YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRAJECTORIES THROUGH ANTI-ISLAM(IST) AND EXTREME-RIGHT MILIEUS

Cross-national synthesis report

DARE
Dialogue About
Radicalisation & Equality

**HILARY PILKINGTON
AND
VIGGO VESTEL**

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Hilary Pilkington (University of Manchester)

Viggo Vestel (Oslo Metropolitan University)

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Executive Summary:

This report brings new insight to our understanding of extreme-right radicalisation across Europe by exploring key themes emerging from the meta-ethnographic synthesis of findings from the study of young people's trajectories through nine milieus in France, Germany, Greece, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russia and the UK.

Starting from a critical approach to the concept of 'radicalisation' and a concern with understanding the everyday contexts of young people's engagements with radical(ising) messages, the focus on milieus provides a new way to understand how individual trajectories towards radical or extremist positions are situated in social environments (offline and online) that sustain them. The milieus studied are diverse but each constitutes a space (physical or virtual) where radical/extreme right-wing messages are encountered, for example via the presence of recruiters, people of high receptivity to radical messages and/or people who have participated in radical or extreme right-wing activities. The close-up study of these milieus also reveals each of them to be internally differentiated and complex and thus as potentially inhibiting and constraining extremism and violence as well as inciting or escalating it.

The data set drawn on includes interviews with just under 200 research participants, most aged between 15 and 30 years, and over 150 ethnographic observations. The analysis addresses five research questions concerning milieu actors': 1) understandings of 'radicalism', 'extremism' and 'terrorism'; 2) encounters with radical(ising) messages; 3) understandings of (in)equality and its role in radicalisation; 4) narratives of their trajectories towards and away from extremism; 5) visions of a better society and how they envisage achieving change.

The study finds that milieu actors recognise the problem of extremism, including right-wing extremism, but dissociate themselves from it. They ground this in their understanding of extremism as characterised by the willingness to engage in violence; something the vast majority of them do not support and in which they do not engage. They maintain that 'right-wing extremist' is applied indiscriminately across the spectrum of right-wing activism. This renders the term meaningless in theory whilst in practice it has stigmatising effects that become a grievance in itself.

The study confirms that online spaces are a significant source of encounters with radical(ising) messages, which are often given credence by milieu actors who see information accessed online as more 'trustworthy' than sources of mainstream media. However, offline relationships – with family, friends and other milieu actors – remain important and are a factor not only in encouraging radical views or actions but in constraining radicalisation. The balance between online and offline encounters with radical messages varies significantly between the different milieus studied.

The study reveals that subjective rather than objective and socio-political rather than socio-economic inequality dominate concerns of milieu actors. The primary site of inequality discussed in the milieus is the gap between societal elites and 'the people'. Although research participants feel alienated by the 'elites' they identify, they do not challenge their power through a discourse of equality. Equality is *not* seen as an ideal and, for many, on the contrary, inequality is accepted and considered natural. The rejection of political agendas of equality in favour of 'natural' difference are expressed also in relation to questions of gender and sexuality.

The study finds that deeply held 'grievances' are crucial in milieu actors' narratives of how they become, and remain, active. The most prominent of these relates to the influx of difference, in the shape of immigrants and refugees, who are held to represent attitudes, beliefs and cultural practices that are alien and threatening to the values and ways of living in the countries to which they immigrate. Islam and Muslims are accorded a particular threat status.

Milieu actors see society as being in profound crisis and express a sense of collective existential insecurity through visions of the physical 'replacement' of white European populations (as a result of immigration and demographic change) and the subsequent loss of unique national and regional

identities. Some fear imminent civil conflict. In some milieus, actors are angry that their views are not heard, or actively silenced, by the media, politicians and societal institutions. This increases frustration and may propel people towards alternative, and more radical, channels of expression. However, there are no straight roads to extremism; a range of mediating factors (affective and situational) are crucial in shaping the outcomes of trajectories. Indeed, even among young people engaged in radical(ising) milieus, these outcomes are predominantly those of non-radicalisation in that they do not cross the threshold into violent extremism. Individuals talk about the role of family, friends or movement influencers in both introducing them to radical ideas and milieus but also steering them away from engagement in violence. Disappointment with the movement or encounters with attitudes that are 'too extreme' as well as wider life changes can be important factors in stepping back from activism.

A key finding of the study is that radicalisation is not a process 'done to' vulnerable young people. They have a sense of their own agency and commitment to 'making a difference'. Across most milieus, research participants envisage achieving the change they seek through democratic participation although they also express profound disappointment and frustration with democracy as they experience it. However, non-democratic modes of governance - authoritarian, fascist or national socialist systems - or non-democratic means to bring about the change are advocated by individuals in some of the milieus.

The report concludes with some critical reflections on the concept of 'radicalisation' and why we choose to conceptualise the journeys of our research participants not as ones of radicalisation but as trajectories through 'extreme-right' milieus.

1. Introduction

This report presents findings that support, and extend, a critical approach to the study of 'radicalisation'. More than a decade ago, Sedgwick (2010) warned that overlapping but differing uses of the term 'radicalisation' had rendered the concept a source of confusion rather than clarification. It should be used, he argued, only as a relative concept alongside a clear specification of the continuum of radicalism being referred to and the location of what is seen as 'moderate' on that continuum (ibid.: 491). This is particularly important to this study since 'radicalisation' has been extended to research into 'right-wing extremism'[1] (RWE) relatively recently and often without due reference to the specifics of the continuum referred to.

In Section 1 of this report, we situate our study within the wider field of radicalisation studies and provide an overview of 'right-wing extremism' in Europe today. In so doing, we consider the significance of what has been called the 'mainstreaming' of right-wing extremism (Miller-Idriss, 2020: 46) for our understanding of what constitutes 'moderate' and 'extreme' on this continuum. We set out our distinctive milieu-based approach and introduce the particular milieus studied such that they can be placed on the relevant continuum. Drawing the contours of nine milieus illustrates the importance of specifying what continuum (of ideas and actions) are referred to when seeking to understand the meaning of shifts along it.

In Section 2, we present the data sets upon which our findings are based, as well as the data analysis method used to synthesise findings across distinctive 'extreme right' milieus. In Section 3, we summarise the findings of the synthesis analysis starting with an exploration of what actors in the milieus studied themselves understand as constituting 'radicalism' and 'extremism' and where they place themselves (and others) on the right-wing continuum. This discussion is a vital precursor to understanding the subsequent findings on sites, sources and drivers of radicalisation. In presenting the findings, we employ the synthesis method to help paint the bigger picture about shifts along the right-wing continuum across Europe whilst acknowledging the range of findings as well as the cases that refute rather than confirm the overall line of argument. While these details complicate the picture, we view them not as troublesome background noise but as vital to interpreting the meaning of shifts along the right-wing continuum in context and thus to identifying appropriate levers or critical points of intervention in different milieus. In the concluding section, we draw on the findings presented to reflect more broadly on whether the deployment of the concept of 'radicalisation' helps clarify when, where and how to make such interventions or, conversely, misdirects our attention or even acts to entrench or encourage grievances that underpin shifts to radical or extremist positions.

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[1] The ethnographic focus of this study, and the particular attention paid to emic understandings of notions of extremism, radicalisation etc., raises the question of how to refer to our object of study. In the DARE project as a whole, we use the term 'right-wing extremism' (RWE) as a short hand to distinguish this dimension of the research from our parallel studies of 'Islamist' (ISE) milieus whilst recognising that most actors in the milieus studied would not recognise themselves as such (see Section 3.1). While there is no adequate resolution to this disjuncture between etic and emic understandings of our object of study, problem, in this report we adopt the following convention. Where secondary literature is referred to, the term used to describe the movement, milieu or activist in that source (e.g. 'far right', 'white supremacist', 'extreme right') is employed; this respects the designations of the cited authors. Similarly, except where respondents in this study are explicitly talking about elements of the milieu they consider to be 'extreme' or 'far' right, the designation used follows the self-identification of most milieu members (e.g. as 'right-wing' activists, 'Cossacks', 'marksmen', 'football fanatics'). Where the object of study in general is referred to, rather than one of the particular milieus studied, it is indicated by using inverted commas around the terms 'right-wing extremism' or the 'extreme right milieu'; this reflects how the phenomenon or milieu is generally talked about.

2. Extreme-right radicalisation

This study must be read in the context of the relatively recent extension of the concept of 'radicalisation' to understanding, and preventing, right-wing violent extremism. Precursors to this can be seen in social movement studies where shifts in action repertoires of left-wing, right-wing and ethno-separatist movements towards political violence have been understood as a process of violence escalation resulting from encounters between competing movements but also between those movements and state (especially law enforcement) responses to protest (della Porta, 2008: 224). However, given the widely critiqued association of the concept of 'radicalisation' with 'Islamist' terrorism in the post 9/11 era, it is important to situate our study in relation to key perspectives on radicalisation and the current political context in which they are being applied to the right-wing spectrum. In this section, we set these out and elaborate the distinctive 'milieu' approach of the study before outlining the milieus selected and their positioning on the 'extreme right' continuum.

2.1 Perspectives on 'extreme right' radicalisation

Despite having become 'the standard term used to describe "what goes on before the bomb goes off"' (Sedgwick, 2010: 479), there remains no agreed definition of 'radicalisation' (Neumann, 2013: 874). At the most general level, it refers to the *process* by which individuals or groups come to embrace attitudes, or engage in actions, that support violence in the pursuit of extremist causes. However, this makes its definition dependent upon what is understood as 'extremism' (the continuum question raised by Sedgwick) and, in particular, whether 'extremism' can be manifest in attitudes alone or only if translated into violent behaviour or support for violent behaviour. This is an important distinction since only a small proportion of those who hold radical, or even extreme, ideas go on to commit acts of violence (Horgan, 2012; see also McCauley and Moskalenko, 2017: 211). The trend in both academic and policy discourse in the recent period has been towards understanding extremism as being constituted by ideas or attitudes as well as behaviour. Kruglanski and Orehek (2012: 12), for example, argue that extremism encompasses not only behaviour but 'attitudes, opinions, and beliefs that differ from established norms [and] have potentially dangerous consequences'. Those arguing against this direction of travel include Bartlett and Miller (2012: 2), who consider radicalisation that leads to violence and radicalisation that does not lead to violence to be two distinguishable phenomena. Most notably, McCauley and Moskalenko's (2017: 211) 'two pyramids' model envisages separate pathways of radicalisation of 'opinion', on the one hand, and 'action', on the other, and no 'conveyor belt' from extreme beliefs to extreme action.

There is also no agreement, indeed there is significant disagreement, on the value of research into radicalisation. Having come into widespread use only after the September 11, 2001 attacks (Sedgwick, 2010: 480; Neumann and Kleinmann, 2013: 362), the concept of radicalisation has received sustained criticism as a source of conceptual 'confusion' (Sedgwick, 2010) but also as being intrinsically associated with Islamist terrorism. There is a growing body of work deconstructing the political framing of notions of 'radicalisation' and 'extremism' (Kundnani, 2012, 2014; Silva, 2018; Kühle and Lindekilde, 2012; Lindekilde, 2012). Empirical studies have documented also the consequences for Muslim communities of the application of these concepts in the development of counter-terrorism and counter-extremism policy and practice (Choudhury and Fenwick, 2011; Thomas, 2016; Abbas, 2019; Pilkington and Acik, 2020). In a review of more than 500 academic articles on radicalisation, Silva (2018: 38) argues that the authority accorded to some models of radicalisation by government and law enforcement agencies 'presents problems for those groups which are represented as dangerous, particularly cultural and ethnic minorities that are already subjected to myriad post-9/11 counter-terrorism practices of surveillance, (in)security and risk'.

From within radicalisation studies too, there is a frustration with what is characterised by Sageman (2014: 620) as 'stagnation' in the field. This pessimism relates largely to the failure of extensive

research into the backgrounds of violent extremists to identify any shared socio-demographic profile that would allow the effective targeting of prevention measures towards 'at risk' individuals (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010: 810; Borum, 2011a: 14; Horgan, 2008: 80; Beck, 2015: 26-30). Shifting the agenda away from the search for profiles that might establish the roots of violent extremism to understanding 'routes' to violent extremism (Horgan, 2008) has been important in re-focusing the study of radicalisation from the question of 'why?' to that of 'how?'. However, attempts to map such trajectories have demonstrated that there are multiple pathways into extremism (Linden and Klandermans, 2007; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008: 429) and different people on a shared pathway have varying outcomes (Borum, 2011b: 57). Moreover, early models of radicalisation such as the 'staircase to terrorism' (Moghaddam, 2005) or 'pyramid model' (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008) have often been interpreted in a too linear fashion, leading to a 'conveyor belt' understanding of how people become involved in political violence (Moskalenko and McCauley, 2009: 241).

Horgan (2017) is less critical of the state of the field than Sageman but questions whether we can ever find clear answers to the complex question of why people become involved in violent extremism. The sheer diversity and internal dynamics of contexts in which violent extremism manifests makes it difficult to find consistent patterns (Crenshaw, 2007: 24). The recognition that macro (structural), meso (group/network) and micro (individual) factors interact in various combinations and to varying degrees (della Porta, 2006) to progress an individual along the path of radicalisation towards violence has led to calls for a more complex 'ecological' approach (Dawson, 2017: 3). Such a model seeks to combine the influence of social structural factors (globalisation, individualisation of risk, economic precarity), their social psychological consequences (immigrant experience, the search for ontological security, need for 'significance') and interaction with extremist narratives (through ideological narratives, groups, recruiters or peer relations) (ibid.). The integration of these factors is addressed in other multi-level models of extremism such as the S^5 framework, which seeks to explain propensity to extremism through the intersection of people and contexts (for further details, see: Bouhana, 2019: 9-12). Bouhana's (2019: 17) moral ecology approach, developed from the S^5 framework, is particularly relevant to the DARE research due to its focus on 'extremism-enabling settings'. However, while Bouhana is primarily concerned with the patterns of distribution of such settings, DARE is interested in individuals' differential susceptibility to extremism-enabling environments (ibid.: 13). It is the reflexive capacity and agency of actors in such settings – which we call radical(ising) milieus – in charting trajectories of radicalisation but also of non-radicalisation (Cragin, 2014; Cragin et al., 2015; Pilkington, 2017) that is at the heart of the DARE project.

As a response to a Horizon 2020 topic call on 'Contemporary radicalisation trends and their implications for Europe', the DARE project necessarily focuses on the question of 'radicalisation'. However, it does so through a critical lens. This means recognising that making the object of study 'radicalisation', rather than terrorism for example, has tended to shift the focus of attention to the individual at the cost of concern with 'root causes' including the declared grievances of radicals (Sedgwick, 2010: 480-481). This criticism might be extended in particular to the ethnographic strand of the DARE research reported on here, which, in contrast to other parts of the project that focus on potential structural causes of radicalisation such as inequalities (see: Franc and Pavlović, 2018; Poli and Arun, 2019), is concerned expressly with individual trajectories. However, the aim is neither to trace the paths of those who end up committing acts of violence back to socio-demographic 'risk factors' or psychological 'dispositions' nor to inventorise the factors or agents that might direct them along a 'route' to violent extremism. Rather we are concerned precisely with the particularity and context of radicalisation - what Sedgwick (2010: 481) refers to as the 'circumstances' in which the grievances of radicals emerge. This is captured in the distinctive 'milieu' approach of the ethnographic element of the DARE project, which is designed to capture the social complexity, yet everyday-ness, of radicalisation. Unlike other studies in the field, which generally reconstruct trajectories through secondary sources on life stories of terrorists or through biographical interviews with 'former' violent extremists, DARE adopts an ethnographic approach focusing on understanding the everyday *contexts* in which young people encounter direct or indirect calls to intolerant or radical ideological positions,

whether such encounters take place among family or peers, through media or political or civic activist groups or in religious or criminal justice institutions. Thus 'trajectories' are not retrospectively reconstructed but emerge through the observation of, and listening to, individuals' reflections on how, and in what context, they experience encounters with radical(ising) messages and how they receive and respond to them.

Our approach starts from the premise that the interaction between political, social and cultural context and an individual's cognitive development is crucial to understanding the radicalisation process and the pathways leading individuals towards extremist behaviour (Costanza, 2015: 3). It captures this interaction through a focus on radical milieus – social formations though which collective identities and solidarities are constructed – which are rarely the object of empirical study but which constitute a 'missing link' in radicalisation research (Malthaner and Waldmann, 2014). Such milieus can be religious, ethnic or political (or a combination of these). They form the supportive and sustaining social 'environments' from within which those engaged in violent, clandestine activity can gain affirmation and sanction for their actions (Malthaner, 2017: 389). Radical milieus also provide an environment in which 'grievance' narratives, 'hidden' truths and 'rejected' or 'stigmatised' knowledge are disseminated and the internal cultures of such environments are framed. Radical milieus are not simply 'hotbeds' of radicalisation; whilst at times actively encouraging and exacerbating violence, they are also diverse and polyvalent social environments in which individuals often criticise, challenge or confront the narratives, frames and violent excesses of militant activity (Malthaner and Waldmann, 2014: 994). As Malthaner and Waldmann (ibid.) have argued, radical milieu may not only contribute to radicalisation but also constrain it by offering also 'alternative (non-militant) forms of activisms' as well as a viable 'exit' option for those who seek to disengage. Drawing on these important insights in the work of Malthaner and Malthaner and Waldmann, we start from the assumption that radical milieus may inhibit and constrain violence as well as incite and escalate it.

In adopting this milieu approach, we are not suggesting that radical milieus are static 'contexts', 'factors' or 'sites' of radicalisation; the milieu is rather an evolving relational and emotional field of activity (Malthaner and Waldmann, 2014: 983) that underpins and envelops radical ideas and behaviours. By studying young people's lived experience in selected milieus, we are able to gain a critical window onto life trajectories as they unfold in a context in which often narrow arrays of life options funnel individuals towards more radicalised belief systems (Constanza, 2015: 2-3). These trajectories are complex and multidirectional; they are not linear routes to a known end point. Radicalisation may start, stall, remain partial or be put into reverse. These are choices made in response to the situations and other actors encountered as young people move through milieus, which may be, more or less, saturated with calls to radical positions. Milieus are envisaged as both physical and virtual (usually both) and not only ideological but also emotional spaces providing opportunities for voicing anger at perceived injustice, identifying 'like minds' or shared hurts and giving meaning to, and making sense of, life. They are also sites where important bonds are forged with others – these bonds are particularly important for individuals whose family or peer relationships have been either lacking or traumatising in some respects.

This milieu approach is adopted also with empirical research in mind. It was essential for us to approach young people not pre-defined as 'radical' or, conversely, 'normal' but simply as milieu actors, all of whom are of potential interest, since the object of study is the social interactions, attitudes and behaviours that are shaped and play out within these milieus. This is particularly important given the high degree of stigmatisation and surveillance actors already experience. In light of the overexposure of radicalisation issues as well as anticipated reluctance of actors to engage in the extended and 'close up' research proposed in the DARE project (see Section 2), the focus on milieus also allowed a significant degree of flexibility to identify both nationally relevant and empirically accessible milieus for study. As discussed in section 1.3, this means that the milieus vary considerably in terms of physical or virtual boundedness, focal activity and the degree of connectedness of research participants. The primary conditions for selecting the milieus were that

they constituted a space (physical or virtual) where radical/extreme right-wing messages are encountered, for example via the presence of recruiters, people of high receptivity to radical messages and/or people who have participated in radical or extreme right-wing activities.

Finally, the milieu approach was adopted not only to facilitate access to research participants but also to engage with those young people in a meaningful way. Our concern is with understanding the complexity of the social causes and impacts (including harms) of right-wing extremism and in identifying societal solutions to them. Thus, gaining meaningful contact with milieus, opening constructive communication and dialogue with individuals and groups and potentially mobilising the agency of those currently drawn into extreme-right milieus for preventing and countering extremism was also part of the DARE agenda.

2.2 Contextualising the studies: Extreme-right radicalisation in Europe

Radicalisation, for the reasons noted above, has been studied primarily in relation to Islamist extremism and in response to a need among policy-makers to identify the process of becoming a terrorist and develop preventative strategies in the form of 'counter-radicalisation' programmes (Kundnani, 2012).

Arguably, one reason for the relative reluctance of researchers to discuss radicalisation in relation to the extreme right, is the ostensibly low level of terrorism, or violent extremism, perpetrated by right-wing extremists. As Sedgwick (2010: 490) notes, the security agenda draws the line between moderate and radical in relation to direct or indirect threats to the security of the state or its citizens; on these criteria, radicalisation into violent extremism among extreme-right actors appears a secondary issue. Europol data on terrorism (by EU country and type) reported annually in the TE-SAT (Terrorism Situation and Trend) report suggest that right-wing extremism accounted for just 2-5% of terrorist attacks between 2017 and 2019 (Europol, 2020: 11). In 2019 (latest available data), six of 119 terrorist attacks recorded in the EU were related to right-wing terrorism (ibid.). Figures for arrest for terrorism related offences show a similar pattern; over the 2015-2019 period just 108 arrests were related to right-wing extremism compared to over 3,000 arrests for jihadist terrorist offences (ibid.: 12).

However, as Bjørgo and Ravndal (2019: 7) note, these data reflect the wide variation in how countries record 'terrorist' offences; right-wing offences are often registered as hate crime, right-wing extremist violence or ordinary violence rather than terrorism. In this way right-wing violence may be under-reported and de-politicised. For example, arson attacks on buildings accommodating refugees, where they do not lead to fatalities, often do not reach the threshold to be considered terrorism (ibid.: 8). Islamist terrorism may also be considered to pose a greater security threat than extreme-right terrorism because the former is more organised (i.e. linked to known terrorist organisations and networks) and more deadly; over the 2001-2016 period, in Western Europe, 17 Islamist extremist attacks killed 539 people while 85 attacks by right-wing extremists killed 179 people (ibid.: 8-9).

The data set on right-wing terrorism and violence gathered by Ravndal (2016)[2] indicates that a small number of high fatality attacks in some countries (most notably Norway) means that extreme-right terrorism is the most significant form of terrorism in some countries studied in the DARE research, but of relevance in all of them. Ravndal's data show there were fatalities as a result of right-wing extremist attacks in seven of the nine countries from which our milieus are drawn[3] (Bjørgo and Ravndal, 2019: 10-11). Of those countries, the highest rate of attack is found in Russia where over the period 2000-2017, 458 people were killed as a result of 406 right-wing extremist attacks. The other countries with high numbers of fatalities are Germany (104 deaths from 82 attacks), Norway (79 deaths from three

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[2] The data set is based on deadly right-wing attacks taking place between 1990 and 2015.
[3] Poland is not included in the data set while no fatal attacks are recorded for Malta. However, as reported below, a racist murder took place in Malta in 2019 and the perpetrators were found to have links with right-wing extremist networks.

attacks) and the UK (33 deaths from 31 attacks) (ibid.). Of rising concern for European security agencies is also the transnational nature of links between right-wing extremist groups and individuals as well as the impact of the distribution of images and testimonies of terrorist actors such as Anders Behring Breivik and Brenton Tarrant.

A heightened threat from right-wing terrorism is a key part of the contemporary context in some of the countries studied here. It is of particular importance in countries such as Norway and Germany where there have been a high number of fatalities from perpetrators of right-wing terrorism in recent years. In Germany, this is associated in particular with the racist murders committed by the National Socialist Underground (NSU) between 1999 and 2007 but which became known only in 2011, as well as racist murders in Halle (2019) and Hanau (2020) and dozens of arson attacks on sites housing refugees and asylum seekers. In Norway, this threat is associated with the devastating terror attack perpetrated in 2011 by Anders Behring Breivik and resulting in the death of eight people from a bomb detonated at the Government Headquarters in the centre of Oslo and the shooting dead of 69 young people attending a Labour Party Youth Organisation's (AUF) summer camp. In 2019, in a protest with similar motivation to Breivik's, Philip Manshaus shot and killed his 17-year-old adopted sister before opening fire at a mosque in Bærum. In the UK, right-wing terrorism by single actors was behind the murder of MP Jo Cox (June, 2016) and an attack on worshippers leaving Friday prayers at the Finsbury Park mosque (June 2017). Although these attacks were not linked to an organised movement, concerns about the extreme right organisation National Action led to it becoming the first extreme right organisation to be prohibited under UK legislation (December, 2016). One of its members was subsequently convicted of conspiracy to murder an MP and making a threat to kill a police officer. In Greece, current radicalisation must be set in the context of a surge of anti-immigrant violence between 2009 and 2013. These attacks were orchestrated by the Golden Dawn party until the arrest of the party's leaders in 2013 following the murder of a young anti-fascist rapper. In Malta the shooting of three African migrants (one of whom was killed) by two soldiers of the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) in 2019 led to the revelation of the perpetrators' affiliations to various extreme-right and anti-immigrant Facebook groups.

For most of the countries studied, however, the contemporary context is characterised primarily by the growth of anti-migrant, anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiments and the growing visibility of movements expressing such views. Thus radicalisation is deployed in relation to the extreme right primarily as an issue of 'integration' – threatening inclusive, civic notions of citizenship - rather than in relation to security or foreign policy (see: Sedgwick, 2010). In Malta and Greece the significant rise in refugees and asylum seekers arriving in the two countries has been a key context of extreme-right radicalisation. From 2002, Malta experienced a surge of asylum seekers, predominantly departing from Libya, which fostered the emergence of factions of organised extreme-right and anti-immigrant groups in the country. Since the 1990s, Greece has been transformed from a migration-sending country to a receiving one, with the rise of arrival of refugees and asylum seekers taking place during a long period of sustained economic crisis (2009-2018). In this context, the failure to establish a coherent and effective integration framework for marginalised immigrants, heightened the sense of discontent with mainstream political parties and further spread xenophobic and stigmatising attitudes, which portrayed immigrants and refugees as exacerbating the crisis and threatening Greek-Orthodox culture and Greek national sovereignty.

Other countries have seen visible anti-'Islamisation' movements emerge. The largest of these is PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident') in Germany, which, it is suggested, contributed to the increase in violent attacks on refugee accommodation blocks as well as to changes in the 'political climate of discourse' such that racist statements, especially in social media, have been 'normalised' (Vorländer et al., 2016: 146; see also Virchow, 2016). Smaller but similar movements in the countries of our study include SIAN (Stop Islamisation in Norway) in Norway and the English Defence League in the UK. While the latter has been in decline since 2013, a range of fringe groups adopt similar platforms and are fed by long-term trends towards a rise in anti-Muslim

sentiments among the UK population (Sobolewska, 2017; Mulhall, 2019). In France, there is no organised anti-Muslim movement with the mobilisational capacity of PEGIDA but anti-Islam views are found across extreme-right political groups while the so-called 'Muslim problem', alongside the well-established discourse on 'the immigration problem', is a common freature of public discourse.

The state is an important contextual factor in radicalisation in a number of countries studied here. In the cases of Greece and Russia, the significant deterioration of relations with neighbouring countries have fuelled nationalist sentiment. In the Russian case, this relates to the annexation by Russia of Crimea and subsequent military conflict between Russian separatists and Ukrainian forces in the Donbass region, in which some milieu members in the Russian case participated or encountered calls to participate. The role of the Russian state with regard to extreme right movements has been somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, the state mounted a major crackdown on extreme right organisations, especially street based ones, following the establishment of the 'Centre for Countering Extremism' in 2008. However, one outcome of this was the creation of space for new right-wing movements, including those linked to Russian Orthodoxy, which began to gain popularity, in some cases with state support. The Cossack milieu studied for the DARE project found that state agencies were open to collaboration, for example, in dispersing opposition protests and conducting security patrols. In the Greek case, heightened nationalist and anti-immigrant/anti-Muslim sentiments and attitudes were fuelled by the escalation of hostility between the Greek and Turkish states (in particular over Turkish state border policy, which was blamed for aggravating the 2015-2016 'refugee crisis' in Greece). Heated political controversy over the signing of the Prespa Treaty – designed to resolve the 'Macedonia dispute' – also led to mass protests by those on the right wing and significantly contributed to heightening Greek-Orthodox nationalism. Arguably, the referendum on membership of the European Union in the UK also mainstreamed anti-immigrant discourses – including a strategic alliance between Tommy Robinson and UKIP under Gerard Batten between April 2018 and June 2019. The success of the Brexit campaign, moreover, empowered those on the right to believe that 'the establishment' could be defeated.

This is not to suggest that those voting to the leave the European Union in the UK were right-wing extremists, but that significant shifts in mainstream political debate and discourse have implications for right-wing extremist movements too. Miller-Idriss (2020: 46) argues that there has been a 'mainstreaming' of 'far-right extremism' as the range of acceptable policy options (the so-called Overton Window) has shifted to the right as previously unthinkable far right ideas are routinely promoted and discussed by alt-right actors. Extremist ideas become normalised, she argues, when they are adopted or suggested in speeches of mainstream politicians and such mainstreaming helps recruit new people to extremist ideologies but also softens extremist beliefs through coded terms that obscure their violent underpinnings (ibid.: 47-8). While Miller-Idriss is reflecting primarily on the mainstreaming of right-wing extremism under the Donald Trump presidency, Trump's influence across Europe cannot be underestimated. The actions and statements of radical right politicians in positions of power within Europe (such as Viktor Orbán and Matteo Salvini) are also widely referred to by actors in radical(ising) milieus as evidence of what 'can be achieved'. As noted above, discussion of 'the immigration problem' and 'the Muslim problem' is well-embedded in mainstream politics in France promoted first and foremost by the Rassemblement National (known as the Front National prior to January 2018), which secured the highest proportion of votes in France in the European elections in 2014 and in regional elections in 2015. There has been increasing concern about the 'mainstreaming' of extreme-right views also in Germany, the Netherlands and Norway where the rise and political success of the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), Forum for Democracy and Party for Freedom (PVV) and The Progress Party *(Fremskrittspartiet)* respectively have provided a mainstream platform for anti-immigrant views and policies. In Germany, the AfD party has helped create a social climate that has contributed to mobilising and radicalising existing racist and prejudiced attitudes, especially towards Muslims and refugees. In Poland, the right-wing populist Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice) party, which came to power from 2015, has led to a wider societal shift towards nationalism and religious integralism. The party has openly supported the annual national marches on

Independence Day, organised by the nationalist leaders of the football fans movement while the state-controlled media has failed to stigmatise xenophobic slogans and aggressive behaviour directed against minorities.

While this does not provide a comprehensive view of the relationship between 'mainstream' and fringe politics in the countries in which our milieus are selected, it illustrates the importance of Sedgwick's call to understand what is 'radical' as a relative concept – signalling movement away from mainstream opinion, which itself varies significantly in different times and places. Indeed, as discussed below, the aim of shifting the position of this 'mainstream', in order to facilitate a more fundamental system change, lies behind the 'metapolitical' approach of key players on the 'right-wing extremist' scene. Such 'mainstreaming' is also an important factor in shaping emic representations of one's own 'non-radicalism' in that it may endorse the conviction of actors in these milieus that they are not only 'not extremists' but that their views are quite 'centre' or even 'middle of the road' (see Section 3.1). Since, as Simi and Futrell (2015: 7) state, 'by definition, extremists operate on the margins of society and face repression from those in power', this raises the important question of what constitutes the 'right-wing extremism' that milieu actors may be radicalised towards and what the ideological 'supply' they draw on looks like in Europe today?

Two decades ago, a review of the academic literature on right-wing extremism identified 26 different definitions of the phenomenon including 58 characteristics, of which only five were mentioned by at least half the authors (Mudde, 2000: 11). Among attempts to bring taxonomic clarification and systematisation to the field since then, Mudde (2007: 25) distinguishes between 'populist radical right' parties and movements that are nominally democratic (although oppose some fundamental values of liberal democracy) whilst upholding a core ideology combining nativism, authoritarianism and populism and movements of the 'extreme right', which are inherently antidemocratic (ibid.: 31). Bjørgo and Ravndal (2019: 3) maintain this distinction between 'radical' and 'extreme' right actors whilst attributing to the 'extreme right' also the legitimation of violence against those they see as 'enemies of the people' and seeing both the radical right and the extreme right as sub-sets of the broader 'far right'. Carter's (2018: 157-182) 'minimal' definition of 'right-wing extremism' also positions it as an ideology that encompasses authoritarianism, anti-democracy and exclusionary and/or holistic nationalism. We might note here also Schmid's (2013: 9-10) distinction between 'radicals', as open-minded, accepting of diversity and believing in the power of reason rather than dogma, and 'extremists', whom he characterises as closed-minded and seeking to create a homogeneous society based on rigid, dogmatic ideological tenets, which suppresses all opposition and subjugates minorities. In the context of democratic societies, he says, (violent) extremist groups, movements and parties tend to have a political programme that is: anti-constitutional, anti-democratic, anti-pluralist, authoritarian; fanatical, intolerant, non-compromising, single-minded; rejecting the rule of law while adhering to an ends-justify-means philosophy; and aiming to realise their goals by any means, including the use of political violence against opponents (ibid.). While Schmid's distinction is applied across the ideological spectrum (not just to right-wing radicalism or extremism), it draws on evolving theories of the relationship between authoritarianism and a range of social and political attitudes (Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1981), in- and out-group preferences or prejudice (Allport, 1979: 9) and cognitive (in)capacities such as dogmatism (Rokeach, 2015) and intolerance of ambiguity (Frenkel-Brunswik, 1949). Although Adorno et al.'s (1950) measure for traits constituting the 'authoritarian personality' has been heavily criticised, it remains the basis for measures such as Altemeyer's Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scale (Duckitt, 2001: 42), which continues to be considered a successful predictor of ethnic prejudice, nationalism, political and economic conservatism and right-wing political party preference (Roets and van Hiel, 2006: 235). Stenner's (2005: 2-4) theorization of what she terms 'the authoritarian dynamic' makes an important distinction between a fundamental 'predisposition to intolerance', the presence of which her findings confirm, and 'the 'attitudinal and behavioural "products"' associated with it. Her study draws, unusually in the field of political psychology, on in-depth interviews (with survey respondents scoring highest and lowest on measures of authoritarianism) as well as survey and experiment data. This

allows her to demonstrate the importance of wider societal conditions – in particular conditions of threat - in accounting for variation in expressions of intolerance (ibid.: 8, 80-81).

At the broadest level, therefore, it seems there is agreement within academic discourse that right-wing extremism differs from right-wing radicalism in its opposition to democracy and legitimation of violence. Right-wing extremists are also believed to display higher degrees of cognitive 'closedness' demonstrated in characteristics such as in-group preference, dogmatism and intolerance of ambiguity. Both right-wing radicals and right-wing extremists are characterised by ideologies including some form of exclusionary nationalism and intolerance (especially, although not exclusively, in relation to ethnicity, race and religion). Using these definitions, most of the milieus studied in this report would fall within the 'radical' as opposed to the 'extreme right' camp due to their broad support for democratic governance (see Section 3.5.2) although there are exceptions to this rule, most notably in pro-authoritarian views among the Russian milieu and anti-democratic views and political strategies among part of the Greek milieu.

Mapping these broad characteristics onto the current ideological spectrum and organisational actors across Europe is not straightforward. Bjørgo and Ravndal (2019: 3) usefully distinguish between three types of 'nationalism': cultural (primarily anti-Muslim and concerned with so-called Islamisation of western societies); ethnic (often expressing itself through anti-immigration attitudes and critiques of multiculturalism); and racial (expressed through white supremacism, anti-Semitism and 'white genocide'). Cultural and ethnic nationalism, they argue (ibid.) characterises radical right movements, while extreme right movements deploy ideologies of racial and ethnic nationalism. All three of these 'nationalism' types are found among the milieus studied for this report. However, the milieus cannot be neatly characterised in accordance with this typology. This is, firstly, because of significant internal differentiation within each milieu; individuals in some milieus belong to a range of movements (or none) and subscribe to a wide range of views, often consciously assembling their own distinct way of seeing the world, critical of established positions both inside and outside the milieu. Some milieus, for example, include research participants who hold strong anti-Semitic views as well as those with pro-Israeli views. In other milieus, there is a high degree of consensus around some ideological issues but the milieu is characterised by distinct groups of radicalised and non-radicalised actors (this is the case especially for the Greek and Maltese milieus). The second reason it is difficult to align the milieus with the categories suggested by Bjørgo and Ravndal stems from the importance to our study of emic understandings within the milieus. While self-descriptions of milieu actors are not adopted uncritically, even the use of 'nationalism' as the broad repository for different views is fitting in some milieus while nationalism is viewed mainly pejoratively in others, where 'patriotic' or 'traditionalist' are more routinely used to describe actors' own positions. Rather than attempt to characterise the individual milieus, therefore, below the key ideological frameworks encountered across milieus are outlined and readers are referred back to the country-based milieu reports for a more nuanced discussion of the prevalence and significance of each of these in that particular milieu. These views, moreover, are held in a complex mixture and to greater or lesser degrees by each research participant so should be read not as ideological positions but as the spectrum of interpretive frameworks actors encounter and from which each constructs their own view of the world.

The first type of ideological framework encountered by milieu actors is associated with classic *national socialist, neo-Nazi or fascist* organisations. Examples referenced in our milieus include the Nordic Resistance Movement in Norway (a movement active also in Sweden, Denmark and Iceland, see: Klungtveit, 2020), National Action (proscribed from 2016) in the UK, Golden Dawn in Greece, the National-Radical Camp (Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny or ONR) in Poland and Imperium Europa in Malta. Such movements are also the most likely to espouse anti-Semitism. Norman Lowell, who founded and heads Imperium Europa epitomises a combination of all of the above, being a Holocaust denier and having described Jewish people as 'sewer rats'. Other common anti-Semitic tropes relate to the 'over-representation' of Jews in positions of authority. It is important to note that while such groups and

ideas are encountered and referenced frequently across the milieus studied, most research participants in our study reject their ideologies (see Section 3.1).

Movements that are *racist or support white supremacism* are also referenced and mainly rejected by milieu actors participating in this study. However, this is true primarily where racism is understood as biological racism (believing someone is inferior because of their 'race'); anti-migrant and anti-Muslim sentiments are often excluded from the category of 'racist' by research participants and understood and justified on other grounds (such as the cultural 'incompatibility'). Individuals within milieus may also see 'race' as a 'natural' differentiating factor and express the belief that people prefer to live with others who are racially similar rather than different to them. The most frequent reference to 'race' relates to the belief that white people are the subject of racism (being discriminated against because they are white) or made to feel guilty for being so.

The third type of ideological framework is identitarianism, also referred to as ethnopluralism. This ideological framework also underpins, or grew out of, what is often simply called the 'new right' (in France or the Netherlands) and underpins (although often unconsciously) more routine criticisms of globalisation or multiculturalism. Identitarian ideology is rooted in the ideas of French new right thinkers such as Alain de Benoist, which support distinct and strong identities in the face of what they see as 'the unprecedented menace of homogenisation' (de Benoist and Champetier, 2012: 32). This homogenisation, de Benoist and Champetier (ibid.: 28) argue, is a result of globalisation and a universalism wrongly imposed by the West through religious crusades, colonialism, economic and social development models and moral principles rooted in human rights. 'Homogenising universalism', they suggest, 'is only the projection and the mask of an ethnocentrism extended over the whole planet' (ibid.: 29). To counterpose multiculturalism, European new right theory proposes ethnopluralism, which promotes the recognition of the rights and equality of all ethnic groups but also their difference and thus the desirability of their separate territorial existence. Where identitarianism itself is not supported – because it is not known or because it is viewed as too extreme – milieu actors often still reject multiculturalism as an ideology 'forced on' people by elites who benefit from the globalising project and support monocultures. These views are thus often linked to the rejection of liberal hegemonic elites seen to be imposing multiculturalism for their own ideological reasons and facilitating the 'Great Replacement' of the native, white European population with non-European immigrant populations. It is worth noting here, in particular, the Generation Identity movement (Génération Identitaire, created in France, 2012 and prohibited by government decree in France in March 2021[4]) (Zúquete, 2018), which rose to notoriety when 70 of its activists occupied the roof of the Poitiers mosque to denounce the 'Islamisation' of France (Cutaia, 2013). This group is of particular interest to our research because it is a youth movement and cross-European in scope; participants in a number of milieus were members of, or had contacts with, Generation Identity.

Alt-right describes a fourth ideological framework, although one that shares much in common with identitarianism. The alt-right refers to individuals, platforms and alternative media promoting a wide range of white nationalist views but most closely associated with Richard Spencer's Alternative Right online blog and a number of widely shared memes such as Pepe the frog. Its central tenet is that 'white identity' is threatened by multiculturalism and left-wing political correctness, egalitarianism and universalism. In this sense it reflects an American form of identitarianism. In some of the countries studied here, e.g. the Netherlands, there is a strong sense of a national alt-right movement distinct from (if largely imitating) American alt-right discourse. However, in other countries, alt-right is used largely to refer to American milieus and influencers. While 'white' identity is not referenced so explicitly in European identitarianism as in alt-right discourse, 'European identity' is assumed to be white European identity.

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[4] See: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/03/france-bans-far-right-paramilitary-group-generation-identitaire

Finally, milieu members mobilise a range of *anti-Muslim, anti-Islam and anti-migrant* ideological frameworks, which are mostly articulated as 'defensive', i.e. designed to protect 'own' (European or national) culture from the threat of Islamic culture or Muslim immigrants. In some milieus studied here (e.g. the Greek, Russian and Polish milieus), Christianity or Christian identity of the country or region is a key reference point because the milieu is closely aligned with religious institutions or feels it is defending a 'national' faith (Catholicism in Poland and Malta, Orthodoxy in Greece and Russia). However, in other cases, Christianity is used more loosely as signifier of European identity/civilisation in relation to 'Eastern' or 'Muslim' others. In other milieus (e.g. Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, France and Norway), hostility towards Islam is mainly framed as rejection of a backward, misogynistic, and expansionist force that threatens European or national culture. Sometimes conspiracies of an Islamic takeover facilitated by political leaders (along the lines of the Great Replacement) are expounded. Sometimes anti-immigration and anti-Muslim views are intertwined, either because Muslims are seen as making up most incoming refugees or migrants or because of the association of Muslim incomers with terrorism. In other cases, an end to all immigration is called for on grounds that the flows are too large to allow 'integration'. In these cases, distinctions are made between immigrants who 'integrate' and those who do not or between refugees who need help and immigrants who are seeking a better life at the expense of the 'native' population. Thus, anti-immigration views and hostility towards individuals or groups of migrants are often rooted in grievances over the perceived privileged treatment afforded to those arriving in the country.

Notwithstanding the diversity of political standpoints both within and between milieus, these ideological frameworks constitute a set of shared reference points for actors in the milieus studied. They come to their various personal positions through an active process of searching for meaning and explanation of injustices they observe or experience, and they develop and hone their own particular belief set in a process of engagement with these frameworks. Sometimes this leads to shifts towards a more radical position, sometimes a step back is taken as the potential implications of adopting particular positions are realised or individuals want to dissociate themselves from others seen to be 'too radical'.

Wherever individuals end up positioning themselves ideologically, in general terms, extreme-right radicalisation emerges in this study first and foremost as a threat to social cohesion through the propagation of ideas and behaviours that incite or amplify hate or fear of 'others'. This is broadly in line with Berger's (2018: 44-48) definition of contemporary extremism as the belief that an in-group's success or survival is integrally connected to the need for hostile action against an out-group. However, as shown in the empirical findings below, support for violence is rare within the milieus studied here and thus 'radicalisation' relates to shifts towards more radical opinions or becoming active in disseminating or promoting those opinions rather than taking violent action oneself. This would place research participants, with some notable exceptions, below the category of 'radicals' in relation to McCauley and Moskalenko's (2017) categorisation[5] and would not constitute 'radicalism' or 'extremism' by the definitions milieu actors themselves apply to these terms, which are associated with action or behaviour not ideas or attitudes (see Section 3.1). The implications of this for how we understand 'radicalisation' and how we evaluate its usefulness in conceptualising attitudes and behaviours in such milieus is returned to in the Conclusions to this report.

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[5] McCauley and Moskalenko's (2017: 211) 'two pyramids' model charts separate pathways of radicalisation of 'opinion' on the one hand and 'action' on the other. The 'opinion pyramid' starts, at the base, with those who pursue no political cause (*neutral*) and climbs through those who believe in the cause but do not justify violence (*sympathizers*), those who justify violence in defence of the cause (*justifiers*) to the apex where people feel a *personal moral obligation* to take up violence in defence of the cause. At the base of the 'action pyramid' are those not active in a political group or cause (*inert*), followed by those who are engaged in legal political action for the cause (*activists*), those engaged in illegal action for the cause (*radicals*) and, at the apex, are those engaged in illegal action that targets civilians (*terrorist*s). According to this categorisation, most actors in the milieus studied here would be 'sympathizers' and 'activists'.

2.3 Overview of the milieus studied

In devising the case studies of young people's trajectories, researchers were asked to select appropriate 'extreme right'/'anti-Islam(ist)' milieus as the focus of study. By studying young people's engagement with radicalisation messages in situ (in their everyday milieus) and over a sustained period of time, the aim was to capture the complexity, including situational nature, of the paths young people take. This approach was premised on an understanding of radicalisation trajectories as non-linear, complex and situational.

The definition of milieu employed for the selection of cases was broad and allowed for significant flexibility in terms of the territorial or non-territorial delimitation of the object of study. A milieu was defined, for the purposes of the DARE project, as the people, the physical and the social conditions and events and networks and communications in which someone acts or lives and which shape that person's subjectivity, choices and trajectory through life. The milieu was not required to be territorially fixed and it was anticipated that, in most cases, it would not be. However, to constitute a milieu, there should be an evident connection (human, material, communicative, ideological) between individuals interviewed and observations conducted. An appropriate milieu for selection should also be a space of encounter with radical or extreme messages (via the presence in the milieu of recruiters, high receptivity to radical messages etc.). Extended concept notes on 'extreme right' and 'anti-Islamism' guided researchers in selecting such milieus. Broadly speaking, 'extreme right' was understood as a political ideology characterised by opposition to democracy, biological or cultural racism and anti-Semitism while 'anti-Islamism' was understood as active opposition to what its proponents refer to as 'radical Islam' or the 'Islamification' of western societies but that often includes a general antipathy towards Islam or all Muslims and is thus characterised by Islamophobia or cultural racism. In practice it was recognised that few actors understand themselves as holding 'extreme right' views and that there is significant overlap between 'anti-Islam(ist)' and 'extreme right' views and behaviours. It is important to emphasise here the high degree of dissonance between how movements and ideologies are described exogenously and endogenously (see Section 3.1); indeed this was one of the questions for research in DARE. Thus, it was not a requirement that participants in milieus thought of the milieu as 'extreme right'; if this milieu or the movements or participants in it were considered as such in public discourse, then it was considered a potential milieu of study.

There was no requirement that the selected milieu be 'typical' of the country or that multiple milieus be included in order to cover the range of different expressions of the 'extreme right' spectrum. Rather the selected milieu should constitute a pertinent case in the country context and be sufficiently similar to other milieus in other country locations to allow the transnational synthesis of cases. This 'fit' with the descriptor of 'extreme right' or 'anti-Islamist' while broad nonetheless remained challenging. This is due, first, to the very different spectrum of views and size of milieus in the different participating countries, which have populations ranging from less than half a million (Malta) to more than 140 million (Russian Federation). Since our target of study was milieus in which young people encountered extreme-right or anti-Islamist messages, rather than individuals convicted of terrorism or hate-crime related offences, it also made the choice of possible milieus very wide. While no formal criterion for 'clustering' of cases was employed, a constant process of discussion of cases being considered for selection and communication between partners ensured that all cases met the criteria for selection but also had some point of connection with other cases. Broadly speaking, two clusters of cases emerged: those where the milieu consists of activists in nationalist, radical or extreme right or 'new right' movements (France, Malta, Norway, Netherlands, UK); and those where the milieu is focused around a non-political interest (e.g. football, shooting, religion) but there are strong ideological connections between this milieu and nationalist, radical or extreme right movements and ideologies (Germany, Greece, Poland, Russia).

In the analysis of Findings presented below (Section 3), we seek to make clear the variation between these different miliues in relation to the visions of society they support and the means they are prepared to adopt to achieve them. In Figure 1 (below), we preface this discussion with an attempt
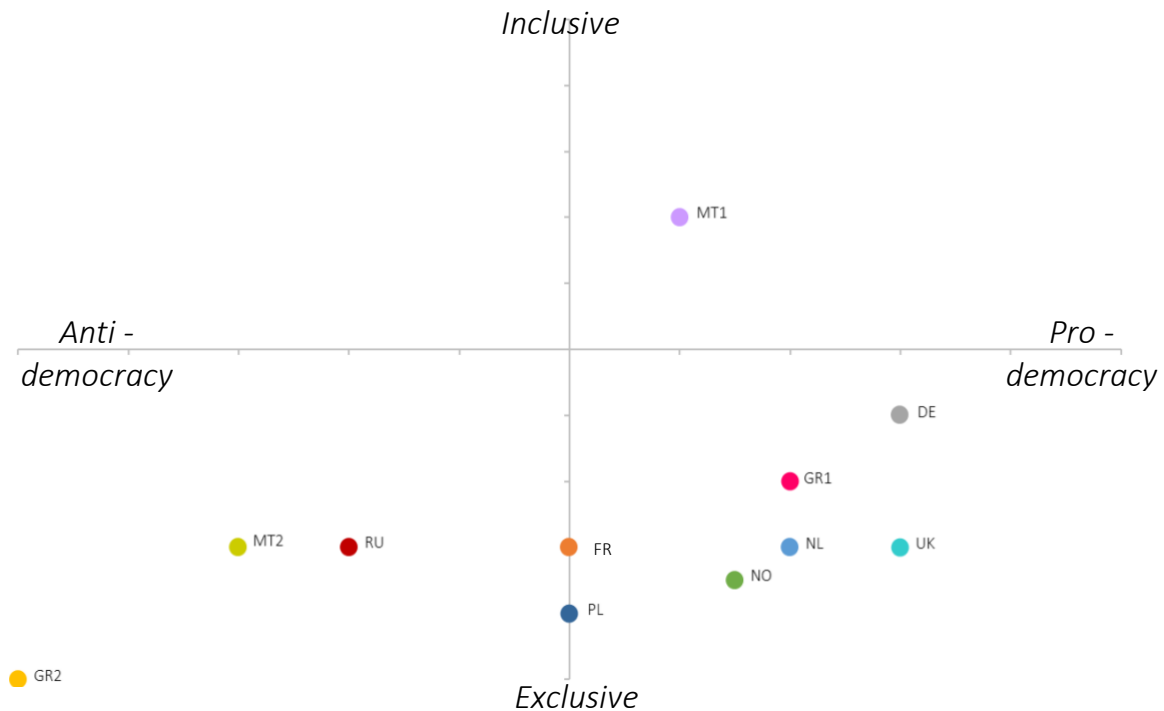
to visualise this range by placing the different country-based milieus in relation to each other. The milieus are placed on the 'political compass' according to views within the milieu relating to: 1) level of support for democratic or non-democratic forms of governance or non-democratic ways to achieve the change they seek ('pro-democracy-anti-democracy' axis); degree of identification with, and prioritisation of the needs of, a nationally or ethnically defined in-group and expression of hostility towards out-groups or minority groups ('inclusive-exclusive' axis). Figure 1 should be seen as a way of 'eye-balling' the relative positioning of milieus only. It is constructed by placing the milieu according to the overall weight of views articulated by research participants in relation to these criteria and thus cannot capture the internal differentiation within each milieu. Exceptions to this are made for Greece and Malta where the milieus are split into two groups (MT1 and MT2 and GR1 and GR2) because these milieus include two distinct groups of research participants. In the case of Malta, MT2 relates to young people currently or formerly affiliated with extreme right groups while MT1 relates to young people living in areas subject to social upheaval and potentially susceptible to extreme-right narratives. In the Greek milieu, researchers distinguished between a 'radicalised' element of the milieu who were directly connected with far-right activists, militarists and neo-Nazi Golden Dawn supporters (GR2) and other Greek Orthodox with anti-Muslim sentiments in the milieu (GR1). These in-milieu distinctions are detailed in the relevant country reports (see Appendix 1). Democratic views run from anti-democratic (left hand quadrants) to pro-democratic (right hand quadrants) while visions of society run from inclusive (top two quadrants) to exclusionary (bottom two quadrants). Thus, as we would anticipate, no milieus show pro-democratic *and* inclusionary attitudes (empty top left quadrant) although the majority of milieus are not anti-democratic (seven milieus are positioned in, or on the border of, the right hand quadrants).

