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

Trajectories of (non)radicalisation in a prison milieu

DARE
Dialogue About
Radicalisation & Equality

BARTOLOMEO CONTI

DARE: Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality

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

France
Trajectories of (non)radicalisation in a prison milieu

Bartolomeo Conti
École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS)

Contents

Executive Summary:

This report focuses on Islamist radicalisation in French prisons. Studying prisons is of particular interest because this space of confinement and deprivation of freedom engenders the desocialisation of individuals and the rupture of social and emotional ties. Prison is an environment in which extremist narratives are presented in both academic and public discourse as a potential way of responding to the needs and fears of individuals who are often fragile and trapped, for whom the failure of the social contract is self-evident.

Main findings: Inequalities and perceived injustice are inscribed in the experiences of all the individuals who feature in this ethnographic research. They share a feeling of confinement, rejection and political and social exclusion. Nevertheless, similarity in conditions do not necessarily lead to similarity in radicalisation and, even less, to violent extremism; the same conditions can have very different, even opposite, outcomes. While the connection between inequality, perceived injustice and radicalisation may not be direct, ethnographic research leads us to conclude that, by way of an indirect relationship, exclusion, rejection and confinement are among the main causes of adherence to radical Islam.

A radical narrative offers young people who are experiencing failure, or who are anomic, solitary, or in search of an ideal through which to engage or even reinvent themselves, the possibility, or the illusion, of escaping from a stigmatising and humiliating condition and overturning what is perceived as a relationship of domination. Radical Islam thus presents itself as an opportunity for a change of status, and thus for reinventing oneself in a new, empowering identity. This is on the condition that pre-existing social and emotional ties are broken so that one can be reborn with new loyalties and identifications.

Detachment - the breaking of emotional, social and political ties - is at the heart of radicalisation since it constitutes a process by which individuals become detached from precarious ties which connect them to social or territorial spaces. By rejecting links with this 'lowly world' or 'society of infidels' in favour of those apparently belonging to an ideal, authentically Islamic society - the Neo-Ummah, the imaginary community of believers - radical Islam serves to push further a process that is already at work, since the majority of young people in the respondent set are 'uprooted'.

Faced with this binary narrative, centred on desocialisation and opposing 'true Islam' to infidels, Us to Them, alternative narratives are developed by those who do not adhere to, or even resist, the discourse of radical Islam. To respond to the feeling of injustice, a feeling shared by all respondents and expressed by a sense of confinement, rejection and marginalisation, they mobilise resources and social and cultural capital to maintain, rediscover or strengthen pre-existing emotional, social and political ties. The family, neighbourhood, Islam or adherence to narratives that challenge the feeling of injustice in the public sphere are presented by those who refuse the narrative of radical Islam as barriers to radicalisation. Rootedness is at the heart of non-radicalisation processes. Two opposing paths thus emerge from the common experience of inequality and injustice. One involves, first of all total detachment, and then reconnection to this imaginary community of the neo-Ummah, while the other involves questioning both inequality and radical Islam and re-rooting oneself in the family, the neighbourhood, Islam.

The distinction between trajectories of radicalisation and non-radicalisation seems to me, to lie in what I call 'almost nothing'. The smallest thing can change everything, just a fragile thread, a link that prevents the shift from 'Us' to 'Them'. Emotional and social ties can break, not necessarily as a result of major reasons or events, but due to a combination of events, encounters, situations and interactions. Situations and interactions, which lead to the conclusion that radicalisation does not

generally occur in a linear way but, rather, as the consequence of the interaction between a subjective, even private, dimension; an association with groups with which the individual identifies (or is assigned to); and structural dynamics that go far beyond them. According to what can be called an 'ecological approach', it is by focusing on the interaction between the supply (offering) of radical Islam and the demand (subjective needs, fears and aspirations) between individuals, groups and context, that it is possible to take into account situations and interactions, this 'almost nothing', that ultimately turns out to be 'almost everything' and is decisive in shaping or countering trajectories of (non)radicalisation.

1. Introduction

In France, as in other European countries, prison represents an environment that is particularly fertile for studying Islamic radicalisation because, as suggested in both academic and public discourse, it exists as a physical and social space where radicalisation is more common than in the rest of society. This appears to be confirmed by the considerable number of people who spent time in prison before committing terrorist acts and who were suspected of undergoing a process of radicalisation (Khosrokhavar, 2014; Basra et al., 2016; Crettiez and Sèze, 2017; Conti, 2018). While there is a certain consensus about prison constituting an environment where extremist and/or radical speech circulates and spreads more easily than in the rest of society, there remain disagreements regarding the causal relationship. Is it the conditions within detention facilities and the absence of rehabilitation services that give rise to a steady fracturing which can result in radicalisation (Béraud, et al., 2016; CGLPL, 2015 and 2016; Khosrokhavar, 2016; Chantraine, et al. 2018; De Galembert, 2020), or rather the strength of radical Islam in prison that makes it one of the primary locations - or even recruiting space - for Islamist radicalisation (Kepel, 2015; Sayare, 2016; Micheron, 2020; Rougier, 2020)? Whatever the response to this complex question, prison has become a prime target of public policy in the fight against radicalisation (Conti, 2020a).

The choice of prison as a milieu in which to study the trajectories of radical Islam is thus founded on not only deductive reasoning, but also inductive reasoning[1]. The research that I have conducted in the prison environment over the last five years[2] has led me to the conclusion that prison is first and foremost a place that intensifies individual desocialisation and promotes the breakdown of social, even intimate,

---

[1] In this report, I use the term 'radical Islam' to describe a certain vision of Islam that legitimises violence as a means to pursue social, religious and/or political goals. All terms in this field of study are problematic, carrying the risk of confusion or even stigmatisation (Hajjat and Mohammed, 2013; Kundnani, 2014; Ragazzi, 2016). I employ this term rather than 'radical Islam*ism*' in this report because, following Roy, I see radical Islamism as describing political activism devoted to capturing the state and transforming society (Roy, 1994; Conti, 2014). Radicalisation, however, as the process by which individuals or groups come to embrace attitudes, or engage in actions, that support violence in the pursuit of extremist causes (Sedgwick, 2010; Schmid, 2013; Neumann, 2013; Khosrokhavar, 2014), is not necessarily or exclusively political. For further elaboration of my understanding of radicalisation as a concept, see Conti, 2018.

[2] Since 2014, I have conducted in addition to this study, three research studies in prison. The first was a research/action called 'Detection and management of Islamist religious radicalisation within the prison population' (2015), carried out in a French prison near Paris. The second was a research/action in a prison in French Guiana (2016). The third was a piece of research on 'contesting knowledge in prison', carried out between 2017 - 2019 in the same prison where I conducted the study reported on here.

relationships. It is a place characterised by the routinisation of violence and the generalisation of victim-oriented and reductive speech based on rumours, verbal and physical violence, taboos, and humiliation, which can induce a state of paranoia, rage, and hatred. The research that has been done (Chauvenet, et al., 2008; Béraud, et el., 2016; Khosrokhavar, 2004, 2006 and 2016; Chantraine, et al. 2018; Conti, 2019; De Galembert, 2020) reveals that prison is an environment in which extremist narratives are presented as a potential way, among others, of responding to the needs and fears of individuals who are often fragile and trapped, for whom the failure of the social contract is self-evident. In this sense, prison is a milieu in which different types of radical and/or extremist messages circulate; these narratives are not limited to radical Islam and one could even speak of prison as an environment that radicalises those who are there, an environment that facilitates a shift from anti-systemic to extremist discourse. The prison space is the scene of the production of explanatory categories and frames, frames to quote Goffman, which have the function of giving the individual the illusion of an explanation. In other words, it allows the emergence of a narrative that is able to guarantee both biographical coherence and an explanation for the individual's incarceration. Such a narrative points to past responsibilities but also a future trajectory. It is able to explain the feeling of injustice and sketch out ways to respond to it. The story is not an exclusively individual production. Rather, it is a collective production, even a collective ordering. The prison space can be seen precisely as the theatre for the production of explanatory narratives. Each narrative has its own logic, its own morality, its own categories. And each one proposes a way out - a faraway paradise, where the individual will finally be saved. All the stories share common objectives: to provide an explanation; to enable order; to produce self-esteem; to draw a projection into the future. While they have the same functions, they are distinguished by a plurality of factors: the relationship to otherness; the response to uprooting; the relationship to violence; the management of feelings of injustice, even rage; the relationship to society; and future trajectories. These narratives are a site also of competing imaginations and loyalties: family, friends, neighbourhood, mosque, traditional Islam, radical Islam, etc.

The methodological approach adopted in this study distinguishes it from the majority of French research to date on radicalisation. First, it seeks to study not only pathways of radicalisation, but also pathways of non-radicalisation. More precisely, rather than focusing exclusively on young people who have been radicalised or imprisoned on terrorism charges, the study attempts to examine a much larger array of profiles and paths of imprisoned youth. This involves observing how inmates react to radical or extremist discourse specifically within the prison environment: how these messages are transmitted; how they create meaning; or, conversely, how they are brushed aside, or ultimately refused, by young people whose relationship with the rest of society is defined by conflict and distrust. In choosing prison as a milieu, I also made the decision to opt for dialogue with the prisoners, who are not simply passive targets of proselytisation, but rather individuals whose commitment and dissent (vis a vis authorities or social norms) can potentially reveal a lot about our societies. To this end, one of my research objectives has been to free myself from as many institutionally-imposed categories as possible, beginning with legal and security-related ones, but also encompassing categories that are used by or imposed on the inmates themselves (De Galembert, 2016; Chantraine et al., 2018). This allowed me to open a 'rigorous' dialogue with the subjects in order to track their trajectories, their forms (or aspirations) of engagement, both individual and collective, as well as their relationship with themselves and others. I thus wish to question categories, concepts and labels that are too often taken for granted. To this end, I made the choice to start from the categories and labelling that are at work in prison, i.e. I started by taking the labelling and categories that the prison staff and inmates used themselves. It was through interviews and actions that these same categories and labelling could then be examined and questioned. This is why I made the choice to study three main inmate groups: firstly, those accused of terrorism or identified as radicalised by prison staff and the judicial system; secondly, those who identify as Muslim and who are sometimes deeply invested in a religious identity and practice, but - according to the prison staff - do not appear to be involved in the process of radicalisation; and finally the inmates, whether Muslim or not, who possess

social characteristics and vulnerabilities (marginalisation, criminality, fractured family, violence, etc.) similar to those adhering to violent extremism but who resist the logics and messages of radical Islam. This could also allow us to respond in an informed way to the question regarding the role that religion plays in the radicalisation process and, in particular, to verify the hypothesis according to which religion could function as a preventive tool against radicalisation as opposed to an element of radicalisation. Finally, this approach could give us the opportunity to analyse the use of the notion radicalisation by prison staff and judicial institutions and to try to study how the interactions among various individuals in the prison environment reshapes (or not) the notion of radicalisation itself. In order to respond to these challenges and questions, I chose to adopt an ethnographic approach based on two main elements: the *in-situ* participation of the researcher and a long timeframe for the study. Together, these characteristics set the study apart from those that have been conducted in French prisons in recent years.

2. Setting the scene

2.1. Historical context

In recent media and political discourse, and more broadly in the French collective imagination, poor inner suburbs, the *banlieue*, and prisons have become the prime targets in the fight against radical Islamism (Sèze, 2019). In these accounts, suburbs and prisons are presented as 'lost territories of the French Republic', in other words, as territories and social spaces where the French State has lost control at the hands of militant Islamist networks, notably Salafis. If these peri-urban neighbourhoods have become 'the territories conquered by Islamism' (to adopt Rougier's description)[3], prisons are seen as the 'incubator' of French jihadism (Kepel, 2015; Micheron, 2020). According to Rougier, it is in prison that new doctrines of Islamism are conceived of and developed. For Micheron (2020), prisons today are essentially support bases from which jihad is organised in France. While there undoubtedly exists a correlation between time spent in prison and trajectories of radicalisation, the exact role of prison in the process of radicalisation is still the subject of debate. The causal connection identifying prison as a determining variable of radicalisation must still be proven. For Khosrokhavar (2004, 2005 and 2016), as well as for most researchers who have been conducting studies in prison for years (Béraud et al, 2016; Melchior and Zanna, 2019; Chantraine et al, 2018; De Galembert, 2020), prison only exacerbates the processes already operating outside the carceral system. Despite these warnings about hasty conclusions, the image of prison as a 'terrorist breeding ground' has become dominant and orients the initiatives put in place by the authorities. In order to understand how this image has gained traction, we must first situate it within a larger historical context, that of the media-based (Deltombe, 2005) and socio-political construction of the 'Muslim problem' in France (Hajjat and Mohammed, 2013) that made 'Muslims' a suspected community (Kundnani, 2014; Ragazzi, 2016; Davidshofer et al., 2018). Behind the image of prison as a place where radical Islam spreads, lies a decidedly more political and ideological debate around the relationship between France and immigration, the Arab-Muslim world, and colonial history (Dakhli, 2016), as illustrated by Alexandra Poli (2020) in her study of patterns of radicalisation within the French Islamist youth milieu since the 1980s.

The idea that prison constitutes one of the main sites where radical Islamism spreads has its roots in the 1990s, when nearly 200 people linked to Islamist Algerian groups - notably the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) - were concentrated in several prisons around Paris. At the time, attention was especially focused on the

---

[3] In the introduction to his book, *The Territories Conquered by Islamism*, Rougier (2020: 2) writes: 'these religious networks have the shared distinction of producing an Islam that has broken its ties with French society, whether in regard to the founding values of its social contract (the French Republic), the principles legitimising its political and moral organisation (liberal democracy) or the historical definition of its citizenship model, which relegates religion to the private sphere'.

proselytising initiatives led by Algerian Islamists who sought in particular to recruit young people from immigrant backgrounds who were not well-integrated. As demonstrated more extensively elsewhere (see: Conti, 2020a), the dominant interpretation of this proselytising phenomenon is that it constituted an exogenous danger, that is to say it was an import of the Algerian Civil War, which had lodged itself into certain spaces abandoned by the state, including prisons, where Islamists recruited disenfranchised young people. In this regard, one of the emblematic figures was that of Khaled Kelkal, a young man born in Algeria, but raised in the suburbs of Lyon, who had been radicalised in prison by Algerian Islamists and who, between 1995 and 1996, orchestrated a series of attacks on French soil. Although it was seen as a by-product of the Algerian Civil War, and thus as exogenous, his case and his trajectory already reveal the link between proselytism, radical Islamism and youth who are receptive to the notion of breaking away from French society. In his seminal work on Islamic youth and Islam in prison, sociologist Farhad Khosrokhavar analysed the motives and modalities associated with young people of North African descent returning to Islam, as well as the phenomenon of non-Muslim conversion. For these young people who are often marginalised and struggling with 'double absence' (Sayad, 1999) - the feeling of being neither French nor from the country of their parents - Islam appears as a 'refuge', a new identity and/or a means of subjectivation (Khosrokhavar, 1997; Göle in Wieviorka, 1997; Roy, 2002; Conti, 2014). These phenomena, occurring within French society, were also visible in prison where, according to Khosrokhavar, Islam has since become the leading religion within the prison system in France[4]. He highlights how, during incarceration, Islam can serve as an instrument for self-reinvention, by being seen as either an alternative ethical code or as a religion of the 'oppressed', especially for those who perceive themselves as victims of racism, marginalisation and discrimination (Khosrokhavar, 2004; Beckford et al, 2005). In his work, Khosrokhavar, as others (Béraud et al, 2016; Chantraine et al, 2018; De Galembert, 2020) also denounced the discrimination that Muslim inmates endure and the negligence of correctional facilities that are incapable of responding to the religious demands of a shifting population.

In another ground-breaking work, 'When Al-Qaïda Speaks: Testimonies from Behind Bars' (2006), Khosrokhavar outlines a radical view of Islam that began to emerge behind bars, but which, he says, remained marginal. During this period and after the September 11 attacks, radical Islam was associated, both in the collective imaginary and in public policy, with Algeria or Al-Qaida and seen as a problem arriving from the outside, something purely exogenous. It was in 2012, following the attacks committed by Mohamed Merah, that the perception changed suddenly and the danger became endogenous. The words of Manuel Valls, Minister of the Interior, illustrate this context: 'there is a terrorist threat in France (…). This is not a question of terrorist networks that arrive from outside. It is an issue of networks that are here in our neighbourhoods. It is an issue of converted French people, French Muslims' (cited in Sèze, 2019: 23). Merah, who quickly became the example to follow, thus ushered in a new phase of jihad in France, which would culminate in the attacks of 2015 (Conti in Ferret et al, 2020). Since 2012, France has not only experienced an unprecedented wave of attacks, but also a phenomenon unique in terms of scale and the profile of individuals involved. In particular, this new phenomenon involves young French people leaving for Syria with the intention to participate in the construction of the nascent Islamic State (Thompson, 2014 and 2016; Atran, 2016). Within a state of shock in France, the attention of the authorities, the media and French society at large, turned increasingly to the 'lost territories of the

---

[4] According to Khosrokhavar: 'Muslims form the majority of the prison population, with rates often higher than 50%, and sometimes reaching 70%, even 80%, within prisons close to poor inner suburbs, that is to say eight out of ten prisoners' (2004: 11). These numbers offered by Khosrokhavar are just estimates, since the law of January 6, 1978 regarding 'information and freedom' prohibits the collection of religious and ethnic data. Despite the law, since the 1990s statistics on Muslims in prison have multiplied and are often presented as obvious, but are only approximations. As de Galembert writes, 'there is no quantitative data available that allows one to measure with certainty the proportion of Muslims in prison' (2020: 31). She concludes that 'the overrepresentation of presumed Muslims within the prison population has become a new facet of the Muslim problem' (2016: 56).

Republic', and more precisely, to prisons and poor suburbs, which would become the primary targets of subsequent plans to fight radicalisation (Benbassa and Troendlé, 2017; Bui-Xuan, 2018; Sèze, 2019; Conti, 2020a). Such plans focus mainly on the activities of Islamist militancy, and Salafism in particular, in a semantic shift that ultimately concerns all Muslims in France (Ragazzi, 2016; Davidshofer et al., 2018; Sèze, 2019). This debate is articulated in relation to Islam, and more precisely in relation to Muslims in France, in the form of excessive Islamophobic security measures on the one hand, and extremist violence on the other. By presenting prison as a place of 'proselytism' for fundamentalists- a place that recruits poorly-integrated young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods -or even as a 'terrorist breeding ground', this idea aligns itself with a long tradition that sees prison as a place of not only physical, but also moral contagion; in this case it is not the plague, but rather radical Islamism that is the virus.

2.2. Contemporary context

Since the attacks of 2015, France has invested significant effort to understand an unprecedented phenomenon, that of a significant number of young people - born and raised in France - who travelled to the Middle East to join jihadist groups or 'just' to perform *hijra*, that is, to emigrate to a society considered 'authentically Islamic'[5]. Social research has had to, first and foremost, confront a lack, if not an absence, of empirical work on the subject - a problem that is by no means limited to France (Schmid, 2013; Beck, 2015)[6]. Empirical research conducted in recent years by researchers or other key players, such as magistrates (Trévidic, 2013), journalists (Thompson, 2014), and social service providers (Bouzar, 2015), make it possible today to sketch the outlines of a phenomenon known in France simply as 'radicalisation' - a term that, despite being widely contested, has gained a foothold, even within the prison space, where it is used by both staff and inmates themselves to describe a process undergone by a certain category of individuals[7]. This term was used even by some respondents accused of terrorism, who spoke of 'radicalisation' to describe their shift towards radical Islam or a certain view of Islam.

As described in the report presented at the National Assembly[8] on May 29, 2019, in France, 21,039 individuals are registered in the File for the Processing of Reports for the Prevention of Radicalisation of a Terrorist Nature (FSPRT), of which 12,809 cases are considered 'active', meaning subject to official monitoring. The report emphasises primarily that there is no 'typical profile' of people who are radicalised, nor a typical process of radicalisation. Bonelli and Carrié (2018), along with many others, assert that there

---

[5] According to the data that we have available (https://radical.hypotheses.org/13464), around 1,700 French citizens have joined the Iraq-Syria front since 2014. To this number, one must add those who would have wanted to leave, but who were apprehended before their departure or were simply prevented from going (Thompson, 2014 and 2016). Indeed, it was only after the attacks of January 2015, that public policy concerning the fight against radicalisation intensified, notably through the banning of French nationals intending to join foreign jihadist groups from leaving the territory; the purpose of travel/the intention to travel in warzones became a separate offence (Besnier and Weill, 2019).

[6] This is notably due to the difficulty of conducting empirical research in a field where 'radicals, revolutionaries and terrorists do not tend to be available for psychological testing' (Beck, 2015: 23).

[7] In France, Khosrokhavar's definition makes reference to this: 'radicalisation is a process by which an individual or a group adopts a violent form of action, directly connected to an extremist ideology of a political, social, or religious nature that opposes the established order on political, social, or cultural grounds' (2014: 8). For an analysis of the use of the term 'radicalisation' in France, see Conti, 2018.

[8] A review of the data generated from empirical research over the last several years is included in the Information Report that was presented before the National Assembly on June 27, 2019, by deputies E. Diard and E. Poullait: http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/rapports/cion_lois/l15b2082_rapport-information. An updated version of the figures is also available in the research log concerning questions of 'radicalisation' created in the aftermath of the 2015 attacks: https://radical.hypotheses.org/14309.

exists not one, but several types of radicalism. Nonetheless, certain characteristics of this phenomenon have been identified. Firstly, radicalisation is a phenomenon that mainly involves young people. According to data provided by the parliamentary report, this phenomenon concerns young adults: less than 5% of registered individuals are over 50 and only 3% are minors[9]. It is also a predominantly' masculine phenomenon since men represent 78% of registered individuals. However, the number of radicalised women – and the role they play in the construction of the Caliphate – is a new and notable phenomenon (Roy, 2016; Benslama et Khosrokhavar, 2017; Casutt, 2018). Indeed, among the nearly 700 French citizens still present in the Iraq-Syria combat zone, almost 300 are women. Another new question that has emerged concerns the number of converts to Islam who, according to the statistics provided by the parliamentary report, account for about 30% of those registered in the file[10]. These statistics also reveal that while radicalisation is a generally urban and peri-urban phenomenon, cases of radicalisation also occur in rural areas. Two small villages capture this reality: Lunel, a city of less than 26,000 in which about 20 young people went to Syria and Iraq to engage in jihad between 2013 and 2014; and Trappe, with around 30,000 inhabitants where over 60 young people left to engage in jihad (Khosrokhavar, 2017: 420). Concerning the socio-economic conditions of the people involved, the report underlines that this is indeed a phenomenon marked by the prevalence of social challenges; 3,708 individuals registered in FSPRT do not have a 'fixed profession' and 3,250 have difficult domestic circumstances (separation, divorced parents, foster families, abusive households, death of a loved one, placement in a shelter, etc.). The report also stresses that these figures should be considered potentially underestimated, since the information in the FSPRT is sometimes incomplete, particularly because the collection of certain data – which is carried out by agents from different services who are not necessarily trained in this task - proves to be very complicated and therefore sometimes partially reliable. Research has shown that subjects' backgrounds are varied. While most young people involved come from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, some also come from middle class backgrounds (Khosrokhavar, 2014; Bonelli and Carrié, 2018). Lastly, the report highlights that 'Islamist radicalisation is a phenomenon linked to delinquency, since over 1,800 people who have been charged or convicted of crimes are registered with the FSPRT and, more generally, a significant number of reported individuals have a criminal record'. Two recent studies confirm that around half of radicalised individuals and/or terrorists have a criminal background and/or have spent time in prison (Basra et al., 2016; Hecker, 2018; Barros and Crettiez, 2019).

