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

## Globalisation, identity and Islam – the case of radical Muslim youths in Norway

DARE
Dialogue About Radicalisation & Equality

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## Executive Summary:

This report explores situations and experiences that are likely to be some of the main drivers in the trajectories toward or away from a radical Muslim or extreme Islamist position. In the present globalised, multicultural situation strong polarisations are developed with immigration and Islam at its centre. Our informants point out a long list of *grievances*, from discrimination, racism, exclusion, suspicion, surveillance and general negativity in their everyday lives on the micro level, to invasions, wars, killings and humiliations in Muslim-associated areas at the macro level of 'world events'. All these grievances seem to build into a *cluster of negativity* perceived and experienced by the young informants who participated in this research, as being directed against them, against their 'Muslimness' and against Islam in general.

We cannot suggest a direct link between these grievances and the processes leading to participation in the Syrian war on the IS side, for example, or to engagement in real acts of terror. However, we see the sheer amount of these grievances as making such connections likely for *some* Muslims; a view well in line with the importance often placed on grievances as a central motivational force in the literature. We argue, rather, that grievances tend to generate what we have termed *counterreactions.* These counterreactions manifest following immediate emotional articulations in response to grievances, which may or may not evolve into a radicalisation process, or develop further to cross the line into support for extremist actions. We also describe a complex series of relationships between personal morality, knowledge, experiences and emotions that analytically have been seen to create what we – with reference to Wiktorowicz's concept of 'cognitive opening' – have termed a *reflexive opening* (Wiktorowicz 2005). Such openings are seen to have the potential to orient our actors *away* from extremist positions, to allow them to question such positions and to make dialogue possible. This is well in line with what Schmid (2013) has termed a 'radical' position, in contrast to what he sees as the closedness, 'squareness' and the authoritarian tinge of an 'extremist' position. Our last analytical dimension is the role that *extra-ideological relations* have in a radicalisation process.

A crucial question is how to facilitate the necessary social relations, situations and circumstances where such 'movements away from' can occur. While providing an answer to this question is beyond the scope of this report, our findings presented in the conclusions provide a starting point in so far as they indicate important aspects of the nature of relations, situations and circumstance where radical or extremist positions can be halted, rejected or turned around.

We argue that the possibility to play upon a long row of actual grievances that a large group of people in fact tend to share cannot be seen as irrelevant in the development of motivations and dynamics that occur in radicalisation processes where also the threshold to political violence against civilians are becoming accepted. We conclude that without the willingness to recognise, address, confront, discuss and try to remedy these core grievances frontally and in a genuine way, any initiatives attempting to de-radicalise or prevent the development of young Muslims toward a violent extremist position would not have much chance of success.

The importance of our informants' feeling of identity as a result of their heightened consciousness around Islam and being a Muslim is common across respondents. This finding is understood as a resistance-tinged (counter-) reaction to the overall negativity and suspicion from the majority against immigrants in general and especially against Muslims and Islam. In the last part we address Fukuyama's claims that *identity politics* has become a *new paradigm* that threatens to split societies

and dissolve societal coherence. The processes of polarisation, where immigrants in general, and especially Islam and Muslims are seen as a core problem, and as antagonists to the identity of a European, Christian or a majority-national position, exemplify such tendencies.

Simultaneously Fukuyama recognises that identity politics has its *origin in important societal injustices* that also need to be addressed. On the one hand identity politics is heavily criticised, while on the other it is seen as necessary and in need of being directly addressed. These apparent contradictions in Fukuyama's claims create a paradox. We argue that the only way to handle that paradox, must be to handle *both* the legitimacy of identity politics *and* the problems of fragmentation that it eventually creates. It can therefore be asked if a better name for the present state could be the *Age of identity*? In that case our Muslim informants must be seen to be well in tune with the 'zeitgeist'.

# 1. Introduction – context, terror and liquid fear

Social scientists have in recent decades tried to encapsulate the current social conditions with terms like post-, high-, late- or liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000, 2007). In this context, *individualisation* is a key concept, understood as a social condition where 'the burden of pattern-weaving, and the responsibility for failure fall primarily upon the individual's shoulder' (Bauman, 2000: 7-8). According to Bauman, this social condition is characterised by a deep complexity, where we, as citizens, experience unprecedentedly fast, continual and far-reaching changes that reflect a high level of uncertainty and unpredictability. These features are summed up in the concept of *'liquid modernity'*. This includes the processes spoken of as *globalisation*, where money, goods, cultural impulses and people are moving at increasing speed from one part of the world to another. Bauman claims that a feeling of insecurity and lack of understanding of the society of which one is a part, are some of the main features of this situation, resulting in what he terms *liquid fear*; liquid because it is so formless and hard to grasp (Bauman, 2007: 2; see also Griffin, 2012: 3-4).

This insecurity is found on different scales, ranging from the effects of the geopolitics of wars – on citizens as well as on the nation – to the uncertainties facing individuals in the more peaceful corners of the earth, where the struggle to find work and housing and to make meaning of life under rapid societal changes, are salient.

Wars, authoritarian governments, poverty and problematic life conditions in countries across the world have caused the increased movement of migrants and refugees to relatively peaceful and prosperous societies. In some societies, some among the local population suggest that these flows of immigrants have caused 'too much change, too rapidly' as it is often expressed. They perceive immigrant communities – many with different looks, language, eating habits, religion, gender relations, childrearing practices, attitudes, aesthetics and overall ways of being – to be a source of confusion, difficult to relate to and threatening (Vestel 2020). For the refugee or immigrant, experiences in their new country may also be considered as confusing and difficult to relate to. Add the fast flow of connections and information generated by the internet and social media, along with the chaotic forces of climate change, and the complexity of the picture is set.

At times, in such a complex and tension-filled situation, extreme antagonism and polarisation develop between the various actors, and a sense of unease and fear is heightened by terror and political extremism (e.g., Bauman, 2007; Griffin, 2012). In recent times, the most salient examples of this are extremist acts

undertaken by Islamist extremists on the one hand, and on the other by right-wing extremists, often as an attack against the multicultural society, especially against Islam and Muslims. In such a situation, a crucial question to consider is how the societal process behind these extremist positions can be understood?

Since 9/11, Muslims have been the core targets of critique and suspicion in Norway – as in many other European countries (Jupskås, 2012). After a series of major terrorist attacks on several European cities by extremists who identified as Muslim and claimed justification for their acts on the basis of Islam, Islamist terrorism was seen as the most acute threat to Norwegian society. This is supported by the annual reports of the Police Security Service until 2019 (PST, 2019a, 2019b, 2018). It was not until 2020 that the threat from right-wing extremists was also judged to be equally serious (PST, 2020).

This view contrasts with the fact that Norway has not experienced such acts of terror by Islamists. As will be outlined in greater detail below, the only terrorist incident has been the attempted murder of the Norwegian publisher of Rushdie's Satanic Verses in 1993. Below we will also elaborate on the remarkable persistence of this view nearly ten years after Breivik, a young right-wing extremist who carried out the most severe terrorist attack in Norway of recent times. Nevertheless, extremist Muslim groups such as the Prophet's Ummah (see below) have emerged, and around one hundred young people have left Norway to participate in the civil war in Syria. This signals that extremist Muslim milieus are also contributing to the fears and the overall emotional ambience of Norwegian society.

Both extreme right wing and extremist Muslim positions could *ideally have been explored together* – as they are related, although in ways that are complex (e.g.. Busher and Macklin, 2015; Eatwell, 2006; Macklin and Busher, 2015; Vestel, 2016; Vestel, 2020). However, the primary aim of this national report is to understand young radical Muslims in Norway and their relationship to violent extremism; their reflections and emotions around the subject of extremism, their views on the world, the ways in which they make their lives meaningful, and their motivations and trajectories toward and away from a standpoint that defends the use of illegitimate political violence.[1]

Here I distinguish between 'radical Muslims' and 'extremist Muslims'. I understand the phenomenon usually termed 'radicalisation' to cover the process whereby political attitudes and societal critique of basic values and attitudes in mainstream society are emerging and developing. In this sense, being 'radical' may be seen as a positive position and as reflecting a whished for political engagement by some societal authorities. But this may also ultimately pass the threshold to where the use of illegitimate violence to obtain political change is accepted, legitimized and cultivated. I see actors who have passed this threshold as 'extremists' and their position as 'extremism'. 'Extremist Muslims' (also often termed 'Islamists', in so far as they legitimize the use of violence by referring to the Qur'an) therefore denotes actors that fuse a demand for religious laws and practices as a basis for the organisation of society and states, with support of violence in the shape of violent jihad.

When I use the terms 'radical Muslims' or 'extremist Muslims' and not 'extremist Islam', it is to avoid linking extremist messages or attitudes to the religion of Islam in itself. Rather, I use these terms to refer to a human interpretation and practices of Islamic teachings. Such an (etic) understanding is contrary to the claims by Islamists, who tend to insist that their version of Islam is the only correct one and that it does not imply 'interpretation'. As the informants in this report cover a range of different positions – and also processes toward and away from different positions in the radicalisation scale, to label them simply 'Islamists' would not match this plurality.

[1] The discussion of the use of violence in terms of 'illegitimacy' will be undertaken more directly later in the report.

## 1.1 Critical events related to radicalisation and extremism among young Muslims in Norway: A contextual timeline

To explore radical young Muslims' attitudes and trajectories toward or away from an extremist position, it is necessary to acquire some basic knowledge of the *context* in which these young actors exist and where they have grown up. As radical Muslims and right-wing radicals relate to each other, the sketch of this context will also include some knowledge about some of the right-wing milieus in Norway (see also Vestel, 2020). This is especially important because: 1) the two major acts of terrorism in post-war Norway were undertaken by two young right-wing extremists; and 2) because these acts were directed against Norway's multicultural society and especially against Islam. To understand the socio-political climate in which young Muslims in Norway find themselves – not least in its emotional aspects, some basic descriptions of the acts and messages of the radical right-wing milieus are therefore relevant.

Acts of terror and political extremism may be seen as what Andersson, Jacobsen, Rogstad and Vestel have termed 'critical events'. These events can take place on a personal biographical level or on the level of society, or even on the macro level in the shape of wars, catastrophes and the like. They have a special importance in the sense that they tend to mark – to various degrees – a division between 'before' and 'after' the event, and have an ability to induce change in the social universes where they are relevant (Andersson, Jacobsen, Rogstad and Vestel, 2012: 13; Rogstad and Vestel, 2011).

Below I list some examples – both on the national and international level – that have been given much attention in the Norwegian context both before and after September 11th 2001. Some of them are truly critical events in the sense that they are often referred to and have the quality of marking a 'before' and 'after', while others are not so highly profiled, but represent more ongoing developments. They cover extremist acts, events pointing to racism, and various expressions of scepticism, suspicion and negativity toward Norway's multicultural society, and especially toward Islam and Muslims. As we shall see in the sections below, several of those events and the messages they convey had a central role in the grievances that our informants (presented below) experience and that seem to be important to their motivation in the various steps of their trajectories toward a radical or extremist position. Some of these events are pointed to in the interviews, some are not. They can nevertheless be seen as a series of historical events that make up an *overall contextual ambience – a socio-emotional-political atmosphere* – in which our young radical Muslim informants exist and in which they have to navigate. It is against this background that our informants have developed their motives for political mobilisation and where the local, meso (national) and transnational levels to some extent meet and interact.

Political extremism in Norway has had a relatively short history. From 1975 to the early nineties, it was radical right-wing actors who were the most active. The main developments within this landscape are described in Bjørgo and Gjelsvik's presentation (2018). An important actor in this very early period is the more moderate Progress Party, which is Norway's oldest immigration-critical political party with its origins as far back as 1973. It has recently had several representatives in the Norwegian government. This is mentioned to show that the history of controversy around the phenomenon of immigration begins before the timeline below.

The earliest event when signs of extremist Muslims were visible to the Norwegian population, was the attempted murder of the Norwegian publisher of Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses, in 1993 by actors presumed to be motivated by Khomeini's fatwa from 1989, but the perpetrator has never been found.[2] Another event that has had long repercussions over the years until the present is the arrival in 1991 of Najmuddin Faraj Ahmad – also known as Mulla Krekar – and his family who arrived as refugees in Norway. Krekar had been a guerrilla leader of the group Ansar al- Islam from Kurdish Northern Iraq, and right from his arrival he was a controversial person in Norway. He was accused of being involved with terror networks

[2] https://snl.no/William_Nygaard

and has in more recent times been convicted for making death threats against the then minister for immigration – now the current prime minister (e.g Nesser, 2015; Lia and Nesser, 2016).

Anti-immigrant groups were in the late nineties becoming more active, some serious racist incidents were given much attention in the media, and the at that time founded self-declared neo-Nazi organisation, Vigrid, was noticeably active around 2000. Its leader, Tore Tvedt, aimed to build an organisation built on Norse mythology and anti-Semitism. Vigrid was at times able to draw several young persons - who were fascinated by Vigrid's elaborate initiation rituals and its charismatic leader - into the group (Bjørgo and Gjelsvik, 2018). These developments, reflecting increasing anti-immigrant sentiment, seem to have culminated in the killing of 15-year-old Ghanaian-Norwegian Benjamin Hermansen by three Vigrid associated youths in 2001 in the high rise suburb of Holmlia. Some of the present project's informants knew Hermansen well, and this murder had also broad repercussions in many milieus of young Muslims, especially in Oslo's similar East-side high-rise suburbs where most of Oslo's immigrant families live.

Around 40,000 people took part in a protest march to show their rage at the killing of Hermansen (ibid; Holen, 2018: 17). This was, at the time, the largest demonstration in Norway since World War II. After Hermansen's death, the right-wing milieus, which had been on the rise, more or less disappeared from public view, and probably went underground. This was presumably partly due to the strong reaction to the murder in the larger public and the media (Bjørgo and Gjelsvik, 2018). That the killing was a kind of 'turning point' is underlined also by the huge demonstrations in several other cities. Nevertheless, the death of Hermansen seems to have also created a lot of fear among young people of immigrant background, including young Muslims – as we shall see below – as it was seen as an expression of the negativity they felt was emerging against them in Norwegian society.

From 2001, Muslim-related terror directed against the US, which was - and still is - one of Norway's closest allies, created considerable fear in many Western countries. The events of 9/11 were followed by the US declaration of the 'war on terror' and its invasion of Afghanistan (2001) and of Iraq (2003) in retaliation (see: Nesser 2015). However, for Muslims this underlined a strong feeling that 'the West was at war with Islam' (see also Pedersen, Vestel and Bakken, 2017; Khosrokhavar, 2009). This is a perception that is still salient among several of this report's informants, and is especially prominent among the most extremist positions. At that time, the establishment of the heavily anti-Islam organisation/foundation Human Rights Service also saw the entry of a high-profile actor who would maintain a radical criticism of Islam and Muslim practices over the coming years until the present.[3] It has had a close relationship to and continual support from the Progress Party,[4] and is also financed through the state budget – an economic support that has been heavily contested by other parties over the years (see below).[5]

In 2004, during a debate in Oslo, the Norwegian comedian Shabana Rehman Gaarder (a female of Pakistani background) physically lifted Mullah Krekar off his feet.[6] Lifting him was meant as an act in which Rehman ironized Krekar's conservative political attitudes toward gender. Krekar and his brother became very angry (Andersson et al., 2012). Since 2006, Krekar has been on the UN list as 'terrorist'.[7] The 'lifting' of Mullah Krekar also reflects the ongoing critique of various Muslim practices at that time, and specifically of conservative gender relations. The comedian, Shabana Rehman, who has a Pakistani and Muslim background herself, and is married to an all-Norwegian man, represents the more liberal groups in Pakistani milieus who were criticising certain practices that other Muslim actors legitimised by pointing

[3] https://www.rights.no/

[4] https://klassekampen.no/utgave/2020-10-06/varsler-kamp-om-hrs

[5] It is illustrative of the group's views that one of HRS's core leaders published a book in 2015 named "Islam. The seventh plague" (Storhaug 2015).

[6] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njK18YWOW-c&ab_channel=ABCNews%28Australia%29

[7] https://www.tnp.no/norway/panorama/2820-norway-sentences-kurdish-mullah-krekar-to-five-years-in-jail

to the Qur'an. This also indicates a certain polarisation between liberal and more conservative Muslims in Norway.

The murder of Theo Van Gogh (2004), the bombs in Madrid (2004) and London (2005) and also the serious riots in reaction to the caricatures of Mohammed published in Denmark (2005) amplified fears of Muslim terrorism, and escalated emotional tensions among the majority populations. On the Muslim side the provocation of the caricatures underlined the developing polarisation of society. At the same time, racism-related events were filling the media; such as the case of the two young boys of African background who died in France while being chased by the French police, resulting in a series of violent riots in many French cities (see Andersson et al., 2012; Mucchielli, 2009).[8] In Norway examples of police brutality (the Obiora case, 2006) and allegations of racism among paramedics (the Ali Farah case, 2007) were seen, adding to feelings of threat and humiliation among young people of immigrant background, including young Muslims (Rogstad and Vestel, 2011).

The next critical event in our timeline was the Israeli war on the Gaza strip in 2008, which created high engagement among young Muslims in Norway (Andersson, Jacobsen, Rogstad and Vestel, 2012; Andersson and Jacobsen, 2012). Around 1400 Palestinians died, including 300 children; on the Israeli side, losses amounted to 13 people. A series of large demonstrations were held in various cities in Norway. A notable local development, was that the Salafist group Islam Net was founded by a group of male engineering students in Oslo in the same year, perhaps indicating that more organised counter-movements were emerging at this time (Vestel, 2016; Linge and Bangstad, 2020). Whether this timing was coincidental or not is hard to tell. However, it does not seem unlikely that both the Gaza war and the increasing overall negative sentiment towards Muslims and Islam in European societies including Norway, as a result of the threat of Islamist-related terrorism, were important factors in the establishment of Islam Net. Also in 2008, the organisation SIAN – Stop Islamisation of Norway – was founded out of several anti-Islam and anti-immigrant organisations (Bjørgo and Gjelsvik, 2018:97-101).

The increasing polarisation between Norwegian Muslims and mainstream Norwegian society peaked with the publication of the cartoon of a pig with the name Mohamad in one of the largest newspapers in Norway (Andersson et al 2012). As a response to this perceived provocation, a young Mohyeldeen Mohammad, who was to become one of the first individuals who travelled from Norway to Syria to fight against Assad uttered what has been interpreted as a warning about a possible 9/11 on Norwegian soil which contributed towards instilling further fear of terrorism among the majority population (see Andersson et al., 2012; Vestel 2016). Around this time, another group of radical Muslim actors emerged. The 'Prophet's Ummah' can be seen as another example of how radical Muslim actors organised (see below, see also Andersson et.al., 2012; Nesser, 2015; Vestel, 2016; Linge and Bangstad, 2020). Their emergence also exemplified the growing polarisation among members of the Norwegian Muslim communities, some of whom celebrated their illegitimate political violence.

The Norwegian Defence League, a Norwegian radical right organisation (now defunct) inspired by the English Defence League, emerged in 2011 (Bjørgo and Gjelsvik, 2018; Pilkington, 2016; Vestel, 2016). Then, in 2011, Breivik carried out his terrible attacks in Oslo and at Utøya. He bombed a government building in the centre of Oslo killing eight people, and then killed 77 young people attending the labour party's summer camp in the island of Utøya as an act of protest against the multicultural direction of Norway and the politicians who facilitated it (see: Borchgrevinck, 2012; Bangstad, 2013; Seierstad, 2013; Vestel, 2016, 2020). Several informants in the radical right wing milieus – explored in an earlier project – saw Breivik's actions as putting the radical right wing's struggles against Islam off the agenda (see: Vestel, 2016). Such concerns have parallels to the perceived setback in the right-wing project created by the murder of Hermansen (above).

[8] https://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/05/world/europe/immigrant-rioting-flares-in-france-for-ninth-night.html

As will be seen below, in the hours immediately after the attacks – before the terrorist was revealed to be an anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, right wing extremist – young Muslims who were near the bombed buildings were both physically attacked and accused of being responsible for what had happened; people were taking for granted that the attack was done by Muslims, while the opposite soon revealed to be the case.

Almost immediately after Breivik's massacre, both the government and civil society demonstrated strong sympathy for the victims of the massacre. Marches were held around the country where participants carried roses to commemorate the victims (Witsø Rafoss 2020).[9] Then Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg made a poignant speech where he remarked that 'more democracy, more openness but not naivety'[10] was required.[11] Along the same lines, future prime minister (2013-2021), Erna Solberg, compared the negative attitudes toward Islam at that time with the anti-Semitic attitudes leading to the Second World War. These comments have since been referred to as relatively controversial, but at the time were seen as an important recognition of the problems that many Muslims were experiencing, including by the informants in the present project.[12]

The Prophet's Ummah became more visible in 2011 after their demonstration against the film 'The innocence of the Muslims' was held outside the US embassy in Oslo and was widely covered by the media (e.g. Vestel, 2016; Linge and Bangstad, 2020; Nesser, 2015:270). The group's actions also took the politics of fear to new heights by openly supporting the terrorist attacks in Amenas in Algeria in 2013 where several Norwegian workers were killed.[13] They also celebrated the bombing of the Boston marathon the same year (see below) and the murder of British soldier, Lee Rigby. The transnational connectivity of the emerging network of Norwegian extremist Muslims was illustrated when it transpired that a 23-year-old Norwegian-Somali youth was one of the four Al-Shabaab terrorists who attacked the Westgate mall in Nairobi (2013) which killed 67 and wounded another 2000 (Akerhaug, 2015).

The foundation in 2013 of IS, which thousands of European young Muslims were joining, may be seen as the culmination of these overall developments (Nesser, 2015; Napoleoni, 2017). As the IS state was emerging, it provided hope for many young Muslims in Europe and also for some of this project's informants, of a well-functioning, exclusivist Muslim state, where a 'correct' version of Islam would be realised. In Norway in 2013 much attention was given to the story of the two young sisters from the Oslo area who had gone to join IS; they both had connections with the milieu of the Prophet's Ummah who sympathised with IS at the time. They were 16 and 19 years old – from the Norwegian municipality of Bærum, close to Oslo (Seierstad, 2016). Their father travelled several times to Syria to help them get out, but they refused. Their fate is still unclear, but they have recently been found alive, living in the camp for IS associates, in Al Hol, Syria. This was even more alarming to the public as the extremely violent practices of IS were becoming known: the keeping of slaves, torturing of enemies, public murders of homosexuals and public decapitations with football sometimes played with the heads. Despite this documented brutality, for several of the radical young Muslims in Norway, the promises proposed by IS remained alive for some time; some of the Informants in this DARE project suggested that they had perceived some of the news coverage of IS as Western propaganda. This is also reflected in the fact that seven young men

[9] https://www.idunn.no/file/pdf/67228521/aa_foele_fellesskap_med_fremmede_rosetogene_og_foelelsenes_so.pdf

[10] https://www.norgeshistorie.no/kilder/oljealder-og-overflod/K1909-Statsministerens-tale-etter-terroren-22-juli.html

[11] https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/rA9MK/har-vi-faatt-mer-aapenhet-og-mer-demokrati

[12] See: https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/GpyxJ/erna-solberg-mener-muslimer-hetses-som-joedene-paa-30-tallet; https://www.dagsavisen.no/debatt/resirkulert-hets-1.455542

[13] https://www.aftenposten.no/okonomi/i/vmOV6j/for-fem-aar-siden-ble-statoils-anlegg-i-algerie-angrepet-av-terroriste

from Fredrikstad – a city one hour's drive east of Oslo – travelled to Syria to join IS in 2013-2014 (see: Ofte Arntzen, 2016; Vitanza, 2018).

At the same time fear was again increasing in Europe with the reappearance of extremist Muslim terror in Europe including the large massacre in Bataclan and the Charlie Hebdo attack in France, where the terrorists killed nine editorial members of staff and three other people. The reason given was that the magazine had published satirical drawings of the prophet Mohammed (Nesser, 2015).

The consciousness of the Syrian war manifested itself even more in Europe when large waves of refugees arrived in 2015. In the first 11 months of the year, 30,110 asylum seekers arrived in Norway[14] where it was feared that the refugees could include extremists, who would be likely to commit terrorist acts on Norwegian soil (Vestel, 2020).

In 2017, the so called Nordic Resistance Movement was founded, fusing Nazism and national socialists from Sweden, Finland and Norway (Bjørgo and Gjelsvik, 2018). In 2018, the Norwegian branch was estimated to have 40 activists (ibid). It held their largest demonstration up until then, in the southern city of Kristiansand. Around 17 Norwegian participants and 50 members of the Finnish and Swedish branches participated (Bjørgo and Gjelsvik, 2018; Klungtveit, 2020). In 2019 The 22-year-old Philip Manshaus killed his 17-year-old sister – adopted from China – and attempted to kill the Muslim congregation in a mosque in the Bærum municipality, outside Oslo. He was stopped and disarmed by two old men (66 and 77 years old) of Pakistani origin.[15] The latter event in particular created a strong sense of fear and unease among Muslims, including those involved in the present project as will be seen below.

The same year as Manshaus's attempted attack, the IS state was dissolved and defeated, when its last stronghold – the Syrian city of Baghuz – surrendered.[16] The extreme brutality of the organisation had long been clear, including to our informants. Furthermore, our informants spoke about their disappointment with IS after the hope and promise that it once offered ceased to exist. The end of the IS state raised pressing questions about what would happen if and when the young European IS volunteers returned to their respective European countries; the fear was that the trauma they had experienced, their attitudes and also their combat experience would make radicalisation and terrorism not unlikely (Hegghammer 2016; Lia and Nesser 2016). Such a fear is of course highly understandable.

Although, empirical research for this project was completed in 2019, it is worth noting some of the more significant events that have occurred since then. In 2020, Mullah Krekar was extradited to Italy where he was accused and convicted for involvement in planning terrorism.[17] In 2020, SIAN held several demonstrations and presentation stands, especially in multicultural local areas in Oslo – the Eastern high-rise suburbs –where it attacked Islam; the Qur'an was burnt (in Kristiansand 2019), spat upon, and pages were torn out and ripped to pieces.[18] Indeed, over the years SIAN has become increasingly radical and aggressive in its demonstrations, and in recent times the conflict between SIAN and counter activists has escalated to the point where the police have intervened in fights between SIAN members, young Muslims and other young people of immigrant background. It has also led to several public debates about the limits of the freedom of speech, as the level of verbal attacks and incidents of physical destruction of the Qur'an has increased. Finally, against this backdrop of polarisation and relational escalation, and SIAN's attempt to take the polarisation process to an even higher level, it is worth noting the publication by the Norwegian government of its '*Handlingsplan mot diskriminering og hat mot muslimer*' (Action plan against

[14] https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/refugees-in-norway
[15] Fanny Bu published 17.09.2019, https://www.tv2.no/a/10854267/
[16] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/23/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-isis-caliphate
[17] https://www.nrk.no/nyheter/krekar-domt-for-terrorplanlegging-1.1264959
[18] https://www.vl.no/nyhet/demonstrasjon-i-oslo-sian-profil-rev-ut-koransider-1.1764927

discrimination and hate against Muslims) in September 2020.[19] The Action plan may be seen as an attempt to emphasise the necessity of calming down and counteracting this process of polarisation.

How is this contextual timeline to be understood? Is it possible to see some larger pattern in the relational dynamics between the radical right and the radical Muslim position in this series of events?

The clearest pattern emerging from the timeline is that a polarised situation, where the extreme right and extremist Muslim groups – with a series of positions in between – have developed in wave-like movements, and where traumas and strong fears on 'both sides' have occurred. We will argue below that the socio-emotional ambience and the overall fear and negativity directed against Islam and Muslims that we have seen unfolding in the contextual timeline have had an important role, both as an experiential resonance board, and as *motivational drivers*, in the trajectories toward radical and extremist positions for the informants in this research project. Three events have had a key role in this context, which we will now look more closely at.

