

**YOUNG PEOPLE'S
TRAJECTORIES THROUGH
RADICAL ISLAMIST
MILIEUS: COUNTRY LEVEL
REPORT
BELGIUM**

**Radicalisation from the
'poor crescent' area**



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DARE: Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality

Young people's trajectories through radical Islamist milieus: Country level report

Belgium

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European Network Against Racism (ENAR)

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Executive Summary

This work does not involve immersion in a recruitment network or even in a peer group, but more modestly in a space where a significant proportion of young descendants of Moroccan immigrants in Brussels live, who are in touch with the social problems marked by their relegation to the so-called 'poor crescent' area; which is where the four detainees who agreed to take part in the survey come from. This research can be described as an immersion 'under constraint' which is not solely limited to the prison. It goes from the inside to the outside and from the outside to the inside of the prison universe, hoping to deepen the analysis of individual trajectories of radicalisation. At the root of a radicalisation trajectory, such as that experienced by our respondents, are a multiplicity of determining factors which, accumulate and enter into affinity with group dynamics, creating the conditions for increased receptivity to intolerant messages and possibly to violence. The heterogeneity of these conditions from the point of view of their social characteristics – such as an early rejected desire for school, poor language skills, lack of qualification, training and employment, lack of professional perspectives and the resulting dissatisfaction, the experience of time (inextricably linked to the position occupied in social space) as synonymous with the collapse of 'possibilities', i.e. the annihilation of time as a movement towards 'possibilities', the appropriation of a future, the feeling of being discriminated against, family dynamics, peer group dynamics, the local context of spaces of intermediation, socialisation, commitment and participation in multiple spheres of activity (education, animation, security, culture, associative), the local context of the 'associative, political and religious offer', the absence of religious culture, the role of religion as a factor of symbolic unification, the strong exposure to the 'most radical offer', etc. – tends to distribute individuals into groups of 'probable trajectories' towards the 'radical deviance offer'. We have seen that in order to better understand these radicalisation trajectories, we need to link individual journeys with group dynamics. Finally, the part played by traumatic events in the individual (and family) experience, and in particular the experience of death, which raises very deep metaphysical questions about the meaning of existence and life after death, helps us to understand why Islam, as a resource and symbolic support, has taken on the central role it does today in the lives of these young people.

1. Introduction

The aim of the DARE project is to understand why and how young people become radicalised. How they adopt radical ideologies with the potential for violent action. This is based on empirical research with young people – a social group generally perceived to be particularly receptive to radical ideologies. Do young people encounter radicalising messages and/or agents directly or not? How do they react to them and what paths do they subsequently take? In order to better understand the phenomenon at the level of individual pathways, DARE research studies individual trajectories in specifically targeted environments where radical and extremist ideas circulate. It is therefore not a question of going out to meet a milieu of young people, but to identify a specific environment in which young people encounter radical/extreme messages (via the presence of recruiters, high receptivity to radical messages, etc.), or calls for active engagement, for example punishable acts (hate speech, violence, etc.)¹. The use of the ethnographic method thus makes it possible, with a view to basing the analysis on the collection of evidence in situ, to question the actors themselves, their practices and the motivations that underlie them, but also to examine the cultural universes of the actors, the representations that dominate within a group of actors, the social interactions, the attitudes and behaviours that are shaped and manifested in these environments.

At the end of this first observation and interview process (from February 2018 to February 2019), the field of action that impressed itself on me was that of the prison, as the prison space appeared to be almost the only possible place to come into contact with people who are in a situation where they are effectively part of the restricted circle of people convicted or involved in violent extremism. This was followed by another eight months of negotiations with representatives of the Belgian Federal Public Service of the General Administration of Penitentiaries to establish the concrete conditions and modalities of access to persons detained for terrorist offences.

However, as it is not based on a fixed place of observation, nor on a long immersion in the universe I am studying, it is not a classic field of immersion in the prison universe over a long period. Rather, it is a 'forced' immersion, subordinating the research to the agenda of the prison administration. From this point of view, it is an ethnographic investigation intended to deepen the analysis of individual trajectories in an environment that cannot be reduced to a prison, which goes from inside to outside and from outside to inside the prison universe.

2. Setting the scene

2.1 Historical context

The fight against terrorism, and more recently the fight against radicalisation, has become one of the major challenges of security policies in Europe. Belgium has experienced several waves of terror since the early 1970s, involving extreme left-wing terrorist organisations such as the Cellules combattantes communistes, and nationalist groups such as the Kurdish groups. According to the Global Terrorism Database, two-thirds of the attacks since 1970 took place in the 1970s and 1980s, with 100 attacks and a total of 30 victims. In the mid-1980s, intelligence attention began to turn to the threat of violent Islamism as political Islamic movements began to emerge across Europe (Renard, 2016). A 2016 report by the

¹ The definition of milieu we use is broad and allows for significant territorial flexibility. The agreed definition of milieu used within the DARE project is: 'A milieu includes 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 (identity), choices and trajectory through life.' See: <http://www.dare-h2020.org/concepts.html>

International Centre for Counter-Terrorism indicates that, according to estimates from official and non-governmental sources, between 420 and 516 people have travelled to Syria or Iraq since 2011 (ICCT, 2016). An update of this database in May 2017 brings the estimate to 591 people who have gone to the Syrian-Iraqi conflict zone, making Belgium the EU Member State with the highest number of foreign fighters per capita (Van Vlierden-Van Ostaeyen, 2017)².

Regarding the profiles of the Belgian contingent of foreign fighters, Peter Van Ostaeyen provides detailed figures in October 2015 (Van Ostaeyen, 2015; Van Vlierden, 2015). Van Ostaeyen finds that 47 of the 516 individuals are women; about 6% are converts; the age of the 202 Belgian fighters varies between 14 and 69 years (with an average of 25.7 years); out of the 266 individuals whose origin is known, most of them come from Brussels (101, of which 24 are from Molenbeek), Antwerp (72), Vilvoorde (28), and Mechelen (14)); and 79 individuals can be linked to the radical Islamist group Sharia4Belgium (created in 2010), which seems to have inspired many young Belgians to leave for the Levant (Coolsaet, 2016). A pattern of home-grown radicalization has emerged across Europe since 2004 with the assassination of Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands and the 2005 London transport network attacks. The subsequent flow of Belgian foreign fighters from around 2013 suggested that pattern remained a key concern, culminating in the attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015 and in Brussels on 22 March 2016. The perception of the threat shifted from one which came from the outside as in the case of the attacks of 11 September 2001, to the enemy emanating from within; 'the question of betrayal arises or, to put it another way, the shift from 'them ' to 'us'' (Truong 2017).

The emergence of the theme of 'radicalisation' does not result mechanically from the attacks perpetrated or from the enthusiasm of two to three thousand young Europeans for the conflict in Iraq and Syria; it is also the result of struggles between various social actors (Bonelli and Carrié, 2018; Bonelli and Ragazzi, 2019). In the context of the aftermath of September 11, 2001 and the attacks on European soil, including the bombings in Madrid and London in 2004 and 2005 respectively, a series of actors, decision-makers and public policy experts, initiated this shift in the traditional ways of managing political violence by putting the idea of radicalisation, understood as the result of a process, at the centre of the reflection. This was done by drawing on the British and Dutch experiences and the good practices promoted by European bodies (the Counter Terrorism Coordinator, the Policy Planners Network on Countering Radicalisation and Polarisation (PPN) and the Radicalisation Awareness Network). Radicalisation then focuses on the stages along the terrorist's path in order to establish identifiable profiles. It allows, in the words of Peter Neumann, the director of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation in London, to talk about 'everything that happens before the bomb explodes' (Neumann, 2008).

2.2 Contemporary context

According to Pieter Van Ostaeyen, the main reason for the large flow of foreign fighters from Belgium is that groups of like-minded militants emerged in Antwerp and Brussels and were drawn into the orbit of radical preachers who encouraged and facilitated their travel to the combat zones at the beginning of the Syrian civil war (Van Ostaeyen, 2016). Based on hundreds of pages of Belgian court documents and a database of Belgian foreign fighters maintained by the author, he establishes that three recruitment

² In their review, the authors define foreign combatants as 'any person of Belgian origin or of foreign origin but living in Belgium for a long time, having left for the conflict zone via Belgian soil or having at least physically attempted to reach the war zone of the Syrian-Iraqi conflict that began in March 2011 with the manifest intention of joining a group of local combatants on the spot, either as combatants themselves or in any other role'.

networks were active in sending Belgian residents to the battlefields of Syria and Iraq: the Sharia4Belgium network, the Resto Tawhid network of Jean-Louis Denis and the so-called Zerkani network.

In the 1990s, residents of the Brussels district of Molenbeek (Van Ostaeyen, 2016) were involved in the Al-Qaeda directed assassination of the Afghan commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, who was the leader of the main opponent of the Taliban, the Northern Alliance. Massoud was assassinated by two fake journalists of Tunisian nationality, Abdessatar Dahmane and Rachid Bouraoui el-Ouaer (Follorou and Stroobants, 2015). Dahmane had been married (Van Ostaeyen, 2016)³, in Molenbeek, by Bassam Ayachi, known as 'Sheikh Bassam', a Frenchman running the '*Centre Islamique et Culturel de Belgique*' (CICB), which houses the Grand Mosque of Brussels and was dissolved by the Belgian Minister of the Interior, Jan Jambon, after recommendations by the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the Brussels attacks suggested, among other things, that the CICB was 'spreading Wahhabi Salafism, a current that can play a determining role in radicalism and violent radicalism' (Belgian House of Representatives, 2017). This decision puts an end to the agreement that bound Belgium to Saudi Arabia since 1967 in the management of the Great Mosque of Brussels (VSSE, 2019). The Saudi Kingdom was entrusted with the management of this mosque (Boussois, 2017) following King Faisal's large donation to help victims of a tragedy that killed 250 people. In 2016, a report by the Coordination Organisation for Threat Analysis (OCAM) linked the spread of Wahhabism in Belgium to the presence of Saudi Islam in the country. OCAM states: Saudi Islam, present in Belgium since 1960s is 'of a very rigorous essence which has been propagated in Belgium by sending preachers trained and transferred thanks to financial support from Saudi Arabia but also from Kuwait and Egypt, and the spread of a radical form of Islam' (OCAM, 2016). The organisation also argued, 'a growing number of mosques and Islamic centres in Belgium are under the sway of Wahhabism, the Salafist missionary apparatus' (La Libre Belgique, 2017).

In recent years, several of the most deadly large scale attacks in Western Europe have been committed by individuals or cells linked to Belgium and in particular to the Brussels commune⁴ of Molenbeek. It was the home of one of the perpetrators of the 2004 Madrid train bombing that killed 192 people and injured 2,000 others, and it was the home for some time of the Frenchman who shot dead four people at the Jewish Museum in Brussels in August 2014. The Moroccan knife-wielding man who opened fire and injured four people on a high-speed train between Brussels and Paris in August 2015 had also passed through the area. French police suspected that the weapons used in the attack on the kosher supermarket in Paris, linked to the attack on the satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo, both in January 2015, came from Molenbeek. Radical outbreaks are not confined to Brussels, however. A week after the attacks in France on Charlie Hebdo and the Hyper Cacher in January, Verviers (Wallonia) was the scene of a violent police assault that killed two young fighters reportedly preparing for attacks on the police (Le Monde, 2016). Many departures to Syria also took place from the Flemish cities of Vilvoorde and Antwerp, where 47 people from the Sharia4Belgium movement were tried and sentenced. Marc Sageman has written about how informal radical groups or 'peer groups' formed in places such as the outskirts of the al-Quds Mosque in Hamburg, the M-30 Mosque in Madrid, the Islamic Cultural Centre in Milan and Finsbury Park in London, contributed to the involvement of a significant proportion of people in Islamist terrorism in the years leading up to and after 9/11 (Sageman, 2004, 2008).

³ Dahmane's wife, Malika el-Aroud (alias 'Oum Obeyda'), the Belgian-Moroccan widow of one of the suicide bombers, was another key figure in the development of radical Islam in Belgium. Her website, Minbar SOS, was one of the most visited forums for French-speaking jihadists in the Western world.⁵ Sentenced in 2010 to eight years in prison for having 'disseminated for years the ideology of the Al Qaeda terrorist movement [...] and having directly participated in the recruitment of candidates for combat [...] and financed the channel [...]', she served her sentence and has been free since December 8, 2016.

⁴ The 'commune' is the basic administrative unit of Brussels.

2.3 Locating the 'poor crescent' milieu

However, in the context of this work, it is not a question of immersion within a recruitment network or even within a peer group, but more modestly of a space where a significant fraction of young descendants of Moroccan immigrants in Brussels live and are confronted with social problems marked by relegation to the so-called 'poor crescent' zone, from which the four inmates who agreed to take part in the study come. As the main place of arrival for non-European international immigration, the so-called 'poor crescent' zone extends along the canal in the centre-west of the city, straddling seven of the nineteen municipalities that make up the Brussels administrative region (ULB-IGEAT, 2010). It is the most densely populated area in the region, the youngest, but also the poorest, with record unemployment rates (nearly 25% in Molenbeek, over 26% in Saint-Josse) (Actiris-Brussels, 2021). On this land, which was the hiding place of Salah Abdeslam and the El Bakraoui brothers in Forest and Molenbeek, the former workers' housing has been reclaimed by a largely immigrant population. In addition to Schaerbeek, Laeken and the old Molenbeek, one must add the 'poor crescent' of Saint-Gilles and Forest in the south of the capital, certain sectors of Anderlecht and, finally, pockets of housing in the historic district of Marolles, known for its flea markets, in the city of Brussels (one of the nineteen communes of the Brussels-Capital Region). What is striking when walking through these neighbourhoods is the high concentration of the Muslim component of the population. In Belgium, there are no precise and official statistics on the counting of the population by religious denomination because the national statistics do not take into account any criteria regarding the religious affiliation of the population.

On 1 January 2015, the total number of inhabitants in Belgium was 11,035,948. The population of foreign origin⁵ represented almost 20% of the residents in Belgium. However, the distribution of this population over the territory is not homogeneous and reflects both the history of immigration in Belgium and the economic importance of certain regions. The Brussels and Antwerp regions are places with a high concentration of foreign population. The so-called non-EU nationals are much more concentrated. The main area of concentration is Brussels (mainly the central, western and northern municipalities) and its surroundings. In the Brussels municipalities, on average one person in two is of foreign origin. In one of them, in Saint-Josse-Ten-Noode, 74% of the population is of foreign origin, the highest proportion in the whole of Belgium (Migration in Belgium: Statistical Data, 2016).

According to data compiled by Dutch sociologist Jan Hertogen (2008, 2014, 2015), which have sometimes been contested (Le Monde, 2016) but which seem, according to Jean-François Husson (2016) to be consistent with other data, Saint-Josse-Ten-Noode is the Brussels municipality with the highest number of Muslims among its inhabitants, with 45.0%, followed by Molenbeek with 41.2%, Schaerbeek with 37.3%, 30.2% for Anderlecht and 24.4% for Saint-Gilles, and 23.1% in Forest. In Woluwe-Saint-Lambert, Auderghem, Uccle, Woluwe-Saint-Pierre and Watermael-Boitsfort, the number is less than 8%.

It is estimated⁶ that there are between 600,000 and 700,000 Muslims in Belgium and that Islam is the second largest religion in the country after Catholicism (VSSE, 2018). According to data collected by Jan Hertogen, the Muslim population was estimated on 1 January 2015 at 781,887 out of a population of 11,209,044, i.e. 7% (compared to 6.3% in 2011 and 6% in 2008). This steady growth could bring this percentage to 10.2% by 2030 (Pew Research Center, 2011:10-11, 15). People of Moroccan origin represent

⁵ All persons who are not born Belgian and who are officially resident in Belgium. They may have been born in Belgium or abroad. Some have become Belgians, others not. The criterion is the nationality at birth.

⁶ These are based on several criteria: the number of people from a country where Islam is the majority religion who have migrated to Belgium and still have the nationality of that country, those who have become Belgians, their descendants and converts.

46% of Muslims, those of Turkish origin 26% (Hertogen, 2014), with more than 90% of these two groups having Belgian or dual nationality (King Baudouin Foundation, 2015). Few figures exist on converts, estimated at between 6,000 and 30,000 in the early 2000s a figure that is clearly outdated today (Aksöyek, 2000). Sunnis are in the majority, but other communities, notably Shiites and Alevis, are also present. Intra-community relations are not without tensions; the most dramatic event was an attack in 2012 on a Shia mosque in which the imam was killed. It is estimated that 80-90% of the Muslim presence in Belgium is the result of massive labour immigration by the Belgian authorities in the 1960s, mainly from Morocco and Turkey (Husson, 2016).

One of the demographic characteristics of the Muslim population is its youth. In 2000, more than one third (35%) of the main Muslim nationalities living in Belgium were under 18 years old (Manço, 2000). It is significant to note, for example, that 25% of the total population under 20 years of age living in the Brussels region is of Muslim origin, or that the most popular first names in the region in 2002 were Mohamed and Sarah (Bousetta and Maréchal, 2003). Socio-demographically, the youngest area of the Brussels region is found in the poor crescent:

The poor crescent concentrates a large foreign population, originating from Turkey and North Africa, and having a higher fertility than European and Belgian standards. Moreover, these neighbourhoods also have a higher proportion of adults of childbearing age. All these elements explain the high proportion of young children in these neighbourhoods. (ULB-IGEAT, 2010)

The strong dualisation of social space, in terms of inequality of access to different forms of material and symbolic resources (schools, sport, leisure, culture, health, work, employment, training etc.) is the outcome of a number of factors. These include the high spatial and community concentration in certain municipalities and neighbourhoods, which are among the poorest in the Brussels region, combined with the presence of a population marked by its youth; in 2015, young people aged between 12 and 24 represented 15% of the Brussels population (Sacco et al., 2016). They also include a very stark contrast between the centre and the periphery, with a young centre (especially the poor crescent, made up of numerous central neighbourhoods and the first western ring) and an older periphery. A study carried out by the Brussels Studies Institute on young people in Brussels shows that:

[...] although less than 30% of young people in Brussels aged 15 to 24 are actually present on the labour market, they are particularly prone to unemployment. They often combine several disadvantages: no qualifications, immigrant background, living in precarious neighbourhoods with parents who are themselves unemployed. In 2014, the unemployment rate for young people aged 15 to 24 was 39.5%. Then a new category of young people emerged: NEETs (Neither in Employment nor in Education and Training) young people who are neither in school, nor in training, nor in work. (Sacco et al., 2016).

Another lesson is that the social geography derived from data on young people's access to the labour market corroborates the strong centre-periphery opposition, with very high proportions of young people registered as unemployed in the disadvantaged areas of the poor crescent (48% in Saint-Josse against 26.7% in Woluwe-St-Pierre in 2012, for example). This high rate is explained as much by the lack of training, qualifications and knowledge of foreign languages among young people as by the insufficient number of jobs available or by the existence of a phenomenon of unequal access to employment and discrimination in hiring, supported by the fact that, for the same qualifications, young people in the poor crescent have a higher unemployment rate.

The characteristics of this specific environment or place generate a wide variety of competing sets of dispositions (corresponding to broad classes of positions and trajectories), not a unified singular habitus

that is characteristic of the place or neighbourhood as such (Wacquant, 2016). Nevertheless, these properties create a specific environment in which social action takes root and thrives by shaping a particular type of sociability. For example, this form of closeness, or even familiarity, is made possible by living in the same neighbourhood, speaking the same language, and knowing that they have a stock of common references borrowed from a collective history marked by migration (of parents) initially from Moroccan cities on the Mediterranean coast (Tangiers, Tetouan, Al-Hoceima), and from the northern Moroccan countryside (Nador, Oujda, Taza) (Manço, 2000).

A.⁷ is a young educator and social worker for young people in Molenbeek who started as a street educator:

And then I started here in Molenbeek almost 9 years ago, I did a year and a half in Anderlecht and then it was very complicated to work where you live. I was really... I went out, I was at work. So I was working 24 hours a day, people would come and ring my doorbell in the evening, and then when you walk in the neighbourhood in the evening, you know it's talking, it's not necessarily easy, your mum is there saying yes, the other guy came to talk to me about that... You walk in the street, sometimes you don't feel like talking, then you have a mother you meet in the street, you can't say no to her, she has a letter "Ya ouldi" (oh my son!) you can translate it for me, so it wasn't necessarily easy (A.).

The description he gives of his street work in the neighbourhoods of Molenbeek attests to a great proximity of interactions in a very densely populated city: 'The young people know that I'm an educator because it's word of mouth, you're sitting with one or two young people, his buddy is going to pass by, "Salam 'Aleykoun', 'Aleykoun Salam, who are you?," I'm A., the educator.' (A.).

As a result of this migration history, many Moroccans in Belgium have a rural and/or Berber origin. And the Brussels conurbation alone accounts for more than 50% of the Moroccan community (Bousetta and Maréchal, 2003). Thus, the living quarters, the neighbourhoods and their socialisation universe are marked by the presence of numerous cafés, shops, mosques and restaurants run almost exclusively by an immigrant population of Moroccan origin.

Almost four-fifths of the people from Belgium identified by the authorities as having joined or attempted to join Islamist militant groups are of Moroccan origin, according to Rik Coolsaet (Coolsaet, 2016).

Following the Paris attacks in 2015, in early February 2016, the federal government released a budget of 39 million euros to the police and justice system as part of an action plan against radicalisation, entitled the 'Canal Plan' in reference to this geographical area comprising the 7 Brussels municipalities and one municipality in Flemish Brabant, from where foreign fighters have left and returned: the territory of Brussels, Saint-Gilles, Anderlecht, Forest, Molenbeek, Koekelberg, Saint-Josse, Schaerbeek, as well as Vilvoorde in the immediate vicinity (Mertens and Torton, 2019).

An assessment by Fabienne Brion based on an analysis of the statistics recorded by the Directorate General of Penitentiary Institutions (DG EPI) on 15 March 2015 shows that in Belgium, the majority of 'radicalised' young detainees are of Moroccan immigrant origin and under 35 years of age (30% are under 25 years of age, 75% are under 35) (Brion, 2019). Fifty-one out of sixty-three prisoners have an Arabic or Berber surname; fifty-three have a first name suggesting that they were born into a family of Muslim religion or tradition (including registered prisoners with Russian citizenship). Only six of the thirty-three Belgian detainees have a surname and a first name suggesting that they do not have an immigrant background. The most represented nationalities are Belgian (33 detainees or 52.4%) and Moroccan (14 detainees or 22.2%). So-called 'homegrown' radicalisation – coming from a minority of young people with

⁷ Ground-level actors connected to the milieu but not part of the respondent set are indicated by letters to preserve anonymity but distinguish them from respondents (who are referred to by pseudonyms).

a family background linked to Islam or converts, born and raised in Europe – leads the public authorities to place the phenomenon of radicalisation within a wider, ongoing debate on the integration of migrants and their descendants. The debate focuses on Muslims, especially Moroccans or Turks - first, second and third generation - and questions the place of Islam in public (and also private) life, the 'language problems' of migrants or the acceptance of majority values and norms (Jamine and Fadil, 2019). In this study, our respondents are Belgian-Moroccans detained for a terrorist offence in Belgian prisons, Arlon, Jamioulx and Leuze-en-Hainaut, and come from the so-called 'poor crescent' area.

3. Field Research

Although based in Paris, I carried out more than ten observation visits in the Brussels region between February 2018 and February 2020. The average length of stay on site was between 8 and 10 days of observation in situ. During this period of interviews and observation, I met more than thirty actors and conducted almost as many recorded interviews with different categories of people concerned by the phenomenon of radicalisation: police officers, civil servants in charge of radicalisation prevention, experts, imams, young people living in neighbourhoods with the particularity of having had a channel for the departure of jihadist fighters to the Iraqi-Syrian zone (614 young people are said to have left to fight with DAESH since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, the majority of whom are Belgian-Moroccan), mothers of young people who have left and died in Syria, associative actors, social workers, street educators, elected officials, actors intervening in the field of the protection of young people (IPPJ), researchers.

Initially, I entered the Brussels field through the mediation of ENAR (European Network Against Racism), which was both the institutional anchor in the area of the fieldwork and the intermediary for establishing contact with the targeted respondents. My approach was initially based on the idea of a gradual immersion in the local population of Molenbeek, Schaerbeek and Saint-Josse (which are neighbourhoods with departure channels to the Iraqi-Syrian zone), through regular contacts over a long period of time. The aim was to mingle with the ordinary life of the local population living in these neighbourhoods, with the ambition of accompanying young people during their meetings, of inserting myself into their networks of relations and acquaintances by making the gamble of being accepted and entering the game of sociability specific to the universe of young people living in these neighbourhoods. However, I very quickly came up against the material impossibility of completing the research in this way. In addition to the need for a lasting and assiduous presence in these places of observation, I also lacked 'relays' on the spot, which I could have mobilised if I had had more time to investigate. Moreover, the initial choice to work in the municipalities of Molenbeek, Schaerbeek and Saint-Josse in Belgium proved to be difficult to implement in these conditions of limited research time, particularly given the extreme demands made on the population and the feeling of weariness and saturation that it generated among the inhabitants. However, this approach was underpinned by the intuition that there is an interest in working on local contexts in order to try to understand and grasp the conditions that may have contributed to the emergence of radical commitments, in particular departures to the Iraqi-Syrian zone, because the methods of commitment and the logic of 'radicalisation' of 'young people' also largely refer to local logic, and in particular to the local structure of the political and religious offer.

The way in which the question of access to a field marked by ideological violence is posed, or at least its legitimisation (methods of access to the respondents, presentation of oneself and the project to the interlocutors, construction of the object, hypotheses that the first visits and observations make it possible to define, etc.) strongly condition the possibility of prolonged and rigorous qualitative observation.

Through one of my informants, with whom I was able to establish a very close relationship of trust, it seemed appropriate to geographically circumscribe the environment around the municipalities of Molenbeek, Scharbeek and Saint Josse, where a large part of the Muslim population of Belgium is concentrated (and which also have neighbourhoods with departure channels). However, given the extreme difficulty of accessing informants who are in a situation where they are actually part of the inner circle of people convicted or involved in violent extremism, I considered for a while dealing with the problem from the point of view of non-radicalisation trajectories. That is, taking seriously the question of why some young people become involved in violent extremist ideologies while others, in structurally similar places, follow non-radicalisation trajectories? However, because I could not rely on a long immersion study (see introduction), and also because the first difficulty I faced when entering the field was the question of how to locate and identify an environment likely to be observed and designated as being composed of 'young Muslims legitimising violence' without falling into essentialism and stigmatisation, I opted to use the legal definition of the young radicalised (Muslim) prisoner or ex-prisoner by attempting to meet with people incarcerated for terrorist offences. The prison space then appeared.

3.1 Data collection

Table 1: Data set

	Number	Total length or brief description (as appropriate)	Average length
Respondents	17		n/a
Audio interviews	37	Approx. 76 hours including just over 30 hours with target persons (n=14) in prison. In total 37 interviews were conducted, 14 of which were interviews with the 4 individuals in prison upon which this report focuses.	Approx. 2 hours per interview
Field diary entries (total)	10	8 to 10 days of observation visits in situ. 200 hours of Observations environment of the 'poor crescent' region	n/a

3.2 Access and researcher-respondent relations

As noted above, I entered the field as a researcher on an H2020 project and through the mediation of ENAR (and particularly its director) who acted as the institutional anchor in the research area and the key intermediary through whom I was able to contact targeted respondents. Following a visit to ENAR's premises, a meeting with its members, an update with its director on the informants, and an observation visit to the geographical area of concern to the study, I was able to initiate my fieldwork. This first visit was followed by a second, longer visit (ten days) - from 28 March to 6 April 2018 - which was punctuated by observations and which enabled me to conduct five recorded interviews with the people targeted by the study as being able to play the role of either respondent or intermediary-informer within the populations of young Muslims (mothers of young people who have left for Syria, imams and associative actors in the Muslim movement and a policewoman). The main difficulty I faced is the one that concerns all researchers working on political violence, and refers to the question of how to penetrate this type of

field? The groups that use political violence and set themselves up against states to challenge them are often caught up in clandestine logics, which makes them difficult to access. On the other hand, there is a fundamental legal problem which means that any researcher who considers penetrating these groups risks falling foul of the law. It is during the reflection, alternating between advances and regressions, on how to locate and identify a milieu likely to be observed and identified as 'Islamist' or as being composed of 'young Muslims legitimising violence' (without falling into essentialism and stigmatisation), that I encountered the difficulty of constructing an object from a pre-constructed, normative definition of what constitutes a milieu composed of 'young radicalised Muslims'. At the beginning, it was with this normative definition, i.e. one that had received a social (institutional or scholarly) definition, that I had to work on different hypotheses through observations and interviews with such and such an imam or preacher, such and such a mother whose son had left to join the ranks of DAESH in Syria to die, such and such a police officer, such and such an expert in the prevention of radicalism, such and such an educator or social worker. Thus, I thought I would work on building a definition around the people who assiduously attend the mosques, but also on the families because of the mothers I met. Given the extreme difficulty of accessing informants who find themselves in a situation where they are actually part of the restricted circle of people convicted or involved in violent extremism, I even considered for a moment dealing with the problem from the point of view of non-radicalisation trajectories. In other words, to seriously consider the question of why some young people become involved in violent extremist ideologies while others, in structurally similar places, follow non-radicalisation paths? In the end, neither of these options seemed to me to meet the epistemological requirements of validity of the study nor the need to neutralise the normative effects of a pre-constructed definition of the object.

To gather data, I used the 'snowball' sampling method, asking the interviewees to suggest other interesting partners to me. Conceived as a network of informants, this system first allowed me to collect a large list of intermediaries working directly with the young people targeted by my survey (mothers of young people who had left for Syria, imams and associative actors in the Muslim movement, a police force, educators, social workers, neighbourhood centres, associations, IPPJ - Public Youth Protection Institutions, etc.). It was first by relying on actors who were convinced of the need to reflect on this complex phenomenon that I thought it would be useful to try to establish links, although I did not always succeed in doing so, with a series of professionals involved in the field of radicalisation prevention. But what became apparent very quickly were the resistances, the tensions and even the distrust that any work on 'radicalisation' can arouse, particularly after the attacks in Paris and Brussels. One psychologist I interviewed, who works in the unit for combating social exclusion in Molenbeek, testifies to this:

The parents have been strongly traumatised by the events and by the targeting and the global labelling of this district [...] the population is very, very badly affected by this. Always bearing in mind, I don't know if you've met other people in Molenbeek, but for the moment, we've been targeted, the intercommunal (the intercommunal square) everyone knows it, it was full of journalists, we couldn't take two steps without being questioned, it was traumatic, even I have an unbearable memory of it...

I interviewed F., a mother whose 18-year-old son left for Syria in 2013 and died there. F. tells me that she screens a lot of the people she meets because she is the subject of many solicitations (most of which are journalists) and that she agreed to meet me on the recommendation of Director of ENAR and S. another mother whose son also went to Syria in 2013 and died there.

On the other hand, it can also be difficult for those working with young people with radicalisation trajectories to pass on a request to participate in a research project with these young people. Understandably, they fear damaging the bond of trust that they have often taken a long time to establish. Such ethical considerations also shaped my decision to seek to interview those already charged or

convicted for offences of a terrorist nature rather than follow a kind of spontaneous epistemology that assumes a radicalised individual is someone who has been designated as such.⁸ Thus, I chose to engage with individuals who have been legally convicted and/or sentenced for radicalism and this was made possible thanks to the access granted by representatives of the relevant penitentiary administrations in Belgium.

In retrospect, this double mediation by entry into the study via ENAR and the H2020 project meant that rather than accessing a certain 'Islamist jihadist milieu' in Molenbeek to observe radicalism and jihadist commitment directly, in an ethnographic way, I was, rather, entering into a space of expertise and struggle that was being structured around the definition of prevention and the fight against radicalisation in Belgium. This demonstrates the impact of radicalisation discourse and the fact that we cannot understand the phenomenon we are interested in without studying its discursive construction. The researcher is in this respect confronted with the double constraint of wanting to act ethically (informed consent) but this ethical procedure is linked to the discourse of radicalisation which makes respondents feel positioned as extremists/radicalised, even though the research is designed to allow critique of this discourse.

Access to the field through this research design carried with it the implicit idea that there is a (problematic) link between the phenomenon of 'violent radicalism' and a certain Islam and certain Muslims. This of course had an effect on the way my intervention and my requests were perceived by the interviewees and on the way the interaction between interviewer and interviewee was constructed during the interview. For example, I asked an *imam* (preacher) who is very active on social networks to be interviewed, but he refused to participate because he did not want to be accused of collusion with radicalism. Another respondent, who had agreed, after an initial interview, to participate in the study, subsequently did not wish to follow up. Although it is impossible to be certain what the reasons for her decision not to participate were, it appears that the implicit assumption of a link between violent radicalism and Islam was problematic. This short passage from the interview with her testifies to this:

But what does it mean to be radicalised? Because for some people I can be radicalised and not for others, I don't drink alcohol for example, I pray, does that make me radicalised or not? I fast, I pray, I don't drink alcohol, yet I don't wear the veil, I kiss boys... for some people I can be radicalised because I eat *halal* and for others I'm a *kufar*... Even an Islamist is what? I consider myself to be a practising Muslim, and from me to my faith sometimes I say to myself that I would like to practise more but it's a personal 'jihad', it's very personal, it's very intimate and others see me as an Islamist.⁹

People who are involved in a research project on 'radicalisation' expose themselves (and/or those around them) to being perceived as 'radical'. The risk of being stigmatised or subjected to unwarranted scrutiny or investigation by the police and security services is real. This was confirmed by the head of the Radicalism Project of the City of Brussels¹⁰ whom I met:

... an interesting thing is that recently people contact us because they have been incorrectly identified as terrorists who have been put on file and they call us to ask for help. I was arrested at the station, at the airport. They tell me I'm on a terrorism list, help me [...] For example, once there was a guy who works, who has a company that is fairly well known in

⁸ What I am resisting here is a kind of spontaneous positive that assumes that social facts stand for themselves and we do not have to concern ourselves with how these facts have been constructed and fails to distinguish between the pre-constructed object, as it is perceived, and the object constructed at the end of, and through, a sociological or ethnographic process of observation, analysis and explanation.