It is in this context that, in recent years, the Prison Administration (AP) has found itself managing higher rates of young people returning from the Iraq-Syria front, young people involved in terrorist acts in France, and young people who have been 'radicalised' or even suspected of undergoing a radicalisation process (De Galembert, 2016; Conti, 2020a)[11]. While in the past, the definitions and mechanisms developed in the management of 'radicalised' prisoners were ambiguous and contradictory (Chantraine et al., 2018; Conti, 2019), today the AP seems better equipped to handle this trend. The AP distinguishes two different profiles of prisoners connected to radical Islam. First, according to data provided by the parliamentary report, in May 2019, 511 prisoners (including 51 women) were incarcerated for acts of terrorism related to radical Islam, referred to as 'TIS' (Islamic Terrorism). Then there are the individuals imprisoned for

---

[9] This data must be taken with caution, because minors are subject to particular procedures and treatments that do not always allow a precise perception of a phenomenon in quantitative terms (Bonelli and Carrié, 2018).

[10] For an illustration of this issue, see my article on the jihadist branch Cannes-Torcy, composed of twenty young French people, half of whom had converted to Islam (Conti, 2020b).

[11] This has led to the emergence of an extended range of categories over the last few years including: the 'radical', the 'radicalised' (le radicalisé), the 'radicalising individual' (en voie de radicalisation) and the 'potential radical' (radicalisable). The employment of these categories - which correlate with what, in McCauley and Moskalenko's terminology (2008), would be an ascent towards the top of the 'narrative pyramid' (2008) - have a direct impact on the detainees' daily lives. More importantly, they have legal implications (Besnier and Weill, 2019) since they are subject to specific treatment depending on the legal category to which they belong.

common law offences who have been reported for radicalisation (DCSR), who - according to the prison administration - total around 1,100. To provide more context, one must also count the 635 people who, in 2018, were monitored by the Penitentiary Integration and Probation Service (SPIP) in open custody on the grounds of radicalisation: 135 individuals prosecuted for acts of Islamist terrorism (85 under judicial supervision and 50 convicted in open custody); plus 500 prosecuted for common law offences. These figures should be treated with caution, however. The data are notoriously imprecise for a number of reasons including: a vague definition of what 'radicalisation' means; superficial radicalisation; the use of 'radical' language or attitudes as a means of provocation; dissimulation (*taqya*); poor tools for detecting radicalisation; and a 'zero risk' policy, which means that prison staff are required to identify any 'behavioural changes' which could be interpreted as the first signs of radicalisation as soon as possible; etc. (De Galembert, 2016; Chantraine et al., 2018; Conti, 2020a). This nevertheless reveals a phenomenon that is steady, if not slightly decreasing, but nonetheless still present in prison and in society, at large.

2.3. Locating the prison milieu

This report is based on ethnographic research that was conducted in a Penitentiary Centre (CP), which is far from any large city, and houses a population of around 450 male inmates[12]. The centre is rather calm, without any particular tension arising from overcrowding or the concentration of especially 'dangerous' cases. As the warden presents it, serious incidents and brawls are rather rare and the relationship between inmates and guards is more or less 'peaceful'. This prison differs from prisons close to big cities, which have to deal with an array of issues, starting with prison overcrowding, which is the main problem plaguing the French correctional system[13]. In the CP where I conducted the research, the prison population, like the staff, is mainly rural; however, there is no shortage of inmates from large urban centres, such as Lyon, Strasbourg or Paris. Unlike prisons near these cities, the CP does not admit a large number of TIS or DCSR inmates. Due to the fact that the majority of the 450 inmates come from rural or peri-urban backgrounds, there are relatively few people incarcerated for terrorism or radicalisation, which, according to the warden, manifests as a sort of rejection of terrorists:

> We don't want to live like Parisians... Paris is far away and here we see terrorism as far away too: that's why prisoners convicted of terrorism aren't successful here.

This perception is not shared by some prisoners, as this detainee in his fifties said during our exchange: 'it is necessary to be blind not to see the radicalisation'. The relative importance of the phenomenon of radicalisation has been an advantage for this research, because it has made it possible to partially overcome the rigid categories and labels which dominate public debate and determine living conditions, especially within prisons where there are many 'radicals'[14].

---

[12] Penitentiary Centres are facilities comprising of a remand centre - which receives defendants awaiting trial as well as inmates sentenced to prison for less than two years - and a detention centre, intended to receive those serving sentences of at least two years. In the CP in question, there is also a floor reserved for imprisoned minors.

[13] Despite the fairly consistent decline in more serious forms of crime, prison populations have dramatically increased in most Western countries. In France, on January 1, 2020, the inmate population was 70,065 (https://oip.org/decrypter/thematiques/surpopulation-carcerale). It was 20,000 in 1957 and 37,000 in 1980. The causes of this increase lie in two phenomena that have deeply impacted French society: 'a heightened awareness within French society of illegality and deviance; and a focus within public policy and discourse on security issues' (Fassin, 2017: 10). We are therefore witnessing the normalisation of incarceration (CGLPL, 2018), which reinforces a sense of injustice and fatalism among prisoners.

[14] In 2015, as part of the action-research project 'Detection and management of Islamist religious radicalisation within the prison population', I had the opportunity to measure the importance of 'radicalisation' in prisons where RIS and FSPRT inmates are concentrated. This action research had a twofold objective: to update the tools used to

This penitentiary centre was selected as the site for ethnographic research because it had already been the subject of participatory action research on 'contesting knowledge in the prison milieu'. This action-research project was carried out in response to a request from the prison's teaching staff, who were increasingly confronted with challenges to their educational activity, in particular by incarcerated students who contested knowledge and/or who use the idea of God to explain the world[15]. Through this research, which began in January 2017 and ended in June 2019, I had the opportunity to cultivate relationships of trust and collaboration with a number of figures within the CP, including the prison directors, guards, professionals (such as the school manager), and certain inmates.

3. Field Research

This study draws from different data sources collected between January 2017 and December 2019. Interviews were conducted with a total of 18 respondents. 15 of whom agreed to have the interviews recorded, while 3 (all in prison for terrorist acts) did not consent to be recorded. At least 2 interviews were conducted with each participant. In several cases, I carried out 3 to 4 interviews, sometimes spaced out over the course of the fieldwork. Data was also drawn from the interviews conducted with prison staff (management, teachers, the warden, guards, SPIP, etc.), with the Muslim chaplain, and with other inmates. Certain interviews, carried out during the first phase of action research on 'contesting knowledge in prison milieu', were not included as data in this study, but were used to provide insight into the study environment. The third source of data is based on a series of observations conducted during scheduled classes, on organised walks, in the halls, during staff meetings, etc. Two major events also played a key role in the observations: a visit to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, after which one of the participants joined our respondent set; and a debate with elected officials regarding the European elections, in which one of the study respondents participated. A final source of data comes from three group discussions, two of which were conducted within the context of the action-research project, 'contesting knowledge in prison milieu'. First, the 'civic engagement' module involved a group of 8 inmates (including one of our respondent set), who participated in about ten group sessions, during which they had the opportunity to meet, and confront in open discussion, a wide variety of figures (civil society groups, guards, CPIP, police, judges, psychologists, job centre workers). The second experimental action was conducted within the prison school. For a month and a half, six prisoners, three of whom were included in our panel, participated in the 'co-construction of knowledge' module, which situated personal trajectories within the context of social and political questions shaping French society. The third type of collective exchange was the DARE project Community Dialogue Event, which brought together a dozen prisoners for a day of collective reflection on the relationship between inequality, injustice, radicalisation and violence.

This work is characterised by a methodological approach based on the assumption that 'radicalisation' and 'extremism' can be better understood if they are studied *in situ* and within an interactive framework. This means that, on the one hand, I employ a micro-sociological approach, one in which the researcher should be positioned as close as possible to the research subjects. On the other hand, the 'sociologist' actively participates in the construction of an individual and collective narrative in which ambivalence, or even contradictions, can emerge between different stakeholders, who are transformed as a result of this

---

identify 'radicalised' prisoners and to set up a support programme for prisoners to prepare them for reintegration into society (Conti, 2019; Benbassa and Troendlé, 2017: 51 et seq.).

[15] The results of this research/action were summarised in the report 'contesting knowledge in prison', submitted to the Direction of Penitentiary Services with publications on it pending.

interaction[16]. It is a matter of getting as close as possible to the various individuals present in the study milieu, which include not only the prisoners, but also those who, starting with the guards, contribute to the construction of prison as a 'negotiated' social space (Chauvenet, 2010; Khosrokhavar, 2016; Chantraine and Delcourt, 2019). The entire prison is thus considered a social space in which it is possible to generate a situational and interactional understanding of what is perceived as injustice and inequality and how these relate to extremism and radicalisation. Therefore, in this context, conducting research *in situ* means walking in the halls, participating in meetings, being present in activity rooms or during classes, and initiating formal and informal discussions. It also means experiencing frustrations, joking, and being constantly fearful of the violence that could occur at any moment, since sudden and unpredictable violent eruptions characterise relations in prison (Chauvenet et al., 2008). In short, it is about being seen as someone who is part of the prison environment while still remaining outside the prison. It is precisely this aspect of the role of a 'sociologist' that allowed me to circumvent - at least in part - the constraints of classification systems specific to carceral space. By taking advantage of the unique status of the 'sociologist', I was able to weave in and out of the partitioned, material, and symbolic space of the prison. Whereas rigid categories and fixed job roles within the carceral setting 'restricted' most people, I had the ability to circulate freely. I thus passed through the spaces and categories in which the people who make up the prison environment are defined in terms of otherness (Chauvenet, 2010). By listening to rumours, fears, expectations, visions, demands, by making eye contact with others, I tried to deconstruct the singular space of the prison and the relationships that are formed there. Respondents were able to have their voices heard, in all their diversity and even incompatibility. This accumulation of perspectives made it possible to recognise the complexity of the phenomena being studied as well as the ambivalence that often characterises the actors, surpassing the categories in which they are (or feel they are) imprisoned.

Besides this 'spatial' dimension, it is important to note the long timeframe that defines the study. I frequently visited the prison for almost three years, during which time I had the opportunity to observe the evolution of various phenomena and individuals. I was thus able to observe how inmates faced the prison shock, which Delarue defines as 'the effect that the brutal discrepancy between life on the outside and life on the inside has on the psyche: the rupture with one's social circle, the reduction of space, the loss of privacy, the dispossession of belongings, the confrontation with a controlled and often sordid material universe, orders, noise, solitude, violence' (2012: 76). The study's long duration gave me the opportunity to observe individuals' gradual adaptation to restrictions as well as ways they found to control the time and space of prison, albeit in a precarious and fragile manner. I thus avoided reducing individuals to their speech or outward posturing, and was able to observe, rather, their evolution.

The experimental actions carried out in the framework of the action research on 'contesting knowledge in prison milieu' allowed me to generate a situational and interactional understanding of the perception of injustice and inequalities as well as their link to extremism and radicalisation. This was made possible by the creation of spaces and interactions where dialogue and conflict could unfold. As Chauvenet et al. highlight, 'in prison, confrontations hardly have the space to play out, given the subordinate status of the inmates. And indeed, it is because confrontation is impossible, at least on the surface level, that violence erupts' (2008: 25)[17]. The absence of spaces in which conflict can be expressed makes prison a social space governed by the logic of war, where conflicts are no longer (or barely) controlled. Inmates and prison staff

---

[16] Following Georg Simmel (1999) and Simonetta Tabboni (2007), I use the notion of ambivalence as a method, a resource, an instrument of knowledge to study the construction of the narrative of the Self and, more generally, of individual and collective identities. Recognising the ambivalence of individuals opens the way to the possibility of working with individuals themselves on their way of seeing themselves, telling themselves and interacting with the Other, based on an interactionist approach.

[17] Politics is the sphere in which conflict becomes institutionalised, according to theories that date back to Machiavelli, when violence is precisely the negation of conflict (Habermas, 1962; Wieviorka, 1996).

thus end up getting to know each other and interacting mainly through the lens of otherness and mistrust, or even violence. By forming spaces where conflict could unfold, we (me and those who participate actively in the research) created the conditions for dialogue and, consequently, situations where radicalisation and extremism were able to be understood through the interaction between individuals. I subsequently aimed to strengthen the capacity for reflection and analysis of people with whom researchers interacted, by working on their self-image within this social setting and in their relationships with the Other. The ultimate goal of this approach, which is rooted in the sociology of action (Touraine 1978), and which I have already experimented both with French prisons (Conti, 2019), and with stigmatised groups in cities in Italy (Conti, 2016), is the capacity of 'a projection of future envision future trajectory' (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 202), which can modify relationships with oneself and others. The evolution of the gaze, of speech, and of posturing, thus becomes a fundamental resource for exploring one's vision and the meaning that each person gives to his or her actions. On the one hand, it is a matter of initiating a process in which prisoners develop a sense of accountability/empowerment through a reflection on their trajectory, their prison sentence, and their reintegration. On the other hand, it is a question of facilitating a shift in the 'infantilising' and sometimes contemptuous way institutions (judicial, penal, medical, etc.) view prisoners. The creation of spaces for confrontation and dialogue has allowed inmates, as well as others, to connect their personal trajectories with the social conditions in which their thinking and actions occur. Thus, 'radicalisation' and 'extremism' have, in some cases, been the focus of shared reflection resulting from the interaction and transformation of views.

3.1. Data collection

The data collected included a total of 48 interviews (of which 27 were audio recorded and the remaining were recorded using notes), field notes from observed events, expert interviews with key non-prisoner actors in the prison environment and text documents. These are summarised in Table 1 and further details of the observed events provided in Appendix 7.2

Table 1: Data set

	Number	Total length or brief description (as appropriate)	Average length
Audio recorded interviews	27	1955 mins (32 hours 58 mins)	72 mins
Non-recorded interviews	21	1295 mins (21 hours 58 mins)	62 mins
Field diary entries	27	See Appendix 7.2 for details of observed events	n/a
Expert interviews	6	Interviews with other key figures in the prison environment other than informants (e.g. guards, chaplain, inmates)	n/a
Text documents	10	Articles in the press; judicial information; list of indictments at trial; interviews carried out by the prison staff upon the arrival of detainees.	

3.2. Access and researcher-respondent relations

The prison environment is 'inherently' unstable because at any moment, unforeseen circumstances may disrupt research. The doors close unpredictably and suddenly to the researcher because of something or nothing' that overturns the negotiated calmness, a calmness that shows itself in all its fragility, a source of unpredictability, as my field diary captures:

> There is relative calm in the prison - a calm which means that something has happened. We learn that there has been an assault, involving eight guards. The atmosphere is tense. Blockades, emergency meetings, tension make sure nobody moves and cancel the interview with the head of detention. Uncertainty hangs over each appointment, over each scheduled interview: will he come? ... Two days with a lot of emptiness, waiting, refusals.

To ensure that research can continue, it is imperative that those who participate in the functioning of the prison - from the Penitentiary Administration to the prison management, from guards to prisoners - feel involved, or at least not 'threatened' by, the 'intrusive' gaze of the researcher. In this sense, the action-research project on 'contesting knowledge in prison milieu' made it possible to gain the trust of various actors, including wardens, guards, CPIPs, and inmates, who had become accustomed to seeing me navigate the prison and conduct interviews that did not deal with the sensitive issue of 'radicalisation'. This clearly aided their participation in DARE. The school director played a key role in ensuring that the project ran smoothly by simply opening the doors of the prison to me. With 20 years of experience, he explained how it functioned and described the social relations within, while introducing me to different actors, somewhat like Virgil in the *Aeneid*. Due to his involvement in the lives of his inmate students, he had become someone they trusted. I was able to build on this trust in order to engage inmates in the research. The selection of participants was based on an extensive collaboration. From the beginning, I also involved prison management and a head guard, who supported my research without hesitation. In a candid report, they provided me open access and information I requested, without ever asking for anything in return.

Inmates were also selected according to the indications of the probation officers' (CPIP), instructors and other professionals. I also relied on the inmates themselves, after gaining their trust. I established a ground rule from the very beginning; I decided not to know beforehand why the individuals I asked to participate in DARE were incarcerated. This allowed me to uncover such information during the interview, and even to be surprised by their narrative, over which they had full control. It was precisely this sense of surprise that enabled me to gain trust in a space dominated by mistrust, where people are reduced to their crime. To be listened to, to tell their stories, to participate in reflecting on the world, is rare for them. The sharing and challenging of their claims often provided an unexpected space for reflection and expression, which was ultimately empowering and rewarding. However, in the case of inmates who are constantly suspicious of their surroundings, convincing them to participate was not easy. I had to step out of my sociologist role and speak a bit about myself; in other words, I had to share some of myself (Truong, 2017: 22). In other cases, I had to stop recording. This was also a way of recognising their distrust, which gradually diminished. Finally, in several cases I had to look for my participants in their cells, which gave them the opportunity to escape a static space that, despite being protective, is antisocial and, ultimately, destructive. Finding them in their cells meant showing an interest in them. It is precisely this interest in others that makes sharing and trust, albeit fragile and uncertain, possible. Three elements contributed to overcoming inmates' reluctance, in line with the logic of the gift and counter-gift: the founding principles of DARE, and particularly the idea of dialoguing and 'listening to the words of those who are generally not listened to'; the outsider status of the researcher, to use the term coined by Loïc Wacquant (2002: 14), i.e., the participant's capacity to assert himself because I am not French, and therefore not directly

integrated into the relations of domination and distrust perceived by some prisoners, particularly those of foreign descent**;** and the account of the researcher's previous work, which can serve to legitimise his interest in each prisoner's narrative. During the interview, a fourth element sometimes proved decisive. Through a gaze that is neither moralising nor indifferent, the researcher can turn out to be an asset in the construction of the personal narrative, within frameworks that are unusual for the prisoner. This means that the researcher is not limited to studying, in the sense of asking questions and observing, but rather aims to create the circumstances for active participation by expressing both 'astonishment' and 'curiosity'.

3.3. Ethical practice

All of the inmates who were asked to participate in the research agreed, with the exception of one prisoner accused of terrorism. He told me that he refused to participate because he had just spent four months in the Radicalisation Evaluation Unit (RUE), where he had to share his life story too many times to recount it again. On the other hand, he had expressed an interest in participating in a collective session. Our informal dialogue in the corridors of the prison continued until he was suddenly transferred, suspected of planning to construct a weapon. For the other participants, we encountered two major challenges. Some did not want to be recorded, fearing that their words could be used against them. This was the case with three individuals imprisoned for acts of terrorism. For others, signing the consent form was difficult. They were simply suspicious of signing anything out of fear that this could one day work to their disadvantage. That speaks a lot to their wariness toward institutions with which the researcher is sometimes associated. For them, the spoken word counts more than the written word. In this sense, the consent document had the opposite effect to that intended: instead of being perceived as a protective tool, it was perceived as a threat.

An ethical issue which I should highlight was a problematic situation involving a young person who was very reluctant to participate and who had been referred to me by the warden. He had been part of a small group of 3 or 4 young people caught in the cell of a TIS (Islamic Terrorism) and was apparently giving them a lesson on the Qur'an. Very shy and fidgety, he agreed to participate, but then he did not show up for the interview. After I went to look for him in his cell, he finally came to speak with me. Although he was not very talkative at first, he ended up speaking and confided in me that upon his release, scheduled in a few days, he was going to 'fuck this country well, and then I'm going to leave'. In light of additional information provided during the interview and, after consulting my colleagues at EHESS, I decided to discuss this case with the warden, although not divulging the interview. I was not surprised to learn that he was already being monitored by intelligence services.

A second ethical issue concerned the relationships that I developed with inmates. After several meetings, dialogue can open up, sometimes based on trust. Sometimes the researcher becomes the way out of a complicated situation, which the young person experiences as a dead end. But once the research ends, this door closes again. Substantial questions then appear. How does one not betray trust that has been built little by little? What right do we have to appropriate the words of a young person who speaks to me because he has no one else to talk to? How does one manage this power relationship? Added to this is the discomfort one experiences when faced with the suffering of some of these young people. One such participant, who is referred to as Griezmann, was 16 years old and came from a highly dysfunctional family and would be forever be scarred by violence; a violence that awaited him also after release. But Griezmann was alive, with an incredible desire to find another path, full of hope that something would help him make it through. At the beginning, he told me about a girl who was waiting for him when he got out, with whom he planned (dreamed) to build another life, far from the knives that had torn his life apart on several occasions. Later, when this girl stopped writing to him, he plunged back into a black hole. What if I let him stay with me when he was released? And what about another participant, Romain, who was

lost in a jihadist vision that had taken him to a state of paranoia bordering on madness? Following a trivial - but commonplace - accident involving his clothes (having a black band around his head on the day of an assault on a guard in another French prison), he ended up in solitary confinement and no one was able to get through to him anymore. Since I had a good relationship with him, I volunteered to try. Protected by three guards in riot gear hidden behind the door of his cell, I met him in his world of isolation. With limited time for a final conversation, he emerged from his world for a few minutes. I reminded him that he had promised me a gift when we last met. He looked around and came back to me with his offering; a *Sura* from the Qur'an[18]. Then he told me that he had nothing more to say and retreated back into his delirium. The guard later told me: 'It was short, but it's more than we got in two months'. Little consolation. I left immersed in feelings of sadness and guilt. With another participant, Adrian, who is affiliated with ISIS, we worked at length on storytelling, reflection, and empowerment/accountability. At the end of our journey, he succeeded in finally confiding to me about the regret he has for the harm he did to his parents. One day, I received a call informing me of his death. He died from an ordinary stomach ache that, left untreated, became fatal**.** This incident may have been connected to the distrust he harboured towards the institution. He waited too long before going to see a doctor, and by the time he did, it was already too late. One question troubles me: did we do everything to save him? What led to his death? Was it the collective mistrust—that of the institution towards jihadists and that of jihadists towards these institutions? Is this how an ordinary stomach ache becomes fatal? And where do I stop? What do I do with his words?

3.4. Data analysis

I encountered two main issues with the data analysis. First, by using Nvivo and a coding system that allowed coding to multiple nodes, I ended up duplicating some data. When analysing and interpreting data, this multiple coding practice sometimes appeared to complicate rather than simplify data management. The second concerns the process of anonymisation, which revealed some of the challenges of following standardised ethical procedures in specific contexts. In the first instance this relates to the fact that individual trajectories are inscribed in specific places, cities and neighbourhoods, which have a fundamental impact on the choices and trajectories of these young people. In removing the names of these locations, to ensure anonymity of respondents, some of the analytic capacity of the research was also erased. Secondly, the anonymisation of participants whose names and stories appear across the media was complicated and sometimes a bit absurd. In order to ensure anonymity, in addition to the pseudonym and changing any possible references to places or people, I have chosen not to include information that could reveal the identity of the respondent. I cannot hide a certain discomfort with the discrepancy between the constraints imposed on the researcher and the possibilities available to the media; a discrepancy that the respondents themselves did not understand, given their names were already in newspapers and other media. Indeed, it was sometimes the respondents themselves who told me where to look in the media in order to 'better' know their story.

In coding the data, I adopted an inductive approach in order to stay as close as possible to the field data, and in particular to the respondents' words. I then harmonised the nodes with the common skeleton coding tree. This led me to produce 31 Level 2 Nodes. This work, which is still in the process of being harmonised, has produced additional nodes to those in the skeleton coding tree, reflecting the very specific prison environment and additional issues that arise there.

---

[18] Sura Ar Rum (The Romans) 21, 30:33.

3.5. Socio-demographic portrait of the respondent set

This research was conducted with 18 respondents, including one woman, whom I met twice in a women's prison. The average age of the respondent set was 26.6, which included three minors (one 16 and two 17 year olds, who reached the age of majority during the research) and four individuals over 30. The decision to include older individuals was based on the initial research results, which revealed the importance of the interaction between individuals of different ages. I was told that one becomes an adult at the age of 30 in prison. In the collective imaginary, this is understood as no longer messing about, getting married and settling down. It also means taking on the role of a guide for the youth. The relationship between rebellious 'old' and young individuals offers a key to understanding radicalisation in detention, since the oldest individuals may be seen as, and claim to be, charismatic leaders who provide meaning to the juvenile rage that is acted out.

