

CONRAD

Constructive analysis on the attitudes, policies and programmes that relate to “radicalisation”

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Axis 5: Major societal challenges





NETWORK PROJECT

CONRAD

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Contract - BR/165/A4/CONRAD

FINAL REPORT

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Published in 2019 by the Belgian Science Policy Office

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De Backer, M., Aertsen, I., Bousetta, H., Claes, E., Dethier, M., Figoureux, M., Moustatine, A., Nagui, F., Van Gorp, B. & Zouzoula, A. **Conrad – Constructive analysis on the attitudes, policies and programmes that relate to “radicalisation.” Final Report.** Brussels: Belgian Science Policy Office.

2019 – 117 p. (BRAIN-be – BR/165/A4/CONRAD – Belgian Research Action through Interdisciplinary Networks)

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ABSTRACT

From the state of the art on “radicalisation”, the only thing we can say with a relative degree of certainty is that the life-paths of known terrorists and the life-worlds of people at risk of “radicalising” differ to such an extent that no single explanatory model suffices. The fight against contemporary terrorism and jihadism has become a “wicked problem” for which no other solution exists than a radical re-framing of the phenomenon itself (De Graaff, 2017:23). This objective is what the CONRAD project aims to achieve: to develop alternative discourses and approaches for *thinking* of or *talking* about “radicalisation.” From literature study, policy analysis, framing analysis and field research in Brussels and Verviers between 2017 and 2019, this report concludes that the term “radicalisation” is problematic both in the public debate and as a scientific tool; it is unclear what it refers to. Furthermore, this report shows that this terminological unclarity has caused policy-makers to deploy myriad programmes with legion priorities. The interplay of policy-makers, media, civil society, security actors and researchers on the topic of “radicalisation” is experienced by vulnerable and stigmatised groups as a “radicalisation machine”. The counter-radicalisation policies and initiatives may have counterproductive effects.

“Radicalisation”; policy analysis; framing analysis; action research; vulnerable youth; radicalisation machine; counter-productive effects

1. INTRODUCTION

Whether in the media, research texts, policy documents, or programmes related to “radicalisation” in civil society, we see that different terms are often used interchangeably to denote violent, radical or religious extremism, violent or non-violent “radicalisation,” “radicalism,” terrorism, jihadism, etc. A remarkable number of policy documents neither attempt to distinguish between these popular terms nor to define them (e.g. Belgian Senate 6-205/1; Belgian Senate 54 1752/008; Council of the European Union, 2005). When talking about “radicalisation,” commentators, policy-makers and researchers refer to a process in which individuals gradually embrace radical ideas and which eventually results in extremist violence. However, in many policy and research documents it is unclear whether (the willingness to engage in) violence is a necessary condition to talk about “radicalisation.” In some publications the non-violent process towards this state is also dubbed “radicalisation” (Mc Cauley and Moskalkenko 2008; Reinares et al. 2008; Schmid 2013; Vidino 2010).

The same diversity in the use of terms can be noticed when analysing policy documents, thus reflecting the complexity of the phenomenon as well as the different perspectives through which it can be understood. For instance, in a 2005 communication published by the European Commission, “radicalisation” is referred to as “the phenomenon of people embracing opinions, views and ideas which could lead to acts of terrorism as defined in Article 1 of the Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism” (COM 2005: 2). However, the 2002 Framework Decision does not explicitly define what “radicalisation” is. It specifies that each member state must take the necessary measures regarding a series of nine intentional acts which are considered as terrorist offences and then goes on to list these nine acts. What is defined here then is terrorism since the fight against “radicalisation” and its prevention originate in the fight against terrorism. Even though, in these past years, preventing “radicalisation” has become a field, ranging from social to security policies, policy documents have made no meaningful progress in better defining the phenomenon. This proves that “radicalisation” is still widely considered as a predisposition to terrorism rather than as a phenomenon that also reflects the vulnerabilities within our present-day societies.

Although Europe has been confronted with cycles of political violence and terrorism for quite a long time, a structured public policy response aimed at preventing processes of “radicalisation” and extremist violence has only started to develop relatively recently. However, it would be wrong to say that public policy has ignored the kind of terrorism and political violence that occurred throughout the 20th century. There is a growing consensus among experts that the political violence in recent years, especially of a jihadi nature, has triggered the elaboration of more nuanced and complex policy-approaches (Vidino and Brandon 2012). This conflation of various aspects of “radicalisation” can be problematic. For instance, the aim of the British PREVENT programme is to “stop people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism” (Home Office 2009:80). This prevention programme clearly places the facts of being a terrorist and supporting this kind of behaviour on equal footing. Similarly, the AIVD, the Netherlands’ domestic intelligence agency, states that its role is to monitor “radicalisation” leading to terrorist violence, but also claims to be equally concerned about “forms of non-violent radicalisation which could severely disrupt society” (AIVD 2007:10) (see further in the policy analysis).

Quite some studies have been undertaken in recent years to determine the root

causes of “radicalisation,” the one more empirically-based than the other. Colaerts (2017:16; our translation) adds the following:

[T]he public and political debate is losing itself in monocausal explanations for Jihadi terrorism. One school is searching causes for the current gulf of violent extremism primarily in Islam, whereas the other looks at feelings of injustice. There are two different schools in the research as well. One school emphasises political and religious ideology, the other focuses on contextual factors such as local socio-economic circumstances.

At present, the only thing we can say with a relative degree of certainty is that the life-paths of known terrorists and the life-worlds of people at risk of “radicalising” differ to such an extent that no single explanatory model suffices. The battle against contemporary terrorism and jihadism has become a “wicked problem” for which no other solution exists than **a radical re-framing of the phenomenon itself** (De Graaff, 2017:23).

This ambitious objective is what the CONRAD project aims to achieve: to develop alternative discourses and approaches for talking about the controversial topic of “radicalisation,” i.e. alternative ways of *thinking* or of *talking* about “radicalisation.” The CONRAD team regards these discourses as “alternative” in the sense that (1) they provide more nuanced perspectives compared to the dominant approaches, (2) they are based (partly) on empirical work rather than desktop research, (3) they give a voice to socially excluded groups and (4) they constitute a power-critical analysis of the dominant approaches to “radicalisation.” We adopt a critical stance towards the dominant use of the term “radicalisation” because we believe the term potentially reinforces the stigmas and stereotypes associated with vulnerable groups. This is why we have chosen to place the term between quotation marks.

About the term and topic “radicalisation” we want to emphasise at this point, firstly, that the fieldwork data are not used as a means by which to make objective statements about reality, but rather to collect life-world experiences and perceptions, thus showing how powerful institutions and discourses are experienced in stigmatised, so-called high-profile settings such as Molenbeek and Verviers. Secondly, the CONRAD team wishes to continue to use quotation marks, in order to signal the problematic nature of the “radicalisation” concept (see 4.1.1.). We believe “radicalisation” to be unidimensional, unclear and reductive since it attempts to grasp a complex phenomenon by way of a single container concept. Moreover, it is stigmatising towards certain social groups, and is generally used in the public debate without much scientific evidence or consensus regarding its validity. Indeed, our team wishes to distance itself from this dominant discourse, backed by policies, programmes and research projects.

In order to do so, the CONRAD project deploys four methodologies: (1) **a thorough study of the existing literature** which has mapped the gaps in our understanding of the phenomenon, methodological weaknesses in the existing research as well as problematic assumptions in much of the governmental approaches and some of the scientific approaches related to “radicalisation,” (2) an **inductive framing analysis** at the Institute of Media Studies (KU Leuven—Institute of Media Studies) which shows the most dominant problematising and non-problematising frames used in the public debate (tv, written press, social media, scientific debate), (3) a **sociological and discursive analysis of policy**

approaches to “radicalisation” on a European, federal, regional and local level, conducted by KU Leuven—Leuven institute of Criminology and ULg—Centre for Ethnicity and Migration Studies, and (4) **participatory action research** in deprived and stigmatised areas in **Brussels** (D’Broej and Odisee) and **Verviers** (Terrain d’Aventures, CRVI, ULg) which provides an insight into how “radicalisation” is experienced and talked about by local actors (young people, youth workers and other professional groups). Field research focused on the areas along the Canal in Brussels and the neighbourhood Hodimont in Verviers (Figure 1).

Field research included interviews, focus groups and other research activities with local professionals as well as with vulnerable groups. With “vulnerable” we refer to the fact that these individuals and groups live in situations of social exclusion, suffering multiple harms from global transitions.

Molenbeek/Canal zone (Brussels)

Odisee University College
D’Broej vzw

Hodimont (Verviers)

Université de Liège
Terrain d’Aventures
CRVI

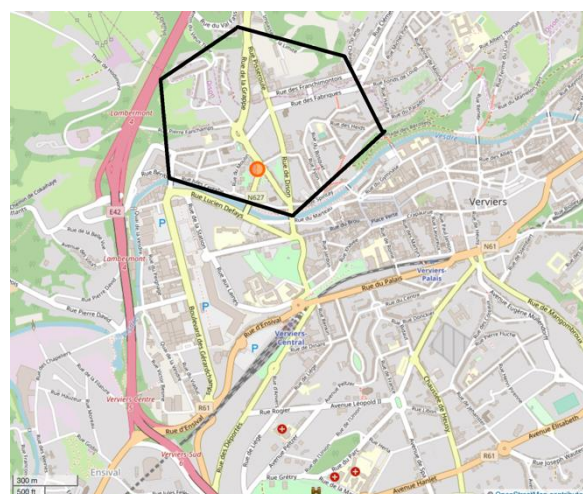
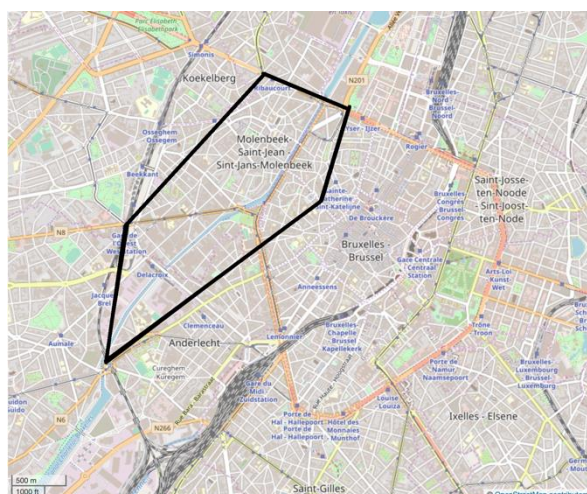


Figure 1: Canal Zone in Brussels and Hodimont in Verviers (Source: Open Street Map)

Within the CONRAD research, these levels of analysis resonate since they show how “radicalisation” is used, experienced and framed in media, policy, research and among vulnerable groups in stigmatised neighbourhoods. Many commentators in the public debate talk about these local sites without being very familiar with what takes place on the ground. We argue that the most powerful actors in the institutional apparatus, namely the media and policy-makers, use discourses that produce powerful (negative) effects in local communities. Due to decades of stigmatisation, injustice and discrimination, local actors in turn distrust these perceived outsiders which renders conversations (including the well-intentioned ones) about “radicalisation” difficult. By bringing these viewpoints together, the CONRAD team hopes to introduce some much-needed nuance in the debate on “radicalisation.”

To structure the fieldwork and help analyse the data, the CONRAD team has adopted a conceptual framework (see Figure 2) which is based on an exercise in reflection of a group of youth workers in Brussels, following the departure of young people to Syria and the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels. It is based on the hypothesis formulated by a group of youth workers that “radicalisation” is intensively related to (young) people’s decreasing **resilience**, caused by global **transitions** (macro-level) and the way in which these intersect in the **life-worlds** of local residents, causing social **vulnerability**, everyday harm and multiple injuries (micro- and meso-level). Contrary to the individualised, monocausal accounts in much of the “radicalisation” research, however, the CONRAD team applies this same conceptual framework to the macro-level. Indeed, “radicalisation” should also be understood as a phenomenon taking place in larger collectives, as a result of global transitions causing vulnerabilities in society at large, among state and non-state actors. Social vulnerability is a term which emerged in social ecological theory and hazard and disaster research. It refers to a “set of characteristics of a group or individual in terms of their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural hazard. It involves a combination of factors that determine the degree to which someone's life and livelihood is at risk by a discrete and identifiable event in nature or society” (Blaikie et al. 1994:9). In line with Schmid’s (2013) definition of “radicalisation,” we argue that it should be considered an individual or group process that occurs when normal practices of dialogue are abandoned. It consists of multiple processes, often simultaneously, in which subordinate groups move away from the mainstream, views of the majority population harden, and actions or reactions of the state become more stringent.

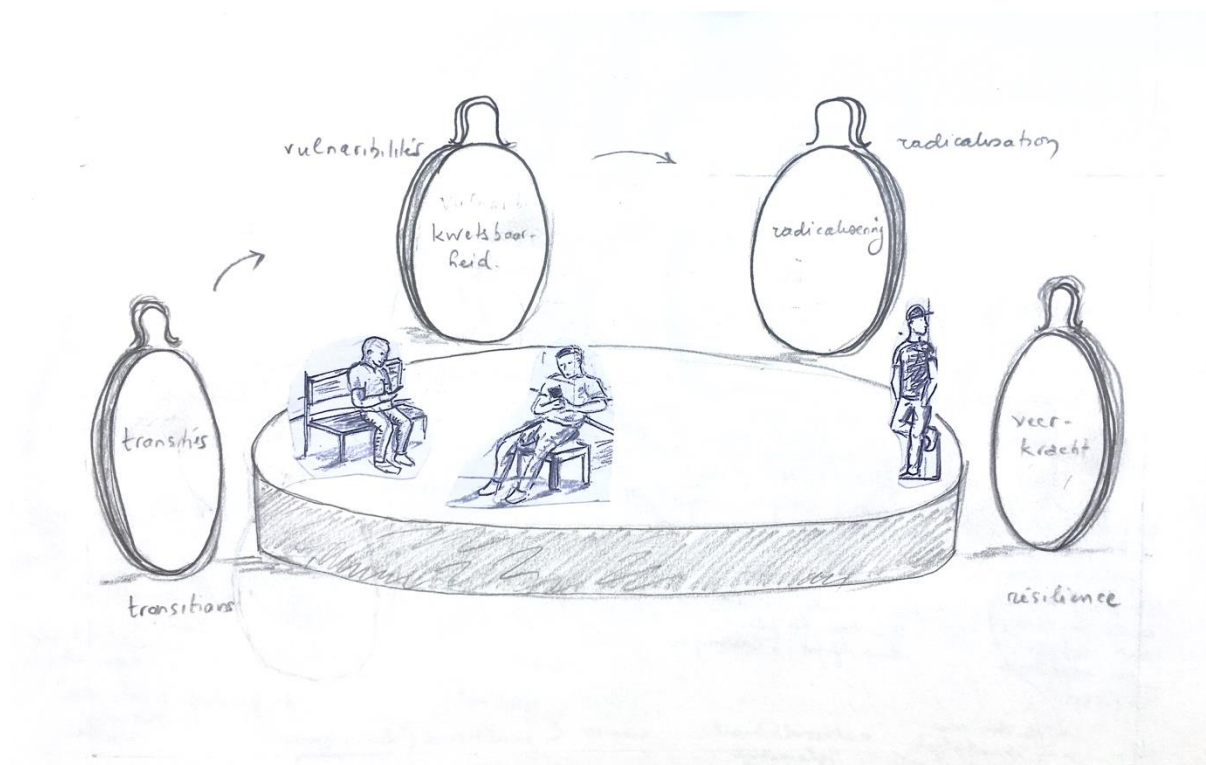


Figure 2: The initial central concepts in the CONRAD project

In this report we show that “radicalisation” is problematic as a concept and as a scientific tool for multiple reasons: (1) it assumes a linear process from religiosity, to orthodoxy, to non-violent radicalism, to extremist violence. This “conveyor belt model” is, however, a myth. From the study of the lives of known violent extremists we know that there is no single extremist profile, nor is there a single trajectory to this type of violence. (2) The concept refers almost only to the individual level, whereas it becomes increasingly clear that “radicalisation” resonates with collective processes. (3) It is a term that stigmatises particularly because it has almost entirely been reserved for Islamic “radicalisation”. (4) The term discredits genuine political engagement or indignation—people with grievances about experiences of injustice are being told to “deradicalise” rather than that they are taken seriously and recognised. (5) The “radicalisation” concept justifies questionable security strategies which engage in counterterrorism pre-emptively, that is, when nothing illegal has yet taken place. (6) The study of the root causes of “radicalisation” in the last 10 to 15 years has mainly yielded dissensus. As a result, we argue that this may relate to the unsustainability of the term itself. Its gaze is simultaneously too narrow and too wide.

Unfortunately, the problematic nature of the concept and the doubts whether there is a homogeneous and unique phenomenon we can call “radicalisation” have not stopped local, national and supranational authorities to develop policy approaches. Our analysis of the EU-level shows that also EU-actors experience a definitional challenge and because of this difficulty develop myriad programmes with legion priorities—we call it a bazooka-like tactic, because the EU-approach penetrates nearly every aspect of life and it that sense seems to fire a canon at a mosquito.

In the public debate, as our inductive framing analysis shows, 12 frames are used to talk about “radicalisation”. These images either see “radicalisation” as a problem (4 out of 12

frames) or not (8 out of 12). Interestingly, when confronting these frames with the state of the art, we see that only half of the frames are scientifically supported. Two frames that resonate with the dominant policy approaches are also the ones most heavily criticised in the literature.

Looking at the terrain, the term “radicalisation” is sensitive. From focus groups and interviews in Brussels with vulnerable young people we can conclude that the term is understood by the latter as referring both to a positive commitment to religion and a negative, destructive commitment to violence. This is experienced as an injustice since terrorist attacks in the name of Islam have cast a dark shadow over their own quest for meaningfulness, spirituality and authentic values. Furthermore, the term also refers to the dominant, stigmatising discourse, to the traumatic experiences of Molenbeek inhabitants after the attacks in Paris and Brussels and to the effects this has had on their life-worlds. Lastly, young people believe that the term “radicalisation” is also a symptom of an underlying illness within broader society, an aspect they feel is underappreciated in the public debate.

From the field research in Verviers, and particularly from the study of the social ecology and the history of Verviers, we conclude that there is no single key to understanding the “radicalisation” of young people. The individual cases under study mobilise various personal factors such as family, relationships, religion, ideology etc. Therefore, we argue, “radicalisation” should be considered as a peculiar modality of a larger phenomenon, namely the biographical intentional break with the social and political order.

Targeted and vulnerable communities experience government policies with regard to “radicalisation” as a machine. In our metaphor, the “radicalisation machine” has parts (policy-makers, researchers, media, civil society, security actors) which move according to mechanical rules and which aren’t conscious of their interaction with the other parts or their effects on the outside world. As a whole, the machine is characterised by the fact that it is exclusively concerned with wielding its power and consolidating its further existence. In other words, the machine is blind, thoughtless and only focused on survival. Also youth work organisations and researchers are a part of this machine—the challenge for them is to acknowledge its nature and to liberate themselves from it.

Both in the public debate and in some research, ecological assumptions are made which connect certain environments such as Hodimont in Verviers and Molenbeek in Brussels to the phenomenon of “radicalisation”. These areas are then called “jihadogenic”—they produce or generate “radicalisation” and “jihad”. However, these assumptions are challenged by our findings. The description of these urban neighbourhoods as deprived, dense and diverse areas also fails to capture the dynamic and numerous ways in which young people respond to their own living conditions, and the ways in which they manage to survive and even thrive despite difficult living circumstances.

We recommend opposing any strategy conflating – even indirectly – youth work with anti-radicalisation. Working with vulnerable young people should not be done under the guise of a security agenda but simply because young people are inherently worth it.

We recommend improving dialogue, partnership and collaboration within the youth sector so that youth workers share more convergent visions and procedures. All too often, the very basic idea of what constitutes radical behaviour and what needs to be done

professionally to assist youngsters at risk, differs between institutions located within the same urban territory.

We recommend increasing the institutional completeness of youth work organisations (i.e. recognised youth centres or more hybrid organisations) with due consideration for the existing needs at neighbourhood level.

We recommend an investment in social and psychological support for youth workers. Youth workers are often caught in a web of multi-level vulnerabilities. As vulnerable workers, they often struggle within vulnerable environments for the sake of vulnerable youngsters. In addition to the insufficient level of funding of youth institutions, the very demanding nature of their job weakens the stability and resilience of their workforce which often results in broken professional careers and professional struggles due to an overload of work.

We recommend offering youngsters more opportunities for internal exchange with legitimate and knowledgeable facilitators (e.g. to discuss the place of religion in public and personal life) and external contacts with other social environments (nationally, internationally but also within the city).

We recommend a critical parliamentary discussion about (1) the blurred boundaries of the legal framework of security actors who engage in anti-terrorism pre-emptively, (2) the importance of professional secrecy for frontline practitioners and the risks of shared professional secrecy in the local integrated security cells (LIVC-Rs), (3) the ways in which suspected “radicalised” people are added to black lists nationally and internationally and how this harms their civil rights and their privacy, (4) the myth of collaboration and the multi-agency approach due to the inherent power imbalance between vulnerable groups, frontline organisations on the one hand and state and security actors on the other, and (5) the possible counterproductive effects of counter-radicalisation policy.

Finally, we recommend to stop using the term “radicalisation”. Instead we propose to use the term “political violence” or to only talk about “the preparation and execution of terrorist attacks.”

The structure of the report is as follows: in the following chapter, we state the objectives and research questions of the CONRAD project, engage in a thorough analysis of the existing literature and present the conceptual framework. In the third chapter we introduce the methodologies used in the project¹. The fourth chapter contains some of the most important findings of the project as well as a set of recommendations to a variety of publics. In the remainder of the report we give an overview of the valorisation activities undertaken in the previous two years and of the texts submitted for publication in a scientific journal and those to be published in book form.

¹ We have also negotiated and written an ethical framework for the field research, the transfer of data to the other team members, the storage of data, the interpretation of data and the eventual dissemination of the analyses. This ethical framework is not presented in this final report due to a lack of consensus regarding the content and meaning of this framework.

2. STATE OF THE ART AND OBJECTIVES

2.1. Objectives and research questions

Instead of focusing too narrowly on the processes leading to “radicalisation,” the CONRAD team sees great promise in utilising a multi-level (micro, meso, macro) analysis, which focuses on the various ingredients that may contribute to violent “radicalisation.” The team also adopts a critical stance about the concept itself. “Radicalisation” is not only an empirical, “real” phenomenon but also a mindset, a media story, a political discourse. As a social construction it has a real impact on the terrain. This is an effect we are particularly interested in. Furthermore, we do not consider “radicalisation” as merely an individual process but also regard it as a collective reality. In this respect it is interesting to notice that the amount and intensity of terrorist attacks in Western Europe is on the decline, whereas the “radicalisation” discourse, arguably, is still on the rise. Our team advocates a deconstruction and reframing of the dominant use of the term “radicalisation,” as it also appears in some of the scientific literature, by studying the effects of that discourse on areas affected by it.

As a result, a set of CONRAD research questions is formulated:

- 1) What does the study of the existing literature teach us about “radicalisation” as a concept?
- 2) How is “radicalisation” framed in the public debate and approached in (European) policy?
- 3) How is the phenomenon understood and experienced by vulnerable groups in Brussels and Verviers?
- 4) What are the characteristics of the so-called “jihadogenic” spaces of Brussels and Verviers?
- 5) Which alternative discourses can be developed to talk about “radicalisation” and how can these be useful for civil society and public bodies?

2.2. State of the art

2.2.1. Phases, triggers and types

The term “radicalisation” refers to a process. For analytical purposes, many researchers distinguish between phases in this process, which is impacted by a series of causal factors depending on the phase the individual is currently in.

An often-cited example is Moghaddam’s (2005) “staircase to terrorism,” which indicates a series of psychological phases. The process starts with the experience of injustice, which may trigger a reaction in some individuals to address this experience. In a second phase, feelings of anger and aggression are harboured. The third phase is marked by the acknowledgement of the morals of a terrorist organisation, which precedes the fourth phase: membership of a terrorist organisation. In Moghaddam’s model, the actual act of violence or terrorism is the fifth and final step of the staircase. This model is echoed by Feddes et al. (2016) who speak of four phases: openness, exploration, membership and action. Borum (2011), similarly, discerns four successive psychological stages: (1) strong personal grievances about the current situation, (2) resentment and perception of injustice, (3) externalisation and projection on a certain social group, (4) demonising of that group. Sageman (2004) identifies four stages including (1) moral outrage, (2) generalised

interpretation of events, (3) resonance with personal experience and (4) mobilisation through networks. Glees and Pope (2005) speak about a *conveyor belt* from Islamism to terrorism.

According to Ponsaers et al. (2012), the first phase is one in which the individual's social context and environment plays a role, as well as subjective factors such as relative deprivation, discrimination and the perceived threat to social identity (see also Reinares et al. 2009). Interestingly, these authors point out that the first phase of "radicalisation" has relatively little to do with individual factors such as psychological problems and subjective perceptions of individual victimhood. Rather, social identity (Tajfel et al. 1970) and ideology play major roles in this phase, especially when a person feels that a particular group identity is under threat, thus reinforcing in-group bonds and out-group adversity. The latter building blocks are instrumental in creating a black and white world-view, by dividing people into neat "us" or "them" categories.

In a second phase, more impact is generated by group processes such as "group polarisation" (McCauley and Moskaleiko 2008), which refers to the phenomenon that ideological and emotional topics discussed in a group context generate polarisation, i.e. smaller groups with more moderate opinions are drawn into more extreme positions because they feel that they would otherwise be perceived as weaker and less influential. The extreme opinions shared within the group also contributes to the group's social isolation. In this phase, the main production of the extremist mindset takes place, including (1) the belief that information coming from outside the in-group is fake, (2) black-and-white thinking, (3) social distancing from the out-group, (4) feelings of superiority and (5) dehumanising the other, in order to be able to engage in violence towards them (Örell 2017).

Contrary to these authors, some researchers argue that the image of a process or "staircase" is too linear to capture this complex phenomenon. Mc Cauley and Moskaleiko (2008) consider a pyramid shaped model, with "radicalisation" as the bottom level, extremism as the middle and terrorism as the top level. Below this bottom level they also identify a broader layer of citizens sympathising with these radical ideas but who do not condone the use of violence. Mc Cauley and Moskaleiko's levels coincide with three phases of recruitment: "spotting," "indoctrination" and "completion."

Hafaz and Mullins (2015) adopt the image of a puzzle comprising four pieces or components (grievances, networks, ideologies and a supporting social environment), which are greatly interdependent. "Grievances" can derive from economic marginalisation, cultural alienation, victimhood, traumatic incidents, etc. "Networks" refers to the social relations that can socialise a person into having extreme or radical ideas. 'Ideologies' are the stories that individuals construct to give meaning to the world, and which may be both religious and political in nature. "Supporting environments" are physical and virtual settings that can bring a person into contact with radicals. Sageman (2008), similarly, considers four non-sequential elements: (1) feelings of moral injustice, (2) interpretation of these feelings, (3) personal reality of the individual, (4) online and offline group dynamics. Between these models some elements or phases clearly overlap (injustice or grievance, for instance) but there are also some serious divergences. This probably indicates the fact that such a process is too complex to account for with a simplified model.

Another way to look at "radicalisation" is through the occurrence of "trigger events," which might be instrumental in urging individuals from one phase to the next. These trigger

factors, we could claim, are more punctual and happen against the backdrop of more structural causes. Ponsaers et al. (2010) distinguish *push factors* as those that lead an individual to start the process of radicalisation (perceived relative deprivation, repression, discrimination, loss of social identity...) and to continue down that road, whereas *pull factors* are mostly related to group dynamics and recruitment (online as well as offline). In this regard, several of these factors or trigger events should be seen as catalysts rather than causal factors. Crenshaw (1981) also argues that a more structural breeding ground for “radicalisation” should be distinguished from proximate and immediate triggers such as violence against members of the in-group, outrageous acts, police brutality, contested elections, provocations or compromising speeches.

Feddes et al. (2016) distinguish a set of different personality types prone to “radicalisation,” each linked to certain triggers: (1) identity-seekers are struggling with a sense of belonging and looking for social connection, (2) justice-seekers are drawn in by the perception of injustice and are looking to set this straight, (3) sense-seekers have usually experienced a personal crisis and are trying to get a grip, (4) sensation-seekers are looking for adventure and excitement. In her study of young women who have travelled to Syria, Noor (2016) finds that these women share a few characteristics (difficult family situation, cultural pressure, lack of stability, previous “frivolous” behaviour, low level of education), but they can also be organised into three categories: naïve, idealistic and ideological.

2.2.3. Root causes

In his meta-study, Victoroff (2005) analyses various theories that claim to explain the process of “radicalisation.” Remarkably, none of these theories can clearly identify or explain the basic causes of “radicalisation.” Theories that nevertheless do offer such explanations can be ordered according to various characteristics. Ponsaers et al. (2010) distinguish between theories that refer to specific characteristics of individuals or groups, theories that refer to subjective perceptions and justifications employed by “radicalising” individuals or groups and theories that are connected to the contextual causes of “radicalisation.”

Miller and Selig Chauhan (2017) order these theories according to monocausal axes: (1) geopolitics, (2) the Internet, (3) social factors such as relative deprivation and exclusion, (4) local context, (5) group factors such as social networks, group dynamics, the feeling of belonging, family and status, (6) individual factors such as mental health, personality traits, criminality, (7) religion and (8) emotions, experiences and identity. It has become clear, however, that no single monocausal theory will ever be able to grasp the full picture of so complex a phenomenon as “radicalisation.”

In the following section we have opted for an approach along five axes: (1) the socio-economic, (2) the (geo)political, (3) the psycho-pathological, (4) the religious, and (5) the personal and affective.