Given Sedgwick's (2010: 491) call to not only specify the continuum of radicalism being referred to but also to locate what is seen as 'moderate' on that continuum, it seems important also to at least acknowledge the variation in where the 'norm' is located in the different countries of study. In order to gain a sense of the range of contexts from which our milieus are drawn, we used the Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU) Democracy Index 2020[6] and the Gallup 'Migrant Acceptance Index'[7]. The EIU ranks Norway as the most democratic of our studied countries (scoring, 9.81 of a maximum of 10) followed by the Netherlands (8.96), Germany (8.67), the UK (8.54) and France (7.99). Malta (7.68), Greece (7.39) and Poland (6.85) are ranked as less democratic than these countries with Russia (3.31) the least democratic by some margin (EIU, 2021). If we use attitudes to immigrants as a measure of inclusive and exclusive visions of society, then, data from the Gallup survey (139 countries in 2016) showed that, of the countries in the DARE study, Norway, the Netherlands and Germany were the most accepting of immigrants (scoring 7.73 and 7.46 and 7.09 out of a maximum 9 respectively) followed by the UK (6.61) and France (6.46). The countries studied in DARE with the most negative attitudes to immigrants are Malta (4.95), Greece (3.34), Poland (3.31) and Russia (2.60). Figure 1 indicates a broad correlation between the relative positioning of our milieus and the wider national societies on these criteria and thus suggests wider societal context is crucial to understanding our milieus. The exception to this is the Norwegian milieu, which appears to be both more exclusive and more anti-democratic relative to other country milieus than we might anticipate from national level data, which suggests Norway is the most democratic and most accepting of immigrants of all the countries from which our milieus are drawn.

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[6] The Economist Intelligence Unit's index of democracy, on a 0 to 10 scale, is based on the ratings for 60 indicators, grouped into five categories: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture. Each category has a rating on a 0 to 10 scale, and the overall Index is the simple average of the five category indexes (EIU, 2021: 56)

[7] This poll asks scores positive and negative responses to three questions about attitudes to immigrants. The maximum score for positive attitudes to immigrants is 9. See: https://news.gallup.com/poll/216377/new-index-shows-least-accepting-countries-migrants.aspx

Figure 1: Political compass visualising the relative 'extremism' of milieus

2.3.1 Case studies of activists in nationalist, radical or extreme right or 'new right' movements: France, Norway, Netherlands, UK, Malta

In France, the case focuses on youth involved in, or close to, Corsican nationalist movements accessed either via prisons or anti-immigrant groups. Participants in the study are mostly middle class or upwardly aspirant members of the working class frustrated at their perceived treatment as a low-status minority group by the French state. They see Christianity as an important identity marker in the struggle against a perceived Islamic takeover in the West and take inspiration ideologically from the French new right. Thus, the Corsican case is not exceptional in France but can be seen as an example of the kind of radicalisation on the Right observed elsewhere in the country. Actors in this milieu have sought contact with a number of radical/extreme European right-wing groups but reject the ascription of labels of racism, fascism or Nazism.

The Norwegian case explores the political trajectories and motivations of individuals within a milieu involved in, or with links to, groups and networks from a wide spectrum of radical anti-Islamist and nationalist ideologies including identitarians, neo-Nazis and 'national conservatives'. Participants in the study share a common purpose in 'defending the nation' - its assumed unique values, history and culture - in the context of the perceived threat posed to Europe and the West more widely by immigration. Most participants support 'remigration', inspired by the ideology of 'ethnopluralism' and 'traditionalism' associated with the thought of Julius Evola (Evola, 2017; Hakl, 2019).

In the Netherlands, the case focuses on the New Right milieu (including alt-right, alt-light and identitarian movements) as it manifests in the Netherlands today. This milieu comprises a mixture of groups and strands that distinguish themselves from the old extreme right by a more modern style, international orientation and intellectual discourse as well as by its online methods of recruitment, organisation and communication and ideological focus on anti-Islam. The study finds that the radical ideas of the milieu are seeping through to mainstream public debates, being identifiable, for example, in discussions about race ('race realism'), the influence of race on IQ and in the discussion on

(traditional) gender roles. This is both undermining trust in authority and polarising society around ethnic and religious identities and political views.

The UK case explores the trajectories of young people affiliated with a wide range of movements, parties or political campaigns in the UK routinely referred to as 'extreme right' or 'far right'. While not co-located, physically or ideologically, these individuals inhabit a common milieu and are connected either personally or through shared activism. The study identifies the growing influence of identitarianism and the alt-right, not least in the perceived threat posed to white identities from demographic change and the commitment to multiculturalism among the political establishment. However, this co-exists with a continued discomfort in talking about race and awareness that the naturalisation of racial difference leads to racism, which participants in the study see as unacceptable. The study pays particular attention to the dissonance between the conceptual descriptor ('far right', 'extreme right') applied to the views and behaviours of those in the milieu and the almost complete absence of anti-democratic or pro-authoritarian positions or the legitimation of violence in the pursuit of political goals among participants.

The Maltese case considers young people's online and offline experiences of engaging with extreme-right ideas, individuals and groups. Narratives were collected from young people currently or formerly affiliated with extreme right groups as well as young people living in areas subject to social upheaval and potentially susceptible to extreme-right narratives. In a broader sense, the case explores how young people make sense of, and engage with, their place and individual identities in the context of Malta's insularity from mainland Europe, its geopolitical position between Europe and Africa, and the transformations brought about by EU membership and new migration dynamics. Its findings suggest an absence of belonging and social cohesion drives young people to embrace nostalgic, and contested, representations of the Maltese nation, or, in extreme cases, to define themselves in unified opposition to the 'other'.

2.3.2 Case studies of non-political interest groups with links to radical or extreme right ideologies and movements: Greece, Russia, Germany and Poland

In Greece, the case focuses on Islamophobic/anti-Muslim attitudes, behaviours and sentiments among young people associated with the Greek Orthodox Church. The milieu is characterised by a synthesis of the ideological and identity characteristics that bring together Orthodox zealots (who see themselves as 'soldiers of Christ'), Greek Orthodox far-right activists, militarists and neo-Nazi Golden Dawn supporters. They view themselves as participants in a common struggle for the protection of 'faith and fatherland' from the threat of Islamification and for the propagation of nationalist and authoritarian far-right political programmes necessary to resist perceived threats and injustices faced by the Greek-Orthodox majority due to globalisation, multiculturalism, immigration and secularism. Attention is paid to comparing and contrasting attitudes between participants in the study belonging to more radical groups and less radical groups within the milieu.

The Russian case considers the right-wing milieu of the young (neo) Cossacks of St Petersburg. Originally a free military formation originating in the sixteenth century, the Cossacks gradually became an ethno-social community performing the function of protecting and defending the increasingly militarised state and its political and social order. Today the Cossack movement is characterised by a rigid hierarchical structure, which, supported by the state, performs an informal 'policing' function including the deployment of violence against the civilian population in the event of protest and disorder. Ideologically, the Cossacks see themselves as defenders of Orthodox Christianity but also share xenophobic and anti-immigrant positions, 'traditional' and neo-patriarchal values. These positions, alongside a sense of perceived injustice, regarding rights and access to resources, act as a basis of radicalisation within the (neo) Cossack milieu.

In Germany, the study explores the particular milieu of Germany's 'Marksmen's clubs' in the context of the mainstreaming of authoritarian populist, right-wing and racist, including anti-Muslim, attitudes in wider German society. The Marksmen's clubs have their roots in a centuries-old tradition and

millions of people participate nationwide in these, ideologically conservative, clubs. Their attraction for far right protagonists is evident in attempts by such actors to influence the Marksmen's clubs milieu and to appropriate aspects of it. This study considers the responses of young people participating in Marksmen's clubs to these developments.

The Polish case focuses on the milieu of radical football fans as a site of radical nationalist ideological expression and violence directed not only against supporters of other clubs but other perceived 'enemies'. The expression of ideological symbolism in football culture is a significant element of the contemporary construction of national identity in Poland and connections between the football fan movement and the Catholic Church (epitomised by the annual pilgrimage of Polish football fans to Czestochowa) is indicative of the fan milieu's engagement with the social mainstream. Nationalist ideology and symbolism is deployed in the radical fan milieu as a tool for constructing not only the nation but also a vision of the enemy, excluded from the imagined community, and subject to vilification. This study of radical fan milieus in a number of Polish cities analyses examples of such expressions and argues that football culture has been used as a cultural resource and political tool by nationalist movements promoting particular versions of national 'memory' and 'identity'.

3. Method

To study young people's trajectories through anti-Islam(ist) and extreme right milieus, the DARE project adopted a case study approach. Central to the qualitative case study is the recognition of the fundamental importance of understanding the *context* of social research. As Burawoy (1998: 13) puts it, qualitative research is based on the epistemological premise that 'context is not noise disguising reality but reality itself'. The principle of reflexivity embedded in qualitative social science, moreover, assumes that social research is the product of the interaction of externally produced theory and internal narratives (indigenous narratives, respondents' interpretations of the social world etc.) that are profoundly *located* in time and space. Thus, the methodological approach adopted in the project starts from the premise that these locations are not limitations on, but central to, the knowledge produced through social research.

At the same time, the project seeks to bring additional insight from the transnational, multi-sited ethnographic approach adopted and to allow a degree of theoretical generalisation about, as well as reflect the complexity of, trajectories of radicalisation that can inform counter extremism policies and practices. To this end, a two-stage analysis process was adopted. The first stage - single case analysis - is described in the introduction to the individual case studies[8] and is depicted figuratively in Steps 1-3 of Figure 2 (below). This cross-national synthesis report is based on the second stage of that process.

3.1 The meta-ethnographic synthesis approach

Cross-national synthesis analyses were conducted separately for the nine 'extreme-right' milieus and the ten 'Islamist' milieus but using the same methodological approach. Following the coding of data in individual case studies, researchers produced two sets of documents: 'node memos'; and 'respondent memos' (Step 2 in Figure 2). These documents, along with the single case study reports, were used for transnational analyses.

For these transnational multi-case analyses, a meta-ethnographic synthesis approach was applied. This involved the adaptation of classic meta-ethnographic synthesis (Noblit and Hare, 1988; Britten *et al*. 2002) to allow for the synthesis of not published studies but transnational qualitative empirical data. This adapted method has been used previously to study cross-European case studies of young people's activism (Pilkington, 2018). It constitutes an alternative to comparative approaches which

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[8] See: http://www.dare-h2020.org/uploads/1/2/1/7/12176018/d7.1_introduction.pdf

pre-determine the parameters for comparison and often translate into a common language only 'indicative' interviews or interview summaries, which tend to lose the 'outliers' or refutational cases, the inclusion of which is crucial to the principles of qualitative research. It combines context-sensitive coding of data in original language (see Step 1 in Figure 2) with the production of detailed primary data summaries ('node memos') and respondent profiles ('respondent memos') in English, which are used as the objects of synthesis. In this way, the synthesis approach retains a level of closeness to context that is lost when the object of meta-ethnographic synthesis is restricted to published studies (in this case the individual case study reports). The synthesis approach thus facilitates the construction of a 'bigger picture' from profoundly contextually embedded data and allows for not only commonalities but also differences to be elucidated and for the retention of a significant amount of contextuality.

The synthesis was conducted as a five stage process in which first the data set was constructed (Stages 1-3) and then the synthesis process conducted (Stages 4-5).

> Stage 1: Constructing the data set

> Stage 2: Scoping the data

> Stage 3: Determining research questions (see Section 2.2)

> Stage 4: Translating the meanings of one case into another

> Stage 5: Generating 'third-level' interpretations

These five stages were undertaken as step 4 of the data analysis flow diagram (see Figure 2)

Figure 2 Data analysis flow diagram

Step 1: Coding
1) Done for each national data set;
2) 'Item' is any segment of interview, field diary or visual data coded;
3) Done in NVivo by researchers (national teams) to two hierarchical levels only;
4) Done in local language.

Item *[Interview excerpt]* 'The right to offend, having the right to offend is far more crucial to a free and just society than having the right not to be offended.'	Item *[Field diary entry]* 'When the masses see that democracy is a lie [...] That's when they will become radical...'	Item *[Interview excerpt]* 'And the more and more the divide between people and government, it's gonna... I mean, the violence will come.'	Item *[Photo]* Slogan on England flags worn by demonstrators reads: 'We will not be silenced'

Level 1 Node Free speech	**Level 1 Node** Democracy – problems with	**Level 1 Node** Polarisation	**Level 1 Node** Silencing, political correctness

Level 2 Node
Ideology and politics

Step 2: Production of Node memos and Respondent memos for cross-case analysis
1. Done by researchers (national teams)
2. Done for each national data set: one node memo for each Level 2 node, and one respondent memo for each respondent
3. Done in English

Step 3: Single case analysis and interpretation
1. Done for each national data set
2. Done by researchers (national teams)
3. Can use NVivo (producing Level 3 nodes/themes) but not obligatory
4. Level 3 nodes/themes are theory-informed.
5. Analysis/interpretation done in local language
6. Deliverable reports in English

Step 4: Transnational analysis
1. Employs meta-ethnographic synthesis method using node memos and respondent memos for cases in data set
2. Done by WP leads only
3. Can use NVivo (producing Level 3 nodes/themes) but not obligatory
4. -Analysis/interpretation done in English
5. Deliverable reports in English

In a traditional meta-ethnographic synthesis the researcher, first, has to scope the potential range of published studies to be included in the synthesis. In this case, the data set for each synthesis was pre-given, consisting of those cases included in each of the strands of radicalisation ('extreme-right' and 'Islamist') and included the following data from each case study:

- 'node memos'
- 'respondent memos'
- individual case deliverable reports

Node memos are thematic memos generated in the form of simple Word documents for each Level 2 node and consisting of the descriptions of the content of Level 2 nodes and their constituent Level 1 nodes as well as illustrative quotes for each Level 1 node. The node memos also included a summary of the context of the generation of the Level 2 node (including particular theoretical paradigms or historical or political events important to its understanding) as well as detailed descriptions of the range of content of Level 1 nodes. These node memos were written in English and constituted the primary objects of synthesis. In addition, 'respondent memos' were generated in English for each individual respondent, providing a quick reference point for the main socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent and other contextual information of relevance to the interpretation of the data. Both sets of memos were produced following anonymisation guidelines that ensured all names used were pseudonyms and any other identifying material was removed.

The building blocks of the meta-ethnographic approach are the generation of 'second-order' concepts and metaphors (Stage 4) and 'third-order' interpretations (Stage 5) (Britten *et al.*, 2002: 213; Lee *et al.*, 2015: 347). Definitions of first, second and third-order constructs differ in the published literature (Malpass *et al.*, 2009: 158) although there is consensus that the underlying process involves 'identifying key concepts from studies and translating them into one another' (Thomas and Harden, 2008: 5). The term 'translating' in this context refers to the process of taking concepts from one study and recognising the same concepts in another study (ibid.). Explanations or theories associated with these concepts are employed to develop a 'line of argument', which pulls these concepts together and provides insight beyond that gained from the original studies.

The translation process in DARE was not of concepts extracted from published literature (as in a classic version of meta-ethnographic synthesis) but respondents' own interpretations coded, categorised, contextualised and interpreted in node memos, respondent memos and case study reports. These materials were read repeatedly in the process of the translation of the meanings of one case into another, where necessary clarifying context and interpretation with the field researchers. Three forms of translation are envisaged in the meta-ethnographic synthesis method: cases are directly comparable as 'reciprocal' translations; cases stand in opposition to each other and are thus 'refutational'; cases are diverse but, taken together, represent a 'line of argument' rather than a reciprocal or refutational translation (Noblit and Hare, 1988: 36). In practice, a single meta-ethnography may include all three types of translation (Campbell *et al.*, 2011: 24; Dixon-Woods *et al.*, 2006: 103). Given the diversity of cases in the synthesis analyses conducted for DARE, we anticipated that the end product would usually be 'a line of argument' developed on the basis of the reciprocal translation of cases but taking account of refutational or partially refutational cases.

The second-order concepts that emerged were recorded and described in a table that sought maximum reciprocal translation but recorded also any refutational cases. It also recorded illustrative quotes for both reciprocal and refutational cases in relation to that concept. The use of the term 'translation' indicates that, at this stage, the synthesiser is comparing concepts, each infused with its own interpretation, and thus is engaged in an interpretive 'reading' of meaning, but not further conceptual development (Malpass *et al.*, 2009: 158).

The final stage of analysis was the generation of 'third-order' interpretations. This stage involved determining what additional insight is brought to the research questions through the synthesis of

cases and is least open to procedural systematisation. The aim is to generate a qualitative synthesis that extends knowledge over and above the sum of the individual case studies included in the study whilst recognising that it may also be that no new insight emerges (Campbell *et al.*, 2011: 119). In a further amendment of classic meta-ethnographic synthesis, at this final stage in DARE we did not aim to induce new ('grounded') theory (as envisaged by Noblit and Hare's original meta-ethnographic model) but to revise, refine or reconstruct theory. This approach is based on a critical approach to the presumption in the 'grounded theory' approach that entirely new theory can be induced from data analysis. Rather it recognises that theory is essential to interpretation and knowledge production and thus the 'necessity of bringing theory to the field' (Burawoy, 2003: 647) with the aim of revising or refining theory rather than generating it anew. In DARE, therefore, we used Goldkuhl and Cronholm's (2010) explication of a 'multi-grounded theory' approach to guide the practical process of bringing theory back in (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: The Multi-Grounded Theory approach (taken from Goldkuhl and Cronholm, 2010: 199)
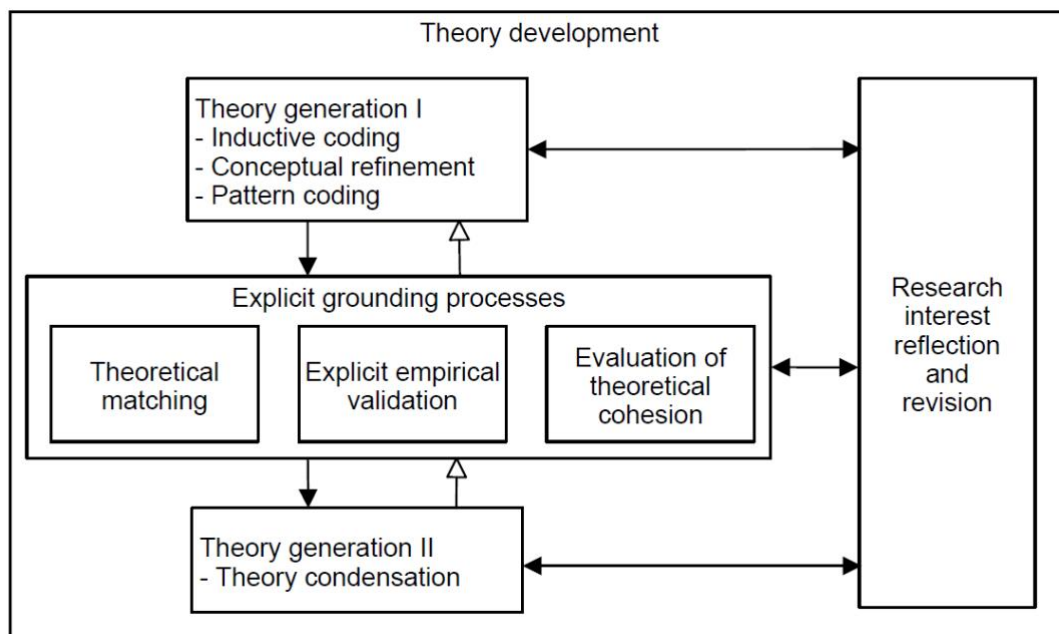
Following this model, and the two stage analysis strategy illustrated in Figure 2, the research teams in DARE employed inductive coding as well as a shared skeleton coding tree to code data at the first level of analysis followed by a process of 'theoretical matching' and validation against both data and existing theoretical frameworks at the third or interpretative level. This third level of interpretative analysis was applied also to the synthesis process where theory is explicitly engaged in the final stage of the elucidation of 'third-order' interpretations.

The main rationale for employing a meta-ethnographic synthesis approach for this stage of the DARE analysis is that it was developed by those engaged in ethnography themselves in order to facilitate the generation of strong interpretive explanations by deriving understanding from multiple cases while retaining the sense of the original accounts (Campbell *et al.*, 2011: 10). Of course, the synthesis process is a 'triple hermeneutic' in which the meta-interpretations of the synthesiser are added to those of the original researcher and the research participant (Weed, 2005: 22) and it is inevitable that some of the 'thickness' embedded in individual cases is thinned out in the process. However, in DARE, the two tier analysis and interpretation process outlined above aimed to ensure that the 'vitality,

viscerality, and vicariism of the human experiences represented in the original studies' (Sandelowski *et al.*, 1997: 366) was retained in the individual case study reports while genuine new insight might be gathered through the synthesis of cases. Moreover, by using the adapted meta-ethnographic synthesis approach outlined above, we sought to retain as much of the original context and richness as possible by using primary data (in the form of 'node memos') as the main unit of synthesis. This allowed concepts to be derived directly from the articulation by respondents of their experience (see, for example, 'keeping the lid on' extremism in Section 3.2.6 or 'information terrorism' in Section 3.2.1) and significant detail and differentiation contained in the original studies to be retained well into the analysis process.

Another strength of the synthesis method – over, for example, a more traditional comparative method - is that cases are retained in their entirety rather than data being gathered only according to pre-selected parameters or dimensions that allow neat comparison. Moreover, by retaining a commitment to including contradictory or 'refutational' data in the synthesis, cases that are 'exceptions' or 'outliers' can be used to enhance understanding rather than excluded because they lack 'fit'. Indeed the refutational synthesis acts as a powerful reminder not to allow the synthesis method to seek similarity alone and to question why some concepts 'work' (in terms of reciprocal translation) better than others. These 'exceptions' or refutations were employed in the development of 'line of argument' syntheses.

Thirdly, meta-ethnography did not substitute ethnography but added to it by extracting the general from the unique. The DARE research design was premised on an inductive selection of cases that prioritised the importance of contextual validity. While analysis protocols provided a systematic process of coding to two levels, this was completed in the language of the interview, to avoid the loss of linguistically expressed difference. After the initial two-level coding, each team was able to further refine their coding (and interpretation) of data to produce third-level interpretations and published their findings as a discrete case study report (see Appendix 1). Thus, this method (unlike a strict comparative design) allowed the synthesis of findings alongside the production of unique case studies that can be interpreted in context.

Fourthly, this inductive approach meant that the concepts that emerged from the synthesis were not pre-defined by parameters for comparison rooted in the research design (and thus on secondary literature rather than primary data). While a skeleton coding tree was employed to assist the synthesis process, the idea of the 'skeleton' was that the coding tree could have flesh put on its bones by the addition of codes reflecting particularly rich data in any one case.

The application of meta-ethnographic synthesis to primary data nonetheless presents some major challenges and has certain limitations. First, although all cases synthesised in this study were drawn from a common research project (supported by cross-project guidelines and protocols) differences between data remained. This was partially a result of the inductive rather than deductive process of selecting cases, which meant that the cases reflected a broad range of milieus (see Section 1.3) experiencing different proximities to radical(ising) messages and being more or less internally homogenous. This meant that some cases were more readily reciprocally translated while others appeared frequently as a refutational case or outlier. For example, in the Greek milieu one section of the milieu was highly radicalised and appear as examples of the refutation of the main line of argument that democracy was the least bad form of governance (Section 3.5.2) and the otherwise almost universal dissociation of self from the label of 'fascist or 'neo-Nazi' (Section 3.1.1).

A second challenge lies in the unevenness of cases inherent in any multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 2011: 21). While some studies were deeply ethnographic, including extensive field diaries, visual data and 20-30 semi-structured interviews, others – especially in countries with small RWE scenes – generated less interviewees. Others secured substantive interview material but the case afforded less opportunity for ethnographic observation; in the Russian case, for example, the researchers were not able to access some sites of observation as such spaces were deemed open only to men.

A third challenge in conducting the synthesis was pragmatic. The process would have benefitted from more time for team reflection and the sharing of practice in the course of synthesis. The benefit of team members conducting different meta-ethnographies simultaneously and sharing reflections on the process is noted by Lee *et al.* (2015: 340). Although in this study such collective reflection took place during the process of the design and following a preliminary scoping of the data, the opportunities were limited by the transnational nature of the wider team, the constraints on travel during the COVID-19 pandemic and the time intensive nature of the generation of data sets and materials.

3.2 Research questions

The research questions guiding the synthesis analysis for this report were arrived at through inductive reasoning - the generation of key themes arising from the case studies – followed by a more deductive matching of these themes against the original research questions driving the DARE project (and generated from existing literature in the field). For the interests of future analysis and synthesis across the two strands of radicalisation considered in the DARE project, Islamist and 'extreme-right'/'anti-Islamist', it was also decided to focus on questions that were appropriate for both case studies, whilst acknowledging that the concepts synthesised in the course of analysis would reflect both the differences between these radicalisation strands as well as the specific case studies included in the project. The questions selected, and thus the themes around which this report is structured are:

- How do milieu actors understand 'radicalism', 'extremism' and 'terrorism'?
- How and where are radical(ising) messages encountered in the milieus studied?
- How do milieu actors understand (in)equality and its role in radicalisation?
- How do milieu actors recount their trajectories towards and away from extremism?
- What do milieu actors want to change in society and how do they envisage achieving that change?

These questions allow exploration of only a fraction of the material gathered. In particular they do not allow any focused exploration of key tropes in the ideological beliefs of actors or the movements to which they are aligned. This may create the impression that individual, socio-demographic or socio-psychological factors are prioritised in the explication of trajectories of radicalisation over structural drivers, especially ideological factors. In fact, although both specific political grievances and the socio-economic, political and cultural environments that frame them differ in each individual case study, the importance of political sense-making in the radicalisation of the research participants is threaded through the report. For example, in Section 3.2, the profound distrust in political and other mainstream institutions is central to the discussion of the use of digital media to source information, while in Section 3.3, populist (anti-state, anti-elite) views as well as a range of perceived injustices in relation to the privileged treatment of minorities are seen to be central to how research participants see the world and why they actively engage in seeking to change it. In Section 3.4, on trajectories through milieus, moreover, we explore political grievances related to the experience of change (the 'influx of difference') and the sense of crisis or need to 'defend' own identity this provokes, to be central to pathways research participants take. While, arguably, this is a shortcoming of the synthesis, an overview of the main ideological frameworks identified among the milieus is provided in Section 1.2 and the case study design of the research means that, in any case, a synthesis of findings on ideological tropes would not be able to provide any sense of their relative prevalence or significance on the European extreme right scene.

More specific themes arising in the data, that would have been more prominent had a purely inductive approach to the synthesis been taken, include the emergence of 'the Left' as a central ideologised enemy among milieu actors as well as how Left/Right distinctions are problematised in key tropes (such as on the welfare state and opposition to political elites). Data was also collected on

transnational links and national and international 'influencers' in the various milieus but not included in the analysis due to the importance of temporal and spatial contexts in understanding these patterns. Themes that appeared as important and interesting in some of the case studies but not others are also not discussed in a focused way. Examples include: militarism and extremist identities; the role of religion in nationalist ideologies and extremism; links between extremism and mainstream political parties and state institutions; and extremism and regimes of patriarchy. While this partial coverage can be accommodated in the 'line of argument' mode of meta-ethnographic synthesis, given the abundance of themes important in all or almost all case studies, we focused on questions that allowed inclusion of the maximum number of studies. Finally, a number of important issues especially in terms of trajectories of radicalisation – such as stress, anxiety, trauma, adverse childhood experience – were only partially gathered due to the varying degrees of ethnographic engagement between cases and between individuals in different cases. Such partiality, it was decided, did not lend itself to synthesis analysis.

Finally, it is important to note that the analysis, while guided by research questions relevant to the field, is essentially inductively constituted. Thus, its focus is on eliciting actors' perspectives. While actors' accounts are not automatically privileged in terms of interpretation, the extensive empirical research conducted in radical(ising) milieus is a key contribution of the DARE project and the focus in this report is on presenting the findings of the synthesis of these perspectives. However, a critical approach to these narratives is taken. We view actors' own understandings of the world, their experiences of it and journeys through it as vital to our understanding of radicalisation. Our role as researchers is to interrogate and interpret these narrations - not to judge their veracity or reliability - but in order to enhance our understanding of how to counter extremism and, where appropriate, engage actors in these milieus themselves in that process.

3.3 Data sets

This synthesis draws on a total of 188 interviews with 184 research participants across the nine case studies (see Table 1). The target age range was 15-30 years although a small number of interviews were conducted with important milieu members outside this age range[9]. Interviews with a range of wider community members and professionals engaged in countering extremism and promoting social cohesion were conducted in most cases studied but are not included in the formal dataset for analysis. The number of interviewees per case varied from 13 to 26 and the number of interviews conducted ranged from 15 to 30. Five interviews were video recorded (all in the UK case), all others were audio recorded. Where the number of recorded interviews exceeds the number of interviewees, this indicates that, in some cases, more than one research participant participated in some interviews. Where the number of recorded interviews is less than the number of interviewees, this reflects the agreement of some individuals to participate in the research but not have interviews recorded. In these cases notes were recorded by researchers and analysed alongside interview and observational data. Ethnographic observation was undertaken in all case studies although varied from two to more than 60 events observed.

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[9] Research participants cited in this report who are aged over 40 are: Christopher (FR); Jacob, Father Gabriel, Thomas and Father Tryfonas (GR); Odd (NO); Jan, Kitka and Panufcy (PL); Craig (UK).

Table 1: Data set

	ISO code	No. interviewees	Audio/video interviews	Field diary entries	Other materials
France	FR	17	17	32	Several hundred Facebook posts
Germany	DE	23	23	15	Approx 50 documents (flyers, leaflets, press statements, advertisements), 230 still images (photos) and 77 short videos from fieldwork
Greece	GR	21	17	15	24 photos
Malta	MT	15	15	6	YouTube videos and forums related to extreme-right personalities. Anti-immigrant Facebook group pages
Netherlands	NL	20	24	9	Text documents
Norway	NO	13	23	4	A large number of YouTube videos created by or related to milieu actors
Poland	PL	26	17	15	Printed newsletters, photos and (limited edition) books for fans
Russia	RU	22	22	2	57 photos and 8 videos shot during fieldwork
UK	UK[10]	21	30	61	Approx 300 photos and short videos from fieldwork, 9 documents (flyers, manifestos, leaflets received during fieldwork
Total		184	188	159	

No new data were gathered for this synthesis study. All data emanate from the case studies conducted by researchers from the national teams and approved for use in this synthesis by them (see Appendix 1 for a full list of these case studies and their authors). The procedures and practices implemented to ensure the ethical collection and storage of research material are detailed in each report as well as in the Introduction to case study reports[11]. Interviewees to whom data are attributed in Section 3 are referenced using pseudonyms (or other form of anonymisation such as Respondent number) and country (using ISO country codes – see Table 1).

4. Findings

The findings of the synthesis analysis are set out in relation to the five research questions detailed above. While milieu actors' own understandings of what constitutes 'extremism', 'radicalism' etc. are

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[10] UK is used rather than the ISO code 'GB'.
[11] See: http://www.dare-h2020.org/uploads/1/2/1/7/12176018/d7.1_introduction.pdf

the focus of Section 3.1, it should be noted that, throughout, the aim is to understand and critically interrogate the views and experiences of actors in the milieus studied.

4.1 What is 'extremism'? Emic perspectives

This study finds a significant dissonance between who, and what, is considered 'extremist' in academic and policy discourse (etic[12] perspectives) and among actors in the radical(ising) milieus studies (emic perspectives). This is not untypical for ethnographic research, which routinely reveals disjuncture between emic and etic representations of the phenomenon studied (O'Reilly, 2005: 116). However, when researching contentious phenomena or 'distasteful' groups (Esseveld and Eyerman, 1992: 217), we encounter a particularly heavy domination of the field by etic categories, their politically laden nature and sometimes the dismissal of the value (even legitimacy) of emic perspectives. After all, why should we care what 'extremists' think?

These disjunctures should not be reified, however. What constitutes (violent) extremism is discursively constructed and thus etic understandings of it also change over time and space. In the recent period (since 2001), for example, *terrorism* has been increasingly re-configured as the study of *violent extremism*, with the two terms often used interchangeably to refer to violent behaviours in support of a shared ideology or belief. *Extremism* is also subject to conceptual drift, being increasingly considered to relate not only to behaviour but attitudes, opinions, and beliefs that differ from established norms and have potentially dangerous consequences (Kruglanski and Orehek, 2012: 12).[13] A key distinction may, or may not, also be drawn between *extremism* and *radicalism*, where 'radicals' are understood as actively supporting fundamental political change (Beck, 2015: 18-20) but being open-minded and employing critical thinking rather than displaying the closed-minded, rigid and dogmatic characteristics ascribed to 'extremists' (Schmid, 2013: 9-10). Finally, both radicalism and extremism may be understood as relative or relational - situating individuals or positions on a continuum of organised opinion in a particular time and place (Bouhana, 2019: 7; Sedgwick, 2010: 481) - or, conversely, be associated with more absolute definitions. Berger (2018: 44-48), for example, emphasises the importance of having a concrete definition of 'extremism', which is, he argues, distinguished by the belief that an in-group's success or survival is integrally connected to the need for hostile action - ranging from verbal attacks to discriminatory behaviour and violence - against an out-group and a call to action.

The discursive construction of what constitutes (violent) extremism also means that these concepts are subject to political re-framing (Onursal and Kirkpatrick, 2021: 1094-5). As noted in Section 1.1, there is a growing body of work that critically deconstructs the political framing of notions of 'extremism' and 'radicalisation' (Kundnani, 2012; Kühle and Lindekilde, 2012; Silva, 2018) in relation to 'Islamist'[14] extremism. This work has documented the consequences for Muslim communities of the application of these concepts in the development of counter-terrorism and counter-extremism policy and practice (Thomas, 2016; Abbas, 2019; Pilkington and Acik, 2020) and, in some cases, drawn on the study of emic understandings to do so. For example, Kühle and Lindekilde (2012: 1608) interrogate the concept of 'radicalisation' through 'listening and respecting how the actual target groups reflect on the phenomenon'. They do this through the study of a friendship-based Muslim milieu in the Danish city of Aarhus referred to by those outside it as the city's 'radical' Muslim milieu.

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[12] Although used originally within linguistic anthropology, here the terms 'emic' and 'etic' are used in line with their adoption in the social sciences to distinguish between concepts and categories rooted in actors' self-understanding and 'insider accounts' ('emic') and those devised and deployed by external, scientific or policy/practice communities ('etic') (Whitaker, 2017; Sieckelinck et al., 2017: 677).

[13] Although, as discussed below, there are models of radicalisation that maintain the non-determinacy of opinion and action (see: Bartlett and Miller, 2012: 2; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2017: 211).

[14] 'Islamist' is used here to indicate a range of ideological positions rooted in the interaction between Islam and politics and is counterposed to 'Islamic', understood as relating to Islam as a body of religious thought.

They find that this etic understanding conflates three distinctions within the discourses of the interviewees and fails to capture their complex opinions (e.g. on terrorism). This etic discourse of radicalisation, envisaging 'a slippery slope from individual violent sympathies to membership of groups and engagement in collective violence', they warn (ibid.: 1621), could hinder rather than facilitate the identification and prevention of radicalisation. In this report, we aim to provide a similar excavation of the implications of the disjuncture between etic and emic concepts of 'extremism' or 'radicalisation' among actors in 'extreme right' milieus (see also: Pilkington, forthcoming).

The discursive construction of (violent) extremism - where people are placed and how they are talked about - matters also because emic understandings are not organically derived and hermetically sealed; they are forged in reflexive engagement with etic concepts. Extremism, like other 'deviant' behaviours, is the product of the interaction of all actors involved, not just those deemed deviant (Becker, 1997: 183). Indeed, although starting from the perspective of the social psychology of terrorism, rather than symbolic interactionism theory, McCauley and Moskalenko's (2008: 430) understanding of radicalisation - as a dynamic process in which significant events are the actions not only of the individual but also of others - shares the basic premises of Becker's critical approach to the sociology of deviance. This recognition of the role of discursive positioning and the actors' engagement with it, becomes increasingly important in the current era of the 'mainstreaming' of right-wing extremist ideas through their explicit or implicit incorporation into the communication of mainstream politicians (Miller-Idriss, 2020: 48). Thus we also aim to open a new debate within this discussion by asking, what it means to call actors in the milieus studied 'extremists' when as Simi and Futrell (2015: 7) state, 'by definition, extremists operate on the margins of society and face repression from those in power'?

Across the milieus studied here (identified exogenously as right-wing extremist) actors rarely recognise themselves as extremist (or radical). In exploring emic perspectives on extremism, we take these self-understandings seriously. This is neither to accept at face value denials of 'extremism', 'racism' or intolerance by actors in 'extreme right milieus' nor to normalise the attitudes or behaviours they exhibit. It is, rather, to argue that the consistent dissonance between who is considered to be 'right-wing extremist' in academic and policy discourse and who thinks of themselves as such should not be dismissed as a smokescreen but investigated. This is not only because it has implications for the complexity of our understanding but because it is important in directing efforts to prevent and counter extremism.

In this section of the report, we explore findings across the nine cases studied in relation to three main themes emerging from the data: self-distancing from extremism; what constitutes extremism (thresholds); and distinctions between extremism and radicalism.

4.1.1 Self-distancing from 'extremism'

As in etic understandings of extremism, milieu actors employ both relative/relational and absolute understandings of what constitutes extremism. In this sub-section, we see how a relational position underpins research participants' understandings of what constitutes 'extremism' as they explain this by distinguishing between themselves and those they judge to be 'real extremists'. This synthesis of findings showed three distinct ways in which actors in radical(ising) milieus self-distance from extremism in this relational way: by pointing to 'others' (primarily 'Islamists' and 'the Left') as the 'real extremists'; by declaring the term to be a 'label' falsely applied to those on the Right in general or themselves in particular; and by rejecting a blanket description of the Right as extremist by differentiating within the 'right-wing extremist' milieu and distinguishing themselves from those who are 'too extreme for me'.

4.1.1.1 'Others' as real extremists

At the general level, extremism is perceived not to relate to the content of the idea or action but to exist across the ideological spectrum; extremism can be associated with 'any ideology' (16, NL) and 'anyone' could be extremist (Frederick, DE). However, there is a strong tendency for actors in the

milieus studied to dissociate themselves, and their milieu more widely, from extremism. Indeed, in the case of the Russian milieu, right-wing radicalism or right-wing extremism is completely absent from the description of radicalism/extremism; actors in the milieu did not refer even to neo-Nazi communities as example of right-wing radicalism/extremism. In six of the nine case studies, 'extremism' was associated primarily with 'others', usually 'Islamist' or 'Left' activists and groups. While the breadth and depth of examples and explanations given for these associations cannot be explored here, we outline the range and variation across the case studies in relation to how research participants' more abstract understandings of what constitutes extremism/radicalism/terrorism leads them to this association.

Islam

For many research participants the immediate association with 'extremism' is Islamist extremism. As Dima (RU) states simply, 'Extremism, radicalisation - of course, this is radical Islam'.

An illustrative case here is a research participant (Bobby) in the French case study, whose immediate association with the word 'radicalisation' is Islam. Although, at the time of interview, Bobby was serving a prison sentence for nationalist (Corsican) terrorism, he neither considers himself 'radical' nor imagines that he might himself have undergone a process of 'radicalisation'. His rationale for not considering his own violence (which has included the use of explosive devices) as terrorism but considering actions of Islamists to constitute such is two-fold. First, the target of the violence is crucial; 'they' [Islamists], he says 'attack civilians' (Bobby, FR). This conceptual distinction between terrorism and other forms of extremism based on the use of violence against civilians in order to influence more distant actors (governments) to effect social or political change (Horgan, 2017: 199; Beck, 2015: 12) mirrors etic conceptualisations. Indeed, as discussed below, it is on the understanding of 'terrorism' that there is least dissonance between etic and emic understandings.

The second reason Bobby distinguishes his own violence from that of Islamists is, he says, 'I didn't have an ideal' while 'they' (Islamists) are 'fighting for Islam'. The strong traditions of laïcité in France are reflected in similar views among actors in the French milieu that the perceived political orientation of Islam makes it 'dangerous for the French Republic and European democracies' (Gary, FR). Gary makes this claim in the context of a wider view that Islam is not a religion but an ideology:

> I did a master's degree in history, I studied theology and everything. Islam is not a religion, it's a political doctrine. So I'm not saying that it's good or bad, I'm just saying that it's a political doctrine and that the foundations of Islam are not compatible with a democracy. That's all I'm saying. So Islam is dangerous for the French Republic and for European democracies. Otherwise, I honestly don't care if Saudi Arabia applies Sharia law, it's not my problem, it's not my country, it's not my culture. I wouldn't presume to say 'what you're doing is right or wrong'. I just defend my culture and the society in which I live. And I see that Islam will endanger my society. (Gary, FR)

The relationship between religion, politics and 'European democracies' is seen more complexly by some participants of the Greek milieu of Greek Orthodox believers. Vaggelis, for example, talks about a historical rivalry between the West and the Muslim world (epitomised in the Crusades) that has been antagonised by contemporary Western policies in the Middle East and contributed to the emergence of Islamic extremism and terrorism:

> They are rival religions. They have fought each other. They represent different civilisations and peoples. Historically, the West is Islam's enemy [...] Bombings, poverty, dismantling of Syrian and Iraqi society create rivalry and hostility towards the West. This is part of the wider problem with Islam. In other words, I think that the real problem is the war in these countries. It must stop. (Vaggelis, GR)

This recognition of the role of western intervention in creating hostility is not uncommon in the milieus. Talking about the relationship between Islam and terrorism, Andreas (DE) responds, 'When

you drop bombs on innocent people, you shouldn't be surprised that they are filled with hatred. When you're hateful, you quickly join groups that you might have avoided before and then you have more terrorists.' Dan (UK) thinks that western military intervention in both Iraq and Syria was wrong and motivated by concerns about oil resources rather than the reasons stated by politicians. He also thinks it exacerbates rather than resolves issues in the region: 'we need to pull out of Syria now, to be fair. We shouldn't have went in, I don't think. […] I know ISIS were bad and that and... but, I think we're just making it worse' (Dan, UK). As with Vaggelis, for Dan this does not alter the fact that there is a 'wider problem with Islam'. Indeed he is also adamant that hostility and violence towards non-Muslims is rooted in Islamic scriptures. As he puts it, 'The Qur'an makes the majority of Muslims violent, that's a fact' (Dan, UK). Regardless of the role western governments might have played in aggravating the situation, the more radical research participants in the Greek case study also view Islam as a religion in which fanaticism is embedded in, and propagated by, its core teachings and which has been historically hostile to Christianity and the West.

> They don't forget the Crusades. All these kids who are taught the 'Sharia' by the Imam in the mosque, they are also taught that the 'crusader' is their enemy. Who were the crusaders? They were English, French and Italians and they invaded our land through Greece. That's what we do to them now, we invade and occupy Europe. (Thomas, Field Diary, GR)

Their discourse paints an image of Islam and Muslims as the eternal enemies of Christianity who are attacking Christian nations through migration and terrorism in order to achieve the aim of Islamisation. As Dassios (GR) puts it, immigrants from Islamic countries 'have come to our homeland to slaughter. We have to do something while we still can'.

It is important to recognise that there are also research participants, across the milieus, who do not see Islam as inherently preaching hostility and violence towards non-Muslims. A number of respondents in the German milieu reject the idea that there is any intrinsic link between Islam, violence or terrorism: 'I don't think that Islam is aggressive in general' (Julian, DE). Robbie (UK) refers to Muslims as generally 'a peaceful people' and that the issue is not the Qur'an but how you 'interpret it'. Arina (RU) is also sceptical about blaming Islam, as a religion, for terrorism: 'Maybe most terrorists are in Islam, but it seems to me that faith is not about that at all. The religion of Islam is not about that at all. In my opinion […] it's not about faith, it's about power' (Arina, RU).

The Left

In Germany and the UK, left-wing extremism is referred to frequently and mentioned also, although less often, by Dutch and French research participants. In the German study 11 respondents mentioned left-wing extremism spontaneously while in the UK eight participants did so and such reference was encountered also in a number of speeches, movement documents and informal conversations at demonstrations and meetings. In the German and UK cases, left-wing extremism is often discussed in the context of frustration at the perceived failure to acknowledge it. It is claimed that left-wing extremism is ignored by the authorities and police, not mentioned in schools when talking about extremism and not brought into counter extremism work. Alexander (DE) complains that left-wing extremism is given 'no public attention' – not being reported in the media or prosecuted by the police even when counter-demonstrators 'throw stones and other objects at the Right'. This is echoed by the experience of actors in the UK milieu:

> And there's radical on the Left that doesn't get mentioned. And they try and claim it's just the Right - it's not. The Left have it. Antifa are a group that are very violent. And I have seen Antifa, black masks, throwing stuff at me and that before. All black masks, throwing stuff at us on the veterans' demo. (Jason, UK)

For one Dutch respondent the word 'radical' makes him 'immediately think of the Left of course, with

those balaclavas and all that'. In the UK case, the use of balaclavas, masks or other face coverings by Antifa activists is frequently mentioned as an indication (in contrast to right-wing movements) of their intent on violence; 'They want to hurt you a lot more than you want to hurt them' (Robbie, UK).

Antifa is mentioned specifically by actors in the German, Dutch and UK milieus as the extremist element of 'the Left':

> I think of them [Antifa] as the Left's ISIS. I think this is the puritanical form of the Left. Because they're the extreme version of everything that you'll read in the Guardian or Vice or everything. They're like the extreme version. So Vice is like the moderate, and like Antifa are the extreme. And I see so many people justifying Antifa by saying, 'Well, they're anti-fascist, so we're all anti-fascist, so we support them.' And I'm thinking, 'No, you don't support that. You don't support hitting people. You don't support bricking...' (Alice, UK)

In the UK case, left-wing extremism is often perceived as one end of a continuum and facilitated by the 'mainstream' Left which engages in 'a form of brainwashing' (Alice, UK) that allows society to accept violence that would not be tolerated by other sections of society. This is reflected in the leaflet of a new city-based extreme right movement in the UK, distributed at its launch event, which refers to 'indoctrination' through left-wing educators as responsible for 'radicalisation' on the Left:

> Academic indoctrination: The vast majority of British teachers are on the leftist end of the political spectrum and their unconscious biases often result in the radicalisation of students. (Activists' information booklet, distributed at launch of movement, 22.09.2019, UK)

Alice also characterises Antifa as 'robots' programmed to simply stop others, including through physical violence, for thinking the wrong thing, which she believes makes them closer to a 'Nazi' mind set than those in the right wing movement. This common reference to the contemporary left-wing as being more 'fascist' than the right-wing among UK research participants is found also in the French case; 'the anti-fascists of today will be the fascists of tomorrow' (Christopher, FR).

Left-wing violence (individually targeted and collectively orchestrated or spontaneously occurring at counter demonstrations) is reported extensively in the UK case but also found in the German and Greek cases. A central event in the UK case study was the prosecution of a number of Generation Identity members (including one of the respondents in this case study) for violent disorder after Antifa activists targeted a conference organised by GI, 'wearing masks' and having 'travelled over thirty mile to track us down there' (Billy, UK). Both Alice (UK) and Uschi (DE) talk about experiencing and witnessing violence at the hands of Antifa activists: 'The leftists are really bad. They just hit everything. […] They don't look whether it is a man or a woman. Or if you're a civilian. They just hit you.' (Uschi, DE). Actors in the Greek milieu also reported attacks by 'leftists' and 'anarchists' against them during an organised campaign to promote their magazine on university campuses in Athens; in this case attacks are associated with hostility towards them as Orthodox believers primarily. However, among Greek respondents, in contrast to actors in the German, Dutch and UK cases, the Left are viewed not as newly radicalised but as traditionally associated with violence. Indeed, according to Vaggelis (GR), violence is culturally more associated with the Left than the Right in Greece: 'Beyond Golden Dawn, violence is an exclusive characteristic of the Left. Golden Dawn is the only exception. But they use the methods of the Left. The traditional methodology of the left-wingers.' (Vaggelis, GR).

In Malta, Poland and Russia, it should be noted, left-wing extremism is not mentioned spontaneously at all. Among Norwegian research participants, while Antifa is seen as 'relatively militant' (dressing in black and carrying baseball bats), they are viewed, historically, as into 'more stone throwing and less killing' than right-wing radicals (Gunnar, NO). While in Norway, counter protestors often outnumber protestors (see Plate 1), and, as indicated by the red and black flags include Antifa activists (see Plate 2), confrontation at political actions is minimised by police cordons separating demonstrators and

counterdemonstrators. In contrast to others in the UK milieu, Will (UK) also believes that while there are 'radical' left-wing groups active, violent left-wing extremism is not a current threat.

Plate 1: SIAN demonstration, Oslo, 06.04.2019

Plate 2: Counter protestors calling for 'SIAN out of Oslo', 06.04.2019

4.1.1.2 Contesting etic nomenclature of the Right: a grievance in itself

In all nine cases studied here, there was reference to the mislabelling of self, or the wider milieu, as extremist, radical or 'far' right. In some cases – especially that of the UK – this perceived misrepresentation is the main prism through which individuals talk about their ideological positions and there is extensive discussion of the stigmatisation and social consequences that ensue from such labelling. In Russia, this labelling as 'extremist' was less frequently mentioned than in other cases. Since there is little analytic value to detailing claims to unjustified labelling as 'extremist' in each milieu studied, in this section we focus on actors' interpretations of the implications of what they consider the false nomenclature applied to the Right. In this way, we seek to illuminate how dissonance between emic and etic understandings of extremism might inform individual trajectories towards and away from extremism as well as counter-extremism policy and practice.