The respondent set was composed of 15 Muslims and three non-Muslims. Two were converts to Islam. The results from previous studies (Khosrokhavar, 2006 and 2016) informed the decision to include non-Muslims in the study. These studies illustrated how radical Islam can offer itself as a possible path for non-Muslims, in particular within the prison environment. One of the interview subjects, François, who was 17 at the time we met, identified (in a provocative attitude, which was not exclusive to him) and defined himself as a 'far-right terrorist'. He was included in the respondent as a sort of dialogue, at first figurative then real, between two forms of violent extremism. François, a reserved and very solitary young man who had committed acts of violence against women wearing hijabs and black men, openly upheld a nationalist and xenophobic vision. In particular, François took part in the experimental action 'co-construction of knowledge' with Adrian, who claims to be a member of ISIS, and with Marco, a young man involved in gangs, that resulted in a particularly rich and instructive confrontation.

The 18 people in the respondent set were incarcerated for a variety of offences and crimes. Some were awaiting trial, while others had already been found guilty. Approximately one third had been charged or convicted for larceny or armed robbery, another third were in prison for drug trafficking and another third was incarcerated for acts of terrorism. One was in prison for homicide and two others for attempted murder. In multiple cases, they had been involved in a number of crimes and misdemeanours and were often engaged in what could be defined as professional criminal careers, their lives being punctuated with periods of time in and out of prison.

Concerning the six people incarcerated for acts of terrorism, including François, this was apparently their first time in prison. This leads us to conclude that, unlike nearly all the other inmates, these six individuals implicated in terrorist acts or networks were not engaged as career criminals. This marks a significant finding which goes against most of the research that has been conducted (Khosrokhavar, 2016 and 2018; Hecker, 2018; Conti, 2018; Barros and Crettiez, 2019), but which must also be put into perspective, particularly due to the limited number of subjects involved. Indeed, the study I carried out on the Cannes-Torcy jihadist group (Conti, 2020b) led me to the opposite conclusion since the great majority of the 21 young people involved in the group had a delinquent trajectory.

4. Key Findings

The key findings will be presented in three parts. I will begin by addressing inequalities and how they affect the lived experiences of our respondents and engender a deep sense of injustice. This translates into a sense of confinement, rejection and marginalisation, both political and social, which often leads to a deep sense of self-deprecation. I will then focus on the individuals who found the narrative of radical Islam, and in particular jihadist ideology, to be a means of expressing their sense of injustice and a way of mobilising subjectively and collectively. Finally, I will examine the question of 'why' and 'how' other

prisoners reject this narrative. To do so, I will primarily analyse the resources they employ in order to respond to this sense of injustice, without isolating themselves from the world.

4.1. The desire for a rewarding 'elsewhere'

Inequality, understood as 'the objectively unequal, or subjectively perceived, unjust distribution of valued outcomes (such as resources and power) or the gaps in access to opportunities' (Franc and Pavlović, 2019; Poli and Arun, 2019), permeates respondents' daily lives. This inequality is simultaneously the result of structural relationships within French society (macro), the consequence of assigning and/or identifying individuals with social groups (meso), and a subjective experience (micro) (Crettiez and Sèze, 2017). These three levels intersect, and even overlap, in the lives of individuals, producing a widely-shared feeling of injustice to which the responses are varied, if not conflicting.

The lives of the respondents are above all marked by a sense of physical, social and symbolic confinement. This can come in a number of forms, which are often superimposed, but generally produce the same feeling of being unable to move forward and, ultimately, to control one's life. First, there is physical and spatial confinement, since a portion of respondents live in segregated areas. Then there is a level of economic confinement, as nearly all of the respondents express having a hard time imagining social and economic mobility, which seems difficult, if not impossible. This type of confinement extends into family dynamics, defined by the breakdown of the family unit, violence, and weakened transmission and normative framework. There is also judicial confinement, resulting from delinquency that is seen by some as the only horizon for the future, in a kind of social determinism that translates into a feeling of inevitability and fatalism. Finally, there is a political form of confinement, which marginalises the respondents and thus makes it impossible to be heard as citizens and to participate in the construction of public space as a space 'for the rational discussion of public affairs' (Habermas, 1962), in the democratic process that defines the good and the bad, the just and unjust in society. This feeling of confinement is at the core of the desire to escape the circumstances that are forced on the individual beyond his or her will. It is a desire that is met with various responses, including radical Islam, which presents itself as an exit strategy - a way to flee a hostile, stigmatising world that offers no future.

4.1.1. Spatial marginalisation and collective identification

The feeling of physical, social and symbolic confinement is above all tied to spatial segregation. Indeed, the majority of respondents grew up and lived in disadvantaged and marginalised neighbourhoods. These are mainly neighbourhoods inhabited by immigrants and people of immigrant origin who recreate community-centred ways of life, especially in connection with the country of origin. Such neighbourhoods are characterised by absent institutions, low-quality social services and a lack of social and economic mixing. These are neighbourhoods that are often characterised by a certain cultural, linguistic and even religious mix, but where people of French origin are very few, as Adrian points out:

> Adrian: ... then we went to (name of the town). I was 12/13 years old. But frankly I loved it. Frankly it was good. I really liked the neighbourhood. In the neighbourhood, there was a building with only Albanians, a building where there were only Turks and another where there were only Algerians. That is to say that outside we all meet each other and it is this mixture that makes everyone get along well...

> Interviewer: There were also French people?

> Adrian: In the college where I was, there weren't many French people.

> Interviewer: Don't you have any French friends?

Adrian: No, not too many. And anyway, they are French because they were born in France, but even those who were born in France don't consider themselves French.

Many respondents explain that they never came into contact with 'French' people during their youth. This is the case, among others, of Steven, who grew up in a district of Marseille where there were no 'French':

Steven: Actually, in the neighbourhoods, and even at school, we are almost all blacks, Arabs and all that, or gypsies, and in my school there were only two French people. So, I had never spoken with them, never, nothing at all.

Interviewer: Is that true? Never discussed with them?

Steven: No, never tried. After some French people of my age, I met them when I was at centre for young people, in the Alps. That's when I really started to talk, to discuss and so on...

Interviewer: I understand that you two have been really separated.

Steven: Yes, it was really separate. Because in the neighbourhoods of Marseille there are French people. In my neighbourhood there was one Frenchman, and he wasn't 100% French, he was mixed Arabic. So ... even he spoke badly of the French.

Anissa, the only woman in the respondent set, who grew up in a small town neighbourhood, describes how her spatial horizon was limited to two high-rise buildings that embody the ghetto in which she lives. Her marriage allowed her to move from one high-rise to the other, in a kind of parody of the social mobility to which she might aspire. Characterised by poverty and economic marginalisation - as well as the weak presence of the state, whose coercive branches are most visible - these spaces are seen as the expression of a deliberate policy of exclusion:

Interviewer: And you think that Arabs were placed in ghettos?

Anissa: Yeah. I mean of course, they do it on purpose… to put all the Arabs in the ghettos. So that we keep to ourselves and so to keep the shit with the shit, actually.

These territorial and social spaces often lead to a process of ghettoisation[19], that Didier Lapeyronnie (2008) has described as the process whereby a world is gradually and collectively built away from the outside world, which becomes perceived as hostile and undifferentiated. The 'French ghetto' is produced both by society (through stigmatisation and racism) and by some residents of these neighbourhoods who are faced with an impossible tension produced by an 'integration' that is obligatory and desired but ultimately rejected because it cannot be achieved (Lapeyronnie, 1996; Wieviorka, 2008). Childhood memories, forms of solidarity and bonds between groups nonetheless help shape a spatial identity, i.e. rooted in the social and physical space where the individual grew up and lived, so much so that for some, segregation feeds into the idea of a total separation, operating within a binary framework which pits what is inside, Us, against what is outside, Them. This is the perspective expressed by Paul, a 17-year-old in prison for homicide who grew up in a ghetto of Marseille:

In our neighbourhoods, nobody gives us shit, we're relaxed, we don't bother anyone, everyone sticks together, you know everyone… We're in our little village, there's everything you need in the village. In the hood, you have everything you need, food, bakeries, everything. Why would you want to leave? To do what?... They don't want to mix with us, why should we go mix with them?

---

[19] Unlike ghettos in the United States, these social spaces are not ethnically homogenous, but are rather meeting places of diverse groups that come from immigrant backgrounds and share the experience of being relegated to society's margins (Wacquant, 2008).

If this spatial identification can function as a protective bubble during youth, it can subsequently be experienced either as a ghetto, which prevents emancipation, or as a source of social and emotional stabilisation. This induces the simultaneous sense of attachment and desire to escape (Tabboni, 2007) in the trajectories of (non-)radicalisation. This is experienced, on the one hand, as a desire to remain attached, rooted in a territory (physical and symbolic) while, on the other, as the desire to leave, to flee the constraints of the community, the family, the territory. In this sense, going to Syria or joining a radical group can be a way of freeing oneself from the constraints of a spatial identity that prevents one from becoming an emancipated adult.

4.1.2. Stigmatisation, labelling and discrimination

All of the respondents were born and/or raised in France. Most of them are French nationals who went to French schools and were educated in the values of the French Republic. Yet nearly all of the respondents of foreign origin, as well as the two converts to Islam, underline how they are constantly reminded of their foreign roots and, in this way, rendered alien. They denounce a society, the media and institutions that deny them their Frenchness by preventing them from writing their story within the national narrative. The words of 16 year-old Griezmann, with a French father and an Arab mother, serve as a brutal reminder:

> Since they always called me 'dirty Arab' and all that, I didn't think of myself as French anymore. You know, I figure 'I'm in France, I was born in France, I'm French and they treat me like a foreigner'.

This perception of being rendered alien is also found among older people, as in the case of Ousmane, who is 39 years old:

> I was born in France, but what is strange is that I am treated like a foreigner in France. Although I was born here, I am a full-fledged Frenchman. Maybe that's it too. We've been so nourished by the fact that we've been shown that we're not like the others. We've been educated to do that in society and all that, whatever. At school, when we're little, and so on... That's what we are, in fact.

These are dilemmas associated with the 'double absence' that Sayad (1999) describes - this feeling of not belonging anywhere, of being second-class citizens, the 'illegitimate children' of French society. It is essentially a sense of rejection and non-recognition, which is reciprocated by the rejection of French society. An enraged Momo, 21 years of age, puts it as follows:

> Interviewer: And who do they (the French) discriminate against, for example?

> Momo: Yeah! Arabs, blacks, people from other countries. In short, people they don't like. They see someone with a big beard, those big sons of a bitch, that's it, he's a terrorist, tatati, tatata... In short, for me the French system, they are pigs, it's corrupt and they're worth nothing at all... this country, I have nothing to do with it.

These two respondents essentially share the common denominator of stigma, which influences their position within French society. The fact that two individuals belonging to two different generations, keep focusing on stigma reflects the fact that stigma is not exclusive to youth, but becomes a kind of inheritance, precisely transgenerational, and therefore even more difficult to shake off. For every society, 'to name is to categorise', as Claude Levi-Strauss wrote in 1962. This means that the act of naming is not only used to distinguish individuals and groups, but also to position them in a hierarchical structure within society itself. The ability to name, classify, order and manage populations is an essential facet of political power (Desrosières, 1993; Foucault, 1999; Lamont-Bail, 2005): 'categorisation—understood as the shaping of the social world and recognition of groups able to legitimately participate in democratic life

and ultimately claim rights - constitutes a strategic power issue in post-migratory societies characterised by substantial cultural diversity' (Martiniello and Simon, 2005: 1). The notion of 'stigma' is central to this process of labelling (Becker, 1963). According to Goffman (1963), this stigma is an attribute, real or not, that socially disqualifies the individual and traps him or her within a category carrying deep social shame. This is a form of categorisation which confines individuals against their will and places them in a position of inferiority relative to 'normal people'. The stigmatised individual is not capable of defining him or herself independently, but is rather defined by society. Experience of discrimination play a major role in the lived experiences of our respondents, as it 'produces such deep and intimate wounds that it undermines the individual's very essence' (Dubet, 2016: 8). The respondents' experiences of discrimination are tied to background and belonging, ethnic-racial origins, or religion, especially Islam (Hajjat and Mohammed, 2013). As far as the latter is concerned, the untenable gap between, on one hand, the perception of Islam as a resource and, on the other, the institutional and societal discourses and practices presenting Islam as a danger, represent a clash of perceptions, which shatters relationships of trust (De Galembert, 2020; Conti, 2020a).

Within the prison, this clash is even more visible. In fact, religion is described by detainees as a resource that helps them manage the conditions of detention, as well as the social discredit, the stigma (Khosrokhavar, 2004; Béraud et al., 2013). They refer to Islam as a 'refuge', 'helping them to get out of it' and 'the only resort' enabling them to confront the 'prison hit' and the uncertainty of the sentence.

> Islam enabled me to feel good, to find a balance (Detainee).

> At the end of the day you are alone anyway (in prison). What has really helped me here is my religion… Even if you are alone, you are never alone. It helps (Momo).

> Religion calms me, a lot, a lot, a lot. Without devotion, I would have been hateful and even a borderline case. I would have probably reacted differently. Surely. But religion really, really calms me. Islam really appeases me (Ousmane).

> What does it bring me? Well first forgiving the pain which was caused… You ask for forgiveness to God but also to people, because you also hurt people (Kylian).

While Islam - as other religions - may be a mobilising source for detainees to address prison, in contrast to other religions, Islam is perceived as a threat. This is even more the case inside the prison walls than outside. It becomes a source of stigmatisation and discrimination:

> Here there is religious, ethnic and social racism. In prison discrimination is everywhere. There is the law which applies to the White people and the law which applies to the others. This is where people become anti-French. This is a jihadists' factory. You push youngsters too far and you make them become extremists. I chose not to go that far. I don't want to tell them to fuck of. I want to be in control and Islam helps me to do so. (Detainee[20])

> To tell you the truth, life here is difficult…From a religious point of view as well as because you have the finger pointed at you. I sometimes feel I am perceived as someone I am not. As someone being radicalised…But this is not how I behave at all…If you want to pray it is very difficult, I have to hide. You cannot speak about religion with other detainees. There are so many difficult things, detention is very difficult for me. (Ousmane)

> I don't need their shit, they think detainees are … They only want to help White people here, they do not treat people the same way. The system is against Muslims. (Detainee)

---

[20] Where quotations come from detainees other than those in the respondent set, recorded, for example, in my field diary, they are attributed generically to 'Detainee'.

This clash of perceptions is illustrated by Anissa, who recounts an accident that occurred a few days before we met, which cost her 5 days in the punishment wing:

> I had five days in solitary confinement because I was doing my prayer, at the same time as they closed the door I put my towel on the floor to do my prayer and then I said 'Allah Akbar' a little louder than usual because my colleague was shouting, she was insulting the supervisor. And from that, in fact, in relation to insults, all that, every time she saw the supervisor she would argue with her... she got ten days in solitary confinement because she insulted her, and I got five days in solitary confinement because I said 'Allah Akbar', because I was saying my prayer. Them, their prayer is on Sunday morning, they do mass, they don't have intercourse! I don't see why I received a report because I said 'Allah Akbar', it just means 'God is great'. I'm not a terrorist!

Within the prison system (which is itself a reflection of society)[21], this clash goes beyond Islam. It is present in the form of a feeling or certainty that one is being punished 'for who you are and not what you did'. This discourse is based on three explanatory arguments. First, punishment has become synonymous with incarceration, through a process of normalising incarceration that particularly targets certain categories of the population (Simon, 2014; Khosrokhavar, 2016; Fassin, 2015 and 2017; CGLPL, 2018; Plat, 2019). Didier Fassin speaks of a 'punitive moment' to describe 'this unique conjuncture where the solution has become the problem. In theory, faced with society's various problems - the breakdown of its norms, the transgression of its laws - its members respond with penalties that seem useful and necessary for the majority. Crime is the problem and punishment is the solution. However, the punitive moment has turned punishment into the problem' (2017: 16). A perception shared by a multi-recidivist detainee, according to whom 'now we go to prison for nothing', this emerges as a narrative widely shared in detention and which contributes to the collective construction of a sense of injustice. The second argument stems from the social construction of otherness related to 'a growing tendency to naturalise social disorder, by attributing it solely to individuals and de-historicising social relations' (Chauvenet, 2010: 43). The individual thus finds him or herself being directly linked to events whose origins lie in social disorder: unemployment, marginalisation, lack of resources, etc. One example comes from those who find in 'dirty' money the possibility of escaping from a condition of poverty. As Griezmann puts it:

> My father didn't have a lot of money, he didn't work, and I used to say to myself, 'Push your father, push your father'. I could see he was better, he ate better, he slept better, and on top of that my little brother was better. Money, money and money. And then it was a fattening up.

The third argument claims that the criminal justice system is not equal for everyone. According to Adrian, 'there's one justice system for some people and another system for the others'. For Blaise, who openly displays his intense faith in Islam, 'there's a justice system for Muslims and another for non-Muslims'. This line of thinking points to a double standard in which the people most likely to be convicted come from categories that dominant society and elites define as 'at risk' or 'dangerous' - specifically people of foreign origin, people from poor inner suburbs, Muslims or even those with previous convictions who must live forever with the stigma of a criminal record. This leads to the widespread perception of being victims of a stigmatising process that relegates individuals to 'dangerous' categories or groups and which, as a consequence, already finds them guilty, what Kundnani calls 'suspected communities' (Kundnani, 2014;

---

[21] Prison 'reflects society and is also the mirror in which this society reflects itself' (Fassin, 2015: 39). This becomes even more relevant in a context in which information and people flow and there is a continuous exchange between inside and outside that erodes the borders between them (Rostaing, 2012). Prison hardship is for some individuals 'one step - among others – into a trajectory of disaffiliation, exclusion and poverty' (Chantraine and Delcourt, 2019: 54).

Ragazzi, 2016; Davidshofer et al., 2018). This perceived injustice and feeling of discrimination, the double standard, allows some prisoners to take refuge in a vision and a discourse in which crimes that have been committed are 'erased' and the speaker takes on the role of a victim of an unjust system. In the face of this discourse, that of the individuals engaged in critical self-reflection who assert that discrimination is not a one-way street, but becomes a form of interaction between people who have been reduced to a category that labels them: Arabs, foreigners, Muslims, whites, French people. In other words, the discrimination that one endures becomes the motor behind discrimination towards others, according to an interactionist or even cumulative logic which is not limited to opposite extremisms (Eatwell, 2006; Bartlett and Birdwell, 2013; Busher and Macklin, 2015; Conti 2020).

4.1.3. A conflictual relationship with the state

Labelling, stigmatisation and discrimination make for a conflictual relationship with the state, which is often reduced to its repressive institutions: the police, the justice system and prison. The stories shared by respondents detail an almost warlike relationship with law enforcement resulting from riots, police brutality, disputes, provocation, beatings and insults. For some, violence is told through the scars they bear on their bodies, which stem from violent escalations or even cumulative violence and become spaces of memory that symbolise hatred towards the state. Anissa reminds when the police brutally hit her after a check:

> They let me go because they thought I was Portuguese. If they knew I was Arab, they would have made me put my head in the dog's cage.

Momo recounts the many fights with the police, the violence suffered, the blows given, and concludes that he had so many stories that he could write 'even a book' from them. Antoine, a young man growing up in the countryside, tells of a growing rage due to what he recounted as harassment:

> I found myself without a driving licence from one day to the next when I had children. I was driving to work, and clearly on the way to work, the gendarmes were waiting for me. Because they knew I was going to work like that and they arrested me several times in a row like that... I felt it was an injustice because I knew the gendarmes were after me. In fact, it was harassment.

This relationship of distrust and violence towards state institutions translates into (and is the reflection of) the absence of civic engagement as well as community-based and political culture, of which one by-product is a lack of voting. Almost none of the respondents have ever voted or joined political movements or associations. They are simply removed from democratic life, their lives characterised by non-participation. For the respondents, this is primarily the consequence of deliberate measures taken by decision makers to exclude certain segments of the population from spaces of power and decision-making bodies. On this subject, Adil, arrested after spending 4 months with the Daesh in Syria, expresses his feeling of exclusion and his contempt for politics:

> Yes, people have opinions, they express them, but what then? Expressing one's opinion doesn't lead to anything. People's opinions are simply not taken into account. At least, as in the current Yellow Vests movement, there is no self-imposition. A people's opinion counts for nothing. The voice of the people is like a sound, without impact. The people are reduced to a decibel, especially in relation to foreign policy.

The lack of political participation and/or political marginalisation is both the symptom and the cause of the difficulty to conflictualise the sense of injustice in the public sphere[22]. In fact, the public sphere

---

[22] Following a long tradition according to which politics is the domain of the institutionalisation of conflict, whereas violence is precisely the negation of conflict (Wieviorka 1996; Conti 2016), with the word 'conflictualising', I mean

constitutes a space, both material and abstract, in which marginalised or excluded people ask for recognition, a space where they challenge a stigmatising gaze and where they demand rights as well as economic and social repositioning (Wieviorka 1996; Ammann et Göle, 2006; Conti, 2014 and 2016). Initiating a process of collective affirmation is strongly linked to the reversal of stigma. During this process, the individual examines him or herself while simultaneously confronting society, in the sense that he or she responds to being devalued by society. As for these young people, what becomes especially apparent is the absence of intermediary bodies (a role previously filled by workers' unions or political parties) allowing young people who grew up in the streets to construct a political narrative. In other words, they lack the opportunity to collectively challenge their sense of injustice and to create fulfilling social connections, like the status of workers in the past (Bonelli and Carrié, 2018). The absence of intermediary bodies is associated with a process of identifying with stigmatised groups, which is particularly visible in the construction of a discourse focused on anti-elitism that appears to replace class struggle in the shaping of an identity in which 'insiders' are at odds with 'outsiders'. Unlike class, which is tied to the economy and production, the notion of the elite allows for the introduction of other factors of distinction, such as ethnic-racial origin, religion and territory. In a classic reversal of stigma (Goffman, 1963), these factors become sources of identification which aim to challenge the social order and engage in socio-economic repositioning (Wieviorka, 1996; Ammann and Göle, 2006; Conti, 2016). A struggle above all for recognition (Honneth, 2004), where questions of identity seem to give rise to questions of the redistribution of material resources (Fraser and Honneth, 2003; Pilkington and Acik, 2019), as Paul puts it in his own way, evoking the story of his grandfather:

> I don't feel French. Because for them, for French people - real French people, white French - for them, we're not French. And I do not like this country. I was born here, but I don't like it. This country hasn't given us anything. My grandfather on my mother's side worked in his home country, where he was born, for France and what has France given him today? It gave him nothing… During the Algerian War, instead of fighting for his country, he fought against it. And what did France give him? It put him in a council estate, an apartment in a council estate where there's mould. That's how you thank someone? I'm not French. I don't like them.

The absence of resources needed to establish oneself as a social actor engenders fatalistic attitudes and feelings, which perceive action as futile because everything is pre-determined. This fatalism is widespread among the respondents, who have become individuals who feel that they have no control over their lives and that the future is ultimately determined by the decisions of others as Steven, 26, openly says:

> Interviewer: You feel things are stuck?

> Steven: Yes. If they're going to change, it's not me who's going to change them. It's more the politicians and all that. It's them.

> Interviewer: You don't feel directly involved. Is that it?

> Steven: Yes, but I know there is nothing I can do.

> Interviewer: Do you vote? Have you ever voted?

---

the capacity to raise in public sphere an issue as collective and not private, to bring a topic into public debate, make it a political/public issue, not a private one. In this sense, the Italian sociologist Stefano Allievi writes: 'Conflict serves to foster the emergence of latent tensions, to discuss them, to bring out interlocutors and leadership, and even to solve problems ... conflict has, sociologically, a positive function. And, in any case, it is foundational, ineliminable, as the classics of sociology have taught us, from Marx to Weber to Simmel. Crisis, after all, serves to discuss a problem... In conflict, one must question oneself around a common sense of responsibility' (Allievi, 2002: 13-14).

Steven: No. I've never voted. I've thought about it a few times, but ... it's useless anyway.

This results in a feeling that is prevalent in prison - that of being trapped in a vicious circle or dead-end - which reinforces not only the conditions leading to recidivism (which is the case for 61% of released prisoners), but also to victimisation, disempowerment and violence.