2.2.3.1. Socio-economic

According to Victoroff (2005) a substantial number of studies refer to relative deprivation—the perception that one is deprived of certain means compared to other citizens—as a basis for “radicalisation.” This would localise the risk of “radicalisation” among underprivileged people or an oppressed underclass. However, this theory can never in itself explain

the process of “radicalisation,” if only because a vast majority of people live in situations of deprivation and/or poverty and do not engage in extremist violence. A study of the profile of known terrorists or radical Muslims shows that they are generally not poor or deprived (Veldhuis and Staun 2009), although several studies find that most foreign terrorist fighters are from the lower or middle classes (Bakker 2006; Weggemans et al. 2014). In Bonelli and Carrié (2018), for example, the most serious acts committed by the “radicalised” youngsters were perpetrated by those of whom it was least expected: young people from stable families with an excellent school record. While, in the Netherlands, AIVD (2014) points out the widely shared frustrations among young Muslims about their socio-economic position, Silber and Bhatt (2007) find that most of the individuals engaged in the preparation or execution of terrorist violence in the US did not come from economically underprivileged backgrounds. Khosrokhavar (2016:9) finds that middle-class jihadi’s, in contrast to the youths from deprived areas, are not motivated by hate for society:

[T]hey have neither interiorised the exclusion which the former [youth from deprived areas] have encountered nor do they consider themselves to be victimised. They invoke humanitarian grounds to justify their opposition to the fascist like Assad government. [...] Their problem is one of authority and norms.

Although socio-economic factors in themselves cannot explain the process of radicalisation, it is possible that they play a role in the background. Several related factors have been identified as significant in causing “radicalisation”: economic discrimination (Piazza 2011), unemployment (Weenink 2015; Gouda and Marktanner 2016) or a low level of education (Weggemans et al. 2014; Noor 2016). However, even these factors are contested. For instance, Bakker (2006) finds that the unemployment level in his sample group of jihadi terrorists was lower than the European average.

Remarkably, Bondokji et al. (2008:24) note in their literature review that there is a serious research gap considering the role of economics and particularly of relative deprivation, in shaping “radicalisation”:

For example, are economic factors more important to specific fighters’ profiles or are they more relevant in Africa and Central Asia? How is relative deprivation affecting the decision to join armed groups? And what areas of material deprivation are more important than others?

The same point was made by Khosrokhavar (2018), who concludes, from extensive research with “radicalised” individuals in prison, that there are rather large socio-economic differences between the profiles of Belgian and French homegrown terrorists on the one hand, and those from North-Africa on the other.

2.2.3.2. (Geo)political

Some authors stress the importance of (geo)political factors. Members of certain ethnic communities in the West are outraged about the situation in Gaza, about the American invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq or the situation in Syria. Based on their in-depth interviews with 117 Islamic terrorists in the UK and the US, Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman (2009) found that for these participants the “clash of civilisations” was identified as an essential motivation to become attracted to terrorism. In his large-scale survey in Italy, Groppi (2017) found similar radical opinions in his sample group, linking the support of terrorism with insults

of Islam. Similarly, in a survey of 6.678 Muslims respondents in Muslim and Western countries, support for terrorism was linked with Western economic oppression and the incompatibility of Western democracy and Islam. The same findings are reported in the Demos study of Bartlett et al. (2010).

However, with the exception of Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman (2009), these quantitative studies do not reveal much about the process of “radicalisation” since they only map out the distribution of “radical” ideas and the motivations and rationales behind these ideas. These studies only provide a temporal snapshot of the ideas and motives within a population. They do not, however, provide much information on the individual psychological process of a person adopting gradually more extreme ideas until they are willing to engage in violence. Moreover, these studies are not very sensitive to the difference between what people say and what they are willing to do. Nonetheless, these studies do give an indication of the weight that is attached to certain motives or causal factors compared to other potential factors in the populations examined.

In recent years the conflicts in Iraq and Syria and the subsequent establishment of an Islamic State constituted highly relevant political pull factors. These conflicts contribute to an “enabling” environment, as Reinares et al. (2008) call it, an attractive political project for immediate implementation that is juxtaposed with more pragmatic or politically weaker Islamic discourses. Similarly, some authors point out that the appeal of jihadism or the process of “radicalisation” can also be inspired by a genuine aspiration for political and social change (ICG, 2015:2). Local political factors can also play a role. As Bondokji et al. (2017) suggest, the reasons why an Iraqi youth joins IS may differ considerably from those of a Jordanian youngster joining IS. The same goes for European youth in countries with different political projects.

2.2.3.3. Psycho-pathological

Quite some studies focus on the role of certain psycho-pathological factors for explaining the process of “radicalisation.” In a survey in Bangladesh and Pakistan, Bhui et al. (2014) find that there is a correlation between depression and sympathies for violent protest and terrorism (although they also show that individuals with a large social capital are resistant to such convictions). Interestingly, the authors point out that migrant experiences of adversity, discrimination and injustice may be the cause for depression and psychosis. Poor health and symptoms of depression can be a consequence of low social capital, isolation and suffered inequalities (Marmot, 2005). The same is shown in the RAN (2019) case study on mental health and violent “radicalisation,” by Paul Gill, who argues that mental health issues may be a cause of a cause of a cause, a by-product of terrorist commitment, or a condition that is present but does not play role. In short, there is no one-on-one link, there are multiple links.² A recent study of Bakker and De Bont (2016), based on research of a publicly available database of 370 foreign fighters in Belgium and The Netherlands, detected psychological problems in 60% of the individuals. Khosrokhavar (2016) also points towards psychological problems that contribute to “radicalisation” as a “total social phenomenon.” However, two earlier overview studies on “terrorism” conclude that most evidence points towards the

² See the RAN YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=243&v=yOv_lvhj3KE

“normality” of terrorists, rather than revealing certain psycho-pathological characteristics (Corrado 1981; Silke 1998). One of the world’s leading voices in terrorism research, Martha Crenshaw, continues to find that psycho-pathological theories cannot explain “radicalisation” (Crenshaw 1981; 1986; 2000).

Furthermore, one of the final conclusions of the SAFIRE research project is that the process of “radicalisation” is not at all abnormal. In fact, many aspects are remarkably similar to the way adolescents develop. This has consequences for how we need to address “radicalisation.” If the process of “radicalisation” is the normal development of an adolescent who risks going down the wrong path, then principles of normal intervention need to be applied. Common social work methods should, in this case, be just as effective as other methods developed specifically for dealing with “radicalised” people (CORDIS, 2015).

A more promising angle might lie in studying the psychological processes that can be found in the lives of “radicalised” people and “terrorists,” for which a link is often established with the psychology of petty criminals: difficult childhood, search for meaning and identity, and group dynamics (Lees Simi et al. 2016). However, it can be argued that these factors should not be considered as psycho-pathological but simply as psychological, personal or “affective” (see section 3.5).

2.2.3.4. Religious and ideological

According to Vidino (2010:3) “[f]ew issues are more heavily debated than the importance of religion in the radicalisation of jihadist militants, with the extremists in the debate attributing to it either a central role or no role at all.” Silber and Bhatt (2007:6) argue that we should understand “radicalisation” as follows: “jihadi-Salafi ideology is the driver that motivates young men and women, born or living in the West, to carry out ‘autonomous jihad’ via acts of terrorism against their host countries. It guides movements, identifies the issues, drives recruitment and is the basis for action.” It is composed of four phases: pre-radicalisation, self-identification, indoctrination and jihadization. At the same time, the authors acknowledge that not all individuals necessarily pass through all four states, nor that it always concerns a linear progression.

Groppi (2017) finds that no statistically significant support can be found for theories proposing discrimination, economic disparity, outrage at Western foreign policy, oppression of Muslims, traumatic experiences, or any standard sociological variable - including gender and being a convert to Islam - as predictors for supporting violence. By contrast, the most significant predictor variables relating to the support of violence are: (1) taking offense against the insult of Islam and (2) the endorsement of an Islamic, theocratic form of government. In their internet survey, van den Bos et al. (2009) find that a higher degree of religiosity correlates with feelings of moral superiority. Weggemans et al. (2014) conclude from interviews with friends and acquaintances of known Dutch foreign fighters that the latter showed an increasing interest in religion before they left to fight with IS. The same phenomenon is observed by Bakker (2006).

At the same time, Perliger and Milton (2016) emphasise that among the 1.175 foreign fighters studied, only 15% had a religious background. Most of these rarely appeared to be recent converts, however, and had often been Muslims since childhood though not overly religious. Because “radicalisation” by definition refers to a process of intensification of

religiosity, it seems self-evident that “radicalised” individuals should come across as highly religious. Based on the existing research, however, it is far from clear whether religion actually acts as a root cause. We know from multiple sources, e.g. two reports by Europol (2015; 2016), that many known Muslim terrorists were not engaged in any religious practice before they “radicalised.” Less than half of the individuals arrested for IS-related incidents had a relevant knowledge of the Islamic faith. Also, in their Australian case study, Aly and Striegher (2012) find that religion plays a far lesser role than contended by Silber and Bhatt (2007), and many government responses with them.

In his study of 50 Islamist plots since 9/11, Mueller (2012:14) concludes that the frame of ideological or religious “radicalisation” may be wrong in its entirety:

The concept tends to imply that there is an ideological motivation to the violence, but what chiefly sets these guys off is not anything particularly theoretical but rather intense outrage at American and Israeli actions in the Middle East and a burning desire to seek revenge, to get back, to defend, and/or to make a violent statement expressing their hostility to what they see as a war on Islam.

Venhaus (2010) concludes that people joining Al Qaeda seldom have a religious background. Contrary to these findings, the view that religion in itself can explain “radicalisation” is dominant in many Western countries. Interestingly, religion is also treated as a factor with huge explanatory force in countries with a Muslim majority. As a result, their de-radicalisation programmes focus on educating these “deceived” and “naïve” men and women in the “true Islam” (Vidino 2010).

It might, therefore, be more relevant to talk about ideological rather than religious root factors. Indoctrination may play quite a crucial role in bringing discontent individuals with perceptions of injustice and feelings of uprootedness to the brink of violence. Ideology contributes to the acceptance of violence as a method for bringing about political change and leads to the creation of a subculture of violence. Ideology is used to reduce potential moral inhibitors and to justify the resort to extreme methods from a broader repertoire of methods of waging political conflict. Cognitive frameworks derived from certain exclusive ideologies have been used to build collective identities based on narratives of violent struggle (Coolsaet 2011).

2.2.3.5. Personal and affective

In a Special Report entitled “Why Youth Join al-Qaeda,” Venhaus (2010) aptly divided those seeking to join jihadist networks into revenge-seekers needing an outlet for their frustration, status-seekers needing recognition, identity-seekers in need of a group to join, and thrill-seekers looking for adventure. It should be emphasised, of course, that these personal factors never paint the full picture. “Radicalisation” is a complex and highly *individualised* process, often shaped by a poorly understood interaction of structural and personal factors (Vidino 2010).

Perception of injustice, discrimination, exclusion or stigmatisation

Quite some evidence has been found that factors such as the perception of injustice, discrimination, exclusion or stigmatisation might indeed play a crucial role. Abbas and Siddique (2012), for instance, have found that, among British South-Asian Muslims,

perceptions of islamophobia and reactions to the implementation of repressive anti-terrorism legislation have been important in the “radicalisation” of British Muslims. Studies in the US (Richardson 2012), UK (Wiktorowicz 2004) and Australia (Woodlock and Russell 2008) have found a similar relation between discrimination and “radicalisation.” In the Netherlands, Geelhoed (2012) reports that nearly all of this (formerly) “radicalised” respondents refer to feelings of social exclusion and stigmatisation, particularly after 9/11 and the murder of Theo van Gogh in 2004.

De Bie (2016) finds that the persecution of (innocent) people suspected of terrorism can have “radicalisation” as an unintended consequence. The same study points out that the way irregular migrants are treated in temporary detention centres has made them vulnerable to recruiters. Blackwood et al. (2013) find that perceptions of excessive forms of control as well as of an apathic government regarding the needs, fears and worries of minorities have contributed to the development of negative feelings. In their study of young Muslims with radical and extremist sympathies, van den Bos et al. (2009) show that a large proportion of the respondents experienced discrimination (see also AIVD 2014). Some young people “radicalise” because they feel they are trapped in a hopeless situation in their home country (United States Presidential Task Force, 2009).

However, as Schmid (2013) adds, the amount of injustice in the world contrasts with the relatively low number of terrorists. Therefore, perceived injustice alone cannot explain the phenomenon. Feelings of injustice, alienation, or perceptions of stigmatisation and discrimination can result in lower self-esteem, feelings of threat and fear, and the withdrawal from society (Aly and Striegher 2012), all of which can make individuals more vulnerable to extremist discourses and on/offline recruiters. Furthermore, emotional experiences with injustice can also function as trigger factors in the process of “radicalisation” (Choudhury and Fenwick 2011). Interestingly, Bonelli and Carrié (2018) comment that a trigger event such as an experience of injustice, humiliation or rejection can create a much greater impact among educated young people from stable families with higher expectations of life than it might among young people growing up in precarious conditions.

Another factor that is quite often mentioned is the perceived violence against minorities perpetrated by the authorities. Crenshaw (1981) already indicated this trigger in her early work, i.e. long before the social construction of the term “radicalisation.” Perpetrators of radical violence often refer to their unjust treatment by the government, robbing them of their identity, security and freedom, as a motive to join radical groups (Crenshaw 1986; Taylor and Quayle 1994). Policies and dominant discourses of “radicalisation,” perceived as symbolic violence, may cause entire communities to feel stigmatised and treated as a security hazard (Vermeulen and Bovenkerk 2012). Recruiters and radical groups consciously tap into these feelings (Lakhani 2012). Negative emotions such as humiliation, contempt, insult, frustration and anger play an important role in the development of “radicalised” thoughts (Feddes et al. 2012), for example in the emotion of betrayal experienced by young people who feel they are being denied better opportunities in secondary education. As noted by Bonelli and Carrié (2018), the impossibility to imagine a future for themselves makes young people more vulnerable to the promise of a complete make-over by joining the IS caliphate.

Although repression or exclusion usually targets social groups, this does not result in the “radicalisation” of entire communities. In fact, very few individuals from these communities actually commit terrorist offences (Silke 2003). Many people live in frustrating circumstances that result in despair, yet they will never commit violence to pursue change. As Friedland (1992) has found, many terrorists do not belong to excluded or repressed communities and cannot in truth claim their acts to be acts of despair. Finally, terrorist groups explicitly tap into these grievances by “marketing” themselves as champions of the cause of certain oppressed groups, a phenomenon which Khosrokhavar (2005) calls “humiliation by proxy.”

Recognition, belonging, identity-search

Several reports explain the process of “radicalisation” as a search for identity, recognition or belonging (United States Presidential Task Force 2009). This is sometimes linked to the fact that many second-generation migrants feel “stuck” between two cultures (Wolff 1997; Geelhoed 2012). Experiences of discrimination and exclusion in their home country trigger a new identification with their culture of origin. In his study based on interviews with friends and relatives of foreign fighters in Belgium, Leman (2016) refers to this phenomenon as a “counter-culture.” The attractive story of a radical Islam is contrasted with a society where these young Muslims do not feel welcome or experience feelings of exclusion. The particular interpretation of *l’islam du quartier* (the local, neighbourhood Islam) or a so-called “pure” Islam functions as a lubricant, a common ground among members of the group who feel a lack of belonging in society (Silber and Bhatt 2007). But, as Ponsaers et al. (2010) argue, the wish to belong to a larger group of like-minded spirits seems to contradict the findings formulated in several studies about “radicalising” individuals *withdrawing* from society. They hypothesise that the former may take place in an earlier stage, while the latter happens towards the end of the process.

Some studies refer to the quest for purpose (Taylor and Quayle 1994) and status (Bartlett and Miller 2012), which functions as an emotional pull towards meaning and significance, leading to “radicalisation” almost “by accident” (Slotman and Tillie 2006). Other theories refer to the desire for sensation, thrills and fame (Ahmed 2015), in line with the criminological work of Jack Katz (1988) who links criminal and deviant behaviour to affects such as seduction. Research into right-wing extremism in Europe found that people are attracted to it because of a mix of opportunistic and criminal motivations, as well as the promise of sensation and thrills, rather than racial or ideological motivations (Bartlett and Miller 2012).

Social environment and group dynamics

It seems clear that “social environment” in the broadest sense of the word plays an important role in the development of radical ideas and the willingness to engage in violence. The process seems remarkably similar to gang or cult membership (Schmid 2013). However, while organised crime groups lack political motivation, avoid publicity, scrutiny and engage in focused activities, Decker and Pyrooz state that terror groups seek publicity for their cause and act largely from expressive motivations (2011). However, they also conclude that “there is an axis of continuity across criminal, deviant, and extremist groups that, when explored,

will bring a better understanding to radicalisation processes” (Decker and Pyrooz 2011:161).

The social dynamics studied in this section may range from dynamics in the family or social group, dynamics among a “bunch of friends” (Sageman 2004), contact with recruiters or with radical networks in prison. This focus in understanding “radicalisation” has been particularly upheld by scholars working in a framework of social movement and social network theory. These studies emphasise the role of social bonds and networks and the individual’s interaction with a radical group, recruitment processes, group membership and the eventual adoption of the group’s frame of reference, values and beliefs. In itself, the membership and formation of a group already produces meaning and identity, which links this perspective to the one treated above.

In their life-cycle research of 1.175 foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, Perliger and Milton (2016) found that an “accessory environment” encourages people to cross the line into extremist violence: 22% were recruited by a religious mentor, 50% by a member of their social group and 10% by a friend. This research argues that it is crucial for “radicalising” individuals to have one or several like-minded people in their immediate vicinity. This is in line with Sageman’s (2004) “bunch of guys” theory according to which young people do not formally join an existing radical organisation but rather develop a terrorist cell in a bottom-up fashion.

Events taking place in the family environment could also function as triggers, from the death of a relative (Buijs et al. 2006; Lankford 2014), to (economic) misfortune, to a crisis in the family (Kleinmann 2012). Some studies find that the lack of strong family ties or social isolation constitute important characteristics of the lone-acting terrorist (Gill et al. 2014). Social learning can explain how “radicalisation” takes place in a learning process in the institutional context of Muslim schools or through cultural diffusion in informal environments. However, this theory cannot explain why the large majority of groups exposed to extremist propaganda and radical discourses does not “radicalise” (Ponsaers et al. 2010:20). Conversely, some studies find that family influence is an important reason for *not* engaging in violence (Cragin et al. 2015). As Bondokji et al. (2008) note, there is some anecdotal evidence that mothers in Libya and family and clan members in Kenia have been influential in convincing fighters to return. Much attention has therefore been spent on the potential roles played by families in the rehabilitation of “radicalised” individuals. According to Spalek (2016), attention of this kind may lead to a certain community becoming suspect.

Similarly, the dynamics within small groups (of friends or relatives) could present a social environment that may form an important factor in the crucial transition from radical ideas to actual criminality and terrorism. A 2012 research project with 1.086 young Dutch people shows how the feeling of moral superiority of the in-group plays a crucial role in far-right “radicalisation” (Doosje et al. 2012). Here, “injustice frames” often play a role, thus bringing the group together, reinforcing feelings of “othering,” thinking in terms of “us” vs. “them,” and legitimising the process of “radicalisation” (Feddes et al. 2016). On the other hand, while “brotherhood” as a collective identity acts as a driver within jihadist groups, (excessively) intense group dynamics may be experienced as intimidation and cause group members to distance themselves and refrain from “radicalising” (De Bie 2016). The disappointment of being a member of a radical or terrorist group may be a push factor to “de-radicalise” (Horgan 2009).

Because of the diversity observed among extremists (left-wing, right-wing, Islamist, nationalist), researchers have increasingly focused on group dynamics, particularly against the background of social psychological theory, including phenomena such as group polarisation, groupthink, in-group/out-group bias, diminished sense of responsibility, perceived rewards and benefits, group norms and rules (Borum 2011). Bonelli and Carrié (2018:200) add that a shared affective space, as well as a shared group representation to the outside world, are highly important in the formation of such groups:

We see the importance of the constitution of a group of equals that transforms progressively and closes itself off in an emotional community. This community, that shares similar representations of the world (the more moderates detach themselves) and that grows together through affective ties, constitute the framework and space in which the action occurs.

Recruiters and “functionaries of radicalism” may help them to find sense in their acts, in legitimising them, even to facilitate them technically, but they are not the motor of the group. These intermediaries are products of group dynamics rather than causal actors.

Several authors have also analysed the role of the Internet. Schils (2017) for example argues that there is no consensus whether the Internet in fact plays a role. It could facilitate the access to certain information, which in turn could result in involvement in certain radical milieus (Conway 2012). This last link, however, is an assumption since the relation may not be a causal one, in which case the Internet may merely function as a catalyst and trigger. Moreover, most empirical research seems to confirm that the majority of known “radicalised” persons were first socialised offline (Schils 2017). As Bonelli and Carrié (2018) argue, “self-radicalisation” on the Internet is a myth, and violent “radicalisation” is mainly a collective phenomenon, foregrounding the importance of meso-level ties and dynamics. In short, the Internet plays a role among individuals who are already receptive to the content that is being offered. A breeding ground must already be in place before someone might start looking for radical messages online. As Nesser (2012) found in his study of the formation of terrorist cells among Muslims between 1995 and 2010, recruitment usually followed the moral shock experienced by individuals seeing gruesome movies of atrocities committed against Muslims in conflicts in the (Middle) East. Online fora offer recruiters the possibility to reach an audience, to engage in personal relations with a worldwide public and to give them access to uncensored content. This does not only benefit the bilateral relations between recruiters on the one hand and potentially “radicalising” individuals on the other, but it is also instructive in the development of group dynamics.

2.2.4. Discussion and conclusion

Looking at “radicalisation” as a single and linear process does not take into account how different factors have an effect on each other (Bondokji et al. 2017) and ultimately overlooks the chance factor in the process of “radicalisation.” For this reason, we adopt a puzzle-like framework for looking at “radicalisation,” which implies focusing on the necessary building blocks or ingredients of the breeding-ground for (political or religious) violence and terrorism to occur. This boils down to asking the question why anyone is “radicalisable,” rather than why anyone has “radicalised.” Because of this approach, we reject models that focus on a *single*, simple linear process. Rather, we consider “radicalisation” as a *series* of processes

taking place in one individual and in the outer world simultaneously. Violence, in this perspective, takes place when circumstances and drivers meet in the “right” constellation, i.e. when these various processes intersect.

This perspective is informed by the historical parallels drawn by Reinares et al. (2008) about political “radicalisation” waves since the late 19th century. According to these authors, these waves share a number of structural features: (1) they all thrive in an enabling environment characterised by a widely shared sense of injustice, whether real or perceived, exclusion and humiliation, (2) there is always a personal trajectory or component necessary for setting off violent behaviour, which explains why the large majority of people sharing the same sense of injustice, and living in the same polarised environment do not turn to violence or terrorism; (3) the actual use of violence involves only a very limited number of individuals. So, while there are several processes that need to take place in order for someone to “radicalise,” the shift towards violence also depends, to some extent, on timing and chance, in order for these processes to intersect. Therefore, we ought not only to study the various factors that may play a role in the process of “radicalisation” but also examine the effect these factors have on each other. With Schmid (2011) and Reinares et al. (2008), we also argue that greater emphasis should be placed on how the social environment resonates with the individual, with propaganda and recruitment as chance catalysts, and with certain structural factors playing (only) in the background.

2.2.4.1. Methodological reflections

In 2008, Silke estimated that only 20% of studies had produced new empirical knowledge, only 1% had conducted interviews and not a single one had undertaken any systematic research with jihadis. Indeed, a substantial amount of the existing research is anecdotal or based on desktop research (RAN 2016). Bondokji et al. 2017:23) conclude their literature review with the statement that “the subject of radicalisation is limited by a dearth of empirical evidence; the majority of that which does exist, lacks in methodological and scientific rigour.” Many findings on both radicalisation and de-radicalisation are merely tentative and can often only be applied locally or within narrow, regional contexts (Schmid 2013). Methodologically, researchers such as Khosrokhavar (2006) and Crettiez (2017), who have conducted interviews with “radicalised” people in prison, have been confronted with serious problems regarding the establishment of a trusting relationship and the provision of the right kind of circumstances for an honest interaction with their subjects.

Some studies are surveys that try to map opinions of respondents in their relation to the socio-economic data of these respondents. Slootman and Tillie (2006), for instance, conclude on the basis of a large survey among Muslims in Amsterdam that a strict and orthodox view on Islamic religion and the feeling of injustice towards Muslims on a national and international scale coincides with the following individual variables: age (16 to 18), secondary school education level, strong connection with the ethnic group, strong perception of discrimination, strong political distrust and social isolation.

Surveys, of course, have some limitations regarding explanatory power. For instance, how can a survey which maps the distribution of beliefs and opinions say anything meaningful about the process of “radicalisation”? Can the difficult issue of why and how an individual decides to engage be revealed with a temporal snapshot of opinions? The

question is also what such a survey tells us when we do not compare these insights with similar surveys conducted among other migrant groups or among the white majority: “no control group of young people in similar situations that have not radicalised or, when radicalised, did not opt for terrorism, has been used in the radicalisation studies surveyed here” (Schmid 2013:38). To say the least, such a survey setup reinforces the dominant and popular discourse of “radicalisation.”

The same criticism can be made in the case of Groppi (2017), who finds that support for violence relates to (1) taking offense against insults of Islam and (2) the endorsement of an Islamic, theocratic form of government. Apart from the facts that such correlations do not reveal much, that comparison with “radical” views among other social groups is simply not offered and that such a setup reinforces the dominant discourse, there are also some methodological remarks to be made about the tool of a survey. We know from previous ethnographic research (De Backer 2016) that vulnerable young (Muslim) participants demand a high degree of trust and reassurance before opening up to a researcher. We also know that those participants are bound to play games with the researcher if this trust is not established and that answers to questions can be exaggerations, lies or answers that are perceived as socially desirable. A survey, in other words, has no way of telling which is which.

Some other large-scale quantitative studies add important insights to the discussion, especially from a macro-perspective. Perliger and Milton (2016), for instance, in their study of the life-cycles of known terrorists propose a set of causal factors and prioritise those that seem to make a bigger difference than others, while also remaining sensitive to the diversity within the subject group. Similarly, Piazza (2011) has shown that there is a link between how countries treat their minorities at the economic level and the number of home-grown terrorists, while Gouda and Marktanner (2016) found a similar link with unemployment.

The existing ethnographic research, which is intrinsically more sensitive to diversity within the sample group and which generally provides a better estimation of the trustworthiness of answers given in a research context, paints a complex picture. Research on known foreign fighters, based on interviews with these “radicals” (Slootman and Tillie 2006; Europol 2016) as well as with their relatives and friends (Weggemans et al. 2014; Leman 2016) sketches a complex image and discerns a wide variety of individual profiles. Of course, the fundamental problem with qualitative research, i.e. the difficulty to generalise from a limited sample, remains unresolvable.

2.2.4.2. Certainties and research gaps

Several conclusions can be drawn from the above literature study. Firstly, existing research focuses on socio-economic, geopolitical, psycho-pathological, religious and affective factors. However, no single factor can explain the whole phenomenon. According to Viktoroff (2005:35) “[t]heories that claim the predominance of one of these influences over the others are premature since no studies have systematically examined more than one or two of these factors, let alone empirically examined one while controlling for the others.” To fathom the importance of every one of these causal factors is the topic of heated debate: Several studies, for instance, find that socio-economic factors rarely play a role in explaining the “radicalisation” into violence of an individual, whereas other studies show a clear link with

unemployment or economic discrimination (Piazzini 2011), allowing that the social psychological aspect of relative deprivation may also play a role. There is no single, unitary process of “radicalisation.” Bonelli and Carrié (2018) conclude from their research with young people placed in judiciary protection on suspicion of involvement in radical movements that there are multiple forms of radicalism, which they define as appeasing, rebellious, agonistic and utopian.

Secondly, much research tackles Islamist or religious “radicalisation” as an exceptional phenomenon, without taking into account the similarities with right-wing, left-wing or nationalist extremism (Rabasa et al. 2010)³. For this reason, the “radicalisation” discourse and anti-radicalisation programmes and policies are experienced as stigmatising by Muslim populations in the West, which is why we need a radical reframing of the concept. Interestingly, the RAND Europe (2011) study, reviewing causal factors among “radicalised” individuals from across Islamist, left-wing, right-wing, single issue and separatist groups, identified the following factors as most significant: (1) perception of impotence to affect political change, (2) past training activity, (3) political activity, (4) proneness to violence and (5) experience of negative meaningful events. Social environment, ideology and affective factors are foregrounded here as the most important.

Thirdly, what most of the research has failed to uncover is that “radicalisation” is a process involving both “ideal” (religion, identity, geopolitics) and “non-ideal” (emotions, group dynamics) factors. The methodological implication of this insight is that while researchers can quite easily focus on the “ideal” through interviews, focus groups and surveys, investigating the “non-ideal” is much harder and demands a much more thorough and time-consuming, in-depth ethnographic approach. Such an approach also requires that researchers be sensitive to the emotive, pre-cognitive, and non-cognitive aspects which are easily overlooked in Western scientific practice.

This insight resonates with the study of Bartlett and Miller (2012) that compares terrorists with non-violent “radicals” as a control group, in order to find out how exactly “radicalisation” can lead to violence. They suggest four factors, all of which are emotive and irrational: emotional pull by feeling of injustice, thrill, status and peer pressure. Finally, this insight also fits with Vidino’s (2010) remark that “radicalisation” is a complex and highly *individualised* process and that it should be understood as a complex *interaction* of structural and personal factors.

Fourthly, most research continues to focus on “radicalisation” as *only* an individual process, emphasising “the individual as the focus of analysis and, to some extent, the ideology of the group, and significantly de-emphasis[ing] the wider circumstances that might help explain why radicalisation becomes significant at a given moment in time and might lead to terrorist actions” (Coolsaet, 2011: 262). We agree with Feddes *et al.* (2016) that we need to look at push and pull factors on micro-, meso- and macro-levels. Veldhuis and Staun (2009), similarly, argue for an analysis on different levels, distinguishing between the macro-level (involving political, economic and cultural causes) and the micro-level, including both a

³ As Schmid (2013:35-6) argues: “It might well be that radicalisation, where rewards for participation in group violence is apparently sanctioned by religion, is in some ways different from radicalisation of members of secular ethno-nationalist groups.” However, while many authors claim that religion represents a stronger pull factor, compared to e.g. nationalist doctrine, this is simply assumed. We simply have too little data to be able to make these claims.

social level (identification, group processes, relative deprivation) and an individual level (psychological and personal). Bjørgo (2005) structures root causes in a framework including structural causes (demographic imbalances, globalisation, rapid modernisation, transitional societies, increased individualism, relative deprivation, class structure), facilitating causes (mobility, technology, transportation, publicity, weapons technology, weak state control), motivational causes (i.e. grievances) and triggering causes (political calamity, outrageous act).

