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# Neo-fundamentalist radicalization in Europe

-motivational factors and causal mechanisms

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# Abstract

The overall purpose of this thesis is to examine the motivational factors and causal mechanisms behind the Islamist radicalization taking place in Europe among European Muslims. The ontological position is influenced by causal realism, and I have a strategic-relational approach concerning structure and agency.

The thesis is divided into three levels of analysis. On the first level of analysis I conduct a theory-consuming study of political and cultural factors that may effect Muslim radicalization on a structural level.

On the second level of analysis I continue by mapping out what segments of society are most susceptible to the Islamist message, and why.

On the third and most concrete level of analysis I conduct a case study of the individual Islamist and what motivated and caused radicalization in this specific case.

The theoretical framework in the thesis consist of the Social Movement Theory (SMT), Framing theory, the Group Process Approach, the Politics of Identity, and finally the Theory of Recruitment.

It is concluded that the radicalization is prominently caused by a combination of structural and individual mechanisms. In other words, it is a dynamic with both indirect causal factors at a structural level and direct causal factors at an individual level.

*Key words:* Radicalization, Islamism, Hizb ut-Tahrir, discrimination, Europe

*Words:* 19891

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# 1 Introduction

According to the Swedish Security Service (SÄPO) the most active radical environments in post-millennium Europe are right-wing extremists, left-wing autonomous movements, and radical Islamist movements.

The terrorist attacks in Madrid 2004 and London 2005, introduced two new concepts to the European public debate; “home-grown terrorism” and “radicalization”. Suddenly, the terrorist threat did not come from far-away countries but originated from fairly well-integrated citizens living in Europe. Since then, home-grown radicalization of young Muslims living in Europe have been one of the most pressing and elusive challenges for governments, policy makers and scientists.

The individuals behind the Madrid bombings and the London bombings were motivated by radical Islamism, and in recent years there has been a rapid proliferation of radical Islamist activity in Europe (Awan 2008, p. 13). Radical Islamism is not only a challenge in its violent form, but also non-violent Islamist movements constitute a challenge to democratic states in Europe because of their anti-democratic, anti-western and anti-modernist ideological foundation (Staun 2006, p. 13).

The urge to understand and tackle the threat of radicalization is not only rooted in fear of possible terrorist attacks. Radicalization of minority groups poses a serious threat to society and intercultural relations, even when it does not lead to terrorism. The Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) states in a report on radicalization and Salafism<sup>1</sup> that:

...there is no threat of violence here, nor of an imminent assault upon the Dutch or Western democratic order, but this is a slow process which could gradually harm social cohesion and solidarity and undermine certain fundamental human rights. (AIVD 2007, p. 9).

The development of fanatic and extremist attitudes and behavior in minority groups can increase impermeability of group boundaries and highly influence on groups’ social position in society, resulting in polarization and intercultural tensions (TTSRL 2008, p. 8).

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<sup>1</sup> Salafism refers to those religious or political transnational movements that emphasize the unity of the Ummah over specific cultural, national or ethnic loyalties. They argue for the restoration of the Caliphate (Cesari in Coolsaet 2008, p. 97).

Also, radical Islamist ideology among European Muslims is what has motivated many of the terror attacks in Europe over the past decade (Fukuyama 2006, p. 10).

The question arises concerning what the causal factors of radicalization are and subsequently, which social groups are most susceptible to radicalization. This leads to the next section where the purpose and research question of this thesis is presented.

## 1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose with the study is to give a comprehensive analysis of the neo-fundamentalist radicalization in post-millennium Europe with a focus on motivational factors and causal mechanisms. The ambition is to link structural factors with social factors and individual motivation in an integrated analytical framework.

## 1.2 Questions at issue

The research question is rather complex, thus it is broken down into a number of operational questions. Each level of analysis is guided by specific operational questions, which are presented below.

### 1.2.1 Main question

The main question is formulated as follows:

- *What are the motivational factors and causal mechanisms for the neo-fundamentalist radicalization in post-millennium Europe?*

### 1.2.2 Operational questions

The operational questions relate directly to the respective levels of analysis in the study.

On the first level of analysis I explore the causal factors on a structural level in Europe regarding radicalization among Muslims. The following question guide my study on the first level of analysis:

- *What are the structural preconditional and precipitant causal factors of neo-fundamentalism in post-millennium Europe?*

On the social level of analysis I study in which segments of society radical Islamism gain most support, in other words, what individuals that are most susceptible to the Islamist message. The following question is guiding the study at this level:

- *What segments of society are most vulnerable to the Islamist message, and why?*

On the most concrete level of analysis, the individual level, I provide a case study of a former member of the neofundamentalist movement Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT). The following operational questions are guiding the study at his level:

- *What are the characteristics of individuals drawn into these movements?*
- *Which psychological and social circumstances make people susceptible to the ideas of Islamism?*
- *What makes some people susceptible to the radical Islamist messages and some resistant?*
- *How does a person become radicalized?*

### 1.3 Delimitations

Radicalization can be both violent and non-violent, and it is hard to separate the two since they are dynamically inter-connected, and the demarcation is rather fussy. In this study I focus on so called neo-fundamentalist radicalization. Neo-fundamentalist groups officially abstain themselves from using violence, however it is commonly argued that they serve as a breeding ground and stepping stone for individuals to pass in due course into violent action and terrorism. The largest neo-fundamentalist movement in Europe at the present time is Hizb ut-Tahrir (The Party of Liberation), and I use this group as an example when illustrating radical Islamist action or ideas of non-violent character.

The time and space of this inquiry is limited to post-millennium Europe. By Europe I refer to the “old” EU-15 countries<sup>2</sup>. The reason for this being that the bulk of Europe’s Muslim population lives in the “old” EU-15 countries. Muslim communities do exist in the “new” Member states, but as their populations are relatively small there is an absence of information about both Islamophobia and the Muslim’s economic and social situation.

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<sup>2</sup> Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom (<http://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=6805>, 2009-03-15).



## 1.4 Concepts and definitions

### 1.4.1 Radicalization

*Radicalization* can very briefly be explained as the processes that leads an individual to political or religious activism with the aim of carrying out radical changes in society. Radicalization and recruitment are increasingly the subject of scientific study, however, no universally accepted definition of the concepts has been developed yet.

Since I am focusing on non-violent radicalization I have chosen to use the definition developed by the Dutch General Information and Security Agency (AIVD) that can be applied to both violent and non-violent radicalization.