For actors in the milieu studied, the first implication of 'false' labelling, is the undermining of the validity of concepts applied to them. In this sense, as Mikaël (FR) says, the term 'extremism' no longer signifies a particular positioning (attitudinal or behavioural) but becomes a 'semantic device to discredit people'. This is demonstrated with reference to the use of the term in relation to mainstream (or at least legally registered and electorally popular) parties and movements. Thus, one Norwegian respondent complains that even joining the Progress Party leads to people being 'judged and branded' Nazis (Nils, NO). German respondents also talk about the over-use of the term 'Nazi' and the tendency for 'extremism' to be used inappropriately:

> […] I get the feeling that 'Nazi' is used too much at the moment. […] if you say something bad against a foreigner, then you are often called a Nazi and this is not so, this is not a Nazi. A Nazi is much more extreme, much worse and I think it's similar with the two terms 'extremism' and 'radicalism.' That is too often […] used, when it is not yet the case. (Maurice, DE)

For French research participants, the false equations encountered are between 'conservatism' (a term ascribed to self) and 'fascism' (Gary, FR), 'racism' (Dean, FR) or 'radicalism' (John, FR). For Polish respondents, it is nationalism and fascism that are wrongly equated:

> Fascism and nationalism, so these are, in my opinion, antonyms. However, I have stopped worrying about people shouting things like that. At the start, it bothered me because every time I read something about a demonstration we organised or someone quoted my words in *Gazeta Wyborcza* and twisted them or commented in some other way, for example, it used to bother me, but now it doesn't. (ONRka, PL)

Paul (UK) also complains that all nationalists are branded extremists these days and, for upholding ideas that were seen as basic moral standards twenty to thirty years ago. The inequity of this, he says, is that 'A Muslim extremist is a Muslim that advocates violence or carries out violence. But a nationalist is always an extremist. There's not nationalists and nationalist extremists.' (Paul, UK).

A series of implications follow from this. First, there is a genuine dissonance between how respondents perceive themselves on the political spectrum and how they are viewed. The vast majority of actors in the milieus studied not only considered their views to be not 'far', 'extreme', or 'radical' right wing but saw themselves as in the 'centre', 'middle' or even 'pretty liberal'. Among UK research participants, Adam, who organises a grooming gangs awareness group, which is frequently labelled 'far right', for example, says that he thinks of himself and his group members as 'clap bang in the middle' in terms of the left/right spectrum while Will says his views have stayed pretty stable around a 'centre right to right' position. Nils (NO) finds the Nazi labelling he had experienced as incomprehensible, calling himself 'a liberalist' while one Dutch respondent considers all 'New Right' actors in the country essentially 'still liberal, because we are still Dutch' (3, NL). Most commonly, respondents positioned themselves as 'right wing' but strongly rejected the assumption that this made them, automatically, 'far right' or 'extreme right'. Within the UK milieu, a frequently borrowed expression to resist this equation deploys a play on words - 'I'm not far right, just right' (Johnny, UK) - to simultaneously make claims to moderation and truth.

The second implication is that the failure to recognise differentiation along the right-wing spectrum or equation of all expressions of nationalism or patriotism with extremism, 'fascism' or 'Nazism' is that the terms themselves may lose meaning. As Robbie (UK) puts it: 'If I'm far right, then you know, it's not an offensive word. It's become so loosely thrown around, that it's, there's no point even saying it now. […] I'm on the right, but I'm not far right.' Dutch respondents also talk about becoming resistant to the impact of labels attached to them which 'no longer have any meaning':

> I think that because so many specific words have come up over the years; you are a racist, you are a sexist, you are a Nazi, you are homophobic, that those words don't affect me anymore. A lot of people are still very afraid of being called something like that, but it doesn't affect me anymore, because they are words that don't mean anything to me anymore. They have been used so often that they no longer have any meaning. It used to be used in context, and it wasn't used that often. Now it is used for every little thing that a person on the Left disagrees with. (14, NL)

However, in the context of the acute awareness of participants about how they are 'labelled', this emptying of the term 'extremism' of meaning can be counterproductive; if they are labelled extremist anyway, they have nothing left to lose. Peter (DE) says that he has been called a 'Nazi' several times in his life and thinks that the designation as a Nazi has pushed many into more radical groups; 'If I'm already a Nazi, then I'll vote for the AfD' (Peter, DE). This is echoed by one of the Dutch research participants who says such terms become 'counterproductive' since by calling someone a Nazi, 'you don't really enable a conversation' (12, NL). Dan's (UK) reflection on this captures how conceptual stretching can back people, who already feel 'silenced', into corners from which they have no other place to go and little to lose:

Well extremists now, the word extremist is just, to me doesn't matter anymore. Because they're classing everyone as an extremist, you know what I mean. You've got... they class me, obviously, they'd probably class me as a right-wing extremist. Which is, which is pathetic, 'cause I'm not. But they are just throwing that word about now. It's like the racist word - it just doesn't mean nothing to me anymore. Someone calls me a racist, I couldn't give a flying fuck, to be fair. (Dan, UK)

Third, the indiscriminate application of the term extremist is seen as unjust and becomes a grievance in itself. Thus, like Dan, Christopher (FR) claims he does not 'give a fuck' about being labelled a 'fascist'. Rather, he is angered by 'the injustice' of it:

[…] if it's fascism to say that I see more veiled women than we used to see, then I'm a fascist. It's not the fear of being called a fascist, I don't give a fuck, but it's the injustice I can't stand […] when you express your ideas, even with the greatest diplomacy, we will call you a fascist because you don't have the same ideas as them. (Christopher, FR)

Some German respondents go further, arguing that the term 'Nazi' is applied not only inappropriately but used towards Germans by non-Germans in a racist way (Julian, Anne, Frederick, DE). In the Greek milieu, the claim that accusations of racism or extremism are in fact evidence of racism towards Greeks has been consciously worked into group ideology through the adoption of the slogan 'No to racism against the Greeks'[15]:

We are the ones who are called 'fascists' and 'neo-Nazis'. We, the fascists and the neo-Nazis, we have opened our houses to homeless Greek people to prevent them from freezing to death. This is the situation in Greece. There are Greeks who are homeless in 2018 and are looking in the rubbish for food. There are Greeks without electricity in their homes. There are people who do not have not even running water, the most important thing. Why isn't this racism? Isn't that racist? (Father Daniel, GR)

Finally, the wide application of terms extremist and radical allows milieu participants to depict those who deploy these labels as illogical whilst presenting their own views as rational and reasonable. Thus, Bobby (FR) dismisses his labelling as 'a radical' by wider society and calls himself 'clear-thinking'. Daniel (MT) also complains that 'They call someone like me extreme-right, but they're just labels' and describes the views of Normal Lowell (founder of Imperium Europa), who he follows, as often simply 'common sense'. Tommy Robinson is cited similarly frequently in the UK milieu as an exemplar of mis-labelling based on blind prejudice (rather than rational evaluation of his beliefs). As Johnny (UK) puts it 'people that call him far right don't listen to him' while Alice (UK) calls him 'not far-right. He's anti-extreme Islam'. Vaggelis (GR) also argues that his opposition to having 'many Muslims in our community' is not racist but 'reasonable':

[…] because we are afraid that our society will become Islamic. We also feel fear of possible terrorist strikes, the loss of our culture, alienation and decline of our values. All these fears are reasonable but you are characterised as racist if you have them even though you don't adopt the racist theory about superior and inferior races. (Vaggelis, GR)

Some research participants accept that they have some extreme or 'racist' views. Sauveur (FR) acknowledges that his views include 'a bit of racism' while Father Daniel (GR) accepts the characterisation of him and his fellow Golden Dawn supporters as nationalists, fascists and neo-Nazis. Indeed, the latter is proud to be called a nationalist: '[…] I prefer to be called a fascist, I prefer to be called a neo-Nazi than doing nothing for the sake of my country' (Father Daniel, GR). Fotis (GR) also

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[15] This slogan has been central to the rhetoric of Golden Dawn and was used to justify the party's organisation of food distribution, blood donation and job seeking services exclusively for Greek citizens.

says he does not care if others call him a fascist. A small number of milieu actors in the UK case study also recognise that their views are, at least in some respects, radical or controversial. This is particularly true of Jacob who is critical of others on the right for a lack of discipline (in relation to their lifestyles) and calls himself 'proper far right':

> [...] from what I can see from Mosley[16]'s lot, at least they, they had some discipline about them. They, right-wing activists now aren't really right wing. They're right wing in some, some of their thinking, but I mean, I, I can't securely put Tommy Robinson and his followers on the Right, because the arguments they use against Islamisation or Islam or Islamism, are all from the Left. They're all, 'Oh, well, you know, it's the oppression of women, the oppression of gays and homosexuals.' And it's just all anti-authoritarianism, and I don't think that's a right-wing position, so I'm not even sure there is a right-wing activist movement at all. (Jacob, UK)

In a more ironic appropriation of these labels, Tonya (UK), herself a wheelchair user, explains how she started to call herself a 'Nazi cripple':

> Well I coined it of myself, because people were calling me a Nazi. I was like, 'Yeah, a Nazi cripple. It makes complete sense. It's not like we were the first to be killed at all.' *[said ironically]* It just really made me giggle, because it... it just doesn't make... it's like a black person who goes and joins the KKK. It just doesn't work. (Tonya, UK)

Among respondents in the German milieu, there are even a small number who think the terms 'extremist' and 'radical' applied to the 'Right' are helpful because they express negativity towards groups you do not like (Ronja, DE) and educate people about different groups (Camilla, DE). Among UK research participants, this labelling is not seen as justified but it is sometimes seen as effective. Calling the application of the term 'far right extremists' to certain groups of activists, a 'scare tactic' used by the government, for example, Adam (UK) says it has effectively stopped him getting more active:

> [...] it's scare tactics really from the government. Because it's putting you in a situation that, 'Hold on, I agree with some of these people and what they're saying, not everything. But I do agree with some of their words,' so, but then when you've got the media and everyone calling them racists, far right or whatever, then it's scare tactics then. Because then, 'Hold on, if I get involved with these people, then I'm, I'm gonna be called racist, I'm gonna be called far right.' Even though most times they're not, but as soon as you go there, they're like, 'Well, woah, woah, what are you doing?' [...] So that's why we stay away. I'll support Tommy, I'll go to his demos, no problem with that, but with an online presence it's hard to really promote that. (Adam, UK)

4.1.1.3 Too extreme for me… Distinctions within the extreme right

Finally, we see a relational notion of extremism in evidence as milieu actors explain what extremism means to them by placing themselves in relation to others' views and actions they consider to be 'too extreme' or to be, genuinely, 'far right'. As discussed in Section 3.4.6, in some cases, these encounters with those considered 'too extreme' are a key factor in shaping trajectories away from the movement, or at least its more radical elements.

When describing what is beyond acceptable by reference to movements or parties within the broader right-wing milieu, it is movements, ideas and individuals associated with 'Nazis' or 'neo-Nazism' which are most frequently cited:

> Nazism. Neo-Nazism. Nazi like, that's extreme in my opinion. Just you know, when you're willing to align yourself with someone who, a group that killed, you know, six and a half

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[16] This refers to Oswald Mosely, leader of the British Union of Fascists (1932-1940) and Union Movement (1948-1980).

million people, innocent people. And you know, however many more, because that's all that we know about. There's probably millions more that we don't. I mean, there's incidences all over the place where you know, they just shot people in the head and just buried them in mass graves. And that happened all across, you know, all across Europe really, so if they want to align themselves with those groups, then they are extremist. They're not welcome; they're not welcome in any country, any state, you know. Just, you know, just sooner we get rid of neo-Nazis, the better. (Jermaine, UK)

Hanna (DE) also says she associates terms such as 'radical' and 'extremist' with 'aggressive neo-Nazis' while Steven (DE) says, you become a 'right-wing radical' if you take this 'Nazi line'.

For some research participants, it is racism or white supremacism which marks out the extremist groups and views. Talking about the Nordic Resistance Movement, Anita (NO) explains her lack of support for them by the fact that 'they are concerned with race and that they want to keep Scandinavia white and that is not my concern at all! Because I feel that they have crossed a line. That is definitely to cross a line.' A Dutch research participant also primarily associates extremism with the use of violence, which, on the Right, is associated with 'White Supremacists' (16, NL). For Steven (DE) someone is 'right-wing radical' if they have hatred for all foreigners, are xenophobic and 'against everything and everyone'. While Steven (DE) distinguishes between 'right-wing' and 'right-wing radical' based on the willingness to use violence to achieve their goal of 'foreigners out', Johnny (UK) considers racially defined immigration restrictions as racist and extreme, regardless of how they are enforced: 'Extremism is where they say […] they don't want anybody that's not Christian or they don't... anyone that's a different colour or anyone that they think might be a problem is not allowed any more' (Johnny, UK). Cara (UK) says she views British National Party material as 'racist' and would avoid using it while Adam (UK) describes 'being racist to communities' as 'radical' and feels both Britain First and the English Defence League go too far in that they go about 'shouting race, shouting religion and things'. The movement most routinely described as 'too extreme' among UK participants is the proscribed group National Action, which is extreme, as Jermaine (UK) explains, both because 'they have a lot of neo-Nazis in them' and because 'they want violence'.

For one French milieu actor, it is anti-Semitism that is a step too far: 'I don't mind that Adolf Hitler took over Germany, but the genocide of the Jews, well... […] I'm not anti-Semitic, so it bothers me a bit' (John, FR). Dan (UK) considers the identitarian movement Generation Identity to be 'too extreme' because it is not only anti-Islam but anti-Semitic (Field diary, 18.03.2018, UK). While Alice (UK) was initially attracted to the alt-right but 'didn't get' their anti-Semitism.

Religion features as a protective factor in the narratives of Greek milieu members amongst whom there was widespread denial of extremism within Orthodox movements (Kimonas, GR). Extremist views are said, by some, to be found only among non-believers. For Jacob (GR), for example, 'fanatics' are those who follow patriotic groups without consciously believing in God. Those who 'attack refugees trying to make a living, going to work', he says, are 'militarists who say that they believe in God but have no real relationship with God'. For him, 'Zeal without awareness. That's where fanaticism emerges' (Jacob, GR).

Finally, a number of research participants among the UK milieu recognise and discuss the potential for 'radicalisation' within right wing milieus. Although in general respondents think that there are not 'many radicals on the Right' (Cara, UK), Paul (UK), sees groups like National Action as attempting to radicalise young people and should be stopped from doing so by others in the milieu. Dan (UK) has personally experienced attempts to radicalise him by neo-Nazis online and expresses concern that attacks like the one against those attending the mosque at Finsbury Park might spark others to engage in terrorism.

4.1.2 Extremism and the role of violence

In a study of young Muslim activists in the Danish city of Aarhus, Kühle and Lindekilde (2012) found that the etic understanding of this friendship-based milieu as 'radical' failed to recognise important distinctions within the young people's everyday discourse. For example, in relation to views on the legitimate use of violence, they argue, etic definitions of radicalisation conflate a central emic distinction between a sense of injustice about the occupation of Muslim territories and the support for the indiscriminate killing of civilians in the West (ibid.: 1613). They do this by failing to give due weight to the contextual circumstances of supportive judgments of radical/extremist beliefs and actions expressed in the milieu (ibid.). This highlights the way the investigation of emic understandings of radicalism, extremism etc. can illuminate a key conundrum in the study of violent extremism, namely the relationship between ideas or attitudes and behaviours. The increasing inclusion of ideas as well as behaviour into notions of 'extremism' (Kruglanski and Orehek, 2012: 12 – see Section 1.1) in etic categorisations creates a form of equivalence between the two when, in fact, only a small proportion of those who hold radical, or even extreme, ideas go on to commit acts of violence and not even all of those who engage in violent behaviour have radical beliefs (Horgan, 2012; see also McCauley and Moskalenko, 2017: 211).

This synthesis of findings from the nine case studies of RWE milieus conducted gives important insight into how milieu actors understand the relationship between 'ideas' and 'actions'. It broadly supports McCauley and Moskalenko's (2017: 211) conclusion that there is only a 'weak relation between attitude and behavior' leading them to develop a 'two pyramids' model which charts separate pathways of radicalisation of 'opinion' on the one hand and 'action' on the other (see Section 1.1 and footnote 5). We first outline how the use of, or support for, violence as a means to bring about change appears in research participants' narratives as the most widely held marker of passage across the threshold into extremism. We then consider how this apparently sharp distinction between the legitimation of freedom of thought and expression alongside the sanction of violence is blurred when milieu actors reflect on what might constitute extremism but fall short of violence. Across most cases, this seems to be captured by the notion of 'imposing' ideas on others. Finally, we reflect briefly on the circumstances in which actors consider violence might be acceptable, in theory, and when it materialises, in practice.

Throughout this section, the terms 'extremism' and 'radicalism' are used largely interchangeably (i.e. as used by the interviewees). In the final section, we look at whether, and how, milieu actors distinguish between these notions.

4.1.2.1 Extremism is the use of (or support for) violence

Across the milieus, the use of, or support for, violence is the most uniformly cited marker of extremism or radicalism. Alexander (DE) believes his views align with 'the vast majority' when he sees radicalism as negative and associates the word with 'exercising violence'. For research participants from Malta also, 'extremism' is where 'you don't just believe in something, 'you take it to the next level' (Fiona, MT). For both Fiona and Alyssa (MT) this next level involves not just discriminating against immigrants but being violent towards them (they refer to abusing or even killing them). This is echoed by Mikey (UK) who describes radicalisation as 'where you take it to the next level instead of just opposing something or disagreeing with something. You then actively seek out to persecute or even kill people of an opposing ideal' (Mikey, UK). 'Radicalism' for John (FR) would be 'to relaunch the armed struggle' - to go out on the street every day beating up the CRS (riot police) as well as 'French people who refuse to recognise the Corsican people'. Extremism, for Dutch milieu actors is characterised as 'wanting to use violence' (12, NL) or 'using violence towards people who think differently' (2, NL). Among UK actors in the milieu, there is widespread agreement that violence constitutes the threshold into extremism. Gareth (UK) draws this line simply as that you should be able to say what you want but to 'throw a brick at someone because he has a different point of view to yours' is wrong.

It follows that actors in the milieus studied mainly seek to dissociate themselves from violence; 'to distance myself from that' as Alexander (DE) puts it. Kostya (RU) describes extremism as 'unhealthy'; a form of direction-less militancy, expressed in believing anyone 'not like you' 'should be suppressed'. Violence is rejected usually on moral grounds ('it is just wrong') although sometimes more strategic considerations are invoked such as wanting to avoid negative representations of the movement and because the use of violence tends to backfire (and not achieve anything). For whatever reason, right-wing terrorism is condemned. In the context of the discussion of the plot to kill an MP and a police officer by Jack Renshaw (of National Action), for example, Dan (UK), says, 'You can't defend a terrorist. Doesn't matter if he's on the right or left, does it, he's a terrorist. He's planning terrorist acts, so...'. Dan goes on to pass the same judgment of those who justify terrorism, saying, 'people who defend them then, they're the same, aren't they?'

When extremism that falls short of violence is discussed, the lines become more blurred as milieu actors reflect on what might constitute 'extremism' that does not involve physical violence or acts of terrorism. While, not all views are captured by this concept, it emerged in a number of milieus that actors understood extremism to be enacted when people sort to impose their views even if they used means short of violence to do so. Thus, for Michael (DE), an extremist is someone who insists on his opinion, is not open and receptive to other opinions and tries to enforce their own ideas by any means, while Frederick (DE) says:

> I think it's extremist when people try to impose their views on you without caring about the consequences. Not giving a shit if someone gets hurt or killed or worse. The main thing is to get your point across. I think that's extremist. (Frederick, DE)

Among Greek respondents too, 'radical' was explained as not just 'showing that you believe in something but trying to get everyone else to, to follow what you are following' (George, GR). Paul (UK), directly contradicting Berger's (2018: 30) etic definition of extremism as 'a belief system' says extremism is not about opinions or the substance of opinions but how you 'try to bring that belief system into the real world':

> […] an extremist is somebody who holds opinions, regardless of those opinions... opinions aren't extremism. But they try to bring about their opinions, and they try to express their opinions through violence, through terror. So you can be somebody who believes in multiculturalism. But if you go around stabbing people who don't, you are an extremist. You can believe in an absolute Islamic caliphate. That's not really extremism. Extremism is going out and blowing somewhere up, because you believe in the caliphate. I can believe in, you know, you can have people who believe in the Third Reich or Adolf Hitler. Now that's not extremism until you start attacking people and imposing your will on others. And extremism isn't a belief system, it is how you try to bring that belief system into the real world […] extreme ideas and extremism are different […] And this is the big problem. They are trying to brand ideas as extreme. (Paul, UK)

Across the UK milieu, there is broad consensus that extremism is about behaviours or consequences of those behaviours not ideas. In this sense, extremist 'action' is separated from extremist 'ideas'. Gareth, for example, says that what is considered beyond the pale must always relate to behaviour; people should have the right to any idea and be able to say it, otherwise 'we're policing thought'. Anita (NO) argues that using violence to influence political debate is a threat to freedom of speech because it seeks simply 'to frighten someone into silence'.

The issue of free speech has been extensively instrumentalised by movements of the Right who call for equal right to speak regardless of extant deliberative inequalities (Titley, 2019: 152) and largely reject the implementation of hate speech legislation. Gareth (UK) exemplifies this position, believing that the biggest threat to society currently is the erosion of 'free speech', complaining that this leads to 'censorship, censorship, censorship, and no dialogue's being created from it'. However, other research participants understand extremism or radicalism to include the expression of verbal or

symbolic violence. For example, Maurice (DE) does not associate 'radicalism' with those who '*think [our emphasis]* that certain groups should get out of Germany' but if they 'walk around with signs saying […] "Foreigners out"', they cross the line since this constitutes verbal aggression and impacts on the human dignity of those targeted. While not designating the act 'extremist', Billy (UK) also states his disapproval of a campaign in which the homes of immigrants were leafleted: 'It's not right to go and intimidate people in their houses and whatever. People have kids and stuff...' (Billy, UK).

Exceptions to the dominant view that ideas, without action, cannot constitute extremism include Gary (FR), who believes conspiracy theories can be considered extremism: '[…] to say "the Jews were never gassed", that's not true, that's total delirium, that's radicalisation, that's indoctrination and that's brainwashing. This is political extremism. Conspiracy in general is extremism, it's radicalisation. (Gary, FR). Will (UK) also believes that if violence is implicit in the views held then this constitutes extremism: '[…] if you're a neo-Nazi and you believe that there's going to be a war between the difference races […] there is no like peaceful way that's going to happen. You're counting on a civil war for what you want to happen to actually happen - bloodshed and murder […]' (Will, UK)

4.1.2.2 Violence: in theory and practice

As noted above, research participants largely reject violence. Respondents from Norway suggest that violence is only acceptable in direct self-defence (not abstract defence from 'Islam' or 'Muslims' in general). This is mirrored in the UK milieu where violence is seen as justifiable only in order to protect oneself, one's family or those weak and in need of protection. The only other situations in which it was stated that violence would be acceptable would be if the country were at war, or if you were fighting terrorism).

However, the rejection of violence in principle does not mean that violence is absent from the milieus, especially where that violence is not associated by research participants with violent extremism. For example, Gary (FR) does not consider violence associated with the 'Yellow vests' movement, where violence emerges spontaneously as 'the result of anger', to be 'radical'. If these people had been 'really radical', Gary (FR) says, 'they would have gone to a ministry at 5 o'clock in the morning, to a ministry where the minister resides, and they would have gone to put a bullet in his head'. Lee (UK), who had served three prison sentences for violent disorder related to his extreme-right activism also dissociates fighting and politics. He explains his involvement in violence at demonstrations and protests as replacing the 'buzz' he had got from fighting as a teenager rather than politically motivated: 'I weren't into political side of it; I was there for scrap and that' (Lee, UK). Similarly, Dutch Respondent 2, together with other RWE activists, targeted leftist groups 'not out of ideological motives' but rather 'for a kick, the adrenaline, fighting for the fighting.' This respondent also participated in street fights against soccer hooligan groups that included young people with an immigrant background.

There are examples in a number of milieus (Norway, Poland and the UK) where violence is part of ritualised activity that is enjoyed, but in contexts outside of political activism. The usual context of this is football hooliganism in which milieu actors also participate. Robbie (UK), for example, does not get involved in violence in relation to political activism but had attended football with his Dad from childhood and, as soon as he was old enough to attend the football with his own friends, got into 'casual'[17] culture and fighting. He describes football fighting - both pre-planned and chance encounters - as 'a big buzz' and, unable to communicate why it is fun, repeats 'the saying' that 'for those who were there no explanation is necessary. For those who aren't, no explanation is possible'. Paolo (UK) is in the same movement as Robbie and also regularly engages in football violence. However, he does not take pleasure in fighting but values the respect he gains from it. Paolo, repeatedly references that he is small, in height, and, especially when younger, got badly hurt when he fought; through fighting he turns this physical disadvantage into a marker of courage by being the one who, nonetheless, is always 'up' for a fight. While this suggests a clear link between fighting and

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[17] Casual culture revolves around a combination of football hooliganism and designer wear.

the forging of a working masculine identity, being 'ready to fight' is present in the narratives of female activists too. Tina (NO), who is involved in martial arts, says she 'loves violence' and explains her enjoyment of martial arts as 'because I enjoy winning a battle, to win in a fight, sort of…I feel it is really lovely'. Among Polish milieu actors, all football fans, Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) is also highly popular as it helps prepare them for hand-to-hand combat with hostile fans. Such combat is seen as proof of courage and strong masculinity and the principle that one should never retreat shrouds these clashes with the mythology of war. Most of the fan associations have their own trained militias that are ready to take part in 'forest fights' (*ustawki*):

> There is this unwritten contract between the fans that the fights are unarmed. Cracovia and Wisła Krakow fans break this rule, they swing at each other with machetes, axes, and baseball bats. When we arranged fights in the woods, there was, for example, an agreement that someone would pull the handbrake on the train and the fans would get off where we were to meet. Is the number of fighters predetermined? It happens, but often only Teddy Boys 95 go. In Russia there was this situation where a meeting was set up in the forest, and Legia and Bielsko fans came from Poland. Legia sent a weak crew and people say they ran away into the woods. Bielsko did better, but the lads came back with broken arms and legs. Those guys were stomping on their heads. (Panufcy, PL)

Thus, in the Polish milieu, individuals might be characterised as 'radical supporters' based not on their political views but because they have crossed the threshold into physical violence. Finally, it is worth noting how Mirra (a female football fan from the Polish case study) echoes Tina's implicit connection between physical and rhetorical 'fighting':

> If someone really […] wants to fight for his or her ideas, then sometimes there's violence in all that, and not just of the physical kind, really. It's not just about beating someone up, but also about this violence, this very psychological violence, that you have to hammer your point home, and the other side doesn't necessarily need to like that. (Mirra, PL)

Violence is not universal in this milieu, however. For Sandra (PL), for example, 'those who hit others, behave wrongly' while true fans 'are normal people who love their club'.

Finally, it is important to note that the Greek and Russian milieus provide clear exceptions to the wider consensus about the illegitimacy of political violence. Among research participants in the Greek case, there is widespread acceptance of violence. There is a strong militarisation of the movement and a stated readiness 'to shed our blood for our fatherland, our religion and our relatives' (Father Gabriel, GR). Thomas, who leads a Greek-Orthodox armed paramilitary group believes civil war - between those who defend national values and 'internationalists' who defend immigrants - is imminent and he is preparing and training his members for armed clashes with immigrants, who he sees as ready to attack the Greeks (Field diary, GR). There is a more or less explicit 'acceptance' of these activities and in some cases cooperation - e.g. during natural disasters - with these groups by the police and other authorities (Field diary, GR). Both the militarisation of the movement and the close, if sometimes fraught, relationship with the police and other state authorities is found also in the Russian milieu of young Cossacks. In the Russian case, research participants often justify the use of violence against certain social groups - especially political opposition to the government, migrants, LGBT+ people and feminists - who they see as threatening to the current social order and political regime. As Alexander (RU) puts it, 'I believe that appropriate physical action can be applied against private citizens if you see a direct threat. […] a threat to the Fatherland'. This violence might take place during Cossack participation in the dispersal of oppositional protests or raids conducted in collaboration with the police on places where drugs are sold or consumed. Militarisation of the movement also takes a direct form in the participation of research participants in military action in eastern Ukraine following the outbreak of hostilities between separatist movements in Donetsk and Lugansk (supported by the Russian military and Russian volunteers) and Ukrainian armed forces in the wake of Russia's

annexation of Crimea (March 2014). The conflict in Ukraine had led some research participants such as Alexey to accept the 'call' to fight directly in the Donbass; an act he felt was justified since 'the truth was on our side' (Alexey, RU). In other cases, the conflict simply served as a key issue of discussion and motivation for conducting military training and encouraging a wider militarisation of society.

4.1.3 Radicalism vs extremism

In the literature on radicalisation, an important distinction is drawn between (violent) extremism - seen as the end point of radicalisation - and radicalism, which is understood as the active support for fundamental - system-changing - political change employing extra-institutional means (Beck, 2015: 18-20). Although radicals, like extremists, may or may not engage in political violence, their rejection of the status quo is generally viewed as non-problematic (Schmid, 2013: 9; Bartlett and Miller, 2012: 2). Schmid's (2013: 9-10) distinction between 'radicals' and 'extremists' is based on his understanding of their fundamentally different personality traits and social orientation. He describes 'radicals' as open-minded, accepting of diversity and believing in the power of reason rather than dogma while characterising 'extremists' as closed-minded and seeking to create a homogeneous society based on rigid, dogmatic ideological tenets, which suppresses all opposition and subjugates minorities (ibid.). In the context of democratic societies, he says, (violent) extremist groups, movements and parties tend to have a political programme that is: anti-constitutional, anti-democratic, anti-pluralist, authoritarian; fanatical, intolerant, non-compromising, single-minded; rejecting the rule of law while adhering to an ends-justify-means philosophy; and aiming to realise their goals by any means, including the use of political violence against opponents (ibid.). While we cannot consider the findings in relation to all these characteristics (which often relate to ideology or wider world outlooks), below, we explore whether in emic discourse, a distinction is made between 'radicalism' and 'extremism' and, if so, in what that distinction consists.

4.1.3.1 Radicalism as distinct from extremism

Across a number of milieus, actors recognise a distinction between 'radicalism' and 'extremism. When defining radicalism, actors often draw on its etymological origins to explain the concept means 'going back to the roots' (Mikaël, FR). This connection with 'roots' is, for Alex (MT), why, in some contexts, being radical may be positive:

> Radical, I think comes from the Italian '*dalle radici*', at the roots, so a lot of people – their perspective is that being radical is not good but it depends. Being radical, you are rooted, you know what you want. I don't think it is connected to violence or right-wing groups. It means being straight to the point, maybe not politically correct in the way you explain yourself. (Alex, MT)

Samuel (MT) also notes that 'radical has a negative connotation to it' but 'in reality when we say radical you're going to the roots of the issue'.

For research participants in the Greek case study, radicalism is associated with the pursuit of profound change in the existing order but with the aim of creating something 'new'. For Kostas (GR), radicalism is 'any kind of ideology or movement which is inspired by old or new ideas and is characterised by a tendency to change the existing order of things and bring about something new'. This understanding reflects a wider invocation of palingenetic[18] ideologies (Griffin, 1991). Vaggelis (GR) illustrates this, citing both 'the Nazis' and 'the Communists' as examples of 'radicals' who 'wanted to change the status quo of Europe'. However, while such a break with the status quo is viewed as necessary by these Greek respondents, Takis (GR) views the uprooting implied in radicalism as 'very negative':

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[18] This refers to the myth of national rebirth which Roger Griffin posits as lying at the core of fascism (see: Griffin, 1991: 26).

> The thing is that the roots provide direction, they exist for a reason. The roots are essential for a plant to grow. That is, the roots are part of the plant in the ground, they are not visible, but it is what keeps the plant alive. So being radical or moving away from your roots is the pure meaning of the word. For this reason it sounds to me very negative. (Takis, GR)

This reflection captures the tension within extreme right milieus between traditionalist or conservative ideologies and those looking to construct a new order.

For many research participants, however, the terms 'radicalism' and 'extremism' are used interchangeably. Four respondents in the German case study do not differentiate between the two concepts, while Mona (DE) considers 'radical' and 'extreme' as 'the same thing'. In the French case study, the term 'radicalism' is used rather than 'extremism' while among Polish participants radicalism and extremism are largely equated. In the UK case study, with the exception of one respondent (see below), milieu actors largely understood 'radical' as a synonym for 'extreme' and both to be attributes attached to actors on the Right to de-legitimise their ideas and close down the space for their expression.

4.1.3.2 Radicalism as extremism without the violence

When reflecting on what constitutes the difference between radicalism and extremism, across the milieus studied here, radicalism was understood as relating to ideas or beliefs rather than actions. A number of Dutch research participants talked in this way, suggesting that 'radical' relates to 'ideas' while 'extreme' relates to 'executing' those ideas (14, NL) or 'practising those things' (7, NL). Five participants in the German milieu also expressed this understanding including Lena (DE) who thought the term 'right-wing radical' is 'a bit weaker' than 'right-wing extreme'. Similarly, Will (UK) argues that 'radical is you believe something outside of what is normal. Extreme is something that if it was implemented it would destroy. […] I would limit extremism to [something that] would involve a violent destruction.' (Will, UK).

Alexander (DE) specifically associates extremism with 'greater violence' than radicalism. This is mirrored by a Dutch respondent (16, NL) who thinks 'Radicalism may be very much involved in a particular ideology and extremism may be the willingness for violence that goes with it'. Another Dutch respondent expresses this as the difference between 'passive' (radicalism) and 'active' resistance (extremism) where the latter means being 'willing to apply violence to people who think differently' (19, NL). Vaggelis (GR) sees the extremist as 'a particular type of radical person', who not only 'wants to implement changes immediately' but 'is willing to use violence in order to achieve this'. Thus while violence could be an aspect of radicalism, 'in extremism there is always violence' (Vaggelis, GR). The same distinction between radicalism and extremism in relation to the presence of physical violence is made by Russian research participants:

> Extremism is just the physical embodiment of radicalism. You can be a radical, a radical in art; you can be a radical somewhere else. You can only be an extremist with a gun in your hands. These are different concepts. (Alexandr, RU)

There are exceptions to this understanding, however. George (MT) understands 'radical' to suggest something that is '*more* aggressive' than something described as 'extreme' while a Dutch respondent thinks about a 'radical' as someone who 'undertakes radical activities' and 'is radical with me with violence' (6, NL). In direct contrast to Schmid's (2013) association of radicalism with 'open-mindedness' (as opposed to the intolerance and closed-mindedness of extremists), moreover, another Dutch respondent notes 'Radicalism, as far as I am concerned, is the lack of the ability or need to listen to a different point of view' (8, NL).

4.1.3.3 Radicalism as a positive force

Some actors in some milieus differentiate radicalism from extremism sufficiently to see it as a positive force. Karen (MT) believes 'radical' can have a positive meaning in that it suggests that views are

changing and engagement with radical views can open one's mind to different perspectives. Will (UK) goes as far as stating that he might consider himself 'radical' (although not 'extreme'). Choosing his words carefully, he states 'I didn't say I wasn't radical. I did say I wasn't extreme' (Will, UK). Will's definition of a radical opinion is 'one that's not mainstream in present days' and resonates strongly with Beck's (2015: 18) understanding of radicalism as a 'contention that is outside the common routines of politics present within a society oriented towards substantial change in social, cultural, economic, and/or political structures, and undertaken by any actor using extra-institutional means'. Applying the same logic, Will considers that, today, 'being a traditional conservative is quite radical, in the present sense, because you're at odds with the mainstreams of society' and sets his own aim as being to fundamentally shift hegemonic discourse.

Steven (DE) sees radicalism as potentially a good thing but only in difficult circumstances while Michael (DE) sees it as positive only if it does not involve violence:

> So being radical, now without the intention of violence, it's an attitude for me. [...] So for me it's also, uh, someone who has right ideas or who thinks against the system or who has a problem with something. That is an opinion for me. [...] Nobody should be beaten up for that. For me, this has something positive. And the positive thing is of course that they are at least thinking about something. And I think that's quite good. It's better than sitting at home on the couch and watching movies. (Michael, DE)

In the specific context of support for one's football club, respondents in the Polish milieu view being a 'fanatical' or 'radical' fan as positive since it means 'a person is able to sacrifice the most valuable thing in his life, i.e. his life, right? For that idea' (Wacek, PL). In a similar way, research participants in the Russian case study, suggest (unlike extremism) radicalism can be positive, when it is based on those ideas and attitudes shared by the group.

4.1.4 Summary

In this section, we have identified how key terms such as 'extremism', 'radicalism' and 'terrorism' are understood within the milieus studied. The aim has been not to counterpose etic understandings of extremism with an 'insider' (and more authentic) view but to recognise the ongoing, reflexive, engagement between etic and emic representations and understandings of 'extremism' and 'right-wing extremist' and the 'scripts of denial' (Titley, 2019: 33) that filter both. Nonetheless, we contend, exploring how these concepts are understood by actors in radical(ising) milieus brings important insights.

Etic perspectives are articulated and largely upheld by respondents in these milieus in relation to terrorism; this confirms the distinctive place of 'terrorism' in the discourse arising from both the use of violence and the separation of the target for political action (governments, institutional powers) and victims (often civilian bystanders). Etic perspectives are also confirmed in as much as (violent) extremism is strongly associated by milieu actors with Islamist terrorism. However, extremism is seen as being applicable across the ideological spectrum and in more than half the milieus, left-wing extremism was spontaneously mentioned and, in some national contexts, seen to be a major (but largely ignored) phenomenon. Extremism on the Right is acknowledged but self and own organisations are, in most cases, dissociated from the 'far right' or 'extremist' elements on the Right, which are condemned. Moreover, there is a strong belief across all milieus that groups and individuals on the Right are mislabelled 'extremist' or 'radical' and that this labelling is disproportionately attached to right-wing activists. This is attributed variously to the state, the media, academia, the public or the police and becomes a grievance in itself and, potentially, undermines the drawing of distinctions (red lines) along the right-wing continuum. This is expressed in opinions that 'extreme right' has become an empty signifier and that its application to those in the milieus studied works only to back people into a corner where they might as well become more radical since are already labelled as such.

In demonstrating their non-association with 'extremism', research participants across the milieus primarily refer to extremism as characterised by the willingness to engage in violence; something that the vast majority of them are not prepared to do. Some also consider actions short of violence to constitute extremism, often characterising this as the imposition of ideas. However, they continue to defend 'free speech' and the importance of distinguishing between 'ideas' and 'actions' (or the consequences of actions) in defining extremism. Finally, some research participants distinguish between 'radicalism' and 'extremism' in a similar way - seeing radicalism as seeking fundamental (at the roots) change of the status quo while 'extremism' is considered to require the employment of violence to this end. This means that some see that 'radicalism' could have a positive connotation, while extremism never has. Others, however, use the two terms largely interchangeably and denounce both.

While it may not be surprising that actors in these milieus largely distance themselves from the 'labels' of 'extremism', the findings in relation to violence, in particular, provide some empirical confirmation of McCauley and Moskalenko's (2017: 211) argument that there are separate pathways of radicalisation of 'opinion' on the one hand and 'action' on the other. While violence is found in some of the milieus studied, it is identified either in movements with dedicated paramilitary groups or militarised practices or it is present, as part of associated rituals (mainly related to football or intra-neighbourhood tensions) and dissociated by actors from their political ideology. This has important implications for efforts to prevent and counter extremism since it may lead to the diversion of attention to those inaccurately identified as on a trajectory to violent extremism whilst failing to recognise, and mobilise the agency of, those who act in radical milieus but practise strategies of non-radicalisation or maintain open-minded engagements with the world and whose experience could inform and enhance CVE practice.

4.2 Encounters with radical(ising) messages: sites, sources and responses

The DARE project studies 'radicalisation' not from the end-point backwards – recognising radicalisation as a process only when it ends in violent extremism – but as consisting of multiple encounters and responses to radical(ising) messages. This premise underpins its focus on particular radical(ising) milieus as sites of the circulation of such messages in order to explore, close-up, how those messages are encountered and how young people respond to them. This, it was envisaged, would inform our understanding of how trajectories of both radicalisation and non-radicalisation materialise.

In this section of the report, we explore the sites and sources of encounters with radicalising messages across the nine milieus as well as the importance of the context of those encounters in shaping how young people respond to them. The concepts elicited might be broadly divided between encounters with radicalising messages online and encounters through offline social relationships. There is growing public concern about the online space as a site for the quick and easy dissemination of extremist material with relatively few legal or social consequences for either producers or consumers (Rieger et al., 2013: 8; Saltman and Russell, 2014: 10). The way in which digital media is now channelled to particular audiences through algorithms applied by social media platforms, moreover, means that social media users are likely to be exposed to those messages in which they have shown previous interest. This potentially creates so-called 'echo chambers' or 'filter bubbles' (Flaxman et al., 2016; Polonski, 2016) which have the effect of confirming prejudice and introducing individuals to more extreme messages, which can shape a trajectory of radicalisation. However, this process does not happen in a vacuum. Online engagement is also embedded in social relationships - from simple 'liking' of posts or materials through sharing, and sometimes commenting on those materials, to making direct approaches to individuals whose posts they have liked and making physical contact and friendships with them. Thus, the Internet does not 'radicalise' people. It is not a one-way broadcast or propaganda medium, but a space of social interaction which resonates with 'everyday youth online

culture' (Conway, 2017: 80-86). It acts as a communicative space and social infrastructure in which ideology is engaged with and a sense of community is formed within radical groups (Rieger et al., 2013: 18) that serves to 'strengthen commitment to the radical ideology' (Koehler, 2014: 122). This process is not one of ideological indoctrination but steeped in both positive and negative emotional experiences - excitement, satisfaction or laughter, as the 'like-minded' are identified and drawn into communication, but also disgust or anger at materials shared or hurt caused by hostile responses to one's own posts - constituting 'a medium of "networked intimacy"' (McDonald, 2018: 15). This is reflected in the analysis presented below, which includes not only an exploration of how online and offline encounters with radical messages are intertwined but also the deeply ambivalent engagement with online spaces found among milieu actors.

The analysis also demonstrates that offline social relationships continue to play an important role in the participation of individuals in right-wing milieus. The key sites of offline encounter with radical messages in the milieus studied were family members, friends and acquaintances and within the milieu or movements in which actors were involved. While this synthesis report does not attempt to provide a holistic analysis of family backgrounds, peer group relationships or the often rapidly changing internal dynamics of the milieus, it does offer insight into the ways in which all three sites of offline relationships work to introduce or legitimise radical attitudes or behaviours but also to 'keep a lid on' extremism by guiding those potentially vulnerable to radicalisation away from more extreme groups or ideas. The role of these factors in shaping the trajectories of milieu actors are noted in this section but explored in detail in Section 3.4.

Research participants were invited to talk about their encounters with radical(isng) messages[19] and thus the findings reported reflect their understandings of what is radical or extreme (see Section 3.1). Thus, what is considered radical varies both between and within milieus. In the German milieu, for example, responses varied according to the different Marksmen's clubs to which the participants belonged while in the UK case, they varied according to movements in which individuals participated and from individual to individual. This means that, in some cases, research participants might cite other research participants as sources of encounter with radical or extremist messages within the milieu, while those cited do not see themselves as 'radical'. Thus, 'radical' is used as a relative concept here and *radical(ising)* messages are understood to be those that are more radical than the research participant at the given moment rather than those with a particular content e.g. calls to violence or support for violence. This means that, in some cases, messages that might ordinarily be considered 'extreme' are not referenced as such by research participants. This is especially the case where (as in the UK milieu) there is strong ideological resistance to what is seen as a culture of 'being offended', which leads research participants to be reluctant to view messages that others might find 'offensive' as 'radical' or 'extreme'. At the same time, references to parties and movements that are widely referred to as extremist or radical within a milieu (e.g. 'Nazis', see Section 3.1.1.3) are also identified as encounters with radical(ising) messages.

Finally, the degree to which online and offline encounters feature in respondent narratives is highly dependent on the nature of the milieus studied in each country. In the Maltese case, for example, many research participants were active in online forums and became interested in movements and key influencers through social media engagement. In contrast, in the Greek Orthodox nationalist milieu, some of whose members are involved in paramilitary activities, there was relatively little discussion of online activity. In most cases, the studies were conceived as traditional, offline ethnographies but found that almost all actors in the milieus were also engaged online.

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[19] Only references to encounters with radical materials on the right wing, not encounters with extremist materials of other kinds (left-wing, 'Islamist') are analysed unless respondents note directly that such material had an impact on them in a radicalising direction.

4.2.1 Trust and truth in an era of 'information terrorism'

Across the milieus studied, online spaces are sites for active information seeking prompted by an almost universal sense that traditional media sources are, at best, insufficient or, at worst, untrustworthy. Thus, despite significant scepticism and wariness about the use of social media among milieu actors, the online space remains a site of (relative) trust and truth.

Across the milieus, information is highly valued and what is disseminated by 'mainstream' media are the object of persistent and fundamental criticism. At one level, this criticism relates to perceived 'bias' or 'untrustworthiness' of media outlets and journalists. In the UK, the BBC is the primary target, being accused of bias in what it chooses to cover and not to cover and in how it covers it. However, it is also about what is perceived as a deep state control of media outlets. Alex (MT) criticises what he calls the 'duopoly' in Malta not only in politics but also in the media. By this he means control of TV and radio stations by the two main parties, which is '24/7 bombarding us with their own propaganda' (Alex, MT). The degree of consensus on this political control of the media from countries with widely differing political constellations in terms of the reach of the state is striking. Thus, Russian participants are highly critical of the media in what they call an era of 'information terrorism' (Dima, RU) while among UK participants, mainstream media are often understood as a fourth arm of the state. DT (UK), for example, equates 'government' with 'the media', complaining that 'there are no independent media companies in this country – there are none. […] they are all told what to do and what to say from the very top'.

The response to this is for milieu actors to turn to alternative online sources, as Alex (MT) explains:

> […] I get my news from the alternative media. I very much use the Internet, unlike radio and television where you turn them on and they tell you whatever they want. I like to do my own research online, I like to be a free thinker and I like to be as fair as possible. For example, with Covid, you listen to the Americans and to Fauci, but you should maybe look at an Italian doctor, who's maybe posting on YouTube. Maybe he's not very renowned, maybe he doesn't have the world media behind him, but you should listen and then see what makes more sense. (Alex, MT)

Casino (Fr) also turned to the Internet for information after developing a critical approach to multiculturalism: 'I started to analyse things, I saw that we're being manipulated, they're not telling us everything, we're being lied to and taken for idiots'. Instead, he 'started watching videos, people who analyse things... on YouTube' (Casino, FR). Information found on the Internet, via Russian media sources or YouTube are seen as independent in a way that mainstream media is not (Gary, John, FR). Dan (UK) believes '98% cent of the news you're reading now is not true' and says people no longer rely on the news or government anymore but go on social media because 'you can actually find out a lot more truth on social media'.

However, research participants cast themselves as highly discriminating users of the media who collect information from different sources before drawing objective conclusions. Dima (RU), for example, does not think the 'truth' can ever be found and explains how he manages this:

> I get information from different sources, so by comparison and analysis I can understand what is a lie and what is not. Let's say Life news says something, Russia Today will show that. [But] on public TV there is a completely different video, what is going on is described completely differently. And comparing all these moments, you understand that you live in an era of information terrorism and it is very difficult to find normal, proper information. That's why you have to use three or four sources. (Dima, RU)

Kami (PL) uses only the Internet and social media for information but stresses the need for a critical approach to online sources of news: 'I always double-check the news, whether other media describe an event in the same way. I've learnt that at university. I don't have a favourite source of information.

In my opinion, every single one is biased. That's why you need to double check information' (Kamil, PL). Anton (RU) also says he uses the Internet but does not believe 50-80% of what he finds there.

Ulf (NO) and Johnny (UK) note that their generation was the first to grow up with the Internet, which provides access to 'enormous amounts of information' (Ulf, NO) unavailable to their parents' generation. Johnny sees this as expanding people's horizons and 'opening their eyes' as they can check out movements that they might not previously have come across on Facebook: 'Especially a lot of people in their forties and fifties, like my dad. When they were my age, there was not a lot – you just voted […]' (Johnny, UK). This access, Ulf (NO) says means that his generation (or 'at least the clever ones') developed critical skills both in seeking out contrary viewpoints and checking out and critiquing sources.

> […] we developed a way of checking things out, from very many sources, really digging around… Then it became clear that many of the things that one hears on the news, were not… not exactly wrong, not direct lies, but so much information was left out, and many perspectives were not mentioned and that has been important in causing people to lose confidence in the media and the information that are encountered in everyday life […] So it was a special generation who developed a method and we discovered that, wow, the world has hundreds, dozens of different perspectives, and that we cannot trust what we hear from traditional media. It led us to develop a certain scepticism. (Ulf, NO)

In this way, online opportunities bring responsibilities of which research participants are keenly aware.

4.2.2 The Internet as today's 'public square'

The Internet, and social media, in particular, constitute a space where milieu actors are able to express their ideas. As Gary (FR) puts it, 'Today the public square is the Internet' and, thus, when wanting to form a political movement, he had started with a Facebook page in order to 'put our opinion our ideas on the public square'. In this way, online spaces are used strategically, to get one's message out (in conditions of limited access to, and acceptance by, mainstream media as outlined above). Dan (UK) believes 'social media can be used in a very good way' to 'give positive messages out to people' and that, then 'people do listen'. Dean, Christopher and John (FR) are also very active on Facebook and see it as a means to present their ideas and meet new people but also to debate individuals with opposing viewpoints.

The latter is important and indicates that entering the 'public square' also means entering into dialogue. Both Daniel and Alfred (MT) see social media as a tool for democratic debate that is much more open (or at least less controlled) than in other forums. Daniel says Facebook 'is where the real battle of ideas is taking place' while Alfred, affiliated with the group Imperium Europa, calls social media a 'pillar for social dialogue'. He contrasts this to mainstream media, which limits dialogue by seeking to delegitimise right-wing arguments from the outset:

> Facebook and YouTube are the pillars for social dialogue everywhere because they cannot be controlled. I used to comment regularly on the Times and Malta Today, because, you know that's why the comments section is there, or should be there, but then they deleted my comments or never uploaded them, even in the media you need to know someone to have a voice. At least on Facebook I can speak and no one will stop me, they try, but it's more difficult. (Alfred, MT)

Ulf (NO) distinguishes between closed forums, which encourage radicalisation, and genuinely open forums such as 4Chan and 8Chan:

> The problem with closed forums is that you then get the echo chamber effect, but not so with 4Chan… It is open for everybody. You don't need any account, you don't need anything to write things. Every time you go into a new thread, you get a new identity, a

new number so that people cannot follow your identity from thread to thread. So everything gets anonymised, so you can follow a number through a thread, but not across threads. And in these threads, you get people with very opposing standpoints […] (Ulf, NO)

Ulf goes on to explain that seeing such opposing views is a strong indicator of the authenticity of open forums such as 4Chan and 8Chan. This, he says, also ensures a kind of immune defence to attempts by non-authentic actors, such as intelligence agencies, to hijack debate:

People suspect that the intelligence services of some big countries have tried to start threads but then you get what is called an artificial… when all of a sudden a lot of people in a very short period of time start to talk about certain things, and they pull each other in the same direction. The net forum reacts against this. That is interesting, because it works like any living organism. So, if something inorganic appears, then you get an immune-defence-response in the open net forum in the sense that they will not let themselves be manipulated. That is very different from closed forums. In closed forums, you get radicalisation and such things. There, only people with the same opinions are invited in. But in 4Chan and in 8Chan it is completely open in the sense that anyone may go in there and write things. (Ulf, NO)

Participants emphasise the importance to them of constantly questioning things, seeking knowledge and trying to understand complexity; this critical mind-set is believed to shield them from extremism. As Gary (FR) puts it, engaging with only the media that confirms your own views is 'mental masturbation' because you are seeking only gratification rather than contradiction. He sees himself as different from many of his friends who share his ideas in that, 'I'm constantly unsure. Meaning that one day I'll be convinced of something and the next day, not at all. I'm never really 100% certain' (Gary, FR). For Gary, 'nothing's true' at least not in a conspiracy theory way and he constantly juxtaposes his own experiences (including having 'friends who are Muslim and who are great') and his information gathering which leads him to the conclusion that 'there's still a problem [with Islam]'. This engagement with, and reflection on, competing evidence suggests a tolerance of ambiguity that is typically seen as lacking in the extremist mind-set (see Section 1.2, see also: Pilkington, forthcoming).