According to Schmid (2013), this type of analysis is also important because the dominant focus on vulnerable youth has obscured the role of the environment in which “radicalisation” can take place as well as the role and responsibility of society and the government. Therefore, he refers to the meso-level, the “radicalising” or “radical” environment, which is supportive or complicit, “which serves as a rallying point and is the ‘missing link’ with the terrorists’ broader constituency or reference group that is aggrieved and suffering injustices which, in turn, can radicalise parts of a youth cohort and lead to the formation of terrorist organisations” (Schmid 2013:4). The macro-level looks at the role of government and society at home and abroad, specifically focusing on the “radicalisation” of public opinion and party politics, on tense relationships between the majority and minorities, and on lacking socio-economic opportunities.

The study of “radicalisation” at micro-level thus appears as a substitute to a more thorough analysis and criticism of contemporary (geo-)politics. Kundnani (2012:5) states the following:

The result is a systematic failure to address the reality of the political conflicts that radicalisation scholars claim they want to understand. Instead, a concept has been contrived which builds into official thinking biases and prejudices that, in turn, structure government practices introduced to combat radicalisation, resulting in discrimination and unwarranted restrictions on civil liberties.

This type of analysis points at the responsibility of researchers and clarifies the role played by research in the development or contestation of the dominant “radicalisation” discourse. With Schmid (2013) we would like to emphasise that although much is unclear about what “radicalisation” is, which factors play a role and to what extent they do so, there are a number of things we can consider as established knowledge about those who have become “radicalised” towards terrorism:

- 1) “radicalisation” does not have pathological roots,
- 2) the study of the background of terrorists shows that no single profile of “the terrorist” exists, and that there are many paths to terrorism,
- 3) “radicalisation” is a gradual process, which is not linear,
- 4) poverty is not an important factor to help explain “radicalisation,” but unemployment may play a role,
- 5) grievances and perceptions of injustice play a rather central role, although they may act as triggers rather than as causal factors,
- 6) social networks and group dynamics are crucial in drawing vulnerable youths to a terrorist movement,
- 7) ideology plays an important role, providing the potential terrorist with a “license to kill.”

However, we must be wary not to treat these factors as indicators that are able to predict the “radicalisation” of vulnerable individuals. From the research into the life-cycles of known terrorist we know that there are simply too many exceptions. In fact, as Veldhuis and Staun (2009) argue, we should move away from the view that certain groups are vulnerable to “radicalisation” and from continued attempts to identify these groups. Instead, we need to look at the conditions that make them “radicalisable”:

Statistically, Islamist terrorists in the West have been young, male, and relatively well educated (e.g. Bakker 2006). This does not mean that young, male, well-educated Muslims are more vulnerable to radicalisation, let alone that policy makers should target this group on which to focus counter-radicalisation policy. [...] We argue that it is crucial for policy makers to move away from the question of which groups are likely to radicalise, but instead ask under what conditions individuals become more likely to radicalise (Veldhuis and Staun 2009:64-6).

2.3. The CONRAD conceptual framework

Inspired by the multi-level approach of Bjørge (2005), Veldhuis and Staun (2009) and Schmid (2013), the CONRAD research team proposes a conceptual framework incorporating micro-, meso- and macro-level analysis, through the concepts of transitions, social vulnerabilities, individual vulnerabilities, “radicalisation” and resilience. Furthermore, it is argued that the continuum of radicalisation/resilience should be considered at each of these levels, since it affects the lived world of young urbanites and the suburban middle classes, of left-wing and right-wing politicians, of workers and rich folk, of the political and public debate. All these phenomena, the “avatars” of radicalisation as Khosrokhavar (2016) calls them, appear in the same glass jar model (Figure 3).

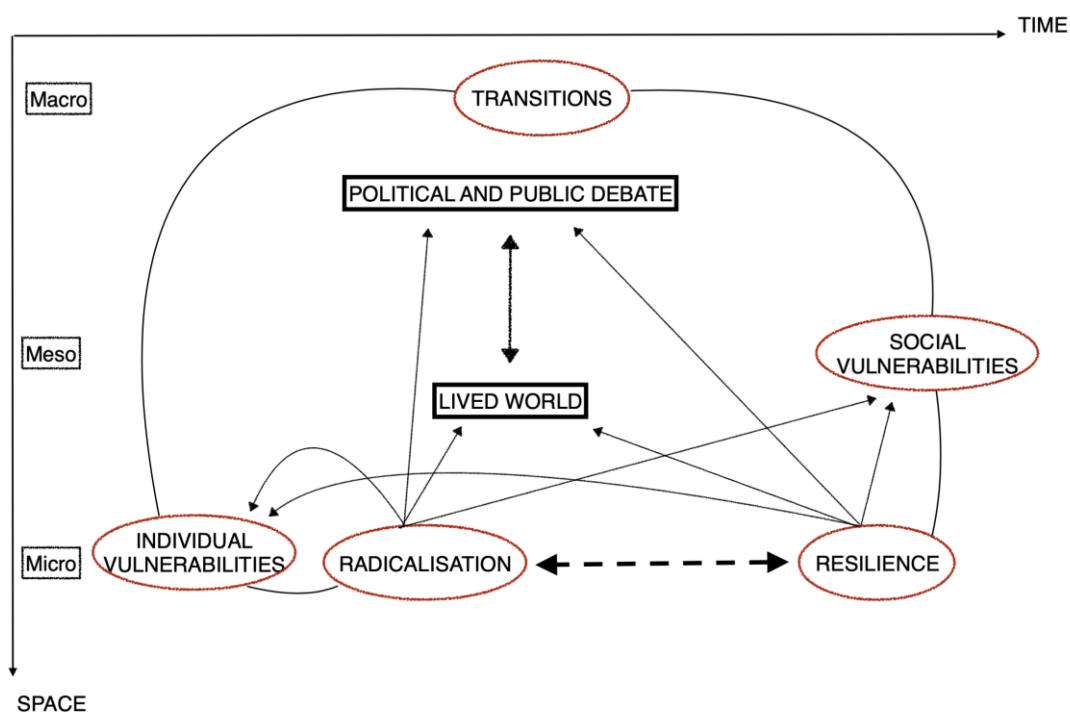


Figure 3: The glass jar model

“Transitions” and “vulnerabilities,” the first two central concepts in the CONRAD framework capture most of the work that is presented in the above section on causal factors. Some of these factors, such as geopolitics, religious doctrine, ideology or socio-economic dynamics operate on a macro-level (“transitions”). Others deal with the internal dynamics of an individual or group, i.e. on a micro- or meso-level, such as the affective and psychopathological factors discussed above. They are the “vulnerabilities” experienced by individuals or groups, which may be a result of global transitions and their intersecting impacts. As Dzekhova et al. (2016:7) argue, “radicalisation” should be understood as a dynamic, multi-staged and multifaceted phenomenon that occurs when individual vulnerabilities (biographical dimension) interact with an encouraging environment. This resonates with the remarks made above about the role of *chance* in bringing the processes that lead to “radicalisation” to a point where they will intersect. Phrases such as “vulnerability to radicalisation” are widely used in this type of research. For instance, the UK PREVENT strategy is largely focussed on radicalisation, ideology and vulnerability of the vulnerable groups (Aly 2013). This is why Schmid (2013) argues that we need to steer away from a focus on vulnerable groups (which is once again stigmatisation) and instead look for the conditions that make people “radicalisable.” In other words, we can still use the term “vulnerable,” but not in an individualised fashion and we must detach it from the expected, suspect social groups.

Rather than focusing exclusively on “radicalisation” as an inherently negative and destructive process, and unlike most of the existing “radicalisation” research, the CONRAD research team proposes to include “resilience” at the other end of the “radicalisation” continuum. A first interesting insight when studying research that mentions both “radicalisation” and “resilience” is the fact that the latter topic is seldom explained, analysed or properly conceptualised. Especially in the UK—influenced by the terminology of the influential PREVENT programme—quite some studies speak of resilience against “radicalisation” as a sort of synonym of “resistance” (as if it were simply a cognitive matter). Other studies focus on “community resilience,” which is also interesting. This places the emphasis on the meso-level, above the individual “at risk” and below the macro forces that play on this individual.

The concept of “resilience” has its origin in psychology, ecology and architecture, denoting the capacity of materials, people and biospheres to resist sudden changes and negative events, as well as the capacity to recover from these events. In public health and prevention discourses, a paradigm shift towards positive psychology has been realised, with therapies and trainings increasingly focusing on protective elements and positive emotions. In social work, “resilience” has been conceptualised, along with social capital and empowerment, as the main tools of any social worker. According to Jan Van Gils (quoted in Peeters 2010), it consists of informal social networks of support (inside and outside the family), the discovery of meaning, social and problem-solving capacities, self-worth and a sense of humour. Resilience is “the ability of a person or a system (group, community) to lead a good life despite difficult circumstances, and to develop in a positive and socially acceptable way” (Peeters 2010:141; our translation). Resilience relies on the individual’s

own strengths and resources, and on the pride of the survivor. It can also be called “psychological capital.”

On an individual level, the recent work of Hallich and Doosje (2017) is relevant. Their study focuses on evaluating the experimental Dutch programme Diamant-plus which aims to “de-radicalise” young people and to invest in their resilience. The programme consists of a mix of two existing methods in youth rehabilitation and social work. The first, entitled “Diamant identiteitsontwikkeling en weerbaarheid” (“Diamond identity development and resilience”), is preventive in nature and aims to enlarge young people’s resilience to “radicalisation.” The effects of this method have been substantiated by earlier studies (e.g. Feddes et al. 2013). The second, “Coach je kind” (“Coach your kid”), is a pedagogic method developed specifically for parents with a migration background. Also, this method has been corroborated and recognised by the Dutch Youth Institute (NJI). Hallich and Doosje (2017) define “resilience” as the extent to which citizens resist to extremist influences through cognitive, affective and behavioural indicators.

Although it is a pilot study in which only 5 families were followed, there is an indication that a multi-actor and hands-on approach such as the Diamant-plus programme can be effective in reintegrating isolated youngsters, strengthening their identity and skills (in dealing with conflicts), and, to a lesser extent, bringing about a critical stance towards extremist ideas. Such programmes can also result in amending the problematic relationship between parents and youngsters, strengthening the pedagogic skills of the parents, and informing them of the road towards official assistance and about the dangers of “radicalisation.”

In another, longitudinal study by Feddes, Doosje and Mann (2015), adolescents with a “dual identity” were investigated in the context of a resilience training based, on the Diamant-plus method. Here participants were subjected to three modules of training during a period of three months. Each module is aimed at dealing with a “dual identity,” intercultural moral judgements and intercultural conflict management. A total of 46 male and female Muslim adolescents and young adults participated. The study showed that the Diamant resilience training reinforced participants’ agency and self-esteem and their capacity to deal with a variety of perspectives. The study also confirmed that this training lowered the seductive force of radical ideas for participants, and that attitudes towards ideological violence and the participants’ own violent intentions had changed and decreased substantially. This study does not show, however, whether resilience trainings are effective in “de-radicalising” violent extremists. It is also unclear whether the effects of these trainings may be considered at all permanent. Finally, we also need to emphasise at this point that these trainings were assessed using quantitative methods which, although applied in a longitudinal way, still have serious limitations considering the assessment of mental states and “non-ideal” aspects of “radicalisation.”

One could argue that the above approach of countering “radicalisation” by enhancing resilience is problematic, because it also focuses exclusively on the individual level and continues to disregard collective responsibilities. Aly (2013), on the other hand, conceptualises resilience as collective resistance, based on a study of the UK’s PREVENT, Australia’s Resilience and the United States’ Diminish programmes, promoting democratic values, social harmony and active participation. The author argues that there is little or no

evidence base for these individual resilience approaches. Instead, she argues for a re-conceptualization of collective resilience, which she views as resistance against terrorism by promoting social harmony and religious tolerance. In this regard, social cohesion programmes should absolutely be distinguished from counterterrorism programmes. Instead, the author observes examples of spontaneous and “bottom-up” counterterrorism which consist of small-scale “everyday political” acts (De Backer et al. 2019) such as the creative and collective appropriation of a bombing site.

The CONRAD project also regards resilience on a societal level. The question here is how entire communities can be made more resilient. From the perspective of counterterrorism, resilience can be considered a protective factor that can diminish the negative impact of terrorism on individuals and societies. A resilient society is capable of recovery after certain traumatising events. As such resilience is the logical opposite of vulnerability. As Bakker (2012:7-8; our translation) argues: “if we choose to enhance the resilience of our society, the current [anti-terrorism] policies will need to be adjusted. Obviously, it remains important that governments take initiative to prevent possible future terrorist attacks. But the understanding needs to grow that the nature and gravity of terrorist threat is more than only the possibility of an attack and the direct, physical consequences thereof.” Terrorism does not mainly aim at killing people. Its primary objective is to trigger a social and political reaction; hence the success of terrorism is directly linked to the degree of resilience with which a given society responds to it.

Vulnerability, as a logical counterpart of resilience, should be criticised in a similar manner. According to Schmid (2013), the dominant focus on vulnerable youth obscures the role of the social environment in which “radicalisation” can take place, as well as the role and responsibility of society and the government. In fact, as Veldhuis and Staun (2009) argue, we should move away from the view that certain groups are vulnerable to “radicalisation” and that we should continue to identify these groups. Instead, we need to look at the conditions that make them “radicalisable.”

In the CONRAD conceptual framework, “radicalisation” is not only considered at the individual level (as indeed most authors do), but as a “total social phenomenon” (Khosrokhavar 2018). As Schmid (2013:39) proposes, the concept of “radicalisation” remains useful if we “see it as a process that can affect conflict parties on both sides in a confrontation” and “apply it not only to individuals and small groups but also to larger collectivities.” Indeed, Schmid (2013:37) argues the case as follows:

When it comes to terrorism, such a one-sided discourse is, however, still widely accepted. Too many analysts have sought the causes of radicalisation only on the side of non-state actors. It might well be that many, perhaps even the majority of ‘root causes’ of radicalisation are indeed on one side of the net, but the almost systematic disregard for government counter-terrorist behaviour is nevertheless striking.

Instead of focusing only on “us” or “them” we need research into the culmination and “radicalisation” of the conflict itself (McCauley and Moskalenko 2011). Examples of the “radicalisation” of Western societies can be found in the increasing use of state violence and control, in the increasing implementation of extreme measures (e.g. waterboarding) and the erosion of human rights and privacy.

It is a phenomenon that takes place in the context of a “radicalising” society or, perhaps, in what has been called a “polarising” society (McCauley and Moskalenko 2011). Fear and anxiety may cause discrimination and polarisation, which may lead to “radicalisation” (Bakker 2012). Some terror organisations are aware of this dynamic: “our fearful overreaction renders the terror instrument yet even more attractive” (Bakker 2012: 6; our translation). The culture of fear has substituted reason and empirical evidence and analyses of threat are increasingly determined by speculation and imagination (Furedi 2007). Bakker (2012) concludes that to overcome the self-fulfilling prophecy fed by fatalism and overreaction, societies need to invest in resilience.

It follows from the above observations that one of the most painful gaps in our understanding of “radicalisation” lies exactly in the injustices experienced as well as the radical and violent reactions produced by groups targeted by “de-radicalisation” and “counter-radicalisation” policies. To put it slightly differently: to what extent do these policies themselves have “radicalising” effects? Especially in the geopolitical sphere, interventions by the West in Islamic countries have generally strengthened the attractiveness of radical groups such as Al Qaeda or contributed to an enormous sense of injustice among Muslims groups in the West (Geltzer 2012). Schmid (2013:6) adds the following:

[I]t does seem that many acts of terrorism are motivated by revenge for acts of repression, injustice and humiliation and that a tit-for-tat process can evolve after a while [...] If the state overreacts to terrorist provocations and becomes very repressive and aggressive, it often produces additional mobilisation on the other side. There is much to be gained from research into the effects of radicalisation policies, projects and programmes. As De Bie (2016) notes, the persecution of terrorism suspects leads to “radicalisation” among people of the same community. Likewise, Blackwood et al. (2013) see a link between “radicalisation” and excessive violence wielded by the authorities. Mitts (2018:1) found that “local-level measures of anti-Muslim animosity correlate significantly and substantively with indicators of online radicalisation, including posting tweets sympathizing with ISIS, describing life in ISIS-controlled territories, and discussing foreign fighters.”

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Five methodologies

3.1.1. Framing analysis

The use of frames and the exercise of identifying them in an unambiguous and reliable manner are grounds for discussion. Nevertheless, this might also provide researchers with some sense of comfort, since it means that a frame is only an *invitation* to look at reality in a specific way. Ultimately, however, sufficient validation of the identified frames remains crucial for them to actually represent the object of the frame analysis, i.e. to provide insight into the underlying patterns of a certain discourse. This external validation is needed to remind one that radicalisation is a complex phenomenon, with many different aspects. Only when citizens become aware of the possibility of multiple perspectives will their view of the world become more nuanced. Only then will it be possible to reach a sustainable solution for tendencies of “radicalisation” within society. In order to tackle these challenges, we engaged in inductive framing analysis (e.g. Van Gorp 2006; Van Gorp 2010; Van Gorp and Vercruyse 2012).

3.1.1.1. Central concepts

Definitions of framing tend to vary depending on the researchers who study it (e.g. Iyengar 2005; Scheufele 1999). In the public debate, framing is even viewed as a purposely *distorted* presentation of reality and usually something which is being said about the opponent in an accusing tone.

In communication sciences, a more neutral and broad understanding of framing is used. Some scholars even see framing as synonymous with the way in which matters are suggested by the media, namely for *representation*. A more specific definition is the one developed by Reese (2001:5), stating that “[f]rames are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world.” In other words, frames are steadfast perspectives or viewpoints that can be used to structure reality in a meaningful way. As such, frames help people to understand what is going on in the world around them. Facts do not stand on their own, but gain meaning by being embedded in a narrative. Frames are mutually shared in society and therefore change relatively little over time. Hence, frames represent images that are familiar and come natural to the users. Their persistent and stable character ensures that they play an important role in communication, even more so when social issues are being addressed. However, their familiarity and constancy might be the reason that they are not recognized as frames. Therefore, a framing analysis can help towards recognising and identifying frames, thus making them visible and tangible. This type of analysis also shows the clear difference with the use of the concept in everyday parlance, namely that framing results in a wrong/distorted perception of reality. It must be noted, however, that, contrary to common belief, frames allow reality to take shape. Framing then should be regarded as the dynamic process through which the meanings of complex, social issues come about.

Radicalisation is a particularly relevant issue for applying a framing analysis. On the one hand, many frames are used, or even needed, in order to explain what radicalisation is, while, on the other hand, it is notoriously difficult to point out an empirical reality that corresponds to the notion of “radicalisation.” Indeed, it is not even certain that such a thing

as “radicalisation” even exists. The lack of consensus between academics, police, youth workers, etc. has resulted in “radicalisation” being defined in a variety of ways. In other words, what some people regard as “radicalisation” is refuted by others. A strong dedication to religion, for example, may be perceived as a sign of radicalisation, or simply as the attempt of an individual “to find meaning in life.” As opposed to dementia or child poverty, for example, on which previous framing studies have been based, there might not be an objective reality in the case of “radicalisation.” In the examples of dementia or child poverty, there is an obvious reality that is beyond discussion. Although it is possible to observe dementia and child poverty through a variety of frames, the issue itself undoubtedly exists. If an empirical reality is largely or entirely missing, it should be obvious that a concept such as “radicalisation” can be regarded as *a social construct* which takes shape by means of an interactive process of constructing a shared meaning. In this case, the *framing* of “radicalisation” will play an even bigger role. After all, if a different frame results in a different definition of the phenomenon, the causes, consequences, solutions and moral judgement may alter fundamentally (Entman 1993). Especially when there is an interest in formulating a solution for “radicalisation,” it is important to disentangle the different ways in which the concept is framed.

Since framing is hard to avoid, and everyone (un)consciously speaks and acts according to their own frame, the CONRAD project also starts from a specific view on “radicalisation,” as is the case for BELSPO’s project call through which this project took shape. The empirical reality on which this project is based are Molenbeek and Verviers, and more specifically the youngsters with a migration background who live there. The reasoning behind this choice is that “radicalisation” presents a first stage of extremism and eventually terrorism. From this perspective, it is important to try and intervene in this process. Therefore, insights in the possible “radicalisation” of youngsters in Molenbeek and Verviers might help to prevent extremism and possibly even terrorism.

In order to obtain a global image of the situation and an overview of the various frames at play, a framing analysis always needs to take a few steps back and let go of the limitation that follows the demarcation of the specific research topic. Therefore, the framing analysis in the CONRAD project looks beyond the situation in Molenbeek and Verviers, by taking into account the entire public discourse on “radicalisation.”

Framing works by means of association. The frame suggests the prism through which one can look at reality, thus guiding the individual’s perception. The idea of guiding suggests that a frame does not impose itself. This can either be regarded as positive, since the audience is not *forced* to follow that steering. On the other hand, framing may occur unnoticed, in which case it can be interpreted as a form of propaganda. That is why frames are often connected to political positions and policy views, especially when it comes to radicalisation.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasise that framing results in a simplification of reality. Certain aspects of reality are accentuated (what Entman calls “salience”), while other aspects remain in the shadow. This is also a pitfall: the frame that simplifies the most, might get the most recognition, since it offers a somewhat black and white definition of reality. More complex frames are harder to get across. Two framing strategies can solve this issue: the combination of different frames and the use of counter-frames. Whereas a frame results

in a problematising description of a situation, the use of a counter-frame leads to a de-problematising definition of a situation. In this study, both problematising frames and de-problematising counter-frames will be mapped.

3.1.1.2. Method

The analysis material was mainly collected by using GoPress Academic, a news database. The material consisted, first, of news articles and reports published in popular and quality newspapers, news websites and magazines from January 2015 to the present date. To ensure enough diversity, the newspaper sample was supplemented by a convenience sample of TV-debates, radio-programmes and documentaries. Besides traditional media, the sample also included policy documents as well as social media and internet fora. The varied composition of the analysis material renders it possible to gain insight in the spectrum of opinions at play in the social debate. News articles, for example, reflect the issues at hand, as well as providing a forum for politicians, experts and other people involved.

Despite the diversity of the analysis material, it cannot be labelled as representative. After all, it is a convenience sample with the aim to ensure diversity rather than representativeness. For example, when the saturation point of data referring to a certain frame was reached, the focus was redirected to finding alternative perspectives.

In total, 267 texts were collected. The material was examined with an open mind during a *thematic coding*, through which every possible relevant text fragment and image was selected and added to a database. Every item received an *in vivo* code, i.e. a keyword that appears in the material itself. For example, a newspaper article by Struys (2017; our translation) talks about “radical” detainees who can *contaminate* other prisoners. Some words suggest that it is dangerous to incarcerate a radical individual with other clean detainees since there is “a real risk for contamination.” The same article argues that “radical” individuals formed a real “problem when returning to society” and hence might also affect the larger population. The solution to “eliminating this danger of contamination as much as possible, is to erect isolated departments for radicalised people,” where they can be “de-radicalised” before safely returning to society. All these separate text fragments were selected and coded so that they could be clustered in a subsequent phase, known as *axial coding*.⁴

Out of the 267 articles, 2.721 excerpts were coded on account of their containing *framing devices* (words, images, metaphors or arguments) that directly or indirectly refer to radicalisation, including its causes, consequences, solutions and possibly moral judgments (*reasoning devices*). Following the thematic analysis, the citations were axially coded. Based on the assigned codes and a comparison between the different coded fragments, we then linked the logically connected framing devices and reasoning devices to form patterns, thus constructing a limited number of *frame packages*. The overall idea that allowed for a package to be treated as a coherent whole, was the actual frame we were looking for. Assigning the most appropriate name to a frame package was an important step in the process, considering it already involves a kind of framing in itself.

⁴ For the rest of the chapter, excerpts from the data are presented in our own translations.

The reconstructed frame packages were placed into a *frame matrix*. This frame matrix shows how the different frames are related to each other. In this way, we have, inductively and progressively, worked towards a limited number of frame packages. A main criterion in this case was that the whole of frames and counter-frames should be *exhaustive*, which means that, together, they need to cover every aspect of the issue. Another criterion was that the frames and counter-frames had to be *mutually exclusive*. When the frames were constructed and described in a matrix, an additional analysis cycle was used to sort all excerpts according to the frame typology. If an excerpt could not be placed within the typology, it was taken to point towards an unidentified frame or an article without a frame (Van Gorp 2010). In the end, the reconstructed frames were viewed as valid because all excerpts could be classified within the typology. This led to the identification of twelve (counter-)frames, discussed at length below.

During this process, seven interviews, aimed at validating the different frames and counter-frames, were conducted with various experts on “radicalisation.” These experts included youth workers, academics, journalists and imams. Additionally, two workshops were organised with journalists, framing experts, youth workers and the spokesmen of a local mosque. During these workshops, there was debate about the credibility of the frames, including about the level to which they were thought to be recognisable and usable.

In the matrix, a distinction is made between frames and counter-frames. Frames offer a problematising description of the issue, and counter-frames de-problematise the topic. This might seem to present a static view, in which some perspectives on radicalisation are conceived of as negative while others are considered as positive. Yet, in the context of “radicalisation,” some of the counter-frames are seen as de-dramatizing rather than de-problematising. These counter-frames do acknowledge a problem but want to refute the sense of urgency which is felt to be present in society. The complex relation between the frames and counter-frames is later discussed at length. Counter-frames are often more challenging to reveal and are partly supported by the creative thinking that took place during the interviews and workshops.

3.1.2. Policy analysis

What common sense discourse refers to as “jihadi radicalisation” is anything but a new phenomenon. Some experts speak of the 3rd or 4th generation of jihadi actors in Europe (Kepel 2015). Yet this is the first time that the public space has been saturated to this extent by the notion of “radicalisation.” Since the beginning of the Syrian war, and especially since the Paris attacks of January 2015, the question of “radicalisation” has been dominating the public debate.

We believe that there is an objective reason to analytically separate different dimensions of the phenomenon. On the one hand, there are the discourses on jihadi radicalisation, produced by both the bureaucratic sphere and civil society. On the other hand, there is the sociological phenomenon of radicalisation, which leads individuals to engage in a disruptive logic with society and possibly to use violent means against it. In sum, we should distinguish the discourses produced on radicalisation from discourses produced within the world of radicalised actors.

The notion of public space has been the subject of many theoretical elaborations, particularly since the work of Jürgen Habermas. Some recent authors have attempted to modernize the analysis of Habermas's modern liberal public space by introducing the notion of oppositional public space (Negt and Kluge 2001). One of the reasons why the notion of public space is unsatisfactory to account for complex phenomena such as radicalisation is that phenomena such as these occur and develop in very closed spaces, inaccessible to the public eye.

As a phenomenon, violent radicalisation acts as a central issue for the society that seeks to protect itself from it, while also operating on the margins of that society, both in terms of the small number of violent "radical" actors and in terms of their secret or discrete mode of operation. Few people are actually brought into contact with "radicalised" actors. But virtually everyone is led to develop an opinion on the issue. This contributes to the increase of socially constructed representations, speeches and framing discourses regarding the subject. In this sense, what society says when it speaks about violent radicalisation does not tell us anything about what the trajectories of radicalised actors reveal about our society.

To move to a more operational level in the field of political sociology, we need concepts that allow us to distance ourselves from a conception of public space steeped in political philosophy, in favour of a sociologically informed understanding of the kind of practices that occur in daily interactions. To achieve this, we use the following concepts provided by political sociology:

- The public policy domain
- The central public policy concept
- Policy domain actors
- Public policy networks and communities
- The concept of infra-political margins

The contemporary radicalisation debate mobilises a great deal of bureaucratic and institutional energy. Within the public space, we witnessed the emergence of reflections, analyses, institutional devices, funding schemes, etc., which eventually take the shape of a specific institutional arrangement dedicated to formulating public policy-responses. This field of actors and the web of interactions that connect them may consequently be called a *policy domain* (Laumann and Knokke 1987).

A policy domain is not a fixed field defined by static and hermetic boundaries. It is a dynamic and living space that evolves according to external and internal circumstances. On the external level, we can mention changes in the economic, social and cultural environment, etc. Internally, the number and nature of the actors participating in the policy domain may vary. Relationships between different public policy areas may also evolve as a result of these internal and external developments.

Housing, culture, social cohesion, and the integration of migrants constitute relatively old domains of public policy. They are structured around legislations, regulations and easily identifiable budget allocations. The prevention of radicalisation is a more recent addition in this respect. Nevertheless, it seems to us that we can now recognize the emergence of a new public policy domain related to radicalisation. The legislation passed by

the federal parliament, the report of the parliamentary commission of inquiry on the Brussels attacks of 22 March 2016, as well as the decrees and directives adopted by Belgium's regional governments all act as indications that a new domain of public policy has emerged.

This anti-radicalisation policy has been constructed with a specific dual structure. It has been developed due to concerns related both to the prevention of violent radicalisation among young people, and the elimination of terrorism. It thus constitutes a domain in which the classic distinctions have been blurred between actors in public policy areas who used to focus on prevention, and those who used to deal in repression.

Therefore, we could hypothesize that the prevention of radicalisation is a transformative policy concept. Its effect is to modify the logic of other policy domains such as immigrant integration, social cohesion in cities, youth, the penal system, etc. One could go a step further and consider that radicalisation is a policy concept geared towards a new security era. In line with Giorgio Agamben (2015), it could be argued that the logic of anti-terrorism and anti-radicalisation herald the transition from the rule of law to the state of security.