## 1.2 Three key events

As mentioned in the timeline, in 2010 a radical group of young Muslims called the 'Prophet's Ummah' emerged in Norway. It started as a Facebook group set up after the demonstration against Dagbladet's, publication of a cartoon showing the Prophet as a pig. The Prophet's Ummah's Facebook page had around 2000 followers before it was closed down in 2014 (Lia and Nesser, 2014:407). The group supported violent jihad, celebrated 9/11, the major bombings in Madrid and London, the murder of the British soldier, Lee Rigby, who had fought in Afghanistan, and a large number of terrorist acts around the world. They also celebrated IS and the attempt to create an Islamic state in Syria, where extreme acts of violence were perpetrated against civilians (see Napoleoni, 2017; Vestel, 2016; Lia and Nesser, 2016; Michalsen, 2016; Bjørgo and Gjelsvik, 2015: 146-155; Linge and Bangstad, 2020). Several of its members went to Syria and were killed in the war. According to the most recent figures from the Norwegian Police's Security Services (PST abbreviated in Norwegian) it is estimated that since the beginning of the war in 2011 around 100 people, including 11 women, have travelled from Norway to Syria to participate in the war – in one way or another - and to join IS, Al-Nusrah or similar groups: 40 have been killed, 40 have returned to Norway or some other country, and 20 are assumed to still be alive in Syria and Iraq. Among those who went, 60 were Norwegian citizens while the others were connected with Norway, for example through family or work. [20]

However, developments among the extreme right-wing antagonists have led Norway further into fears of terrorism.On 22 July 2011 Norway was shattered by its most severe terrorist attack in the contemporary context, when 32-year-old right-wing extremist, Anders Behring Breivik, detonated a bomb at the Government Headquarters in the centre of Oslo, killing eight people. He then entered the Labour Party Youth Organisation's (AUF) summer camp on the small Island of Utøya – a one-hour drive from Oslo – and killed 69 people, most between 15-19 years old (see: Borchgrevinck, 2012; Bangstad, 2014; Vestel, 2016; Bjørgo and Gjelsvik, 2018). These acts were motivated by a protest against immigration and the political establishment that had allowed it. Breivik had been in his twenties when the attack was first planned. His deeds, although often spoken of as a 'lone wolf' action, were inspired by his primarily internet-driven contacts with various right-wing milieus around the world, and especially those associated with the so called Eurabia theory, created by the Egyptian Jewish exile Gisele Littman, also known under the pseudonym 'Bat Ye'or'. This theory asserts that a conspiracy of Muslims and political leaders are planning

[19] https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/handlingsplan-mot-diskriminering-av-og-hat-mot-muslimer-2020-2023/id2765543/

[20] See Svendsen, published May 13th, 2019: https://www.nrk.no/norge/pst_-ytterligere-ti-norske-fremmedkrigere-trolig-drept-1.14549058.

to take over Europe, including Norway (see Sætre, 2013; Bangstad, 2014; Bangstad, 2019; Vestel, 2016, 2020). According to Andrew Brown, writing in *The Guardian*, Breivik's web contacts included a network of 104 European nationalist sites and political parties[21]. Central sites and figures included the Norwegian blogger Peder Jensen writing under the pseudonym 'Fjordman'; the so called 'Jihad Watch' blog by Robert Spencer; and the 'Gates of Vienna' blog by Edward May – on which Fjordman regularly published (Sætre, 2013; Borchgrevink 2012). What unites Breivik's contacts – apart from nationalism – is an extreme hostility towards Islam and often against the EU.

Eight years later, on 10 August 10, 2019, 22-year-old Philip Manshaus killed his 17-year-old adopted sister of Chinese origin, and attempted to shoot Muslims assembled at the Al-Noor mosque for congregational prayer in the municipality of Bærum. He is reported to have explained that the killing of his adopted sister was necessary to protect his parents in a future race war, where he feared that people who had been in contact with 'non-whites' would be in danger.[22] In his statements he has celebrated the Australian terrorist Brenton Tarrant (28) who had killed 51 people at a mosque of the same name (Al-Noor) in New Zealand in March 2019, and sees Tarrant, as well as Breivik, as sources of inspiration.[23] At the time of writing Manshaus's trial has not been concluded.

It is impossible to explore and understand the present landscape of radical young Muslims in Norway without seeing them in the context of the recent wars, terrorist attacks and conflicts on the macro scale and the associated ideologies. This is also manifest in the characteristics of the two primary networks, to which our informants especially relate: the Prophet's Ummah; and Islam Net.

## 1.3 The selected milieu – circling around two networks

The core memberships of the groups and networks in today's landscape of young radical Muslims in Norway are very small. The two groups that have been most active and present in the public arena are 'The Prophet's Ummah' and 'Islam Net'. Both groups have had some contact and connections with each other, and members have moved from one group to the other (e.g. Linge and Bangstad, 2020: 80-82). They will be further described below.

The milieu chosen for this report consists of informants who mostly belong to the larger milieu that surrounds the cores of these groups. Some have had some connections to either The Prophet's Ummah, Islam Net or to both. Some have been insiders for a shorter or longer period, and some have considered going to Syria, or have connections with other young people who have travelled to participate in Syrian conflict, either as combatants or through humanitarian work. The number of friends and acquaintances who had participated in the Syrian war varies from just one up to ten. This very closeness – through knowledge, friendship, being part of a milieu – to people who had undertaken the drastic decision to engage in the Syrian war, makes the selected milieu ideal for exploring the trajectories toward or away from an extremist position and for exploring their reflections, drivers and emotions around such processes.

In line with Hegghammer's position it is important to underline that going to Syria – even to participate in armed combat – does *not* necessarily imply that the person should be seen as a potential terrorist (Hegghammer 2014). Such actions, nevertheless, can be understood as implying a high level of exposure to terrorist ideology and positions, especially on the basis of what we now know about the practices and ideology of IS, and also Al- Nusra (Napoleoni 2017; Hegghammer 2014).

[21] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/sep/07/anders-breivik-hate-manifesto
[22] Fanny Bu published 17.09.2019, https://www.tv2.no/a/10854267/
[23] https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/JoRo0R/polititeori-ville-kopiere-moskeangrepet-paa-new-zealand. Published 13 August 2019.

We have not been able to reach violent extremist milieus that at the present time support or even celebrate violent actions. Most informants distance themselves – at least in our interviews[24] – from the use of violence to achieve political change.

### 1.3.1 The Prophet's Ummah

*The Prophet's Ummah* is a Salafist group, which started out as a Facebook group (e.g. Lia and Nesser, 2016; Nord Holmer, 2016; Khoshrokhavar, 2017; Roy, 2004; Bangstad and Linge, 2020). It emerged in the aftermath of a demonstration in Oslo in 2010 against the publication of the aforementioned satirical drawing in *Dagbladet*, a major Norwegian newspaper, showing the prophet Mohammed as a pig. Around 3,000 people took part in the demonstration (Andersson, Jacobsen Rogstad and Vestel, 2012: 112-118; Akerhaug, 2013; Vestel, 2016; Michalsen, 2016) where 24-year-old Mohyeldeen Mohamed (of Iraqi background), from the city of Larvik – a 100-minute drive from Oslo – gave a speech in which he declared:

> When will Norwegian authorities and their media understand the seriousness in these things? Maybe not until it is too late. Maybe not until we will have a September 11th on Norwegian soil. This is not a threat, it is a warning (Akerhaug, 2013: 32- 36; Vestel, 2016: 120-121).

The speech received much attention and was understood by some as a threat. Against this background, the Prophet's Ummah gradually developed into a group (see: Akerhaug, 2013: 98-99; Vestel, 2016: 120-125; Bangstad and Linge, 2020), becoming known in the public sphere in 2012 when they organised a demonstration against the anti-Islam low budget film *Innocence of the Muslims.* This film was regarded as of especially low quality, and a clear, caricatured attack upon Islam, and it gave rise to protests from Muslims in several countries (Vestel, 2016: 121). At the demonstration in Norway slogans supporting Osama bin Laden were displayed.

In 2013, the milieu around the Prophet's Ummah was thought to have around 30 at its core and a wider group of around 100 associated with it. Its – now defunct – website give a flavour of its standpoint:

> The Prophet' Ummah has been started by a group Muslims who have as their aim, first and foremost, to satisfy Allah SWT, and to present Islam in its purest form, as it was taught, understood and practised by the last messenger of Allah, the Prophet Mohammed, his household, disciples and the first generations, Allah SWT be satisfied with them all…
>
> Jihad is one of the best actions one can undertake in Islam, and the saving of our Ummah lies in practising this obligation…
>
> Jihad must be practised by the child, even if the parents refuse, by the wife, even if the husband refuses, and by one who has debts, even if the lender denies…
>
> Dear brothers and sisters, the issue is important because today the enemy is not a nation or a race. It is a global system of *kufr*. The disbelievers are conspiring against us like never before…
>
> Unfortunately, many people today have been influenced by how the leading 'democratic' countries like Great Britain and the USA and Norway are leading their modern wars with open brutality…
>
> The Prophet Mohammed gave in his time, rights to prisoners of war, which is what one really can call human rights, in contrast to today's so-called human rights or the Geneva convention

[24] This expression does not imply a suspicion that the informants necessarily hid alternative attitudes toward violence, but is simply meant as leaving it open for such a possibility to exist.

> that does not include Muslims, as it has been revealed in Abu Ghraib, and that continues even today, in Guantanamo Bay, among other places…[25]

In various media, The Prophet's Ummah also declared support for well-known terrorist actions, on social media and in interviews with the press (see, for example: Vestel, 2016: 123-125; Linge and Bangstad, 2020). These included the terror attack on the In Amenas gas plant in Eastern Algeria, where 23 hostages were killed, among them five Norwegian workers; the bomb attack on Boston Marathon, where three were killed and 260 wounded; the attack on the Westgate mall in Nairobi where 67 were killed and 200 hurt; and the murder of British soldier, Lee Rigby. The group's spokesperson commented on some of these attacks as follows: 'To hell with Boston and may Allah destroy the US. We pray and cry for our loved ones in Afghanistan, Mali, Syria, Pakistan […] Somalia and all Muslim Ummah'[26].

The group had as their mentor the British lawyer, Anjem Choudary, central in forming the group 'Al-Muhajiroun'[27], which was banned after it was revealed to have links to Al-Qaeda, and, later, as a spokesman for 'Islam4 UK', also proscribed under UK counter terrorism laws in 2010 (Linge and Bangstad, 2020; Wiktorowicz, 2005:90-91).[28] Mullah Krekar, the Kurdish leader of the group Ansar al Islam, is also said to be admired by members of the Prophet's Ummah, who at times showed up in court when Krekar's cases were being heard. Krekar was never a member of the Prophet's Ummah, but was admired by young Jihadists, as he was seen as a veteran in the Jihadist project (Linge and Bangstad, 2020: 72-73). There is also a special page on the website of the Prophet's Ummah, devoted to one of their most revered ideologues, Anwar al-Awlaki. He is quoted in a long article entitled '44 ways of supporting Jihad', with each of the 44 points explained and discussed thoroughly (see also below, for example: Shane, 2015: 185).

The Prophet's Ummah publicly sympathised with IS, the caliphate and the leadership of Baghdadi. Most of their core members were in their twenties, with a wide range of family origins including Chile, Iraq, Pakistan, Algeria, Kosovo, Yugoslavia, Somalia, and Eritrea, as well as Norway; several are converts. According to the newspaper *Aftenposten* (14.06.2014), by July 2014, five of their members had been killed, four were in jail, and several had been accused of terrorism.

The Prophet's Ummah seems to have been in decline from around 2015 and today is more or less dissolved. The group's website was closed down in 2014, and there has been little activity in its name since then. Its spokesperson, Ubaydullah Hussain (born in 1985), was convicted in 2017 by a Norwegian court for recruiting for the terrorist network IS. He was sentenced to nine years in prison, and the conviction was upheld on appeal in 2018[29]. However, the imprint of the Prophet's Ummah on the Norwegian public consciousness has been considerable and the group represents an actor in the radical Muslim landscape that most of our informants relate to.

### 1.3.2 Islam Net

*Islam Net* originated as a student organisation founded by a group of male engineering students in Oslo in 2008 (Bangstad and Linge, 2013; Vestel, 2016: 125-129; Linge and Bangstad, 2020). It is strictly conservative and is associated with the more peaceful variety of the Salafi tradition. The group is led by Farhad Qureshi (of Pakistani background), who in 2014 was characterised as 'Norway's most influential preacher' (Linge, cited in *Morgenbladet* 14.06.2014). Islam Net has followers in the cities of Oslo, Bodø, Tromsø and Trondheim and, in 2017, was estimated to have around 2,000 members (Vårt Land ,April 7,

[25] All quotes downloaded from the webpage 'profetensummah.com', 29.04.2021 and translated by the authors.
[26] ABC news, published 20.01.2013 and downloaded 18.03.2013.
[27] See the documentary: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqZWfbDkvYk&t=20s
[28] See also 'Profetens Ummah', downloaded from Store Norske Leksikon, updated 21.01. 2018.

[29] Downloaded from Store Norske Leksikon, updated 21.01. 2018)

2017). Some well-positioned Muslim leaders among informants in a previous project claim that these numbers are exaggerated (Vestel, 2016).

Islam Net's central activity is '*da'wa*', that is inviting to the faith in a form of missionary work. The group arranges yearly so called 'Peace conferences' which are inspired by the televangelist preacher Zakir Naik's performances on the 'Peace TV' channel.

The members emphasise that they are against violence and all terrorist acts (Linge, 2013). Farhad Qureshi comments:

> Terror is terrible and the Qur'an teaches that to kill only one innocent life is like killing all humanity! And to save one innocent life, is like saving all humanity! This means that any faithful Muslim will do his utmost to prevent terrorism and this is our message through all channels through which we reach young people. To collaborate against terrorism ought to be something in which everybody can participate. (cited in 'The duty of a Muslim is to work against terror', Aftenposten 16.06. 2014 [authors' translation]).

The organisation nevertheless is seen to have very controversial attitudes. For example, it practises very strict separation between men and women at its meetings. This was one of the reasons why, in 2013, the University of Oslo refused to accept Islam Net as a student organisation.[30] Islam Net also supports the so called *hudud* laws, which carry the most severe punishments in the Qur'an, implying approval of the death penalty for homosexuality and for apostates, stoning for debauchery/infidelity and cutting off hands for theft (Bangstad and Linge, 2013: 254). The leaders nevertheless underline that their support of the *hudud* punishments does not imply that they demand or support such practices in non-Muslim countries like Norway.

Islam Net has also been accused of inviting controversial preachers to its Peace conferences. Among the invited are: Haitham Al-Haddad who is reported to have said that Jews are the descendants of monkeys and pigs, and that practising homosexuality may be a worse sin than killing (*Klassekampen* 29.12.2012); the Indian Salafi televangelist, Zakir Naik who is said to support death penalty for apostates and homosexuality, to have supported bin Laden, and claimed that George Bush planned 9/11[31]; the Australian convert Shady Al Suleiman who supports stoning for debauchery and holds that HIV is a punishment from Allah for homosexuality (Suleiman also invited Al Qaeda ideologue Anwar al-Awlaki to his mosque); and lastly, the American Usha Evans who also supported Anwar al-Awlaki, and is reported to have said that Islam's largest threat is 'so called moderate Muslims'.[32]

Islam Net has wider appeal for young Muslims than the Prophet's Ummah. Linge (2013: 47) writes: 'By putting together a narrative mainly consisting of Salafi doctrines, apologetics and popular culture these new intellectual Islamists appear as true believers, rebels and youthful at the same time.' (authors' translation). According to Bangstad and Linge, Islam Net is dominated by young people of Norwegian-Somali background. Some of the audience at Islam Net's controversial peace conferences have been children 12-13 years of age, according to an informant who knows the milieu. While the Prophet's Ummah is characterised as 'extreme', Islam Net is spoken of as 'ultraconservative'. Even if the groups have lots of similarities in what they believe are the true and important features of Islam, they differ in their views on violence.

The Prophet's Ummah and Islam Net are the most relevant and well-known groups of radical Muslims in the Norwegian public sphere. They form the general milieu in which people and impulses relate to the

[30] https://www.nrk.no/osloogviken/islam-net-nektes-adgang-1.10956337.

[31] https://www.indiatoday.in/india/delhi/story/ten-controversial-statements-by-zakir-naik-327810-2016-07-06, from India Today, d.l. 13 February 2020

[32] https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/RxzAJ/islam-net-inviterte-meget-omstridt-imam, Aftenposten 24.04. 2016

groups, and flow to and from one group to the other. The informants in the present project are all part of the milieu that has these two groups – more or less – as their central points of reference.

## 1.4 Research questions, structure, style and focus of the report

The key findings of the research are addressed in Section 3, which is divided into seven sub-sections each addressing a particular research question.

The first two sub-sections explore the informants' experiences of growing up, from childhood, through youth and into young adulthood. Here we are especially interested in events and experiential patterns that influence or become drivers toward future radical or extremist positions. We also examine how grievances may play a central role in the radicalisation process. This section addresses the following research questions: i) *What are the main drivers in the trajectories of the various informants toward or away from a radical Muslim position?*; and ii) *How do inequalities, injustice and grievances – as subjectively perceived – impact the processes of radicalisation?* In these two sub-sections, childhood experiences of racism – including a racist murder – and also everyday experiences of exclusion and negativity regarding their 'Muslimness', at their work places, in relation to the police, and in relation to the larger society are explored.

In the third sub-section, we explore assumed Muslim attitudes and practices regarding gender as well as the informants' relation to gender related questions. We explore how stereotypical portrayals of Muslims and Islam as being especially conservative in their attitudes towards women, masculinity and sexuality have affected our informants. In particular, we explore the trope of the 'Male Muslim Monster' as well as attitudes towards transgender and alternative sexualities. As, for several of our informants, the repeated critique of their assumed attitudes toward gender represents an important grievance, this is reflected in our third research question: *What role do gender related attitudes play in the processes of radicalisation?*

A central part of the experience of being a young Muslim in today's Norway, are the two core events in Norway's recent history of right wing terror, namely the atrocities committed by Anders Behring Breivik, and, more recently, the murder of an adopted-sister and the attempt to kill a group of Muslims assembled for Friday prayers by Philip Manshaus. The fourth sub-section explores the informants' relationships to these events, for two of whom they were especially close while several others also pointed to their impact. Since these attacks contributed significantly to an overall atmosphere of fear and negativity against Islam and Muslims, the fourth research question will be: *What role does right wing terror play in the processes of radicalisation?*

The fifth sub-section explores the role of grievances generated by macro scale world events such as the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, the US use of drones for killing political enemies, the conflicts in Israel and Palestine, in the processes of radicalisation. For several informants these events extend the micro level experiences of negativity, suspicion, Islamophobia and threat via a larger, macro level perspective. In the published literature also, the foreign policy of various countries is increasingly seen as having an important role in such processes. This informs the fifth research question: *In what ways do macro-, meso- and micro level social relations interact in the processes of radicalisation?*

The sixth sub-section focuses on the war in Syria, the dream of a caliphate, IS, doomsday and its disappointments. The war in Syria has attracted a large number of young Muslims from several countries, starting as a protest against the treatment of Assad's brutal regime against especially Sunni Muslims. As the events developed, the extremist organisation of ISIS emerged, and several friends and acquaintances of our informants are reported to have travelled to Syria to participate, including to join IS. Here the relationship to violent extremism is explored in relation to the sixth research question: *What role does the Syrian war play in the processes of radicalisation?*

In the seventh sub-section, informants' views on radicalism, extremism, legitimisation of violence and the radicalisation of the state are considered. A core theme in the DARE project has been to understand the informants' own views upon terms like radicalisation, extremism, and their relation to the legitimisation of violence to obtain political change. From this exploration the theme that states may also be 'radicalised' has emerged, in the sense that they have been using what the informants see as illegitimate violence to obtain political change. Examples of this are the treatment of prisoners in US controlled prisons, the Norwegian military bombings in Libya, the violent occupation of Israel in Palestine and so on. The seventh research question that this sub-section addresses is: *How do the informants themselves relate to the concepts of radicalisation and extremism?*

In Section 4, these research questions will be returned to addressed, discussed and analysed directly in relation to the findings presented. In addition, the question of the role of situations, events and relationships influencing processes of radicalisation that do not have a clear ideological frame is addressed by asking: *What is the role of extra-ideological relations in the processes of radicalisation?* Here, we consider how the elementary human need for confirmation, friendship and community as well as experiences of loneliness or even love relations may work as moving forces that take a person into communities and positions where problematic attitudes and actions are cultivated and valued. In Section 5, as part of the Conclusions, we reflect on the theoretical implications of the findings in the course of addressing the ninth, and final, research question: *In what way can the meaning making attitudes and world views of the radical Muslim position be seen as relating to, confirming or eventually moving beyond the social conditions outlined in the broad characteristics of post -, high-, late- or liquid modernity?*

This report focuses on the informants' own narratives about themselves and their lifeworlds and employs these as the basis for analysis and interpretation. In order to allow the reader to distinguish clearly between narrative and author interpretation, the report favours the use of direct quotes from informants to paraphrasing.[33] The aim of this research is to explore the informants' subjective perceptions, and this by necessity demands listening to what they have to say. This approach, it is hoped, will enable us to better understand and illuminate the worlds and actions of these radical young Muslims, and the ways in which they make meaning of their lifeworlds.

We assume that the experience of *injustice* is of core importance in the generation of an emotional orientation, which for some becomes a moving force toward radical orientations and even extremist actions. To understand the nature of that 'moving force', implies an exploration, not only of the orientations toward radical or extremist positions, but also of the *dilemmas, ambivalences, reflexivity, doubts, convictions, provocations and value judgements* that enhance, moderate or prevent the movements in such orientations.

The importance of *grievances and the subjective perceptions of injustice* in the development of extremist attitudes is also underlined by Berger who writes: 'In essence, extremist ideologies weld grievances to a system of meaning in which they become both universal and personal, while insisting on hostile actions to resolve the conflict' (Berger 2018:131; see also Beck 2015:92).

The central questions for starting on this exploration of the grievances and subjective perceptions of injustice are simply: *How does it feel to be a young Muslim in today's Norway?* and *How do the multitude of these feelings relate to political extremism?*

[33] These are presented verbatim. Where text is omitted by the authors, this is marked with […], while a pause in the conversation or narrative by the informant is marked with '…'.

## 1.5 Theoretical starting point

We aim, in this report, to capture what we might call the *emotional structures* that are created and activated in the lifeworlds of the informants. These may be seen as the structures generated by repeated experiences and critical events which result in an overall *emotional ambience* – a social emotional 'atmosphere' – that marks the lifeworld of the informants and provides a framework for their choices, actions and the articulation of their feelings.

This approach follows recent studies of social movements in which emotions are considered a driving motivational force for engaging in political protest and in the struggle for social change (Flam and King, 2005; Jasper,s 1998, 2018; Tarrow, 1999). Indeed, Jaspers (2018: xi) challenges the separation of emotional and cognitive dimensions of protest by adopting what he calls the '…awkward neologism *feeling-thinking processes* [italics in original] to try to break us out of an old habit of contrasting feeling and thinking, which our minds fall into whenever we use the two words separately.'

Recognition of the importance of emotions is also found in recent work within terrorism studies. As McCauley and Moskalenko note, 'Although a rational choice framework still dominates research on terrorism, there is a growing awareness of the importance of emotions and affective experience in understanding political radicalisation' (2017: 28). Work within the DARE project, establishing the evidence to date on the relationship between inequality and radicalisation, also identifies (at the individual level) more consistent relationships between cognitive radicalisation and various measures of *perceived* social inequality than objectively measured inequality, leading to the conclusion that 'subjective perception at an individual level may play a more important role than economic inequality in the inequality-radicalisation nexus' (Franc and Pavlović, 2018: 3). This also suggests that emotional aspects may play an important role in processes of radicalisation.

### 1.5.1 Three modes of the radicalisation process

Unlike some theories of radicalisation that assume this process takes place in linear stages[34], historian Roger Griffin's theory of three stages of the radicalisation process (Griffin, 2012: 88-110) can be understood more like 'modes' of engagement through which actors may move to and from, in trajectories that are not necessarily linear (see also McCauley and Moskalenko's discussion of the lack of linearity in McCauley and Moskalenko, 2017). This opens up the possibilities that actors in all modes may also move back to less radical positions. Based on Griffin's theories, these modes can be described as characterised by: nomic crisis; splitting; and the bliss of completion (Griffin 2012:88-110).

*Nomic crisis:* Griffin refers to Peter Berger's use of the word *'nomos'* to denote an ideal type for the cosmological, cultural and social 'meaningful order' into which people are born, and that is deepened, processed, modified and transmitted to the next generation. This nomos also provides a 'shield' of meaning that protects their world in a wider sense, including the meaning of personal experiences of the individuals and their need for an existential order. When this order no longer works or is threatened – for example when society no longer manages to provide a relevant orientation to the individuals – a 'nomic crisis', related to Durkheim's concept of 'anomie', develops. According to Griffin this may be seen as a foundation for a process that may end up in extremism. Coupled with our perspective that emphasises the importance of an emotional ambience, we may add that this experience is heavily emotionally charged, and may imply strong feelings of grief and of injustice that may become an important moving force for the actors.

[34] See for example Borum (2011) and Moghaddam (2005) for several such theories of 'stages', and a critique of them.

*Splitting and a Manichaean world view*[35]*:* A possible result of the experience of a nomic crisis, is, according to Griffin, an increasing need to defend or to re-establish an original 'nomic home', or to find or create a new one. This may imply counteracting a feeling of humiliation and injustice, by seeking some sort of revenge through a struggle that feels meaningful and 'real'. In these processes the phenomenon of 'splitting' emerges. This is a simplifying assumption of a universe where 'the others' – those who do not share the nomos of the protagonist, or who threaten this nomos – are demonised, dehumanised and are seen as of less worth in a strictly dualist world view.

*The bliss of completion:* The last mode in Griffin's understanding of the phenomenon of radicalisation is one where the conviction of the importance of the aim has become so internalised that violence against society/the enemy/the other can be undertaken, not only without a feeling of guilt, but also with a feeling of grandiosity and of having achieved the goal. Violence is here perceived as sacralised, even if the goal is not necessarily anchored to religion. The perception of being threatened, on edge with society or being marginalised is now transformed to a feeling of having achieved some sort of 'bliss'.

The content of these three modes will be used as a base for our exploration of the research questions set out above. It is important to note that none of the informants in this study could be said to reflect the third of these modes, where real acts of terror could be realised. It is nevertheless presented here as it provides us with an overall frame that indicates the content, situation, trajectory and state of mind that the DARE project seeks to counteract.

### 1.5.2 Locations

As noted above, the cities of Fredrikstad, Larvik and the municipality of Bærum are all localities from where young radical Muslims have emerged but it is the areas in and around Oslo that have hosted the largest and most noticeable milieus of radical Muslims in Norway. The injustice arising from social inequality is embedded in the very structure of the capital of Oslo, where most of our informants live. Oslo is a divided city. Its two halves are spoken of as the *East side* and the *West side*, roughly demarcated by the Aker river that flows right through the city.

The West side of the inner city of Oslo is traditionally associated with the wealth and the lifestyle of the middle or upper-middle class. Its outskirts are dominated by larger private residencies and semi-detached houses. Here, Oslo's most attractive and expensive areas are situated high above the city with a distant view over the Oslo fjord. On the East side, are areas traditionally associated with working class families. In the inner city small, rented flats in apartment buildings have traditionally been the common form of housing. On the outskirts of the East side we find both old and more recent high-rise suburbs dominated by housing cooperatives, as well as industrial areas (Ljungren and Lie Andersen 2017; Hylland Eriksen and Vestel 2012).

Many of the non-Western immigrants have been settled in the inner Eastern parts of the city, but as gentrification increases, many immigrant families are moving to the outskirts of the East side. Several of the high-rise suburbs there have had a bad reputation, although this goes in waves. These areas are associated with many problems related to low income, low education, a high incidence of health problems, crime, youth gangs and a high number of immigrant families (see: Vestel, 1999, 2004, 2016; Wessel, 2017). For some of the young inhabitants of these areas, the stigma of living in one of the high-rise suburbs in Oslo is a burden, and the bad reputation of some of these areas is known throughout Norway.