4.1.4. Socio-economic exclusion and the desire for social mobility

Economic and social inequality is due to structural dynamics but enters directly into subjective lived experiences and perceptions. Almost all of the respondents belong to the working class and in certain cases one could even consider them sub-proletariat. Like them, their families are often 'stuck' in low-skilled, low-paid and sometimes degrading work. In certain cases, they and their parents are unemployed, in unstable jobs, or even involved in illegal activities for which they are prosecuted in court. As the head of detention bitterly says, '80% of those in prison have had relatives in prison. Prison thus becomes a family legacy'. The delinquency that certain young people are involved in aligns with family history and practices, with a 'know-how' that passes between generations as a resource allowing one to climb the social ladder or simply to take what one does not have. As Marco, 21, says: 'I didn't like my situation. I wanted money. I wanted to have everything I wanted. And everything I couldn't have, well, I went to get it, I went to take it'.

However, it would be a mistake to understand this as merely a question of economic resources, since some respondents make no secret of the fact that they have become accustomed to 'earning' a lot of 'dirty' money through illegal activities. Thus, we examined the social conditions of our respondents not only in terms of economic resources, but more broadly in terms of economic, cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1979; Ilan and Sandberg, 2019). In this sense, education is emblematic of unequal access to resources within French society. With the exception of François, a 17-year-old who was studying at university before being arrested for terrorism (associated with the far-right), almost all of the respondents quit school early. Dropping out of school has several causes: the material and psychological circumstances at home; the need to bring home money in order to offset the family's financial difficulties; the desire for money; the initiation into delinquency; and the difficulty of conforming to a normative framework at odds with family life and the rules of the streets. Others dropped out against their will, sometimes following incarceration. Some do not hide a deep feeling of waste. The conflictual relationship with school is often described as one of the first manifestations of unequal access to resources, in what appears to determine an individual's place in society:

> Actually, we grew up in the streets and we got by with the streets. For some, that's just how it is. Some people have parents who've got money who've got everything they need. They go to school, they're in a good school with model students and then there are those who are in school with people from the streets. It's not the same, we don't all live the same lives. We don't all grow up in the same way. We grow up in different ways and depending on how you grow up, that shapes your personality and shapes what you do too (Antoine).

Therefore, the dynamics of the street are seen as the path towards social mobility and thus towards the type of success that most respondents never found, either in their studies or in the workplace (Ilan and Sandberg, 2019). The catalyst of delinquent behaviour is above all the desire to have what is denied by social circumstances. Marco, a 21 year-old young man who grew up around gang wars in a French overseas département, summarises this sentiment: 'I didn't like my situation. I wanted money. I wanted to get whatever I wanted. And everything I couldn't have, well I went looking for it, I went out to take it'.

What feeds into this desire is the proximity to others, to 'normal' French people who are somewhat near but nevertheless quite different. This is in line with the logic of mimetic desire described by René Girard (1972; 1982) in which desire is produced by the disconnect between being close to the 'other' while

simultaneously being separated from them. Marco illustrates particularly well how deviance does not exist in absolute terms, but is rather the result of both a process of external designation and individual rationalisation, that makes it easy to obtain what one desires and compensate for the lack of social mobility:

> I kind of like hearing people say that stealing things, being a thug or whatever, is easy. There's no easy money on the streets. For someone who doesn't have experience, you're going to put an individual on the side of the road, to sell 100 grams of weed or cocaine he's carrying on him. It's not easy, ok. Staying there for hours with police passing by, it's not easy. The risk he has to take, the risks that other people have to take in a job as a psychologist or school teacher or whatever, it's not the same, eh?

Subsequently, it is the logic of accumulation and the consequences of labelling that make it so that these young people find themselves trapped in a downward spiral, which quickly becomes difficult to manage and which leads them to lose control of their lives. As Kylian, a man in his forties looking back bitterly on his life, sums up: 'It's as if you were on the outside watching your life go by'.

4.1.5. The crisis of the family institution

At the micro level, it is in particular the breakdown of the family institution that affects respondents' perceptions and lived experiences. Speaking about family was not easy because the familial narrative is often one of shame. It becomes a matter of disclosing domestic violence, a drug-addicted mother who abandons her children, a father who left home, etc. Talking about family is also difficult because putting their stories into words forces respondents to look at themselves through the eyes of their parents and their parents' suffering, which can invite feelings of guilt since imprisonment often translates as a weakening of the familial bonds of trust. The accounts, as well as the silences, generally relate to a family model that no longer works, that of the traditional patriarchal family built on a rigid division of roles between the father, mother and children. The mother is often a housewife responsible for preserving the intimacy of the private sphere**.** The father, when present, does not manage to fulfil his role of authority, due to the difficulty of taking care of the family's financial needs and of coping with a sense of humiliation that passes from one generation to the next (Khosrokhavar, 2006). Parental authority and the normative framework are thus absent, weakened or openly contested, clearing the way for transgression, dysfunctional and reckless behaviour, but also violent outbursts[23]. For some, family represents a social space for practising and learning violence, just like the streets. This is illustrated by Griezmann, 16, whose mother was absent serving time for drug trafficking and whose father was in great distress:

> I whistled [had to deal with violence] a lot, I hit people a lot, I used a lot of either verbal or physical violence. But I endured a lot from my older brother… 'You want to be a man, you want to do stupid shit, well just look at what life is, you want to be part of the streets?' They kept hitting me until I said 'no, I won't do stupid shit anymore'. Except that it was the other way around. The more they hit us, the more hate we felt. At one point they were hitting me, but I was just laughing about it. Because at that point, it was banal - routine!

Among the respondents, we identified different configurations of what Khosrokhavar has termed the 'decapitated patriarchal family' (2018: 278). The first configuration is that of those who essentially grew up without either parent, like Paul and Romain who were both raised by their grandmothers. A second configuration, which applies to about half of the respondents, includes those who grew up in single-parent households, generally with a mother who was completely overwhelmed with her children. In some cases,

---

[23] 'Personally, I'm not violent… Violence came to me,' explains Paul, illustrating a violence that is so rooted in the lives of most respondents that one could speak of trivialised violence that is only exacerbated by prison (Chauvenet et al., 2008).

the father's death is what triggered the breakdown of the family unit and the disruption of emotions and domestic norms, leading sometimes to delinquency and violence, as Teodoro tells us:

> I grew up with my mother. My father died when I was young. I didn't know him... Honestly, you can say what you want, but growing up without a father is very difficult. Especially for a boy, you need to have a man who is there, from whom you can learn, otherwise it's like going outside and walking in the fog. It's not possible.

In most cases, the father is a stranger or has simply abandoned the household, in a relinquishing of paternal duties that is a permanent feature of the prison population. A deep feeling of abandonment and rejection emerges from the stories of a significant number of respondents. A third configuration is the reversal of generational roles, with sons replacing their fathers as authority figures within the fragmented family, as in the case of Griezmann, who, still very young, tried to take care of his father, who - entangled in addictions that overwhelmed him and made him incapable of caring for his children - was displaced from his paternal role. The final configuration involves the symbolic death of the father (representing parental authority) in line with clearly jihadist frameworks (Khosrokhavar, 2018; Ferret et al, 2020). In these cases, parental authority is replaced by that of the street, of a strict reading of religious texts, of the peer group, of the imaginary community of believers, the imaginary *Ummah*, or of ISIS. This is the case for Adrian, among others, who upon adopting a strict vision of Islam at the age of 16, took on the role of moraliser and became controlling towards his parents, whom he accused of being infidels. In the context of this crisis of the traditional family and the challenge of parental authority, it emerges that often the grandparents, and specifically grandmothers, who make up for the father's absence or the mother's normative weakness. The importance of grandparents appears as further evidence of the crisis within the traditional family structure, a crisis which also manifests as a lack of intergenerational transmission within the family. Over the course of my research in prisons, I observed that most inmates - especially younger ones - do not know their family history, which is often not passed down. As an older and more-educated inmate bitterly explained, 'these young people don't even know their own history'. This lack of intergenerational sharing and the consequent lack of knowledge of one's own origins, makes it quite difficult for these individuals to tell their stories and thus to understand where they come from (Candau, 1998). As Yuval-Davis writes, 'identities are narratives, stories that people tell themselves and others about who they are (and who they are not)… These identities may be connected to the past, to an origin myth; they may aim to explain the present, and most importantly, they serve to imagine future life paths' (2006: 202). Storytelling thus has a liberating function, especially for the young people who have a hard time articulating coherent narratives about themselves (and a particular identity) which would allow them to plan for the future and challenge a sense of injustice. As Teodoro, engaged in a profound questioning, said during a collective session on family trajectories: 'My story hangs together with that of all the others here. We are all uprooted people'.

4.2. Detachment: a paradigm of radicalisation

We have just seen how macro-level (structural), meso-level (group/network), and micro-level (subjective) factors interact to produce a widely-shared sense of injustice. We will now look at the numerous, complex ways individuals have found to respond to feelings of confinement, rejection and powerlessness. In particular, we will identify the options available to young people on the verge of rupturing their connection to society. The idea is to understand why in some cases such a break occurs, whereas in other cases, individuals are capable of mobilising resources so as not to cut themselves off from the world. This analysis is based partly on the connection between subjective needs (micro) and collective supply (macro) - particularly the ideological offering of radical Islam - and partly on the notion of detachment, which appears central to trajectories of radicalisation or, conversely, non-radicalisation. I will begin by

addressing the ambiguity, if not the contradictions, that characterise the paths taken by these young people, who find themselves persistently on the brink of breaking yet also seeking to rebuild social ties. Next we will examine how the ideological offering of radical Islam (at the macro level) connects to subjective needs (at the micro level) and how this 'juncture' is formed, i.e. what radical social forms look like (the meso level). This section will conclude with an analysis of the resources that some of these young people mobilise to avoid becoming detached and, on the contrary, to lay down roots. We will, therefore, consider the spectrum which runs from one extreme (the desire to die in the name of an ideology[24]) to the other (the willingness or ability to restore emotional and social ties, despite the injustices one has experienced).

In order to understand the connection between supply (offering) and demand (need), one must proceed with the assumption that prison, as a mirror of society, is the scene where competing narratives are produced and where they clash in the 'public space' of the prison, i.e. in the courtyard, the halls, the windows through which inmates communicate. As Teodoro, 30, explains, 'what we do in the prison yard is political'. Each narrative contains its own logic, morality and system of categorisation[25]. Additionally, each narrative offers an escape - a distant paradise where the individual will finally be saved, as well as modalities and logics used to conflictualise the feeling of injustice. These narratives all share certain objectives: to explain an individual's life path; to create order; to generate self-esteem; and to plan for the future. While they may have the same function, they differ both in terms of how they assign 'responsibility' and in the forms of loyalty they mobilise: family; friends; peer groups; the neighbourhood; the mosque; *Ummah* (the Muslim community); brothers, etc. Responsibility and loyalty reveal themselves in the variety, or even contradictory nature, of narratives, which shape the relationships one has with the self and with 'otherness', with feelings of injustice and with violence. Responsibility and loyalty are often in contradiction, resulting in ambivalent trajectories that vacillate between openness and closure, between the desire to break away and the need to be rooted[26]. The trajectory of Momo not only allows us to observe this ambivalence at work, but also to see how the 'swing' to violent extremism can be the consequence of a series of often unforeseeable events and interactions, which, at times, are beyond one's control.

Momo, 21, is serving his fifth sentence in prison and has spent four of the last six years behind bars. At the heart of his delinquent path is the desire for money since 'it's what makes the world go 'round. With money, you can do anything. Without it, you can do nothing'. Raised without a father, Momo has been involved in all types of violence - violence between youth gangs and against the police, the symbol of a repressive State:

> Momo: Fighting with the police? Yeah, I used to do that when I was a kid. I've done it before; I was even convicted for it.
>
> Interviewer: For fighting with the police?

---

[24] For Roy (2016), death occupies a central place in the approach of a generation that he considers 'nihilistic'. Roy understands death as an integral part of the jihadist project - an idea contested by some researchers, as well as the journalist David Thompson (2016).

[25] Like Goffman (1974), we could speak of a 'frame', meaning a socially-constructed cognitive structure capable of attributing a precise meaning to an event, a context, etc.

[26] According to Simonetta Tabboni (2007), any relationship with otherness carries ambivalent, contradictory and overlapping feelings: on the one hand, the need to reaffirm one's faithfulness to a collective identity and, on the other hand, the need to move beyond the protective environment to which one belongs in order to seize what the environment cannot offer.

Momo: Violence against law enforcement. That's what they call it… I got arrested by the Anti-Crime Squad and since they always go above and beyond to abuse their power, I head-butted them, and there you go… It makes me laugh when I think back on it.

Whether it is perpetrated or endured, violence has become trivial, if not addictive, in Momo's life. The recklessness of his words reveals this 'trivialisation of violence', which is not limited to him:

I kind of liked it**.** Walking around the city, fighting with other neighbourhoods… Yeah, in packs. But I've also gone out alone and sometimes ended up surrounded by ten people. But it's fine, I liked it. I got hit with a hammer, I still have the scar.

Besides violence and disorder, hate also characterises Momo's trajectory. Whereas on the streets violence gets directed toward police officers, in prison, it is directed toward guards as part of a binary, even warlike, relationship:

The guards here are heartless… Excuse my words, but they're huge assholes. They do whatever they can to break us psychologically… They'll do anything to break you. If you don't have a brain, you're screwed… They can try whatever they want, they won't break me. But then, personally the only thing I was scared of was one day getting a hold of one or two of them and massacring them and then getting four or five extra years like that. Actually, I wasn't scared of them, I'm really just scared of how I would react.

As a Muslim, Momo situates his faith outside traditional Islam, within a discourse of mistrust and contempt towards the prison chaplain and imams in general, whom he accuses of perversion. He pushes to the extreme what Roy (2002) calls the deterritorialisation and deculturation of Islam, forging a personalised and imaginary Islam:

For me, it's fine. I'm still pretty well-informed about my religion. I didn't just start practising when I got here. Even starting outside… I don't have to go see an imam, I know lots of people, they know a hundred times better than the imam. And every day I teach myself about my religion. About what you should and shouldn't do… Imams aren't necessarily scholars! I've met imams who prostituted their daughters. They put their daughters out on the sidewalk.

Interviewer: The imam?

Momo: Yeah. I knew imams who told me that fornication wasn't a big deal. They're not necessarily role models.

His discourse expresses first a more general shift in Islamic authorities, with the emergence of new figures, and reflects a process of individualisation in the production of religious knowledge (Roy, 2002; Fouad-Allam, 2002; Van-Der-Veer in Eickelman and Salvatore, 2004). Secondly it expresses a dehumanisation of the other, which encompasses imams, the police, the guards and more broadly a society described as deeply corrupt and unjust. His response to this feeling of injustice reveals above all the hate and the weakness of social ties. However, what also emerges are the last social ties available, which Momo clings to in order to prevent himself from falling into a jihadist vision:

I hate France. I don't like France. And if someone asks me, 'why do you stay in France?', I'd say, 'I don't like France, but I like what people have made of it and that these people are all immigrants basically'… Well I'm glad I grew up in the hood. That's the kind of ambiance I like.

Interviewer: You like the ambiance of a more community-based France?

Momo: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what is it that you don't like about France?

Momo: Everything! The only thing that's good is the social security system. That's it!... It's a country of cowards, French people are all cowards! They prefer rapists over robbers, they prefer rapists to drug dealers. It's less serious to scar a woman for life, or to scar a kid, than to go out and steal. Basically, in France it's, 'you can touch my kids, but don't touch my money'[27]. There's no justice. None at all! There's no freedom, equality or brotherhood either. It's a lie… I don't want anything to do with this country. I was born here because my mother gave birth here, but that's it. I'm not French. I repeat: I'm French, but only as a formality. It's just a question of paperwork.

Momo has a radical discourse in which hatred mixes with an extreme vision of Islam - an Islam that is marginal and confrontational, in the sense that it positions itself outside of, or even against, the traditional Islam of families and mosques. His discourse involves the dehumanisation of the Other, identified with evil, filth and disorder (Douglas, 1996). However, while breaking ties with French society, Momo desperately tries to cling to such ties so as not to cross a threshold into jihadism that would mean going down a path of no return, a path filled with heavy consequences (Conti, 2020a). First, he evokes the 'myth' of a return to Algeria—the country 'that drove out the French'—then speaks of the 'hood' as a social and physical space of identification, the last defence to protect a wounded identity. Lastly, he makes reference to his family and in particular to a mother he feels indebted towards and who, despite everything, is still there to offer him a path to salvation through emotional bonds.

Momo's trajectory introduces us to the notion of 'detachment', meaning the breaking of emotional, social and political bonds which is a central component of the path towards radicalisation. For those who subscribe to the narrative of radical Islam, or even jihadism, it is a matter of cutting ties with the world, in the sense that these individuals engage in a more extensive process of uprooting in order to reinvent themselves. Radicalisation can be described as a process of detaching from already-fragile ties that bind individuals: to detach oneself from feelings (as Romain and Adrian will say), from pleasures (as Jeremy will explain) or from relationships with society (as all people adhering to radical Islam will say). Radicalisation reveals itself to be a process of detaching (dissocialising) from precarious ties which connect individuals to social or territorial spaces. This detachment is accompanied by a process of resocialisation within a new entity: the group or neo-Ummah**,** the community of Allah refashioned to mirror Islam's heroic period under the Prophet (Bowen, 2004; Césari, 2004; Grillo, 2004; Khosrokhavar, 2006). Radical Islam and jihadism thus accelerate a process that is already at work, since the majority of young people in our panel are 'uprooted', as Teodoro explains. According to a strictly binary approach, the narrative of radical Islam seeks to break ties with 'this lowly world' or society of 'infidels', whereas, as we will see, other narratives make use of resources as well as social and cultural capital, to respond to a sense of injustice. Their response lies in conservation, rediscovery or the strengthening of ties.

4.3. Self-detachment, trajectories and radicalisation

The narrative of radical Islam is thus one of the narratives that come into competition in prison, narratives collectively elaborated in order to produce order and meaning, narratives that compete in the symbolic space of the walking yard. This narrative was mainly (but not exclusively) communicated to me by five men who openly assume a vision of Islam that could be characterised as 'radical', more often 'extremist'. Accused or convicted of acts of terrorism, they claim their involvement was legitimate and some refute the charges or convictions, in particular by distinguishing between ideas and actions, as expressed by

---

[27] As Mary Douglas writes (1996), in combination with denunciation on the basis of diet, denunciation on the basis of sex (seen as a denigrated category of promiscuity, feminisation, and incest) plays a fundamental role in the process of dehumanising the Other: 'The greatest infamy, that which incites ethnic persecution, combines heritage, sex, food and religion' (1996: 102).

Romain: '[I am] a prisoner of war. Because I'm not here for an offense or a crime, I'm here for my ideas and intentions'. All five individuals became radicalised outside the prison system. With the exception of Blaise, who had been involved in extremists groups since the early 2000s, the others adopted a jihadist ideology during the period in which the Islamic State was forming in Syria. It is therefore important to consider the context and temporality of their words, understanding in particular that their words are expressed years after their decision to join - either directly or indirectly - jihadist groups. They operate within a particular space and time: that of imprisonment. Their speech is thus 'reflective', a way of looking back on 'what happened'. The trajectory of each of the respondents illustrates a particular aspect of the encounter between the offering of radical Islam and the demand/subjective need, and also what 'detachment' means.

4.3.1. Anomie and family chaos: The Neo-Ummah as a surrogate family

While radicalisation is the result of a plurality of factors and cannot be reduced to psychological problems, the subjective dimension (experiences, needs, fears) occupies a central place in the radicalisation paths of some young people (Benslama, 2016; Bouzar and Hefez, 2017; Monod, 2019). Romain's case is emblematic of this psychological dimension, but also illustrates the capacity of the ideological offering to fulfil subjective needs. Born into a Protestant family in an overseas département of the French Republic, Romain is a 21-year-old convert who was imprisoned on suspicion of planning an attack and trying to reach Syria to join a jihadist group. His adherence to violent extremism is rooted in his family's chaotic journey, marked by wounds that he struggles to put into words. This difficulty was compounded by the 11 months he spent in isolation. Slowly and with much sadness, he opened up about his family experience. He describes an absent mother and an unknown father, an adopted brother and a grandmother who raised him until the age of 16. As a teenager, he finally reconnected with his mother in France, which seemed like a distant country to him, according to what he had heard 'from people who went for the snow. For me, France meant snow. That's it'. He stayed with his mother in a small town in the east of the country. He did not know anyone and after attempting to complete training as a blacksmith ('to make swords, because I like swords'), he fell into idleness, loneliness and boredom. It was during this anomic phase of his life that he converted to Islam. Solitude defined both his conversion to Islam and the construction of his religious practice. He learned about Islam exclusively on the internet, which offered a way out of his isolation and a means of connecting with what is seen as an imaginary community (Anderson 1991; Roy, 2002; Grillo 2004; Bowen 2004; Khosrokhavar, 2006). His conversion and adherence to radical Islam occurred simultaneously, meaning that he entered directly into radical Islam as a result of his conversion, without any contact with the traditional Islam associated with mosques: 'I've only been to the mosque twice. Then the police came and arrested me'. Beginning from an anomic condition (Durkheim, 2007), where rules and social ties are lacking, Romain latches onto this new ideology, first through social networks, then in prison. This new community—which nurtures him, protects him and makes him feel like an integral part of a larger community, the neo-Ummah, took the place of his family, thus assuming the role of a surrogate family:

> Muslims are like a family. For me, Muslims are family… I don't know them, but I don't need to know them. Just by reading the Qur'an, I know them already. From the moment someone confirms their faith, I defend his kin. How I see it, a Muslim - whether French, American or whatever else - is more valuable than a non-believer from [his country of origin], even if we come from the same mother. It might be surprising, but that's how it is (he laughs, somewhat awkwardly). What ties us together is faith, Islam… [we are] a community. We're like parts of one man. If one of us is attacked, the whole body feels the pain and is going to do whatever it takes to heal itself.

Romain takes his uprootedness to the extreme, by brushing aside all pre-existing ties in order to be reborn in a new identity that brings him peace and, in his words, 'helped me to reconcile myself with myself.' The

idea of detachment, expressed through the doctrine of *al-walâ' wa al-barâ'* (loyalty and renunciation) that drives the faithful to systematically break with all elements associated with unbelievers in contemporary society, provides Romain with an explanatory framework that is clearly ideological. Such a framework replaces inefficient and disappointing familial bonds with new ties in a process that appears, in Romain's words below, as the epiphany of a new subjective social order:

> We don't choose allies among our enemies, even if they're from our tribe, our clan, our family. We don't choose an ally against our brothers, against the cause of Allah… [It is] negation and affirmation. Renunciation and alliance.

Romain's case allows us to see how the ideology of radical Islam - which is, in this case, explicitly jihadist - offers an opportunity to respond to subjective, even personal, evils, starting with the crisis within the family. New forms of loyalty replace existing ones, cast aside as fragile, in what can be considered the breaking of ties with a family in crisis and, more generally, with society. For some, the adherence to radical Islam presents itself as a possibility to leave an adolescent phase - a period marked by wounds and difficulties (Benslama, 2016; Khosrokhavar, 2014). As an imaginary community of believers, the neo-Ummah thus appears as an organic (warm) community that opposes Western individualism and 'cold' societies resulting from the modernisation of Muslim societies. To paraphrase Césari (2004), the neo-Ummah is synonymous with warmth and solidarity against the coldness and inhumanity of the post-modern world. In this way, cold is opposed with heat, chaos with order, the individual with the community, cold rationality with warm feeling (Van Der Veer in Eickelman and Salvatore, 2004; Roy, 2002; Khosrokhavar, 2006).

It is within this immaterial space, which knows no borders and is not embedded in tangible traditions, that the isolated and anomic individual can reinvent him or herself and be reborn with a new valued identity. Radicalisation, according to Benslama (2016), can be interpreted as the symptom of a desire to be rooted, experienced by someone who no longer has roots or who considers themselves to be unrooted. Therefore, the neo-Ummah allows one to lay roots, by 'reinventing' the family (an institution in crisis). Jihadism proposes to overcome such a crisis through imagining a new utopian family, based both on tradition (a return to values and to the traditional division of labour) and on modernity (a reinvented family modelled after an origin myth, but also connected to subjective needs). The new jihadist family seems to be a novel patriarchal model, breaking with the modern family in crisis, or even in opposition to the breakdown of the family. This new family model is based on a strict division of tasks and roles, stemming from dissymmetry between man and woman.