Actors in the public policy domain are collective actors operating within a formal or informal organisation. They can be public (governments, parliaments, municipalities, street level bureaucrats, etc.) or private (voluntary private associations). These actors may wield a high level of power (ability to legislate, ability to finance, professionalization, etc.) or a low level of power. Actors in a public policy area develop strategies such as mobilisation, identity construction, speech production, etc. Public policy actors are linked to each other in different ways. They can be closely and durably involved in the implementation of a program, in which case we talk about networks of public policies. But the actors can also be connected in a loose and sporadic way, in which case we talk about public policy communities.

One of our guiding hypotheses is that the strategies of these actors influence each other within the same field. Therefore, we believe that the key element is to recognize that the strategies adopted by the actors of a public policy domain are mutually consequential, i.e. that they depend on the positions and the strategies of the other actors in the field. This is not to say that there is actual consensus within the field, although there is a minimal consensus concerning the field's operating rules. The disagreements do not concern the existence of the field or its foundations, but its particular modes of operation.

Policy domains are open to interactions from above and below. From the top, it is obvious that the whole environment of a policy domain can be modified or even suppressed by macro-political or macro-economic factors (military intervention, economic crisis, environmental change, etc.). This is what the CONRAD project has called macro-social transitions. From below, the public policy domain can be influenced by infra-political margins.

The notion of infra-political margins is borrowed from the work of anthropologist James Scott (1990). This idea allows us to take into consideration the fact that the degree of openness to the public eye of what we call the "public space" is not equal in all its dimensions. For various reasons, certain spaces are characterised by a lack of openness or even by a high degree of opacity.

As far as "radicalisation" is concerned, the notion of infra-political margins makes it possible to understand how radical trajectories can take shape. One example taken from the experience of a mosque in Verviers illustrates the role of infra-political margins. After the

mosques' activities had been reorganised under the leadership of a "civic imam," one could observe that it resulted in certain segments of the young people to break with the group. Those who had indeed broken away ended up becoming an ominous radical cell that met regularly at a snack-bar.

3.1.3. Digital storytelling

Digital storytelling is a participative group process used in a variety of disciplines (oral history, educational sciences). Its aim is for each participant to tell a personal story and to capture it in a series of strong, evocative images that can be spread across the Internet. The process is semi-structured and outcome-driven, comprising six stages: 1) storytelling and writing, 2) making storyboards, 3) creating images (pictures, photos, collages), 4) recording the voice of the storyteller, 5) assembling voice and images by means of a digital application, 6) collectively valorising the outcome by publicly showing digital stories.

Digital stories are distinct from documentaries, movies or video-testimonies. They have a very short narrative structure which is reduced to its essentials. It is told from an "I" perspective, transforming the story into an authentic personal message, revealing a narrator exploring and expressing their emotions and vulnerabilities. Digital stories are crafted so as to create a space of deep connection between the narrator and the listener/spectator.

Given its open and flexible character, the underlying reasons and interests of digital storytelling vary from setting to setting, but the general idea is to empower people individually, as well as collectively. The research literature often articulates three types of empowering potential, although recent action research in Brussels (Claes 2015; 2016) also opens other perspectives, which could be particularly relevant for conducting difficult talks on "radicalisation." We distinguish five potentials:

1) *Educational potential.* Many studies have emphasised the educational benefits of using Digital storytelling. DST is regarded as a deep learning tool that improves literary and writing skills (Robin 2006; Sylvester and Greenidge 2009). It also enhances academic achievement and critical thinking (Yang and Wu 2012) and helps to bridge the digital divide in schools (Gyabak and Godina 2011).

2) *Instrument of participation, and co-creation.* Digital storytelling also enables people to "bond and bridge," providing a strong instrument of participation, co-creation, and cooperative learning. This coincides with literature that shows how digital storytelling strengthens democracy (Hull and Katz 2006; Couldry 2008). Digital storytelling triggers dialogical processes that promote social change (Couldry 2008). According to Lambert (2013), digital storytelling gives a voice to people that normally do not have access to media channels and thereby opens new doors to civic participation. Digital storytelling also reconnects people through the power of personal, authentic stories. In this respect, digital storytelling promises to create a strong digital environment for conducting difficult talks on "radicalisation."

3) *Narrative instrument of self-expression.* Digital storytelling is a powerful narrative instrument of self-exploration and self-expression. Hence it can help people to reintegrate traumas and difficult moments into their personal life trajectory. Making this integration visible in a combination of words and images can be part of a therapeutic healing process and help strengthen ownership and dignity.

4) *Instrument for embracing plurality in public space.* Recent action research in Brussels (Anneessens neighbourhood, Molenbeek) also shows the potential of digital storytelling for transforming public spaces into spaces of plurality. Digital storytelling creates a digital environment through which a plurality of views can be made visible in public space. The stories, projected on walls or screens, can serve as an inspiring context in which group discussions in public spaces can be organised. Digital stories have the additional advantage of preserving privacy interests. Participation in digital storytelling is voluntary. Explicit consent for rendering digital stories public is asked by the facilitators and the methodology of digital storytelling allows for anonymising the narrator. Moreover, the narrators themselves act as the authors of their own appearance. Through the process they decide which parts of themselves will be revealed and which parts remain in the intimate sphere.

5) *Potential for conflict-transformation.* Action research in Brussel also evidenced processes of conflict transformation through digital storytelling. People learn to support divergent views on sensitive topics through the recognition and valorisation of authentic, personal stories, but also through the shared process of making stories. Recent action research in Brussels has also shown that dealing with sensitive topics (education, violence within families) in a process of digital storytelling, often requires facilitating techniques inspired by restorative programmes (talking piece, rephrasing messages).

3.1.4. Restorative justice

Restorative justice is not usually considered as a collection of concrete practices such as victim-offender mediation and family group conferences, but rather as a set of values and principles that re-define our understandings of crime and may re-orient the practice of all those working in a judicial context (Zehr 1990; Marshall 1996). Pali and Pelikan (2010) identify three elements that recur in the theory and practice of restorative justice: a life-world element, a participatory element and a restorative element. Restorative justice stresses the *life-world element* because it does not only regard crime and conflict as unlawful behaviour or a violation of legal rules, but also as concrete harm caused to human beings, as a disturbance of human interactions, and as a web of frictions and frustrations that needs to be expressed and recognised by the parties concerned. A respectful restorative response aims at constructing a safe space in which these personal stories can be told and listened to in a respectful manner. The underlying restorative intuition comes down to the idea that exchanging stories in a dialogical setting generates a context in which conflicting parties can be moved by each other's tale. Finding appropriate practices that embody this life-world element, is one of the key steps to conflict transformation.

Restorative justice stresses the *participatory element*, for the simple reason that restorative justice is shaped by democratic ideals of ownership, participation and deliberation. It starts from the strong belief that conflicting parties are affirmed and can grow in their dignity, self-respect and autonomy if they are given a stake in responding to crime or conflict. Restorative justice is about encountering “the other” and coping with “otherness” while re-positioning the image of the self, other parties and the world. At the practical level, participating towards finding solutions for conflicts or participating towards negotiating conflicting interests are seen as expressions of shared ownership. Conflicting parties thus

become the owners of their conflicts and thereby regain some control over their lives (Christie 1977).

Thirdly, restorative justice stresses the *restorative element*. It conceives its practices with the aim of restoring something. What this restorative element precisely contains, is not always clear and very much depends on how participants define their needs, experiences and expectations. But the common idea is that the response to crime is something constructive, in the sense that it can provide conflicting parties (victims, offenders) with a supportive tool to give meaning to what happened or is happening to them, to cope with their shattered assumptions and to open up new perspectives for the future. By doing so, restorative justice focuses on mobilising moral emotions such as empathy, repentance, forgiveness, and hope. These emotions risk being obscured in a punitive climate that is dominated by fear, resentment and retribution. In rediscovering these restorative emotions, the proponents of restorative justice hope to transform conflicts into new opportunities for human interactions in the future. Exchanging personal narratives (the life-world element) and actively participating in finding a response to conflicts are regarded as important vehicles for releasing and channelling these restorative emotions.

Restorative justice has many practical applications: from minor offences such as acts of vandalism or theft, to more serious crimes such as sexual violence, armed robbery and murder, or even gross human rights violations and the aftermath of terrorism (Staiger 2009). Moreover, during recent decades, the scope of restorative justice practices has been enlarged to include very different types of inflicted harm and injustices, as well as conflict situations in intercultural settings (Pali and Aertsen 2018; Vanfraechem and Aertsen 2018). Restorative justice practices are now also evolving towards the community level, in order to de-individualise conflicts and to capacitate and empower groups, agencies and public authorities.

However, restorative justice can also be considered as a method for developing knowledge, expertise and theory in the fields of law, criminology and social sciences in general. It is precisely in dialogical processes that unilateral and stereotypical perceptions of phenomena and incidents can be shared thanks to the provision of a safe space in which one can listen to “the other” without the need of self-defence or justification. Such an environment also creates the possibility to question and challenge predominant meanings and understandings of phenomena, and therefore valorises conflicting parties as generators of knowledge. In this regard, restorative justice connects to the aforementioned approaches and methodologies of discursive analysis (which allows for dialogical truth as well as narrative truth), framing analysis (in which counter-frames are constructed and explored by means of retrospective analysis, but also through the active participation of stake-holders and conflicting parties), and digital storytelling (which presents an instrument for sharing individual stories and listening to opposing ones, thus contributing to conflict-transformation). Topics such as crime, justice, extremism and “radicalisation” tend to evoke ambivalent, contradictory and inconsistent attitudes among citizens, which are best understood and studied, however, as “meaningful symbolic behaviour,” through which events are interpreted, evaluated, categorised and structured (Verfaillie 2012).

Against this background, the CONRAD project decided to work with “restorative circles” (or dialogue tables) in Molenbeek and Verviers. Restorative circles are frequently

applied at group level to discuss all kinds of issues, conflicts and disputes – or even just to create or support a climate of cooperation. They were inspired by the restorative justice model of “peace-making circles” (Fellegi and Szego 2013). The use of restorative circles with young people, family members and friends, victimised or otherwise affected individuals or their representatives, fellow citizens in local communities, youth workers and representatives of public authorities would enable all those concerned to express their experiences and needs within the context of their complex life-worlds, to voice their opinion, to clarify their expectations, but also to listen to deviating or opposing ideas and opinions, and to finally express their common understanding of “radicalisation” and – if necessary – to expand their common alternative understandings.

3.1.5. Participatory action research

Since the mid-1990s, a growing number of youth researchers has opted for participatory action research (PAR). The reason is that research as a social practice is vulnerable to power dynamics, not only while committing the results to paper but also before conceiving of the research setup. Since power imbalances already have a major impact on the lives of young people, especially those from low-income families or stigmatised neighbourhoods, it is crucial to pay extra attention to power when conducting research with these participants.

Although it has gained momentum since the 1990s, participatory action research is still a rather marginal phenomenon (Vanfraechem and Aertsen 2018). It originated as a reaction to certain limitations and difficulties within qualitative research. According to Punch (2002: 326-7) the following traps may be avoided by using PAR:

- The imposition of adult views: adults may have certain assumptions about young people, whereas young people may simply have a different way of viewing the world,
- Young people’s vulnerability to unequal power relationships in research: being used to having to try to please adults, young people may fear adult reactions,
- Young people’s limited vocabulary and different language use,
- The imposition of adult interpretations: adults presume that young people prefer ‘appropriate’ methods, are more competent at them, and that they have a shorter attention span.

PAR introduces an alternative relationship between researcher and research subject. Rather than studying a subject or subjects, the participatory researcher studies *with* them. According to Pain and Francis (2003:46) “[t]he defining characteristic of participatory research is not so much the methods and techniques employed, but the degree of engagement of participants within and beyond the research encounter.”

As a type of action research, PAR includes participants as co-researchers: “[t]hese participatory, action-oriented methods engag[e] the children as co-researchers, photographers and discussants to help describe the socio-spatial dynamics of each site from their own perspective” (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2003: 132). But PAR is not *only* a methodology. It is underpinned by a rather different set of philosophical assumptions about the nature and purpose of research, because its primary focus is often on social change and action rather than mere social analysis (Kindon 2005). That is why “[p]articipatory ethics might be

understood as an ethical stance against [academic] neutrality” (Cahill et al. 2007:306). It is a choice against academic dispassion, or a choice in favour of an ethic of care. This (contested) academic and philosophical position resonates with the words of Desmond Tutu: “if you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.” As such, PAR establishes a link between academic work and activism:

A participatory ethics builds upon long-standing traditions of grassroots social movements, activism, critical race and feminist theories and the work of social justice advocates who strive to address unequal relations of power, open up new spaces for decolonized knowledge production, and challenge the dominant hegemonic paradigm. (ibid.)

More recently, PAR was also adopted as a form of protest against the marketisation of knowledge (Pain et al. 2011:183). Smith (2007:102) mentions in this respect that “research in [...] a time of uncertainty, and in an era when knowledge as power is re-inscribed through its value as a commodity in the global market place, presents tricky ground for researchers.” PAR has a few distinct characteristics, the first of which is the belief that “they,” namely the people, know better:

Participatory research starts with the understanding that people – especially those who have experienced historic oppression – hold deep knowledge about their lives and experiences, and should help shape the questions, and frame the interpretations of research. (Torren and Fine cited in Cahill et al. 2007:309).

As such, PAR involves working with a group. Most PAR researchers put this into practice on all levels: research questions, the choice and design of methods, the analysis of data, the presentation of findings, and the pursuit of follow up action are all discussed collectively (Cahill et al. 2007). In line with the previous observation, Hopkins (2010:43) concludes the following about the nature of this type of research:

The unique qualities of participatory approaches mean that they nearly always involve working collaboratively with a group, and sometimes a group of young people may decide to research a particular topic and then ask a university researcher to work with them in the process. On other occasions, the researcher may devise the focus of the research in discussion with a group of young people, or with an organisation or agency working with young people.

These co-operations allow for a variety of perspectives to emerge naturally, with the potential of addressing issues that otherwise might go unaddressed.

Another feature of PAR is that the researcher has less control over the process and its outcomes: “with participatory research then, the researcher often has far less control over the focus of the research and how the research is conducted as this is likely to be shaped by the young people or other groups involved” (Hopkins 2010:43-4). The lack of control is welcomed as an advantage rather than a problem. Some authors call it “emergence,” indicating that the unforeseen is allowed, desirable even: “[o]ur full acceptance of emergence is partly about shaking off the role of expert knower altogether” (Pain and Francis 2003:50).

3.2. Social ecology

The study of a social phenomenon as “radicalisation” should not make abstraction of the particular contexts in which it occurs; after all, all “radicalisation” is local (Coolsaet 2016). It should actively collect the practical wisdom in a given context so as to gain a better understanding and ultimately create better-suited policies. In order to do this, a social ecology of “radicalisation” should involve the use of a “thick description” (Geertz 1973) of young people and other key experts, the social context of the neighbourhood or city in question and the complexities involved in the examination of the lived experience of those directly affected. For an in-depth discussion of social ecology as a model and the social ecologies of Brussels and Verviers, see annexes I and II.

Introduction

Social ecology is the description of a given social phenomenon in the wider social and spatial context in which it takes place. It is based on the understanding that local contexts function as an ecosystem, in which everything is connected with everything else. In the following sections a non-exhaustive selection of uses and understandings of “social ecology” in various disciplines is treated.

Social ecology in urban sociology

From the 1920s onwards the Chicago School (Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, Louis Wirth, Herbert Blumer, Erving Goffman, Anselm Strauss, etc.) engaged in what they called urban ecology. Particularly Park and Burgess contributed to a model of urban ecology consisting of principles derived from biology. In the city, competition and segregation lead to formation of natural areas, each with a separate and distinct moral order. These models show a central business district surrounded by a zone in transition, a zone of working men’s homes, a more middle class residential zone, and a commuter zone. “Urban ecology is the study of community structure and organization as manifest in cities and other relatively dense human settlements (Figure 4). Among its major topics, urban ecology is concerned with the patterns of urban community sorting and change by socioeconomic status, life cycle, and ethnicity, and with patterns of relations across systems of cities.”⁵

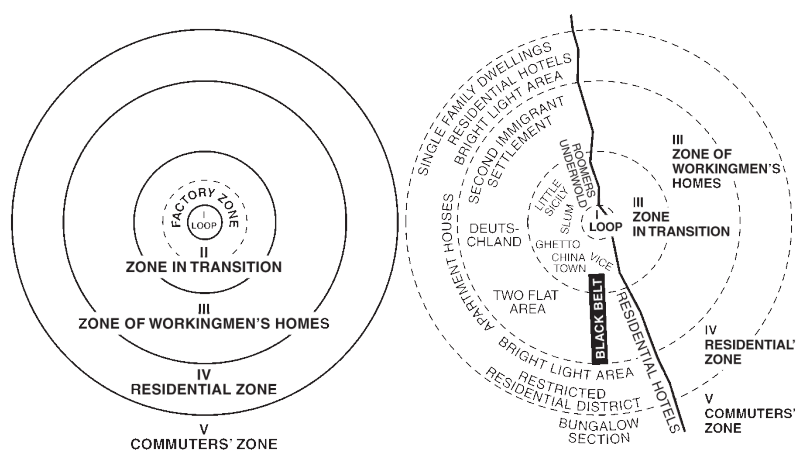


Figure 4: Urban Ecology (Source: Burgess, 1925)

⁵ See <http://sociology.iresearchnet.com/urban-sociology/urban-ecology/>

Social ecology in criminology

The Chicago School has inspired Shaw and McKay (1942) in the development of the Social Disorganisation Theory, which links deviance and crime with disorder in particular neighbourhoods. The model was also crucial for the development of the subcultures theory in the Birmingham School.

In contemporary criminology social ecology has remained popular as a model, through Byrne & Sampson's (1986) book *The social ecology of crime* and the work of, among others, Raudenbush and Morenoff on the 'neighbourhood effects' on the presence of crime. Here,

social ecology refers to a contextualized orientation which views offender and victim as part of a network of social relations, as well as the physical environment, of neighborhoods (...). From this perspective, crime is not viewed as an act which can be understood as an isolated act with individual motivations but rather as a collective product of ecological systems. (Bazemore and Schiff 1996: 328)

Interestingly, in many contemporary criminological papers utilising 'social ecology' as a concept, model or analytical tool it is seldom defined or problematised (e.g. Anderson 1998; Lauritsen and Schaum 2004).

Social ecology in psychology

It is unclear whether Bronfenbrenner (1974) was inspired by the urban sociological work of the Chicago School when he wrote about social ecology in his own field: developmental psychology. Bronfenbrenner believes that in order to understand human development, the entire ecological system in which growth occurs needs to be taken into account (Figure 5).

The central precepts of the ecology of human development are that human development takes place within a set of nested and changing environments and that complex relations within and between those nested environments shape behaviors. (Ennett et al. 2008: 1777-1778)

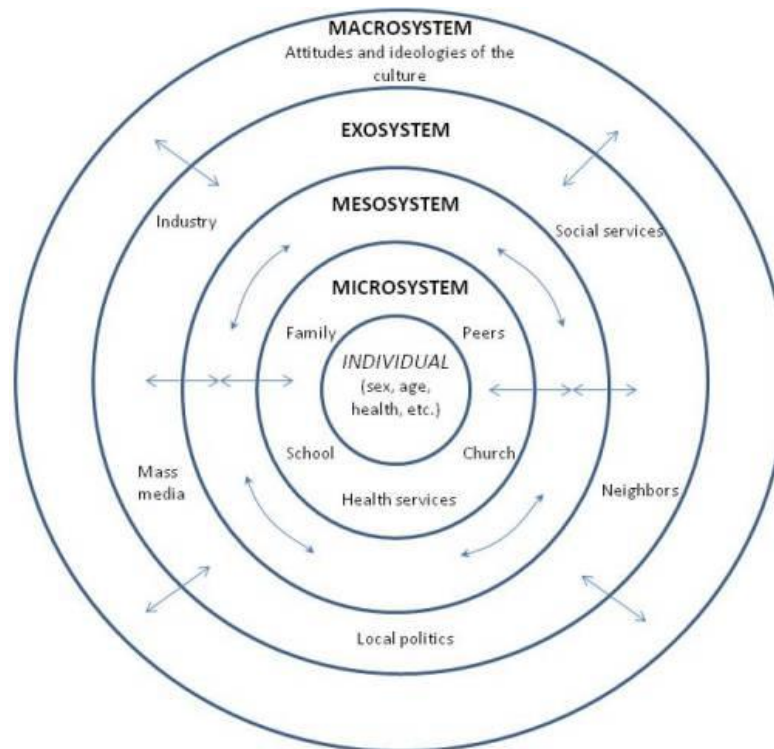


Figure 4: Social ecology in developmental psychology (Source: Bronfenbrenner, 1974)

The ecology Bronfenbrenner describes localises the individual (and his or her psychological development in particular) in wider concentric circles of micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-levels.

The micro-system includes activities, roles and relations in a defined setting (family, peers, etc.). The meso-system refers to interconnections among several microsystems (e.g. between family members and teachers). The exo-system talks about more distant systems that influence the individual indirectly through their impact on lower levels. The macro-system includes the norms and values of cultures and subcultures, belief systems, ideologies, social structure, gender role socialization, national and international resources, etc. We could call it a socio-ecological systems theory (cfr. Henderson and Baffour 2015)

This is not necessarily a spatial model, but it echoes a similar logic of the wider scales encompassing a given individual or a given social phenomenon. Ungar et al. (2013), interestingly, use a social ecology model to study resilience among children and their development under adversity: “[t]he study of resilience focuses on one particular subset of processes associated with human development: those that enhance the experience of well-being among individuals who face significant adversity” (p. 348)

Bronfenbrenner’s social ecology also links implicitly with the environmental psychology of Roger Hart (1970), Harold Proshansky (1978), Kevin Lynch (1960) and Moore and Young (1978).

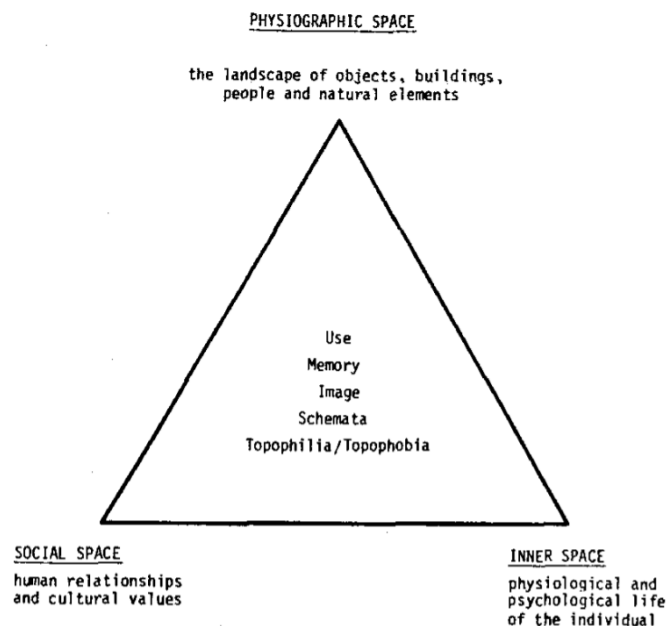


Figure 1. Realms of environmental experience.

Figure 6: Realms of environmental experience (Source: Moore and Young, 1978)

These authors emphasise that an ecology of social relations, such as that of Bronfenbrenner, should be supplemented by an interest in the interaction between person and place and in the spatial context in which social relations take place, in order to better grasp the conditions of an individual's wellbeing. Moore and Young (1978), for instance, distinguish inner space (psychological), physiographic space (the built environment and its history) and social space (human relations and cultural values) (Figure 6). They call it a behaviour-environment ecological framework.

Social ecology in anthropology

The early ecologists of the Chicago School viewed space as merely "physical" or "geometrical," i.e. as homogeneous and lacking any intrinsic social characteristics (Cohen 1976: 50). These ecologists also viewed the use of space by man as an economic transaction, making use of the resources available in order to realise his/her aims.

Cohen (1976) proposes a new social ecology that views the local environment through four lenses (Figure 7):

1. The instrumental orientation relates to the environment merely as a means or medium for the achievement of individual or collective ends, and not as a value in itself. Space or the environment serves as a resource or as a locus of resources the exploitation of which is either technically feasible or economically profitable.
2. The territorial orientation relates to the environment in terms of control over it, be it in the form of physical dominance or of political organization.
3. The sentimental orientation relates to the environment in terms of the sense of attachment it conveys to an individual or a community; attachment may be the result of a sense of belonging to a place, or it may be derived from a place's prestige.
4. The symbolic orientation relates to the environment in terms of the significance,

which a spatial feature harbours for an individual or a community, either in aesthetic, moral, or religious terms.

THE PARADIGM FOR SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

ORIENTATION TO ENVIRONMENT	Instrumental		Territorial		Sentimental		Symbolic	
PURPOSE OF ORIENTATION	Resources		Control		Attachment		Significance	
MODES OF ORIENTATION ^a	Technological Feasibility	Economic Benefit	Strategic Dominance	Political Organization	Primordial Belonging	Social Prestige	Aesthetic Enjoyment	Moral-Religious Meaning
REGULATIVE MECHANISMS AND PROCESSES	Knowledge	Market Exchange	Tactics and Strategy	Decision-Making	Identification	Social Evaluation	Taste Formation	Sanctification
TYPES OF ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION	Exploitative Potentialities	Land and Property Values	Tactical and Strategic Value	Territorial Rights and Boundaries	Extent of Belongingness	Prestige Area	Aesthetic Value	Sacred and Secular Places
INSTITUTIONS	Techniques and Technology	Economic	Military	Political	Solidary	Stratificational	Artistic	Moral-Religious
FUNCTIONAL SPHERE	Adaptation		Goal Attainment		Integration		Pattern Maintenance	

Figure 7: Social ecological analysis in anthropology (Source: Cohen, 1976)

4. SCIENTIFIC RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Results

Research question 1: What does the study of the existing literature teach us about “radicalisation” as a concept?

4.1.1. “Radicalisation” is problematic as a concept and a scientific tool

The study of the research literature and the field research in Brussels and Verviers lead us to conclude that there are a number of problems related to the term “radicalisation” and the process it purports to describe⁶.

THE LINEARITY MYTH. After the first terrorist attacks on European soil in the post-9/11 era, namely those in Madrid (2004) and London (2005), governments were quick to endorse the assumption that extreme ideas constitute a logical first step towards terrorism and that individuals with grievances will first adopt extreme ideologies before committing acts of violence. Underlying this “conveyor belt model” is the assumption that the main root cause for this terrorist violence lies buried within the ideology or the religion itself (Miller and Selig Chauhan 2017: 26), which are often conceived of as a sort of virus, infecting vulnerable urban youngsters and spread by recruiters, online brainwashing or “radicalisation” in prison. This causal relation, however, is heavily criticised in recent research. Indeed, extremist behaviour is rejected by many “radicals,” as well as by large majorities in Muslim countries or in Muslim communities across Europe (Groppi 2017; Reinares et al. 2008). Additionally, known terrorists mostly have a series of rather diversified reasons for committing violence and acts of terror, while research into the life-worlds of documented *Islamic* terrorists shows that many of them did not have a particularly religious past or had little knowledge of Islam (see state of the art). Nevertheless, this conveyor belt model and its assumption of a contagious ideology/religion, remains the dominant governmental approach, and is also supported by some of the dominant scientific models, such as McCauley and Moskaleiko’s (2008) staircase to terrorism.

THE FOCUS ON THE INDIVIDUAL. Most of the scientific literature limits its focus on “radicalisation” to an individual process and underplays the importance of collective processes (Gielen 2008). Although studies on “de-radicalisation” practices may claim that “radicalisation” must be understood on a micro-, meso- and macro-scale (Feddes et al. 2016), such practices tend to focus exclusively on the level of the individual (Hallich and Doosje 2017). As Schmid (2013) argues, focussing on the micro-level obscures the role of the environment in which “radicalisation” may occur, while also downplaying the role and responsibility of society and the government. In his analysis, the meso-level refers to a “radicalising” or “radical” environment that supports the individual or renders him complicit. It thus provides the missing link connecting the terrorist to a broader reference group that feels disgruntled and experiences injustice, with the potential of “radicalising” certain youngsters, who might then go on to become part of a terrorist organisation (2013:4). In his analysis, Schmid also refers to the macro-level, for which he observes the role of the government and

⁶ In fact, several of the problems related to the concept of “radicalisation” were signalled by youth workers at the onset of the project.

society (at home and abroad), and specifically examines the “radicalisation” of public opinion and party politics, the tense relationships between majority and minority groups, and the absence of socio-economic opportunities. The individual phenomenon of “radicalisation” does not take place in a void but should rather be understood against the background of global transitions, of a heated and polarised public debate, of surging populism and far-right extremism in politics, and of a plethora of policies, programmes and projects tackling “radicalisation.”

STIGMA. Another central problem in the dominant discourse on “radicalisation” is that, until quite recently, the term only referred to Muslim communities. “Radicalisation” in the name of “Islam” is perceived as an exceptional phenomenon that fundamentally differs from other forms of political violence, whether right-wing, left-wing or nationalist extremism (Van Bouchaute et al. 2018). However, the similarities and differences between militants operating in the name of a religious ideology, on the one hand, and those involved in other forms of violent extremism, on the other, are rarely investigated (Rabasa et al. 2010). In all probability, RAND Europe (2011) constitutes the only large-scale study comparing various forms of violent extremism. This false exceptionalism in the public and political debates on “radicalisation” is experienced by the Muslim community as stigmatising. “Radicalisation” is an ambiguous concept, because it has come to associate both “radical ideas” and Islam with violence and terror.

CONTROL. The refusal to distinguish radical ideas from extremist violence results in a situation in which entire populations can be and are controlled, thus bordering on an unconstitutional policy and security practice. Furthermore, the assumption that “radicalisation” is the result of failed integration (an assumption often formulated in the early days of “radicalisation” policy in Europe) has partly contributed to the current mix of counterterrorism and social cohesion policy. The UK PREVENT programme, for instance, “has confusingly oscillated between tackling violent extremism in particular and promoting community cohesion and ‘shared values’ more broadly” (Richards 2011: 143). Colaerts (2017) refers to some countries adopting practices involving the distribution of “checklists” which not only mentioned changes in behaviour, but also included extreme political opinions and certain types of Islamic garments as indicators of “radicalisation.” Schmid points to the role of state actors: “[t]he use of torture techniques and extra-judicial renditions in recent years, has been a drastic departure from democratic rule of law procedures and international human rights standards” (2013:iv). These practices, he continues, are indicative of the fact that in a polarised political situation not only non-state actors but also state actors can “radicalise.”