⁹ As this potential respondent did not participate beyond the initial interview, she is not assigned a pseudonym.

¹⁰ Expert interviewees are referred to in relation to their position only, to preserve anonymity.

his economic environment, and has been for a long time, and one day they tell him listen, you can't come in, I'm not supposed to tell you this but they did a check and you appeared to be a terrorist threat, so the guy can't believe it, So the guy can't believe it, he comes to us and we're going to dig into this story and we're going to find out what the answer is and we're not going to be able to tell him, because in reality, what happened is that there was a mistake in the sense that it wasn't him who should have been registered but his brother, and on the other hand his brother was really in trouble and he didn't know it.

The interview I conducted with a respondent whom I did not include in the group of respondents is edifying from this point of view: suspected of being the 'man in the hat' – one of the three terrorists of the attack of 22 March 2016 in a metro station and at Brussels Zaventem airport – he was arrested, taken to the headquarters of the Federal Judicial Police, charged the same day with 'terrorist murders' and 'participation in the activity of a terrorist group' and detained. Two days later he was released after a comparison of his fingerprints with those left by the real 'man in the hat' on the airport luggage trolley showed that they did not match. While he was found not guilty and then released, he was still charged with 'participation in the activities of a terrorist group, terrorist murders and attempted terrorist murders' before the Brussels council chamber finally cleared him on Tuesday 5 January 2021, four and a half years after his arrest in the trial of the Brussels attacks of 22 March 2016, two days after the metro and airport bombings.

After the attacks in Paris and Brussels, the political situation of moral panic and generalised fear was conducive to the development of a logic of suspicion and denunciation, of which the Muslim population seemed to be the first targets, with the idea that all Muslims are potentially radicalised, if not 'radicalisable'. This is what this short passage from the interview with the director of action research at the Centre for Help and Care for People Concerned by Extremism and Violent Radicalism (CAPREV),¹¹ which is responsible, among other things, for managing a toll-free number on which the CAPREV team receives telephone calls¹², seems to indicate:

...there are situations that are not very, very related to radicalism and... so what we have as a target audience really is in particular ... like an ordinary citizen who is worried because his neighbour has a beard that grows strangely, well we have these kinds of situations that happen to us... (laughs)... less now, there was confusion I think for a while... so they took it as a bit of a tip-off line which we are not.

Between 2015 and 2016, this logic of suspicion was at its height, as the Radicalism Project Manager of the City of Brussels testifies:

In other cases, I think the most problematic cases, the most recurrent ones too, there was at one point, we're in 2015 or 2016, at the height of the period of the attacks, etc. There is a neighbourhood dispute, the police come and then a neighbour declares those are radicalised

¹¹ Created in 2016 by the government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation following the attacks in Paris and Brussels, CAPREV is the centre for assistance and care for any person concerned by violent extremism and radicalism. Within the framework of interventions for people directly concerned by violent radicalism, whether they are in detention or placed under judicial order, CAPREV accompanies, meets, supports and listens to nearly 80 people (men and women), and is also responsible for managing a toll-free number.

¹² This number is the single entry point for the Wallonia-Brussels Federation in terms of prevention of extremism and violent radicalism. People who call this freephone number are put in contact with the appropriate employee or service for individual care (psycho-social and legal support) or for assistance to a community (cultural or sports service or operator, schools, etc.) via an intervention, training, the provision of tools and various resources. <https://extremismes-violents.cfwb.be/a-propos/>

etc. and so there is a local policeman who makes a confidential information report in which he puts suspicion of radicalisation in the report. There's a neighbourhood dispute, the police come and then a neighbour declares that these people are radicalised etc. and so a local policeman makes a confidential information report in which he puts suspicion of radicalisation and bam! At the time, there was no filter, I think that the police services were so nervous that they said, well, we're not taking any risks, and so in the end, how many people ended up on file? Fortunately, in Belgium, there was an awareness that things were not going well, they were no longer going well. But sometimes the damage is done.

In these circumstances, for the researcher, there is a form of stigmatising inherent in the process of working on so-called radicalised 'milieus' and individuals. The following testimony from a resident of Molenbeek (but not part of the respondent set) describes experiencing stigmatisation following the terrorist attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015 and during the period before the 22 March 2016 Brussels attacks and expressed their desire to disassociate from this stigma attached to the city and its inhabitants:

November 14, 2015, the day after the attacks, when it was discovered that there were more or less links with Brussels. The press arrived en masse in Molenbeek, until just before March 2016, when the Brussels attacks took place, during which time the people of Molenbeek were singled out, stigmatised, it was said we should be bombed¹³, the journalists were there day and night. There was not a single riot. There were problems. Let's also look at the reality that 99% of the people in Molenbeek, even the kids, I worked on the youth council, after the Paris attacks, they said we want to go to Paris, I worked on the youth council after the Paris attacks, they said we wanted to go to Paris, to the Bataclan, to pay tribute to the dead and to show that not all the people of Molenbeek are like that, and it's not kids who are in the codes (who have not internalized the right codes of conduct), it's kids who have dropped out of school, who have a rather chaotic life, who hang out in the streets, who deal a bit here and there, it's these young people, and so, ok, there were problems. The number of cameras there were, the number of journalists present who were going to ask people who were going to get their baguette: so you know Salah Abdeslam? It's violent... And there wasn't a single outburst and that also says something about the maturity of the population, which we don't stress enough...

Finally, another point of dynamic impact and influence of the research on the field related to this anchoring via ENAR is that on the one hand, ENAR's director's networks of access made it possible for me to access the prisons and the detainees, whereas it is normally extremely difficult for a non-Belgian to do so, but on the other hand this very connection led some inmates to reject participation in the research after having simply 'googled' the name of this leader who is identified as an actor in the public debate on issues related to Islam in Belgium¹⁴.

¹³ The respondent is referring here to the statement of a well-known polemicist in France and Belgium who had proclaimed during an editorial on a French mainstream radio a few days after the attacks of November 13 (November 17, 2015) that 'Instead of bombing Raqqa, France should bomb Molenbeek' see: https://www.rtbf.be/info/societe/detail_bombarder-molenbeek-la-plainte-belge-contre-eric-zemmour-classee-sans-suite?id=10328551

¹⁴ Field Diary. Email exchange with director of CAPREV explaining the reasons for the refusal of the people being monitored to participate in the research.

3.3 Ethical practice

After eight months of negotiations, I was able to start interviewing prisoners in Belgium in November 2019. The criteria that were applied allowed me to gather a limited number of candidates (four) willing to participate in the study. After a long negotiation stage with the representatives of the prison administration, which included the establishment of an official request for access to prisoners in due form with the delivery of a certificate of good conduct, an extract from the criminal record, an explanation of the research objectives, the specification of the research tools used as well as the methods for carrying out the research (definition of a target group, identification and selection of target persons, how to contact them, the instruments I could or could not use, etc.), the Prison Service carried out an initial pre-selection of persons likely to meet the study criteria. The criteria were: a person incarcerated for a terrorist offence who was born or grew up in the Brussels, Liege and Antwerp region. Four institutions with inmates who could meet the criteria we had defined were not included in the selection because they were involved in other investigations. Initially, during a meeting with the representative of the Directorate General of Penitentiaries to settle practical questions, the number of people potentially concerned by the survey announced by the person I spoke to, who is an advisor to the Directorate General of Penitentiaries (EPI), was 40. After the selection, there were only 14, spread over five establishments. I therefore asked for the criteria to be extended to include any person detained for a terrorist offence, regardless of where they were born and/or socialised. But this was refused. I also asked for access to the legal files (detention files) which was also refused. The second stage consisted of the Prison Administration sending to the people targeted according to the research criteria (in the volume of people pre-selected by them), a letter requesting their participation in the survey accompanied by a reply coupon so that the people could reply, as well as an information sheet explaining the objectives of the research and a consent form. After these documents were sent to the institutions concerned, which gave them to the 14 detainees, four of them responded positively and wished to participate in the study. Before going to the establishments concerned, we drew up and signed a collaboration agreement at the request of the General Directorate of Prison Administration, defining the concrete modalities for carrying out the visits and interviews within the prisons. During the interview inaugurating the series of four interviews that we were going to conduct with the participants, we obtained their informed consent by reminding them of the framework of the study, its objectives, its ethical rules and in particular the anonymous and confidential nature of our exchanges and the possibility for them to stop the process at any time if they so wished.

As a direct consequence of the strong solicitation they received from researchers, the administration and services, our request to participate in the study, even though it claimed to be conducted for research purposes, was received with circumspection by the individuals targeted by our survey, who expressed doubts about being the potential objects of instrumentalisation. For example, among the reasons given by the 80 people approached by CAPREV for participating in our study, some explicitly referred to the fact that they 'no longer wish to be 'guinea pigs'¹⁵'. On the other hand, at the time we were conducting our fieldwork, research teams from the Université Libre de Bruxelles and the Université de Louvain were already on site in the prisons. This was confirmed to me by a Belgian researcher. This was one of the reasons given by the representative of the general management of prisons to limit the selection of prisoners for our study. In fact, four establishments with prisoners were excluded from the selection because they were involved in other surveys.¹⁶ In the context of the request for access to the persons followed by CAPREV, to which the director and his team kindly replied, I wrote a letter of request for participation to the persons followed, which I accompanied with an information sheet explaining the objectives of the DARE project, as well as a consent form. The CAPREV team then distributed these

¹⁵ Field diary. Email exchange with the director of CAPREV on 07 August 2019.

¹⁶ Field diary. Interview at DG EPI in Brussels on 6 June 2019 at 2pm.

documents to the people concerned. No favourable response to our proposal was returned. According to the report presented by the CAPREV director¹⁷, some people did not make a decision at the time, others shared their negative response. Some people explained that in view of their personal situation, they did not wish or have the strength to share this part of their story; others emphasised the need to turn the page and move on; some expressed their mistrust and fears with regard to the legal procedure that concerned them (fear that they would be recognised or that it would be turned against them one day...), others again ‘googled’ our names and refused afterwards without explaining the reasons.

Some of the people we contacted via CAPREV explicitly replied that they were ‘tired of being asked by researchers’¹⁸. All the requests I made to those working with people affected by radicalisation also noted the very high level of attention directed to them, including by state services. This is reflected by an expert interviewee, a psychologist working with prisoners from the Molenbeek:

I received a first request from a convicted terrorist prisoner. And then a second one. And today I have four. They are all Molenbeekers and in this section there are 16 of them. And I see each of them at the rate of an interview of more or less one hour every two weeks. The youngest I see is 24, the oldest 42 and the other two 31 and 32. They are very much in demand by the services.

In addition, it is very difficult for them, for legitimate ethical reasons, to agree to relay a request to participate in a research project to these young people, as they are afraid of damaging the bond of trust that they have often taken a long time to establish. This is shown in the following exchange with an expert interviewee who was in charge of radicalisation prevention in Molenbeek:

Interviewer: Do you think that among the people you follow, there are people who would be likely to respond to a form of solicitation of this type, by presenting things in the least repulsive way possible?

Interviewee: Yes, I understand

Interviewer: but really with the idea of trying to collect a voice, to restore its complexity and then to give it to those who, in particular to the decision-makers on these issues.

Interviewee: In fact, I find that the work would be interesting for some of my follow-ups. But the problem is that it would damage my relationship with them to say, ‘Here I can tell someone about you’, when I’m bound by professional secrecy and they really want to keep it to themselves. Now, it’s true that there are quite a few people I advise to write, because I think it’s also important to tell your story. It allows you to take a step back and to unload some of the guilt. But for me, in relation to my job, it’s complicated.

Thus, the prevailing situation in the field is that of a strong feeling of saturation and weariness with regard to a subject which, after the attacks in Paris and Brussels, legitimately provoked a demand (from political leaders) for a political response to a problem to which the name ‘radicalisation’ has been given and which has led to an inflation of reports and research programmes, but which are so many repeated solicitations to often the same people.

Another methodological difficulty linked to the establishment of a bond of trust with the people directly or indirectly concerned by the phenomenon of radicalisation is that which concerns the unequal relationship between the investigator who asks and the informant who provides the information. Among the people I interviewed, some explicitly raised the question of what they would gain from participating

¹⁷ Field diary. Email exchange with the director of CAPREV on 07 August 2019.

¹⁸ Field diary. Email exchange with the director of CAPREV on 07 August 2019.

in the study, including financially. This was the case with one of our interviewees, whom I wanted to include in the group of respondents, but who declined to participate after I replied negatively to her request for remuneration: 'Could we possibly, if it works, talk about remuneration or not?'¹⁹

This situation also conditioned the dynamics of the research and directed it towards outlets that almost exclusively the prison world was able to provide in these conditions. Another possible approach would have been to approach individuals convicted of terrorist offences through their lawyers. But the timeframe of the research did not allow for this, at a stage when the fieldwork was already well underway. Faced with the demand and sometimes even the requirement to see the respondents' participation valued and promoted by a form of material or symbolic recognition highlighting their commitment, the researcher is sometimes at a loss.

3.4 Data analysis

For the purposes of this study, I have chosen to structure the report through the analysis of individual cases (respondents). This is due to the small number of respondents and the multiple interviews with each of them. Given the extreme difficulty of accessing detainees for radicalism, it was only after a long and difficult negotiation (the stages of which I have outlined above) that it was possible to contact some of them.

The small number of respondents made it possible to set up multiple interviews with each of them. For this reason, I employed narrative analysis rather than thematic analysis because the nature of the data (in-depth and repeated interviews allowing for the in-depth study of a given trajectory) makes narrative analysis more appropriate.

I conducted a total of 42 interviews with all stakeholders, including the target group. Of these 42 interviews, 5 were not recorded. Therefore, I only include 37 interviews that were recorded. These are 37 different stakeholders, including the target group. Of these 37 recorded interviews, there are interviews with: social workers, street educators, practitioners, psychologists, prevention officers, elected officials, senior civil servants, police officers, imams, a young Brussels man who has the particularity of having been suspected of being one of the three terrorists in the attack of 22 March 2016 in Zaventem, two mothers whose son went to Syria, two ex-prisoners, and a focus group with 8 young people from Molenbeek which convened twice.

With regard to the target group in prison, I selected four respondents with whom I conducted a total of 14 interviews. These 14 interviews can be broken down as follows: four interviews with an inmate of Arlon; three interviews with an inmate of Jamioulx; three interviews with the first inmate of Leuze; and four interviews with the second inmate of Leuze. There were therefore multiple interviews with each of the four respondents.

While this report focuses on these four respondents, an additional 13 respondents participated in interviews and/or a focus group. These additional respondents include: eight young participants in a focus group; two former prisoners; a young Brussels man suspected of being one of the three terrorists in the 22 March 2016 attack; and two mothers whose sons travelled to Syria and who gave information informally that was recorded in my field diary. Thus, a total of 17 respondents is recorded in Table 1 (see

¹⁹ This period corresponds to the first known departures at a time when going to a combat zone was not a punishable offence as such, since it was not until 2014 that all international institutions, through a Security Council resolution (2178), criminalised travel to Syria.

above), although it is the 14 interviews with the four core respondents noted above that are primarily drawn on here.

3.5 Socio-demographic portrait of the respondent set

After the preselection work carried out by the prison administration and the delivery of documents to the 14 targeted prisoners (comprising a consent form, letter requesting participation, study presentation sheet and response coupon), four responded positively by wishing to participate in the survey. These men were aged between 29 and 36 at the time of my meeting with them and were all under 30 when they were incarcerated. They have the particularity of having been born and socialised in one of the communes located in the so-called 'poor crescent' zone. They also have in common the fact that their parents are of Moroccan immigrant origin.

They were convicted of 'offences relating to a terrorist group'. However, the profiles and trajectories under this qualification are different. Two of them had no previous criminal record before their first imprisonment. And two others had already been in prison for offences relating to theft. One is accused of participating in the activities of a terrorist group and is involved in attacks that resulted in the death of several people. Two others are charged because of their desire to leave for the Iraqi-Syrian zone and their alleged links with a 'radical milieu'. And the last one, with no criminal record, was convicted of being the head of a recruitment cell in the context of his activity on the instant messaging application called Telegram.

4. Key Findings

The findings of this study are organised into four sub-sections, exploring the trajectories of each of the four key research participants noted above. All four were in prison for offences related to terrorism. For the preservation of anonymity, the respondents are referred to by the pseudonyms Primo, Secundo, Tercio and Quarto.

4.1 Primo's story

Primo was born in a Brussels commune that is part of the so-called 'poor crescent' zone. He is aged 35 and currently detained in Arlon prison. He is accused of 'participation in the activities of a terrorist group, terrorist assassinations and attempted terrorist assassinations'. The second of six siblings, four boys and two girls, his father is working-class and his mother a housewife. He was educated as a child in a primary school located in a commune bordering the one in which he lives with his parents, located in the so-called 'poor crescent' area. Like other communes in the second ring of the north-eastern part of the Brussels Region, this one is characterised by a population with a middle-class socio-economic profile and a more mixed social and ethnic mix than the neighbouring towns. He has excellent memories of his time at primary school, which he says was 'the best period of my life'.

Interviewer: How was school? What memories do you have of your childhood?

Respondent: The truth is that I think I went to the best school in the world... ah yes, I'm telling you the truth... in primary school... that is to say, from the age of 5 or 6 until the age of 12, because after I went to secondary school... I don't know how you say it in France...

Interviewer: Yes, the same as secondary school, we say college...

Respondent: You say college so uh that was the best time of my life...

Interviewer: Primary...

Respondent: Primary yes from when I was 5-6 years old until I was twelve-thirteen you know... [...] so why did I say it was the best school in the world? ... it's a school like it's straight out of a fairy tale... you see it's a big park, imagine a big park with big weeping willows, you know, with some games for the children, but what was beautiful, especially in winter, you know, you had the chestnut trees, you had a lot of weeping willows, you know, and there's a little path that leads you and, at the end of that park, there's the big school...

Interviewer: Oh yeah, it's a beautiful setting!

Respondent: Yeah, frankly, it's a nice setting and in addition to that I had great teachers, you know, they were really great teachers, how can I tell you that, frankly, I had two teachers, one in French and the other in maths, and in fact they were a couple, you know, it was a man and a woman, but *Soubhanallah* (Glory be to God), I don't know why, there were a lot of children in the school you know, I don't know why, they loved me but seriously you know ah yeah they loved me but something like ... even I didn't understand you know ... they loved me as if I was their son you know... I was small, I was a kid, you know... [...] in the schoolyard in this primary school when we were little, we used to have inter-school tournaments but from the same commune, you know, like there were fifteen schools, fifteen teams and we had a real five-a-side football room and every year there was a tournament and every year we won it you know... we gave them a *treha* [a beating] you know... laugh... and we also had the best holiday you'll ever forget in your life you know... with our school we went on a green class, we went for a week with another class, we were 20-25 students, you know, there were two classes and we went with our teachers, we slept for a week in the Ardennes in a chalet, we played games in the forest, Goose game, board games... we watched the cinema on a giant screen in a chalet you know... In a chalet, in winter, you know what I mean... Laughing... Big screen you know... and so it was these two teachers who helped me a lot in French, in mathematics and everything... I'll be grateful to them for life because frankly today, they helped me a lot because I had a lot of problems you know... they helped me a lot and I'll even surprise you... you know that after each... when school ended... all my friends you know... yeah Bilal bye bye bye... my teacher kept me and took me home you know...

Interviewer: Oh yeah you had a special relationship...

Respondent: She took me home, we had an hour's lesson at her house, her husband also gave music lessons, she came home two hours later you see... so I stayed with her at home for an hour, we had lessons for an hour, then we watched a bit of TV you know... she took me home... almost every day I went to her house you know... [...] when she arrived in my neighbourhood (laughter)... she would come back and it's a jungle for her... Laughing... And uh... it was... but it was really a nice school, I felt it, I felt that these two people, you know, her and her husband, they gave me a lot of love, you know... I didn't understand why they chose me like that, you know, especially today, you know, they helped me... they liked me, you know, you can tell they liked me...

Interviewer: You said you had problems at school...

Respondent: Yeah but I wasn't the only one you see...

Interviewer: What were the problems you had?

Respondent: It was problems, you know, I didn't have the facilities that other people have, you know, they have facilities to read, to write... and then it was over the years, you know.

Other memories from this period include his passion for football, which he played in the schoolyard with his classmates and for which he had strong ambitions of a professional career. When I ask him what he attributes the cause of this failure to, he explains that he was 'not given the chance' to demonstrate his talent because of the racism he was allegedly subjected to. He describes how he had been 'a very, very good player' at junior level and that some of his team mates 'were geniuses, geniuses, frankly they could have become great Messi, Ronaldo...'. In those days though, he says, 'they didn't give you a chance'. Specifically, he recalls having trials at Anderlecht and being astonished that both he and his close friend had been rejected although the trials had gone really well. This had made him suspicious although, at the time, he says, he hadn't thought of it as racism as that kind of thing just wasn't really talked about then. But thinking back now, it is clear to him that this was the issue and points to the continued lack of diversity within the Belgian football league.

At the end of this first period of schooling in primary education, where he experienced his first loves, came the time of the first disillusionments with the move to a technical and vocational secondary school that Primo experienced as a real heartbreak.

I stayed six, seven years in this school ... you know, your first girlfriend, the first girl you kissed, you know what I mean...It was an Italian girl, you know. She was the most beautiful girl in the school, a beautiful Italian girl with blonde hair and blue eyes, frankly she was really beautiful and after that you know it's a heartbreak because after you finish, you leave this beautiful...this fairy tale...you know what I mean...to go back to the big league, you know, ah yeah, it's not the same lemonade anymore... (Primo)

In this schoolyard, within this new school environment situated on the fringes of general education, he is also exposed to the beginnings of what will constitute the prolonged exposure to violence that he will subsequently experience.

[...] there, people are smoking farts [hashish joints] in the playground, you see crazy fights ... you say to yourself, 'Where the hell am I! You know what I mean... ah yeah because secondary school goes from the first to the sixth year and those who are in the sixth year are grown-ups and you've just left a world of fantasy you know, and you arrive and you see violence. I was afraid... frankly. Yeah I was afraid of school... I arrived and I said to myself... I am basically... all my life I've been like that ... everyone who knows me, my neighbours, shopkeepers and so on ... I'm a non-violent guy ... no violence [...] and then when you get to secondary school and you see all this violence that you didn't see during your six years of carefree life there when you were at school, your little teacher would come and get you in the car, oh yeah, it's not the same... and then that's when I started smoking, you know... you know, the girls are there, go ahead and smoke and everything... your first cigarette. (Primo)

In this school environment, he becomes interested in training to be a welder and seems to have some aptitude for this trade. However, the atmosphere is not really conducive to hard work and there are many opportunities for negative emulation.

Interviewer: And in secondary school what were the teachers like?

Respondent: They are hostile because the teaching profession is not respected, it's not new, I've seen ... we were in a welding class, I'm like this, writing, I see a steel plate flying and it

breaks against the blackboard near the teacher, you know how many teachers have resigned ! It was really a sick school... it's like you have a bench that flies through the window...

Interviewer: Oh yes, right...

Respondent: I tell you no, it's violence. I only just escaped what they call 'school harassment'. I've seen school harassment. There are many people, little girls, who have committed suicide. School harassment is no laughing matter.

Interviewer: Have you been bullied?

Respondent: No, I told you I just about escaped, I just escaped... I just about escaped because I was on the right side even if I was on the wrong side - on the right side means you know the guy who's screwing up, you know.

And outside of school, there is life in the neighbourhood with its own rules, its own logic and its dynamics of negative emulation between peers, such as the evening of a 'trip' with friends when Primo commits a number of criminal offences including car theft, driving without a license and in a state of intoxication. This earned him his first prison sentence at the start of his eighteenth year.

Interviewer: And at this point you went down for what?

Respondent: At that time we were going out at night and doing stupid things, we drink alcohol, it was the first time I drank, you know... I smoked weed and everything, my eyes were like crazy and everything, you know, all red and a friend of mine says yeah, there are girls waiting for me, he was a good-looking kid from the neighbourhood, you know, all the time with beautiful girls, he says yes, there are some girls waiting for me at their house in a villa, his parents aren't there and all the rest... there are three of them and everything and we're three, you know... but it's a bit far, you know, and what do we do, we steal a car... we steal, you know, the Ford fiesta that you start up so quickly, so we start up the car and we leave and almost arrive, you know, we're arrested by the police..

Interviewer: Was it in the evening during a normal check?

Respondent: Yeah, a normal control... there are my two friends and we get arrested, I'm drunk, you know what I mean, I've been drinking, smoking... and the policeman arrests us, puts us in the car and everything and the next day they're both released, but as it was me who was driving, you know...

Interviewer: Were you driving?

Respondent: Yeah, I was the one driving, we did like the little version like the kids, we said the car was found stolen, we just got in, we put the wires on and left with it, that's all, we stuck to our guns, you know, and the next day they were released after 24 hours in jail, in custody, they were released, I was taken straight back to prison, you know, on December 21st 2003...

Interviewer: How long did you stay there?

Respondent: I took a lot, frankly, for the first time you've been caught I took a lot, even my lawyer told me I got 6 months...

Interviewer: imprisonment?

Respondent: No, I was sentenced to 3 years you see...

Interviewer: With 6 months' imprisonment...

Respondent: I did 6 months, yeah... while I was doing my 6 months and then they said to me sir, you've been sentenced to three years, you've done 6 months, you see you've already done a third of the sentence, you can be released... I didn't know anything about justice, frankly, when he told me three years I was astonished, you see... I said what, 3 years! I look at my lawyer and everything he does to me... and on top of that the owner of the car you see we had written him a letter we reimburse you for all the expenses, all the mess and everything... and so here we are after 6 months, I was released and so you see I got out I took a month, and even more than a month, I think it took me two months to get over it, I had caught something in my brain, it's in my head in fact, I couldn't be around ... you know like if I go to a place where there are people I couldn't...

Interviewer: Yes, the crowd...

Respondent: And I didn't know, actually I'm coming... we have a thing at home, it's called the street such as...

Interviewer: Yes, yes, I know...

Respondent: So I arrived and I had an anxiety attack, I went straight out and I had just been out of prison for three-four days and a few days later I'm still going to a place where there are people but it's an anxiety attack frankly, the cold sweat, you get all pale, and I asked myself what was going on and then I asked and they told me it was prison, as it was the first time, as it was the first time I had been in prison, it stayed like that for a little while and then it went away, you know.

This first experience of prison set him on a pathway that would finally lead to participation in armed robbery. His experience of prison was a classic one – of insecurity and fear – and one to which he would frequently return. In order to deal with the terrifying experience, he invested in serving out his sentences to such an extent that he even enjoyed some spells in jail: 'I've been in prison several times, there were times when it was shit, it was difficult and there were two or three times when it was really... so good, it didn't even feel like prison you know'. To feel safe there, he assumed that he would remain there, going back and forth from prison. He stopped his schooling at the age of 18, when he entered prison. He tried to find work, but the chances of getting a job were limited because of his early school dropout. In order to keep up with the other inhabitants of the neighbourhood materially speaking, theft became the easiest way – economically and morally, since in terms of cost/benefit calculations the prospect of imprisonment no longer frightened him – to make money. By choosing this route, he fulfils the inherent logic in his journey and ends up going back and forth between prison and the outside. As Marwan Mohammed (2011) has shown in an ethnographic study of the formation of gangs in a working-class neighbourhood in the Paris, the logics of honour are such in these neighbourhoods that the only social capital that remains worth anything for young people who are failing at school or who are unemployed, is reputation; getting themselves know as a means of gaining access to forms of recognition.

Respondent: And then it's gone... And then you know, as the French rap group IAM says, prison, 'the bars are no longer scary, it's routine, just a thorn in the side...', you see, as the singer says, after I've been back many times, you know... and then you get out and you go to the Pôle emploi, in our country it's not the Pôle Emploi, it's Actiris [a regional organisation in charge of employment policy whose competences are limited to the Brussels-Capital Region] to look for work, you see I've done a lot of paperwork, you see, you try to rush to get on a training course because I'd stopped school, you see You're running around, I've worked, I've done a lot of jobs, I've worked in pruning, in rubbish trucks, at Quick, I've worked at McDonald's, I've done a lot of companies...

Interviewer: So you didn't finish your welding qualification?

Respondent: No, I stopped, it was really ... I stopped in the third (secondary) year, I could have had the diploma because you have two diplomas, there is a diploma in the third year and a diploma in the last year of the sixth year but the problem is that I missed it, I missed it twice... that is to say I did my third year, I went to school until I was eighteen, my first year I missed it because I tell you it's two different worlds... it's not the same, after that it's all over, you go into robbery you know... you stop it all, we stop playing football, we stop, all that, it didn't work out and that's it ... because I knew that ... I said to myself that a job was ok but you think yeah, finally school is not for you ... Yeah it was cute when we were little, we had some good years, we had a lot of memories of travelling, a lot of wonderful memories but afterwards... it's... you go back to prison, when I got out of prison, I got out you know with this desire to... we worked a bit but there's always this...

Interviewer: What was your state of mind when you got out of prison?

Respondent: I was in a bad frame of mind actually... There's no one who comes out of prison better than he when he went in... it's all bullshit... and then you start to grow up and you see the people in the neighbourhood... you see oh this one he bought a car, and then you have the others talking, oh you saw that one he opened a business ah that one he opened a café, ah you saw that one he opened a sportswear shop, ah you saw that one he made it, he did this... and there you go, and then you hear people say, yeah, you heard those ones, they made 1 million euros, ah, you heard those ones, they made 250,000 euros, you know, and there you go, it goes very, very quickly, it's something that sucks you in, and that's it, once you're in, once you've tasted... the first time I tasted money, you know, you say to yourself it's over, what am I going to do to work, frankly, in 5 minutes I took 100,000 euros, you know what I mean... what am I going to do to work! another time in one night, you know, we stayed three minutes in a thing, in hand, on the clock, three minutes, we came out with 300,000 euros from there... you say to yourself it's never finished, you say to yourself fuck your mother's work, you say to yourself I'm going to open a business, I'm going to open this, I'm going to open that, and then you take advantage, you're with your wife, you travel, you go to Turkey, you go to Egypt, one day you're at the casino in Madrid.

His early socialisation into violence²⁰, delinquency,²¹ banditry, going back and forth from the prison world, and, finally, confronting the traumatic experience of the death of his childhood friends and also that of his little brother, can be cited among the deep causes of his entry into extremist political violence. Not to mention the fact that robberies and hold-ups project him into a world where the initiation to the handling of weapons becomes an obligatory passage. This was illustrated in an exchange I have with him about how one of his childhood friends ended up in prison after he, together with others, had robbed the town police station to recover uniforms, computers and, for one of them, a handgun. This weapon became the focus of a drama between two people who were friends of his childhood friend. His childhood friend shared a flat with the owner of the weapon but was absent on the day of the tragedy. While they were in the flat, the owner of the gun strutted around showing it off to the other guy. Having removed the magazine thinking it was empty, he pointed it at his friend, pulled the trigger and unintentionally killed

²⁰ His lawyer told me that Primo had experienced the loss of two of his best friends as a child, one of them from leukaemia. Field diary. February 2020.

²¹ According to his lawyer, one of his nicknames in the neighbourhood was 'Brink's', named after the armoured car company that transports cash. Field diary. February 2020.

him. Primo then explains to me by offering to draw me a picture of how the safety catch works on this particular handgun, which he tells me is one of the 'best in the world'.

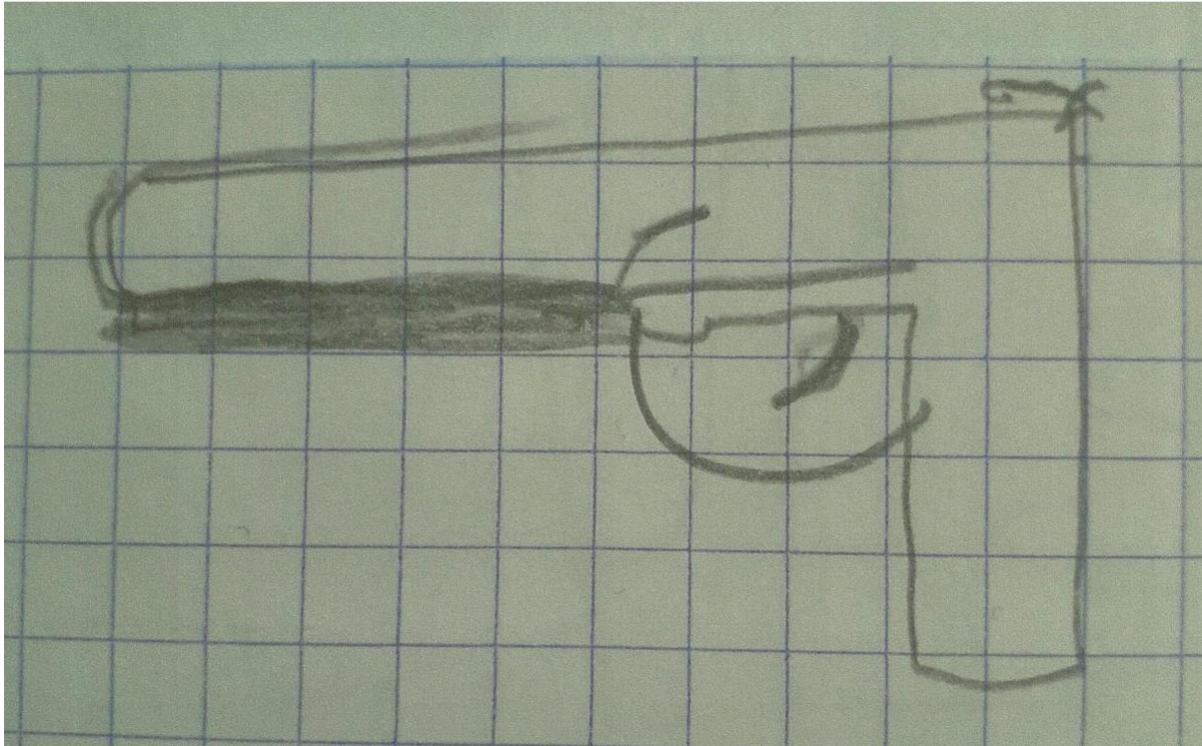


Plate 1: Field diary. Prison, Arlon, January 2020

But what is striking in Primo's story is the extraordinary adjustment of a social trajectory to the 'radical offer', and the capacity of the latter to become a resource, with meaning for the respondent. Based on the data we were able to collect on his social and biographical characteristics, this conjunction between a 'situated radical offer' and his social characteristics is not the simple result of chance. Indeed, his socialisation experiences, which draw on the social history of immigration, do not only refer to the history of the neighbourhoods, but also to the unequal distribution of places and roles in access to goods and resources (employment, housing, health, leisure, etc.) and strongly determined dispositions, ways of seeing and acting, the individual moral economy, and the way in which the future is envisaged or not, and the way in which projects are made. Thus, dropping out of school, early socialisation into violence, delinquency, robbery and the prison world are inseparable from the equally early internalisation of territorial stigma and the feeling of impasse that is engendered as it becomes clear that one's aspirations must be adjusted in relation to opportunities (of getting by through work), class contempt, cultural illegitimacy, racism and the phobias engendered by the practice of Islam. This reveals a structural homology – or correspondence - between the positions and characteristics of the (strongly homogeneous) social group to which Primo belongs and the space in which the radical offer operates. In this way, Primo's 'warlike' disposition, acquired during robberies, and culminating in his initiation into the use of weapons, finds correspondence with a radical Islamic discourse, emphasising (over the wide range of possible references) religious references (hadiths, Koranic verses, etc.) employing warlike metaphors.