AIVD defines *radicalization* as follows:

**The growing willingness to pursue and/or support far-reaching changes in society which may constitute a danger to (the continued existence of) the democratic legal order (aim), which may involve the use of undemocratic methods (means) that may harm the functioning of the democratic legal order (effect).** (AIVD, 2005, pp. 13-14).

The definition focuses on the active “support of far-reaching changes in society”, which can constitute a danger for the democratic state. Further, AIVD talks about a possible use of undemocratic methods, which then includes non-violent groups. Since this definition implicates much more than just terrorism and violence but also a democratic dimension, it is suitable in this study.

*Ideological radicalization* is transnational and entails no links to the country of origin. It is defined in essence by European Muslim’s identification with a universal Ummah, or community of the faithful. It typically develops as a result of the alienation of the young, and Islamist radicalization in Europe has predominantly taken this path since the early 1990’s (Roy 2003, p. 1).

### 1.4.2 Islamism

Islamism is an ideology with fundamental totalitarian and anti-democratic characteristics. In other words, it is *not* another formulation or reformulation of the religion Islam (Staun 2006, p. 4). It must be emphasized that the basic religious texts of Islam *in no way* call upon terror or violence against the innocent. Islamism and Islam is *not* the same thing, and it is important to keep this differentiation in mind.

The ideological foundation that Islamists share can be seen as a set of common standpoints:

1. First, there is a totalitarian element. Islamists are searching Islam for an all-inclusive system of thought, without any opposition, that can provide support and answers regarding all aspects of human life. They also promote the totalitarian notion that the whole is more important than the units – that is that the collective (the Ummah, the movement or the family) is more important than the individual. Further, neo-fundamentalist movements, just like within fascist or communist movements, are often organized in a way so that the Islamist way of life is infiltrated in all parts of the members lives (Staun 2006, p. 43).
2. Islamists, and especially the neo-fundamentalists, oppose every form of democracy. According to them, the people and decision makers in a democracy put themselves in God's place.
3. There is much focus on Sharia law. Islamists argue that the Muslim ideal society shall be ruled by Sharia law, and in addition neo-fundamentalists argue that also Muslims living in non-Muslim countries shall follow the Sharia law even if it is in opposition with the rule of law in the country in which they live.
4. Some Islamist movements have received much inspiration in anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, and generally in anti-Western and especially anti-American ideas. Many Islamist movements also show clear anti-Semitic features (Whine 2001, p. 57).
5. According to Islamists, the Muslim world have developed in the wrong direction; Islam has been deserted because society became decadent, and the decadens developed when Muslims deviated from the true path of the Prophet Muhammed. Political leaders in Muslim countries are, according to neo-fundamentalists, apostats that have abolished Sharia law and instead implemented Western lack of faith and manners of living. The only way to deal with this and to return to true Islam is for them to remove these apostate regimes and re-establish the original Muslim manner of living, the way the Prophet Muhammed practiced it (Staun 2006, p. 44).

In this paper the term "Islamist" is used regarding movements that view Islam as an ideology and whose goal is to re-establish the caliphate. The term "Islamism" is used as a comprehensive term for the ideology that the different Islamist movements utilize.

### 1.4.3 Islamist categories

Islamism can be divided into four main categories; neo-fundamentalism, nation-state fundamentalism, traditional fundamentalism, and modernist Islamism. Briefly, the neo-fundamentalists focus on the globalization of Islam and the re-establishment of the Caliphate and the Sharia law. The nation-state Islamists focus on the regime in the Middle East, and use both non-violent and violent means in attempts to overthrow what they regard as corrupt regimes in Muslim countries.

Traditional fundamentalists stay away from high politics and focus on getting influence in the cultural or social sphere, regarding for instance family- and/or gender issues. The modernist Islamists work towards a more modern interpretation of Islam, that allow for freedom of opinions and thinking (Staun 2006, pp. 48-49).

It is a difficult task to categorize different Islamist movements, yet I think it is necessary in order to get a complete understanding of the subject of this paper. The best way to categorise these movements is by using two parameters; goals and means (ibid. p. 33).

What ideological goals do the different Islamist movements have? Here it is most common with a differentiation between radical and moderate. After that, differentiation is made from a parameter of tactics and means. What means do the movements use to reach their goals? Here it is most common to differentiate between non-violent and violent means. However, according to Olivier Roy (2004) these categories shall only be seen as helping tools and since there is no sharp line between the different categories, they shall be used with a gliding transition (Roy 2004, p. 78).

Non-violent movements, like for instance the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizb ut-Tahrir, may not officially and explicitly advocate violent means, but they may very well function as a step-stone or initial background movement to the more violent movements (Staun 2006, p. 33). Still, to label Hizb ut-Tahrir as non-violent is not completely accurate. The movement does not explicitly promote the use of violence, but they do not completely refrain from it either, they just do not think it is politically advantageous at the moment. Nevertheless, they are usually classified as a non-violent Islamist movement, and more specifically a neo-fundamentalist movement (ibid. p. 41).

#### 1.4.4 Neo-fundamentalism

In this paper I focus on the largest and fastest growing group of Islamists; the neo-fundamentalists. They are first and foremost concerned with the globalization of Islam and the global propagation of Islamism and/or the opposition of the West. An essential characteristic among neo-fundamentalist movements is the desire to create a better human race through the re-Islamization of society. Ideologically, they seek to promote a rigorous and literal interpretation of the Koran.

Their main goal is to re-establish the Caliphate, the way it was created by Prophet Mohammed in Medina at 622 AD. The Caliphate will be based on Sharia law and include all Muslims, both Sunni and Shiah.

They consider communities based on national or ethnic grounds as man-made and artificial, and instead consider all Muslims as one communion – the Ummah. They seek to make the Ummah-concept a challenger to the concept of the nation-state, and in addition oppose every form of democracy since a democratic sovereign take God's place.

## 1.5 Disposition

This thesis is divided into three levels of analysis, where the last and most concrete level of analysis is conducted as a case study.

The first part of the thesis, chapter 2, gives an overview of the methodological framework that guides the thesis.

The following chapter (3), gives a thorough insight to the theoretical underpinnings that the analysis is based on. Chapter 4-6 constitutes the analysis of the thesis, and the chapters are divided into one for each level of analysis.

In the last chapter (7) I bring together the conclusions drawn in the analysis and sum up the main concluding remarks.