RADICALISM AS LEGITIMATE POLITICAL THOUGHT. From a historical perspective, the term “radicalisation” is problematic in its relationship to “radicalism” as an expression of legitimate political thought. Over the last few decades, “radicals” and “radicalism” have been understood as opposing traditionalism and the status quo, and thus including left-wing, right-wing and even centrist and liberal incarnations. As Colaerts (2017) indicates, political “radicalism” is not new, nor is it necessarily suspect. At the same time, many historical examples of radicalism were characterised by violent episodes: the 1890s workers and anarchist movement, the early fascist groups in Italy and Germany during the 1930s, the 1960s revolutionary groups such as the Afro-American Black Panther Movement,

May '68 in France, separatist nationalist groups such as ETA and IRA, etc. In this respect, Neumann (2008:3) points out that “as late as the early 2000s, hardly any reference to radicalisation could be found in the academic literature on terrorism and political violence.” In the political discourse of the last decades certain examples of “radicalism,” such as “radical ideas” or “radical” manifestos were generally considered favourably. After the 9/11 attacks the term “radicalisation” was adopted as a less value-laden term to engage in analysis of terrorism. As an ideology, radicalism challenges the legitimacy of established norms and policies, but it does not, in itself, lead to violence. In other words, radicalism can exist without the advocacy of violence in its striving for social or political change. “Radicalism” can be an innovative social force, a “political action” shaped by a certain context (Colaerts 2017; Della Porta and LaFree 2012; Reinares et al. 2008:5). From this perspective, grievances as a result of “widespread feelings of inequity and injustice, a very acute sense of marginalisation and humiliation” (Reinares et al. 2008:9) can be translated into outrage and a radical political stance.

TOO NARROW AND TOO WIDE. We believe strongly that the term “radicalisation”—it was first coined in policy documents—is also unfit for scientific purposes. It refers to a phenomenon we are not sure actually exists. Of course, we can conceive of a process in an individual that precedes his or her willingness to commit terrorist violence. Yet, the study of root causes in the process of “radicalisation” in the last 10 to 15 years has mainly yielded dissensus—what we know for certain is that we know very little. We argue that this is probably because the term “radicalisation” throws too many (and sometimes unrelated) phenomena in one basket. It is too vague and does not correspond to a homogeneous empirical phenomenon. At the same time, very little research has been undertaken to compare religious “radicalisation” with phenomena which might be similar, like extreme-left or -right political violence or sectarianism. The gaze of the “radicalisation” concept is, in short, both too narrow and too wide.

Research question 2: How is “radicalisation” framed in the public debate and approached in (European) policy?

4.1.2 (European) “radicalisation” policy is characterised by definitional vagueness and a bazooka-type multi-agency approach

Based on the analysis of European policies related to “radicalisation” (see annex III) we can conclude that EU policies display a wide variation in terms of objectives, underlying philosophies and domains of action.⁷ To illustrate this point, we present four examples:

- the 2005 resolution of the EU Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, which includes a list of the following recommendations: (1) to develop intersectional strategies which allow the different levels of power to collaborate; (2) to promote an inclusive discourse without stigmatisation while maintaining respect of human rights;

⁷ In consultation with two other Belspo-funded research projects on “radicalisation” (FAR and AFFECT) we agreed to divide the tasks regarding policy analysis. As a result, this report only presents an analysis of the European policy. However, in broad terms the same conclusions apply to Belgian federal and regional policies on “radicalisation.”

(3) to organise education for professionals who are affected by this issue; (4) to support cities by organising exchanges and reunions; (5) to reinforce youth education within families as well as schools; (6) to promote partnerships with civil society; (7) to promote and support programmes of disengagement; (7) to financially support professionals dealing with “radicalisation;” (8) to provide financial support to organisations; (9) to promote collaboration between international organisations; (10) to regularly evaluate the member state actions in this field.

- the Radicalisation Awareness Network, the main vehicle of the EU in this field, which advocates on: (1) the development of counter-narratives; (2) the support of teachers; (3) exit-work and “de-radicalisation;” (4) work with young people, families and local communities; (5) support of local authorities; (6) anti- and “de-radicalisation” work in prisons (7) support of police and law enforcement; (8) the remembrance of victims of terrorism; (9) health and social care.
- the 2014 EU strategy, which focuses on (1) inequalities and discrimination, intercultural dialogue and education; (2) moderate discourses and dialogues in the media; (3) governmental communication; (4) the development of dissuasive discourses; (5) online “radicalisation;” (6) training of first-line practitioners; (7) actively involving civil society and the private sector; (8) implementing strategies of disengagement adapted to the context; and (9) research on the subject.
- the 2016 communication of the European Commission, which proposes 7 fields within “prevention work”: (1) supporting research; (2) the fight against online propaganda; (3) combating “radicalisation” in prisons; (4) accessible education; (5) an inclusive society; (6) the further development of security mechanisms, policies and technologies; and (7) helping out third countries in fighting “radicalisation.” Remarkably, this 2016 communication mentions 7 fields in the prevention of “radicalisation”, whereas only two of these can actually be labelled as “prevention.”

The overview presented above shows that “radicalisation”-related policy at EU level is highly varied, involving a wide array of networks, organisations, programmes, policies and projects, each with diverging objectives and emphases: “European counter-radicalisation programs differ greatly from one another in terms of aims, structure, budget, and underlying philosophy and each experience is deeply shaped by political, cultural, and legal elements unique to that country” (Vidino and Brandon 2012:164).

We refer to this multitude of objectives and actions as the “**bazooka**,” echoing European Central Bank director Mario Draghi’s policy in the years of the financial and monetary crisis of 2014 and after. Considering this “bazooka” approach we could conclude that the main European actors are unsure about which actions to prioritise, probably due to a lack of scientific consensus regarding the root causes of “radicalisation.” As a result, the EU tackles the problems of “radicalisation” and the danger of (home-grown) terrorism by “shooting at everything that moves,” i.e. by deploying a wide variety of tactics and actions.

How have we arrived at this bazooka-type of “radicalisation” policy? As stated above, the word “radicalisation” has only recently become a part of policy debates, namely in the years after the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London. In the early years of terrorism and “radicalisation”-related policy at EU level, the fight against terrorism took priority over the fight against “radicalisation.” As a result, the “prevention” section in those early years only

represented a small proportion of the policy developed, which was mainly geared towards security and protection. Only after the attacks in Madrid and London did it gradually become clear that terrorists are often home-grown rather than foreign, leading to the realisation that the EU should focus more on the process of “radicalisation.” This probably also explains why some documents, especially early policy documents, do not make the effort of defining “radicalisation.” This can also be seen, regrettably, in more recent documents.

To show the process involved in the EU “radicalisation” policy over the last 15 years, we present a (non-exhaustive) timeline of EU policy initiatives, starting in 2004 with the appointment of a European Union Terrorism Coordinator. A year later, in 2005, the first policy framework was presented with the influential EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy. This framework consists of four pillars: prevention, protection, prosecution and reaction. The term “radicalisation” is only mentioned in the first pillar, where it is defined as “the phenomenon of people embracing opinions, views and ideas which could lead to acts of terrorism” (COM, 2005). The hypothetical clause “could lead to” reveals a weakness of definition comparable to the formulations in the AIVD (2004) anti-terrorism statement which states that the prerogative of the Dutch intelligence services is to intervene in cases of real terrorist threat, as well as in cases of extreme beliefs “which could severely disrupt society.” The problem with this hazy definition and the policy that relies on it, lies in the fact that it not only targets (imminent) violent behaviour but also extreme or orthodox beliefs, whereas liberal democracies and their constitutions, in principle, offer citizens the freedom to hold whatever beliefs they want. This definition also remains problematic because the current state of the art gives no scientific evidence, neither for the assumption that extreme or orthodox beliefs lead to violence, nor for the conditions under which this is supposed to occur. Therefore, to target people holding extreme beliefs within a framework of anti-terrorism (or indeed a criminal law) cannot properly be justified.

A 2008 brief by the European Economic and Social Committee does, however, refer to the “**definitional challenge**” of violent “radicalisation” and its prevention. Interestingly, the document focuses mainly on “terrorism” and links violent “radicalisation” to failed integration and exclusion, which certainly did not have any scientific base at the time, and which remains contested as a root cause today. This text symbolises the EU “radicalisation” policy in the second half of the 2000s: well-intentioned but also mostly steered by political gut-feeling and a lack of scientific basis.

After 2010, a myriad of new policy initiatives was developed with an increasing focus on “radicalisation” outside the classic anti-terrorism policy (but still based on the controversial insight that radical ideas lead to violence). In 2011 the Radicalisation Awareness Network was founded, which currently includes more than 3000 frontline practitioners, and which is organised in nine working groups (narratives, education, EXIT, youth, local authorities, prison, police, remembrance of terrorism victims and health and social care). In 2012 the European Network of De-Radicalisation was founded. The 2014 revision of the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy is another great example of the bazooka strategy, focusing on ten priorities which include research, prevention, policing, fighting online “radicalisation,” disengagement, tackling inequality and discrimination, etc.

While the European Commission has been the most active and powerful European actor in “radicalisation”-related policy, the European Parliament has only been involved in

one legislative action on “radicalisation,” namely the (non-binding) resolution of 2015. Kundnani and Hayes (2018) suspect that government leaders and the Commission have played an active role in restraining the Parliament’s willingness to take further legislative action. The 2015 resolution refers to “radicalisation” in a rather curious statement, which claims that “[it] has become a term used to describe the phenomenon of people embracing intolerant opinions, views and ideas which could lead to violent extremism” (P8_TA(2015)0410:3). This quote contains a number of interesting elements. Firstly, it is not a definition but rather seems to refer to other people’s definitions, while also containing some doubt as to the Parliament’s authority to say anything conclusive on the matter. In this regard, the formulation in itself also brackets (the lack of) scientific evidence concerning the phenomenon, since it only refers to the discursive reality in which certain people use certain definitions to talk about a given phenomenon. Secondly, a remarkable shift has taken place since, in this document, the word “extremist” has been replaced by “intolerant.” This is relevant from a socio-legal perspective, because we can intuit that many extreme beliefs are totally harmless and do not constitute a risk for society, whereas intolerant beliefs are, to say the least, akin to intolerant behaviour and hate-related violence. Furthermore, 2015 was the year in which, on the European level, “extremism” and “radicalisation” were no longer understood as an exclusively religious, Muslim affair, with other “extremisms” being named more consistently.

The 2017 brief of the European Economic and Social Committee contains a definition which focuses specifically on radical violence. It foregrounds an approach which, in line with the model of Vidino and Brandon (2012), identifies three levels of prevention work. 2017 was also the year in which the High-Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation was founded. This group brings together the most important actors at the European level: representatives of the Member States, the Commission, representatives of the RAN, FRA, Europol, Eurojust, etc. Moreover, the Committee of the Region brief was published in that same year, introducing the following definition: “in the absence of a commonly accepted definition of ‘violent radicalisation,’ [we define] ‘radicalisation’ as a phenomenon of people who regard the use of violence as legitimate and/or use violence themselves in order to achieve their political objectives which undermine the democratic legal order and the fundamental rights on which it is based” (p.17). This definition resonates with Hannah Arendt’s (1969) reflections on violence and, more recently, with the Flemish study of anti-radicalisation policies in prevention work, undertaken by Van Bouchaute et al. (2018). Following this scholarly tradition, the problematic term “radicalisation” ought to be replaced by “political violence,” a term with two advantages: it refers directly to violence rather than extreme or radical ideas, and it moves away from the false exceptionalism of Muslim “radicalisation.”

From the above presentation and discussion, we can draw seven conclusions regarding EU policies related to “radicalisation.” Firstly, we can argue that there has been little to no progress in defining the social phenomenon of “radicalisation.” If insight into the social phenomenon is limited, it will hinder effective policy-making. Indeed, a hazy definition probably leads to bazooka-like policies almost automatically. For instance, the weight of the literature is focused upon terrorism rather than “radicalisation.” Christmann (2012:1) claims the following in this respect:

[T]he evidence is concerned with that smaller cohort of individuals who, once radicalised, go on to commit acts of violence in the pursuit of political or religious aims and objectives. This introduces a systematic bias in the literature, away from the radicalisation process that precedes terrorism, including radicalisation that does not lead to violence.

Of course, inherently linking “radicalisation” to terrorism has an impact on the kind of actions that are taken. In this regard, Heath-Kelly (2012) refers to the invention of “radicalisation,” which allows governments to deploy anti-terrorism measures *pre-emptively*.

Secondly, the confusion of projects, policies, programmes and actors tackling “radicalisation” is closely linked to the wide variety of definitions used by different European actors. Indeed, the variety of definitions also shows that the institutions involved each act according to their own assumptions and underlying philosophies. The variation (and the chaos) only increases, of course, since the legislative action regarding “radicalisation” remains the prerogative of the Member States: “European counter-radicalisation programs differ greatly from one another in terms of aims, structure, budget, and underlying philosophy and each experience is deeply shaped by political, cultural, and legal elements unique to that country” (Vidino and Brandon 2012:164).

Thirdly, most “preventive” actions are not related to prevention in the usual sense. They include actions like the screening of online propaganda and recruiters by national intelligence services, as well as supporting research or collaboration with non-EU states. Also, actions focusing on classic prevention work tend to ignore the potential fall-out for frontline practitioners, who are instrumentalised within a framework that mostly remains repressive and is linked to criminal law approaches. Using local practitioners with solid ties in local communities and established relationships of trust as government antennas may cause disturbing side-effects for these first-line practitioners, who are never identified or critically discussed in EU policy texts.

Fourthly, the EU policy on “radicalisation” can generally be characterized as a “bazooka” approach. This entails a plea for collaboration with various actors in civil society, often by mixing “radicalisation” and social cohesion initiatives (the so-called multi-agency approach). The UK-based think tank Demos argues that governments have a legitimate claim to counter certain ideologies which undermine social cohesion by fostering integration and empowering disenfranchised communities. However, these efforts should be pursued separately from counterterrorism efforts (Briggs et al. 2006). Vidino states in this respect that “[a] ‘counter-radicalisation’ strategy that blurs the line between supporting social cohesion and countering terrorism is likely to achieve neither” (2010). Indeed, such a dynamic has several negative consequences in the sense that projects for social cohesion and the people within individual organisations are increasingly regarded by intelligence services as detection mechanisms rather than as initiatives aimed at bringing people together. This evolution also damages the credibility of frontline workers. It has been documented, for instance, that programmes such as the UK PREVENT programme have led to well-intentioned individuals being ostracised from their own ethnic or religious groups because of their activities in “radicalisation” projects under the PREVENT umbrella (Richards 2011).

Fifthly, most of the statements issuing from European actors formulate a rather inclusive discourse. For instance, the first three priorities of the 2014 Counter-Terrorism

Strategy focus on (1) fighting inequalities and discrimination, promoting intercultural dialogue and strengthening education, (2) promoting moderate discourses and dialogues in the media and on social networks, (3) improving governmental communication explaining policy decisions in order to avoid extremist responses. It is remarkable to see that this type of moderate and inclusive discourse has gained the upper hand at EU level, whereas in many Member States the dominant tone is that of populist and right-wing discourses on “radicalisation,” migration and the refugee crisis. Here the EU wishes to promote a sober and positive discourse, promoting human rights, education, socio-economic prosperity and intercultural dialogue. However, as Kundnani and Hayes (2018) argue, most of the actions as formulated in the Action Plans of the European Council of governmental leaders are repressive in nature and parliamentary oversight is nearly inexistent. The authors also claim that most of the content of these Action Plans is not shared by the general public: “[t]he Swedish Presidency, which oversaw updates to the Action Plan in 2009, was ‘of the firm opinion that the revised version... should be a public document,’ but was overruled by the other members of the EU Council” (Kundnani and Hayes 2018: 18).

Sixthly, the dominant view on “radicalisation” remains mechanical, based on the linear conveyor belt model:

Radicalisation was essentially seen as a conveyor belt process in which “vulnerable” Muslims were susceptible to external influencers – first Al-Qaeda then, from 2008, a broader church of “radical Islamists” – said to espouse an “extremist worldview” that “distorted the reality of Western policies and conflicts around the world in order to justify violence” (Kundnani and Hayes 2018:18-9).

This can be seen in the underlying assumptions related to a variety of detection schemes (e.g. detection checklists, Colaert (2017)) or the use of counter-narratives. Concerning the latter, the RAN states that “[d]eveloping counter-narratives on the basis of such limited and general knowledge has of course little chance of success” (2016:2). Another example of this mechanistic approach can be seen in the development of de-radicalisation programmes, which are seldom evaluated on their effectiveness. Also, the use of data mining and detection technologies to screen the Internet as well as initiatives to hold Internet companies responsible for “radicalisation” (while there is no scientific consensus about the role of the Internet as a root cause) shows how the European actors continue to reduce this complex social phenomenon to a rather simple and linear, individual and psychological process:

Most governments have focused on technical solutions, believing that removing or blocking radicalising material on the Internet will solve the problem. Yet this report shows that any strategy that relies on reducing the availability of content alone is bound to be crude, expensive and counterproductive. Radicalisation is largely a real-world phenomenon that cannot be dealt with simply by “pulling the plug.” (ICSR 2009:1)

Seventhly, policy documents seldom contain a critical discussion of the breeding ground for the development of extreme opinions and behaviour. What does it mean to be vulnerable? What does it mean to be at risk of “radicalisation”? And who are the people at risk? It can be argued that this breeding ground for “radicalisation” is created by a multitude of factors, which bring about feelings of disengagement with society, as well as discontent or anger among certain (young) people, thus making it easier for them to be influenced negatively. If

the above questions are left unanswered and left to the discretion of local law enforcement, cases of wrongful suspicion are to be expected. This dominant focus on the individual, psychological process of “radicalisation” also obscures the collective responsibilities of other institutions (judiciary, law enforcement, policy, media) and the role of collective “radicalisations” that are taking place in this context, namely the increase of hate speech, populist discourse and polarised political debate.

Considering the fact that the attacks in Madrid (2004) and London (2005) happened more than 10 years ago we should be critical as to the lack of understanding about the topic of “radicalisation” and the lack of terminological clarity in policy documents. Since the first mention of “radicalisation” in 2004-2005, communications and recommendations have evolved but the main objective remains the fight against terrorism. The focus on “radicalisation” and its prevention remains secondary. Indeed, the different definitions of the term remain essentially linked to violent action.

4.1.3. Twelve frames are used in the public debate on “radicalisation,” only half of which are used in scientific literature

We performed a study on the framing of “radicalisation” (see Annex IV and Figoureaux and Van Gorp, forthcoming). More specifically, the study aimed at identifying helpful opportunities with regard to broadening the communication about this term. “Radicalisation” has been part of a lively debate in Belgium ever since the terrorist attacks of November 13, 2015 in Paris and those of March 22, 2016 in Brussels, as well as the rising issue of departing Syria fighters. The debate on “radicalisation” is part of a broader polarizing climate that influences the stability in Belgian society by way of framing.

These frames present a certain prism or perspective that organises one’s perception of “radicalisation.” Depending on the perspective that is used, the issue may be regarded in a different way: as a spreading illness, or as an empowering force, for example. This study wants to gain insight into the meaning of “radicalisation”, by mapping *all* the frames that are prevalent in Belgium. To broaden the view on the issue, the study also develops a number of counter-frames, which present a *non-problematising* perspective on “radicalisation” in Belgium.

“Radicalisation” is a special topic on which to perform a framing analysis, since there is no consensus on whether the phenomenon even exists. Some also consider the term “useless,” and claim that it describes *normal* events, while others believe it to be *stigmatizing* and *counterproductive*. In other words, this ambiguity makes “radicalisation” a more confusing than clarifying term.

The term “radicalisation” was originally used within European police and intelligence circles shortly after the 9/11 attacks, at which point it simply meant “anger” (Coolsaet 2016:3). Following the attacks in Madrid and London by homegrown terrorists in 2004-2005, the term was suddenly widely used both in policy documents (Kundnani 2012) and in the media (Hörnqvist and Flyghad 2012). Radicalisation soon became a “container concept,” to refer to “everything that happens before the bomb goes off” (Neumann 2008:4).

Today, the term “radicalisation” has a negative connotation, whereas the term used to be more neutral and therefore less emotionally charged. In its unbiased sense, to be radical means “to be extreme relative to something that is defined or accepted as normative,

traditional, or valued as the status quo” (Mandel 2009:105). In general, “radicalisation” is understood as a process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly more extreme political, social or religious ideals and nurture aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo (Wilner and Dubouloz 2009).

Over the years, however, the meaning of the term has been shaped into “a new lens through which to view Muslim minorities” (Kundnani 2012:3), and has even been equated with “Muslim-danger” (Fadil 2017:9). Since there is no consensus about the definition of “radicalisation”, the meaning of the term varies according to the speaker using it.

According to our inductive framing analysis, there are 12 frames and counter-frames which structure the public debate on “radicalisation” in Belgium. We have labelled them as follows: *A criminal career, Virus, Mutiny, Two roosters in one cage, Puberty, Meaningfulness, Penance, The Freedom Fighter, Resilience, Embrace the threat, The continuum and A catalyst.*

The first four frames consider “radicalisation” a social problem. In these frames “radicalisation” is identified as (Figure 8):

1. inherently linked to criminality
2. an evil ideology that spreads like a virus
3. the revolt of certain groups against society
4. an effect of the clash between two (incompatible) cultures

Frame	Cultural theme	Definition of radicalization	Cause (why is it a problem?)	Consequences	Moral values involved	Possible solutions/actions	Link with extremism and terrorism	Metaphors, choice of vocabulary
1 A criminal career	From petty thief to gangster	Step-by-step one shows more criminal behavior and thus becomes more radical	Fast money or time in prison turns young thieves into the ultimate criminal	Gangsters are collecting fame and status while creating a dangerous society	People consciously choose for evil	The police and justice department have to track down potential criminals and lock them up	Radicalism grows into extremism and ultimately terrorism	Terrorist elite school, training center for jihad's, prison as university of radicalization
2 Virus	A life-threatening, contagious disease	Radicalization is an evil, spreading ideology	Poisonous radical ideas are transmitted to vulnerable individuals	The society panics and activates disaster plans	The battle against evil and the victory of the right	The government needs to isolate and try to cure contaminated individuals	Radicalization without treatment leads to violence	Positive medicines, feverish behavior, <u>antivirusprogram</u> , deradicalization clinic
3 Mutiny	Resistance against the authorities	Radicalization is the sudden uproar against the authorities	Perceived discrimination and injustice lead to buildup frustrations	There is insubordination in society and a disruption of the balance	Peace is disturbed and should be restored	The priority is to restore political stability: address frustrations or suppress the uproar	Some insurgents take up the arms	Intifada, distrust the government, resentment against the white elite
4 Two roosters in one cage	Only one rooster can lead the henhouse	Continuous challenges by 'the other' leads to aggressive behavior	Two macho cultures clash and feed the anger in each other	Society polarizes and segregates, everyone is forced to choose sides	The incompatibility of two dominant elements	One of the two cultures <u>needs</u> to win to restore peace and stability	A minority takes up arms to win the battle	Kulturkampf, clash of civilizations, superiority, being repressed in my own city

Figure 8: 4 frames used in the “radicalisation” debate

In the eight counter-frames, which de-problematise the phenomenon, “radicalisation” is identified as (Figure 9):

1. part of the process of growing up
2. an intense, positive engagement with religion/ideology giving purpose to life
3. an individual's way to find forgiveness
4. someone standing up to defend the weak

5. an effect of the changing pressures in society
6. something which is experienced as threatening as a result of ignorance
7. a marginal phenomenon in a much larger social group
8. an intrinsic element in a healthy public debate

The framing analysis contributes to the question of alternative discourses by revealing the existence of a wide variety of non-problematising discourses in contemporary debates. It also shows that many of these interpretations stress the non-violent aspects of the phenomenon or imply that “radicalisation” does not necessarily involve a security risk.

The main governmental approaches, however, echo only two of the twelve frames listed above, namely the *Virus* frame, which presents “radicalisation” as a contagious disease, and the *Resilience* frame, which stresses the individual’s capacity to overcome the pressures in society. Both these frames are adopted in many governmental responses to countering violent extremism (CVE), policies (checklists, PREVENT, deradex) and de-radicalisation projects (Bounce, Diamant +). Underlying both these frames and approaches is a mechanical and teleological conception of “radicalisation,” an approach that is highly popular among governmental responses because it simplifies the complex interplay of processes which we

Frame	Cultural theme	Definition of radicalization	Cause	Consequences	Moral values involved	Possible solutions/actions	Link with extremism and terrorism	Metaphors, choice of vocabulary
1 Puberty	The phase of becoming an adult	Radicalization is actually a phase of identity searching	A psychological phase leads to experimenting with extreme ideologies	Young people are testing boundaries and provoking on purpose	It is a part of life and a part of growing up	Society needs to stop dramatizing and see the natural process for what it is	In exceptional cases, the young people remain on the extreme path	Wandering young people, brats, sleeper, typical for their age, do not overreact
2 Meaningfulness	Giving purpose to life	Radicalization is actually an intense experience of ideology in a rational world	The fading of religion in the West creates a need for alternatives	Someone chooses to try and live their ideology or religion to the fullest	People have a need for spirituality	People have the right to believe and society needs to accept this fact	This severe lifestyle is aimed at inner experience and not violence	A pure living of religion, trying to lead a good life, Amish, Jehovah's, vegans, all radical
3 Penance	Righting wrongs made in the past	Radicalization is a rebirth, a way to find forgiveness	Missteps fulfill the sinner with guilt and the urge to right these wrongs	A clear black and white interpretation shows the way to living a good life	The importance of taking responsibility and acknowledging mistakes	It is up to the sinner to give the best of himself in order to obtain forgiveness	The ultimate way to be forgiven by God is to die in His name	My sins will be forgiven, one act can erase all sins, martyrdom
4 The freedom fighter	Fighting for the freedom of a country or a people	Radicalization is a sign of courage since someone dares to stand up for the weak	The worldwide geopolitical injustice forces someone to activism	A hero rises that battles for the good cause	Always pursue the good	A strong signal of the international community to help the oppressed and weak	Terrorism is actually a battle for freedom	Shortcut to heroism, idealists, stand up for your rights

Frame	Cultural theme	Definition of radicalization	Cause	Consequences	Moral values involved	Possible solutions/actions	Link with extremism and terrorism	Metaphors, choice of vocabulary
5 Resilience	The ability to retake the former shape after being stretched	Radicalization is the sudden outburst of built-up tension in society and individual	The rapid, far-reaching changes pressure society and people	The society and the individual look for a new balance	The belief in the flexibility of society	Stimulating mutual rapprochement and flexibility support the search for balance	The high tensions can give a sudden outburst to violence	We need to be stretchable and resilient, one of the most flexible communities
6 Embrace the threat	To be open for the unknown	Radicalization is no longer a threat when one realizes that the evil is only in the mind	Negative thoughts and emotions feed the gap between people	Being open to the unknown vanishes fear from society	Yin and Yang	People should learn that everyone acts out of the idea of 'doing good'	Evil can also be terrorism, but that as well is part of reality	They are part of us, need to step towards them, they are always reachable
7 The continuum	A continuous collective of values	Radicalization is actually a small part of a variety of ideological interpretations	The extreme ends demand and receive too much attention	Society confuses an ideology or religion with one particular interpretation	More attention should be given to personal interpretations	Other perspectives should dare to demand attention, people should keep an open mind	Violence occurs only very limited in the extreme interpretations	A religious conviction like any other, extreme interpretation of Islam
8 A catalyst	An element that accelerates or starts a process	Radical ideas are fundamentally different than the mainstream view on society	Challenging thoughts thrive a democracy	An in-depth discussion on society challenges the current regime	The necessity of contradiction	A democracy needs to give space to radical thoughts to keep the debate alive	If there is no room for debate, violent outliers are possible	Constructively radical, plea for radicalization, radical enlightenment

Figure 9: 8 counterframes used in the “radicalisation debate”

call “radicalisation” into a one-dimensional, linear phenomenon that can be detected, prevented and reversed.

Researchers such as Groppi (2017), who view religion as the main root cause for “radicalisation,” can be said to provide evidence for the *Virus* frame. These authors believe that reasons for violent extremism should be found in the religion itself and that religious orthodoxy is a precursor for terrorist violence. However, the evidence presented by these authors is only valid on the condition that this conveyor belt model of “radicalisation” is indeed true (Vidino and Brandon 2012). However, there seems to be a growing consensus among scholars that this linear process connecting orthodoxy to violent extremism does not exist (Kundnani 2012). Of course, this is a frame that is used widely in the public debate because of its simplicity, both by politicians and by tv-studio experts.

Other dominant frames are those that stress the role of criminality (*A criminal career*), perceptions of injustice and relative deprivation (*Mutiny*), geopolitical factors (*The Freedom fighter*), group dynamics (*Two roosters in one cage*), experimenting and identity crisis during adolescence (*Puberty*), the importance of distinguishing radical ideas and the willingness to engage in violence (*The continuum*).

The counter-frame of *Meaningfulness* is almost entirely absent in the literature on “radicalisation.” Indeed, Feddes et al. (2016) are the only ones to echo this counter-frame in their reference to sense-seekers. However, the *Meaningfulness* frame is particularly present in witness reports of foreign terrorist fighters or former “radicalised” people such as Ald’emeh (2015). Yet for reasons that are unclear to us, this has not been picked up by researchers. The same applies to the *Penance* counter-frame, which refers to an individual’s feelings of guilt and the urge to right the wrongs of the past by engaging in orthodox interpretations of Islam. This counter-frame surfaces quite strongly in witness reports of (former) “radicalised” people but is again not picked up by researchers.