Many of these areas have had a bad reputation from early on. They were originally post-war social housing projects – built under the direction of a series of social democratic governments from the late 1950s

[35] Manichaeism is an old Persian religion characterised by an extremely dualistic world view where good fights against evil (see: Jonas, 1963).

onwards. Then many families were happy to move into the blocks. They had been living in narrow flats without bathrooms and with toilets in the backyard, and in generally bad and unhealthy conditions. The tower blocks had the most modern facilities, and were often built near to small forests and lakes to provide natural spaces for recreation. However, as a large number of people were put together in very concentrated areas, social problems soon arose. Similar situations are known in other European countries (e.g. Bourdieu, 1999 :60-76; Dikec, 2007; Waquant, 2008; Beach and Sernhede, 2013; Gudmundsson, Beach and Vestel, (eds) 2013).

In the late 1970s and the 1980s the bad reputation of these areas was exacerbated when an increasing number of immigrant families moved in. Nevertheless, for many of the young people who were growing up in such areas, the negative reputation of the place was also played upon as an asset. Various expressions of popular culture, especially the hip hop tradition, have evolved in similar multicultural areas in the larger cities of the US. In the same way in Oslo's high-rise suburbs, the young people could present themselves as 'tough guys' (mostly boys), while acquiring skills important in youth cultures, especially in hip hop, such as breakdancing, graffiti, DJing, rapping (mc-ing) and more. Thereby the young inhabitants gained prestige for themselves and their home area within a certain culture (see: Vestel, 1999, 2004, 2018).

Earlier research conducted by one of the authors since 1992 in similar areas has highlighted that several of these places also have a series of positive qualities – not least for the young people – that are easy to overlook and difficult to spot, if you only see them from the outside. Here friendships and long-lasting relationships across ethnic, religious and cultural boundaries are common. And especially among young people the phenomenon of *hybridity* and complex combinations of subjective identity are actualised among both young men and young women (Vestel, 2005, 2009a, 2009b; Pietersee 2004). In the lifeworlds of the informants in the present project, the phenomenon of *identity* has a special importance. But among the informants, identity is to a large degree concentrated around certain basic features; they are Muslims, they are from immigrant families, most are males and they have grown up in areas with bad reputations; all these variables are salient aspects of their identity that are met with various expressions of negativity. They thereby suit the actors' profiles sketched in what Francis Fukuyama terms 'identity politics' (Fukuyama, 2020).

Being a Muslim with an immigrant background in contemporary Norwegian society should be set in context. In 2020, Norway had around 5 million inhabitants, of whom 18.2 percent (in 2018) had an immigrant background.[36] 14.1 percent of the population were immigrants to Norway, while 3.2 percent were born in Norway to immigrant parents.[37] Although there are immigrants living in municipalities all over Norway, most immigrants and their families are found in the areas in and around the municipality of Oslo, where they make up 33.1 percent of the population today. The first immigrants in recent times arrived in the 1970s, and most had a Pakistani background. However, by 2019 the origins of the five largest groups of immigrants and Norwegians born to immigrant parents were: Poland (2.10%); Lithuania (0.84%); Somalia (0.80%); Sweden (0.73%); and Pakistan (0.71%).[38]

Muslims comprise around 4 percent of the inhabitants in Norway (Regjeringen, 2020: 10). Survey data on attitudes towards Muslims (from 2017) suggest high levels of hostility (Hoffman and Moe (eds), 2017). Here one could ask if the attitudes to Muslims are part of a larger picture of anti immigrant attitudes. As seen from the overall data available, this seems to be the case, as such attitudes tend to mark Islam and Muslims as representing the 'most alien' to what is seen as 'Norwegian culture' (see, for example,

[36] Statistisk sentralbyrå 9 March 2020: https://www.ssb.no/innvbe
[37] Figures from IMDI from 2018, https://www.imdi.no/om-integrering-i-norge/innvandrere-og-integrering/innvandrerbefolkningen-i-norge/
[38] All figures from https://www.kommuneprofilen.no/Profil/Befolkning/DinRegion/bef_innvandrere_land_region.aspx

Storhaug 2015). Hoffman and Moe's survey data show 27 percent of those surveyed expressed attitudes hostile to Muslims including around 30 percent who stated that 'Muslims wish to take over Europe'. Muslims are seen as a 'a threat to Norwegian culture' by around 40 percent while 42 percent supported the statement 'Muslims do not want to integrate in Norwegian society'. Almost 70 percent supported the statement that 'Muslims suppress women'. A separate report from 2019 showed that 30 percent of those surveyed believed it was impossible for Muslims to become Norwegian, even if they lived for a long time in Norway (Tyldum 2019: 79). These attitudes are reflected in the experiences of Muslims living in Norway. Survey data suggest that 35 percent of Muslims have the feeling that they do not belong in Norwegian society, 'often or sometimes', 27 percent had experienced people behaving negatively towards them once their religious belonging was known and 14 percent had experienced explicit harassment (Regjeringen, 2020). This indicates that the scepticism, suspicion and negativity directed toward Muslims is considerable in certain parts of Norway's population and that the burden of these negative attitudes is felt by a significant number of Muslims. Such attitudes are important in shaping the overall ambience in which young Muslims grow up in Norway.

# 2. Field Research

In this section the process of data collection and analysis is outlined, including how research participants were accessed and ethical issues managed.

## 2.1 Data collection

A total of 18 interviews with 15 respondents were conducted. The first interview was done in March 2018, the last in February 2020. The interviews varied in length from 30 minutes to 4 hours, and the total amount of interview data was around 1.860 minutes.

Table 1: Data set

| | **Number** | **Total length or brief description (as appropriate)** | **Average length** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Respondents** | 15 | n/a | n/a |
| **Audio interviews** | 18 | 1,860 minutes | 103 minutes |
| **Moving images** | 16 | These include YouTube videos from and about both the Prophet's Ummah (Profetens Ummah) and Islam Net. | n/a |

## 2.2 Access and researcher-respondent relations

The most significant challenge for this study was gaining contact with young Muslims who would be willing to participate in the research. Experience working on an earlier project about youth and extremism – which included both right-wing actors as well as radical Muslims – had proved to be gaining access to relevant milieus (see: Vestel, 2016, 2018). This was particularly difficult due to suspicion that journalists and researchers might report their findings to the Police's Security Services (PST) at a time when the Syrian war was escalating, IS was on the rise, a large number of refugees were seeking entry to European countries, including Norway and negativity towards Islam was increasing – not least in the media. With this experience in mind, the second author of this report, Muhammed Qasim Ali, with whom the first

author had become acquainted during the earlier project, was engaged to facilitate access to relevant milieus. Qasim Ali is a freelance journalist and debater of Pakistani background, who had interviewed several of Norway's higher-profile Islamists and was in touch with a large network of young Muslims including those of relevance to the DARE project. He also worked in the non-governmental organisation 'U-Turn', which seeks to prevent crime, marginalisation and violent extremism through information and by enabling the integration of young Muslims.

In his public persona Qasim Ali appeared to be what we may term 'a moderately conservative Muslim', but he had also issued controversial messages in the media. He was well known for standing up against the negative image of Islam and young Muslims, and he was an early advocate of a plan to tackle Islamophobia – an idea that was realised in 2020 and included in a document by the Norwegian government (see Regjeringen, 2020).[39] He argued for the re-introduction of the blasphemy clause in Norwegian law to counteract radicalisation, a suggestion that created a stream of protests. He has accused the Norwegian police of discriminatory behaviour against young people of immigrant background. As a journalist, he covered several larger demonstrations organised by people associated with the extremist group The Prophet's Ummah. For these reasons, Qasim Ali was well known and associated with a readiness to defend and stand up for Islam and young Muslims, while at the same time being highly critical of Muslim extremism. This lent him significant credibility with the public.

Qasim Ali's knowledge of the first author's earlier publications and his interest in DARE's aim of exploring young Muslim's trajectories in and out of radical and extremist positions, led him to agree to participate in the project. Specifically, he conducted all but one of interviews with young people cited in this report, drawing on his extensive network of contexts. These interviews were based on the DARE common skeleton interview schedule and conducted in Norwegian. Amendments to the interview guide, the structure of the interviews and the criteria for choosing informants were discussed thoroughly between both authors and instructions given and adjusted as we went along. The data analysis was conducted and the current report was written by the first author, Viggo Vestel.

While the public profile of Qasim Ali among the Muslim population in Oslo must be taken into account in interpreting the research material gathered, the positionality of all researchers must be accounted for in analysing research material and no particular issues are seen to arise in this case. Indeed, precisely because his persona and background, Qasim was in a special position to make contact with and gain confidence among the young Muslims we wanted to reach. Indeed, even in this case, finding individuals willing to be interviewed proved difficult. Around ten of the young people he asked *refused* to participate. Reasons given included suspicion that Qasim was collaborating with the PST, scepticism about the EU and the belief that Norwegian society had so little interest in creating justice for Muslims in the country, that participating would be of no use. Primarily, however, the reason was a general lack of confidence that the information from the project would not be used to portray Muslims in a negative light once more. These reasons support the experience of being treated with suspicion and negativity by Norwegian society in general reported by those young people who did consent to interviews (as discussed in Section 3). In recruiting the informants, they were encouraged to participate on the grounds that it was important for Norwegian society and for the EU to learn more about how young Muslims are experiencing their situation regarding racism and attitudes toward Islam, and that it was an opportunity for young Muslims to express their stories directly.

These challenges are reflected in the relatively low number of informants – 15 persons – finally achieved. Moreover, during the course of the fieldwork, there were very few public meetings, stands, demonstrations or other collective gatherings in milieus related to radical Muslim milieus, which meant that ethnographic observation of such events proved impossible. Reporting on the few events that did occur would have run the risk of revealing identities as these milieus are very small. Indeed, throughout

[39] https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/m69jb0/norskpakistaner-vil-gjeninnfoere-blasfemilover-i-norge

the research, the necessity of guaranteeing anonymity was paramount; for informants this was crucial to avoid losing their jobs or the future opportunity of employment. Also there was the possibility that if their identities were to be known, the participants could be registered by the PST (if they had not already been registered).

## 2.3 Ethical practice

In accordance with the instructions for ethical practice, all informants received an information sheet in Norwegian in which the project was presented. Here it was underlined that all participation was voluntary, that the informant could withdraw from the project at any time and that anonymity was guaranteed. All consents were given verbally.

## 2.4 Data analysis

The data were coded using NVivo 12 software and employing the shared skeleton coding tree (as detailed in the Introduction to the case study reports). At total of 13 Level 2 (family) nodes and 33 Level 1 (child) nodes were used. The number of Level 2 nodes used is thus relatively low. This is because, in the Norwegian study, a number of the distinct Level 2 nodes in the shared coding tree were combined; this reflected the particular way in which informants talked about issues. In particular themes around 'ideologised enemies', encounters and responses to radical (ising) messages and networks of radicalisation were all dealt with within the node 'Ideology and politics'. It was also because a small number of themes anticipated in the shared coding tree did not emerge in the interviews for the Norwegian study e.g. 'kicks, thrills and sensory stimuli' and 'dreams, ideals and utopias'. At the same time, three new Level 2 Nodes were added to reflect important themes in the informants' narratives. These were: 'violence'; 'the media'; and 'aesthetics, art and popular culture'.

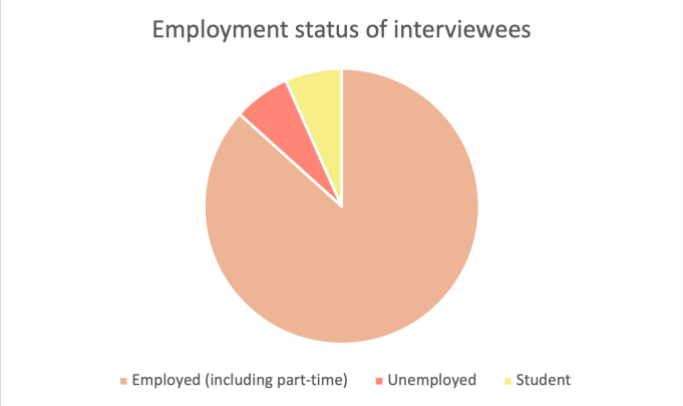
## 2.5 Socio-demographic portrait of the respondent set

The report is based on 18 interviews with 15 informants. Of these, 13 were men (87 percent) and 2 women (13 percent), which is in line with previous research suggesting radical, and extremist, Islamist milieus are predominantly male. It is possible that the gender of the interviewer (male) may have been a factor in the gender balance of the informants; several female potential informants were contacted, but all but two declined to participate.

Six of the informants were in their twenties (one of unknown age but believed to be in their early twenties) and nine were in their thirties (the oldest being 35 years of age).

At the time of the interviews 11 informants were in full time employment, 2 were in part time employment, 1 was unemployed, and 1 was a full-time university student (See Figure 1). Their employment varied and included: healthcare worker; electrician with own firm; shopworker; salesman; working in a grocery store, the service sector, the transport sector, the IT sector, a restaurant, and a kiosk; academic-related work;

Figure 1: Employment status of interviewees



working for a security company and for a railway company; working on culture projects; and working in journalism.

Figure 2: Education level of interviewees


In terms of educational status, two had completed post-secondary vocational training, two were studying at university, three had only secondary school education, two had dropped out of secondary school, one was unclear, two had completed university, one had completed a master's degree, one had completed a lower post-graduate university degree in economics, and one had completed post-graduate education (see Figure 2).

The geographical-ethnic backgrounds of our informants were varied. In addition to identifying as Norwegians to varying degrees, seven had Pakistani family background, two Moroccan, one Afghani, one Iraqi, one Somali, one Syrian and two were converts with majority Norwegian background.

In addition, nine interviews were conducted with experts including: four coordinators of youth related issues – including radicalisation – in four different municipalities; two policemen; one youth worker; and two public employees in a public office dealing with unemployment and social services for young people, including youth who were in or out of a radicalisation process.

# 3. Key Findings: Radical Muslims in Norway – the experience of Islamophobia, daily life and world events in the Age of Identity

## 3.1 Growing up with immigrant background – high-rise suburbs, bad reputations and critical events

In this first sub-section, Islam and being a Muslim is not an explicit theme; it is rather, the experience of having an immigrant background that appears to frame how our informants have grown up. This stigma of having an immigrant background is compounded in later life when the negativity and suspicions that tend to be attached to being young Muslims are experienced.

Among our 15 informants, 11 live in, or grew up in, the high-rise suburbs on the East side of Oslo. One grew up in a small town, one in a middle-class neighbourhood close to the high-rise suburbs, and two are now living in areas similar to the West side, after having spent their childhood on the East side. Several have grown up in the same high-rise suburb which for anonymity I have called 'Granbakken', situated on the East side, with around 30 000 inhabitants in the larger municipality to which it belongs. More than fifty percent of the inhabitants in Granbakken have an immigrant background.

Granbakken is similar to the Holmlia area in which Benjamin Hermansen was growing up and where he was killed by Neo-Nazis in 2001 (e.g. Holen, 2018: 15-21). For most of the informants – especially those who were young at the time – his death is well known, and often felt to be relevant, as their own areas are so similar to Holmlia. For those who were roughly the same age as Benjamin, the shock was particularly significant, and some of our informants, now in their thirties, knew Benjamin personally.

Imran (33), of Pakistani background, dropped out of secondary education, but is now in full time employment), was especially close to the events around the murder, as he and his family had lived in Holmlia for some years when it all happened. He describes his reactions when he got the news that Benjamin was killed:

> He was in the same class as someone I know. Very close. We grew up together, for three years, while I lived in Holmlia. Benjamin really was the liveliest person I knew. Everyone was friends with him. And you could say that that time was quite a Neo-Nazi time. …How can we say it – those who hated black people, you know? So yes, it was quite a tough experience. I was surprised when it happened because I'd never really thought that people could take their prejudices so far, and actually be so…
>
> It was a huge shock. [...] It really was so tragic because Holmlia had previously been a very lively place*. It was as if all the colours had been drained from Holmlia the next day.* I remember from my childhood that we were often in Holmlia centre and every year there were always what was known as 'Holmlia days', with the carnival and things like that. It was fun. The place was packed. After Benjamin, the place has never been packed again, not even on the Holmlia days or things like that. It just died out, for one strange reason or another. (Imran)

With the large demonstration some days afterwards, where 40,000 people went to protest and mourn, the murder of Benjamin was a critical event for the larger Norwegian public (Holen, 2018). But it also set the 'tone' and told of the general ambience experienced by many young people in the multicultural high-rise satellite towns around Oslo, and in similar areas of other large cities in Norway. When Imran says it was *'As if all the colours had been drained'* from the area afterwards, we get some impression of the sorrow and fear felt in the aftermath of Benjamin's death. In the Granbakken area, it had significant consequences for the overall atmosphere and the emotional 'feel' of the place, then and in the years to come. Imran comments:

> It was a shock, yes. Because you suddenly became so frightened. So yes, we were terrified. It was like they could suddenly come and take us... It was difficult to be out at night and things like that. We felt like we had to group together, in a way – gather together. So you'd never end up being by yourself. There was also an episode which happened straight after. Some months afterwards, Victor Lopez was also killed in Holmlia. We personally received a message that it was suicide – but it wasn't physically possible to commit suicide from the tree where it happened. And people had seen two people running away from the area. So I know that he was killed. Or, I'm pretty certain of it… (Imran)

Victor Lopez (from a Chilean refugee family), a friend of Benjamin, and at 15 about the same age, had protested about racism in the days after the murder. His death was not publicly seen as being caused by racist actors, and did not receive much public attention (see: *Dagbladet* 21.09.2001). It was investigated as a so-called 'unnatural death', but the final conclusion is unclear (ibid). Nevertheless, for young people who had been close to Holmlia and to Benjamin Hermansen, this seems to have been one more gruesome incident adding to the atmosphere in the similar neighbourhood in Granbakken (see also Holen, 2018). That event had strong negative repercussions as Imran sees it. He continues:

> Imran: …at that time there was a lot of hatred. You can say we became more hateful. And then…
>
> Qasim: Towards whom?
>
> Imran: It divides, in a way – you know, there's a lot of white people in Granbakken. But like, we've never seen them as white, if you understand…They were just 'people'. But you become

> sceptical of the white man (outside the area), if you get me… I felt like the death of Benjamin was what made us – *what gave us the future we had, in a way*. (Imran)

It was not only those very dramatic experiences that created a problematic atmosphere for the Granbakken youngsters in those days. Imran mentions a series of hurtful experiences. After having been picked out for a prestigious team as an especially talented football player, he – through a 'white' friend – heard that the other players were speaking badly about 'foreigners'. He was also refused a place in a team outside the Granbakken area, a decision that he also felt had strong racist overtones. When one of the parents of another player – who was supposed to give him a lift homewards – just dropped Imran outside the train station in a heavily snowy evening, and he had to wait one hour for the next train, he felt it was caused by similar attitudes. So he just quit the football team when he was 15 in frustration.

> Then I started smoking and hanging out in bad areas instead, because there was more unity. We felt, you know, included. ……and when it happened, we were a bit like – really, we went from being nice to standing up for ourselves…after that, things changed for us. We thought, okay…We have to, like, *fight back*. And then it developed more and more, and there was more hash smoking, more going into town to hang out, getting a bigger and bigger network. And then, yeah, there was more crime… But I still managed to make it through, right until the final month of third year at secondary school. Then I couldn't take it anymore. There were too many drugs and things like that, so I just quit. I became a full-time criminal… (Imran)

The point, of course, is not to seek to excuse Imran's gradual movement into crime but to see how his own reflections around his criminal activities are expressed as a kind of *revenge*, as a way to 'fight back', to move 'from being nice to standing up for ourselves' and as an easier way to 'handle these problems'. He says:

> …at that time we were criminals too, right? So it was like, for us it was easier to handle these problems using violence, because that was what we did. … Like, we went around and created a kind of hatred inside us, *hatred of white people,* really. And of the system too. (Imran)

For some years, Imran and his friends were successfully selling drugs, undoubtedly contributing to the negative reputation of the area. He tried to apply for ordinary jobs, and claims to have sent hundreds of applications, that never succeeded. 'What else were we going to do?' he asks. It is hard to tell what were the exact circumstances of Imran's drift into crime, but he finally managed to get out of it, and is today a relatively successful businessman.

But for Imran, the experience of Benjamin being killed by Neo-Nazis, the circumstances behind Lopez's mysterious death, his own experiences of racist comments by his non-Granbakken teammates, and the racist overtones of their parents and leaders, gave his youth in a place like Granbakken a negative tinge. For Imran crime became mixed with the emotions of revenge and opposition, and was also a way of earning money.

For Aziz (33), movement into crime was propelled by more everyday experiences of bullying and disrespect. His story thus differs from that of Imran but is, nonetheless, a familiar one in Granbakken and similar places. Aziz began to work in his dad's small café when he was 10.

> I liked having hamburgers and kebabs in my lunchbox in school (laughs). Packed lunch. And maybe dad didn't know that you could get so fat by eating that. He let me do it and I started to become a really fat boy. I was bullied a lot […]. I was fat and fatty and this and that. (Aziz)

But soon his low prestige was turned into a position of more respect, at least among the youth of his age. Some members of a well-known gang started to come to the shop more frequently. One of them befriended Aziz, and told him that if he got into trouble, he could always call on the boys and they would come to help him. So on one occasion when Aziz was being bullied at school, he called his new friends:

> Aziz: Then three cars swing in before I even manage to hang up. And I saw from the other side that they were coming. There was one called [name] and [name] who came out of the car, [...] There was no fight, but I was suspended from school for 5 days. On paper, the reason was 'for calling the X gang to the school'. When I was thrown out, it was *the first time I had a walk of fame and not a walk of shame!* That day totally transformed my life!
>
> Qasim: A positive experience which came out of an initially negative one?
>
> Aziz: Yes. Suddenly, I was a superstar. I was the one in (area) who could get the X gang to come that very second. I called them and they came immediately, you know? [...] And the whole of the school thought, you know what, that guy there is dangerous, he called one time. [...] Started being more and more …and started fighting more often. I also wanted to be a gangster like the ones in the X gang. I understood that if I were one of them then I wouldn't be bullied.

After a while, Aziz did some small services for the bosses of the gang, and he gradually got more into crime. He got his first pistol when he was 17, and as the years passed, he became a well-known criminal. With fast cars, lots of cash in his pockets, his popularity with the girls, Aziz exemplifies one variety of *'upward mobility'* that many of his Granbakken peers would partly envy, partly reject as a bad thing to do. But with the strong resonance in popular culture of the tough and attractive side of the lives of gangsters and criminals, this fits well with Aziz' striking statement of having passed from a 'walk of shame' to a 'walk of fame', acquiring sorely needed prestige for a young bullied boy. It is also part of the story that in his late twenties Aziz went through a crisis where his renewed faith in Islam helped him to leave his criminal life behind (see below).

But not all informants who have had their childhood in Granbakken share the negative experiences of the place. Hassan (25, Moroccan background, completed vocational training, now married and in full-time employment) speaks about his childhood as peaceful and nice. He does complain – as do several other informants – about the problems with criminal groups selling drugs, some related violence (even shooting), and also outsiders' negative image of where he lived. He nevertheless emphasises that he feels positively about the place, and that 'we, the nineties boys' had a very good milieu, playing football and often meeting in the mosque in later years. He is eight years younger than Imran, and perhaps what happened to Benjamin had different resonances because of his age at the time.

Nadia (32, Iraqi background, currently at university) lived in the area for several years. She too complained about the criminal groups and the behaviour of the police, and about Benjamin's death. Nevertheless, she spoke in more neutral terms of her years in Granbakken in general.

Even if Imran's story was more intimately connected to the racist murder of Benjamin and the death of Lopez, as he lived in Holmlia at the time, the cases of Hassan and Nadia underline that there are important variations in the informants' relationships to where they lived. However, the general experience of living in Oslo's high-rise suburbs, which had reputations for crime and social problems that had entered the public consciousness, seem to be of importance in so far as they contribute to the emotional ambience in which these young people grew up (e.g. Bourdieu, 1999: 60-76).

## 3.2 Everyday life – Islam, fear and discrimination

The racist murder of Benjamin in January 2001 was for many years a key fear inducing and critical event that put the necessity of a struggle against racism, on many levels of Norwegian society, on the map.

The consequences of the attacks since 9/11 – both by the right wing and by extremist Muslims – are also deeply felt in the everyday life of young people from immigrant families, and especially young Muslims. The fear created by extremist Muslim terrorist attacks fuels negative attitudes among non-Muslims

toward Islam. These negative attitudes affect young Muslims, and this is exacerbated by the fear of right-wing terror. In addition, young Muslims themselves – as we shall see – also fear terrorism by extremist Muslims.

This becomes clear when Qasim discusses with Imran the negativity created by terrorist acts committed by extremist Muslims. Imran says:

> …it starts as early as school, you know… In addition to that, you have the media, papers, who just forward negative things about Islam as soon as it happens… Every time I have a conversation with someone about this, I say to them, 'but hello, have you ever thought that there are two billion people in the world who are Muslim, including me? And if Islam had theoretically promoted terror or violence and so on, then all of us would be practicing that. We are the most practicing religion in the world. We pray five times a day. We go to every single Friday prayer. We would have been the ones who first practiced these things, if it had been a part of us. Can't you see that it's not like that?' But it doesn't get through to them, of course… So they've always got some kind of answer in order to try and prove to you, convince you that your own religion is violent. (Imran)

After the series of very serious terrorist attacks by extremist Muslims in different parts of the world, it is highly understandable that people are afraid in their everyday lives. But the tendency to generalise and to develop suspicion toward any Muslim – or even someone *assumed* to be Muslim – also creates a heavy burden for young Muslims who are very far from having anything to do with these acts. And as the quote from Imran points out, the religion in itself – with all its signs and markers of attitudes and practices – has become *a general sign that creates suspicion*. This is even clearer when Imran talks about a girl commenting on the big mosque at Furuset – another high-rise suburb – as they drove by:

> Then she said 'Well, it's there where they plan…' and I said, 'What is it they're planning there?' 'Well, terror attacks and stuff like that.', she said. She was, like 19 years old. I just said, 'Do you believe that?' and she said, 'Aren't you scared?' and I said, 'You know they go there and pray?' and she just said, 'What? Do you, like, do that?' I said, 'Yes, it's a place you go to pray. It's not a place…do I, like, look like a terrorist?' She just said, 'No, but it is…that's what I've thought they, like, did there.' …And that's a true story. I'm not kidding… (Imran)

The presence of similar suspicion manifests in many ways, and not least in the constant reminders and emphasising of assumed *difference* between non-Muslims and Muslims.

When Qasim asks Nadia, if she feels that she is Norwegian, she tells of being marked as different in several situations in her everyday life:

> No, not at all. I have been asked by foreigners if I'm Norwegian because I don't look typically foreign. I have light skin. But ethnic Norwegians still ask me where I really come from. I can never say I'm Norwegian because then they'll ask where my parents come from. No matter how Norwegian you say you are, you will still be asked… I grew up here [...] I know what it is. …Ok, I go to a party. What happens? Have something to drink, have a glass of wine. Don't you drink? And it's a Norwegian who asks you, do you not drink because of your religion? Then I think I can't be fucked being at this party because I can't stand that question, 'do you not drink because you're a Muslim?'... You're not coming out, is it because you are a Muslim? You're not doing this or that, is it because you are a Muslim? Society reminds you of it all the time… (Nadia)

She continues:

> I always start with a blank page when I start in a place. It can be my studies, it can be work, it can be anywhere. But I feel that I'm asked questions about my background and my religion

> every time…because I look different…It makes me angry, because at the end of the day, *I'm not a UFO, I don't come from space*. I feel I have thrown away too many years in this country, and tried to make something of myself, but no matter what I do, it's the same. I'm a foreigner who isn't welcome here. (Nadia)

For Nadia, being repeatedly marked as different, creates a feeling of not being welcome, of being excluded and marginal to the 'we' group among majority Norwegians.

