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

Young Muslims in unofficial prayer places of Athens

DARE
Dialogue About Radicalisation & Equality

ALEXANDROS SAKELLARIOU

DARE: Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality

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

Greece

Young Muslims in unofficial prayer places of Athens

Alexandros Sakellariou
Panteion University, Athens

Contents

Executive summary

This report presents and discusses the findings of the ethnographic research conducted on radicalisation and non-radicalisation trajectories of young Muslims in Greece. It focuses on a specific milieu in a central area of Athens where young Muslims attend, and communicate in, unofficial prayer places. The main objectives of this research are to understand radicalisation and non-radicalisation trends in the Greek historical, spatial and political context and to enhance understanding of the role of inequality and perceived injustice in radicalisation in relation to young Muslims' integration in Greek society.

The fieldwork began in summer 2017 and lasted for about two years until the summer of 2019 resulting in 17 interviews with young Muslims and additional material (texts, images, audio recordings of mosque messages, leaflets).

The main findings can be summarised as follows. Firstly, perceived inequalities and injustice were expressed by young Muslims in the course of interviews and ethnographic observation. In addition to socio-economic inequalities, grievances may play a role in the process of radicalisation and a number of such grievances were mentioned by the respondents in this study. These included concerns about human rights and religious freedom related, for example, to the construction of an official mosque and establishment of an Islamic cemetery in Athens, as well as about racism, Islamophobia and international issues such as the Palestinian issue or the transfer of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem. With regard to integration, the main finding was that most of the participants feel integrated in Greek society, although some of them may not be considered as not fully integrated, particularly those who have an immigrant background. Those respondents who did not identify themselves with western culture and societies, expressed some radical views about democracy or western habits and morals however this was not accompanied by support for the perpetration of violence in order to change the social and political status quo. Religion was found to play an important role in how young people negotiated encounters with extremism. Participants, even those holding radical views, stressed the fact that religion was an important resource in confronting extremism rather than a driver of it; this was verified during the participant observation. Throughout the field research, it was also observed that religion was a crucial factor in trajectories of non-radicalisation. This research has shown, on the one hand, that one-dimensional explanations to such a complicated issue should always be avoided and, on the other hand, that even when multi-dimensional explanations are offered, they should not be applied in all social, political, and economic contexts. Finally, we conclude that there is an urgent need to pursue research into non-radicalisation processes and trajectories rather than looking exclusively at the pathways of those who have already radicalised.

1. Introduction

The debate on the place and role of violence in religion is as old as religions themselves and has addressed two dimensions of the relationship. First, the internal dimension i.e. the role of violence, physical and symbolic, perpetrated inside the religious field in order to secure and strengthen religious faith (Girard, 1991; 2017; Roux, 1998). Second, the external dimension, that is the deployment of violence towards the surrounding society either as a defence mechanism or as a tool for expansion (Lewis, 2017; Hagège, 2018). While political Islam, or Islamism, has been studied for a long time (Kepel, 1992; 2000; Roy, 1994; Basbous, 2003), it has only been during the last twenty years, i.e. after the landmark date of 9/11, that the relationship between Islam, violence and terrorism have become a dominant theme in the media and academia (Mamdani, 2004; Roy, 2006; Khosrokhavar, 2009).[1] Following this event, a huge volume of publications have been produced, trying to understand and explain why Muslims, especially young Muslims, have embraced violence targeted not only at Western but also Muslim societies.[2] The methodology of these academic studies has been both qualitative and quantitative from a variety of scientific disciplines including sociology, psychology, anthropology, political science, international relations, and others. After the rise of Daesh, the so-called Islamic State (IS), in 2015 and the attacks perpetrated in Europe (France, Germany, Spain, UK and elsewhere), this issue rose still higher up the agenda of social scientific research (Kepel, 2015; Neumann, 2016; Roy, 2017). The majority of the approaches, though, came as a response to the burning issue of how the West should defend itself and as a consequence, security and terrorist studies dominated the field (Neumann and Kleinmann, 2013: 361). In addition, the main theme reproduced in the media during these 20 years was that of Islam as a monolithic, fundamentalist and violent religion that is incompatible with the European and Western civilisation and societies (Karim, 2001). Of course, such stereotypical and negative images of Islam in the West pre-existed 9/11 (Said, 1981; Arjana, 2015) but their dominance was established in the aftermath of those events.

Against this background, this report presents and discusses the findings of ethnographic research conducted on radicalisation and non-radicalisation trajectories of young Muslims in Greece, specifically in a milieu in a central area of Athens where young Muslims attend, and communicate in, unofficial prayer places.[3] The main objectives of the study are drawn from the wider DARE project research design, namely:

- To understand radicalisation and non-radicalisation trends in the Greek historical, spatial and political context;
- To identify new trends in receptivity to radicalisation especially in relation to youth and extend the field to the study of non-radicalisation trajectories;
- To investigate the interaction of structure and agency in radicalisation through the intersection of societal (macro), group (meso) and individual (micro) factors in individual trajectories;
- To enhance understanding of the role of inequality and perceived injustice in radicalisation;

---

[1] Terrorism is a highly controversial terms in the academic fields of humanities and social sciences, epitomised in the adage 'One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter'. Thus alongside a large volume of publications on the study of terrorism looking at its historical, sociological and psychological roots (e.g. Kumm 2010; L' Heuillet, 2013) there are also competing approaches analysing, for example, the phenomenon of state terrorism (e.g. Chomsky, 1988; Chomsky, 2003).

[2] In addition to the scientific work on this topic, works of literature too have been inspired by these developments and tried to offer some insights into religious violence and fundamentalism (see for example: Bachi, 2006; Hamid, 2007; Sansal, 2008; Vallejo, 2012; Houellebecq, 2015).

[3] The milieu and these prayer houses will be discussed in more detail in Section 2.3.

- To understand the relative significance of religion, ideology and extra-ideological (affective) dimensions of radicalisation and how they are interwoven.

Based on these goals, the main questions were the following:

- Are there cases of radicalisation, violent or not, in the selected milieu?
- Why do some young people become engaged in violent extremist ideologies while others, in similar structural locations, take non-radicalisation trajectories?
- How do sustained inequalities and perceived injustice impact upon radicalisation?
- Do young Muslims themselves understand 'radicalisation' and the discourse surrounding it?
- What is the role of social relationships in facilitating radicalisation of ideas and behaviour? To what extent do individuals 'self' radicalise?
- How do extra-ideological factors - emotional experiences, sense of identity and 'coolness' of radical milieus, death cult - shape radicalisation trajectories?
- Does religion play a role, and what kind of role, in radicalisation or non-radicalisation trajectories?

Given the association of political violence in Greece, most recently with groups on the extreme right and even extreme left, it is important at the outset to establish the rationale for undertaking a study of Islamist (non)radicalisation in Greece. This is derived, first, from the observed phenomenon of the growth in Muslim populations in Greek society since the 2000s, but primarily since the so-called 'refugee crisis' from 2015 onwards.[4] This goes hand in hand with the persistent reproduction in the Greek public sphere of the open stigmatisation of Islam and Muslims, which targets them as a threat, as inherently violent and as terrorists (Sakellariou, 2017; Sakellariou, 2019). Indeed, in some cases the media or self-proclaimed experts have argued – based always on some 'anonymous' source - that Islamist terrorists (imams or others) have been active in Greece. Against this background, this study asks: Are Islamist extremists active in Greek society? If so, how have they been radicalised? And, are they home-grown extremists or have they come from abroad?

The second rationale for conducting this is that the Greek context provides potentially rich ground for exploring the role of two key drivers of violent extremist trajectories among Muslims in the current literature: inequality (objective and subjective); and religion. In relation to inequality, for example, since Muslim communities in Greece face a range of inequalities - both socio-economic and in terms of religious freedom – might we expect them to be vulnerable to radicalisation? And, if religion, particularly Islam, is a key driver of radicalisation, as argued by some experts, what is the role of Islam in this process in a predominantly Greek-Orthodox context?

Thus, the rationale for conducting this study is threefold: Greek society has seen a recent rise in its Muslim population, many of whom are young people; those Muslim communities face problems of inequality on a national level; and they are subject to public debate in which they are stigmatised as a threat due to the perceived violent character of Islam as a religion. As will be discussed in Section 3, there were significant challenges in undertaking the study, not least because no such investigation into

---

[4] As of December 2015, more than 800,000 refugees and immigrants had arrived in Greece searching for a pathway to other European destinations. For more information see http://www.iom.int/news/irregular-migrant-refugee-arrivals-europe-top-one-million-2015-iom (last accessed 2 May 2020). This flow was suddenly halted in March 2016 when Eastern and Central Europe countries decided to close their borders, even to Syrian and Iraqi refugees, and these people were trapped in Greece. Today it is estimated that more than 70,000 refugees and immigrants have been blocked in Greece. Since January 2019 more than 65,000 immigrants and refugees have entered Greece with a rise observed in the last days of August and early September 2019, see https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean (last accessed 2 May 2020).

the existence and degree of extremist or radical views among Muslims or the trajectories of radicalisation and non-radicalisation, has been carried out in Greece before. While sociological and anthropological research on Muslims in Greece has been conducted, it has considered, either issues such as their living conditions, the development of community organisations and their integration in Greek society (Imam and Tsakiridou, 2003; Antoniou, 2003; Kassimeris and Samouris, 2012; Hatziprokopiou and Evergeti, 2014; Chatziprokopiou and Hatziprokopiou, 2017) or been focused on questions of religious freedom and other legal issues (Tsitselikis, 2004; Ktistakis, 2006). Attempts to investigate radicalisation and extremism on an international and national level have come from the fields of security studies, international relations and geopolitics (Mazis, 2012; Paraskeva-Gizi, 2014; Karatrantos, 2016). In some of these cases there is a security approach and in most of these approaches there is the stigmatisation of Islam and Muslims (Kostakos, 2007; 2010; Giannoulis, 2011; Symeonides, 2017), which will be discussed in more detail in the following section. This lack of previous studies, on the one hand, means that there are no existing findings to build on and learn from but, on the other, makes this research unique and creates room for new hypotheses, theoretical reflection and analyses.

2. Setting the scene

2.1 Historical context

Before turning to the particular milieu selected for research, it is important to provide a brief overview of the wider socio-historical context of the Greek case (for a more detailed discussion, see Sakellariou, 2020a). The first important dimension to consider, as noted above, is the historical and social context of Islam and Muslims in Greece. Debates about Islam are deeply rooted in and strongly intertwined with the experience of the long Ottoman occupation (1453-1821) and its collective national interpretations. The rule of the Ottoman Empire is considered a serious trauma and an important juncture for the creation of the collective identity of the Greek people, which is still present in the dominant memories of the national 'self' and 'other'. From this perspective, it has to be understood that Muslims have been part of Greek society for centuries. This aspect is important when it comes to the stigmatisation of Islam and Muslims, because the historical past still plays a crucial role in public discourses related to current developments (Sakellariou, 2020b).

The second key dimension concerns the immigration context in contemporary Greece. It is important to distinguish between different Muslim communities in Greece. Firstly, the Muslim minority of Thrace, located in the northeast part of Greece, consists of about 120,000 Muslims. They inhabit the region together with a Greek Christian majority (Tsitselikis, 1999; Ktistakis, 2006; Katsikas, 2012).[5] This group constitutes 'old Islam' and is distinct from recent waves of Muslim immigrants who are considered as 'new Islam' (Tsitselikis, 2012). The second group is generally composed of Muslim immigrants, who, far from being a homogenous group, come from a variety of nationalities and ethnicities. It is this group, as suggested by (primarily) conservative and extreme-right political actors, that has undermined the homogeneity of Greek society and lacks the basic criteria for inclusion in it i.e. the language, the

---

[5] Thrace's Muslim community, along with the Greeks of Constantinople in Turkey, was protected by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne which exempted them from the mandatory population exchanges between Greece and Turkey. Signed in the aftermath of Greece's defeat in Asia Minor, the Treaty included a section on the 'Protection of Minorities', which contains a series of provisions to guarantee the rights of the minority populations in both countries. Despite the protection, Muslims of Thrace have faced integration obstacles, discrimination and social exclusion due to their religion, but also due to their ethnic background, which is mostly Turkish.

Christian-Orthodox religious belonging and the common cultural heritage. It is mainly this group that has been targeted as a security threat when it comes to radicalisation and Islamist extremism.

The third, and arguably most important dimension of the historical context relates to the presence of Islamism and/or Islamist terrorist organisations in Greek society. Historical evidence show that in Greece, although extremist violence from terrorist organisations proclaiming a leftist ideology and from extreme-right groups like Golden Dawn can be easily documented (Sakellariou, 2003; Sakellariou, 2020a), there is no organised Islamist violence and terrorist activity. From the 1970s until the 1990s, a series of terrorist attacks have taken place in Greece, but these attacks were sporadic and cannot be interpreted as constituting a continuous and systematic presence in Greek society. There are four key terrorist incidents that illustrate this. The first one was the hijacking of an Olympic Airways plane by six Palestinians on 22 July, 1970 as it was flying over the island of Rhodes. The demand of the hijackers was that the Greek government released seven of their fellow citizens who had been detained in Greek prisons. The second was another hijacking, this time of a TWA plane flying from Athens to Rome on 14 January, 1985. This hijacking was organised by two Lebanese nationals whose demands were that all Shia Muslims arrested by Israel be liberated and an international condemnation of Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 be issued. While this hijacking had no direct impact on Greek society, it is usually mentioned because it originated in Athens and this gave rise to questions about the presence and activities of international terrorist groups on Greek territory. The third attack took place on 11 July, 1988 on the cruise boat 'City of Poros' and at the same time an explosion of a car bomb took place on the coast at Trocadero in Palaio Faliro, a region close to Athens. A total of nine people were killed and 45 injured as a result of these attacks. The last attack took place on 19 April, 1991 in the city of Patras when 10-12 TNT explosives were employed and resulted in the deaths of seven people and injuries to a further nine people. While the authorities accused the Organisation for the Liberation of Palestine (PLO) of perpetrating the attack, the organisation denied any involvement (Bossi, 1996: 143-144). It is clear that these incidents were mainly related to international issues - Israel's invasion of Lebanon or the Palestinian issue - and not actually targeted at Greek society directly. As it has been additionally argued, Greece, due to its close and friendly relations and policy towards Arab states, was basically excluded from any terrorist plans of such groups. This is an argument regularly reproduced during the last 10-15 years in order to explain why Greece has not been the target of Islamist terrorists (Giannoulis, 2011: 11).[6]

One final contextual issue to take into account concerns the ongoing issues around the construction of a mosque in Athens. The historical, legal and political issues surrounding this debate have been studied, with sometimes illuminating results (Antoniou, 2010). Currently, official mosques, which are open to Muslims exist only on the islands of Rhodes and Kos and also in Thrace in Northern Greece where, as mentioned above, since 1923 the longest-standing Muslim community resides, the members of which are Greek citizens. The history of the construction of a mosque in Athens began in the late 1970s and remains ongoing (Tsitselikis, 2004: 281-290). The lack of an official mosque in Athens has been one of the burning issues for Muslims and, alongside the lack of an Islamic cemetery, constitutes a key dimension of the religious inequality they face. In the absence of an official and state recognised mosque, Muslims in Greece have found their own locations to observe their religious duties (Sakellariou,

---

[6] However, more recently information released by the Islamic State has shown that Greece, though probably U.S. military bases rather Greek society as a whole, was included in its potential targets (see: https://www.protothema.gr/world/article/408156/100-upoptoi-tis-tzihad-stin-athina/, https://www.tovima.gr/2015/11/25/world/kai-i-ellada-anamesa-sta-60-krati-stoxoys-twn-tzixantistwn/, and https://www.huffingtonpost.gr/gabriel-charitos/diethnes-neoi-stoxoi-isis-souda-krhths-akrotiri-kyrpou_b_11328892.html, (last accessed 16 April 2020).