## 2 Methodology

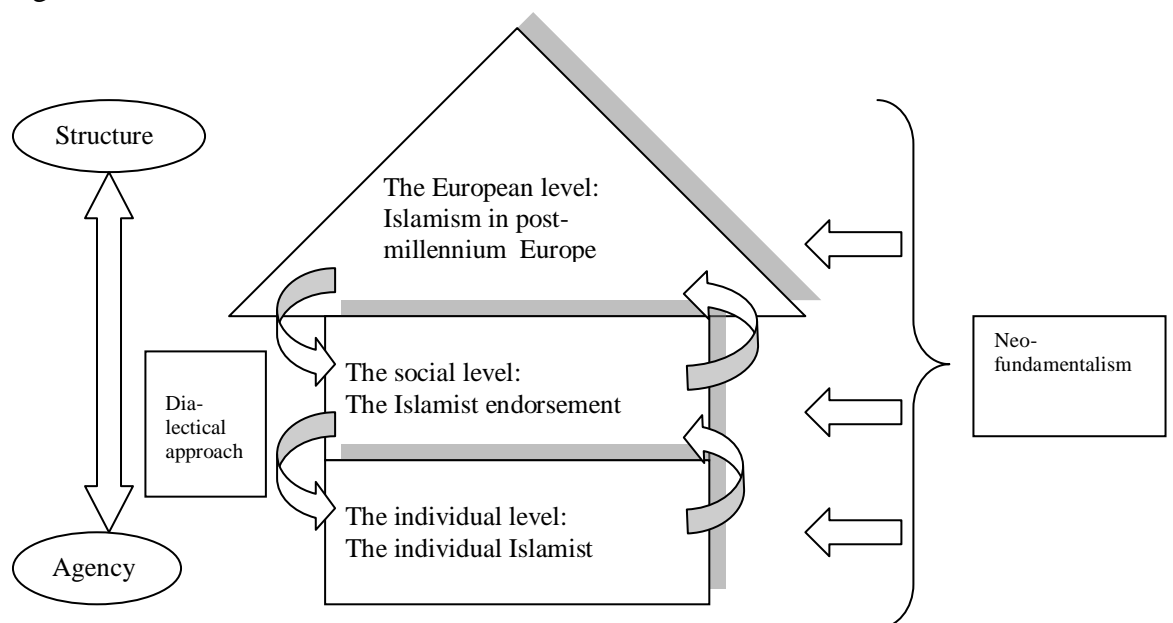
This chapter outlines the methodological approach and the research design of the study.

In order to give a comprehensive answer to the main research question, studies have to be conducted on several levels of analysis, followed by a concluding analysis where the findings on each level are interwoven into an entirety.

Theories and methods vary depending on the level of analysis. In the following chapters I will give an overview of the methods used in this study.

### 2.1 Research design

Figure 1 denotes a graphical representation of the levels of analysis that will appear in the study, from the most general level (the European level) to the most concrete (the individual level). The box beside the model represent neo-fundamentalist movements in Europe and the arrows approaching the model illustrates that these movements have an impact on all levels of society, from the most general to the most concrete level.



**Figure 1**

Further, the dialectical approach concerning structure and agency is illustrated with the big arrow going both ways between structure and agency, as well as the arrows between the different levels of analysis going both ways.

In the following section I present the issues illustrated above in more detail.

### 2.1.1 Case selection

The case of study is neo-fundamentalist radicalization. In order to further restrict the scope of analysis I focus only on non-violent radicalization. Hizb ut-Tahrir is a typical example of a non-violent neo-fundamentalist organization, and since I have gained valuable insight into this group I use it as an example throughout the study.

The selection of interviewees is based upon *centrality*, which is considered the most suitable for this study. Centrality means that the researcher strives to find persons that in journalistic terms are labelled centrally placed resources. The determining criteria are knowledge and experience in the field of study, thus I have chosen interviewees with in-depth knowledge and experience on each level of analysis.

## 2.2 Validity

Extern validity has to do with the degree to which the findings of the investigation are possible to generalize to other social settings and situations. As LeCompte and Goetz (1982) argue, extern validity may pose a problem to qualitative researchers since there is a tendency to use specific case studies and limited samples in the study. However, as this is a theory-consuming study the focus is not put on generalising the findings but rather on explaining the process in the present case. It is not possible to make inferences from a single-case study to the population at large, however the study facilitates an understanding of other similar situations.

## 2.3 Epistemology and ontology

During the writing of this thesis my ontological position is profoundly influenced by causal realism, as defined by Brante (2001). He defines four postulates for causal realism, that is applicable in this study;

1. There is a reality existing independently of our representations and awareness of it (ontological postulate)

- 1a. There is a social reality existing independently of our social scientists' representations and awareness of it (ontological postulate for social science)
2. It is possible to achieve knowledge about this reality (epistemological postulate).
3. All knowledge is fallible – and correctable (methodological postulate).

Brante argues that causality shall be seen in a tolerable and 'enabling' manner. It should not be defined as law-like universal regularities between observables A and B, but rather "in certain circumstances it is likely that B will occur", i.e. a causal relation that holds *sometimes* (Brante 2001, p. 174).

According to Brante, causality is intimately connected with understanding and explanation. An observed regularity is as such no explanation. In order to understand regularities we need to identify the social *mechanisms* behind the regularities (ibid.). A mechanism is defined as "*a cause that has a (causal) relationship as its effect* [orig. italics.]" (ibid. p. 175). This is a suitable way of conceiving causal relations in the study, and I will use the term "mechanism" as defined by Brante.

### 2.3.1 Structure and Agency

My view of structure and agency is an important foundation for my argumentation and analysis in this thesis. According to Giddens (1979) structures can both *constrain* and *enable* actors. Viewed from a *dialectical approach*, structure and agency relate to one another and continuously interact. This means that agency affects structure, but structure also affects agency (McAnulla 2002, p. 278).

The analytical framework is inspired by *the strategic-relational approach*. This is a dialectical understanding of the structure-agency relationship developed by Hay (1996) and Jessop (1990). The key concept in this approach is that of *strategy*. Structure is considered the starting point, and action only takes place within a pre-existing structured context. Actors are reflexive and formulate strategies on the basis of partial knowledge of the structures. They develop effective strategies to overcome problems imposed by their strategic disadvantage. According to Hay it is called strategic learning: "agents are reflexive, capable of reformulating within limits their own identities and interests, and able to engage in strategic calculation about their current situation" (Hay 1996, p. 124).

In this thesis the structure perspective is considered similar to the European level of analysis. The structures, at this level, that affect the actors are of political, cultural and economic nature.

Proceeding to the more concrete levels of analysis, the actors are considered the neo-fundamentalist endorsement and the individuals involved in Islamist movements. I consider the actors to be both the individual Islamists and the neo-fundamentalist endorsement. In other words, agency can vary between the social level and the individual level, whereas structure is constantly considered the

European level and the structural conditions at this level of analysis. Structure is consequently affecting the agency at both the social and the individual level.