Omar (26, Syrian background) had some similar feelings. As several informants report, in his case the problems manifested at his workplace. After he dropped out training to be a journalist, he managed to find a new job in a market where it was difficult to get one. His new job was as a cook in a restaurant chain called 'Rodericks' [pseudonym]. But soon it was clear that it was not easy for a young Muslim. He explains:

> Everybody eats pork at Rodericks. So I'm grilling it and I know that it's wrong, but I can't find another job and…I mean you get all that steam on you. So after a while, when you eat regular food, you taste pork. …But I think if you don't have any alternative, you can work at that. A job's a job. (Omar)

Omar accepts the unpleasantness of the work he had to do, even if it pushed him to the limit of what he as a Muslim, could accept. However, he recounts one incident, at Eid, when two of the senior staff came up to him. They had understood that he was a Muslim. And started to make jokes about Islam and the Taliban.

> Then one of them says 'Don't you feel well? I feel sorry for you'. I say 'Why?'. He says that the US had just bombed the Taliban and so and so many people have died. And I think: 'Huh, why is he telling me this. What's that got to do with me?'. So then the head chef comes up, smiling a kind of icky smile. 'What's up? Our little jihadist?'. They made a laughing stock of me… And suddenly I got the shift list. He had put me on all the night shifts, the less wanted and the most unpopular shifts… (Omar)

For Omar this was a very unpleasant experience, and one that directly related to his Muslim background. There was an underlying tendency to generalise about terror and jihadism, even if expressed in a relatively mild and not aggressive, but nevertheless ironic tone. After some period of argument and protest, Omar decided to resign from the job. He regretted afterwards that he did not stand up for himself in the situation. He applied for other jobs without any luck.

He then got the idea of putting a Western name on his applications. And – tellingly – he had success: 'All my applications were answered', he says. 'I got a job the very same day. I was called into interviews all the same day, three or four places. Totally crazy.' For Omar, this underlines the suspicion attached to an immigrant background, as indicated by his real name, and the evaporation of this suspicion as soon as his name was westernised. Once again, the tension created by the attitudes of suspicion and his identity as a youth of immigrant background, and also as an assumed young Muslim, was accentuated.

The disappointment and frustration of having lost his first job was clear. He then explains about how he gradually became a more practising Muslim. He says: 'People think you've given up and lost it but you're just trying to bring out those last muscles, to find that last ounce of energy. So it was a bit like that. I started praying a bit more. Learning a few more hadiths…' For Omar this experience was *just one step in a series of events* that led him into a milieu that he today regrets engaging with; namely the group that became the Prophet's Ummah.

As seen within a larger framework, his trajectory into a radicalisation process may be partly interpreted as a *reaction to his everyday life where negativity against his religion manifested in an accumulation of large and small instances of prejudice and humiliation*. Instead of accepting it, he rather chose 'to keep the tab high', and to become what his antagonists feared the most – *a radical Muslim.*

For Nadia too, experiences in her workplaces have been highly problematic, both in terms of meeting suspicion from her bosses, but also more generally from a lack of inclusion.

> Nadia: Yes, I've experienced a lot of discrimination and racism. In the job market, among others. When I was working in the hospital, I thought that the hospital would be a place based on humanity where people would be compassionate, look after each other, good environment, good work environment, no matter how you looked, where you came from. The most racism I've ever experienced after school was in my working life, especially in the health sector.
>
> Qasim: Precisely what – can you give some example of what happened?
>
> Nadia: Among other things, I had an ethnic Norwegian boss who thought that – well, I got sick, he believed that when foreigners get sick then it's just an act, he believed I should go on benefits, not work at all because I was sick and couldn't work, and I was inept. It was felt as both a personal attack and, in a way, I felt oppression on all possible fronts, really. I've experienced racism on a daily basis by not being included in social groups, etc. As simple as that.

The same kind of negative attitudes at the workplace were experienced by Hassan:

> I've had these experiences in the workplace in particular. As I said, I work in [town] and – when I started in 2014, I was the only foreigner there, at least the only Muslim who had ever worked in the firm. It's a very large company. And [town] is a town where there's known to be a number of critics of …and a lot of racism there. There are a lot who, among other things, are members of Pegida.[40] So it just defines your place there. When I came, there were always…strange questions I was asked all the time. 'You saw what happened in France, in Nice? Why do you lot do things like that?' I then get the impression that I'm the one to blame for it. (Hassan)

This is yet one more example of an act of terrorism that is turned against young Muslims living very far from where the atrocities happened. In the case Hassan mentioned a 19-tonne cargo truck had been driven into a crowd during the Bastille Day celebration in southern France in July 2016; 86 people were killed and 458 were wounded. IS claimed responsibility for the attack.[41] However, more low-key expressions of similar attitudes pop up in unexpected contexts and arenas. Gulam (30) provides more insights into the emotional ambience of his everyday life:

> I worked in a shop when I was younger, but then, then there was someone who called me something like 'fucking darkie' or 'fucking foreigner' and that. And often, when Norwegians drink, it's very easy for them to start throwing words like that around, right? And of course, they read – they believe what they read in the papers. So they believe – they tar all Muslims with the same brush, you know… (Gulam)

Aziz also experienced trouble with getting a job. Aziz had gone through a profound transformation from life as a criminal to life as a religious and strictly conservative Muslim. The critical event that precipitated this transformation occurred when he was betrayed by his former friends in the criminal milieu of which he was a part. He lost faith in those friends. He then moved to a different city to get away from his past, and there he turned to religion. He says:

[40] Pegida ('Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes') is an anti-Islam organisation originating in Germany in 2014. It had its first demonstration in Oslo in 2015, but has not had many demonstrations in Norway since (see Bjørgo and Gjelsvik, 2018: 170).
[41] See: https://www.vg.no/spesial/2016/terrorangrepet-i-nice/.

> I started making religious friends, and you also have a more religious environment here. The thing that made me more religious was that I started practicing prayers and customs to distance myself from… stop being involved in drugs, selling and drinking and snorting and going to parties and taking other people's women … that is the gangster life [...] I've distanced myself from that. I only did that because I was betrayed by my friends, right? I didn't believe in that friendship anymore. So I started distancing myself and became practicing. Then it was the internet.[42] Sitting and talking… because I didn't really have a clue about Islam, you know? [...] My religion was the thing that made me stop all my bad habits as well, which I'd taken from my criminal background. (Aziz)

In the life of Aziz there seem to have been several critical events. First, his escape from a situation of being bullied as a child by becoming part of a criminal milieu, which lent him considerable prestige. Then, several years later, the betrayal by his friends in that criminal milieu. This was followed by another transformation when he 'got religion' or we, might say, renewed his faith. As part of that transformation, Aziz started to grow a beard and to wear traditional clothes, as he saw those markers as important in underlining his new ways of living. But this latter transformation had its price. After his transformation, he was called to testify at a criminal trial, and experienced the following:

> Then they asked me 'why have you grown a beard, etc. – have you become radical?' The judge asked me that! If I'd become radical. Right? Again …she didn't care if I was a criminal again or not. She wondered if I was radical! [...] She didn't praise me for having moved away from the one of the hardest environments in (the town)! Right? I was the most well known guy in (area). But *she just wondered if I'd become radical*! (Aziz)

After having gone through such a major transformation, leaving his criminal lifestyle behind, it was very disappointing for him to be met only with even more suspicion and negativity. Aziz tells about how he was more accepted by the people around him before he became religious. But as soon as he got a beard, troubles came into his life:

> Once, I had a job where I'd worked for two and a half years. I was seller of the year there. I was the only one from [names town] who'd been taken to all the competitions, but when I apply for jobs there now, I get very good conversations about what I really should be doing with my life and that I should study, that they're not doing too well and there isn't space for anyone else. [...] He said that he 'Wasn't sure that this job suits you anymore because you've started thinking differently in your life. You should study or do something else instead. Apply for jobs in stockrooms!' He said it straight. 'Work in a stockroom. Then you'll have a lot of time to practise, because you like to pray. In the stockroom, nobody cares if you pray. Customers can't see you.' You know? It's about my beard. My appearance, right? (Aziz)

For Aziz these were strange experiences, not least being treated like that in the court. This created very negative emotions that also reached far beyond the actual situation that provoked them:

> If she sees a beard and thinks that a person is extreme, then she is far right extreme herself. Right? It's a far-right extreme society we have in Norway which makes a person do such things… like, *I've started to hate Norwegians*. Just like they hate us. Why should they hate us on sight, without even knowing us? We hate them as well… (Aziz)

Even if these strong words convey a lot about emotional reactions to the injustice and grievances experienced, he did not become a sympathiser with the more extremist networks, to our knowledge. We must also add that several of the young Muslims who have been radicalised are known to have criminal

[42] More examples of the use of internet and speeches on YouTube and on CDs – especially regarding speeches of Anwar al-Awlaki – will follow below.

pasts (see: PST 2016). The judge's question as to whether Aziz had become radical thus must be seen against such a background. But even so, this does not ease Aziz's subjective experience of extreme injustice through these events.

Aziz recounts having experienced major, life-changing critical events. However, small incidents – that may or may not be seen as contingent – may also be felt to be *part of a larger pattern.* This is the case in particular, when they involve societal authorities, such as the police, as described by Gulam:

> A former colleague of mine was in the police and he told me that when they drove around Grønland[43], one of the policemen, he spoke terribly about foreigners, for example. And the other day, my brother was with his friends. They are 17 and 18 years old. They were going to drive home from Tøyen. They were stopped by the police at three o'clock in the morning. Why are no Norwegians stopped at three o'clock in the morning if they're in a car? Just Norwegian boys? Why is it always foreigners who are stopped? It's because of discrimination. It happens day in, day out. Nobody talks about it. (Gulam)

For Gulam the repeated experiences of hatred and negative attitudes generates fear, and memories of the fate of Benjamin Hermansen the 15 year old who was murdered by neo-Nazis in Holmlia come to the surface. This makes him ask some basic questions about his own belonging to the country in which he has grown up. He continues:

> Gulam: There was a period of an awful lot of hatred against foreigners. Right? Groups like that came … I don't remember what they're called now...
>
> Qasim: The Nordic Resistance Movements … SIAN, or?
>
> Gulam: Yes. Things like that. …it's uncomfortable and scary. I think that… imagine someone attacks me on the street one day. Think about those who have died, of Benjamin… Things like that are pretty uncomfortable, because then you think 'fuck, where do I belong?'

Gulam points to right wing radicals and the fear that they create for young Muslims. But, as will be discussed below, some of our Muslim informants also fear terror from extremist Muslims' acts. For Gulam, both these sources of fear are involved when travelling on the underground. First, he describes incidents he and his family had experienced after their Friday prayers:

> I was very scared for my siblings and mother because they wear headscarves. Because I've experienced it several times, for example on a Friday evening, when the underground is full... There are two or three of us friends who've been to the mosque and look Muslim and people start telling bad jokes aimed at us … So I thought, Okay, it's just a matter of time before people start to say, 'Hey, who do you think you are, Allahu Akbar', and start messing about like that. (Gulam)

But it was not only the fear and discomfort he feels from the anti-Muslim groups on behalf of himself and of his family. He also refers to the possibility of Muslim bombers striking in places where lots of people gather:

> So I felt that I couldn't… I didn't like taking the underground all that much. I didn't like going to places where there were a lot of people. I thought, 'Okay. There's so much about it in the media, imagine if somebody blows themselves up?' I didn't like being in the Oslo City shopping centre. I didn't like being at Byporten.[44] Or Oslo Central station. Or Aker Brygge.[45] I

[43] Grønland is an area in East side inner Oslo with a large number of inhabitants with immigrant background.
[44] Byporten is a large mall in the centre of Oslo.
[45] Aker Brygge is a popular and quite upmarket area in central Oslo near the sea front.

> avoided big gatherings. I thought, somebody or another – people have been stupid enough to do just that … (Gulam)

In other words, there is an underlying insecurity and a fear of being attacked from extremist Muslims – not least in the streets and public spaces where many people gather. So not only fear of violence from right wing extremists, and a general atmosphere of suspicion and negativity towards Muslims, but also fear of potential terror from extremist jihadists seem to be important elements in the overall uneasiness of the everyday life of a young Muslim in today's Norway.

## 3.3 Gender relations – *niqabs*, feminism and the 'Male Muslim Monster'

The experience of fear and negativity toward people of immigrant background, and especially Islam and Muslims, seems to have been a theme in the lives of most informants. In some examples, this must be seen as partly related to sharp contrasts in more immediate markers of identity. Non-Muslims may feel a sense of provocation by ways of dressing that are perceived as different, such as the long beard and more traditional Pakistani clothes. Zakir (27) who has chosen such an appearance himself, admits this. But also some forms of women's dress that mark what are assumed to be certain gender relations are a recurrent theme for critique and suspicion towards Islam.

The issue of gender relations has had a prominent place in the negative attitudes toward Islam in the European public consciousness. In so far as Islam is associated with very conservative versions of traditional gender performance, where the woman is subordinate to the man, it is seen as in opposition to the ideal of gender equality that many Western countries have struggled to achieve. In addition, the emancipation of what we may call *alternative sexualities*, such as homosexuality, queerness and transgender practices, are rejected by conservative Muslims as not conforming to gender norms found in the Qur'an. Extreme examples of animosity toward homosexuals – resulting in systematic murders – as well as IS's radical gender segregation practices, underline these stereotypes and acts.

Zakir claims that for his wife, who wears a *niqab*, the reactions toward this garment – which covers the face – are especially problematic. 'In Norway it's almost like career suicide to defend the *niqab*…as soon as you wear a *niqab*, you're an extremist', he says.

When Qasim points out that the *niqab* is closely associated with IS and the practises of radical Islam, Zakir accepts this but nevertheless complains:

> I can give several examples. My wife won't go to the shopping centre, at least not alone, or only with my mother. I have to go along because she always gets negative comments, people hurl comments after her… And when she drops the children at kindergarten, sometimes she meets somebody on the street who thinks it's their right to just be able to attack her, not physically but verbally… Some have come up and shoved her, that's happened too. Even at a hospital, a doctor or some medical staff, just went up to her and shoved her as she was going past… (Zakir)

He continues by telling how the *niqab* makes a number of everyday activities difficult:

> If we travel to central Norway or to places where there aren't many Muslims, do we want to go to a place where there are lots of people, maybe a day on an open farm, will we go there? We like animals, we want to go to an open farm where the children can help milk a cow or go to cheese makers…will we go there? …It affects a person, doesn't it? You think about it…you dread things you actually shouldn't dread at all…. Then these thoughts come, like that woman who said: 'if your wife chooses to dress that way she should also be prepared to deal with this reaction'. And to a certain extent, I understand that people… but still, it shouldn't be this way… (Zakir)

As Qasim remarked, the association of the wearing of *niqab* with IS has become very strong, also in Norway. Many ordinary people have seen the images from the Kurdish camps of large groups of female IS wives wearing the *niqab*. So for people not used to see *niqab* wearing women, it may seem especially threatening as the garment is so associated with IS and so with the brutality and terror for which IS is responsible (see: Inge, 2018). We never learned why Zakir's wife wore the *niqab* but it turned out that she was a convert. Could it be that such a profound step also implied a will to go to an extreme regarding a dress code that was perceived to be heavily provocative by the majority? Was it mostly an act of protest? Or was it more a way to explore how the wearing of this garment is felt, and a kind of meditation on the meaning of it? Or was it simply fulfilling the wish of her husband? The answer is that we do not know.

In contemporary Islam, wearing a *niqab* is closely associated with Salafis. Inge, in her study of the processes of becoming a Salafi among young Muslim women in the UK, refers to a range of reasonings and emotions around what many of her informants see as a re-birth into a correct form of Islam. Here, some of them refer to a hadith in the Qur'an that says that in the time close to doomsday there will be 73 different sects in Islam. In this context, her informants refer to their becoming Salafi as reflecting a need to be sure of choosing the right one, in the shape of the one that is seen to be closest to the life of Mohammed at the time when he lived (Inge, 2017: 93-94). Others emphasise that the very strictness and severity of, for example, Salafi female dress code, is to express a firmness and lack of compromise in an environment of non-Muslims and non-Salafis, as in this informant from Inge's research, who says:

> When you see a sister in a light blue *abaya*, you know with her yellow *hijab* – to me, it's like she's trying to fit into society, you know. Where you know from the Salafi sisters…when you just see the black black black black black *niqab niqab niqab*[46]… I would see them as very firm and not trying to conform to society at all. It's like 'I'm not even bothered about what you think of me…' In life you want to be strong, you want to be firm – you know, who wants to be weak?...So you wanna be with the stronger crew; you don't wanna be with people that's gonna be with the loser. (Hayah, an informant, quoted in Inge, 2017: 91)

A critical argument often put forth in public debate is, as discussed above, that Islam as a religion demands traditional gender roles (see below). Even the *hijab* – which is worn more frequently by Muslim women in the West - is often seen in this way as marker of female suppression; for the *niqab* this is even more so (e.g. Storhaug, 2015).

Although Zakir understands these negative reactions, as wearing a niqab is very rare in Norway, he emphasises that that in Pakistan and some other Muslim countries this is not the case. Indeed, if one takes the ideology of liberal attitudes toward how people dress seriously, such reactions might be reasonably seen as unjust. Wearing a *niqab*, nevertheless, seems to cross a line in many people's eyes, and so Zakir is probably right in his feeling that defending the *niqab* is an extremely difficult position in today's Norway.

Hassan describes the shock and negativity that some people in Norway express at the sight of a niqab as being juxtaposed against the very liberal attitudes towards homosexuality in the country. He says he sees the world as 'chaotic'. It turns out that this perception is related to his experience of attitudes to gender in Norway. This is particularly related to an experience involving his children's nurseries:

> I have children and my perception of the world has automatically changed [...] I've become more worried about my children's future. I know I can cope with it, but the time which awaits us is so negative, I feel. [...] The worst is that I… [...] I can give you an example. Before summer 2018, there was a gay, a homosexual parade. I believe that people should be able to express whatever they want. If you want to be gay then you can be gay, I have nothing against it. But

[46] This quote is cited verbatim from the source (Inge, 2017: 91). The repetitions in Hayah's account of how the Salafi sisters dress, may be used to indicate the uniformness of their dress and her positive view on their refusal to accept any compromise with the norms of the non-Salafi majority.

> I got really – I was – I was astounded when I heard the news that in nurseries, small children were marching in the gay parade. [...] They're being forced, indirectly, to look at naked men! (Hassan)

It is difficult to know exactly what happened in the nursery his children attended. Perhaps there were young, liberal and what is often termed 'progressive' people working there who wanted to socialise the children with positive and liberal attitudes toward alternative sexualities. But this was worrying Hassan. He continues:

> I also have a friend who lives in [the town he commutes to]. [...] His son goes to a nursery. [...] There they had a day where the theme was that anyone could love anyone. And it was in the context of gay week, that all children could choose to be partners with whomever they wanted. Then two brothers who went to the same nursery as his son, they became partners that day! [...] These were ethnic Norwegian children. When they came home and their parents heard about the children being partners, there was a lot of rage. And the parents know my friend, and what happened was that they went and confronted the nursery. Two brothers a year apart saying they were partners. I think it's an unsettling development that even normal ethnic Norwegians think it's scary that we're being forced down this path. And this is just a fraction of what is waiting for us. (Hassan)

Again, it is hard to know the exact details. Young children, not least at nursery age, may often engage in play to explore what they have seen grown-ups do or heard them talk about. And as having a partner is an important part of the grown-up world, the boys' decision to 'be' partners does not have to mean anything deeper than just play or such exploration. But it is noticeable that Hassan's story also recounts negative reactions expressed by parents of majority Norwegian origin. This underlines that liberal attitudes to homosexuality and other alternative gender practices, may not only be difficult for more conservative young Muslims, but also for parents from the Norwegian majority. The new, at times super-liberal attitudes and practices regarding gender and sexuality are not easy to follow for many of the country's inhabitants. But nevertheless, for Hassan encountering such attitudes seemed to be a shock, eliciting a feeling that the world was 'chaotic'.

Nadia, a respondent with an Iraqi background, whose parents sought asylum in the 1980s, struggles to find a job, and refers to several experiences of racism especially in her work relations. She also feels that the contemporary Norwegian attitudes associated with feminism and homosexuality are problematic:

> Nadia: Here in the West there is a very extreme, very extreme wave of feminism, and as a woman I don't think it's right [...]
>
> Qasim: Many people accuse Islam of not accepting homosexuality. What do you think about that? How do you view homosexuality? Is it okay, acceptable in your eyes?
>
> Nadia: I can say that, with my background and culture and religion and everything, it is not an acceptable thing. But if you ask me as a person, I would ask you, if there is homosexuality and there starts to be more and more of it, what will future generations be like? It's kind of *like a global warming situation*!

With the dramatic simile of 'global warming', she seems to express that developments – akin to Hassan's description of 'chaos' – will go even further toward an unimaginable insecure and fear-inducing situation. She sees a clear marker of these chaotic and problematic gender practices as related to 'trans persons' and the practices of more radical gender changes:

> There is an awful lot of focus on trans people, those who change gender these days. I believe it's a wave which is influencing young people a lot. They are in a period of their life where

> they can be shaped easily. They don't have their own opinions. They have their opinions, but they can be easily shaped, so I think it has a huge influence on them. (Nadia)

Nadia is far from alone in her worries and feelings that trans is problematic in young people's lives. This is also found among the broader Norwegian public although, except in the case of Hassan, the research did not indicate that shared feelings in relation to trans, or other alternative sexualities, had led to any closer contact between the informants and actors from the majority population.

For some, both feminism and increased tolerance for nakedness are among the markers of *doomsday*.[47] In other words, liberal gender relations, feminism, alternative or queer sexual practices and homosexuality seem to be threatening markers for some of the informants.

But there are ambivalences, especially when we ask questions that point directly to power relationships and the more ideological aspects of asymmetry between men and women. Gulam, for example, immediately rejects the asymmetry referred to in these questions. He also criticises the men who always want to have the last word:

> Qasim: Critics of Islam, they also say that Islam demands that women listen to their husband. Obey their husband. What do you think about that?
>
> Gulam: I think it's some fucking bullshit, hehe. Like, I don't know much about Islam, but I at least believe in Islam it's the case that – it's not like it's just that man who should decide. I think there are some areas where it's maybe stricter than in others. To be honest, I don't have a clue. But I'm really concerned with…
>
> Qasim: But personal experience, then. How have you seen women in your family and…
>
> Gulam: Like, I feel there are an awful lot of foreign men who are really, like, concerned with having the last word. And that's something I'm completely against. Because… it shouldn't be like that, that men should decide, and the woman should obey.

Regarding being gay, Gulam at first expresses a liberal attitude, but then seems to react more negatively emotionally when he reflects more deeply on our questions:

> Each to their own. I can't say anything about it. I can't judge anyone for doing what they want. But yes, what should I say? In a way, I'm not for it. I wouldn't be happy if my brother or sister became a lesbian or gay. I'd be disappointed and sad. But so what? I couldn't do anything more. (Gulam)

Anwar (30), for his part, introduces a sharp critique about how he sees that the ideology of feminism has been used in more overarching politics by the West in its relationship to Islam. He calls it *'imperialistic feminism'*: 'The thing is, there's one type of imperialistic feminism. In other words, when they've been involved in colonising other countries, they've laid the foundations for what proper feminism is, or what is ok' (Anwar). Up against the colonial mentality where Western women are telling Muslim women what they should do, Anwar underlines, in contrast, that Muslim women must be the ones to decide for themselves:

> Anwar: Muslim women must be allowed to say for themselves what they think is right. When Muslim women aren't heard themselves and there are other white men or white women telling them what is proper equality, what equality is for them, it is...

[47] The markers mentioned by informants in this project as indicators that doomsday is approaching cover a wide range of phenomena.

> Qasim: The critics of Islam also say Islam requires a woman to obey her husband. Is that true?
> Anwar: Yes, that's right. The statement is of course… [...] because in a marriage both man and woman have duties to each other. And there are certain things where the man has to follow otherwise he'll commit a sin. But it's because of the media that an image has been created of Muslim men oppressing women. And that's what they've pushed when they've invaded Muslim countries. *That they have to go and rescue them.* And that's the narrative that's played all the time. And they don't let Muslim women, or at least traditional Muslims, stand up and give their opinion. That's why it's the narrative…

The nature of equality can be discussed from many angles, and it is difficult to deny that critique regarding gender-related issues has been used in many western public forums, and as an argument in imperialist wars stating that *the women should be 'liberated'*. One example is the Afghan war. According to Førde, Norwegian labour politician, Marit Nybakk, then chair of the Norwegian Parliament's Standing Committee on Defence, used Taliban's oppression of women as an argument for Norway's participation in the Afghanistan war. This is a repetition of the stance of the then US first lady, Laura Bush, who supported the war as a way to free women and children who lived under Taliban.[48] Here one may question the intention in such a statement; was it just an attempt to put forth a seemingly noble argument to cover the hard realities of the US invasion, just as Anwar suggests above?

It seems that the strict attitudes regarding male authority over females in Muslim contexts have resulted in interactions that are very difficult to see as anything other than pure oppression. A terrible example from Pakistan is the Taliban's attempt to murder then 15-year-old, Malala Yousafzai, on her bus on the way home from school in 2012 because of her outspoken views on girls' education. In 2014, when Malala was 17 years old, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her campaigning for girls' rights to education.[49] Another example is the harassment, assault and rape of many young women by large groups of young men assumed to have been of Middle Eastern and Muslim background, in Cologne and several other German cities on New Year's Eve in 2015.[50] There are also stories of honour killings, one well-known being of a Swedish woman of Turkish-Kurdish background who was killed by her own father in 2002 (see, for example: Wikan, 1999).

However, this has resulted also in severe demonisation of the Muslim male. The religious scholar, Sophie Rose Arjana, has written about what has been called the 'monsterising' of Muslims, for example. Here the idea especially of what we may call the *'Male Muslim Monster'* has been salient.[51] In other words, critique and views of gender relations – that sometimes describe very real female oppression, but at times are just stereotypes – are repeatedly put forth against Muslims and contribute to increasing the burden of negativity and suspicion that young Muslims experience in their daily lives. Nevertheless, as Zakir so strikingly expressed, some of these critics also are participating in power games in which Western actors are attempting to decide how Muslims should behave, and promote themselves as the only true representatives of freedom and humanity. This is the core of Zakir's criticism, and also of his encouragement to Muslim women, saying that the only ones who can fight for freedom and put an end to female oppression in a Muslim context are Muslim women themselves.

[48] Førde February 22, 2010 http://kjonnsforskning.no/nb/node/8026
[49] https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2014/yousafzai/facts
[50] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35231046
[51] E.g. Al Jazeera, 31. Oct. 2019: (https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/muslims-men-monsterising-racial-191030111111453.html

## 3.4 Right wing terror – Breivik and Manshaus

When Norway experienced the lethal right-wing terror of Breivik, this was a critical event for the Norwegian public and an extremely hostile act directed against immigrants, their children and those defending multiculturalism. Here, the crucial questions are: How were the moments of these terrorist acts experienced by our informants? And how did these acts contribute to the emotional ambience in these young people's lives?

Imran was walking home and a mere kilometre from the government building in central Oslo when the first explosion happened. He describes the reactions of the others on the streets when they had begun to assume that it really was a terrorist attack:

> I heard the bang, right? So I start walking down to see …okay, I don't know…I was more curious. I walked towards the danger instead of running away from it. And what was happening? I saw people pointing at me. I didn't know what had happened yet. I hadn't read the paper. Nothing. It had clearly appeared in the papers (on the net) a few minutes after the explosion in Oslo happened. And people were just pointing at me and saying, 'It's your fault'. And I said to them, 'What are you talking about?' and then as I'm walking by them, they say, 'It's your fault. We knew this was going to happen.' And I just…there was a lady and she tried to kind of run after me and people were just…I just felt so, like, okay, what have I done? I felt guilty that a bomb had exploded in the city. And I prayed to God 'Don't let it be Muslims. Please. Don't let it be foreigners. Don't...' (Imran)

As several young Muslims have stated – either from what they heard from people they knew, or from their own experience – that the first reaction among their fellow Oslo dwellers was to suppose that it was all done by a Muslim. And in line with Gulam's fears, Imran was thinking that the people behind the terror could have been extremist Muslims when he prayed that they were not. At the same time the wildly negative reactions he experienced from the people he met as he ran towards the crime scene, were yet another indication of the negative views and suspicions directed against himself, Muslims and 'foreigners', that is people of immigrant background. In the following interview extract it becomes clear that Imran also includes Qasim in the 'we' group, that he felt was so harshly attacked that day:

> Imran: It was like they'd been waiting for it. That it would happen, so we can take those damn foreigners! [...] All the Norwegians I saw on the street… they did something or other to me. Some milder, some harder. That lady was, like, wild. She wanted to hit me, while there was another man who was pointing at me saying, 'Do you see? Do you see?' [...] It just proved to me that day that *everyone who isn't us* has thoughts like that inside them. Everyone. [...]
>
> Qasim: What? What are you talking about now? Suspicion?
>
> Imran: A kind of *suspicion, racism, hatred, prejudice*. Call it what you will. They have it inside them.
>
> Qasim: Do you mean that?
>
> Imran: Yes. They don't feel that you and I are worth as much…

Abdi speaks of people he knew reporting similar reactions. First, he complains about how much IS had destroyed for himself and his fellow Muslims:

> What the average Norwegian thinks is that all Muslims are like that, and that affects my daily life. There is more pressure on me. I notice it now and again. Nasty looks, not getting jobs, women constantly having to look out for themselves in case they get hit, things like that. [...] Take 22nd July. I was working in a hotel that day. Immediately afterwards, on the way home, I didn't experience it, but I heard that lots of Muslim women had their veils pulled from them.