2011). For some, this means former storehouses, derelict houses and factories, which have turned into prayer houses, while others pray in open public spaces (see Plate 1). Some of these informal mosques have been selected as the milieu for this ethnographic research.
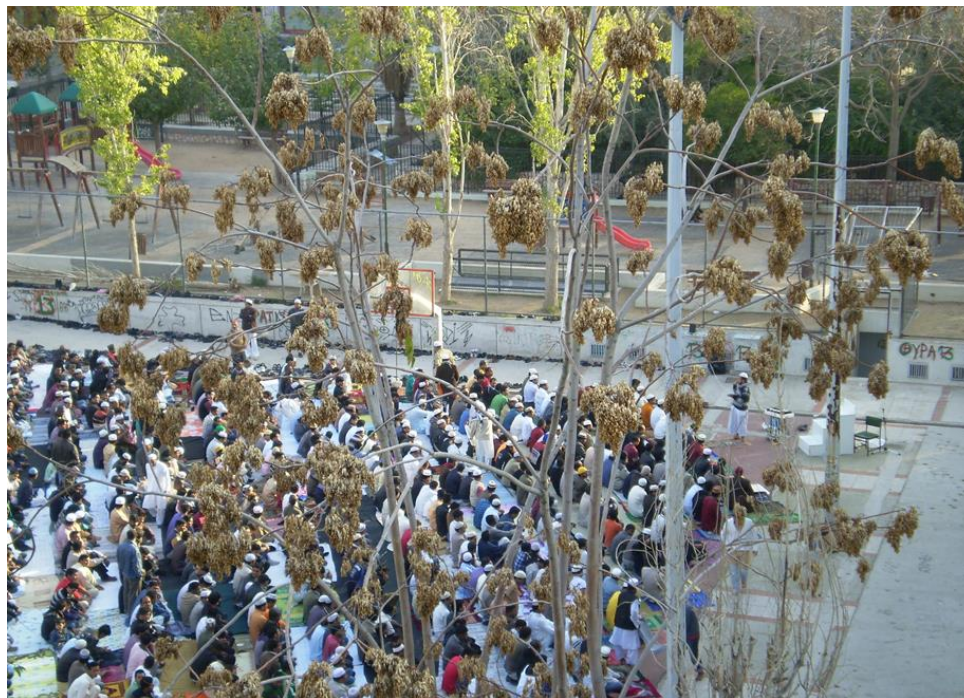

Plate 1: Muslims praying outside in Athens

2.2 Contemporary context

In the current period, and notwithstanding the religious and socio-economic inequalities faced by Muslim communities in Greece discussed above, there has been remarkably little protest, let alone violence, by Muslim groups. As it discussed in the report on the historical case studies of interactive radicalisation (Sakellariou, 2020b), it is important to highlight that Muslims have used demonstrations or other means of social activism as a tool to claim their rights only in three cases. The first took place in May 2009, after a controversial incident when a police officer tore up the copies of some pages/verses of the Qur'an during a police investigation, giving rise to a storm of protest.[7] The second took the form of a series of public prayers in 2010 in the city centre of Athens held in order to protest against the lack of an official mosque in the city (despite the law permitting its construction being passed in 2006). The third instance took place in December 2019, when a man of Greek nationality started to curse Allah in the area of Omonia square in central Athens where many Muslims operate their stores. The man was arrested for racist hate speech by the police. After this incident Muslims gathered outside the local Police Department to demonstrate and organised another rally a few days later.[8] Thus, there have been

---

[7] Georgia Dama, 'Unger Overflows', *Eleftherotypia*, 26 May 2009, 18-19 and Georgia Dama, 'We exist either you like it or not', *Eleftherotypia*, 30 May 2009, 44.

[8] 'Disturbance in Omonia: A man was imprecating Allah and Muslims are protesting', *Newsbeast*, 3 December 2019, https://www.newsbeast.gr/greece/arthro/5719401/anastatosi-stin-omonoia-andras-evrize-ton-allach-moysoylmanoi-kanoyn-sygkentrosi-diamartyrias, and 'Demonstration for the man who was imprecating Allah',

very few cases of mobilisation among Muslims and always within the national legal and social framework. However, such cases, like the one in 2009, have been used in security orientated reports (Giannoulis, 2011: 24) to suggest that Greece is threatened by Muslim immigrants' rage.

Other activism undertaken by immigrant and refugee groups in conjunction with anti-racist/anti-fascist groups, NGOs and leftist groups and parties to protest against the rise of racist violence, hate speech and Islamophobia has also been peaceful. Another form of activism is the effort made by some Muslim groups e.g. the Muslim Association of Greece to lobby political parties and the government in order to protect Muslims' rights by constructing the mosque of Athens or establishing a Muslim cemetery. Therefore, they tend to follow a more mainstream approach which is used by other groups and NGOs in order to achieve their goals. Despite the fact that Muslims are not a unified group (Sunnis, Shiites, and from various national backgrounds), they seem to have primarily decided to follow a peaceful and mainstream path in order to claim their rights. This path does not prevent Muslims from protesting when they consider it necessary. Finally, it should be noted that, to date, there has been no incidence of violent response by Muslim communities to attacks against Muslim immigrants or arson attacks against prayer places perpetrated by the extreme-right (for a detailed discussion of this, see Sakellariou, 2020b).

Despite the lack of evidence on Islamist extremist violence, the stigmatisation of Islam and Muslims in Greece continues to be fuelled by information emanating from the media and some self-proclaimed security experts (in addition to that disseminated by the extreme right). The media and security commentators draw on precisely those issues discussed in Section 2.1 to evidence their claims about the threats posed to Greek society by Islamism. They use the objective growth of Muslim populations in Greek society, namely immigrants and refugees, not the Muslim minority of Thrace, and the existence of a large number of unofficial prayer houses in order to argue that Greece is endangered by the presence of Islamist extremists in what they refer to as 'illegal mosques'. Several times in the last six years, press articles and headlines have claimed that fanatics or even jihadists have been present, and in some cases preaching, in these unofficial mosques of Athens. One such example was the headline of a populist right-wing newspaper 'To Proto Thema' (The First Issue), on 13 August, 2015, which read 'Government's great crime: Hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants arrive [in Greece] without control. Who knows how many jihadists came to Greece?'. Of course, no evidence was provided in the article, nor any figures regarding number of jihadists that might have crossed the border. Another example was the front page of the newspaper 'Eleftheria tou Typou' (Freedom of Press) on 28 August, 2017 (see Plate 2). This front page showed the inside of a mosque (not from Greece) and next to it the image of some people with masks and holding rifles. The title was: 'Mosques of hatred in Attica. The police has put under its microscope three (of the 80 monitored) places of Muslim cult (sic) where extreme speeches were given'.

Newsbeast, 13 December 2019, https://www.newsbeast.gr/greece/arthro/5769177/poreia-gia-ton-andra-poy-evrize-ton-allach-stin-omonoia-i-islamofovia-einai-ratsismos, (last accessed 19 December 2019).

Plate 2: Front page of the newspaper 'Eleftheria tou Typou'

In another example, the moderate right-wing newspaper 'I Kathimerini' (The Daily) published an article on September 9th, 2017, with the tile 'Imams of hate' based on a so-called 'highly confidential' police report about Islamist extremist activities in Greece and in particular in Muslim prayer houses. The article describes how one of these unofficial mosques had close relations with the Muslim Brotherhood 'an organisation of political Islam, which has as its slogan "jihad is our path" and has been characterised as a terrorist organisation by Russia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the Emirates, but not by the U.S.A. and the E.U.'. The article also notes that:

> the anti-terrorist service is highly interested in a cultural centre and improvised mosque which operates near Piraeus, because according to police information the person responsible for the place seems to be involved in cases of illegal transfer of people from North Africa to the regions of the Caliphate [i.e. ISIS].

According to the article, this individual was helping Islamist extremists to be transferred from Morocco and Algeria through Greece to Iraq and Syria. Finally, the article made a reference to a Salafi mosque in Athens where many 'fanatical' Muslims belonging to the 'Salafi movement' gather.[9] This long article from a perceived mainstream newspaper did nothing more than reproduce a police report without offering any other documentation. It is not unusual for the media to reproduce such information but, without additional concrete evidence to support the argument of the presence of extremists in Greece, it is problematic. Moreover, there have been no cases of people actually arrested, accused of, tried or imprisoned for extremist activity.

However, this has not prevented the Greek media reporting the arrest of individuals for extremism. In one such case it was reported that an Imam who was preaching in a mosque of Athens had been arrested. According to the news report, he had said 'look how their women are dressed. They are sinners. They are drawn into sin' during a sermon and that he had expressed extreme views about

---

[9] I have visited both mosques mentioned in the article including during the DARE field research.

Europe and the U.S. although no further details were given.[10] Most of these articles contain very confusing information about what exactly took place and provide little documentation beyond having spoken with some police sources. Indeed, in most of the cases, the information is reproduced from previous years (2014-2015) and is not new. It is also important to note that official reports have never been revealed by the police or the secret service, not even via press releases, and thus media reports rely on anonymous sources.

Two other cases reported by the Greek media relating to Islamist extremists are worth noting. The first was an incident that took place in September 2017, when the police arrested a 34-year old Iraqi who was holding a knife and threatening passers-by in front of the Archaeological Museum of Athens. It never came to light whether he suffered psychological problems or whether his motives were religious or political, although it was later reported that he had been released from prison after convictions related to robbery and drugs.[11] The lack of information suggests that there was no religious or Islamist motivation behind this act, otherwise the police and particularly the media would not have left this unexploited. The second example was the arrest of a supposed ISIS member in Alexandroupoli, a city in Northern Greece near the border with Turkey. After a series of press articles and TV news reports claiming that he was an ISIS fighter, it turned out that he was probably - and according to his lawyer - fighting with the Syrian Liberation Army and he had been reported to the Greek authorities for domestic violence. Even the police admitted that there was only a suspicion, but no evidence, that for a very short time he joined ISIS, but he certainly was not a central member nor did he ever try to organise a terrorist attack in Greece. However, the Greek media mentioned that horrific videos were found in his mobile phone with executions and torture of prisoners under ISIS and even a photo with a significant high-ranking ISIS member very close to Al-Bagdadi, the ISIS leader.[12] None of these were made visually available to the public, but were only reproduced in a written form as information.

While it serves no purpose to dwell on these, and similar media examples that are usually reproduced via the Internet and social media after original publication, the following example provides some idea of the quality of the information produced by most of the Greek media. In 2017, it was mentioned that a 'self-proclaimed' Imam from Bangladesh was arrested because he had formed an 'Islamic Police' in order to secure the implementation of Sharia law in Muslim prayer houses. The photo that accompanied this news report (see Plate 3) came from one of the sites in which my research was conducted, which I have been visiting since 2016. Indeed, the person depicted is the president of the board which runs the place (incidentally, not from Bangladesh but from Morocco) and has participated as an invited speaker in an event organised by the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church. Today both of the main links that reproduced the news report have been removed, leaving the only one that does not carry the original accompanying photo.[13]

---

[10] http://www.newsbeast.gr/greece/arthro/2819918/sinelifthi-imamis-me-akrees-thesis-stin-athina (last accessed 13 April 2020).

[11] http://www.nooz.gr/greece/irakinos-kukloforoise-me-spa8i-stous-dromous-tis-a8inas (last accessed 13 April 2020).

[12] It is very interesting in this specific case to chart how the same news website changes its content gradually until it is finally found that the case was not as important as was initially considered. See for example http://www.nooz.gr/greece/sillipsi-tzixantisti-stin-aleksandroipoli, http://www.nooz.gr/greece/sto-mikroskopio-i-drasi-tou-tzixantisti-sto-isis and http://www.nooz.gr/greece/antartis-kai-oxi-tzixantistis-o-32xronos231017 (last accessed 13 April 2020).

[13] https://www.star.gr/eidiseis/ellada/383269/synelhfthh-aytoklhtos-imamhs-apo-to-mpagklantes-eixe-sygkrothsei-islamikh-astynomia-sto-kentro-ths-athhnas (last accessed 13 April 2020). It is important to note that the media sites reproducing this report are in no way peripheral - one is the website of a mainstream TV channel

Plate 3: Accompanying photo to the article

Such regular reports in the media suggesting extremists exist among the Muslim population, particularly immigrants and refugees, in Greek society, provided part of the rationale for this study, namely to investigate whether there was indeed evidence of radicalisation within these communities.

The negative role of the media was underlined by many of the interviewees during the research as, in their opinion, the media uncritically accept and reproduce extremists' claims to be acting in the name of Islam; this is considered a major issue and the wrong approach (Nikos). This misinformation should be somehow controlled and prevented, as one participant said:

> First of all, as far as misinformation is concerned, obviously the media should be controlled. They shouldn't present ISIS, and every person who declares they are a Muslim and gets a knife, slaughters, plants a bomb, kills, gets a gun and kills again, all this doesn't represent Islam. Islam is represented by the people who go to the mosque, read the Qur'an and talk about it peacefully and they can explain two or three things to you. […] So, I should, I think one should... First of all stop misinformation, that is to say, check every text, check the media, what they present [to the public]. (Thanassis)

In addition, respondents argue that the media create a climate of fear about Islam and Muslims, through the reproduction of police information about the existence and activity of extremists among the Muslims in Greece, generate Islamophobia which leads to the stigmatisation of Muslims. (Vassilis)

Apart from the media, there is a second source of information about the activities of Islamist extremists in Greek society, particularly regarding the unofficial prayer houses. This source consists of self-proclaimed security specialists who try to present a more substantiated argumentation about the threats from such activism. Reports which are mainly published abroad, as well as websites dedicated to the monitoring of radical Islam (e.g. RIMSE-Radical Islam Monitor in Southeast Europe)[14] are the primary channel of such information. It is interesting to note that the data included in these reports and online texts are mainly from anonymous police/secret service sources through the implementation of informal and unofficial, in some cases off the record, discussions or interviews, but also from the media. So, there exists a network of police sources, the media and these security specialists that circulate more or less the same information.

In the aftermath of 9/11, and after the rise of ISIS, the main question asked by these security specialists is when Greece will become a target of a future terrorist attack. The country's geographical location, for

---

and the second is the website of the periodical of a well-known journalist. Although the original image is now removed, I had downloaded a copy to my computer.

[14] https://www.rimse.gr/ (last accessed 16 April 2020).

example in relation to the immigration issue, is considered to create many threats for Greece (Symeonides, 2017) and there is a pragmatic expectation that radical Islamist groups could participate in low-risk assignments and psychological operations (such as recruitment, funding, propaganda and training) that would not be easily detected by Greek or other authorities. It is argued that the Greek context facilitates such operations for a number of reasons: geographical proximity to countries that export radicalism; illegal immigration and porous borders; social unrest; a growing Muslim community; indigenous terrorist networks; and corruption in the private and public sectors. These reports cite confidential reports and interviews with informants suggesting that there is fire behind the smoke. There is even a reference to the key members of a network, referred to by the police authorities as 'The Union of Mosques' or 'The Union of Imams', with military training and combat experience and connections to terrorist groups, foreign governments and the Muslim diaspora in Europe (mainly in Britain, Italy and France). It is argued that the network uses criminal activities to finance and facilitate their ideological objectives. The most noticeable illegal activities they conduct are passport forging, arms trafficking, people smuggling and drug trafficking. Finally, according to the same sources, the network has developed an internal structure to support fundraising, recruitment and counter-intelligence activities. However, future developments on the aforementioned political, socio-cultural and economic issues could change this dynamic and activate or radicalise Islamist networks in Greece. According to this analysis, so far the networks based in Greece perform mainly non-violent activities, but provides support for other groups based in larger European cities (Kostakos, 2010: 3-5). The common argument in such reports is that, although no verified Islamist terrorist attack has ever occurred in Greece, in recent years there has been evidence of increased, mainly background, logistical, recruitment and accommodating activities that has created a hub of uncontrollable, 'loose', individuals who act and operate freely making the trafficking of people from Asia and the Middle East through Greece easier while also looking to recruit Islamist radicals for operations beyond the Greek borders (Giannoulis, 2011: 22).

Analysts writing from this perspective thus see international networks as important security threats and consider Greece as having become a likely transit and entry point for Islamist militants who mask their activities and movements in civil society. Globalisation forces are seen as having contributed to this development. Networks of non-government organisations, charities and cultural centres linked to Saudi Arabia have managed to build and finance a large number of informal mosques in Greece, Kosovo, northern Albania, and Bosnia. Finally, it is considered that, because of the opening of the first mosque in Athens, in the long run, Greece will have to deal with the threats that France, Spain, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom are now encountering. Kostakos (2007) argues that the danger of becoming an open recruitment and logistical base for terrorists, as well as a terrorist sanctuary, is extremely worrying considering that Greece shares borders with countries known for being home to terrorist groups. In addition, it has been suggested that signs of Wahhabism and radicalism in Greece are also starting to emerge and Greece will face difficult challenges in the years ahead (Kostakos, 2007).

However, the examples and cases used to support such argumentation are controversial. For example, one such case relates to the involvement of Albanian separatist groups, such as the UCK (Kosovo Liberation Army), who are not necessarily Muslims. Moreover, the discovery by the police of a secret arsenal of weapons is mentioned in one report, although the authorities have never said officially that this was related to any Islamist extremist or underground activity. The same applies to the weaponry found among Turkish nationals (Giannoulis, 2011: 19). In another controversial case, the same report mentions the incident of 14 parcel bombs sent from Greece in late October/early November 2010 to the offices of Nicola Sarkozy in France, Angela Merkel in Germany and Silvio Berlusconi in Italy as well as several embassies in Greece (such as the embassies of the Netherlands, Belgium, Mexico and Switzerland) and agencies abroad such as Interpol, the European Court of Justice and other institutions

(ibid.: 24). Although any link to Islamist terrorism was denied by the Greek government and authorities and such a link has never been proven, the report still mentions it. The list of possible threats to Greece includes reference to blog articles authored by Muslims and informal Salafi mosques (ibid.: 23) or the arrests of foreigners who were involved in Islamist groups abroad, who, after arrest, were extradited to other countries but never accused of preparing an attack in Greece (ibid.: 25).