There are also voices within the milieus that express scepticism about the 'productivity' (Karen, MT) of debates in social media. Karen avoids getting 'embroiled' in debates on social media, using it rather to share articles on topics she thinks are of importance and should be addressed. Other research participants in Malta are sceptical about whether online platforms provide a space for genuine dialogue or simply allow 'poison' to be spewed (Samuel, MT). Research participants in the Netherlands, while seeing social media as a place they can express their opinions, have also become disappointed in their superficiality and lack of real discussion; it is, one respondent says, 'too easy to forget that you are interacting with a person and not just with a profile picture' (9, NL). Another complains that the place for real dialogue is constrained, in practice by the fact that those of a different political persuasion will not engage, illustrating this by her experience that 150 people who were 'friends' with her on Facebook left and would no longer engage with her after she expressed her support for Geert Wilders (21, NL).

4.2.3 Online spaces: 'awakening' and 'influencing'

Online radical(ising) messages are both abundant and easily available, meaning encounters with such messages are likely to be frequent and important in shaping trajectories. However, online activity of research participants varies significantly and depends on their position in the milieu; from influencers creating a significant volume of their own content through to those simply using the Internet to 'research' different movements or explore issues with which they had become concerned. This also means that participants in the milieus studied here might be positioned as either 'perpetrators' (those disseminating radical materials in order to recruit to the movement) or 'victims' (having become involved in the milieu after encountering such materials online). In some cases, individuals are both,

i.e. they are active participants in the milieu and as such subject to attempts to recruit them to 'more extreme' movements or ideas.

The classic discourse on online radicalisation posits the online space as a site of dissemination of radical ideological material and recruitment to their causes (Cammaerts, 2009; Weaver, 2013). In this study, there was some discussion of the use of the online space in this way. Research participants in the Russian case mentioned individuals who were 'good' at spreading radical information via the social media platform VKontakte; in one case, a research participant said he himself disseminated such information in this way. Two research participants in the UK case study were active 'influencers'. One had kick-started the Free Tommy Robinson campaign by making an events page on FB, which, he said, within a few days had generated commitments to attend from 5,000 people (DT, UK). Paul (UK) was very active in producing his own content and had 92,000 subscribers to his weekly show and 200 people in his Telegram group. Commenting on the extent of the reach he had, he says, 'I get 15 to sort of 35,000 views a week on, you know, my show. I regularly get in excess of fifty to a hundred thousand views on my weekly little short info videos' (Paul, UK). Some of his 'bigger videos', he says, 'have been watched over a million times' (Paul, UK). The French case included research participants who had started their own movement opposing what they see as the 'Islamisation of Europe' and defending the idea of a Christian Corsica by starting a Facebook page to test the water and 'see if there were people who shared our ideas' (Gary, FR). Adam (UK) had first become aware of the issue of 'grooming gangs' from watching a Tommy Robinson video and subsequently set up a Grooming Gangs Awareness group online that had grown to 5,000 followers.

Other research participants report that the Internet had been an important factor in their 'awakening' or entrance to a radical position. For both Espen and Ulf (NO), their nationalist orientation was influenced by the gaming communities with which they engaged over the Internet and Espen's experience in particular leads him to believe that 'it is much easier for young people to get radicalised through the Internet' (Espen, NO). Espen, who is a member of the anti-immigration Independence Party, talks about starting his 'political awakening' at the age of 14 when he 'used Facebook a lot' and followed English Defence League live streams on 4 Chan where he encountered everything from mild conservatism to the Nordic Resistance Movement. At 15, he became involved with the Norwegian Defence League after contacting them via Facebook Messenger and watched numerous videos online. A similar trajectory is described by Jermaine (UK), who also became active in the English Defence League while still at school. Jermaine narrated his activism as directly related to exposure to online radical messages; he had initially become involved with the milieu through a closed social media group sharing an interest in weapons but also engaging in far right messaging. This led him to extensive exposure to videos by movements and influencers prominent at the time:

> EDL was like, well this seems pretty cool, you know. There's people smashing up shops and things, but, you know, the EDL running through the streets. And not all of them smashing up shops. And I was always like, 'This is like uncontrolled chaos,' and you know, not necessarily what ultras... it was kind of like a fine line between ultras and hooligans and that was something I was like really interested in. And then from there... […] To be honest with you, I watched hundreds if not thousands of different videos from the EDL, Britain First. (Jermaine, UK)

Jermaine's thirst for such materials led him to follow up new sources and channels mentioned by those leaving 'Comments' on the videos. He also remembers being deeply affected by often graphic images of the aftermath of terrorist attacks or murders that were shared online. Billy and Alice (UK) both mention regularly listening to podcasts (from Red Ice Media or Lauren Southern) or YouTube videos such as those by Alex Jones while they were at work.

Research participants' narratives create a vision of a world filled by a constant stream of radical messaging to tune in to, if you choose. This is an image confirmed by milieu actors when talking at a general level. Kacper (PL) believes that 'the most important channel for communicating radical

content is Facebook and that sort of thing' while actors in the Dutch milieu describe 4 Chan as the main site of radical and extremist content where you get 'all kinds of people' and encounter 'comments that really go too far, in this case it is extremism' (10, NL).

It should be noted here that although online encounters with radical messages are found in all nine case studies, they are talked about infrequently in the Greek case and, in the German case, online spaces are mentioned less often than people as the source of encounter with radical messages. Robbie (UK) notes that he had not come across extremist material online, pointing out that it would be wrong to see people as 'vulnerable' to such messaging. This kind of material does not just drop into your account, he says, it has to be sought out. Finally, research participants often note that encounters with radical messages do not attract them to those who disseminate them but evoke 'disgust' (2, NL) and thus turn them away from right-wing movements, or at least the more radical of them. George (MT), for example, reported having been 'invited' to join Facebook groups where members of extreme right-wing movements participated and encountering there 'hate and unwarranted comments'.

4.2.4 Online spaces as sites of surveillance and silencing

Online spaces are valued as sites of relatively open and free expression, as discussed above, but increasing restrictions and surveillance of online communication mean that research participants also recognise a dark side to social media and online forums of participation. Two main concerns are voiced: the increasing surveillance of online spaces (and the ensuing consequences of exposure there); and growing restrictions and constraints on online communication, which are experienced as a new form of 'silencing'.

Research participants are conscious of the dangers of social media exposure. Some recount how they avoid any social media profile for fear of the consequences of being recognised. Brandon (FR) explains how he travelled to another city with the Front National but asked to be kept out of the limelight for fear that, what he refers to as, the 'hunt for fascists' would lead to individuals being exposed on social media and 'crazy and preposterous rumours' attached to them. George (MT) does post to social media but is careful about what he contributes because it 'puts you in a very vulnerable position'. One research participant from The Netherlands recounts having experienced a threat from a 'leftist boy' online (5, NL) while 'outing' of milieu participants by members of oppositional groups is reported frequently in the UK case study. Dan (UK) receives threatening messages on a daily basis (including threats to life) and says many tweets that are 'exposed' by the Left are fabricated or doctored but, nonetheless, had led to him being questioned by the police. He is most angry, however, about an incident in which his grandmother's address had been posted online by opposition groups leading to threats to her house and expensive food deliveries being sent there (Dan, UK). In what might be considered a form of indirect disenfranchisement, Lee (UK) says he had stopped voting because when he had registered to vote it had 'ended up with anti-fascists at me door and that'.

Dangers from the consequences of online activity may also emanate from within the movement. Anton (DE) describes how a group of marksmen from his club had been expelled from the club because of radical right-wing posts one had made to Facebook (the others were expelled for defending the person who had made the posts). Anton agrees with the policy: 'I think, as a society or as a Marksmen's club, which is a role model in society, you also have to say: "Okay, these are the consequences when you radicalise yourself."'. Among research participants in the Russian Cossack milieu, some also think that people who make insulting posts should be held responsible for them, although views are mixed in this milieu. Imprisoning someone for reposting a post, Dima (RU) says, is indicative of 'a repressive machine'.

In the case described by Anton, the offensive posts had been seen and reported by other club members. Where exclusion is implemented by media or other external agencies, this is often interpreted as censorship or silencing. Alex (MT) complains that often although people 'speak about democracy', when certain people, whose views they don't like, post or comment on newspaper

websites, comments are disabled (so they can't respond to attacks on them). He describes this a 'tyranny with a smile, where they try to silence you and censor you' (Alex, MT).

For some respondents this silencing is not only wrong but counter-productive in terms of constraining radicalisation. Ulf (NO) argues that what radicalised many young people in the gaming milieu was 'when the political correctness started to penetrate', by which he means feminist and other groups started to enter the gaming worlds and criticise their 'views and thoughts' for being 'problematic gender wise, racist, non-egalitarian and so on'. Milieu actors also complain that search algorithms, designed to identify offensive posts just look for keywords, out of context, and lead to unwarranted bans (14, NL). This is illustrated by Dan (UK) who expresses a real sense of injustice over a post that had been removed from Instagram for being offensive, when it was actually a repost of a threatening message that had been sent to him by an 'Antifa member'. Indeed, among the UK milieu, spending time in 'Facebook jail' is routine and some participants had received permanent bans. Lee (UK) had been permanently banned from Facebook while Dan (UK) had had both his Facebook and Twitter accounts permanently disabled 'for constantly violating community standards'. Paul (UK), who had all his materials checked first by a solicitor before posting, had had some of his videos removed by YouTube even though, he says, he knows he has 'not broken any law or stepped over any line' (Field diary, 24.05.2019, UK). Paul is angry, in particular, about the lack of transparency or right to appeal; they often 'won't even tell you' the reasons for the ban, he complains, 'they just say, you know, "Your account has been locked for this…." And you click on the 'this' and it's a blank page' […] And there's no recourse, there's no way to file an appeal.' (Paul, UK).

Reflecting on the effect of bans on Facebook and Twitter, Dan (UK) is concerned that they are counter-productive, having the effect of 'pushing people into a corner' and driving groups underground and to become more radical (Field diary, 18.03.2018, UK). This seems to be confirmed by Lee's (UK) experience. His ban from Facebook came at a time when he was getting closer to the more radical, and subsequently proscribed, group National Action. As he put it: 'I were just getting involved with National Action and that. And I did, we got, all got kicked off Facebook. We moved over to that VK [VKontakte] and I told them on VK, I said, "Right, that's it. I'm joining you." But then day after, I said, "No, I can't do it. I can't leave [names own movement] and that."' (Lee, UK). While National Action was only banned later, when Lee was already in prison, it is clear how such experiences can act as a tipping point for radicalisation. Paul (UK) also expresses a concern about what he calls the 'huge bias' shown by Twitter in its social media, which can lead people to adopt more violent solutions:

> I use Twitter. I'm very careful what I say on there as well. Because Twitter has this huge bias. Again, the same bias I'm talking about. And all these biases lead to anger. They lead to the side who are being silenced thinking that there is no democratic, no peaceful and no sensible solution. And that's when you see these young people doing foolish things. And I'm desperate to stop them doing foolish things, 'cause I don't want there to be violent outcomes to what's going on. I don't want violence; I want peaceful solutions. (Paul, UK)

This reaction speaks not only to the belief among respondents that the closing down of online space may be counter-productive in terms of preventing radicalisation, but also that this policy is implemented unevenly and in a way that consistently denies political voice to the right wing.

4.2.5 Online spaces in offline lives

Online encounters and contacts constitute an important dimension of individuals' experiences of exposure to radical(ising) messages and interact with offline experiences, attitudes and relationships in shaping their trajectories through 'right-wing extremist' milieus. Online information seeking can be prompted by offline experiences and relationships, personal or moral crises, social isolation or pre-existing concerns. Content encountered can, in turn, confirm attitudes, or prompt reinterpretation of offline events, contexts or personal experiences. Online connections can be precursors to offline meetings and vice versa. Indeed online and offline contacts often overlap significantly. At the same

time, the kinds of issues that find resonance in online communities are influenced by socio-political context. Thus online and offline experiences are entwined and both enable and constrain one another.

Radical(ising) messages can be encountered unintentionally; in the German milieu studied, for example, research participants came across right-wing party material, alternative media coverage or radical(ising) articles in their timeline or through posts from social media friends. Such content is often sought intentionally too. The Internet serves as a first port of call for individuals when they become interested in a political issue; their subsequent Internet searching confirms their prejudice or provides new angles that shift their ideological position. For example, Casino (FR) had a pre-held concern about 'multiculturalism' after one of his family members was assaulted by a migrant from North Africa (see Section 3.2.1). As he became increasingly convinced that North Africans were 'dangerous', and his opposition to multiculturalism deepened, he turned to the Internet for information that he considered more trustworthy. Thus, while in theory 'self-radicalisation' through solitary engagement with online materials can take place, in practice, as Robbie (UK) notes, people either search for this material themselves or others direct them towards it:

> […] they can do it on their own through the Internet, can't they? But there will be people that push them towards it. You know, they'll show them the websites to look at and they'll suggest watching this video and that video. (Robbie, UK)

Encounters with radical content online may also be an outcome of online connections taken up primarily to forge connections with other, like-minded, individuals. In this sense online spaces may be utilised less to disseminate radical material than to foster sites of belonging. For those feeling socially isolated, especially, this is an important channel for seeking community and friendship. This is the view of one research participant from The Netherlands who believes 'Many people in the extreme right scene are in that scene because they do not have connections elsewhere, they are isolated, they have no social relationships. Suddenly they may join and belong to where there is a "we" […]' (6, NL). Mikey (UK), who had spent crucial years in his late teens feeling isolated due to a mental health condition, used social media to connect with people and build confidence before attending his first demo; when those he contacted online explained what happens and it all seemed 'straightforward' he decided to attend. In this way, connections online often lead to physical meetings with other activists, influencers or groups. When Adam (UK) sees 'causes' online that look they have connection to his own group, he finds out more about them and establishes links with them. This is how he got in contact with Imogen (UK) and attended a protest camp she had organised against 'forced adoption':

> You see, when you get into following different things online that are against child abuse, against the grooming and raping of kids, prepubescent kids, when you see all that online, and you come to see the different causes then, and, and you, you look into it, and you see what they're about. And that's really how I saw Imogen on, I saw her page online somewhere, it kind of interlinked with something that we'd been doing. (Adam, UK)

This leads him to talk about the importance of community in the milieu, created by fighting causes 'together'. Offline involvement with Generation Identity had been sparked for Alice (UK) and Billy (UK) after, first, being impressed by the kinds of information GI was putting out online. After seeing those, Billy (UK), says, 'I just started messaging them, and met up with them and stuff'. In contrast, for Samuel (MT), things happened the other way round. Attending an offline event with Norman Lowell, a prominent extreme right activist, led to him following up his interest in online forums. The organic interaction between online and offline spaces – where it is no longer clear which came first - is summed up by Will (UK) talking about a group of activists engaged in a range of movements on the Right:

> WILL: I think this whole thing emerged from a certain erm I think it was originally online but it's come off... there is a noticeable social circle in [city] of people who are broadly linked to this kind of stuff. There's links between the Tommy stuff the DFLA and GI and all these thing as people know each other there's probably a few thousand people. It does

have its own in-jokes its own style. Yes, it does have its own subculture. It's a hard to define, one, because its only just emerged.

INT[20]: Is it a physical one or a virtual one?

WILL: Both. Both, it began virtual and has become physical – [this] is the trend I think we're seeing.

However, this 'trend' towards the virtual and physical being intertwined is also an object of criticism. Paul (UK) blames social media for atomising the movement and taking it away from its 'real world activity':

[…] social media is one of those things - it's a bit like a honey trap - you think you're going to get something really good out of it, but then you end up just stuck going nowhere. And what it is, people went on Facebook, they went on YouTube, they went on Twitter. And it gives you a huge reach, but everyone you're reaching is atomised and anonymous. And it doesn't give you the power to build the real world communities. And it doesn't necessarily translate to any kind of real world influence. That's something I want to get away from. (Paul, UK)

Finally, online and offline activism are also intertwined through the activities of videoers and streamers present at events and widely acknowledged as 'influencers' in their own right in milieus. Where the prime role of the individual is streaming events, they engage not just in publicising the offline activity – their presence embodies the cause in as much as they frame their activity as part of 'telling it as it is' and challenging attacks on freedom of speech. As one individual encountered while live streaming from a demonstration, we are here 'because the government don't tell us the truth, the media lies' (Field diary,7.7.2018, UK).

4.2.6 The role of movements: incitement to, or 'keeping in the lid on', extremism?

Across the milieus studied, there is evidence that it is within the milieu, or specific movements, that actors are most likely to encounter radical messages and agents. At the same time, there is a strong narrative from research participants that movements or organisations are also crucial in preventing radicalisation by channelling or 'keeping the lid on' anger and grievances.

The Greek milieu studied includes actors who are already active in extremist movements and parties – most notably the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn – and thus extremist encounters within the milieu are routine. Father Daniel (GR) was standing for Golden Dawn in local elections forthcoming at the time of the research and declared that he was proud of being a nationalist and not offended by those who called him and his fellow Golden Dawners fascists and neo-Nazis. Ethnographic observation revealed his behaviour to be provocative as this description of a journey across Athens on which the researcher accompanied him and others from his movement:

Along the way, Father Daniel put on a CD to play with nationalist and Golden Dawn songs and anthems. When we were crossing Exarcheia Square [an area of central Athens known as a left-wing and anarchist stronghold] the official anthem of Golden Dawn was playing. Father Daniel lowered the car's windows and increased the volume in order to 'piss off the dirty anarchists' as he put it. (Field diary, GR)

Father Daniel is anti-democratic in his views and expresses admiration for the 1967-1974 military dictatorship in Greece. He hates politicians and expressed the hope that, some day, Golden Dawn would be able either to kill all politicians by drowning them at sea or exile them to a deserted Aegean island to which left-wingers used to be exiled and tortured during the pre-1974 authoritarian and anti-communist regimes. Another research participant, Thomas (GR), headed up a Greek-Orthodox armed paramilitary group that trains its members to exercise violence against Muslims and immigrants in

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[20] 'INT' indicates the Interviewer (researcher).

Greece. The two groups had collaborated in a protest occupation of the Athens Mosque construction site and slaughtered and buried two pigs on the site. Dassios (GR), had close links with the leader of another far right party called 'Greek Solution', while Giorgos (GR) was a member of the mainstream New Democracy party and recounted how the party harboured members, including those aspiring to leadership roles within it, who held extremist views and called themselves 'Christian-Talibans'.

In the Russian case study, former members of Russian Cossack villages (*stanitsa*) formally deemed 'extremist' (and their leaders imprisoned) were encountered; these individuals stood out due to their black uniforms and only recent conversion from paganism to Orthodoxy (Field diary, 14.10.2018, RU). In other *stanitsas* in the study, football hooligans and skinheads with radical right-wing ideologies were encountered (Vladimir, RU). Polish milieu actors also noted coming across members of radical movements (All-Polish Youth, ONR) at football stadia, confirming a 'correlation between involvement in that [football fanaticism] and radical beliefs' (Kacper, PL). Sympathy for 'racist slogans' encountered in the stadia is expressed by Sandra (PL) who says the slogans are aimed at 'limiting the number of Arabs in Poland to as few as possible' in order to 'defend European women'.

Among the UK milieu, participants encountered those they considered 'a bit extreme' and engaged in 'mentoring' young people in a way that gave the impression of 'people being bred as white nationalists' (Alice, UK). Alice laughs off the extremism of this individual (also a participant in this study), however, on the grounds that he has always, personally, 'come through' for her as a friend and she doesn't think he is 'going to like radicalise anyone' (Alice, UK). In a similar way, Mikaël (FR) says he accepts a Nazi sympathiser within the milieu because 'he's a fundamentally nice person' and 'not someone who only has faults'.

Three participants (Billy, Dan and Lee) in the UK milieu talk about having been subject to recruitment attempts by more extreme movements in the wider milieu. Dan (UK) says this was local 'neo-Nazis' who were 'trying to persuade me online'. Lee (UK) had had the National Front offer to pay for his membership if he agreed to join and was also subject to an attempt to recruit him to National Action before the group was proscribed. The attempts to recruit failed and, more generally, participants in the milieu report shock when they encounter people they consider 'extremist' or with Nazi or Combat 18 tattoos at events in the milieu:

> I actually knew someone in the [names city] Division who had a swastika tattoo. But I knew him for a while and I was actually kind of close friends with him. But it was only at a demo actually - the police grabbed him, and he grabbed his shirt like that, and when he pulled his shirt - I seen the swastika. I was like shocked but... (Jermaine, UK)

Some also recount hearing chants and speeches that were inappropriate because they 'were quite derogatory of Muslims' (Robbie, UK) and being given placards directed against Muslims, which they had refused to carry because they did not approve of their message (Jason, UK). In a similar way, participants in the German Marksmen's club milieu encountered members of a local extreme right group but kept their distance. Around half of the milieu respondents who resided in the same district as the RWE group knew members of the group personally although they generally deny having anything to do with them: 'You see them always walking around here in [name of district] with their t-shirts and sweaters. But I have nothing to do with them' (Ronya, DE). When members of this RWE group turned up at a marksmen's festival, the group's leader was told that they could only attend if they wore ordinary clothes such that they were not recognisable as members of the extreme-right group (Field diary, DE). Others in the German milieu, note that they are aware of some members or former members of their Marksmen's clubs having been linked to RWE parties such as the NPD (National Democratic Party) or AfD (Anne, Camilla, Julian, DE) or that individual members of the club had been known to make comments and jokes that are 'a bit racist'. Lena (DE) says that when individuals start to abuse foreigners, when they are out and drunk, her response is to guide them strategically towards a taxi home.

For some milieu participants, this defusing strategy is a conscious position and they see it as part of their role to steer members, especially younger participants away from 'extremist' elements. Espen (NO) talks about his communication with a group of youngsters on snapchat and other channels through which he aims to 'keep them on the straight and narrow', that is away from the extremist Nordic Resistance Movement and the glorification of right-wing terrorist acts and actors:

> […] when The Nordic Resistance Movement are growing it is easy for some young people to be attracted to them… I try to turn them more into a more peaceful and democratic path. I try to communicate with them, through snapchat and such channels… I try to have some responsibility there. They are very much into the typical 4Chan thing, with frogs with swastikas and such things, that gaming humour… but it is quite exciting too, nationalist youngsters… I try to keep them in the ok directions, so that they don't develop into something wrong. Especially if they have positive things to say about Breivik and the guy in Australia. Then I really tell them what I mean… And maybe they listen to me… (Espen, NO)

Among the Dutch milieu, one participant also gives an example of a couple of people he used to spend a lot of time with and who ended up attacking a mosque (throwing a bottle of methylated spirits at it). He is critical of the exclusion of such people from groups that are seeking to change things 'within the framework of the law' because labelling them 'Nazi', 'stupid' or 'xenophobic', and excluding them from making their voice heard, simply increases frustration and thus the likelihood of radical action (3, NL). This view is common in the UK milieu too where unaffiliated 'micro elements' are seen to be the most dangerous. In contrast, those leading visible movements, often viewed as 'extremist', see one of their objectives as being 'to keep a lid on things':

> […] the other guys that are the leading... And they are trying to keep a lid on things […] I mean, to be quite honest, the problems are actually probably coming from some of the sort of little micro elements that aren't really affiliated with anyone, that are far more dangerous. Because nobody knows, you know, who's controlling or, you know, what they're doing. (Craig, UK)

Paul (UK) believes people like him, and parties like the BNP in which he was very active in the past, are preventing extremism and gives an example of how he had recently persuaded some young activists to stay away from groups like National Action:

> My video against National Action – somebody had that flagged and taken down. So I made a video about why people shouldn't join a terrorist group, and it's taken down. I made another video called, 'We must protect...' I think it was, 'We must protect the young.' And it was about older nationalists being responsible and stopping young nationalists doing stupid things. (Paul, UK)

Like the Dutch respondent above, Paul also says that it is the people who feel isolated or get angry and frustrated that are likely to become extremist. In contrast, he says, he pulls them out of that isolated bubble and gets them to use their anger constructively – to improve themselves. Perhaps, the most lucid explication of the dangers of driving actors out of movements onto the 'fringes' of society is made by Generation Identity activist Will (UK) who argues:

> I don't think it works as a kind of anti-extremism tactic, to throw people out of normal life. […] Because I get, from that mentality it's like, 'Oh if this becomes normal, it's a danger.' But actually I think, I think the problem with these things comes because they are fringe, rather than because they are… of what they're saying. I think it's fringe groups that become extreme. It's not really about what they say that can predict whether there will be violence. You know, I think it's just to do with how outside of mainstream are they. Because if something exists and it's weird... actually I wrote a thing about this, it's on my Twitter (…). If it exists way outside the mainstream, it can never get it. Over time, it almost

makes sense for them to become violent. […] If you're completely locked out, it doesn't... I would never do it, but like it does make sense from the perspective of the group or idea to just shock your way in. So I think it backfires that, I don't think the kind of ostracisation thing works. (Will, UK)

Among the Cossack communities (*stanitsas*), both *atamans* (leaders) and 'confessors' (the religious authority) in the *stanitsas* have important roles in endorsing or preventing radicalisation. Alexandr (RU) recounts how, in his community, it was the religious authority who prevented 'almost the entire village' going to the Donbass to fight by refusing to bless this act.

Of course, where the line is drawn with regard to what is tolerable and can be addressed by those inside the movement and how to recognise when the lid cannot be 'kept on' and individuals need to be ejected from the movement or even reported to the authorities is – like 'extremism' itself - relative. A clear example of this is that within the UK milieu, one of the respondents who claimed to be stopping younger actors becoming extremist, was described by others in the milieus as promoting precisely the kind of extremism that they were trying to prevent people in their movement from moving towards.

Finally, we should note dissenting voices that refute that extremist messages are commonly encountered in the milieus. This is particularly the case in the marksmen's milieu in Germany where there is a strong discourse countering widespread representations of the clubs as right wing. Jana, Uschi and Julian (DE), for example, compare the number of extremists you might meet in Marksmen's clubs with the many more you would encounter at a football stadium or the pubs they attend after matches.

4.2.7 Encounters with radical(ising) messages among friends and family

In most milieus studied here, at least some research participants had encountered radical messages or been encouraged into radical movements or views by people they described as friends or acquaintances in their peer group circles. Encounters with radical messages within the family were also mentioned but in fewer milieus. Since such encounters are significant primarily for their role in guiding trajectories towards and away from extremism, the role of family and friends is considered in Section 3.4.4. In this section, we note only the presence of such encounters.

From the German marksmen's milieu, seven participants talk about 'friends' and eight about 'acquaintances' as a site of encounter with radical messages. Peter (DE) describes having a female friend who hung out with 'Nazis' and said he himself had been involved with Nazis and hooligans. Lena (DE) also notes that she has many friends who say 'stupid things' to Muslims. In the French and Maltese cases, research participants talk about becoming involved in radical groups either with or through friends. In the UK case, three of the respondents described being brought into the milieu by a friend and in all three of these cases, this related to young men who had been friends from childhood. This suggests a significant overlap between residential district and radcial(ising) milieu and is a finding also in the German milieu.

With regard to family members, parental values sympathetic to extreme right views were noted by some research participants in the French, Germany, Polish and UK milieus. The activism of siblings is also an important source of encounter with radical(ising) messages. Peter (DE) had an older brother who belonged to a neo-Nazi group for a number of years and two female Polish respondents talked about following older brothers into football fighting (Sandra, PL) and the radical group ONR (ONRka, PL). At the same time, the protection of younger siblings from entrance into radical milieus was also discussed by participants (Paolo, UK).

4.2.8 Summary

In line with much recent literature, the synthesis of findings across the nine cases studied here found that online spaces are a significant source of encounters with radical(ising) messages including hate speech, racist 'jokes' and images, invitations (and pressure) to join extremist movements. Encounters

with such messages online raise particular concern because milieu actors generally view information accessed online as more 'trustworthy' than sources of mainstream media which are characterised as institutions of 'information terrorism'. In contrast the Internet is viewed as today's 'public square' in which 'people like us' can communicate our ideas and 'be heard'. Thus online platforms are seen as 'pillars for social dialogue'. Importantly, participants see themselves as digital natives whose extensive exposure to online media means they have developed critical skills in relation to navigating the online informational sphere and portray themselves as sceptical consumers who pride themselves on never relying on a single source and checking those sources to get as near to 'the truth' as possible. Milieu actors also recognise a darker side of online spaces. Some limit or avoid online presence because of the dangers (of trolling, exposure and threat) it carries while others view growing surveillance and exclusion (through bans from platforms) as unfair and another way of 'silencing' their voices.

Online encounters with radical(ising) messages, however, always have a social context and are embedded in offline experiences, attitudes and relationships. Online information seeking can be prompted by offline experiences and relationships, personal or moral crises, social isolation or pre-existing concerns. Content encountered can in turn confirm attitudes, or prompt reinterpretation of offline events, contexts or personal experiences. Online connections can be precursors to offline meetings and vice versa. Thus, online and offline experiences are entwined and both enable and constrain one another.

The findings from the study of the milieus here also show the continuing importance of offline relationships in encounters with radical(ising) messages. Such messages were encountered, first and foremost within the milieu, but friends and family members were also mentioned as sources in many case studies. However, in the case of friends, family and movements, participants talked not only about their encouragement of radical views or actions but the constraints they placed on radicalisation. Movement leaders felt compelled to 'keep a lid on' extremism and guide those they felt were vulnerable to radicalising messages away from them. Concerned family members not only socialised their children into radical movements but taught them that violence never achieved anything and restricted their travel to events where fighting might occur.

Thus, in evaluating the significance of the encounters with both online and offline messages, it is important not to assume that messages encountered directly impact on attitudes or behaviour. Across the milieus, participants are keen to emphasise their critical engagement with what they see or hear and how they make their own judgments about their thresholds regardless of the views or actions of parents and other family members, friends or other movement participants. While we should be attentive to the fact that participants may be inclined to emphasise their own agency in narrating their stories, as researchers we should also not over-interpret the power of messages encountered to 'radicalise' individuals. Respondent narratives also reveal a multitude of ways in which individuals negotiate, avoid, or manage social relationships to fit the attitudes and behaviours they are comfortable with rather than adapting those attitudes and actions to conform to those around them.

Finally, the relative weight of online and offline encounters with radical messages varies across case studies due to the nature of the particular milieus studied with online encounters being particularly extensive in the Maltese milieu and having less weight in the Greek milieu.

4.3 (In)equality and radicalisation: from 'natural' difference to perceived injustice

A key thread running through this synthesis of findings from our milieu studies is that radicalisation is not 'done to' individuals – as the passive outcome of encounter with radicalising agents and messages - but involves a process of subjectivation as experiences of individual or group injustice are transformed into social criticism and action. This is exemplified by our findings on the relationship between (in)equality and radicalisation where we identify a range of grievances across our milieus but their differential capacity to mobilise active and/or radical responses among milieu actors as well as

their ambivalent relationship to notions of (in)equality. The specific role of both *personal* (mostly individual, micro level) and *political* (mostly structural and group level) grievances in trajectories of (non)radicalisation is considered in Section 3.4. Here we consider rather which inequalities actors in the milieus studied see as characterising contemporary society and how such inequalities are in some cases legitimised (e.g. through reference to 'natural' difference) while, in others, they become sites of perceived injustice around which individuals and groups may mobilise.

The focus here on emic understandings of inequalities and their role in radicalisation is not only in line with the overall approach of the DARE project but reflects the increasing evidence that the subjective dimension of inequality may be as, if not more, important than objective inequality in driving radicalisation. As noted in Section 1.1, radicalisation studies have failed to date to identify any shared socio-demographic profile - including objective characteristics of social class – that predicts likelihood of radicalisation (Beck, 2015: 25-30). Research on horizontal inequalities[21] between culturally defined groups (Stewart et al., 2008), moreover, shows that while objective inequalities are important, it is perceptions - the sense of injustice created when socioeconomic inequalities overlap with ethnic, religious or other salient group identities - as much as reality that determine whether such inequalities result in violence (Stewart, 2002: 12; Brown and Langer, 2010: 29-30). A recent systematic review of over 140 quantitative research studies on the relationship between inequality and radicalisation (also conducted as part of the DARE project) found that subjectively perceived inequality may play a more important role than objectively measured economic inequality in the inequality-radicalisation nexus (Franc and Pavlović, 2018: 3). An understanding of how actors themselves perceive inequality – its sources and meanings – is thus an important element in a more holistic understanding of the relationship between (in)equality and radicalisation.

Following a brief overview of the 'objective' socio-economic characteristics of the milieus studied, these subjective understandings are set out in four sub-sections, reflecting the key themes emerging from the synthesis of findings from the nine milieus. The first relates to the main inequality characterising contemporary societies identified by research participants, namely the gap between societal elites – financial institutions, politicians, media - and 'the people'. The injustice attached to such inequality by milieu actors relates to their view that these institutions promote and facilitate a policy of multiculturalism as a result of which immigrants, refugees, and especially Islam and Muslims, threaten to replace the respective national culture and its inhabitants. However, inequality per se is not viewed as unjust in the milieus studied. This is demonstrated in the second theme exploring research participants' views on inequality and difference as natural phenomena, which, in some instances, are important to preserve. This is illustrated starkly in the third theme where 'natural' difference in relation to gender is viewed as not only to be preserved but to be celebrated. The support for highly traditional gender relations is found among individual research participants across all milieus and is dominant in some milieus, especially those located in national contexts characterised more generally by conservative gender norms and intolerance of gender ambiguity and LGBTQ+ communities. However, attitudes vary significantly across and within milieus rendering a complex picture of relationships in right wing milieus towards gender relations including sometimes strongly articulated criticisms of immigrant, especially Muslim, communities for upholding unequal and rigid gender relations and LGBTQ+ intolerance, which threaten 'western' values. Finally, the fourth theme captures instances where perceived and experienced inequalities are articulated by research participants as injustices. These relate to the unfair treatment of milieu actors, due to their political views and activism, especially by the police but also in the sphere of employment. This is mirrored by a perception of 'minority' groups being afforded preferential treatment in a range of social spheres.

4.3.1 Material inequalities: an 'objective' viewpoint

The variation in backgrounds and profiles of research participants both within and between the nine milieus studied renders it inappropriate to deduce an overall pattern or comparison of objective socio-

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[21] As distinct from vertical inequalities that exist between individuals or households.

economic status and engagement in radical(ising) milieus. However, it is important to the interpretation of narratives of subjective (in)equality that some context is provided on who our research participants are and the material circumstances in which they live. Given the very different nature of each milieu, and the degree to which researchers were able to access information about family background of research participants, we present here only basic information collected about current occupation (whether in employment, unemployed or in education) as well as educational achievement. Due to the difficulty in comparing levels/types of secondary education across different national contexts, here we note simply the proportion of the research participants in each milieu who had completed, or were currently studying in, higher education. A fuller profile of respondent sets - including more details of employment stability or precarity, how respondents combine education and part-time work and the number of respondents not in paid employment but occupied in voluntary or caring work – can be found in the individual case study reports listed in Appendix 1.

Table 2: Employment and educational profile of research participants (by milieu)

Milieu country (total no. of interviewees in brackets)	% currently in full or part-time employment	% currently in secondary education	% unemployed	% with (or studying for) higher education	Other milieu specifics
France (17)	53%	6%	6%	47%	5 respondents were in prison at time of interview. Two of those counted as being 'in employment' had unstable jobs.
Germany (23)	39%	35%	4%	17%	Those counted as 'currently in secondary education' include those on apprenticeships.
Greece (21)	57%	24%	19%	52%	4 are unemployed
Malta (15)	87%	0%	7%	53%	
Netherlands (20)	60%	20%	10%	25%	
Poland (19/26)	100%	0%	0%	63%	7 respondents did not provide data (to preserve anonymity); percentage is thus calculated of the 19 for whom data are available. Two of those reporting as 'in employment' are employed in seasonal or occasional work.
Russia (22)	91%	5%	5%	86%	
Norway (13)	69%	15%	15%	38%	
UK (21)	62%	5%	19%	24%	

All respondent sets are characterised by the researchers conducting the study as heterogeneous in terms of socio-economic profile. In the cases of the German and Dutch milieus, by national objective measures of status (including education, professional profile and actual or future income), the respondent sets are classified as mainly middle class. Among the Dutch milieu, one research

participant might be considered upper class and a handful were from working class families. The Russian respondent set is proportionately the most highly educated among our milieus and, in economic terms, research participants are characterised by the researchers as having good jobs and salaries and mainly belonging to the middle class. In the Norwegian and UK milieus, types of employment in which respondents were engaged indicates a wide range of occupational class markers. However, in the UK milieu, when talking about their own class position, most respondents refer to their own working class background or status and see their milieu of activism as such. Only one respondent in the UK milieu self-identified as middle class in interview although at least one other would, by objective criteria, be considered middle class. In sharp contrast, the Polish respondent set also included those with both secondary and higher education and with both middle class and working class origins but neither individuals nor the group displayed any class-based identity.

When discussing their social and economic position, greatest dissatisfaction is expressed by those in the Greek milieu. The Greek respondent set appears relatively highly educated with similar proportions of those employed and unemployed as in other country milieus. However, material insecurity features strongly in the narratives of Greek research participants who attribute their current problems to the consequences of the economic crisis and austerity policies. They reported economic hardship in the present, that is having to struggle even in order to achieve just the basic things, such as 'to sustain a household, to have a family, to be financially independent' (Kostas, GR), which for the previous generation had been relatively straightforward steps in an anticipated life-plan. Most striking, however, is the high level of pessimism about future employment, income and life prospects. As Melpo (GR) notes, 'there is no prospect, we feel it and we know it'. In this context many young people migrate and even the participants in this milieu who had been determined to stay in Greece 'because we love our country and we should support it. We shouldn't abandon it like a sinking boat' (Antonis, GR) were beginning to lose hope. Above all they felt a lack of security:

> […] Greek society does not offer a feeling of security. On the contrary, it gives you insecurity, a feeling like 'what am I going to do in this jungle?' - a feeling of uncertainty. There is nothing stable, nothing certain. So, clearly, Greek society offers nothing but frustration to young people. (Kimonas, GR)

All these themes - insecurity, lack of prospects for the young and feeling the only option is to migrate - are discussed also frequently by Polish participants. Wacek (PL) sees only uncertainty and insecurity when he looks ahead to the future:

> Then I see nothing. I do not see anything. […] I am not able to predict what will happen by the end of the day today. I am not able to predict what things will be like in five years' time. Whether there will be, I don't know, stagnation or whether we will grow. Will these people leave, will this country start to die, will the economy start to collapse? I cannot tell, and I do not see any real action, do you? (Wacek, PL)

Like respondents from Greece and Poland, some French participants talk about the future as fraught with material concerns because 'it is very difficult when you start from nothing' (Sauveur, FR). However, it is important to bear in mind the specifics of the French respondent set, of whom just under a third (including Sauveur, cited above) were serving prison sentences at the time of interview.

In the German and Maltese cases, financial challenges, obstacles to self-improvement and economic insecurity were also mentioned by a number of respondents. For example, just more than a third of the German research participants explicitly or implicitly invoked concerns about their financial situation today and/or in the future. Vanessa (DE), for example, talked about feeling 'financially short' and experiencing 'economic insecurity'. However these concerns are most usually expressed in relative terms, i.e. research participants evaluated their own situation (at the individual level) as deprived in so far as they assessed it as unjust in relation to the perceived situation of certain other groups. This is indicated by Ronja (DE) who wonders where refugees get the money for certain purchases that she and her partner cannot afford because of their low salaries and high cost of

housing. In Malta, the proportion of respondents in full-time and part time employment is high but like the German research participants, financial concerns and inequality were repeatedly highlighted by young people often linking perceived economic insecurity to immigration, producing 'cheap labour' and 'unfair competition' (Alex, MT).

In sharp contrast, the Russian research participants look forward positively to improving their social status (through career or study) and material well-being. In the rare cases where informants reported low incomes, this was recounted in relation to previous places of residence, where the average salary had been low (and from which they had moved to find better job opportunities and salaries). However, despite their objective well-being, the narratives of Cossacks are often laced with stories of subjective inequality (both economic and social) centred on the oppression and unfair treatment by the authorities of Cossacks as a group.

Without pre-empting the more detailed discussion of the findings on this below, it is worth noting that a striking feature of the narratives on material problems or economic prospects of research participants across the milieus is the intertwining of socio-economic with socio-political inequalities or injustices. This appears to confirm the findings of the systematic review of quantitative and qualitative empirical studies on the relationship between inequality and radicalisation conducted as part of the DARE project, namely the relative significance of perceived socio-political inequality (as opposed to objective economic inequality) in driving radicalisation (Franc and Pavlović, 2018; Poli and Arun, 2019).

This is reflected in repeated reference to issues of clientelism, nepotism and patronage that bind economic benefit to political power. Research participants in the Maltese case complain that due to the polarised and clientelistic character of political relations in Malta, their lack of political representation also brings with it a loss in access to social and economic benefits since access to state resources and employment hinges on direct connections with the ruling party (Mitchell, 2002). For Alex (MT), immigration issues are central to understanding how the poor employment conditions for 'Maltese' are linked to the economic gain of the political elite:

> My problem with immigration is not per se illegal [immigration], I think the problem is legal [immigration]. I'm all for unity between Europeans but you have to think of your country. Then there are also a lot of illegal immigrants. To be honest, even the ones that come legally from places like India and Pakistan. Even though they come here legally, or companies bring them here, because that's what the plutocrats want, they are all for cheap labour. At times, they'll [plutocrats] point fingers at people who mention these things and either call them racists…. They're [politicians] making their pockets bigger and bigger, but our wages are staying where they are, stagnated. And *these* people, with all due respect, they work 12 hours or so and if they get paid 5 euros, 3 goes back to the company. Why do they come here to live in these conditions? Work is a right for Maltese, for a citizen, so look what's happening to us. If you ask for a raise, they'll say you can leave, if you don't like it. This is why employers are so in favour of diversity. (Alex, MT)

In the Greek milieu, experiences of economic hardship, unemployment, poverty, insecurity, pessimism and frustration underpin complaints about the prevalence of nepotism, favouritism, corruption and political clientelism as a means for securing a job and income in an economy severely traumatised by the consequences of the crisis and austerity. Politicians are perceived as indifferent towards the plight of the people while they focus on accumulating power and money through corruption. As Kostas (GR) puts it, political parties are only tools for 'grabbing and stealing whatever you can and giving offices to some of your people' at the expense of the society and the nation.

The French milieu respondents also denounce social inequality, economic instability and an unjust system, embodied by a state that favours elites. Research participants feel marginalised because of who they are (insignificant socio-economic actors who are overlooked in politics), because of how they identify (as Corsicans) and because of their ideas (at the margins of the political spectrum). This

situation is further complicated in this case by the dominance of organised criminal gangs (mafia) over certain economic sectors.

This profound entanglement of economic benefit and political/state power is manifest in the Russian milieu too. In this case, inequalities are not seen as emanating from economic differences (family socio-economic status, salary level, access to economic benefits), but access to power and (administrative) resources. Indeed, in this case, research participants perceive activism in the Cossack milieu as a potential opportunity to gain access to a quasi-state position and status. At the same time, the state is also the object of criticism and seen as the source of social inequalities. Milieu actors complain about inequality in the salaries of the country's population and the huge difference between the earnings of the 'middle' class in Russia (to which the Cossacks see themselves as belonging) and the Russian elite. They point to injustice in budget distribution, in particular the concentration of financial resources in the country's 'two capitals' (Moscow and St Petersburg) as well as the failure to adequately provide for pensioners and to fund health care. They also complain about differentiated access to security; the potential for terrorist attacks, they say, makes the use of public transport, visiting large markets and other busy sites unsafe for the 'average' and poor sectors of the population. The problem of insecurity in Russian society is considered acute by the Cossacks and, while they do not actively fight economic inequality at the macro level, they mobilise their own units to resolve security issues themselves.

In the UK case, politicians are widely accused of lacking integrity, being corrupt and entering politics for personal gain; they have become a 'political class' (Field diary, Tommy Robinson European Parliament election rally, Stockport, 08.05.2019). Politicians are seen as complicit in, or responsible for, covering up issues of key concern to activists and the lack of political representation, and power, of the working class is seen as perpetuating injustices or inequalities. Cara (UK), an elected councillor at the time of interview, says it is the 'working class' who see the real issues that need solving because they are the ones using public services and in need of social housing. In contrast, the political elites are perceived as dismissing the issues the right wing raise because, on the one hand, they simply don't experience the problems themselves and, on the other, they do not trust those who do to make political choices (Paolo, UK). The UK milieu was also characterised by widespread concern with, and individual experience of, loss of employment (and future chance of employment) as a result of political activism. This is one reason for the prominence of grievances about political 'silencing' in this milieu (see below).

4.3.2 Elites and the establishment versus the people

A striking and recurrent claim in the milieus studied, albeit with some exceptions, is that a societal elite – consisting of government, the state, societal institutions, the media and cultural influencers – exists and actively feeds a growing gap between itself and the interests of the people. It does so by supporting and facilitating the processes of globalisation and multicultural society resulting in the acceleration of flows of immigrants and refugees, alongside other migrants to European countries. These attitudes and experiences are in line with an apparently wider trend towards the rise of 'national populism' (Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018) as a reaction to globalisation processes and multicultural society facilitated by elites in a range of countries.

According to Enzo Traverso (2019: 17) populism is 'above all a style of politics rather than an ideology. It is a rhetorical procedure that consists of exalting people's "natural" virtues and opposing them to the elite - and society itself to the political establishment - in order to mobilise the masses against the system.' Thus, Traverso argues, populism is used as a label for a wide range of political messages and ideological positions - from Marine le Pen and Jean-Luc Mélenchon in France to Nigel Farage and Jeremy Corbyn in the UK, to Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the US to Silvio Berlusconi, Matteo Salvini and Beppe Grillo in Italy, and so on (ibid.: 16). In this way, actors who are clearly associated with the Left, in various senses, may also be labelled 'populists'. Indeed political thinkers such as

Chantal Mouffe (2016) have argued for the need to develop a left-oriented populism that employs some of the traditional rhetorical techniques of populism to achieve left-oriented political change.

In the nationalist version of populism explored by Eatwell and Goodwin (2018: 81-129), however, it is liberal and left-wing governments and elites that are a key object of *distrust*. Such sentiments are encountered frequently among research participants in the right-wing milieus reported on in this study. Ulf (NO) reflects this in his view that people are increasingly feeling a sense of *alienation* in 'everyday life' but that these experiences are not taken seriously by the elite:

> I see an alienation emerging. Many people are experiencing that, and it is evident on two levels. The first level is in people's everyday life; they are not able to identify with the people around them when you get people from radically different cultures that arrive in your neighbourhood, and Norwegian people are moving out, then it is difficult to identify. On the second level, they experience alienation in relation to the political authorities – when what they experience in their everyday life is not reflected in what the elites are talking about… You are alienated in your everyday life, and you are alienated in relation to authorities and politicians, and suddenly they are categorised in a way that they cannot recognise. That is what I believe is the most radicalising, that people do not experience that they are taken seriously. (Ulf, NO)

Here Ulf implies that those who criticise how society is developing are too easily categorised as racists or such like. The most prominent 'influencer' in the UK case study, Tommy Robinson, echoes this position in his European Parliament election flyer. In this case, the gap between 'the people' and the elite is related to the Brexit process:

> THE ELITES WANT IT BUSINESS AS USUAL - the big politicians, the big banks, the big media. The entire establishment is against Brexit. Everyone's against it but the people. I'M WITH THE PEOPLE – the military veterans, the families who have suffered from Muslim rape gangs, the working class people who have been left behind economically. People who have been mocked by the elites, who were told they just don't count.
>
> (Tommy Robinson campaign flyer, European Parliament elections, 2019, UK)

Robinson cites military veterans, families 'suffering from Muslim rape gangs' as well as the working class in general as constituting the 'people' that have been forgotten or even supressed by the elites. In other parts of the flyer he presents politicians and EU bureaucrats as 'them' who 'don't care about people like us' and 'try to silence us' and contrasts them to himself, who has been fighting for 'the forgotten people', who have no voice, against 'the elites'. A research participant in the UK milieu also sees the alien 'bubble' of the elites as providing a sharp contrast to his own and his family's experience of poverty and those elites as seeking to 'silence' critical voices such as those of Tommy Robinson:

> [...] the establishment are in a bubble …] where they have […] everything on their side - they've got money on their side, they've got the buildings, as in the parliament buildings on their side. [...] we the people are living in poverty and all that are above this threshold of elites are living in complete luxury. […] I think that the whole spectrum: government, establishment, police at the top level, not the bottom level, the top level, the whole thing is corrupt. […] There's too much money involved. These people are living high luxury lives and they are making sure that anyone [who] stands in their way, they can get rid of them. And that's what they're trying to do to Tommy. (DT, UK)

While objective economic inequality - 'living in poverty' - and class differences are referred to here, it is the subjective sense of these inequalities attaching to one group (people 'like us') while 'they' ('the elites') are 'living in complete luxury' that provides the emotional drive in these statements and renders the inequality into a perceived injustice. This feeling is intensified by the sense of powerlessness to change the situation. Those in government are perceived as not only leading a lifestyle that is very distant from 'ordinary people' but as so arrogant that it becomes pointless to

dissent. Tonya expresses this as she explains why she had not protested about new mosques being built in the town:

> [...] I know it's going to be done either way. I know they're not going to listen to us, so there's no... [I] hate this council, government, people in power. I feel like we are brushed off as some little parasite that's just irritating. They just flick them away and they're gone. (Tonya, UK)

In this context, a number of research participants, from various milieus, note their support for Donald Trump as someone who, among other things, resists the information flow in traditional media, which are viewed as completely dominated and twisted by the establishment (on the role of Trump, see also: Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018: ix-xx; Traverso, 2019: 20-26). In the DARE seven-country study of extreme-right Twitter users, Trump is the single biggest 'influencer' (that is his messages or posts have been most frequently commented on, shared or retweeted) (Nilsen et al., 2020: 20-21). Trump's controversial style, which differs in many ways from that of more conventional politicians, also carries strong appeal:

> [...] that's why I love Donald Trump. Because what he's saying, fake news, I agree with. Ninety-eight per cent of the news you're reading now is not true, it's not. They're pushing bullshit on you. [...] but something's going on. I can't put me finger on it, but something's going on. [...] And that's why I love Trump, because he's anti-media. And that's why I think a lot of people love him. [...] 'Fake'... he loves the word, he loves the word [...] He is right. They do, they do deliver fake news. (Dan, UK)

In these ways, Trump has become a strong *symbol* of a politician who stands against the establishment and whose non-conventional ways of 'speaking out' afford him high confidence and prestige in milieus and groups who identify with the content and style of his communication (Traverso 2019: 20-26).