This is the model that Jeremy, a man in his forties who was convicted of terrorism, put in place just before being arrested. He married a woman with two daughters who had recently lost her husband to suicide in prison (although, according to Jeremy, he was killed by a country of non-believers). In a closed relationship in direct conflict with society and the state, the familial sphere becomes the space for building a new sociability, in which Jeremy plays the role of absolute authority. As he says: 'I'm the authority!' He maintains a particularly authoritarian hold on his two adopted daughters, whom he lived with for only a short time, before social services separated the girls from what was defined as an 'unhealthy relationship'. It is a family model that, as Adrian - a young person affiliated with the Islamic State - explained during a group session, allows above all for the natural order of things to be re-established after having been perverted by the mixing of gender roles[28]. At the heart of Adrian's concern is feminism, a subject he is eager to address because 'when we get out, we'll always have to deal with this Satanism'. Without drawing general conclusions, it is important to stress how, during the module on the co-construction of

---

[28] Notions of order and disorder appear central to the trajectories that we study. On this matter, refer to the works of Mary Douglas (1996) and René Girard who, in his research on sacrificial violence, illustrates how disorder arises from the erasure of differences (1992: 77-79).

knowledge, Francois - despite being the bearer of a vision in theory diametrically opposed - shared Adrian's discourse on the need to re-establish a natural order, which had been disrupted by modernity, and in particular by gender confusion. The family, in its imagined and fantasised form, but also real, function as an institution, social structure and space of relationships (Ferret et al, 2020), thus presents itself as one of the keys to understanding the articulation between subjective and structural factors, proposed by jihadist ideology.

4.3.2. Commitment and rejection to face a (perceived) injustice

The case of Adrian illustrates the link between radicalisation and feelings of confinement and rejection. A refugee who arrived at the age of nine, Adrian spent his first year in France with his family either in shelters or on the street. He was finally moved into a working-class neighbourhood inhabited by an immigrant population and known for being marginalised, a source of stigmatisation for its inhabitants. Adrian, who did not speak French when he arrived, quickly learned the language of Voltaire and revealed himself to be a good student—a source of pride for this young man who likes to succeed. His accomplishments boosted his self-esteem and gave him the hope of leaving the ghetto and moving up the social ladder, seen as the embodiment of success for the familial migratory experience. But his background and place of residence quickly become obstacles. To begin with, although he wanted to continue to excel in his new language, French, he was sent against his will to a technical college - a choice dictated because of his origin, as is the case for many other young people from minority groups in France. Coming from a neighbourhood with a poor reputation, from a low level college, as part of a minority, and as a refugee, the possibilities of being accepted into a general academic educational stream were drastically reduced for Adrian. Thus, the educational path of those whom Truong (2017) calls 'the bad children of the Republic' (the title of his book) seems to have already been mapped out, one that leads to manual and unskilled work, which is highly devalued in today's France (Brinbaum et al., 2013).

Then, when it was time for him to find an internship in order to complete his school term, he was consistently met with closed doors because of where he lived, which trapped him in the stigma of belonging to a 'dangerous category'. This discrimination exemplified his first rift with France, the country that had taken him in, and to which he had been deeply grateful:

> [At school] I stopped in Year 12 because they made me repeat since I didn't manage to find an internship. Because every time I went to a garage shop to ask about an internship, they looked at the address and saw that I came from an area known for being the hood… And personally, I didn't take that well. It's a kind of rejection, complete rejection… Stay in your neighbourhood, find something in your neighbourhood. What does that mean? And that really pissed me off because as a result of that, I didn't get a diploma. I was completely discouraged because I couldn't even continue since I had to repeat a year. And I never repeated the year… In the end [I got] treated like a piece of shit.

Faced with being rejected, Adrian found refuge in a fundamentalist vision of Islam, which offered itself as an opportunity to respond to the rejection he had endured:

> As soon as I stopped school, I went directly into religion. Directly. Everything dealing with prayers, everything, everything. I found refuge in my religion. I immediately went straight into religion. I cut myself off. I didn't see anyone anymore. When it came to girls, I stopped talking to them. Right away, I was pissed off.

Coming from a non-practising Muslim family, Adrian does not frequent mosques and the local Muslim community does not interest him. His Islam is that of a Quietist Salafism that he mostly learns about on the internet and which offers him an argument for distancing himself from the society that rejected him (Amghar, 2011; Adraoui, 2013; Wagemakers, 2016). However, Quietist Salafism is but a brief interruption,

because he seeks action beyond the constraints of an intense religious practice. The revolts in Syria, subsequent repression and the birth of jihadist groups presented him with the new possibility of responding to the rejection he experienced and to a growing sense of injustice. His internet research led intelligence officials to knock on his door. At a very young age, he was summoned to the police station, but was seen as a victim, according to a widespread approach at the time in France, which associated radicalisation with sectarian drifts[29]. Faced with fear and his father's anger, he calmed down, distanced himself from jihadist internet forums and got married[30]. However, a second event, which he experienced as a deep injustice, drove him to go further by joining the Islamic State:

> There were the attacks and 16 November, they came hooded and armed. They broke down the door and then jumped on me. I didn't understand and they told me 'Indeed, sir, you will be put under house arrest', without any explanation… I couldn't stay with my wife either, who was pregnant. I had to stay at my parents'… So yeah, I began reporting in four times a day. Honestly, I wouldn't wish that on anyone. It completely destroyed me…. I'd never felt such anger before. I'd never felt such anger towards France… It was similar to the first rejection I'd experienced from society. So that was the second rejection.

A sense of injustice and humiliation turned his radicalisation, at the time still cognitive, into something behavioural. Adrian wanted 'to get even', to take action. An ideology, that of the Islamic State, endorsed his actions and gave a larger meaning to his subjective anger. He reconnected with his friends from secondary school, with whom he imagined 'getting revenge', in what became a collective endeavour where the peer group served as a catalyst for individual action. Adrian and the other members (all minors) of the group would be arrested just before taking action. Thus, with every injustice endured, Adrian took a further step to isolate himself within an increasingly rigid vision of the religion and an extremist attitude that legitimises violence. Several years after his arrest, during our conversations, he was finally able to put into words what seemed to be a radicalisation due, above all, to subjective wounds following successive experiences of rejection:

> It's the desire for justice, the search for justice… [but] it's also about the life I was living. Meaning I always felt like I'd constantly been chased out of my own country. It's not that I left on my own free will. How I see it, I was pretty much chased out. That means that actually I always grew up with injustice. I think things like that were unfair to me… it feels like being condemned, eternally, for the rest of my life. So yeah, inevitably when you're faced with a feeling of injustice and things like that and when there are things that come your way like the Islamic State, restoring justice in the world and everything, well… For me, that's why, I mean, I wanted to do it because of the anger I had.

Adrian's trajectory is defined by rejection that accumulated over time and by the impossibility of escaping a stigmatising condition: initially as a refugee (a condition that feeds into nostalgia for a lost and inaccessible world); then, closed off in a marginalised neighbourhood, in which he was targeted by stigmatisation; and finally, following his choices and (cognitive) adherence to radical Islam, trapped in a 'terrorist' category, which made him the target of the police and neighbours (his wife was assaulted on the street). At each stage of his life, the doors closed and the rejection he endured provoked subsequent rejection, creating a cumulative relationship where one responds to rejection with another rejection. In

---

[29] In France, it is the Centre for the Prevention of Sectarian Drifts Related to Islam (CPDSI), responsible for managing minors reported as showing signs of radicalisation, that represents this approach (Bouzar et al., 2014).

[30] Still a minor, Adrian married a woman with whom he built a family unit in opposition to French society. He describes how they enjoyed sending messages the day of the football World Cup, messages in which they ('jokingly') mentioned the idea of going out and killing all the non-believers who were partying in the streets. His wife, with whom he has two children, would later leave him while he was incarcerated.

what appears to be a classic reversal of stigma (Goffman, 1975), Adrian builds his identity, representations and belonging upon the stigma at the heart of his exclusion.

Adrian died in prison, apparently due to an innocuous stomach-ache that was not treated in time. In our last interviews, a few months before he died, he shared with me his critical take on his own trajectory:

> We were in this bubble, where there was only hatred, only hatred towards everyone... It was a closed circle and there was only hatred, anger, resentment, the desire to cause pain, you know.

The subjective experience of discrimination and stigmatisation - strictly linked to social and economic inequality, in many cases a direct consequence of ethno-racial origin or spatial segregation, - push certain young people to adhere to a movement or a narrative that allows them to flip stigma and thus transform individual weakness into strengths in order to reverse power relations. Rejection and the breaking of ties with society begins when subjective humiliation and suffering is identified with a collective authority, the neo-Ummah, that is also suffering and humiliated, in what is known as identification by proxy (Khosrokhavar, 2006: 311-326). Adrian's personal participation, like that of Romain and the others, is built around the idea of a Muslim community that is persecuted and humiliated throughout the world. The defence of Muslims hinges on the idea of the birth of a new society in which justice would finally reign. In this ideal society, differences would be erased, whether in terms of class, economics, race or territory. In this new utopian society, the hypocrisy of our societies - stemming from both individuals and governments as well as states constantly accused of deceiving the people - would disappear. It represents the dream of an egalitarian society, free from the inequality and injustice that have accompanied the lives of these young people. Here, again, we come across the idea of an exit from the society in which the individual grew up and lived, related to what can be defined as the political dimension of the *al-walâ' wa al-barâ'* doctrine (loyalty and disavowal). This dimension essentially denounces as idolatrous all forms of belonging or allegiance to modern society and to its value system, and instead prescribes the strict and literalist observance of the commandments found in the Sacred Scriptures. In a type of reiteration of a language learned first on the internet and later in prison, Romain explains how the doctrine *al-walâ' wa al-barâ'* must be extensively applied to any relationship:

> There are no gods, there's no democracy, there are no idols, no communism, all those are false, invented ideologies, except Allah. That's the covenant... Only my brothers are there.

These words reveal, of course, also how the ideal society might be distorted in that differences between individuals emerge on the basis of one's proximity to God or, more precisely, in relation to a certain vision of Islam, which is promoted by a certain elite. This is the logic of *takfir*, the ex-communication of any Muslim who does not share a particular vision of Islam.

4.3.3. Becoming a political actor by destroying the political field

The feeling of being unheard, expulsion from the democratic apparatus and the construction of society or being removed from the political field, is shared by many of our respondents. This feeling is coupled with a sense of fatalism and uselessness that contributes to the de-valuing of the self. Humiliated, stigmatised and degraded, these young people discover in radical Islam - and particularly in jihadist movements - the possibility of reversing this relationship of domination. This involves positioning oneself as superior to 'native' French people, either through the fear one instils (which becomes a source of self-esteem) or through a sense of having made a valued contribution to a cause perceived as 'just'. The trajectory of Adil, a young person who was quite reluctant to speak, illustrates this subjective need to attain self-esteem via participation/commitment. As a young man who does not really practise Islam and who, as he says, has a taste for life, Adil left a major French city for Syria with a dozen friends and his brother, anticipating a phenomenon, that of brotherhood, which is a characteristic of the jihadism of this decade (Khosrokhavar,

2018; Ferret et al, 2020). Some later would die in Syria; others would return to France, where they would be convicted in one of the biggest trials for jihadism; and one later would blow himself up at the Bataclan on 13 November 2015. Adil builds his commitment upon a relentless criticism of the democratic system, defined as hypocritical and devoted exclusively to defending the interests of a minority. According to Adil, the voice of the people is simply unheard and the stigmatisation of minorities, beginning with Muslims, becomes an obvious element governing French society. In what again appears as a reciprocal, cumulative rejection, Adil responds to marginalisation by merely placing himself outside a society that rejected him. In the attempt to become a political actor, one ends up destroying 'politics' as a field of confrontation and negotiation. Only the space of war remains, as Adil and many others openly say. Adil pushes the idea of a voluntary escape from French society to the extreme, as seen in comments like, 'I'm not French' and/or 'I want to leave this country'. Behind this idea is the longing for another, often imaginary, world pictured as a mythical community that does not really exist. Such a vision is rooted in the fantasy of travelling to distant lands and the image of a world where pure religious rule is law. For these young French people, freshly converted or reacquainted with Islam, leaving an oppressive and corrupt society like France to join a world of virtue in order to ease their worries and their sense of injustice and powerlessness, quickly becomes a desire and sometimes an obsession. Adil sought this new world in Syria, where he spent four months with ISIS. The neo-Ummah became a new nation for him and the Islamic State, the new homeland. What radical Islam offers to this young person, like many others, is chiefly the possibility for a rewarding commitment:

> Before, I never had the opportunity to get involved, and then it just happened naturally, spontaneously. A natural way of participating to go out and help Muslim people. I had to take responsibility.

Taking responsibility is therefore a way of emancipating oneself and claiming a new role in the society. A way of existing through the assumption of responsibility. Adil explains that his participation arose from the interaction between a personal need (that of committing to a cause) and an ideal (that of building an authentically-Islamic society):

> If you want to understand, you mustn't start with the details… Ask yourself how the differences between people were erased by something they had in common: they're attracted to an idea!... They find it ideal to reproduce their religion from the beginning. Rebuild Islam from scratch; this idea transcends differences, like those between rich and poor, between people from different countries. It covers everyone because this idea has no borders.

This ideal is all the more rewarding because for Adil, as for all the others who would have liked to leave but were not able to, it is a matter of committing oneself in the name of justice, precisely against the injustice enacted upon Muslims:

> I left in 2013, to fight the regime of Bachar al-Assad and to aid Muslims. A question I always get asked is what if it hadn't been Muslims? No, then I wouldn't have gone. I wouldn't have made that commitment for people of other faiths… I went to fight the injustice done to Muslims.

The subjective need to get involved combines with the desire to write this history and to participate in the construction of an authentic Muslim society modelled by the ancestors. Such an idea presents the possibility of not only building a new society, but also of satisfying the desire to participate in something 'great' and 'just', achieving the self-affirmation they do not find in French society. As Scott Atran (2016) underlines, Islamic State was able to channel the rebelliousness of these young people, their energy, idealism and even their need for sacrifice, while the West urges moderation and risk avoidance. Adherence to the ideal project of establishing a community where religious law reigns supreme thus takes

on a cathartic function: it restores the self-esteem of these young people (immigrants, from suburbs, Muslims, etc.) by undoing the self-contempt that the West has instilled in them. This ideal rehabilitates them by re-affirming their self-worth, in their own eyes and in the eyes of (some) others. Yet, ultimately, the ideal never comes to fruition. After four months, Adil returned, disappointed. In Syria, it was rather greed, human 'weakness' and opportunistic logics that eventually prevailed.

4.3.4. Being 'chosen': Changing status with the forgiveness of God

Radical Islam offers a way out to young people who are failing, restless, anomic, solitary or seeking an ideal to commit themselves to, if not the opportunity to reinvent themselves. This ideology gives them the possibility to change their status on the condition that they cut prior social and emotional ties in order to be reborn within a new identity. The discourse articulated by Jeremy—a convert in his forties sentenced to eight years in prison for recruiting young people he allegedly encouraged to travel to Syria—one of whom became a major leader in ISIS - provides us with some angles of understanding. Jeremy presents himself as a scholar, someone who knows the religion. He explains that it is God who decides whom to guide, effectively erasing human will (and responsibility):

> You can't find God by looking for Him, because He finds you. He comes to us… no one can discover on their own. He's the one who imparts knowledge, who decides things. He gives what he wants to whom he wants. This is sustenance - *Al baqa*. We ourselves are nothing… My path - everything - led me to this. Everything comes from Him.

> Interviewer: And free will?

> Jeremy: When we speak of sustenance, we negate free will.

Here, two important aspects emerge: the act of being 'chosen' and the condition of detachment, as in the need to detach oneself from everything - from all personal will, as well as from any human relationship and sentiments - in order to follow the divine path. Jeremy provides an unexpected example that enables us to further refine the notion of detachment.

> If you choose your wife because you love her, you are bending to what you love. And not to what makes you move forward. It's up to God to decide. Not us… Our ally is God, our enemy is the soul, the devil, this lowly world… The soul (citing a verse in Arabic) is the ego in French. It's something that wants for itself, its desire and the passions of man. Within, there are all the failings of man and the devil works through the soul. The more one manages to control the soul, the more one pleases God. The more one humbles the soul, the higher one rises.

In this manner, Jeremy explains that his incarceration is the expression of divine will:

> God created each individual's destiny: everyone must accomplish the task that God reserved for him… I'm fine here. It's God who put me here, in a given time and place. If I accept, that means I follow the will of God… 15 days before being arrested, I told God I wanted to go to prison to help the inmates, to lead them to the righteous path… Prison is great for doing things. For me, prison is paradise!

Jeremy particularly addresses those who are submerged in significant, if not crushing, guilt and social disapproval. He offers them an exit strategy to erase the past and open oneself to new perspectives; the forgiveness of God.

> What I say is that God forgives everyone, even a paedophile. There was a paedophile here and I spoke with him. I told him, 'what you did is done, but what counts is what you do tomorrow'. In just a short span of time, he changed in an unbelievable way. Because God forgives.

Everything is forgiven when one gives oneself to God. More specifically, it is God who decides whom to choose, while human will disappear. One follows God's will, or the will of those who speak in his name, by removing oneself from this lowly world, from desires of the soul; in sum, from the devil. The individual leaves a world of sin to be reborn in purity. It is an epiphany which changes the individual's status in this world and rewards the individual in the afterlife. For these young people who are trapped in a vicious circle and who feel that there is no escaping their condition, an opportunity presents itself through God's forgiveness. What emerges is the strength of divine justice that forgives despite being confronted with human justice, which on the contrary is not forgiving. Religion - especially an all-encompassing religion - can be seen as a way out, as a form of social and personal redemption. All is forgiven. It is in this relationship between those who have gone astray and those who illuminate the path designed by God that we find a possible explanation for the decision to adhere to radical Islam as well as a logic of recruitment, both in and outside prison. This is not necessarily a call to jihad, but rather an opportunity to show the way to those who are lost or 'gone astray'. An escape route for these young people who struggle in a society that (almost) condemns them for life. By accomplishing the tasks assigned to them by God or by those who speak clearly in his name, they are reborn as innocents on God's path. This idea of a new status is intriguing for the opportunity it provides young people to escape from the humiliation they felt and become all-powerful 'after a life spent suffering', 'after a life spent being nothing but losers'. This is what Benslama (2016) refers to as 'super-Muslims'. This also explains the fascination generated by this idea of belonging to a small group of 'chosen' and 'fated' ones who defy the great powers of this world, namely the powers allied against representatives of 'true Islam'.

4.3.5. Reversing power relations: affective vs. rational, heart vs. reason

'Knowledge lies in the heart', explains Jeremy. According to this rhetoric, truth derives from God or the Qur'an, and one can only access it through the heart and/or through intermediary scholars who illuminate the path created by God. Other truths are only human and, thus, the result of imprecise examination which is dominated by doubt; whereas doubt falls away when truth is accessed through the heart. As Romain puts it, 'we have no doubts, we are in the truth.' In this type of account, 'being in the truth' refers to a state of grace that is not based on logic. Truth comes from faith and not from research, the quest for truth, or by rationally confronting the Other. Therefore, the relationship to knowledge shifts from the terrain of logical arguments towards the domain of affects. It becomes a question of good and evil, just and unjust, as the confrontation with the Other through logical argumentation and scientific knowledge are quickly pushed aside, if not invalidated[31]. For young people who grew up surrounded by uncertainty, destruction, even chaos, radical Islam thus presents itself as the opportunity for order through the mastering, if not erasure, of doubt. What revealed itself to be a characteristic element of their subjectivity is precisely the 'fear of disorder' or, to employ the definition given by Blom (2011), 'the desire for framing'. This represents the 'desperate' need for a vision and rhetoric capable of (or at least giving the illusion of) mastering the disorder specific to their lives and the doubt specific to contemporary society. What religion offers is certitude, especially within its rigorist vision. As Romain says:

> I have no doubts. Never. May Allah keep it that way. Doubt is for those who don't have the strength… The Prophet taught us that everyone questions themselves, but that people go astray on their own…
>
> Interviewer: But when you say that, you don't have any uncertainty about being wrong?
>
> Romain: No uncertainty, ever. Doubt is for those who act unjustly towards themselves.

---

[31] The definition of post-truth captures this shift, which concerns the whole of society: 'objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief' (Oxford Dictionary: https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/post-truth).

In addition to bringing order, this relationship with knowledge allows for a reversal of power dynamics; if knowledge lies in the heart and becomes a question of affect - meaning that what is true is determined by personal emotions and beliefs - then a new balance of power takes hold within the prison, as well as in society. In making emotions and pure intentions the means of accessing truth, values are redesigned, which makes it possible to redefine the power relations between individuals; he who is 'pure' is superior to he who is not, beyond the knowledge they possess or try to gain. This allows one to reverse power relationships with others, beginning with non-believers. We can see this in the case of Jeremy, who claims, 'non-Muslims change their minds 40 times a day. But I don't change'.

This represents a binary, Manichean vision that distinguishes between the 'chosen ones' and everyone else, where one finds the space of faith (in which one devotes oneself to God's path) and the space of non-belief (ruled by passion and the desires of this lowly world). As an inmate describes, 'as long as the others are seen as non-believers, anything can happen'. In this way, a binary world takes shape around the contraposition between in-group (us) and out-group (them), according to a logic which can easily become belligerent, as Romain says:

> It's actually a war that's been going on for centuries. Between right and wrong. Between true and false. That's it.
>
> Interviewer: And you feel like you're part of this war?
>
> Romain: We're all part of this war. Even you, you're part of it [we laugh]… There's no neutral, you're either against or for…
>
> Interviewer: And for society, you think that in this war there will be a winner and loser?
>
> Romain: Of course. We're the winners. Here and in the afterlife, we will be the winners.

4.3.6. Radical sociabilities: the internet, the group, the network

The encounter between the supply (namely the narrative of radical Islam) and the demand (the subjective dimensions encompassing experiences, fears, needs, etc.) takes place via spaces of sociability that enable individuals, who are isolated and/or in search of roots, to identify with, or even dissolve into, the community of 'true' believers. As was expected, the internet has been fundamental in shaping Adrian and Romain's trajectories, in what can be defined as a process of 'self-radicalisation'. This is a process by which a person shapes his/her social identity to match a given ideology by actively searching for radical information and networks without necessarily being a member of an established radical group (Paton, 2020). Adrian explains:

> This whole phase happened on the internet, there was no one who guided me. It happened in a really isolated way; just me and the internet… During that time, I learned about religion on the internet.

Romain goes even further, in a complete upheaval of the production of religious knowledge, which demonstrates a break with Islamic culture and tradition:

> I've never been to a mosque and I've never spoken with imams… But the internet is a way to connect with scholars… Online, if you follow the Qur'an and the Sunna, you can't go wrong… That's the source.

Blaise, a 37-year-old convicted for terrorism, brings a critical perspective to the path that led him to prison and a deep sense of failure:

> It's because I had often been disappointed by real people and I gravitated towards virtual people, Muslims… At the time, I spent too much time on social networks. Every time someone

asked me for help, I helped them, I sent them money, etc[32]. I was too naïve. But that virtual life is over for me. When I get out, I don't want to get close to the internet again, not even the phone.

Originally, Adrian took a solitary approach to the internet, but over time his approach became more concrete, especially in his slide towards violence, within a peer group. Romain builds his radical Islam and adherence to jihadism through his computer before later solidifying his vision through a group, the new 'family' that takes shape within the prison setting: 'I always have brothers who are here for jihadism. We're connected, even if we don't know each other. Religion is what unites us.' In contrast, from the outset, Adil's approach is formed through the peer group, a group of somewhat 'ordinary' young people, like those described in the work of Sageman (2008) or in my work on the Cannes-Torcy branch (Conti, 2018; Conti, 2020b). It is within this group that individual commitment materialises in what can be referred to as the dilution of individuality within the collective.