In this context, the centrality of the affective dimension that links him to the neighbourhood, where a strong supply of 'deviance' dominates, and in which delinquency holds a structuring place in the face of parental or institutional educational strategies that struggle to correct the negative logics, paradoxically functions as a resource, a form of moral security. It is no coincidence that all the hideouts Primo used after the night of 12 November until his arrest were located in the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood is a physical and symbolic territory akin to 'a space of relations and representations that sanction the fact of living apart, in and through illegality' (Truong, 2017). Primo's attachment to the neighbourhood and to the childhood friends with whom he grew up is at the root of his experience of involvement in so-called 'home-grown terrorism', used to refer to those who, in gangs of friends, turn against the country where they were born. Primo is suspected of having participated in terrorist attacks in France and Belgium. It is only at the end of the third visit to the prison, at the end of a lengthy interview that lasted almost 5 hours, that he tells me in detail the successive stages of this slow drift towards violent extremism. He told me that my visits were an opportunity for him to get out of his cell, in which he was locked up for most of the day, and to talk to someone, because the regime imposed on him did not allow him to come into contact with other prisoners, so he did not speak to anyone.

I'm not the kind of guy who talks alone in a cell, it's good to talk, I'm happy frankly *alhamdulillah* (thanks to God) ... [...] because the four years I've just spent frankly, 24 hours a day in a cell without seeing anyone, that's already worth 10 years in prison. (Primo)

This situation was unlikely to change before the trials were held due to the serious risk perceived by the authorities and the prison administration of Primo spreading radical ideas to other prisoners.

Interviewer: Will your regime in prison change or will it remain the same? For example, going out for a walk with the others?

Respondent: My lawyer told me maybe after the trials, but I don't think so you know because you know what they are afraid of, they are afraid of proselytising... They are afraid of proselytising as if I had been born in Afghanistan with the bearded ones, I followed 50 years of science you know what I mean... whereas I don't know anything you know, I barely know how to read Arab, you know what I mean...'

Arrested in April 2016, he had been in prison for almost five years. Based on the status of 'terrorist' assigned to him, the prison regime had restricted his movement and led to his withdrawal. However, he contests this status, emphasising that he is simply adhering to the principles of Islam.

Interviewer: Others outside and even here in prison, the justice system, the police, the institutions, the press, say that you are a terrorist, a radicalised person, an Islamic terrorist, what do you think of that?

Respondent: No I don't agree with this label, of course not, you see there are people who practise their religion even more strictly, although for them it doesn't seem strict but for me it's strictly, for example the guy who fasts every Monday and Thursday, or the guy who fasts every other day or the guy who spends a third of his nights in prayer, it's not compulsory but for me it's a rather strict practice of religion.

For his lawyer, the *a posteriori* justification for jihad in the name of the values of Islam calling for 'coming to the aid of his persecuted Muslim brother' proclaimed by Primo do not hold up, particularly in view of his past life marked by close contact with the world of petty crime, theft, banditry and alcohol consumption. This sometimes leads him and his lawyer to get angry and not to speak to each other for several weeks. This is a fact that Primo himself acknowledges. Before his experience of commitment in the name of 'jihad', his life was marked by living 'apart, by and in illegality'.

[...] I stole all my time, I only worked a little, otherwise I stole all my time, I wasted it on the 'haram' (illicit), the discos, the casino, the trips, I said to myself that this is not life, I found myself many times saying to myself: 'Imagine dying in this condition... and then you end up being convinced and you say to yourself that those who are against jihad, who are Muslims because there are many of them, we hear them speak on television and so on, they don't have as many arguments as those who are for jihad and who have arguments, they have hadiths, the Koran and so on. (Primo)

When I first met the respondents within the walls of the prisons, all I knew was the name of the institution; the prison administration did not inform me beforehand of the identity of the individuals, the precise reasons for their incarceration or the reasons for their conviction. I only knew, in accordance with the predefined criteria set out in the collaboration agreement we had signed, that these were related to counter-terrorism measures, which referenced notions of 'radicalism' or 'radicalisation' even though these terms had no legal content. The first exchange I had with them was mainly intended to introduce the interview, to gather the reasons for their involvement in this dialogue, and at the same time, to show them as energetically and sincerely as possible, that I would guarantee their trust and foster a sense of understanding. I aimed to communicate this message through the tone and content of the questions, the willingness to listen and to be totally available. The second interview focused on reminding them of the ways in which a courteous and benevolent exchange based on mutual trust was possible. This presupposes, for them as for me, the ability to say 'no' and express any disagreement with complete autonomy. Thus, when I explain to Primo the interest I have in understanding his trajectory and invite him to express the reasons why he agreed to respond positively to my request for an interview, he explicitly mentions that his trajectory was characterised by the passage from what he calls 'one extreme to another extreme'. From 'a world where we used to drink, go out to clubs, where you are sucked into banditry, where all your mates are robbers, thieves and you are there with them in the *haram* ['illicit'], you only do bad things, you see, you go from that to directly', to entering Islam in the name of jihad. On the one hand, he deplores the lack of reflection in his choices and the necessary distance which, according to him, would have allowed him not to avoid rushing into things that had led him to where he is today: 'I would have liked to have taken a step back and to have entered my religion very slowly', he confided in me during the second interview. On the other hand, he justifies this extreme that he has just deplored in the name of what he considers to be a 'normal practice of religion' and that only Europeans would, according to him, be inclined to consider as a radical project.

Interviewer: I am here to understand. I am here for you, to understand. I'm here to understand, to try to understand and that's my interest, I'm interested in understanding your trajectory. But what is your interest in this? What is your interest in our talks?

Respondent: My interest is to explain myself, you see, to be clear, to put on the table what there is to put on the table and that's it. In fact, I had an approach when I received the first letter. I spoke about it with my lawyer. He said yes, this is good to make you understand, to clarify your situation a bit, to clarify the path of all this. And because I wanted to do it through a book, I explained it to you at the beginning, then afterwards, when an article comes out in La Presse, you see it is about you, every week, every month. In short, I had this idea of writing a book, but I don't know if you can say autobiographical.

Interviewer: Yes, you could say.

Respondent: For me, it was more in order to prevent other young people following the same path, because there will still be scourges like that in the future. And how can I tell young people not to rush into things because it was the rush that made me... I would have liked so much to go back to that time and to have taken a step back. I didn't know what to do, I didn't

know. I rushed like an idiot. I went from one extreme to another. From being extremely in the *haram* ['illicit'] to being extremely in a religion. When I say extremely in the '*haram*' and extremely in a religion, it's extreme in relation to the country where we live. But those who practise it in this way, they practise it as it was practised at the time of the prophet. I mean, at the time of the prophet it was normal. People in the market square would call upon others to help the jihad in Iraq. And it was Bilal [one of the prophet's companions and the first muezzin of Islam] who called people 'to run to the jihad!'. We need you to go to Yemen, you know what I mean, it was a normal practice of the religion. For other civilisations, it's radical and so I would have liked to have stepped back and entered the religion slowly. Learning the basics of prayer. And in fact, that's what I did, but too late. Because once I got back to prison, the first thing I did was to read '*Fiqh salat*' [the rules of prayer], it's a book about the rules of prayer. How to do your prayer well. Because there are many people who do prayers, but they are not accepted. Or they get a tiny part of the reward. And so, you see how to do your prayer? How to do Ramadan well? Little by little, we, all of us (referring to the neighbourhood friends with whom he participated in the attacks), have gone from a world where we drank, went out to clubs, you go from that to directly ... you see, there is no middle ground, no distance, and that is what I wanted. To put it in a book to explain to young people that anyway, these are political wars, wars of strategy for oil. For this, for that, you see it's complicated, it's not easy. There are many people who have thought about this. I'm not the one who will find the solution. Well, I wanted to do my bit. That's why I accepted this interview.

To understand this very particular experience of dissonance that Primo is going through, we must first see that he has a real difficulty in being able to talk about himself, as do many others who have suffered the effects of 'school deviance' and early transgressive commitments characteristic of belonging to spatially segregated working class fractions, without economic capital (pocket money, luxury clothes, etc.) or cultural capital (academic qualifications, legitimate ways of speaking and thinking, etc.). But it is also important to understand that for boys, 'the neighbourhood' refers in particular to what the sociologist Fabien Truong calls 'a factory of loyalty conflicts' (Truong, 2017). That is to say, as a member of a group united around the same community of experiences, you are obliged to be loyal to the group in some way. This obliges the individual to conform to ambivalent roles and to be accountable to each other at different levels. From this point of view, the neighbourhood as a space of relationships not only enshrines an 'offer of deviance' but also constitutes a large refuge zone from which one can project, if not the fulfilment of an imaginary future, at least the possibilities. A marriage, a job, or the purchase of a flat. As was the case for Primo:

You can imagine after so many years, you have your flat that she [his future wife] has been waiting for a long time, you have the caterers that have been paid for, the wedding hall that has been paid for, you have all the dresses that have been paid for, everything has been paid for, even the date has been set, you know, my mother, you know how happy my mother was? She said, 'at last, at 30 years old, you're going to get married. I don't know how many years I've been waiting for that.' My mother was very, very happy, she was happy, every time she saw one of her girlfriends, she said to her, you're invited and everything, and imagine from one day to the next your wife sees you in the media, in the newspaper you see, boom... The world fell on her head, you know, it's, it's... I went through... I don't even know how I'm still alive *Wallah* [in the name of god]... I've been through so much that... I'd even like to... I'd even like to make a film about it *sahbi* [my friend] . (Primo)

This inner conflict of loyalty is very clear in Primo when he speaks about the group of peers to whom he belongs and with whom he participated in the Paris and Brussels attacks – young men who were mostly childhood friends. He cannot entirely condemn those who were his close friends because the solidarity they

experienced together now gives meaning to his commitment. At the same time, he wholeheartedly condemns the murderous acts they committed.

Because you see, I lived with them long before all this, long before the plague broke out in Syria. These are people you grew up with. You know them, you get up in the morning, you grew up with them. We built ourselves together, even if we didn't make the right choices, you see, we didn't take the road to work, we flew together. In short, we grew up together, we knew each other. And so, when they left, they already had two years of war behind them, while I was still in prison. When I was with them in the flats, you see, there were points where I agreed with them and points where I didn't agree with them. Even before the attacks. So, that's why I agree that you should go and fight in front of soldiers. I'm not okay with you going out and killing people in the street. (Primo)

Speaking of his childhood friends, Primo is torn between, on the one hand, the loyalty he feels he owes them, and the helplessness in which he finds himself at being unable to act other than by following them on their murderous journey, in the mode of a kind of 'copy and paste' of the jihad. This is evidenced by his attitude to being told to write his will just a short time before his aborted suicide operation, which the investigators would later find:

I'm guilty of writing a will saying, to my mother, 'Don't worry about the victims, France is being attacked because they have taken the lead from the enemy dogs of the crusade..'. Frankly I wrote something that today, I say to myself, why did I do that and of course it was on the computer and they're going to blame me for that at the trial... it's a will where I copied and pasted, there were lots of wills.' (Primo)

He goes on to reflect on his feelings about those childhood friends now:

All my childhood friends who were killed, I didn't agree with them because In fact I understand them and on the one hand I don't understand them because those who carried out these attacks in Paris and Brussels, even if I accompanied them you see... [...] and in fact why I said I blame them and at the same time I don't blame them, I understand them and at the same time I don't understand them, it's because they've seen things... you know what I mean... they've seen things that when you see these things it's over, you don't have a heart anymore you know what I mean... and sometimes you have five burnt children, you have children, you have old people you know, blown to bits, they've seen images that you and I, even in our worst horror films, have never seen... and so you see I was thinking I don't agree with them, you know, and on the one hand I understand them, I don't even know if I can say that I understand them, I don't understand them, I'm in a position where I don't even know where... you know what I mean... but what's certain is that it's useless... The war. (Primo)

He now considers this entry into the field of extreme political and religious violence to be the result of an impulsiveness born of 'anger'. In terms of his own trajectory, he sees the element that triggered it to be an extremely traumatic biographical event, namely, the announcement by his sister of the death of his younger brother who had gone to Syria while he was serving his umpteenth prison sentence. This tragic event propelled him into a spiral, which, almost irremediably, step by step, led him to participate in the terrorist attacks perpetrated in Belgium.

Since I got out of prison, this black anger that I had, you know, the fact of having seen all that, the fact of wanting to go to Syria and leave and all that, it was a trigger, in fact, you know, it was on a whim, on a whim, hatred, you know what I mean... Because when it happened, you know, I said to myself... I said to myself if I catch this guy who killed my brother, what am I going to do to him? (Primo)

After contravening the conditions of his release on licence from yet another prison sentence for robbery (by breaking the no alcohol condition), Primo had his parole revoked, Primo had his parole revoked and went to prison to serve the full ten months remaining to him. During 'those 10 months that I still have to serve [...]' the world changes for me', Primo concedes. During a visit from his fiancée and sister, Primo learns the news of his little brother's departure for Syria:

...on the next visit, I can still see the scene, I see my sister and my wife but from a distance because I am in the visiting line and there are still three or four people in front of me and I see my wife and my sister crying, I tell myself straight away that I'm going to end up in the isolation cell today because I tell myself that there's someone in the room who's been disrespectful to them, there's a 'murderer' [guard] who's been disrespectful to them, and I tell myself that's it, I'm off to the isolation cell for a week, and then I arrive and I tell them what's going on? Why are you crying? They tell me to sit down. I say what's going on? They say no, there is nothing, there is nothing. I say ah it's ok, ok. She tells me that your little brother has gone to Syria. When she tells me that! [silence]... I would have preferred them not to tell me. You see, because you can't do anything, you see. I hope you never feel like that. You can't do anything. You can't even do yourself any good by walking, by taking your mind off it. (Primo)

After the shocking news, Primo tries to forget the pain he feels by gambling, playing cards or football, drinking and smoking, and now also starts to take an interest in the situation in Syria by watching the news on TV:

...I try to forget, it '*qamar*' [gambling] a lot in prison, it was playing a lot, cards, poker and everything, it was a good period, there was everything, drinking, smoking, we worked, time passed, afternoon five-a-side football, evening activities, it was a good atmosphere and I tried to forget. I say come on, it's not serious. There are mates who are with me in prison too, guys from my town but who come from other neighbourhoods and I tell them the story and everything, I tell them hey! guys, it's a crazy thing, there's such and such, such and such, they've gone to Syria, even my little brother has just gone there, they tell me no, stop, even your little brother!? Ah, I say, 'yeah, what's going on there?' From that day on I started to take an interest, I didn't give a damn, you see the newspaper, the news and everything, the debates on television, I didn't give a damn, it was from that moment on that I started to take an interest, all my life I wouldn't have given a damn, but from that moment on. (Primo)

During a leave of absence from prison two months before the end of his sentence, Primo returned to his neighbourhood and saw the devastating toll this had had among his friends, many of whom had gone to the Iraqi-Syrian zone and whose reasons for leaving he could not explain:

...until the day when I had two months left in detention, I had the right to three leaves, I had already been out twice for thirty-six hours, so when I go out, I have my sandwich shop, I come to see the business, I am with my partner who is a friend with whom we also grew up in the neighbourhood, I ask him what is going on? Ah, he says it's a crazy thing, he says look at the neighbourhood, it's empty, '*ass'ahbi*' [friend], he says first of all there were all the '*drari*' (boys, young men) from Vilvoorde who left, Vilvoorde was emptied, there were a few individuals from Anderlecht, there were a few from Verviers and he says now it's our place... He told me even Kader, a friend of mine, he left and a few days later, his little brother, who is 25-26 years old, followed him, with his sister and his sister's two children. There's a neighbourhood where a whole family has left too... can you imagine you go into prison, you come out eight months later on leave and you come back to the neighbourhood, you don't

have any friends. The neighbourhood is empty and you ask why all these people have left? You want to know why all those people left... (Primo)

Primo wonders why so many people have left, including some of his childhood friends. Watching videos on YouTube showing bombings and extremely violent images of civilians, men, women and children killed or wounded, Primo thinks he understands why they left.

...I look on the internet at the first video I see, in fact I understand why they left, I'm even going to write something down for you on your notebook, it's a video I'm going to give you, it's the first two videos I saw and that's when I said to myself I understand why they left... because at that time we're far from the Islamic State, we know that there is Al Qaeda, there is Jabat al Nosra, there are many small groups and many Syrian inhabitants are joining these groups against Bashar Al Assad... since the first world power, the United States, is not doing anything, we are going to do it. (Primo)

Above all, Primo relates these images of extraordinary violence to the fact that his brother is in the theatre of these murderous operations and wonders how he can survive such violence: 'and I know that my little brother is there, I see bombings...I knew that my little brother was in this mess and I thought how he will survive this?'. At the end of his ten months in prison and with only a few weeks left before his release, Primo is summoned by the warden of the institution where he is staying. She wants Primo to call his family on the phone because news has just arrived.

There's a woman, she's a ward manager, she comes in, and she tells me you have to call your mother. She gives me my mother's number. As soon as she said that, I felt a tightness in my chest. I felt weird, I say Madam I have money in my account I can call, I say yeah what's going on? And I look at another boss I know well, he says I can't tell you anything I'm sorry. He closes the door. I call. And in the house I hear my sister crying. It's my sister who answers. I say yeah, what's going on? She couldn't even speak. She says yeah it's ... *Allahy Rahmou* [May God be pleased with him] he has been killed. (Primo)

Upset by the death of his brother and disconcerted by the wave of departures that affected so many of his childhood friends, Primo 'begins to read the Koran, to look up on the internet how the Koran should be read, to read hadiths (prophetic traditions)... to learn little by little [...] to fear Allah...'. He correlates and links these departures for the Iraqi-Syrian zone to religious practice and, in a sort of moral introspective assessment, evaluates them according to the degree of sincerity of the faith of those who go there:

I was thinking, what did you do before, did you do what your little brother did? Did you go off on your own? But not only like my little brother, there are plenty of people who did it, they left without telling anyone, it's between them and God, they left without anyone knowing about it. No, it didn't happen like that the day I left, plenty of people knew, and in any case, I swore to myself in prison, as soon as I get out I'm going to go and see what's going on there, I'm going to go and talk to the last two friends I have left and so I went to see... I was determined to leave, I wanted to know what was going on and then I was fed up, I said to myself what kind of life is this, you know, I said to myself we're light years away, I read in the Koran that we're going to be questioned about the goods we've acquired and I say to myself that I've always stolen, I've only worked a little bit, otherwise I've always stolen, I wasted it on '*haram*' (illicit things), discos, the casino, trips, I say to myself that's not life, I found myself many times saying to myself, imagine yourself dying in this condition... and then you end up being convinced and you say to yourself that those who are against jihad, who are Muslims because there are many of them, we hear them speak on television and all that,

they don't have as many arguments as those who are for jihad and who have arguments, they have hadiths, the Koran and that's it... (Primo)

Primo is caught up in a kind of mental conversion in which a number of strong affective attachments - fidelity to one's origins, loyalty to the memory of his little brother, ambiguous attachment to the neighbourhood and loyalty to his childhood friends – compete with his own sense that self-destruction is unthinkable. Primo articulates this himself:

You see, when I was with them [talking about his friends hiding out], they said, 'Yeah, look at your brother, he was a good man, you must be too'. And I was comparing, you see, I was saying my little brother didn't do that, my little brother was on the ground, you see. I'm something else, you know what I mean. And anyway, even if my little brother would have done that, you know, I wouldn't have done it because I can't, you know, I can't see myself shooting at people, they're in the middle of a café terrace, you know, running to blow myself up, you know what I mean, you know, you shouldn't 'Ayik' [exaggerate], you know. (Primo)

Previously, Primo had not prayed except as a child – to do as the adults did. He then forged the opinion, after some rapid online research on certain websites, that 'perhaps [his] little brother was not entirely wrong, [his] friends were not entirely wrong, because the Koran talks about jihad'. He contrasts his past actions with his younger brother's approach, which has an aura of sincerity about it, he believes, because he went to Syria in secret and got up in the morning to pray the dawn prayer while Primo was returning from his late-night robbing sprees. Did you do like your little brother? Not only like my little brother, there are plenty of people who did it, they left without telling anyone, it's between them and God, they left without anyone knowing. Primo then decided to go to Syria, as he had sworn to himself in prison, in order to 'see what is happening there'. Before that, he spent a few days with his parents who 'had forgotten that jihad was part of Islam' and distanced himself from this 'family Islam' emblematic of the first generations of Belgian-Moroccan immigration workers. His father tried to dissuade him, but to no avail: 'one day we were at the table like this and my father said, 'Hey, I *saddeq* (sacrificed) one child, it's over! *Meskine* [poor guy], he was afraid that someone else would go to Syria, he felt it...'. Thanks to the support of one of his childhood friends, who was already there, and whom he later found in the hideouts that sheltered the protagonists of the Paris and Brussels attacks, he went to Istanbul and then on to Syria. He stayed in Syria for nine days, during which time he first looked for 'a way to repatriate [his little brother's] remains to Turkey', so that at least [his] parents could go and visit his remains', but his friend tried to dissuade him from doing so because he reportedly told him 'they won't let you do it because it's in the religion, that's how it is, where the martyr falls, they bury him'. His friend advised him to stay and not to return to Belgium because, 'already in the neighbourhood there will be talk, that's for sure, and when you come back they'll arrest you straight away, they'll suspect you of having been in Turkey, you'll do 3, 4, 5 years in prison'. Primo was not very forthcoming about exactly what he did during these nine days. He says that he realised the extent of Daesh's success in its international recruitment of candidates for jihad by seeing 'people from all over the world, people from Madagascar, Brazil, Mexico, France, Europe, America, even Chinese, I saw Chinese people, I was surprised, I swear Chinese people from Shanghai came [laughs]... They came from Shanghai, I swear, they were people from all over the world, they went there.' Nevertheless, if the precise conditions that allowed this return remain mysterious, since it is almost impossible for any individual who has been in the war zone where DAESH was present to leave, it would appear that it was his links with this childhood friend who, 'over the years had risen in the hierarchy, because he had proved to the senior emirs that he was trustworthy', that led him to leave Syria.

On his return to Belgium, at the end of June/beginning of July 2015, i.e. about five months before the Paris attacks, the police visited the family home and informed Primo's parents of his trip to Syria. When questioned at the police station about the nature of this trip, Primo said that he had only gone to Turkey to

take his mind off the news of his little brother's death. The police let him go even though, according to Primo, he still had a few hours of community service left that he had not completed. During the five months preceding the killings of 13 November 2015, Primo said he went back to his business, he still did two or three jobs, but he had given up, he had started to pray, stopped drinking alcohol and taking hashish. A month before the attacks, one of his acolytes, a childhood friend, who had not gone to Syria, informed him of the planned attacks by some of the protagonists who had been in Syria and were now on Belgian soil. He then thinks that 'this is the end of his nightmare' which had started in prison when he heard about the death of his little brother. He describes the existence of what he calls 'a dirty atmosphere in the neighbourhood, a crazy tension with the unusual presence of the police, in civilian clothes'. He describes being watched and surveilled. He says that he was stopped several times in his car without a driving license but was allowed to drive away without being apprehended. He thinks that it was an order from the State Security who had put him under surveillance. But he is surprised that despite this increased surveillance of the whole neighbourhood, and especially of him and his childhood friends, the police could not prevent the attacks from happening.

When I ask Primo about his state of mind at that moment, and where he is in his personal journey after this trip to Syria, he explains that he is lost but that 'back home it's *'aaadi'* [normal]. My buddy says come with me to Spain, I'm going with him, he says come with me to go and rent an apartment for my brother you see I'm going, we're going, we get there and two days later I go with his brother to go and rent another house.' These places later shelter the perpetrators of the attacks. Primo goes to the hideouts in Brussels where he found the childhood friend he had joined in Syria, who tells him: 'this is where it all ends, if you want to come it's now'. In a sort of nostalgia for the time when they were together, blazing around the neighbourhood at the wheel of an 'All-road' (Audi model 4X4) a thousand miles away from Syria and its warlike implications, Primo confides his doubts to his friend. His friend replies that if his friends are there 'today it's because they are bombing us and we are not going to let them bomb people without giving them an answer [...] *Alhamdoulillah*, it's Allah who guided us, look at your little brother, he was a man to the end, he didn't give up and I can't wait to go and join them'. On Thursday 12 November 2015, Primo accompanied his childhood friends to the rented premises and left by taxi on the same evening. On the way back to Brussels, Primo cries. ...I came back but I knew and on the way back I was crying, I was thinking here are all my friends who have already been killed in Syria and my little brother who has been killed, your last friends are going to die and you can't do anything. Once he arrived in the neighbourhood, he now deplores the fact that it has been almost completely emptied of his friends. On the evening of 13 November, Primo was sitting in a café in the neighbourhood, watching the football match at the Stade de France, watching the shockwave of that night of terror being broadcast on all the television channels. To the investigators, Primo explained that he had accompanied the protagonists of the killing the day before the attack because they were his childhood friends:

The judges asked me why you accompanied them, I told them because they are my best childhood friends, they are childhood friends with whom I grew up, I said to myself that I am not interested in going to blow myself up, in going to kill people. (Primo)

When Primo explains to me that 'no one will be able to deny' that those who went to Syria did so by virtue of 'a good feeling, taking up arms and risking your life,' I respond that this is not what he did after he went to Syria – he didn't stay to fight. Primo then admits that if '[h]is little brother hadn't been killed, and [h]is friends... we would have stayed in our quiet life because the truth is that I was in a life far away from that'.

At that precise moment, the day after the attacks in France, Primo knew he was wanted by all the police forces in Europe; his photo was broadcast on all the television channels. Thus began a headlong rush, which ended on the day of his arrest, a few days after the attacks in Brussels.

I know what my part was [in the Paris attacks] ... My charges are participation in a terrorist organisation, they know among other things that I was in Syria, you know, for nine days. They know that I was in the hideouts of the flats just after the Paris attacks, you see after the Paris attacks when my photo came out in the media, I don't know that on November 13, a few days after my photo came out... and I knew that when my photo came out, you know, I knew that they were going to '*jmaai*' [pick me up]... There's a guy who comes in front of the restaurant that I sold, you know... He comes, he says follow me, I'm going to put you in a flat, in a hideout... Because you know very well what happens, they'll come, they'll sweep you up, you'll spend 30 years in prison in France, you see that was just after the Paris attacks, so at that time, this guy, I'm following him because I don't have a choice. (Primo)

Primo found himself in a Catch-22 situation. Out of loyalty to his friends, but also for fear of being seen as a 'traitor', he couldn't denounce them by warning the police of their plans to attack. He couldn't turn himself in by denouncing himself either, because in any case, running away from the police was his 'job' after his nightly robbing expeditions, from which they were making 20-60,000 euros a time. This double bind soon translated into an impossible equation for Primo.

I can't call the police, because the judge told me that why didn't you call the police, I told him yes, of course, you are not even capable of protecting your citizens and you want me to call the police to warn that people are going to carry out an attack so they will quickly label me an apostate, and they will label me a target for life... You see, you know, the future organisations that will exist, they will stick a label on this one, there you go, he sold out his brothers and everything. They can attack your family, who will protect them? [...] I couldn't have done that, I couldn't have called the police, I couldn't have denounced them. Because it was impossible, simply impossible. (Primo)

Soon his picture was on every TV in the world. Knowing he was wanted, when a member of the bombing commando cell approached him and offered that he could join them in their hideout, he felt he had no choice, especially since most of his childhood friends had been killed in Syria or during or after the Paris attacks:

And then I had to follow the guy from November until the attacks of 22 March. November, December, January, February, March, 4 months, so during these 4 months, I'm with them in the flats, in the hiding places, everywhere I go, I have to follow them you see... because I don't want to give myself up, I don't want to spend my life in prison, I still had a bit of money left over, I said to myself yes there are French people who have been in Thailand in hiding for 20 years, they are '*aich*' (living)... There you see... I think maybe I'll '*hrab*' (run away) somewhere, you know, I'll run away, you know, I'll make false papers, go away, you know, but the days went by, you know, the days went by and everything... And in those caches there was nothing good you know... Oh yeah, I was there during those four months, I occupied my days, we had a tablet, you know, I had films on the PC, you know, we watched films, and I spent my days like that thinking, all the time thinking. What to do? What do I do? What do I do? The only solution that presented itself to us once, was to go back to Syria. There was apparently a way to get there and papers, but it didn't happen, and I didn't want to. (Primo)

Whilst in the hideouts, the decision was made to hasten the attacks of 22 March 2016 after the arrest of a childhood friend of Primo's. Primo describes how his companions tried to persuade him to carry out the act himself. Primo knows that he will not be able to carry out the ultimate act of self-destruction in order to kill as many people as possible around him. He says that he has convinced himself that he has the will to do it because he doesn't want to spend his life behind prison bars, but deep down he knows that he won't be able to do it.

During the four months I stayed with them after Paris, you know, they talked to me, you know what I mean, they told me yes, you have to go all the way, you have to do it, it's useless, you're going to spend your whole life in prison, you're going to regret it, *asahbi* [friend]! He told me *wallah* [in the name of God] do it! (Primo)

In order not to attract the disapproval of his companions, Primo delays until the last moment to announce that he will not do it, that is to say the day of the attack itself.

[...] I say to myself I don't want to tell them now [...] I say to myself, well, there are two of them, they're going to go to the first target location, and the three of us are going to the second location, and then I say to myself, when they've finished their thing and I'm on my own, what will I do? I don't have much money left in my pocket, I say to myself what do I do? Once I got to the place where the attack was to take place, I told them brothers, I can't do that, I told them guys, I'm not going to do it, one thing leading to another, because I stayed with them in the flats, I convinced myself that I was going to do it because I don't want to spend my life in jail, but there's nothing religious about it, you see, there's no sincerity towards Allah, I'm going to do it for the sake of doing it, out of ostentation, no, I won't do it and I'm probably too full of empathy, you see people, you say to yourself, go and stand next to this one, you're going to '*tartak*' [explode], you can't do it, you see. And so they do it. (Primo)

His refusal to destroy and self-destruct is, in fact, an afterthought, signalling the fact that his desire for life is stronger than his desire for death, even when supposedly endorsed by certain religious 'authorities'.

Respondent: When you have reached a certain degree in jihad...Because you must not believe, you know how many people of science, people who have studied 10 years of sharia, who have studied the Koran by heart, who know thousands of hadiths by heart, they are *ulemas*, men of science, they agree with what happened in Paris, on the 13th...

Interviewer: Yes, but you say that you don't agree with what they did and, therefore, also with these *ulemas*. Did you tell them that you did not agree with your childhood friends?

Respondent: Of course I told them...

Interviewer: And what did they say to you?

Respondent: Well, they would bring me the answers that you're going to ask an *ulema*, he's going to tell you the same thing, you see, he's going to tell you here, this, this, this, this many verses of the Koran, this many. 'Transgress against them, with equal transgression'²², combat has been prescribed for you, so let it be unpleasant for you', he will give you lots of hadiths, lots of things, at this stage even if we say he is right, even if he is right I will not do it...

Interviewer: And so you didn't do it?

Respondent: I don't...

Interviewer: Why?

Respondent: Because of the risk of killing an innocent person, because the prophet, he forbade to kill anyone who is in his place of work, who is in his house, even anyone you see...

²² This is an inaccurate quote from Sura 2; Verse 194 of the Qur'an: Al Baqarah-194. The Holy Month for the Holy Month! - Retaliation applies to all sacred things. Therefore, whoever transgresses against you, transgress against him with equal transgression. And fear God. And know that God is with the pious.

you don't have the right to kill people... except if war is declared... I'm going to give you a nickname of the prophet and if you don't know it, find out, they called him '*Dahak el qata*²³'...it means the man who smiles when he kills, it was his war nickname you see... there was Abu el Qasam but there was also this one...'

This renunciation at the very last minute, but also planned, appears *a posteriori* as the ultimate denial of the project to which he had committed himself only 'half-heartedly'. That is to say, it calls into question the whole pseudo-theoretical edifice on which he now bases his justifications in the name of jihad. 'For me, going to help innocent people, coming back and killing other innocent people, it doesn't make sense...' he told me. However legitimate the justifications for jihad may sometimes appear, particularly with regard to a particular aspect of the international geopolitical situation. These alone do not exhaust the meaning of his commitment to a 'Born again' enterprise of violent action. He admits to the 'chivalrous attitude of soldier-to-soldier combat' and rejects the idea of attacking innocent people. After all, I've always been clear, you know, those who went to fight soldier to soldier, you know, chivalrous, you know, I always agree with that... But to carry out attacks, my position has always been clear, you see it's no way, not possible'. The virtuous attitude of sacrificing personal satisfactions for the sake of greater moral perfection, which he would almost present as the principle of the personal and collective commitments of his childhood friends, does not only not coincide with the past of these same friends, but above all, in his own eyes, with the extreme ignominy of such a project to destroy human lives.