Further, I view the relationship between structure and agency as a complex interplay, as suggested by Hay (1996). In addition, Badersten (2002) comments the interplay where the agent's intentions, motivations and variations play a key role, but where the structure constitute the framework of the acting (Badersten, 2002 p. 78).

The structure and agency has to be taken into account and analysed simultaneously in order to discover the causal factors behind Islamist radicalization in Europe.

## 2.4 European level of analysis

In order to obtain a contextualized understanding of neo-fundamentalist radicalization in Europe I start at this level by exploring different types of factors at a structural level that affect radicalization. In the famous publication *The Causes of Terrorism* (1981), Martha Crenshaw distinguishes between factors that set the stage for terrorism over the long run, also referred to as preconditions, and precipitant factors that immediately precede the occurrence of terrorism. Preconditional factors do not have a direct effect on individual behaviour, but they can shape and constrain the individual's environment and in that way have an indirect effect on radicalization.

The precipitants include events that call for revenge or immediate action, such as provoking acts or speeches (Crenshaw 1981, p. 381). There is a significant difference between the preconditional factors that affect the situation in Europe, and precipitant factors, which is the reason I divide them in the analysis. The preconditional factors are divided into two main categories; political preconditions and cultural preconditions, with their respective precipitant factors.

## 2.5 Social level of analysis

At this level of analysis I study the Islamist endorsement in Europe. This analysis provides a picture of what segments of society that are most susceptible to the neo-fundamentalist message.

I use existing theories to explain why some segments of society are more susceptible to the Islamist message than others, consequently this is a theory-consuming inquiry.



## 2.6 Individual level of analysis

At this most concrete level of the inquiry, I conduct a case study in order to study individual-level factors that contribute to radicalization.

Radicalization is perceived as a process rather than as a state. According to Brante (2001, p. 181), an individual does not exist in a vacuum but is to a great extent a product of the social. In this study I consider the individual as embedded in a social context or social system. The focus is put on process characteristics, which are variable, such as the context in which the individual lives and operates, and also the “relationship between events and the individual as they affect behaviour” (Taylor & Horgan 2006, p. 586).

I conduct a single-case study research consisting of a semi-structured deep interview in combination with studies of relevant literature. The person I interview is former member of the neo-fundamentalist movement Hizb ut-Tahrir.

The best way to do this case study would of course be to interview a very large number in different countries across Europe. This is not possible due to the scope of this thesis as well as time limits, and the focus is put on the radicalization process in this specific case.

## 2.7 Semi-structured interviews

During the course of the thesis I conduct several qualitative interviews. The interviews are conducted in a semi-structured manner since this method provides a depth in information through the use of open-ended questions. It allows the respondent to talk freely about issues and opinions regarding the subject at issue, and additionally allows for new questions to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says. Since the subject of this thesis is a fairly unexplored issue and the framework is explorative the flexibility of semi-structured interviews is suitable (Flick 2006, p. 160).

The interviewees are scholars in the field, persons with deep insights and knowledge in the field as well as persons that have previously been involved in radical Islamist movements themselves. More specifically, I have chosen to interview four persons, each with their own specific insight, knowledge and experience. I interview one of the most prominent scholars in the field, Dr. Jørgen Staun at the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), an imam in Sweden, the branch head of two community youth centres in a segregated area in Sweden, and finally a former member of the neo-fundamentalist movement Hizb ut-Tahrir. This selection of interviewees provides both personal insights and experiences to the subject, as well as a professional view. The knowledge from scholars in the field and persons with deep insights in the matter is valuable for the more abstract levels of analysis, while interviewing individuals with personal experiences from Islamist movements are invaluable on the most concrete level of analysis.

## 2.8 Ethical considerations

An interview inquiry is a moral enterprise, and the moral issues concern both the means and the ends of the inquiry. Throughout the entire process there are several ethical issues to consider. These ethical considerations has to be taken especially serious when researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena (Birch et.al. 2002, p. 2).

Steinar Kvale (2009, p. 63) identifies seven research stages where one need to consider ethical issues extra carefully.

He argues that the purpose of an interview study should be considered with regard to improvement of the human situation investigated. This is called *thematizing* and should be regarded beside the science value of the knowledge.

An interview *design* involves “obtaining the subject’s informed consent to participate in the study, securing confidentiality, and considering the possible consequences of the study for the subjects.” (ibid.).

During the *interview situation* personal consequences for the subjects, such as stress and changes in self-understanding, need to be taken into account.

When *transcribing* the interviews the confidentiality of the interviewees need to be protected and there is the question whether transcription is loyal to the interviewee’s oral statements.

During the *analysis* of the interviews there is the question of whether the interviewees should have a say in how their statements are interpreted.

It is the ethical responsibility of the researcher to report knowledge that is as secured and *verified* as possible. This also involves the question of how critically an interviewee may be questioned.

When *reporting* private interviews in public one has to consider the issue of confidentiality and the consequences of the published report for the interviewees and for the groups they belong to.

Kvale (2009, pp. 68-69) mentions four fields that are traditionally discussed in ethical guidelines for researchers concerning interview studies: informed consent, confidentiality, consequences and the role of the researcher. I will discuss informed consent and confidentiality in the following chapters.

### 2.8.1 Informed consent

Informed consent involves informing the participants of the research about the overall purpose of the study as well as of any risks and benefits from participation in the research project. It furthermore entails obtaining the voluntary participation of the subjects, and informing them about their right to withdraw at any time. The subjects shall be informed about confidentiality, and who will have access to the interview material, the researcher’s right to publish the whole interview or parts of it as well as the participant’s possible access to the transcribed material and the analysis of the data.

## 2.8.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality entails that data identifying the participants will not be revealed. If information that is potentially recognizable to others will be published, the participants should agree to this release of identifiable information. Throughout this thesis I use only feign names of the interviewees, except of Dr. Jörgen Staun. Further, I do not give out any information of what city in Sweden the interviewees are working and functioning in, since this could reveal their identities.

It is important to make clear before the interview begins who will later have access to the interviews. Further, in a qualitative interview study where the participant's statements from a private interview setting may appear in public reports the interviewee's privacy need to be protected. There is a certain dilemma regarding confidentiality as a field of uncertainty connects to the issue that anonymity, on the one hand, protect the interviewees and is an ethical demand. On the other hand it can serve as an alibi for the researcher that can use the confidentiality to interpret the subject's statements without being gainsaid (Kvale 2009, p. 73).