> Some older ones were pushed off the bus, onto the tramlines, etc. But then a few hours passed, and we discovered it was your average Norwegian who had done it. Then it was: 'hello!' (Abdi)

It is of course hard to know exactly what they experienced and how many 'Muslim looking' persons experienced those kinds of reactions. Nevertheless, the many similar reports in the aftermath of that event at least indicate some important features of the emotional tone to people's lives that emerged afterwards.

For some it was natural to believe that the terror of 22 July would make Norwegian society improve, and that racism and Islamophobia would decrease and to change into something less aggressive. But that did not seem to happen in the years that followed. Osman (22) comments*:*

> I feel in a way that Norway in general has forgotten 22 July, based on what you see in the public arena. The rhetoric of hate that happens on Facebook comments and among politicians and so on… The xenophobia that is being spread. So then I feel, and again that scepticism people have towards Muslims and foreigners… I feel that it's there, people have forgotten... (Osman)

Eight years later, on 10 August, 2019, 22-year-old Philip Manshaus killed his adoptive sister, and attempted unsuccessfully to shoot assembled Muslims in a mosque in the municipality of Bærum, in a protest similar to Breivik's. Anwar sees it as implying that Breivik's ideas are still alive in Norwegian society:

> Yes. After all it's … I'd say that his actions, at least the ideology is something that still lives on now. And we witnessed that in the summer. And there are more who are coming to the boil. But they haven't reached boiling point yet. [...] The action is the boiling point, that's when it all breaks loose. So I think a lot of Norwegians share a lot of those ideas. Maybe they wouldn't commit violence, but they share the same view. (Anwar)

Alam (35) talks about his frustrations after the mosques he used to visit started to employ guards after Manshaus' violent attack:

> And I felt that it was so strange and uncomfortable that it's got to the point where they're closing the doors of the mosques, and that there's a guard outside while people are praying, … So I just shook my head, and was like: 'Yeah, yeah, that's reality now'. And my friends, those I've spoken to, are also friends who… We've discussed this for a long time. So … Yeah. So I think we all felt the same way, that 'Now it's happening here.' And we just think that it's going to happen on a bigger scale. (Alam)

Some of Alam's friends were also talking about arming themselves:

> And it's got to the point where people are talking of arming themselves. [...] I've heard friends talking about it. They've said: 'We just have to do it.' … I remember hearing a conversation between four people, and one of them said: 'Brother, we should just arm ourselves, and when we're at the mosque for Friday prayers, we'll be armed. [...] I mean it, because it's not like I'm a pacifist, or this or that. But I did think: 'What the fuck. Is something likely to happen to me and my family? There's no way I'll ever let that happen.' So I would rather carry a weapon or whatever we can defend ourselves with. (Alam)

To our knowledge Alam and his friends did not get themselves any weapons. Nevertheless, the description of their emotions after both Breivik's atrocities and Manshaus's more recent unsuccessful attempt to shoot the congregation of a mosque assembled for prayer, illustrates the burden of sheer *fear* that these critical events have put on the lives of young Muslims in Norway.

As indicated above we see similar emotional reactions generated by what we may call 'world events', such as larger conflicts, wars and tensions between the West – with the US as a core power – and various

Muslim actors. And in many cases, extremist Muslim acts of terror must be understood as closely related to these conflicts (e.g. Leiken, 2012; Khoshrokhavar, 2017; Roy, 2004). This is also confirmed by recent research, and must be seen as an example of an emerging perspective in which to understand radicalisation and especially Muslim extremism (e.g. McCauley, 2018; Nord Holmer, 2016; Vestel, 2016). In the following sub-section, the informants' relationships to these conflicts and tensions will be explored.

## 3.5 World events – the Muslims, the West and ways in and ways out of radicalism

World events in which Muslims are treated unjustly are often especially important for young radical and extremist Muslims (see, for example: Crone, 2016; Borum, 2011).

Qasim and Anwar discuss if there were any events that had been especially important for Anwar's political standpoints. Here – not surprisingly – 9/11 plays a critical role. Anwar says:

> First of all, it was when 9/11 happened. That's when… my experiences got linked to international situations. They aren't linked personally to me. It's more of *an awakening*. [...] And then I watched the news, I saw the media showing a lot of Muslims cheering… In Egypt and other places in the world. In Pakistan. And that made me think why?… there must have been something? What's the reason for it? And in 2001 I was maybe 12. And that was the start of the awakening. Why is it like that, why are they cheering? Why were the Twin Towers hit by planes? What's the cause? And that was when the process started. That I started following politics and so on, at an early age. That was the start… (Anwar)

The motives behind the 9/11 attacks are beyond the scope of this report. Suffice to say that Al Qaeda had declared war on the US as early as in 1996 and also in 1998, according to Shane:

> …on the claim that the United States wanted to conquer Muslim land. That claim, initially based on the small contingent of American troops in Saudi Arabia, had seemed implausible, even lunatic, when it was first proclaimed by Osama bin Laden. But now, with American troops patrolling the streets of Kabul, and Baghdad, it began to make sense. (Shane 2015:152)

So, according to Shane, even if Al Qaida's original claims from 1996 and 1998, seemed implausible, Al Qaeda's original claims can be seen as much more rational in the situation after 9/11. Shane also remarks that after the invasion of Iraq in 2003, on the false premise that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, 'the notion that the United States' real motive must be the control of the oil and lands of the Muslim Middle East gained credence.' (ibid). In other words, the perception of an ongoing attack from Western actors against Muslim areas evolved with good reason, and with the Al Qaeda 9/11 attacks that war had got an early warning.

For Anwar – even as a 12-year-old – 9/11 was what he himself speaks of as 'an awakening'. First he describes it as a mystery in so far as it raised a series of 'whys' in his mind – the cheering of Muslims in several places of the world, the contrast to the terrible deaths of the people in those buildings, all seem to have made deep impressions on the 12-year-old boy. As he followed the signs and explored them further in the following years, he sees the event as the very *start of his political development*.

Nadia also points to 9/11 as a turning point in her own biographical development, where her slumbering religiosity was awakened. With hindsight, this probably also resonated with her experiences of being marginalised and excluded from Norwegian society:

> I can't say that I'm a very religious person, but after so much prejudice against Islam, I have to say that I've become more Muslim, and that's thanks to that wave. Up until 11th September, I thought nothing about my own religion, about Islam, but afterwards there were

> so many divides, so I sought knowledge. I started hanging out with people. I was actually accepted by Muslim culture… I wasn't held away. I have never been accepted by Norwegian society. I also didn't know about the Muslim side because… of course, it's always been there, but as I said, I've never been a religious person... When I was shut out of Norwegian society, I was alone for a very long time. After 11th September, there was talk of Muslims, Muslims, Muslims it *opened my eyes for Muslims in Norway* … So I started seeking knowledge … You really didn't have to look for that much knowledge because there was so much in the media, but just the negative. [...]. My curiosity was awakened. …*Because of the hatred of Muslims*. There was so much resistance, pressure, it became more difficult to get a job because of your name, your appearance – the values you held were not accepted. (Nadia)

Here we see how 9/11, and the societal developments in its aftermath, intertwined with her everyday life. Her problems with getting jobs – as we have seen in several examples among the informants – were interpreted within that frame. The frictions and the strong emotions it generated seemed to have initiated a larger self-reflexive process, where not only the 'whys' of Anwar were put into motion, but also her own *feeling of identity,* of who she was, with whom she could feel at home, and by whom she felt accepted; that is her fellow Muslims. It is probably impossible to exaggerate the consequences of 9/11 for the politics of identity among young Muslims.

In the immediate period after 9/11, the US born and educated Yemeni preacher, Anwar Awlaki, played an important role as what Shane (ibid.) calls a 'bridge builder' between the US authorities and the Muslim milieus. Initially Awlaki condemned the attacks and also underlined the point that the violence was incompatible with Islam (ibid.: 160). But as already mentioned, Awlaki gradually went through a transformation, and he came to celebrate the opposite view.

On 30 September 2011, Anwar al- Awlaki was killed by a US drone in Yemen, as ordered by Barack Obama. And two weeks later, his 16-year-old son, Abdulrahman al-Awlaki – who had no history of terrorism – was killed in another US drone strike, also ordered by Obama (Shane 2015:xv).

For Hassan (25), these deaths – and especially the killing of Awlaki's son – were important. He says:

> I was really influenced by a special case, when Anwar Awlaki was killed by the USA. *An elite power killed him!* That in itself is sad. I followed him and I understood his opinions. He went out and was really extreme in his statements before he died. But! What made the case even worse was that the week after, they killed his son, a 16-year-old boy. I was so astounded. I thought okay, why are they doing things like that? Is it just because they're Muslims, is it because they have these opinions,… it forced me to wake up and the more I started looking at the case, I saw it was *much bigger* than it actually was. (Hassan)

For Hassan these killings were critical events. Even if he admits that Awlaki became 'really extreme' before he died, the lack of ethical responsibility on the part of a super power like the US, was provoking. He found the murder of Awlaki's 16-year-old son, who could hardly have been involved in his father's actions, utterly unethical. Hassan 'woke up' and then came to see what had happened within a much larger context where these and other events were expressions of an ongoing war against all Muslims, with no regard to their being 'good' or 'bad'.

> I don't know where to begin. One thing is September 11th, but – the more I read, the more I spoke with friends, I started feeling…an automatic *hatred against the West*, that is, the NATO-based wars which are going on in countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia. There you can see that America is in a country where they are taking complete control. They take control over the government, control over the people who are forced to live under their rules. Because it's them who choose the government. For example, what happened in Afghanistan, Iraq, two completely new governments were established when they came in. It is not just

> unfair, it's…threatening. It's much worse than unfair. It's a very negative, loaded word when I say threatening. I mean it. Because I can't imagine someone coming to my home and taking control over my wife. I resort to attacking. That is, that's my natural reaction. … In a way… I see that this is *a war against Islam.* Regardless of whether it's good or bad Muslims. No matter what, it'll be a constant war. (Hassan)

Pointing to the US as an overall aggressor is common among our informants. For Hassan the situation where this super power is taking over the control of countries with a high number of Muslims, is especially threatening, comparable to a physical attack on his family.

Frank (31, a convert), like so many informants, sees the conflict between Israel and Palestine as a typical example of the injustice directed against Muslims in various parts of the world. He knows some Arabic, has visited Palestine several times, and was very upset by what he saw:

> I think there's an awful lot of injustice against Muslims more generally in wider society. …But I see it …as a way in which God is testing me, you know. To see how strong my belief is. I automatically feel for them in particular, in the situation in Gaza, for example… I've visited a number of family members down there. Been in their homes. And they've even been denied doing renovations to their own flats because they've received a strict message that they're not allowed to do that. Israel just want the flats to be all the same so they can take over their properties…It was a very difficult situation. You could touch and feel it… Like it generally is on a global basis, Muslims can be seen as a group which is treated incredibly unfairly. And… for example, if a Muslim kills a non-Muslim, suddenly it's a terrorist attack. *But if America, for example, blows up five hundred people, then it's allowed – then it's just a war against terrorism*. They kill civilians as well, but they're worth just as much. (Frank)

Again, the generalised negativity against Muslims in wider society is seen as mirrored in the larger-scale war against terrorism – originally declared by American president, George Bush, where even civilians are not spared. Frank continues:

> I think it's really unfair that there are around 1.8 billion Muslims in the entire world, and as soon as a psycho with a Muslim name does something crazy, it has an impact on us all. Even though the majority are against the action. … I think that, to a certain extent, there is a kind of *crusade against Muslims*, a *witch hunt like no other*. (Frank)

Osman points to the US use of killer drones, for example in Pakistan, which he wrote a term paper on:

> …so I learnt about the insidious way this drone system works in Pakistan. Against the innocent. Even if they somehow manage to kill one person, they've killed ten innocent people. And what makes me really angry is when, for example, Tony Blair recently talked about the Iraq War and confirmed that they did this to topple Saddam. And then he said, with tears in his eyes, he said 'sorry'. I feel angry about that because … I think there must be some accountability for their actions... (Osman)

According to the French researcher and philosopher, Gregoire Chamayou, drones came to be some sort of emblem for the Obama presidency, the very instrument of the anti-terror doctrine where one shall rather kill than take prisoners, and have replaced torture (Chamayou, 2015). In Pakistan alone, estimates of the number of people killed in drone attacks between 2004 and 2012 vary from 2,640 to 3,474 (ibid.: 13).

Osman also mentions Palestine, the atrocities of Assad in Syria, the interference of US allies in Libya, the invasion in Iraq, but also refers to the negativity against Muslims reflected in the debates around *hijab*, *niqab*, circumcision, and the 'burkini'. Again, we see how local/national debates about some markers of Muslimhood are acquiring new and extended meaning when they are seen in relation to the larger

patterns of world events, and also in the shape of Trump's travel bans on different Muslim countries. The result is an overall feeling that Muslims are not welcome, and that their identity – as in Nadia's quotes – is threatened. According to Osman:

> The thing is that they place so much focus, indirectly, on Islamic elements… I feel that it's a problem because people can't be themselves. …people are slowly but surely attacking Islam. Because they're not talking about prohibiting the kippa, they're not talking about forbidding the turban. Usually it's about hijabs in the police, hijabs for children. And again, it's the media playing on that and the politicians fall into the trap. I feel that this is negative too because it will lead to people saying: 'You know what? We don't want to have you here in this country.' It's a bit like when Trump decided to have that travel ban on different countries and then people still voted for Trump anyway and a lot of his policies played with this business of racism and exploited racism and hostility towards Muslims. (Osman)

For Ali (27) the interference of Norway with the NATO allies in Libya – despite its image of being a nation of peace – was important and highly provoking:

> Several times, I've thought that there's something very special about the fact that Norway, which is a nation of peace, has been involved and contributed to some of the wars. And a conflict that made a big impression on me was when Norwegian forces participated in Libya, which has… that conflict, I remember it made a big impression on me. I started to think: *my taxes have gone on this?* (Ali)

The Norwegian involvement in the Libyan war has been heavily criticised. 588 bombs – one tenth of the total dropped by NATO – were dropped by Norwegian planes in the Libyan war.[52] It has also been argued that the claim that Gaddafi was about to carry out genocide was just part of a propaganda war (ibid). The consequence was a long-term civil war that is more or less still going on. In this way, Norway's participation in US and NATO alliances in wars and invasions in countries that have a large number of Muslim inhabitants is a salient source for condemnation and animosity by young Muslims. Marring the country's image of being peaceful and a supporter of peace processes in different conflicts, these actions stimulate the view that Norway is one more participant in the general war against the Muslim world.

These conclusions do not mean that the West in a more generalised way, is necessarily declared as the enemy by the informants. Zakir (27) distinguishes between what he sees as (radical) right-wing leaders, and the ordinary people:

> You see leaders like Trump have come to power, in England, you have Boris, in India you have Modi. You see in a way that the people at the fore aren't moderate people…the leaders who are emerging these days aren't for the whole population, they're for a special group…. In a way, it is people who you couldn't imagine having so much power, but they're getting more power, and their ideology is starting slowly but surely to gain more acceptance in the global society. (Zakir)

This ability to see Norwegian society as more complex, and also attractive, although polarised, is also visible when Zakir expresses his views on Norway: 'I'm fond of Norway, it means a lot to me of course, I was born and brought up here. But at the same time, you think how much are you willing to…do you want your whole life to be nothing but a struggle?' (Zakir).

[52] E.g. Veberg and Bentzrød 13.09.2018 https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/G1LwBl/var-det-riktig-av-norge-aa-slippe-588-bomber-over-libya-her-er-fem-spoersmaal-og-svar-om-libya-rapporten; Kruhaug 12.09.2018 https://forskning.no/ntb-krig-og-fred-politikk/professor-mener-libya-krigen-var-bygd-pa-en-logn/1238269

## 3.6 War in Syria – the dream of a caliphate, IS and its disappointments

In recent times, the complex developments leading to the Syrian war, from where the extreme Islamist organisation of IS emerged, play a foremost role in today's tensions between radical Muslims and the West (e.g. Napoleoni, 2017). Significant numbers of second and emerging generations of Muslims living in Europe and elsewhere have joined IS within the last decade. They originally aimed to fight against Syrian dictator Assad, and to join what they tended to see as an attempt to establish a real Islamic Caliphate, governed under the Sharia – the rules and practices put forth in the Qur'an.

It nevertheless soon became clear that the IS regime was becoming one of the worst terror regimes of recent times. The dream of a caliphate was brought to an end by sexual abuse, plain slavery, extreme gender divisions, liquidations, decapitations, public executions of homosexuals and others, gruesome punishments and severe dictatorship under self-proclaimed religious leaders (Napoleoni, 2017). A large number of young people and fellow Muslims were killed.

Amnesty wrote in 2015 about Assad's regime and the larger background to the civil war that had been raging since 2011 in Syria:

> For several decades the security forces of Syria have violated human rights through extrajudicial killings, kidnappings and torture. On March 18, 2011, people in the city of Dera'a went to the streets. They demanded that arrested children should be freed. The demonstrations spread rapidly, and there were mass demonstrations all over the country. [...] President Assad has not given into the protests, but had met the peaceful protesters with massive suppression, arrests, torture and killings. The governmental army answered by bombing villages and neighbourhoods in the cities. Many soldiers deserted and the country is now in a full civil war (Amnesty's homepage 23.01.2015, [translated by the authors])

Hassan recounts his own transition from feeling rage against Assad, to trusting the promises of IS, and the disappointment and provocation he felt when IS's atrocities were revealed. He had several friends who were killed in the war:

> I'll be completely honest. At the start of the Syria conflict, when I saw a speech by the leader of IS. He came out of the mosque and said 'I am your Khalifa, your leader who will reclaim Islam and put an end to this injustice. Assad has oppressed you for a long time. I will be your saviour'. I have to say that I supported him. I thought 'wow', oh, here it is…it's a dictator, people are against him and – and we can finally have Islamic governance. I was in a group with Muslims – the Prophet's Ummah was founded at that time – I was with these people and I watched and felt this injustice. (Hassan)

Probably in common with so many other young Muslims around the world at that time, Hassan's most immediate motivating emotion was rage against Assad and his government. He continues:

> I was blinded by that way of thinking and the fury I had for these oppressions. I wanted proper Islam, an end to the killing. So I became blinded by that fear. Yes, I became radicalised in the way I was provoked by seeing so many Muslims unfairly killed. [...] Several of my friends travelled there. It was actually really gullible that they went there, they thought they were doing the right thing. And they went down there, to IS, and ended up losing their lives. (Hassan)

As the war in Syria unfolded and IS began so show its true nature, Hassan's attitudes changed. He refers to two events that were central for his change of attitude to the war. The first was the fact that a good friend whom he had known since primary school was killed. This brought Hassan to a new judgement of the situation and of IS as an actor.

> Yes, it was especially one I had a lot of contact with. It was an Albanian brother who I feel, he had good intentions. He had the right reason for helping Muslims and fighting. [...] When he was killed, I had already understood that in this war IS a wrong grouping. *Completely wrong*…eh, what can I say, I don't even consider them Muslims. [...] In the end you saw that the actions and things had absolutely nothing to do with Islam. That he was killed…it's such a shame that it ended up how it did. Of course, I was affected… (Hassan)

Hassan had several friends who were killed in Syria, and the second experience that made him pull back from his original support for as he says, was the advice he received from another friend:

> [...] if an important person, a good friend of mine, hadn't come and given me what we call *Nasiha*[53], that is to come and guide another… if he'd not made me able to understand that this type of thinking was completely wrong, then I myself would have travelled to Syria. [...] He was a good friend who has guided me and helped me to understand and see the bigger picture, and not only the parts of it. He made me realise what is right and wrong… (Hassan)

This example underlines the consequences of a significant other party having the opportunity to provide advice. They can help someone to develop a constructive distance from a situation, instead of the often intense engagement that young people can develop when confronted with extreme injustices, such as in Syria.

A war may be seen as a liminal state where ordinary life is put on hold, but where critical events – like death – can become the normal (Vestel, 2018; Szakolczai, 2015). Nevertheless, when that event is particularly personal, it may become an important turning point, as seen in Hassan's case. Like Hassan, Nadia also had a good friend that was killed, this time in Iraq, but with a less typical story to his radicalisation and death. As Nadia tells it:

> A boy I got to know during a NAV-course.[54] We sat and wrote job applications together. Really pleasant and nice. [...] I remember he said that today was a very good day for him because he'd got a place on this NAV-course to help him write applications, his wife had got a job and his daughter had got a nursery place. Right? Lovely… [...] So we got to know each other. [...]. He was a religious guy who went to the mosque every Friday, but he was far from an extremist. [...] We had good contact. We became friends. Some others in the class also became friends with us and we formed a little group. Pakistanis, Tunisians, me, and also someone from Morocco. We had contact through a lot of people… (Nadia)

The situation seemed pleasant, her friend and his young family were about to get settled, they had a nice circle of friends, all with immigrant backgrounds, and with good contacts. But then something changed:

> Then suddenly he and his wife divorced, and he fell into a depression. And over time, he started hanging out more and more with… when you're depressed some people drink alcohol, use narcotics and substances to get through it. The path he chose was to go to the mosque. In the mosque, people used to come over and invite him to take part in terrorist things. He divorced and had to move house. He moved into a flat-share on the West side and I visited him there one time. It was such a cave, where he was living. He couldn't afford it, he said, because he didn't have a job. He had to pay child support to his wife and this and that. The only thing he could afford was a little room in this huge villa, where he shared a toilet with forty other people. It was disgusting…

[53] Nasiha is an Arabic word that means 'to advise'. It can also mean 'recommendation' or 'sincerity'.
[54] This is a course offered by the state, where people can get help with doing job applications and related services.

> [...] He hung around the mosque [...]. After that, I didn't see him. He disappeared. Suddenly, recently, when I'm reading the paper, I see a photo of him. He carried out a terrorist attack in Iraq. That was how I found out about it. Suicide bombing! (Nadia)

In the trajectories toward extremist positions, elements that have little or nothing to do with ideology or politics – that is extra ideological relations – may have important roles, as mentioned. In the case of Nadia's friend, we don't have any more details about how he developed to be a suicide bomber. Neither do we know if, or how, ideology, perceived injustice and political processes eventually interacted with his personal misery. Nevertheless, as Nadia sees it, personal problems, depression and difficulties finding an acceptable way of earning a living seemed to have been important impulses for his path into extremism and its utmost end: becoming a suicide bomber.

For the convert Einar/Abdullah the atrocities committed by IS made a strong impression on him. This is clear when Qasim asks him if he saw any of the videos that IS published when they were at their height: 'I saw many videos. The ones when they say 'Allahu Akbar' and do this (draws his index finger over his throat) to people. [...] They're not exactly videos that gave me a desire to go there.'

For many people, the *extreme brutality* shown in the propaganda films made by IS was an important reason to distance themselves from the group and its way of mixing religion with extreme violence. Qasim asks Abdullah:

> Qasim: Are there any Muslims in your environment who are too extreme, as you see it, who have points of view people shouldn't have, such as supporting suicide bombers?
>
> Abdullah: I have seen a number of people who support this, and that is simply not okay because it becomes like, 'if you don't do what we say then you're not a Muslim'. That's not okay because it can't be the case that you should follow just one specific group.

Abdullah expresses worry and anger against the extremists' position where suicide bombers are supported, and they insist that their way is the only right way to be a Muslim. This is necessarily highly provocative for young Muslims who have very different views and practices regarding their religion. Such a world view, where only positions of extreme polarisation exist – black and white/either or, as Griffin put it – is held to be a core attitude in most extremist positions (Griffin, 2012; Berger, 2018).

For Abdi (30), the knowledge that young persons he had seen regularly in the mosque were killed made an impression, even if they had not been close to him:

> Yes, I know of people who have been killed in Syria, but they haven't been close friends of mine. [...] I've seen some people who used to pray in the mosque travel and be either killed or injured [...] It's affected me, two of them in particular. Even though I didn't know them. You can imagine a guy you saw in the mosque… [...] It strikes you when you hear that they're dead. It was quite sad. [...] And when I watch CNN, when I see children being gassed to death, I swear I've cried several times in my room. But the end result after I'd finished crying, wasn't to pack my school bag and leave… (Abdi)

Even if he was deeply touched by the atrocities of Assad and recognised that some people who travelled had good intentions, Abdi never considered to go to Syria himself, for several reasons:

> Qasim: IS tried to establish the caliphate with Islamic rules and ways of organising a society. It looks like many young Muslims have been fascinated by this for a while. At least at the start of the war. What do you think about that?
>
> Abdi: [...] I think it was, as you say in English, bollocks. I think it was ridiculous that this guy went up there during the Friday prayer and said that. [...] Yes, we Muslims believe in the caliphate, we know it will come, but when a group of people who have possibly had trouble with… they come from the West and have grown up with crime, and then immediately start

> to say that they're … I didn't think that was anything. [...] I maintain that 90% of the ones who left were people who either escaped their prison sentence or were involved with drugs, crime. [...]
>
> Qasim: IS have done some brutal things. Decapitations, rapes, holding women as slaves, slave-woman arrangements. What do you think of that? Totally wrong?
>
> Abdi: Totally wrong. It's these things that always made me suspicious… from the first time I heard about them, I've always been sceptical of them. It's just being proved more and more.

It is hard to entirely accept Abdi's claim that most of the IS warriors were former criminals who escaped their earlier life, although some of them were (see: PST, 2016). But this belief, his strong dismissal of the authority of al-Baghdadi, and not least the atrocities of IS seem to have been the most important reasons behind his negative attitude to leaving to participate in the war.

Frank was sceptical, but he also went through a phase in the early days of IS where he was more uncertain, as he had yet to discover their destructive nature:

> I have seen how they have rampaged and what they've been doing. But of course, I was a little uncertain. You liked what you saw in the beginning. Because you thought they represented Islam and so…Many people went because they've seen a lot of videos and so on from down there and seen how Assad Bashar and his regime there have killed and exterminated even women and children, and so on. So they want to travel down there with the intention of making a difference. (Frank)

For Frank it soon became clear that IS was not what it at first presented itself to be. One example here was a person that Frank knew who, as far as it is known, travelled to join the group with good intentions. He soon became critical and protested against IS, and then was killed by the group. Although it may be very difficult to know exactly what happened, other people in the Norwegian milieu confirm this story, as well as similar others. According to Frank, this was not an exception:

> When they arrive down there and into the clutches of IS, then they regret going. And there are lots who even have their passport taken from them and given an ultimatum, that they either have to fight on IS's side or be killed, so it's pretty easy to choose. Of course, everyone wants to choose their life. [...] Many travelled there with good intentions, but it ended in tragedy. [...] So I am, like, learning lots about it myself. And I am very grateful that I didn't go there myself, because then I probably wouldn't be sitting here today… I can understand that they went there. But I hadn't… I'd rather have died myself than kill civilians. (Frank)

The cruelty of Assad, the sympathy with his opposition and the early promises of IS were motivating people to go. But for Frank, the threat of getting killed by IS if one criticized them, the atrocities that IS later became known for, and the fact that the group had killed a large number of ordinary civilians seems to have constructed the field of tension he found himself in. In the end, this resulted in a very negative attitude about traveling to Syria.