Some authors (Papgeorgiou and Samouris, 2012: 377) have argued that the authorities should be cautious and object to those Islamic groups and associations in Greece whose goal is to implement parts of Sharia law in Greek society or practice Dawah as a way to attract converts. However, these authors disregard the fact that all religions act in this way, including the Greek Orthodox religion when it undertakes missions in Africa or Asia. They also note that 'the arrival in Greece of people with extreme extremist (sic) (jihadist) action creates the risk of the transfusion of Salafist jihadism among the communities of Muslim immigrants' (Papgeorgiou and Samouris, 2012: 384). However, this strong statement is not accompanied by any evidence from the authors.[15]

It is important to emphasise here that while the authorities and police initiated some programmes in order to tackle Islamist extremism, they have never stated openly and officially that Islamist extremist groups have been active in Greek society, being very cautious with the information they reveal and their characterisations. As stated in a pocket guide published (2016) for public servants in the field (including security services and police officers in the mainland and in the borders), 'Greece, due to its geographical location, is in the epicentre of the issue of "foreign fighters", because their main movements and activities take place either in or through countries neighbouring Greece', implying mainly Turkey, but also the MENA region. Thus, although Greece has never faced any attacks by Islamist extremists like other European countries (e.g. France, the UK or Germany), the debates and information presented in the media, reports by security specialists and to lesser extent in police guidelines booklets, create an atmosphere of anticipation of such and this is important for understanding the rationale for the selection of the milieu.

2.3 Locating the milieu: Young Muslims in unofficial prayer places in Athens

According to the definition adopted by the DARE project, a milieu is the people, the physical and the social conditions and events in which someone acts or lives (Vestel, 2020). The milieus we are concerned with must, therefore, be spaces of encounter with radical/extreme messages (via the presence of recruiters, people of high receptivity to radical messages, people who have participated in radical/extreme activities, circulation of subversive content, etc.). The milieu approach calls for the exploration of various experiential levels of interaction at micro, meso and macro levels. *At the micro level* it considers traumas, extra-political experiences of being bullied, loneliness, or violence in the family. Even without any obvious political content, such emotional traumas may contribute as drivers towards processes of radicalisation. More generally speaking, studying the micro level of experience allows us to access subjectivities, personal trajectories and possible turning points in life paths, and, by extension, self-narratives behind personal ideologies as well as patterns of processes of radicalisation. *At the meso level* experiences also play a role in so far as relationships, such as family, friends, co-workers, or mere acquaintances, all contribute to shaping individuals. Everyday discrimination, for example in access to work, housing, shopping, etc. may, for some, create a perception of an overall pattern of injustice and threat that influences the direction of political trajectories. *On the macro level*,

---

[15] Both authors held high-ranking offices in the Greek Police and secret service, so perhaps they are reluctant to reveal their sources. However, publishing such information in what intends to be an academic book should be accompanied by references.

social institutions (family, school, religion, economy, the media and the state) deeply impact individual lives. Also, situations far from the place where one lives may be experienced as crucial, e.g. international events and developments.

In line with the particular historical and contemporary context of this case (outlined above), it is important to underline that radical milieus are not only an outcome of actual encounters with radical messages, but also of relations to societal perceptions of radicalisation, as found in media portrayals and in social stereotypes of 'the radical'. Thus, the rationale for focusing on milieus might be summarised as:

- Firstly, aiming at closeness to young people's lived experience. The best way of getting such data is by spending time with them through fieldwork. Where this is not possible, one can try to get such data through interviews, both with young people themselves and with people around them. Closeness can also be achieved through direct ethnographic observation and analysis, especially if such work is carried out over time

- Secondly, this closeness allows the exploration of the grey zones in and out of radical positions, that is, the tracing of multidirectional trajectories of individuals as they unfold in their everyday engagement with radicalisation messages and positions.

- Thirdly, the closeness to lived experience allows greater opportunity to explore the extra-ideological drivers of radicalisation, such as feeling excluded, problems with parents, peers and schools, existential dimensions dealing with life, death and the meaning of life and experience of social injustice.

- Fourthly, it emphasises the possibility of seeing young people as creative agents who are able to see and address real injustice. This lends the term 'radical' a more nuanced connotation than a narrow focus upon violence.

- Finally, it emphasises the historical background of the milieus, that is, their contextualisation in a longer time perspective.

Bearing in mind the historical and contemporary context outlined above, in the rest of this section, the milieu selected for study will be located and described. As already mentioned, Muslims in Greece do not have access to officially recognised religious places (with limited exceptions).[16] Further to this, the media and some security specialists have argued that informal mosques are at the centre of radicalisation and violent extremism.[17] Based on this and since these are the places where Muslims, especially young ones, mainly gather, it was decided to focus on this particular milieu. Drawing on previous knowledge of the field, and after some preliminary fieldwork, it was decided to focus on three Arab prayer houses that legally function not as religious places but as cultural associations. The Arab community is one of the oldest in Greece and because of this members of this community have good command of the Greek language. Two of the informal mosques are located in Athens city centre (see Plates 4-6), while the third one (see Plates 7-8) is located in a municipality close to Athens, and near to Piraeus; each of them is accessible via public transport.

---

[16] Currently, official mosques, which are open to Muslims exist only on the islands of Rhodes and Kos and also in Thrace in Northern Greece where, since 1923, the most long-standing Muslim community resides, as mentioned above, the members of which are Greek citizens.

[17] See Section 2.2 for examples of the kinds of claims made.

Plate 4

Plate 5

Plate 6

Plate 7

Plate 8

The participants from this milieu were young Muslims who were either born in Greece, had lived in Greece for many years (10 or more) or had converted to Islam in the last 2-3 years. It is estimated that Muslims constitute between 5-10 per cent of the population in Greece, with the vast majority concentrated in Athens. However, due to the lack of official data it is almost impossible to gain accurate figures on the size of the population. Although in the locations studied here there is a stable number of attendees, in many cases Muslims move around, praying in different places. Through this networking some have established contacts and visit each other's religious places. Due to the absence of official data which has already been noted, the demographic composition of those attending such places of prayer is difficult to ascertain. Through pre-existing personal contacts over the course of the last five years, and through ethnographic observation and discussions in the milieu, I would suggest that the majority are middle-aged and lower class men of Greek or Arab background. However, we have also found a limited number of women attending such places, some people of middle to upper class background and, of course, people of non-Arab national backgrounds (e.g. Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Albanian etc.). Based on observation and knowledge of the field, one assumption was that, because of the unstable status of the prayer house milieu (many not official, some without any permit), many of the interviewees would move between locations, for a variety of reasons. This was verified during the interviews, from which it became apparent that quite a few of the participants knew each other from attending different prayer houses and moving from one to another due to changing theological or political views or even for practical reasons (e.g. territorial proximity). In this way they constructed a milieu.

3. Field Research

3.1 Data collection, data analysis and socio-demographic portrait of the respondent set

The process of data collection started from the first contact with people from the Muslim communities of Athens. Officially, the data collection started in summer 2017, after ethical approval from Panteion University. However, due to personal contacts with the Muslim communities since 2012-2013, visits and contacts within other frameworks have been made since March 2017. Having already known that the

DARE project was about to start, preliminary contacts, especially those with key people, were made in order to prepare for the fieldwork. The fieldwork lasted for about two years until the summer of 2019 and resulted in a series of collected data summarised in Table 1. The data set consists, first, of 17 interviews with young people, two of which were conducted via Skype because at that time the respondents were traveling abroad or visiting their birthplace in another region of Greece. It also includes data from a number of other sources including: 56 entries in the field diary from participant observation and interviews; one joint interview with two key people of a Muslim community, which was not transcribed; 38 images, from the prayer places in the milieu; 12 audio recordings with messages after Friday prayers, produced in the Greek language by a Greek speaking Muslim (max. 6-7 minutes duration each); printed material found in those places about Islam including, among others, titles like 'Women in Islam', 'Romanticism in Islam', 'The key for the Understanding of Islam', etc.; and online material downloaded from two blogs run by Muslims born and raised in Greece.

Table 1: Data set

	Number	Total length or brief description (as appropriate)	Average length
Respondent memos	17	n/a	n/a
Audio interviews	17	1,282 (21,36 hours)	75,41 min
Field diary entries (total)	56	One document of 56 entries	n/a
Still images	38	Images mainly from mosque interior and during the Friday payer	n/a
Mosque messages	12	18 pages of transcribed audio messages	n/a
Blogs	18	Downloaded online texts of two interviewees consisting of two files: 10 texts, 45 pages; 8 texts, 95 pages	n/a

What was difficult to measure and document was the informal discussions during visits to the prayer houses for Friday prayers, the Ramadan or on other occasions. Summaries of these discussions, of course, were collected and written down in the field diary after the visits to the prayer places.

With regard to the interviews, considerable effort was made in order to follow the agreed interview schedule and no significant deviation from this template took place. However, the length of the interview that ensued, if all questions were answered, was sometimes problematic, with some interviewees becoming fatigued if it lasted over an hour and began to provide short and less well-elaborated on answers. In one case the interviewee requested continuing the following day and thus a single interview was split over two days. It is also important to note that some interviewees struggled to understand, or were reluctant to respond to, particular themes in the interview scenario. These concerned, most notably, their own understandings of extremism and radicalisation, the meaning of life and death and some questions relating to personal issues e.g. those on the family background, intimate relationships, education, etc. On such issues, notwithstanding efforts to explain the purpose of the question, interviewees hesitated to respond or avoided doing so by moving to other topics. They were

more willing to talk about inequalities, problems they face in Greek society, International issues, ideology and politics, religion, etc. It should also be noted that, in some instances, people were talked openly in informal discussions but were quite hesitant to express themselves when recorded.

As a consequence, the final number of Level 2 nodes populated was 17 (including a total of 67 Level 1 nodes), 16 of which came directly from the interview schedule and one was added. The new addition was named 'the role of identity', which replaced the originally anticipated separate Level 2 nodes on ethnicity, gender and sexuality, class etc., which were not populated since no information was collected from the interviews. Of course, based on participant observation and informal discussions some evidence was actually collected, but this was too limited and insignificant to be included in the Nvivo analysis. In some cases when the collected information was considered important, it was included in the analysis, despite this, some of the level 2 nodes are not very populated.

As far as the socio-demographic portrait of the respondents is concerned, their age varied from 18 to 32 years old, with the majority of the 17 respondents (12) being over 25. Only two of them were under 20, 10 between 20 and 29 and 5 from 30 to 32. With regard to gender most (13) were male.

Regarding their country of birth, most participants were born in Greece (9) and were Muslims or had converted to Islam recently. In some cases they were second generation immigrants who were born and raised in Greece and they considered themselves Greek citizens. The others were born in a variety of countries (e.g. Morocco (1), Jordan (1), Egypt (2), Palestine (1), Pakistan (1), Syria (1), Afghanistan (1), and Albania (1)). This impacts of course on respondents' nationality; four had Greek nationality but others had mixed-nationality (e.g. Greek-Egyptian (2), Greek-Palestinian (1), Greek-Turkish (2), and Greek-Dutch (1)).

Respondents' educational background was advanced; the majority either held university degrees (6) or at the time of the interview were studying at the university (3). This is probably because, as most of the interviewees were of Greek nationality and family background, they had had the opportunity to study in Greek schools and then continue their studies in Greek universities. Those of an immigrant background had had fewer opportunities to go to university, unless they had come to Greece for this particular reason (as in one case). Regarding their employment status, most of the interviewees (8) were in full-time employment in some cases running their own businesses. Four of them were unemployed.

When it comes to family situation, the majority were single (10) although 5 were married. Most of them (8) had one brother and most of them had no sisters (7). Only a few of them had their own children - the majority (10) had no children of their own. Most of the participants were living with other people at home (10) – these were either their parents' family, brothers and sisters or with their own family.

Finally, all respondents (17) were Muslims, but the degree to which they were practising their religion varied. The vast majority (12) were believers and practising, four self-identified as not fully-practising Muslims and one said she was culturally Muslim, but in practice agnostic. For these participants, being a practising Muslim referred to following the five pillars of Islam, and, in addition to performing Shahada i.e. the profession of faith that every pious Muslim undertakes, this means praying (*salat*) every day, with Friday prayers being considered the most important, and fasting during the Ramadan period. Pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) was the most difficult religious practice to follow and only one respondent stated that they had done this (twice), while another was planning to organise the trip in the near future. Most of those who were believers and practising admitted that they would like to make the pilgrimage but it was difficult for them for various reasons, personal and financial. Finally, *zakat* (almsgiving) was practised only by few of the respondents although one of them undertook this every Friday, as I observed since I attended the same mosque he did (although he never did this ostentatiously).

3.2 Access, researcher-respondent relations and ethical practice

The main purpose of the ethnographic research was to look into the meanings, the experiences and the social-psychological aspects of the process and trajectories of radicalisation and non-radicalisation. As it has been argued, every science which studies social relations is a science of the human behaviour and strives to understand it (Weber, 1991: 179, 182). Based on this effort of understanding, social scientists try to explain human behaviour interpretatively, since behind every 'human activity' there is a person found and the meanings human beings attribute to it. In order to achieve this, a combination of participant observation and semi-structured interviews were selected as the main methodological tools for the research. Conducting fieldwork is not an easy task. Ethnographers are not just outsiders looking inside a group or community. They have to be reflective insiders, negotiating roles and subjectivities, looking out from the inside (Coffey, 1999: 57). Furthermore, even though fieldwork cannot be done without gathering data, it entails far more than data gathering as a process of a sustained inquiry (Wolcott, 1995: 249). If fieldwork in general needs special attention on the part of the ethnographer, fieldwork within a religious group or community and, moreover, a minority one, requires more attention and cultivation of relationships between the researcher and the group under study. Religion is considered a private and sensitive feature of people's identity and everyday life. Sometimes, people do not want to discuss religious issues and can become defensive and even hostile when someone forces them to speak about their religious ideas and convictions.

Sociological reality is such that no single method, theory or observer can capture all that is relevant and important (Denzin, 1970: xii). For that reason participant observation was not the only method employed in this case study. Qualitative interviewing can be a great adventure as every step of the interview brings new information and opens windows into the experiences of the people the researcher meets, providing the opportunity to the researcher to document the various and complicated experiences of human beings and contribute to the understanding of the modern world (Back, 2007), discovering ideas, values, perceptions, stances and emotions and understanding personal and social experiences (Mishler, 1996; Mason, 2003: 83-131; Grawitz, 2006: 235-279). It is a way of finding out what others feel and think about their worlds, because through qualitative interviews one can understand experiences and reconstruct events in which one has not participated (Rubin and Rubin, 1995: 1). Qualitative interviews can also help the researcher clarify and reflect on events and experiences in which they were present, in order to understand them in a more integrated way. In that sense, qualitative interviewing is a helpful tool for ethnographic research, since it allows one to share the world of others, to find out what is going on, why people do what they do and how they understand their worlds (Rubin and Rubin, 1995: 1-5; Kvale, 1996: 1) and this was exactly what happened in this case. However, on the other hand, through ethnographic observation, I was able to confirm and, in some cases, question the beliefs and issues described in interviews (Inge, 2017:53), meaning that this methodological combination was a fruitful way of approaching the milieu. As it has been rightly argued, revisiting sites, individuals, situations, sentiments, and meanings means cultivating what, for a researcher, should be the heart of their vocation (Truong, 2018: 14).

Access to the field felt relatively straightforward at the beginning because I had established contacts with the Muslim community over the 4-5 years before the fieldwork, around issues such as the construction of the Mosque in Athens and of racism and Islamophobia. As a consequence, contacts with gatekeepers and key-figures were already established and there was knowledge and connection with the field and the people. However, asking for their engagement in another series of visits and discussions might have engendered a feeling of fatigue among the Muslim community; indeed this was something mentioned by some of the key-figures in the process of the research. They also reported that many researchers and journalists had exploited the Muslim community in order to conduct their studies

and then either presented a distorted image of Islam and Muslims or lost contact with the community. This was perceived negatively especially by young Muslims. Despite these issues raised, people were eager to participate in the research and open their meeting places (public or private), allowing me to visit, discuss, take photos, videos and attend their services. From this point of view, access was achieved smoothly and without hesitation or suspicion, leading to the collection of interesting and rich ethnographic material over the course of an almost two-year period of participation albeit with less intensity during the last six months or during summer time.