Primo expresses the ambivalence of his position – in his half-hearted condemnation of the destructive actions committed by his childhood friends - through contradictory terms: 'I understand them and I don't understand them'. His position has less to do with the justification of the horrors to which they would have been accustomed to – the result of several years spent in the war zone – but rather to the feeling of solidarity that binds him to his former comrades in the neighbourhood of his childhood, and above all, to the loyalty of the memory of his younger brother who left and was killed in the Iraqi-Syrian combat zone at the age of 19.

This is why, after he had told me the story, which he wished me not to record, of three dreams about his brother, one that he himself had had a few days after the announcement of his death, the second about his sister and the last about his mother, he concluded by referring to a Koranic verse indicating that 'God has bought believers, their person and their goods in exchange for paradise.'²⁴ The use of this verse supports the justification/conviction that his brother would have died a martyr. In this context, it seems logical that Primo does not totally condemn the acts of his childhood friends, even if in his eyes they do not make sense: 'You see, it's difficult, I can't judge those who carried out these attacks, I can only say that I did well not to pull any trigger and not to have killed anyone, you see'. In Primo's head, the line between the two types of commitment in the name of 'jihad', – that of his childhood friends who left the zone and then returned to the land where they were born to sow death, and that of his brother who was killed after having left to fight in the zone – is not clear. '[...] I don't even know if I can say that, I understand them, I don't understand them, I'm in a position where I don't even know' he confided to me about his childhood friends.

²³ This expression attributed to the designation of the prophet does not appear to be included in any of the known Sunni tradition but is circulating in Islamist circles. <http://blog.decouvrirelislam.net/Home/islam/Le-prophete-Muhammad/desinformations-sur-le-prophete-saws/je-suis-le-prophete-du-carnage-je-suis-un-rieur-sanglant>; <https://www.islamweb.net/fr/fatwa/93864/Le-Proph%C3%A8te>

²⁴ Reference to the verse of Sura 9-111-'Surely Allah has purchased the believers, their persons and their goods in exchange for Paradise. They fight in the Cause of Allah: they kill, and they are killed. This is an authentic promise that He has taken upon Himself in the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an. And who is more faithful than Allah to His promise? So rejoice in the exchange which ye have made: and this is the greatest success.'

Primo is constantly confronted by this haunting question of guilt. The memory of his murdered brother clouds the issue and prevents any attempt at clarification, whether it be in terms of the position to be taken in the face of the alleged obligation to help his Muslim brothers and sisters in Palestine or Syria that his friends suggest:

...it's a serious position too, you see, because who doesn't tell you that Allah will call you to account? What have you done for them? Did you help them? (Primo)

Or in the case of the moral problem posed to him of determining himself in conscience with regard to the acts he has committed:

I am at peace with myself but there are always these dark thoughts, these regrets you know, I say to myself yeah why did I do that? I should have done otherwise you know, but at the same time, it's not good to say that, because it's destiny, *Qadr Allah Khlass* [God wanted it that way] ... I know that you can't use fate to say yes, here I am, I committed a sin and then I say yes, it's fate, no, that doesn't work, but I was in a logic where you see for me I wasn't committing sins, it's fate, I can invoke it you see... (Primo)

Moreover, while it is an undeniable fact that prolonged exposure to the sight of wartime exactions has negative repercussions on the human brain and must in some way predispose to a form of acceptance of violence by lowering the threshold of tolerance, the fact remains that, in the account given by Primo, the fact of having been in the area and having been exposed to the worst atrocities does not necessarily lead to the commission of a violent act. This was the case of one of the protagonists of the deadly attack in Brussels, who also gave up on 'blowing himself up':

I didn't blow myself up and in the other place there was someone else who didn't want to blow himself up. He is in prison now. He didn't blow himself up because he told me that when he arrived at the target of the attack he felt that he didn't want to do it, although he had been in Syria for several years and had seen some crazy things, but it's not easy [...] you see, you have to go there to put on an explosive waistcoat and press down, you see... and tell yourself that there will be pieces of you in every direction, you see, it's...

We can trace the contours of Primo's journey which began in 2012, when leaving to fight in Syria was not yet legally reprehensible,²⁵ intensified as a result of the death of his younger brother while he was serving a prison sentence and culminated in his renunciation of the violent act. His trajectory and the decisions that he made is characterised in the dilemma of 'how to leave without betraying?', which seems to be expressed in the content of the remarks he makes when I ask him about why he abandoned the act.

Interviewer: I would like to ask you a question, the notorious day of the bombing when you give up on blowing up the bomb, you give up because you are not convinced that you are doing it for God, you have a doubt about the sincerity of your act, earlier you said I don't know if I am praying for God sincerely, or for ostentation, for others?

Respondent: Yes, there is some of that, but afterwards, are the others... I'm not... it's not a question of God or not God, it's that I'm not convinced, simply because they're people who have nothing to do...

Interviewer: Yes, but you say true Islam, right?

²⁵ It was only in 2014 that all international institutions, through a Security Council resolution (2178), criminalised travel to Syria.

Respondent: Yeah but true Islam doesn't say you have to kill people, I'm for a jihad that is done according to the rules that the Koran says...

Interviewer: So you don't agree with the attacks and the targeting of innocent people?

Respondent: Oh yeah, no I don't agree, but as I say, I understand them and I don't understand them, and I think I understand them because they've seen some crazy things...

Interviewer: But you too have seen things!

Respondent: Not what they saw.

Interviewer: What you are saying is that the engine is hate?

Respondent: It's not hatred, it's also revenge and also from seeing the same things [atrocities] again and again... when you live in a place and you are bombed constantly at some point you don't have that...

Interviewer: Yes, I agree, but who is better placed than you to understand this feeling of revenge and yet you didn't go through with it?

Respondent: [silence] hmm... maybe I got even...

Interviewer: Do you think?

Respondent: What do you know about it? How do you know I didn't kill people there?

Interviewer: I don't know!

Respondent: (laughing)... no, but they stayed for two or three years while I stayed for only nine days... they saw atrocities that I did not...

Interviewer: No doubt, but this is not the case for all, some did not go to Syria...

Respondent: Yes, like such a... you talk to me about a chivalrous war of equals, but for me the French, British or American pilots who bombed are also terrorists or worse... And you see in the media they talk about us mujahideen [jihadist fighters], including people who didn't carry out any attack, who just went to Syria and fought as if it was the worst crime of humanity, but in fact it's a question of Islam, of religion, because for me those who committed the worst crime are the Christians with the round-ups, with Auschwitz and the extermination of the Jews and yet we never say about them that they are Christian terrorists, we don't talk about terrorism linked to Christianity...

Today Primo is worried and very concerned. He is afraid of the punishment he will receive for the actions he has committed. 'Imagine when I get out of prison, the state of the world won't be like it is now. Sometimes that scares me.' Even if, as he told me, he did not 'pull any trigger and did not kill anyone', he faces very heavy penalties for his participation in a terrorist organisation that has killed several dozen people in France and Belgium.

Interviewer: How do you see the future?

Respondent: The future? the truth is, I know that there's a minimum of 20 years, they're going to give me maybe 20 years in France, because it's not that they're going to condemn me, because they can't condemn those who are no longer there, they're going to make an example of those who remain, the judges who will be there that day, they won't be able to face the popular pressure, and they'll condemn us to ease their conscience and to satisfy public opinion. 35, that makes me 30-31, if I get out of prison at 65 I'll be happy, the truth is

I'll be happy. 35 years in prison. Because we don't know what else to do, you see. They're not going to tell me yes sir, you accompanied, you did this, you did that, you did that, we know you're not the mastermind, you're not the sponsor, we know you didn't give any logistical help, because these are the most important questions, eh? Are you the mastermind? Did you provide logistical help? Are you the sponsor? In the two attacks I'm not involved. They were prepared in Syria, the masterminds were killed and so there you go, if they have to convict me for really, you know... ok... they're going to give me 10 years in France because I accompanied them, ok I'm willing to take 10 years for a round trip you know it's expensive but well, 20 years in Belgium and there you go you know I can apply after being convicted, in five years I'll apply for my bracelet or something.... but it's not going to happen like that, you mustn't dream, you see, what I mean is, anyway, as my lawyer told me, he told me to get it into your head as much as possible, so that if there's less, it's a good surprise, because there are people who are sick, they say yeah, 10 years I'm out, '*ya hasrane*' and so there you go.

But the greatest disillusionment Primo now faces, locked in his jail probably for many more years, is the feeling of emptiness, of nothing, of time passing with no clear purpose other than the obligation to serve his sentence:

I'm really frustrated by that, you know, time is going by fast and I'm not doing anything. You know. When I say, I'm not doing anything, I mean, not I'm not doing anything like I'm sitting around, but I'm not doing anything with my life. That is, I'm not moving forward. I mean I'm at an age you know, 35. That's a good age for a man. It's the age when he's married, when he has his children and plays with his children and takes them to school. He works. I don't do all that. I'm here. I'm not saying I don't do anything, but it's very, very difficult. Even though you're taking... you're trying to learn a bit of science, you're reading a bit left and right. You occupy your time as you can, in fact. You read poems or books, you watch a bit of TV, you try to pass your time, you have visits from your family, you know, but I know I'm wasting my time and my life. Because I was in B... (in a prison where he was previously in Arlon) with a guy who said to me, I'm going to tell you the truth, I'm giving you good advice, don't ever get it into your head to say to yourself, like I'm going to be fine, these trials, I'm going to get 10-15 years and then I'm going to get out, always get it into your head to the maximum. Why the maximum? Because if you put 10 or 15 years in your head and at the end you get 30, 35, 40 years, you'll be disgusted, so it's better to put a figure in your head, max. That way, if you take less, it's a good surprise, so I say to myself, go for 30 years. You know. I say OK, you're going to do 30 years, OK, I say during these 30 years in prison, what can you do well? You know, I ask myself that sometimes, I say to myself, what can you do well to at least make yourself look, you know, to at least look like you haven't wasted all those years for nothing, to do something good you know. And that's what I'm saying to myself but in fact, the only thing you know, that for me, you know, was valuable to me, if I can say that, is to have my wife, my children, near me, you know, to see them grow. You see the family. Going on trips. Life, you know. You know what I mean. You know you won't get that. And best case scenario, you'll be out at 60, you know, best case scenario, what are you gonna do at 60 or 65? What do you want to do? Are you going to work? You're going to go to the job centre. [laughs]. So I say to myself, you see it's not like I'm in a state where my ideas are black. It's just that for me, I'm objective, you know, it's normal, that's it. But I say to myself, I say to myself, what can I do now to look like I've spent 35-30 years in prison for nothing? As I said, I try to find ideas, write a book, write a script for a film. Afterwards, I have to find out who will, you see I sometimes think like this, who will want to play the roles. Which director will want to take my script to make a film Otherwise, you see, I say to myself that I have to do things so that

it serves as a lesson to people, so that I don't fall into a rush, so that I have the science, to know before going like that, you see. (Primo)

4.2 Secundo's story

Secundo was born to parents of Moroccan origin in a Brussels commune from the so-called 'poor crescent' zone. He was aged 31 at the time of the interview and detained in Jamioulx prison for 'offences relating to a terrorist group'. He is accused of having tried twice to go Syria. Three interviews were conducted with him but he refused the invitation to participate in a fourth interview.

Secundo's older brother was instrumental in the process that fuelled his attempt to travel to Syria in 2012. This older brother was married to a French convert to Islam (whom he recently divorced) and served a prison sentence for going to Somalia 'to live his religion according to the norms of sharia'. He is now free.

Secundo was first convicted on 21 May 2014 by the Brussels Correctional Court for twice attempting to reach Syria in 2012. He was sentenced to four years' imprisonment suspended for five years for 'participation in a terrorist activity'. The suspended sentence related to his conviction for a terrorist offence became enforceable following further convictions, first in July 2017, when he was sentenced to 27 months in prison for a drugs offence, and then to 18 months in prison for 'assault and battery leading to incapacity to work' in October 2017. This brought his prison sentence to seven and a half years. He has been in prison since February 2017, following his re-convictions.

Secundo is the fifth of seven children (four boys and three girls) of which he is the third boy. One of his brothers, referred to in this report as M., is four years older than Secundo and was charged for having joined (in 2011, along with 17 other people) the group 'Al Shabaab', which later pledged allegiance to the Islamic State²⁶. When Secundo was arrested and imprisoned on his return from Turkey, he was convicted in the same 'case' as his brother. He was accused of having 'collected funds to finance the jihad in Somalia, where his brother was.²⁷' He is suspected of having participated in the 'exchange of information [between the protagonists], support, assistance and financing²⁸' of this jihadist group in Somalia.

Secundo was born in Belgium in 1989 to a Moroccan father and mother from the Eastern Rif, a region in the north-east of Morocco. His parents emigrated at a very young age from this region of Morocco, where many workers in Belgium come from. Secundo's father, who lost his own father at the age of five, explained to him the difficult living conditions in Morocco that motivated his departure for Belgium, where 'a maternal uncle had already settled'²⁹:

He suffered my father. He came when he was 18, 19, thanks to my uncle. He started to work and he had debts in Morocco, my father tells me, he says to me '*alhamdulillah*' [thanks to God], he built his house here and he made his house in Morocco. He made his wife and children, he told me, 'we had nothing'. We had no meat. It was the people who gave it to us. A pair of trousers with a hole in them, he had to sew it up, he told me three times, he sewed the same one up again and again, he told me we were poor. Until my grandmother, I call her

²⁶ Some of the information presented here about Secundo comes from a file to which we were given access to by the prison administration providing data from a number of sources on Secundo's judicial and prison history, his family background, personality, an assessment of the risk of reoffending based on the VERA-2R tool and an analysis of his rehabilitation and reintegration plan.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

'hana'. She is the one who raised him. My grandmother, my father's mother in fact, when my grandfather died, my father was 5 years old, he doesn't remember him. That's how poor people are brought up, you know? He told me I didn't have my father to look after me and my brothers and sisters. But he didn't have a photo of his father. He had a photo of the family in Fez, they had a photo of him which has disappeared. So he can't put a face to my grandfather. Anyway, after his mother, my grandmother, she left to remarry. So she left her children to my great grandmother, so they have no one. My aunt, my father's older sister, she was maybe five years older than him. She didn't get married because of that. To look after her little brothers and sisters. My grandmother, my father's mother, she remarried. It's as if you had abandoned your children, you went to live with someone else, you had other children. My father, when he was 17 years old, they collected some money for him, he came here. He came here and he worked, he collected his money that he owed to the family and he handed over the money. Very slowly, very slowly. And there [in Belgium] he made his life and got married. (Secundo)

As is still a relatively common practice in rural Morocco, Secundo's father married his first cousin, his maternal uncle's daughter. Secundo's paternal grandmother is the sister of his maternal grandfather. Secundo's father was a butcher, but after an accident at work, which forced him to stop working, he became unemployed. Secundo has always known his father to be unemployed, and although he has no memories of his father working, he is very grateful to him for providing for his family, brothers and sisters, and for teaching them the right way to do things.

He worked in the butcher's shop. He worked for years. Afterwards, he was injured from carrying the meat and so on, he had an operation and so on and then he stopped working. In short, although he was unemployed, I knew him when I was growing up, he was unemployed. When I was a kid, he was at work, but I don't remember. But '*alhamdoulillah*' [thanks to God] in spite of that, we wanted a pair of shoes, from time to time, he paid for them for us, you know, for Eid (religious feast) so that people wouldn't say that he didn't have [money]. That these children don't have [money]. In short, '*alhamdoulillah*', we ate, we drank, we had what we needed, But if you wanted extra, of course you had to find that yourself. You want training, you want this, that, of course, your father is not able to pay for both. He pays for you, he has to pay the other one too. And if he pays, then we can't get by. There's nothing at home, he tells me. Oh yeah! He tells me if you don't tighten your belt there's nothing! He told me, you mustn't be like that [closing his fist], you mustn't be like that [opening an outstretched hand], you must be like that [shows a half-opened hand]. You give a little, you squeeze a little. (Secundo)

Since becoming unemployed, Secundo's father has been quite involved in the mosque, which is located just opposite the family home, where he regularly calls for prayer.

As soon as he had his first two children, he stopped smoking. But he was impulsive too. He stopped and devoted himself to his religion. In short, he prayed, you see he prayed and then he went to 'Al Hajj' [pilgrimage]. In fact, that's when he stopped smoking my mother told me. Afterwards, slowly, the mosque, we have a mosque just opposite our house, the Badr mosque, opposite our house. You can't avoid it. It's like crossing my kitchen, crossing the street, you have my house, you have the street and that's it. It's right across the street. And, *alhamdoulillah*, my father is someone you can trust. You see someone who is very respected. And at home, you have to be '*Nichane*' [straight, honest] also you know, don't bring me problems, he tells you that you know. He knows well. Of course, he doesn't know much about religion, you know, he knows that this is '*halal*', this is '*haram*', this is good, this is bad, don't

steal, don't do this. The most important things. Every parent knows. They tell you to be careful, they take you back to the Arabic school, learn to read and write. That's them, they've done their... (Secundo)

Now retired, Secundo's father is described as having a 'strong character'³⁰ and, according to Secundo, is 'very respected' by the neighbourhood where he lives in a commune located in the so-called 'poor crescent' area with a high concentration of Moroccan and/or Belgian-Moroccan nationals. Secundo's parents are pious; they both pray and have gone on pilgrimage to Mecca.

After Secundo's first imprisonment on his return from Turkey, his father warned him to be careful and not to 'bring problems home'. According to one of the social enquiry reports, Secundo's father has refused to visit his son in prison since his second incarceration, as a way of showing his strong disapproval of his warnings and advice, while his mother and siblings visit him regularly.

At school, Secundo did not pass his Basic Study Certificate (CEB), which sanctions the end of primary school and access to secondary school. He was put on a technical and vocational education track at the end of primary school and he completed a two-year apprenticeship as a car mechanic, but ended up dropping out at the age of 18.

After dropping out of his studies, Secundo went through a series of casual jobs as a warehouse worker, order picker or delivery driver and periods of unemployment. Living at home, he occasionally contributes to the family budget. For a year, he was part of a professional integration project run by a local association. He collaborates with other young people in the organisation of events (setting up stages, scenery, etc.) in different theatres or cultural places in Brussels. This allowed him to take Dutch and computer courses, which he appreciated very much. This lasted for a year, but when it came to an end, he experienced a long period of unemployment, at least two years, during which Secundo wanted to 'go out, have fun, know the street'. It was during this period that Secundo tried to reach Syria after his brother had gone to Somalia in 2011. Incarcerated for six months on his return from Turkey in September 2012, he was conditionally released in March 2013. Among the conditions of alternative to pre-trial detention that were set for him, Secundo has 'the obligation to have a socio-professional occupation'. He then began training as an educator, which was initially supposed to last six months, but was terminated at the end of the first three months due to his absenteeism. He explains that this training, which included a summer internship in a holiday camp with children, 'unfortunately' took place during Ramadan, a period when it is hot and the days are very long, making fasting very difficult to bear. So much so that he sometimes felt unwell. Today Secundo regrets not having been able to complete the training and hopes to be able to resume it when he leaves, but, for the moment, his indictment for 'participation in the activity of a terrorist group' prevents him from doing so.

When I was 18, I stopped my studies and went to work with my older brother in his first job, which was in warehousing. I worked in the warehouse, order picker. I did that for a year, maybe, and then that too, I stopped. I was still you want to have fun, you want to go out, you want to know the street. That's how it is. You stop the job. Then you go back to another job, but after that I always. I've done all sorts of jobs. You see, I worked in the metal industry and as I said, I worked in things where there were festivities. The 'Couleur café' festival and the Théâtre de la Monnaie, Théâtre de Flagey in Ixelles. I was working, we were painting, we were putting up podiums, we put away the nets, the sounds. We did a bit of everything. [...] I trained as an "children's activity leader" but I didn't finish it. Now I can't. I wanted to do it, youth worker, but I wanted to do it now. But I can't do it any more because I have the Radicalisation...Terro... file. So, afterwards, even like that, I'm told there's always a way to do

³⁰ Ibid.

it. You have to be outside for that. Because the training I went to was good, it was a nice training. Unfortunately, during Ramadan, I broke down. It was during Ramadan. I had a hard time, I was fainting and everything. In the evening, I fainted. I used to get up at what, let's say. I had to get up at 4am, 4.30am, 5am, I had to get ready at 5am, I had to be at school at 6am because it was the holidays. I had to be there at 6 am., the time for the children to come and everything, then you bring them back, people come with their parents, they go to work, they drop their children off. And I'm on a placement here. You see, I'm doing an internship with other people and everything, so I liked this job, but at that time it was tiring because you had the sun, it was a crazy summer, it was very hot and it was tiring, no drinking, no eating, nothing, you have to take care of the children, you take care of yourself, and at the end I finished at 6pm. *Wallah* (in name of god) it was like working in construction. I didn't know it was like that. The training of children's activity leader, I said at ease, it's fine, it's good to take care of the children. But taking care of the children brother, go ahead, take care of him, take care of him, everyone has their own mentality, the other one says that, he's 2 years old, 3 years old. Afterwards, you arrive in a group and they are 12 years old. It's even more, you see real 'shayatine' (devils) you think to yourself, what the hell... But it's good. I liked it. Why did you like it? Because it reflects me when I was a kid. I lived in it. [...] That's why I wanted to do this training, I wanted to do it now, but then they said yes, you can't do it. You have to do another course because that's it, your legal record forbids you to do so. But I'm not going to give up. You see the training for youth workers. I've already talked about it and *insh'allah* (if Allah wants) when I set foot outside. We'll try to find a solution. People hear yeah Terrorism, radicals, participation, they '*khlee*' [they are afraid] but you don't know the person's life. You don't even know what I've done and you're going to call me a radical. You call me a Terro, but I haven't set foot anywhere. You don't know my life, my brother, my brother, yeah, he's been there. And yeah, my brother, he was in the jungle. (Secundo)

In Secundo's family, they adhere to the fundamental principles and values of the religion of Islam, such as behaving well, being sincere and loyal, not stealing. They practise traditional Islam inherited from the rural regions of the Moroccan Rif, they believe in God despite a lack of religious education other than the so-called 'Koranic school' where they learn to memorise the Koran without understanding its meaning, as was the case for their parents and for Secundo himself who attended a Koranic school from the age of 8 to 12 years old in Belgium.

Interviewer: Does your mother also pray?

Respondent: Yes, my mother didn't know anything, *meskina* [poor woman], she prayed but she knew what? She knew *Fatiha* (the first sura of the Koran, called 'the prologue', 'the opening') and *Kul adu bi rabi nass*, *Kul adu bi rabi al falak*, *Kul hu allah* [the last three suras of the Koran, the smallest ones], she didn't know anything. Until today. Today she has learned. After I shed a tear *wallah* ... I shed a tear in my eye because she has suras that even I know, and I forgot them. She went to school. She said I'm tired of reading that with the *Fatiha* and *sub'hn'allah* that's when you see that whoever wants to... (...) she didn't even know her alphabet '*alif*' '*ba*' '*ta*' (A, B, C) ... she didn't know. Afterwards, she learned like a child with other *madres* [mothers] slowly, and now she reads... I haven't seen her take the *Koran*, but she reads for sure...because she studied suras and everything... You know...

Interviewer: The small ones, the last ones...

Respondent: Still. There are suras I've forgotten... and she knows.... them I tell her I'm happy for you. Anyway, my father, he's at the mosque, he's a 'muezzin' you see, now that he's unemployed and all, he does what he has to do at home, he stays at home, when it's time for

prayer he goes to pray to call for prayer... from time to time he closes the mosque or it's other friends of his who are responsible for the mosque...

Interviewer: Does he write Arabic?

Respondent: Yeah he writes Arabic, he writes and reads it, he learned it when he was a kid and everything, I also read and write it. I read and write it but I don't understand it.

Interviewer: Oh, is that a crazy thing to do?

Respondent: I read Arabic but with the *fatha* (vowels) otherwise I can't read without... That's how I learned in Arabic school. And the Koran, we learned to read the *Koran* but we never learned the Arabic language, *darija* Arabic (vernacular), pfff... quickly. I only speak if you see... at home we only speak berber and a little French... otherwise no Arabic ever... *thamout* (it's dead), Arabic died in the film... [laughs]

Secundo's level of observance of Islamic worship (including five daily prayers and Ramadan) fluctuates. In prison, Secundo explains that he sometimes prayed at the beginning of his detention but not any more. Moreover, according to the socio-psychological report produced by the prison administration in 2019, Secundo did not observe Ramadan for the first two years of his detention. The report also states that Secundo describes himself as not very religious as a teenager³¹. Similarly, when Secundo saw the suspended sentence on his conviction for a terrorist offence become enforceable following further convictions, he practised intermittently:

[...] In short, I was delirious. Especially when I was selling cocaine. I resumed my life despite being in the *haram* [illicit]. I prayed and everything, there were times when I prayed, but there were times when I was like 'yeah, I need money, I have nothing, I want to have fun, I want to travel and I want to forget my problems', especially that because I drank a lot afterwards, when I was out too. (Secundo)

In contrast, he indicates that he experienced more intense religious practice during the two years prior to his attempts to leave for Syria, when his brother had already left for Somalia. This period also corresponds to a time when Secundo is unemployed. It is in this context of unemployment and in shock over his brother's departure for Somalia (just a few days after his parents' return from Mecca) that he 'started drinking and smoking like crazy'.

I tried to go to Syria in 2012, I was arrested in Paris, they put me in the Santé prison. On my way back from Turkey, because I tried to go there twice. But my story is a bit complicated. Because I have an older brother who went to Somalia. He went to live there for two and a half, three years. So since he left, it's been a shock for us at home. I already had some problems with people and so on, so after him, when he left, it turned everything upside down. First of all, I started to drink and smoke like crazy because I liked my brother. He's just 2 or 3 years older than me, so we grew up together, we had fun together and it hurt us. My father lost 15 kilos when he left. My mother, she got sick because he was the only person who stayed with my parents when they needed anything. (Secundo)

The departure of Secundo's older brother is a key turning point in Secundo's personal journey and his subsequent decision to try to reach Syria. Secundo describes his brother, for whom he has great admiration,

³¹ File, dated 29/01/2019, entitled 'Specific in-depth report in relation to terrorist offences' produced by the Prison Service, p. 6.

as pious, modest, respectful, helpful, gentle, 'who doesn't raise his voice'³², the 'favourite' child, of whom he is a little 'jealous' because he is the only member of the family to be benevolent and to help his parents, but who 'has crossed paths with people who shouldn't be crossed'.

My brother, he is a modest person. Of course he's modest, he's very, very, very modest and he has a great respect for people. And well, for me, no one is better than him. Even I would say I'm jealous of him and not jealous in the sense of... but *alhamdulillah* [thank God] I'm glad I have a brother like that actually. Because you can imagine my parents, for example, in the *radhma* [work], in everything, you know, question of *sarakh* [shopping], question of staying a bit with the parents, taking care of them, of your brothers and sisters, taking news. And all that, we don't have those things. Even my older brother who is married, boom, *he selam* [greet], then he leaves, you know, you leave, the sisters are all married now. I only have my little brother and my little sister at home. You see my older brother who is married, he has his own flat below, he has taken two floors. But he was always there, you know. Modest. He speaks softly, you don't hear him. He'll never raise his voice to you. Disrespectful. Never, you know, you say *subhnallah* [glory be to God] this guy had everything to... at the beginning, you think why did he leave? My father lost 15 kilos. You know what, I've never seen my father cry. I've never seen him. My father is a tough guy, go and see him cry. *Wallah!* [Swearing] when I was having lunch with him and he was crying, brother, it gave me a shock you know, losing 15 kilos, my father. Every Friday, he invited the imam and his buddies to eat couscous. Fridays were over. He didn't invite anyone anymore. He didn't want to see anyone, no more *addan* (call to prayer), nothing. At first he let himself go *mesquine* [poor guy]. But this is the love he had for his son. You look, you see. In fact, you love all your children, you see. But the only one who calls to ask for help is always the same one who answers. You see, it's normal, you'll be closer than him, you'll be closer to him than the others. Of course, as my father told me, your children are like fingers on a hand. Choose a finger to cut off. Which one do you want me to cut off? You see, he told me, he said which one do you want me to cut off? You can't choose. I prefer to keep all my fingers. Children, it's the same thing. You can't choose, but of course I prefer him, it's normal, he helps me. You, you let me die. When I call you. But for money you like to come to my place (laughs). You see things like that. Since we were children, my brother has been like that. Then he got into his religion and everything. Afterwards, he met some ... afterwards, later on, after 5, 6 years in his religion, later on, he met some people who shouldn't have met him, you know, he met some people who shouldn't have met him, but he remained the same, you know, he remained the same. He didn't show any change or anything. That's how it is, that's life, that's life, as they say. We didn't want to, but it's written. You can do what you want. He writes in your book Fate, we all believe in fate. It is written. Of course, you can choose your fate. It is up to you to be careful. Allah has created you free to do what you want, *halal* [lawful], *haram* [unlawful]. If you want to go *haram*, you can go *haram*, but then you will be judged. But here we are. That makes all this, that makes it equal to this. But how do I say this, this is a *kheir* [a good], it's a good, it's an experience that you learn at the same time for you, your children, your entourage ... who risk falling on people who will *bakahr* [deceive, cheat, abuse] you see and you'll see your son is no longer there from one day to the next, or your nephew ... I talk to my little nephews,

³² This theme of benevolence and gratitude towards parents is very present in the Muslim religious unconscious, notably through hadiths and Koranic verses. For example, the following verses 23-24 of Sura 17: '*Worship only Him and show kindness to father and mother: if one or both of them should reach old age with you, then do not say to them 'oooh' and do not disrespect them, but speak loving words to them, and for mercy's sake, lower for them the wing of humility, and say, 'Lord! Show mercy to them both as they raised me up as a child.'*

cousins, my cousins of my age. We talk about all this and everything is fine. But then, as I say, I personally don't care, I'm protected from all that. (Secundo)

Speaking about his brother's 'religious' path, Secundo said that it was only after several years 'that he came across the wrong people', referring to what the expert report of the prison administration describes as 'an ultra-radical environment in Belgium.'³³ He also said that his brother never told him to read this or that book, to listen to this or that religious preacher or to take this path rather than another leading to the path of God, but that he occasionally recommended that he pray every day because he was 'making a mess'.

But he was always in the '*din*', in his religion. So before, he was not radical, of course, he went to centres and everything that even the state agrees. There are imams who are like that, because there are several sects, and then there are some who say that they are '*murji'a*' [a theological school considered heretical by the Sunnis], others say they do their sunna but with '*ahl al jammaa*'³⁴ (Bonney, 2016; Shalata, 2016) while others say they follow the Salafists - each tries to find his way and the true path to follow in his religion. In short, at that time, he had no worries, but afterwards, he reminded me from time to time. Look, if you don't pray, take up your prayer and all that, because I was making a bit of a mess of things. Afterwards he married a French woman from Toulouse, he went to Toulouse to look for her, she was wearing the *niqab* and everything... [...] Because I didn't know all these things. He never told me anything, he never said to me listen, read these books and not these books. Look, this one and not that one. You see these things, he never told me. He never spoke to me. He just told me, here you are, pray, try to devote yourself a little to your religion, he already gave me reminders like every day but that's it, nothing more. He always hid. My brother is someone who hides everything, he will never show you what he has done. (Secundo)

On his return from the pilgrimage to Mecca, Secundo's father tried to find out about his son's fate from his daughter-in-law, the wife of Secundo's brother, who tells him that he is in Somalia. Secundo 'goes on with his life and does what he has to do', i.e. not much at a time when he is unemployed and has no real occupation. Left to street sociability, Secundo is also confronted during this period with what he will modestly call 'personal problems with people' in the neighbourhood, which he will not talk about head-on, but which I found traces of in the note produced by the prison administration about him, showing that they constituted a tipping point and a powerful spring in the principle of his decision to try to reach Syria.

Respondent: For six, seven months, I have no news, so I do, I do what I have to do. I go on with my life and everything but with the problems, some problems that I had personally from my experience. Then, all of a sudden, I, personally, I stop everything. I was smoking pot and everything, I was drinking and having fun. I was watching a video on YouTube with some friends. At that moment, there was no radicalisation, there was nothing at all. We are in the car. We're watching a report about smoking. What is it doing to the person? And what does it do to our health? It gave me a shock that day. That day I said I don't smoke any more, I take my pot and I throw it down the drain, in front of my mates, they say what are you doing? I said no, I'm throwing it away, I'm not smoking anymore. In the meantime, I work, I work in events and everything. Everything that is theatre, plays, everything that is concerts and

³³ File, dated 29/01/2019, entitled 'Specific in-depth report in relation to terrorist offences' produced by the Prison Service, p. 24.

³⁴ 'Ahl As-sounna Wal-Jama'ah' is a designation for 'People of Tradition and Consensus'. This designation is itself an issue of struggle within the various factions and/or groups and ideological currents in the field of Salafism. 'Ahl As-sounna Wal-Jama'ah' is also a Somali paramilitary group composed of moderate Sufis opposed to the radical Islamist group Al Shabaab with which Secundo's brother is suspected of having had links.

everything. And it's hard to stop smoking in those places, because there's alcohol, cigarettes, there's entertainment. There are more temptations and everything, but anyway, after the pot, I had stopped it. It was more the cigarettes that I cracked when I got angry or whatever because I was an impulsive person. So, after that, I stopped smoking and everything is going well. After six months, as I said, I'm waiting for a friend from my neighbourhood. He had also left with a person who lived not far from me. His son-in-law is coming to live with me, so his father-in-law has left. He's in his forties, he left with my brother who often stayed with him. He was a Frenchman. He came to live here in Belgium. He comes to my house, he says listen, this number here, it's your brother's number. Call him. I thanked him. I go straight home, I call him, I take a phone, a card, he tells me you have to take a phone, you take a card and you call him. OK. Salam, Salam, where are you? He says I am in Somalia. What the hell are you doing there? I'm still in my little thing. He says yes, I'm going to live my religion and everything. But I know him too. Afterwards, I asked about Somalia, I knew that supposedly they were 90% religious with Sharia law and in my head I said to him if you want to live your religion, live there, but you also had other countries like Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, I don't know. Where there is a call to prayer you go there, you see, at that time even England, I think you could go there, there are people who are cops and everything. But at that time, we didn't think like that. I didn't think like that. I didn't think like that. I said, there's sharia law. He wants to live there, I can't do anything to him. Afterwards, we know that there is a war and everything, we tell him, you know, afterwards, I give the phone to my parents, my parents start to cry, saying to him, listen, my son, come back, you've been tricked, come back, you're going to get killed and everything. But he was determined. He said no, I want to live there and everything, I live well and everything, afterwards he sent us some photos and I could see that he was really well, you know. There are supermarkets, like in Iraq. The same thing. Like in Syria, Raqqa and everything. You lived well and everything. And then, well, there was a mess. Anyway, in the meantime, I start asking around. Why did he leave? Later, there's Syria, what happens in Syria after a few years, after two years.