The internet, neighbourhood groups, Syria and finally prison become the social spaces comprising a network. In detention, in prisons where jihadists come together (Chantraine et al, 2018; Micheron, 2020), but also in outlying prisons, 'radicals' constitute a specific group (De Galembert, 2016 and 2020; Khosrokhavar, 2018; Conti, 2018). Above all, they are subject to institutional labelling, which designates them as a (dangerous) category apart. Additionally, they are labelled as such by 'other' prisoners. Finally, most of them too construct a language that distinguishes them from the others, so much so that sometimes they use the same labels, as 'radicals', to designate themselves during our exchanges. While some try to avoid communication with other prisoners imprisoned for terrorism or radicalisation, to fade away, others try to communicate and thus create a feeling of solidarity, which can strengthen them individually and collectively. Some even try to assert themselves in prison as a separate and specific group. These include those who are deeply involved and who feel, in a way, that they have nothing left to lose. It should also be pointed out that some of them knew each other before entering prison. Not in person, but as members of a network, built and powered by the internet, in which they know the pseudonym, or even the battle name, of each other. This is a network of a limited number of people united by an ideological vision, that of creating an Islamic state, governed by a certain vision of Sharia law, which can be called the 'jihadosphere'. It is a network that includes men and women, who marry amongst themselves, revealing a small community that broke with not only French society, but with traditional Islam and family bonds. Thus, even in prison, they try to organise marriages amongst themselves, with the goal of founding a new, explicitly jihadist family as part of a new community, the neo-Ummah. Jeremy had allegedly tried to force his 16-year-old adopted daughter to marry an inmate. Adil, transferred on suspicion of wanting to manufacture a 3-D weapon in prison along with another TIS (an inmate convicted for Islamic Terrorism), had a religious wedding with the sister of a shooter from the Bataclan attack. This is a jihadosphere that today, as we shall see, no longer attracts people like it used to and which is less and less functional.

4.4. Safeguards to resist, refuse and counter the narrative of radical Islam

It is reasonable to wonder why some young people - at odds with society, scarred by successive wounds, who feel deeply that they have been excluded and trapped in a vicious circle - do not become radicalised. The discourse of radical Islam provides multiple 'resources' to respond to the need and desire for escape, success and to raise self-esteem. In order to illustrate which resources are mobilised to resist, refuse and counter the path of total withdrawal offered by radical Islam, I will begin on a macro level, namely the

---

[32] Blaise refers to Nizar Trabelsi, a Tunisian terrorist convicted of planning an attack on an American military base in Belgium.

declining allure of what is being offered. Next, we will see how safeguards function in the lives of these young people; safeguards that ultimately reveal the will to not cut oneself off from the world, since 'what connects us outweighs what divides us' (Truong, 2017: 50). These safeguards often operate at the intersection of three levels: micro, meso and macro. We will first look at the role of the original family unit, as well as the allure of the image surrounding the new, constructed family. Then we will concentrate on Islam—a collective, subjective, even private, experience that positions itself as a powerful alternative to the ideology of radical Islam. Finally, we will examine the modalities and resources developed or envisioned to conflictualise the sense of injustice within the public sphere. In particular, we will see that it is through renewing pre-existing ties (or by reinventing new ones) that respondents attempt to root themselves and respond to the need to bring order to their lives.

4.4.1. The temporalities of radicalisation: the waning of the fascination with radicalism

The temporalities of radicalisation are of utmost importance, as much in individual processes as in collective dynamics. During a particular period, approximately between 2012 and 2017 (i.e. during the construction of the Islamic State in Syria) we witnessed what Adil refers to as a 'social movement', namely young people drawn to the great adventure of building a new, authentically-Islamic society (Atran, 2016)[33]. This was a phase of exaltation that mobilised all kinds of young people beyond their social origin, political involvement or even religious practice. Within the prison system, this meant that the narrative of radical Islam was particularly attractive and that the 'radicals' basked in a particular vanguard aura, seen as being courageous enough to go all the way. By 'completely' taking responsibility for their choices (changing names, breaking intimate ties, incarceration, uninhibited speech, death), they presented themselves as 'models' of ethical integrity and great courage, and appeared to be people emancipated from family and social protection/restriction. In a way, they were testament to an emancipation that was (and is) highly sought after among ghettoised, marginalised or imprisoned youth[34]. Death, imagined or even desired, appeared to be the ultimate proof of their autonomy (Chauvenet, 2010; Roy, 2016). This is supported by my observations in 2015 (Conti, 2018) as well as by research conducted during this period (Chantraine et al, 2018; Crettiez and Sèze, 2017; Micheron, 2020).

That time is simply over. The narrative of radical Islam is no longer as enchanting as it was before, either in prison or outside. Three main reasons can be identified. First, the ideal was never attained, above all because ISIS lost the territory it had gained. Second, those whom Thompson (2016) calls 'returnees' brought back a feeling of disappointment, as Adil's words demonstrate:

> Interviewer: And today what do you think of your actions?
>
> Adil: I don't regret anything about the intentions. There might be regret around how things played out, the way, the method: that was disgusting. The intentions were noble, but the method was disgusting.
>
> Interviewer: Disgusting?
>
> Adil: Yes, the terrain was disgusting because it was like the rebellion turned against itself, leaving Bachar in place… I came back following this disappointment.

---

[33] This notion of a social movement is at the core of Cassut and Micheron's analysis: https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2017/02/21/comment-le-djihad-s-impose-dans-la-campagne-presidentielle_5082708_3232.html

[34] Whether they have converted or have reinitiated their practice of Islam, these young people mark their new identity and new belonging through rites of passage, starting with a change of name. Choosing a name for oneself (*kunya*) is hailed as a possibility to reinvent oneself, since it is evidence of the symbolic death of the uncertain, Western individual and the birth of a new religious and undoubting one. In the words of Nicole Lapierre, 'to name someone is to bring them into existence and to touch their name is the reach their integrity' (2000: 277).

In Syria, where the ideal was supposed to be achieved, the French fighters ultimately 'imported their *jahilya* (pre-Islamic religious ignorance) of the hood' (Thompson, 2016: 174), by reproducing the frameworks, the power relations and the injustices of the ghetto/neighbourhoods (and society) that they wanted to escape.

Additionally, the violence, which was generally performative, poses a problem so long as jihadists are not able to justify it (any more). Their discourse thus became less and less audible in prison, to the point where even those who expressed a certain fascination with the perspectives offered by radical Islam are opposed to a violence 'taken out on children', a 'blind' violence that some describe as clearly 'contrary to Islam'. This is thus a violence that delegitimises the 'radicals' in prison and, more broadly, the narrative of radical Islam.

Lastly, the trajectories of those who crossed the threshold - the 'radicals' - (almost) always ended badly. Some, like Adil, have a hard-liner attitude, in a type of one-upmanship that precludes any possibility of renewing affective and social ties. Romain descended into a black hole, which would lead him to a type of madness in which each gesture or world is engulfed by a totalising religion, erasing the individual by cutting off all forms of communication. Others managed to take a critical, if not remorseful, look back on their paths. This is the case of Adrian:

> I participated in a theatre session on radicalisation and it was nice. For certain things, it was as if you were looking at yourself, like in a mirror. You could see the way you were. And I thought to myself, 'wow, I was really twisted! I was living in the same house as my parents, but I wasn't talking to them!'

Others are simply disappointed and nowadays only dream of withdrawing from this world, in an admission of failure. Jeremy was quickly dismissed by the other inmates and his discourse on God's forgiveness, which might have been found fascinating several years prior, ultimately found very few followers. Like Blaise, he sullenly wondered how to begin a new life upon his release. Thus, Blaise ended up taking refuge in another ideal, which he found in the image of a shepherd grandfather in Algeria:

> I plan to go back to Algeria and even to have a job there that will let me stay removed from society… For example, living like a peasant, like my grandfather did… The farm, life in nature, that's what the Prophet recommends. There's a *hadith* that tells you to live in the mountains. And also, with my grandfather, it's important to remember where you come from, you have to go back to your roots.

Here Blaise depicts familial roots instead of religious ones, a farm in the mountains instead of the utopian homeland where religious law would rule.

4.4.2. Affective ties: family as a grounding tool and a path to forgiveness/salvation

On a micro level, family ties persist, despite the breakdown of the family. This is a primary resource which makes it possible, on the one hand, to resist or counter the discourse of radical Islam and, on the other, to imagine future life paths. While the narrative of radical Islam pushes family dysfunction to the extreme, by cutting emotional and normative ties, in these other cases, one tries 'desperately' to renew or reinvent such bonds. Hence, family presents itself as a space of identity construction, of forgiveness and of looking ahead.

First of all, the creation of a personal narrative, finding the words to describe a wounded identity, occurs when family history is put into words. These family histories occupy a central place in the trajectories of the young people who are constantly trying to bring coherence to their lives in order to rebuild themselves: knowing where one comes from makes it possible to think about where one is going. This work of bringing order to one's biography operates in particular through family memory and through the

(re)discovery of familial sentiments and bonds. Those who have passed the adolescent phase or who will soon pass it are most likely the ones engaging in this work. Thus, Teodoro, 30, envisions an escape from delinquency through rebuilding a family history, in which references to his father and grandfather enable him to explain his journey and to articulate the ethics he is building. Like so many others, Teodoro lays roots through family memory in order to plan for the future. This memory is reshaped, above all, according to the needs of the present because, as Joël Candau so accurately writes, 'there is no true act of memory that is not anchored in current identity issues' (1998: 146). In this way, Griezmann—who meets all the conditions (personal fragilities, inequalities, perceived injustice and socials context) for finding a rewarding commitment and a way out of a difficult circumstance within the narrative of radical Islam— builds his identity in the image of his grandfather, who, as a role model, helps Griezmann respond to the feeling of injustice and the pain of double absence:

> Personally, I always loved my grandfather, my father's father. He was French… My grandfather had an enormous heart. And I always look up to him and think, 'they're not all the same'. At one point I told myself I didn't want to see them anymore (French people, whites and everything), but then I thought to myself, 'no, they're not all the same'.

In this work of biographical ordering, grandparents are often presented as models to follow, in a generational jump that makes it possible to put the pieces back together by erasing the most painful aspects, like the absent father, his resignation from his authority, or any shame within the institution of the family.

Secondly, the family, with its affective ties, also presents itself as a place for forgiveness and, consequently, salvation. Marco, Saïd and Ousmane all speak of a family that did not abandon them, despite the suffering caused by their delinquent paths. It is with this altruism, this gift, that the counter-gift is produced; one does not leave family. Not abandoning an imprisoned son, brother or husband reveals itself to be a gift of the self, which later connects and binds; one matters to someone and this fact both engenders self-esteem and entails a moral obligation, even a moral debt, in that one wants to give as well[35]. It is in this manner that Marco evokes his mother, who raised him alone and who followed him during his incarceration, without ever abandoning him, even while he descended into delinquency and violence. Marco, a youth spent in violence and crime, prison and knives, explains that his change was due to the self-sacrifice of his mother, who - in spite of everything - never abandoned him:

> Marco: I didn't change in Guadeloupe. I was always the same.
>
> Interviewer: Is it here?
>
> Marco: No, it started in Martinique.
>
> Interviewer: When you get out of all this dynamic that keeps you going all the time?
>
> Marco: When I switched to CD (long detention), I had started to think a bit because my mother wanted to go to France. And that she didn't want to go to France because I was... she didn't want to leave me. So, I said: 'Go ahead, leave! Don't worry about me, just go! - But no, you'll be all alone. I know you, if on top of that I'm not there...'. I said: 'No, go ahead...'. She didn't want to leave ... And in the end, I asked to go to France so that she could be in France, so that she could do her training, so that she could be well. Pfff... She's in Paris, she's doing her training.

---

[35] In *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, published in 1924, Marcel Mauss explains that 'to refuse to give, to fail to invite, just as to refuse to accept, is tantamount to declaring war; it is to reject the bond of alliance and fellowship'.

This moral obligation, as well as the possibility of paying off such a debt, is based on trust, as described by Saïd, who is essentially the only respondent to have grown up in a structured family: 'They're sad to see me here and I get it. But then again, they believe in me a lot, they trust me and even today they believe in me'.

Blood and family ties also claim their place for those who adhere to a radical vision of Islam and who spent time cutting off social and emotional bonds. In such cases, the original family is seen as an emergency exit, leading towards salvation, as Adrian clearly states:

> If someone really wants to see me change, the only way to do it is through my parents. They're the only ones who are able to calm me down and hold me back. If I feel like doing something stupid, they're the only ones who can stop me. To be honest, it's really my mom. For me, they're the solution.

Lastly, family represents a space in which one can plan for the future. Some of these young people are now themselves parents, which changes their status. Such is the case of Anissa, who only dreams of leaving her ghetto to ensure a better future for her three children. Then there is Saïd, who sees the education of his three sons as another tool to become stable and open towards society, since he wants to guarantee them a good education and success in French society. The words of Antoine, father of two, attest to the fundamental role children can play in the construction of a future path, both for those who already have a family and for those planning to build one when they get out of prison:

> Interviewer: So what helps you stay in line, resist these types of messages and solicitations, is the fact that you have children?

> Antoine: It's because if we have the desire to live, it's always for something. I know that it's my family, my children… I live for them.

Here, we again find the need to construct oneself by giving oneself, which becomes a source of attributing value and building a particular ethic. The responsibility towards others constitutes, in sorts, the key to escaping a vicious circle of disdain, uselessness and failure.

Therefore, while the narrative of radical Islam accelerates the destruction of the family in crisis by replacing it with an ideal (but also ephemeral) family, those who refuse or resist to adhere to the narrative of radical Islam still cling to their families (or what remains of them) and to what family can represent. For certain young people, family was one cause (among many) of desocialisation and thus of the process of radicalisation, whereas for others, family acted as a type of 'counter-power'. The new, distinctly jihadist idea of the family was therefore challenged by pre-existing ties. Loyalty and debt within the original family, as well as ties based on blood and affection, prevented some respondents from going down a path of no return. For others, family represented the primary way out of a 'jihadist' phase (Conti, 2020b).

4.4.3. Islam as a shield against radicalisation by bringing order to the self and the world

Islam is mobilised by individuals who identify with radical Islam. They claim to speak in the name of 'true Islam', that which is created by scholars; sheiks in Saudi Arabia, Yemen or elsewhere. It is an imaginary Islam, beyond time and space - an Islam of past scholars who are read and interpreted as if they were prophets of the present, as the chaplain says:

> They have been brainwashed and it's difficult to pull them out of that. It's like inside a cult, they follow middle-men who speak in the name of Islam, so-called scholars who are not even in France… Those whom they call 'scholars' are capable of simplifying the world, making things easier to grasp: 'God said, the Prophet said'. What they are seeking is simplicity… For these radicalised youth, there's a real problem of knowledge.

The constant reference made to scholars, not tied to any particular time or place, is directly linked to a persistent observation; before turning to radical Islam, none of these young people had practiced regularly or had much religious knowledge. Some, like Adil, continued to relegate religious practice to second place, even after having carried out jihad. In the past, Blaise - and, more recently, Adrian and Romain - skipped several steps, plunging directly into a decidedly radical vision of Islam, one committed to action. None of the respondents situate themselves in the Islam they associate with French mosques, traditional Islam or family traditions surrounding religious practice. Their Islam is instead one of separation, disconnected from concrete reality. A PDF Islam, in some cases (Conti, 2020b). This entails an alternate form of detachment, one largely illustrated by Roy, who highlights the importance of the processes of deculturation and deterritorialisation of Islam (2002 and 2016).

Other respondents employ Islam to counter the narrative of radical Islam, in what appears to be a mutual act of excommunication regarding what constitutes 'true Islam'. First, there are those who practice Islam regularly and rigorously, such as Ousmane and Saïd. By fixing norms and structuring their lives, Islam most importantly offers a means of establishing order. Saïd, the son of a countryside imam, positions himself within a territorial Islam, made of memories, traditions and individuals that give a concrete and collective materiality to the religion. This is an Islam with a strong ethical dimension, as Saïd explains:

> My religion forbids me to do harm. You see, it forbids me to steal, it forbids me to do harm, it forbids me to lie, it forbids me to hurt anyone. You see? So when you understand all that, it's not possible. But when you go see someone, half of them might call themselves Muslims but half of them - and I've spoken with a lot of them - don't pray or don't respect, for example, the five pillars of Islam. They don't respect anything.

Contrary to 'radicals', who have never visited mosques - or if they do, do so merely in an opportunistic manner, to find like-minded individuals or to proselytise, like Jeremy, who was known to and excluded from certain mosques due to his speech - religious practice and morality are part of a collective approach. Ousmane, who is married to a non-practicing woman, understands his religious rigour as a strictly personal undertaking. Like Saïd, he settles into religion, which represents peace and stillness, not action and movement like it does for the jihadists. Blaise, in his experience of disappointment and defection from radical Islam, ultimately adopts this logic, centred on the individual more than action. Like Ousmane, but contrary to Saïd, he advocates for a withdrawal from French society, in what appears to be a private relationship with Islam:

> I feel like things here in France don't concern me. I see myself as a resident, in transit… Certain things go against my religion. For me, it's like travelling, because here divine laws aren't applied. I stay back. They have their laws and I stay outside, on my own.

Younger inmates, whose perspectives condemn the jihadist ideology, also refer to Islam, and in particular to a traditional, ethical and family-centred Islam. Their Islam lies in the intersection between an individualised, almost private, appropriation of the religion and a territorial, familial and community-based inheritance[36]. For these young people, Islam primarily represents an escape route, a last resort to which they can turn to save themselves, a refuge to be preserved (Khosrokhavar, 2004; Sarg and Lamine, 2011; Béraud et al, 2013; Conti, 2014). The idea of reconverting and 'voluntarily' returning to the tenets of Islam, presents itself as an opportunity to re-aesthetise the world, as Truong aptly writes (2017: 128). This represents a practical and symbolic means of finding one's place and renewing ties from a rewarding position, instead of fighting. Islam is thus described as a resource that allows one to become calm, find stability and conform to a particular ethical framework. It is therefore a way to escape from illegality, but

---

[36] The relationship with Islam also evolves with age. While during adolescence, Islam often appears as an opportunity to break away from, even to challenge, the established order, during adulthood, Islam may transform into a path towards reconciliation with family values and memory, as well as a framing tool for establishing order.

also constitutes a resource, for example, for building a family. This vision contrasts with the jihadist one, which seeks to break original, albeit fragile, family bonds in order to create new, fleeting families in line with the logic of permanent war and continuous travel. In this sense, one opposes radical Islam precisely because the discourse and actions of 'radicals' deprives these young inmates of this 'final' resource that is Islam. By preserving Islam as ethics governing behaviour, one holds onto the possibility of escaping failure and contempt. This leads us to conclude that the Islam espoused by these inmates, even in its most rigorous version, fundamentally disagrees with the narrative of radical Islam, which turns Islam into a tool of action rather than ease, of instability rather than steadiness, of fighting rather than peace. Radical Islam is an Islam of revolt, which uproots and breaks the bonds that these young people try (with difficulty) to renew.

4.4.4. Becoming a political and/or social actor

While family and Islam offer first and foremost an exit strategy and forgiveness, as well as a sense of order, other identifications and loyalties allow for more direct responses to feelings of injustice. This sense of injustice is widely shared and takes different forms depending on age, experience, opportunities and perspective; in sum, according to the resources one is able to mobilise. It is particularly through conflictualising the feeling of being trapped, rejected and cast aside politically and socially that some attempt (or are able) to reverse the stigma which confines and devalues them. Some individuals (try to) manage to include themselves in collective narratives that serve to mount opposition that is purely political. In an account that is by no means exhaustive, I observed a variety of what Truong (2017) refers to as 'safeguards' that shield one from the temptation of totally breaking with society. Unlike the narrative of radical Islam, these 'safeguards' translate the willingness (or the attempt) to renew ties or to form new ones. The conflictualisation of exclusion and injustice - and for some, commitment and participation - occurs by being part of the city (*polis*), as in the social and political space one inhabits. Their horizon is not a distant or imaginary world, but one that is concrete: the family, the mosque, the neighbourhood, the city, the nation. To this, others also add specific identifications with social movements, which are still part of the public sphere, which is understood as a space of struggle, demands and assertions on the part of the social actor. According to individuals, these 'safeguards' can materialise at different levels within public space (local, national and transnational) and require different types of loyalty and identification, as well as forms of engagement. These levels intersect and overlap to produce diverse trajectories[37].

The first level is the local. It manifests as relationships that are formed daily within the living spaces of these individuals. To begin with, there are friendships, neighbours and professional relationships, but also support that is provided by institutions: schools for children, the social security system, hospital, etc.). These relationships primarily take shape at the neighbourhood level, which can become a place of identification. This is the case for Momo, who, through the neighbourhood and its norms and relationships, transforms spatial identity into a tool for resisting a total split. This identification is even more pronounced in the case of Paul, who builds his identity by pitting those inside the neighbourhood (the Us) against those outside (the Them) - a territorial identification/opposition that allows him to express his rage. This also applies to Griezmann, whose life is immersed in violence and whose self-esteem is built on relationships he developed within the neighbourhood, where he is known not only for his criminal offences, but also for his actions on behalf of the poor. This personal narrative is the foundation of his identity and strengthens his ties with the territory, where he attempts to lay down roots, to connect himself to social and emotional spaces. Ousmane, stigmatised by the visibility of his Islam and the ties he has broken with the State and society, finds roots in the village of his birth and where his wife and children,

---

[37] As both a methodological tool and the reflection of the organisation and interpretation of social relations on the part of social stakeholders, the division of public space in three levels (local, national and transnational) is elaborated and analysed in my research on Islam in Italy (Conti, 2014).

who patiently and painfully await his release, have found unexpected forms of solidarity with non-Muslims. These are forms of solidarity anchored in space that 'warmed his heart' and which contrast with the binary logic of radical Islam:

> People know me, they know the individual. Beyond religion, beyond the aspect it gives off, they know the person. Look, I'm in prison. Everyone in my village knows it. The bakery comes and brings back pastries, even snacks, the tobacconist, the Monoprix, etc. I mean there is a solidarity - when my wife told me that, my heart felt like it was going to explode, because I was happy ... and yet outside I am in kamis, I wear the jihallaba, I have a beard, I had a beard like that. I mean I have ostentatiously religious signs. When people look at me they say 'he's a salafist', you see.

The neighbourhood, and the relationships that play out in it, can therefore lead one in two very different directions. On one hand, as in Adil's case, the peer group from the neighbourhood contributes to the breaking of emotional and social bonds on an individual level and to resocialisation through the desire to participate in jihadist activity. The radical trajectory is a collective one, a dynamic that I observed in the case of the jihadist group Cannes-Torcy, (Conti, 2020b) and well described by Sageman (2008 and 2017). On the other hand, emotional and social connections, as well as spatial identification, constitute obstacles, or even alternatives, to responding to a sense of injustice. An alternative 'Us' is formed, in contrast with the binary one of radical Islam. In her story, Anissa thus sets the neighbourhood and her group of friends against the terrorists:

> I'm not with them (the terrorists) eh, I don't accept what they do because they kill innocent people, that's not true religion, they're not religion, they're terrorists, they're... what do you call it, shit... I don't know what the word is anymore, but they're not Muslims. God doesn't say to kill people or to kill themselves. It's very serious, it's 'haram', that means 'it's not right'. Kamikazes, that's it, they are kamikazes. They're going to Syria, they're going to fight...
>
> Interviewer: In your opinion, why do young French people, who are about your age, decide to go to Syria?
>
> Anissa: I don't know. Because they like violence.
>
> Interviewer: Do you think it's a taste for violence?
>
> Anissa: Well yes, I think so. And there are some who want... they are radicalising in fact, they want to be Muslim, they believe it is the right way to be, to kill people, but not at all. To be a Muslim is to give a hand to your neighbour, to help your neighbour.