In contrast, when the time arrived for the interviews, a wall of hesitation and reluctance was evident, at least for most of the participants. Apart from the ever present problem of availability - as people have other professional and family obligations – a more general hesitation about being recorded was directly or indirectly expressed. I waited for relations to develop and conversations with participants to warm up naturally before I broached the subject of extended one-to-one interviews. However, the months crept on and, though people were generally friendly, it remained difficult to arrange interviews (Inge, 2017:55). One illustrative example was that of a Greek convert (Thanassis) who was very open to talk when we met regularly at the mosque during the Friday prayers but it took me almost a year to persuade him to record what turned out to be a very interesting interview, which he did just a few weeks before he was to leave for military service.

What was also clear in some cases, was the power relations exercised in the mosque. Imams and other key figures played a central role in the mosques and this perhaps was another reason that people were hesitant when it came to giving an interview; they would do so after discussion and consultation with these key figures or after these key figures had informed them that they had talked to me or even been interviewed by me (if they were within the target age group). Moreover, in those instances when the interview took place in the mosque, there were interruptions by other people being around that caused some difficulties to the process (e.g. during interviews with Dimos and Dimitris). For that reason, I tried to arrange the interviews outside the mosques (e.g. a coffee shop or the interviewee's house if they suggested that) so that they felt more comfortable and free to talk.

No particular ethical issues were encountered. The option of securing consent verbally at the start of each interview was employed (rather than written consent) for the reasons outlined above. This consent process followed earlier provision of information on the DARE project and discussion of the content and purpose of the research during previous meetings in the mosques. Thus at the start of the interview, this information was briefly repeated before verbal consent was obtained. There was always an opportunity, given either at the beginning or at the end of the interview, for any clarifications on the project.

Two ethical issues of note arose. In a couple of cases, and sometime after the interview, the participants came back to me asking to delete their audio interview files, even though they had been very friendly and open while interviewing. In the case of one participant (Dimos), approximately one month after the interview, when I was visiting the mosque in order to see some people and no longer conducting fieldwork, he approached me and asked me to delete his interview. However, he was happy for me to retain the transcribed interview as long as I deleted his voice. I reassured him about the deletion of the audio recording and he agreed to the use of the transcription and its content. In a similar case, also about a month after the interview, a female interviewee (Evgenia) contacted me through email and kindly asked me to delete the recorded interview. When I talked to her about the reason for this, she told me that she did not want her voice stored anywhere. I also reassured her that the audio file would be deleted and when I asked her if she wanted to delete the transcribed interview as well, she said she was fine with that, as long as no names and places were revealed. I never learned if there was any connection between these two cases, although to my knowledge, the respondents did not know each other.

In one final example (Vagelis), before the interview with the respondent was arranged and whilst I was visiting the prayer house on other occasions, I got the impression from talking to the respondent that he was hesitant to agree on the interview because he suspected that I was a police officer or secret service agent. He mentioned that several times the secret service had visited the place asking questions. He asked me many questions about my background, my descent, my family, my opinion on several topics and all these gave this idea of suspicion. Although he was generally friendly, I think he never stopped thinking of me as an infiltrator, and, at the very least, a state official. A few months after the interview, I read one of the articles in his blog about the National Report on Islamophobia I had written. In this blog, he noted that I had contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood representatives in Greece and that I had omitted some crucial parameters of the issue of Islamophobia, leaving open the possibility that I was working for the secret services. Although he never mentioned anything directly about the DARE research, he expressed his doubts about my identity without naming me but being clear whom he was referring to and he also tried to warn others to be careful in case I was going to approach them. This was a very interesting reaction because we had met and discussed a variety of topics since 2014-2015. My assumption was that his reaction came after a photo he saw of me, together with two other key figures in the Muslim community in Greece, on Facebook. I tried to contact him through email and we exchanged a few messages, but he was certain about my role and 'secret' identity, so the contact was eventually lost. Since this took place after the fieldwork was completed, it did not have any detrimental impact on the research. However, it exemplifies the power relations and conflicts within the Muslim community and in the broader milieu under study; in some cases it is the things that the researcher could not imagine in advance, that place obstacles in the way of relations with participants and make the research process difficult.

Overall, however, as I realised when I discovered that I was referred to within the milieu as 'doctor' or 'the professor', my university status helped case a positive light on my presence in the field; more positive than if I had been a journalist, for example. This, in addition to my previous contacts and emphasis on wanting to listen to the views, experiences and ideas of the participants, away from the media and political stigmatisation, allowed the whole research process to flow without any fundamental problems.

4. Key Findings

4.1 Young People's Own Understandings of Radicalisation and Extremism

According to Olivier Roy (2017), there is a cult of death among contemporary Islamist extremists that at some point explains their ideology and violent activism, which, in his opinion, is not part of the religion of Islam. However, during the fieldwork among young Muslims, the issue of death was brought up directly only a couple of times, although it was present in discussions about jihadism, ISIS, Al Qaeda, etc. In one of these cases the issue of death was mentioned in one of the religious classes that used to take place each Friday after prayer. There, one of the participants - a woman from Albania – mentioned that her daughter was highly stressed and had many dreams, because her father had died as I later realised, and Nikos, another participant, advised her to visit a psychologist, because there was nothing he could do to help. She replied that they had been to a therapist but he could not give her any medication. Nikos responded by saying she should not be so stressed, because death in Islam is something natural and we should not be so sad about it. (Field Diary)

The issue of death also came up in the very different context of extremist violence and suicide bombers. During this discussion, while death for a good cause was considered legitimate, what contemporary terrorists do was rejected for being against the true Islamic faith.

R:[18] […] Now this is combined with the error that one will go to Heaven. This is true for the fight, when you fight and die, but which kind of fight? A fight which is legal, a legal war, a moral war, decided by the ruler of a Muslim country, with a Muslim army, officially. Not if I, myself, go out with a sword and attack someone and then he kills me and say I am a martyr and I will go to Heaven. […] There is a legitimate process of engaging in war. Not following an anarchist way like terrorists do.

Q: So, this is also a theological distortion in essence?

R: Theological, methodological [i.e. religious practice] and dogmatic distortion. (Dimitris)

When it comes to how young people understand radicalisation and extremism it has to be noted that this was one of the most difficult parts of the interview scenario. Most of the interviewees could not approach and define the concepts and on my part, it was not considered practical to insist on something that was either not clear to them or created confusion as to how to approach it. On the other hand, there were participants in their late twenties and in their thirties with more developed views on the topic. Some of them went as far as characterising Muslim groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, as extremist and even terrorist, arguing that in Greece there are groups very close to this ideology and this something the authorities should look into.

> Toleration of this particular ideology is more than dangerous and it is for sure a threat for the present and for the future. As a threat we do not mean only terrorist attacks but, in addition, a more general attempt to destabilise the country through political interventions (empowering the interests of foreign countries), massive revolutions, and chaotic events in central streets. […] All kinds of toleration of the ideology of 'Islamist' movements of the 20th century, which is expressed and propagated especially through the Brotherhood, constitute a serious threat. European countries and especially Greece, confront this group in a wrong and not appropriate way, as a group that is politically persecuted. Let us remember that Westerners characterised Al Qaeda in exactly the same way before 9/11. (Text Documents, Dimitris)

According to one of the interviewees in some cases such groups should be defined as neither radical nor extreme but as hard-core Islam, meaning at this point the Salafis.

> R: There is another, let's say third definition [apart from radical and extreme], which is the hard-core Islam, which doesn't need to be either extremist or radical. For example, the first person I met when I became Muslim was [name] who in recent years has been promoting Salafi Islam. Personally, I don't belong in the Salafi stream even though I have also been influenced by it. While in the Netherlands, let's say, some groups are Salafis, they have some hard-core elements… In the Netherlands, for example, when I lived there, many youngsters I met with - and all of us who embraced Islam - had such hard-core views and in some cases they were involved with or were members of more fanatic groups, which were actually extremist-Salafist. [Name] here in Athens, is a Salafist, but he distances himself, he is hard-core regarding Islam, but distances himself from the extremist.

> Q: So, the one here, would you classify him as a hard-core Muslim? This particular guy, and not in the radical or…

> R: Yes, hard-core, very strict, let's say. […] Because before this whole story with the Islamic state, Salafism played this role of fanaticising the people and from the moment the Islamic

---

[18] In every following interview excerpt R is for response and Q for question.

State appeared all of a sudden Salafism changed and says 'Ah, we have nothing to do with terrorists…'. (Kyriakos)

Participants other than those who self-identify as Salafis, tend to place Salafis at the extreme, although never openly call them extremists and in no case do they associate them with violence and terrorism.

No, for me okay I wouldn't put them in this category [extremism], they are like… like factions, dissenters. It is a bit like having Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox. Does that make them extremists? It doesn't… […] they are not, so I think that the differences between them are very few and they exaggerate so much that they come up with aphorisms like 'we have the knowledge and the rest are not true Muslims'. Okay, my friend, so you call yourself a Salafi what do you believe in? […] Who are you that you are going to divide Muslims? […] these people think that they are the experts, the authentic Islam, 'we follow the right Islam and you are wrong, so you must follow us'. (Nikos)

During one of the Friday classes Nikos spoke openly against political parties and groupings within Islam based on a reference to Salafis. After the class, I asked him what he meant and he told me about one guy he knew in Germany who put him in a Facebook group and in this group they started to discuss about the Salafi ancestors and such things. Then Nikos wrote in the group that he did not agree with such divisions and left the group. Then his friend called him and asked him why he did that. Without fighting with his friend, Nikos told me that he said to him that it was not possible to talk about the ancestors, Salaf, etc. because then you create a kind of a party within Islam. If you are Muslim you just follow what the Qur'an says and call people to follow the Qur'an, without Dawah and similar stuff. Allah is the one who decides who will or will not become Muslim. (Field Diary)

Respondents are critical of Salafists because they believe Salifists wrongfully divide Islam through the establishment of different groups and engage in the practice Dawah, i.e. missionary work in order to Islamise Greece. ISIS is considered one of those groups that divide Islam and should not claim that it represents Islam.

One thing that Islam teaches us is that we should not divide ourselves into groups. Meaning that we should form a united front and not divide religion, not form sects or parties, something that offers you a clear answer. It tells you that 'you shouldn't be divided into groups'. Having a central administration, a central goal, a common goal of all [Islamic] countries is acceptable. But only if there are no deceitful purposes, etc. meaning political issues, etc. I mean that a state shouldn't say 'okay, now let's go to Greece and Islamise it'. No, there should be a common goal, in order to advocate Islam as it is in reality. Not like what ISIS wants and everyone who speaks in the Name of Allah and kills people, even Muslims. The greatest sin in Islam is to kill a Muslim. How many Muslims has ISIS killed? I can't accept that ISIS represents my religion, because my religion is very strict on this. (Thanassis)

For their part, Salafis do not accept being seen as extremists or separatists and consider themselves the genuine version of Islam, as Islam's Orthodoxy. As noted above, for them, it is the Muslim Brotherhood supporters in Greece who should be seen as dangerous and extremist. On an international level, a distinction was drawn between Salafis, Muslims and Kharijites. According to one interviewee, who self-identified as Salafi, extremists, e.g. ISIS:

They are Kharijites, yes. They are the classical Kharijites with, eh…they have been influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, we have documents now, which have been verified, showing that they have adopted all the teachings of… so that they will bring change to the

Islamic world, to get rid of the western influence, something which we basically agree with but we disagree on the means. Here lies the problem. (Dimitris)

The same view was expressed by others, who did not place themselves in the Salafi stream, although they had previously been Salafis for a short period: 'All these people who kill, murder, innocent people in the name of Islam and Jihad putting bombs and organising attacks and assassinations are Kharijites and they are heretical offshoots of Islam'. (Pavlos)

When examples of groups active during recent years were raised, e.g. Al Qaeda, ISIS, Boko Haram, all were considered extremist, violent and terrorist. However, when it came to forming a concrete definition, it was difficult even for those who had more elaborated views on these issues. Most of the participants had heard the term 'extremism', but only a couple of them were aware of 'radical/radicalisation'. According to one of the interviewees extremism is:

> R: […] Anything that doesn't cope, anything that is out […] of Islam, for me anything that is not Islamic, how much out of Islam it is? Eh, okay, there are variations to that, but in case […] if it is out of the path, out of the spirit, the values and the principles of Islam, more or less, it is out.

> Q: So, all these groups like the so-called Islamic State etc. are they extremist based on this approach?

> R: Of course, absolutely, they are out [of Islam]. (Nikos)

An alternative approach to extremism given by one of the participants through his blog texts includes anything and anyone that moves out of Islam not only towards violence but towards moderation as well.

> We need to stress something equally important. Extremism is not only to exaggerate and go beyond the limits of Allah and Sunna through the addition of new [theological] elements. Extremism is also when someone doesn't comply with the Islamic duties as they are described in the Qur'an and Sunna. When for example someone denies Hijab in the name of moderation, then this is not moderation but extremism (towards the other direction) with regard to the Islamic duties. We can name many examples that belong to this category of extremism. The call of the extremist circles all the time around the establishment of a utopian 'Islamic' state which (according to them) will come through an ideological revolution first and then a violent one will follow. In order to reach this point they adopt modern methodologies (as their approach) and they cover them with the cloak of Islam. (Text Documents, Dimitris)

But of course, extremism is sometimes also placed together or considered as identical to fanaticism and is an outcome of religious ignorance and illiteracy.

> In my mind right now an extremist, I imagine, is someone who has been, basically, fanaticised. A fanatic who is also ignorant, has lack of knowledge. He is not… I mean he is at a point where he is controlled, he has been manipulated by various people, mainly on a political level, and he has never read actually about religion and he just wants to hurt people who don't hold the same beliefs as he does. This means that he is a person who is not going to accept any other opinion. I mean that I myself can sit down and discuss with a Christian and tell him 'Yes, man, you believe that religion has a triadic form [God, Son and the Holy Spirit], whereas I believe that it is pure monotheism. Let's discuss on some subjects'. No, this is something that an extremist would never do, if I have understood this concept well. (Thanassis)

Finally, apart from ignorance, extremism is also related to someone who interprets on his own the holy texts of a religion, in this case the Qur'an, and then accuses all the others as having moved away from the 'true' religion.

> For me, yes, the very beginning of what we call extremism is that I myself take the holy book [of any religion], I read it and from this wrong impression […] it is only me who understands it, and all others don't. This concept that a full and in-depth understanding of the holy text can be done leads to criticise other people's acts, because once I understand it and since I am the only one who knows the absolute truth I will criticise another person. In addition, since the Qur'an also has a legal aspect, I will make an interpretation of my own, I will be also a judge… it is a matter of power. […] but for sure what I consider to be extremism or something that might be extremist comes from this idea that I understand [the holy scriptures], because I think that man can't understand the Divine, so he can't understand anything, it goes beyond his senses and from the moment the Qur'an speaks about things which are not only human […]. (Kostas)

As mentioned above, the terms 'radical/radicalism/radicalisation' were more difficult for the participants to define than 'extremist/-ism'. In those cases, radicalism was approached as the opposite of extremism and thus radicalism emerged in some cases as imbued with a positive meaning.

> R: Unless I am saying something completely wrong, I have associated the word radical with young people and Aristotle who used this concept for young people that they want to change the establishment all the time, so a radical is a person who wants to make changes, to change the system.

> Q: So, you give a positive content to this? How do you understand this?

> R: Yes, I think it has a positive content as well, while extremism is completely negative. […] I imagine that the extremist is closer to jihad, to what we call jihadism, a radical is someone who tries to fight for his rights in a country […]. (Maria)

In another case an interviewee admitted that some of his views could be perceived as radical, but this doesn't mean that he accepts violence. In this way, radicalism was also presented as having a positive aspect.

> This is radical, yes, I accept that, I accept it. But of course, this is a debate that shocks people, when I say [as a Muslim] that I don't accept democracy, this doesn't mean that I am a fascist, it doesn't mean that I support Golden Dawn, let's say. I, as a person, I don't agree with this system. I don't have the intention to catalyse it, I am not trying to be against it. The minute any country decides to have this system, that's fine with me. But me as a Muslim, I don't accept that. We Muslims, in order to select a ruler, we follow another approach. […] This is the Salafi approach, but there might be also another one that could also include violence and someone starts to plant bombs or commit terrorist attacks in order to destroy democracy. But that is not what we are talking about here…. (Dimitris)

Thus, in this study it emerged that participants had heard the concepts of radicalism/extremism, but they could not, or did not feel confident enough, to define them. They chose, rather, to describe the phenomenon through examples taken from Greek society or the world more broadly.