Interviewer: This was in 2012.

Respondent: In 2012, yes. This is me, this is my vision. I'm starting to watch the videos. In the meantime, there were also friends of my brother who were here. There were two people who had not left. My brother didn't give them any news, they were already on this path.

Interviewer: Two people your brother knew?

Respondent: Yes, that my brother knew. And I meant in the way that you call people '*takfir*' [the act of excommunicating someone deemed ungodly, Muslim or not] because they do this or that. You see, all these things. [...] These are Belgians, these are people we grew up with in my neighbourhood. They are the same age as my brother. But the other two, his two friends and his two little brothers, they are my age, I've already met them. Some of them I've already scratched, I've done business with them. I've done business with him, you know. So there are links. I tell them I've heard from my brother. He asks me for his number. I give him his number. Afterwards my brother said listen, do a little harvest, I need money and everything, how much? he says 600 euros and everything. But you don't have to go to your parents' or your brothers' houses. And you just go to some friends' houses. I'll give you the addresses, the names or whatever. You go to them, they'll give you a little '*sadaqua*' (alms). Anyway, that's how it started. 'With this money I also had to give a small part to the family of the person who came to give me the number because now his wife has become a widow, she has children, she has no one to look after her. There are people in prison. He tells me to

share this money. I'm '*niya*'. I am '*niya*' [sincere, also translated as naive]. I even kept the Western Union tickets, I keep them at home and everything, saying to myself you never know if there is a problem. When I got blown up at home, that's how they saw that I sent money and that there were Western Union tickets, that you were sending to such and such a place. That was the proof that...

At the very beginning of 2012, a period, as noted above before travelling to the Iraq-Syria zone was a punishable offence, Secundo, at his brother's request, regularly sends him money while he is in Somalia. The Court of Appeal judgment mentions the period from February to April 2012 during which these money transfers were made. To justify his active participation in this regular fundraising, which he did not think then, nor still today, was anything 'wrong', let alone a breach of anti-terrorist legislation, Secundo puts forward blood ties, brotherhood, his sincerity (I am *niya*), the fear that even his parents are seized with, but also his desire to help this admired brother³⁵ whose influence on his life he recognises afterwards and even, he says, the fact that he 'deceived' him, even though he says that his decision to attempt *the* 'adventure' in Syria came from his own initiative. In any case it is through the intermediary of his brother that Secundo enters the radical milieu by participating in what the analysis of the judicial file qualifies as 'exchange of information, support, assistance, and financing of a group of people – including his brother – who joined the terrorist group 'Al Shabaab' in 2011.' This has strong repercussions on the judicial treatment of Secundo, who is presented as being vulnerable to his brother's influence and suspected not of wanting to leave for Syria but to join his brother in Somalia. This is a thesis that he vigorously opposes.

I'm a very impressionable person, you know, I was thinking yeah, it's kind of my brother's fault, he kind of *bakhar* me [deceive, trick, lure, abuse naivety, tell stories]. [...] The things I did. It is my choice. It's my choice. Nobody told me to do this, do that. So to go and blame it on someone else. Saying yes you are impressionable. Maybe I was impressionable, sure, he's my brother, don't forget. It's not a friend who's going to come and say I'm in Somalia, go and send money. Do this for me, do that for me, there are blood ties too. I grew up with my brother in the same house, in the same room. We had fun, we were accomplices in everything. Then suddenly, overnight, he leaves. Of course, after we grew up, at 16 everyone has their friends. But in the house we still laugh. But that's not a reason to tar me with the same brush. [...] my older brother, when he's out, every month the cops come to see him, the state services. 'Are you all right? Are you OK and everything?' He says, 'I'm fine. Just leave my brother alone.' He tells them about me. He tells me that he told them [the police] to leave me alone, that I had nothing to do with it. 'You want something? Come on, I'm here. *Wallah!*' He told them to lock him up, if they want, 'but stop accusing my little brother who has nothing to do with it. He ain't got nothing to do with it. The only thing he did was send money. Yeah. Of course, he was a bit radical (sic), radical (sic), in terms of how you understand that.' But I've never called anyone a *kafir* (godless, unbeliever) or what? You understand. And that I wanted to go to Syria, yeah, I wanted to go and see. That was my intention. I wanted to go, but I didn't go. For that you condemn me because I sent money. You sentence me to four years with five years, why? Because I sent money to my brother. It wasn't extraordinary sums, sums of 200, 300 euros that I sent every month or every two or three months, I collected 700 euros, 700 euros, what do I do with M.? It's not my money, what do I do with it? He says you know what, send 300 euros? Give 100 euros to the wife of ... with whom ... for her children

³⁵ In the guidance report of the legal aid worker who accompanied him on probation, she points out that Secundo said he was 'very admiring of his brother'. Guidance report of 25/01/2017. File, '*Specific in-depth report in relation to terrorist offences*', Ibid, p. 21.

and so on. For me it was '*fiabilillah*'³⁶, I say here I am helping, that's itWhat else do I do? You see, I didn't think I was doing any harm or anything and really even now. I don't think I did anything wrong. I didn't do any harm. I didn't give him money to invest in *kalachs* or anything... brother there *kalachs* are raining, there, it's raining, it's raining, it's raining, *kalachs* in Somalia, there's no lack of them there. Over there they tell you to come and live, you work, you have a little money. You make your own life. Of course, they make war or something. Are you fighting a war, brother? I don't give a damn... you see, but you tell me you live and everything. Live my brother, what do you want me to say? I just want to hear your voice, I'm just afraid that tomorrow they'll tell me you're dead, you understand. That's it. The only thing I can still get in touch with you is the telephone. Otherwise, I want to talk to my brother. I don't know what's going on with him. I go to the cops, I tell them yeah, he's gone to Somalia, what are you going to do? You're going to go to Somalia in the jungle. You're going to get my brother back. Take care of the people in the neighbourhood... You see, it's normal, we were afraid, we didn't want to, we didn't want to tell the cops that my brother was gone. Even my parents, you see, it's a fear I don't know, is it good or bad, we didn't know yet. (Secundo)

Secondly, he strongly contests this characterisation of 'radicalised person' and potentially 'radicalisable' to which he is subjected by the judicial administration, and which has led to his systematic refusal of his requests for leave and permission to leave (PS), which have been supported by the prison management and social workers since he became legally eligible. He feels a deep sense of powerlessness in the face of this designation, which he can do nothing to oppose except through 'good behaviour', and which he considers contradictory since, he says, the treatment he is given in prison, such as the possibility of mixing with other prisoners, of being in a cell with two people or of working, are not usually practices authorised for 'radicalised' prisoners.

I've turned over a new leaf since my first incarceration, three months later, when I tell you that I started smoking again, I started smoking again and everything. And now all this, all this, this, this, it's a bit confusing. You see, when you're arrested, you're refused leave, you're refused PS for such and such a thing, that's it, you're stuck. Leave of absence. I'm three years into my sentence. They say I don't understand why they don't want to give you leave and leave of absence when they are positive for me, everyone is positive. Twice it's gone positively via the management, the social workers and all that. [...] it's them who really decide. IT'S OK. If they say no, bye bye! You can't do anything. They have already refused me three requests for leave. My third leave request and my fourth PS request... [...] When I went into prison my mentality was as a normal person, you know I was a prisoner, like a guy in for narcotics. But not for this case. That's where it messed me up. They put me on that file first. At the beginning, I had nerves, nerves, nerves, hatred towards everyone, I didn't say I was going to go out, I was going to shoot everything, I had hatred. No, but I was saying to myself look, they have no mercy towards me. So you see I'm not like that. But how? How do you prove to them that you are not a radical person. When you are in a cell you can tell directly what someone likes and dislikes. How can you prove? You can't prove anything. Except the social workers, the director... [...] in 2013 when I got out of prison, since then, I've never been heard of, you know, I've never been in the presence of a radical or a bearded person. I've never been checked. Never. I turned the page right then and there, so I say to myself, look, I've turned the page but I don't know what you want. It's like you're forcing us to be radical.

³⁶ *Fi sabilillah* is an Arabic expression designating 'any act performed exclusively for God', 'in the cause of Allah', or 'for the love of Allah' or 'He who fights for the cause of Allah'.

You want to force me to be on my own. If I'm a radical person, then take me back to a prison where there are only radicals. Take me back to Ittre³⁷, because in Ittre there are many radicals. Take me back to that prison then! You're denying me my leave and my PS. You want me to go to the bottom of the sentence? [...] Don't give me hope. You give me hope. You are selling me a dream. I'm not sold a dream, you mustn't sell me a dream. And then, in the end, there's nothing. No, we might give you something. No, look at your conditions, you're with another couple in cell, you're not a radical. Radical people have them alone. Nnananinanana... In fact, they put me like a normal person. You see normal detainees, not radicals and all. [...] I wanted a job, I said I'd like to work in the laundry, the warden put me in that place, even though there's not much room in the laundry. It's all about washing sheets, you clean, you also deliver, you give them, you do the sections to give the laundry to the prisoners. Supposedly a radical, he doesn't go to the 'workers' wings. But when I go to the TAP (*Tribunal d'application des Peines*), when I make my requests for leave, they take me for a radical. [...] Now, I say to myself, I hope, fingers crossed. I tell them just give me a leave of absence and you will see that I am someone who can reintegrate. I'm not a danger to society. Take that out of your head already, you know. I'm an active person. But for that to happen, I need to be given permission to leave. (Secundo)

This perception of the judicial administration is due to the complexity of Secundo's case, which combines both participation in a terrorist group for which he raised funds (February to April 2012) and almost simultaneously in the same period (May to August 2012) a desire to join a 'land of Jihad' and 'training camps in Libya in June 2012.'³⁸ Secondly, he denies having tried to reach Somalia; he wanted to go to Syria. He made no further mention to me of his willingness to join training camps although he does not deny that he would have fought if asked. On his second trip to Turkey, after he and his accomplices were stopped by Turkish police at a passport control near the border with Syria, Secundo abandoned his plan to return to Syria because he said he had 'a blockage', which he did not explain, but which it is not unreasonable to think was due to the awareness of the imminent danger to which he now knew he could expose himself so close to the combat zone. On his return to Paris, he and his accomplices were questioned by the police. He later explained to investigators that he did not intend to join his brother in Somalia but to go to Syria to 'help' and also for 'adventure'.

Respondent: We get stopped by the Turkish cops. They get on the bus. Passport check. What are you doing here in Turkey, at the border. We say we are travelling. He says yes, but this is the border with Syria. There is a war there. We say no, we are not going to war. I say I'm travelling. They phone, they ask around. They count how much money we have. I don't know who they call and they leave us. It's okay, it's okay, sorry. And you have a three-month visa to stay in Turkey. The others are determined. It's OK, we're leaving. This is where I got stuck, you see. I said to them, look, I'm not going to go and all that, what do you mean you're not going? I say I don't want to and I'm not well. It's getting a bit annoying and all. The other one is determined. He tells me I'm going to go, I say listen to Souleymane, the mate I went with, I told him I don't want to go. I say if you want to go, go, I say I'm not going. And that's all. He told me in truth we'll wait a little while and then we'll come back, we'll take the road again, we'll come back another time.

³⁷ One of the country's high-security prisons where the most dangerous people are held.

³⁸ In the '*Analysis of legal documents concerning active convictions for participation in a terrorist group*' part of the Judicial Administration Report, it is mentioned that Secundo left in June 2012 on his second attempt to leave for Turkey '*with the intention of joining training camps, particularly in Libya*'. File, Ibid, p.8.

Interviewer: ah another time?

Respondent: ...that means we're going back to Belgium, we're going back to Belgium, so the other one hates it because he's not the one who has the contact. The one who is in his forties. The third one didn't have a problem with it. You see, we come back. At that moment, the other one takes the plane to Belgium. But me and my two mates, my brothers' mates, we take a ticket to Paris, we say to ourselves, I'm going to change my route. I say you never know. I'm like that. We take the plane, we arrive in Paris, I'm in the queue at Charles de Gaulle, I'm waiting and all, I see the guy who puts the stamps on the passport. I see he gives me a look like this, you see on the line, as soon as he gave me this look I understood that there was something abnormal. I say to my friend, that's strange, why are you going to look, is your father there or what? I said to myself, 'That's strange, I'm coming in front of him. I give him my passport, he says can you stand to the side? The second and the third person also stand to the side, everyone goes through. They come to collect our bags. I see a bunch of cops coming, about fifteen or twenty of them, yeah, listen, you're under arrest. Do you have a European warrant? Do you have a European warrant? I didn't know. However, I made the first trip, I came back and there was nothing. Second trip, that's where the European warrant came from. OK, we arrived at the Santé prison. We stayed there for a month and a half. They ask us to be repatriated. We arrive here in Belgium and we are sentenced for participation in an offence. Terrorism. With your brother and everything. OK. I didn't set foot anywhere. I went to Turkey. Sure, yeah, I had some... I wanted to go. Because at one point, they wanted to stick me with Somalia. The prosecutor here in Belgium wanted to stick me with Somalia and tell me that you wanted to join your brother. I said listen, I didn't want to join my brother. Because at that time, let's say you had the right to go to Syria, there was no Islamic State, no al-Qaeda, etc. It was 2012. I was released in March 2013. So it was maybe September, October, at that time, because after I came back I did six months, or maybe before, maybe May, April, June, July, I don't remember. I tell them Listen to me, I left for Turkey and I wanted to join Syria. Why did you want to join them? I wanted to help them and everything, he said to me, but if they had asked you to take up arms? At that moment, I said I would have taken them up if they had asked me. I was 'niya'. If I was told to take up arms. If it is to help them. I would help them. First of all, if it's possible, to help them humanely and everything that is humanitarian, so I would help them. But now, if they ask me to take up arms, well, I wouldn't say no, I would be obliged to do so at that time. The prosecutor told me that you knew what you were doing, you could die. I said listen, at that moment, in my head, it was an adventure for me. Afterwards, I wanted to go to Syria. You shouldn't put me in Somalia with my brother. Of course, if my brother wanted to go with al-Qaeda or whatever, that's his choice. But to put me in the same file, no. Because then yeah, you sent him money. You got active. You joined. What am I joining? I don't even know my religion. I send money to my brother because he is my brother. He never told me anything, that he fought today or that I did this or that.

Although he was a fighter and decided to leave at a time when his humanitarian motives for leaving may appear credible, the specificity of Secundo's case lies in the fact that his 'participation in terrorist undertakings' is being debated and judged in a context deeply marked by the attacks committed on Belgian soil since 2016 and by the introduction of emergency measures in the wake of the attacks in France in January and November 2015. This time lag in relation to the commission of the acts in 2012, when he was given a probationary suspension - due to the length of the judicial investigations - is not specific to terrorism trials. It does, however, have an important effect on the perception of defendants by judicial actors. Indeed, Secundo was first sentenced on 21 May 2014 by the Brussels Correctional Court to four years in prison with a five-year probationary suspension for 'participation in a terrorist activity' and for having twice attempted

to join Syria in 2012. When the suspended sentence for his conviction for terrorist offences became enforceable following new convictions, particularly in relation to drug legislation, it was July 2017, i.e. the period just after the attacks of March 2016. We can therefore assume that, at the time of his conviction, the perpetuation of attacks on Belgian soil by individuals previously considered as radicalised (or even convicted for this type of case) seems to encourage the judicial authorities to apply heavier sentences in cases involving armed radical Islam, often by associating them with security measures. On the other hand, DAESH's appeal to Western jihadists to transpose their commitment to their own soil rather than to the Syrian-Iraqi theatre probably adds to this mistrust (Mégie and Pawella, 2017).

Finally, there is a very important biographical event in Secundo's radicalisation trajectory. In the report of the prison administration, in the section dedicated to the analysis of the criminogenesis of Secundo's behaviour, the following is written:

The person concerned (Secundo) mentioned the fact that in his neighbourhood he had problems because other young people had given him a reputation as a 'snitch'. As a result, he avoided spending time in his neighbourhood for a period of almost two years (2009 to 2011). He explains that the cause of this was the fact that he was arrested by chance in 2009 with two acquaintances who had just committed an offence. He (Secundo) was cleared but the other two people gave him a bad name afterwards.³⁹ (Prison administration report)

This episode in Secundo's life is not superficial; on the contrary, constitutes a major event in his biographical trajectory that explain this tipping into the path of '*takfir-ism*', although he denies ever having called anyone a '*kaffir*' (Bonnefoy and Lacroix, 2016). That is to say, on the ideological level of the tipping into a milieu marked by the propensity to use the act of excommunicating a person deemed impious, Muslim or not, and consequently towards a belief system that more or less legitimises violence. The attitude of avoiding the neighbourhood for such a long period due to a 'dispute of honour' linked to the question of participation in a criminal offence is enough to demonstrate the extent to which the logics of honour and reputation that structure relations between young people are not anecdotal. The latter is not only a physical and geographical territory, but also a symbolic space where a particular type of symbolic goods is exchanged, in the form of reputation. This 'honour dispute', which Secundo describes as the reason for avoiding the neighbourhood, is part of 'the logics of honour and recognition specific to local life, rooted in the informality of inter-acquaintance and based on values such as honour, reputation and virility' (Mohammed, 2009). This space of reputation, which acts as an informal regulatory body, strongly structures relations between peers in the neighbourhood. The obligation as a member of a group united around the same community of experience to be beyond reproach in terms of reputation, honour and loyalty is constitutive of the idea of good or bad reputation. That is to say, it is the access to that particular form of recognition which makes for a good or bad reputation, and which gives or, takes away a certain prestige on the scale of respectability specific to the neighbourhood. In the context of young people's sociability, honour and reputation are 'the central framework of the system of representations that gives general meaning to behaviour and conduct' (Mohammed, 2009). The 'only social capital that remains to be preserved for young people who have failed at school or are unemployed' (Mohammed, 2021). This is Secundo's account of his encounter with this 'radical milieu' through one of his brother's friends, whom he saw at the mosque and which he began to frequent 'nearly six months after his brother's departure' to Somalia, according to the judicial administration's report.

Respondent: I haven't been anywhere. You'll know what's going on. The first time I wanted to go, it's like I told you there was a mate of my brother's so they're not my friends. They're

³⁹ File, dated 29/01/2019, entitled 'Specific in-depth report in relation to terrorist offences' produced by the Prison Service, Criminogenesis, pp. 15-16.

my brothers' mates. We see each other at the mosque and everything. That's all, then I start to look at what's happening in Syria. He says, 'Have you seen what's happening? He says I'm going to go and everything. I say, are you going to go? He says yeah, I know people there. There was no Islamic State yet. It was the very beginning, 2012. He told me I had a contact and everything, this person I had an appointment with later, he was about fifty years old, he told me I was going to go with him. I told him you're going to take the plane and go with him? He said yes. I said, I want to go too. I wanted to go, especially for the adventure, with the problems I had in my neighbourhood. I said I'd rather... I had.

Interviewer: you wanted to change...

Respondent: ... Change radical things. Radical and radical is radical.

Interviewer: Radical what (laughs).

Respondent: I said, 'Here we go, we're going to change'. At the same time, I also felt sorry for what had happened and everything. That's all the... I saw live torture, you never see that. That's what happened there. I say there's nobody helping them and everything. However, at that time, we didn't say come and see an association or anything, although if there was I would have left, if it was legal. At that time the friend found the contact and everything. He went on a plane, he went to Turkey, he arrived in Istanbul, he kept me informed and everything. After a few days, he calls me. Two days later, he calls me and tells me to listen to the guy I left with. How do I put it? He told me we were on a bus, discreet. He was arrested with a false passport, in fact he had a false Italian passport, he was an Algerian. But he had a false Italian passport, but he spoke Italian well, perfectly. In short, I never travelled at that time, apart from Morocco, all of Morocco I did, but apart from that I never travelled outside. I never travelled alone. I had a little bit of money saved up. I was really saying, I'll join you. I'm coming where are you? He says, I'm in Istanbul. I told him, I'm arriving on the spur of the moment, I swear, I'm taking a small backpack, I'm taking a plane ticket, I'm leaving two or three days later. My parents were in Morocco at the time. What happened was that my brother had already left. My father lost 15 kilos. I didn't pay any attention to all that. At the time, yeah, it was a shock. But as time goes by, after you see the videos, you say to yourself, I'm going to help them. I'll keep it quiet from my parents. I won't tell them anything. If I tell them, they will say 'no'. I go to Turkey, I arrive there, he comes to pick me up at the airport, we go to the hotel and I tell him what happened. He tells me that he was arrested, I don't know why. Anyway, he tells me to come and take a bus ticket and we go to the Turkish border. We take a ticket, we arrive at the border. It wasn't Arantep. We were still about twenty kilometres away or in another town. But there, we saw people, Syrians, people dressed in military clothes. And we didn't dare ask. I didn't have much faith. I didn't have faith. People have faith, they are determined and they leave. I didn't have that. Not long ago, I stopped smoking. I still listened to a bit of music from time to time, *wallah* sincere, so I wasn't really hot, hot, hot. But I say good luck, let's go, it's an adventure. That's it, I was in a little delirium. [...] the second time, we decided to leave with four people. There are four of us. Four of us left. We arrived in Istanbul, the third person. He was also a friend of my brother. The fourth person was a contact with my brother. My brother knows a person and he knows the person my brother knows, he is a Moroccan. I don't know him. *Salam, salam*. You take the way go '*bismillah*'. That's it, that's how it is. He is in his forties. We get there, I take pictures. I travel, for me, I travel, I'm with my mates, I say 'come on, let's take the boat, we'll go and see the museum, the Great Mosque...

Founded on the belief that the status quo is unacceptable and that a fundamentally different alternative is available to him elsewhere than in the life he leads in the neighbourhood he was born in and where he now has a bad reputation, Secundo wants to change things 'radically' – 'Change things radically. Radical and radical, that's radical' – without seeing that this path could have led him to terrorism. Driven by this 'radical' will, which echoes this 'honour dispute' experienced in the neighbourhood, he became exposed to the violence of a radical milieu from 2011 onwards through his brother who left to join a terrorist group in Somalia. He participated in this group for no ideological or religious reason, but was driven by contradictory feelings mixing family motivations, altruistic compassion, frustration, the search for meaning and the desire for adventure, as he had never travelled outside of his summer stays in Morocco with his parents. There are many factors that can explain Secundo's radicalisation trajectory: his desire to go to school was rejected at a very early age, his poor command of the language, his lack of qualifications, training and employment, his lack of professional prospects and the resulting dissatisfaction, the family dynamics at the origin of his brother's departure to Somalia, the local context of spaces for intermediation, socialisation, commitment and participation in multiple spheres of activity (education, entertainment, security, culture, associations, etc.), the local context of the "associative, political and religious offer", the absence of religious culture, the role of religion as a symbolic unifying factor, the strong exposure to the "most radical offer", and the lack of a "political and religious identity".), the local context of the "associative, political and religious offer", the absence of religious culture, the role of religion as a factor of symbolic unification, the strong exposure to the "most radical offer" given the social characteristics of the individual, his "impulsiveness" at the origin of his conviction for "assault and battery" within the framework of a banal altercation on the road, etc.)

At the end of this study, I saw Secundo in prison for the last time and he had received his long-awaited PS and CP. He was out for two days for the first time since his incarceration. He went to his parents, his brother and a cousin came to pick him up. He has another leave of absence planned for early April. These leaves of absence give him hope of being released on parole with an electronic tag. He plans to apply for this in the near future. The prison management is optimistic that he will be released on parole. He is also trying to prepare for his appearance before the TAP [the Sentence enforcement court] in order to apply for parole. To do so, he must validate that he has obtained outside training. He seems determined to do so.

4.3 Tercio's story

Tercio was born in a commune located in the so-called 'poor crescent' area. He was 35 years old at the time of the interviews. A judgment of the Brussels Criminal Court of 29 July 2015 found Tercio guilty of having participated in the activities of a terrorist group between 1 September 2013 and 11 July 2014 (11 months). He was sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment and stripped of his civil and political rights for 10 years. Since he had a one year suspended sentence for a conviction for burglary from 2011, he was given a 6 year prison sentence in total. He was incarcerated on July 10 2014 and was released on sentence expiration on April 27, 2020. He was also the subject, on 3 June 2019, of a citation for disqualification from Belgian nationality, although this was not upheld by the Brussels Court of Appeal (decision of 19 December 2019).

With the assistance of Tercio's lawyer, I was able to access a series of documents relating to Tercio's legal and administrative situation (Conclusions and Final Judgment relating to the citation for loss of Belgian nationality by the Brussels Court of Appeal, CAPREV's follow-up report dated 05 September 2019) as well as the 'Specific report in connection with terrorist offences' produced by the prison administration concerning him. A 'social prison technical expert' and a psychologist attaché working within this

administration are the authors of this last report⁴⁰. This one dates from May 2019, almost five years after Tercio's incarceration in July 2014. It is based on interviews with Tercio, but also on the consultation of his detention file, his judicial file, certificates testifying that Tercio followed various training courses during his detention, and, finally, the report of the external social investigation carried out by the Brussels House of Justice, which ensures the follow-up and monitoring of persons subject to trial, both outside and inside the prison. Interviews with the authors of this report would have made it possible to objectify the mode of knowledge production of the judicial institution and thus allow 'a more controlled use of this institutional knowledge to address the lives of individuals classified as radicals' (Bonelli and Carrié, 2018). Nevertheless, when possible, access to these documents, which I was able to consult here with regard to Tercio, supplemented by interviews conducted with the detainees, helped to shed light on the family, school and friendship dynamics of the individuals concerned.

Tercio is the eldest of seven children from the union of 'a Moroccan father and mother'⁴¹. They both come from the same small fishing village in the eastern Rif region and emigrated to Belgium in the early 1980s. When I ask Tercio to describe what his parents told him about their country of origin, the emphasis is immediately placed on the lack of money and then on the miserable conditions in which they lived; conditions shared by a large proportion of those who came to swell the ranks of labour immigration to the industrial centres of Western Europe. This was recounted in a self-ironic tone, as if to distance himself from the seriousness of the situation described and to mask the painful experience of those who experienced it:

What did we hear about Morocco? Ah, the misery! The misery! No money. That's all we heard from Morocco... [laughs] The shit, the misery. Laughing... At least, that's what I heard. Misery. *Waaloo* [in Arabic, nothing]. *Wa thin waloo* [in Berber, there is nothing]. (Tercio)

The emigration of Tercio's family goes back a long way, since his grandparents themselves emigrated from this rural region of Morocco to Belgium in the wake of the labour agreements between the two countries:

My grandparents came here over 60 years ago. My grandfather has been here in Belgium for over 60 years. My mother came here when she was 15 years old. I was born here, I'm the third generation that came here. [...] My grandfather came here when he was about 20 years old. At first he was in Spain. He stayed 5 or 10 years and then he came here, to Belgium. He left on his own. Then he worked in construction, he made the tunnels, the subways. He participated in all these works, he is 85 years old, he worked more than 22 years with a jackhammer. (Tercio)

This same maternal grandfather with whom Tercio 'spent a lot of time as a child'⁴² insisted one day on visiting his grandson for whom, according to Tercio, he had shown a great deal of affection as a child, in prison. Nevertheless, Tercio did not expect to see his little cousin arrive in the visiting room accompanied by this father figure, who addressed him with a message that touched him in 'the heart':

⁴⁰The expert is attached to the psychosocial service (SPS) of Belgian prisons, which is a service composed of psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers present in each Belgian prison and attached to the federal public service Justice. The main role of the technical social prison expert is to draw up opinions for the prison director and the magistrates deciding on the appropriateness of early release for convicts or internees in prison. He is thus involved in the psychosocial reception of incoming prisoners, the accompaniment and supervision of prisoners throughout their detention, the preparation for reintegration and the evaluation of reclassification proposals, as well as issuing opinions on the methods of serving the sentence.

⁴¹ Conclusions, Court of Appeal of Brussels, 43rd Chamber, p. 9.

⁴² Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, p. 3.

It hurt my heart when he said to me *Ash dani y jiouy i balaou aliya* [Why given them an opportunity to lock me up!] He looked as if he was saying, 'Why did you put yourself in that situation?' He hurt me, as if he had stabbed me in the heart. He said 'at least I saw you' and left. (Tercio)

Beyond the affection and tenderness that is at the heart of the grandfather's moral admonition to his grandson, Tercio's grandfather plays an important symbolic role. Since Tercio struggles to see his father as a male authority figure, his grandfather comes to be seen as the principle authority in the family for him. Thus his moral judgement leads to a sense of guilt, self-examination and, at the end of six years of incarceration, the beginnings of a desired change as a possible way of redemption:

...When it happened [the offending period] I was 27, 28 years old. I went into prison and I was 29. Today, I'm 35. It goes quickly, I spent my thirties here. The best years are being wasted here for... but I only blame myself because I know that I'm the one who made history. You see, it's not them. They didn't push me. That's what I told people here [in prison], I say, why then they didn't go to my parents? Why don't they go to my grandparents? Why don't they go to my sisters and brothers? It is because it was me who did it, they didn't do it. They didn't do anything. They live normally. I'm so mad at myself for following an ass. I was such an ass. (Tercio)

In Tercio's family, there are four girls and three boys including him :

My sister is a pastry chef, she works in a bakery. I have my other sister who is a seamstress, now she is a housewife. My little brother was a bricklayer before his accident, and I have the little one who is still at school. I have another sister who has become independent. She works in a school, she has her own apartment. (Tercio)

All of Tercio's siblings have left the parental home except for the last two.⁴³ Tercio's status as the first-born among the siblings is retrospectively felt as a disabling handicap and presented as the reason he has a tendency to 'follow' uncritically:

I, for example, am the oldest. I didn't have an older brother or sister. I had my aunts right above me, my uncles are dead. [...] My problem was that I didn't have anyone to lean on. (Tercio)

Tercio attributes the difficulties and problems to which he was exposed, first at school and then on the street, to his unfavourable position in the order of siblings. In contrast, he refers to a friend of his as being 'lucky' because 'he had two big brothers who were looking after him'. This status of eldest child was all the more difficult for him because when Tercio was 12 years old, his father stopped working, creating a sense of precariousness and destabilising the family situation, which was subject to repeated change including change in schools⁴⁴:

Al walid [father] *mesquine* [poor guy] was a bit lost after he lost his mother *meskina*, he went a bit in... That's it ... he started to *qamar* [gamble]. He went a little off the rails. He stole from my mother, it went wrong at home and in the end I had the whole family on my back, I had to take care of the whole family. At one point, I went through periods when there was nothing in the fridge. My father didn't want to work [...] all the children were still at school. I had to

⁴³ Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, p. 5.

manage. I did the best I could. I started to work. I started bringing money home so they could get by. [...] my mother, she was going crazy. My father was going crazy, and so was I. (Tercio)

In this context of very strong family tensions caused by the father's unemployment and the absence of enough income to meet the family's needs, the learning process of little Tercio is made all the more difficult by the fact that his mother, who was at home, did not work and had not managed to learn French⁴⁵. Moreover, his father was not very involved in his son's schooling⁴⁶. In addition, the multilingual environment at home – where the children spoken Arabic (Moroccan dialect) with their parents but the parents spoke Berber among themselves while the children spoke French with one another - created a division between linguistic interactions at home and at school. At home, three languages coexist but at school, his bilingualism is never expressed, and his knowledge of two languages is marginalised. Research on the recognition of the multilingualism of children from immigrant families in the school context shows that each type of bilingualism develops according to the place given to the languages of the bilingual repertoire by society. Thus, when an individual's language of origin, such as dialectal Arabic in immigrant societies, is less valued than the second language, a situation of so-called subtractive bilingualism develops, since the two languages are perceived as competing rather than complementary and the dominant language, often that of schooling, will tend to take the place of the secondary language. Conversely, in a situation of additive bilingualism, the individual maintains his or her original language because it is valued in his or her social environment and he or she learns a second language without his or her first language being threatened (Dagenais, 2008).

Also, far from helping Tercio in his learning situations, this negatively perceived bilingualism adds to his instability and to various forms of self-depreciation and self-esteem. He repeated the first year of primary school because of learning difficulties, especially in French⁴⁷. Gradually, as a result of this early repetition and successive moves, he dropped out and repeated the grade again at the end of primary school. He only obtained his Basic Study Certificate (CEB), the diploma that marks the end of primary studies, after passing through a so-called differentiated class whose objective is to allow the pupil to acquire the CEB in order to integrate into the normal school course of study.

I did all my primary schooling, my secondary schooling, I did Secondary IV and then I stopped school. So I didn't finish. So I went off the rails a little bit. I had no reference points, you see. I don't have an older brother. I'm the oldest in the family. (Tercio)

At the end of an apprenticeship marked by early difficulties that slowed his progress and led to delays over the years, Tercio left the school system and the vocational track he had embarked on without obtaining a diploma at the age of 17. Through a capillary effect, the family conditions (professions, income, wealth and educational capital of the parents, size of the siblings, sex, age and position in the siblings) and the difficulties encountered at school meant that the peer group and the street (especially its 'deviant pole') became a greater influence in Tercio's life than either family or school. To explain his learning difficulties, Tercio points to the lack of reference points and his status as a first-born child, which did not allow him to benefit from the help that his younger siblings were able to count on because he was older than them.

The problem with that is what? When we went to school as youngsters, we didn't know how to get along with our friends and we started to influence each other because I didn't have an older brother or anyone to 'tighten the screws' at home. [...] I have six brothers and sisters,

⁴⁵ Ibid. p.5

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 5

⁴⁷ Ibid. p.5

no one has ever had a problem. I'm the only one who had a bad relationship, who followed like an idiot. [...] I'm the only one who followed a bad path. (Tercio)

Obviously a youngest child can benefit from the help of his elders, as Tercio tells me that he 'knew how to deal "*alhamdulillah*" with [his] brothers.' On the other hand, the first-born child in a family must be able to count on support from those other than their siblings, first and foremost from their father or mother. But Tercio says that his parents 'were a bit lost' with him, and then his aunts got married and his uncles died very young. He concludes that he was 'lost' and 'all alone [...] I had no one to lean on'.