## 2.9 A note on methods

The primary obstacle when studying radical Islamist groups is most obviously access. The respondents are very limited in number which makes random samples very difficult. However, a case study approach using semi-structured deep interview with a single respondent provide unique insights into radical Islamic groups that are practically impossible to gain through other methods.

A critical standpoint has been taken when analysing all the interviews, in order to make sure that no hidden agendas or personal opinions on part of the interviewee, which are not relevant for this study, affects the material.

## 2.10 Methodological implications

The ontological standpoint in this study is influenced by causal realism as defined by Brante (2001). Causality is explained in terms of structure and agency, and the notion that agency is constrained and enabled by the structure, and both are simultaneously interacting.

The study consists of three separate studies each with specific operational questions. The first and second levels of analysis (the European and the social) are both theory-consuming studies influenced by the strategic-relational approach, seeing structure and agency as continuously interacting. The main methods are literary studies combined with semi-structured interviews.

On the third level of analysis (the individual level) I conduct a case study research. The case study is based on a semi-structured deep interview with a former member of the neo-fundamentalist movement Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Altogether I conduct four semi-structured interviews with people holding deep insights in this field of research. Significant efforts are put on the protection of the identities of the interviewees and feign names are used in all cases except with Dr. Jörgen Staun.

## 3 Theoretical framework

This chapter starts with an overview of previous research on the issue of Islamist radicalization. It is followed by the theories used in the analysis.

Most of the causal factors of radicalization are assumed to contribute to all forms of radicalization, both violent and non-violent; however in the present study I apply the theoretical framework to non-violent Islamist radicalization in post-millennium Europe.

### 3.1 Previous research

Most explanations of radical Islamism are rooted in socio-psychological accounts of mass behavior, which emphasize the primacy of grievances and discontent. The underlying assumption is that grievances are generated by socio-structural, economic, and political strains and crises which produce psychological distress and prompt individuals to participate in collective action (Wiktorowicz 2004b, p. 3). In the literature there is a long list of precipitating factors, including economic malaise, failed modernization projects, blocked social mobility, the Arab defeat in 1967 in the war with Israel, the legacy of colonialism and cultural imperialism, and political alienation. There is also a general agreement among scholars that individuals join groups and movements in response to crisis (*ibid.*).

According to Wiktorowicz (2004b), general socio-psychological explanations often suffer from critical shortcomings. First, even though strain and discontent are ever-present and Islamic groups exist in most Muslim countries, the extent of their presence varies greatly. Many countries with severe stress and crisis exhibit low levels of Islamist mobilization, e.g. Iraq (prior to the U.S.-led invasion) and Syria. Grievances may provide impetus for joining but other factors such as levels of repression or resource availability influence decisions about involvement. Leon Trotsky states that “the mere existence of privation is not enough to cause an insurrection; if it were, the masses would be always in revolt” (quoted in Goodwin and Skocpol 1989, p. 490). Second, the socio-psychological theories cannot explain why some individuals choose to join Islamist groups while others do not. Wiktorowicz argues that even if one accepts that particular constituencies have a greater tendency to join because of a shared set of grievances and psychological stress, there must be other mechanisms that help explain why this commonality translates into joining in some cases but not others. Structural strain and discontent may be necessary, but not a sufficient causal explanation (Wiktorowicz 2004a). Third, the socio-psychological framework does not explain differential patterns of joining among Islamic movements. In other words, why individuals

with similar experiences, levels of stress and grievances choose to join different movements. Why do some people choose to join violent Islamic groups while others join moderate, non-violent movements? In order to overcome the shortcomings of the socio-psychological approach, some scholars have turned to social movement theory (SMT).

In this thesis the main theories used are *Social Movement Theory (SMT)* including *Framing Theory*, the *Group Process Approach*, the *Politics of Identity* and the *Theory of Recruitment*.

## 3.2 Social Movement Theory

*Social Movement Theory (SMT)* offers a way of studying questions like: What causes do radical Islamist groups mobilize around, and when do these causes resonate with potential recruits? *SMT* has been applied in a number of studies of Islamic activism, as well as leftist and nationalist terrorism (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2008, p. 3). It offers a way to envisage Islamist radicalization with a focus on the broad dynamics and processes of political mobilization. It also considers the relationship between the individual, the group and the broader society.

During the past years, scholars have gained new insights into the dynamics of the Islamist movement, and there are several studies that have borrowed from *SMT* and attempts to open the way for a more systematic way of applying *SMT* to the Islamist movement (Meijer 2005, p. 279).

In *Islamic Activism – a Social Movement Theory Approach* Quintan Wiktorowicz (2004a) discuss several different Islamic movements in terms of social movements.

I use a social movement theoretical approach when analyzing the movement's ways of mobilizing support and recruiting participants.

Quintan Wiktorowicz (2004a, p. 4) presents the social movement theory as “a unifying framework and agenda that can provide effective modes of inquiry to further boundaries of research on Islamic activism”. He further states that most studies on Islamist movements have been inadequate since they have been based on psychological causes of mass mobilization and focused on “structural strains” and “social anomie”. These anomies were deemed to be the result of rapid socio-economic transformations, rural-urban migration and clashes between the values of the village and the anonymity of the modern city.

There are those who ascribe the influence of an aggressive Western culture in the Middle East as the reason for the rise of the Islamist movement. Yet some draw on the lack of democracy as a reason behind the rise of the Islamist movement. Any of these theories may apply well on the rise of Islamism in the Middle East, though not - for obvious reasons - on the rise of these movements in Europe.

*SMT* has emerged as a middle ground approach in analyzing episodes of controversial collective actions, falling between structuralist and rational choice

schools. Structural theories tend to have large units of analysis, generally focusing on the international system and nation states in order to explain collective action.

While structural theories focus on episodes of large collective action analyzed through structural change, social movement theorists argue that it is necessary to understand also how individuals act within the parameters of such change (Robinson in Wiktorowicz 2004a, p. 115). Supporters of structural theories argue that understanding large outcomes such as social revolutions can only be made by analyzing changes in large units.

Followers of the rational choice theory, on the other hand, look at the other end of the spectrum. These theorists argue that it is the sum total of millions of strategic choices made by individuals that make up history. Hence, for rational choice theorists individual agency plays an essential role in understanding collective action. In general they deny the explanatory value of units of analysis other than the individual (Robinson in Wiktorowicz 2004a, pp. 113-114). According to rational choice theorists, groups do not make choices, only individuals do. Hence it is the individual choices in strategic relationships with other individuals that are of interest when analyzing collective action, such as revolutions (ibid.).