4.2 Gender Presence and Attitudes

Gender did not present itself as a central topic in discussions with the participants or during the field observation. Only four of the interviewees were female with a further interview being conducted with a key female figure. As verified during ethnographic fieldwork, this proportion of women reflected the milieu in which there were much fewer women than men and, in most cases, the women present were above the target age range of the study. Nevertheless, reference was made to gender issues during several discussions. For example, during one of my visits to Friday prayers Nikos told me that he was thinking of taking a second wife, even though he was married to a Greek-Orthodox woman (Field diary). At another point he tried to explain the permission to take multiple wives allowed in the Qur'an as wise advice because it avoided adultery and other sins, given that there are more women than men in society. He also stressed the fact that this rule in Islam applies only if the husband is able to protect and feed all of his wives, otherwise he should keep only one, explaining that this is not an obligation, to have many wives, but an option for the pious Muslim.

Some of the interviewees noted that such topics on the place of women in Islam are routine among peers, especially when someone decides to embrace Islam. Then a series of questions are raised.

> As I said earlier about the scarf women wear. Someone might ask within the peer group, for example a newcomer in a peer group, why women wear a scarf. And you have to say that they have to hide their head more than their face, that is, not their face but their head, they will hide their hands as far as the wrist and wear relatively loose clothes. Over and above that, the rest with regard to clothing are exaggerations. That is, yes for a Greek man or woman it is very extreme to put a scarf on your head, but it is similar to our grandmothers in our villages and grandparents who still now do this. But it is also extreme what happens in some Arab countries where women are fully covered with clothes and you can only see the eyes and nothing else, no other part of the body. Our religion is very specific on this issue and you actually do this in order to protect women against the male population, which let's say, is stronger in terms of being able to hurt them. (Thanassis)

Another topic that was highlighted was the visibility of women because of the headscarf and the discrimination they sometimes face.

> Now can I be 100 per cent realistic? It is not as easy to find a job as before. That's it, that's for sure. A boss will not hire me in a supermarket the way I look, will not accept me in a business, as a nurse in a hospital, being realistic. I myself have not encountered such a situation, but if you go to work, you will have a lot of trouble. If it is not my own job or a job working with someone close to me, no one would hire me and you would definitely have a problem. It's not easy at all. That is, no matter how much you study, a girl wearing a headscarf finds it difficult to be hired by anyone. They can place you in the laundry, they may take you somewhere to clean, so you will not be on the front line. (Eleftheria)

Reactions from their environment were stronger for women who had left the Christian faith and embraced Islam. As one such woman said, while we talked after the end of the interview, she was experiencing a lot of pressure from her relatives and family because she had changed her religion and it was considered a betrayal to abandon the Orthodox religion and convert to Islam because of Turkey and the Ottoman past. They had often spoken badly of her and had called her a *Turkosporos* (a Greek word meaning literally 'A Turkish Seed' connoting someone of shameful origin from a Turkish place) and a jihadist, among other names. They had spoken insultingly also when they saw her wearing a headscarf. All this put her under such pressure that she had sometimes contemplated moving abroad to a European country with a larger Muslim community, for example, the UK or Germany or to a Muslim

country. She told me she understands why some Muslims react and join extremist groups, but she does not necessarily justify their actions, unless they have to defend themselves in the societies they live e.g. fighting against a foreign invasion (e.g. of the United States in Iraq). In general, she believed that Islam was being persecuted and that it is the actions of Westerners that are responsible for both the waves of immigrants and the violent reactions by Muslims. (Field Diary, Interview with Evgenia)

As found in other qualitative research on female Muslims, becoming a Muslim has a strongly gendered dimension especially with regard to sexuality and body (Jouili, 2015: 72-85). This was articulated by one female interviewee as she describes how she gradually embodied her embracing of Islam in terms of her outward appearance:

> I started without my scarf and all that, of course I got comfortable with a lot of people, because of my character, because of my behaviour. I can tell you that the people who knew me had no problem, because it didn't go wrong... because I didn't just start it one day and change everything the next. It was done gradually, at first a bandana on the head, a little different, a little bit longer skirt, longer sleeves, that was done gradually and people started getting used to it slowly, it wasn't a sudden change from one day to the next. Of course, there were people who looked at me in a racist way when I was passing by. They said 'the Syrian girl came to the store, what is she doing here?'. (Eleftheria)

In this study, gender turned out to be only a very small part of the research with no direct relation to radicalisation processes and trajectories. It might be noted that Muslim women were seen to experience more difficulties and inequalities in their everyday life – something mentioned by some interviewees (Dimitris, Vagelis) - but no observation or reference was made that could relate this to the radicalisation process.

4.3 Online and Offline Social Relationships

As it has been argued young people are identified as a target for recruiters, called 'fertilisers' or 'radicalisers' (O'Neill and McGrory, 2006; Hoffman, 2009). As a consequence, one of the most important questions is that of how radicalisation evolves and how it relates to the group or meso level, including the role of both online and offline social relationships. Several scholars (Cheong and Halverson 2010) have studied the discursive strategies employed either by Al Qaeda or by ISIS to construct a strong and attractive collective Islamist identity or to encourage young western-born Muslims to identify with Islamist extremism through self-promotional photos, blogs and videos uploaded to social media platforms by those already recruited (Picart, 2015: 361-364). According to Khosrokhavar (2005), what seems to be crucial in the process of recruiting young Muslims is the ability to mobilise 'vicarious grievances' and build upon the empathy with victims already existing at the individual level (humiliation by proxy). This rhetoric of humiliation is used extensively in ISIS ideology which calls Muslims living in the West to jihad (Stern, 2015). Overall, according to the literature the importance of social networks and enabling environments has now been widely acknowledged. Social and kinship relationships are crucial in drawing vulnerable young people into a terrorist group (Sageman, 2004; Schmid 2013: 26-27, Truong, 2018).

When it comes to the fieldwork findings only a few of the participants in the research had experienced direct, offline encounters with extremists or calls to violent extremism and in all cases, in one way or another, they had sought to avoid them and escape them. Two cases are particularly evocative. The first is that of Sahid, who I met at one of the mosques I visited and where he always attended the Friday prayer and Ramadan. Sahid did not become part of the respondent set for the study because, at 38, he

was older than the target age and he did not speak Greek well at the time (although he wanted to learn Greek fully and take Greek citizenship - a fact Nikos verified). However, Sahid had close relations with others in the milieu and was very much part of it. I talked with Sahid – partly in English, partly in Greek – and he told me that he was from Aleppo in Syria and that he had arrived in Greece almost five years ago. He recounted how, one day in Syria, he went to work and while there, a bomb exploded in his house killing his wife and family. Then Daesh arrived and told him that he should join them[19]. Eventually he was told by Daesh that he must go with them the next day. He agreed but the next day he left for Turkey and from there he tried to fly with some of his friends to Sweden, but this plan didn't work. So, he came to Greece through Turkey and walked to Thessaloniki and from there travelled by train to Athens, with a single suitcase; everything else was left behind. Using his hands to illustrate, he told me that the beheadings accompanied by shouts of 'Allah u Akbar' are not part of Islam. He added that while they [ISIS in Syria] performed all these atrocities they were drinking wine and beer. (Field Diary)

Another very close personal encounter with extremism was recounted in interview by Alekos. During the interview, when discussing issues of extremism and radicalisation, he referred to Afghanistan and asked for the recording to stop for a while. He told me about the clashes between the different tribes and told me that many extremist and violent elements were active in villages and cities. He had met many of them and had encountered one of them again, after a long time, in Turkey before he had got to Greece. After the interview, he mentioned that one of his brothers, 19 years old at that time, had wanted to join the Taliban and held quite extremist views, including that jihad should be expanded in every Muslim society because all Muslim governments had betrayed Islam. When I asked him about his own view, he agreed with his brother's criticism of Islamic governments and that Muslims were subject to suppression and persecution, despite the fact that he did not consider himself a devout Muslim. He told me that he had encountered extremist views while in Afghanistan and that he talks to his brother, who still holds the same views. However, despite my questioning, it remained unclear whether his brother had joined the Taliban or just liked them and where he was or what he was doing today. Alekos' opinion was that the West was solely responsible for the radicalisation of Muslims - even those who are not so devout - because even cultural Muslims still have this [Muslim] background and they feel the exercise of violence by foreigners and for that reason it is a mistake to look for the extremists only among the circles of believers or fanatics. He admitted that perhaps he himself would have reacted violently if he had been younger (although he was only 23 years old) and that he had participated in discussions over the web where extremist views had been expressed. He thought many people shared these views although he did not agree with all of them and thought that those who express them do so because of the easiness and anonymity of the Internet and so this does not mean that they are ready to implement them in practice. (Field Diary)

Indeed among the respondent set, participants were more likely to have encountered radical messages, even threats, in online communications. One respondent recounted one such incident when he was in the Netherlands:

> R: One example is that I was threatened by Muslims, younger ones, for example…
>
> Q: Here? [in Greece]
>
> R: No, in the Netherlands. Online, of course, curses, threats, etc. Not for any serious reason, but because I wanted to organise a group of Muslims, Christians and Jews for charitable reasons, and let's say that some young ones didn't like that and thought they should warn me…

---

[19] It is interesting to note that according to his narration Bashar al Assad's forces also have been putting pressure on him to select a side.

Q: Not to do it…

R: Yes, that this can't happen.

Q: So, finally you didn't…

R: Finally, I didn't proceed, but for other reasons, but anyway… (Kyriakos)

The response to such incidents was either to step back from their plans or to leave the online group (such as a Facebook group) as in the following example recounted by Nikos:

R: No, I left. I left because I just expressed my opinion. And unfortunately… one principle of Islam that at the moment is not implemented among all Arabs is the acceptance of other opinions. […] if you disagree, you shouldn't quarrel, that means that disagreement shouldn't lead to quarrel; [nowadays] there is no respect for a different opinion. Because for me if someone understands or translates a concept differently, that is not a reason to make an enemy of him, I will not fight him, I can't organise a party or a heretical group , in order to show to him that he is wrong. You have your opinion, I have mine, I express some arguments and we are still brothers, friends, and human beings, there is no reason to fight because you believe […] and kill each other because you believe in the interpretation of one verse of the Qur'an in a different way than I do/ (Nikos)

An interesting finding that came out from the interviews was that in some cases Muslims themselves who considered another to have expressed radical or pro-violence views had reacted by reporting this to the authorities.

R: No, no, only what we hear from the media for example that the [Muslim] community reacted and dismissed an Imam who had preached something fanatical. And if they reacted, for me they did the right thing. If I knew someone who held views similar to ISIS and Al Qaeda, an Imam or a simple Muslim, I would have mentioned this to the anti-terrorist authorities, as I already did. I saw someone, it doesn't matter from which country, a migrant, clearly writing various things [on social media]…he was trying to convince people that one [Islamic] organisation was right. I reported this to the police, I sent an email saying that this person in his Facebook account says that, etc. and you should look into this. […] And I don't care if someone was to say that I am a snitch…of course you could argue that this page could be run by a secret police officer in order to fish for extremists, but anyway I did what I thought was the right thing. […] So, first I informed some Imams I know in Athens and I told them to report this to the authorities and he [one Imam] told me that he knew about it and he would report it and I also did.

Q: And the case you mentioned before about someone else?

R: Yes, this was another case I also reported to the authorities.

Q: Who… can you tell, if you like, what he was talking about?

R; No, no it was not something written exactly, I saw some pictures, pictures with guns, of course one picture by itself might not mean anything, perhaps I have also uploaded something at some point, without meaning that I hold extremist views. But in the course of the conversation after time, you see some photos, like one with someone holding two human heads from decapitated people, eh, after that you don't need anything more to understand…

Q: Yes, yes… […] Absolutely, but the previous case you mentioned was also reported to the authorities by you?

R: Yes, I reported this to a person I know, a policeman, and I told him to look into this issue, because I don't know what was going on, yes… (Pavlos)

Further to that, another interviewee (Vagelis) mentioned that many Muslims, especially those running prayer houses, had close relations with the police and the secret service, so if any extreme element appeared they would have known because they are under surveillance all the time. So, in this regard, what the media reports are reproducing, i.e. that informal mosques are centres of extremism and radicalisation is not true and completely exaggerated.

The fieldwork revealed that some of the participants have faced extremist and radical messages through their established relationships (friends, brothers, online communication) or in other cases from other Muslims who considered them as heretics or not so 'good' believers. However, in all cases, the participants managed to deal with the messages and none of them was involved in, or established, any relation with radicals online and/or offline, although they did not exactly reject the essence of some of the arguments expressed by those radicals.

4.4 Inequalities and Perceived Injustices

One of the most discussed reasons for young Muslims' engagement in violent extremist groups is that of objective and subjective inequalities. The role of economic and socio-political inequalities, objective or subjective, has been continuously discussed and presented as being among the main reasons for radicalisation in Europe (Kepel, 1992: 75; 2015: 80-89) and elsewhere around the World (Chomsky, 2002: 75, 83-85; Bishara, 2002: 145), especially after 9/11. This has also been a major thread in the literature reviewed within the DARE project (Franc and Pavlović, 2018; Poli and Arun, 2019; Storm, Pavlović and Franc, 2020). In Algeria during the 1980s and 1990s, the economic crisis was so deep that a large number of the country's youth became an easy target for Islamist propagandists (Basbous, 2002: 147). Those young people were called 'Hittistes' from the word 'haït' meaning 'wall', because they used to spend their day standing on the city walls across the large streets and avenues of the country, since they had no job and could not employ themselves in anything. According to Kepel (1992: 317), given that inequalities still exist in Muslim societies, and unemployment is the main prospect for young adults, jihad is much more attractive than any 'preaching' on individual rights and liberties. This assertion, i.e. that extremism results from structural development factors, such as poverty, high unemployment, or lack of educational opportunity, is intuitively attractive to some policymakers, partly because they have experience trying to solve structural problems and also because such explanations soothe their anxieties about the human condition. But the role of structural factors has been repeatedly discredited. For example, a study of terrorist attacks from 1986 to 2002 found no correlation between low gross domestic product and incidence of terrorism, a finding that has been replicated again and again across different measures and time frames (Berger, 2018: 85-87).

The significance of such perceived inequalities and injustices among young Muslims in the milieu emerged from the interviews and pertained to two levels. First, injustices are perceived to exist at the international level and to have an impact on Muslims worldwide, or on what is referred to as the global Ummah. One of the most well-known cases was the U.S. decision to transfer the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, in this way recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital. On that day, the message after the Friday prayer was focused on this development expressing Muslims' grievance.

The subject of today's speech could not be more timely than... the mercy of Allah and the special place it holds in the hearts of believers. As we all know, the (latest) events are happening in a period…, with a sad situation at all levels, in a period of division that we have been divided into groups and parties, states, fighting each other, unlike the commandments, the clear commandments of the messenger, which God has sent… that we should all hold hard to the rope of Islam, to the rope of Allah, and not to be divided into parties and sects and groups. We just do the opposite, we will all remember that before Islam we were all hostile tribes to one another, blessing to Allah, we were united in our hearts and became brothers with Islam among us. But we left that and we became what we are today. However, these latest events must act as an alarm clock, as a bell to reunite the hearts of the believers, and to truly return to the way of Allah and to the Prophet's commandments, so that we can properly support the Holy Place of Jerusalem...The holy place of Jerusalem is holy because God blessed it. (Mosque messages)

At the end of the prayer, the imam said that in the afternoon at 6 pm there would be a demonstration in the Constitution square of Athens about this matter followed by a march to the American Embassy. It was organised by Palestinian organisations with the participation of Greek organisations and Greeks and 'is the least we can do'. (Field diary)

The West is considered as an entity which has been completely unjust towards the Islamic world since the era of the Crusades and colonisation.

Yes, of course. Muslims' ignorance combined with this injustice of the West, right? Which comes from…From the era of colonisation until now it is like that, we haven't managed to get rid of it…. This is an explosive combination, to create…how to say it, to give a step to people that want to re-establish the golden era of Islam but in a wrong way. We all want to bring back this golden era, Andalusian Islam and things like that, but we must see how these people at that time did that. They were the best in theology, the best in [religious] methodology, the best in the study of the Qur'an, and they treated the infidels in the best way. You cannot do all that using a gun or with violence, to achieve all this, that some other people achieved in a completely different way. That's the problem. (Dimitris)

On the second, national level, Muslims recognise racist incidents, discrimination, bigotry and hate speech in Greek society but, in general, consider the situation to be not as bad as in other European countries like the UK, France or Germany and fall short of accusing Greek society of being racist or Islamophobic. One of the main problems Greek Muslims face regardless of their national and ethnic background relates to the historical past with Turkey and the Ottoman Empire mentioned above. People have also been accused of becoming Turks, especially when they decided to embrace Islam. This was mentioned in a few cases as a memory that still creates negative emotions, because it goes back to their school years.