Researchers such as Ponsaers et al. (2010) would probably call this type of emotional-personal explanation a *justification a posteriori* since, rather than explaining the

actual behaviour, it provides a rationalisation after the facts. However, this can be said about more than one counter-frame. How should we understand the absence of this frame in the scientific literature? Is this absence completely corroborated by evidence or could it unveil the bias away from emotional, non-rational or even non-cognitive triggers and causal factors steering human behaviour?

Research question 3: How is the phenomenon understood and experienced by vulnerable groups in Brussels and Verviers?

4.1.4. Young people from Brussels identify six layers of meaning in the term “radicalisation.” Who is “radical”⁸? The term “radicalisation” is multi-layered and, according to young people from Brussels, refers to:

1. a positive conviction
2. the willingness to engage in violence
3. a stigmatising label
4. a traumatic experience generated by the political and media attention after the attacks in Paris and Brussels
5. a “perfect storm” flooding over youth and youth work
6. a mirror showing societal conditions

The first layer of meaning refers to the conscious choice, a positive conviction, to a person who’s loyal to his/her own principles and acts upon those principles. This layer of meaning predates the phenomenon of “radicalisation”. In this sense, “radicalism” is a sign of courage and integrity often attributed to charismatic heroes such as Nelson Mandela and Ghandi.

The second layer of meaning refers to the willingness to commit terrorist violence. This second layer, like the first one, refers to an explicit loyalty towards a set of values and convictions and a willingness to act according to those values, even if this will demand sacrifice. Yet, there are also differences. What distinguishes negative and positive “radicalism” is the content of the conviction; the former is characterised by disbelief in human equivalence, affective dynamics of hate and contempt, the absence of self-reflection, clouded judgement and destructive feelings. Of course, positive “radicalism”, according to these urban youth, can turn into negative “radicalism”, but this implies an intense overturn of convictions and values.

The third layer of meaning refers to the contested and sensitive category of religion and how it connects with “radicalisation” as a label, a stigma. The term is part of a stereotyping and stigmatising machine, like a knife that is turned in the wound over and over again.

The fourth layer identified by urban youth in Brussels reminds them of the traumatic experience of terroristic violence in Brussels. It refers to bewilderment, the powerlessness to understand how someone is capable of blowing himself up in the name of religion or ideology. Especially in the Molenbeek context the term has a strong affective meaning, as several inhabitants have indicated. Also for youth workers, who knew some of the young people who left for Syria, the word conjures guilt, shame and loss of sense. Existential questions were posed: is it even worth it to do youth work? How could we have prevented it?

⁸ This section presents some excerpts of the book containing the research results obtained in the Brussels case study, to be published in the spring of 2020.

How come the mothers did not see this coming? These are the existential issues which make it difficult for those concerned members of the Molenbeek community to discuss the topic.

The fifth layer of meaning sees “radicalisation” as the crossroads where different phenomena meet: the local effects of international, geopolitical conflicts, doubts and despair among young people, the attraction of IS propaganda, the negative radicalism among some of those young people which they did not see coming. This period was experienced as a perfect storm, as the interplay of contextual factors that are unpredictable, as the pieces of a puzzle in Hafez and Mullins’ (2015) model.

The sixth layer of meaning refers to the collective reaction of the Brussels youth work organisation D’Broej to the terrorist attacks. “Radicalisation”, to them, is a critical mirror that reflects a vulnerable society. That vulnerability, or more accurately, those multiple vulnerabilities in society intersect in the lifeworld of urban youth with a migration background. Both the terrorist attacks and the attractive pull of negative “radicalism” should be understood, according to these youth workers, as a symptom, showing the urgency of tackling social vulnerability.

Understanding these multiple meanings, sensitivities and trauma’s is necessary if one wants to work with groups such as urban vulnerable youth or stigmatised communities. If not, research or other projects with these groups will most certainly not succeed. What this exercise also shows is that even sensitive terms, when discussed in a safe environment, can yield rich discussions and that these young people have a remarkably nuanced understanding of a complex phenomenon, definitely if one takes into account how they were personally affected by it.

4.1.5. Inhabitants of Hodimont, Verviers, consider “radicalisation” in terms of a disruption (“rupture”) of society.

Although Verviers is far from the only city in Belgium confronted with the phenomenon of “radicalisation,” the events of January 2015 will instil in the public discourse the idea that Verviers is confronted with a specific problem of “radicalisation” among its young people⁹. The case is read in connection with the fewer than a dozen young people who left to fight in Syria and Iraq in the ranks of IS and other insurgent organisations. It is also related to controversies that attracted national media coverage about the role of a local imam. According to the national press, the imam - whose son was also arrested for threatening words spoken in public - spread a radical version of Islam in the city which was suspected to have encouraged several young people from Verviers to join the jihad in the war zones mentioned above.

The impact of “radicalisation” on the city allows us to identify several collective vulnerabilities. The social ecology conducted as part of the project shows that Verviers as a classical decaying industrial city is confronted with internal social, territorial and cultural divisions exacerbating the polarisation between newcomers and natives. These lines of division are also illustrative of the unequal distribution of power between groups and territories. This has led to a fragmentation of both the social and physical public space. The

⁹ This section is composed of excerpts from a book which will contain the research results in the case study of Verviers, to be published in the course of 2020.

macro-level transformations which have shaped the urban space have also generated multi-level collective vulnerabilities which have proved conducive to the development of disruptive youth mobilisation.

Several elements contributed to the establishment of Verviers's reputation as a city where "radicalisation" was perhaps greater than in other cities. The controversy involving a radical imam and the shooting of the Rue de la Colline in January 2015, a few days after the Paris attacks of January 2015 play an obvious part in the matter. Yet to delineate the phenomenon, one must go back further in history.

Since the mid-1970s Verviers has seen the development of a small pietist Salafist current. Very active in the Kobaa mosque in the Rue des Fabriques, it did not, however, attract much media attention until the mid-2000s. Around this time, the weekly magazine *Le Vif-L'Express* started to publish reports and analyses of the particular situation in Verviers.

One of the crucial elements with regard to the analysis of the first phenomena of local "radicalisation" in Verviers lies less in the particular history of the city than in its geography as a border city. Verviers is only 35 km from Aachen. It is in this city, however, that in 1978, the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in exile developed a very active Islamic centre around the person of Issam Al Attar. A number of Arabic-speaking Muslim executives regularly attended this centre and developed a network of activities and relationships closely associated with the current that fiercely opposed the regime of Hafez El Assad and later of his son Bachar. This is how *Le Vif-L'Express* summarizes the multiplicity of religious and political groups in Verviers:

More than 100 different nationalities are represented in Verviers. Precisely because of its open and social character, but also because of its proximity to the German and Dutch borders, Verviers has always been the laboratory for many rebel movements, beginning in the 19th century with Marxism. PKK Kurds, Turkish Grey Wolves, Algerian FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) and GIA (Islamic Armed Groups), Moroccans from GICM (Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group), Muslim Brotherhood (which has the largest mosque in Wallonia), Chechens fleeing Russian repression, Somalis trafficking khat (the drug) and maintaining foreign relations with Somali pirates (an inhabitant of Verviers acted as a "fixer" for the journalists of *Envoyé spécial*, France 2, in 2008), Salafists of the strictest observance, who do not hesitate to name one of their future cultural centres after the medieval theologian Ibn Taymiyya, an ideological reference to the Islamic State, in whose name the Shiites and Syrian Alawites must be killed ...

After the attacks on Charlie Hebdo and the Hyper Cacher of 7 and 9 January, 2015, this was a new event that shook Belgium, and the world. On 15 January 2015, a special unit chartered by the federal police was deployed to the Rue de la Colline in Verviers, on the suspicion of there being preparations for a terrorist attack. The suspected individuals had been tapped over the phone. Upon the police's arrival at the scene, the culprits opened fire on the police who fired back, killing two of the three individuals on site. The last one tried to escape but was caught by the police. Weapons and explosives were found inside the house. Twelve other searches were carried out during this operation in different districts of Brussels and Verviers. This event largely contributed to the idea of Verviers as "a hotbed for radicals" even though the three suspects were not actually from Verviers, but from Brussels.

Newspapers and media published many articles on the event, often with evocative headlines such as: "Stronghold of jihadism," "Radicalism being fought since 2007" or "Tired of the radicals in Verviers," reinforcing the idea of a dangerous, lawless city.

This event, which stigmatised an entire city on the national and even international scene, sparked a feeling of indignation among the inhabitants of Verviers, mostly due to the magnitude of what was to follow in comparison to what actually took place in Verviers. One could even argue that this event was interpreted by several local actors as the trigger to change and improve their city. A collective desire to improve the image of the city slowly started to emerge. In a relative short period of time, the Family and Entourage Accompaniment Service for Radicalism (SAFER) was set up.

The Verviers social workers express great exasperation when they are asked about the phenomenon of "radicalisation" in their city. One of them explains: "I am almost in denial when I hear about "radicalisation". When I am interviewed by journalists, I want to tell them: go away, there is nothing to see here! Verviers is no more radical than any other city, and jihadist radicalisation is only one radicalism among others." Many of our respondents have personal knowledge of young people departed to Syria and Iraq. One of them explains: "Very few of those who have gone to Syria come from the district of Hodimont. They come from other parts of the city. They left for reasons very different from each other."

Alongside Islamist radicalisation that has been strongly linked to the city of Verviers, we have also been able to detect other radical movements. Indeed, radical movements have been present in Verviers for years, such as the Rex party created by Leon Degrelle in the 1930s, which can be connected to the emergence of the extreme right in Verviers today. Originally linked to the Catholic world, the party became more radical in the second half of the 1930s and adopted a fascist ideology. Degrelle then experienced a fall in the legislative elections of 1939, but still managed to get four members elected, including one from the Verviers district. Subsequently, the supporters of Degrelle's party went on to collaborate with the Nazis during the World War II. Afterwards, the extreme right movement in Verviers is found under the aegis of AGIR. In 1994, a particularly serious event occurred during a football match between Belgium and Morocco: shots were fired from the AGIR office, located in the Hodimont district, hitting a young Moroccan. Several hundred people were involved in this incident and two police officers were injured. A few days later, a large police force surrounded the AGIR headquarters in Verviers, following a rumour about the arrival of troublemakers. Besides AGIR, the New Front of Belgium (FNB) is another extreme right-wing party, which was present in Verviers until the elections of 2006. At present, the Popular Party managed to obtain 6% of the votes in the municipal elections of 2012 in Verviers and 7% in those of 2018.

This inventory of the far-right movement in Verviers allows us to move away from the Islamist focus on "radicalisation" and to highlight the existence of other radical movements in Verviers. Moreover, by means of the interviews conducted we have been able to identify another movement that can also be described as radical but less visible for those outside the Turkish community. In view of current events, one might think that it is the Maghreb young people who are the most affected by Islamist-type speeches. However, some of our interlocutors tell us the opposite. Some young Turks are also being tempted by radical speeches oriented towards the Turkish nationalist movement. There is probably no single

key to understanding the “radicalisation” of young people in Verviers and the engagement of some of them in violent actions abroad. These individual cases mobilize various personal factors such as, family, relationships, religion, ideology etc.

Against this determinist point of view, the CONRAD group at Verviers suggested “radicalisation” should be considered as a peculiar modality of a larger phenomenon, namely the biographical intentional break with the social and political order (Crettie 2011; Paugam 2014; Denave 2015). Of course, not all forms of disruption with the social order lead to violent “radicalisation.” It is thought, however, that this is a fertile avenue to explore because, conversely, there is no form of violent “radicalisation” that has not been preceded by a social disruption with the family, or the social and political environment.

Youth and youth workers from Terrain d’Aventures are confronted with the phenomenon of radicalisation from both a theoretical and a practical point of view. If from a theoretical point of view, all are wondering about the motivations of young people to break with their family environment to pursue deadly adventures in the heart of the Syrian-Iraqi conflict, they are also confronted in a practical way through their young people.

From the above we conclude that an alternative interpretation of “radicalisation” emerges from the study on the Verviers social ecology and history. We argue that what society calls “radicalisation” is a heterogeneous collection of individual mobilisations characterised by their disruptive nature, a seemingly homogeneous term that masks (badly) a variety of often incomprehensible trajectories. Additionally, these disruptive mobilisations, careers and biographies are not necessarily and systematically violent ones. The association between “radicalisation” and violence is not questioned sufficiently. According to the model that was elaborated in Verviers, disruptive mobilisation may be considered as deviant, defiant or unbounding (*déviante/défiante/déliante*) (see Figure 10). In the following paragraphs we shortly outline the central conceptual framework developed in the Verviers case study.

Between reliance and unbounding

The concept of “reliance” was coined in French by Roger Clause while “*déliance*” was theorized by Bolle de Bal (2003). Neither term refers to the fixed and static nature of people’s life trajectories but rather to dynamic processes, or to a trajectory. As such, they express the idea that people are permanently creating, recreating or disrupting human and social bonds (Bolle de Bal 2003). This dynamic is at play in a field characterised by conflicting social forces, which in our case is the urban space of Verviers. These concepts presuppose a process and a result, which are always in motion and never definitive. Focusing on the notion of “reliance” and “*déliance*,” is a way for us to better understand the reasons why social actors engage in disruptive trajectories, by more or less conscious choice and in a more or less rationalized way.

The young people we observed, connect with or disengage with their social environments through processes of social affiliation or disaffiliation. When considering the so-called phenomenon of “radicalisation,” we generally believe the result of disruptive local mechanisms needs to be identified more closely. While many view “radicalisation” as a critical moment, we look at it here as a trajectory of actors embarked on a path mapped out

by a whole series of disruptions, which are not all violent and which researchers should seek to identify.

Between confidence and defiance

Youth workers must constantly play with the trust or distrust that young people give them. They struggle to try and avoid the unbinding of the social fabric by connecting them as strongly as possible to society. Theatre activities make it possible to work at young people's distrust of society by thinking about what links them to the rest of society. Through their activities, youth workers seek to stimulate positive answers the objective of bringing added value to society. It is through the comprehension of their daily work that we can measure the importance of social work and particularly of social work involving young people who are vulnerable or in a situation of disruption with society. When society allows young people to express themselves, they perceive it as a strong signal that they have a place in society and that this place is important.

Between deviance and desistance

The profile and pathways of radicalising young people are difficult to establish, but most converge towards a fairly specific profile: young people in their twenties, from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, usually with a low level of education and trouble entering the labour market. Many of them have precarious jobs when they are not unemployed. A reality that is less often mentioned is their going through deviant delinquent trajectories. Nearly all radical actors who turned into foreign fighters in Verviers had already been involved in previous deviant activities. This reality is generally rarely questioned and when it emerges, it is often dismissed as irrelevant. The question is not to state or invalidate a causal relationship between delinquency and "radicalisation," but rather to counter the lack of systematic analysis on how to preventively construct desisting approaches with regard to this target group and how to empower youth workers when faced with the problem.

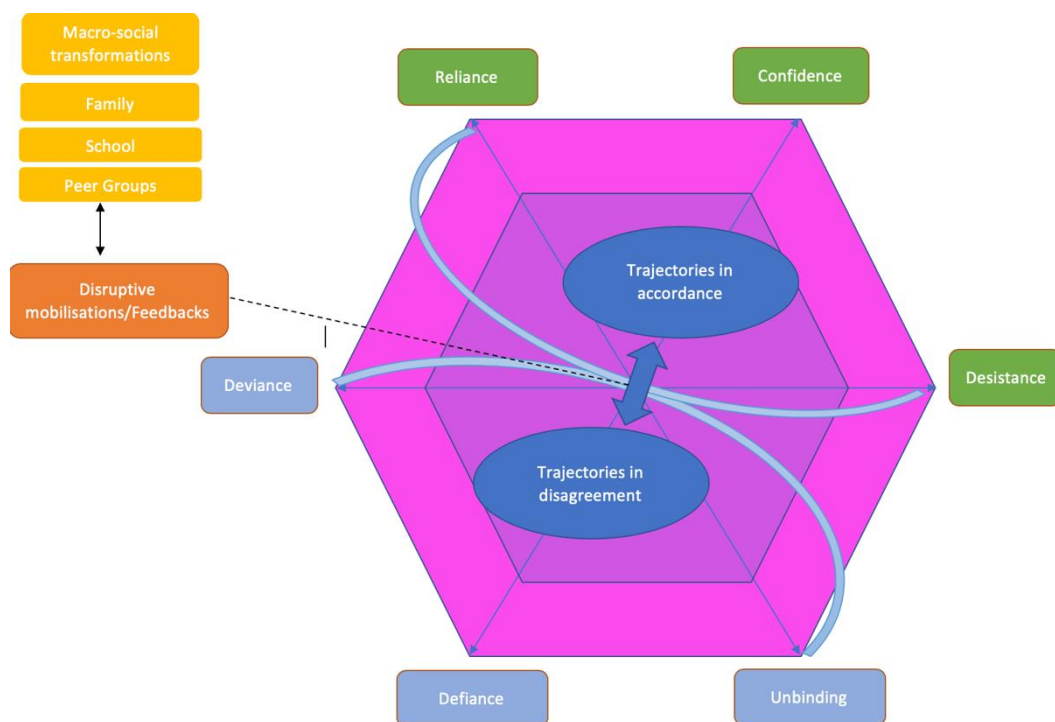


Figure 10: the conceptual framework developed in the field research in Verviers

4.1.6. Vulnerable young people and youth workers experience the interplay of policy, media, security actors, scientists and civil society as a “radicalisation machine”

Targeted and vulnerable communities experience the assault of government policies with regard to “radicalisation” as a machine¹⁰. One youth worker referred to it in terms of the “de-radicalisation industry,” which led the CONRAD research team to abandon the search for the “root causes” of “radicalisation” and to focus instead on local experiences with regard to the radicalisation dispositive. We analyse the alliance and the interplay between several actors: the media, the authorities, the security actors, the justice system, the civil society organisations and the scientists. In the metaphor of the “radicalisation machine” the apparatus that focuses on “radicalisation” either directly or indirectly is presented as a machine, whose parts move according to mechanical rules without being conscious of how they interact with the other parts or how they might affect outside world. The term is borrowed from the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault, whose term *le dispositif* refers to the institutional, physical and administrative mechanisms and structures of knowledge that generate power dynamics within and between social groups. The machine comprises the system of relations between the parts: discourses, institutions, organisations, architecture, regulating decisions, the law, administrative measures, scientific claims, norms and values. As a whole, the machine is characterised by the fact that it is exclusively concerned with wielding its power and consolidating its further existence. In other words, the machine is blind, thoughtless and only focused on survival.

The same applies to its parts: researchers and civil society organisations need to secure future funding, journalists need to generate clicks, politicians need to be re-elected.

¹⁰ This section presents some excerpts of the book containing the research results obtained in the Brussels case study, to be published in the spring of 2020, and is, in modified form, also reproduced in a submission to the criminological journal *Panopticon*, see De Backer et al. (forthcoming).

At the same time, the machine's individual parts follow their own separate logic. For instance, certain actors may benefit from spreading images of dangerous young people, environments and religious communities. Certain discourses, politicians and media may also reinforce one another when it comes to this type of imagery, while citizens strongly adhere to a constructed narrative featuring the suspicious young Muslim, the no-go ghetto, the dangerous mosque – as though these constituted a self-evident, objective reality.

The authorities are one of the machine's strong parts. They show themselves in different ways: as the actor whose budget cuts in civil society almost force youth work organisations to adopt the logic of “de-radicalisation,” or as the organiser of projects for social cohesion which function as a form of counter terrorism (Heath-Kelly 2013). Richards (2011) mentions in this respect that the UK PREVENT programme has “surprisingly oscillated between fighting violent extremism and promoting cohesion between communities and ‘shared values.’” This strategy, which is simultaneously geared towards social cohesion and counter terrorism, probably manages to achieve neither (Vidino 2010). The authorities also wish to “responsibilise” an increasing number of citizens and professionals in tracking down “radicalisation.” Another term borrowed from Foucault, namely “governmentality,” allows us to understand this tendency as the state trying to shape the behaviour of its citizens in order to increase the effectiveness of its administration (McKee 2009). The responsibility of the administration is hereby passed on to the “big society” (Bartlett 2010). Statements by individual politicians have only reinforced the experience of threatening authorities in vulnerable neighbourhoods.

A Brussels youth worker: but someone with responsibility who talks in terms of “cleaning up a municipality.” You immediately know you're heading in a certain direction, and that, as a society, you'll be walking into an even greater number of traps [...] But someone with a mandate, an executive mandate, who's going to divide people against each other and target them instead of seizing the moment to unite them. That's not what they're supposed to do.

Civil society organisations struggle with the role inside the machine. On the one hand, their reaction is dismissive and critical. On the other hand, however, they depend on government funding. As a result, the landscape of local organisations and their mutual relations are disrupted by call for projects with regard to “radicalisation,” which one organisation will respond but which another other will refuse categorically. Lena, who works as a coordinator for a youth organisation mentions:

I thought yeah great and now suddenly there's channels for subsidies. I know we really considered things seriously here. Are we in? Are we going to submit a project under the header of “de-radicalisation”? We eventually decided not to, because didn't agree as a matter of principal. And at that moment we could still make the choice to refuse out of principle.

One of the youth workers shares the same reserve:

By responding to the calls for subsidies we were guilty, as youth organisations, of joining the radicalisation machine. Today we're really asking ourselves if we should have done it.

Organisations who respond to these calls are blamed for conforming to the government's instrumentalising security logic. What could be a resilient network of organisations is divided and conquered by the machine.

The media also play a determining role in the machine. The research about "radicalisation" reveals, for instance, that the media carry a great responsibility in creating and consolidating the image of "suspect communities" based on origin and religion (Lakhani 2012). Especially in the case of Molenbeek, where journalists and their TV vans took over the town square for weeks and months, the media left its mark. An inhabitant:

That was the worst thing. It shouldn't have happened. For me personally, for everyone, those are serious traumas that still haven't been resolved. A feeling of inferiority ad yes [...] gosh, a culprit because sure there's two or three who did it, but you're guilty as well because you live in Molenbeek. And then you hear so much in the press...

The international media dubbed Molenbeek the "jihadi capital of Europe," a "hub for radicalisation" and an "ultra-segregated zone of lawlessness" (Fraih and Dewolf 2016). As Guittet remarks, these claims and statements have contributed to the stigmatisation of local communities and to the "production of that which they reject" (2018:5). At the same time, these (international) media undermine the local prevention work of several professional actors by minimalizing the complexity of their jobs. "This tendency among journalists and politicians to outdo each other in their disdain for the neighbourhood has definitely made it more difficult to talk about the rich and unique characteristics of Molenbeek." (Guittet 2018:5) Of course, security actors also have a role to play. Their objective is to guarantee the safety of all citizens, even at the cost of the freedom or the well-being of a small group. One local inhabitant claims that "as Muslims, we are excessively targeted." In this security dynamic legal frameworks are extended, and there is a perception of legal uncertainty, as in the case of the Canal plan.

Interviewer: One of the other consequences, especially of the attacks in Paris and Brussels, was the deployment of the famous Canal plan. First of all, how do you relate to this plan? And, secondly: what does the Canal plan mean for you specifically?

Youth worker: That's a very good question! I've never seen that Canal plan on paper. I've looked for it, asked for it, found statements made by the minister. But I never got it. So it's a bit unclear to me what the main lines were. I have noticed what it can mean and what it can mean for us specifically. Namely that, under the header of the Canal plan, we were visited by the social inspection. [...] Erm, only, erm, I do have a problem with it if it would appear that, and I think this should be investigated seriously, sending down the social inspection was used as a way for the police to determine whether certain organisations are shady or not, or other such missions related to the Canal plan.

Because of her final objective—consolidating and increasing its power—the radicalisation machine is a treacherous thing. It is impossible to tell whether it will act repressively, when it will appear, and when it will disappear. It feeds on emotions like collective fear, moral panic, suspicion, islamophobia, injustice, humiliation, betrayal and rejection. At the same time, it spreads the illusion of rationality. For instance, the radicalisation machine presents the

process of “radicalisation” as a mechanical, straightforward and linear one, a process that can be detected, prevented and disrupted by way of counter-narratives. Another example of this (false) rationality can be found in the soldiers patrolling the city centre, of whom we could ask the question how great their chances are of preventing an actual attack. Is their presence not rather aimed at providing the population with the *feeling* that their safety has increased?

The concept of the radicalisation machine is a metaphor. As such, it will never be complete or perfect; it only helps us to better understand a complex reality. One interesting aspect of the image of the machine is that it closely corresponds to the life-world of Brussels youth work in the period after the attacks. The experience of youth workers is of an omnipresent “they” sticking labels on the young people of Brussels and on themselves. The idea of media and politics influencing each other is familiar to them as well. In the fight for existence of the Brussels Boxing Academy (BBA), a part of the organisation D’Broej, Brussels youth workers realised all too well how closely media and politics are intertwined, and how political convictions can change when the images in the media are altered.

Fear and anger are the resources *and* the exhaust of the machine. The media spread fear through the terror threat. Populist politicians and security services respond to this, partly out of self-interest. They activate a security theatre (Schneier 2003) which makes the experience of the threat even more tangible. The media then further spread these “war scenes” via sensational images. The consequence of which is greater fear among the population, which mixes with a paranoid tunnel vision.

Shortly after the attacks, this tunnel vision reached its highest point. A youngster is removed from his class room and interrogated because his beard is too long. A student in his final year at a trade school is denied an internship at the European Commission because of his origins and his religious beliefs. One month after the Paris attacks, two youngsters from the Royal Athenaeum in Jette are taken away for questioning, because one of the teachers interpreted their arguments as sympathy for the attackers. Two boys are stopped at the Monaco border because they appear on a black list, without knowing how they got on it (or how to get back off it). The panic reaction in the school which houses the boxing hall of the BBA also teaches us how suddenly everything can be interpreted as a sign of radicalising danger:

We, the people from the BBA, were forced by the school principal to take down the collection of national flags from the ceiling, because apparently people saw it as reason for radicalisation. I suppose because there was a Palestinian flag as well? We’d hung up those flags in the Olympian spirit, in which sport is meant to unite people. It all depends on how you look at it.

This all takes place against the background of prior injustices. Youngsters experience the Brussels police officers in their patrol cars as *fremdkörper*. According to the youngsters, these young officers are often not from Brussels, and behave like “cowboys” (De Backer 2017; 2018). Stories about police violence are legion. House searches with regard to terrorism prevention cause severe traumas. A youth worker:

Guarding children against traumatic images of police officers with machine guns in the doorway, I mean, even if you have to search a house or you have to be somewhere, the basics is to protect children from things that can traumatise them to

that extent and then you walk right into that trap by running down doors with a violent, aggressive attitude and performing house searches.

For urban youth with a migration background, the substratum of injustice is also linked to ethnic profiling and random police checks which are part of their everyday reality. For instance, talking about his brother's mysterious death after being hit by a police car, Ayoub (24) also mentions the time when, as a fifteen-year-old, he left school and was stopped by officers who demanded they take his picture because they were building a data (Van Tenderloo 2019). Saad, Florent, Gilles and Severin (all 16 years old) claim that, when hanging around in public spaces, only the first two (with a darker skin colour) are submitted to police checks (De Backer 2017).

Research question 4: What are the characteristics of the so-called 'jihadogenic' spaces of Brussels and Verviers?

4.1.7. Rather than "jihadogenic," Brussels and Verviers are places that generate vulnerabilities

Recent criticism regarding the dominant research literature on "radicalisation" points to the missing link between some urban areas and the processes of "radicalisation." Perlinger and Milton (2016) conclude, for example, that out of 1200 foreign terrorist fighters, 70% came from the same cities. The top three of Western cities when it comes to the number of foreign terrorist fighters are London (38), Antwerp (32) and Brussels (30). Vilvoorde and Molenbeek occupy the 9th and 11th place respectively. If we consider the municipalities of Brussels and Molenbeek as part of the same city region, Brussels indeed is the capital of jihadi warriors.

According to Khosrokhavar (2018), this can be explained due to the social networks available in these areas (and the presence of recruiters), but also due to the specificity of the urban spaces. These are characterised by quantifiable, objective dimensions such as a high presence of migrants, low educational levels, high unemployment, high delinquency, imprisonment and recidivism, illegal economy, low-skilled labour and disrupted family structures. On a subjective level, these areas are also characterised by feelings of stigmatisation and victimisation along with anger regarding the treatment of minorities.

These general characteristics are to a large extent applicable to the field research sites of the CONRAD project. Both Hodimont in Verviers and the deprived neighbourhoods along the canal area in Brussels share the characteristics of a diverse population with migrant backgrounds, high unemployment rates, low educational levels, illegal economy, dense living conditions with a lack of green public spaces and poor housing conditions. On the subjective side, feelings of stigmatisation and victimisation are very much present in the stories of young people from these areas. In these stories, we notice individual and collective experiences of injustice, humiliation and rejection, especially with regard to the school system, discrimination on the labour and housing markets, the contested place of these youngsters' religion and culture in Belgium, and, not in the least, police violence. The digital stories collected in the Brussels and Verviers site exemplify these life-stories of exclusion and rejection.

Based on the field research in both sites we can also conclude that some important nuances and critical remarks on the ecological approach formulated by Khosrokhavar (2018)

are necessary. Three assumptions often underlie the analyses of urban areas marked by migration, social deprivation and subjective feelings of exclusion: (1) these areas are socially fragmented, (2) religion plays a major role in this fragmentation, and (3) migrant groups produce closed collective identities while living in ghettos. However, these assumptions are challenged by our findings.

In the neighbourhood of Hodimont, for instance, social fragmentation is not primarily caused by an inward-looking migrant community which intensely self-identifies with its religion. Rather on the contrary, this closed quality is the result of political forces who fail to unite the different neighbourhoods bordering the inner city under the umbrella of a strong collective identity. This lack of a collective Verviers identity and the inability to provide it, painfully came to the fore after the discovery and dismantling of a terrorist cell in January 2015 and, later, after the arrest of a radical imam. Suddenly, as a result of the media storm that swept across the city, attention was drawn to the urgency of restoring a positive image of Verviers.