Another level where identification and the construction of loyalty and narratives occurs is the national level. The nation essentially remains a powerful agent of identification around which certain individuals build their identities. Such is the case of Nabil, who refers to Morocco, where he was born, as the place that allows him to integrate and which serves as a shield against the allure that radical Islam can have. National identity frames his revolt and indicates the version of Islam to be followed, namely an institutional, purely Moroccan Islam. Among those who were born and raised in France, some openly assert their attachment to the country and clearly claim their French identity. In these cases, a distinction is made between injustices, including those of the State, and the nation. The discourse is possibly constructed in opposition to an elite, in an antagonism between 'included' and 'excluded', which does not correspond to (or is even an alternative to) the contraposition between in-group (us) and out-group (them) of radical Islam. For Anissa, as for others, there is an identification with France, which may at times be inexplicable, but is undeniable:

> Interviewer: You're not considering going to live [in Algeria] one day?

Anissa: Not at all, no.

Interviewer: You're fine here?

Anissa: Well yeah, I'm fine here in France.

Interviewer: But what do you love?

Anissa: (laughs) Well I don't know, I love France. We're good, we're safe here and we get a lot of assistance.

The stories the respondents tell about their own personal trajectories in particular reveal the point to which social assistance plays the role of a safeguard against radical temptation. We saw this in the case of Momo ('the only thing that's good is the social security system'), but it is an observation that extends to many other respondents, especially the older ones, like Kylian ('In France, honestly, we live well, we work, we're fine. We're not in the Third World') or Teodoro ('France gives us a lot'). This approach of national identification generally goes hand-in-hand with a process of accountability, as in accepting the reciprocal nature of violence and injustice. In other words, war takes two. This taking of responsibility that one finds especially, but not only, among the oldest respondents (such as Teodoro, Saïd or Kylian) occurs when one puts into words 'what France gives us', which prompts the need to give in return. In this sense, some go so far as to express the desire to work within the framework of State institutions, particularly in the field of social services, driven by a desire to both 'give oneself' and connect with social and political spaces[38].

This identification with a national identity was also characteristic of certain 'radicals'. Adrian felt 'indebted' to France for taking him in, revealing a desire to integrate until rejection reminded him that entering the national French narrative was impossible:

> I wasn't the one who wanted to break away from France. I never wanted to. France took me in, took in my whole family. It's more so back home where I could get killed. Here I'm safe. Why was there this split? I don't know.

Even more emblematic of this ambivalence are the words of Blaise:

> I consider myself French. I grew up here, everything's here, but here they still consider me Algerian, while in Algeria they call me French… I even had to join the French army, as part of the navy, and even represented France in boxing… I prefer the mentality here to the one there, in Algeria, because I grew up in this mentality. Even my father, when he retired, didn't build in Algeria; even though he had land over there, he built here. He feels like he belongs here. But despite that, I want to leave France because of the humiliation they made me endure… I endured so much humiliation that I can't live here. As soon as I get out, I'm going to my country, Algeria, even though I've never lived there.

In this conflictual, even contradictory, relationship with institutions, one finds criticism of a State that is not able to maintain order, letting a type of destructive chaos take over. Some begin to desire a strong state, one able to bring about order. This is clearly the case of François, who espouses a far-right agenda, but also of other individuals who identify with radical Islam, like Adrian, who longs for a state of order in his home country—a shift revealing the ambiguity between order and disorder: he has a jihadist discourse in France, while he has a nationalist one when he refers to his country of origin.

---

[38] The track of the army, pursued by a considerable number of young people, including those who later adhere to jihadism, is in this sense indicative of this double will. Moreover, the army provides a response to the search for guidance, the need for authority or the necessity of escaping the social isolation in which certain individuals were trapped. For more on this matter, see Settoul (2017) and Conti (2020).

Lastly, there is the dimension of socio-political engagement. There are accounts rooted in social history and the collective imagination that render it possible to conflictualise the sense of injustice. By being part of a grand mobilising narrative, one finds a source of validation. This is what occurred with Griezmann, whose speech builds a (rewarding) self-image through the conflictual relationship between rich and poor. In other words, he attempts to construct his identity by entering into class struggle, even if he knows nothing about the class struggle. He makes economic redistribution and socio-economic justice the hallmarks of his commitment against injustice, a political engagement that he is not yet able to name properly. The protective role he plays towards an overwhelmed father, as well as his actions towards those most disadvantaged in his neighbourhood: at the age of 14/15, he steals and gives to the homeless, he undresses in front of a poor person to give him his stolen jackets, he pays the rent for three months to an unemployed family friend he met on the street. Actions and storytelling that construct his identity and strengthen social and emotional ties, where Griezmann imagines himself as a righteous and just person.

Then one finds the type of engagement that is clearly political, such as with Teodoro, who rebuilds himself through the social movement of the fight against racism and by getting involved in helping young people from disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods:

> Bill Gates doesn't feed me. It's not the people who've got the most money or whatever. No, it doesn't have anything to do with those people, quite the opposite. It's the people who gave their life and soul for a cause: Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Mandela, Abraham Lincoln. Those are the people who feed me. That's how it is: Emile Césaire, Simon Veil. You see, those people, that image is what feeds me.

His political engagement stems from an event that shaped his life; the collective fight against the expulsion of undocumented immigrants from a church in Paris that he witnessed when he was a child. For Teodoro, as for Saïd, the 'hood' is the horizon of reflection and action. Engaging the youth becomes a way to cultivate rewarding commitments and become politically active. In the prison setting, this engagement is in 'competition' with the actions of those who identify with radical Islam, as Teodoro clearly describes:

> Interviewer: And how do the 'brothers' [as he calls the 'radicals] operate?

> Teodoro: Maybe we have the same target, in opposite directions, but they're manipulative. They manipulate the youth, they pull them in and make them listen to what they want them to hear. They plant things in their heads that have nothing to do with what these young people think. When I bring the youth in and I push them to do certain things, I try to make sure they surrender to themselves, that they discover themselves. Because most young people think they're not able to, that they can't. So then I push them to do it so that they tell themselves, 'but fuck, I can do it actually.'

In each of these cases, there is an attempt to politicise injustice by rooting oneself in socialising spaces of social groups. This approach does not ban violence, but it is not ideological. Rather it is a means of interacting with the violence that is directly or indirectly endured. In particular the violence of the state. Loyalty forms among a variety of individuals and/or groups, in an attempt to build oneself as a social actor who questions society. By conflictualising their exclusion or marginalisation, individuals try to align themselves with groups and social actors seeking to change social relations within society. One is not only part of this society, but also begins to claim a sense of belonging, in an attempt to put down roots and create connections. Exemplary is the identification with the Yellow Vests movement, which was at the centre of the political debate during part of my research. Their political contestation of order and social-economic relations provoked forms of identification among prisoners. This was the case, among others, such as Adrian, who made no secret of his fascination with the Yellow Vests movement, which appeared to him as an alternative, and truly political, form of contestation of the social order. In a way, the political

contestation of the Yellow Vests emerged as an alternative to the religious and ideological discourse offered by radical Islam.

4.4.5. Criminal Logic

I would finally like to discuss the role of criminal logic that has an ambiguous relationship with radical Islam. Within the prison system, there is no shortage of cases involving alliance, convergences or transitions from one to the other (Basra et al. 2016). This is, firstly, because, as Ilan and Sandberg (2019) point out, street capital can be an added value in the jihadist career and therefore facilitates recruitment into extremist groups. Secondly, because adherence to radical Islam offers a way out of criminality and the possibility to have 'everything forgiven'. However, for some of the respondents, criminality (and criminal forms of loyalty and morality) can also act as an alternative to a radical ideology, as Marco explains:

> We the bandits, the thugs, we're not like that (extremism). We've got values. We would never kill a child. We'd never take out a kid…
>
> Interviewer: When you say 'we the thugs, we've got values', does that mean there are base rules?
>
> Marco: Of course!
>
> Interviewer: And you're saying that on the other side, there aren't any of these rules…
>
> Marco: But they don't know that. They don't know these rules. They might not have the same values as us…
>
> Interviewer: You're almost protected by your experience?
>
> Marco: Yeah, you could say it like that.

According to Marco, criminal morality imposes boundaries that are not to be crossed. A discourse shared by others, such as Griezmann or Anissa. What differentiates the two is the logic of violence, which, in the case of criminal violence is instrumental rather than an integral part of an ideology. While establishing Islam as his way out of delinquency, Paul explains that he behaves according to a strictly criminal logic, with its own rules, objectives and modalities:

> Paul: Personally, I'm not into this whole idea of terrorism and everything… I'm just fine doing my own thing, hashish, drugs. There you go… I'll stay with that rather than go kill people or whatever.
>
> Interviewer: It's better to hurt oneself than others.
>
> Paul: I mean, yeah.

The use of violence, which punctuated part of Paul, Griezmann and Anissa's life, must respect rules that jihadism does not respect. Nabil's words are emblematic of a feeling that is rather common among Muslim inmates rejecting extremism:

> Actually, for me, it's horrible. In fact, I don't even have words to… They (the terrorists) killed children, they killed innocent people who were in cafés or walking down the street. They are Muslims, but for me those people are worse than barbarians.

Finally, there is a hedonistic side, which constitutes the delinquent or criminal practice, but also goes far beyond it: 'pleasures of the soul, the desire for things from this lowly world', to quote Jeremy. Many of these young people do not hide their love for money, drugs, trafficking, alcohol, uninhibited sexuality, etc. What's more, they are not at all eager to renounce these activities and pleasures. As pointed out by Ilan

and Sandberg, 'stark contradictions exist between the secular, materialist and hedonistic worlds of street culture and the spiritually orientated, restrictive dictates of the violent jihadi ideologies' (2019: 291). This is, among other things, the case with Momo, who loves money and an unrestricted lifestyle in the hood, or with Paul, who is 'doing his own thing'. Confronted with the jihadist offering, one made of sacrifices and renunciation, these young people simply prefer this lowly world, built on passion, desire and pleasure. In this sense, the Islamic state has been able to attract young Europeans precisely by promising them different and more direct access to certain very material pleasures, even if presented under a 'divine' jacket (see Conti, 2020b).

5. Conclusions

What I observed in prison is a disaffiliated youth who share the stigma of incarceration, but also, more generally, a background of disadvantaged socio-economic conditions. The lives of the individuals encountered during this study are characterised by social inequality and a deep sense of injustice. Most of these young people, generally first- and second-generation immigrants, feel 'outside' of society, 'outside of the nation', trapped and rejected politically, socially and familially. However, one can assert that there is no direct connection between sustained inequalities, perceived injustice and radicalisation (Franc and Pavlovic, 2019: 71; Poli and Arun, 2019). Socio-economic conditions do not always lead to cognitive radicalisation and, even less, to violent extremism. However, while not all respond to inequality and the sense of injustice by adhering to the narrative of radical Islam, all of the radicals explain their paths in terms of inequality and injustice. These findings echo those of Khosrokhavar, according to whom, 'the social question is at the heart of jihadism, since middle-class youth in Europe who become radicalised constitute a minority' (2020: 81). Jihadists essentially come from working-class contexts, live in marginalised neighbourhoods and endure exclusion and poverty. Economic inequality and social exclusion, expressed through what Nancy Fraser calls 'the institutionalisation of misrecognition' (Pilkington and Acik, 2019), combine with a denial of recognition (Honneth, 2004). It is in these 'jihadist-breeding' spaces and under these socio-economic conditions that the offering of radical Islam becomes acceptable. This makes it possible (or at least that is the promise) to reverse the condition of being 'outcast', 'oppressed', 'excluded' 'not recognised' or 'trapped' and to provide the prospect of a new status: 'chosen', 'pure', 'fighting for an ideal', 'defenders of justice' (via the defence of Muslims). Jihadism thus offers a way to salvation, forgiveness and self-worth for disempowered youth whom society has generally judged in advance and/or definitively. It constitutes a path of emancipation, one able to fulfil the desire for (the illusion of) social mobility which is difficult to achieve within French society. It also represents the possibility for a rewarding commitment, as opposed to social and political marginalisation. Therefore, while the connection between systematic inequality, perceived injustice and radicalisation may not be direct, ethnographic research leads me to conclude that, by way of an indirect relationship, exclusion, rejection and confinement are among some of the main causes of radicalisation. This is all the more valid when inequality is tied to discrimination towards groups (ethnic, religious, etc.) that are subjected to a process of othering and marginalisation—a process which impedes social mobility and self-affirmation. Being labelled 'black', 'Arab', '*banlieusard*'[39] or 'delinquent' is a source of stigmatisation, just like belonging to the 'suspected community', the Muslim one (Kundnani, 2014; Ragazzi, 2016; Davidshofer et al., 2018).

The central question I have reflected on, and which is at the core of DARE is the following: among the individuals who share many of these living conditions and a pronounced sense of injustice, why do some

---

[39] Although this term technically denotes residents of French suburbs (*banlieues*), it is most often used in reference to populations inhabiting poor and/or working-class periurban areas on the outskirts of large cities. In these cases, it is typically used in a pejorative sense.

respond by adhering to the narrative of radical Islam, or even violent extremism, Jihadism, while others develop 'alternative' responses? Of course, I cannot provide an unequivocal response, simply because there are no unequivocal responses. The processes of radicalisation are varied and complex, as research from France and elsewhere has shown in recent years. The uniqueness of each case confirms that there exist not one but many explanations of 'why' and 'how' one radicalises. However, based on the respondent set I worked with, which remains my point of reference, I can offer perspectives to help understand why 'all extremists have grievances, but not all people with grievances become extremists' (Berger, 2018: 129). Ethnographic research conducted has essentially confirmed that shared pathways have very different, even opposite, outcomes (Borum, 2011). In order to ascertain what at any given moment causes a (usually rapid) shift or a process of radicalisation, one would most likely need to perform phenomenological ethnography, which would require one to be present while 'the violence takes place' (Huët, 2019: 10). Such research would be extremely difficult to envisage – on ethical grounds – and in the case of this study was impossible given the prison milieu, which meant research participants were countered once the process of radicalisation had already started or been completed. Nevertheless, the practice of storytelling, as well as the uninhibited speech of these young people - those who are referred to as 'rebels' in prison - allowed me to find some answers to the question of what it takes to radicalise. The research conducted for this study suggests that radicalisation hinges on 'almost nothing'. The smallest thing can change everything, just a fragile thread, a link that prevents the shift from 'Us' to 'Them'. These emotional and social ties, this 'almost nothing' that holds everything together can break—not necessarily for major reasons or events, but for 'almost nothing'. These 'almost nothings' could be encounters that happen at a particular point in one's life, small experiences of injustice that compound those already endured, unspeakable family shame, hurtful words that have not been countered or the boredom of an existential emptiness associated with young people's quest for identity. In prison, these 'almost nothings' could also be the inappropriate words of a guard (yet another minor humiliation), an encounter with a self-proclaimed 'scholar' who speaks of an imaginary world, a disproportionate sentence that one is given, or the prospect of a surrogate family and loneliness. Redeeming oneself. Meeting forgiveness. Revenge. Existing.

This 'almost nothing' constitutes a sort of limbo or a faint line separating 'normal' and 'abnormal', openness and isolation, loyalty and betrayal, ties and their breaking. This is a limbo where everything can fall apart at any moment. At the root, one finds proof of what Beck has written, that 'radical can be anybody' (2015: 26) because some – not all - of the young people I met tiptoe precariously around this limbo, where 'almost nothing' can impact everything. They are constantly balancing, unstable, on the edge of a precipice. In such circumstances, 'almost nothing' can topple everything, break ties, or erase the last connections. From one moment to the next, one may arrive at a juncture that is unexpected, sudden, even inexplicable, but which at the same time helps clarify a lot (Bidart, 2006; Bessin et al., 2010). Suddenly, bonds are broken—an event that, if one has to describe years later, is difficult to explain or attribute an argumentative logic to. Yet at the moment when such bonds are broken, everything appears to be explained. One could speak of the all-encompassing epiphany of meaning or of a new order. And what accompanies, if not provokes, this clearly individual, subjective, even intimate approach, is the offer, i.e. the narrative of radical Islam as well as the sociabilities (i.e., groups, networks) that link the individual to the macro level. Ideology has precisely this power, that of explaining everything, of removing doubt and uncertainty, of 'being in the truth'. The offering of radical Islam proposes a new family, a distant and imaginary world where (divine) justice will reign, and a change of status allowing one to escape shame, reverse humiliation and master alienation. To be the chosen ones. To restore justice in this world (through violence, if necessary), which becomes - as in any human community (Girard, 1972 and 1982) - what brings about a new order. The blood of martyrs seals this new relationship, the new 'divine' order: that of an imaginary community (Anderson, 1991).

If everything can change for 'almost nothing', everything can be held together by 'almost nothing'. There are safeguards at work. These ties, even if seemingly fragile, prevent one from sinking, and are ultimately the keystone of non-radicalisation. They may include family connections, living spaces, personal memories, desires, or the trust of a loved one. Ties can also take the form of a model grandfather, a mother who is always there, a friend who helps, a son's wishes, a guard who has the 'courage' to listen, or a teacher who opens up a space of conflict in prison where the self can express itself. This essentially constitutes the desire to give. One wants to give of oneself in order to exist, because as Mauss (2012) said, 'to refuse to give, to fail to invite, just as to refuse to accept, is tantamount to declaring war; it is to reject the bond of alliance and fellowship'. Then there exists the mobilising force of other grand narratives with explanatory power that help individuals feel they belong to something greater and that they are agents of justice. This allows for (or gives one the illusion of) participating in the construction of this world as a social actor, thereby giving one control over one's own life. The shift - sometimes gradual, but usually swift - to accepting ideological violence is therefore countered by barriers and resistance, which leads us to reject a 'linear' approach to radicalisation (Moghaddam, 2005; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008). The encounter between the offer of radical Islam and the subjective dimension is not linear, but is rather back-and-forth, composed of a combination of events, encounters, situations and interactions. In short, it is built upon structural factors, as injustice, inequalities, misrecognition, stigmatisation, exclusion, and can turn on 'almost nothing'. It seems to me that we must take into account the fact that the transition to a radical vision legitimising ideological violence or the transition to violent action, is in most cases not achieved through the slow and complex construction of an ideological vision, but rather through the breaking of bonds that can occur without warning, with the potential to affect most of people I met. Violence, which is an integral component of the lives of these young people, can at a given time and for 'almost nothing' become ideological. This leads us to question the theoretical distinction between cognitive and behavioural radicalisation, or between radicalisation and extremism. Obviously, this distinction makes sense from a security and judicial point of view, as well as in the labelling or identification processes at work in an environment such as prison. Distinguishing between radical opinions and radical actions, synthesised by the two-pyramid model of violent extremisms (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2017), seems useful in order to avoid the risk of confusing radicalisation that leads to violence and radicalisation that does not lead to violence. Similarly to Pilkington's findings on right-wing extremism (Pilkington, 2020), the ethnographic research undertaken for this study has shown that violence does not necessarily or primarily come from those who hold radical views, but arise, rather, from those who have problematic emotional, social and political ties. In many cases (not all) violence seems to arise from situations and interactions. In these cases, people may suddenly move from radical discourse to violent action. This is why, by focusing too much on the distinction between cognitive and behavioural radicalisation, we face the risk of not seeing the shifts and the connections between the two, how situations and interactions, what I call 'almost nothing', can cause a young person to slip from radicalisation to extremism, from radical discourse to violent action. The problem, it seems to me, is precisely that a focus on the distinction between radicalisation which leads to violence and radicalisation which does not lead to violence leads us to be unable to explain *why* the violent act is committed. What emerges from this ethnographic research is thus the non-linear nature of pathways to radicalisation and consequently the need to approach these social phenomena by considering the interaction among the subjective dimension, groups and structural factors. These factors interact differently according to individuals, their relationship to groups, and the context. This approach echoes what Dawson calls an 'ecological' approach, which 'focuses on the interaction of an individual (or group) with their environment, and it assumes that no single factor will explain why something is happening… we need to think in terms of the dynamic interplay of individuals with their environment, and hence the many sets of variables, including hard-to-predict contingencies, that work in complex yet identifiable ways to radicalise individuals, though rarely in the same way' (2017: 3). This makes it possible to take into account this 'almost nothing' that ultimately turns out to be 'almost everything' and is decisive in shaping or countering

trajectories of (non)radicalisation. This connection between micro, meso and macro factors also allows one to move away from what Chauvenet refers to as the social construction of otherness, which involves 'a growing tendency to normalise social disorders, by attributing them solely to individuals and by de-historicising social relationships' (2010: 43). Each individual's trajectory is the result of three factors: a subjective, even private, dimension; his/her association with groups with which the individual identifies (or is assigned to); and structural dynamics that go far beyond him/her. Thus religion (in this case Islam) reveals itself to be both a deeply intimate experience - but also a collective one, practiced by groups with which one identifies or is assigned—and a vision of the world, or even an ideology, that transcends the individual.

In prison, as in society, the construction of space for dialogue and conflictualisation enables individuals to connect their personal trajectory to social dynamics and thus to liberate themselves (partially) from this social construction of otherness. Importantly, this research reveals the importance (and the absence) of spaces where one can conflictualise the feeling of injustice and the weakness of collective entities capable of constructing a narrative with which the individual can identify. Politics, understood as a field for expressing the controversies and conflicts that characterise society, presents itself as the possibility of constructing a collective response within the city, the *polis*, and as the possibility of bringing the individual out of anomie, isolation and solitude. The absence of political spaces and intermediary bodies that allow one to conflictualise real or perceived injustice favours the social construction of otherness, as well as anomie and (political) solitude, opening the way for the adherence to radical narratives and extremist logics, consequently legitimising violence. In this sense, as Roy (2016) writes, over the last decade, jihadist ideology has become (virtually) the only ideology on the market that allows one to return to the political field. The (almost) insoluble difficulty, is that they, the 'radicals' and/or jihadists, do not build the public space to be a place of confrontation, but rather destroy it, essentially depriving it of all legitimacy and all possibility of confrontation. The destruction of the political space is at the root of the outbreak of violence, which is by itself the negation of conflict. If conflict is repressed or not acknowledged, extreme violence reappears (Wieviorka, 2004).

Tied to this need to conflictualise injustice, the observation arising from the interviews conducted, as well as from the actions carried out in prison, is that these young people want above all, to exist. This represents an almost existential desire to be heard, to be recognised as political subjects. Creating spaces for conflictualisation has made it possible to listen and express oneself - in short to be a political actor - the public space in this case being the school room or the work group. Politics here does not lead to institutional organisations, but rather to the possibility of publicly expressing the feeling of injustice through an interactive relationship with others. This is a matter of being listened to and listening - speaking in order to exist. It is this possibility that opens the way to confrontation. It is in this need/pleasure to listen and be heard and by way of confrontation, that the doors leading to rehabilitation, reintegration and the weaving of emotional and social bonds are opened. This entails the reintroduction of doubt, the 'pleasure' of discovery and confrontation. This 'almost nothing' ultimately leads to the cultivation of bonds of trust, as trust constitutes the 'social magic' (Simmel, 1999) at the heart of society.

6. References

Adraoui, M. (2013) *Du Golfe aux banlieues : le salafisme mondialisé*, Paris: Ed. PUF.

Allievi, S. (2002) 'Islamofobia? Nuove forme di definizione e stigmatizzazione dell' alterità', *Razzismo & Modernità*, 2: 3-30.

Amghar, S. (2011), *Le salafisme d'aujourd'hui. Mouvements sectaires en Occident*, Paris: Michalon.

Ammann, L. and Göle, N. (2006), (Eds.) *Islam in public: Turkey, Iran and Europe, Istanbul*, Istabul: Bilgi

University Press.

Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso.

Atran, S. (2016) *L'Etat Ilsmaique est une revolution*, Paris: Les Liens Qui Liberent.

Barros, Y. and Crettiez, X. (2019) *La Réalité de la menace djihadiste en France 2015-2018*. Available at: http://chairecitoyennete.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Chaire-Citoyenneté-Realite-djihadistes.pdf

Bartlett, J. and Birdwell, J. (2013) 'Cumulative Radicalisation between the Far-Right and Islamist Groupsin the UK: A Review of Evidence', London: Demos. Available at: https://www.demos.co.uk/files/Demos%20-%20Cumulative%20Radicalisation%20-%205%20Nov%202013.pdf

Basra, R., Neumann, P.R. and Brunner, C. (2016) *Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the New Crime–Terror Nexus*. London: The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence.