Osman would not go to Syria as he did not see it as a conflict that could be solved by using guns, and also because the imams he follows advised him not to go. This points to the importance of religious authorities in such choices:

> Of course, you have those ideas about wanting to help the innocent but that isn't – I don't think the solution is to take up arms and start shooting because I mostly follow the scholars who say you shouldn't… or that it doesn't help the people down there if you travel there. Because, like I said, there's a grey zone, I think. It isn't black and white. (Osman)

For Osman, the rebellion against Assad stood forth as a real opening where large changes could have happened, especially in the aftermath of the Arab spring:

> I was against Bashar because there was the Arab Spring and so on, and they managed to get rid of Hosni Mubarak and that's when people started to realise 'You know what, these dictators, they're starting to be overthrown so that people can start to get…', So I was in favour of the idea that democratic systems and so on should come. That the people could decide for themselves and kind of choose a good leader. And I was against dictatorship. [...] Then later, when I realised it was total chaos, I started to think that perhaps to stop things from being so negative for the civilians, it's better to have a dictator, for example Bashar, as a dictator in Syria. But then I found out he'd actually attacked civilians too, so it just became kind of massively chaotic. (Osman)

For Osman, the situation where Muslim stands against Muslim is also an argument against participating in the war:

> At one point, there was Bashar on one side and the rebels on the other and so people had a clear idea. And suddenly, it started getting chaotic [...] He's the one who's created most of the chaos. But again, the thing is if you go down there, you don't know. You'll shoot another person who's also shouting 'Allahu Akbar', so you don't know what you're doing. So that's never been in my thoughts. Some of my friends were very engaged in that but they gradually started being less engaged because they realised that, you know what… [...]…it isn't black and white. (Osman)

### 3.6.1 Doomsday, Dabiq and the end of the world

Omar had around ten friends and acquaintances who went to Syria. Four are alive, two are in jail, and the fate of the others is unsure. Some of them had some association with the Prophet's Ummah. Omar had been several times in Syria, both before and during the war. We get a glimpse into how a young Muslim – at the beginning of the Syrian war – experienced the situation from his life in Oslo:

> I was so taken up with the war. Then I go out, go shopping and so on. I meet a mate who's just smiling and happy, and the sun's shining and it's nice weather and so on. And I look at him and I kind of … 'Aren't you keeping up with what's happening?' And it's kind of 'Yes, yes, but come along and have a barbecue with us.' So I thought 'Huh? You're going to have a barbecue? The world's about to end and you're talking about barbecues???' So I got a bit caught up in that because I felt as if it has never – and this is a known fact, never in human history have so many people been involved in war and forced to flee and get killed. So it was really big, and I thought 'Can it get worse?' But it would get worse. (Omar)

The last remark seems exaggerated, in comparison to the Second World War. Nevertheless, the statement can be seen as reflecting the *scope and intensity in how it was felt,* worrying about the chaos, the killings, the attempt at building a caliphate and so on. In our next quote, he speaks about how he first encountered IS. We must remember that he had been to Syria several times and also had close family in the country. This heightens the likelihood that his judgements had some basis:

> They didn't reveal themselves at first, the leadership and stuff. People didn't know who they were. But the people living down there, (at first) they didn't force people into anything at all. You could… at prayer time you just had to pray. To start off with they were very simple. They managed to… people had been in a lot of different groupings, so when IS came, there was a bit of security. The number of rapes went down a bit, people were looted less and that kind of thing. (Omar)

For some of the local people in the war-torn areas where chaos and crime were frequent, IS seemed to have brought a better life, for a period at least. But according to Omar, this view was completely naïve:

> So for people who were there and didn't see the big picture and who have maybe also lived in the West and had dreamed of a life like that [...] they saw it like this, 'Hey these guys are doing it. Everybody else talks about it, but these guys are doing it. They're implementing it. Not just that, but they're implementing it in the right way.' That is the way it looked then to outsiders, right? … But somebody who's smoked and been addicted to nicotine for 20 years is supposed to pack it in that very day? That's one way of doing it. [...] But to start off with they were grouped over small areas, so they managed to implement a correct form of sharia, you might say. (Omar)

For many young Muslims at the time, the Syrian war was also seen as a possible sign that *doomsday* was coming closer. Omar describes the hectic atmosphere around the possibility of doomsday coming in the milieu he frequented during the war: 'There was a kind of period where you'd get up on a Friday and head for the mosque and think "Is it today? Is it today?" For some of us it was that serious. [...] You thought: "Next Friday, next Friday". (Omar). But soon the perception of IS changed, including for Omar:

> The problem with IS was that they killed more Muslims than the other groups. They killed… in a way, they were very self-destructive. And there was no room for error. Everything had to go right and in a way they provoked the entire world into fighting against them. In a way they made… they invited the whole world to bomb Syria. (Omar)

It is well known that IS also approved of taking female slaves in the areas they ruled over. The best-known example here is the Yezidi women who were held in sexual slavery, sold several times and brutalised.[55] According to Omar, such practices resulted in some highly problematic motivations for travelling to Syria:

> And then I had to kind of think because I talked to some people who travelled there earlier. And one of them talked about taking female slaves and changing them like socks. That was his motivation for going to Syria! That's when I thought – before I used to defend people like him because I thought when that kind of thing was in the newspapers, I thought no, no, nobody thinks that way! But suddenly I found that some people do think that way. When a relative tells me that in Syria not everybody has gone there to help, some have just gone there for themselves, I didn't realise that this was true... (Omar)

Such attitudes among men who had gone to Syria to join IS, and also the extreme brutality and dehumanising ways of that group, were more arguments in Omar's critique against the war and of IS, and a warning against joining them. He concludes his views like this, when he compares the mentality of the young newcomer from Europe against the motivation among the local people in war-torn Syria:

> Don't you think he's stronger than you? He's been driven out of his home. He has more potential to win because he's losing everything. Whereas you leave from here (in Norway) and leave everything behind to travel down there. Maybe you'll get sick of it and do some stupid stuff. Because you aren't in that mentality down there. Let the people down there defend themselves. Let's help them with food and drink, which is the humanitarian way… Let's help those other people who don't have anything to do with the war, with food and drink. [...] It is something you won't get into trouble for. If you really want to help, then … (Omar)

As mentioned, several informants, like Omar, speak about the importance of the religious aspects of the war. A city that repeatedly is mentioned in his interviews, is Dabiq, in northern Syria, 40 kilometres northeast of Aleppo. According to Islamic eschatology this is the city where the final combat between Muslims and the Christians will occur, which will bring in doomsday and the end of the world.[56] The

[55] https://www.aftenposten.no/verden/i/4w7E/samira-ble-fanget-og-misbrukt-av-is-krigere-men-klarte-aa-roemme; see also Vestel, 2016: 171-172.

[56] https://www.aftenposten.no/verden/i/K9xa6/is-er-jaget-fra-sin-dommedagsby-skadefryd-paa-ne

significance of the place is underlined by IS naming their glossy, English-language magazine *Dabiq* (e.g. Sørensen 2016). Alam comments on the importance of Dabiq and two other central places, as seen by some of the people who believe they are participating in that crucial final war:

> If you join the fight in Dabiq, in Kashmir … or in Khorosan – that is also mentioned in their doomsday prophecies – if you're a soldier, or just an errand boy, water-carrier or whatever, then you're *guaranteed the highest of the highest rewards*. Then it's easy for someone who's sold cocaine their whole life. If you're thinking 'Fuck, I've been selling cocaine by the river in Grünerløkka [a hipster area in Oslo] all my life, and now I get the chance to do this…, [...] Now I can be someone who opens the doors to paradise for all my family. I'll be a hero for all eternity.' For sure, it's … The day you die, that's when your day of judgment begins, in a way. So it's actually quite irrelevant to us. But of course what the doomsday prophets say is that if you take part in this battle or that battle, then you're somehow guaranteed to rise higher than … Like in Valhalla, you know… (Alam)

An interesting historical parallel here is presented by a contemporary Norwegian Neo-Nazi group which has appropriated its name *'Vigrid'* from Norse mythology (e.g. Vestel, 2016: 94; Bjørgo and Gjelsvik, 2018: 61). This name has its origin in the word *'vigr'* which means 'willingness to fight'. It is also the name of the hill where the two groups of supernatural beings, representing order and chaos – the *'æser'* and *'jotner'* – will meet in a grand final combat and mutually extinguish each other and the world ("Vigrid", Store Norske Leksikon, published 05.10.2009; Bæksted, 1978: 186). In other words, the final battlefield, where the world is to come to an end, has a similar sacred status both in Islam and in the Old Norse mythology. And in both religious systems, death in the fight, will be rewarded with high prestige and will imply a new life in an ideal world – in paradise, or in Valhalla – where all needs and inclinations will be satisfied.[57] These religious stories are, in other words, used politically, both in the Old Norse religion and in present day Islam; if you can convince young men that the war is signalling the end of the world, then the power of these religions will help to motivate their will to fight.

From earlier contact, it was known to the authors, that Alam had been especially engaged in world events and geopolitics and had participated in several well-known demonstrations, 'hearings' and activities debating situations (war, invasions, the caricatures) where Muslims have had an important role, such as the invasion of Afghanistan, Iraq, the situation of the Rohingyas in Burma, the wars in Libya, in Yemen and so forth. When asked if he still is following these conflicts as closely as before, he answers:

> Personally, I just couldn't read about conflicts any more. It does something to you, you can get so angry … And you can get … I was afraid of become totally immune to all the terrible things happening, on a personal level. So I thought it was perhaps good to put some distance between me and it, so that I don't die inside, from constantly updating myself on the horror. I don't know if it's right or wrong, but it at least calmed me down a bit. [...] And I thought I'd focus on more local issues instead, because I felt like it was tougher and stronger for a person to resolve local issues, than pass judgment on things so far away. Because it's very simple. In reality, I'm not going to become a foreign fighter… (Alam)

The personal costs of intense political engagement were too high. And his engagement has shifted. But he still feels intensely provoked by some of the more actual conflicts, from where – as he says it – *hatred* at times is generated:

> Alam: There are certain things and institutions that you start to hate. Not that it … It means nothing more than just strongly condemning them, which means you have a kind of …
>
> Viggo: Who do you mean? Can you be more concrete? Since we're talking about it.

[57] Similar ideas are also found in Hindu mythology, and especially in the 'Bhagavad Gita'.

> Alam: The military, the official policy of the USA, all the way. And if Pakistan behaves like it's the 53rd, 54th state of the USA, or if it's Norway, I'd be against those policies too. And those who defend that policy. Whether it's sometimes a prime minister, or … You know what I mean. It's not like I go around hating Erna Solberg (the Prime Minister in Norway). I've heard from researchers that she's actually a very good, and warm person. Then Erna appeared in the media saying that 'Muslims are in danger of experiencing what happened to the Jews in the 1930s,' and that was back in 2011[58].
>
> Viggo: I remember that very well, that's very important …
>
> Alam: Strong words! And I remember thinking, it's always been like that … It made me feel safe and secure that what I'm doing is right. If my Prime Minister is thinking this, but has perhaps just forgotten it, or maybe politics is just quite locked right now… Then I thought I'd remind her about it if I can, in some form or other. (Alam)

## 3.7 Views on radicalism, extremism, legitimisation and the radicalisation of the state

The willingness to use violence to obtain political change is a central criterion defining extremism while the phenomenon of radicalisation – as the word usually is used – is seen as a process whereby a political position is adopted that could lead to such an attitude. However, such a conceptualisation is not obvious to our informants, who, as discussed below, might insert the word 'illegitimate' before the word 'violence' in this definition. More precisely, they suggest that there may be situations where violence is unavoidable or necessary, under certain circumstances, and also that the very legitimacy of such use of violence may be contested.

Our core question in this section is therefore, how do our informants understand words like 'radicalisation' and 'extremism'? Are these words useful? And how is the use of violence related to these views?

Anwar describes how he sees radicalisation, and how radicalisation is usually associated with Muslims:

> I won't go into the understanding of the concept itself but I can say how most people understand it. When they hear radicalisation, they always think it's a Muslim person being radicalised. Because you rarely hear about a right-wing extremist being radicalised. And that's the label that's always stuck to Muslims. Or radicalised Muslims. In any case, the concept of radicalisation is a concept that is created, or at least applied, to be used against Muslim men. (Anwar)

The complaints that the term radicalisation is to a much lesser degree associated with right wing terror is mentioned by several informants. Anwar continues:

> When you talk about… Breivik or another white… Manshaus. Then it's like… there's never any talk about a radicalisation process. They just say he was a lone wolf, he had mental problems, difficult childhood, and … it was an unfortunate situation and it was a difficult period. [...] It's discussed as a *personal tragedy*. It's never that way when a Muslim person does something like that, it's never called a personal tragedy then. (Anwar)

[58] Alam is referring here to a statement by Erna Solberg (the then leader of the conservative right party, Høyre, who became Prime Minister in 2013), which she made in August 2011, that is the month after Breivik's attack. See: https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/GpyxJ/erna-solberg-mener-muslimer-hetses-som-joedene-paa-30-tallet

Here Anwar points to the tendency to find the trajectories of right wing terrorists as mainly caused by their social or mental problems in their own biographies. His subtext here is that there is a clear tendency to see Muslim terror as having more to do with the religion of Islam, in itself. Aisha (22) follows up:

> I don't know if people have noticed it or not, but whenever events like that have happened they've called those events 'terror attacks' if Muslims or immigrants have been convicted. But when it's white people doing things like that, then the person is said to have had mental health problems from childhood, or to have been motivated by games or that the divorce of his parents made him that way. [...] The entire focus is on the event itself and then often they get a lighter sentence and more attention in court, in jail, and in the media. (Aisha)

The balance or imbalance in the distribution of punishment, treatment and media attention of various acts of terror can be discussable. The tendency to associate radicalisation mostly with radical Muslims may also be seen as reflected in the fact that until 2020 the yearly reports from the PST stated that an act of terror in Norway was most likely to come from extremist Muslims. Most important here is that the informants themselves have a strong impression that there is a clear bias against Islam related actors, and that this is seen as unjust.

For Osman, the association of terror and radicalisation with Islam causes heavy distortions, in so far as the borders between moderate Islam and extremist Islam become blurred:

> The first thing people connect with it are Islam and Islamist terror, and people… The Islam word is used so much that it isn't easy for your average person to distinguish between normal Muslims who follow normal Islam and those who follow extreme interpretations of Islam. (Osman)

Osman also sees radicalism – in contrast to extremism – as a positive word:

> I've done some research, Martin Luther King had radical aspects. Malcolm X had radical aspects. There was also a period when Nelson Mandela was pretty, pretty radical. Even Mahatma Gandhi! So these are people I see as revolutionaries, they're people I see as mentors [...] …it can be useful because people come up with unique ideas and opinions about how to improve society. Because after all that is what Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, did [...] improving society. (Osman)

Being radical, as Osman sees it, is a positive thing because it makes it possible to change the world. The big names he mentions are all persons that are known to have had strong political opinions, and Luther King, Gandhi and Mandela were – as we all know – extremely important figures in the struggle against deep injustice in the countries where they acted; Osman sees them all as radical in a positive sense. All these leaders, nevertheless, also represent the necessity of a willingness *to critique and oppose the authorities – more specifically the state* – in their respective countries. In that sense, Osman sees both radicalism and extremism as useful concepts:

> I think it's useful to talk about radicalisation and extremism, I mean as long you talk about both sides, when it comes to religious extremism. And here I'm also thinking of Christian and Jewish religious extremism. What Israel does, for example, is after all an extremism in itself. (Osman)

As is implied in the radical stances in the critiques by King, Gandhi and Mandela of the very states under whose authority they were, as Osman sees it, *states may act as extremists*. For example, this is seen in the way the state of Israel uses sheer violence to enforce its politics on the Palestinian population. In this way the struggles of Gandhi, Mandela and King, are likened to the struggle of the Palestinians, which may also be seen as radical in a positive sense, as they fight against the suppressive regime of the Israeli authorities.

As Omar stated:

> Actually, being radical is still a great thing for me. [...]. If a person is radical that means he wants to create change, most often for the better. Because if you hadn't had radical changes in society or human history, we wouldn't have got where we are today. Something radical is always needed. (Omar)

When both researchers (e.g. Bjørgo and Gjelsvik 2018.) and state authorities are using the word 'radicalisation' solely to denote the processes that more or less are assumed to lead to the use of extremist violence, then one tends to miss the creative and positive force that also may be an important part of 'radical thinking', these informants seem to mean. Occupying words – in this case the word 'radical' – may be seen as just one more way in which states and their ruling powers are exerting power over their inhabitants. Refusing the one-sided negative tone of the word, may therefore also be seen as an *act of resistance* by the young Muslims; they seem to insist that the word radical must be somehow freed from the association with the use of violence.

But there are further problems with the view of violence as a defining feature of radicalisation. This is associated with the need for *self-defence*. Osman underlines this when he speaks about Martin Luther King: 'He put the focus on self-defence. [...] And it's the same with the business in the Middle East and Muslim countries, East Asia and so on. The key word is self-defence. Everybody must be able to use violence in self-defence'. While Martin Luther King promoted non-violence as the overall 'weapon' of the struggle against racism during the civil rights movement, he did not categorically dismiss the use of violence in self-defence.[59] So here, Osman is right in his statements. This harmonises with the view of Anwar who points to the necessity of judging the context in which violence is used: 'Yes, it can be *legitimate* there. For example Palestine: they are right to defend themselves. So you have to consider the context people are in.' Imran speaks more directly about a situation he imagines could happen in his daily life, where the need for self-defence is obvious:

> Yes, I mean, if it happens then I have to defend myself. [...] Now it's like this, when you're actually pretty unlucky, because if I'm walking alone and suddenly see three-four radical white Islam haters, people with Islamophobia, then there isn't much I can do to protect myself. And it's not like I can walk around with weapons and things like that. I'm not keen on that myself either… But sometimes the thought hits me that I should have some protection. (Imran)

### 3.7.1 The state as terrorist and the question of legitimacy

As we have seen, the provocations implied in world events where states and super powers like the US and NATO are using military force in their invasions and interactions with countries and areas where Muslims live in high numbers, create strong opposition, grievances and even hatred among our informants. Hassan has, for example, stated that for a time he listened a lot to Anwar al-Awlaki, a person who, at least in his later life, supported the use of violence and also of plain terror. We try to find out more about what this means for Hassan:

> Qasim: What do you think about using violence to create change in society? In Norway, Europe, the Middle East, what do you think about the use of violence to create change in a society?
>
> Hassan: I don't think anything of that. I'm against it.
>
> Qasim: On the one hand, you say you listened to Awlaki a lot. This is a person who supported the use of violence in order to…

[59] See: https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/social-organization-nonviolence

> Hassan: I don't support those people; I understand those people. There is a big difference, a very big difference!

His answer seems to indicate that he did have some sympathy with the contents of what Awlaki criticised which (in short) is a long series of accusations against the US and the West for their politics in relation to the Muslim world (see Shane 2015). There is no doubt that the difference between *supporting* the violence that Awlaki recommended using against the West, and *understanding* the reasons and emotions behind this is very important. Hassan seems to express a similar relationship to the violent jihad recommended by the Prophet's Ummah.

> Qasim: Going back to the Prophet's Ummah [...] they have expressed a lot of support of attacks around the world, such as 9/11, the bombings in London, Madrid, among others. And several other terrorist actions. How do you view these views? Do you have any understanding for that?
>
> Hassan: Yes, complete understanding!
>
> Qasim: Do you support their expressions? Since you have complete understanding, were you happy when they expressed this?
>
> Hassan: I don't really have anything against the fact that that they show this resistance there. If we're going to talk facts, 3400 died on September 11th versus around 100 000 killed in Afghanistan. That statistic is so brutal that you don't feel any regret. If you say something bad about them (the Prophet's Ummah) then I've nothing against that either. They have the full right to do it. [...]
>
> Qasim: [...] In a way you support these actions, then?
>
> Hassan: If you call it support then I support it. If this is the box you want to put me in. [...] Because that statistic, the weight is so heavy on the one side that it's really unfair and wrong, and I feel for them.

Here it is difficult to understand exactly what Hassan means: does he support these actions of terror because of the extreme differences between the number of Afghanistan civilians killed as compared to the considerably lower number of civilians dead in the 9/11 attacks? According to a recent article in Al Jazeera, 'US war in Afghanistan: from 2001 invasion to 2020 agreement', his figures are correct.[60] However, it does become clear that he does not support the killing of civilians:

> Qasim: It's joy that the West gets hit back, is that it?
>
> Hassan: [Silence]… *joy in the form that they're met with resistance*. Never joy over innocent people dying! Now I'm not standing here protecting myself, but it's a shame that there are innocent lives which are lost. But they (the West, the US?) have to understand the consequences of what they do, which are these terrorist actions.
>
> Qasim: But you don't support them?
>
> Hassan: No, I don't support actions like that. Had it been against a military base, then I'd have supported it 100%, without a doubt. These attacks directed towards military powers in the USA, Madrid, France … I'd have no problem supporting that.

Hassan distinguishes between combat between military powers and the taking of 'innocent lives'. When asked more directly if he supports the killing of civilians, he answers:

[60] https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2020/02/war-afghanistan-2001-invasion-2020-taliban-deal-200229142658305.htm

> Qasim: What do you do when you see or hear people supporting the murder of civilians? Which I would say is crossing the line of what is acceptable?
>
> Hassan: I have friends with these opinions.
>
> Qasim: Do you contradict them, or do you support them?
>
> Hassan: I don't support them. To be completely honest, they're aware of my opinions. But I don't think I'm able to change their opinions!

As Hassan admits that he in fact has friends who support killing civilians, which must be seen as plain terrorism, his answers – at least to this author – seem genuine.

But then again, one can list a long series of highly problematic actions carried out by the US and its allies: the treatment of prisoners in US-driven prisons like Guantanamo in Cuba, Bagram in Afghanistan and Abu Ghraib in Iraq; the killings of civilians by US drones in Yemen, Somalia, Pakistan and more; the war against Palestinians in Israel (e.g. Vestel 2016; see also McCauley 2018). Many of these events can be seen as examples of extremist terror, but this time, *executed by Western states*. Some would here tend to use the word 'state sponsored terror', but this can be seen as reflecting a wish to mask such actions into something more digestible. I therefore prefer to use the 'extremism' word. Beck also directs attention to the extremism (terrorism) of states (Beck, 2015: 66-68). So when Muslim extremist groups carry out atrocities, they could at least defend themselves by just saying that they are only doing what the US and their allies have done on a *much larger scale* – including the killings of a large number of civilians.

The need to confront the radicalisation and the use of violence by states and – in various contexts – also plain terrorism, is underlined by the long-time established authority in terrorism studies, Alex P. Schmid, who writes:

> One of the biggest shortcomings of the literature on (counter-) terrorism is that so many studies have been blind to what the other side – the government – did and does at home and abroad. [...] Too many analysts have sought the causes of radicalisation only on the side of non-state actors (Schmid, 2013: 37)

Here, we might add, it is hard not to say that what one side – the state – has done, does not legitimate what the other side – the non-state actors – has done. Hassan's 'understanding', in other words, can be seen against this background. Similar arguments appear when we ask what Aziz thinks about the use of violence to change a society in today's Norway, in Europe or in the Middle East. He says:

> I'm against it. But we live in a country which is for it. [...] We live in a country which uses violence in other places in order to change their ways of living! For example, NATO… We have a leader in NATO nowadays with Stoltenberg. He has the main responsibility for the murder of Gaddafi, right? (Aziz)

Obviously, the use of violence to kill Gaddafi could be seen as an example of extremism according to the usual definition. The crucial question here is, if extremism is the use of violence to achieve political change, then are there not occasions when violence must be considered as legitimate? To this, it is necessary to add a second question: *'legitimate for whom?'*

The State of Israel surely sees its use of violence against Palestinians as legitimate. But is it seen as legitimate from a Palestinian point of view? The answer is a clear 'no'! It was decided by Norwegian politicians that it was right to let loose a large number of bombs to hit Gaddafi and his forces, but did the Libyans approve of this as legitimate?

Aziz refers to the use of violence by NATO and its allies in Libya as exactly an example of the use of violence to obtain political change. It seems from these parallels that the definition of extremism – also as it is used in DARE – is critically lacking the precision that makes it possible to include a state – that is *the very*

*institution that legitimates* – as a terrorist organisation. Aziz is playing elegantly with these problems and with well-positioned irony when he continues his answer:

> And if you see that we in Norway will be involved with going and bombing other countries into a million pieces to get rid of a kind of ideology or reality, then we learn from our state that it's a pretty appealing way to change an opinion… Saddam was killed, right? Afghanistan was bombed because of the suspicion that the World Trade Centre bombings were carried out by them. [...] They want to teach them that it's okay if you start bombing places to pieces because then you can change their opinion. (Aziz)

In other words, Aziz says that the terrorist attacks by extremist Muslims may be seen as exactly the result of *what those extremists have learnt from the Western states*: the use of violence to obtain political change! He continues his somewhat ironic rhetorical critique by underlining the consequences that these 'teachings' potentially have for Norway: 'So extreme Muslims can then begin bombing Norway to pieces so that they stop with Islamophobia because we're taught this by Europe, by Norway, and…?' (Aziz).

This suggests that the definition of extremism must be expanded to be more precise; extremism must be understood as the use of *illegitimate* violence to achieve political change. It follows from this revision that such a definition also – and in each case – has to be accompanied with a discussion about what is legitimate and what is not, and for whom.

Our last question to our informants is about what they would do if they saw someone with really frightening intentions. Qasim asks Abdi:

> Qasim: Let's say you meet someone in the mosque and they say brother, I hate those heretics, or something like that, I want to do something criminal. I'm not saying a terrorist attack, but really unstable and seemingly crazy. What would you do?
>
> Abdi: I wouldn't consider the police immediately. *I would take* him down to the best kebab shop down in the town, then I'd buy a kebab for him, and let him speak. Get out everything he is feeling. [...] I'd say: You may think that that non-Muslim is a real devil, or you may think he can be good tomorrow... Let's say you go into cardiac arrest, right, suddenly he's a doctor and he saves you. The situation is turned upside down. So you must always, you should never be quick to anger, you must not think negatively all the time. Fine, you are Muslim, he isn't a believer, but he's let you live in this country, his country. I would say that, and if he didn't take that advice, if he continues acting up, then I would phone the police. It's one of my duties as a member of society.

### 3.7.2 Surveillance

The most central motivational forces behind extremist Muslim violence in various parts of the world are retaliations and conflicts where Western powers, notably the US, have attacked or invaded Muslim areas (see: Nesser, 2015; Pettinger, 2015). One result of these relations, is the *surveillance* of milieus suspected or known to have connections to terrorist milieus, which may also be seen as an expression of the radicalisation of the state. This is also experienced by several of our informants, as they report on several incidences of surveillance by what they assume to be, or have verified to been done or influenced by, by Norwegian authorities, especially the PST (the Police's Security Service). These accounts relate to surveillance both within Norwegian borders and abroad and are hard to verify exactly. Nevertheless, they are repeatedly mentioned by our informants.

Omar refers to six instances when he: had been denied entrance to, or got thrown out of, several countries; where he had missed a plane because he was kept waiting; or was humiliated at the airport due to what he claims to be instructions and information given to the authorities in those respective countries from the PST.