What Tercio testifies about his relationship with his parents and what he says about his perception of his position in the sibling group, in particular the feeling of loneliness that he feels because of this 'absence of reference points', must be placed in the wider context of family history, the socio-historical context of immigration, its development and its transformations. Initially made up of two immigrant parents, with little or no schooling, workers with no work or qualifications, whose social condition is based entirely on the function of worker in the sense that the condition of the immigrant is indissolubly linked to the condition of worker in industrial society (Zehraoui, 1994), the family settlement loses its reason for being as soon as its initiators are unemployed. However, in order to overcome this contradiction, parents, and above all the father of the family, whose position as the sole wage-earner in the family group makes him responsible for providing for the needs of its members, must continue to assume their role, while at the same time living through a migratory experience that places them in the paradoxical situation of trying to learn, to have others learn, and to pass on their knowledge (Zehraoui, 2009).

The problem with that is that they didn't know how to deal with me because they didn't know what life was like here, how education worked here, we taught them all that. We taught them how things work here. Even reading a letter, they didn't know. They had to go to my aunt's house because she had been to school, otherwise they were a bit lost. My father went to work, he came to the house, there was the market, the butcher's shop, the baker's shop.

The question of intergenerational transmissions within immigrant families or families of immigrant origin can therefore only be understood and make sense within this general framework. If Tercio's father's employment situation leads to the economic and social precariousness of the family, it also affects his function as a worker, when he had initially emigrated precisely because he sought employment opportunity. This inactivity endangers the cohesion and unity of the family group and, simultaneously disqualifies the father in the eyes of the son. His loss of financial status and security weakens his power and his symbolic authority in the family further, having been already undermined by his illiteracy, thus making it impossible for him to monitor and supervise Tercio's schooling.

Even reading a letter, they didn't know. [...] They didn't look at it with me, you know. So I went to school. The class newspaper, who's going to read it? Nobody's going to read it. (Tercio)

This family situation is further aggravated by the gambling and alcohol addictions of a father who, when he is employed, 'works a lot of nights in the restaurant business' and 'comes home late every night in a state of inebriation'.⁴⁸ Also, during the childhood and early adolescence of little Tercio, these elements of the father's family life have a very negative impact on the development of the eldest of the siblings, giving rise to 'affects of anxiety, shame and guilt'.⁴⁹ This situation obviously has an impact on the professional

⁴⁸ Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, p. 4.

⁴⁹ Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, p. 12.

aspirations of the children, starting with Tercio, for whom the ‘absence of reference points’ is combined with the ‘absence of a father’ in the sense that the father's image is not recognised in its protective function and as a regulator of links with the outside world (school, friendships, social networks, institutions in the broad sense). This is particularly true of the identification with the father's function as spokesperson for the law and guarantor of ancestral values. Hence the search for this protective identification in the older generation, whose position within the kinship group is thus relatively dominant:

The father⁵⁰ was going to pieces, so was I. Now I'm well aware of all that. Life isn't easy, you have to hold on to life. My grandparents never gave me an education like that. [...] And that's the way I want to go, the way my grandparents and parents did. I don't want to sully the name of my parents and my family.

In this particular historical-family configuration, which is doomed to anomie on the one hand by the crisis of paternal authority resulting from the condition of the father's exile, ill-adapted and placed under the dependence of his own children (Bourdieu, 1993), and on the other, paradoxically marked by male domination which gives men more prerogatives in practically all areas of social life, except for the domestic sphere, and gives them the power to manage, decide and sanction everything that has to do with the outside world (Zehraoui, 2009), the relationship that is established between the father and the son is such that it forces the latter into an untenable position. Indeed, against and by virtue of the father's defection from his role as head of the family, who is primarily responsible for providing for the needs of its members, Tercio is as if precociously subjected to the role of representative par excellence of the kinship group, of bearer of the family's status and reputation, which normally falls to the father first. In the sense that he is put in the position of being called upon to take over the family destiny while circumventing the authority of the father described as ‘strict and authoritarian.’⁵¹ It should also be pointed out that female emigrants from the Maghreb in the early 1980s were still closely bound by family logic and male domination, so that, by virtue of the gendered division of labour, their place and role were rather assigned to the domestic sphere and the education of children. In this way, the implicit injunction to assume the place of the legitimate heir of the lineage, which is objectively inscribed in this double status of ‘first born-boy’, reflects the particular place of men within the kinship group. It is this weight of the social inheritance of the reproduction of the status of head of the family that weighs on the frail shoulders of young Tercio when he declares: Now I've realized something, I'm the big brother. I don't need a big brother. I'm the one who has to *ziyar* [squeeze, frame, tutor] the little ones. Indeed, boys have long had a special place within the lineage because of the legal framework. For example, the possibility of passing on the family name has for a long time, and until very recently, given a special place to men within the lineage, giving a patrilineal inflection to the kinship system that is still observed in Europe, despite the legal changes that have recently taken place to challenge this unequal rule in favour of laws opening up marriage to same-sex couples and/or opening up adoption to same-sex couples in some European countries (Gollac, 2013).

As Tercio very lucidly summarises it, looking back with empathy on the conditions in which his parents had to take charge of the education of his siblings:

The problem is that our parents didn't know all that. They came here, they worked, that was all they had in mind, work, work, but they didn't know how to deal with us. They emigrated to a country they didn't know. But they came here to work and they didn't come here to

⁵⁰ Tercio often refers to his father and his mother as ‘the father’ and ‘the mother’.

⁵¹ Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, p. 12.

show us how it works or what and how, they didn't know. It's not their fault. I know it's not their fault. (Tercio)

Notwithstanding the responsibility that falls primarily to the parents in the context of parental authority as defined by law, Tercio's parents, like many immigrant families, are in a situation where they have to 'learn' the language (usually through the mediation of the children themselves), the cultural codes, the habits and customs of the host society, and to pass on the provisions, norms and values that should enable their child to develop and emancipate properly (Zehraoui, 2009). It is in the context of solving this equation, which we have seen to be particularly difficult given the difficult context of Tercio's family life history.

I used to go to friends' houses. The big guys in the neighbourhood, we followed the big guys in the neighborhood. The big guys in the neighborhood would send you to the dogs, they would use you. We didn't realise it. Our parents didn't see all that. They thought, he's here, not far away, he's coming home at such and such a time, you're coming home at such and such a time. Where were you? At the park, that's all I came back. You see, they don't know that the guy was already all '*mrrouyen*'⁵² [disorderly]. And here they were using us. We followed. We thought that was the way because the big brothers were right. And then you get into a vicious circle. (Tercio)

The determining factors that contribute to Tercio's integration into the world of the street and the neighbourhood, and to his disengagement from the family and the school comprise the following: the accumulation of negative school experiences against a backdrop of 'subtractive bilingualism' (Dagenais, 2008), the early stigma associated with the disregard and contempt for the mockery and self-judgment specific to the school world⁵³, the poor quality of the 'family climate' marked by the problem of the bond and the conflicting attachment in the father/son relationship, the delegitimization of the school order and the authority of the parents (and especially the disqualification of the father in the eyes of the son), the number of siblings, which almost always makes it impossible to control the children closely and effectively, and the parents' unemployment, which results in limited resources.

The family atmosphere is such that Tercio experiences an ethical dissonance caused by the inconsistency between, on the one hand, 'the imposition of rules and a framework considered too authoritarian'⁵⁴ from his father and, on the other hand, the behaviour of his father who, neglects employment, adopts addictive practices linked to alcohol, exposing him to the accusation of 'not assuming his responsibilities as a man and father of the family.'⁵⁵ This dissonance between the prescription of a norm of conduct and its legitimacy leads Tercio to run away from home at the age of 15. By this act, Tercio expresses a tension and a decisive rupture with key figures in his life, in particular his father whom he blamed for not having assumed his responsibilities as a man and father of the family, and for whom he says he has 'felt anger for a long time.'⁵⁶ Running away is the culmination of difficult relationships with parents and a sense of

⁵² This adjective is derived from the word '*Rouina*' in Moroccan dialect which, by extension, means 'mess', 'disorder', 'anarchy'.

⁵³ 'As a child, he is teased and cannot find his place among his peer group (in class)'. Specific in-depth report in relation to terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate-General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, Criminogenesis, p. 14.

⁵⁴ Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, Anamnesis, p. 4.

⁵⁵ Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, Anamnesis, p. 4.

⁵⁶ Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, Anamnesis, p. 4.

abandonment by parents who are overwhelmed by their own problems (Gaillard, 2014). In the section on the examination of explanatory hypotheses for Tercio's acting out, the report produced by the Federal Public Service of the Penitentiary Administration states:

He feels oppressed by a father whom he describes as strict and authoritarian. The meaning of his remarks and sanctions is not understood. Indeed, how can he tell him to act in such and such a way when he himself uses drugs. The parental message, which is an important paradox, is rejected by the person concerned. The father is perceived as a malevolent and insecure person.⁵⁷

He started hanging out in the streets, smoked his first joints and committed his first thefts.⁵⁸ Placed in a public youth protection institution (IPPJ), he was quickly dismissed by the youth judge and returned to prison because of his numerous criminal records at the age of 17. In fact, even a minor Tercio is now judged as an adult, so it is no longer a question of protection but of conviction, and therefore of punishment.

At that time, Tercio's criminal record mentions 'a conviction in the youth court for burglary, receiving stolen goods, as well as numerous convictions in the police and criminal courts, mainly for burglary, theft with violence, receiving stolen goods, drugs, lack of insurance and registration, and drunk driving.'⁵⁹

After dropping out of school fairly quickly, Tercio was given over to the street life in the neighbourhood and to his deviant and delinquent practices. On this part of his life history, Tercio did not say much during the interviews, giving only a few details that suggest that he has long had a run-in with the law.

I've already been in prison, I've been in prison but I've been in prison for a couple of weeks, the biggest sentence I've had is this one. [...] she's a privately hired lawyer but I've known her for a very long time. That's why I took her on because she knows my case by heart and I didn't think I had a better defence than her. (Tercio)

It is as if he was trying to avoid any mention of this past by casting a discreet veil over what is intimate about the power of the gaze cast on oneself, one's family and one's name, and the ability to face the stigma, contempt and social disapproval that surround the acts of theft, trafficking and violence that are typical of so-called street delinquency.

I had a lot of default convictions because I had problems with my old apartment, I had a tenant above me who was tearing up my mail, he made me miserable, I had a lot of problems because of that. I also had this lawyer who got me out of every case and everything. (Tercio)

Given the reality of the investigative situation and the conditions of the interview (the constrained world of the prison universe), and the meaning it has for Tercio at this particular moment in his history, it may be thought that it is only on the condition of claiming an acceptable self that Tercio accepts the principle of the interview (Mauger, 1991).

Respondent: Really, the day I received your letter it really touched me a lot. I have a little bit of an opening because I read that letter, I swear I had tears in my eyes '*subh'anallah*' [glory

⁵⁷ Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, Criminogenesis, p. 15.

⁵⁸ Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, Criminogenesis, p. 15.

⁵⁹ Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, Anamnesis, p. 6.

be to God], really at the time I needed a... you know sometimes you need to get it off your chest. We're humans. We're not monsters. We have a heart, we have a conscience.

Interviewer: Of course, of course.

Respondent: It's not just anyone who sees this. People only see your facts, the paper, he'll read it ah well that's you! I'm sorry, it's not me.

If part of the narratives collected are conceived by individuals to try to exonerate themselves from the prison administration and state agents, and even from the researcher sometimes suspected of being on the payroll of the prison administration (Bonelli and Carrié, 2018), the interaction discussed here with Tercio reflects less the possibility given to him through this means to assert a political commitment or discourse than the opportunity to present another narrative about himself, a narrative different from the judicial one. Aware of this bias, the use of elements of 'the judicial, prison administration and CAPREV documents noted above' at the very least neutralizes it by objectifying the conditions under which the interview was possible and the meaning it has for the respondent, and thus makes it possible to account for the remarks recorded in relation to the various dimensions (family, school, professional) of the trajectory studied. The tone is set from the first exchanges of the initial interview. If Tercio accepts the principle of a dialogue on his own trajectory of 'radicalisation', it is in order to make the point that he does not want to be involved in the accusations of terrorism to which he is subject following the judgment of the Criminal Court.

Especially the fact. How can I put it? That we are all put in this bag. It hurts a lot. It really hurts. In any case, it affects me personally, it really affected me a lot. They see you as a terrorist, they start to look at you in a strange way. Oh, I have nothing to do with that. And that kills me. How are you going to prove all this? How can I? If you're not out there showing your true colors, you don't know. Well, I don't know how to do anything. I'm stuck. [...] It's as if I were called a paedophile now, for me it's the same thing. It's a trick! I'm not a rapist, I'm not a pedophile. For me, it's the same thing, it's like being called that. [...] I don't want to be labelled that because I don't recognize myself in that. I'm not that person. I'm not a person who's going to go out and do harm. (Tercio)

The opportunity to present a different version of the self-narrative that the DARE research represents is one of the determining factors in his acceptance to participate in the research. It reflects an attempt to control a part of the discourse and public presentation of a private representation of one's own life (Bourdieu, 1993). The observations recorded in the SPS report regarding his time in detention state that 'his behaviour in detention does not call for any particular remark, he (Tercio) is described as a polite, calm and respectful person', and emphasise the only concern that seems to animate Tercio in prison is his relationship with the other detainees and the prison staff : to escape the summons resulting from the judgment in which he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for having been found guilty of participating in the activities of a terrorist group. Because according to him, 'the worst thing is when people imagine something about you that is not true. That's the worst. They will put a label on you that is not true'.

He hides as much as possible the facts for which he is in prison and lies about the reasons for his incarceration. He displays a consequent anxiety about others knowing about his past actions. He shuts out radicalized prisoners and when he sees one from near or far, he seems to "liquefy" (sic). He loses all his means and is in a state of panic. He is afraid of being

associated with a terrorist and of carrying this "shameful" label, but also and above all of being rejected by others.⁶⁰

Classic sociological work inspired by interactionism on the phenomena of deviance and delinquency, based on Becker's theory of labelling, or on the social uses of identity based on Goffman's concept of stigma, has made it possible to better understand the impact of biographical effects on individuals and the social effects of the moral and political aversion of which they are the object in the societies where they live. Indeed, in order to negotiate their role, and their place, which they know is both 'discredited' and 'discreditable' (Goffman, 1963) individuals are labelled or stigmatised as 'terrorists' or 'radicalised' by virtue of a triple marking attributable to their conviction by the state. First is a legal marking in the sense of the judgment and criminal sanction attached to any type of offence in relation to a 'terrorist enterprise'; second, a social marking in the sense of the stigma that negatively characterizes this type of deed through the prison sentence incurred; and third a moral marking in the sense of moral and political disqualification and the social aversion it generates. Thus, individuals have a limited range of means to adapt their behaviors, playing on the boundaries of perception and their different registers, with a view to destigmatising some of their biographical properties. As Goffman has shown, the stigmatised individual focuses on information control with respect to his or her stigma, either by hiding it, telling some, or revealing it. Tercio is generally reduced to his stigma of being 'radicalised', 'because you know people know after a while,' Tercio had admitted. And, the reason for Tercio's incarceration is little known by prison staff and inmates. His situation in detention is then characterised by uncertainty, which he feels as a lack of security and which can translate into anxiety, shame, hatred or self-contempt. This is because a strong relationship of aversion, rejection and hostility surrounds the representations of individuals and social groups whose practices are similar to the one he is accused of (participation in the activities of a terrorist group). So it's no coincidence that when I ask him how his interactions with the other inmates are going, Tercio's answer is spontaneous:

I've been in prison for five and a half years, and you know I've never told anyone here in prison about this. Because I'm not proud of it. On the contrary, I feel dirty, that's really how to explain it. I'm not trying to show off or anything, like some people do [...]. I don't want to be mixed up with those people because I don't recognise myself in them. [...]. I don't talk to anyone about it. I prefer not to talk to people because I don't want people to make me feel like that. [...] You know, it's not easy. I was afraid, I said to myself no, I don't want to be labelled like that. Because especially here in prison you have a label for the rest of your life. You go out, people will see you, there are people here who are from your neighbourhood and everything and I try to hide, even those who know, I hide you know. Because you know, people know after a while. (Tercio)

Nevertheless, Tercio's energy in claiming a different status from that for which he has been convicted is not the result of a simple discourse of justification aimed at exonerating himself, it is rather a symptom of what Becker has identified as 'one of the most crucial phases in the process of forming a stable pattern of deviant behaviour' (Becker, 1985). This is because it involves the redefinition of one's identity by others. Indeed, the stigmatised individual, that is to say any person whose constitutive difference is already known or immediately visible, does not cease to evaluate, in all situations, in a ceaseless vigilance, and with a view to controlling them, the social consequences associated with the fact of being taken and designated as 'radicalized' by others.

They say, sir, you're just like them, and it drove me crazy. [...] because if you have to take into account the prosecutor, we are all the same [...] He gives us all 25 years. And that's it. It's

⁶⁰ Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, *Parcours en détention*, p. 10.

rouina [catastrophe] ah crazy! what he was saying about me! he was saying one of his words brother, it stuck in my heart, it's as if someone had struck me... [...] the prosecutor told me Mr Tercio is imprinted (sic) with salafist ideology. It gave me a jolt. I said, "Is this guy crazy or what? Why is he going to tell me that. It's not even part of my education. I never had that idea in my head. You can imagine, it's strong words used... printed (sic) from the salafist ideology. (Tercio)

Labelling is the fact of endowing, in a given situation, an individual with an attribute, a mark, which differentiates him, discrediting him, devaluing him to the point where this attribute places the individual in a particular category (in this case, that of the 'radicalized') and functions as a natural criterion for classification. Now, one of the likely effects of this chain of events described by Becker to account for the process by which an individual is considered deviant is the risk, in this case, that the more regular and repeated the situations in which people are found to believe that he or she is indeed 'radicalised', the more the stigmatised person inclines, by a kind of unconscious ratification, to perceive himself as 'radicalised' and the more he tends to be perceived under this label and so on in an uninterrupted loop of stigma reinforcement.

Armed with pre-reflexive knowledge, inscribed in the immediacy of his relationship with the world and his own practice of the social game, Tercio operates this anticipation, this movement of thought consisting of dreading in order to protect himself from all situations such that if they occur there is every chance of reactivating the stigma and thus giving substance to this self-fulfilling prophecy. It is clear from this definition that stigma is not an attribute in itself: it is defined in the eyes of others. An attribute does not in itself carry either credit or discredit. It refers to a deviation from the norm. Stigma is therefore analyzed in relational terms. Also, through this stigma marked by the seal of his relationship to the official, Tercio knows that he is acquiring a real social status which locks him into what Merton called a self-fulfilling prophecy in the sense that, as Becker puts it, 'to treat a person who is deviant in one respect as if he were deviant in all respects is to utter a self-fulfilling prophecy' (Becker, 1985: 57).

The prosecutor told me that 'Mr. Tercio is imprinted (sic) with Salafist ideology'. That gave me a jolt. I said, 'Is this guy crazy or what?' Why would he tell me that? That wasn't even in my education. I never had that idea in my head. You can imagine, these are strong words used... printed (sic) from the Salafist ideology. (Tercio)

This means that what was only a potentiality, one possibility among others, becomes a reality. In particular in a context where confinement and the situation in prison is such that the accusation of radicalism can be an instrument of pressure and intimidation between prisoners in the service of personal interests:

I already had a story last time, I don't know what the guy told me. The guy was in his cell, I don't know what conflict they had, they got into a fight, I don't know why, and the other one said to him, I'm going to tell the management that you want to radicalise me.... The guy went crazy.... I'm going to go to the management, I'm going to tell them that you're trying to radicalise me, I don't know what. You're forcing me to do the prayer, because the guy actually does the *salat*. [...] It happens very quickly. So now, people know that. [...] They know that it can be like a weapon. Here, I've got you by the balls. Here, you, you have to give me or else... something crazy. You know, that's why it's better to keep your mouth shut, as they say the less he knows the better. (Tercio)

Now, it is this official ratification, this social verdict and, consequently, this identification with the status of 'radicalised' that Tercio seeks to escape at all costs to the point of 'to the point of 'liquefying' (sic)... of

losing all one's faculties, of being in a state of panic for fear of being associated with a terrorist and of wearing this 'shameful' label, but also and above all of being rejected by others'.⁶¹

After leaving home at the age of 15, Tercio began what Becker calls a 'deviant career' which, as we have seen, draws on many factors, of which the family dynamic appears to be the most determining. He began to hang out on the streets, smoked his first joints and committed his first thefts.⁶² Because of his 'numerous convictions in the police and criminal courts, mainly for burglary, theft with violence, receiving stolen goods, drugs, lack of insurance and registration, and drink-driving', Tercio was initially entrusted by the courts to the Public Youth Protection Institutions (IPPJ), but was soon dismissed by the youth judge and returned to prison at the age of 19. This first prison experience anchored his entry into a process of so-called common law delinquency and he subsequently served several short prison sentences. Lacking the legitimate social resources to achieve the societal goals he adheres to (such as access to a stable and well-paid job), Tercio embraces a deviant career in the sense that he organises his activities on the basis of a relatively stable pattern of deviant behavior. He commits several deviant acts, participates in specific forms of street sociability for a long time, and leaves the family home, to which he returned only 10 years after he first ran away, following a tragic event in 2010 when his little brother fell from the top of an eight-metre bridge,⁶³ causing paralysis of his lower limbs. His brother's serious accident, which left him quadriplegic, and the loss of his job a year earlier, which he perceived as an injustice, are among the many moral wounds that have marked Tercio's personal journey.

Alhamdoulillah [thanks be to God] God has left it to us. This too, destabilised me, it disgusted me. And *Sub'hanallah* [Glory be to God] this disabled person [referring to the person with whom he went to Syria] really came at this time when I was a bit disturbed. (Tercio)

Prior to that, in 2008, at the age of 24, Tercio had managed to get a job as a catenary fitter: 'I was a catenary fitter. I was doing the catenary lines. That's train wiring. And I liked it a lot. I was good. I had a good start with them.' He was the victim of an accident at work which he did not manage to have recognised, because he was not sufficiently informed of his rights, even though he was legitimately entitled to claim and so was dismissed after a month's absence from work.

Actually, I had broken my finger. Because I don't know if you see the catenaries how it is? You have the pendulums that hold the two cables. In fact, we were removing them and when you remove them, it's with pliers and a hammer. But the train is moving and over a distance of 300 km, each time we remove the stuff, it goes fast, you see, and at one point I hit my finger with a hammer and my finger got stuck between the pliers and the stuff, my finger swelled up straight away! And me, as I had a pair of gloves on, I didn't see that it was swollen. It was at night, we worked a lot at night. I finished the work. It hurts a bit. We were hot, you see, you don't feel it. [...] That's what I'm telling you, we don't know, you see. Why? Because it's normally an accident. Because it's normally an accident at work. But I didn't do it as an accident at work. When I went to the doctor the next day, the doctor saw me like that, he said ah medical certificate. I faxed it to them and they said ah he's sick. And they didn't know that I got the thing from them. And that was a real shock. (Tercio)

⁶¹ Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, *Parcours en détention*. P. 10.

⁶² Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, *Criminogenesis*, p. 15.

⁶³ Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, *Anamnesis*, p. 5.

This loss of employment seems all the more unjustified to him as he is covered by medical certificates. It is no coincidence that it is also during this period of unemployment following this dismissal experienced as an injustice and marked by 'excessive consumption of alcohol and drugs,'⁶⁴ where he indulges in theft as well as the sale of drugs (for which he was convicted in 2011) that he met the person with whom he was to Syria via Turkey in November 2013.

He was a guy from the neighbourhood who had also been in prison, and he too had just got out, so I didn't know him long. In fact, what happened was that I got into drugs. I needed money, when my brother fell, I needed money. I didn't know where to turn. I started selling drugs. At first, I was looking for work. I was looking, but you can't find work easily. Let's face it, you're not going to find a job overnight. It's complicated. And then you have opportunities that come along, you find this crap drug, then you start selling, people in the neighbourhood buy. You get into a vicious circle, you start to like it. And then you forget the reality of the situation. That means that you don't look for a job anymore, you don't even pay attention to your real life, you get into a vicious circle without realizing it. Because the lack of money is dangerous. When you need money, you get used to having money, in the end you see the easy money and spend your days only on that. And that's where I met him, I had a café where he used to come and he worked in the removal business. I had already moved before that, I was interested and he needed someone because he was alone. He told me he needed someone to do removals. I said yes, I'm interested too. And so I left, I did the removals with him. That's how it started. (Tercio)

Over time, this combination of unfavourable events, although independent of each other, reinforces the deviant motivation and, in a relentless logic, creates the favourable conditions for a meeting between, on the one hand, a social trajectory itself marked by a deviant mode of behaviour and, on the other hand, a situation, a place, or a person who brings together the characteristics likely to arouse or suggest deviant motivations. To put it more directly, you don't meet just anyone anywhere. This is what happened with Tercio.

In 2009 we gave me the C4 (Certificate of Unemployment that a dismissed worker has to fill in to claim his rights to compensation). In 2010 my brother fell. All this had a snowball effect. Then I went to see the other disabled person, he was already working with a van, he was doing removals and all that, I was working with him. (Tercio)

In a case where '16 other people also appeared and were convicted', the man he met in a café to offer to do removals was sentenced in absentia, in the same judgement of 29 July 2015, to twenty years' imprisonment 'for having participated, as a leader, in the activities of a terrorist group.'⁶⁵ 'In addition to her direct participation in fighting in the ranks of terrorist groups, the judgment established that she 'recruited fighters and facilitated and/or organised the departure of certain candidates to Syria.'⁶⁶

At the end of a journey that will lead them to Syria, then to prison, what is striking is the extreme passivity that Tercio shows towards the initiatives taken by his companion in this situation. This slavish inclination to persuasion is easily observed in expressions such as: He was telling me to come [...] he told me to come [...] he already had a whole plan [...] he changed all the plans [...] he wanted to [...], he was telling me', and 'I'm going to go with him. He was telling me'. This suggests a relationship of influence and

⁶⁴ Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, Criminogenesis, p. 15.

⁶⁵ Brussels Court of Appeal, 43rd Chamber, Conclusions, p.7.

⁶⁶ Judgment of 29 July 2015 of the 49th Chamber of the French-speaking Court of First Instance of Brussels, judging in matters of correctional police, p. 137.

suggestibility produces subjection, passivity and a reduction in free choice against a backdrop of family anomie and a crisis of paternal authority, strong educational deficiencies and, consequently, the failure of prior socialising suggestions (Laurens, 2007).

Then, once, we came across some restoration equipment. We bought it all back. He was a restaurant owner and had a degree. He said to me: 'We're going to open a restaurant in Morocco, it's going to be a success.' And I followed him like an idiot. In the end, I saw neither restaurant nor equipment. I came back empty-handed. I was lost. It snowballed, it snowballed. In the end, I found myself in the shit. I thought he was a smart guy and I was even less smart than he was, because I followed him and I was an idiot too. But all that is also life experience. [...] That's my problem. I trusted people too easily (sic). (Tercio)

If we agree with Bernheim that 'every idea is a suggestion' and that 'every phenomenon of consciousness is a suggestion' (Laurens, 2007), we can posit that the acquisition of a sufficiently solid stock of prior suggestions emanating from the main socialization institutions in charge of education (family, school, etc.) predisposes to the rejection of deviant or criminal suggestion. And that, conversely, a weakness in the acquisition of this stock makes one open to this type of suggestion. Moreover, what makes this hypothesis of suggestibility, of the relationship of control and/or influence credible in the case of Tercio is that it is consistent with the elements of 'personality analysis' taken up in the report of the Psychosocial Service of the prison administration, which stresses, in the context of what is described as a 'bonding problem attachment and loss of object'. The psychological assessment also mentions the fact that Tercio 'has difficulties in relating to others. He is afraid of being rejected and betrayed. He wishes to obtain consideration and recognition'. All of these descriptive features relating to Tercio's psychological characteristics resonate with his attitude after he received a phone call from his sidekick, whom he presumed was still in prison in Turkey. Indeed, when his sentence expired in April 2020, Tercio would have been released.

During our exchanges in the visiting room, we had given each other our respective contact details in order to continue the dialogue we had started inside the prison outside. One day at the end of May 2021, more than a year after his release, Tercio was stunned when he received a phone call from the man he had gone to Syria with. After his release, the latter wanted to return to Belgium. That's why he called me: 'He wants me to help him come back here to Belgium'. Faced with this unexpected situation, – for the last news (when we went to the Palace), the prosecutor said that 'he was arrested in Turkey and that he was imprisoned there, and they were waiting for his extradition' – Tercio, visibly very worried found himself so distraught and as if deprived of his means of action that he had, he confided to me, no other way than to seek to contact me to take advice on what to do. The state of stress and panic into which this event has plunged him, palpable in his quavering voice, is such that he was no longer able to think for himself. 'He's asking me for help, what should I say? I don't want any more trouble,' Tercio exclaimed in amazement. His attitude towards this phone call is in many ways indicative of the phenomenon of control and/or influence in which he was caught in this relationship. 'I'm not, I wasn't a smooth talker like he was', he will admit. Or again, delivering a self-deprecating judgement on his own reasoning abilities: 'I wasn't sharp, I needed time to understand'. For however disconcerting it may have appeared to Tercio, it is remarkable that this face-to-face encounter held at a distance so disconcerted him that he could not find the means or the strength to oppose and/or reject the call. It was as if he had to go through the mediation of a third party to allow himself to say no, to express his opposition and his determination to break off all contact: 'I only want one thing, to return to a normal life, to be able to reintegrate normally and forget everything. Even if you are branded with a red iron.' This attitude of almost irrational fear of mental contagion is reminiscent of the one described by the prison administration's report regarding his behaviour towards other radicalised detainees from whom 'he tries at all costs to distance himself', and with whom he seems to

'liquefy' (sic)... to lose all his means, to be in a state of panic for fear of being associated with a terrorist and to carry this 'shameful' label'.

Tercio indicated that I was the first person he had sought advice from on this matter. It is further evidence of the lack of follow-up and reintegration support upon release from prison that, in this situation, having been released at the end of his sentence and not being subject to any supervision or forced disengagement pathway, it was to a researcher that Tercio turned to voice his concerns, rather than his lawyer or any other person with follow-up or supervision function.

The prison administration's report suggests that Tercio is 'fascinated by this ... important person, who has a reputation, charisma and a position of leadership'. The latter 'will take him in hand. He values him, gives him a place. He protects him and makes him feel secure'. As for Tercio himself, 'he describes their bond as strong and solid, the big brother he never had', someone 'strong and powerful to whom he would probably never have opposed'⁶⁷ 'I really considered this person a good friend', Tercio admits.

He had been in jail because he had killed someone. They came to his house. They wanted to rob him. They came with knives and he also came with a knife – it was kind of extreme for a drugs story, it was in 2002 or 2003. He had done five or six years in prison for this story. And then he got out, I saw him around 2010. 2010, I think, I saw him. 2009, 2010. That's when I saw him, it was after my brother's accident. He told me that we were going to work together in the removals business. I liked removals. For a long time. For more than a year we worked together, we did removals and garage sales. We did it under the table, he had a van, we made business cards that we distributed everywhere. Every day we took what we could get. One day 200 euros, the other 50 euros, one day 500 euros. Then we started to make ourselves known and when we came across this material. That's when things started to go wrong. As soon as we found the equipment there, he started to 'kharbek' me ['confuse me']. He changed all the plans. It was restaurant equipment, and he was a cook and he wanted to open a restaurant in Morocco as he was married to a Moroccan woman. And his wife's mother, so his mother-in-law was a cook in Morocco. He already had a whole plan, he told me we were going to hire them, he trained his wife in the kitchen, it's true that he cooked well, and then he told me don't worry! They'll be in the kitchen, I'll be with her and you'll be in charge of the dining room, a whole crazy project and in the end there's nothing! (Tercio)

At that time Tercio says that he was lost, after his dismissal and his brother's accident occurred. He was involved in theft and the sale of narcotics, which led to a 20 month suspended sentence which he served under the electronic tag regime. At the same time, he moved house, took his HGV licence, which he failed, and travelled several times to Morocco accompanied by the man he considered to be his 'friend' in order to transport catering equipment that they had bought 'from an Italian [...] for nearly 4,000 euros [...]. The aim was opening a restaurant in Morocco on the initiative of his sidekick. The venture failed. Even though he has no formal proof of this and his partner swears that the equipment has disappeared, Tercio is convinced that he sold everything after a dispute arose between the two partners about the ideal location for the restaurant:

I don't know what the hell he did. But I'm sure he sold out, because what did he do from there? During this time, his mother and all, they had gone to Syria, all that happened at that time, and he left to join them, that's how I found out afterwards, and when he came back, he told me his mother had left. I was here. I was training to be a truck driver, everything. Then I got the electronic tag for an old story and everything. At the end, I had just bought a

⁶⁷ Specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences, Federal Public Service Justice, Directorate General EPI, Prisons, Psychosocial Service, 29 May 2019, Criminogenesis, p. 16.

small car, I said to myself, we're going to get on well, I'm going to go to the country; at the end, the guy said to me, my mother has left, there's my brother, this asshole, every time he slagged off his brother. He told me to help me, we're going to go get them and everything with your car; I calculated the route. And I followed him like an idiot. (Tercio)

Thus, despite this disagreement between him and his accomplice over the location of the restaurant project and the disappearance of the equipment, Tercio ends up renewing the bond that was distorted after this disagreement by accepting the proposal to go to Syria to look for the mother and brother of his acolyte who are there. Tercio explains that, 'I left to bring back his parents [...] I didn't leave to fight a war or anything. I left to help this disabled man. That's all. [...] When I was there, there was no DAECH or anything. It was still early 2013-2014.' What is striking about Tercio's attitude is his extreme passivity and readiness to 'follow' and make himself available. The regularity with which Tercio himself uses the expression 'I followed' on several occasions during our interviews speaks volumes.