In line with this worldview – which sees the elite and the people as highly polarised - social media and the Internet become a powerful arena, or new public space (see Section 3.2.2), where 'the people', and right wing actors, can express themselves against the establishment. Dan epitomises this view, saying 'the worst thing that ever happened to government, is social media, to be fair. Because you can find out anything you like. People now don't rely on the news and the government, they go on social media' (Dan, UK).

However, what is demanded of the establishment by milieu actors is relative to where on the continuum 'the norm' sits. For example, in Poland, where the government of the ruling Law and Justice party has given substantial support to the views of right wing critics, research participants in the Polish football fanatic milieu remain dissatisfied. This is captured in Mirra's critique of the government, which becomes infused with anti-Semitism as she recounts how she herself has moved towards support for the more radical 'All Polish youth' movement:

> I used to strongly support PIS (Law and Justice party), because I thought it was a national party. But lately it seems that we're opening up to a Jewish country and looking as if from their perspective, because we cooperate with the United States. It shows that these are not quite our life ideas. (Mirra, PL)

For Mirra and her close circle of radical right wing football fanatics 'God, Honour and the Homeland' – as Piotr (PL) expressed it – 'are not just empty words'. While the ruling PIS party ostensibly supports this position, milieu actors remain critical of its failure to sufficiently defend the interests of 'the people'.

4.3.3 Equality, inequality, purity and the paradox of difference

Given the criticism of elites outlined above, it might be assumed that some call for greater equality would feature in the views of milieu actors. With the exception of some pro-equality voices in the German milieu, however, this is not the case. Maurice (DE) considers it to be 'fundamentally unjust

that some people are treated differently from others'; this is, for him, 'actually the definition of inequality'. Camilla (DE) also describes a better society as one in which 'all people were equal. If all people were equally open. If everyone would give everyone an equal chance'.

Among other milieus, there is little evidence of such equality as an ideal, however. Ulf, (NO) for example, mocks left-wing activists - and especially feminists - who had tried to infiltrate his milieu of gamers, referring to them as 'social justice warriors'. Indeed, inequality of various kinds, are expressly supported and even celebrated by some research participants. For Jacob (UK), the 'best men' have the right to win, while the 'losers' just have to accept their position. From such a position inequality is seen as natural:

> JACOB: Elitism isn't inherently a bad idea. It's like, yeah, that's my natural position…
>
> INT: Inequality is natural?
>
> JACOB: Inequality is natural, yes, absolutely.
>
> INT: And the passing on of inequality? So when you talk about elitism, so the passing on of advantage or inequality is also...
>
> JACOB: Yeah. Yes, absolutely. Well it's developed – I think everything that's happened is natural. […] The winners are gonna win... the best men are going to win. The losers are going to lose. (Jacob, UK)

Tonya (UK) - who is a wheel chair user - also sees the world through this lens of social Darwinism. She believes that inequality is natural and that not all people are equal or should have the same rights: 'I do think there's a natural inequality between people in general - there just is. […] life is survival of the fittest, whether that's with education, mentally, physically' (Tonya, UK). Her unwillingness to recognise how inequality is generated by society and politics is particularly striking as, at every turn, she denies that she is in anyway disadvantaged and that, in many cases, her disability, on the contrary, is an advantage. She recounts:

> I recently signed up to a few modelling agencies and they've... I think I've buggered it because I signed up for them and then they called me when I was down in Scotland with a friend, and I didn't want to be rude, and I didn't know how long they'd be on for. So I messaged them saying, 'Keep the slot open, I'll get back to you when I can.' And they just went, 'Nah.' And I was, 'Okay, fine.' But getting into them, and the few I've spoke to, they basically said I've got a fair chance because I'm in a wheelchair. […] So I feel privileged in a way, because people will want me, to seem more inclusive. (Tonya, UK)

It is difficult to understand this position without a holistic picture of Tonya's life trajectory. However, her narrativisation of her disability as a 'privilege' should be read in the context of having been 'conditioned to not take offence', as she puts it, 'because I grew up with an arsehole father who always took the Mick out of me'. She also insists on using words such as 'cripple' and 'retard' about herself while encouraging the use of such terminology by others when talking to her as 'a sign of respect'. As Bottero (2020: 2) notes in her elaboration of the practical experience of subjective inequality, people's responses to inequalities are often paradoxical or contradictory.

Positive attitudes toward inequality are also reflected in the views of Tina (NO) who sympathises with Nazi ideology:

> I believe that in Nazism Hitler decided everything. I do not really know how I would have done it all different, but I know at least that there are two types of human beings. There are the people who just need to have a job, and who just need an ultimately comfortable and predictable life, and that is the masses. Then you have the people who have got something more, and they are very few. […] but most people are just worker ants, and those who are worker ants should not have a bad life, a cruel life […] They are the foundations of a nation. […] Someone will have a disposition to learn, while others won't

have time or interest, and have different types of abilities […]. So to sum up, those who know the most should decide the most. Therefore, I believe that [ancient] Greek democracy would function quite ok. And Greek democracy is plainly fascism. (Tina, NO)

So, for Tina, the natural order is that there are some people who are 'worker ants', on the one hand, and a small percentage that 'have got something more', on the other. It is the latter who, naturally, take the role of decision makers, constituting an elite, with whom, it is clear from interviews, Tina associates herself. Tina also makes ironic reference to ancient Greek democracy, equating the celebrated cradle of democracy with 'fascism', since women and slaves were excluded from participation in decision-making and thus only men made decisions. Thus, in critiques of current elites' distance from the people articulated by research participants, it is not the social structure, in which elites dominate over the people, that is seen as the problem but the fact that those elites do not represent the desired political position. A consequence is that a more or less authoritarian structure of governance - what Tina here labels 'fascism' – may become acceptable to some (see Section 3.5.2.4).

Tina's vision of a society in which there are 'different' types of people, each of whom have their distinct – but unequal - place in society is mirrored in other respondents' understandings of ethnic, racial or national difference. This is most clearly elaborated among those research participants who embrace the notion of *ethnopluralism*, as articulated by movements such as Generation Identity. Ethnopluralism promotes the cultivation of the 'pure' differences of each 'ethnos' (the people, folk or nation) while resisting the mixing of a distinct ethnos through exposure to differences external to the national (a fuller elaboration of the ideology can be found in the works of its proponents such as: Sellner, 2018; de Benoist and Champetier 2012). Ulf (NO), who had moved towards a similar position, put it this way:

> In practice, we see, for example, that what, in very simple terms, is called 'nationalism', in a way is a tool or a vehicle that can be used to achieve a part of this. That you see that nature, the people, the animals, history and culture, are all in one sphere, all in an organic unity. […] If you disturb that balance, then you threaten all that balance, the health of the organism, you might say.' […] That is why we say that we want many nations that have their own, unique expressions... I am thinking about immigration… if it is too high, then you get that alienation we talked about at the beginning. When the pressure becomes so strong that it becomes an alien element in an organism, then it is harmful to the organism as a whole… […] The reason is that immigration has been so high over such a long time that we do not have capacity to handle more. If we are to maintain what has been done to make us a unique sphere, a unique node without losing ourselves, then we do not have the capacity to take in more people. (Ulf, NO)

A similar concern with defending what is seen as a unique, national identity forged through history is found among the Russian Cossack milieu. Russia's 'difference' from the wider world is celebrated including its distinctive 'national psychology' and national traditions that make it a last bastion against the 'rubbish' that comes with democratic governance and the ideals of equality associated with it.

> I do think that there is a kind of national psychology. I mean Russia will always be isolated. […] globalisation, for example, of the European Union has been shown to have failed yes. […] Russia remains a kind of fortress, against these same-sex marriages, yes, against all this rubbish. It is still standing. And it's worth it, because some of the foundations of Orthodoxy, which have been internalised over centuries, they still reside in us […] How is Russia viewed? It is accused of homophobia, yes. I celebrate our homophobic country. […] We have the Russian people, the Russian people is traditional. We need a king, we need faith, then we know where we are going, and when we know where we are going, we are ready to give everything. (Alexandr, RU)

Alexandr not only recognises and celebrates Russia's 'difference' but views it as essential that these differences are preserved and cultivated. In stark contrast, differences that come from the outside – associated for him with immigrants and LGBT+ people - are seen as a threat against which Fortress Russia should protect itself.

This reveals what we may term the *paradox of difference* within the idea of ethnopluralism. While the difference that constitutes each nation as something unique is desired and preserved, differences emanating from outside the nation are rejected and even denied existence, unless confined to the geographical areas where they are assumed to belong. Thus, differences from 'outside' may be recognised as unique and to be preserved and celebrated in their own right, but only as long as they are kept in their 'natural' areas or origin (and thus in their 'natural' place in the unequal global power structure). They represent – to those who position themselves as the defenders of the nation - the 'wrong' kind of difference. This is exemplified by Dean (FR) whose criticism of 'multinationals' and western governments who interfere in other countries is rooted in the belief that ending such interference would allow Africans to 'stay at home because Africans love their country, they love their continent. And they wouldn't need to come and bother us here' (Dean, FR). Anita (NO), acknowledging that this is a view promoted also by Donald Trump, also declares that the emphasis on commonality - the ideal of 'a colourful community'[22] - is over, this is the age of difference.

This logic underpins the argument, articulated by a number of research participants, for a policy of *re-migration*; that is, for the migration back to country of origin of recent immigrants. This remigration tends to be seen as helping to make the nation 'true' (again) to its original nature, i.e. as it was before immigration became 'too high'. For Gunnar (NO), who was associated with Generation Identity, this implied making everyday life, especially of Muslims, so unpleasant and unbearable that they leave the country voluntarily. The defence of the identity of the nation thus implies the 'elimination' of too much of 'the Other' through an act of 'purification' that restores the 'natural' order. For Paul (UK), it reflects also the 'natural' disposition of people to feel more comfortable with their 'own':

> Human beings are happier, more contented, more at ease when they are around people who look like them, people who act like them, people who have shared belief systems, common goals. Because people naturally like to be around people who have similar, similarities with them. […] people don't like difference. People like commonalities. (Paul, UK)

These views also legitimise the differential treatment of immigrants, refugees and Muslims that is they are employed to justify the rejection of fundamental equality and the denial to them of the same rights and statuses as the original inhabitants of the country. This ascription of 'right' difference to the nation and 'wrong' difference to immigrants thus constitutes another expression of the view that *inequality is natural*.

This quest for purity, however, is not seen in all milieus explored in DARE and in those where it is in evidence, it is not uniformly articulated, rather it is expressed to varying degrees. For example, research participants in the Norwegian study who were members of the Progress Party in Norway (to which Breivik also belonged for a short period) stated that they see immigrants as enriching Norwegian culture[23]. Similarly among the UK milieu, positive reference to the contribution made by immigrants to society were made by research participants and, in many cases, citizenship rights and the right to 'be' British were not linked to immigration status. As Jason (UK) put it: 'I don't believe you have to be

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[22] This is a translation from the Norwegian expression '*det fargerike fellesskapet*', which is a popular term for a multicultural society.

[23] Such views among the youth section of the party, may also reflect a split within the party, between young liberalists on the one hand, and more critical attitudes toward Islam and immigration, among other sections of the party.

born here to be British. If you want to be British, you come here, you integrate to society, you're not doing anything wrong, then why can't you be British? You're British to me.'

4.3.4 Gender relations, natural difference and inequality

> I don't believe in equality, I believe in inequality in the sense that inequality is the basis of life. Between a man and a woman there is equality in human dignity and equality of opportunity and I believe in meritocracy - if a woman is better than a man at a job, she should be the one employed... [...] However, we do believe that a man and a woman have different roles, that they are different physically, biologically, emotionally. They are different, we should embrace that, it's like a synergy, yin and yang, solar and lunar, since time immemorial, they complement each other. We should embrace masculinity as well as femininity. (Alex, MT)

The rejection of political agendas of equality in favour of 'natural' difference is no more clearly articulated than when milieu actors talk about questions of gender and sexuality. Four core concerns were expressed by milieu actors when talking about equality and difference. The first is the need to preserve the 'traditional' family including the differentiated gender roles associated with it, which are perceived as being eroded by a societal shift towards the 'feminine'. The other three relate to different sources of threat to this traditional constitution of society by: alternative sexualities; the decline in morality; and 'Islamisation'.

4.3.3.1 Preserving a 'natural' balance: the 'traditional' family and gender roles

Although, as expressed by Alex (MT) (above), men and women should be accorded equal 'dignity' and opportunity, across the milieus studied, they are believed to have quite different roles in society. Research participants often describe this outlook as having 'traditional' (Cara, Paul, UK) or 'socially conservative' (Craig, UK) attitudes at the heart of which is a commitment to 'traditional' family values. Alex (MT) calls himself a 'traditionalist' who believes in 'traditional values' and gender 'inequality':

> I believe that a woman has two roles, to give birth and to nurture, whilst the man is to protect and provide. So going along the traditional path a lot of people mention equality. I don't believe in equality. [...] We look at women as the bearer of the race. For example, I would never agree to sending women to the frontline in war, because they have different roles and the woman, like the children, should be defended. We should very much respect our women. If a woman wants to go and work, by all means, but I wouldn't want her to work because she has to, for economic reasons. [...] If I'm married, I want to be the provider, it's in our nature. I think the man needs more to have a career, at least I think it's more for a man to have a career than a woman. (Alex, MT)

Among the Russian Cossack milieu, 'that men and women play different roles' is viewed as having been 'laid down' by God (Anton, RU). Women and men have their own destiny; for women this is childbirth and care of 'home comfort' and serving their husband, while for men it is protecting the home and providing for the family. Within this milieu, respondents express support for 'the patriarchal family, for the patriarchal way of life' (Anton, RU). This means that men are superior in the family to women but also 'respect women more' and are 'responsible for women, for their actions' (Sasha, RU).

Similar views are expressed by Norwegian respondents Gunnar and Ulf (NO). Gunnar says he supports 'equal rights' but he does not want to see women doing military service or as priests and thinks that 'we should provide financial and moral incentives to them to be at home with the kids. It is good to build up a strong nuclear family as a core cultural feature'. Ulf (NO) also believes that 'gender relations are given by nature' and that 'there are some things that men are better equipped to do, and some things that women are better equipped to do' and thus that 'the feminists are mistaken when they want women to be liberated all the time'. The same criticism is voiced within the Dutch milieu, where it is suggested that women are no longer given a 'choice' of career or marriage and staying home but pushed into thinking they have to have a career (14, NL).

For Daniel (MT), the policies of Viktor Orbán designed to strengthen traditional gender performativities, and especially the role of the housewife (see Eatwell and Goodwin 2018: 72), presents a model to emulate:

> I like Viktor Orbán, I like that he's conservative, that he places importance on the family and the model he is using - where he shifted the role of the housewife and endowed it with value, material value, for the work she does. It's the way forward... (Daniel, MT)

The need for such policies or 'incentives' is articulated by some respondents as the consequence of a more fundamental shift in society away from 'the masculine' and towards 'the feminine' that has unsettled the 'natural' gender balance. This is, moreover, something that milieu actors believed to be consciously fostered by 'cultural elites':

> It would have been better, if it were a value in society and from the elite that men should be masculine and women should be feminine, that would be good, but nowadays, the cultural elite pushes the opposite. That men should show emotions and that women should be strong. And of course you can have strong women who are also feminine, but... The Viking women were strong, but they were not feminist... (Gunnar, NO)

For some this contributes to a more general feeling of crisis, disorder and imbalance (see Section 3.4.2) especially when the ideal of a core family and the 'natural' tasks associated with each gender are challenged. This is seen as instilling identity problems among children:

> ... there is no balance anymore. Fewer and fewer people get married, many weddings end in divorces, and that causes problems. Especially if they have children; those children grow up with only a mother and no balance, because a father takes care of the male part of a person, and a mother takes care of the feminine, the nurturing. And a father takes care of the harder, you know what I mean. And I think that's going to result in a generation of people who have no identity, no value (14, NL)

Jacob (UK), whose world outlook is strongly influenced by Jordan Peterson's[24] online lectures, believes the balance between the masculine and feminine binary is crucial to political order. He thinks society has become unbalanced by a shift in recent decades towards the feminine (and thus also towards the left-wing/hedonistic pleasure/chaos side of the binary) and needs to be re-balanced by shifting towards its masculine (right-wing/eudaimonic pleasure/order) side. He also sees this feminisation to be inculcated from early childhood:

> I see things as yin, yang, masculine, feminine. Concrete example of that... the most important concrete example of that is the family. And what I see is children, our people being raised mostly by women. Not mostly... more by women than men. Not... yeah, more by women than men, so that's an imbalance there straight away from their early years, we are having an imbalance of influence on our children. (Jacob, UK)

A similar, but considerably more extreme critique of female dominance is found in the manifesto of Breivik (Borchgrevink, 2012: 232-240)

Of course, we need to bear in mind that these views in support of 'traditional' gender roles reflect the views of research participants who were predominantly male. The respondent set as a whole (taken across all nine milieus) was 88% male. This proportion is somewhat skewed by the fact that one milieu (the French one) was entirely male while the Norwegian and Greek milieus also included a very small number of female respondents. Four milieus (The Netherlands, Poland, Russia and the UK) were around three-quarters male (reflecting the kind of gender split we would anticipate for right-wing

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[24] Jordan Peterson is a Canadian academic psychologist at the University of Toronto whose lectures are widely viewed in the form of YouTube videos within the milieu. Among respondents in this study his views on inequality and hierarchy, the crisis of masculinity and 'order' and 'chaos' are referenced.

extremist groups) while two milieus (Germany and Malta) had roughly equal numbers of male and female research participants.

Female research participants often shared a broadly 'traditional' perspective. For example, Tonya thinks that 'the sexes do complement one another' and that feminism has gone 'too far': 'when I hear the word 'feminist' I picture, I picture a man-hater. I picture somebody who doesn't like men, who doesn't respect men, who doesn't appreciate the role that males give' (Tonya, UK). However, when it comes to participation in the milieus, women expect to treated equally and with respect. As discussed below (see Section 3.4.6) when highly conservative views on gender, or just lack of respect for you because of your gender, make it difficult to act effectively, female milieu actors become disillusioned and even leave movements. The Marksmen's clubs in Germany were traditionally exclusively male although all but one of the clubs from which research participants were drawn in this study accepted both men and women. In this milieu, therefore, the presence of women was still a topic of debate. Michael (DE), who was a member of the club that did not allow women, feared that having women involved would be disruptive by potentially causing sexual jealousy between male members. In contrast, Anne (DE) thinks it is 'completely silly' to exclude women, whilst relying on them to do much of the work in the background - baking cakes, making coffee, sewing costumes - for club events. Moreover, in some milieus, progressive gender attitudes or challenges to conservative attitudes are also articulated (by both male and female research participants). Will (UK), for example, says it is impossible to go back to traditional roles from where we are now and ridicules conservative views about sexual ethics among part of the Right, calling them 'fantastical' (Will) (see Section 3.5.1). Even in the Cossack milieu, the patriarchal family might remain the 'ideal' but it is recognised that this is rarely possible to live out in practice because of women's demand for autonomy or because men are unable to provide for, and protect, their family on their own.

4.3.3.2 Threats to the traditional constitution of society: alternative sexualities

The overall gender related imbalance in society is perceived, in some milieus, as fuelled by the strengthening of the rights of non-heterosexual citizens. This is particularly the case in those milieus where the national context is characterised by intolerance towards alternative sexualities. This is expressed clearly by Mirra from Poland, whose government, together with that of Orbán in Hungary (see above), has been supportive of radical right-wing positions and characterised as 'illiberal democracies' (see, for example, Eatwell and Goodwin 2018: 72; Traverso 2019: 3):

> Homosexual marriages? No, absolutely not, because, after all, how can you have two fathers or two mothers, I can't even imagine it at all, we're... a traditional family, that's what a family is, exactly, a mother and a father, and then there can be children, and if there are two people of the same sex, well, then it's not realistic for them to make children. So in my opinion that's also why these people shouldn't adopt children or get married, also because according to the Church and this tradition that we have in Poland, that I agree with, well, a family is made up of a man and a woman. (Mirra, PL)

Polish participants who say they have a 'traditional' approach to relationships and family often counterpose this to the idea of single sex couples having families. Paweł (PL) says that he does not look down on homosexual people but believes that at heart 'homosexual acts are a sin' and that 'a child can develop way better, to a fuller extent, in a marriage, which consists of a mother and a father'. Sandra (PL), however, cannot imagine 'same-sex relationships' at all, declaring them to be 'against nature'. In this way, same sex marriages, relationships and sexualities can be seen as performativities that challenge the norms of the various traditions in the countries of our informants; they blur the borders of perceived 'naturalness'. Practices that transgress traditional gender roles are perceived as highly provocative – arousing disgust – or seen as an illness that should be treated. This is captured in Violetta's tirade against 'feminists' and 'lesbians':

> Feminists and lesbos annoy me. […] they're basically the same thing because most feminists are lesbians. Fortunately, I do not come across them because they don't hang

out in beauty salons, they are ugly and couldn't care less. They haven't been able to settle down and so they become feminists. Feminists don't come to [football] matches because it's not a place for them, if they came to matches, they would probably meet some cool guys there, start to take care of themselves and stop being feminists. Homosexuals are a freak of nature and should be treated, but it has become apparent that it [treatment] is not very effective. It stays with you till you die. (Violetta, PL)

Here, Violetta contrasts her own concern with her looks and a more traditional femininity with the stereotyped ugliness and disregard for physical appearance of the 'feminists' and the 'lesbos' whilst, at the same time, imagining that they want the same as everyone else – to meet a 'cool guy' and look after their appearance.

It is amongst actors in the Greek milieu that views about sexuality are most deeply entwined with morality or rather the immorality that they see as characterising contemporary society. For these participants the epitome of contemporary immorality is homosexuality, which, respondents believe is 'promoted' by the media leading to 'moral decline and sepsis' (Jacob, GR). Thomas (GR) sees homosexuality as a 'fashion' followed by young people, fuelled by the media who treat those who are LGBT as 'stars'. Billy (UK), who, in contrast to the Greek respondents, is not religious and accepts homosexuality as long as it is kept 'behind closed doors' and not displayed publicly or promoted. He is particularly against moves towards more inclusive relationship education which he sees as 'trying to indoctrinate kids in schools with it [homosexuality]' (Billy, UK). However, more usually objection to the 'promotion' of alternative gender and sexuality in the UK milieu is reserved for the issue of transgender where there was a clear coalescence of attitudes, which are pro-choice but hostile to a perceived 'left-wing' agenda to consciously promote gender fluidity. For example, Mikey (UK) believes there is nothing wrong with people making 'an informed decision' about gender realignment when they are mature enough to do so but there is something very wrong with families 'raising children as gender neutral from an early age' (Mikey). This reinforces the source of the perceived 'threat' of non-heterosexualities for milieu actors, that is its disruption of the gender binary in which research participants are heavily invested. This is illustrated by Dan's acceptance of homosexuality and transgender but resistance to notions of gender fluidity:

> […] someone wants to be gay, what's the problem, you know what I mean? The only thing I am against, and this is not me being homophobic, I'm against all these hundred genders and all this crap. It's gone beyond a joke, and gender neutral and... beyond a joke, to be fair. There's only two genders - a man and a woman. Doesn't matter if you're gay or you want to be transsexual, but you're a man or you're a woman. (Dan, UK)

These positions clearly reflect debates in wider society and at least some of the spectrum of views encountered there. Indeed this spectrum may be wider than imagined. A number of research participants in the German milieu talked about the acceptance of gay and lesbian members in the Marksmen's clubs as well as in wider society and this was a message of inclusion consciously promoted by the Federation of the St. Sebastianus Marksmen's Youth ('*Bund der St. Sebastianus Schützenjugend*') organisation (see Section 3.5.3.2 for more on this pro-inclusion campaign).

Plate 3: Beer mat produced by the Federation of the St. Sebastianus Marksmen's Youth reading 'Did you know? Our district Prince is gay!'

Discussing the possibility of having two gay men crowned 'King and Queen' of the marksmen, Frederick (DE) says 'Why not?':

> […] if the chemistry is right, then the chemistry is right. If it's two men? Ok. If it's two women, if it's one man and one transgender. Yeah, whatever. […] It's the only point where I really like to differ from the church. I see the human and not what the human is. Two of my best friends are lesbians. Yeah, and? I've had no problem with that. I'm always considered gay myself. I don't know why, though. (Frederick, DE)

Frederick's reference to his disagreement with 'the church' on this one issue is indicative too of a key fault line in right-wing milieus. According to Will (UK), the right-wing movement as a whole remains deeply split on gay rights and that divide is basically one between Christians and seculars. It is to this role of religion in shaping views on gender in our different milieus, that we turn next.

4.3.3.3 Threats to society: the decline of morality

In the two milieus in which Orthodox Christianity plays a key role - the Russian Cossack and Greek Orthodox milieus – we see how religious principles of morality frame (and blame) women as the keepers of morality and reproducers of society. In the Cossack milieu, women's behaviour – especially their sexual and reproductive behaviour - is monitored and evaluated for its (im)morality. Research participants see women as the primary 'objects' of care and control on the part of the state and of men who have the 'right' to control women. This is justified by reference to Orthodox Christianity as well as patriarchal ideas about the sexuality of women and the need to control female bodies. This control is required, not least, because women are viewed as particularly susceptible to 'bad' influences (for example, through social media) and the most likely to adopt wrong behaviour patterns, primarily in terms of sexual and reproductive behaviour. Thus, it is women who bear responsibility for small family size and delayed parenthood (i.e. for macro changes associated with the second demographic transition) as well as for the high proportion of marriages ending in divorce and the prevalence of single-parent families.

Immorality is a core component of societal critique within the Greek milieu studied. Theodoros (GR) states that of all the problems in Greek society, 'the most important is the moral one. I mean the selling of the flesh […]'. He goes on to give an example of how he cannot bear to look at young women at the university, who are 'dressed very lightly'; this, he says, is 'indecency' and 'disgusts' him (Theodoros, GR). For Father Gabriel (GR), this immorality is evidenced also in the 'sin' of abortion,

prostitution and adultery. Among the ultraconservatives in the Greek Orthodox milieu, abortion is considered not only as an expression of the immorality of sexual liberalism but as murder that will be punished by God:

> Father Gabriel's view [is] that contemporary Greeks are misled and have fallen into heresies, which means that they are not real Orthodox. The surge in sin is the ultimate proof of this. 'We have drowned in abortion, sin has reached a pinnacle'. Father Gabriel adds: 'There are 500,000 abortions each year. We are murdering our children. That's why we will be struck by the wrath of God. Because we have distanced ourselves from God. Prostitution and adultery have spread unprecedentedly' (Field diary, GR)

Opposition to abortion is not always religiously framed, however. Billy (UK) raises the issue of abortion as a moral issue but in the context of the need to prioritise strong family over selfish lifestyles rather than as a 'sin'. At a later point, the ideological roots of his opposition become clear when he says that abortion is an issue of 'demographics' since 'natives' may be having four to five abortions while 'Islamists would be coming in, maybe having ten kids'. In this way, abortion becomes another threat to the preservation and reproduction of the national ethnos.

Outside of the strongly religious milieus studied, however, there are individual research participants who see the loss of moral compass as a key issue in contemporary society. Paul (UK) recounts, with horror, a scene he had witnessed when walking through the city in the early morning:

> I saw this girl, several of them, young, pretty women, slumped in doorways, with their skirts hitched up, boobs hanging out, lying in their own vomit. Sun was coming up. People running around going crazy, doing all sorts of stuff to each other, and then scuffles breaking out. It's like Sodom and Gomorrah. (Paul, UK)

He attributes this behaviour to what he sees as the promotion of sexual immorality especially through popular culture (he cites the videos of two female singers - Lady Gaga and Katy Perry[25] - as examples). Paul also talks at length about the 'destructive' nature of chasing relationships based on sexual attraction, suggesting that intimate relationships should be decided on rational not emotional grounds - that is, 'who will make the better mum'. He considers men's excessive viewing of pornography as part of the problem, seeing addiction to pornography among men as being a problem on the scale of anorexia among women, being destructive for marriage or conducting any healthy sexual relationships with 'real' women:

> I had this guy write to me, and he wrote to me on three different social networks to make sure I'd get the message. And him and his wife were at an all-time low - they were going to break up, the family was gone. And he watched my video on pornography. And he said he'd never heard anything like it. And he said he totally changed his habit. He deleted all his pornography, got rid of it all. And him and his wife are fine now. The family's staying together. Because he got to the point where he'd been sucked into this hedonistic world of just watching pornography and masturbating; he couldn't find his wife attractive any more. But that's the norm. And do you think he's the only young person I've spoken to about that? I've known multiple young men who've been addicted to pornography. But no-one's talking about it, because it's a man's issue. And it's a scary man's issue. Because no-one wants to talk about it, because of the people who are behind it. (Paul, UK)

Here we see not only the celebration of traditional and conservative gender roles but also profound criticism of the liberal attitudes to sexuality and hedonistic pleasure that, to some degree, align milieu actors with Muslim communities that they criticise.

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[25] Both Lady Gaga and Katy Perry have been suggested to be part of new world order conspiracies or the illuminati by 'alt-right' commentators.

However, research participants who we would expect to support highly traditional gender behaviour – such as Tina (NO) who aligns herself with national socialism – can also disrupt our expectations. When the researcher confronts Tina with the prospect of staying in the kitchen and giving birth to children, she responds:

> […] that must have been for the masses. The common woman in the street. And do you know what she's concerned with? I have had so many female friends, that are completely normal people, and they are concerned with *being feminine*, and I am not kidding, no matter how strong they are, no matter how smart they are, they just go around talking about how to become more feminine. Seriously, most of my female friends, their biggest worry in life is making sure they are not masculine, because then they will not get a boyfriend, and then they will not have a family. That is what most females think about. And that is not something that we can change! It doesn't mean that every woman consequently wants to stay home with the children. It means only that most of them want it, and it shouldn't be sabotaged. As happens now, it is sabotaged through cultural Marxism. (Tina, NO)

While Tina sees the traditional gender role as fully acceptable for 'the masses' and 'the common woman in the street', however, she emphasises that such inclinations 'are not for me'. She presents herself as very different from the traditional feminine ideal celebrated by other research participants. Her love for martial arts, of which she is a successful practitioner, and the fact that she had dated people of ethnic minority backgrounds, moreover, suggest she engages in a much more liberal gender practice than that which she envisages for most women. When the researcher challenges her on these ostensibly contradictory positions, she responds with humour:

> INT:…so you are part of that scene…martial arts included, but you want the right to date black men…
>
> Tina:…yes, and I am pro-abortion and against Christianity…
>
> INT….and you don't care much for the straight housewife thing…
>
> Tina:…[laughter] no that would never have worked…
>
> INT:…probably not [laughter, shakes his head]…
>
> Tina: …But sometimes I have fantasies about it… I have thought that it could have been very comfortable if I found a man that was strong enough…but I don't think he exists…

This position has its own logic; since Tina cultivates strength, and associates herself with the elites, it follows that she seeks a man who is 'strong enough' and conforms to this traditional male role. But as Tina's example illustrates, although support for traditional ways of doing gender appears to be prevalent in the milieus studied, in practice, lives are lived in more complex ways.

4.3.3.4 Threat of Islamisation

The final threat to the traditional constitution of society identified in the narratives of research participants relates to that of 'Islamisation'. The 'religion-neutral state' is seen as exposing fundamentally Christian nations to the threat of Islamisation in two main ways. First, this relates to the threat of the potential import of what are seen as 'barbaric' practices such as 'sexual slavery', genital mutilation and honour killings in countries in the Middle East. In the UK milieu, the most frequently cited claim is that Islam sanctions child rape:

> So as we've seen in some of the predominantly Muslim areas of the country, I think they're basically using that and some verses from the Hadith for that purpose. To, to the extent where it's even been said that it's acceptable to sleep with a nine-year-old girl because Mohammed did it. Well, I don't care what country you're from or what your, your religious belief is, that's not acceptable, so I am critical of that. (Mikey, UK)

Sharia law is also frequently invoked, especially practices related to the punishment of homosexuality (Johnny, UK), the treatment of women in Middle Eastern countries as well as fears that 'many Muslims' would like to see it implemented in the UK (Cara, UK). Stereotypical tropes about paedophilia and violence towards women being embedded in Islamic texts are employed by members of the Greek milieu also:

> 'Islam is a hate religion. They are not civilised and they are rude. They accept rape and paedophilia and they beat women.' He tells us of an incident with an immigrant from Egypt who insulted Thomas's wife, calling her a whore. Thomas hit him and both of them were arrested by the police. Vaggelis claims that 'Islam is a religion that teaches about disciplining women through beating. This is written in the Qur'an and it is very different from our culture. [...] They walk in the streets and women walk behind men and they are obliged to wear the hijab. This means that they are incompatible with European culture'. (Field diary, GR)

The second threat is to the hard-won rights of women where women in Islam are said to be 'subjugated' and treated as 'lesser' than a man (Cara, UK). Uschi (DE) sees the wearing of a headscarf as counter to the principles of freedom and women's rights according to which she has tried to raise her daughter; while women in Germany 'fought for rights, for years', Muslim women, she says 'have no rights'. For women brought up in Germany to choose such subordination, in her opinion, is 'a bit bonkers' (Uschi, DE). Milieu actors in the UK also envisage Muslim women as victims of Islam who, it is imagined, are simply too scared to leave Islam:

> I guarantee you that if, if the women were protected and said, 'You will not be attacked and not be verbally attacked and verbally abused or anything if you take the headscarf off and straighten your hair like you really want to' I think they would. [...] because I've spoken to women that have told me, away from the scenes, 'If I took this off now, those Muslims out there would tell my family. I'd be beaten. Beaten for taking it off.' (DT, UK)

Gunnar (NO) is less hostile and more nuanced in his views on the role of women in Muslim families. Indeed, he says that he shares what he sees as expressions of a critique and refusal of feminist ways of being, such as in a Norwegian context, which, as a Scandinavian country, tend to be renown for liberalism in gender related issues (Kjøstvedt, 2013):

> …you see Pakistanis usually marry other Pakistanis, there are a stream of immigrant Pakistanis because they don't want to marry a feminist, atheist Norwegian woman. They want a religious, conservative Muslim woman. I understand it very well. I would have done the same thing if I was a Muslim. And we also see that - if we return to the nuclear family - we see that Norwegian feminist women do not want feminine men. On the contrary you see that female feminists, atheists, they often seek the masculine, not least in some marriages where they find African men. And you have Norwegian men who find themselves marrying Thai women. That is because Norwegian men want, obviously traditional women with traditional views on the family. And at the end of the day, Norwegian women also desire the more macho man. (Gunnar, NO)

Thus, Gunnar claims that what he sees as a result of feminism - feminine men - is not what Norwegian women 'really' want; on the contrary, they are held to prefer traditional, masculine and 'macho' men. Billy (UK) goes even further, expressing his admiration for the Muslim community's emphasis on family values:

> I wish we could emulate what the Muslim values [are], with the emphasis they put on family values and stuff. I wish our people would do the same. 'Cause I believe that our nation should be that strong. I believe that you need strong family values to have a strong nation. Now people are just living selfish lifestyles, where it's just all about them. They

just want to go out and do whatever they want to do. To pot with everyone else; to pot with society. (Billy, UK)

Billy links traditional gender norms with the creation of a 'strong family', which, in turn, he see as being at the heart of 'a strong nation'. It is thus traditional gender performativities and the strong nuclear family that are imagined to be the shared ground on which right-wing milieus and Muslim communities stand.

4.3.5 Perceived injustice: the police, employment and minorities given preferential treatment

In addressing questions of equality and inequality, we have emphasised that milieu actors often accept inequality as rooted in naturalised difference and the fight for equality as the misguided folly of 'social justice warriors'. However, in some instances perceived and experienced inequalities are articulated by research participants as injustices. These relate primarily to the unfair treatment of milieu actors, due to their political views and activism, especially by the police but also in the sphere of employment, and are mirrored by a perception of 'minority' groups being afforded preferential treatment in a range of social spheres.

For some of the milieus who are heavily engaged in street level activities, complaints about injustices experienced at the hands of the police are frequent. At times it is claimed that the police are too passive and 'hypocritical' in that they fail to protect right-wing activists when they are attacked by leftist groups such as the Antifa or antiracists or treat the latter less harshly than the right-wing groups. Paul (UK) recounts one example when the police appeared to fail to prevent violence instigated by those opposing a Tommy Robinson election rally:

> Bricks were hitting people. Young men were getting beaten in the street, and the police...
> I tell you now, if me and ten of my mates laid into a lone Muslim man on the street in
> front of police, we'd be up on serious charges. But when it's a white lad, the police are
> there with their arms folded. And you could see that in the pictures. No police officers
> were running in and dragging them apart; they let it happen. (Paul, UK)

Similar perceptions of police injustice are also found among the Polish football fans. Mirra describes how she had 'fled the police a few times' and was once caught by them when she was 15 and 'thrown in the tank'. She claims that the police are 'more interested in giving us a fine than in actually helping us', and that they constitute 'an unnecessary part of our country' (Mirra, PL). A feeling of suspicion and hostility was also expressed in an interview with Patryk, a 22 year old supporter of the Ruch Chorzów football club, which was halted after he became suspicious that the researcher was working for the police.

The police are also accused of failing to investigate politically motivated attacks if they are perpetrated against right-wing activists:

> …another hypocrisy, I had my house attacked, I had bricks thrown through my windows,
> I had my car spray painted. I had graffiti outside my house, giant swastikas. Now if that
> happened to any other [electoral] candidate, the police would have been all over it. In
> fact, somebody called Anna Soubry a Nazi, and police were all over it.[26] Somebody comes
> and spray paints swastikas on my car - the police tell me to go down to Halford's and get
> some T-Cut.[27] (Paul, UK)

Further experiences of injustice are recounted in relation to being sacked from work or refused employment when milieu actors' employers find out about their political positions or activities:

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[26] Anna Soubry is a well-known, former Conservative member of the British parliament.
[27] T-cut is a polish used to restore scratches on metal surfaces.

Doesn't matter what the march is about. […] I've always said that, as long as you don't bring it into work, then shouldn't be a problem. But it always follows me in work, like. […] if I'm ever working, someone will know me face or seen me about on speeches or... And you'll always get that one, 'Oh you're a racist. You're a racist.' Go to the boss, and next minute you're sacked. I've lost count now, but I think it's five jobs I've been sacked from (Dan, UK)

Will (UK) tells a similar story based on his own experience:

By this time, I was the [position in movement] in the UK. And then after a long period of suspension on full pay, which was quite enjoyable [laughing]. I then was erm ...there was some coverage in the Sunday Times, which led to me being asked to resign. I refused and then I was fired. (Will, UK)

The consequences for some of these informants is that, unable to find regular employment, they are forced to use milieu networks to gain work:

So in terms of employment, I can only go via people I know or abroad. If I wanted to get a job like the one I used to have, the only way I could do it is leaving England. 'Cause everyone else... you know, in the industry I was in, part of your application is an adverse media check. You type my name into Google, it's, 'Fascist, fascist, fascist, fascist.' (Will, UK)

Similar situations of being sacked from jobs as a consequence of right wing political positions are also found among research participants in the Norwegian milieu and from earlier research in Norway (Vestel, 2016).

The sense of injustice of milieu actors is frequently expressed in relation to what they see as preferential treatment given to others. Examples of this in relation to police protection are noted above, but it is also evident in discussion of financial support provided by national governments and the EU. In Germany the large wave of refugees in 2015 was perceived as creating feelings of such preferential treatment. Andreas says:

Of course it was a lot with the stream of refugees that came. Uhm, it is quite clear that it is […] uneconomic for Germany. Because it was always said that there was a shortage of skilled workers but not all of them are skilled workers. […] And many see then of course, […] that there are probably also many people who receive social benefits uhm, they see then of course […] their social benefits are under threat. (Andreas, DE)

Such inequality between German and refugee populations was noted by a number of research participants in the German milieu and such grievances were described as being actively mobilised by parties such as the AfD. From the UK, Billy complains of never having sufficient income, even though he worked very long hours every week and compares his own situation with his impression of what immigrants receive:

Like I can work up to like seventy hours in a week. When I was doing European work, you're maybe working eighty, ninety hours a week. And you're getting your pay and it's never enough. You still are struggling to make ends meet. And then there's maybe a family being brought in from Somalia or somewhere and they're getting everything for free. Getting houses, getting grants. I've heard rumours too they get grants for, to get a car and stuff. I don't know how true it is like. But if you're from here, you've to work hard for everything. And you still don't have enough like. (Billy, UK)

Arne (NO) complains that his disability benefits are far from sufficient to have a decent life, while the 'foreigners' receive much more. Difficulties with low income alongside his sense that immigrants were being given priority were important motivating issues that led him both into petty crime, and also into what he describes as 'right-wing extreme milieus':

It started quite slowly when I got those disability benefits. I had very little income and when you're in town and encounter many different cultures and become perhaps a little aggressive because others have a better car and such things, so you feel envious. Then I went into some right wing extreme milieus, read about the foreigners who get a free driver's licence, help with this and that, money here and there. Then I go on the dole and try to get a little furniture. And you get 'no, no, no' from them. So crime became a reality that was easy to slip into because there are no consequences and you have nothing to lose. (Arne, NO)

Christopher from France sums up a strong feeling of injustice:

If people are hateful, it's because there is a lot of injustice at the root of it. Can you imagine that a guy who has worked all his life, who reaches retirement, who is taxed on his pension, who doesn't even manage to earn 700 euros a month, who sees people from the outside arrive, who are given a little more than what he has contributed all his life, people who are not from here and who are entitled to everything. Where is the justice? In Germany, that's what happened. Everywhere. Where is the justice? In Italy, it's the same. (Christopher, FR)

As discussed in Section 3.3.1, material inequality is a concern most frequently articulated among research participants in the Greek milieu. The sense of injustice is magnified when their own financial insecurity is seen against the apparent benefits given to those coming into the country but denied to Greek citizens:

There are no jobs, but it makes me angry that I have three children and I hardly make ends meet, and they have cut off the benefits. So, the foreigners come and they get 2,500 Euros. That's quite a large sum of money and all of them take it, so it is a considerable amount in the end […] The European Union should give these benefits to Greek multi-child families too. I tell you that these families are financially bleeding. This year, they didn't receive any social benefit. And they cut the child allowance too, they lowered it too much. And now my husband and I, both of us, work like dogs, we can't catch up and now I see the others come and take two and a half thousand. Paid rent with paid food, electricity, water... (Maria, GR)

It is Thomas, who is part of a Greek Orthodox militarised extreme right wing network of former commando soldiers, however, who paints the bleakest picture. When the researchers ask if he could arrange some interviews with the young people in his group, he warns that his own views are mild in comparison to theirs:

'They will be swearing and they will want to kill, because they are unemployed. They are unemployed, they are in trouble. I have my job and even if I don't earn enough, I still have my savings. And I'll get a pension. Theirs is a prospect of four decades of slavery. That's why they are yelling and they want to kill them all. They want to kill them all.' The youngest are in Thessaloniki. 'There, they are already polishing their rifles.' (Field diary, GR)

While there may well be a certain demonstrative character to these claims by Thomas, the longevity and severity of the economic crisis in Greece together with the emergence of real extremist groups, such as Golden Dawn, suggest that such claims should not be dismissed out of hand.

4.3.6 Summary

The nature of the ethnographic data drawn on in this study, based on small samples from selected milieus, makes it impossible to draw concrete conclusions about the causal or correlational relationship between inequality and radicalisation. Drawing on increasing evidence from existing, quantitative and qualitative empirical studies suggesting *subjective* dimensions of inequality may play

a more important role in radicalisation than objective, socio-economic measures of inequality (Franc and Pavlović, 2018; Poli and Arun, 2019; Harpviken, 2020; van den Bos, 2020), however, this synthesis of ethnographic studies is able to provide further insight into the importance of perceived injustice, perceived socio-political inequality or 'grievance' in trajectories towards extremism. The nature and role of such grievances in radicalisation are discussed in Section 3.4, in this section we provide findings on how milieu actors understand (in)equality, what inequalities they identify in contemporary society and the perceived and experienced inequalities that are articulated by research participants as injustices. While these inequalities appear primarily to be those related to the political rather than the economic sphere, in practice, it is difficult to disentangle economic and political inequalities. As Bottero (2020: 10) argues, 'inequality is never just a question of economic distribution but always entails relations of power, domination and subordination and hierarchies of respect, standing and accountability'. This is evident in the injustices explored here, which are perceived as political in origin but have economic implications (such as being sacked for one's right-wing activism or views) or which relate to material hardship but are articulated as unjust primarily in the context of the perceived 'privileging' of the needs of others (see also: Linden and Klandermans, 2007; Pilkington, 2016).

The synthesis of findings presented here identifies the gap between societal elites and 'the people' to be the primary site of inequality among actors in the milieus studied. This elite – referred to as the establishment and its institutions – is accused of pursuing policies of multiculturalism that threaten to replace the national culture and its inhabitants as a result of the arrival of immigrants and refugees and the growing visibility of Islam. In many milieus, Donald Trump, with his unconventional style and attacks on the mainstream media as purveyors of fake news, has become a symbol around which opposition mobilises, drawing on the Internet and social media as alternative channels of information. At the extreme end of the ideological spectrum among our milieus, a search for purity - of the race and of the nation - are reflected in a tendency to wish for what is termed 'remigration' of immigrants and refugees.

However, while research participants feel alienated by the 'elites' they identify, they do not challenge their power through a discourse of equality. Equality is *not* seen as an ideal and, for many in the milieus, inequality, on the contrary, is accepted and seen as natural. Thus, notwithstanding complaints about the situation of the working class, about poverty and the 'luxury' in which elites live, there is a tacit acceptance of the social structures, in which the power of the establishment and elites resides, where they are perceived to be upholding traditional values and distinctive characteristics of the nation. This – ethnopluralist - version of nationalism is rooted in an understanding of the nation as imbued with culture and identity that reflect a 'natural' uniqueness - and source of 'natural inequality' - that must be preserved. While the difference and uniqueness of immigrant groups are also recognised and regarded as worthy of preservation, such difference is accepted, at least for some, only if confined to the geographical areas where they are held to have their origins.

The rejection of political agendas of equality in favour of 'natural' difference are expressed also in relation to questions of gender and sexuality. In the milieus studied, traditional gender performativities are celebrated and cultivated whilst, simultaneously, immigrants and especially Muslims are accused of threatening national cultures through oppressive gender norms in relation to women and sexual minority groups. In some milieus, expressions of alternative sexualities are often condemned as immoral and/or unnatural while abortion and inter-racial marriage or relationships are viewed as sinful and/or a threat to the reproduction and preservation of national identity. Views vary, however, both between and within milieus and some research participants reject or at least contest these values, attitudes and practices while others express admiration for the adherence to strong family values among Muslim and other immigrant communities.

Perceived and experienced inequalities are articulated by research participants as injustices primarily where these relate to the unfair treatment of milieu actors, due to their political views and activism. This is articulated in relation to a range of social institutions but especially the police and employers and must be seen in the context of the perception of 'minority' groups being afforded preferential

treatment in these spheres. Here, social class is expressed in various manifestations of protest and resistance against such injustice although the rhetoric of 'the people' versus the establishment is more uniformly deployed.

In the following section, we consider more closely how grievances and tensions relating to issues of (in)equality evoke perceptions of injustice, threat and fear to which individuals and groups feel they must respond. We explore how such grievances may become drivers of radicalisation, including the use of violence, but also how milieu actors' responses constitute manifestations of agency that seek to redress perceived injustices in ways that do not lead to violent extremism.

4.4 Trajectories towards and away from extremism

In this study we employ the notion of trajectories through 'extreme right' milieus rather than the process of 'radicalisation' in order to capture the complexity, diversity and evolving nature of young people's engagement with radical(ising) ideas and agents. As outlined in Section 1.1, this is informed by our critical approach to models of radicalisation that have often led to understandings of involvement with radical ideas and movements that envisage a too linear and one-way direction of travel and fail to explore those pathways that do not lead to political violence (Cragin, 2014). The milieu approach of the DARE project is more aligned with recent 'ecological' approaches (see: Dawson, 2017; Bouhana, 2019), which explore propensity to extremism through the study of the intersection of people and context and which seek to integrate the role of social structural factors, the search for ontological security or 'significance' that such conditions evoke and the role of extremist narratives to which people are exposed (Dawson, 2017: 3). By following individuals over an extended period of time, the data generated by the DARE ethnographic research also provides insight into a particular dimension of trajectories that is rarely explored - the reflexive capacity and agency of young people in shaping their pathways. This is not to suggest that social structural factors or extremist mobilisers ('recruiters') are not important – the role of grievances that arise out of social structural factors, and are instrumentalised by extremist movements and influencers, are central to our understanding of what shapes young people's ideas and actions – but that one of the key mediating factors in understanding outcomes of radicalisation and non-radicalisation is young people's agency. This relates to how they understand the world around them, how they interpret their experiences in it, decisions they take about becoming active in voicing or acting upon grievances they hold and their responses at critical moments about the directions their pathways take.

The synthesis of findings from the nine 'extreme right' milieus studied illustrates the complex interweaving of grievances and mediating factors in shaping the pathways of individual young people. This is visually depicted in Figure 4 (below). The ensuing discussion is structured in six sub-sections, reflecting key themes emerging from the ethnographic data.