> I felt cheated. Spat on. Because I'd gone to a meeting with the PST after all. [...] I voluntarily withdrew from the grouping that became The Prophet's Ummah. I've even told my friends that 'If you hang out with those guys, we aren't friends. Because that business is self-destructive. [...] You'll end up in jail for planning terrorist actions. That's it. That's all there is to it.' And all the crap that goes along with that, that crap will follow you for the rest of your life. And it'll affect your children and your grandchildren and maybe a couple of generations more, unless you move. And if you do that, it'll be there, deep down in your papers. So [...] you just ruin things for yourself. (Omar)

The perspective that former connections to an extremist group will affect family members in the future, and the feeling that it will follow you 'for the rest of your life' underlines the painfulness that these incidents have created. This is further illustrated when Alam complains that it became impossible to have a holiday abroad together with his wife:

> We landed in Turkey and I was arrested and my wife detained.[61] Then she was released, because, of course, they had nothing on her. I was put in a holding cell, and the following day deported to Norway. That was our holiday trip! And that was just one time. It's happened in Jordan, it's happened in Egypt, it's happened in Pakistan. So … I've been denied visas to Israel, India, USA … So it gets in your way. [...] And I haven't been on holiday for ages... [...] I know that I've been watched, and had trouble at work, and it's used up so much time and energy, career opportunities, everything. I'm not saying that's the only reason but it gets to you. You become more paranoid, you become depressed … (Alam)

Such repeated experiences create heavy psychological pressure, emotions of mistrust, paranoia and struggle:

> You don't trust people any more. [...] You have so many weird thoughts, that you're like: [...] 'You have to put it all aside, start from scratch, restart your life' for yourself, every day. So it's an extra battle you have to have in your life, and I wouldn't wish that upon my own little brother, and not upon my son in future, or anyone for that matter. (Alam)

Several informants point out examples of PST coming to their workplaces or also to their homes to search for 'information':

> It's been… my friends have been under surveillance by the PST and… the worst thing is the methods they've used. [...]. There are two or three people whose flats have been raided and… all of them were very good friends, close friends… [...] I feel it even when I communicate with somebody, sometimes I feel like my messages are overheard too or something. That there's somebody else reading it before it's sent on. Of course, you get personally offended that somebody's listening to you or monitoring you [...] I have that mechanism of not thinking about it too much. [...]. Because if I start to think about it I may become mentally ill, I may become paranoid. (Anwar)

In addition, several of the informants complain that the PST on various occasions has contacted several of their friends to get information about themselves, even further underlining the emotionally stressful atmosphere of mistrust.

This is not to deny the necessity of surveilling milieus that the PST has reason to suspect of being involved in political crimes and extremism. In the cases of our informants, it is impossible to judge whether the reasons for such surveillance activities were well founded or not. Nevertheless, the quotes point clearly to the fact that such practices may also be strongly *counterproductive,* in the sense that the despair and anger of the ones who are the targets of such surveillance may amplify the feeling of negativity, exclusion

[61] For anonymity reasons the names of some of these countries are changed.

and being at 'war' with societal authorities, the police, the security police, the West and so on, even further. The 'paranoid' feeling thus become one more element adding to the overall pattern that becomes the 'objective' basis of the ideological frame that the West is at war with Islam.

## 4. Some reflections on the research questions: grievances, counterreactions, reflexive openings and extra-ideological relations

In this section, we present some further reflections on our findings as related to the specific research questions set.

As we have seen in the previous sections, the situation of the young Muslims is characterised by a wide range of *grievances*. According to Berger, a grievance may be understood as a perception of having been humiliated, treated unfairly or inappropriately (Berger, 2018:129). Several researchers have pointed to grievances of various kinds as being a central 'moving force' in processes of radicalisation (e.g. Franc and Pavlovic, 2018: 3; Berger, 2018: 127-131; Schmid, 2013: 26; Kundnani, 2012:6; Tarrow, 2009: 110-112; Cragin, 2014: 341; McCauley, 2018; Nesser, 2015; Wiktorowicz, 2005; see also Borum, 2011 for several references to theories where grievances play a central role). Nevertheless, even if many researchers agree that grievances are of crucial importance, they are 'not enough' to explain a radicalisation process. As Schmid puts it:

> However, there is so much injustice in the world and there are relatively speaking, so few terrorists, that grievances alone cannot explain radicalisation to terrorism. It needs a trigger event or 'cognitive opening' linking grievances to an enemy who is held responsible for them or who is deemed to stand in the way of removing the cause of the grievance. (Schmid, 2013: 26)

This touches on perhaps the most crucial question regarding the understanding of radicalisation processes: *Why is it that among persons who share many of the same life conditions some evolve into extremist positions and others do not?* Such a question relates to Berger's claim that 'all extremists have grievances, but not all people with grievances become extremists' (Berger, 2018: 129; see also Cragin 2014).

However, in addition to the focus upon grievances, we claim that three other interpretive concepts are also important to our understanding of the trajectories toward or away from a radical position. These are termed *counterreactions*, *reflexive openings* and *extra-ideological relations*, and will be explained further below.

While the perception of grievances may be understood as an emotional and immediate reaction to injustice and humiliation, it may also result in a more articulated *counterreaction*, that in some of its consequences may develop into radicalisation, and ultimately, to cross the line into a support for extremist actions. We will therefore attempt to point out such counterreactions under the various thematic foci in the discussions.

A second phenomenon that will be focused on below, is what we here call *reflexive openings*. It is partly related to what Quintan Wiktorowicz has called a *'cognitive opening'*, which is a moment when an individual who is trying to make sense of his or her existence suddenly 'sees a light', through which an old view on the world can be dismissed and replaced with something new (Wiktorowicz, 2005: 20-24). In Wiktorowicz's theory, this is used to illuminate a certain point in a process leading to a state where extremism may occur (see also, Schmid, 2013: 23).

In contrast to Wiktorowicz's term, we will use the term *'reflexive opening'* to describe a manifestation of an *ability to see more open mindedly/broadly on the situation in which one finds oneself*. We understand it as an emotional-cognitive state that roughly directs the attention in different directions from the stark and aggressive polarisations often associated with counterreactions, and tends to be more receptive, reflective and creatively inclined to emphasise the more constructive and inclusive aspects in a situation of possibly increasing tensions. Along such lines, we try to indicate if there is anything in the experiences, situation or reflexivity of the subject that may have possibilities for dialogue, for reflexivity and for questioning the more extreme positions; in other words the possibility of 'grey' in their black and white worldviews, allowing for a more pluralistic perception of others (see: Koehler 2014/2015).

Our use of the 'reflexive opening' term is also related to the mindset that Schmid has labelled the 'radical' as contrasted to the 'extremist'. For Schmid the radical is characterised by a more open-minded attitude, where reflections and also dialogues may be invited and emphasised, and is *contrasted* with the close mindedness of an extremist position where violence, authoritarian attitudes and refusal of dialogue are the most characteristic features (Schmid 2013: 56; see also Pilkington, 2020). A focus upon reflexive openings, as I see it, is relevant, as it will be helpful to encompass *attitudes, situations and processes where dialogue and reflexivity can occur, as a possible wedge inserted into processes that may develop into an extremist position*.

Here it is important to underline that what we have called *counterreactions* also may be accompanied by an open mind, well in line with Schmid's understanding of the radical. We nevertheless wish to emphasise the more explicit manifestations of such reflexive openings.

A third phenomenon we will illuminate through some examples is *extra-ideological relations* that seem to have had importance in the trajectories along which our informants have moved.

The three aspects of counterreactions, reflexive openings and extra-ideological relations are fairly *unevenly distributed* in the sub-sections of the report, but their relationship to the occurrence of grievances seems to be what unites them all.

So with these concepts in mind, let us start our comments on the research questions.

*i) What are the main drivers in the trajectories of the various informants toward – or away from - a radical Muslim position?*

*ii) How do inequalities, injustice and grievances – as subjectively perceived – affect the processes of radicalisation?*

Our empirical findings all seem to suggest that a core answer to the first research question is fundamentally related to the second research question. This means that the main drivers in the trajectories of the various informants toward a radical position seem to be the series of grievances emerging from perceived inequalities, injustices and negativity which the informants have met in their lifeworlds. These grievances – which will be shown as a common thread in almost all the comments made below – can be summed up as follows based on findings presented in sections 3.1 and 3.2.

*Grievances:* We explored the emotional ambience of the locations – high-rise housing in almost exclusively working class suburbs with a bad reputation – where most of our informants have grown up. In other words, a feeling that the area in which you live is held to be a *'bad place'* may be seen as one of the first examples of grievances that even a very young child can be assumed to notice. In this setting the racist murder of a 15-year-old (and possibly another murder of a young person also assumed to be racially motivated) in 2001 was shown to have had strong influences on the emotional atmosphere in which several of our informants grew up, as well as for other young people in similar locations. As they grew older, our informants interpreted many less serious incidents– rightly or wrongly – as racist. Growing up in a context of racism in a place where actual racist killings have occurred may be seen as creating an

emotional atmosphere in which considerable grievances and feelings of injustice have emerged. Therefore, location plays an important role as *a resonance board* for development into radicalisation, and as an important example/memory of early stigmatisation.

*Counterreactions:* Gradually the young inhabitants of such locations developed *a counterreaction* that one of them characterised as *'a kind of hatred inside us, hatred of white people'*. In parallel with this, at times there was a tendency to engage in criminal activity, and this was subjectively held to be partly an answer to the lack of availability of jobs for these youths. One informant also spoke of his involvement in crime as a form of *revenge,* meaning revenge for the racism and exclusion he and his friends had experienced.

*Extra-ideological relations:* When we see this section as describing growing up in a larger perspective, we also notice that extra-ideological relations, such as bullying in one case, were shown to be a driver towards crime where prestige and 'power' were attractive forces. The story progresses when our informant was eventually betrayed by his criminal milieu. This was a crucial event in our informant's decision to turn towards religion, and shows how extra-ideological relations interact with more ideologised positions, which may or may not be characterised as 'radical'.

*Reflexive openings:* It is important to notice that 'white people' within the local area, were not included in the statement in which 'white people' were an object of hatred. This also underlines the *internal solidarity* and friendship relations often found in such areas, that Les Back has called 'nationalism of the neighbourhood' (e.g. Vestel, 2016; Back, 1998:240). In a series of earlier projects in multicultural suburbs like these in a Norwegian context, I repeatedly found examples where collectives, friendships and also love relations across cultural, religious and geographical backgrounds among young people, were salient in the emergence of what could be seen as 'hybridised identities' (Vestel 1999, 2004, 2009a, 2009b; Pietersee, 2001; Back, 1998). This implies that the informants subjectively identified with several ethnic identities more or less simultaneously. For example, a 21 year old girl (Miriam) with background from Botswana, who was going steady with a boy of solely Norwegian background put it this way:

> I feel like I am both a little Pakistani, Turkish, Kingston Jamaican, African and Norwegian (laughs). I think that is really good. Marley was half, you know [...] I feel mixed…or…I know who I am and where I come form but…your milieu is also important. (Vestel 2009a:181)[62]

Such a complex experience of self-identity is probably a result of close interaction, friendship and positive relations as these young people grow up surrounded by a wide range of different ethnic groups. The identification with a specific location where such positive relations to a variety of different ethnic groups have developed, is what Back has termed 'a nationalism of the neighbourhood' (Back 1996:47). As hybridised practices represent openings toward several other ethnicities, combining and integrating them into an overall self-identification, they may be seen as alternatives to more polarised worldviews. In such cases the experiences of cross-cultural communities – the forming of a *'community of differences'*, so to speak – became part of a larger repertoire of opportunities, and a clear opening towards other ways of 'being in the world'. Such experiences can therefore be seen as resource that can provide an important reflexive opening for dialogue and for halting or at least reflecting upon the processes of radicalisation (e.g. Vestel 2004).[63]

Until this point in their descriptions of growing up, negativity toward Muslimness or Islam was not yet mentioned

[62] Her reference to her musical hero, Reggae King, Bob Marley, points exactly to the fact that Marley's father was what is termed a 'white Jamaican' while his mother was an 'Afro Jamaican'. He was thus 'half', in Miriam's expression, underlining the similarities to her own feeling of having a (hybridised) 'mixed' identity.

[63] Here it is important to underline that such a 'nationalism of the neighborhood' may also develop in more problematic ways where the 'nationalism' becomes so hard edged that other, often similar, areas are viewed as 'enemies'.

*Grievances:* In Section 3.2, we explored some more central features in the informants' everyday life. As a result of the events of 9/11, and the later terrorist attacks by extremist Muslims in various parts of the world, a *Muslim identity* became a target of increasing *negativity and suspicion*. This negativity and generalised fear are felt to be amplified by *right wing attacks* (see also below). The suspicion is also manifest while meeting ordinary non-Muslims in everyday life, who are exposed to the reports of terrorism and the tendency for coarse generalisations about Muslims in the media. Through such processes *Islam emerges as a general sign that creates suspicion*, and any marker that may indicate being a Muslim becomes the target of critique: not drinking alcohol, not eating pig meat, traditional clothing, wearing a hijab, growing a certain beard, and so on.

Grievances resulting from what we may term *ideologised exclusion* - ideologised because it was directed against Islam and Muslimness - were thus felt in important aspects of our informants' everyday life. Not least, we find several examples of *negativity and suspicion in the young Muslims' workplaces*. For one young man a series of such experiences in workplace– some resulting in the loss of his job – led him to join a milieu that later developed into the extremist group the Prophet's Ummah. Another informant reported that there had been Pegida members in his workplace, who accused him of being responsible – as a Muslim – for the horrific terrorist attack in Nice, France. There were many examples of the informants *being repeatedly stopped by the police*, on very meagre suspicions. This may of course be related to a history of crime, but can also be interpreted as racism by these young people, and also as one more expression of animosity against Islam in the larger context/repertoire of experiences. Lastly, also one of our young Muslim informants expressed fear that extremist Muslims may carry out a terrorist attack in Norway. This adds yet one more element of uneasiness, negativity and fear to the informants' lives, this time from *within* the larger Muslim community. We here see that a series of incidents in our informants' everyday lives from when they were young resulted in feelings of injustice and of grievances as they became older. The role of this series of grievances, particularly the discrimination and negativity encountered in the workplace, may be to increase the feeling of being excluded and not being wanted. Thereby grievances fuel more radical views where exclusion is seen as a repeating pattern and expressing a more encompassing structure, and become seen in an ideologised frame (e.g. Wiktorowicz 2005).

*Counterreactions:* When an informant – after having lost jobs and experienced racism, humiliation and negativity many times – joined what became the Prophet's Ummah, this act was an example of a counterreaction. As we know, the Prophet's Ummah developed into an extremist group that celebrated terrorism carried out by extremist Muslims around the world. Even though our informant dropped out of the group at a certain point, his joining exemplifies how grievances may be a possible driver in a process that at worst ends in an extremist position. Another informant also described how he found he easily got a long row of job offers as soon as he added a European name to his 'Muslim' name, confirming for him the discrimination he felt he had experienced. Such a name change is also a counterreaction.

*Reflexive opening:* When one of our informants expressed fears of being the victim of a terrorist act by extremist Muslims, this is a fear that can be shared by many people in the majority, and other non-Muslims. As a shared fear it has potential for becoming a meeting point between our Muslim informants and the majority and also other non-Muslims, and thereby a point away from a more polarised relationship. In other words, it could be a moment for interventions, for building communities and for critique of an extremist position.

*iii) What role do gender related attitudes play in the processes of radicalisation?*

*Grievances:* In Section 3.3, we explored how our informants experienced criticisms from non-Muslims in relation to gender relations and practices among Muslims and in Islam. Such relations are seen by their critics as exemplifying very conservative versions of traditional gender performances. Here the wearing of *hijab*, and to a much greater degree wearing a *niqab* – easily associated with images of ISIS women in the detention camps in Syria and Iraq – have been salient signs that often elicit strong reactions among

non-Muslims, not least in Scandinavian areas that are well known for feminist attitudes and very liberal views on these matters (e.g. Inge, 2017). Here, a 'monsterising', especially of the male Muslim, has been felt by the informants. Male religious markers, such as certain ways of bearing a beard, for example in combination with the wearing of more traditional clothing, have become associated with extremism. Some of our informants have experienced this as very troubling as they themselves have identified with more moderate positions. This was especially true for one informant who left a criminal career behind after becoming more religious and was aggrieved to find that when he started to grow a beard and wear traditional Pakistani clothing, his appearance aroused more negativity and suspicion than his former 'appearance' as a criminal. In addition, what is perceived as negative attitudes among Muslims toward 'alternative sexualities', or LGBTQ orientations, have been highly criticised and added to the overall critique and negativity experienced by our informants. The role of gender-related attitudes in the processes of radicalisation thus seems to be to generate more grievances in the lives of the informants, as a result of this critique.

*Counterreactions*: Informants, nevertheless have also pointed to what they see as a tendency for Western actors to use the assumed need to 'liberate' Muslim women as a way of legitimating invasions and war against Muslim countries, such as in Afghanistan. This must be seen as a kind of 'counter critique' of such assumptions.

*Reflexive openings:* In line with what is stated above, one male informant also emphasised that Muslim women themselves must be the ones to do the fighting for their own rights, as many Western feminists would agree. This could then be a meeting point for starting a dialogue.

On the other hand, some of our informants expressed highly conservative attitudes toward gender. And for some of them aspects of liberalism in the Norwegian context – especially related to the LGBTQ groups – were felt as shocking (such a world was spoken of as 'chaotic'), as they are also for some actors among the majority. Feminism was for some seen as a sign of no less than the coming of doomsday. This overall picture may thereby show a kind of conservatism that some Muslims share with conservative groups in some segments of the all-Norwegian majority. Such meeting points between similar attitudes may thus be seen as possible bridges to various groups in the majority. In DARE Norway's report on right-wing extremism, there are examples where right-wing radicals explicitly declare agreement with the more conservative practices among Muslims, especially regarding the view that the primary role of women is to take care of children and the home (Vestel, 2020: 51-57). Whether such groups would be able to meet around these questions, is nevertheless, more doubtful, as other aspects of their respective identity and attributes are seen as heavily problematic.

*iv) What role does right wing terror play in the processes of radicalisation?*

*Grievances:* In section 3.4, we explored the role of the two most notorious right-wing terrorist acts in the lives of the informants. As the most extreme act of terror – and indeed one of the most critical events –in Norway in modern times, Breivik's atrocities were designed to create a maximum of fear in the Norwegian public, as an expression of his critique of the multicultural society. In the atmosphere of the time, when extremist Muslims had been responsible for a series of horrific terrorist attacks over the previous decade, the first reaction among the larger public in Norway was to assume that this too was an act of Muslim terror. Reports from some of our informants who were in the vicinity almost immediately after the explosion in the government building recall how they were pointed at; they describe how people accused them for being responsible for the attack due to their appearance as being Muslim. That a terrorist attack by a Muslim was not unexpected is underlined by the fact that one of the young Muslim informants who was pointed at also tells that he fervently prayed that it should not be the act of a Muslim – again pointing to the fear related to the differentiation and tension between moderate and extremist Muslims.

This situation conveyed two important messages to our informants as Muslims. The first is that when such acts of terror happens, people almost automatically tend to suspect that it was done by extremist

Muslims. And with the widespread tendency to generalise, this becomes a heavy burden for young Muslims to bear, even if their attitudes are far from extremist positions. The second message is that the extremist right wing actors are willing to engage in acts of such atrocity to 'get rid of the immigrants' and also the politicians who support the multicultural society. When Manshaus eight years later, attempted to kill a group of Muslims gathering for Friday prayer, the message was similar. Needless to say, both these acts of terror created grievances, fear and feelings of being unjustly treated, including among the young Muslims of this project. The effects of right-wing terror in the processes of radicalisation thus seems to generate more grievances, this time on the basis of plain fear, well in line with the intentions of the terrorist.

*Counterreactions:* After the Manshaus episode the impulse among young Muslims to take to *arms* to be able to defend themselves was a clear expression of despair. Our informants poignantly tell us about how several mosques have responded by introducing guards, which must also be seen as a counterreaction.

*Reflexive opening:* The public condemnation of Breivik's atrocities, the marches where people carried roses (the rose marches) and the speech of the prime minister against such deeds could easily be seen as an overwhelming display of solidarity (Witsøe, 2020). These gestures could therefore be viewed as a convincing opening toward more inclusive dialogues with people of immigrant background generally, and with Muslims in particular. However, several of our informants, on the contrary, complain that the lessons from these events, and also from the racist murder of Benjamin Hermansen, have largely been forgotten. Nevertheless, the possibilities that were created in the aftermath of this act of terror could – at least to some extent – exemplify an opening, and also an important point of reference, where Muslims and non-Muslims could share both anger against the perpetrator and sorrow at the loss of life.

*v) In what ways do macro-, meso- and micro-level social relations interact in the processes of radicalisation?*

*Grievances*: Section 3.5 explores more explicitly the role of various world events in the landscape of tensions in which young Muslims find themselves. As already indicated, in the eyes of our informants, the negativity and even plain aggression against Muslim actors (countries, areas, groups) in the larger world arena are seen as expressions of the war against Islam. But here, as elsewhere in these relations, the situation is complex. From the central marker of 9/11, acts of Muslim terrorism have been a statement to which the first response was George Bush's declaration of the war on terror, initiating the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and a series of retaliatory acts, as counterreactions to Islamist terror.

Several of our informants point to 9/11 as having a special place in their perceptions of the world, and, for some, as a point when their political consciousness was *awakened*, even if they were very young at the time. For some of them, the big question was *why* this had happened, and also why so many Muslims around the world in fact were celebrating it. For some, these world events and wars put many of their problems with getting jobs, and the negativity and suspicion experienced in their daily lives on the micro level into context, seen as expressions of war between the West and Islam. In this way, *events on the macro level interacted and were connected to their day-to-day micro level experiences of negativity and suspicion*. Informants in this section point especially to the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Yemen, and the US use of drones to kill opponents in various parts of the world as examples of the war against Islam. They complained about Norway's membership of the US and NATO alliances, and also mentioned its participation in the Libyan war – where Norwegian planes dropped a large number of bombs – as an example of provocation. The role of these world events in the processes of radicalisation seems to be to confirm and to prove to the informants that there is an ongoing war between the West and Islam, with all the grievances that this implies of death, cruelty and despair.

*Counterreactions:* For some, the grievances pointed out above resulted in what an informant termed 'a hatred against the West', and he compared the US taking over control in countries with a high number of Muslims, to a physical attack on his family. Muslim terror – with 9/11 as a turning point – and the whole

series of terrorist acts that followed, are the most *explicit and ultimate counterreactions* to what is perceived and interpreted – rightly or wrongly – as the West's humiliation, violence and exploitation of Muslims countries, groups and organisations. Through the series of processes mentioned above the informants' *identities* as Muslims were underlined and strengthened and made something to be proud of, as a counterreaction to the evolving stigma of being a Muslim within majority society by holding their identity forth as the opposite, in a logic similar to the old 'black is beautiful' slogan.

*Reflexive opening:* The capacity to see nuance is manifested when one informant insists that he could blame the leaders (Trump, Johnson, Modi) for these things, but not the ordinary people, for example in Norway. In this way attitudes among the broader Norwegian public, which criticise and show resistance toward the political elite could provide a potential meeting point for these young Muslims.

*vi) What role does the Syrian war play in the processes of radicalisation?*

*Grievances:* In section 3.6, we explored the perceptions of the situation when the struggle against Assad's atrocities in the Syrian context evolved. The core grievances here were Assad's treatment of fellow Muslims. The interference of the US and its allies (such as the Kurds) in the further and complex developments of the war, were also becoming perceived as causing further grievances.

*Counteractions:* The emerging resistance to Assad's atrocities made thousands of young Muslims – including some from European countries – travel to Syria to participate in the war where the developments resulted in, as we know, the emergence of IS and what was held to be an Islamic state. Also, there was a view that this war could be seen as a sign of no less than the *coming of doomsday*, when the participants would receive manifold rewards for themselves and for their families. Several of our informants talk about the early hope that IS would develop into a 'perfect' state where the fundamental values and practices of Sharia would be realised. This could also be seen as their being motivated by the hope of building an ideal *countermovement as a reaction to the humiliations, negativity and suspicion* that so many Muslims had experienced in their worlds until then; the Syrian war and IS thus seems to have become something more than just an attempt to beat Assad. When the US and European allies started to interfere, the 'meaning' of the war also became understood within the frame of the war against Islam, especially directed against the existence of IS. It is nevertheless important to mention that at the beginning, the US and several European leaders expressed sympathy with the opposition to Assad.[64] The role that the Syrian war played in the processes of radicalisation seems to have been threefold: first to invite people to fight the atrocities created by the Assad regime; second, to invite Muslims from a wide range of countries to physically engage in the war as it developed further; and third, to function as a channel through which young people were exposed to extremist ideologies and practices of a terrorist Islamist state.

These counteractions then evolved according to three core motives: the fight against Assad; the fight against the West; and the fulfilment of the religious imaginations that this could be the final struggle between Muslims and non-Muslims.

*Extras-ideological motivations:* We also heard a story about how extra-ideological elements, such as divorce, unemployment, homelessness and depression, seemed to have led an informant's friend to seek contact with extremists and end up dying as a suicide bomber. One informant tells how he was shocked

[64] For example, on August 18, 2011 it was reported in the Washington post: "President Obama and European leaders called on Thursday for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to resign, after months of his violent crackdown on protesters. The rhetorical escalation was backed by new U.S. sanctions designed to undermine Assad's ability to finance his military operation. 'The future of Syria must be determined by its people, but President Bashar al-Assad is standing in their way,' Obama said in a written statement. 'For the sake of the Syrian people, the time has come for President Assad to step aside." (retrieved from Wikipedia April 30, 2020).

to find out that some fellow male Muslims were motivated to go to Syria by the expectations of getting female sex slaves. In other words, extra-ideological motivations may even manifest in such a religiously tinged war, such as the Syrian example.

*Reflexive openings:* Our informants also describe their disappointments and bitter critique when IS was revealed to be what they also saw as extremely problematic, unacceptable and immoral. Revelations included: the brutality that manifested in the decapitation of enemies; sexual slavery; Muslims being killed by fellow Muslims; friends of the informants being killed; stories about young folks who went in good faith, but who criticised IS and then were killed or forced to fight by IS. IS is also well known for its particular brutality against Shia Muslims (Napoleoni, 2014:87-88). This brutality and the total dismissal of Shias provided strong motivation for one of the informants who himself was a Shia Muslim; he was on the verge of going to Syria, but to take part in the struggle *against IS.* One informant underlined the importance of a trusted friend who gave important advice (so called 'Nasiha') which stopped him when he was on the verge of going. This underlines the existence of an open-mindedness that Schmid sees as the hallmark of 'the radical', as a contrast to the closedness of the 'extremist' (e.g. Pilkington, 2020). A further argument for not participating in world events such as the Syrian war – physically or virtually – was that it was too emotionally demanding 'constantly updating myself on the horror', as one informant expressed it. But also here, some opening for reconciliation is mentioned when discussing the Syrian war and the tendencies to generalise negative impressions of IS to Muslims in general. Here is mentioned the warning given some years ago by Erna Solberg – today's prime minister in Norway – that the negativity toward today's Muslims, resembled the attitudes toward the Jews during the Second World War, and should similarly be combatted.

*vii) How do the informants themselves relate to the concepts of radicalisation and extremism?*

*Grievances:* In Section 3.7, we explored the reflexivity emerging when the informants themselves relate to the concepts of radicalisation and extremism, as grounded in the fear of Muslim extremism among the Norwegian public, and the more or less explicit assumption that terror is likely to happen.

Several informants point out that words such as 'extremism' have come to be almost automatically associated with Islam and to Muslims. The informants also complain that when a Muslim is involved in terror, it is blamed on the religion and on Muslims as a group. Right-wing terrorists – in contrast – are often reduced to being 'lone wolves', with mental problems, for example due to a difficult childhood, trauma and the like, as in the cases of Breivik and of Manshaus. This is indeed how radical right-wing informants in Norway today themselves tend to explain these examples, while mostly underplaying the ideological positions that these cases also revealed (Vestel, 2020). These assumptions seem to have created even more unease, grievances and despair for all of our informants.

*Counterreactions:* Importantly, it is pointed out by the informants that *states can also be seen as 'terrorists'*, for example: Israel's treatment of the Palestinians; the US drone murders of Anwar-Awlaki and his 16-year-old son by the US; the use of US drones in Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia and Afghanistan; the enormous discrepancy in that 3400 were killed in 9/11 attacks, while 100 000 were killed in Afghanistan; and so on. One informant underlined that he can *understand* the Muslim terrorists in these cases, but also expresses strongly that this is very different from *supporting* them. It nevertheless underlines the intensity of the grievances that these actions create in our informants. Here, a crucial but rarely discussed question asks *for whom* does state violence have legitimacy? One informant states ironically that it is from the Western states that extremist Muslims have learned that they can use violence to obtain political change, and points to Norway's and NATO's heavy bombing of Libya as such an example.