At the end of the Conclusions to Tercio's defence, concerning his citation for loss of nationality, his lawyer wrote 'that he has in reality behaved like a "follower" in search of his bearings and identity'.⁶⁸ During the conversation we had, she also confided in me that she did not understand Tercio's radicalisation; his shortcomings were that he was a petty criminal under common law.

Today, my eyes have been opened thanks to prison. It opened my eyes a lot to what I did in my life, but I'm well aware of the seriousness of what I did. I didn't realise because there wasn't all that on TV when I left, if there was all that from Daesh, all that... I would never have set foot there, never, I would have told him to go to hell. [...] In those days, I'll tell you, it wasn't like it is now. There was nothing like that. The borders were open. People came and went, I saw old people with big bags, they left, they came back, it looked normal. The Turkish soldiers were there, they controlled the luggage. [...] There was no such thing, on the contrary, you could hear Bashar al-Assad oppressing his people. Something must be done. He's a dictator, he has to be removed. There was not what is happening now, since I am in prison I hear crazy things, but it hurts me a lot because I know that it is not part of my education you understand and tell me that I am imprinted (sic) with this ideology. (Tercio)

In fact, in order to fully understand this radicalisation trajectory and the context in which Tercio's 'following' unfolds, it is necessary to enter the universe of specific forms of street sociability offered by this space relegated to the margins of society, which the neighbourhood represents, and the fact of 'living by and in illegality' (Truong, 2017:85). Delinquency plays a structuring role in the face of parental or institutional educational strategies that struggle to correct negative logics. The logics of honour, respectability and social participation are such in these neighbourhoods that the only social capital that remains to be preserved for young people who are failing at school or who are unemployed is the reputation that allows them to gain access to forms of recognition, including in the order of inter-individual interactions, as in the case of Tercio's specific relationship of influence towards his sidekick, in whose contact he saw 'the source of recognition he needed'.⁶⁹ For young people who are failing at school, disappointed by school, frustrated by family difficulties and exasperated by the feeling that they have no real chance of getting a job, the feeling of belonging to the neighbourhood acts as a positive space for self-building. The social ties that are established there bring protection and recognition. Thus, when Tercio agreed to go to Syria with his accomplice on the grounds that he was going to 'do his friend a favour', they had already committed a few electrical cable thefts together. On the other hand, in April 2013, seven months before their departure for Syria by road via Turkey, they had been checked late at night with the

⁶⁸ Brussels Court of Appeal, 43rd Chamber, Conclusions, p.7.

⁶⁹ Brussels Court of Appeal, 43rd Chamber, Conclusions, p.7.

paraphernalia of the 'perfect burglar'.⁷⁰ When they set out for Syria by road in November 2013 with a vehicle that Tercio had just acquired, the fact of leaving for the Iraqi-Syrian zone was not yet a punishable offence as such, since it was not until 2014 that all the international institutions, through a Security Council resolution (2178), were going to criminalise travel to Syria.⁷¹ What Tercio expresses in his words: 'I didn't realise because there wasn't all that on TV when I left, if there was all that from DAESH, all that... I would never have set foot there, never, I would have told him to go to hell'. On his return from his stay in January 2014, he was questioned by the police a month later in February 2014 before being released: 'they came to search the place, they took me back to the police station. They start asking me questions, yes you left, I didn't say no, I said yes I left for Turkey. [...] They released me around 4pm. I explained to them that my friend stayed there.' However, the situation that prevailed in November 2013 at the time of Tercio's first departure was not at all the same as it was at the end of March 2014, when he left the area a second time at the request, he said, of his companion.

March. End of March, beginning of April, the guy calls me back. He says there's a problem, my older brother has been killed. I'm injured. I'm in Turkey, I'm in the hospital. So he's gone to fight too. He tells me please, I need you, come and help me. I tell him where are you in Turkey? He tells me where we were in the town where we were, in Turkey. And I go there. (Tercio)

Tercio went back to Syria, he said, to convince his friend, who had been injured, to return to Belgium.

I tell him come on, let's go back, look your whole family is back, your brother is dead and he tells me no now it's my war too, they killed my brother. I told him your brother is the one who wanted to come, you told me so at first. After that, he told me it's ok, no problem. He told me we were going to go to the apartment because in fact he had an apartment, he had bought a car, he had money, he was well off, he had a small business. (Tercio)

During this second stay, Tercio, in the company of his sidekick, whom he admits he follows 'like a donkey', looted houses abandoned by their occupants who were trying to flee the fighting then active in Syria. In addition to the fact that he went to a place that was then considered a war zone, staying in a house with a family whose members were all convicted of terrorism by the judgment of July 29, 2015 and provided assistance by convoying one of them (his friend), the justice system also suspects him of having 'benefited from training in Syria, and, at the very least, (of having) gravitated around fighting in the ranks of Jabhat Al-Nusra'. The publication on Facebook by his sidekick of photos showing Tercio in combat gear and with a weapon was seen by the justice system as being likely to establish this participation in training and combat. Tercio acknowledges the looting, but denies having participated in training and fighting. He was arrested in July 2014 and an arrest warrant was issued.

After a month in Syria and Turkey. I come back here. It was April-May I think. Finally, I come back here, I am stopped by the police. One month later. In July, I was arrested, yes you went to Syria. Oh yes, in the meantime [...] we'd taken some photos, we were at his house, you see some stupid things. I tell myself he's going to keep them, the guy, what did he do, he was going to put them on the Internet. When I arrive here, I don't know anything about it. I arrive, I see the police, they take out all the photos. I'm here, I don't know what to say. I'm stuck, I

⁷⁰ Judgment of 29 July 2015 of the 49th Chamber of the French-speaking Court of First Instance of Brussels, judging in matters of correctional police, p. 123.

⁷¹ <http://www.senat.fr/ue/pac/EUR000001885.html#:~:text=The%20r%C3%A9solution%202178%20of%20the%20Council,gravitates%C3%A9%20to%20the%2C%20infringement;>
https://www.un.org/cttravel/sites/www.un.org.cttravel/files/general/french_ct_travel_programme_summary_0.pdf

say what the hell is happening to me, what's happening to me? I still don't understand what's going on. I don't realize how big this whole thing is getting. In the end, what's going on? Yes, you are armed (in the photos). I say Look, sir, you can see, there is only one gun, in each photo. It's the same one. You see it. Yes, it's true, I took it, we were sitting like this on the terrace, you can see the terrace, the table, the house behind it, I said you can see I'm not doing anything crazy here. Can you imagine what you are telling me? Finally, they tell me to go to prison. I go before the judge. Since then, I've been in prison. (Tercio)

While Tercio denies any desire to associate with a terrorist group, the different paths of socialisation they take are such that, as we have seen – despite his desire to find stability through employment which might have kept him away from the 'deviant pole' of the street world – he early on adopted a pattern of deviant behaviour which, over time, became relatively stably instituted. So that it was the deviant behaviour that produced, over time, the deviant motivation (Becker, p.64).

I wasn't stable in truth. I didn't have my stability, but I was looking for stability. I couldn't find it, so I didn't know what to do. I was doing everything. Moving, the restaurant, I wanted to do this and there was nothing concrete. [...] In fact, I'm someone who gives up very quickly. And then there was my brother's accident which drove me crazy. [...] He was in rehabilitation, he stayed in hospital for a year; then he came out, it got reinfected, he went back to hospital for another year, which makes two years in total. Then he started to go out a bit, he took his apartment. I was going crazy... I was lost. Then I tried to find a little training, I had found a training course to get my HGV licence. In the end, I didn't finish it. [...] But I didn't take it again. Then there was the story, it was really all in that period, everything was compressed there. Then when I came back, I wanted to go over it again, they told me yes, there is a way, and finally they came to get me at home a month later, and since then I have been in prison. (Tercio)

At the end of the judgment of 29 July 2015, already serving a suspended sentence for burglary from 2011, Tercio was sentenced to a total of six years' imprisonment. In explaining Tercio's motivations for engaging in what the Tribunal describes as 'participation in the activities of a terrorist group', the Court's decision makes a distinction between 'defendants who have allowed themselves to be indoctrinated by propaganda of extremist ideas and others who come from the 'banditry milieu' and whose motivations are clearly more related to their desire to embark on an adventurous existence by freeing themselves from the constraints inherent in life in Belgium, which are too regulated for their taste, than to religious motivations which only serve as a pretext.'⁷² According to this distinction, Tercio belongs to this second category of defendants convicted 'as a participant in the activities of a terrorist group, and not as a leader of the said group; that is to say, young people who are not necessarily imbued with a Salafist ideology, but who see in fleeing to the jihad the only solution to exist in their own eyes, in the eyes of those around them and/or of society'.⁷³ With regard to Tercio and his journey, it is very difficult to conclude that he is a 'flight to jihad' in the sense of a 'leader who is stuck in a sectarian and deadly logic and who wants to promulgate his radical ideas',⁷⁴ because if he has acquired a system of justifications that encourages him to persevere in his deviant career and to commit theft and crime ('when my brother fell I needed money. I started selling narcotics. At first I was looking for a job. Let's face it, you're not going to find a job overnight'), no biographical data emerges from the elements of observation, interview and consultation

⁷² Judgment of 29 July 2015 of the 49th Chamber of the French-speaking Court of First Instance of Brussels, judging in matters of correctional police, p. 175.

⁷³ Brussels Court of Appeal, 43rd Chamber, Conclusions, p.6.

⁷⁴ Brussels Court of Appeal, 43rd Chamber, Conclusions, p.7.

of the legal file that highlights a doctrinal, dogmatic background of jihadist or radical impregnation, either in practice or in the order of discourse.

I haven't prayed in a very long time. How does it feel? Since I came back to prison, I prayed *nichane* [regularly], and then from time to time I won't lie to you, it's a bit difficult. Morally, it's very difficult. But when I was outside, let's say a year like that, I had started to pray a little bit, you know, pray, not pray, I was 28, 29 years old. Before, I had prayed, but I stopped praying from time to time, but my parents never forced me. (Tercio)

As he says himself:

It's totally opposite, just like night and day. You see it's like I'm sticking a personality on you, but it's not your reflection, it's not you. It's not you. I, they know it very well deep down, that's why also the judge was well aware and she said we follow what the Court had judged for me, saying that there were people who had really been radicalised and that I had helped these people, it's two different points. I was really happy to see that there are still people who can make a distinction between the two. It reassured me a lot because deep down, I was really not well. I was really lost. I said to myself, this is it, everyone is going to believe that I am a madman when it has nothing to do with that. And it touched me a lot to know that they made the distinction between the two people. Deep down, I feel much more reassured about that. At the beginning, I was not well because I thought I was a terror, radicalised, I don't know what, when there is nothing like that. [...] because I'm going to tell you the truth, in my opinion, being radicalised can be a good thing because someone who is radical, for example with himself, means that he sets limits. That's how I see it. Someone who's radicalized. In any case, I don't consider myself radicalized like that, but radicalised in relation to myself, that I set limits for myself. I say to myself, this is my limit and I don't cross it. I'm radical with that. For me, that's it. (Tercio)

Thinking about the term 'radical' in a positive light, Tercio understands it to indicate the personal ability to dictate one's own rules to oneself and not to break them. According to his own understanding, we might note, he did not show himself to be sufficiently 'radical' in that he failed to oppose the project which was clearly marked by the extremist aims of his acolyte.

4.4 Quarto's story

Quarto was born of Moroccan parents, a father born in Tangier and a mother in Ceuta, who came to Belgium in the early 1980s. His mother used to work in the cleaning industry, but 'now she is unemployed'. As for his father, Quarto doesn't know what to say but, he tells me, 'he used to work at the fishmonger's'. In December 2012, then aged 21, Quarto's father died at the age of 59. 'He had cancer'. Quarto was born in a municipality located in the so-called 'poor crescent' area and grew up in a working-class district of the city of Brussels located in the same arc. 'At the time, the neighbourhood was not like it is now, there were old buildings and too many delinquents', Quarto says. At the time of our interviews, he is 28 years old and has been in detention since January 2016 (when he turned 24). This is his first experience of prison, he has no previous criminal record. He was sentenced on appeal to 7 years imprisonment for 'offences relating to a terrorist group, attempted crime and murder.'

At the end of our repeated exchanges from November 2019 to February 2020, I suggested to him that his imprisonment appeared to me as an anomaly, a mistake. This is because, the testimony I collected from him, from the social workers who followed him in prison, but also from the observations and legal and

administrative data that I was able to consult concerning him,⁷⁵ it appears that his presence in prison is an anomaly (if compared to what I had observed with regard to the trajectories of Primo, Secundo and Tercio). Quarto's trajectory differed in the absence of any early socialisation into violence, delinquency or 'deviant' street sociability. When I discussed this with him, his response was frank and spontaneous:

But for me, it's not a mistake. This is a second chance. It's a second chance for me. If I hadn't gone to prison, I would have been gone or dead by now. Going to prison allowed me to live and to see the truth. And my mother, she told me I'd rather see you in prison than see you die there. (Quarto)

Quarto is adamant that, if he had not been arrested, he would have travelled to Syria as he had vowed to do. Indeed, his departure had been scheduled a few days after his arrest.

I didn't leave. [...] at the beginning we wanted to leave in November. But as there were attacks in November, the borders were closed so we changed the date. And because I thought I had found the smuggler and so I went to Paris. My arrest was approaching because I was being closely watched. [...] And because, on the phone, I said that I had to bring 300 euros before Tuesday, the cops thought I was going to leave on Tuesday and so they came. (Quarto)

Quarto travelled to Paris to meet someone with whom he had been exchanging messages with about a smuggler 'who takes people from Paris to Syria', accompanied by Vianney [pseudonym], a fellow accomplice. Quarto is surprised to learn that the person he was expecting to meet and with whom he is communicating on Telegram, is in fact 'a sister who was pretending to be a brother'. At this point, he still doesn't know who he's dealing with.

I met Sarah. And I didn't really know who she was, because in the network she pretended to be a man. And so I met her once. [...] The fact is that we saw her, we were watched, and then at the end of the month we were arrested. And after eight months, when I go back to prison, I saw her on TV related to the gas canisters in Paris, without having known that it was her project. (Quarto)

Sarah is a young woman who was tried and sentenced in June 2021 to thirty years in prison with two-thirds of the time as a security guard for a failed gas canister attack near Notre Dame in Paris. Previously, she had been sentenced in another case, in April 2019, to eight years in prison for her role as a recruiter of radicalised youth, many of them women. On social networks, she posed as a jihadist fighter, not hesitating to disguise her voice. It was she who drew more attention from the police to Quarto's actions, precipitating his arrest in Brussels, some twenty days after their meeting in Paris. 'And so I did meet her but I was under close surveillance and, at the end of the month, I was arrested on January 30, 2016 and I met her at the beginning of January 2016.'

Several days after their meeting in Paris, contact with the designated smuggler was unsuccessful because 'she didn't bring me the right smuggler,' Quarto points out, 'it was a smuggler who was smuggling undocumented migrants. As a result, I had to go for nothing'. The simple link established with Sarah, given her involvement in an extremist action, was likely to reinforce a view of Quarto as an extremist in the eyes of the judicial administration.

⁷⁵ These comprise: specific in-depth report in connection with terrorist offences (2018), Update report in view of prison leaves (2019), Judgment pronounced by the Court of First Instance (June 2017), Judgment delivered by the Court of Appeal of Mons (December 2017) and several Opinions of the Director of the prison concerning electronic surveillance

But I didn't know her project. I didn't know anything at all. And as I denied it at the beginning they said I knew her project, whereas I didn't know her project. I only met her so that she could show me the smuggler, that's all. (...) (Quarto)

However, combined with Quarto's attitude of not only initially denying the charges against him of participation in a terrorist group, but also making threats against the judge in charge of investigating his case, suspicions of collusion with violent extremism are growing and becoming more and more specific.

At the police station, I started to deny all that and when I went before the examining magistrate at that time, I told myself I had nothing to lose, I was so angry. I didn't know what I was doing, I was saying threats and stuff like that, the fact that the arrest went wrong so I didn't control my anger. I was saying [...] serious things like why are you preventing me from doing my religion, that we have the right to kill and also sooner or later if you prevent me, [...] it will be the end of times, the '*Mahdi* [in Arabic: *al-mahdi*, means 'the well-guided one', according to the tradition, he is an eschatological redeemer awaited by Muslims] will come, he will rule the earth, etc. It's like Islam came by the sword, it's going to happen again, that's what I told him. I was saying things like that. The fact that I was giving threats and I was saying anything, it confirmed everything that happened. [...] I confirmed the person I really was. (Quarto)

This is part of the reason for the negative impact on his subsequent judicial treatment. Although he had been eligible for prison leave since May 2017, i.e. almost a year and a half after his incarceration in January 2016, it was not until three years after his eligibility, after having been refused several times, at the end of a visit to the Sentence Enforcement Court in March 2020 competent to examine requests for sentence adjustment, that a favourable outcome is pronounced granting Quarto the opportunity of one day's leave (PS) and then thirty-six hours' leave which would lead to a measure of release under the electronic tag regime in January 2021.

Previously, multiple attempts to apply for leave of absence and/or time off had been refused by the Directorate of Detention Management (DGD), based on the threat assessment carried out by the Coordinating Body for Threat Analysis (CBTA), of a risk of committing further serious offences and a serious extremist threat. 'At first they gave me a rating out of three and then they lowered it to two. Three is the maximum', Quarto explains.

However, this characterisation of him as a 'radicalised person' by the judicial administration, which for a long time has led to him being systematically refused requests for leave and permission to leave (PS), which have been supported by the prison management and social workers since he became legally eligible, is also the product of a complex history and a life trajectory studded with significant and singular events.

During our second meeting in the visiting room of the prison where he was detained, Quarto immediately wanted to tell me about his plans to take part in a writing competition organised by a federation of member associations active in prison and/or on release (see Plate 1) . Encouraged by the numerous training courses he attended in prison, notably on 'self-image, stress management and also the enneagram', Quarto opted to write an autobiographical account, among the many different ways of writing, whether a short story, a narrative, a poem, a testimony, a reality or a fiction: 'this is what pushed me to write a biography.' He worked on this until mid-February, the deadline for returning the texts. Helped in this task by a certain M. V., a fellow prisoner who Quarto noticed was 'someone who was gifted in French' but also because, he said, 'I have difficulty expressing myself'. Distressed about the death of his father, Quarto wrote: 'this situation was one more catastrophe from that moment on'.

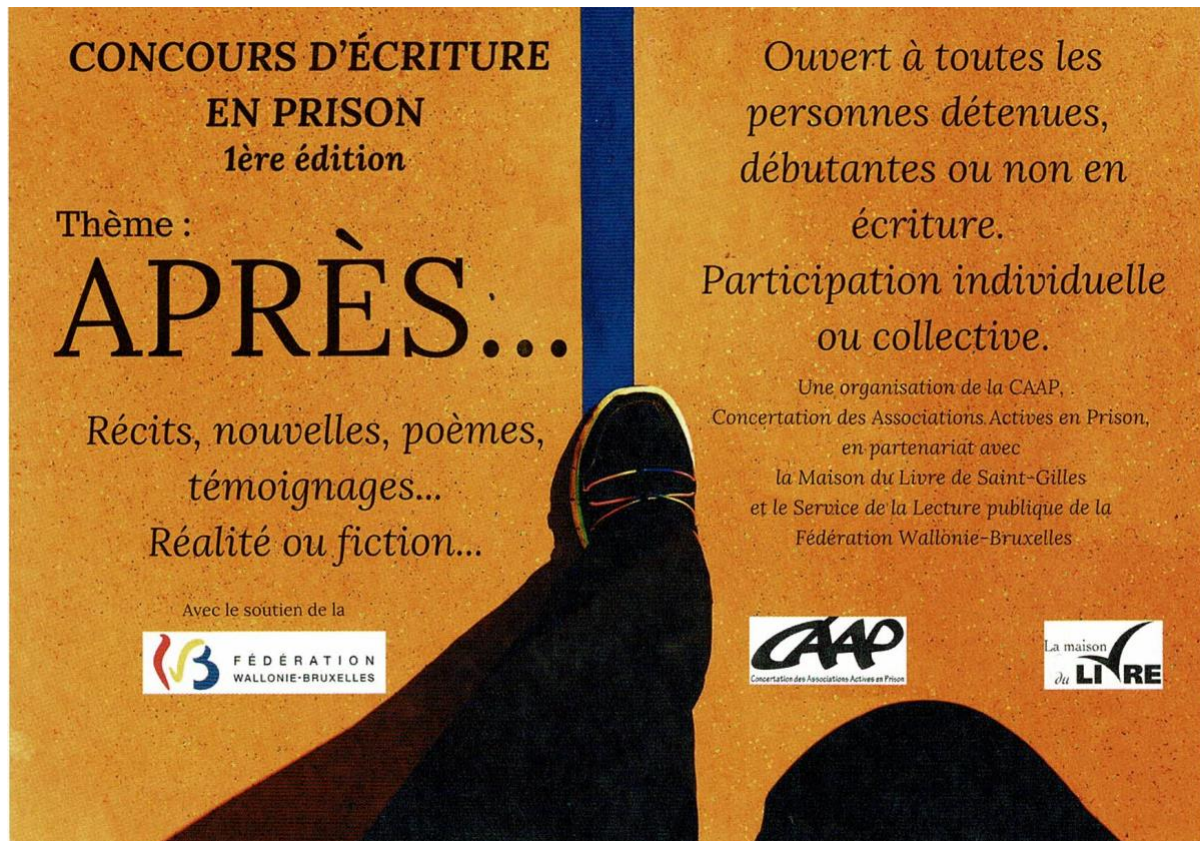


Plate 2: Writing contest entry form, Field Journal, December 2019.

Quarto's father had been ill since 1998, and went into remission until 2009. In the early 2000s, his parents separated for a period of four years. According to Quarto's mother, the separation was the result of numerous arguments concerning her husband's parents.⁷⁶ Regarding this separation, which he says had a profound effect on him, accentuating an already strong feeling of loneliness, Quarto stresses that it occurred against a background of 'family problems'.

Compared to my parents. The problem is that at that time, when my mother got married. And because they were a rich family and my mother's family was poor, they were against marriage. [...] Today, with time, it has changed, it's just a little contact. Hello, goodbye, from time to time she goes to their house, but they don't come to ours. (Quarto)

To support him in his illness, Quarto's mother decided to live with her husband again. The family dynamic seems to have been punctuated by these two strong moments. On the one hand, the parental separation that puts at a distance the father with whom he did not speak much because the latter only spoke Arabic and he did not. And the death of his father, which shattered the family unit that had been moulded around the patient.⁷⁷ When he died in December 2012, Quarto intensified his practice of Islam, which he had been observing intermittently until then, especially the canonical prayer, which is one of the pillars of Muslim dogma:

⁷⁶ Specific in-depth report in relation to terrorist offences, 2018, p.3.

⁷⁷ Specific in-depth report in relation to terrorist offences, 2018, p.3.

Yes, I started as a child, but at that time, you see, I used to pray and then I stopped, but since the death of my father at the age of 21 at the age of 21, I have kept my religion, from then on, I never stopped praying again and still pray. (Quarto)

In fact, his behaviour is a kind of conversion involving a radical change of attitude to the point that it cannot go unnoticed by his family circle, starting with his mother:

She suspected from my behaviour that I had a change. [...] I didn't talk much with them. I used to go to the mosque to pray regularly. I was deeply involved in religion. Every day, on time, for every prayer of the day, even the dawn prayer. (Quarto)

In a note that he had taken care to bring with him to our second interview (Quarto had a habit of coming to the visiting room with a folder full of documents) and that he handed to me for my perusal – a decision from the Directorate General of Detention concerning a leave of absence was recorded. The note read:

It should be noted, however, that the social investigation report shows that his family members, without imagining that he had become an extremist, had noticed some changes in him before 2012. Religion was clearly a secondary part of his life. From 2012 onwards, he started going to the mosque on a daily basis. He had also started reading Koranic books (sic) and discussed the subject of religion with his family or the imam. (Field journal, February 2020).

Quarto confirms this to me, stating, 'At that time I started to get into religion. I started going to the mosque, I prayed and I kept going to the mosque and praying.'

Quarto is the fourth of five children. The eldest is a married woman working in the cleaning industry. She rarely comes to visit because of lack of time, divided between her job and her two children. The second is a man aged thirty-five. He does not work and is not married. To the investigators in charge of producing the social investigation report, Quarto explains that his brother has used too much cannabis in the past, which has led to serious health problems: 'he thought he was someone else.' The said social investigation report mentions a diagnosis of schizophrenia since the age of 25. He was also incarcerated for a short period in 2006 for assault and battery. Currently on medication, he would have stopped all medication thanks, according to Quarto, to his religious practice. When I ask Quarto if his siblings follow the religious rites and prescriptions of Islam, he says: 'Just my brother, my older sister is married, yes, but otherwise the other two are not, from time to time. As for his mother, as far back as Quarto remembers, 'she has always prayed and done Ramadan.' The third born in the order of siblings is a girl, now the mother of two children born of different relationships. She does not practice Islam. Finally, the youngest daughter lives at home, and if she practices Islam from time to time, as Quarto suggests, she does not wear the veil.

It is also important to recognise that oral transmissions, imitation, 'see-do' and 'hear-say' are at the basis of the family's religious socialization. For Quarto and his brother and sisters, as for his parents before, knowledge, skills and know-how, religious practices and their rituals, are acquired and transmitted within the family. However, like many immigrant families, they often only know the religious message orally and through the practices of the previous generation. The parents, many of whom have not attended school, have only a limited or even rudimentary knowledge of the fundamental texts of Islam, the *Koran* and the *Sunna* (*hadiths*). The transmission of the religion is therefore done by imitation and '*voir-faire*' (see-do), as the children themselves do not have access to the texts or to the Arabic language. This passage of interview, relating to how Quarto himself perceives the way in which religious knowledge has been transmitted to him, illustrates the particular modes of intergenerational transmission specific to immigrant families:

Interviewer: But what do they (mother and siblings) tell you about religion?

Respondent: In relation to that, they know that I had no knowledge of religion and that I was influenced.

Interviewer: Does your mother tell you about the Koran?

Respondent –That's what she always did. She taught me about prayer, Ramadan etc.

Interviewer: Did she always do the prayer, the Ramadan? Since you remember your mother, she was always like that?

Respondent –Yes, that's right.

Interviewer: Is she telling you no, you shouldn't have done that? I didn't teach you that. I taught you something else. You see this kind of thing.

Respondent: Yes, she tells me that. But if she had told me about religion I wouldn't have come to this point.

Interviewer: Oh, because she wasn't talking to you about religion?

Respondent: If she talked to me about religion. But if she had explained to me the basics of Islam and told me that there are extremes. Because I didn't know all that. I just knew the Islam that my mother taught me, that's all.

Interviewer: What is this Islam that she taught you?

Respondent: That's it, Ramadan, fasting. She didn't talk to me about jihad, nothing at all.

However, one of the main reasons for Quarto's radicalisation trajectory is closely linked to his physiological characteristics, which appear from birth. Indeed, at birth, Quarto had a significant hearing problem in both ears, which led to speech difficulties, which sometimes made it difficult to understand him during our interviews. Quarto's hearing impairment was not detected until his compulsory medical examination in primary school, i.e. in the preparatory course for entry into primary school at the age of 6-7 years. This personal characteristic exposed him very early to rejection, mockery and discrimination by his peers and contributed to shaping a subjectivity marked by the experience of differentiation and the feeling of marginality as constitutive of his early relationship to the world: 'I felt different from others and I could see that others treated me differently', he writes in his autobiographical account, which he first chooses to title 'Victim like you', before opting for the definitive title: 'The labels'. This was probably after we had discussed the power of labelling in our various interactions with others and the social world during one of our interviews. So when I ask him what he thinks about the fact that OCAM considers him to be 'a serious extremist threat' and that he is considered a 'foreign terrorist fighter' by the same organisation, Quarto replies: 'I think that they are once again diving into the label without knowing the person'.

When I asked him what meaning this first title 'Victim like you' had for him, he explained to me what, deep down, motivated his decision to respond positively to my request and to take part in the study, namely the desire to tell his story, to talk about his experience and to move away from a holistic judgement based on legal categorisation (conviction for a terrorist offence) to a judgement on a case-by-case basis, which is more attentive to the singularities and individual differences.

[...] the fact that I received a letter, it came at the right time. And I didn't expect it, at that time I was preparing my release and now, maybe my release is close. It was time to be able to explain to me what I have been through and to avoid putting other people in prison. [...] I am not the only one in this story. I am also suffering, I am also concerned by the story. And I want to make people understand that not everyone is in the same bag and one case and another are not the same. (Quarto)

Thus, from a very early age and then during his early socialisation, because of his disability and the consequences it caused in terms of rejection, mockery and ridicule by his peers, Quarto internalised the idea that this personal attribute that characterises him functions as a stigma. He is acutely aware that he is endowed with a bodily attribute that differentiates him, and he perceives this to discredit and devalue him from the other members of the peer group to which he belongs. The gap between what Goffman calls structural attributes (age, sex, profession etc.) and virtual attributes (those constructed from anticipations, normative expectations and stereotypical demands on what he should be and the category to which he is expected to belong) strongly compromises social identity, as soon as it is known or seen (Goffman, 1975: 32). In Quarto's case, expressing himself orally has the effect of cutting him off from the rest of the world (withdrawal into himself) and from himself. The following exchange around his activities in prison and in particular the training course dedicated to the discovery of the enneagram, a test which allows the classification of personality into nine types, which Quarto tells me he finds very interesting because 'it is a course where you discover yourself. Who you really are and how you function', testifies to this early internalisation.

Interviewer: And how do you think you operate then?

Respondent: In fact, the enneagram, there are 9 types. And I am type 4, that is to say empathy, I feel the emotions of people and I feel rejected.

Interviewer: Is it true that you have been feeling rejected for a long time?

Respondent: It's always been that way with my disability.

Interviewer: Is your disability from a very young age?

Respondent: At birth.

Interviewer: Okay, you've felt rejected since you were a kid?

Respondent: Yes, I have that feeling and the fact that I came back for that and when I see people who don't want to be around me, it makes me think of what I experienced.

Interviewer: What exactly did you experience?

Respondent: Actually, during my childhood, I was teased because I don't express myself well and I was teased about that and so I isolated myself. When I was young, I didn't have many friends except in school, but when I finished school, I didn't have many friends [...] I hung out with the kids in my neighbourhood. The fact that I didn't know the phrases well and everything, they made fun of me and it hurt me. So I shut myself up, I didn't go outside. I grew up like that.

Quarto's disability (and that of two of his sisters⁷⁸) is recognised by the General Directorate for the Disabled as a condition resulting in 66% hearing loss and had had very concrete repercussions on his learning process and his school and professional career. He was directed very early on towards special education for the deaf and hearing impaired, and after repeating several times, he entered a vocational section where he obtained the Certificate of Higher Secondary Education, which is the secondary school leaving certificate. After this diploma, he registered as a job seeker after having undertaken a year in higher education which he abandoned because 'the courses were too difficult'. He has never worked except 'in 2012 as a student at Colruyt (supermarket) in the fridge'. Because of his severe hearing difficulties, the contract was not renewed.

⁷⁸ Specific in-depth report in relation to terrorist offences, 2018, p.3.

This disability, by diminishing his learning abilities, also markedly reduces his ability to relate to others and to create bonds based on age, gender or class affinity, and consequently hinders his social integration in a peer group or professional circle. Quarto is aware of this gap resulting from his disability: 'And as a result, the fact that I have remained closed in on myself there are things I have not learned, and now when I talk to people I feel that they are more advanced than me. This rejection that Quarto says he was subjected to, he reports experiencing even today in detention and not just because of his 'radicalised' stigma. Even now, I feel rejected and judged because of my disability,' he says in his account. 'Inmates do not want to be around him because of his label (of radicalised) and/or make fun of his apparent naivety', the internal psychosocial report of the prison administration underlines.

Isolated, confined to the domestic and family space, no longer going outside (from the age of twelve to thirteen) 'except for school and to help (his) mother with the shopping', haunted by the fear of social judgment, burdened by his hearing loss, which causes him to feel very anxious when he is in the presence of his peers, as on the day he attends a birthday party and experiences what he calls an anxiety attack, for which he is accused of ruining the party. With an early developmental delay due to his double hearing and speech impairment, without the cognitive abilities required for work or training, nor the necessary skills to cooperate with the outside world, thus accumulating 'handicaps' and lack of resources, Quarto's whole life is restricted. As space shrinks, so does the mental and emotional horizon. The combined effect of this kind of *diminished* reality (Lahire, 2019) in which Quarto is immersed, i.e. negatively composed of all the resources from which he is not a beneficiary, adds an important dispositional dimension which at the mental level forms the counterpart of this physical and physiological reality: the experience of a shrinking self. In the sense that as Lahire has shown, socially differentiated access to different resources – (knowledge, knowledges, embodied dispositions allowing the appropriation of these knowledges, dispositions necessary for the very struggle for the appropriation of the different kinds of capital) – determines possible extensions of the self to all forms of increasing one's reality or power over reality. This narrowing to which he is cornered inevitably produces in a logic of introversion, self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, feelings of insecurity, uncertainty of being legitimate in front of others, which are all translations of the feelings of powerlessness engendered by a life precociously and durably led in the most unfavorable conditions.

When his father died and his parents separated, Quarto 'lost his last points of stability'. This is what he writes in a passage from the autobiographical story he submitted to the writing competition. And he adds: 'My family was no longer together. I lost my self-confidence at that point'. The prison administration's report states that the death of the father broke up the family unit that had been welded around the patient. Since then, it seems that it was Quarto's imprisonment that helped to trigger an awareness and willingness to improve communication between the different family members.

As we saw earlier, it was at this point that Quarto became a believer and radically intensified his religious practice to the point of going to the mosque every day and several times a day, including to observe the dawn *salat*. At that time fragile and precarious, suffering from isolation, being neither in training, nor in employment, nor in studies, the assiduous attendance of the mosque tore him away from his solitude by forcing him to go out to pray in a group. He writes: 'I was beginning to build a wall between myself and the rest of the world. I couldn't find work, I had no social relationships, so I went to the mosque for comfort'. When I ask him about his activities prior to his incarceration his answer is unambiguous: 'My hobby was my sport and going to the mosque and also being connected as I didn't have many friends'. Another crucial dimension adding to Quarto's psychological vulnerability, from which his integrity risks being affected, diminished, altered, is the absence of affectivity, which one author has referred to as the 'highest of solitudes' (Ben Jelloun, 1997) and which translates daily into forced abstinence and the increasing repression of sexual desires. Thus, the administration's report stresses that Quarto 'expresses

a suffering for not having been able to create a love relationship yet and has strong expectations in this regard.⁷⁹ Elsewhere, the report states that 'he finds his single status very difficult, very frustrating and sad. When he is released, he says that his mother will look for a wife for him'⁸⁰ In fact, as we shall see, the driving force behind Quarto's radicalisation is this emotional quest. The circumstances on the way to this quest appear to be the markers and milestones necessary for its completion. Three years have passed since the death of his father, when a man named Rachid (pseudonym) comes to meet Quarto on his way out of the mosque.