In Brussels, a series of migration waves has made the city one of the most ethnically diverse in the world. In a small and dense area such as Anneessens, which is part of the city centre and at walking distance of the main touristic hotspots, more than 140 nationalities live together. Even in the municipality of Molenbeek, which has a strong Moroccan community, different cultures, nationalities and religions (from orthodox Russians to Evangelists from Guinee and Ghana) continue to live together. It is obvious, in this case, that the image of inward-looking communities living in ghettos is simply inappropriate. Rather, both the deprived areas along the Brussels canal area and the Hodimont neighbourhood in Verviers can be viewed as archipelagos of interspersed minority communities.

Observations from within the Moroccan community in Molenbeek further reveal that these communities are also internally diverse: lines of difference can be drawn between lifestyles of generations, between different migration waves, between lower class and middle class, between Sunnis and Sufis, between conservative and progressive groups, between Amazigh and Arabic Moroccans, between Muslim Amazighs and atheist Amazighs, etc. This also implies that religion is not the main determinant of local collective cultures. Instead of framing this community as monolithic, we prefer to use the terms superdiversity (Vertovec 2007) or diversity within diversity (Geldof 2016) to denote the huge difference within migrant communities, which are usually assumed to be monolithic.

The assumption that social deprivation, migration and religion set the stage for processes of “radicalisation” is contradicted by the case of Verviers, which suggests that, more than the poverty of Hodimont, the geographic location of Verviers on the German border has historically made Verviers a strategic locus of exile for different radical, political groups. Even in digital times, physical connections may cause geo-political conflicts and radical positions to migrate to a small provincial city like Verviers. The separateness or “outsideness” of certain urban European areas is not only symbolically visible, but also geographically.

Farhad Khrosrokhavar distinguishes two types of urban areas: the *banlieux* or suburbs at the outside border of a city, and the *enclaves* in the inner city, which are clearly marked off from the affluent parts of the city. However, the research sites in Verviers and Brussels belong to neither of these two types. In Verviers, the neighbourhood of Hodimont

draws its distinctness from its location at the other side of the river, at least, when seen from the city centre. Yet it fluently merges into neighbouring areas such as Dison, so it cannot be regarded as an *enclave* in any literal sense; nor is it a suburb either since it is within a stone's throw of the city centre. Moreover, the idea of a dividing line between a wealthy city centre and a poor, deprived quarter is not applicable to Verviers, since the commercial heart of the city has been struck by economic decline for several decades, and the wealthy neighbourhoods are located outside the city, up on the hill.

In Brussels, the neighbourhoods and municipalities along the canal are even more difficult to qualify according to Khosrokhavar's typology (although he clearly had Brussels in mind when suggesting the category of 'enclaves'). The area in question covers a poor crescent-shaped section in the vicinity of the canal, yet, poverty spills over into the inner city, which can only boast a partly flourishing economy. The main activities associated with a service economy take place in the peripheral areas around Brussels, where the upper and middle classes are based. Recent social and economic transitions are blurring the lines between the poor, super-diverse crescent of around the canal area, and the rich municipalities at the edges of the Brussels Capital Region. Middle-class migrant communities tend to move to the outskirts as a sign of their social mobility, whereas white middle-class groups are moving into the canal zone which is undergoing a (minor) economic revival and processes of gentrification. As a result, real estate prices are increasing, and poor families are forced to move from the canal areas to the more distant peripheral towns and municipalities outside Brussels.

The description of these urban neighbourhoods as deprived, dense and diverse areas fails to capture the dynamic and numerous ways in which young people respond to their own living conditions, and the ways in which they manage to survive and even thrive despite difficult living circumstances. Urban areas like Hodimont in Verviers and neighbourhoods along the Brussels canal are at the crossroads of global transitions, which incidentally also makes these areas difficult to capture in static frames or typologies. Young people's participation in our field research showed that the transition into a digital era, the rise of social media and the omnipresence of a consumerist society, to name just a few, have an important impact on how young people with a migration background relate to issues of religion, identity, social exclusion, democracy and the rule of law. Furthermore, young people's experiences with rejection, humiliation, betrayal, abandonment and injustice inescapably refer to social and political institutions that fall short in providing full access to basic human rights, i.e. the right to decent healthcare, housing, education and meaningful work. The Brussels field research reveals several personal and collective strategies in dealing with these vulnerabilities. Young students flee from their precarious housing conditions by spotting study places in the city, or by using the space of a youth club during the weekend. These youth clubs, as part of a wider network of organisations, offer educational support in order to remedy inequalities produced by the educational system or address social fragmentation by bringing people and neighbourhoods together. These personal and collective efforts to redress social inequalities can be understood as resilience, namely the individual and collective capacity to resist and transform shocks and stressors issuing from broader social changes through a set of resources, principles of interactions,

attitudes, and by means of strategies devised to manage individual and collective life-wounds.

A similar strategy to order the research findings by means of a flexible combination of concepts has been deployed by the action research in Verviers. By setting out a nexus of three paired concepts (deviance-desistance, distrust-trust, disconnection-connection) the team found how young people, as well as their supporting organisations, oscillate between these different pairs of social interaction.

In view of the above, how should we interpret the connection between certain urban areas and the high concentration of IS combatants and sympathisers? Quite some researchers, often criminologists, favour an ecological approach, which locates social phenomena in specific places and understands those phenomena as a result of neighbourhood effects. According to Bouhana (2019) extremist hotspots are linked to a set of processes and changes that affect social integration; foster perceived group competition; increase social disorganisation and disadvantage; undermine levels of trust in legitimate authorities; undermine trust between pro-legal community members and impair community resourcing; compromise law enforcement effectiveness, as well as the effectiveness of informal deterrence; damage perceptions of procedural justice; afford unchallenged propagation of extremist group norms and unmonitored exposure to “radicalising” agents; determine the selection of certain (susceptible) populations for exposure to criminogenic settings; and lead to collective and individual experiences of hardship and the absence of effective social support. However, the social ecologies of those areas constitute only one essential element in explaining the phenomenon. Bouhana further distinguishes four other major explanatory factors, including personal susceptibility, systemic processes (norms, governance, segregation, strains), settings and selection.

Khorsrokhavar seems to suggest a stronger connection than Bouhana does, by coining the term “jihadogenic spaces.” These urban settings are characterised by deprivation, diversity, high unemployment, and illegal economy, which Khorsrokhavar then identifies as conditions contributing to the formation of “jihadist” actors. Yet, his analysis also nuances this ecological perspective by pointing out that neighbourhoods with a solid presence of pietist Salafism are relatively immune to “radicalisation,” indicating that the presence of ultra-orthodox Islam prevents the development of jihadism. In some cases, orthodox Muslims have even reported young jihadis to the authorities. The case of Marseilles, for instance, shows that young people who intensively identify with the city are much less likely to be attracted to the jihad. Pujol (2015) also argues, based on his long research in the ghettoised neighbourhoods of Marseilles, that the presence of strong social networks and strong identification with the neighbourhood and the wider city act as effective barricades against the lack of identity or feeling stuck between two cultures, both of which have been identified as a possible root cause for “radicalisation.”

The CONRAD research team argues against the use of the term “jihadogenic spaces.” Using the term “jihadogenic” while focusing uniquely on urban settings as a fertile ground for the formation of terrorist actors, may reiterate the risk of stigmatisation which the research project aims to avoid. After all, how often do we ask the question whether extreme right-wing terrorism and violence is *caused* or *produced* by the place of residence of the terrorist, especially if the extreme right-wing radical has a middle-class background?

Furthermore, the term “jihadogenic” shifts the stigma from people to places. It reinforces the discrimination which people from deprived neighbourhoods often experience on the job market as a result of their place of residence. The case of Hodimont in Verviers offers an excellent illustration in this respect. Objectively speaking, there was not much reason to regard the neighbourhood with suspicion after a terrorist cell had been dismantled in January 2015: the terrorist had ties with Brussels rather than Verviers and the street where it all took place, the Rue de la Colline, is located in the city centre of Verviers, not in Hodimont. This anecdote shows how governmental anti-terrorism and security policies also reproduce postal code stigma, regardless of objective facts.

One more reason for avoiding the term “jihadogenic” is that essential discussions concerning such social and political issues as religion, education, institutional violence and exclusion on the labour market risk being reduced to issues of safety when considered in the context of “radicalisation” and “jihadogenic spaces.” In order to avoid this pitfall, the CONRAD research team adopts a mirror approach. Instead of asking how urban settings might contribute to terrorism, the team investigates what is mirrored by the complex phenomenon of “radicalisation” with regard to the social impact of a society and a city in transition.

4.2. Recommendations

Research question 5: Which alternative discourses can be developed to talk about “radicalisation” and how can these be useful for civil society and public bodies?

4.2.1. Policy recommendations

A great deal of policy recommendations in the literature dealing with radicalisation focus strongly on the security dimension (risks reduction, information-sharing, multi-agency work, etc). This focus illustrates the discrepancy between the attention paid to repression and prevention. Since both are legitimate and necessary within a democratic society, the two approaches may converge but they might also lead to tension or even contradiction. In its final report, the Belgian Parliamentary Enquiry Commission on the Brussels Attacks of 22 March 2016 stated: “The hearing with the mayors concerned has revealed that it is necessary to articulate (and thus to strive for complementarity) a repressive approach and a preventive approach, which should therefore ideally never be confused or opposed.”¹¹

Considering the nature of the CONRAD project, we wish to focus on the preventive dimension (social cohesion) and consider certain aspects which may increase the resilience of young people when faced with discourses that could lead to their exiting society either by way of violent radical trajectories or through other forms of socially disruptive mobilisations.

- We recommend opposing any strategy conflating – even indirectly – youth work with anti-radicalisation. A clear distinction should be made between the target groups and the methods of intervention proposed by such policies. There should always be a

¹¹ Documents Parlementaires, Chambre, 54^e session, N°1752/009, page 166

clear distinction between those in need of social cohesion measures and those who are at risk and in need of individual follow-up and help.

- We recommend improving dialogue, partnership and collaboration within the youth sector so that youth workers share more convergent visions and procedures. All too often, the very basic idea of what constitutes radical behaviour and what needs to be done professionally to assist young people at risk, differs between institutions located within the same urban territory.
- We also recommend local policy-makers to start a dialogue with concerned groups in society, including young people and their environments. Furthermore, these local (and national) policy-makers should develop a communication strategy to adequately inform the public about the complex phenomenon (and developments similar or related to) “radicalisation”.
- We recommend increasing the institutional completeness of youth work organisations (i.e. recognized youth centres or more hybrid organisations) with due consideration for the existing needs at neighbourhood level.
- We recommend increasing social and psychological support for youth workers. Youth workers are often caught in a web of multi-level vulnerabilities. As vulnerable workers, they often struggle within vulnerable environments for the sake of vulnerable young people. In addition to the insufficient level of funding of youth institutions, the very demanding nature of their job weakens the stability and resilience of their workforce which often results in broken professional careers and professional struggles due to an overload of work.
- We recommend offering young people more opportunities for internal exchange with legitimate and knowledgeable facilitators (e.g. to discuss the place of religion in public and personal life) and external contacts with other social environments (nationally, internationally but also within the city).
- We recommend a critical parliamentary discussion about
 - the blurred boundaries of the legal framework of security actors who engage in counterterrorism policy pre-emptively,
 - the importance of professional secrecy for frontline practitioners and the risks of shared professional secrecy in the local integrated security cells (LIVC-Rs),
 - the ways in which suspected “radicalised” people are added to black lists nationally and internationally and how this harms their civil rights and their privacy,
 - the myth of collaboration and the multi-agency approach due to the inherent power imbalance between vulnerable groups, frontline organisations on the one hand and state and security actors on the other.

4.2.2. Recommendations to broader society

4.2.2.1. Speaking with vulnerable and concerned communities

The dominant reading of “radicalisation” as a mechanical, predictable and individual process neglects the life-world of the stigmatised communities in deprived urban areas. We advise organisations, citizen initiatives, academic institutions or media that wish to engage in a conversation on this topic to speak directly with the people involved and ask them about

what they experienced in the period before, during and shortly after the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels. How did those events affect them? What does the term “radicalisation” evoke for them? What does it remind them of? For such an exchange to take place, we advise recognizing the vulnerability of the conversation partners and to anticipate the fact that these conversations can cause tensions or stir up old traumas. In this sense it can be useful to have a conflict mediator facilitate the talks.

Furthermore, we realise that the CONRAD project was limited in terms of reach. Other life-worlds have also been affected by the attacks and need to be heard, including the victims of the attacks, their friends and family, survivors and foreign terrorist fighters, returnees, police officers, military and security service personnel, the members of the coordination organ for threat analysis (OCAD/OCAM), etc. The method of digital storytelling presents an attractive approach in this respect. It allows for varying and clashing viewpoints to be exchanged in a personal story, combined with powerful images, the whole of which is then discussed in group. An additional advantage to this approach is that conversation partners are not even required to meet face to face.

4.2.2.2. Keeping track of new events

New social events constantly colour the meaning of the debate and its central terms. The term “radicalisation” was not given a meaning by young people and youth workers in a void. On the contrary, it was always connected to their own experiences with regard to the Syria fighters, the government’s security response plan, the media presence in suspect neighbourhoods, geopolitical evolutions, the terrorist attacks in Brussels and Paris and the launch of project calls on “de-radicalisation” or “counter-radicalisation.”

Since these events, the situation has continued to evolve on a national and international level with the incarceration of Belgian IS-children in POW camps, the migration and flight of IS warriors, the fear of radical Quran schools as well as the rise of extreme right in Europe, the Panorama disclosure of *Schild en Vrienden*, the attack on a mosque in New Zealand, incidents as the arson of an asylum centre in Bilzen, the electoral victory of *Vlaams Belang* and a series of increasingly militant demonstrations for ecological reform and animal rights. All of these evolutions have influenced the meaning of the term “radicalisation.” Indeed, the term is increasingly being used to interpret broader social developments. This evolution confirms the intuition that “radicalisation” is not only an individual phenomenon but also takes place on a collective level. This was also remarked by several researchers, who argue that focusing on the individual is a way for policy makers to circumvent responsibility. In that sense, the main focus on “radicalisation” within the security debate needs to make way for an increased focus on the effects of the dominant discourse and policies that are being used in the field.

4.2.2.3. Broadening the debate

The CONRAD team argues for relinquishing the focus on security in the debates on “radicalisation”. A discussion about so-called problematic and jihadogenic urban neighbourhoods cannot simply revolve around heightened control on allegedly suspect communities, since this will only result in increased stigmatisation. Policy attention for these

neighbourhoods and groups remain, of course, highly necessary, but should be geared towards tackling deprivation and discrimination.

According to the young people interviewed, rather than only talking about Islamic terror, we also need to refer to the hostile framing of Islam in Western societies. While most of these young people have connected their religious experience to the search for identity and meaningfulness, others feel doubt and find it hard to adhere to their beliefs, due to increasing insecurity, uncertainty and powerlessness. The so-called radicalisation machine is experienced by these young people as a process that is destroying their religion (“they manage to break everything”), thus polarising the debate when it comes to the place of religion in society.

“Radicalisation” takes place against the background of transitions and phenomena which, at first glance, have nothing to do with it. Yet, they need to be made explicit if we want to understand why some people suddenly seemed to be willing to engage in violence. For instance, the field research showed that new communication technologies and consumerism have a strong impact on the life-world of urban youth. The way in which young people view religion (see digital story “Les Rohinyas”) or the rule of law (see digital stories “La Base” and “Est-ce qu’il vont me croire?”) is affected by the images they see on their smartphones. Given their personal life-experiences in vulnerable neighbourhoods, they get the impression that nothing around them ever changes, while the outside world keeps on changing for the better. Vulnerable young people understand that they are at the receiving end of demographic, economic and social changes like impoverishment, deindustrialisation, the decline in living conditions, privatisation, social welfare budget cuts, the rise of framing in media debates and increasing discrimination.

These transitions have a strong impact on their identity formation. Indeed, they have the feeling that their identity is determined from the outside, as a norm they have to live up to. Thus, their identity is constantly challenged and contested and, as a result, they feel they are forced to betray themselves. As one young person commented: “we live a lie” (see digital story “La Barbe”). In their experience, access to identity is unequal: there are those who can afford a new identity and there are those who cannot. These global transitions are inherently experienced as sources of injustice and as providing unequal access to a humane existence. Consumer economy and new communication technologies, as well as the unequal access to education (see digital story “La Classe D”) and the employment market are disrupting these youngsters’ search for meaning and recognition. Interestingly, meaning, recognition and identity are factors which are often mentioned in “radicalisation” research when trying to identify the so-called “root causes.” It must also be noted though, that in their analysis of global transitions, these young people indicate that there are solid reasons for hope: the increasing ethnic and religious diversity in urban areas is identified as a source of opportunity for more solidarity, tolerance and freedom.

4.2.2.4. Understanding “radicalisation” in the context of personal and collective harm

The stories told by vulnerable youngsters reveal deep harm and traumas which impact the way they view themselves, as well as their capacity for harbouring faith in others, trusting loyalty or expecting respect and care. Some of these experiences go beyond the level of

individual harm and are marked by a collective dimension. This is the case, for instance, with regard to experiences of Islamophobia and police violence.

Youth workers point out that the behaviour of these vulnerable, urban youngsters is partly prompted by their life-long experiences with rejection, injustice, abandonment, betrayal and fear. Their reactions or coping mechanisms include fighting, fleeing, freezing or following. “Radicalisation” can thus be understood in terms of these harms and subsequent coping tactics. We therefore also argue that “radicalisation” is partly comparable to other forms of social deviance in which vulnerable and harmed individuals turn away from society, adopt a flight tactic, harden in an ideology, confront authorities, disappear in criminal networks or flee to safer spaces or IS-caliphates. In that sense, religion or ideology is merely a carrier upon which personal fears are projected.

Vandecandelaere (2017) has documented how young people from Molenbeek deal with the economically precarious circumstances of their neighbourhoods: some are (relatively) successful, obtain a degree in secondary or higher education, find a place in the job market because of a specific (often creative) talent, while others make due by finding work, mostly by securing an initial position as a volunteer, in the socio-cultural sector or through practice-oriented courses. The ones that remain, the groups that hang out in the street, are oriented towards illegal economy, gang-life, drug trade, robberies or theft. The negative engagement of this last group, as we know from the study of life paths of known FTF’s, is an excellent breeding ground for recruiters (Perliger and Milton 2016). The flight from and rupture with society, as observed among “radicalised” young people is very similar to the flight into addiction, or the adventure of gang life. Uncoincidentally, those same young people that were previously engaged in criminal careers engage in a search for meaning and penance by committing to extremist ideologies and violence.

Furthermore, our data show that individual harms coincide with vulnerable institutions. Neither police, justice, nor education are capable, in the deprived areas of Verviers and Brussels, to fulfil the ideals of the rule of law and the welfare state. This situation is reflected in the unequal access to rights and legal protection, in the lack of policies that sufficiently mitigate the effects of global transitions such as migration, the shift to a knowledge economy, poverty and relative deprivation. It is a vulnerability that can also be observed among the actors that populate our institutions: well-intentioned teachers, police officers, clerks, social workers, etc. In short, it is not only young people who are vulnerable.

4.2.2.5. Liberating yourself from the radicalisation machine

If we acknowledge the analysis of the radicalisation machine, the irrevocable question emerges how one can liberate oneself from it. Our first suggestion is to banish the term “radicalisation” to the periphery of the conversation. The “radicalisation” debate keeps us from talking about the actual injustices in deprived neighbourhoods. It hides a much more crucial debate about the rule of law, police violence, unequal access to education, consumerism and the place of religion in society. In fact, the attacks in Paris and Brussels are wake-up calls, telling us to shift our attention to this fundamental conversation.

We advise organisations, researchers and journalists willing to organise a different and broader public debate to do away with the term “radicalisation” and discuss the

underlying phenomena of which we believe “radicalisation” might only be a symptom. Such a debate will shut down the machine, will recover power imbalances, will remove the obsession with security, and will address more important urgencies. The resilient debate we propose does not put up with the non-committal exchange of thoughts, stories or opinions; rather, it is aimed at action and change. As such, it is inevitably an ambitious debate.

We also call out to civil society, socio-cultural organisations and researchers to refuse funding from “radicalisation”-related project calls and contests or to formulate critical remarks in project submissions regarding the content and position of the term, as well as the effects of “radicalisation”-related projects, programmes and policies in the field. We also ask journalists to stop pursuing clicks and newspaper sales by featuring “radicalisation” as a self-evident, individual and psychological phenomenon or as something that is intrinsically related to Islam.

To conclude, we ask policy-makers to stop launching calls for these projects and programmes related to the prevention of “radicalisation.” Young people and other vulnerable groups can definitely use funding for setting up emancipatory projects. However, this should not be done out of security considerations but because these projects are inherently worthwhile.

4.2.3. Communication recommendations

4.2.3.1. Three basic techniques

The aim of the *frame matrix* (with the four dominant problematizing frames and the eight counter-frames as possible alternatives) is to act as a communication toolbox. The following overview is useful in at least two ways. Firstly, it wants to help its users to situate and thus to become more aware of their own way of communicating about “radicalisation.” Secondly, it provides the opportunity to (re)consider alternatives, to communicate more consciously and to develop a communication strategy. After all, communicating about “radicalisation” is not possible in a non-committal way. The lack of (scientific) agreement on the definition or causes of “radicalisation” and even on its existence as an actual phenomenon makes communication on “radicalisation” all the more impactful. Events such as terrorist attacks, street protests, online hate speech or clashes with the police might all fall under the umbrella of “radicalisation,” turning it into a container concept. The frame matrix can help disentangle these different visions.

Furthermore, one should be aware of the possibility of *self-fulfilling prophecies*. Continuously referring to young people from certain areas in Belgium (such as Molenbeek or Verviers) or to the Muslim community as radical entities outside Belgian society, may indeed result in young people feeling stigmatised and unwelcome, causing them to act out or “radicalise.” Thus, communicating about this topic should happen in a deliberate, nuanced manner.

This “conscious” communication means, first and foremost, to examine whether one's own communication corresponds to one or more frames and/or counter-frames. For example, one might feel obliged to use the same concepts and choice of words as one's conversation partner, who might be using the *Virus* frame and speak in terms of “isolation,” “contamination” or “symptoms.” Using the frame matrix makes it possible to think outside of a certain frame and find ways to use alternative (counter-)frames and thus suggest an

alternative choice of words or metaphors. Furthermore, the overview allows one to situate the communication of other stakeholders more easily and thus gain insight into their perspectives and argumentations.

Use the overview with frames and counterframes to perform a self-assessment: Where do I stand now, where do I want to go and how do I get there?

The following pages illustrate how the toolbox works in practice. It should however be kept in mind that “radicalisation” is a subject that generates a great deal of emotion. Consequently, a message appealing to one particular group may agitate or offend another. In the Belgian social debate “radicalisation” is often connected to the terror attacks of November 13, 2015 in Paris and of March 22, 2016 in Brussels. This means that emotions such as anger, fear and sadness are inherent to the conversation. From a different perspective, the current debate might also be perceived as stigmatising, since often “radicalisation” is linked to Islam and the Belgian Muslim community, or neighbourhoods such as Molenbeek and Verviers. Ideally, it should be possible for the frames and counter-frames to be deployed in such a way that they can appeal to *all* citizens and can bring them closer together, thus counteracting the polarisation of the issue, or at least to preventing intermediate positions from shifting to the extremes. The emotionality surrounding the debate should not be regarded exclusively as a challenge or a negative aspect. It can also function as a motivation, a sense of urgency. People can feel distressed about their situation and hence feel inclined to act upon it.

Three basic techniques can be distinguished in the strategic deployment of framing. Firstly, frames can be used to identify “radicalisation” as an issue, thus bringing it under attention. Next, there are the possibilities of countering the problematising frames by defusing the subject, i.e. what the literature calls “deframing,” or by “reframing” it. These three techniques will be discussed at length in the following paragraphs.

One characteristic of framing is that each frame represents a certain perspective on an issue, so that its other aspects remain underexposed. In this study, we identified twelve specific perspectives on the complex topic of “radicalisation”. Consequently, no single (counter-)frame can do justice to the entire topic. There are three arguments in favour of a deliberate and simultaneous use of frames and counter-frames. Firstly, the most complete picture can only be obtained when the twelve frames and counter-frames appear equally in communication. Since some frames seem more dominant than others, they may present a blurred view of the matter. It is therefore advised to make greater use of perspectives that are less common in the current debate. Secondly, not every problematising frame is connected to a specific counter-frame. Every counter-frame de-problematises “radicalisation” with regard to a particular reasoning. Although this does not mean that counter-frames offer a logical and direct answer to the problematising frames, it does allow for a dynamic

combination of frames and counter-frames. Thirdly, considering the public concerns, fears and uncertainties about “radicalisation,” it is unlikely that using only de-problematising messages will be perceived as credible.

No (counter)frame is correct or wrong in itself, a balanced combination of frames and counterframes is generally preferred.

Technique 1: frame it! (but do it carefully)

The four frames that make up the matrix, *Virus*, *A criminal career*, *Mutiny*, *Two roosters in one cage* define “radicalisation” as a problem. This can, however, be problematic in itself because some frames might be perceived as stigmatising. For example, in the *Virus* frame, “radicalisation” is seen as a disease spreading poisonous ideas. Often, these ideas are a metaphor for Islam, and thus this frame could be stigmatising for the Muslim community. However, according to the *Virus* frame, a person is considered the victim of a disease, with the understanding that anyone can get contaminated and that the victim can therefore not be blamed. Any blame, in this case, would lie with the virus itself or the recruiters. The Flemish Syrian-fighters, for instance, were framed as victims of Fouad Belkacem, since they had everything to be happy (e.g. being a promising football player) and the reason for their radicalisation lay solely with the virus. The *Mutiny* frame sheds light on the frustrations which might be perceived by people with a migration background with regard to unemployment or discrimination. At the same time, *Mutiny* can present Belgian society as structurally discriminatory and unwelcoming to people with different backgrounds, which might in turn evoke angry feelings from people who feel attacked by these arguments and the implied accusation of racism. The frame *A criminal career* focuses on the personal choice for a criminal path, which also implies linking radical ideas to crime. The frame of *Two roosters in one cage* relies on the idea of clashing cultures and the incompatibility of two different identities and moral-cultural-legal systems. By doing so, the frame also implies structural superiority and inferiority of one of either cultures. Depending on the point of view, one community is seen as less valuable than the other. So, every frame has its own nuances and only the complete picture can reveal all of them.

Our research team therefore advises people to carefully use one or more frames in their communication, and to acknowledge that the underlying sensitivities are real. This can also help to strengthen mutual understanding. For example, *Two roosters in one cage* takes into account that “radicalisation” can take place among different groups in society. Stating that the West and Islam are incompatible, this frame also identifies “radicalisation” in Western society. This might be a starting point for people to gain insight in the viewpoint of

“the other”, acknowledging that constant provocations have a negative impact on social cohesion.

The problematising frames can also be seen as appealing to a particular reality, in which clashes with police, street violence or terrorist attacks are reasons for concern in Belgian society. In this respect, the frames can also function as a call for action. Considering “a criminal career,” for example, one can consider the importance of better assistance in prisons, and the importance of an efficient judicial system, while *Two roosters in one cage* points towards the importance of stimulating dialogue between population groups. The aim in using these frames should be to improve matters; only using these frames to point out dysfunctions in Belgian society will have a negative effect on communication.

Communication that manages to strengthen reciprocal understanding of the tensions experienced by other groups could ultimately also result in an enhanced connection between population groups. For those struggling with certain feelings, it is important that these be acknowledged by others as real. Otherwise, these feelings can grow and lead to frustration. Emotions can be tempered as soon as they are expressed, and others show understanding. This goes in different ways. The fears and emotions of people affected by the terrorist attacks (Brussels, Paris, 9/11...) are undeniable, whether they are experienced by primary victims or society at large. At the same time, certain population groups feel neglected or unwelcome, and struggle with a search for identity. These feelings should also be acknowledged.

In any case, after carefully “touching” the frames, and especially their emotional charge, the intention is to always switch to a counter-frame, as will be discussed during the elaboration on the third technique. The first technique can also be combined with the second, albeit with a greater risk that people will get bogged down in a (discussion about) the problematisation of “radicalisation.”

Technique 2: deframe it!

Deframing means contradicting a frame by stating that its definition of the situation or the subsequent reasoning is incorrect. Suppose that one wants to counterframe A. *Deframing* means that frame A is explicitly contradicted and that counterframe B is presented as the alternative (“not A, but B!”). *Reframing* implies that only counterframe B is used, yet without directly referring to the problematising frames (“B!”). The American linguist George Lakoff (2004), however, points out a risk in this respect. If the message is not to think about an elephant, the first thing that one will think of is an elephant. In other words, by invalidating frames, the final result may be the opposite and the frame may actually be reinforced. The general advice is that, if one wants the audience not to think about something, one should not bring it up oneself.

When using frames directly, this must be done with great care, and the same applies for deframing. For example, the first technique indicated a sympathetic attitude and understanding of the feelings that underlie frames such as *Mutiny* or *Two roosters in one cage*. It is advisable to also deframe in this context: the initial feeling of fear and incompatibility may not stand in the way of dialogue.

Always keep in mind that by invalidating frames, the end result may be the reverse, namely that the frame is reinforced.

Research shows that the effects of framing are stronger when it comes to subjects of whom the listener has less knowledge. As soon as personal and direct experiences are involved, the impact of framing becomes more diffuse. When it comes to “radicalisation,” only a very small minority in Belgian society can claim direct experience. The act of deframing should be supported by strong arguments as to why certain frames are incorrect or why they deserve to be qualified. The main reason for doing this cautiously is that these arguments will have to compete with people’s personal (albeit often indirect) experiences, what they read in the newspaper, see on television or find on the Internet. On the one hand there are real-life events (vandalism, terrorism, increased police and military controls, ethnic profiling, etc.), which are placed under the “radicalisation” umbrella, and on the other hand there is a socially constructed reality about a society with a higher number of people from an immigrant background, tensions between ethnicities, and religions that are perceived as incompatible etc. The link between Molenbeek and the terrorist attacks in Paris, for example, is undeniable. However, this does not mean that every young person in Molenbeek should be seen as part of those events, nor does it justify the stigmatisation of the communities to which these youngsters belong. Reality is not as black and white as is often thought. The frames and counter-frames, with all their nuances, can help to clarify that.