I was open to say that I like Arabs let's say, although at the beginning it was not so much the religious part, I was saying that I like Arab music. We were going for an excursion with the school and I was sitting alone reading books about it [i.e. Arab culture] and my classmates were looking at me. I had many controversies from that time already, 'ah, you became a Turk', 'you became this…'; we were fighting because I am also a very explosive character. So with some of them who were mocking me, let's say, we were also beating each other, they were calling me names, throwing eggs at me, but okay this was happening in high school. Although after many years that I accidentally met the same persons we had no issues with one another at all, we were okay. We were going through puberty at that time, and all this was very strange for them. (Pavlos)

In one case an interviewee who was Greek but of Turkish heritage reported receiving negative comments about her origin.

> Q: You mentioned…you told me about school, did you have any problems on religious issues or anything else with classmates?
>
> R: Eh, okay I got called a Turkish girl.
>
> Q: Ah, really?
>
> R: Yes, I heard that 'she is a Turkish girl', and they say it very openly, wrongly of course, but yes, I've heard also 'fucking Turkish girl', as well as that she is an Albanian girl, but not for me…yes, when it comes to the religious issues all this [i.e. that I am a Muslim] was very strange for them. (Maria)

One of the main inequalities mentioned during the interviews was that of a lack of an official prayer place for all Muslims who live in Athens.

> There are certainly many inequalities, but again I think if Muslims had stronger representation and made stronger, more vigorous claims and fought for their rights more dynamically in the sense of giving an example… I mean many Greeks say, 'So you want a mosque? Then go back to your country'. But as I am Greek, at least give me the right to construct it myself. I have that right anyway in this country. The fact is I consider these emotional arguments that various Greeks put forward to be completely baseless. There is no reason why I should sit and listen to someone speaking only emotionally, without any knowledge of either his own rights or my rights. I read today a comment on the Muslim Union's page that one Muslim said, 'I have been here in Greece for so many years and have always paid taxes and those taxes pay the priests'. So, I, as a Muslim, pay for your religious leaders, why don't you do the same? And this is a very good view. I mean, we do have rights and if we do not claim them then this game of emotions will play out. So we should just go and say, 'Look, these are our rights. We are not talking about emotions'. At least they would be compelled to listen. And if they do not, we have the EU as a backup that we can go to and say: 'Look here they don't give us what we are entitled to, while we work, pay taxes, we are legal residents'. Let's just say it. (Kyriakos)

Apart from the mosque issue, the lack of an Islamic cemetery was mentioned by some interviewees as an indicator of inequalities (Dimitris, Kostas); something that a democratic state should deal with.

Others have described situations that they did not refer to as discriminatory but it was quite obvious from the discussion that they felt them to be so. For example Nikos told me that his daughter would go to a private school and when he prepaid for the following year (kindergarten) he also asked for an Arabic language teacher. One day they told his wife that they had found one but they did not know whether they would hire her; they would look for another because she wore a headscarf and they were afraid of the other parents' reactions. Another respondent, Thanassis, reported that an Arabic company, CCC, had banned women from wearing a headscarf at work in Greece, even though it was Arabic. (Field Diary)

The experience of violent incidents was rare but mentioned by some of the participants:

> R: Once, members of the youth of a party that is in the Parliament, they hit me in the face.
>
> Q: In Thessaloniki?
>
> R: Yes, yes they called me fascist, a Turk and so on. […]

Q: And after the incident you told me where the members of those who hit you were from? It wasn't from this party that it is now...

R: No, it was not from this party I was, from the other party I said, Golden Dawn.

Q: This happened because they knew you were in the previous party and...

R: I was talking to some kids and we had an appointment. We were talking about historical issues, so we said let's have a coffee. We went to the appointment in the central square, in Aristotelous Square and at some point one of them receives a phone call and he tells me to go with him to get his keys because he forgot to bring them home for his girlfriend. I said okay we were... again we were in the central square, i.e. above Egnatia Street and all of a sudden I didn't catch the reaction I heard footsteps […] they ran over to hit me. Some people with knuckledusters... after I was hit once, I don't remember anything. I remember getting up and looking at the stars, I didn't even see a person, except for the one who had played the role of the good friend.

Q: Were you hit hard?

R: I was covered in blood. (Pavlos)

Inequalities and discrimination were also mentioned with regard to the workplace and to prayer practice that is not always easy to be exercised. As noted in the section 4.2, women who are more visibly Muslim are most likely to be discriminated against.

And often a Muslim hides it [his religion], almost always – he will never say it. He will not say it because he is afraid of losing his job. On the other hand, it is women who face many challenges, they have ten times more difficulties than men, because the woman is the one who needs to be covered [the Islamic way], who covers her body and abandons the habits that she had before [as a non-Muslim or as a non-practising Muslim]. (Vagelis)

In some cases even accusations of being an ISIS member were made by antagonists.

Nikos used to talk to me about his job issues, the projects he undertook but also things about the bullying by some of his competitors. One of the things he mentioned to me was that because he is Muslim some of his competitors go to those he works with (e.g. Municipalities) and they say: 'well, do you work with ISIS?' [Implying that since he is Muslim he could be with ISIS]. He told me in general that there are articles in the press and then people call him back and ask him about those. (Field Diary)

Finally, one important outcome was that young Muslims feel that there is a kind of institutional discrimination and racism especially when it comes to the security authorities, which try to control their prayer places.

[…] After all, we started [the mosque] as we had started and the day we had the presentation, which was Friday, it was a Friday, they came, they broke down the door with the Anti-Terrorist agency […]. There was a panic here and of course I realised that this was the plan of the secret service. It was a clear secret service plan to scare us, to tell us 'we are here'. (Dimitris)

As it would be reasonable to expect, he asked the police officers about the reasons for such a show of force and they replied that there had been an official complaint that there were guns in the mosque. Because of his previous – perceived as good - relations with the secret services he asked about this

complaint and who was behind it. However, the reply made him think that they had no evidence and that such an accusation was never actually made:

> The bad thing is that we had too much confidence in the secret service and we used to talk to them, but we learned our lesson. No, it's not that we're hiding something. We never hide anything. That is, the website is open for any activity, for any talk, i.e. [name] is the most open book of all the communities, which is a Greek Muslim community, right? It's not Arab or Pakistani and unfortunately no one respects that. I used to say 'come over' I know how to 'talk things through', to have a certain level of understanding, a good relationship compared to foreigner Muslims. Now, I don't know, I think they count me as an Egyptian, I don't know […]. (Dimitris)

This close relationship with the secret service was described as too long-standing and typical for such informal mosques and in this particular case it started in the 1980s. However, this kind of relationship, is interpreted as direct discrimination because no other religion needs to have contact or have permission from the secret service in order to open a religious venue. Furthermore, it is implied that this kind of behaviour from state authorities could very likely lead to radicalisation.

> In order to get the paperwork for the mosque you must have links to the secret service. If you do not have a good relationship and you do not have a specific goal, you will not be allowed to do it. That is to say, instead of going through the Ministry of Education, we go through the Ministry of Citizen Protection. That is wrong from the beginning. A young person may take this in a different way. This is inequality and it is one of the major forms of inequality, that a Muslim should be under surveillance by the Ministry of Citizen Protection That is, you are automatically dangerous, right? This is one of the first forms of inequality that I have experienced very strongly and badly. Being a Muslim, having a place of worship, having a missionary activity and being somehow obligated, not absolutely obliged. […] But they come, visit you and tell you 'secret service'. Why? I want you to tell me why here. Why should I be under security? Okay, you had every right to watch my phones, my emails, whatever you want. But you can't come to me like that, with arrogance, and I have said that, I have said that from the very first meeting. I tell them, 'I want to ask you a question, if I were a Christian or a Buddhist, would I have this attitude? Would I go out of here?' He replied 'you know now with the Muslims'. So I say the issue now is my religion. My issue is my religion because if I were of a different religion, right? Even if they called me Osama bin Laden, you wouldn't bother me. And so can my origin and so can my presence. Okay, partly I understand the stress that exists but on the other hand you can't digest, I personally can't accept the notion that you belong to a ministry that has to do with country's defence. As if I'm a threat. I get that anyway. And I have the brains to get it. But you know, and this is how it is born, that is, it is one of the causes of radicalisation. When someone perceives you as a threat to the defence of his country from the beginning, then the other [Muslim] starts to live and behave that way [as a potential threat]. This kind of [state] behaviour, implying that the country is in danger [from Muslims] could lead some [Muslims] to feel ok with this [and become radicalised]. (Dimitris)

One interviewee (Takis) mentioned a couple of incidents with the police during police checks on the streets of Athens, mentioning offensive behaviour on the part of the police officers. However, this was probably related to his immigrant identity rather than being based on religion.

At this point, it should be remembered that many of the interviewees came from a Greek-Orthodox background but, at some point, had decided to embrace Islam. In these cases where individuals have converted to Islam, the reactions of the family are perceived in a very negative way, since they are often

expressed as accusations that the young person has become a Turk, i.e. a traitor to the Greek nation, or in highly emotional ways, such as the mother who threatened to kill herself because her daughter had become a Muslim (Eleftheria). In other instances, even comments about recruitment from radical groups were made: 'My parents, I remember them saying that…, I was going to the mosque every Friday and attending classes let's say, and my father knew that and sometimes he said to me ... that I would end up a terrorist..." (Kyriakos) or ask questions like 'have you joined ISIS?', 'what are they doing to you'?, 'they can do things to you', 'they can give you something', 'maybe you will have to take something [drugs], who knows?'. (Thanassis)

According to the main studies conducted in the Western context, Islamist radicalisation is more likely among those who are less educated and of a lower economic status and this constitutes a positive relationship between individual economic inequality and radicalisation (Franc and Pavlović 2018:72). This is not verified by the findings from the milieu in Greece. However, when it comes to the socio-political inequalities and grievances related to the macro-level (e.g. the role of the state, security forces, respect of rights, etc.) this seems to play a more important role in the rise of radical views among Muslims in Greece, as in other studies (Franc and Pavlović 2018:75).

4.5 Radicalisation and Non-Radicalisation Trajectories

As it has been argued, those who are primarily the target of extremist Islamist groups are young people, which is proven when examining the ages of those being recruited by Islamist extremist groups and organisations. It is important to stress, however, that young people are not the problem, but the solution (Deakin, 2018: 31-33), it is only a minority of young Muslims who will resort to violence . The vast majority are peaceful and reject the actions of violent extremist groups, such as Islamic State, as surveys, in the UK for example, have shown (Abbas and Hamid, 2019: 285). It was suggested in Section 4.3 that social relationships in which the young people in the milieu are engaged do not set them on a radicalisation pathway, at least not a violent one. However, this raises the question as to whether such radicalisation might emerge as a response or reaction to violent acts from others, especially right-wing extremists either in Greece or abroad. That is, could such radicalisation emerge as a form of cumulative or reciprocal extremism? The potential for this emerged after the Christchurch attack in the mosques in New Zealand which left 49 Muslims dead and 50 wounded. Following this attack, Nikos made a special reference to the attack in his message after Friday prayers, however, using a peaceful and reconciliatory tone and underlining that such kinds of acts are outside of the logic of Islam. In his words:

> I end today's talk with a reference to something… all of us as believers woke up shocked by what happened with those gun shootings in the two mosques [N. Zealand], an incident which left many dead Muslims in a prayer house. All of us pray that God will forgive those who died and we need to stress that Islam, Islam's values, have nothing to do with these kinds of acts, and that Islam despises these kinds of behaviours. (Mosque messages)

After the prayer the person responsible for the mosque (who had made the speech in Arabic and which Nikos had summarised in Greek) asked for a special prayer for the victims of this attack (Field Diary). An explanation for the absence of a stronger reaction could be that this was an incident that took place far away and this distance lessened any impact and reduced any kind of reactions. However, this attack can be contrasted with the activity of Golden Dawn, a neo-Nazi political party convicted by a Greek court as a criminal organisation for racist attacks and murders against anti-fascists, communists and Muslim immigrants (Sakellariou, 2020a; Sakellariou, 2020b). The activities of this group could be anticipated to be more likely to incite a reaction from Muslim communities. It would seem though that leading

community figures and activists managed to avert any anger that would lead to clashes with right-wing extremists. As one interviewee put it:

> And this is how we dealt with, I come back to the issue of Golden Dawn, this phenomenon, we tried a lot, we fought by all means [to avoid clashes with GD]. Where it [GD] used to appear we were also going there, we were reacting [through dialogue and communication], we didn't stay quiet; we didn't stop, or be afraid of… but we tried to control our own people too. This was not an easy task, because many of us, from many communities were angry, their 'blood was boiling' and stuff…meaning that they might also have attacked [GD] with whatever means, using anything they could. Imagine that. That would lead to a civil war. This is what we tried to control, through dialogue, using other tricks. […] we did that so as not to give any excuse from our side, because it would be us who paid for this afterwards…not them [the extremists]. Unfortunately, everyone would say 'look immigrants did that'. (Vassilis)

This kind of attitude was verified, even in cases where territorial proximity with Golden Dawn was mentioned. In one such case, the informal mosque is at a short walking distance from Golden Dawn's offices in Athens city centre and, although the interviewee argued that there are no problems, he added:

> R: Now, on how are we going to react, I generally believe with the same calm way as regards all other provocation and disturbances that we have faced till now here and there; calmly and without actually responding to them. Okay, at this moment for good or bad what we Muslims do is that we can't do anything. We have only what the law offers us. There is no other way, this is the right thing to do and this is how things should be done. And if something happens and we can't deal with that, then we should all get up and leave the country. This is the direction that I, as many others, move towards, even those of us who are Greek citizens. We will never use any other means [of reaction]. If we get to the point of no return, to which we are slowly moving, if we can't stand it anymore, we will get up and leave and this is what we prepare ourselves for. (Vagelis)

From this point of view the findings from the fieldwork verify those of the report on cumulative extremism, i.e. that cumulative extremism between the extreme-right, notably GD, and Muslims in Greece constitutes a case of non-escalation of violence (Sakellariou, 2020b). Moreover, it leads to the conclusion that, despite the presence of opportunities and stimuli that might encourage young Muslims to engage in violent extremism as a reaction to provocation by others, non-radicalisation trajectories prevail in the milieu.

This does not necessarily mean that radical ideas do not exist in the milieu. The fieldwork showed that ideas that could be characterised as radical or extremist in a western context are present. For example during one of my Friday attendances at the mosque it was mentioned that the Qur'an is to Muslims what the Constitution is for western democracies. Also, a positive reference to Saudi Arabia was made by Nikos, who noted that the amputation of hands is a punishment there but it is very rarely used because no one dares to steal. The outcome counts, he added; thefts are minimal and no hands are amputated. Polygamy was also considered positive for men and women. As he said, 'are there more women in total? What will they do? Why can they not have a husband? It is not compulsory, only if you want. But even if you can have more wives it means taking care of them, being fair, etc.' For him, this was a solution to a social problem. The same applies to the inheritance system. 'How many siblings quarrel about heredity and how many have lost their lives over such issues? All this is solved with the Qur'an'. (Field Diary)

In other cases, a rejection of democracy as a system was openly expressed (Dimitris), explained by the fact that Islam is a complete political system from a Salafi perspective. Another interviewee admitted that he is very strict and conservative in following the Qur'an in his everyday life, as all Muslims should do. He also said that, at the beginning of the war in Syria, he had had a positive stance towards ISIS because they were fighting against Assad:

> Well for me that is my main point of reference. I am very religious, very conservative also when it comes to religion and other issues. I am very much like this… it is my main point of reference; I don't know how to describe it. […] I'm very religious and how to say... in many conversations they say to me why do you have this opinion? Why do you have that opinion? Why are you doing this? I say because Islam says that. So let's say it crystal clear. Let's take an example. Once some Muslim girls from Syria, Jordan and other countries, but living in Athens and attending a Greek high school, made a video saying why we should wear a headscarf. Each had a different reason for that. Why…that's the right thing to say, let's say, because that's how our customs are, I find that unacceptable, if I were a girl and I was in their place and I would answer because the Qur'an says it and for no other reason. And if I was asked why the Qur'an says that, then it just says so... I am not an obscurantist, don't let me be misunderstood. I could elaborate extensively on this topic, but the main reason is that we do a or b because the Qur'an says it, because our teaching says that. If we want to go back further we can do that, but we do not eat pork because the Qur'an simply says so, that is the reason. […] At the beginning of the war in Syria, for example, all righteous Muslims were and are against Assad, this does not mean that they were in favour of ISIS, right? By no means can anyone be confused, for example, I was once reading a site and there were related organisations in Syria telling them to go there and feed the poor, to give clothes, repair damaged houses, they gave couples bonuses…which might have been pseudo propaganda, they might have been lies, but they were things that actually happened, because let's say we had heard at times that there were people who went there thinking that they would find an ideal situation and they turned bad, but I told you this before, I needed to know why, if I didn't know it could be misplaced, I wasn't misled because... well maybe I had some misconceptions in the beginning before they showed their true face, all these extreme organisations like that? But that remained on a Platonic philosophical level with the idea, not that I was going to get involved in criminal acts or... but somebody else who didn't know could go. (Dimos)

Violence, however, as a means of implementation of Sharia law or Islam in general was rejected by all these participants who insisted on the role of dialogue and *dawah* and on the truth of the Qur'an that covers all aspects of the human life.