Figure 4: Trajectories of (non)radicalisation
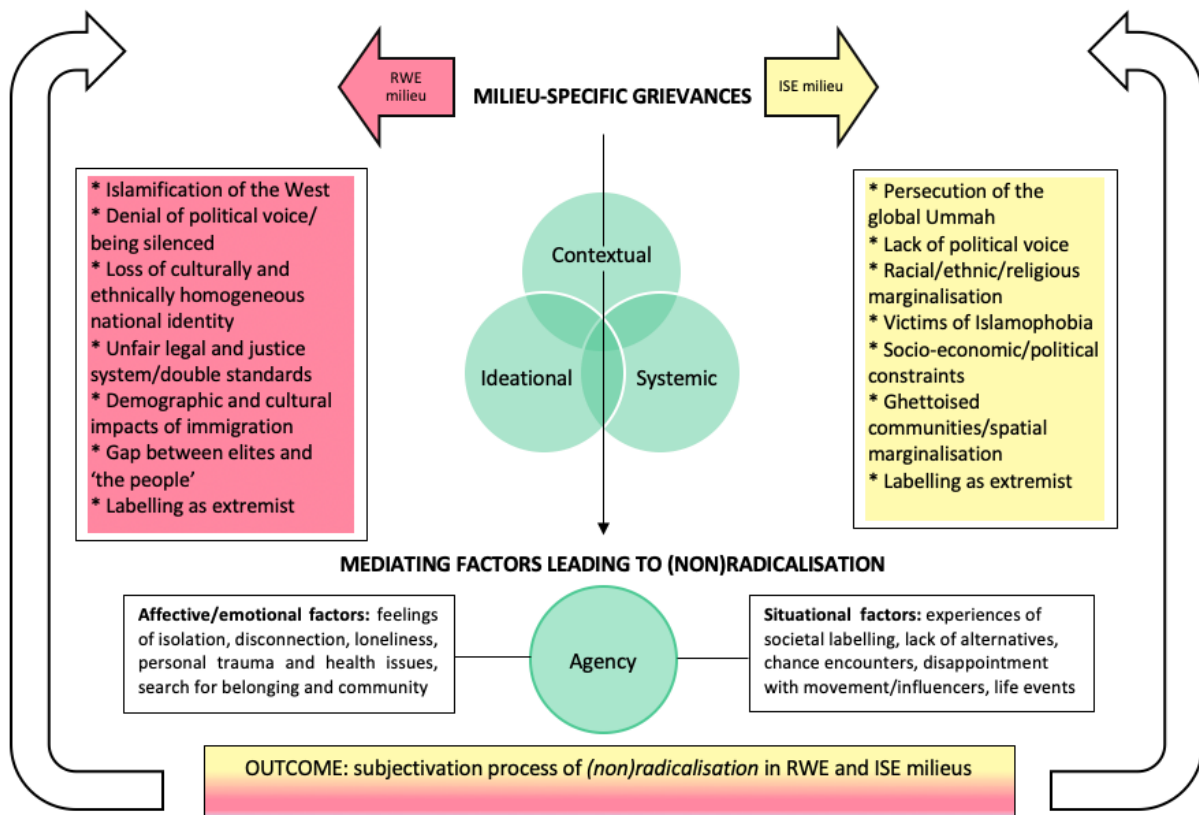
The first three themes explore grievances voiced by research participants and the movements in which they are engaged. The centrality of grievances to processes of radicalisation is well established in existing studies (see, for example: Berger, 2018: 127-131; Hardy, 2018: 86; McCauley, 2018; Nesser, 2015; Cragin, 2014: 341; Schmid, 2013: 26; Kundnani, 2012: 6; Tarrow, 2009: 110-112; Wiktorowicz, 2005; Borum, 2011b). For some actors in 'extreme right' milieus, particular events or experiences may radically shift their perspectives or motivate them to action - akin to the trajectories of 'converts' identified by Linden and Klandermans (2007). For the majority, however, external events or personal experiences release a deeper, simmering anger or pre-existing resentment or grievance (Pilkington, 2016: 76). These deep-lying grievances - what McCauley (2018: 9) refers to as *political grievances* - are what motivate actors, frame what they 'stand against' and what they would like to change through their political action and they feature strongly in the accounts of research participants of their own trajectories toward or away from extremism or radical positions. Two of the three salient grievances in those narratives are milieu-specific (see Figure 4). These are, on the one hand, concerns associated with what is referred to below as the *influx of difference*, that is, the arrival and presence of refugees and immigrants and the increasing visibility of Islam and Muslims in their immediate environment but also their imagination of the nation or Europe more widely. It is important to note here that while immigration is far from new in most contexts, concern about, and resistance towards, it have grown in a wide range of countries in recent years (see, for example, Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018). Thus, ideologically rooted grievances should not be seen as separate from emotional or extra-ideological factors in radicalisation trajectories; these political grievances are profoundly inflected by emotions of anger, fear, hurt, humiliation, threat etc. Such grievances may be rooted in perceptions of having been humiliated, treated unfairly or inappropriately (Berger, 2018: 127-131) or of feeling exposed to

societal changes where values, ways of life and the state of 'what is' are threatened. The second milieu-specific grievance expresses itself in the perception of the situation as a *crisis,* and the corresponding need for strengthening and defending the identity of the national in response (see also: Griffin, 2012). This sense of crisis is underpinned by feelings of uncertainty at individual and group levels and is augmented through mediating affective factors such as feelings of isolation, dislocation and frustration into a sense of collective existential insecurity and impending violent conflict. The third grievance highlighted here is found also in the parallel studies of trajectories through 'Islamist' milieus and relates to the feeling among milieu actors that their interpretation and critique of the current situation is *silenced* and their views are either not heard or not taken into account by the media, politicians and societal institutions. Here we highlight two implications of this for trajectories towards extremism emerging from the narratives of research participants. These are that attempts to delegitimise, or silence, political views may propel people towards more radical views or movements, on the one hand, or to seek alternative channels - online forums, gaming and information sites - to express those views, on the other.

However, while all extremists have a grievance, not all grievances lead to extremism. In the following two sub-sections, we explore mediating factors - affective and situational - recounted as important in young people's trajectories towards and away from extremism. Here we consider primarily the role of the family, peers and significant others in both bringing research participants into radical milieus but also in constraining their engagement or drawing their own 'red lines', i.e. thresholds they would not cross. We also consider the role of what McCauley (2018: 9) refers to as *personal grievances* - loneliness, social problems and the quest for community in these trajectories. Finally, we focus more specifically on those factors research participants narrate as being central to their movement away from radical milieus or the most extreme elements of them. These include disappointment, encounters with attitudes considered to be too extreme and shifting priorities.

4.4.1 The influx of difference: refugees, immigrants and Islam

Across almost all the milieus studied, a key concern of research participants was what we might call the 'influx of difference'. This is expressed in discussion of the arrival of refugees and immigrants, especially the large wave that manifested in many European countries in 2015. In the narratives of research participants, immigrants and refugees bring with them differences - in beliefs, values, attitudes, culture, gender relationships and ways of being - that threaten the culture and economies of the countries to which they migrate.

4.4.1.1 The threat of cultural difference

For many research participants, the resentment towards those arriving was refracted through the lens of mistrust in elites who they believed promoted and benefited from this population influx (see Section 3.3.2). This is expressed, for example, in accusations that national governments and the European Union had failed to stop the influx of immigrants just seeking a better life alongside refugees fleeing wars (for example in Syria).

> I therefore blame the government and the European Union. That is why many people hate it so much, because they have not intervened all this time and have not said, 'Okay, we are going to stop this immigration flow and we are going to sort our own people first.' It's alright blaming people who live here for reacting that way and complaining about their gut feelings, but people here also have rights. People live here and they don't want so many foreigners here, so don't forget that. And then do something about it. (21, NL)

The fact that there was 'big business' to be made from this movement of people heightened the suspicion of research participants, as expressed by Anita (NO):

> And the smugglers were earning lots of money from them. On the TV we saw a couple who came with their children, they did not escape from war and they said things like 'we

are not going to return because we have sold everything we owned just to get a better life here'. You see what I mean, there were so many other people than the refugees who escaped from war. Then I understood that this was big business. (Anita, NO)

These resentments have been mobilised by movements and parties across Europe from new mass political parties like the AfD in Germany, through radical groups such as Generation Identity, active in several of our countries of study, to openly neo-Nazi groups such as Golden Dawn in Greece or the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) in Norway (see Section 1.2). For example, Gunnar (NO), who had stepped back from activism after a neo-Nazi group he had been associated with was disbanded, re-engaged around the time of the 2015 immigrant wave when he became aware of Generation Identity through the videos featuring their ideologue, Martin Sellner (see: Sellner 2018).

Alongside resentment, research participants express a sense of threat posed by refugees and immigrants. This is articulated through familiar tropes that associate newcomers with criminality and 'alien' values among which gender attitudes and relations as well as intolerance to liberal attitudes characteristic of western societies feature strongly:

> And now when I look at how soft the West is, even towards the most intolerant of people, I don't think it's going to end very well for Europe itself [...] in Europe, we think if a woman wears a short skirt, it's not an issue, because we are used to that, but if you wear a short skirt in those cultures, then they think that means you're a whore [...] This can also be seen, for example, in the high number of rapes in Arab and African countries, which just happens - it's normal, it's how they are brought up. (14, NL)

Notwithstanding the strong support for traditional gender performativities among the milieus studied (see Section 3.3.3), feminism and liberal gender values in Europe are contrasted to the more traditional and, what are presumed to be, oppressive practices of various immigrant groups. This instrumentalisation of women's and LGBT+ rights by parties and movements of the populist radical right as 'core civilisational values of the West' under threat from migrant, especially Muslim, communities is well established (de Lange and Mügge, 2015: 62). Mona (DE), for example, expresses concern that a growing number of refugees from Muslim majority countries in Germany 'don't respect German tradition' (for example in relation to gender inequality) and present a threat to German values. In Norway, the father of one of the research participants (Anita) claims that Muslim men just laugh about what he describes as 'the Norwegian male weaklings who are not able to defend Norwegian women.' Another Norwegian informant complained that cultures of rape and sexual harassment accepted in home countries are brought with men coming to Norway (Odd, NO).

Muslim communities and Islam are singled out by research participants as being particularly hostile and culturally threatening. Among Norwegian research participants, for example, are those who view Islam itself as alien and revere Hege Storhaug's (2014) book *Islam – The Eleventh Plague of the Nation* (English title). Islamist-inspired terror attacks feature strongly in narratives and have been widely documented as a source of grievance and fear (see, for example, Nesser, 2015). Both Arina (RU) and Marlene (DE) connect their feelings of being 'terrified' to use the metro (in Arina's case) or to go out at night (in Marlene's case) with the 'flow of people' and 'refugees' arriving in their cities and reported terrorist attacks. As Marlene puts it, 'When so much is happening. You never know if something will happen' (Marlene, DE). Billy (UK) also notes that fear related to terrorist attacks drives people to seek out anti-Islam(ist) groups: 'A lot of people went to Generation [Identity] because of the actual Manchester arena bombings and... I think fear drives people towards groups like that.' (Billy, UK). Uschi (DE) thinks the wearing of the burqa should be banned in Germany because such clothing could be used to hide 'an explosive belt', a fact with 'scares people' Paul, (UK), emphasises that Islamist terrorists in the UK are not people who have come into the country as terrorists, but those whose belief system has been nurtured growing up in the country:

> [...] many of these terror attacks that have taken place, these are not people who are, for want of a better term, fresh off the boat. They are not people who've just come in. They

are second or third generation Muslims that were born here; they have British passports. The 7/7 bombers were all British-born Muslims who we were told would have integrated. And you're not gonna buy these people off, like they're white people. You're not buying them off. You're not giving them money and grants and they're gonna just lap it all up. Because they have something deeper, which is what politicians don't understand. The depth of their faith and their belief system is greater, deeper and stronger than young white lads. (Paul, UK)

This intensity of belief is itself frightening for some. Among Dutch respondents there was fear and astonishment that the Charlie Hebdo cartoon caricature of Mohammed could be seen as so offensive as to justify the killing of people.

For other respondents across the milieus in this study, it is not Islam itself, but so-called 'Islamisation' that is of greatest concern. Islamisation is understood as the (territorial) imposition of Islam in non-Islamic countries or the (cultural) transfer of values, traditions and practices related to Islam to wider culture through their increasing accommodation. It is well-established in political discourse, being at the core of the political platforms of groups such as PEGIDA in Germany since 2014 and in the lexicon of Siv Jensen, former leader of the Progress Party in Norway. The latter repeatedly warned about what she termed the 'sneaky Islamisation' ('*snikislamisering*'), pointing to claims that Islam related ideology, attitudes and practices are being introduced into Norwegian society through non-transparent channels.[28] For respondents in this study, the 'Islamisation of Europe' appears as a real phenomenon (Mikaël, FR). Territorial Islamisation is mentioned in literal terms by Billy (UK) who says the whole idea of Islam is 'to expand Islam and to take over lands and stuff. And they'll do it by any means […]'. More usually it is referenced by pointing to the rising proportion of the population in cities across Europe who are Muslim and the claim that this constitutes a gradual 'colonisation' in process:

We have to understand that a lot of the Muslim population are colonising; they're not integrating with the rest of us. You know, they are pushing people out of their homes. I've actually had three different calls […] where their Muslim neighbours have just been absolutely ridiculous in what they've been doing: throwing dirty nappies over the wall into one of the gardens. Phoning the police every time they hear music, because it's against their culture for music. Phoning the police, so the police come and tell them that they're causing offence - they need to turn their music off. Absolute ridiculous stuff. And I believe that that is to try and push that neighbour out of that house, in order to have a Muslim family move in. (Cara, UK)

In Germany, respondents see Muslim refugees as not respecting German traditions but continuing to do things their way (Mona, DE) as an indication that they 'want to change a lot here' (Marlene, DE). Paul (UK) claims some areas of nearby cities and towns, in which he has worked, are already completely 'transformed' by Islam and Muslim communities are accused of not integrating and consciously isolating themselves from non-Muslims:

When you go into a Muslim area, you know it's a Muslim area. The signs in the shops are a different language. The people in the shops are speaking a different language. Every woman is dressed from head to toe in black with a little line of children like ducklings following them around. These places are completely transformed. And what's more, not only have they been transformed, but they have imported their culture to the complete exclusion of our culture. These places, other than the buildings and the fact it's raining so you know you're in England, they are not English or British in any way anymore. And what's more, when you go into these communities, the youngsters are being taught, not English as a first language, but other languages. And I've spoken to women in places like [names city], who've gone to get jobs in schools and have been turned down for not being

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[28] See: 2009-2019: Ti år med begrepet «snikislamisering» – Dagsavisen

able to speak the language of the kids at the school. Now this creates a huge problem, because you're not seeing integration. (Paul, UK))

All this speaks to the way Islam is exceptionalised, that is, it is seen as not just another element in a twenty-first century societal mix but uniquely incompatible with others in that mix. Moreover, in a time of 'liquid fear' (Bauman, 2006: 1-21) – when the complexity of society makes it difficult to understand the nature and cause of fear - Islam and its assumed power (see Paul's quote above) provides a plausible way to 'explain it all'.

4.4.1.2 The threat of cultural replacement

This concern with Islamisation rather than Islam per se reflects a wider trope in the narratives of milieu actors of the threat not only of cultural difference but of cultural *replacement*. This is rooted in the view that current patterns of immigration are bringing about demographic change that will lead to a new minority status for milieu actors and unacceptable cultural change. Put crudely, the sheer number of refugees and immigrants brings with it a fear that 'they' will take over and 'we' will be replaced. Dan (UK), for example, believes that 'we are becoming a minority in our own country' while Bobby (FR) states 'we're disappearing, little by little through migration, through interbreeding'. Bobby's views are framed clearly in the ethnopluralist notion of the uniqueness and territorial rootedness of cultures (Sellner, 2018; Camus, 2019: 76-78; Bar-On, 2019:238; de Benoist and Champetier 2012) discussed in Section 3.3.2. As he puts it, each people should be 'masters in their own land':

> […] unfortunately, their numbers are too great, we're clearly being replaced, we're disappearing little by little through migration, through interbreeding, through all that, yes, clearly... but without hatred... like the whites in Africa, it's a two-way street. Be careful, it's their land, they are at home, they must be masters of their land, so the Whites have nothing to do in Africa either... each population has its own land... (Bobby, FR)

Bobby's aim through his activism is thus to achieve a Corsica, France and Europe 'without Arabs' and 'without Islam'. The imagined threat posed to local and national cultures by the failure to keep populations in place is captured in the conversation between two research participants from the most extreme section of the Greek milieu, for whom incomers to Greek society are described as 'cancer cells' making the Greek national body 'sick':

> Gerasimos intervenes and characterises immigrants and Muslims in Greece as 'cancer cells' and 'dirt' that enter the national body and make it sick. The nation as a living organism is at risk from the cancer cells and dirt that they present. [...] Nikos says that he agrees and believes that multiculturalism will lead to the disappearance of each country's different culture. 'If all countries become multicultural, how will local culture be? Either the Greek culture or the culture of other countries.' He believes that multiculturalism destroys the diversity of individual cultures by assimilating them. 'All countries will be multicultural, that is, a common identity without identity.' Gerasimos points out: 'Nothing, nothing.' Nikos continues '...and all societies will be the same, and the special character of each people will vanish'. (Field diary, GR)

For Father Gabriel (GR), the decline of Greece is attributed to a combination of the influx of 'others' and the failure of Greeks to reproduce. As he puts it, 'We do not give birth to children, we are becoming an aging country, our girls have 500,000 abortions per year, they throw children in the trash. So what do we expect? We have reached a dead-end' (Father Gabriel, GR). Alexandr (RU) similarly notes that 'if you do not give birth to children, then these children do not breed, they do not fill the territory'. For Alice (UK), the concern is about what she sees as the lack of open discussion about the long-term implications of immigration. She thinks the alt-right belief that there is 'a plan' to outbreed white people should be discussed properly and not just left to 'weirdos on the Internet talking about it' because:

> […] if it's true, if we're, you know, if the population is going to change to such an extent that we're no longer a majority white, you know, British or like I suppose English, country. Whatever. Then yeah, it'll change. And I'm sort of like, 'Well I don't know if I want that, to be honest.' (Alice, UK)

Once again, underpinning these concerns is the sense that governments - if not supra-governmental conspiratorial networks - are not being transparent or even duping the people for their own benefit. Odd (NO), a research participant who feels no animosity to individual immigrants, expresses also a sense that people have been unwittingly desensitised to change and it was only with the arrival of refugees in 2015 that the implications of this emerged:

> I started to ask, 'where will this end?' What will Norway be in a hundred years, to put it that way? Regarding Muslims, it is my impression that they feel they have lots of time, [to take over the country] so to speak. I just felt that this exchange [of population] was going on. I still voted socialist and even for the reds. The basic idea of sharing goods was fine… And I have to say I am not against immigrants. We have immigrants where I live now in our neighbourhood. Many mixed marriages. My children play with immigrant children, and I have nothing against that. But it really took off in 2015, when all the refugees came to Europe. It really made me feel deprogrammed, that I had been sort of brainwashed earlier on. (Odd, NO)

This led Odd, notwithstanding his and his family's positive relationships with neighbours of immigrant background, to become active in a small party that explicitly aims to commence a programme of re-migration.

4.4.2 Crisis, identity and the need for defence

A striking feature of narratives across the milieus is the reference to the presence of immigrants, refugees and especially Muslims as symbolic of a deeper crisis. This crisis is articulated as one of threat to *identity* and induces a strong sense of the need to defend against that threat:

> Identity has become the big new thing. Not only politically but also regarding culture and gender, see what I mean, it has got to the point where everything has to be identified these days […] And it is a fact that the borders are breaking...we have an open Europe, and religions are starting to divide people at the same time as they too are beginning to clash more than before… then it seems like we have to identify ourselves to know what we are standing for, in a way… […] and when things are starting to clash, then we have a stronger need to find a way back to our own identity, to who we are, to be able to hold on to something… (Anita, NO).

What is striking about Anita's way of making sense of the world is not only that it reflects the wider concern with *identity* in today's public sphere (Fukuyama, 2020; see also Honneth, 2007: 70-72; Traverso, 2019: 41-55) but also the shift in responsibility for securing identity to the individual. Bauman (2000: 31-32), among others, relates this to macro societal developments - most notably 'individualisation' - whereby identity is transformed from a 'given' into a 'task'. This, he says, has the effect of 'charging actors with the responsibility for performing that task and for the consequences (also the side effects) of their performance.' (ibid.). Anita's understanding of the current 'task' is to find something 'to hold on to' in a world 'starting to clash' as group (national, ethnic, religious) identities have become destabilised in the process of confrontation with the influx of difference. Such a profound sense of current crisis and anticipation of future conflict, found across the milieus as discussed below, threatens the individual sense of biographical continuity (self-identity) that underpins ontological security (Giddens, 1991: 53-54). One potential consequence of the undermining of ontological insecurity is the rise of nationalist sentiments (Billig, 1995: 44) and populist politics whose promise to regenerate and reinforce past notions of belonging and inclusion appeal to the psychological need for continuity especially in the context of the experience of trauma and anxiety

(Steele and Homolar, 2019: 216). In this way, extremism may emerge out of the experience of crisis, that manifests as a feeling of threat posed to what Peter Berger has termed the 'nomos' (or 'shield of meaning'), that is, the culture, attitudes, world views, history, values that give meaning and protection to the groups or individual with which it is associated (Griffin, 2012: 24-25, 88-110).

4.4.2.1 Uncertainty, identity and the path to extremism

The relationship between self-uncertainty, social identity and extremism is well-established in the psychological literature on extremism (see, for example, Hogg, 2012). While primarily concerned with individuals' motivation to identify with (clearly defined) groups in order to reduce the uncertainty they feel about themselves through group validation (ibid.: 20), this literature does not reduce uncertainty identity to a matter of personality. Rather, uncertainty reflects 'an enduring context that creates uncertainty' (ibid.: 21) and thus is an outcome of the individual's engagement with the social world as they interpret and experience it. Moreover, uncertainty at the group level can also manifest itself in a turn to extremism. Moghaddam and Love (2012: 249) suggest extremism can be understood as a (dysfunctional) defence mechanism adopted by groups during times of instability and insecurity, 'when the in-group is facing an uncertain future, and there is a real possibility of serious in-group decline and even extinction'. While Moghaddam and Love (ibid.) are concerned here with the relationship between collective existential uncertainty and Islamic fundamentalism, a similar expression of the crisis they perceive as being an existential one can be identified among the 'extreme right' milieus studied here, despite the fact that actors in these milieus for the most part represent ethnic majority communities.

Such uncertainty and insecurity is often reflected in feelings of alienation experienced when research participants encounter *signs of difference*. This is evident in the following description by a Dutch research participant of a neighbourhood he knows that no longer resembles what he associates with the Netherlands:

> [...] when you see it you think, 'is this really the Netherlands?' For example, [names street], a beautiful street with old houses, but almost every shop is Arabic - kebab shops, shops with Arabic fashion such as headscarves and Arabic texts... that sort of thing. People who just don't speak Dutch. Then I think, 'where are the Dutch?' 'Where have I ended up?' [...] For example, some Muslims adhere to or glorify Sharia, and those are very strict rules of Islam that do not suit Europe. But also, for example, some just hate everything that Europe stands for, and they say, 'We will replace European people in the future, we will be the boss' and things like that... and there is also a lot of cooperation with countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar... Rich countries that export oil, but also adhere to Sharia and subsidise mosques. (14, NL)

Here the visual and auditory markers of difference - kebab shops, headscarves, posters, advertisements and people speaking in a foreign language - are mediated through a sense of insecurity and displacement into a feeling that western values are being undermined by oppressive Sharia laws and a feeling of hatred towards the West promoted, and sponsored, by rich Arab countries. They point, in the respondent's mind, to a future in which 'we' will be replaced and 'they' will 'be the boss'.

> That this crisis is perceived to be of a collective existential nature is evident in many narratives across the milieus. For Christopher (FR), France as a country and identity 'is dead' while Steven (DE) questions why Germany is even called 'Germany' any more when, he says, of those living in Germany 'at least 60% of them are no longer German'. This, he worries raises the question of 'who will fight for Germany if this continues?' (Steven, DE).

Two UK research participants (Dan, Gareth, UK), who had grown up together in the same part of the city, lament that differences in culture and behaviour of immigrants have ruined communities. This is explained by the arrival of 'low skilled economic migrants' which is 'killing this city' because they are

being housed in already poor areas and turning them into ghettos. Gareth evokes this feeling in his description of parts of the city that are 'dead' and communities that have been 'killed off':

> […] it was literally like driving down a street in Egypt, except there was no sand. It was poor. It wasn't just like 'oh it's generational poverty', which we always had. It was, this is a new type of poverty where like these streets look like dirt, like these streets are horrible, do you know what I mean? Like everything about them - rubbish bins […] all over the streets. No care at all. Like we killed it off, we absolutely killed the communities off. […] I walked through [names another district of the city] the other day, literally seen not one white person. Literally seen rubbish all over the streets. Literally seen a full street with not a habitant in it. […] It was empty. Was dead, was empty, it was dirty. It didn't look like [names city]. Didn't resemble what we used to see. And that's scary to me. (Gareth, UK)

When prompted to clarify what community they are referring to when they say it has been 'killed off', Dan (UK) says that they are talking about 'An English community. A white English community'. This evokes the discussion in the previous section of milieu actors' concern with the imagined 'replacement' of European populations as an outcome of current globalisation and population movement processes. In the most extreme cases, this is articulated as the threat of biological extinction of the 'white race' through race mixing. As one research participant from the Netherlands, put it: 'I am not against anyone, I'm not a racist or anything, I wish everyone the best, but the white race is almost dying out and I only see women going and mixing with foreign men. I am against that' (11, NL). In a longer articulation of a deep grievance about being prevented from setting up a cultural society for 'English' students at university, Paul complains that this is partially a result of the differential (and, in his opinion, unjust) interpretation of the acceptability of in-group preference among ethnic minority and white majority communities:

> […] I've had people come up to me who are actually members of groups like the Afro-Caribbean Society and say, 'I want to talk to you.' And I actually had this lovely girl, came up to me, and she said to me, 'I want to talk to you. Why do you hate me?' And I said, 'I don't hate you.' I said, 'Do you want to marry a white man?' And she said, 'Of course not. Why would I want that?' She said, 'I want to marry a black man. I'm proud of who I am. I want to have children that look like me, that are brought up with my cultural values.' And I said, 'Well so do I. So why do you come up to me saying I shouldn't be allowed to do that?' And after that we became quite good friends. We used to talk a lot. But really, what's happening here is I have a shared interest with people of all different cultures and colours, who feel the same way about their people as I feel about mine. But they are allowed to express that. Not only that, when they express that, they are told by the establishment to stop me expressing the same thing for my people, and to hate me expressing things like that for my people. So these people expressing their love for their culture and their way of life, were told to hate me for doing the same. (Paul, UK)

For Paul, this denies white English people the right to be 'proud' about their own 'people' and the right to defend their culture.

It is important to note that, in two case studies - Greece and Russia - the underlying societal crisis identified by research participants is seen in strongly moral and spiritual ways. A number of actors in the Greek milieu emphasise that the main problem in Greek society today is moral and spiritual and can only be remedied by the return of Greeks to spirituality. As Thomas (GR) puts it, Greeks must remember 'that Christianity originated in Greece, civilisation started in Greece when others were still in the trees'. This explicit connection of Greek spirituality with national superiority is found also in the narrative of Jacob (GR) who believes Greek Christian culture to be superior to all because it possesses purity and can civilise all. It is because of this 'superior culture', he says, 'the transnational centres of power want to destroy it'.

For Father Gabriel the root of the problems are a 'spiritual crisis' that has meant that 'Today, Greek society and the Greeks have abandoned God […]' leaving Greek society 'in a state of decay' (Father Gabriel, GR). Vaggelis sees the source of decline in Greek society as being a decline in value attached to the nation, religion and the family:

> What annoys me in Greece is the fact that there is a directed, the source of which I don't know, deterioration of the country's national values and traditions. I mean, the homeland and the concept of the homeland, the nation-state, are being downgraded. Religion, the traditional faith that we inherited from our ancestors and we should pass on to our descendants, is being degraded. And, of course, the institution of the family which is being degraded through new, additional, artificial rights such as gay couples' marriages, or adoption by gay couples, things that will lead to freak families and people with psychological problems. (Vaggelis, GR)

What has replaced spirituality is technology or technocracy. Gerasimos (GR), for example, thinks today Greeks have lost their identity and that 'people today feel closer to technology than to religion'. Father Gabriel (GR) believes that it is 'excessive technocracy that drives us away from God'. Alexey (RU) sees the world as currently characterised by 'an ideological, spiritual degeneracy' in which values previously praised such as 'love, freedom, honour' are today 'ridiculed'. Ulf (NO) is also highly critical of what he terms 'technocracy', supporting rather what he refers to as 'traditionalism' in the sense of Italian theorist Julius Evola (2017: 35-45) in which society is seen as an extension of the ecosystem.

A related discourse is found in the reflections of Peter and Maurice in the German milieu as well among Polish milieu actors, where there is an emphasis on the damage done to society by consumerism. ONR (PL) for example blames 'the system that functions in the West' for turning people into 'consumer monsters who do not think too much […]'. He envisages a greater significance to life:

> In my opinion, we are not here, we are not on this Earth just to live our lives. We are like little ants fitting into this consumerist world, into the consumerist order, but it seems to me that we should have, or aspire to have, greater goals, objectives, in our lives - both as people and as a nation, as a society. Myself, I believe development is expanding one's boundaries, overcoming one's limitations. It's similar for nations. A nation should be aware of its... mission? Right? Just like our leaders wrote before the war, and here, in my opinion, our mission, as a nation, should be, I dunno... re-Christianisation, or... I'm struggling to find the words... of Europe, simply restoring it to... perhaps restoring is the wrong word, but... rediscovering its Christian roots, plus, developing them in the contemporary reality […] (ONR, PL)

Even in milieus that are less religious, there is a sense that religion provides an important counter-force to 'progressive ideas' by maintaining some traditional values and ideas - something 'to hold on to' as Anita (NO) puts it (see above) as crisis threatens to engulf society. This feeling is encapsulated by Christopher (FR), who declares, 'France is the Titanic. It is sinking.' The same metaphor - the '*Titanic syndrome'* - is used by Bauman in elaborating his notion of 'liquid fear' as 'the horror of falling through the wafer-thin crust of civilization into that nothingness stripped of the elementary staples of civilized life' (Bauman 2006: 17; see also Griffin, 2012: 4). What Bauman captures here is the fear that ensues from the loss of 'organized routine', of the known and predictable, the balance between signposting and behavioural repertoire - what milieu actors articulate as a sense of being overwhelmed by the signs of difference.

4.4.2.2 *The imminence of threat: conflict and civil war*
For some milieu actors, it is this 'uncertain' future – imagined as ending in 'replacement' or 'extinction' of white Europeans – that they think leads people to become 'more extreme' (14, NL) and feel the need to physically defend their country or their people. This is expressed most consistently through a narrative of the imminent threat of destructive civil conflict, which is found in the UK, Dutch, French, Norwegian, Greek and Russian milieus. Billy (UK) envisages the possibility of a civil war against Islam

and emphasises the need for ordinary people to be aware, and to be prepared to meet what he anticipates as extremist Muslims trying to 'take over':

> […] if people don't become aware of what's happening, it will lead to endless bloodshed on the streets, I believe. Because Islam is, it's their idea to expand Islam and to take over lands and stuff. And they'll do it by any means: violence and... it'll get to the point where native Europeans won't sit around and accept having their Christmas markets attacked[29] and their kids blew up at concerts[30] and stuff. Unfortunately people will probably go out and retaliate. (Billy, UK)

Among actors in the Dutch milieu, civil war is also envisaged as what will happen 'when Westerners will no longer tolerate attacks on their own norms and values' (3, NL). This research participant believes 'conflict is coming. And it will start either in Germany, or maybe in England' (3, NL). John (FR) fears the prospect of Islam being 'used as a weapon of war', which might quickly escalate into a 'world war' alongside 'civil wars, in each country there will be two communities, which will confront each other' (John, FR). The idea that terrorist attacks happening in Europe might trigger larger scale conflict is expressed by others in the French milieu in the context of the 'return of jihadists' (Gary, FR). Violetta (PL) is also fearful about the future of Poland and expresses the need to defend it by preventing terrorists from entering the country as well as preventing women from marrying and having children with 'such people'.

Gunnar (NO) frames his views as not desiring but wanting to prevent civil war. However, he believes there is already 'a real hard cultural war going on' in which Europe has to be defended. To prevent this spilling over into civil war, he argues, immigration must be ended:

> We have to ensure that Europe remains European, or we will end up like the Christian Copts in Egypt. Civil war? […] the fact that some believe that Western European societies may end up in a civil war supports the argument for stopping immigration and getting on with remigration. Because this is not something that comes up in Eastern Europe. Nobody is talking about civil war in Poland, in the Czech Republic, in Slovakia or Hungary; there is no worry about extreme parties taking up their guns and dragging wider society with them… (Gunnar, NO)

A Dutch participant sees the growing polarisation between 'extreme right and extreme left' alongside 'refugee problems' and 'conflict in the church as indicating that 'everything is escalating and there will be a 'boiling point' (6, NL). That polarisation between Left and Right could be a potential source of civil conflict is mentioned also by Gareth (UK), as he describes the volatile atmosphere in America. Dan (UK) also considers the possibility that the trigger for civil conflict could be not only an Islamist inspired terrorist attack but a far right terror attack on the Muslim community or even state-sponsored terrorism:

> I've always had a feeling Tommy Robinson will be killed eventually. He will be killed by the state or by a Muslim. He will be killed in the end. And once that happens, that is when I think we will see a civil war in this country, is when Tommy gets killed. And I think it will happen, unfortunately, I do. (Dan, UK)

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[29] This refers to a terrorist act at a German Christmas market in 19 December 2016, when a 24 year old Tunisian who had had his asylum application refused, murdered a truck driver and drove his truck into the crowd, killing and injuring a number of people (Berlin remembers victims of Christmas market terror attack | News | DW | 19.12.2020).

[30] This refers to the terrorist attack at the Ariana Grande concert at the Manchester Arena on 22 May 2017 when Salman Abedi detonated a home-made bomb killing 23 people (including himself) (Manchester terror attack (manchestereveningnews.co.uk)

4.4.2.3 The necessity of a violent resolution?

As indicated by Gunnar (NO) above, for some milieu actors, a 'soft' war has already begun. Others were preparing for, or even participating in, a violent resolution to tensions. Dan (UK) returns to the issue of a possible civil war several times during interviews and conversations, emphasising that while he himself is terrified by the prospect, some people are actively preparing for it:

> I don't mean like preparing for it like the militias and all that. But they're saying, 'Look. Demo-ing is not the way to go now. You know, there's a civil war coming here. We need to prepare. We need to be ready for when it happens. Because if we're not, we're gonna be in shit street.' Because they're ready. If you're talking about the Muslims, the Muslims are ready. […] they are expecting it. But I know people, I know people getting medical equipment together and things like that, you know, just in case. […] Which is scary. (Dan, UK)

Indeed, militias are exactly what Thomas (GR) is organising. Thomas leads a paramilitary right wing organisation involved in direct, confrontational action such as that to take down an ISIS flag in a refugee camp described here:

> He says that when they arrived in the local town, they were suddenly surrounded by 'countless Muslims with turbans. From the four corners of the world, masses of them appeared, countless'. A member of the [paramilitary group] panicked and the mission leader calmed him down. He says that the Muslims encircled them, holding their mobile phones in their hands. He claims that in the end they took down the ISIS flag and then they wrote on the wall the slogan 'THIS IS GREECE. ISLAM WILL NOT PREVAIL. VICTORY OR DEATH'. (Thomas, recorded in Field diary, GR)

Thomas is outraged at the presence of 'ISIS flags in my place!' and says that in this area the Greeks were afraid to move around the city and stayed locked in their own homes, 'full of fear, afraid'. He recounts another incident in which his wife was reportedly surrounded by immigrants in a remote area of Athens and terrorised. He rails against the lack of response to the situation which he describes as 'being rounded up in our own city' complaining that 'Only when they start to be beheaded right on their doorsteps, only then, will the Greeks wake up.' (Thomas, GR). While he acknowledges that not all Muslim immigrants are Jihadists, his view is that if you cannot tell who the extremist is and who is not, you should 'shoot both of them' (Thomas, GR). Thomas's way forward, it appears, is to resolve the crisis by instigating a 'bloodbath' that will clear the way for new political actors:

> Thomas believes that, if we are to overcome the crisis and the degrading of values, 'we have to clear the landscape within the Parliament'. New parties and new minds need to enter the Parliament. 'That's why a bloodbath is approaching. In order to put things on their course. Perhaps, what we expect the immigrants will do [that is, to revolt and violently attack the locals] might be done by the Greeks to the immigrants, so as to put things on the right course. Right now new forces are emerging…' (Field diary, GR)

Others also see civil war as a necessary step in order to assert the dominant order. As Sauveur (FR) puts it, 'unless there is a war, a real civil war, unless the French move to get them out of the country, things won't change. It will get worse and worse. You think the Arabs should be moved out of the country... I think the French should take up arms and get them out.' For the radical segment of the Greek milieu, the use of violence against the 'enemies of the fatherland and of the faith' (Father Tryfonas, GR) is justified and anticipated; this includes pogroms against immigrants and even civil war and the extermination of political opponents and those who defend immigrants and refugees.

In Russia, fears and negative expectations for the future are related to military conflict outside Russia's borders rather than within. Petr (RU) fears that everything is heading towards war and that the next war will be on a bigger scale – 'it will no longer be with Ukraine or Syria, it will be […] with the United States of America and China'. While Russian milieu narratives often stress the importance of avoiding

such war, at the same time, the main activity of the Cossacks is preparation for military conflict. Moreover, through their everyday role in maintaining public order, they are already involved in the physical defence of their beliefs. For example, Dima expresses support for the violence used against Russian political art group 'Pussy Riot', whose notorious performance in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow in 2012 was judged an act of desecration as well as a sign of immorality and sexual liberalism in Cossack milieus. He explains below why he felt a brutal attack on members of the group as they tried to perform in Sochi during the Winter Olympic games[31], was justified:

> [...] the Cossacks whipped them. By the way, that's a good thing, because a whip is pretty hard but it is not a truncheon - which leaves bruises - but a whip can break all your ribs. So the lads whipped the girls and basically they did right. [...] Why? Because they did the right thing. Because you have to behave like a decent person. If you have particular views on politics or society, go and advocate them. Nobody will oppose you, if you really mean it and if the people want to hear them. (Dima, RU)

Finally, a number of participants express their hope for peaceful and democratic resolutions of the tensions they see around them but fear that civil war is inevitable because 'some people have just lost hope [...] of doing anything peacefully' (Dan, UK). Per (NO) warns that what he calls 'the right wing side' is gripped by an emotional state in which they envisage 'that everything is hopeless' leading to a high degree of negativity and 'thoughts about civil war'. Like Per, Mikey (UK) hopes for more positive, dialogic solutions but fears that some violent conflict (if not outright civil war) is now inevitable:

> I think, if things continue as they are, and I think there's not the open dialogue which I think it needs to sort of put paid to people's concerns, build bridges, whatever needs to be done to secure peace, that unfortunately I think something like that is likely. Full-blown civil war? I don't think so, if I'm honest. But I think certainly the type of sectarian violence that we've seen in Northern Ireland over the decades, I think that is a very real possibility unfortunately. We've seen race riots, obviously even though Islam is not a race, but we've seen race riots in this country before. And I think if... unless there's some kind of coming together and there's some kind of mutual understanding, I think the potential is there for that powder keg to ignite again, unfortunately. (Mikey, UK)

One dissenting voice is that of Paul (UK) who pours scorn on those who believe there will be a civil war, race war or conflict. Arguing that there will never be a 'race war', he envisages change happening as a process of demographic and cultural change that is already underway:

> [...] it will happen town by town, city by city. It won't happen with a bang. It won't happen with an almighty conflict. It will happen like a creeping shroud falling over the west. It will happen like the sun setting. It'll be gradual. And if the white people of Britain did not revolt when London went, and they did not revolt when Birmingham went, they did not revolt when Leicester went. So are they going to revolt when Leeds and Manchester go? Where is the tipping point? There isn't. It doesn't happen like that [...] (Paul, UK)

He advocates what he considers a 'political solution' of 'peaceful separation' whereby those who 'just want to import their culture to the exclusion of ours and take benefits etc., they need to leave' (Paul, UK). Civil war or not, however, the future for most respondents appears bleak. For Johnny (UK), either way, the tensions he sees as gripping society determine a difficult path ahead. 'It's either, it's going to be sorted out. It's going to be very bloody', he says, 'or it isn't going to be sorted out and it's just going to be a long battle for as long as you live' (Johnny, UK).

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[31] See: https://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/feb/19/pussy-riot-attacked-whips-cossack-milita-sochi-winter-olympics

4.4.3 'Silencing' versus the possibilities of Internet and the new channels for the radical right

The third set of grievances identified in the narratives of milieu actors relate to the experience of feeling their interpretation and critique of the current situation is *silenced* and their views are either not heard or not taken into account by the media, politicians and societal institutions. This leads to a growing frustration and louder demands to 'be heard' as well as a search for alternative channels through which to express themselves.

A recurring complaint among research participants is that their views on the perceived crisis and wider societal critique are persistently silenced. Early experiences of this – in school or college – are key moments in the trajectories of some research participants. Tonya's (UK) clash with a teacher in college over an essay she wrote shortly after the terrorist attack at the Manchester Arena, compounded rather than addressed the resentment she felt. She learned from this to 'keep my opinions away from my papers' and has since experienced her views not being accepted elsewhere too:

> I did my work experience in [names company]. And they are very naturally a leftist sort of company. And they do somehow, I don't know how, bring their politics into their products. They're very pro-refugee, pro them and everything that I'm very anti, so when I did work experience there and they were speaking about things like... I'd sit and I'd smile. Because I need to do work experience. I needed that to get through college. So yeah, that was like, it was one of those things where I was beaten into submission, like, 'Your opinion is not accepted here. Do not say a damn thing.' So I didn't. (Tonya, UK)

Peter (DE) also notes that many people 'don't want to speak out' because they would be immediately tarred with the 'Nazi' brush and are afraid of the consequences. In contrast, Jason (UK) suggests that the more you are silenced, the more you want to talk about the issues that are not allowed. He recounts how his political awareness and activism had started from a moment when he had objected to his teacher comparing Tommy Robinson to Hitler:

> Now obviously, maybe Tommy is controversial to a lot, yes, but he's not Adolf Hitler. It's a very bad comparison. That day's the day I just lost it. I stood up and started saying my views. I was in Year Ten at that point. And then more and more people actually cheered me on. And so many people had told me privately that they agreed, but were too scared to speak out, 'cause they can't have any speech. (Jason, UK)

The narrative of being 'silenced' is found most frequently in the UK milieu (see also: Pilkington, 2016), where slogans calling for the end to 'silencing' are found frequently at demonstrations (see for example, Plate 4, depicting demonstrators draped in England flags with 'We will not be silenced' emblazoned on them).

Plate 5: DFLA poster at Telford action, 30.03.2018

Plate 4: 'We will not be silenced', DFLA demo, 02.06.2018

It is not only their own voices that milieu actors feel are silenced, however. Campaigns against miscarriages of justice and the failure of the police to prosecute perpetrators of Child Sexual Exploitation also incur accusations that victims' voices are not heard. Placards and posters from an action against so called 'grooming gangs' in the UK, for example, expresses a commitment of the Democratic Football Lads Alliance (DFLA) to getting the voices of victims heard (see Plate 5).

Such accusations suggest that these issues are silenced deliberately by the relevant authorities in order not to 'offend' minority communities. This reflects the intersecting narratives discussed in Section 3.3 that, on the one hand, the 'elite' do not listen to the concerns of 'the people' and, on the other, that the state, government, politicians, media, and various societal institutions support and promote the very immigration, globalisation and multiculturalism that milieu actors see as the root of the current 'crisis'. They do this through emphasising values of tolerance, humanism and liberal values and, where necessary, covering up evidence of societal issues that challenge this vision. A DFLA flyer from its Telford action, for example, accuses the regional police force of first denying any problem with Child Sexual Exploitation in the town and then failing to prosecute those subsequently arrested (Field diary, 30.03.2018) (see Plate 6).
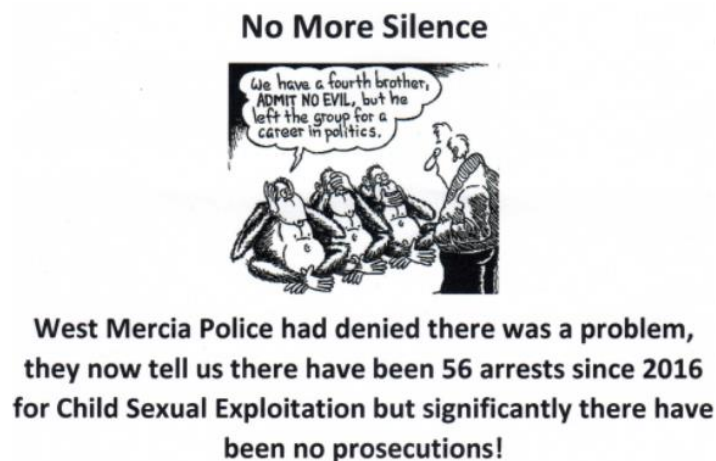

Plate 6: DFLA Action leaflet

This feeling of being silenced has two implications for trajectories towards extremism. The first is that attempts to delegitimise, and silence, political views may propel people towards more radical views or movements. As Craig (UK) elaborates:

> If you take away people's political voice, on both sides, it becomes cancerous and it basically becomes something very, very malevolent very quickly. And that's, I think that's one of the biggest dangers that we're facing. Not that there's anyone sinister in these groups. But if a political voice and a political analysis is not allowed, because it's deemed to be too extreme or whatever, where do those people go and what do they do if they're not allowed a political voice? (Craig, UK)

Jason (UK) confirms this view, arguing that delegitimising people's views by labelling them 'racist' or 'fascist' (as in the earlier example of the comparison made by the teacher between Tommy Robinson and Hitler) simply serves to amplify the protest of those on the Right and their insistence on their right to express themselves:

> When they try and call everyone, threaten everyone for different views, that's what causes... it causes an opposite reaction. It's like a spring – you push it so far, but then eventually it's going to boing back and come flying at you. That's what happens – they push political correctness and spamming these things against people like me, calling us wrong and racist and threatening us, that causes the opposite reaction. (Jason, UK)

The role of situational or interactional factors in exacerbating and amplifying these grievances is readily visible at actions and demonstrations. Reciprocal taunting and provocation between demonstrators and counter demonstrators ratchet up tension and, literally, raise the volume of voices and, potentially, encourage milieu actors to cross lines they would not normally cross. This is captured in the excerpt from the researcher's field diary:

> The counter protestor crowd has increased now to around 250-300 and periodically chants 'Nazi scum off our streets' and 'No pasaran'. The chants back are 'Tommy's going to be, your MEP', 'Oh Tommy' and 'Paedos'. The mood is quite ugly - a lot of gesturing and shouting between sides. Dan is up on the wall showing his flag and getting a lot of abuse back. (Field diary, Tommy Robinson European Parliament election rally Bootle, 19 May 2019)

Dan (UK) is proud of the fact that he has attended myriad demonstrations but never been involved in violence or arrested and sees this 'shouting at each other' as constituting democratic engagement. However, when - from his vantage point on the wall - he spots a member of his milieu trapped on the other side of the police cordon and being chased down the road by counter protestors, he rushes with others towards the police cordon and calls to people to 'come and help him'. Had he got through that cordon, he would have certainly ended up in physical altercation and been arrested.

The second implication of this feeling of being silenced for trajectories of radicalisation is that those with right-wing views who feel they are refused a public voice seek alternative channels to express those views. For this, they turn to the possibilities of the Internet and the vast number of blogs, Internet forums and 'alternative' information pages that are open to extreme right messages. In Norway, the example of how Breivik - and also 'Fjordman', his main 'ideologist - nurtured his ideas from a series of transnational right wing channels on the Internet is well known (Bangstad, 2013; Borchgrevink, 2012; Sætre, 2013). In the UK, several research participants note the importance of engagement with new media channels (see Section 3.2.3) including Alice (UK), who says that after hours of listening to conspiracy promoters, like Alex Jones, she felt the need to go out on the streets and 'do something'.

Other research participants describe more indirect routes toward the 'extreme right' milieus such as participation in net based gaming communities. Espen (NO) speaks about his experiences in gaming and later on 4chan:

> The attitudes that were typical among the gamers were towards the Right. But there was lots of joking, of course. About nationalism, the Second World War, the Third Reich, with memes about Hitler, and swastikas. There was lots of humour, but it probably was also pulling people in directions that made them more open to incorrect standpoints. I believe that the Internet has meant a lot for my own orientation toward nationalistic values, and my interest in identity. (Espen, NO)

According to Beran (2019) the 4Chan forum developed over time into an extreme right forum, where extreme misogyny, racism and even announcement of real terror actions were given an arena. While other research participants also refer to their background as gamers, and later as 4Chan associates, as significant in their later contact with 'extreme right' milieus, it is Espen who articulates most clearly its appeal:

> Yes, it has very great importance, I believe, and especially for young people. I use 4Chan a lot because there is news there, for example, if there is a terror attack, then you can see videos about it hours before it is presented in the ordinary media… and, so it happens very fast on 4Chan… And there are so many different people there. There are also lots of people into terror there[32]… (Espen, NO)

But even social media does not guarantee a voice; milieu actors had experienced being silenced or simply denied entrance to this space also. This extension of the reach of those who silence, Dan (UK) thinks, runs the risk of pushing people down a radicalisation pathway:

> That's why even with social media, taking them off social media, you're just fuelling the fire, to be fair. That's what I think. What would you rather do, someone go on and have a little rant on Facebook, or someone go out and blow a mosque up? You know what I mean. […] I think social media and marches do help people get their anger out […]. Like I said, I do think if they back, they're pushing people into a corner, you know what I mean. (Dan, UK)

Dan's reference to 'getting the anger out' through social media and 'fuelling the fire' by blocking people from it, illustrates, again, the role of emotional factors in mediating radicalisation and non-radicalisation outcomes (see also: Beck, 2015: 36; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2017: 28; Jasper, 2018).

It is important to note the significance of this narrative in the UK context and its lack of salience in others. In the Norwegian context, the relative absence of the narrative may be related to the fact that the Progress Party for many years has been very visible in Norwegian politics including in government coalitions. Moreover, actors who are explicitly hostile to Islam such as the think tank 'HRS – Human rights service' and the web-based 'Document.no' and 'Resett' have all had a relatively strong profile in Norwegian public discourse.[33] Thus, it is hard for milieu actors to claim that the radical right has been 'silenced' in Norway. Our study of milieus in Poland and Russia also captures contexts in which government institutions and societal authorities tend to support much of the critique and attitudes expressed against immigration within the milieus studied (even if state institutions may still be viewed as hostile as, for example, is the case with the police for the Polish football fanatics' milieu). In Greece, too, some sections of authority (such as clerical authorities in the Orthodox Church) might support

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[32] According to Beran (2019: 116-122) those using 4Chan include people who supported or had been involved with real terrorist actions as well as those who advertise both terror and suicide.

[33] With strong support from the Progress Party, HRS has for many years also received considerable financial support from the Norwegian state, something that causes repeated controversy among the other political parties. See: Stortinget strides om statsstøtte til Human Rights Service (aftenposten.no)

radical and even extremist right wing positions while politicians and, especially left-wing, government are viewed as hostile.

4.4.4 'Making my own choices': family, peers and significant others in trajectories towards and away from extremism

While it is political grievances - perceived threats of immigration, terrorism, Islam, cultural differences – that feature most strongly in young people's narratives of what motivates their activism, a range of extra-ideological (affective and situational) factors are important in young people's trajectories. The range and significance of such factors are explored in detail in the individual milieu reports (see Appendix 1) - here we focus on the role of the family, peers and significant others in both bringing research participants into radical milieus but also in constraining their movement towards extremism (see also Sieckelinck et al., 2019).

Parental values sympathetic to extreme right views were mentioned by some research participants in the French, Germany, Polish and UK milieus. For example, Brandon (FR) says the fact that his mother (who had been markedly left-wing in her own youth) was also 'seduced' by the Front National 'reinforced my choice'. Monaand Lena (DE) had it instilled from childhood that they should not bring Muslims home and that they should not marry a Muslim while Tonya (UK) had started to police what her Dad said on Facebook because 'some of the stuff he says, it's so... […] it does make him look a Nazi'. Respondents from Germany and the UK also talk about grandparents or great grandparents with right-wing views (Alexander, Vanessa, DE; Dan, UK).