A frame that is eligible for deframing is *Two roosters in one cage*. The main building block of the frame is the idea that Western and Islamic cultures would not be complementary, making it difficult or impossible for these two cultures to live together. For example, a “Westerner” could argue that Islam does not regard men and women as equal and that Muslims are homophobic. One way of countering this could be to ask whether men and women really are equal in the eyes of Belgian people without a Muslim or migration background and whether they are all truly tolerant of homosexuals. In other words, the dividing line between the two cultures cannot be drawn so clearly. An additional argument could be to point out several examples in which cohabitation of different cultures is seen as a positive opportunity.

The *Virus* frame, in which ideas (e.g. religion/ideology) are seen as the root cause of “radicalisation,” can also be deframed. This could be done by pointing out the differences in interpretation of religion and ideology and by moving on to the use of *The continuum* counter-frame. *The continuum* addresses the divergence in personal interpretations of a religion/ideology and thus shows that one perception cannot be generalised to the whole spectrum. Considering there about 1.8 billion Muslims in the world, how come only a very small minority of them are engaged in violent extremism?

Technique 3: reframe it!

The main advice of the research team is to use the counter-frames as much as possible. Since these counter-frames are complementary, they can also be combined. Offering alternative perspectives makes it possible, through critical thought, for civilians to develop both a personal and well-funded view on “radicalisation.” Using more counter-frames can therefore contribute to a more nuanced and balanced debate on “radicalisation.” Safe spaces of dialogue should be created, which are open to counter-frames and where personal experiences can be shared.

Use more counterframes.

However, the counter-frames represent more nuanced and abstract arguments, which makes them less suitable for displaying them in easy-to-understand images and slogans. Therefore, the language that will allow these counter-frames to be used in a concise manner needs to be further developed.

Concrete figures and statistics can of course help to support a statement, but, in a heated debate, it seems that an accessible and appealing type of language is preferable. Usually, the strength of frames lies in very short messages, which capture the main ideas. Since counter-frames are generally more complex and more nuanced, it is a challenging exercise to formulate them in catchy terms or phrases. For example, within the *Freedom fighter* counter-frame, “radicalised” young people are often referred to as “heroes,” performing “acts of bravery.”

Some counter-frames, such as *Puberty*, *Meaningfulness* and *The continuum* advocate abandoning the term “radicalisation” since they consider the phenomenon it describes as a known issue that does not require a new word. For example, *Meaningfulness* describes “radicalisation” as part of the “normal” search for meaning in life. Following this argument an otherwise normal process is blown out of proportion by describing it as “radicalisation.” One could, in this respect, indeed argue to stop using the term “radicalisation,” or to use alternative terms, such as “positive commitment” or “political awareness.” This of course depends on the preferred frame. Continuing to use the term “radicalisation,” is also an option since it may be considered as difficult to ignore. Yet one might opt for more concreteness when using the term by making a distinction, for example, between violent and non-violent “radicalisation,” or by introducing specific terms such as “extreme right-wing” and “Muslim” “radicalisation.” In the latter case, one already acknowledges that different forms of “radicalisation” are possible.

4.2.3.2. Additional communication advice

Everyone communicates from a certain perspective. If it is not clear to people which frame they are using, it might be because they are unaware of their own viewpoint. To avoid

making assumptions, or ignoring the perspective one has adopted, it may be advisable engage in a discussion with people from different backgrounds about how they perceive matters. It is necessary to become more aware of one's own, fixed beliefs as a way of opening up to "the other." Connection is only possible if one is willing to make an effort, if one really wants to understand the specific perspective through which someone else observes the same reality. Trying to understand this will bring people closer together. Once this happens, a new common ground can be established, with common frames and frames of thought. This should make it possible to continue living together in a connected society where dialogue is possible and different population groups no longer oppose each other. Security and trust are crucial in this regard. One can opt for indirect communication, to create a trust relationship.

Find out through which perspective you and "the other" observe the same reality, and look for matches with your own perspective.

A point of criticism made in conversations by young people who are often the subject of media framing, as well as by the youth workers who work with them, is that Muslim youngsters are no longer allowed to be teenagers. They state that behaviour which is normal for a young age, such as provocations or experimenting, is judged differently when it comes to the Muslim community. They are quickly labelled as "radicalised," even when this clearly does not apply to them. This may also result in the actual "radicalisation" of some young people. It is advised, in these cases, to use the *Puberty* counter-frame, in order to contextualize and de-dramatize teenage behaviour. However, referring to the emotionality of the "radicalisation" debate, this counter-frame might be seen as problematic with regard to certain concerns about the phenomenon. Indeed, the *Puberty* counter-frame may normalise "radicalisation" to such an extent that the phenomenon, in whatever form, may no longer be considered as deserving any specific attention, "because it will blow over again."

Use the *Puberty* counterframe to show the normality of certain behavior.

Another perspective that is often used is the image of the "victim." For instance, young people – e.g. young Muslims, or youngsters from Molenbeek and Verviers in this case - are

considered the subject of media framing. They are perceived as victims of a system (possibly a “machine”) that operates outside themselves and is beyond their control, a situation which they can only undergo as innocent victims. Victimisation can evoke feelings of solidarity. However, the research team advises to avoid a too simplistic form of the *Victim* frame, since it silences the voice of the young people themselves and places them in a passive and weak position. Victimisation is something that one undergoes or copes with. Looking at more structural transitions and the institutional level, young people can be considered as vulnerable, as people who are structurally disadvantaged in society when it comes to receiving and being able to seize opportunities. They are undergoing a large structural phenomenon, but only have a margin of resilience with it.

It appears that the young people of Molenbeek and Verviers are unable to express themselves, whether because they are not given this opportunity, or because it has to be done in a way that is less familiar to them. It would be advised to let them speak for themselves, and for youth workers to guide them in their contact with “outsiders.” Opportunities for dialogue should be used to the fullest. Indeed, there may be pitfalls and bad previous experiences, but by closing the door to people with their best interest at heart (journalists, researchers), the gap in society remains. The *Resilience* counter-frame can be advised here, as a means to empower young people. For example, youth workers should coach them, rather than become their guardians and spokespersons.

Give young people, who are the subject of media framing, a voice and stress their individual and collective power.

Another counter-frame for the communication on “radicalisation,” is *The continuum*. This counter-frame points out that “radicalisation” is indeed a social issue, which is, however, only linked to a very small group of citizens. *The continuum* identifies the risk of generalising the category of “radicalised” people, which inevitably leads to stigmatisation. Following the same argument, it is also advised to be aware of in- and out-group way of thinking. People tend to perceive the heterogeneity in their in-group but regard the out-group as homogeneous. The action of one person belonging to the out-group may thus be seen as representative for the entire group. It is crucial to be aware of this psychological mechanism, and to try and see the heterogeneity of the out-group as well.

Additionally, *Embrace the threat* is focused on stimulating rapprochement between different population groups, by distancing oneself from the initial fear and attempting to connect with people with whom, at first glance, one has nothing in common. It goes beyond the de-categorisation of “the other” and the natural reflex to see the other group as an entity.

Use *The continuum* and *Embrace the threat* to tackle generalisation and stigmatisation and to promote dialogue between population groups.

Lastly, in the framework of this research, the overview of twelve frames and counter-frames was translated into cartoons which each express a different perspective on “radicalisation.” They can be used in group or personal conversations to start a discussion on “radicalisation.” They are meant to evoke emotion, reactions and stimulate a debate, in an accessible, less verbal way. The cartoons can also be used in a context where the term “radicalisation” is to be avoided, since term is never mentioned in the cartoons. In that sense, they can be used to discuss a phenomenon of which even the existence is still ground for debate. In earlier conversations with young people from Brussels and Verviers, the cartoons proved to evoke interesting discussions on a complex and sensitive issue. Of course, the frame and counter-frame overview and cartoons can also be used by professionals, or policy makers, to create an internal debate on their own perspectives on “radicalisation.”

Use the cartoons to start a discussion on “radicalisation” in a socially challenged context, even when the term “radicalisation” is to be avoided.

4.2.4. Recommendations on terminology

4.2.4.1. Use non-problematising alternatives

In the search for alternative terms for the term “radicalisation” the framing analysis can also offer some suggestions. We cannot claim that any frame is closer to an “objective reality” or presents a truly more accurate description of the process at work than another. Two counter-frames, *Embrace the threat* and *Resilience*, do not offer different terms. They define “radicalisation” as an inherent part of society, and hence as a phenomenon one must deal with. Using a different term is, according to these counter-frames, not relevant. Listed below are terms that, within a particular counter-frame, could serve as alternatives

- Within *Penance*, radicalisation can also be called “self-sacrifice” or “self-exaltation,” “salvation” or “purification”.

- Within *Continuum*, radicalisation is an “ideology,” a “trend,” a “distinctive interpretation of a religion or ideology”.
- Within *A catalyst*, radicalising individuals are “idealists,” radicalisation is a “political dynamic” and a “commitment.” According to this counter-frame, one should also speak of “re-radicalising”.
- Within *Puberty* there are alternative terms such as “a search for identity,” “a radical period” and “adolescent (mis)behaviour / malpractice / misconduct”.
- Within *The freedom fighter*, “radicalising” individuals are reframed as “heroes,” “helpers,” and “freedom fighters.” Here, “radicalisation” is seen as standing up for the weak.
- Within *Meaningfulness* “radicalisation” is reframed as “expressing one’s religious identity,” “belief” and “commitment”.

Depending on the frame that is being used, a whole new set of synonyms or alternative terms emerges. Combined with the communication recommendations offered above, this can inspire professionals (social workers, other civil society organisations but also journalists) to use non-problematising terms, thus framing “radicalisation” as a young person’s quest for meaningfulness, recognition or penance, or an idealist striving for a just society. These myriad terms and varieties resonate well with the findings from the field research in which young people criticise the term “radicalisation” because it simplifies a much more complex social reality. In the field research, “radicalisation” was soon replaced by alternative terms such as “derailment,” “blinding,” “freezing,” “hardening” or “polarisation” - terms that can also be adopted more easily when speaking about related or similar social phenomena.

4.2.4.2. Problematising “radicalisation”

From the field research in Brussels we know that “radicalisation” is understood by urban youngsters as (1) a positive conviction or commitment, (2) the willingness to commit violence, (3) a stigmatising label, (4) a traumatic experience, (5) a perfect storm flooding youth and youth workers and (6) a mirror of a dysfunctional society. It is clear that this term is problematic if one wants to work with this particularly vulnerable and to some extent involved group.

The term “radicalisation” reduces a complex and concrete reality to an individualised, psychological and teleological dynamic that is inherently related to security. It obscures and even renders suspicious young people’s heart-felt commitment with religion and their search for identity. As we know from the field research in both Molenbeek and Verviers, dealing with religious issues is one of the areas in which these young people feel least supported and most lost and confused since they cannot connect to the religion of their family and parents nor relate to the Islam of the local imam. As a term, “radicalisation” identifies Islam as an inherently violent religion, which further contributes to these youngsters’ identity struggles and to their feeling stuck between two cultures, thus compromising their religious commitment. It contributes to a longer series of injustices and refers to a society that does not acknowledge its own vulnerabilities and responsibilities. Since it refers to one or multiple traumatic experiences it impedes a meaningful debate on the term with many urban (Muslim and non-Muslim) young people. From the fieldwork we can conclude that the use of the term

closes doors and is therefore no longer useful from a research perspective. “Radicalisation radicalises,” as one youth worker put it.

From the critical study of the available research we can also conclude that “radicalisation” is a contrived concept which tries to group everything that is going on within individuals in the period before they engage in terrorist violence. We also know that there is no single terrorist profile and the study of the life-courses of known terrorists and foreign terrorist fighters teaches us that there is a lot of variety among these profiles as well. As a result, the search for root causes has been a difficult if not impossible exercise. We need to face the possibility that “radicalisation” as a pre-terrorism phase among religious and possibly other groups as well) does not constitute a definable object of study. We do not know whether such a unique and homogeneous process even exists. What we do know is that some people have radical convictions and some people commit violence and/or have travelled to Syria.

4.2.4.3. Use ‘radicalism’ rather than “radicalisation” and distinguish between violent and non-violent radicalism

In fact, rather than talking about “radicalisation” as a unique, self-evident, homogeneous process, we need to talk about “radicalism” (which does not pretend to represent a process), or, more importantly, about “violent radicalism” (which stresses the aspect of violence). In the search for appropriate terminology we also need to consider that “radical” can be interpreted as an amplifying adjective that can precede a wide variety of nouns (and therefore: phenomena). Based on the input of the Brussels youth workers, we also need to stress that there is a crucial distinction between positive and negative radicalism, a distinction which manifests itself in a search for meaningfulness and identity, a political commitment to radical change on the one hand and moral superiority, lack of self-critique and humour, intolerance and fanaticism on the other (Knoope 2017). The latter is of course more problematic for any given society, yet, as long as the people harbouring these ideas do not support or (plan to) commit violence, a liberal rule of law allows them to think what they will.

In the case of violent radicalism solid alternative terms have been suggested or are currently being used. Three of them are particularly prominent: “violent extremism,” “fanaticism,” and “political violence”. In our opinion, the latter term is particularly promising since it stresses the centrality of violence as a precondition for security actors to become involved and since it goes beyond the scope of Islamic “radicalisation,” which has been the main focus for the last two decades. This term also resonates well with the moral ambiguity of political violence. Take for instance the way the first foreign terrorist fighters in Syria, who were called freedom fighters by the Western media during the early days of the Arab Spring. In a RTBF interview, then foreign minister Didier Reynders remarked that “for those young people who, possibly because of their idealism, are engaging in humanitarian work or leaving to fight alongside the Syrian liberation army, a monument might be built celebrating them as heroes of the revolution.”¹² Soon, however the label of idealism disappeared and was replaced by the image of the “radicalised” fighter and the terrorist. Yet the identities of

¹² https://www.rtbf.be/info/belgique/detail_didier-reynders-veut-suivre-a-la-trace-les-belges-revenus-de-syrie?id=7981642

the heroic young people remained the same. It is interesting to see that a term such as political violence or political terror is increasingly adapted by leading voices in the public debate¹³.

4.2.4.4. Focus on “terrorism” rather than “radicalism”

We also argue that the term “radicalisation” makes it possible for security actors to engage in anti-terrorist action pre-emptively, deploying detection mechanisms at an early stage when nothing illegal is actually happening. This confusion of categories is not innocent: it extends the reach of the repressive apparatus and categorises large groups as potentially harmful or suspect. Young people are placed on a “black list” by the police and security actors, without knowing why or how they can be struck off the list again. Giving these actors the right to intervene before any actual violence remains a questionable matter. For this reason, Elke Devroe (2019) argues for the removal of “radicalisation” from the policy lexicon and to replace it by “the preparation and execution of terrorist attacks”. In a context of security and prevention it remains important to give precedence to terms such as “(the preparation of) acts of terrorism” because it provides a decent, legal description in the framework of existing criminal law. Ideally, this will result in putting a halt to the current extension of the legal framework by security actors.

4.3. Future (action-oriented) research

The aim of the CONRAD project was to explore alternative ways to deal with the issue of “radicalisation”, away from stigmatising and discriminatory approaches that risk reinforcing polarisation and distrust in society. Inspiration and guidance for such an alternative discourse (a way of thinking, talking and acting) was found in the field of “restorative justice,” whose values and principles allow for a process of participation in, and re-definition of, the issue at stake. Whereas current restorative justice practices mainly focus on various types of crime or interpersonal conflict which bring together the victim, offender and their support persons in a form of dialogue, more recent interpretations and theories are applying these practices within more encompassing frameworks that are relevant to more complex social phenomena and developments. In this respect, research is being done on how restorative justice values, principles and methods can feed innovative approaches of “doing justice” to areas and people who are caught in a complex, diffuse situation or climate of social tension or opposition. According to a restorative justice philosophy, this can only be done through personal participation of those who are directly involved or targeted, by offering a safe space for the free expression and communication of ideas and experiences, including those of “voiceless” people. The element of “restoration” or redress is also crucial, however, since the exchange between stakeholders aims at finding a new balance together, a kind of “social peace” with which all parties can identify, and which will allow them to further build their lives.

Finally, the element of “justice” should not be reduced to the understanding of justice as provided by the official justice system, but should comprise the “justice” expectations, experiences and practices as shaped in an interactive dynamic where the informal justice of

¹³ <https://www.demorgen.be/nieuws/minister-somers-over-brandstichting-asielcentrum-dit-is-politieke-terreur-ba15b792/>

the people bubbles up to the formal justice of the system, and where the latter percolates down to the justice of communities (Braithwaite and Parker 1999). Conceived in this way, restorative justice is founded in a positive (but not naïve, as restorative justice practices in extreme cases of human conflict demonstrate) image of humans, their communities and their capabilities, relying on their resilience in dealing with conflict, tensions and frictions in their surroundings.

Based on the premise that alternative discourses on “radicalisation” should be developed in an ongoing process of participation and communication with the direct stakeholders, the initial expectation of the CONRAD project was to create spaces where dialogue can take place among and with citizens themselves, and completed with the contribution of professional actors where appropriate. This implied that the dialogue had to take place and the discourses had to be developed within local communities, with individual citizens, families and their own social (and religious) organisations. But as these communities are – ideally speaking - not islands, and concerns about the so-called phenomenon of “radicalisation” are shared – without being very precisely defined or understood - by society at large, the dialogue had to be extended to representatives of the wider social environment, either by including civil society organisations or official bodies including the police, security actors and the justice system. This would create unique opportunities to confront existing, dominating or alternative images of “radicalisation” as were also identified, for example, in framing exercises in media and policy documents, with the life-world of the people involved. Such a dynamic process would then result in new, and shared, understandings of “radicalisation” or radical re-formulations of the issue, its causes and consequences.

In the timeframe of the CONRAD project, we managed to organise five dialogue tables, two in Brussels, two in Leuven, and one in Verviers. These were interesting events in terms of bringing together the different communities concerned (social workers, researchers, young people, residents, civil society members, policy-makers) and had a major impact on the course of the project, as these dialogue tables involved valorising and discussing certain outcomes such as the conceptual framework, the ethical framework and the digital stories. However, to be able to speak of actual “restorative” discussions, would have required more time than was available. Collaboration within the CONRAD team and the first year of field research have shown that building trust often takes more time than anticipated at the stage of proposal submission, especially in the context of action research which, if undertaken according to its basic premises, allows participants to co-design the research agenda, even if that means redrafting the original proposal.

We believe that there is still great merit in the original idea and philosophy of engaging various participants in restorative meetings or discussions. From research into trauma and sexual or domestic violence we know that group sessions have had much more success in supporting and empowering victims. In fact, as Rachel Pain (2014) has argued, there are many similarities between the effects of global terrorism and the everyday terrorism of domestic violence. Since “trauma” is not too big a word to use in the context of “radicalisation” and the concerned communities, we believe that trauma group work such as restorative circles would be immensely beneficial for the concerned communities. In these debates, the new outputs of the CONRAD project (i.e. the cartoons, the frame matrix, the

visualisation methodology) could be used as conversation starters or as tools to structure thought and inspire dialogue.

5. DISSEMINATION AND VALORISATION

5.1. Cartoons

The cartoons developed by the KU Leuven Institute for Media Studies are based on the twelve frames of “radicalisation,” and can be used in focus groups, group conversations or face-to-face interviews (see Figure 11). The set of 12 cartoons is useful for those who experience some annoyance or hesitation in raising the issue of “radicalisation” among a certain group of people. For instance, the researchers from the Institute for Media Studies used these cartoons to discuss the topic of “radicalisation” with young people with a migration background in Molenbeek, Anderlecht, Verviers and Antwerp. Besides researchers, youth workers, teachers or journalists can also use the cartoons when wishing to discuss the topic of “radicalisation” with (young) people in a less direct way. The great advantage of working with the cartoons is that the various dimensions of the concept of radicalisation can be explored and brought up in a playful manner.

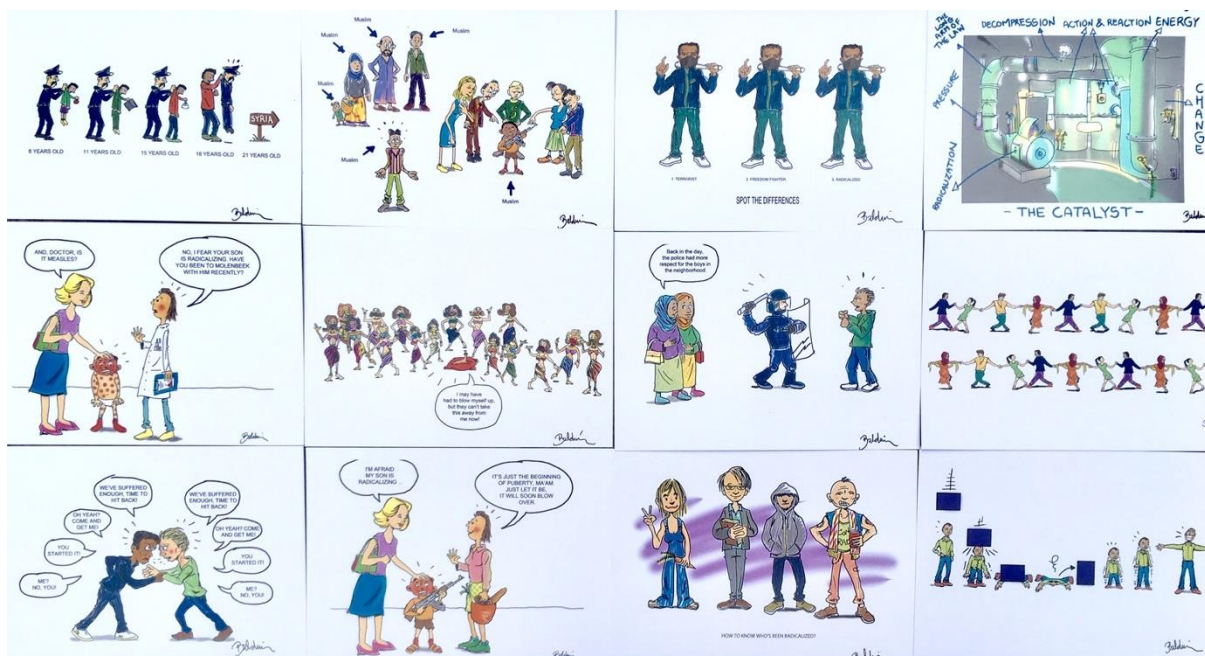


Figure 11: 12 cartoons portraying the frames and counterframes used in the “radicalisation” debate

The researchers of IMS formulated the following five recommendations, based on their experiences with this form of “cartoon elicitation.”

1. Print the cartoons on cards that can be handed out and that can be handled by the participants themselves. This gives the participants the opportunity to have control over the duration of the conversation. Some prefer to go through the cartoons more quickly and then chat for a long time with all the cartoons spread out in front of them. If researchers want to keep more control over the time span, they can turn over the cards themselves.
2. Sit at a round table. A round table is recommended because all participants to the conversation have the pile of cards before them, in the same order, with the pictures face down on the table. One by one, the cards are turned and the cartoon in question is discussed. The first series of

questions are very open. What perspective on “radicalisation” do you think is reflected here? What do you think about that? How does that make you feel? As such, the conversation goes on, reflecting and focussing on what the different participants bring to the table, until all frames have been discussed.

3. The cards also make it possible to organise the (counter-)frames, for example by asking for the cartoons to be arranged according to how familiar they are to the interviewees. This can be done in two steps after initially turning over the cards one by one. First, the interviews are asked to make two stacks, one with pictures they do not recognize, and one with pictures they do recognize. Next, each of the two stacks can be further discussed and arranged. Interviewees devise an order in the different perspectives on “radicalisation,” and compare and discuss these with the other participants around the table. Alternative questions that may guide the ordering are: What frame best expresses your personal interpretation of “radicalisation”? Which frame is incompatible with your own views and why?
4. Leave time for the interviewees to interpret the cartoons in their own, personal way and do not expect them to have understood the “preferred reading” of the cartoon. Each cartoon refers to one frame or counter-frame. It is crucial that the interviewer is open to the participant's own interpretation of a cartoon. Each image is to some extent ambiguous and open to interpretation. Once the participant's spontaneous interpretation is clear, the interviewer can give an explanation that is closer to the (counter-)frame so that the participant can also express ideas and perceptions.
5. Group and individual conversations are possibilities that are both worth considering. The cartoons can be used in combination with various questions that also determine the focus of the subsequent analysis. The aim of the IMS researchers within CONRAD was to find out what place “radicalisation” fulfils in the life-world of the young people in Molenbeek and Verviers. It was about processes of assigning meaning that can be conducted individually, in a stigmatized group or in public discourse. It is to be expected that personal experiences and high involvement in a subject will determine the interpretation of the term “radicalisation.” In a one-to-one conversation, this personal interpretation can be expressed to a greater extent. In a focus group, there is more striving towards a group consensus. The IMS prefers to combine personal conversations with group discussions.

Note: anyone interested in high-resolution versions of the cartoons should contact researchers Marie Figureux (marie.figureux@kuleuven.be) and Prof. Baldwin Van Gorp (baldwin.vangorp@kuleuven.be).

5.2. Digital stories

Six digital stories have been developed, five in Brussels and one in Liège. They can be found on the project website: <http://conradresearch.wordpress.com>

5.3. Dialogue tables, seminars and final conference

Five dialogue tables were organised. Two tables, organised in Leuven in 2018, revolved around the topic of research ethics and had a mixed crowd of researchers, social workers,

restorative justice practitioners and members of security actors. One was organised in Verviers in 2019, with an equally diverse audience. Two dialogue tables were organised in Brussels in 2018, one of which centred on the digital stories of mothers from Molenbeek and the other showing the digital stories of the young people of the CONRAD project to a mixed audience. One two-day seminar on urban youth work, resilience and “radicalisation” was organised in Brussels in 2018, with keynote speakers Lena Dominelli and Neil Denton. The CONRAD final conference was held in Brussels on 27 February, with keynote speakers Farhad Khosrokhavar and Martijn de Koning, presentations of the CONRAD team and two panels (see Figure 12).

Programme

09:00 Coffee and registration
09:30 Mattias De Backer (KU Leuven): introduction to the CONRAD project
09:45 Keynote lecture: Farhad Khosrokhavar (EHESS), “Radicalisation, from the concept to reality: types of radicalisation”
10:30 Q&A
10:45 Coffee break
11:15 Marie Figoureux (KU Leuven): “Disentangling radicalisation. Frames and counterframes in the Belgian societal debate.”
11:35 Panel “Radicalisation, a problematic concept in research, policy and practice”
Ellen Goovaerts (Arktos)
Hassan Bouseetta (Université de Liège)
Anton Vereshchagin (Kaleido Ostbelgien)
Camille Claeys (Municipality of Molenbeek)
Paul Van Tigchelt (OCAD/OCAM)
Moderator: Nadia Fadil (KU Leuven)
12:45 Q&A
13:00 Lunch
14:00 Keynote lecture: Martijn de Koning (Universiteit van Amsterdam), “Chasing ghosts – race, risk and radicalisation in the Netherlands”
14:45 Q&A
15:00 Coffee break
15:30 Mattias De Backer and Tom Flachet: “The radicalisation machine”
15:50 Panel “The impact on local communities”
Nina Henkens (Uit De Marge)
Ali Moustatine (D’Broej)
Fabienne Brion (UCL)
Bart Van Bouchaute (Artevelde Hogeschool)
Farid Nagui (CRVI)
Moderator: Maarten De Waele (VVSG)
17:00 Q&A
17:15 Closing words by Erik Claes (Odisee Hogeschool)



Figure 12: Programme of the CONRAD final conference

6. PUBLICATIONS

De Backer, M., Claes, E., Moustatine, A., Flachet, T. (forthcoming), De radicaliseringsmachine: bevindingen en reflecties uit Molenbeek en Verviers, *Panopticon*.

De Backer, M. (in review), Inequality and hierarchy in 'radicalisation' research: about participatory ethics and power relationships between researchers and gatekeepers, *Qualitative Research*.

Claes, E., Flachet, T., Moustatine, A., De Backer, M. (2020), "*Radicalisering*": een donkere spiegel voor onze maatschappij. Brussels: Academia Press.

Figoureux, M. and Van Gorp, B. (in review), The framing of radicalization in the Belgian social debate: a contagious threat or youthful naivety? *Critical Studies on Terrorism*.

Bousetta, H. and Zouzoula, A. (forthcoming), *Nager entre deux-eaux*

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The CONRAD team wishes to thank, first and foremost, every inhabitant, local professional, youth worker and youngster in Brussels and Verviers who has dedicated some (or much) time on this project.

We also want to thank Wetenschap en Ethiek (KU Leuven) for the practical, logistic and financial support for the two focus groups organised in 2018.

We also wish to thank the members of the follow-up committee: Maarten De Waele (VVSG), Katrien Lauwaert (Moderator), Antonio Buonatesta (Médiante), Edit Törzs (European Forum for Restorative Justice), Marieke Arnou and Paul Borghs (Unia), Nadia Fadil (KU Leuven), Hans Dominicus and Carl Beckers (Justitiehuisen), Bruno Struys (De Morgen), Fabienne Brion (UCL), Sofie De Kimpe (VUB), Heidi Defever (Arktos), Isabelle Detry (NICC), Charlotte Remacle (SAFER Verviers), Britt Mathys (OCAD/OCAM), Franck Hensch (Céciv) and Felicia Solis Ramirez (CREA Fédération Wallonie Bruxelles).

We also wish to thank Pieter Houbey (KU Leuven) who's been extremely helpful in the final, editing stages of this report.

Last but not least, we want to thank Christine Mathieu and in a later stage also Emmanuèle Bourgeois, for being an excellent contact person and sounding board at Belspo.

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ANNEXES

- Annex I: The social ecology of Brussels – Canal Zone
- Annex II: The social ecology of Verviers – Hodimont
- Annex III: European policy analysis
- Annex IV: Framing analysis