Nevertheless, it was interesting to listen to participants' views and explanations for the reasons behind young Muslims' involvement in violent extremism, in order to understand where they stand on this burning issue that has an impact upon their lives too. One explanation offered was the invocation of sentiment by the recruiters, combined with injustices and based on a lack of knowledge about Islam on the part of those recruited:

> R: What they [recruiters/Islamists] exploit the most is what we call the invocation of sentiment, when you stimulate people through their sentiments and this is the most well-known form of deception in rhetoric. That means if you come up here and you start the sentimental stuff and you start yelling and you speak of injustices and you start to be populist, it's over, you won. So, they use this tactic which everyone falls for, on a global level, and they also include this in the religious element, meaning that we are experiencing

injustices, that we should do something, we shouldn't stay with our hands crossed, right? And they start building on that. […] They use the art of deception in their discourse, but if someone has a basic knowledge of Islam and moreover the way the Prophet himself dealt with such issues… […] But when someone is not educated and I don't mean necessarily through school or at the University, but being a man that reads, reads a newspaper, a book, simple things, when he is not educated, and works from morning to night or if he is very young, it is easy for him to be carried away. (Dimitris)

Another explanation combined the lack of knowledge about Islam, manipulation and a Freudian explanation on death and love:

R: It is the same as what, in another era, would have attracted them to become crusaders. What Freud says on love and death, but this stands within a framework where education doesn't exist, and man loses touch with his instincts and moves towards violence and fanaticism. […] What direction anger will take nobody knows. But this kind of anger can be activated by social phenomena, by marginalisation, by the historical context, and probably by people who create all these, who direct such things. These are the most dangerous people to trust.

Q: Those who guide them?

R: Yes, these people who although they are educated, they are educated meaning that they have the knowledge, they use this knowledge in order to manipulate people's anger, people who are ignorant let's say. (Kostas)

Of course, hope and a vision for a better life combined with socio-economic inequalities were also mentioned:

I don't know, they offer hope? They sell a vision? They sell hope and you know unemployment in the Arab world is too high. Really too high, among young people it is huge. Eh, the whole world, class is important…there are too many rich people, but also too many poor people. Eh, okay…the exercise of power, now, if you are 18 years old and they offer you a weapon and the opportunity to take a position, you have the power and you feel that from being unemployed you can do something and this is without any knowledge of Islam, because this young person doesn't know what Islam is. He has not even read the Qur'an and they tell him that God will take you in Heaven if you do that or they brainwash them and they say if you kill your brother you will go to Heaven, because your brother is in the opposition [politically], let's say, and they follow this person, let's say […]. In the meantime those who are in Syria and fight the regime - there are now 14 groups that are fighting each other and one calls the other an infidel and I wonder… I wonder… For me wrong education and… its correct use by the society [is important]… in order to teach Islam properly… This is responsible [for the rise of extremism] to a great extent, right? (Nikos)

Finally, one interviewee underlined the fact that most of those who are recruited into such groups are also involved in other criminal activities and find a shelter in Islam, as a kind of cover-up.

Yes, but all those who were there in Europe are involved [in other things] and obviously they have nothing to do with religion. Those who are aware read about these issues. But when some people run bars and sell drugs they have no relation to religion. If for example, I here in Greece make some bullshit, and get involved with mafia people and stuff, at some point I will find a place to hide myself. And these people found this [i.e. extremism] and did what they used to do. You get it? Because there, if you are in the mafia and stuff, you

don't… you can kill, you can do anything; because if you join this group, this system, you are not afraid. You have no fear, so you can do anything. (Takis)

Fieldwork studies on why young people do not radicalise (Cragin et al., 2015; Cragin, 2014; Bartlett and Miller, 2012) are very important in order to understand and explain different trajectories. As it has been argued, it is possible to develop a preliminary hypothesis about the reason for which individuals do not become terrorists, based on a handful of studies that discuss this issue somewhat indirectly. It is clear that some parallels exist between joining and not joining terrorist groups. Specifically, social networks appear to both encourage individual membership, as well as discourage it; perceived costs (the inverse of rewards), as one might expect, also appear to create barriers. Thus, while ideological rewards, financial rewards, social rewards, or excitement each contribute to an individual's decision to join a terrorist or insurgent group, logistical costs or mistreatment at the hands of militants create disincentives. Such preliminary findings do not necessarily contradict past studies on radicalisation, but they underscore the merit of understanding resistance and desistance as separate processes and might be more effective to encourage non-radicalisation (Cragin, 2014: 350). Existing research offers some illuminating findings on the non-radicalisation process. From the vantage point of a comparison of terrorists with non-violent control groups, it can be seen that many of the claims regularly deployed to explain terrorism apply to far wider, non-violent groups as well. Many non-violent radicals felt a strong, cynical distrust for politics, governments, re-produced relevant conspiracy theories, while a deep outrage with Western foreign policy was almost unanimous among them. Non-violent groups shared a keen perception of social discrimination, especially in employment, experienced periods of drift and uncertainty about their own identity, desired in some sense the creation of either the caliph or an Islamic government, and were even attached to some level of self-segregation, and aspects of a theological just war theory (Bartlett and Miller, 2012: 16-17). Participants' explanations about and responses to violent radicalisation seem to confirm analyses offered in the limited non-radicalisation literature. They might hold radical views or feel socially excluded and stigmatised, but they reject violence. Why this is the case is a crucial question that will be discussed in the following section.

4.6 Ideology and Sentiments as Factors of Radicalisation and Non-Radicalisation

The role of religion in the rise of violence has been a main theme of public debates, academic or not. It has to be noted that apart from those arguing that religion is the key to understand violence and terrorism, some scholars have argued that religion should not be considered a key factor in the process of radicalisation (Juergensmeyer, 2017; Cavanough, 2017; Nanninga, 2017; Sonn, 2016: 105-113). In addition, as it has also been evident in studies on former terrorists, religion has played a minimum role in their recruitment and trajectories of radicalisation (Botha and Abdile, 2014). As a consequence, contrary to stereotypes, increased religiosity does not necessarily lead to radicalisation (Abbas and Hamid, 2019: 291).[20]

Common to all the explanations offered by respondents in this study as to why young Muslims engage in violent extremism is the lack of religious knowledge and religious education, i.e. the lack of awareness of the true substance of Islam. Religion thus is seen as playing a crucial role in radicalisation, through its absence or, more likely, distortion. However, there is also evidence from the fieldwork that religion can, in some cases, also act as a protective factor against radicalisation and thus plays an important role in non-radicalisation. This was explicitly articulated in one interview:

---

[20] It is also important to mention that, according to recent surveys in MENA religion, it seems that there is a growing minority of young people who are critical and skeptical about or even reject religion (Raz, 2019:2-4).

Q: So you think that at the end of the day religion can be a factor for confronting extremism rather than being the source of extremism?

R: Yes, I believe that. Because what religion says about loving one another, for example, the same is said in the Qur'an. [Although] Yes some people really distort that and try to use it as much as possible for their own benefit. (Maria)

According to almost all the participants, Islamic thought has been distorted by those who are involved in violent acts, especially with regard to jihad. For those who claim to have read the Qur'an and Islamic theology, Jihad has nothing to do with what is termed holy war and violence. For them Jihad is primarily a spiritual and internal fight of the Muslim (greater jihad) and the holy war (lesser jihad), which is always defensive and should be undertaken by a recognised Muslim leader. In addition, as they argue, even when jihad of both kinds is undertaken only Allah decides if someone goes to heaven. From their point of view, today a completely distorted idea of jihad dominates among people with little theological knowledge.

R: This is jihad, that jihad is not identical with the holy war, if you have not read what jihad means because you have not opened the Qur'an, you have not studied and so on, they tell you about jihad today and that when you die for it, this is the reason you will go to heaven, then you believe that and you join, you go and do this and that and you think you will go to heaven.

Q: Which has no basis whatsoever from what I understand... as Islam says...

R: First of all, even now that the Muslims are killing each other, even in the conditions of war, Islam forbids killing a woman, a child, cutting a tree, killing an animal. Also anyone who turns himself in or is taken as a prisoner – it is forbidden to kill him, from the moment he hands you his gun, you are forbidden to kill him, as long as it is forbidden and only when he turns his gun on you then you have the right, only as a defender or in front of somewhere where you fight, to fight him. To go and kill people who are in the market, who are sleeping, who are eating, who are in a restaurant and so on, unarmed, women, old men, children, unarmed people, this is something that no religion has supported - no religion including Islam. Why do they call this Islam? A holy war? Especially now that, as you see, suicide bombers who attack…the majority of victims are Muslims […] You kill Muslims too. What is in your mind to do that and then you say you are conducting a holy war, holy against whom? Now what methods are used to achieve this [convince people to join this jihad], to do this brainwashing, I really don't know. (Nikos)

It is clearly stressed that Islam is far from what is presented in the media, i.e. a religion of violence:

In five minutes I will mention some basic principles that God himself in the Qur'an taught us about how to call people [to Islam] who are not yet convinced and do not enjoy what we [Muslims] have, the blessing of Islam, the light of Islam, and we can call them to Islam, to the light, to truth. This is a very important issue, especially in the society we live in, where the majority are Christians, it is very important that following God's instructions and based on love and zeal to call our fellow beings to the truth. I will start from the Qur'an where God says that Christians and Jews, the people of the Book, should come [to Islam], He calls them, let us not debate what separates us, those issues we disagree upon, but meet on a common basis, on a common starting point, which is found in your Books as well, to pray and glorify the one and only God. […] And if after this call to them they deny what He told us? Kill them? No, just declare our identity and express it openly, we have our religion, you have yours. Also, in the Qur'an God says that one should call people to God's path but with

prudence, but where does prudence come from? It comes from the Book, the Qur'an and our Prophet Mohammad's sayings. It is there that we can find prudence; it is there that we can find the proof, the clear proof, about Islam's truth. (Mosque messages)

Moreover, throughout the fieldwork and interviews, it was evident that terrorism was viewed as completely out of the question, even for those who had expressed radical views:

From all these [i.e. the teachings of Islam] it is easy for someone to see Islam's position on terrorism. Terrorism is a form of hostility during which innocent people are targeted in order to frighten the population. As a consequence, Islam's position on terrorism is related to the Islamic position on hostile acts. It is clear from the above that even during war time it is not permissible for Muslims to target civilians […]. Murdering innocent people is a crime, even during war. Whoever intentionally murders innocent people is a criminal and should be punished for his crime. Terrorism is absolutely forbidden in Islam. Within the whole history of Islam, Muslims' behaviour against others during war was exemplary, although exceptions are found, unfortunately… […]. The verse is not about terrorism as we know this concept today. 'Terrorism' as an act is a crime and is called '*Irhab*' (meaning corruption against society) and according to Islam is punished by death. So, If you read the phrase 'and I will instil terror in the hearts of infidels' without the context, without the correct interpretation, the critics of Islam claim that Islam incites terrorism and the murdering of innocent people, civilians, of other religions, etc. But this terrorism is '*hiraba*', a crime against society. (Text Documents, Pavlos)

This is combined with the dominant view among participants that Islam is actually the religion of moderation and peace: 'Islam means Peace and denial of the self/ selfishness. The word Islam has the meaning of peace, peace for people, inner peace for every human being, and denial of self and submission to the will of God'. (Text Documents, Pavlos)

In one of the Friday prayers I recorded a sermon in Greek about Islam as a religion of moderation, a religion of balance and peaceful coexistence with other people and other religions (Field Diary). In addition, Islam for most of the participants is considered the most definitive element in their lives.

R: Yes, it is Alpha and Omega; it defines you; it determines you as a man, as a personality, as your inner self.

Q: And if I asked you to sum up in a few words, what is Islam for you?

R: Islam is to accept that your God, your creator is the one and only and that you owe him submission and loyalty. This is Islam. (Dimitris)

Islam was also described as a road to truth, in a Platonic way, 'a road; a road to Plato's truth to put it in Greek. Every religion is a road' (Kostas) or even a 'user manual'.

R: Some time ago I was asked the same thing in the mosque and I replied that it is the 'user manual', the instructions for human use. It basically gives you answers to many questions you have either about your existence in general, about how to drink water, or how to swim or how to treat a person on the street. In all aspects of your life, as we have said before, regarding natural phenomena, the immediate social phenomena, on how to deal with your fellow human beings, even with your wife, how you should behave at night say, Islam has some solutions… it has solutions for all these issues. (Thanassis)

Other ideological factors that were mentioned in the interviews related to 'ideologised enemies'. Most of the participants rejected the idea that any real conflict exists between Muslims and Christians as well

as the 'clash of civilisations' theory (Kostas). In only one case was enmity between the two identified, but only on a theological level:

> Q: Do you think there is an enmity between Christianity and Islam?
>
> R: Enemy in terms of faith yes! That is normal. It is normal for that to exist. [But] this does not prevent you from collaborating, working and communicating with each other. It means that I do not like what you believe, you do not like what I believe. You do not like me as a Muslim - I do not like you as a Christian. I would like you to be a Muslim and you would like me to be a Christian. But we can talk and discuss and help each other out if we need something. One of my friends, I won't say friend, yeah, okay, he's a Christian, a priest's son, from Egypt, we have a great relationship.
>
> Q: But isn't there some violence in all this?
>
> R: No, not at all. […] We have different beliefs, but we do not say, as modern guys say, that we love each other, no, we do not have to love, because love is a feeling that you bestow on someone who believes in the same that you believe and love. (Dimitris)

Jews, on the other hand, while not stigmatised as inferior, were mentioned in one of two ways. The first was in the context of conspiracy theories, for example that they were behind 9/11, since no Jew died that day (Takis), or even that they were behind the rise of ISIS and that they control the whole world (Nikos). The second reference to Jews was as Islam's and Muslims' one and only enemy as, for example, in the following message:

> God says in the Qur'an, verse 82, that you can discover that the most fanatic enemies of the faithful ones are the Jews. […]. This is a specific statement in the Qur'an that hostility will come from Jews and will be timeless. […] These facts continue to speak for themselves, with this specific attitude that the Qur'an already warned us about, we, all believers, must be fully aware of this attitude and not try to ally ourselves or try to keep a relationship, to take no other path than to deal with what He considers to be his enemy over time. And to try to support our Palestinian brothers and the al-Aqsa mosque by trying to change the identity of the mosque that is the blessed place, the place of residence of most of the prophets of the time of Abraham, of Lot, of Solomon, of David, of Jesus Christ and refute what they [Jews] say about this place, this blessed land, belonging to them and having been given to them by God. (Field Diary)

Despite such ideological views on Jews there was no reference, explicit or implicit, about the necessity to practice violence against them.

5. Conclusions

What are the main conclusions to be drawn from the above analysis and how do they relate to the relevant literature? First of all, economic inequalities do exist among Muslims in Greece as these were documented through the interviews, informal discussions and ethnographic observation. However, they do not seem to play any particular role in the radicalisation process, contrary to what is found in the literature focused on Western Europe (Franc and Pavlović, 2018). In addition to economic inequalities, grievances about human rights and religious freedom, e.g. the construction of an official mosque or the establishment of an Islamic cemetery in Athens, racism, Islamophobia, the role of the state authorities and international issues, e.g. the transfer of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem or the situation in Palestine, were all mentioned by the majority of the participants. As it has been argued, the two most common

grievances among young people concerned not being able to enjoy all the rights and opportunities they are entitled to and feeling constrained by different forces, including family, society as a whole and political power (Abbas and Hamid, 2019: 6), and this seems to be the case in the Greek case. From this perspective socio-political inequalities, as demonstrated in the literature (Franc and Pavlović, 2018), are a more important factor for young Muslims in the Greek milieu when it comes to radicalisation, although not in a violent form.

One explanation from the literature for radicalisation is that what unites young people in radical groups and brings them together is not a demographic (being young) or socio-economic characteristic but the fact that they do not feel close to, or identify themselves with, the Western societies where most of them have been born and raised (Neumann, 2016: 125). According to a study in Denmark on the question of whether the failure of Muslim immigrants to integrate into a Western democratic society is linked to militant Islamist beliefs, the idea that failed integration in a Western nation is a major cause of radicalism, or that Muslim radicals are less integrated than non-radicals, was not supported (Borum, 2011: 4). With regard to integration, the main finding was that most of the participants feel integrated in Greek society, although some might be considered to be not fully integrated, especially those of an immigrant background. Some participants, who would not identify themselves with western culture and societies, expressed some radical views about democracy or Western habits and morals, but without this meaning that they would support the perpetration of violence in order to change the social and political status quo.