Beck, C. J. (2015) *Radicals, revolutionaries, and terrorists.* Cambridge: Polity Press

Becker, H. S. (1963) *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance.* New York: The Free Press of Glencoe.

Beckford, J., Joly, D. and Khosrokhavar, F. (2005) *Les Musulmans en prison au Royaume-Uni et en France*. Louvain: Presses universitaires de Louvain.

Benbassa, E. and Troendlé, C. (2017) *Rapport intermédiaire. Mission d'information désendoctrinement, désembrigadement et réinsertion des djihadistes en France et en Europe*, 438, Paris: Sénat.

Benslama, F. (2016) *Un furieux désir de sacrifice. Le surmusulman*, Paris: Seuil.

Benslama, F. and Khosrokhavar, F. (2017) *Le jihadisme des femmes. Pourquoi ont -elles choisi Daech?* Paris: Seuil.

Béraud, C. De Galembert, C. and Rostaing, C. (2013), *Des hommes et des dieux en prison*, Rapport. Accessed at: http://www.gip-recherche-justice.fr/publication/des-hommes-et-des-dieux-en-prison/

Béraud, C. De Galembert, C. and Rostaing, C. (2016) 'Islam et prison: liaisons dangereuses ?' *Pouvoirs*, 2016/3 158: 67-81.

Berger, J.M. (2018) *Extremism.* Massachusetts: The MIT press.

Besnier, C. and Weill, S. (eds) (2019) *Les filières djihadistes en procès. Approche ethnographique des audiences criminelles et correctionnelles* (2017-2019). Rapport. Accessed at: http://www.gip-recherche-justice.fr/publication/etude-pluridisciplinaire-de-lactivite-de-la-cour-dassises-competente-pour-les-affaires-de-terrorisme-2017-2019/

Bessin, M. et al. (eds) (2010) *Bifurcations. Les sciences sociales face aux ruptures et à l'évènement*, Paris: La Découverte.

Bidart, C. (2006) 'Crises, décisions et temporalités : autour des bifurcations biographiques', *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie,* 120(1): 29-57.

Blom, A. (2011) 'Les 'martyrs' jihadistes veulent-ils forcément mourir? Une approche émique de la radicalisation autosacrificielle au Pakistan'. *Revue française de science politique*, 5(61): 867-891.

Bonelli, L. and Carrié, F. (2018) *La Fabrique de la radicalité. Une sociologie des jeunes djihadistes français*, Paris: Seuil.

Borum, R. (2011) 'Radicalisation into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research'. *Journal of Strategic Security* 4(4): 37-62

Bouzar, D. (2014), *Désamorcer l'islam radical. Ces dérives sectaires qui défigurent l'islam*, Les Éditions de l'Atelier.

Bouzar, D. (2015) *Comment sortir de l'emprise 'djihadiste'?* Paris: Les éditions de l'atelier.

Bowen, J. (2004) 'Beyond Migration: Islam as a Transnational Public Space', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 30(5): 879-894.

Brinbaum, Y., Chauvel, S. and Tenret, E. (2013) 'Quelles expériences de la discrimination à l'école? Entre dénonciation du racisme et discours méritocratique', *Migrations et Société, 25:* 147-148.

Bui-Xuan, O. (2018) *La radicalisation religieuse saisie par le droit*, Paris: Institut Universitaire Varenne.

Busher, J. and Macklin, G. (2015) 'Interpreting "Cumulative Extremism": Six Proposals for Enhancing Conceptual Clarity', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 27(5): 884-905.

Candau, J. (1998) *Mémoire et identité*, Paris: PUF.

Casutt, G. (2018) 'Quand le djihadiste est une femme', *Inflexions*, 2(38): 87-96.

Césari, J. (2004) *L'islam à l'épreuve de l'Occident*, Paris: La Découverte.

Chantraine, et al. (2018), *Enquête sociologique sur les "quartiers d'évaluation de la radicalisation" dans les prisons françaises*, Rapport DAP.

Chantraine, G. and Delcourt, L. (2019) 'Expériences de carcéralité', *Tempo Social*, *31*(3): 37-58. Available at: https://www.revistas.usp.br/ts/article/view/161341/158176

Chauvenet, A. (1998) 'Guerre et paix en prison', *Cahiers de la sécurité intérieure*, 31: 91-109.

Chauvenet, et al. (2008) *La violence carcérale en question*, Paris: PUF.

Conti, B. (2014) *L'émergence de l'islam dans l'espace public italien : les leaders musulmans entre intégration et intégrisme*, Paris: L'Harmattan.

Conti, B. (2016) 'Islam as a new social actor in Italian cities: between inclusion and separation'. *Religion, State, and Society*, 44(3): 238-257.

Conti, B. (2018) 'Une radicalisation religieuse ? Politique, religion et subjectivité dans les processus de radicalisation'. In Bui-Xuan (ed) *La radicalisation religieuse saisie par le droit*, Paris: Institut Universitaire Varenne, pp. 43-59.

Conti, B. (2019) 'Between Deradicalisation and Disengagement: the Re-engagement of the Radical Actor?'. In Jayakumar, S. (eds) *Terrorism, Radicalisation & Countering Violent Extremism: Practical Considerations & Concerns*, London: Palgrave Pivot, pp. 43-56.

Conti, B. (2020a), *Case Studies of Interactive Radicalisation: France*, DARE Report. Available at: http://www.dare-h2020.org/uploads/1/2/1/7/12176018/d2_france.pdf

Conti, B. (2020b), 'Rise and Fall of a Jihadist neo-family: the Cannes-Torcy cell'. In Ferret et al. (eds) (2020) *Neo Umma. Jihadi movements in the European context: an anthropological and family relations/configurations perspective*, Routledge, Social Movements in the 21st Century: New Paradigms, Series Editor: Kevin McDonald.

Contrôleur général des lieux de privation de liberté. (2015) *La prise en charge de la radicalisation islamiste en milieu carcéral*, Rapport. Available at: https://www.cglpl.fr/2015/avis-relatif-a-la-prise-en-charge-de-la-radicalisation-islamiste-en-milieu-carceral/

Contrôleur général des lieux de privation de liberté. (2016) *Radicalisation islamiste en milieu carcéral 2016: L'ouverture des unités dédiées*. Available at: https://www.cglpl.fr/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Rapport-radicalisation_unités-dédiées_2016_DEF.pdf

Crettiez, X. and Sèze, R. (2017) (ed.) *Saisir les mécanismes de la radicalisation violente: pour une analyse processuelle et biographique des engagements violents*, Rapport. Available at: http://www.gip-recherche-justice.fr/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Rapport-radicalisation_INHESJ_CESDIP_GIP-Justice_2017.pdf

Dahkli, L. (2016) 'L'islamologie est un sport de combat', *Revue du crieur*, 3. Available at: https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01325340/document

Davidshofer, et al. (2018) *Les effets de la lutte contre le terrorisme et la radicalisation sur les populations musulmanes en en France*. Rapport. Available at: https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/72151

Dawson, L. (2017) 'Sketch of a Social Ecology Model for Explaining Homegrown Terrorist Radicalisation', *ICCT Research Note.* Available at: https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ICCT-Dawson-Social-Ecology-Model-of-Radicalisation-Jan2017-2.pdf.

De Galembert, C. (2016) 'Le 'radical', une nouvelle figure de dangerosité carcérale aux contours flous'. *Critique internationale*, 72: 53-74.

De Galembert, C. (2020) *Islam et prison*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam Eds.

Delarue, J-M. (2012) 'Continuité et discontinuité de la condition pénitentiaire', *Revue du MAUSS*, 40(2): 73-102.

Deltome, T. (2005) *La Construction médiatique de l'islamophobie en France (1975-2005)*, Paris: La Découverte Poche.

Desrosieres, A. (1993) *La politique des grands nombres. Histoire de la raison statistique*, Paris: La Découverte.

Diard and E. Poullait. Available at: http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/rapports/cion_lois/l15b2082_rapport-information.

Douglas, M. (1996), *Rischio e colpa*, Bologna: il Mulino, (Original: *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*,New York: Praeger Publishers, 1966).

Dubet, F. (2016) *Ce qui nous unit. Discriminations, égalité et reconnaissance*, Paris: Seuil, coll. La République des idées.

Durkheim, E. (2007) *Le suicide*, Paris: PUF, coll. 'Quadrige Grands textes' (Original publishing: 1897).

Eatwell, R. (2006) 'Community Cohesion and Cumulative Extremism in Contemporary Britain', *The Political Quarterly* 77(2): 204–216.

Eickelman, D.F. and Salvatore, A. (2004) *Public Islam and the common good*, Leiden-Boston: Brill.

Fassin, D. (2015) *L'Ombre du monde. Une anthropologie de la condition carcérale*, Paris: Le Seuil.

Fassin, D. (2017) *Punir. Une passion contempo*raine. Paris: Le Seuil.

Ferret et al. (eds) (2020) 'Neo Umma. Jihadi movements in the European context: an anthropological and family relations/configurations perspective', In McDonald, K. (ed), *Social Movements in the 21st Century: New Paradigms*, Abingdon: Routledge.

Fouad Allam, K. (2002) *L'islam Globale*, Milan: Rizzoli.

Foucault, M. (1999) *Il faut défendre la société*, cours au collège de France, année 1975-1976, cours du 7 janvier 1976, Paris: Gallimard.

Franc, R. and Tomislav, P. (2018) *Systematic review. Quantitative studies of inequality and radicalisation.* Available at: http://www.dare-h2020.org/uploads/1/2/1/7/12176018/4.1.pdf

Fraser, N. and Honnet, A. (2003) *Redistribution or Recognition ? A Political-Philosophical Exchange.* London/New York: Verso.

Girard, R. (1972) *La violence et le sacré*, Paris: Grasset.

Girard, R. (1982) *Le bouc émissaire*, Paris: Grasset & Fasquelle,

Goffman, E. (1963) *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Goffman, E. (1974) *Frame Analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. New York: Harper & Row.

Grillo, R. (2004) 'Islam and Transnationalism', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 30(5): 861-878.

Habermas, J. (1962) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Cambridge: Polity.

Hajjat, A. and Mohammed, M. (2013) *Islamophobie. Comment les élites françaises fabriquent le 'problème musulman'*. Paris: La Découverte.

Hecker, M. (2018) '137 nuances de terrorisme. Les djihadistes de France face à la justice'*, Focus stratégique*, 79, Available at: https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/hecker_137_nuances_de_terrorisme_2018.pdf

Honnet, A. (2004) 'La théorie de la reconnaissance : une esquisse', *Revue du MAUSS* 23(1): 133 - 136

Huët, R. (2019) *Le vertige de l'émeute: De la Zad aux Gilets jaunes*. Paris: PUF.

Ilan, J. and Sandberg, S. (2019) 'How 'gangsters' become jihadists: Bourdieu, criminology and the crime–terrorism nexus'. *European Journal of criminology*, 16(3): 278-294.

Kepel, G. (2015) *Terreur dans l'Hexagone. Genèse du Djihad français*. Paris: Gallimard.

Khosrokhavar, F. (1997) *L'islam des jeunes*. Paris: Flammarion.

Khosrokhavar, F. (2004) L'Islam dans les prisons. Paris: Balland.

Khosrokhavar, F. (2006) *Quand Al Qaida parle: Témoignages derrière les barreaux*. Paris: Grasset.

Khosrokhavar, F. (2013) 'Nouveau paradigme de la radicalisation', *Le Fait religieux en prison. Configurations, apports, risques*. Paris: DAP.

Khosrokhavar, F. (2014) *Radicalisation*. Paris: Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme.

Khosrokhavar, F. (2016) *Prisons de France. Violence, radicalisation, déshumanisation : quand surveillants et détenus parlent*. Paris: Robert Laffont.

Khosrokhavar, F. (2018) *Le nouveau jihad en Occident*. Paris: Robert Laffont.

Khosrokhavar, F. (2018) 'L'urbain djiahogène'. *Geostrategia*. Available at: https://www.geostrategia.fr/lurbain-djihadogene/

Khosrokhavar, F. (2019) 'L'imaginaire fanatisé du djihadisme européen'. *Raison présente*, 212(4): 43-53.

Kundnani, A. (2012) 'Radicalisation: the journey of a concept'. *Race and Class*, 54(2): 3-25.

Kundnani, A. (2014) *The Muslims Are Coming! Islamophobia, Extremism, and the Domestic War on Terror*, London: Verso.

Lamont, M. and Bail, C. A. (2005) 'Sur les frontières de la reconnaissance', *Revue européenne des migrations internationals.* Available at: http:// remi.revues.org/index2489.html], 21(2) : 61-90.

Lapeyronnie, D. (2008) *Ghetto urbain. Ségrégation, violence, pauvreté en France aujourd'hui*. Paris: Robert Laffont.

Lapierre, N. (2000) 'Changement de nom: le signe, la haine, le soi'. In Benbassa E. and Attias J.C. (eds.) *La Haine de soi*, Paris: Complexe.

Martinello, M. and Simon, P. (2005) 'Les enjeux de la catégorisation', *Revue européenne des migrations internationales*, 21(2): 7-18. Available at : http://remi.revues.org/index2484.html

Mauss, M. (2012) *Essai sur le don : Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques*. Paris: PUF (Original date pub : 1925).

McCauley, C. and Moskalenko, S. (2008) 'Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways toward Terrorism'. *Terrorism and Political Violence,* 20(3): 415–433.

Melchior, J.P. and Zanna, O. (2019) 'Malaise dans les prisons françaises – Une éthique professionnelle en porte à faux face à la radicalisation'. *Revue Internationale de Criminologie et de Police Technique et Scientifique*, Polymedia Meichtry SA. Available at: https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-02382767/document

Micheron, H. (2020) *Le jihadisme français: Quartiers, Syrie, prisons*, Paris: Gallimard.

Moghaddam, F. (2005) 'The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration', *American Psychologist*, 60(2): 161- 169.

Monod, G. (2019) 'Évaluation des troubles psychiatriques des djihadistes et terroristes en milieu carcéral'. *Le Genre humain*, 61(2): 291-294.

Neumann, P. (2013) 'The trouble with radicalization'. *International Affairs,* 89(4): 873–893.

Paton, N. (2020) Country level reports on drivers of self-radicalisation and digital sociability among Europeans, DARE Report. Available at: http://www.dare-h2020.org/uploads/1/2/1/7/12176018/5.1_france.pdf

Pilkington, H. and Acik, N. (2019) 'Not entitled to talk: (Mis)recognition, inequality and social activism of young Muslims', *Sociology*, 54(1): 181-198.

Pilkington, H. (2020) *Understanding 'right-wing extremism': in theory and practice*, DARE Report.

Plat, T. (2019) *Beyond These Walls: Rethinking Crime and Punishment in the United States*. New York: St. Martin's Publishing Group.

Poli, A. and Arun, O (2019) *Meta-Ethnographic Synthesis: Qualitative Studies on Inequalities and Radicalisation*, DARE Report. Available at: http://www.dare-h2020.org/uploads/1/2/1/7/12176018/d4.2_2.pdf

Poli, A. (2020) *Patterns of radicalisation within the French Islamist youth milieu since the 1980s*, DARE Report (Forthcoming).

Ragazzi, F. (2016) 'La lutte contre la radicalisation ou deux formes de la pensée magique'. *Mouvements*, 88(4): 151-158.

Rostaing, C. (2012) 'Une approche sociologique du monde carcéral', *La nouvelle revue de l'adaptation et de la scolarisation*, 59(3): 45-56.

Roy, O. (1994) *The Failure of Political Islam*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Roy, O. (2002) *L'islam mondialisé*. Paris: Seuil.

Roy, O. (2015) What is the driving force behind jihadist terrorism? – A scientific perspective on the causes/circumstances of joining the scene, *Proceedings of the BKA Conference 'International Terrorism*: *How can prevention and repression keep pace?*', 18th-19th November 2015. Available at: https://life.eui.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/OLIVIER-ROY-what-is-a-radical-islamist.pdf

Roy, O. (2016) *Le Jihad et la mort*. Paris: Seuil.

Rougier, B. (ed.) (2020) *Les territoires conquis de l'islamisme*, Paris: PUF.

Sageman, M. (2008) *Leaderless Jihad, Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*. Philadelphie: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Sageman, M. (2017) *Turning to Political Violence: The Emergence of Terrorism*, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania.

Sarg, R. and Lamine, A.S. (2011) 'La religion en prison'. *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 153: 85-104.

Sayad, A. (1999) *La double absence. Des illusions de l'émigré aux souffrances de l'immigré*. Paris: Seuil.

Sayare, S. (2016) 'The Ultimate Terrorist Factory. Are French prisons incubating extremism?', *Harper's Magazine*. Available at: https://harpers.org/archive/2016/01/the-ultimate-terrorist-factory/

Schmid, A.P. (2013) *Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation and Counter-Radicalisation*, The Hague: ICCT – http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013.pdf

Sedgwick, M. (2010) 'The Concept of Radicalisation as a Source of Confusion'. *Terrorism and Political Violence, 22*(4): 479-94.

Settoul, E. (2017) 'Les combattants étrangers de Daech au prisme de la sociologie militaire', *Moyen-Orient*, 33, janvier-mars.

Sèze, R. (2019) *Prévenir la violence djihadiste. Les paradoxes d'un modèle sécuritaire*. Paris: Seuil.

Simmel, G.(1999) *Sociologie*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Simon, J. (2014) *Mass incarceration on trial: a remarkable case and the future of imprisonment*. New York: The New Press.

Tabboni, S. (2007) 'De l'ambivalence sociale à l'ambivalence culturelle'. *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 123(2): 269-288.

Thomson, D. (2014) *Les français jihadistes*. Paris: Les Arenes Eds.

Thomson, D. (2016) *Les revenants. Ils étaient partis faire le jihad, ils sont de retour en France*. Paris: Seuil.

Touraine, A. (1978) *La voix et le regard*. Paris: Les Éditions du Seuil.

Trevidic, M. (2013) *Terroristes: Les 7 piliers de la déraison*. Paris: éditions JC Lattès.

Truong, F. (2017) *Loyautés radicales. L'islam et les « mauvais garçons » de la nation*. Paris: La Découverte.

Wacquant, L. (2002) *Corps et Âme. Carnets ethnographiques d'un apprenti boxeur*, Marseille et Montréal: Agone.

Wacquant, L. (2008) 'Le corps, le ghetto et l'État pénal'. *Labyrinthe,* 31(3). Available at: https://journals.openedition.org/labyrinthe/3920

Wagemakers, J. (2016) *Salafism in Jordan: Political Islam in a Quietist Community*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wieviorka, M. (1996) *Une société fragmentée? Le multiculturalisme en débat*. Paris: La Découverte.

Wieviorka, M. (2004) *La violence*. Paris: Balland.

Wieviorka, M. (2008) 'L'intégration: un concept en difficulté'. *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, 125(2) : 221-240.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006) 'Belonging and the politics of belonging', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40(3): 197-213.

7. Appendix

Appendix 7.1: Socio-demographic data of respondents

Name (pseudonym)	Age	Country of Birth	Education	Employment	Ethnicity	Family status	Gender	Religion	Religiosity	Residential status	No. in household
Said	28	France	Did not complete secondary education and left	In full-time employment	Arab	Married	M	Muslim	Believer and practising	Lives independently with own partner/ children	4
Teodoro	30	France	Did not complete secondary education and left (restarts in prison)	Unemployed (In illegal activities)	African (Black)	Single	M	Muslim	Believer but not practising	'Not applicable'	3 (Mother and one brother)
Romain	21	France (Polynesia-Overseas department)	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed	Asian	Single	M	Muslim (Converted)	Believer and practising	Lives at home with other relatives	Not Known
Adrian[40]	21	Albania	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed	Caucasian	Divorced/ separated from spouse or partner	M	Muslim	Believer and practising	Lives at home with both parents	4
Antoine	22	France	Did not complete secondary education and left	In part-time employment (In illegal activities)	Caucasian	Divorced/ separated from spouse or partner	M	Christian	Believer but not practising	Living with partner	4

---

[40] Before beeing arrested, Adrian was married (one children), but obliged by judge to live with parents.

Steven	26	France department (Mayotte)	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed (In illegal activities)	African (mixt – not easy to establish)	Divorced/ separated from spouse or partner	M	Muslim	Believer but not practising	Not applicable – It is not clear as he was moving from place to place	Not applicable
Paul	17	France	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed (In illegal activities)	Arab	Single	M	Muslim	Believer but not practising	Lives at home with other relatives	Not known
François	18	France	Currently at university (in prison)	Student	Caucasian	Single	M	Atheist	Not applicable	Lives at home with single parent	2
Jeremy	41	France	Not known	Unemployed	Caucasian	Married	M	Muslim (Converted)	Believer and practising	Lives independently with partner and children's partner	4
Ousmane	39	France	Did not complete secondary education and left	In part-time employment	Arab	Married	M	Muslim	Believer and practicing	Lives independently with own partner/ children	7
Nabil	30	Maroc	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed (In illegal activities)	Arab	Single	M	Muslim	Believer and practicing	Not know	Not know
Adil	26	France	Did not complete secondary	Not in paid employment but occupied as carer or	Arab	Has girlfriend partner but not	M	Muslim	Believer and practicing	Lives at home with both parents	8

			education and left	unpaid work		living together					
Griezmann	16	France	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed (In illegal activities)	Arab/ caucasian	Single	M	Muslim	Believer but not practising	Lives at home with single parent	5
Blaise	37	Algeria	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed	Arab	Divorced/ separated from spouse or partner	M	Muslim	Believer and practicing	Not known	Not known
Marco	21	France – Guadalupe (Overseas department)	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed (In illegal activities)	Black (not easy to establish)	Single	M	Christian - Evangelist	Believer and practicing	Lives at home with single parent	3
Kylian	40	Algeria	Did not complete secondary education and left	In part-time employ (In illegal activities)	Arab	Divorced/ separated from spouse or partner	M	Muslim	Believer and practising	Lives independently alone	Not known
Momo	21	France	Completed general academic secondary education	Unemployed (In illegal activities)	Arab	Single	M	Muslim	Believer and practising	Lives independently alone	Not known
Anissa	25	France	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed (In illegal activities)	Arab	Divorced/ separated from spouse or partner	F	Muslim	Believer but not practising	Lives independently with own partner/ children	4

* Some data (employment, residence status, number of persons in the household) refer to life prior to incarceration. In some cases, individuals did not provide these data.

Appendix 7.2: Observed events

	Name of event	Date	Location	Recorded data
Flash actions				
1.	Visit in solitary confinement area	3/5/2019	Prison	Field diary notes
Organisation meetings				
1.	Debate with elected officials regarding the European elections	11/3/2019	Strasbourg	Field diary notes
2.	Visit to the European Parliament in Strasbourg	12/3/2019	Prison	Field diary notes
3.	Community Dialogue event	16/12/2019	Prison	Field diary notes and report
Social events				
1.	Civic engagement module – Life in detention	11/6/2018	Prison	Field diary notes – (Short) Interview
2.	Civic engagement module – Democracy and citizenship	12/6/2018	Prison	Field diary notes
3.	Civic engagement module – The actors of justice	12/6/2018	Prison	Field diary notes
4.	Civic engagement module – Citizen's voice workshop	13/6/2018	Prison	Field diary notes
5.	Civic engagement module – Individual and collective identities	14/6/2018	Prison	Field diary notes
6.	Civic engagement module – Personal trajectory and projects	15/6/2018	Prison	Field diary notes
7.	Civic engagement module – Individual interviews and feedbacks	15/6/2018	Prison	Field diary notes - (Short) Interview
8.	Co-construction of knowledge module	2/5/2019	Prison	Field diary notes
9.	Co-construction of knowledge module	3/5/2019	Prison	Field diary notes
10.	Co-construction of knowledge module	11/6/2019	Prison	Field diary notes – Interview