Supporters of *SMT* argue that groups are the proper unit of analysis when explaining collective action. They argue that strategic choices made by individuals are not made in a vacuum outside the changing contexts and networks in which people in fact live. Individuals and social movements belong to a broader social setting and a framework characterized by shifting and fluid configurations of enablement and constraints that structure movement dynamics (Wiktorowicz 2004a, p. 113). Hence, since a group-social context is essential for understanding individual decision-making, the group is a proper unit for analysis.

To sum up, supporters of *SMT* take the middle road in this aspect, and argue that while structural changes outside the individual's control provide changing opportunity structures, they do not determine the outcomes.

*SMT* recognizes that agency is important, although only in the social context in which it emerges (ibid.). In some aspects social movement theory can be seen as a bridge between structuralism and rational choice.

*SMT* tends to utilize three variables;

1. First, *SMT* study how changes in political opportunity structures have impact on the acceleration and deceleration of collective action. These changes can come from various sources, for instance international structures, government change at home or changes within the group itself et cetera.
2. Second, *SMT* concentrate on the mobilizing structures for the group in question. The mobilizing structures can vary from formal structures (e.g. political parties) to informal structures (e.g. informal networks) and illegal networks (e.g. terrorist cells). Like-minded people are being recruited through these structures, and new participants are being socialized.

3. The third variable is focused on *cultural framing*. In contrast to structural theories and rational choice theories, cultural issues are taken seriously in *SMT*. Cultural issues are thought of in an ideological-tactical sense (ibid. 116).

When done effectively, issue framing can be done with very few words. In a sense, framing is the advertisement or poster version of how issues get interpreted within a certain ideological context. In the Arab world, Islamists have framed their policy with a few simple words; a common statement is “Islam is the solution” to practically any problem or issue in society. Using framing, potential recruits do not need to understand and grasp the complete ideology of the movements as the leaders do. In the following section I present the *Framing Theory* in more depth.

### 3.2.1 Framing Theory

Social movement theorists have since the 1980’s been interested in ideational factors, including social interaction, culture and meaning (Wiktorowicz 2004a, p. 15). *Framing Theory* is one of the main schools identified in *SMT*. Focus is on the social production and dissemination of meaning, and how individuals come to conceptualize themselves as a collectivity.

The concept of “frame” relies on the work of sociologist Erving Goffman, and refers to an individual’s worldview or “schemata of interpretation”, that offer cognitive tools for making sense of experiences and events in the surrounding environment. Frames consist of values, i.e. notions about right and wrong, and beliefs, i.e. assumptions about the world, attributes of things, and mechanisms of causation. This scheme or frame helps an individual to make sense of and organize his or her experiences and guide his or her action (Snow 1986, p. 464).

For social movements these schemes are designed to mobilize participants and support and are thus important in the production and diffusion of movement interpretations. As social movements are engaged in the social construction of meaning, movements must articulate and spread frameworks of understanding that reverberate with potential participants as well as broader publics to obtain collective action (Wiktorowicz 2004a, p. 15).

The term *framing* refers to the active construction and dissemination of meaning and the success of a social movement in mobilizing resources and gaining supporters (Porta 1992, p. 31). The key to mobilization according to this perspective is whether the movement’s version of “reality” resonates with or can be brought to resonate with the movement’s potential constituency. Some scholars refer to this process as “frame alignment”, which means the emergence of congruence between an individual’s and an organization’s beliefs, values and interests (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2008, p. 6) In some cases the movement or mobilizing agent only need to reach out to a “sentiment pool” that is already sharing the grievance and attribution tendency of the movement, but lacking a means of organizing and expressing these grievances. In other cases, the mobilization



requires that the movement is able to manipulate the values and beliefs of potential constituents (Snow 1986, p. 464).

There are three core framing tasks for social movements;

1. Movements construct frames that identify a situation as a problem in need of repair. This task includes acknowledgment of responsibility and targets of blame.
2. Movements offer solutions to the problems, which includes particular tactics and strategies planned to serve as remedies in order to ameliorate injustices.
3. Movements provide a rationale to motivate support and collective action. Motivational frames are needed in order to convince potential participants to actually engage, and thus transform bystander publics into movement participants (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2008, p. 16).

Islamist movements are profoundly involved in the production of meaning and associated framing processes. These movements are to a large extent driven by issues such as identity and culture; accordingly they are involved in struggles over meaning and values.

*Framing Theory* highlights the *process* of radicalization rather than specific socio-economic background factors or innate personal characteristics. Thus it is able to give an explanation for the wide variety in the actual socioeconomic profiles and life paths of individuals involved in Islamist movements in Europe (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2008, p. 9).

According to *Framing Theory* it is the intersubjective and communicative process of framing a situation or issue, rather than the situation or issue in itself that is the key to understanding radicalization (Porta 1992, p. 17).