As demonstrated in the literature, for some people, Islam provides an opportunity for identity reformulation and a form of protest; in this sense what we see today is the Islamisation of social and political protest (Roy, 2006: 296). More particularly, Islamist extremism is, at least in the West, a youth movement, which is not only developed out of the religious and cultural references of the parents of young people, but it is also inseparable from our societies' youth culture (Roy, 2017: 9). It is a culture of violence turned into a culture of death (Khosrokhavar, 2009: 59-61, 64). The systematic relationship with death is one of the key issues in today's radicalisation and this nihilist aspect plays a central role, because violence is not the means, it is the goal. As a consequence, terrorism does not come from the radicalisation of Islam but from the Islamisation of radicalisation (Roy, 2017: 12-17). It promotes individualism through death by making the holy war a personal duty and not a collective one (Khosrokhavar, 2009: 6). This has been described by L'Heuillet (2013: 222) as 'Islamist nihilism' and it is explained as a revolt against the absence or the death of God, which is perceived as a threat for the whole world. The findings from the milieu studied here, however, do not confirm this kind of explanation. In those cases where death was discussed, Islam as a cult of death or Islamic nihilism were not mentioned; indeed death was not related in any way to Islam as a religion.

The most important conclusion from the study, I suggest, is that religion plays a key role both in radicalisation and non-radicalisation. According to Roy (2017: 76, 159) those who are radicalised do not seem to embrace violence after any kind of reflection on sacred texts. They do not have the necessary religious education and they are not interested in it. They are not radicalised because they misinterpret the sacred texts or because they are manipulated, but because this is their choice and their poverty in religious education poverty is obvious. Radicalisation has many and complicated origins but at the end it is a choice, a personal choice which is, in turn, a political choice (Roy, 2017: 164). This is illustrated in the autobiographical short story of the son of a convicted terrorist in the 1990s who was among those who designed the attack against the World Trade Centre in 1993 (Ebrahim, 2014). In his book he tries to dispel the argument that terrorism is a foregone conclusion for people trained to hate. Based on his own trajectory he shows that hate is always a choice, but so is tolerance. Though Ebrahim was subjected to a violent, intolerant ideology throughout his childhood, he did not become radicalised. Ebrahim argues

that people conditioned to be terrorists are actually well-positioned to combat terrorism, because of their ability to bring seemingly incompatible ideologies together in conversation and advocate for peace. From this perspective, everyone, regardless of their upbringing or circumstances, can learn to tap into their inherent empathy and embrace tolerance over hatred.

Extremism is thus not simply a product of religious belief, nor is it confined to any one religion. As it has been argued, Jihadism is a movement based on a specific version of Islam, but it is only one way of looking at this religion and certainly not the only one (Khosrokhavar, 2009: 2). Religion matters to religious extremists in the same way that race matters to racial extremists – as their particular in-group identity. However, the fact that religion is not a proximate cause of extremism is not a reason to avoid studying how religion informs extremism. For religious extremists, scriptures and beliefs are sources of information that are used to define in-group and out-group identities. Understanding the details of extremist religious belief can help us understand how extremist in-groups seek to recruit from eligible in-groups, and it can help us anticipate specific actions that a religious extremist movement might take. The desire for simple explanations keeps many of these incorrect assumptions alive. But in order to understand why people become extremists and how to combat extremist violence, it is necessary to move beyond the clichés and find something better (Berger, 2018: 85-87). Throughout the field research in the milieu it was obvious that religion could also be a crucial factor for non-radicalisation. The participants, even those holding radical views, emphasised the fact that religion is a key to countering extremism and not a cause of it. They additionally highlighted that all those violent extremists act in the name of Islam, without any authorisation and after having distorted the meaning of Islam.

What, then, can be concluded with regard to radicalisation among Muslims? First, I would agree that being or becoming a Muslim does not necessarily lead to radicalisation. Islamic identity is more like a long-distance race, a powerful reconversion of the self that allows for introspection and change. But it can also lead to a belligerent presentation of the self that transforms a dead-end into a call to arms (Truong, 2018: 151-160). Second, it appears to me, that young Muslims, practising or cultural, are in many cases the solution to the process of radicalisation through their non-violent political activism or the production of new sub-cultures (Abbas and Hamid, 2019; Herding, 2013). Third, new approaches are necessary that seek to understand individuals within their sociocultural environment in order to capture the changing nature of behaviour within context (Costanza, 2011). Fourth, and related to the above, psychological factors might play a role, but they should not be considered as the main reason for radicalisation and non-radicalisation. According to Durkheim (1978: 170) every time that a social phenomenon is explained through another psychological phenomenon one can be sure that the explanation is wrong. This does not mean that a psychological approach is not useful. Islamist extremists should not be considered as sick people, or psychopaths, but even when such cases do exist they should not cancel the political approach which is considered more important (Roy, 2017: 23, 68-70). Radicalisation is first and foremost a social process and not a product of abnormal psychology (Beck, 2015: 23, 40-41). Finally, the new forms of extremism – jihadism being the predominant form in last decades— are indicators of a profound malaise in the contemporary world. They may, of course, be chalked up to individual responsibility or religious or ideological radicalism. But the malaise of modern societies combined with economic exclusion within a mass culture that is egalitarian by its very essence, gives rise to a new malady over which Western societies have only imperfect control (Khosrokhavar, 2017: 148).

In an interesting study looking into the radicalisation of European converts, Karagiannis (2012: 112) finds that, despite fundamental differences in outlook, five mechanisms of radicalisation recurred. The first was where converts were radicalised because they became victims of abuse or discrimination. For a second group of converts, radicalisation was the result of political grievances. The slippery slope effect

was identified as another mechanism of radicalisation. There were also cases of individuals being radicalised by partners or relatives. Finally, it was argued that inspirational preaching could function as an additional mechanism of individual radicalisation. However, although in the Greek milieu most of these factors could be found, the outcome was, in no case, one of violent radicalisation. Further research is necessary before it can be concluded that religion, as suggested above, is a key factor, in the (non)-radicalisation process. However, this research has shown, on the one hand, that one-dimensional responses to such a complicated issue should always be avoided and, on the other hand, that, even when multi-dimensional responses are offered, they should not be applied to all social, political, and economic contexts.

6. References

Abbas, T. and Hamid, S. (eds.) (2019) *Political Muslims: Understanding Youth in a global context*. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Arjana, S.R. (2015) *Muslims in the western imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bachi, S. (2006) *Tuez-les tous*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard.

Bartlett, J. and Miller, C. (2012) 'The edge of violence: Towards telling the difference between violent and non-violent radicalization'. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 24: 1-21.

Basbous, A. (2003) *Islamism: A failed revolution?* Athens (in Greek): Papadimas.

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

Bishara, A. (2002) 'The conflict of narratives and its outcomes', in Geormas, K. (ed), *Terrorism and civil society*. Athens: Metechmio, pp. 135-151.

Borum, R. (2011) 'Rethinking Radicalization', *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4 (4): 1-6.

Cavanough, T.W. (2017) 'Religion, violence, nonsense', in Lewis, J.R. (ed) *The Cambridge companion to religion and terrorism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 23-31.

Cheong, P. and Halverson, J.R. (2010) 'Youths in Violent Extremist Discourse: Mediated Identifications and Interventions', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 33: 1104–23.

Chomsky, N. (1988) *The culture of terrorism*. Boston: South End Press.

Chomsky, N. (2002) 'The causes and impact of terrorism', in Geormas, K. (ed), *Terrorism and civil society*. Athens (in Greek): Metehmio, pp. 71-82.

Chomsky, N. (2003) *Power and Terror. Post 9/11 talks and interviews*. Tokyo: Little More.

Costanza, W. A. (2011) 'Adjusting Our Gaze: An Alternative Approach to Understanding Youth Radicalization', *Journal of Strategic Security*, 8 (1-2): 1-15.

Cragin, K., Bradley, A.M., Robinson, E., and Steinberg, S.P. (2015) *What Factors Cause Youth to Reject Violent Extremism? Results of an Exploratory Analysis in the West Bank*. RAND.

Cragin, K. (2014) 'Resisting Violent Extremism: A Conceptual Model for Non-Radicalization', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 26:337353.

Durkheim, E. (2000) *The rules of sociological method*. Athens (in Greek): Gutenberg.

Ebrahim, Z. (2014) *The terrorist's son: A story of choice*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

el-Zein. A.H., (1977) 'Beyond Ideology and Theology: The search for the Anthropology of Islam', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 6: 227-254.

Franc, R. and Pavlović, T. (2018) *Systematic Review: Quantitative Studies on Inequality and Radicalisation*, DARE project report.

Gilsenan M., (1992) *Recognizing Islam: Religion and society in the Modern Middle East*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Girard, R. (1991) *Violence and the sacred*. Athens (in Greek): Exandas.

Girard, R. (2017) *Violence and religion*.Athens (in Greek): Nissos.

Hagège, C. (2018) *Religions, discourse and violence*. Athens (in Greek): Exandas.

Hamid, M. (2007) *The reluctant fundamentalist*. San Diego: Harcourt.

Herding, M. (2013) *Inventing the Muslim cool: Islamic youth culture in Western Europe*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.

Hoffman, B. (2009) 'Radicalization and subversion: Al Qaeda and the 7 July 2005 bombings and the 2006 airline bombing plot', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 32(12): 1100-16.

Houellebecq, M. (2015) *Soumission*. Paris: Flammarion.

Inge, A. (2017) *The making of the Salafi woman : Paths to conversion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jouili, S.J. (2015) *Pious practice and secular constraints : Women in the Islamic revival in Europe*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Juergensmeyer, M. (2017) 'Does religion cause terrorism?', in Lewis, J.R. (ed) *The Cambridge companion to religion and terrorism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp.11-22.

Karagiannis, E. (2012) 'European converts to Islam: Mechanisms of radicalization', *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 13 (1): 99-113.

Karim, H. K. (2000) *The Islamic peril : Media and global violence*. Montreal: Black Rose Books.

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

Kepel, G. (1992) *The revenge of God*. Athens (in Greek): Livanis.

Kepel, G. (2000) *Jihad: Holy War*. Athens (in Greek): Kastaniotis.

Khosrokhavar, F. (2017) *Radicalization: Why some people choose the path of violence*. New York: The New Press.

Khosrokhavar, F. (2009) *Inside jihadism: Understanding jihadi movements worldwide*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

Khosrokhavar, F. (2005) *Suicide Bombers. Allah's new martyrs*. London: Pluto Press.

Kumm, B. (2010) *History of terrorism*, Athens (in Greek): Empireia Ekdotiki.

Lewis, R.J. (2017) (ed.) *The Cambridge companion to religion and terrorism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

L'Heuillet, H. (2013) *In the sources of terrorism*. Athens (in Greek): Polis.

Mamdani, M. (2004) *Good Muslim, bad Muslim. America, the cold war and the roots of terrorism*. New York: Pantheon.

Nanninga, P. (2017) 'The role of religion in al-Qaeda's violence', in J.R. Lewis (ed) *The Cambridge companion to religion and terrorism*, Cambridge University Press: New York, pp.158-171.

Neumman, P. (2016) *The new jihadists: Islamic State, Europe and the next wave of terrorism*. Athens (in Greek): Diametros.

Neumman, P. and Kleinmann, S. (2013) 'How rigorous is radicalization research?', Democracy and Security, 9 (4): 360-382.

O'Neill, S. and McGrory, D. (2006) *The Suicide Factory. Abu Hamza and the Finsbury Park Mosque*. London: Harper Perennial.

Papageorgiou, F. and Samouris, A. (2012) *Islamism and Islamophobia: Beyond prejudice*. Athens (in Greek): Taxideftis.

Picart, C. (2015) 'Imagined Relations in the Self-Radicalization of Colleen LaRose (Jihad Jane)', *Societies*, 5: 354-83.

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

Roux, J.-P. (1998) *Blood, myths, symbols and reality*. Athens (in Greek): Livanis.

Roy, O. (1994) *The failure of political Islam*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Roy, O. (2006) *Globalised Islam*. Athens (in Greek): Scripta.

Roy, O. (2017) *Jihad and death*. Athens (in Greek): Polis.

Sageman, M. (2004) *Understanding terror networks*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Said, E. (1981) *Covering Islam*. London: Routledge.

Sakellariou, A. (2017) 'Fear of Islam in Greece: Migration, terrorism, and 'ghosts' from the past', *Nationalities Papers*, 45 (4): 511-523.

Sakellariou, A. (2019) 'Islamophobia in Greece: The Muslim 'threat' and the panic about Islam', in Zempi, I. and Awan, I. (eds) *The Routledge international handbook of Islamophobia*. Oxon: Routledge, pp.198-211.

Sakellariou, A. (2020a) *Radical milieus in historical context Country level reports: Greece*, DARE project report.

Sakellariou, A. (2020b) *Historical case studies for interactive radicalisation: Greece*, DARE project report. Available at: http://www.dare-h2020.org/uploads/1/2/1/7/12176018/d2.2_greece_report_on_interactive_radicalisation.pdf

Sansal, B. (2008) *Le village de l'Allemand ou Le journal des frères Schiller*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard.

Schmid, A. (2013) *Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review*, ICCT Research Paper, The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism.

Sonn, T. (2016) *Is Islam an enemy of the West?* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Stern, J. (2015) 'The Islamic State Paradox', *Politico Magazine*, 17 November. Available at:

http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/11/the-islamic-state-paradox-213368

Storm, I., Franc, R. and Pavlović, T. (2020) *Report on the Relationship between inequality and youth radicalisation from existing survey datasets*, DARE project report. Available at : http://www.dare-h2020.org/uploads/1/2/1/7/12176018/d4.3.pdf

Truong, F. (2018) *Radicalized loyalties: Becoming Muslim in the West*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Vallejo, F. (2012) *Métamorphoses*. Paris : Éditions Viviane Hamy.

Vestel, V. (2020) *Milieu: Working definition*, DARE Project.

Weber, M. (1991) *The methodology of social sciences*. Athens (in Greek): Papazisis.

7. Appendices

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
Alekos	23	Afghanistan	Secondary Education	Full time	Afghani	Single	Male	Muslim	Believer, not practising	Living independently alone	1
Dimitris	31	Greece	Completed University	Full time	Greek-Egyptian	Married	Male	Muslim	Believer and practising	Living at home with own family	6
Dimos	22	Syria	Primary School	Unemployed	Syrian	Single	Male	Muslim	Believer and practising	Living independently with friends	3
Eleftheria	31	Albania	Secondary education (left university after 3 years)	Unemployed	Albanian-Greek	Divorced	Female	Muslim	Believer and practising	Living independently with her son	2
Evgenia	21	Greece	University student	Full time education	Greek	Single	Female	Muslim	Believer and practising	Living with her parents	4
Georgia	31	Greece	Completed University/PhD student	Full time education	Palestinian-Greek	Single	Female	Muslim	Non believer / cultural Muslim	Living independently alone	1
Giannis	27	Greece	Completed University	Unemployed	Greek-Turkish	Single	Male	Muslim	Believer not practising	Living with parents	4
Kostas	29	Greece	Completed University	Full time employment	Greek	Divorced	Male	Muslim	Believer and practising	Living independently alone	1
Kyriakos	29	Greece	Secondary education/ dropped university	Unemployed	Greek-Dutch	Single	Male	Muslim	Believer not practising	Living with parents	8
Maria	18	Greece	University student	Full time education/ part time job	Greek-Turkish	Single	Female	Muslim	Believer not practising	Living independently alone	1

Michalis	19	Egypt	University student	Full time education	Greek-Egyptian	Single	Male	Muslim	Believer and practising	Living with grandparents	5
Nikos	32	Jordan	Completed University	Full time employment	Jordanian	Married	Male	Muslim	Believer and practising	Living with his own family	3
Pavlos	28	Greece	Completed University	Part-time employment	Greek	Married	Male	Muslim	Believer and practising	Living with his own family	3
Takis	30	Morocco	Secondary education	Full time employment	Moroccan	Single	Male	Muslim	Believer and practising	Living independently alone	1
Thanassis	25	Greek	Completed University	Full time employment	Greek	Married	Male	Muslim	Believer and practising	Living at home with parents	4
Vagelis	27	Egypt	Completed University	Full time employment	Egyptian	Married	Male	Muslim	Believer and practising	Living with his own family	5
Vassilis	30	Pakistan	Primary education	Full time employment	Pakistani	Married	Male	Muslim	Believer and practising	Living with his own family	5