Siblings are also important sources of encounters with radical(ising) messages. Peter (DE) had an older brother who belonged to a neo-Nazi group for a number of years and who, he says, 'was my role model, my ideal'. He says that his brother did not consciously 'steer' him politically but 'when you hear about these issues and get introduced to them, you develop opinions in that direction and then you strive for it a bit' (Peter, DE). One female Polish respondent also talked about an older brother who had been in the ONR (ONRka, PL) and notes that 'privately' her parents are 'also nationalists'. Another female Polish respondent talks about starting her football fighting by following her elder brothers into it (Sandra, PL). Gunnar (NO) also describes how his views were influenced by an older family member who was a neo-Nazi. In this case, white power music and cool skinhead style seem to have made up a sub-culturally flavoured package of aesthetics that was attractive:

> We were very militant, we expected that the war would start at any minute, and people that did not think the same way were seen as 'civilians', while those in these groups were more like soldiers. And there were lots of weapons in the national socialist groups in Norway at that time, because many of them were criminals, so they had access to, and close contact with, traditional criminals. Lots of guns and stuff… It was very macho. […] There was a romanticism around violence. In many songs of the white power music there are lines that say that the traitors should hang. […] …but then it became too militant, and the security police broke it up and some people were sent to prison, so…and I became more moderate. […] I moved to another city and got new friends… (Gunnar, NO)

While few UK respondents talk directly about encountering radical messages through family members, the role of family members active in the milieu in bringing them into it was evident. Lee (UK) recounts how, in early teenagehood, he had delivered leaflets for the BNP (British National Party) when asked to do so by his friend's father. Mikey (UK) says his dad is a very patriotic person and he thinks his own respect for discipline and order, as well as his patriotism, has come in part at least from him. Both Robbie and Dan (UK) had fathers active in the milieu, and in more extreme movements than they themselves. They had both attended their first demonstration with their dads.

> Me dad's always been Orange Lodge Loyalist. […] And he's always like, not... he's not a racist, me dad, but he's always been like, you know, he's against, he's anti-immigrant,

always has been. He's anti, very anti-immigrant. He knew after Lee Rigby, I wanted to go on something like that. And he said, 'EDL are marching at Manchester. I've got you a ticket if you want to come, for the train.' (Dan, UK)

However, discussing the relationship these two research participants had with their fathers, and engaging with their fathers themselves, revealed their role in Dan and Robbie's trajectories toward extremism was far from uni-directional. Whilst they were introduced to the movement by their fathers, their dads also played an important role in making them aware of the dangers and the limitations of actions, especially violent actions. Over the years, Robbie's dad had been a member of the National Front, the BNP and the EDL but during a conversation with him after the Brexit Betrayal demonstration, he told the researcher that he left them all because he realised violence never solves anything (Field diary, 29.03.2019, UK). This same understanding, and avoidance of violence in his political activism, features strongly in Robbie's narrative and he recognises that this position has been shaped by his dad's sharing of his experience. One Polish respondent talks similarly about his father being a 'die-hard fan' but not being into fighting and having prevented him going on away trips where the fans were likely to end up in a fight (Pawel2, PL).

Alongside these encounters with right-wing extremism within the family, there are also numerous references to having left-wing family members who were influential in the respondents' upbringing. This is noted by Julian (DE) in relation to his father, by Tina (NO) and Respondent 8 (NL) in relation to their mothers and by Espen (NO) and Lee (UK) in relation to uncles. Lee describes an incident where he ended up literally on the other side of the barricades from his uncle:

> […] me uncle, he's a very, I would class him as far left. 'Cause he were, he used to run about with Antifa and that, when he'd been, when he, I'd say he were early twenties and that. And all his mates and that, they were all, there was actually a woman and a guy who, before I got involved in EDL, I used to be right good friends with 'em. And I got involved with the EDL and [names regional movement] or [names regional movement] more, 'cause we, we were more focussed on militant left. And we were in Manchester one day and like we've gone into this crowd and they were there and we ended up fighting with them. (Lee, UK)

For some participants, having these 'other' influences is seen as an important factor in tempering their own extremism. Redford (FR), for example, notes that his grandfather had been a communist and part of the resistance (about which he is proud) and that his 'parents have always been leftists'; this, he says, had held him back from committing to voicing extreme ideologies. Brandon (FR), talking about the kind of cultural racism that characterised his school, says that his 'parents never raised him like that' and that this had kept him 'open-minded' and never 'consciously, ideologically, racist'.

It is important to recognise young people's agency in these relationships too; they are far from always the 'victims' of parental socialisation. Espen (NO) thinks that it was his uncle 'who got quite influenced by me' rather than the other way around.

> I became right wing oriented when I was very young, like I said. My father had an uncle who was a hard-core communist, so I did not say much to my father about it. But then we discussed a lot. And gradually he came to agree more with my standpoints, or attitudes. So I think that he got quite influenced by me. (Espen, NO)

This generational role reversal was also identified in the UK milieu. Paul's (UK) parents for example, were also in the BNP but had been brought into the party by their son, rather than the other way around. Anita (NO) and her father – both active with the Stop Islamisation of Norway (SIAN) - are another example of a mutual and relational process of radicalisation within the family where it was Anita who inspired her father initially to become active. However, the relationship between activist parents and their activist children was one of mutual care and respect; experience was shared by parents who wanted to keep their children safe and vice versa. For example, both Robbie and Tonya

talk about monitoring their dads' use of social media because – as non-digital natives – they tended to get too involved in responding to comments or to share too much.

Friends also feature as natural influencers in trajectories towards and away from extremism. Three participants in the French case who had been friends from childhood, formed a Corsican nationalist movement together (Gary, John, James, FR) while Brandon (FR) talks about returning to Corsica because he was deeply attached to his home but also because his friend Mikaël (FR) had created a movement that was 'extreme right'. Jonathan (MT) became involved with Norman Lowell's Imperium Europa party when a new friend, met at university, turned out to be involved. He explains that he wanted to 'share this with this friend. It became our thing and then, then I started getting into what he was saying'. In a different context, Jan (PL) talks about getting into the football fan milieu because he 'wanted approval of my friends', which he gained from fighting while Sandra (PL) describes how female fans were socialised into fighting by the older female fans and 'wanted to impress the boys that way'. In the Polish case, indeed the social bonds forged go beyond those of 'friendship', taking on the character rather of brothers and sisters in arms locked in struggle with both fans from other clubs and with law enforcement agencies.

In the UK case only three of the respondents described being brought into the milieu by a friend and in all three of these cases, this related to young men who had been friends from childhood. In one case, Johnny (UK) became involved in the Football Lads Alliance through a childhood friend (Robbie, UK) and 'loved it'. Charles (MT) tells a similar story - a childhood friend had become fascinated with Lowell and invited him to attend events with him and found people there to be not at all like they were described in the media. However, in the case of Gareth (UK), he accompanied his friend (Dan, UK) to two demonstrations but only to support him and did not pursue activism further.

Thus, friendships are both ways in and ways out of extreme right movements. Jonathan (MT), whose entry into Imperium Europa as a means to solidifying a new friendship was discussed above, recounted that, once he had made more friends (at university) and read more, he realised those initial friends were 'not the ones I would have chosen' and he started to 'make my own choices'. In the UK milieu, also there are many references that at least partially refute the connection between friendship and movement into radical groups. Thus, Dan (UK) said friends from the EDL were now moving in the direction of Generation Identity but he felt the latter was too extreme. Robbie (UK) talks about consciously distancing himself from friends who are in the EDL who send him stuff through direct messaging; he had made an initial decision not to follow them into the EDL when he was just 13 and still felt that was the right call:

> Yeah, so I was thirteen. I was thirteen year old. And I saw, I remember the poppy burning [by Islamist groups] which started it off. And I thought that's... I was same mentality as the EDL – that's wrong, it needs to be stopped. My friends were older than me, they were sixteen - fifteen, sixteen. They were going on these marches, and they told me what they'd seen, what they'd heard, what they'd said. And I thought, 'That's... it's not... I don't want to be part of that because it's...' Even at thirteen, I thought, 'That's not the right way to go about it.' You know, especially when there was that big one in Luton, where they just ran riot – 7,000 of them, didn't they, they just sort of ran riot. And obviously it looked like a buzz, but even then I thought, 'That's... I don't want to be a part of it.' (Robbie, UK)

These examples illustrate how friends moving in a more radical direction are not necessarily followed. Such encounters may act as moments of reflection and points in time when research participants draw their own lines in terms of what they believe or how they want to act.

4.4.5 Social isolation and longing for community

A key mediating factor in trajectories of radicalisation and non-radicalisation are a range of personal circumstances, emotional and psychological states, and situational experiences, which make individuals vulnerable, or resilient, to movement towards extremism. Indeed, Sieckelinck et al. (2019)

argue that youth – or rather the distinct social-emotional developmental challenges that young people face in the transition between youth and adulthood – is an important factor in itself in radicalisation.

While, as discussed above, family and peer relationships may pull people towards radical ideas and groups, the *lack* of such supportive and bonding relationships is also an important factor in trajectories toward an extremist position. Arne (NO) is now associated with SIAN (Stop Islamisation of Norway) but, of all the research participants in the Norwegian milieu, he was the one most strongly attracted to the openly national socialist Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM). He recounts how his childhood was shaped by his parents' divorce. He felt excluded, developed mental health problems, dropped out of compulsory schooling and lived off disability benefits. He had very little money and envied immigrants who received more support from the state, leading him into a criminal career and amplifying his problematic relationship with people of immigrant background. Arne had few friends as he grew up and the fact that no one visited him in jail underlined his loneliness. Against such a background he *longed for a community*, which he associated with the extremist NRM even though he was not convinced about the political dimension of the movement and did not endorse the use of violence:

> …what is tempting with the NRM is the unity, the community, to be in a group where everyone knows everyone, and where everyone feels a deep hatred for people outside the Nordic race and a feeling that it is that race that is right. That unity I feel is very exciting. But when it comes to violence? I see it as meaningless. Like I have said many times, I want them [immigrants] out of Norway but I don't want to kill them… (Arne, NO)

The kind of vulnerability due to complex social problems experienced by Arne is a cause for concern among the Russian Cossack milieu. Research participants in this milieu seek to bring young people into the Cossack movement and lifestyle as a way of helping them overcome these issues and socialise into society:

> They need to be taught how to view their lives normally so that they can build, or try to build, normal relationships in society. We have acted here not so much as trainers but as mentors, because many children have the kind of families where either the mother or the father drinks or the mother is managing alone. They need some kind of authority […] Because if that place is taken by drug addicts or alcoholics, what will they grow up to be? The girls will become prostitutes, the boys will be constantly drunk or stoned. Is that really what we want? (Dima, RU)

While there is not space in this report to give due attention to the individual life situations and problems encountered by research participants, mental health issues stand out as recurrent theme. Among the research participants in the UK milieu, half (ten) talked about their own struggles with mental health issues and half of these had been formally diagnosed. Three members of this milieu reported having attempted suicide one or multiple times and three had experienced periods of homelessness. Where family relationships were poor, respondents also expressed low self-esteem and isolation and found a positive sense of 'family' or 'community' in activist groups. In the Netherlands, one milieu actor recounted the feeling of 'real' family being related to those in the milieu rather than their blood family (18, NL). Paolo (UK), repeatedly uses the term 'family' to describe the DFLA, in which he is active (Field diary, 02.01.2019). He expresses this most poignantly when talking about the lowest point of his life (after his partner lost a baby and their relationship ended) when it was not his blood family but the 'football hooligans' who had got him through:

> Yeah. I went completely off the rails. Massively off the rails; attempted suicide, I just... yeah, everything you can imagine […] It was not the best. And then I tell you what, it was football hooligans that got me through it. Everyone can say what they want about us being this, that and the other, but they're my family. I don't speak to... I spoke to my mum maybe five or six times this year. My birth mum. I've seen her twice, both at funerals. (Paolo, UK)

While in prison Paolo says, he also got letters and phone calls from other DFLA lads from rival clubs from the north to the south of the country: 'that's heart-warming. Because you see people that usually would want to kick your head in, just wanting to know that you're all right' (Paolo, UK). For Kitka (PL), too, the bonds with his football fanatics community provides acceptance, a sense of self-worth and a feeling of adulthood. His articulation of what the group means to him also captures vividly the importance of the collective emotion of belonging, which he compares *inter alia* to the Catholic Holy Mass:

> Screams, singing together - it's like at Mass. Those people who need to go to a demonstration, go to a parade, go to mass, go hunting in the forest, then meet over some stew and vodka probably feel the same emotions. Some group that gives you the feeling you're something more valuable, something better, and when you're young, then obviously your self-esteem is zero or you're a nobody. You go to school, everyone is getting on your case, you're having a hard time at home. And here you are accepted, almost an adult. Of course, you have to like football, we all liked to play football, watch football, and we were keen on it. So that's probably why it's football, not mountain-climbing or some shit like that, but the group is part of the attraction for sure. These scarves, the colours, us on this side, them over there. (Kitka, PL)

Jason (UK), who was still living at home and studying at college when interviewed, also felt unsupported by his parents as he dealt with mental health issues growing up and had received an intervention from social services. Jason describes himself as 'very lonely at the moment' and is angry about past failed relationships and highly anxious about possible future ones (Field diary, 16.03.2020). His political activist community appears in his narrative as the family he craved during what he describes as a 'terrible' childhood:

> [...] it's like a family. [names party], for example, it's like a family to me. It's like my chairman, she's like, she's like that really wild, stubborn member of the family, I'd say. And then you've got another member, another youth member there, he is, he's like the brother type of guy. Where he's there, showing you all these funny things on his phone - memes, all that stuff. You have family like that, and then you got [names party colleague] is like that really proud parent, and he's over in [names town] chairman, and he's like that real proud parent, 'This is Jason and all that, look what he's done' and all that. He's that type of thing. (Jason, UK)

In this way, activism builds self-confidence and self-esteem. As Jermaine (UK) puts it, meeting high ranking members of the movement meant he 'felt like I was someone'. Similarly, DT (UK) describes how taking the initiative to organise events in support of Tommy Robinson had meant that 'within a few weeks of me just being a no-one outside of Downing Street, now I'm suddenly talking to Geert Wilders' security team [...]'. The personal growth and confidence in one's organisational capacities gained from taking on new responsibilities confirms the direction individuals have chosen and strengthens their motivation for political action.

4.4.6 Stepping back: charting trajectories away from extremism

The milieu approach adopted in this study means that the research participants were actively engaged in radical(ising) milieus but most had not crossed the threshold into violent extremism. This provides a rich opportunity to explore not only what pulls young people in these settings towards extremism, but also what propels them away from those milieus or the most extreme elements of them. It allows us to sketch some of the real life contexts of pathways of 'non-radicalisation' (Cragin, 2014; Cragin et al., 2015) and to see such trajectories emerging not as the result of a particular disposition, political position or situational decision but in the process of constant navigation of the milieu and negotiation of the relationships within it. While each pathway is personal and distinctive, here we highlight a number of recurring themes in the narratives of milieu actors including: disappointment; encounters with attitudes considered to be too extreme; and personal shifts in personal and political priorities.

4.4.6.1 Disillusionment and disappointment

As discussed in the previous section, the emotional dimensions of activism are significant for many research participants as they search for belonging, self-worth or the supportive family they lacked growing up. While some participants received the emotional support and sense of collective endeavour they sought, for others activism had proven to be an emotional roller coaster leaving them feeling at times frustrated, hurt, used or even betrayed. In this way, high expectations of the emotional dimensions of the new community brings with it potential *disillusionment* when expectations, be they in relation to political goals, friendship or a sense of belonging and purpose are left unfulfilled (Bjørgo, 2011: 10).

Narratives of disillusionment are most clearly articulated by those already having made the decision to leave movements (see for example: Bjørgo, 2009; Kruglanski et al., 2020). Among research participants in the UK milieu, Lee was in the process of disentangling himself from the movements, and associated relationships, in which he had been embedded for years. Talking after his release from prison (having served a third prison sentence for violent disorder related to his political activism), he associates his disillusionment in part to the failure of members of his movement to help his girlfriend and her children financially whilst he was in prison. This had been particularly hard to bear as he himself had set up a hardship fund for those convicted in relation to the same incident but, while he had made sure others had been helped out, his girlfriend had received little support. This disillusionment with others though is heavily inflected with a disappointment with himself in relation to where he had placed his priorities:

> …then I thought, 'Why? Why am I putting down my girlfriend and my kids...?' Kids are crying all time 'cause I'm in jail and they are missing their dad. Why am I putting them through this, just through my own selfish reasons basically, 'cause I want to go out and have a fight on a Saturday afternoon. I bet you, out of all them years I were involved, ten years, well seven years, give or take the jail time, I bet I didn't spend ten weekends with my kids in all them years. (Lee, UK)

Female milieu actors also express critical engagements with their milieus, as their gendered experience of the world shapes distinctive positions that don't quite 'fit' and reinforce their marginalisation in the movements. Tina (NO), for example, experiences a lack of fit between the national socialist ideology with which she associates and her own approach to gender and sexual freedom, which had evoked strong reactions in the conservative right wing landscape, and especially in the milieu around the Alliance party, to which she had been affiliated for a while:

> […] well I like the humour in the Alliance… but they have no self-irony [laughs]. I mean if you make fun of others, then you must take it when someone is making fun of you… The alt-right and the Alliance are just classical Nazism in a new package and very like …macho, at root, I would say. That is what I discovered. It is really impossible to be a female in that movement… Because you are a future mother, you should not have shagged blacks, there are so many rules… so there are very few women that fit in, or who have the possibility to fulfil these demands… [laughter] So for a woman like me who has grown up in the nineties, it is terribly difficult to fit into that thing… They are against abortion… They won't get any women on that team… So related to the question of getting women on the team for hard nationalism, then the alt-right or the Alliance is just not a fit at all! (Tina, NO)

Disappointment over the highly conservative views on gender in the Alliance was a key factor in Tina's decision to leave the party. For Alice (UK), such disappointment was more related to feeling let down and hurt by those she had trusted in the milieu but who were quick to turn on her after she was sacked from her role in the movement. Alongside the hurt, reflections on her experience led her to the conclusion that there had been a deeper lack of trust towards her because of her gender and class:

> I just started in my head just thinking, 'Yeah, like, this is, it's frustrating.' Because I do feel like I'm on the right side, but I'm also seeing so many problems. And in a way, I can't be

taken seriously, because yeah, I am a girl. I'm a middle-class, posh... People would just, people didn't know where to place me in those groups, so they would just say I was weird. (Alice, UK)

4.4.6.2 Establishing one's own red lines

In Section 3.1.1.3, we explored how, and where, research participants draw lines between what is acceptable in terms of ideological positions and political actions by identifying others, within or outside their milieu, who are 'too extreme for me'. Of course, these lines vary significantly as they are drawn relative to the individual and the milieu they inhabit. However, the way they are narrated by research participants illustrates how recognising what they find *too extreme* can clarify those lines and propel them away from extremism. Within the Dutch milieu, a research participant (2, NL) talked about encounters on Facebook with an individual sympathising with Breivik, which they perceived as 'disgusting' and rejected as too extreme. Being compared to Breivik by his schoolmates was also a wake-up call for Espen from the Norwegian milieu. Initially drawn to the Norwegian Defence League (NDL) at the age of just 13, Espen reports that he was becoming disappointed with the movement in any case because 'it was a typical echo chamber. And I liked to discuss things. So I did not get much out of it after a while' (Espen, NO). But the terrorist acts committed by Breivik on 22 July 2011 brought things to a head as he found himself confronted by comparisons of his own ideological attitudes with those of Breivik:

> The 22 July thing inflamed everything. I thought about what it could mean for my future. And my whole social life. I did not want to lose that because of me being in the NDL… And like I said, four years afterwards, I was told that I was like Breivik at Junior High School, and such things. That was a very hostile thing. I said that we absolutely do not support terror and his actions, but we (in the NDL) could support many of the things that he expressed. But not the violence, of course not. But many people are not able to separate those things. So I became a bit more silent when I grew older. (Espen, NO)

Dan (UK) describes making a last minute decision not to attend an event organised by a regional Infidels group because he was worried by something he had seen online which he felt was a 'Bit too racist, like they were a bit white pride'. Similarly, SIAN member Anita (NO), draws her own 'limit' with reference to the Nordic Resistance Movement's ambition to create a 'white Scandinavia':

> They are concerned with race and they want to have a white Scandinavia and that is something that I am not concerned with at all… I feel that crosses a limit. But I can understand why they cross that limit… thinking that there is so much mixing of races, I almost said… and if it continues like this we, as a society, will be washed out, thinned out more and more, so that is a fact. But I do not at all feel that it is a solution, to make Scandinavia white... I understand the thought that one has a problem with seeing that the 'pure race' is being annihilated or thinned out… but I really do not support them, absolutely not… (Anita, NO)

For Jan, one of the Polish research participants, the threshold related to tolerance for physical violence. On the one hand, this was related to his experience of being on the receiving end of serious violence inflicted by a rival football team: 'My head was cut. I was hit with a wooden stick with a sharp end. I was in hospital because I had to have stitches. They also twisted my arm. (…)' (Jan, PL). On the other hand, Jan had also met a girl that he had a crush on. Thus the extreme violence experienced combined with the kind of new priorities discussed in the next section to convince him to distance himself at least from the most violent football hooligan milieu.

4.4.6.3 Reprioritising life and activism

The focus on young people in this study means that the majority of our research participants fall into the age category seen as most 'available' for extremism. However, even among this age group, there is evidence that decisions to step back from milieu activism are often associated with a shift in

priorities especially in relation to new intimate and family relationships (or a new attitude to existing relationships).

Paolo (UK) notes the change in attitude among his football-related milieu when they become involved in serious relationships:

> I know a lot of lads who've got kids and that now, and they're not the same. I mean, I know lads that would have put you through a phone box two years ago, now, need to ask the missus' permission to come to the pub. Completely different. (Paolo, UK)

Paolo thought he was heading in that direction himself when he got engaged to his girlfriend and they were expecting a baby. He took a step back from the football milieu to focus on taking responsibility for his family - as he put it, 'I settled myself down. And I didn't want to risk losing that' (Paolo, UK). However, after he and his partner lost the baby and subsequently separated, he was 'straight back' to the milieu.

After many years of activism, and three prison sentences related to it, the decisive moment in Lee's trajectory away from extremism was a visit he received in prison from two social workers who warned him that, if he did not change his life and political activism after release, he risked losing access to his own and his partner's children:

> They said: 'Well, you're telling us everything we want to hear. So what we'll say to you now is if you stick to what you're saying, you'll be right.' Said, 'But if you get out of jail and come back to what you were doing, we're gonna put protection orders in for your kids and we're going to put protection orders in for [names girlfriend]'s kids.' So straight away that gripped me, the switch went, and I thought, 'That's it. I can't do it anymore. I can't, I can't run the risk of my kids and [names girlfriend]'s kids being taken away. (Lee, UK)

At the time of interview, Lee had been so far successful in making the shift necessary, but having returned to the neighbourhood he had grown up in, not being pulled back into old networks would be an ongoing challenge.

For Alice, it was the prospect of a new relationship that had made her reconsider the prioritisation of political activism in her life. Below she imagines how she would feel if someone she had just met, and liked, had heard her participating in a live-streamed show hosted by another member of the milieu:

> And I think, 'God, imagine if...' when I was on the stream with [names another respondent], it was just after I'd met this bloke, and I thought, 'Imagine if he watched this stream. And I'm sat there, nodding along to some guy talking about the Jews.' And I think, 'I just can't, I just can't...' So I've always got that. And now I've just been thinking like I want this not to be the only string in my bow. So yeah, I'll do it, but at the same time, like I said, I'm not watching politics all the time. I'm not like making it my life. And I think that's healthy; think that's better. […] I think it's better to think of it as the job. As work, the job, you know. You go to work and you're... everything's happening. And then you come back and you're worried about like tea and what we're doing tonight and shall we go and see this film. And I think it's nice to keep it separate. (Alice, UK)

A similar process of reflection, in this case provoked by getting to know a colleague of immigrant background better, had also made Samuel (MT) rethink where he was going:

> I had never spoken to a black person before in my life. So it was, you know, because it was a collegial relationship, I didn't have much choice in the matter, and then I remember this person offered me to go and have drinks with him, and I said OK. […] And you know, after repeatedly working together and having drinks, I started to realise that this person is like everybody else… And then obviously I started to feel this internal conflict within

me, I was like 'What the fuck am I doing man? What is this crap?' […] Life's too short, for hating, and all this stuff, and this guy, changed my mind. (Samuel, MT)

The importance of reflection, choice and a sense of agency in young people's movements towards and away from 'right-wing extremism' is returned to below.

4.4.7 Summary

Studies of radicalisation frequently distinguish between questions of 'why?' (root causes related to structural inequalities and ideologies) and 'how?' (agents and mechanisms of recruitment, 'self-radicalisation' etc.). In this study we have employed the notion of 'trajectories' to signal rather the complex ways in which these factors are integrated in individual journeys. We have also paid attention to the significance of mediating factors (affective and situational) in shaping the outcomes of those journeys and recognised that these outcomes, even among young people engaged in radical(ising) milieus are predominantly those of non-radicalisation in the sense that they do not cross the threshold into violent extremism. Finally, given the unique ethnographic data we have brought to this study, we are able to move beyond seeing young people's 'vulnerability' to radicalisation to highlight both what moves young people, consciously, to embrace extremist narratives, but also how they reflect and act to step back from such narratives (and actions that support them).

Empirical studies of 'right-wing extremism' usually engage with those who have left the movement and, when narrativising their journeys, already distance themselves from the beliefs they held whilst active. As our study is with actors still engaged in radical milieus, we found that strongly held visions of the world are crucial in motivating young people to become, and remain, active. We understand these as a set of deeply held 'grievances' (see Figure 4) of which we discuss the most prevalent. The first of these relates to the *influx of difference* in the shape of immigrants and refugees, that are held to represent values, attitudes, beliefs, ways of living and cultural practices that are perceived as alien and as threatening to the values, attitudes and cultural orientations in the countries to which they immigrate. Such difference is not attached only to newly arrived immigrants or refugees but often to all racialised 'others', regardless of whether or not they were born in the country. Islam and Muslims are accorded a particular threat status expressed through an association made with Islamist terror attacks in European countries and hostile attitudes towards the West expressed by Islamist extremists. The threat of Islam is articulated not only as security related but also as cultural i.e. it is the prospect of the 'Islamisation' (or 'Islamification') of Europe that is presented as the real threat. This is narrated, in the second theme explored, not only as a political threat but as indicative of a profound *societal crisis*. Visions of the future among milieu actors is pessimistic, sometimes apocalyptic, as they imagine the physical 'replacement' of white European populations through immigration and subsequent demographic change and the subsequent loss of unique national and regional identities. For the most radical, this evokes a sense of the urgent need to defend the identity of the nation through policies of 'remigration', 'peaceful separation' or, in some cases, military action. This sense of crisis, we find, is underpinned by feelings of uncertainty at individual and group levels and is augmented through mediating affective factors such as feelings of isolation, dislocation and frustration into a sense of collective existential insecurity and impending violent conflict (expressed in the expectation of an imminent civil war). While the expression of these grievances often takes 'very real and divisive forms of racialised self-understanding and hostility to multiculturalism' (Kenny, 2012: 24-25), Kenny suggests such grievances deserve to be heard rather than immediately dismissed as motivated by narrow-minded prejudice (ibid.). Moreover, the suppression of the articulation of grievance may exacerbate social division and thus fuel rather than tackle extremism (Pilkington, 2016: 175). Indeed, the third grievance identified in milieu actors' narratives - and one we found to be prominent also among research participants in the parallel ethnographic studies of 'Islamist' milieus conducted within the DARE project - is the feeling that their views are either not heard or not taken into account by the media, politicians and societal institutions and, in some cases, actively *silenced*. This increases frustration and research participants express concern that attempts to delegitimise, or silence,

political views may propel people 'underground' or towards alternative channels - online forums, gaming and information sites - and, in this way, towards more radical views or movements (see also Section 3.2). This narrative of 'silencing' in public and political arenas, it should be noted, is not prominent in all milieus. In countries where current government, and wider public discourse, is more in tune with that of milieu actors (such as in Poland and Russia and to some extent Greece), state and societal institutions remain an object of criticism but primarily for not being radical enough.

While grievances are, for the reasons noted above, at the core of our understanding of young people's trajectories towards extremism, they far from determine a path towards violent extremism. Exploring how young people narrate their journeys to date, we identify a number of vital - affective and situational - factors including the role of family, peers and significant others as well as situations of isolation, social and health problems, loneliness and desire for community that play crucial a part in understanding how our research participants came to be where they were. Importantly, we find that these factors are significant not only in bringing research participants into radical milieus but also in constraining their engagement or encouraging them to draw their own 'red lines' in terms of how much, and what forms of, engagement they have. Finding a welcoming community and gaining in self-esteem, moreover, may not only sustain participation in radical milieus but also facilitate the development of skills, self-belief and identity that reduce ontological insecurity and allow participants to see ways to pursue the change they desire without recourse to violent action.

Finally, we focus more specifically on those factors research participants narrate as being central to their movement away from radical milieus or the most extreme elements of them. These include disappointment with the movement or individuals in it and encounters with attitudes considered to be too extreme. But they also include wider life changes such as starting a family, a new love interest or the recognition of how activism might negatively impact on those close to you, leading to personal shifts in priority and life/politics balance.

4.5 Envisioning and enacting change

As discussed in section 3.4.2, research participants from the milieus studied expressed a significant degree of personal ontological and collective existential insecurity. This is reflected also in their discussion of the future which, at the societal level at least, is imagined negatively if not in apocalyptic forms. Notwithstanding this pessimistic outlook, there is an active engagement and intention to change society. In this final section, we consider how actors imagine the 'ideal', or at least better, society and how they envisage achieving such change. The primary orientation is towards means of democratic participation although anti-democratic dispositions and strategies also are found within some milieus, including, in the Greek case, examples of palingenetic visions of building a new society. Finally, we consider how research participants reflect on agency in general and their own ability to influence society in particular.

4.5.1 Imagining a better society

Images of an ideal or just better society were less frequently found in research participant narratives than dystopian visions of the future. The only commonly recurring 'ideal' found across milieus was that of a society characterised by strong community and morality, unchallenged by 'other' cultures or values. This is often imagined as society 'like it used to be' and a sub-theme of this narrative reveals a vision of a society characterised by 'traditional' or socially conservative values including a patriarchal gender order. However, individual research participants also talk about an ideal society being more equal, more just or more tolerant; this narrative is most consistently expressed in the German and Dutch milieus.

The most commonly mentioned ideal society is referred to as a 'traditional' society - one that existed before it became 'threatened' by 'others' (immigrants, those from other cultures or faiths) or by

materialistic or non-spiritual values. Milieu actors claim that such 'traditionalism', is often misconstrued as 'nationalist' or 'protectionist' when in fact they are simply defending 'the norms and values that became commonplace in the 1960s. Basically just liberal, social ideals.' (3, NL). Paul (UK) similarly complains that:

> […] the ideas they try to brand as extreme are […] basically morals or viewpoints that underpinned our society twenty, thirty years ago. Yet the ideas […] which would have been seen as extreme twenty or thirty years ago are now being normalised. So it's almost like what they do is they say, 'Extremism and extremists are people who believe in traditionalism or things that would have been normal twenty, thirty years ago. And they're extremists just because they believe in it.' (Paul, UK)

Dean (FR) refers to himself as 'a very old-fashioned person' and thinks that he would have felt more comfortable growing up in the 1950s rather than today. Christopher (FR) talks about his Corsican heritage - his grandfather is a Corsican poet, his grandmother did not even speak French - and how he idealised Corsica and its values, which he had inherited. This leads to a sense that creating a better society is achieved by 'preserving what can still be preserved' (Warren, FR). Oksana (RU) talks more specifically about wanting 'to be engaged in the revival of the Russian tradition'. Among UK participants the only recurrent ideal society referred to is that of society characterised by community with its own rules and strong morality (Dan, Gareth, UK). Such a society is described as one in which people respected one another and talked to each other, could walk anywhere and had street parties (Imogen, UK). It is also a more ethnically homogenous society – in which the English are the majority (Dan, UK) - and where families could be more traditionally organised because you could afford to live on one salary (and so have more time for children) (DT, CL, UK).

> [My] personal view is, they shouldn't be in this country. Personal view is, you don't go to another country to change that country into a country that you're trying to get away from. You go to another country to appreciate their history, to appreciate their culture. To live their history, to live their culture. Every country's different and amazing for its own reasons, its own things. Britain used to have the best community. Used to have the most amazing community in Britain, where you could walk around anywhere and say hi to anyone and everyone knew everyone's business. And now, everyone sits on their phones and keeps away from everyone. (Imogen, UK)

It is clear from the above that there is shared vision of an ideal society that is more traditional. However, exactly what is being referred to and when such a society existed, is less clear; for some it is the 1950s, for others the 1960s, for others still, it is a society they remember themselves as a child. Moreover, some of these periods - not least the 1960s – are periods associated less with tradition than with rebellion against tradition and liberalisation of values. Thus, it seems that there is a much stronger sense of dissatisfaction with the here and now than a consistent vision of the constitution of an historically existing ideal society that might be returned to.

While the research participants cited above evoke images of society two to three decades ago, Norwegian respondents look much further back for their 'tradition'. Ulf (NO) supports what he calls 'traditionalism or perennialism[34]', which is rooted in the pre-Christian traditions of Europe. Interestingly in the case of Ulf it is this ancient tradition - the return to sustainable ways of living - that points to a non-materially but ecologically oriented future.

In contrast, it is the Christian identity of Corsica that is central to Mikaël's (FR) political ideals. Among participants in the Polish milieu also, emphasis is placed on *communitas* understood as constituted by God, the nation/homeland and the family where the nation consists of 'the family of families' (ONRka, PL) and the role of the individual is to defend God and the homeland through 'honour' (Jan, PL). An

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[34] Perennialism is the belief in the importance of ancient traditions that transgress the limitations of the present (see Hakl, 2019: 59).

important line of defence of the homeland, as discussed in the previous sub-section, is to protect its homogeneity. As Mirra (PL) puts it, protecting ethnic and religious homogeneity protects not only against 'others' but against right-wing extremism:

> I think that if the state were to make sure that there were no such things, that nationalities were not mixed, then there would be less such violence and fewer such killings, because, because people would share one idea, their religions would not differ [...] even Breivik, whom you mentioned, would not introduce such solutions if his country was kept pure racially. (Mirra, PL)

Among the Greek milieu there is also an emphasis on national community alongside spirituality as forming the basis of the ideal society. Jacob (GR) states that 'in order to create a good society we should cultivate people's spirituality, because if people are spiritually cultivated then, they can be proper citizens and good parents and patriots' while Kimonas (GR) posits Orthodoxy as the key to inculcating the necessary characteristics for members of 'a good society':

> I think a good society has specific characteristics. People should be characterised by mutual love, altruism and sacrificial spirit. That is, to help others in need. Without second thoughts. They should also be honest and polite to each other. In order to achieve all these we should turn to Orthodoxy, because it is proven that the Gospel sanctifies humans. So if young people grow up with Orthodoxy and they study it and have a good spiritual guide, then they have everything they need in order to be members of such a society. (Kimonas, GR)

For others in the milieu, however, this new society requires a strong national state that defends its sovereignty against external threats presented by neighbouring countries but also the global economy. This means 'nationalism must be combined with communist politics' (Thomas, GR) to ensure agricultural production and manufacturing capacity is maintained. At the same time, defence capacity must be kept high:

> For me, a good society takes care of its economy and is self-sufficient. I don't mean to avoid commerce and communication with other countries, but in an emergency to be able to rely on itself. Otherwise, it will need money from others. Greece in particular should rely on its agriculture and its maritime industry. Socially, the state should keep all groups happy. A good society means being able to meet your needs without favouring particular groups. To have national sovereignty, not expansionist policies, but national sovereignty, and what belongs to you not to be a matter of negotiation. To make clear what is yours, from a historical point of view, and to defend that. You must not just import, you must also export. Take care of the army! The army is very important in national sovereignty. The fact that I know what belongs to me does not mean that neighbouring states know it too [...] (Theodoros, GR)

This view is reminiscent of that for which Ulf (NO) criticises the Nordic Resistance Movement i.e. wanting 'a kind of ethnically white North Korea', even though Ulf himself supports a party that aims at 'remigration'. Ulf says he shares with the NRM a wish 'to preserve people and nation and tradition and the wish for an ethnically homogenous society. But we don't share their views on the economy.' He understands the modern state as totalitarian in its pretension and imagines an alternative society where power resides in 'organic institutions' whose authority has emerged through thousands of years of tradition and mutual obligation.

One dissenting voice in this narrative is that of Will (UK) who calls return to a 'pre-modern' world 'a fantasy'. In a reflection of particular pertinence to the patriarchal dimension to this vision of the ideal society, he states:

> I hate the anti-modernist, traditionalist element. It is the ideology of GI [Generation Identity] and it is the New Right. I think it's giving up, I think it's a fantasy [...] in my view,

the kind of society they're talking about could only happen if you could reverse technological change. And if you read some of Faye's[35] stuff, it's all collapsed fantasies. It's all fantasies of an invasion and a collapse and people go back to living off the land basically. It's never going to happen, you know. Some of the views you see on the Right about sexual ethics and so on, are just fantastical. What are you going to do? Uninvent the pill? Ban it? (Will, UK)

In some milieus, or amongst particular participants in milieus, this re-establishment of a traditional society acquires a prominent and specific gender dimension. This consists of imagining the need for the return to a more patriarchal society or for society to undergo a 'gender re-balancing' (Jacob, UK) and the importance of restoring the 'health of society' (Gary, FR), which is threatened above all by sexually immoral women (Paul, UK) and the 'moral decline and sepsis' brought about by homosexuality (Jacob, GR). These visions reflect wider views on gender (in)equality in the milieus as discussed above (see Section 3.3.3).

An ideal of society found more sporadically across milieus is one in which there is more social justice, openness and tolerance and less inequality and hatred. Vanessa (DE) and Uschi (DE) both talk about a better world being one in which there was more peace and less poverty; a world, according to Marvin (DE) in which homes are given to the homeless, there are 'enough' jobs and kindergarten places and 'nobody lives in poverty'. Research participants in the Dutch milieu also consistently include notions of 'equality', 'freedom' and 'respect' among the values they cherish - indeed as part of the 'traditional' values of Dutch society that they seek to protect. However, equality here is envisaged as equality of opportunity not outcome and this discourse is accompanied by a strong resistance to 'egalitarianism' which they see as being deployed to unfairly privilege minority communities.

Openness and tolerance are also mentioned by some as crucial to a better world:

> That would be a better world for me in any case. If one can also discuss things. You don't have to agree, but you have to accept the other, yes. And uhm, that would definitely be a better world for me. […] More acceptance, more tolerance. Openness to the other that would be a better world for me, yes. That is missing. That's exactly what I'm talking about with extremism, radicalism, too, uhm, that it is a lack of open-mindedness and openness towards other topics and other opinions. (Michael, DE)

The importance of openness to others and to other views was a common narrative in the UK milieu where a number of respondents talked directly about the importance of engaging in dialogue with people with differing views. Gareth (UK) says that what would make society a better place would be 'More discussion. More people sitting down listening to each other, rather than standing on each side of a barricade, as you say, shouting at each other, getting nothing done.' (Gareth, UK). Per (NO) hopes for more dialogue to reduce the demonisation of others 'on both sides' and to emphasise, instead, a 'common humanity'. Camilla (DE) also believes that multicultural living would work, 'If all people were equally open. If everyone would give everyone an equal chance', although she is sceptical about the capacity of society to achieve that state currently.

Respondents in the UK milieu generally see the willingness to challenge your own views, or have them challenged, as a positive human quality. Tonya (UK), for example, admires her friend in the milieu, Alice, for being able to relate to both far right and far left. In sharp contrast to a sense of discomfort with ambiguity characteristic of the 'need for closure' (Webster and Kruglanski, 1994: 1050), Tonya admires Alice's capacity to see things as 'not black and white':

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[35] Guillaume Faye (born in 1949) is a French radical right oriented philosopher and activist well known for his neo-paganism, anti-modern 'nativism', associated with ethnopluralism and theorising around the French radical right's strategy of metapolitics (Francois, 2019: 91-102).

> So like she [Alice] is, she can see things from a, from the middle ground; it's not black and white. And I like that she's able to kind of bring the very, what I would consider, far right, and the far left, she can somehow relate to them. (Tonya, UK)

Of course, it is important to read this openness to difference and apparent celebration of diversity against the discussion above of the resistance of milieu actors to the influx of difference and the belief, in some cases, that difference is tolerable only when located 'where it belongs' (see Section 3.3.3 and Section 3.4.1).

4.5.2 Achieving change: Democratic and authoritarian orientations

Research participants in this study actively seek change. As discussed in Section 1.2, right-wing extremism is generally distinguished from right-wing radicalism by the willingness to use non-democratic means to achieve desired change. However, this synthesis of findings found, across most milieus, that change was envisaged as being achieved through democratic means. Exceptions to this rule include the radicalised part of the Greek milieu as well as some individual research participants in other milieus who advocate non-democratic modes of governance and are prepared to adopt non-democratic means to bring about the change they demand. Below, we consider, first, research participants' general reflections on democracy and the political process as the means to bring about change. We then explore the particular aims of democratic engagement, the limitations of democracy that they experience and the views of those who seek to promote non-democratic forms of governance and action.

4.5.2.1 'Everything's got to be done through the political process': pro-democratic views

It is among participants in the north European countries in our study, that we find the most pro-active declarations of support for the democratic process as the means to achieve change. In the German and UK milieus, research participants talk explicitly about the importance of the democratic political process in finding a way to bring about change. Cara (UK) states simply 'Politics is the only peaceful way to do it' while Craig (UK) passionately believes that nothing can be solved through violence:

> [...] first of all, you've got to have dialogue, and then you've got to have a political, a political outlet for what you're doing. Everything in this... in a democracy, everything's got to be done through the political process. (Craig, UK)

In the context of online engagement with others generally sharing his political views, Paul (UK) says that he always challenges those who claim 'There is no political solution' while Dan (UK) states 'politics is what I think people need to go into, and do it the right way'.

Most respondents take part in elections and think it is important to exercise your democratic right. Vanessa (DE) laments those who 'complain that nothing changes here. But they sit at home and don't vote [...]'. Uschi (DE) also says she will definitely vote because, 'if I want to change something then I have to go to the polls and not sit back on my ass, watch the polls on the TV and then complain'. Camilla (DE) even recounts how one year, when elections were held on the same day as the marksmen's festival, a group of them had gone to vote collectively, in uniform. This image is recreated in DT's (UK) imagination of how to achieve change by gathering up those, working class citizens, who normally do not vote and going *en masse* to the polling station:

> [...] what we're doing is we're looking at the working class in terms of the real backbone of this country: building sites, bricklayers, installation guys, you know from the groundworking side. [...] None of them would even bother even to think about voting, let alone registering to vote and going down. So what do we do? [...] when it comes to a general election it's gonna be like let's say for argument's sake Monday afternoon that you can go down and vote. 'All right lads. Soon as we've finished, we'll go, all of us we're all going to meet in this place, like we do for a march, we're going to go... all in your own cities, we all go down to the voting booth. We'll all vote and then we'll go to the boozer, have a good night out. How does that sound, lads?' (DT, UK)

While the efficacy of voting is viewed unevenly among milieu participants, it remains (not least symbolically) important. As Tommy Robinson emphasises during his election campaign for the European Parliament (May, 2019), it is a moment when everyone is equal: 'On 23rd May, we all count the same. Rich or poor, we each get one vote.' (Tommy Robinson election flyer for European Parliament elections, May 2019). Among Dutch participants, some argue that voting is not only important but a duty and can be a route into engagement with politics; one said he had become interested in politics following the 2017 elections when he had first been eligible to vote (4, NL).

In Norway, eight research participants had been members of - often moving between - four political parties (The Alliance, The Independence Party, the Democrats and the Progress Party) while in the German case study, four research participants were members of democratic political parties and three were politically active in them. A number of respondents in the UK milieu had stood for election themselves. Cara (UK) had become a city councillor in 2014 at the age of just 22 while Paul (UK) stood for election (unsuccessfully) multiple times for the British National Party. Mikey stood in local council elections for UKIP in May 2019 while Dan and Jason (just 18 at the time) stood in the local council elections in May 2021 (Dan as an Independent, Jason for UKIP). Jacob (UK) was initially registered to stand as a candidate for the Brexit party in December 2019 General Election although the party withdrew its support after his exposure by an anti-extremism organisation.

4.5.2.2 Finding a political voice: raising awareness, engaging in dialogue and shifting the debate

By engaging in the political process, milieu actors seek to find a political voice. With that voice, they aim to raise awareness of the issues they see as important, engage in dialogue with those with whom they disagree and shift the debate (or even the metapolitical climate).

Maltese participants talk about having become 'second class citizens' (Alex, MT) and needing to find a voice in the political sphere: 'we need someone who truly represents us, not politicians, the political class who represent their pocket or their bosses in the EU […]' (Alex, MT). Tommy Robinson also combines pro-democratic with anti-elite discourse at his campaign launch for the European Parliament elections (2019), arguing that the working class is not represented in politics and that people must register to vote because the only way to threaten 'them' is to take their seats (Field diary, 25.04.2019, UK). Dan (UK) is committed to 'urging people to go more into political routes' because 'the only way for me I can see people changing things is if we go and get ourselves elected.' Kostya (RU) emphasises the need for Cossacks to become 'a political force' who 'will represent themselves' in order to pursue their aims, while a Dutch participant talks about the possibility of establishing their own movement or party (14, NL).

The point of gaining a political voice is to debate ideas not discussed by other political parties; to this end Gary (FR) sought to share his ideas via a Facebook page. The need to raise awareness and 'get issues talked about' that they feel do not receive enough attention is a recurrent feature of narratives within the UK milieu. For Paolo (UK), this is the point of demonstrations:

> I think mainly the demos are more to make people aware. The demos are more because some people don't even have a clue what's going on. When we went to Sunderland, some people were like, 'What?' They don't realise that women are getting raped on a regular basis in their own city. You don't even know, because no one's reporting it. It takes football hooligans to take over your main street for you to take notice that women are getting abused in your own city. And I respect, I respect that a lot. Because if people like us, Tommy Robinson, didn't speak out, who would? It'd be a silent country and they would get away with what they want. (Paolo, UK)

However, the emphasis is placed on the importance of 'having the conversation' because you need to be able to talk about a problem in order to tackle it. Indeed, creating that open conversation, e.g. about child sexual abuse, may constitute much of the solution in itself. However, it is also important to get issues addressed in parliament or mainstream media or to force public discussion on key issues, which might require lobbying politicians:

I will lobby my politicians and I will torture them until they start talking about it. Because if you take my power away from me, then people still have power. I will literally sit on their doorstep if I have to, until they start talking about it. Because I believe that's what's right. (Cara, UK)

Espen (NO) also notes that, despite experiences that had taken him to 'the edge of becoming even more extreme politically' - referring to when a friend had been hospitalised after being beaten up by 'a gang of immigrants' - he tries to orient himself towards making change 'in the political arena […] rather than going for the more extreme actions'.

Of significance to the conclusions from this study is that political voice is not seen as uni-directional. Thus while freedom of expression is viewed as central to the democratic process (2, NL), it involves free speech for all, not just for 'us'. It is not about getting yourself heard, at any cost, but as much about the process of engagement with others and 'inviting to dialogue' (Per, NO). In the information booklet presented at the launch of his new movement, Jacob (UK) writes that 'free speech is the key to mediating between the extremes' (Activists' information booklet, distributed at launch of movement, 22.09.2019) and Dan (UK) emphasises that what he loves about political engagement is the contestation of views: 'I love all that where you shout, and both sides are shouting at each other. Because that is democracy.' (Dan, UK). Imogen (UK), in contrast, stresses that politics needs to be done without screaming and shouting because, as she puts it, 'how are you supposed to get heard if no-one can hear you?'.

Milieu actors do not believe they will ever gain significant power but seek to make change through their participation in the democratic process not least by acting as a 'pressure system' (Jason, UK). The primary aim is to influence politics and government and, in the UK milieu, this had led to a more or less formal alliance between a number of groups within the 'extreme right' milieu and the UKIP party (as then constituted) as a kind of 'strategic alliance' to try to influence debate. Those research participants engaged with Generation Identity talk explicitly about wanting 'to change the metapolitical landscape' (Gunnar, NO). Thus, in contrast to those activists who want to enter formal politics, for Will (UK), Generation Identity 'is never going to become a political party it's an activist group [that] wants to influence politicians rather than be them'. This is reflected in Generation Identity (GI) messaging. One leaflet from the movement, distributed at a demonstration attended in the UK, states GI's central goal to be 'raising awareness of our positions' and, in this way, 'influencing the existing political discourse' (Generation Identity leaflet, received at Birmingham DFLA demonstration, 24 March 2018). Will explains that GI has three main messages it wants to get across - on globalisation, the 'Great Replacement' and Islamisation - and by talking about these issues:

We want to force public discussion on to those points and we want to shift it in our direction so against immigration against Islamisation erm and people are quite receptive to it. […]And that's the strategy, you filter in by showing, oh there's support for this idea, oh actually people agree with this idea and they're willing to act on it and then platforms start to move. (Will, UK)

This engagement with metapolitics leads participants to seek to learn lessons from movements such as Greenpeace and the LGBT+ rights movements about how to make previously fringe views mainstream through political activism. Will (UK) takes inspiration from such movements, which he sees as 'really successful' in transforming society 'for everyone' and believes that the same incremental change can be achieved on issues such as immigration as right-wing criticisms are gradually absorbed by society. Gunnar (NO) also explicitly refers to the success that the 'old left' has had in influencing the general public through such metapolitics as being a clear source of inspiration for GI. In this way, some milieu actors directly seek to shift the Overton window (see Section 1.2).

4.5.2.3 Democracy as 'the least bad' option

Alongside this fundamental approval of democracy and active engagement by many in its political processes, the milieus are characterised by profound disappointment and frustration with democracy

as they experience it. Three respondents in the German milieu express disappointment in the current system and believe that voting changes nothing:

> Well personally now with politics I have nothing to do with it. Because I don't think what's going on with politics right now… I don't know, I don't think it's right, what's going on right now. […] I do go to vote, but then … I vote… I look… I vote, I mark the ballot, but I don't really look [laughs] at whom I vote or what I vote. I don't really care about that. Because I personally, as a single individual, no matter what I choose, my single voice doesn't matter very much. No matter what I choose or whom I choose. (Steven, DE)

This is echoed by some Dutch respondents who see voting as not giving people 'enough influence' (9, NL). There is deep scepticism about the democratic system in which parties and opposition parties are pitted against one another and both promise a lot with little result (2, NL) and a feeling that 'democracy often takes too long and even then no clear justice is delivered' (14, NL). In this way, democracy appears as no more than the 'least bad' option (4, NL). Notwithstanding the general belief in the UK milieu that the democratic political route is the only way to get change, there is a deep distrust in the current political system. Jason (UK) says he is angry at the state for 'not delivering democracy, not delivering what it promised us'. Tina (NO) also questions the quality of the democracy on offer: 'Now we have democracy, but do we really have it? Because the information people get is very selective' (Tina, NO).