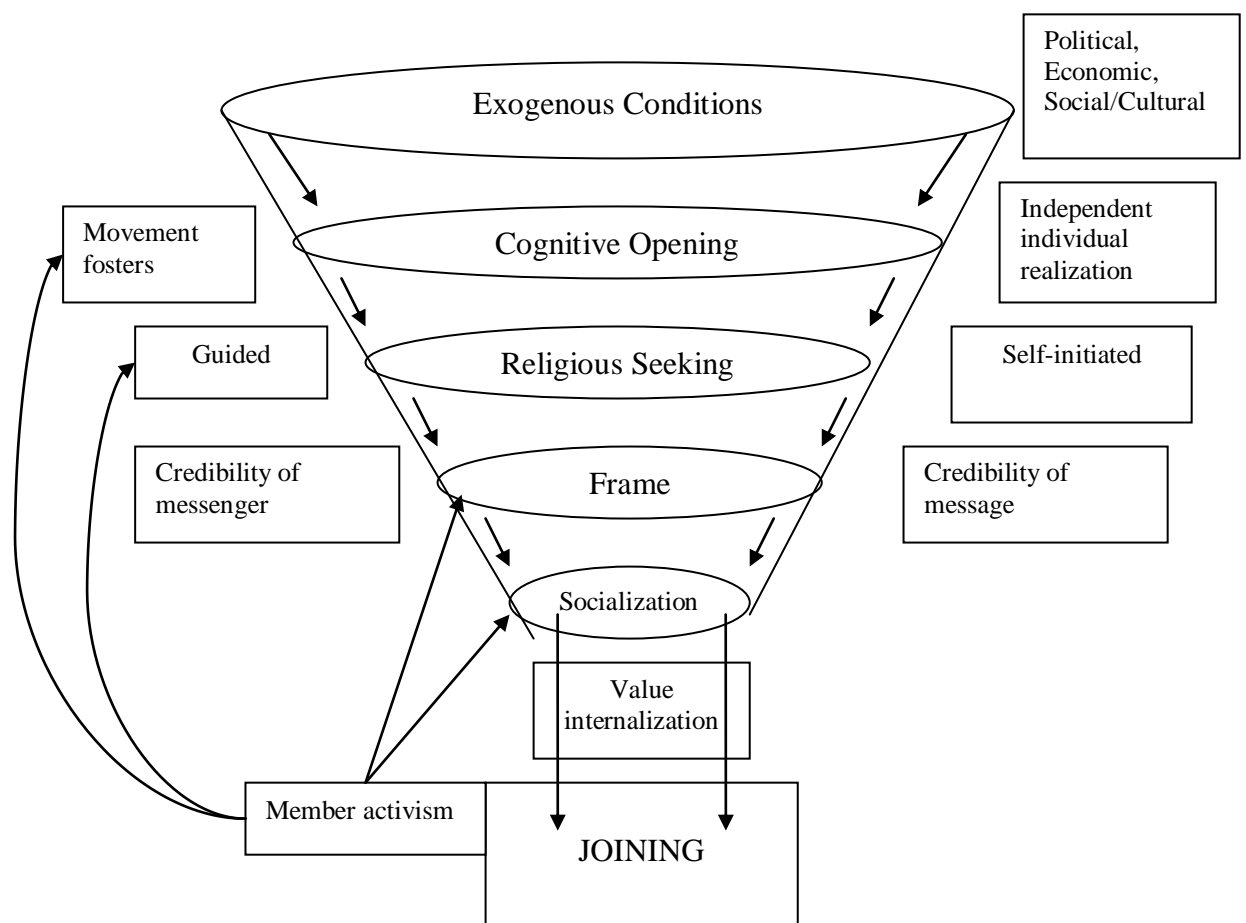
Nevertheless, some scholars argue that *Framing Theory* is not able to give satisfactory answers to questions like why a movement manages to obtain frame alignment with some individuals but not others, and why some individuals defect at an early point while others remain committed to the radicalization or movement. This indicates the need to supplement the theoretical framework with a psychologically and socio-psychologically informed *Theory of Recruitment*. The following chapter will provide this.

### 3.3 Theory of Recruitment

There are several models describing how individuals become radicalized and join radical Islamist groups. Many of these existing models aim at explaining the recruitment and radicalization into violent groups that use violence as a means to further their goals. However, Wiktorowicz (2004b) has developed a model

explaining radicalization processes into non-violent groups. The model below was presented for the first time at a conference at Yale University in 2004. The model is a so called advanced phase-model describing different phases that the individual is going through during the radicalization process. This model, in contrast to most other existing models describing radicalization, focus on the radicalization processes that religious radical individuals is part of while joining a radical religious or religiously inspired movement or sect, that at least officially refrain from the use of violence (Staun 2009, p. 2).

Significant prerequisites for Wiktorowicz’s model is that a) it solely focuses on studies conducted of a relatively large and well organized movement, and b) that this movement is religiously inspired (Wiktorowicz 2004b, p. 8).



The model describes the main phases that members go through while joining the movement al-Muhajiroun<sup>3</sup> in Great Britain.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Muhajiroun is a spin-off movement to Hizb ut-Tahrir in Great Britain.

At the heart of decisions about joining is a process of persuasion. Individuals often experience an extensive socialization process that includes exposure to movement ideas, debate and deliberation, and even experimentation with alternative groups. It is only when the individual is convinced that the group represents the true Islam that he or she is likely to join. Individuals in other words, do not typically wake up with a sudden epiphany that drives them to join a radical Islamic group (Wiktorowicz 2004b). The entry into the radicalization process are supposed to be a set of external factors – political, economic, social/cultural, that brings the individual to a cognitive opening.

Wiktorowicz defines four key processes that enhance the likelihood that a potential joiner will be drawn to a radical Islamic group and eventually persuaded to participate.

1. Cognitive opening

A personal crisis, experienced discrimination or oppression, or encounters with charismatic recruiters that create a “cognitive opening”, where the individual becomes receptive to the possibility of new ideas and worldviews.

2. Religious seeking

The individual goes through a search for new ideas and meaning, channelled by religiosity.

3. Frame alignment

The movement’s message increasingly appears true and “makes sense” to the individual and attracts his or her initial interest. There is a “frame alignment” between an individual’s interpretive scheme and a movement’s message.

4. Socialization

The individual experiences religious lessons and activities that facilitate indoctrination, identity-construction, and value-changes. This final step appears when the affiliate comes to accept the key principles and beliefs of the movement’s message. A more intensive socialization takes place in closed study groups. Finally the member also reaches the conclusion that the movement does not only represent the truth but also that he or she has a personal obligation and responsibility to become active. Group bonding and peer pressure strengthen the commitment of the member.

The first three steps are necessary prior conditions for the fourth (socialization). In other words, if an individual is not open to new ideas, does not encounter the movement message, or rejects the movement message after initial exposure, he or she will not take part in the kinds of movement activities

necessary to fully disseminate the ideology and convince an individual to join (ibid.).

### 3.4 Group Process Approach

Within the field of socio-psychological approaches one of the most promising avenues for research on radicalization is the *Group Process Approach* (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2007, p. 3). The *Group Process Approach* provides an answer to why only a minority of those exposed to the same political, cultural and socio-economic influences turn to radical movements.

The key to explain why only a minority turns to radical movements is that the group process approaches focus on mechanisms, dynamics, stages and processes in small groups through which radical dispositions emerge. This approach do not focus on innate individual characteristics, but rather on how certain social processes can lead “normal” people to do unusual things. They posit that the key to radicalization is to be found in mechanisms such as socialization, bonding, and peer pressure within small groups nested within a wider radical subculture (Ibid. 9). It is these mechanisms that allegedly step by step permit the members to overcome their normal inhibitions.

Group process theories often rely on what Walter Reich has termed “a psychology of rewards” (Reich 1998, p. 271). A group that is ideologically inspired offers the individual a personal role, a clear worldview, and a righteous purpose. It is argued that particularly young people have a strong need for identity and belonging and the membership in a tightly knit group can fulfil these needs. When the individual is once inside the group, processes such as ideological indoctrination, repetitive behaviour and peer pressure creates a proclivity for radicalization. A common group identity gradually displaces the individual identity, as well as individual moral responsibility and thus contributes towards removing normal constraints on behaviour. Isolation further strengthens the in-group bonding and similarly contributes to the demonization of the enemies or “the other” (Levine 1999, pp. 345-346).