Respondent: It's someone called Rachid, he was in my neighbourhood and he talked to me about it. In fact, at the beginning we talked a lot about religion. Then, little by little, he told me that the imams were working with the State, they are corrupt. And then, he told me that you are not obliged to pray with them. Afterwards, that's what convinced me, he talked to me about Syria, etc.

Interviewer: What did he tell you about Syria?

Respondent: That there are poor Muslims in Syria who are suffering injustice, and our duty is to help them and that's where you will go to heaven. And that these people don't like our religion, that's why they don't want to see the reality. That's how he convinced me.

Interviewer: Who are these people?

Respondent: The miscreants... At the time he convinced me, he told me we were going to go away together and then overnight he disappeared. I never heard from him again. So, as I had this idea, I went on social networks and I started to post. I was doing anything.

If Rachid has disappeared it is because he has gone to Syria. A note from the Public Prosecutor's Office concerning the review of the granting of an electronic surveillance measure made at the request of Quarto in 2018, indicates, I quote, that 'his radicalisation is induced by the association with a person who will leave for Syria (Rachid)'. Following this meeting finding himself alone, Quarto will, via social networks, seek information and eventually be an actor of propaganda tools. Promising him, once he arrives in Syria, 'to have a wife, a house and a place in paradise', Quarto lets himself be convinced:

In fact, it all started. It was in January 2015. In fact, I saw a guy called Rachid I knew through the Mosque. And then he talked to me, he talked to me about religion, he talked to me about mixing. He talked to me about a lot of things. And in a few months, he started to tell me about the Islamic State, he showed me videos. And everything I saw, it was beautiful and the fact that I saw everything, I really believed in it, in truth, as I was really naive and all that, I got into this thing there... [...] At first, when he spoke to me, I wasn't convinced, but then he recited verses from the Koran about how I should do jihad for my own good and all that. And then he showed me videos and all that. He convinced me. The day we wanted to go. He disappeared overnight. I never heard from him again. Then from there, I went on social networks, I was looking for people who wanted to go. (Quarto)

Rachid in Syria, Quarto feels cheated, abandoned by the one he calls his 'director of conscience',⁸¹ now spending most of his time in the bedroom of the family home typing on his computer keyboard after he stopped attending the mosque on the orders of Rachid:

⁷⁹ Specific in-depth report in relation to terrorist offences, 2018, p.9.

⁸⁰ Specific in-depth report in relation to terrorist offences, 2018, p.4.

⁸¹ 'The Labels', autobiographical narrative submitted to a Writing Competition organised by a federation of member associations active in prison and/or on release, Quarto, 2020.

Respondent: [...] By telling me things like, for example, co-education. You can't hold hands with a woman. You can't go to classes where women and men are mixed. And also like what, like you can't pray in the mosque, because the imam works with the state.

Interviewer: And what did you say to him?

Respondent: When he was telling me about the evidence and everything, I listened to him, I really believed him. I was someone who went to the mosque a lot. The fact that he had told me all this. At a certain point, I didn't pray at the mosque anymore, I stayed in my corner and I just went out to do some shopping. [...] After that, he convinced me.

Delivered to virtual realities, he will then via his connection to social networks – he admits to having been registered on Facebook since 2009, on Telegram and Twitter since 2015⁸² – set out to find the means to reach this land supposedly more lenient as to the accomplishment of his project of finding a wife and also more respectful of the observance of religious law, according to the description Rachid had given him.

When you get there, you have a house, a wife, they were showing the place, what it's like there, like on Friday, you close the store early, you do your prayer and stuff like that. (Quarto)

When I ask Quarto if he thinks that in Belgium he has not found the place that would have allowed him to observe his religion, Quarto's speech, echoes the radical vision advocated by Rachid:

Interviewer: But you didn't have any difficulty, here in Belgium, in your neighbourhood, to go and pray. Nobody forbade you to go and pray, for example ?

Respondent: No, the question is that you can't put all your religious practices here, as for example we have difficulties with *halal* and *haram*. [...] My difficulties at the time were mainly with *halal* or *haram*, or wearing a *djellaba*. Going to the mosque all the time, also they said in the videos that you should not live in a non-Muslim country and that you should live in a Muslim country. They also said that it is an obligation to live in a country where there is *sharia*.

Interviewer: For example, if you want to eat *halal*, you can eat *halal*. There are *halal* butcheries, *halal* restaurants, there are spaces that allow you to respect your diet, right?

Respondent: Yeah, I agree. But in some foods, there's stuff that you don't know what's in it, that's the problem. You can find gelatins in anything.

Interviewer: Okay, yes, but the gelatin, well, then, you have to do your market. You're free to shop, just like you go to the market. On the stalls there is a whole range of fruit, vegetables, food, etc. You take what you like, if you don't like it. You take what you like, if you don't like it, you leave it. Don't you think so?

Respondent. Oh yes.

Interviewer: And then, after all, is it really, the fact that there is gelatin, is it really a problem? Do you think it's really a problem?

Respondent: In all foods, there are some.

Interviewer: Well yes, no, but is it really a problem in relation to religion, in relation to your religion? Do you think it's a problem?

Respondent. No, but if you don't know what's in it, it's fine as long as you don't know what's in it, but as long as you know and you eat it, that would be a problem. [...] But you see, at the

⁸² Specific in-depth report in relation to terrorist offences, 2018, p.6.

time I thought that Syria was the only country that applied Sharia law. And the fact that I thought that, that's what motivated me to go there.

In retrospect, Quarto recognises that he has evolved after four years of socialisation in the prison environment, his efforts to participate in the various training courses offered by the prison's social service, his involvement in the workshop, where he works from 7am in the morning to 2.30pm in the afternoon, affixing acronyms and logos on the floor mats adorning the interiors of the major car brands and preparing boxes for the factories, and his accompaniment by a CAPREV psychologist, as well as his meetings with the prison's imam chaplain. Moreover, the prison management, which was reluctant for a while, agreed to his request for a cell with two inmates, thus confirming this positive development because 'at the beginning,' Quarto analyses, 'I was someone who was really susceptible to influence. It was a scale of 8 out of 10. With hindsight, by following training courses, I am less so now':

At first, the management didn't know me, so the first request was refused because they saw what was in the file, but once they got to know me, they saw that I was not the same person I was four years ago. When I make a request to go to a duet, she agrees. [...] Four years ago, I was a guy who was really weak, really impressionable, and really naive. Looking back, I've evolved. (Quarto)

Moreover, the attacks in France had already taken place and Quarto was not unaware of the risks involved in going to a country where the war was in full swing: 'At the beginning we wanted to leave in November (2015). Initially we wanted to leave in November, but as the attacks took place in November, the borders were closed so we changed the date.'

However, more than his ignorance of the plurality of theological conceptions or schools of thought prevailing in the Muslim religious field – 'But I did not know that there were several kinds of Islam. And that at the time, I thought this was the real one' – that would justify his adherence to this vision of a radical Islam pitting unfairly treated Muslims against a conquering West, is his assiduous frequentation of forums on social networks in search of a marriage according to the rites of the *Sunna*. First on Facebook, then on Telegram after he was invited to join this group by a member of the said group, called '*Sunna* marriage', the switch to a jihadist type project gradually takes place. It should be recalled that the time in question corresponds to the peak of the intensification of departures to the Iraqi-Syrian zone, but also from Daesh's encouragement of Western jihadists to transfer their commitment to their own soil rather than to the Syrian-Iraqi theatre. So much so that 'not having many friends', spending most of his time on the Internet hunting (that is the expression he uses) for marriage opportunities and being able to speak freely – even with ease – under the seal of digital anonymity, Quarto finds a way to escape his isolation and the pain of living in seclusion.

Interviewer: Did you spend a lot of time on the Internet?

Respondent: As I didn't have many friends I spent my time on the Internet, hunting (sic) and talking. Expressing myself on the Internet was easy. With my disability, I am not a very articulate person.

Interviewer: On Telegram how much time did you spend chatting per day?

Respondent: It was almost all my time. [...] First, I was on Facebook, I came across a group called '*Sunna* marriage', and at that time I had no income, and this person told me as soon as the conditions are met, come and contact me. And then one day, we were talking and then he put me in the Telegram group, he told me that it was better to talk there freely so that we would not be monitored and then he told me about Syria and he introduced me to groups on Telegram, Then, we had planned to leave together. But we didn't go.

Among these multiple confirmation biases favourable to the cognitive self-enclosure into which Quarto plunges is the paradoxical adjustment to the idea that the unbearable violence in Syria, a theatre of war, where he sets out to 'live there, get married, [...] work and live quietly' can be accommodated in a quiet life. It is undoubtedly only through a kind of extension of the virtual world that such a partitioning of real life is made possible.

Respondent: And it was also Propaganda videos that came from the Islamic State.

Interviewer: On Telegram there were videos too? What images did the videos show?

Respondent: It showed everything, positive or negative.

Interviewer: When you were watching the videos, how did it feel?

Respondent: I was really attracted to the positive videos.

Interviewer: But still, there were some scary things.

Respondent: But I was afraid of these things. At the time, I thought it was the law. Whatever happens, you have to go through it, and as I'm a good person who does no harm I thought I never went through it.

Interviewer: I understand. What were the positive images?

Respondent: When you get there, you have a house, a wife, they were showing the place, what it's like there, like for example, on Friday, you close the store early, you do your prayer and stuff like that.

Interviewer: There were also negative messages. You were watching them too. The negative messages in the videos, for example, the beheading videos.

Respondent: That, frankly, I wasn't watching. It's worse than a horror movie, a horror movie, it passes. You know it's not real. But I wasn't watching it.

Nor can we underestimate the effectiveness of extremist discourse which, through an encounter with an entrepreneur of the extremist cause and then via the mediation of the Internet, relies on the exploitation of a discourse of polarisation favouring the construction of a feeling of otherness based on a binary and simplistic vision of the world as well as on the opposition between a 'them' and an 'us', deployed here under the religious prism: unjustly-treated Muslims opposed to a conquering Occident. But from the point of view of the intimate flesh of what is happening in Quarto's life, something of the order of a complete 'renarcissisation' of his social identity is at play through his activities on social networks, behind the powerfully disinhibiting filter of the digital screen.

And the fact that I had this idea, it was a hope for me to have friends and realise my projects. There I felt respected because before, I always felt rejected because of my disability. Because I could easily communicate with people in the networks. But in real life. No, I have a hard time. [...] I could speak without anyone knowing that I have a disability and express myself freely. (Quarto)

If Quarto nurtures radical ideas through a combination of transmission and frustration, his primary objective is to find a woman to marry.

Planning to go to Syria, he had met discussion groups within Telegram, grouping together a common base of Islamic State sympathizers whose main purpose was to allow members to communicate about plans to leave for Syria (organising religious weddings, financing, obtaining false documents, crossing the border into the conflict zone...) and the commission of violent acts (death as a martyr, targets to be favored in an

attack, searching for a weapon...⁸³ He was told by people that there was a smuggler in Paris. The first occasion, he went there alone but in vain. A second time, accompanied by Vianney, they met Sarah who showed them a smuggler and guided them in the Paris metro. At that time, Sarah was not known to the police and it was under a male alias that she had given them an appointment. This second attempt also failed. He and Vianney, along with other members of the discussion groups, then formed the project of leaving before November 15, 2015, but the closing of the borders after the Paris attacks prevented this from happening. But one of the recurring topics of discussion among its members was the search for wives and the organisation of religious weddings prior to the departure to Syria.⁸⁴

In fact, there were several groups. The group that wanted to leave, the attack group, there were several. [...] At first, I was told that I had to do jihad to fight and all that. Finally, I accepted. Afterwards, I thought about it, I saw the videos and I saw that it wasn't my thing. And as I saw that there were several options, it was to live there, get married, or get a job. My intention was to work and live quietly. [...] I asked to meet women, but there were none. Most of them were brothers I was talking to. (Quarto)

Having failed to meet women, Quarto agreed, 'in exchange for being introduced to a 'sister'⁸⁵, to host a wedding ceremony at his family home, while his mother was in Morocco: 'In the meantime, I met other brothers I didn't know. They had asked me if you would agree to have a wedding at home and I agreed. That day was the day before he was to be arrested by the police, who came at dawn to arrest him. Of the three girls present, only two have married, the third refuses the proposal made to her by one of the 'brothers' present to couple up and marry Quarto, which hurts him. The next morning at dawn Quarto and his sidekick are arrested by the police. The arrest does not go well. Quarto, who does not have his hearing aid, resists the orders of the police, whom he thinks are thieves. When he realises that they are the police, Quarto complies, but the damage is done.

After that wedding, everyone went home and the guy who got married was at my house. I offered him to sleep in my room and I in the living room. I had my table broken and I put the hammer under the table I had just fixed, I had forgotten to put it away. And then I fell asleep in my djellaba and at 5 o'clock in the morning, they came the police at 10 o'clock. And as I didn't have my hearing aids in and as I saw that they had hoods, I thought that it was the thieves. So I didn't let them do it. Then, as soon as I saw that it was the police at that moment, I let them do it. And then. And afterwards, they made me believe that I had hit the table when it was they who hit me. [...] And like the police, they found nothing. And so they charged me with attempted murder, saying I had the hammer in my hand. And I didn't have a hammer. It was his word against mine. [...] They said that I had the hammer in my hand, and that I was going to do it, whereas the hammer was under the table. [...] There was his version and I had my version and then they took the police version. (Quarto)

Incarcerated on the day of his arrest, Quarto was prosecuted and sentenced, in a 2017 appeal judgment, to seven years' imprisonment by the Court of Appeal on charges of 'having, on several occasions between August 2015 and January 2016, as a perpetrator and co-perpetrator, in the capacity of leader of a terrorist group, participated in an activity of a terrorist group, including through the provision of information or material means, or through any form of financing, with the knowledge that such participation contributes to the commission of a crime or offence' and of 'having attacked or resisted with violence or threats towards a ministerial officer with the circumstance that the rebellion was committed by a single person

⁸³ Ministère Public, Judgment delivered by the Court of First Instance of Hainaut, 2017, p.10 and 11.

⁸⁴ Ministère Public, Judgment delivered by the Court of First Instance of Hainaut, 2017, p.18.

⁸⁵ Specific in-depth report in relation to terrorist offences, 2018, p.8.

with weapons'⁸⁶. The power of leadership lent to Quarto under this legal characterisation of the acts perpetrated by him and which he does not deny, – except for the attempted murder which he denies – does not, however, coincide with the regular characterisation emanating from the judicial bodies of the detention according to which he is distinguished by his 'suggestibility, his admiration for people with more leadership than him, his interest in detainees with a radicalised profile, and the risk that he may be regrouped by people advocating radical Islam'. The main risk lies in Quarto's personality, described as 'naive, weak-minded, fragile, suggestible, with low self-esteem and limited cognitive abilities, susceptible to the influence of others, gullible'. Yet his condemnation as a leader, as a 'leader', only overcomes the paradox, if not the oxymoron, of 'suggestible leader' if the legitimate risk to society is that 'his profile remains fragile, dangerous, because he might blindly follow a leader if it gives him status and compensates for his frailties'.

5. Conclusions

The fight against terrorism, and more recently the fight against radicalisation, has become one of the major challenges of security policies in Europe. Belgium has experienced several waves of terror since the early 1970s. In the mid-1980s, intelligence attention began to turn to the threat of Islamism advocating violence as political Islamic movements began to emerge across Europe [Renard, 2016]. A 2016 report by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism indicates that, according to estimates from official and non-governmental sources, between 420 and 516 people have travelled to Syria or Iraq since 2011 (ICCT, 2016). An update of this database in May 2017 brings the estimate to 591 people who have gone to the Syrian-Iraqi conflict zone, making Belgium the EU Member State with the highest number of foreign fighters per capita (Vlierden & Van Ostaeyen, 2017).

Culminating with the attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015 and Brussels on 22 March 2016, the constant flow of foreign fighters from Belgium over the last few years has brought to light the phenomenon of the 'threat within', whereby perpetrators of attacks such as the 2004 assassination of Theo van Gogh or the London 2005 bombings, were carried out by natives of their own countries. Reflecting on the idea of radicalisation as the result of a process, makes it possible, in the words of Peter Neumann, former Director of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation in London, to talk about '*everything that happens before the bomb explodes*' (Neumann, 2008).

In recent years, several of the most deadly mass attacks in Western Europe have been committed by individuals or cells linked to Belgium and in particular to the Brussels commune of Molenbeek. Many departures to Syria also took place from the Flemish cities of Vilvoorde and Antwerp, where 47 people from the Sharia4Belgium movement were tried and sentenced. Marc Sageman has written about how informal radical groups or 'peer groups' formed in places such as the outskirts of the al-Quds Mosque in Hamburg, the M-30 Mosque in Madrid, the Islamic Cultural Centre in Milan and Finsbury Park in London, and contributed to the involvement of a significant proportion of people in Islamist terrorism in the years leading up to and after 9/11 (Sageman, 2004, 2008). In Belgium, following a recommendation by the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the Brussels attacks, the agreement that had bound the Belgium to Saudi Arabia since 1967 in the management of the Great Mosque of Brussels was terminated and the association (the Islamic and Cultural Centre of Belgium) that managed it was dissolved (VSSE, 2019). A report by the Coordination Organisation for Threat Analysis (OCAM) dated 2016 makes a direct link between the establishment of this 'Saudi Islam', present in Belgium since the 1960s, 'of a very rigorous essence which has been propagated in Belgium by sending preachers trained and transferred thanks to

⁸⁶ Judgement of the Court of Appeal, which is included in the Specific in-depth report in relation to terrorist offences. p. 5.

financial support from Saudi Arabia but also from Kuwait and Egypt, and the spread of a radical form of Islam' (OCAM, 2016). The organisation also argued that 'a growing number of mosques and Islamic centres in Belgium are under the sway of *'Wahhabism, the Salafist missionary apparatus'* (La Libre Belgique, 2017). Based on hundreds of pages of Belgian court documents and a database of Belgian foreign fighters, Pieter Van Ostaeyen establishes that three recruitment networks have been active in sending Belgian residents to the battlefields of Syria and Iraq: the Sharia4Belgium network, Jean-Louis Denis' Resto *Tawhid* network and the so-called *Zerkani* network (Van Ostaeyen P. 2015).

Within the framework of this ethnographic study, we wanted to penetrate a space where a significant fraction of young descendants of Moroccan immigrants in Brussels live and are confronted with social problems marked by relegation to the so-called 'poor crescent' zone, from which the four inmates who agreed to take part in the study come. As the main place of arrival for non-European international immigration, the so-called 'poor crescent' zone extends along the canal in the centre-west of the city, straddling seven of the nineteen municipalities that make up the Brussels administrative region (ULB-IGEAT, 2010). It is the most densely populated area in the region, the youngest, but also the poorest, with record unemployment rates (nearly 25% in Molenbeek, over 26% in Saint-Josse) (Actiris, 2021). On this land, which was the hiding place of Salah Abdeslam and the El Bakraoui brothers in Forest and Molenbeek, the former workers' housing has been taken over by a largely immigrant population. The Brussels and Antwerp regions are places with a high concentration of foreign population. The so-called non-EU nationals are much more concentrated. The main area of concentration is Brussels (mainly the central, western and northern municipalities) and its surroundings. In the Brussels municipalities, on average one person in two is of foreign origin. In one of them, in Saint-Josse-Ten-Noode, 74% of the population is of foreign origin, the highest proportion in the whole of Belgium (Migration in Belgium, 2016). In Belgium, there are no precise and official statistics for counting the population by religious denomination because national statistics do not take into consideration any criteria regarding the religious affiliation of the population. However, it is estimated⁸⁷ that there are between 600,000 and 700,000 Muslims in Belgium and that Islam is the second most important religion in the country after Catholicism (VSSE, 2018). Thus, it is estimated that 80-90% of the Muslim presence in Belgium is the result of massive labour immigration by the Belgian authorities in the 1960s, mainly from Morocco and Turkey (Husson, 2016). According to data compiled by Jan Hertogen (2008, 2014, 2015), Saint-Josse-Ten-Noode is the Brussels municipality with the most Muslims among its inhabitants with 45.0%, followed by Molenbeek with 41.2%, Schaerbeek with 37.3%, Anderlecht with 30.2%, Saint-Gilles with 24.4% and Forest with 23.1%. In Woluwe-Saint-Lambert, Auderghem, Uccle, Woluwe-Saint-Pierre and Watermael-Boitsfort, the number is less than 8%.

One of the demographic characteristics of the Muslim population is its youth. The youngest part of the Brussels region corresponds to the poor crescent (ULB-IGEAT, 2010). The high spatial and community concentration in some of the poorest municipalities and neighbourhoods in the Brussels region, combined with the presence of a youthful population and a very strong opposition between the centre and the periphery, contribute to a strong dualisation of social space in terms of access to different forms of material and symbolic resources (schools, sport, leisure, culture, health, work, employment, training.). In 2015, young people aged 12 to 24 represented 15% of the Brussels population (Sacco et al., 2016). The study carried out by the Brussels Studies Institute on young people in Brussels shows that they (young people from the poorest segment of the population) often have several disadvantages: no qualifications, immigrant background, living in precarious neighbourhoods, with parents who are themselves unemployed. In 2014, the unemployment rate for young people aged 15 to 24 was 39.5%. The social geography derived from data

⁸⁷ These are based on several criteria: the number of people from a country where Islam is the majority religion who have migrated to Belgium and still have the nationality of that country, those who have become Belgians, their descendants and converts.

on young people's access to the labour market corroborates the strong centre-periphery opposition, with very high proportions of young people registered as unemployed in the disadvantaged areas of the poor crescent (48% in Saint-Josse against 26.7% in Woluwe-St-Pierre in 2012, for example). In these areas, a new category of young people is emerging: NEETs (Neither in employment nor in education and training), young people who are neither in school, nor in training, nor in work (Sacco, Smits, Kavadias, Spruyt, d'Andrimont, April 2016). There are many reasons for this high rate: the lack of training, qualifications and knowledge of foreign languages among young people, but also the insufficient number of jobs available and the existence of a phenomenon of inequality of access to employment and discrimination in hiring, supported by the fact that, for the same qualifications, young people from the poorest crescent have a higher unemployment rate.

The characteristics of this environment thus create a specific environment in which social action takes root and flourishes by shaping a particular type of sociability marked in particular, and especially for these young people, by a strong unity of experience, time and place. What does this mean, for example, in terms of the form of closeness or even familiarity with which it is possible, on the basis of this unity, to address each other in the street (usually marked by anonymity)?

The description that this street educator I interviewed gives of his work in the neighbourhoods attests to a lowering of the social barriers structuring interactions in a very densely populated city.

The fact of living in the same neighbourhood and residential areas marked by the presence of numerous cafés, shops, mosques and restaurants run almost exclusively by an immigrant population of Moroccan origin, leads to sharing more or less the same lifestyles, to establishing the experience of a common horizon or even a common destiny by virtue of common socialisation experiences. The localised use of street slang, which mixes elements of French, Arabic and Berber, is directly linked to the knowledge that they have inherited a stock of common references from a collective history marked by migration (of parents) initially from Moroccan cities on the Mediterranean coast (Tangiers, Tetouan, Al-Hoceima), and from the northern countryside of Morocco (Nador, Oujda, Taza) [Manço, 2000]. Far from reinforcing the feeling and perception of a unified singular habitus that would be characteristic of the place or neighbourhood as such, these social experiences and the characteristics of this specific environment or place generate a great diversity of competing sets of dispositions (corresponding to broad classes of positions and trajectories) (Wacquant, 2019). Some young people fare better than others and, despite the difficulties associated with the characteristics of these specific places, they manage to put in place upwardly mobile strategies that enable them to counteract the counterproductive effects of the social and residential environment on educational and professional experiences. However, a statistically significant part of this component of Brussels youth descended from Moroccan immigrants remains permanently exposed to the same difficulties as their parents, namely 'overall an unfavourable situation on the labour market marked by an over-representation in low-skilled jobs, an under-representation in administrative jobs, and very low employment and salary rates, especially for those born outside the European Union. In addition, they [the children] tend to attend predominantly disadvantaged schools, which lack experienced teaching staff' (OECD, February 2015). In this context, an assessment by Fabienne Brion based on an analysis of the statistics recorded by the Directorate General of Penitentiary Institutions (DG EPI) on 15 March 2015 shows that in Belgium, the majority of 'radicalised' young detainees are of Moroccan immigrant origin and under 35 years of age (30% are under 25 years of age, 75% are under 35) (Brion, 2019). The so-called 'endogenous' (homegrown) radicalisation - coming from a minority of young people with a family background linked to Islam or converts, born and raised in Europe, leads the public authorities to place the phenomenon of radicalisation within a wider, permanent debate on the integration of migrants and their descendants. In this investigation, which we conducted on the basis of observations and interviews with Belgian-Moroccan respondents from the so-called 'poor crescent' zone who were detained for a terrorist offence in Belgian

prisons, we tried to better understand why and how young people become radicalised by questioning the actors themselves, their practices and the motivations behind them, but also the cultural universes of the actors, the representations that dominate within their peer groups, the social interactions, attitudes and behaviours that are shaped and manifested in these environments where they are exposed to encounters, directly or not, with messages and/or agents of radicalisation.

For these young people, what is at stake is largely the product of our society. Located on the margins of the city and society, the relationships they have with issues related to violence, religion and politics are in fact the product of our society, i.e. the product of the relationships that these margins have with the Centre. From this point of view, there is a form of loyalty to the mechanisms of our society on the part of young people who, in certain situations, choose violence as a means of expression. First of all, it is important to distinguish the paths of commitment and/or adherence to a form of legitimisation of violence from the variety of motives for which they are prosecuted: 'home-grown terrorists', 'wannabes' (those who unsuccessfully attempted to join Syria), 'returnees', recruiters, relatives of jihadists who have facilitated or financed a departure to Syria or the acquisition of weapons, perpetrators of jihadist propaganda (apology) or calls for violence, those who consult these messages etc. Each of these trajectories involves various motivations and dispositions with regard to the issue of violence. In the itinerary of these young people, we find a multiplicity of factors and reasons that make it possible to understand the reasons for radicalisation. These firstly refer to the perspective of what is at stake in the intimacy of these paths and more broadly by resituating them in relation to the social history of these neighbourhoods (the social history of the socialisation, interlocution and remediation bodies of working-class neighbourhoods), and to the fact that life in these neighbourhoods is for many of the young people who live there marked by the feeling of living 'apart' or 'apart from'. And for others to live 'apart, through and in illegality'. Those we interviewed share the property of having very early on experienced a school environment situated on the margins of general education, which exposed them early on to 'demobilisation from school' and to the adoption of attitudes inclined to transgressive commitments and, consequently, to participation in informal mechanisms, not legitimately instituted, for regulating the collective norm, of which the 'street' is the best example (Mohammed, 2011). In the context of an ethnographic study on 'the formation of gangs', the sociologist Marwan Mohammed has shown how family and school factors give the street, and in particular its 'deviant pole', greater influence, to the detriment of the educational action of the family and the school. In fact, given the difficulty of institutions to embody the norm capable of transforming violence into conflict, i.e. into negotiation in a space of compromise organised by rules of law and civility, and given the deficit of educational strategies struggling to cope with negative logics (school deviance, absence from work, absenteeism, etc.), the constitution of a 'deviance offer' in these territories is favoured. From this point of view, by participating in the gathering within the same establishment of pupils in difficulty with the same lifestyles, and in fine to school deviance, the school actively contributes to the manufacture of delinquency to which a part of these young people are very early exposed. The relative failure of the parents of these young people to counter the negative logic of their children is largely due to the weakness of the resources available to them, but also to the 'moral and commiserative de-legitimisation' in which they are held by their children (Mohammed, 2011). On the other hand, these socialisation experiences, which are rooted in the social history of immigration, do not only refer to the history of neighbourhoods, but also to the unequal distribution of places and roles in access to goods and resources (employment, housing, health, leisure, etc.) and strongly determine dispositions, ways of seeing and acting, the individual moral economy, and the way in which people envisage the future and make plans. Thus, dropping out of school, early socialisation to violence, delinquency, banditry and the prison world in a trajectory such as Primo's are inseparable from the equally early internalisation of territorial stigma, the feeling of impasse resulting from the lucid ratio of the adjustment of hopes to chances (to get by through the fruits of one's labour), class contempt, cultural illegitimacy, racism and phobias engendered by the practice of Islam (Truong, 2015). It is this homology

that is striking in that it tends to distribute individuals into 'classes that are as homogeneous as possible' (from the point of view of their social properties) and into groups of 'probable trajectories' that are as convergent as possible (from the point of view of their biographical careers) (Cohen, 2021). To Primo's 'warlike' dispositions acquired during robberies and other similar thefts, culminating in an initiation to the use of weapons, there is a response in the order of discourse, the privileged recourse, in the set of possible references, to an enlarged stock of religious references (hadiths, Koranic verses, etc.) borrowing from warlike metaphors.

What also emerges is the centrality of the affective dimension that links respondents to the neighbourhood, where a strong supply of 'deviance' dominates, and in which delinquency holds a structuring place but which paradoxically functions as a resource, a form of moral security. The social link that neighbourhoods provide is a link of 'elective participation' that brings protection and recognition. It is not by chance that all the hideouts where Primo will be found until his arrest are located in this area related to the life of the neighbourhood. A physical and symbolic territory that is similar to 'a space of relations and representations that sanction the fact of living apart, in and through illegality' (Truong, 2017), the attachment to the neighbourhood and to childhood friends is at the root of his experience of involvement in what must be called 'home-grown terrorism', to designate those who, in gangs of friends, turn against the country where they were born.

Secundo, who is also involved in street sociability, is also confronted with what he modestly calls 'personal problems with people' in the neighbourhood, which were a tipping point and a powerful springboard for his decision to attempt to join Syria. We have seen to what extent the logics of honour and reputation that structure relations between peers in the neighbourhoods are not anecdotal. Secundo's attitude of avoiding the neighbourhood for such a long period of two years on the basis of an 'honour dispute' related to whether or not he had participated in a criminal offence is sufficient to demonstrate this.

This 'honour dispute' at the core of Secundo's avoidance of the neighbourhood echoes Primo's very particular experience of dissonance, the result of what sociologist Fabien Truong calls a 'conflict of loyalty'. That is, the obligation as a member of a group united around the same community of experience to be, in some way, loyal to the group. This obliges the individual to conform to ambivalent roles and to be accountable to each other at different levels. The 'honour dispute' and the 'loyalty conflict' combine and are part of 'the logics of honour and recognition specific to local life, rooted in the informality of inter-knowledge' and constitute 'the central framework of the system of representations that gives general meaning to behaviour and conduct' based on values such as honour, reputation and virility' (Mohammed, 2009). This space of reputation and honour acts as an informal (moral) regulatory body and strongly structures peer relations in the neighbourhood. This explains why Primo cannot entirely condemn those who were his close friends, because the solidarity they experienced together now gives meaning to his commitment, and why Secundo flees the neighbourhood.

It is this homology that is striking in that it tends to distribute individuals into 'classes that are as homogeneous as possible' (in terms of their social properties) and into groups of 'probable trajectories' that are as convergent as possible (Cohen, 2021).

At the root of a radicalisation trajectory such as that experienced by our respondents are a multiplicity of determining factors which, accumulating and entering into affinity with group dynamics, create the conditions for increased receptivity to intolerant messages and possibly to violence. The homogeneity of these conditions from the point of view of their social characteristics – such as an early rejected desire for school, poor language skills, lack of qualification, training and employment, lack of professional perspectives and the resulting dissatisfaction, the experience of time (inextricably linked to the position occupied in social space) as synonymous with the collapse of 'possibilities', i.e. the annihilation of time as a movement towards 'possibilities', the appropriation of a future, the feeling of being discriminated against, family

dynamics, peer group dynamics, the local context of spaces of intermediation, socialisation, commitment and participation in multiple spheres of activity (education, animation, security, culture, associative), the local context of the 'associative, political and religious offer', the absence of religious culture, the role of religion as a factor of symbolic unification, the strong exposure to the 'most radical offer', etc. – tends to distribute individuals into groups of 'probable trajectories' from the point of view of their biographical careers towards the 'radical deviance offer'. We have seen that in order to better understand these radicalisation itineraries, we need to link individual trajectories with group dynamics. For they are very important and explain, in the case of Primo's commitment to this sort of 'copy and paste' jihad, how much the group takes precedence over the choice of the individual. And in the case of Secundo, the driving role of the symbolic rewards awarded by the peer group in his decision to attempt the 'adventure'. Finally, the part played by traumatic events in the individual (and family) experience, and in particular the experience of death, which raises very deep metaphysical questions about the meaning of existence and life after death, helps us to understand why Islam, as a resource and symbolic support, has taken on the central role it does today in the lives of these young people.

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6.1 7. Appendices

6.2 Appendix 7.1: Socio-demographic data of respondents

Name (pseudonym)	Age	Country of birth	Education	Employment	Ethnicity	Family status	Gender	Religion	Religiosity	Residence status (prior to imprisonment)	Number of people in the household
PRIMO	36	Belgium	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed	Moroccan	Unmarried	Male	MUSLIM	Practising	Lives at home with parents and siblings	6
SECUNDO	31	Belgium	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed	Moroccan	Unmarried	Male	MUSLIM	Believer-non- practising	Lives at home with parents and siblings	7
TERCIO	35	Belgium	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed	Moroccan	Unmarried	Male	MUSLIM	Believer-non- practising	Lives at the family home	
QUARTO	29	Belgium	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed	Moroccan	Unmarried	Male	MUSLIM	Practising	Lives at the family home	5