Among the many shortcomings of democracy identified by milieu actors, is its lack of representativeness. Tracy Blackwell (of Justice for our Boys and Yellow Vests, UK), in a message announcing she will stand for election, declares that parliament is 'broken' and 'is no longer representative of the common people. The system needs complete overhaul' (Field diary, UK, 02.06.2018). Dutch respondents complain that 'much is determined by the EU' when 'they are not democratically elected' (4, NL). In the UK milieu, negative reflections on democracy also focus on the EU, specifically the tortuous Brexit process.[36] Billy (UK) says that the Brexit process has shown 'the masses' that 'democracy is a lie' and warns that this is what makes 'people become radicalized' (message recorded in Field diary, UK, 11.03.2019). This criticism is similar to one made by Anne (NO) in expressing anger that those in power refuse to accept the will of the people. Anne complains that it is a failing of democracy that when parties on the radical right are elected (such as the Swedish Democrats) other parties will not work with them: 'That is a negative for democracy in the long run' (Anne, NO). A number of participants in the French milieu also experienced political disappointment after the election of a nationalist coalition at the local level in 2015. After gaining power, the coalition started to promote a policy of 'common destiny', which included the integration of immigrants from the Maghreb and their descendants, which many milieu actors felt went against their promise to defend the interests of the Corsican people. This disappointment led Bobby (FR) to leave the nationalist movement.

A number of respondents refer to forms of more 'direct democracy' (19, NL) as a potential remedy to the currently failing system. One suggestion is that a positive development would be to extend the role of referenda so that 'citizens would be given the right to speak out on topics' (4, NL). Will (UK) also believes that direct democracy would benefit the far right and gives the example of the banning of minarets in Switzerland. However, others are sceptical about it. Tina (NO) feels that more participatory forms of direct democracy can only work in very small areas (e.g. a small city state, not a whole country) arguing that 'people do not want to sit down for hours every day and read' in order to inform themselves enough to participate fully in a democratic politics.

Greek respondents are the most negatively disposed towards democracy. Politicians are seen as betraying the country by having 'given the wealth of the country to foreign powers' (Father Tryfonas,

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[36] For a discussion of the complex relationship between the referendum on, and subsequent process of the UK leaving the EU, and attitudinal shifts in the UK, see Pilkington, 2020: 9-10.

GR), as seeking to divest people of their Greek national and religious consciousness and eventually to cause them to lose their faith and their homeland. Political parties - of both left and right - are also seen as dividing people and replacing ideologies with 'interests' (Thomas, GR). Even the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn is accused of forgetting their principles and beliefs as soon as they get into office (Maria, GR). Maria, who has voted for Golden Dawn previously states:

> Golden Dawn would do the same, nothing would change. Even Kassidiaris [Golden Dawn's spokesperson] from the moment he took office he would turn to making money. Nothing is going to change. It's all about money, there is nothing else. (Maria, GR)

The depth of hatred towards democratic politicians among the radicalised section of the Greek milieu is captured in Father Daniel's (GR) declaration that:

> […] all these 250-280 people who rule Greece [referring to the 300 Greek MPs excluding Golden Dawn's MPs] are all traitors. They need to be hanged, not only them but three generations of politicians before them. You put them in a boat and you send two torpedoes to evaporate them. (Father Daniel, GR)

4.5.2.4 Authoritarian and non-democratic alternatives

Actors in the milieus studied relatively rarely suggest alternatives to democratic modes of government; where they do, the references are vague and undeveloped. For example, Frederick (DE) talks about a 'kind of monarchy' as being an alternative to democracy and having the potential to bring 'a little bit of discipline' to the country. However, when pushed by the researcher on the process of selection of those who rule under a monarchy, he immediately backs down: 'The problem is, if you only have one up there, he could easily extract everything possible for himself and his family and everyone else is just… like with the kings back then. No, I was just talking bullshit. I don't want a monarchy' (Frederick, DE). Similarly, Hanna (DE) imagines it would be good to have someone in charge for a short period of time to get things 'in line' but she would not trust any individual to do so and so concludes that democracy is the best form of government. Amongst the UK milieu, no participant advocated a system of governance other than democracy beyond a general expression of supporting a pro-authority and pro-discipline stance including showing respect to the royal family and instilling respect and discipline from childhood (Mikey, UK).

Russian milieu participants are an exception, being more likely to favour a form of authoritarianism or monarchy as the ideal state model. Monarchy is constructed by participants as a utopian system although recognising that its implementation, in practice, would be impossible. Olga (RU), for example imagines her 'ideal world' as having a monarchy as its political system. The appeal for her is in the trust invested in the leader, who is the bearer of 'universal spiritual values', which would mean people were 'united by something' and 'believed in their government' (Olga, RU). In the Dutch milieu also, one participant advocates abolishing democracy in which he has 'zero faith' and establishing an 'absolute Christian monarchy […] The ideal is absolute monarchy' (6, NL). Some members of the Greek milieu also view monarchy as 'the best system' because monarchy 'with a good monarch' allows elites to align themselves with the national will, with 'what the citizens want' (Kostas, GR).

Without specifying a preferred alternative, Alexander (RU) claims that 'Democracy is not our way' – drawing this conclusion on the basis of the 'bloody massacre' in which the two periods of attempted democracy in Russia (under the Provisional Government in 1917 and under Yeltsin in the 1990s) had ended. An 'authoritarian system' is preferred by one Dutch respondent, also, on the grounds that democracy does not work. He feels that democracy allows certain groups 'to abuse it' (14, NL) although also recognising that, under an authoritarian system, the stakes are higher; 'if something goes wrong, then it can go wrong much worse' (14, NL).

Positive views of authoritarian, fascist or national socialist systems are found among two milieus: the Norwegian; and the Greek. Within the Norwegian milieu, it is Tina who elaborates most fully her

fascination with national socialism. She explains 'what it is that I like about Nazism' by reflecting first on what she dislikes about 'market liberalism':

> I think we all have different tasks in a society, but when you get more and more of that market liberalism, then we end up with just two sections - two classes - rather than a more organic form where everyone is equal within their differences […] it becomes like either you have money or you have nothing. (Tina, NO)

In a Nazi state, in contrast to market liberalism, she argues, there is a welfare system and state jobs 'that are available to people so that people do not have to accept anything. Real jobs are made available to everyone' (Tina, NO). In this way Tina's views combine what she calls her socialist views 'from my mother's influence' with a belief in 'a natural hierarchy'. She calls this 'fascism' and justifies these views by arguing that there has never been a democratic system in which there has been no elite and that an authoritarian regime can never succeed without acceptance from those who are governed: 'The fact that someone decides, doesn't mean that they necessarily do harm to those over whom they decide… it will only be chaos if everyone decides everything…' (Tina, NO). Thus, one of the current problems with society, for her, is that 'What is happening with democracy now, when everybody can go into politics, is that you get a bunch of uneducated guys in politics' (Tina, NO). She argues that Nazism is dismissed as 'wrong' instantly because it is 'authoritarian' but, in practice, 'no matter what ways of ruling one has, then you have got to have one form of authority or another' (Tina, NO). The problem is thus 'how do you secure that the best possible people are governing'? (Tina, NO). Other respondents in the Norwegian milieu also defend the authoritarian features of Nazism (Arne, NO) or argue for a natural hierarchical system (Ulf, NO). Ulf's view is rooted in an ecological perspective in which a hierarchical system, he says, does not mean a system that suppresses but constitutes a vertical connecting line of consciousness that stands outside the chronological process of evolution but also has the power to create transformation (Ulf, NO). In his worldview, obligations and rights are deeply contextualised and localised such that 'abstract' human rights are meaningless and mass movement and migration beyond natural geographical, language and cultural borders 'will only lead to mess, chaos and suffering' (Ulf, NO). This explains what he views as the failure of contemporary multiculturalism and the modern, global, liberal project more generally.

Some individuals in the UK and German case studies might be characterised as having ambivalent views in relation to Nazism. In both cases, their reflections come in the context of talking about how they, or people in their milieu, are labelled 'Nazis'. Steven (DE), for example, rejects the way people equate saying you are 'proud to be a German' with being a Nazi whilst also acknowledging that, sometimes, 'one might have a few thoughts about how it might be if Hitler were alive today'. Jacob (UK) expresses concern that while he doesn't want to end up alongside the 'goose-stepping Nazis', he recognises that 'Some of the things I'm saying right now I know are so controversial that the general population would say, "Yeah you're a Nazi. Just admit it to yourself."'

The most extreme support for authoritarian leadership is expressed by research participants from within the radical section of the Greek milieu. For these research participants, the violent imposition of authoritarian rule is justified by: the perceived need to defend Orthodoxy and the Greek nation from allegedly armed Muslim extremists (who had entered Greece among the wave of immigrants and refugees); the attempt by Turkey to exploit the refugee situation to challenge Greek national sovereignty; and the need to end injustice, referred to as 'racism against the Greeks'. Envisaging themselves as threatened by internal and external 'enemies of the faith and of the nation', the anti-Muslim Greek-Orthodox radicals imagine the possibility of 'deleting everything and starting from scratch' (Thomas, GR). This belief is rooted in a nationalist-authoritarian palingenetic vision which anticipates a civil war and looks for a radical religious or political leader that could 'carry Greeks on his shoulders and lift them' (Pantelis, GR). Such ideological schemes reflect the kind of authoritarian, palingenetic vision characterising historical fascism but re-appearing in contemporary extreme right-wing politics in the form of small political (frequently meta-political) 'groupuscules' (Griffin, 1991, 2003). This is epitomised in the Greek milieu by the views of Father Tryfonas who had written a

manifesto calling for a Greek awakening and liberation movement in order to rid Greece of 'traitor politicians' who act unconstitutionally and illegally and betray the country by effectively working for foreign and anti-Greek interests (Father Tryfonos, GR). He claims that all those who have been in government from the mid-1990s have implemented unconstitutional policies and must be removed and imprisoned. His call is for nothing less than revolt - for taking up arms, if necessary, in a final battle 'for religion and nation':

> […] there is no room for further concessions to the anti-Christian and anti-Greek plans of the New World Order. The time has come for the Orthodox, who always knew how to fight and sacrifice for faith in Christ, to say 'enough is enough'. (Father Tryfonos, GR)

Father Daniel also calls for revolt. All Greek patriots, he says, must take to the streets to protect their homeland and Orthodoxy, which are threatened by the New World Order: 'We have a war, a war declared by the anti-Greeks and the Jews who seek to annihilate Greece and Orthodoxy. But the people, the clergy and the army will resist the destruction of Greece' (Father Daniel, GR).

The justification of violence in the pursuit of change is only occasionally found in other milieus (see Section 3.1.2). Whilst attending a pro-Brexit rally with UK milieu actors, in the course of a general chat in a pub with a group of those attending, one middle aged man, married with four children and a good job, said he believed civil war was coming and that he was 'ready' for it. He explained that he had a barn in the countryside where he kept shotguns (ostensibly for game shooting) and said he would not hesitate to use them against people if and when necessary (Field diary, pro-Brexit rally, 09.12.2018, UK). However, this preparedness for war was not something encountered from participants in the research. A number of Dutch participants also argue that violence is justified sometimes to achieve change, but, in contrast to the radical members of the Greek milieu, this is not in order to install authoritarian rule but to remove leaders or governments that they view to be 'tyrannical' (4, NL). This Dutch respondent gives the example of feeling violence would be justified to overthrow the current Turkish government while another imagines it to be legitimate where the government itself is using violence unjustly e.g. in Venezuela, in Syria and, historically, '*against* the Nazis' [our emphasis] (21, NL).

4.5.3 Making a difference: agency (and its limits)

Agency refers to a person's capacity, or power, to think and act in a way that they choose. Its philosophical significance - in debates about free will versus determination - is important for some actors in the milieus studied here as is evident in their rejection of attempts to shape the social world as 'the devil's work' (see Section 3.5.3.1). For most, however, agency is discussed in terms familiar within social science as deeply entwined with structural forces. Attempts to enact change are enabled or constrained by structural forces actors encounter while the structures of power embedded in society also affect the capacity of individuals to act. Agency moreover is enacted at different levels with different intentions. As Lister's (2015: 146) taxonomy of agency illustrates, agency can be personal and every day or political and strategic and this differentiation in where people feel they can, and cannot, act as they choose or effect change is reflected in our data. Milieu actors are more inclined to feel able to enact change in their personal lives and immediate environment than at a societal level.

Below, we first outline where and how milieu actors feel they can enact agency to 'make a change' as well as the limits to that capacity. We then consider, specifically, milieu actors' reflections on their specific capacity to enact positive change in countering or preventing extremism. It is important to note that questions regarding agency are difficult to ask directly and thus data in this sub-section are partial and often draw on spontaneous references to this or are inferred from responses to questions asked at a general level, e.g. about whether young people can influence their environment.

4.5.3.1 'Trying to make a change': Feelings of agency or lack of agency

The ability to effect change, and the will to do so, was expressed particularly in the German and UK milieus and in relation to one's own future and immediate environment e.g. working environment. In

this sense, as Uschi (DE) puts it, 'everyone is the architect of their own fortune'. Sometimes this sense of agency is extended to the immediate locality with several of the German milieu participants being involved in participatory city district initiatives. Lara (DE) thinks you can change things through involvement in environmental protection groups like the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union in which she participates. Anne (DE) thinks 'young people can definitely make a difference' when talking about a citizens' initiative in her district. Peter (DE) sees a wider potential to effect change, articulating the connection between his participation in the Marksmen's club and a wider sense of democratic participation:

> You can change things. If I, as an individual, can make at least a few waves in the lake, what could a few hundred people who are really engaged do? Especially if they take up a meaningful topic. But that's what people lack, to live democracy. And for me, what I do there is already a part of democracy among the marksmen. Just simply participate, get involved. (Peter, DE)

In particular, participants think they can change (and are changing) things through their active participation in the Marksmen's clubs, where a number of research participants worked as volunteers or on the management boards of a particular corps or the club's youth section. For Camilla (DE) this involves acting as role model within the club, for children who are having a difficult time at home, for example, and who might open up to her. Peter (DE) believes his volunteering in the club has moved things forward in a number of areas and mentions his role in helping out the youth branch of another city's club. Other participants talked about actions that the young marksmen had undertaken such as visiting homes for the elderly and renovating a community centre (Alexander, DE).

Among UK participants, their own activism is also closely tied to their belief in the need for change and the importance to them, personally, of feeling that they have 'done something' or at least tried 'to make a difference'. At the abstract level, this is articulated less as having some kind of 'free will' than as recognising that we have to take 'responsibility for that for which we're not necessarily responsible for' (Jacob, UK). Dan (UK) talks poignantly about a plaque he had seen on the wall of a Peace centre he had visited and how its words had resonated with his own fears about an imminent civil war and the need to try actively to prevent it:

> […] it was a little plaque on the wall, and the words was: 'We believe that lives should not be lost or ruined because of man's inability to resolve differences peacefully. However, to live in peace, we all have a responsibility to make it happen.' And I took a picture of that, because that really, that did stick in my head, like. I don't want that. I've got nieces and things. (Dan, UK)

Paul (UK) sees the danger of those involved in nationalist causes becoming enveloped in negativity and that it is important not to be sucked into that. Of himself, he says, 'I'm not negative, I'm positive. And I'm full of ideas, and I'm full of a will to change things' (Paul, UK).

For UK respondents, the feeling that they are trying to bring about change is central to their activism and it is among these respondents that we get a sense of the 'quest for significance'[37] as playing an important role in motivating activism (see: Kruglanski et al., 2020: 180). Robbie (UK) notes that 'you sort of feel proud to be doing something. You know, that's what I like about it - it's knowing that I'm trying to make a change […]'. Similarly, Jason (UK) says 'I need to be able to say I've fought and done my part to try and make this world a better place' while Dan (UK) also explains his activism as driven by wanting 'to make a difference':

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[37] The 'quest for significance' refers to the fundamental psychological desire to matter, to be someone, to have respect, esteem, achievement, meaning, competence and control (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2017: 210).

[…] this is why I do what I do. […] I want to make a difference, you know what I mean. I want to live for something. Even, even if people don't agree with me, you know, what I feel is right, I want to do something. (Dan, UK)

For one research participant in the Russian milieu, who had formerly been involved in football hooliganism and thus also often in conflict with the police, participation in the Cossack movement had given him a sense of having 'found a way to do good, but within the framework of the law, so that I don't end up in prison for it' (Vladimir, RU).

In the Greek milieu, agency and the will to effect change was articulated only by the radicalised segment of the milieu where it was linked to the protest against the construction of the mosque in Athens, preparations for violence against immigrants and Muslims and as part of a wider war to defend 'faith and country' and the advancement of anti-democratic political agendas.

Lack of agency or inability to influence events is also only partially expressed in the milieus. In the case of the Dutch milieu, only one respondent mentions a sense of being unable to determine the future and this relates specifically to the inability of The Netherlands as a country to determine its future 'as long as we remain a member of the EU' (4, NL). Among the German milieu, a number of participants felt that change could not be brought about through demonstrations (Marvin, Hanna, Vanessa, Uschi, Lara, DE) but only Marvin (DE) and Steven (DE) think that in general it is not possible to change much in politics or society. However, there is scepticism about politicians' lack of will to 'listen to younger people' (Ronja, DE). Anton (DE) sees German politics as being dominated by the older generation, which makes it very difficult for the younger generation to 'actively change anything'. This, he says, should not stop them trying – and he expresses admiration for Greta Thunberg's determination to express her views on climate change despite her age - but he thinks that German society is not 'ready' to listen to the younger generation yet. Vanessa (DE) believes young people are ignored even when they take action and recounts how, when she had attended an event alongside club chairmen, the city's mayor had not shaken her hand. This had made her sceptical about so-called 'equality'.

Tina (NO) talked about a period in her late teens when she felt frustrated and disappointed that others around her did not engage or seek to change the world in the way she felt compelled to. Interestingly her reflection on this includes the recognition that her challenging nature was uncomfortable for others and that when she was 'depressed' and inactive 'people liked me better, I was more socially accepted' (Tina, NO). While this is not articulated often by participants in the milieus studied - or brushed off as par for the course, often by male participants - it illustrates that sense of social responsibility that actors in milieus carry about being compelled to 'make a difference' even if others thought you were wrong (see Dan, above).

In the case of actors in the Greek milieu, lack of agency or ability to change or influence was sometimes expressed as a feeling that they had no choice but to leave the country. As discussed in Section 3.3.1, this was closely connected to a pessimistic vision of the economic situation of Greece especially employment prospects for young people. For Zinovia (GR) young people are forced to migrate out of Greece because 'There are not enough opportunities now and whatever you want to do, you have to struggle very, very hard'. Anargyros (GR) agrees that 'there are no prospects for anyone now' and feels 'totally pessimistic' about the country's future. This was also the case for one French participant who said leaving the country, in order to earn money, was his only option for a good future (Sauveur, FR). Ironically, perhaps, his imagined destination is Greece.

In contrast, in the Russian milieu, inability to change the world was linked to spiritual rather than material issues. The more religious participants in the milieu, for example, rejected the very principle of trying to change the world because 'The highest Christian virtue is to love the world that God created. […] All thoughts that something needs to be changed here come from the devil' (Nikolai, RU). It was acceptable to Nikolai only to 'change yourself, through repentance, through confession' (Nikolai, RU). Although some milieu participants saw their engagement with the Cossacks as a way of participating in shaping the future course of the country, even they imagined that the future would

be determined by external events. As Petr (RU) puts it, it is only those 'at the very top' that can 'sort it out'. Milieu participants see the only change they can make as being at the individual level or by influencing their immediate environment: 'if we actively work on ourselves, around us, with our relatives, acquaintances, friends, then maybe something will come good […] (Tihon, RU). The Cossack organisation and 'idea' is to bring 'order' to the 'space around you' by inculcating the 'traditional element missing in the upbringing of young people' and thus giving those young people the basis from which to 'make choices in the future' (Kostya, RU). Some research participants also noted that they were members of social groups (e.g. youth) that were systematically ignored in society (Marina, RU) and 'squeezed' by the state economically when in fact 'we should do everything so that young people stay in the country' (Evgeniy, RU).

4.5.3.2 Making a contribution to countering extremism: A role for milieu actors?

In Germany and the UK, and, to a lesser extent in other milieus, research participants talked about enacting change specifically in relation to countering extremism. This is important because in explaining their desire to tackle these issues, milieu participants move beyond deviance disavowal - denying their 'extremism' - by indicating an openness to dialogue and to 'others' and a direct engagement with thinking about how to prevent radicalisation.

The first contribution noted is simply one of openness. The Marksmen's clubs that constitute the German milieu studied are described by milieu actors as genuinely open to everyone and thus a place where people can meet others, including those who are different from you (Maurice, DE). Vanessa (DE) says that she has not encountered any racist or intolerant attitudes in the club she attends and that this openness to anyone, regardless of culture or nationality, can protect against radicalisation. This finding in the German milieu is of course at least partially a result of the fact that whilst the Marksmen's clubs are associated in the public mind with right-wing positions and attitudes, and are viewed as a potential recruiting ground for extreme right-wing groups, the membership is quite mixed.

Even in the UK milieu, however, where all participants were activists in movements routinely considered 'right-wing extremist' or 'far right', there is an insistence on their openness to difference, and dialogue. Adam (UK) says that he is not only 'tolerant' of 'others', but proactively engages with work colleagues who are 'predominantly foreign' because he wants 'to learn things about people, their nationalities, how they integrate'. Mikey (UK) is a volunteer with a homelessness charity in the city, where he regularly talks to people from a wide range of backgrounds and appreciates the dialogue that is generated:

> Now, myself, we, we volunteer, sort of feeding the homeless in Birmingham once a week. And quite a few of the volunteers are Muslims themselves. And we have this conversation with them, and we actually learn quite a lot about Islam and the culture that we didn't really know before. […] And they sort of learn about a lot of our concerns and think, 'Okay.' And that sort of, you know, you've got those, the boundaries coming down, and you sort of, you appreciate what the concerns are. You still might not necessarily agree with each other, but you, you've got that dialogue there going forward. (Mikey, UK)

It is notable, however, that the context of this dialogue for both UK participants is outside of their activist circles and, even in the German milieu, members say that while the clubs might be open to all in theory, in practice there are often few people of migrant background or other faith in the club (Maurice, DE). Clubs are often comprised of predominantly German members who share certain views, including on the topic of 'foreigners' (Mona, DE) and it is impossible to prevent those with racist or right wing views joining (Julian, DE).

Beyond simply being 'open' to others, participants also talk about the role of their movements in preventing or countering extremism. This role is primarily informal. Several participants felt that involvement in Marksmen's clubs protected against radicalisation - as Anne (DE) puts it 'when you are in such a strong community, it is much harder to radicalise someone'. The simple, everyday practices within the club - from 'helping each other' (Peter, DE) to involvement in the democratic running of the

club (Michael, DE) - allow people to learn to speak their mind (Peter, DE) and feel integrated and comfortable (Lena, DE) in a positive, inclusive environment that prevents people looking for some other, more radical, community (Michael, Leon, Steven, DE). Uschi (DE) describes how she simply invites 'haters' and more extreme actors who approach the milieu of marksmen, to participate in everyday actions, to chill out, have a beer and 'talk'. Julian (DE) takes a somewhat different approach, describing how he responds angrily to people who make extremist remarks in the club:

> [...] if he does something like that and people from outside notice it, that just confirms what people think, and a person like that can destroy a whole club. So I just get angry. Because for me this club is just, yes, simply a retreat [...] I want to relax, I don't need someone sitting in front of me and saying, 'asylum seekers are all shit and bla bla bla and Heil Hitler', or whatever. [...] When I think about the fact that really extreme Nazis are also against disabled people, it doesn't work for me at all. (Julian, DE).

In the Greek milieu, a number of research participants also note their response of calling out extremism, or responding in a way that seeks to calm it. Giorgos (GR), for example says 'When I come across extremist comments and views on the Internet, I tend to defend moderation'. For these Greek respondents, such a response often draws on Christian principles. Vaggelis (GR) believes that extremist ideas in society need to be addressed 'By providing the right education, education with principles' (by which he mains 'national and religious principles').

More formally, the Marksmen's clubs are an active site of youth work, which also protects against radicalisation (Frederik, Peter, Camilla, Steven, DE). More specifically, they are involved in a number of initiatives to counter right-wing extremism. The youth organisation of the umbrella organisation of 'The Historic German Marksmen's Brotherhood Federation' ('*Bund der Historischen Deutschen Schützenbruderschaften*') organised a campaign called 'Marksmen against the Right' (*Schützen gegen Rechts*). Setting out the principles behind the campaign, its youth organisation, known as the 'Federation of the St. Sebastianus Marksmen's Youth' ('*Bund der St. Sebastianus Schützenjugend*') declares, 'the commitment to a colourful country and a living democracy is as natural as the rejection of all forms of radicalism'. It continues:

> For us, home ('Heimat') is the place where all people are welcome; regardless of their skin colour, religion, gender or whom they love. We do not exclude anyone and are open to diversity. For these reasons, we clearly stand for peaceful coexistence in a diverse society in which every person is regarded as equal and consistently reject all forms of racism, sexism and nationalism as well as all forms of discrimination against people. (Federation of the St. Sebastianus Marksmen's Youth campaign 'Marksmen against the Right'[38])

This youth organisation has also adopted a declaration of incompatibility with the AfD (Alternative for Germany) party, which means, that the organisation does not accept members of the AfD and its sub-organisations. Its campaign against the Right also includes activities that aim at 'sensitising children and young people to the dangers of political extremism' and 'increasing resilience of children and youth to the influence of extremist groups' (Federation of the St. Sebastianus Marksmen's Youth campaign 'Marksmen Against the Right'). In the course of the campaign against the Right, wristbands with the slogans 'Marksmen Against the Right' (*'Schützen gegen Rechts'*) and 'For A 'Colourful Country' (*'Für ein buntes Land'*) were also produced, to be distributed to marksmen at various marksmen's events (see Plate 7). While it is difficult to verify the degree of uptake of these federation level campaigns, a number of activities at the level of individual clubs were encountered during fieldwork (Julian, Peter, DE) including the founding of a multicultural group of marksmen in one of the marksmen's clubs studied in which the researcher was allowed to participate as a guest marcher. Related activities include initiatives and actions in which the clubs helped refugees. Julian (DE), for

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[38] This is taken from the organisation's website: https://www.bdsj.de/projekte_aktionen/aktiongegenrechts/

example notes that during the 'refugee crisis', many people in his club had 'even accommodated refugees'. Another potential contribution to countering radicalisation might be speeches, or parts of speeches, by people from the management board of the Marksmen's clubs, in which things like cosmopolitanism ('*Weltoffenheit*'), diversity, tolerance and multicultural coexistence were talked about.

Plate 7: Wristband with slogan 'Marksmen against the Right' ('*Schützen gegen rechts'*)

In the UK, some participants believed their movements had a distinct role to play in preventing radicalisation and countering extremism. This is particularly strongly voiced by members of the Democratic Footballs Lads Alliance, whose motto is 'Against all extremism' (see Plate 8). The failure, in public discourse, to distinguish between organisations that do and do not promote extremism is a particular source of frustration to DFLA activists, as explained by Mikey:

> […] for whatever reason, mainstream media has accused us of being some kind of anti-Islam group. We've been compared to the EDL, Britain First. We're often sort of compared to sort of like fascism groups, like National Action. And us, as an organisation, we wanted to dispel that myth. Because we don't stand for that. One of our logos is: 'Against all extremism,' and that includes obviously the usual suspects, things like IRA, Islamists, but also far-right groups like National Action. We just basically condemn extremism in all its forms. (Mikey, UK)

Plate 8: DFLA placard, Telford action, 30.03, 2018)

As discussed in Section 3.2.6, a number of research participants talk about the importance of movements and networks in 'keeping a lid on' radicalisation and containing extremism. Paul sees

himself as consciously redirecting vulnerable young people away from the movements he considers extreme and doing a much more effective job than what he calls 'crazy deradicalisation courses' (Paul, UK). Participants in the Russian milieu are also highly critical of state counter-radicalisation programmes such as the Yarovaya amendments (2016) to existing counter-terrorism legislation, which, in their view, are used less to identify terrorists than to 'limit the freedoms and rights of people who are unlikely to pose a threat (Svyatoslav, RU). Espen (NO) also exemplifies how an actor with insider status and knowledge may have an important role in addressing what he sees as a danger for eager young people who might be attracted to real violent extremist actors. Here he feels some responsibility for preventing the youngsters' movement towards more extreme directions, again using the channel of various Internet forums and social media:

> I have some contact with a group of youngsters that I try to keep a little bit on the straight and narrow. [...] ... I mean when the Nordic Resistance Movement is growing it is easy for some young people to be attracted to them... I try to turn them towards a more peaceful and democratic path through Snapchat and such channels... I try to have some responsibility there. They are very much into the typical 4Chan thing, with frogs, with swastikas and such things, that gaming humour [...] I try to keep them in an ok direction, so that they don't develop into something wrong. Especially if they have positive things to say about Breivik and the guy from Australia.[39] Then I really tell them what I think... And maybe they listen to me... (Espen, NO)

Jacob (UK) describes how, one of the first people to join him in a 'collective' he had established, from which to grow a 'proper far right movement', had started to display worrying signs of radicalisation and he had had to carefully 'manage him out' of the group. When asked if he had thought about reporting this individual to the authorities, he responds:

> Talked about it. And I very much considered it. And especially when he shaved his head. Yeah, I got a couple of lads together for advice, and asked them for advice. And we, I gave them a time limit. I started putting in targets. If he doesn't stop talking about it, if he carries on this way, then I'll start doing this - I'll ramp up the pressure to... and I'll just bring up conversations like you know, 'You're not going to get any resources in this while you're like that.' And I just started ramping up the pressure [...] I was just setting my own boundaries. [...] and I was just trying to... continued trying to coach him, but... and when it wasn't working I'd add to the pressure and managed him out basically. (Jacob, UK)

A number of research participants in the UK case talk about the importance of opening up rather than closing down dialogue with actors in extremist milieus in order to counter radicalisation. Two respondents argue that radicalisation can be prevented by 'listening to' so-called extremists. Tonya (UK), for example, explains that her friend Alice (also a research participant) had justified her interaction with an influencer on extreme right social media who Tonya thought was too extreme, with the logic that 'If you've tried to humanise them and actually speak to them, they're more likely to listen.' As Cara puts it, 'If I'm wrong on these things, let's have a conversation. Don't just shoot me down. Do not call me a Nazi, do not call me a racist - have a conversation with me'. Respondents in this milieu describe themselves as ready and eager for such dialogue while portraying their opposite numbers (especially the 'far left') as less willing or unwilling to engage. This was not all talk. Three research participants in the UK milieu engaged in a 'mediated dialogue' with three participants from the parallel case study on 'Islamist' radicalisation organised by the DARE researchers, inspired by

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[39] Here Espen refers to Brenton Tarrant.

sentiments expressed by these milieu actors about their desire to engage in dialogue with the 'other'. One of them, Dan (UK), says he had been told he was intolerant for years - due to his activism - but the dialogue had shown otherwise:

> I thought to myself, 'Well, I am a bit, I am tolerant, yeah.' People have called me intolerant for years, and I actually started to think I was a bit, but then that [the 'mediated dialogue'] happened, so... And I will be doing a lot more of it. I love doing it. (Dan, UK)

Takis (GR) also believes that dialogue is the best way of tackling extremism:

> In normal conditions people can solve their differences through dialogue, through logic and more generally through dialogue. […] I can understand both the point of view of an Islamist extremist and the point of view of an extremist right-winger. Both of them are partially right, but the point is to strike a balance so that neither need to exist. […] Yes, I want things to be resolved on the basis of dialogue, on the basis of logic and on the basis of factors with a solid basis. I am certainly against violence; I condemn violence wherever it comes from. (Takis, GR)

One UK research participant, Jermaine, had become involved in Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) work more formally after being referred to the UK Prevent programme by his college. Entering the counter-extremism programme is voluntary, however, and Jermaine describes his decision to agree to it primarily with the objective of undertaking 'reconnaissance' for his movement. However, he struck up an instant rapport with the mentor to whom he was assigned, finding they had similar backgrounds and interests. Most importantly, the mentor asked him to research the issues he was concerned about for himself and check out the interpretation being presented by his movement. This process, alongside the confirmation his mentor gave him in terms of his own skill sets and future potential, led him to doubt his earlier beliefs and conclude that, in fact, he 'really had no far right mind-set' (Jermaine, UK). He not only withdrew from activism but started to engage in PVE himself by talking to young people about his own trajectory and experience and becoming involved in an NGO employing 'formers' to deliver PVE training.

4.5.4 Summary

In this final section, we have explored how actors in the milieus studied imagine a better society and if, and how, they might achieve the change they seek. Our first finding is that utopian images of a future world are rarely encountered; even images of a better society were found infrequently compared to the dystopian visions of the future discussed in Section 3.4.2. The only commonly recurring 'ideal' found across milieus was that of a society characterised by strong community and morality, unchallenged by 'other' cultures or values. This is often imagined as society 'like it used to be' and described as 'traditional', that is rooted in socially conservative values and a patriarchal gender order. However, in some milieus and among individual research participants a better society is one characterised as more equal, more just or more tolerant.

A second key finding is that, despite the largely pessimistic vision of the future shared by research participants, they actively seek change. Moreover, across most milieus, research participants envisaged such change being achieved through democratic participation. The most vociferous proponents of democratic means – who insist that 'everything's got to be done through the political process' - are found among participants in the north European countries in our study, including in those milieus where there is most complaint that they are denied a political voice. By engaging in the political process, they seek to raise awareness of the issues they see as important and shift the debate (or even the metapolitical climate). Milieu actors also recognise, however, that political voice is not uni-directional and they seek not only to make themselves heard but to engage in dialogue with those with whom they disagree.

Alongside this fundamental approval of democracy and the active engagement of many participants in its political processes, the milieus studied are characterised by profound disappointment and

frustration with democracy as they experience it. In this sense, democracy often appears as the 'least bad option' rather than as a positive choice. However, at the same time, alternatives to democratic modes of government are rarely suggested or are referenced in ways that are vague, undeveloped or immediately withdrawn. Exceptions to this rule include the most radical part of the Greek milieu as well as some individual research participants in other milieus who advocate non-democratic modes of governance and are prepared to adopt non-democratic means to bring about the change they seek. One French respondent, for example, was serving a prison sentence for terrorism-related offences. Positive views of authoritarian, fascist or national socialist systems are found primarily in the Greek milieu where we also encountered palingenetic visions of building a new society and participation in paramilitary organisations designed to bring about such radical change by force.

Finally, we considered how research participants reflect on agency and their own capacity to influence society in particular. Here, with the exception of individuals who perceive seeking societal change as the prerogative of God, research participants understand agency as their capacity to act and feel more able to enact change in their personal lives and immediate environment than at a societal level. Nonetheless, the majority are strongly committed to trying to 'make a difference' even though they are also well aware of the structural constraints on their capacity to achieve change. In a small number of milieus – primarily in Germany and the UK - research participants talked specifically about enacting change in relation to countering extremism. This often took the form of informal practices of calling out racism or extremism when they encountered it. However, in some instances organisations had been involved in counter-extremism actions or, in one case, saw its very mission as being to stand up 'against all extremism'. Individuals had participated in dialogic interventions aimed at countering extremism and, in one case, begun to work with the government counter-extremism programme to which he had himself been referred.

5. Conclusions

This report brings new insight into how young people engage with radical(ising) messages and navigate the settings in which they encounter them through the ethnographic study of 'extreme-right' milieus in nine European countries. We have conceptualised these journeys not as ones of radicalisation but of trajectories through 'extreme-right' milieus. This reflects a shared endeavour with those working within radicalisation studies to understand violent extremism as the outcome of a *process* (rather than as embedded within specific ideologies or beliefs) alongside a number of concerns we have about the limitations of the concept of 'radicalisation' for understanding, and preventing, movement towards violent extremism. It is to these concerns that we turn in formulating the conclusions of the study reported on here.

Our first concern relates to the indeterminacy of the object of study when studying 'radicalisation'. The confusion invoked by the concept of radicalisation (see: Sedgwick, 2010) has not abated over the last decade but, arguably, grown as the term has been applied to a wider range of extremisms and contexts without due attention to establishing the continuum along which the movement towards the 'radical' is measured and where 'moderate' lies on it. Our study – drawing on very different milieus in a range of national contexts – confirms Sedgwick's observation about the shifting placement of markers of 'moderate' and 'radical' and his conclusion that 'radicalisation' is a necessarily relative concept. However, it complicates the picture further by asking what actors in 'extreme right' milieus themselves understand to be 'radical' or 'extreme'? Actors in the milieus studied acknowledge the presence of right-wing extremism but, in most cases, dissociate themselves and their own organisations (or wider milieu) from such extremism. Across most milieus there is a strong conviction that groups and individuals are mislabelled 'extremist' and that this labelling is disproportionately, and inaccurately, attached to a large section of right-wing activism. In demonstrating their non-association with 'extremism', research participants primarily refer to extremism as marked by the willingness to engage in violence; something that the vast majority reject. Some also consider actions

short of violence to constitute extremism, often characterising this as intent to 'impose' one's ideas on others, whilst defending the freedom to hold and express such ideas. Some research participants distinguish between 'radicalism' and 'extremism' in a similar way - seeing radicalism as seeking fundamental (at the roots) change of the status quo while 'extremism' is considered to require the employment of violence to this end. This means that some envisage 'radicalism' as having a potentially positive connotation. Others, however, use the two terms largely interchangeably and denounce both. Finally, a minority of actors – mainly from the Greek milieu – accept the label of 'extremist' and actively promote violence to achieve their political aims.

On the basis of our study, we suggest that, while it may not be surprising that actors in these milieus distance themselves from the 'label' of extremism, it is important to take account of such disjunctures between etic and emic understandings. This is, first, because such labelling - attributed variously to the state, the media, academia, the public or the police - further undermines already weak trust in social institutions and becomes a grievance in itself. It may thus have iatrogenic effects in terms of the prevention of violent extremism (see: Lindekilde, 2012). Second, the tendency to apply the label of 'extreme right' or 'far right' to a large part of the spectrum of right-wing activism, without clear reference to where 'moderate' and 'extreme' lie on the continuum, threatens to reduce such notions to empty signifiers. This, milieu actors say, may have the effect of backing people into a corner where they might as well become more radical since they are already labelled as such. This supports Sedgwick's (2010: 491) suggestion that, if the space that may be described as 'moderate' is contracted to the satisfaction of all agendas, the consequence may be the exaggeration of the security threat posed and the exclusion from normal public and political processes of those deemed radical. As a result, such actors may become more radical in security terms, since exclusion from normal processes encourages a search for alternative means of action. Thirdly, the wide application of notions of right-wing extremism may undermine the drawing of distinctions (red lines that should not be crossed) within 'extreme-right' milieus. Our study identifies clear markers of extremism across milieus. For most, 'extremism' starts when one uses, or supports the use of, violence to bring about change while many also consider some views to be intrinsically 'extremist' (most frequently 'Nazi', 'anti-Semitic', 'white supremacist' or '(biologically) racist' views). These red lines are important and are the empirical manifestation of what McCauley and Moskalenko (2017: 211) identify theoretically as the 'weak relation between attitude and behavior'. Recognising that a shift towards more radical ideas does not necessarily lead to radical, including violent, behaviour, moreover, has significant implications for efforts to prevent and counter extremism. It may lead to the diversion of attention to those inaccurately identified as on a trajectory to violent extremism whilst failing to recognise, and mobilise the agency of, those who act in radical milieus but practise strategies of non-radicalisation and whose experience could inform and enhance CVE practice. This is not to take emic understandings as 'truth' or to suggest that attitudes expressed by milieu actors are not socially divisive or harmful and should not be challenged. It is simply to recognise that the most effective response is more likely to be found if the nature of the threat posed is accurately identified. It is also not to suggest that there is no relation between radicalisation of attitudes and the manifestation of such attitudes in action. The very principle upon which the 'metapolitical' approach of Identitarian movements such as Generation Identity operate assumes that shifting the attitudinal climate allows the eventual implementation of radical political acts such as 'returning' migrants. Moreover, the presence of a non-violent but vocal and visible wider milieu sharing many of the views articulated by those prepared to enact those views through non-democratic or violent means is inevitably used to legitimise violent extremism.

Our second concern relates to the danger of conflating engagements with radical messages and agents as a process of radicalisation. This, we argue, on the basis of this study, underestimates the role of agency in this process. We are concerned with a particular tendency to see young people as inherently vulnerable to 'radicalisation' or 'radicalisers' and thus to envisage radicalisation as a process done to them either by external agents or over-exposure to extremist messages (encountered especially in online spaces). The synthesis of findings across the nine cases studied here confirms that online spaces are a significant source of encounters with radical(ising) messages including hate speech, racist

memes, 'jokes' and images, invitations (and pressure) to join extremist movements etc. These online encounters are powerful since milieu actors generally view information accessed online as more 'trustworthy' and view online space as today's 'public square' in which 'people like us' can communicate our ideas and 'be heard'. However, in evaluating the significance of encounters with extremism both online and offline, it is important not to assume that messages encountered directly impact on attitudes or behaviour. Across the milieus, participants emphasise their critical engagement with what they see or hear and pride themselves on not relying on a single source and checking those sources to get as near to 'the truth' as possible. They claim to make their own judgments about their thresholds regardless of the views or actions of others. While we should be attentive to the fact that participants may be inclined to emphasise their own agency in narrating their stories, as researchers we should also not over-interpret the power of messages encountered to 'radicalise' individuals. Respondent narratives also reveal a multitude of ways in which individuals negotiate, avoid or manage social relationships to fit the attitudes and behaviours with which they are comfortable rather than adapting those attitudes and actions to conform to those around them. Moreover, this reflective and critical capacity is something that might be mobilised in tools and actions designed to prevent extremism.

Our third concern is the shift of focus to the 'how' rather than the 'why' when looking at the engagement with radical ideas through the lens of radicalisation. Whilst we recognise the frustration with attempts to answer the 'why?' question through the identification of the 'roots' of radicalisation in individual profiles (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010: 810; Borum, 2011a: 14; Horgan, 2008: 80; Beck, 2015: 26-30) or inconsistent correlations between objective indicators of inequality and radicalisation (Franc and Pavlović, 2018), we find a range of grievances that consistently appear in the narration of trajectories through 'extreme-right' milieus. Although the majority of research participants are not, by objective measures of socio-economic well-being, materially deprived, they perceive themselves to be structurally disadvantaged. Sometimes this inequality is recounted as the consequence of macro-economic crisis (especially in the case of Greece) but it is understood more usually as the result of the political decision-making of 'elites' who uphold policies of globalisation and multiculturalism that threaten the material and cultural comfort of existing inhabitants through the arrival of immigrants and refugees and the growing presence of Islam and its followers. Perceived and experienced inequalities are articulated by research participants as injustices primarily where these relate to the unfair treatment of milieu actors, due to their political views and activism. This is articulated in relation to a range of social institutions but especially the police and employers and is, almost always, narrated in relation to the perception of 'minority' groups being afforded preferential treatment in similar spheres. This gap between societal elites – referred to as the establishment and its institutions - and 'the people' is identified as the primary site of inequality articulated by actors in the milieus studied and indicates the difficulty of disentangling perceived economic and political inequalities. However, while milieu actors feel alienated by the 'elites' they identify, they do not challenge their power through a discourse of equality. Equality is *not* seen as an ideal and, for many in the milieus, inequality is viewed as 'natural' and there is a tacit acceptance of the social structures, in which the power of the establishment and elites resides, especially where the latter are perceived to be upholding traditional values and distinctive characteristics of the nation including traditional gender performativities.

This raises the important question of whether subjective, or 'perceived' inequalities, are grievances that should, or could, be addressed in order to prevent radicalisation? Our fourth concern is thus that grievances, even where their expression takes 'divisive forms of racialised self-understanding and hostility to multiculturalism' should be heard rather than automatically dismissed (Kenny, 2012: 24-25). The findings of this study confirm Kenny's argument for the need to critically engage with grievances of 'right-wing extremist' milieu actors. As we outline in Sections 3.3 and 3.4, these grievances focus on the perceived threat to self and own group of racialised 'others' ('immigrants', 'Muslims') and those who are perceived to promote their interests ('liberal elites', self-serving politicians, global networks of conspirators etc.). They are forged out of the interaction between

individual experiences (of economic and social dislocation, population movement, urban change) and political messages encountered which, once shared with others and endorsed through the narratives of authoritative figures, come to be understood as the experience of the group (see: Honneth, 1995: 163). While the characteristics of this group is not as clearly articulated as is the case with other groups who forge a politics of identity in this way (Honneth, 1995, 2007; Taylor, 1994) it is understood by milieu actors as 'people' like me, who are misrecognised as bearers of privilege and whose interests are relegated to the bottom of the pile and identities 'disrespected' because this does not serve the interests of liberal elites. One aspect of this misrecognition or denigration, they would argue, is the attribution of descriptors such as 'right-wing extremists' (or 'racists', 'far right', 'Nazis') in a way which serves to deny political voice and worth as citizens. This misrecognition, itself, often becomes a grievance.

Such grievances, we have suggested, employ racialised tropes and prejudices that are demeaning to those they 'other' and socially divisive but they need to be heard and responded to. They are articulated, first and foremost, in the context of the experience of the *influx of difference* and the perception of such difference as representing a threat - sometimes a security threat but more generally a threat to existing values, attitudes, beliefs, ways of living and cultural practices. For many milieu actors this threat is interpreted as indicative of a profound *societal crisis*. This is reflected in visions of the future among milieu actors that are almost universally pessimistic, sometimes apocalyptic, as they imagine the physical 'replacement' of white European populations through immigration and subsequent demographic change and the subsequent loss of unique national and regional identities. This sense of crisis, we find, is underpinned by feelings of uncertainty at individual and group levels and is augmented through mediating affective factors such as feelings of isolation, dislocation and frustration into a sense of collective existential insecurity and impending violent conflict (expressed in the expectation of an imminent civil war). These environmental conditions of 'normative threat' are demonstrated by Stenner (2005: 80-81) to be a crucial factor in activating individual predispositions to authoritarianism resulting in the heightened expression of intolerance. Significantly, she also finds that the same conditions of normative challenge similarly magnify the response among 'libertarians' towards celebrating individual autonomy and diversity (ibid.: 63). The entrenchment of both positions, we suggest, also creates an environment conducive to radicalisation.

While political grievances are, for the reasons noted above, at the core of our understanding of young people's trajectories towards extremism, they far from determine a path towards violent extremism. In some cases personal grievances such as negative experiences in school or employment, low income as well as adverse childhood experiences, personal trauma, mental health issues (related or unrelated to these experiences) play an important role in how young people narrate their journeys to date. Moreover, we identify a number of vital - affective and situational - factors including the role of family, peers and significant others as well as situations of isolation, social and health problems, loneliness and desire for community that play a crucial part in understanding how our research participants came to be where they are. Importantly, we find that these factors are important not only in bringing research participants into radical milieus but also in constraining their engagement or encouraging them to establish their own 'red lines' in terms of how much, and what forms of, engagement they have. Finding a welcoming community and gaining in self-esteem, moreover, may not only sustain participation in radical milieus but also facilitate the development of skills, self-belief and identity that reduces ontological insecurity and allows participants to see ways to pursue the change they desire without recourse to violent action.

Thus, our fifth concern with the concept of radicalisation is that it focuses exclusively on the least likely outcome of engagement with radical ideas. Even among young people engaged in radical(ising) milieus, as in our study, pathways are far from uni-directional and outcomes are, in fact, predominantly those of non-radicalisation (Cragin, 2014) in the sense that the majority of milieu actors do not cross the threshold into violent extremism. We thus employ the notion of 'trajectories' to signal the complex ways in which 'why' and 'how' factors are integrated in individual journeys and, alongside

the role of grievances, we pay attention to the significance of mediating factors (affective and situational) in shaping the outcomes of those journeys. Thus, the milieu approach of DARE is more aligned with recent 'ecological' approaches (see: Dawson, 2017; Bouhana, 2019), which explore propensity to extremism through the study of the intersection of people and context and which seek to integrate the role of social structural factors, the search for ontological security or 'significance' that such conditions evoke and the role of extremist narratives to which people are exposed (Dawson, 2017: 3). By following individuals over an extended period of time and using an ethnographic method, however, our findings are able to provide insight into a particular dimension of trajectories that is rarely explored - the reflexive capacity and agency of young people in shaping their pathways. This is not to suggest that social structural factors or extremist mobilisers ('recruiters') are not important - the role of grievances that arise out of social structural factors, and are instrumentalised by extremist movements and influencers, are central to our understanding of what shapes young people's ideas and actions - but that one of the key mediating factors in understanding outcomes of radicalisation and non-radicalisation is young people's agency. This relates to how they understand the world around them, how they interpret their experiences in it, decisions they take about becoming active in voicing or acting upon grievances they hold, and their responses at critical moments about the directions their pathways take.

The sixth and final concern relates to the way in which the discourse of radicalisation positions actors as extra-social (outside the norms of societal engagement) and, in this way, demobilises their agency, which is, on the contrary, essential to counter-extremism efforts. The findings of this study suggest that, with some notable exceptions, research participants believe the change they advocate can be legitimately sought only through democratic means - that is that, 'everything's got to be done through the political process'. Alternatives to democratic modes of government are rarely suggested and positive views of authoritarian, fascist or national socialist systems are found primarily in the Greek milieu where we also encounter palingenetic visions of building a new society and participation in paramilitary organisations designed to bring about such radical change by force. The majority, however, express a fundamental approval of democracy (with most being actively engaged in its various processes from voting through to standing for election) albeit simultaneously articulating profound disappointment and frustration with democracy as they experience it. Thus, with the exception of some religious milieu actors, who perceive seeking societal change as the prerogative of God, research participants embrace their human capacity to act and are often driven by a strong commitment to 'making a difference'. In a small number of milieus - primarily in Germany and the UK - research participants talked specifically about enacting change in relation to countering extremism. This often took the form of informal practices of calling out what they consider to be racism or extremism when they encountered it. However, in some instances organisations had been involved in counter-extremism actions and individuals had participated in dialogic interventions aimed at countering extremism or in delivering counter-extremism messages in educational settings.

There are, of course, many limitations to this study (see Section 2) and the critique of the notion of 'radicalisation' outlined here should be read in the context of its specific design and method. These include its milieu approach, that is the focus on environments in which radical messages are encountered rather than individual extremists. Our findings may well have been different had the majority of our research participants been actors who had crossed the threshold into violent extremism. There is also a certain self-selection in terms of those who were willing to engage in such a research study; our argument about the openness to dialogue among milieu actors thus cannot take into account the potential closedness to dialogue of those who did not participate in the study. However, through its ethnographic approach, the study does succeed in capturing the social complexity, yet everyday-ness, of radicalisation in the sense of understanding the everyday *contexts* in which young people encounter direct or indirect calls to intolerant or radical ideological positions. Thus 'trajectories' are not retrospectively reconstructed based on their end-point but through the observation of, and listening to, individuals' reflections on their everyday experience, including their encounters with radical(ising) messages, and their response to these experiences. In this sense, the

fact that research participants choose, for the most part not to cross the red lines to 'extremism' that they mark for themselves make them also key actors in preventing and countering extremism. Understanding their trajectories requires a suspension of moral judgment in relation to ideological beliefs but offers new ways to think about how to ensure such beliefs are not expressed through violent action and engage the reflective agency of young people to that end.

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7. Appendix 1

The data on which this report is based is drawn from nine case studies of extreme-right/anti-Islamist milieus conducted by members of the DARE project. These case studies are published as individual reports and are detailed below. This synthesis of findings could not have been written without the analytic insight and commitment to research of all the researchers and authors involved in these case studies and we are deeply indebted to them. Our thanks are expressed also to all the research participants who agreed to take part in the individual case studies – for their time and their trust that we would engage critically but honestly with what they told us. We thank also Sofia Patel and Rosie Mutton for their contributions to the development of Figure 1 and Figure 3 respectively.

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