*Reflexive opening:* It is often underlined by the informants that they make a clear separation between radicalisation and extremism (see also Vestel 2016:143-144 for a similar finding). It was not contested that extremism can be understood as the use of violence to obtain political change. In contrast, radicalisation

tends to be held to imply an, often healthy, societal critique and a positive struggle to obtain societal change. There is, nevertheless, a widespread feeling among the informants that many non-Muslims – especially in the radical right wing groups – tend not to see these differences, and instead generalise to such an extent that the difference between the radical and the extremist is blurred (e.g. Vestel 2020). But in so far as such a differentiation is seen, this may function as an opening for dialogue.

*viii) What is the role of extra-ideological relations in the processes of radicalisation?*

In the analyses of several of the sections above, we have also seen – sporadically – situations, events and relationships with direct or indirect influences upon the processes of radicalisation where *no ideological references could be found*. One of the first and perhaps most influential of these relationships is reflected in the type of location where most of the young Muslims have grown up. Structurally, for example, Granbakken – like several similar areas– already had a bad reputation before the immigrant families moved in, as mentioned in Section 1. This is related to *economy*: relatively cheap flats in concentrated areas of high-rise buildings are simply the most affordable for immigrant families with modest or poor income, just as they had been for working class families from the majority in the years before the immigrant families came. If ideology is to be understood as something like a system of ideas – and also emotions, it seems reasonable to add – that orientates the understanding of power relations, the nature of certain interest groups and the legitimisation of the access to resources among these groups, then it is hard to find a clear ideologically rooted reasoning for why working class or immigrant families should be placed in such areas. It is clear that this design is the result of an existing physical-economic structure, but there is no ideologically articulated and declared reasoning saying that 'here, this bad place, is where such people – immigrants, working class – do or should live'. [65]

But in so far that there is already some sort of stigma attached to the location, it may *become more ideologised* as the demography changes, in ways that correspond to the assumed characteristics and status of its inhabitants. It may start out as being seen as a neighbourhood of (working class) people with little money and with social problems. When the immigrant families arrive, the stigma persists but becomes associated with what are seen as strange 'cultural differences' (food, smells, clothes, music, religion, gender relations, ways of being) and also assumptions/discriminations on the basis of skin colour and physical appearance (racism). Then, especially in the aftermath of 9/11 and the following series of Islamist terrorist acts, the stigma extends and attaches itself to the negativity directed against Islam and the Muslims inhabitants.

Such stigmatisation also generates counterreactions, along the lines that Farhad Khosrokhavar writes about regarding the young Muslims in the *banlieues* of the French cities who face a situation that is similar, but in many ways even more problematic:

> Humiliation, frustration, social and economic exclusion, and racism are experienced within an imaginary structure that gives individuals the half-real, half-fictive impression of being without a future, of facing closed doors, in short, a sense of the internalised ghetto. Those who passively endure that situation may fall into criminality or violence on an individual basis, but those who revolt and seek to act do so by *ideologising* their internal experience: they expand their hatred of 'non-Muslims' by adopting a jihadist vision (Khosrokhavar, 2017:17).

In other words, these developments, where originally non-ideologised social problems are transformed and ideologised into an overall imagination where they are seen and felt as one more expression of the war of the West against Islam, the function of these extra-ideological relations is clear: they become media that are subjectively transformed into confirmations of an ideologised world view, that are felt as

[65] The fact that the physical-economic realities have such results may also be discussed as a sort of 'hidden message'. But such an analysis lies beyond the frame of this report.

explaining these relations, and, that simultaneously become an expression of a counterreaction in the shape of the counter-ideology that – at worst – may end in an extremist position of violent jihad.

But the impact of extra-ideological relations (grievances) may also be more indirect, as in the example of one informant who was bullied, then joined a criminal gang and got much-needed prestige (see Koshrokhavar's mark above), but when he was betrayed by his gang had a counter-reaction to this by going through a 're-conversion' to life as a pious Muslim. Even if his transformation seems to have led into a relatively moderate way of practising his religion, it is not unlikely that he could also have ended up in a more radical and even extremist position. In this example, the vulnerability of a victim of being bullied and his disappointment at the betrayal by his former 'brothers in crime' seems to have become the important non-ideological elements leading to such a position.

Vulnerability is also an important theme in the mentioned case described by our informant of a friend whose marriage broke up, became unemployed, homeless and depressed, got in contact with recruiters and ended up as a suicide bomber. Here we do not know if, or eventually how, his despair become ideologised. Nevertheless, it indicates how a vulnerable life situation – probably creating a receptivity to radical messages which reflects the cognitive opening in Wiktorowicz's sense – may have importance in the trajectory toward an extremist position.

Also, the informant who lost her friend, describes her own despair and disappointment at being excluded and not accepted in her workplace and other situations, by non-Muslims. She felt like an alien, expressed in her utterance, 'I am not an UFO', as she put it. She also described the great relief she felt when she found a mosque where she was well received and could become a part of a new community, especially among the female group in this new setting. Here, her original feeling of exclusion is also 'ideologised', as it was so related to her 'Muslimness'. But this was also *combined* with the more fundamental human need for being part of an accepting community. This need must also be seen as an important driver for her joining the friendly group of women in the mosque and getting into a process where her religiosity was revived. Again, we see an interaction between ideologised and extra-ideological drivers in these processes; the sore need for community and support was fulfilled in the more ideologised setting of the mosque, and thereby drove her into a stronger, and more politicised identity as a Muslim.

In the examples above we have seen how grievances that originally were not felt as expressions related to an ideological agency, may become ideologised in the processes of radicalisation.

But there are also important extra-ideological elements, especially in the shape of positive social relations, which may have a salient role in later developments toward a radical position. Several of our informants have pointed to the community and friendship they experienced as they grew up; being one of the 'the Granbakken boys' who played football together and went to the mosque and had fun in the large variety of ways that young people do as they grow up. It is also a well-known truth in the social sciences, that an external stigma, may also create an internal feeling of community, as seen in my own research projects in similar areas over the years (see also, for example, Back, 1998; Alexander, 2000; Beach and Sernhede, 2013; Vestel 1999, 2004, 2009a, 2009b,). *Again, we remind the reader that almost all informants had friends or acquaintances who had travelled to Syria to participate in that war.* Here it is not unlikely that their very friendships, often developed over their 'formative years', and the resulting closeness of the informants to those who went, also had a relatively *autonomous* power – in addition to the more ideologised positions – that created some sort of pressure on our informants to join them.

But for reasons we will discuss more closely below, they refused.

The role of extra-ideological relations in the processes of radicalisation, can here be coarsely summed up as twofold: On the one hand, non-ideologised *grievances* (again) of many kinds – for example regarding life situation, problems in love relationships, losing jobs and housing, being bullied, or being socially

excluded – may become media for counter-reactions that then become *ideologised* and thus part of a trajectory that may end up in a radical – or even extremist – position.

On the other hand, non-ideologised *positive social relations*, such as friendship, love relations, a feeling of belonging to a community, and also the possibility of obtaining prestige, may become important 'pull factors' that then may become ideologised in a trajectory toward a radical or extremist position.

## 5. Conclusions: grievances – an emotional push toward radical or toward extremist positions?

To conclude: the informants have described a long list of deeply felt grievances in which Muslims are victims of aggression, suspicion, humiliation, exclusion, injustice and general 'phobia' in a wide range of contexts. All these grievances seem to build up into *a massive cluster of negativity* that our informants perceived and experienced as being directed against themselves, against their 'Muslimness' and against Islam in general, well in line with what Griffin has called a nomic crisis (see also Wiktorowicz on the role of crisis, 2005). This perceived negativity occurs on two levels. The first refers to relations at the micro/meso level experienced in everyday life as a young Muslim with immigrant background in Norway. The second refers to relations manifesting at the macro level such as transnational world events, including wars, invasions and various kinds of violence imposed by superpowers such as the US and its alliances. The importance of foreign policy, the behaviour of state actors and these world events as motivations behind radicalisation also seems to be noticed to an increasing degree by present day researchers (e.g. McCauley, 2018; Nord Holmer, 2016; Pettinger, 2015/16; Nesser, 2015; Kundnani, 2012; Schmid, 2013; see also Vestel, 2016, 2018).

While we cannot suggest a direct link from these grievances to the processes leading to extremist actions – for example participation in the Syrian war on the IS side, or engaging in or even sympathising with terrorism – we see the sheer volume and variety of negative expressions reported here as making connections to some sort of radicalisation or even extremism, likely. In so far as these assumptions are right, such grievances – both at the everyday level and at the level of world events – may, *for some,* be considered to be the main drivers toward a radical or even extremist position.

An important outcome of the experience of grievances, corresponding with their very importance as 'moving forces' in processes of radicalisation, is some sort of *counteraction* as we have seen in a long row of examples above. And here, a central difference in these counteractions is between the radical position, on the one hand, and the position of the extremist, on the other; the radical – in line with Schmid's (2013) differentiations – will be involved in processes of resistance and protest, inducing moral indignation and a further reflexivity and analysis of the grievances and their patterned structure, and, at the same time, be open for discussion, dialogue and also deeper confrontations, but *without* concluding these deeply political processes by resorting to violence.

The extremist, in contrast, will, in accordance with Schmid's suggestions, share many of these features with the radical, but will also pass the threshold to where violence is used, and at times, even celebrated. In its most extreme versions it will also be accompanied with a 'closed mindset', authoritarian features, and deep disrespect for those considered to be different, 'on the other side', and who are seen to represent what is wrong, as seen from the extreme (!) of the extremist side. This is in line with the mode that Griffin refers to as 'splitting', where the world is indifferently seen in 'either or terms'; black or white; good or evil, also along the lines of Koehler's focus upon 'de-pluralisation' - the reduction of the plurality of alternatives into an either/or position - as characteristic of the extremist position (Griffin, 2012: 92; Koehler, 2014: 125). In other words, *the radical and the extremist tend to share more or less the same grievances, but they develop important differences in their practices and in how they respond to – how they counter-react – to these grievances.*

Why these differences? This leads us to some core questions regarding radicalisation.

## 5.1 Some core questions about a 'radical' versus an 'extremist' position… and some crucial lack of answers

Let us remind the reader of the criteria for the selection of our group of informants. We have aimed to reach informants who have been exposed to radical or extremist ideas, for example by having been close to or part of radical/extremist groups, and/or have close relatives, friends or significant others who have joined extremist milieus, or who have gone to join the combatants (or humanitarian helpers) in the later Syrian conflicts, where we assume they have been exposed further to extremist ideas and practices.

Here it is important to underline that none of the informants – in the time period of our interviews – supported the use of illegitimate violence to obtain political change. We would also – on the basis of our large range of in-depth interviews – argue that they, in accordance with Schmid's (2013) suggestions, qualify to be seen as 'radical', which is also a label they accept for their own position. This implies that the milieu explored might be divided into *two groups.* The first group, to which our informants belong, have not crossed the threshold to an extremist position. They have not travelled to join the war in Syria, not even to engage in humanitarian work, and in that way they have avoided or refused to become part of a social group of actors who represent an extremist position. Some have been *on the verge* of joining actors in the Syrian war, but did not go through with it. The second group in this milieu consists of our informants' *friends, acquaintances, relatives or significant others*. Some of these individuals were closely associated with the Prophet's Ummah at the time when the group explicitly supported Muslim terrorism, or had similar attitudes (but were not affiliated with the group). Others went to Syria to participate in the war or other related activity and were thus closely exposed to extremist ideology.[66] In this way, they stand in contrast to the first group of informants.

So, let us reflect on some emerging questions – which are close to the core questions also articulated in McCauley and Moskalenko (2017:26):

*Why did one group (1) in the milieu – the ones we have interviewed – seem to have become what we here have termed 'radical'?*

*And why did the other group (2) in the milieu seem to have taken, to have searched out or have become more closely associated with an extremist position?*

The background for these questions is that both groups originally belonged to more or less *the very same or similar milieu, meaning that they had much of the same upbringing, and generally experienced most of the same grievances, suspicions, humiliations, negativity and the like*.

To get closer to some possible answers we may get some help from a report published by PST called '*What background have persons who frequent extreme Islamist milieus in Norway before they are radicalised?*' (2016). Here, the survey of what PST have termed 'relevant' milieus are described as follows: they are multiethnic; consist of mostly young men with little education; 61 percent had immigrated to Norway as children or youth; they had been involved in crime; experienced longer periods of unemployment; and had reduced connections to Norway presumably because of little work experience; 17 percent had lost both or one of their parents during childhood or youth. They are assumed to have had a difficult time growing up, and tend to be badly integrated in Norwegian society (PST 2016:2).

The PST does not give the exact number of respondents – Sandberg et al. claim that there were 137 – but they are said to be a representative selection from PST's database of persons who have been considered

[66] This does not necessarily imply that they have adopted an extremist – violence supporting – position. Nevertheless, they must be seen as considerably more likely to find themselves in or closer to such a position.

'relevant' to register (Sandberg et al. 2018). The series of social problems and difficulties listed here may perhaps indicate that the actors who were becoming more positive to an extremist position tend to feel that they have less to lose. The fact that 68 percent of the men in the PST survey (but only 31 percent of the women) had been suspected or convicted for crime before they radicalised, may also indicate that radicalisation or association with extremist positions, for some, could be seen as a way out of crime, or as some sort of atonement (PST 2016:9). Such an interpretation may be taken further by seeing their problematic life situation, lack of integration, the sorrows regarding a difficult childhood and so on, as providing the ideological framing of political extremism with both vulnerability and a special energy or drive. This has parallels to how right wing terrorist, Anders Breivik, tended to see several of his personal grievances – problems - during his early life, more or less as a result of the problems he saw as generated by the globalised, multicultural society (e.g. Borchgrevinck, 2012; Seierstad, 2013).

Could it be that Group 2 roughly shares characteristics with the profiles listed in the PST report? Could issues related to what we have termed 'personal grievances' – e.g. social problems, trauma, some crime, bad integration, little work experience, loss of parents – be the differentiating factors between the two groups, with Group 2 presenting a special drive toward an extremist position? Such a question is unfortunately hard to answer as our knowledge of the characteristics and subjective perceptions of their lives are not sufficient.

The characteristics described in the PST report contrast to what we know about our 15 informants in Group 1. Based on what we know about the social demographic situations of Group 1 informants – including their schooling and employment history and crime records – we can argue that *their political position can hardly be reduced to a sole question of social problems, psychological problems or 'personality'.*

The profile of Group 1 is also in line with the fact that PST admits that it is questionable if the characteristics of social problems and personal grievances give us *the whole picture* and hold it as an open possibility that there is also radicalisation in more resourceful milieus that PST have not been able to reach, as they write: 'Because the research shows little social variation, it is possible that a certain radicalisation occurs in milieus who have more resources than what we see in this survey, without PST being able to register it' (ibid, my translation (PST, 2016: 12). In other words, this may imply that there is a bias to this survey.

Such a different profiling can also be understood in the context of Nesser's and Bjørgo's dynamic continuum of *ideal types* of motivational roles in jihadi extremist groups (Nesser, 2015: 12-18; Bjørgo, 2011: 4-8). Here it becomes clear that Nesser's 'Misfits type' (Bjørgo's 'Socially frustrated youth'), primarily characterised by social problems – that also matches the relatively narrow profile sketched by PST, and that they admit has important limitations – reflects only *one type of motivation*. In Nesser's typology the types characterised as the 'Protégé, and especially, the 'Entrepreneur' – in contrast - are more ideologically oriented, the latter being characterised as being *'religious-political activists who have a strong sense of injustice'*, and are also seen as *'crucial for a terrorist cell to form and take action'* (Nesser, 2015: 13; PST, 2016).

*Could it be that our Group (1) of informants should be seen as closer to the two latter profiles sketched by Bjørgo and Nesser, that is, as more resourceful and ideologically oriented and also who are more reflexive and therefore more reluctant to, for example, go to Syria?*

The potential answers to these questions are further complicated by McCauley and Moskalenko's so called *'two pyramids model'*. The Opinion Pyramid suggests that a radical attitude develops in a non-linear movement from neutrality towards an apex where one feels a personal moral obligation to take up violence in defence of the cause, *but does not do it*. This must be understood as different to the Action Pyramid, which suggests that the development toward behavioural radicalisation at its apex involves actors engaging in and supportive of extremist terror and the killing of civilians (McCauley and Moskalenko

2017:19-20). Here they draw heavily upon social psychological theory which underlines that there is no necessary causality between radical attitudes and violent extremist actions. This matches 'the observation that ninety-nine percent of those with radical ideas never act.' (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2017: 21). Whatever the nature of such differences in development, our group of informants is clearly to be placed somewhere in the former category where 'opinions' dominate and where violent political actions are declined.

*Can we get closer to understand some more aspects of their situation? Are there additional features that may indicate why our informants have formed a sense of belonging to the 'radical' group?*

A possible indication here is that they seem to have been more receptive to a development into what we here have called 'reflexive openings'. If this implies being open for reflection, discussion and various forms of confrontation without resorting to violence, then we are approximately within or very close to the mindset we have spoken of – applying Schmid's term – as 'radical'.

The next question asks *what may create such an opening that may be seen to characterise a radical mindset?*

## 5.2 Reflexive openings – moving away from an extremist position

We may indicate some answers to this question by summing up in a more concentrated form the relationships and experiences that are pointed to by our informants in our empirical sections and that seem to have worked - in a more *concrete, direct and personal way* - as some sort of *bridges* leading our actors in directions *away from a radical or extremist position* to some degree, that is, to experience some sort of opening:

1. The availability of significant others such as friends, imams or other religious authorities who could guide our actors away from participation in extremist milieus.
2. Knowing the tragic story of a friend who after a series of extra ideological social problems – such as a divorce, depression, unemployment, problems with housing - got into contact with extremists and then ended up as a suicide bomber: a kind of history of warning.
3. The personal costs related to 'constantly updating oneself on the horror' of the long series of international conflicts where Muslims and Islam were perceived to be under attack.
4. The sorrow and despair caused by the deaths of friends, relatives and significant others in the war in Syria.
5. The negative emotional reactions to the brutality of IS in a general sense.
6. The negative emotional reactions to IS killing of civilians.
7. The negative emotional reactions to IS killing young Muslims and significant others who had criticised the organisation.
8. IS's especially brutal actions against Shia Muslims.
9. The realisation that IS had killed more Muslims than non-Muslims.
10. The observation that so many of the Syria travellers have a criminal background.
11. The denial of Baghdadi's claim that he himself was the rightful leader of 'all Muslims'.
12. IS insisting that its way of practicing Islam is the only correct way.
13. The moral indignation against the IS practice of taking female slaves for sexual exploitation.

14. The moral indignation over other young Muslims seeing the possibility of having female sex slaves as an important motivation for participation in the Syrian war.
15. The views that young Muslims who had grown up in the West, were not likely to attain enough knowledge about the 'local mentality' to be useful in the Syrian conflict.
16. A feeling of some understanding by national authorities and politicians that has the potential to orientate young people away from radical and even extremist positions.

As indicated in the above list, and as seen in the discussion of reflexive openings in the subsections in Section 3.8, there is a long and complex series of experiences and relationships, where personal morality, knowledge and advice from significant others, recent developments in foreign policy and world events (here, especially the Syrian war), and, not least, emotions seem to have had a role in orienting our actors away from extremist positions. They are thereby all examples of views, experiences, situations, reasoning, knowledge and emotions that may enter as *impulses and arguments* against moving further into extremist positions.

A crucial question then will be *how to facilitate the necessary social relations, situations and circumstances where such 'movements away from' can occur,* taking such a list and the nature of the corresponding reflexive openings – as indicated in the subsections above – as starting points.[67] An important and elementary point here seems to be how to develop a required ability - from societal representatives or similar agents who involve in such interventions - to create the necessary *trust, arenas and an overall atmosphere* where a genuine dialogue can evolve.

Another important question to consider asks whether *we should simply ignore the grievances of our informants in the larger struggle against extremism?* Using McCauley and Moskalenko's basic premise that opinion and action are to be handled as more or less separate trajectories, we found that our informants seem to represent only the 'opinion' part of the trajectories and their 'radicalism' appeared unlikely to cross the threshold into violent extremist action. Again, and in accordance with what has become a classic argument in research on radicalisation, it can be stated that many Muslims – young or old – experience a range of similar grievances, *without* becoming involved in violent extremist actions. But then, the pressing question again arises: *Does this imply that societal authorities should just let such a totality of grievances – with all the destructiveness, fearfulness, trauma, sadness, lack of elementary human respect, despair, aggression and animosity, likely to be generated, also towards the majority society – simply be there without admitting any societal responsibility or showing any will to remedy such a situation?* Judged from the most elementary idea of human rights, the answer to such a question cannot be 'yes'.

And, notwithstanding social psychological theory that claims a weak causality between opinions and actions, it would be very hard to find a good argument that would convincingly deny that strong attitudinal support, rooted in a popular sharing of such grievances, would *not* act to strengthen the will and convictions of those who do support violence and terror against civilians to cross that threshold and actually do it. In other words, the possibility to play upon a long row of actual grievances that a large group of people tend to share cannot be seen as irrelevant in the development of motivations and dynamics that occurs in radicalisation processes where the threshold to political violence against civilians is approached.

In conclusion, we suggest that for any form of dialogue, de-radicalisation or preventing violent extremism initiative to have a chance at success, there must be a sincere willingness on the part of the state (and

[67] More explorative suggestions to how this may be done can only be realised outside the frames of this report.

society) to recognise, address, confront, discuss and try to remedy the core grievances experienced by young Muslims – in this case - in Norwegian society.

## 5.3 Fukuyama's complaints and the 'Age of Identity'?

In our final research question, we asked:

*ix) In what ways can the meaning making, attitudes and worldviews of the radical Muslim position be seen as relating to, confirming or eventually moving beyond the social conditions outlined in the broad characteristics of post-, high-, late- or liquid modernity?*

The motive for posing such a question is related to some recent statements by theorist Francis Fukuyama, who has drawn attention to the seemingly expanding concern with *identity* in today's publics (Fukuyama, 2020). According to Fukuyama, what he calls 'the politics of identity' can be seen as a highly problematic side to the concern with identity:

> Again and again, groups have come to believe that their identities – whether national, religious, ethnic, sexual, gender, or otherwise – are not receiving adequate recognition. Identity politics is no longer a minor phenomenon, playing out only in the rarefied confines of university campuses or providing a backdrop to low-stakes skirmishes in 'culture wars' promoted by the mass media. Instead, identity politics has become a master concept that explains much of what is going on in global affairs. (Fukuyama, 2020: 2)

Fukuyama's claims that identity politics has become a *new paradigm*, is also a critique of such politics that he holds to be splitting societies into *'endless fragmentation'* and dissolving the societal coherence that he sees as necessary for a democratic nation to exist (Fukuyama, 2020: 15). He further states that it is the processes related to the rapid economic and social change, created by globalisation, that have enabled demands for recognition on the part of groups that once were invisible to mainstream society. In other words, his diagnosis seems to be finely in line with our sketch of a 'nomic crisis' where the large 'wall of grievances' that our young Muslims informants have described and experienced, are indeed pushing them into a need to admit, recognise, claim and to defend their identity as Muslims.

At the same time Fukuyama – paradoxically, we may add – recognises that identity politics also has its *origin in important societal injustices*. He mentions, for example, a long list of groups where identity politics are manifest, and also *needed,* we may add: the recent Black Lives Matter movement; Me Too groups; feminists and women's liberation groups; the old Civil Rights movement; Native Americans; working class groups in various areas – for example the Rust Belt supporters of Trump; various groups of immigrants; gay men and women; the disabled; transgender groups; and so on. Fukuyama recognises all these as groups to which injustice has been done, and that he sees as having good reasons to fight for their rights. He writes: *'…there is nothing wrong with identity politics as such; it is a natural and inevitable response to injustice'* (Fukuyama, 2020: 7).

In other words, on the one hand he holds forth that the concern with identity and the engagement in identity politics are something unwanted, destructive, and to be avoided. But, on the other, he also states that it is 'a natural and inevitable response to injustice'!

In our explorations of the lives of young Muslims in today's Norway, we have found an almost overwhelming list of grievances that both 'objectively' and subjectively are experienced as directed against their Muslimness and Islam in general. Respondents describe how the *identity of being a Muslim* is at the core root of their sense of injustice, due to a combination of factors. The links drawn between Islam and terrorism as well as what many would term 'illiberal' attitudes towards gender, have together created a perception about what it means to be a 'Muslim' in today's society in Norway. Like in the

examples that Fukuyama himself points to above, the reactions to those grievances by the young Muslims in this report may indeed be understood as 'a natural and inevitable response to injustice'. And as such – as in the examples mentioned by Fukuyama – it should not be ignored. This points to the conclusion that identity politics in today's world simply *cannot be avoided*, *nor ignored*. And if the eventual problems with such 'identity politics' – which in some ways must be seen as real – are to be avoided, the only way to handle that paradox, must, in some way or another, be to handle *both* the necessities of identity politics *and* the problems of fragmentation that they eventually create. But to flesh out the possibilities, urgencies and guidelines to realise such a task must necessarily be seen as a *project on its own*, related to *policy on several levels* and in a very broad sense.

The focus upon and the quest for identity may be seen as an unsurprising *reaction* to a societal development where *individualisation* has been seen as a core characteristic in post-, high-, late or liquid modernity, well in line with, for example, Bauman's analysis (Bauman, 2000, 2007; Griffin 2012). Against such a background, the feeling of longing for *community and an identity that to a large extent is collective* is highly understandable. And in the societal state of globalisation where polarisation charges the quest for identity with the energy of power struggles, and at times even results in terror and plain violence, perhaps a better name for the present state could be the *Age of identity*? In that case, our Muslim informants must be seen to be well in tune with the 'zeitgeist'.

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# 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 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hassan | 25 | unclear | Completed post-secondary vocational training | Full time | Morocco & Norway | married | male | Muslim | high | Own flat | 5 |
| Nadia | 32 | Iraq | University student | Lots of experience | Iraq & Norway | single | female | Muslim | high | n/k | n/k |
| Einar/ Abdullah | 31 | Norway | Secondary school | Full time | Majority Norway | single | male | Muslim convert | high | n/k | n/k |
| Abdi | 30 | n/k | n/k | Full time | Norway & Somalia | married | male | Muslim | high | Own flat | 2 |
| Frank | 31 | Norway | Secondary school | Full time | Majority Norway | Lives with partner | male | Muslim convert | high | Own flat | 4 |
| Osman | 22 | n/k | Completed university | Full time | Pakistan & Norway | single | male | Muslim | high | n/k | n/k |
| Omar | 26 | n/k | Completed post graduate | Full time | Syria & Norway | single | male | Muslim | high | n/k | n/k |
| Gulam | 30 | n/k | Sec. school | Full time | Pakistan & Norway | single | male | Muslim Shia | high | n/k | n/k |
| Anwar | 30 | n/k | Completed university | Full time | Pakistan & Norway | ? | male | Muslim | high | n/k | n/k |

| Name (pseudonym) | Age | Country of Birth | Education | Employment | Ethnicity | Family status | Gender | Religion | Religiosity | Residential status | No. in household |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ali | 27 | n/k | Completed post-secondary vocational training | Full time | Morocco & Norway | married | male | Muslim | high | Own flat | |
| Zakir | 27 | n/k | Completed post graduate vocational education | Full time | Pakistan & Norway | married | male | Muslim | high | n/k | 4 |
| Alam | 35 | n/k | Completed post graduate education | Part time | Pakistan & Norway | married | male | Muslim | high | Own flat | 3 |
| Aziz | 33 | n/k | Dropped out of Secondary education | unemployed | Pakistan & Norway | Divorced, new partner | male | Muslim | high | Own flat | 2 |
| Imran | 33 | n/k | Dropped out of Secondary education | Full time | Pakistan & Norway | Divorced, new partner | male | Muslim | high | Own flat | 4 |
| Aisha | n/k | Afghanistan | University student | Part time | Afghanistan & Norway | single | female | Muslim | high | n/k | n/k |