In the field of research it is still debated whether group processes and group dynamics alone can turn a “normal” person into joining radical movements or whether it is necessary to study the interaction between group processes and individual predispositions (Victoroff 2005, p. 30). However, if group processes rather than individual characteristics explain radical behaviour, an element of contingency comes into play when explaining which individuals that get involved in radical movements. Marc Sageman (2004), argues that chance encounters might play a decisive role in radicalization. Getting involved in radical movements might be a question of being at the wrong place and meeting the wrong people at the wrong time. In an attempt to acknowledge the potential for chance encounters to strongly influence life paths, psychologist Albert Bandura (1982) has outlined social and personal factors which might decide the potential

for chance encounters. Personal factors such as competencies and interests impact what circles people move in, and existing values and standards impact on susceptibility. Chance encounters might have particularly strong influence when the individual goes through a period of confusion with regard to his or her cultural or religious values (Bandura, 1982, p. 751). According to Bandura, also social factors are likely to influence the strength of the impact of a chance encounter. Factors such as if the new group environment is experienced as rewarding and if the symbolic universe of the group is compelling is factors that have an impact. Moreover, the more closed the group the higher the likelihood of a strong impact on the life path of the newcomer (ibid. 753).

### 3.5 Politics of Identity

“The battle for Europe is larger than the one that religious leaders would have these young Muslims fight. It is a battle over the right of self-definition. The war for Muslim minds around the world may turn on the outcome of this struggle” (Kepel 2004).

According to Fukuyama (2006), modern identity politics springs from a hole in the political theory underlying modern liberal democracy. The radical Islamist ideology, that have motivated many of the terror attacks in Europe and elsewhere the past decade must be seen as a manifestation of modern identity politics rather than an assertion of traditional Muslim culture. This argument has been made very strong by the French scholar Olivier Roy in his book *Globalized Islam – the Search for a New Ummah* (2004). According to Roy, radical Islamism is not rooted in culture, in other words, it is not some kind of spin-off or consequence related to Islam or the cultural system that this religion has shaped. Rather, it is a consequence since Islam has become *detrterritorialized*, in such a way as to throw open the whole question of Muslim identity (Fukuyma 2006, p. 10). In traditional Muslim societies, as in Christian societies, the question if identity does not come up. In a traditional Muslim society a person’s identity is given by the social environment, the near family, and everything from the local imam to the political structure of the state. It is not a matter of personal choice, but rather Islam is a religion that consists of a set of externally determined social rules. Moreover, these rules are well contained in accordance with the traditions, customs and practices (ibid.).

According to Roy (2004), identity becomes problematical when Muslims leave traditional Muslim societies and, for example, immigrate to Europe. The identity as a Muslim is then no longer supported by the surrounding society; on the contrary, there is a strong pressure to conform to the West’s prevailing cultural norms and traditions. Since there is a gap between the person’s inner identity as a member of a Muslim cultural community and the surrounding society, the question of authenticity arises as it would never do in the traditional society. This

results in a constant questioning of imams on for example Islamist web sites, about what is *haram* (prohibited) and what is *hallal* (permitted). This insecurity does not exist in the traditional society since the inner identity and the surrounding society are not at odds with one another in the same way. Roy (2004) argues that radical Islamism and jihadism arise precisely in response to the resulting quest for identity. When a person become a member of a global *Ummah*, defined by adherence to a universal Islamic doctrine, where all local customs and traditions are inexistent, the Muslim identity becomes a mater of inner belief rather than outward conformity to social practice.

Understanding radical Islamism as a form of identity politics helps to explain why it is primarily second- and third generation Muslim immigrants that have turned to neo-fundamentalist movements in Europe. First-generation immigrants have not made a psychological break with the culture of their country of origin, and hence carry traditions with them to the new country. However, in the case of their children and grandchildren, they are often critical and judgmental of their parents' religiosity and traditions, while not fully integrated into the culture of the Western surrounding society. They are stuck between two cultures with which they cannot fully identify, and accordingly they find a strong appeal in the universalist ideology that fundamental Islamist movements promote. They do not longer have to be identified by ethnicity, but as a Muslim which makes them part of a wider global society.

If understanding radical Islamism as a modern phenomenon and a product of identity politics, then two implications follow. First of all radicalization and extremist politics has been seen before among fascists, Bolsheviks, anarchists, members of the Baader-Meinhof gang et cetera. According to e.g. Fritz Stern (1974) modernization and the transition *Gemeinschaft* (often translated to *community*) to *Gesellschaft* (often translated to *society*) represent an alienating process that has been negatively experienced by innumerable individuals in different societies. Fukuyama (2006) argues that it is now the turn of young Muslims to experience this transition.

Ever since the terrorist attacks on September 11, there have been groups trying to show how jihad and suicide bombing have deep Islamic or historical roots. However, it is important to remember that at many times in history Muslim societies were more tolerant than their Christian counterparts. Fukuyama (2006) concludes by stating that it makes no more sense to see contemporary radical Islamism as an inevitable outgrowth of Islam, than to see fascism as an inevitable result of Christian European culture (Fukuyama 2006, p. 12).

### 3.6 Theoretical implications

The previous chapters provided an overview and discussed the most promising theoretical approaches to explaining and understanding the phenomenon of radicalization in Europe.

The *Social Movement Theory (SMT)* investigates why social movements arise and develop by studying political opportunity structures that stimulate both individual and group responses. Framing theory is one of the main schools within *SMT*. *Framing Theory* highlights the process of radicalization rather than specific background factors or personal characteristics.

The question arises, what prevents others, exposed to the same political and ideological influences from joining a Islamist movement. In order to study this I lean on the *Group Process Approach* and *Theory of Recruitment*.

The main idea in the *Politics of Identity* is the concept of *deterritorialization*, which according to Roy (2004) throws open the whole question of Muslim identity. The identity as a Muslim is no longer supported by the surrounding society, which in combination with strong pressure to conform to the West's prevailing norms and traditions can cause insecurity since the inner identity and the surrounding society are constantly at odds. This helps understand why primarily second- and third generation immigrants have turned to neo-fundamentalist movements in Europe.

## 4 Neo-fundamentalism in Europe

On this level of analysis I study, on a structural level, causal mechanisms that may affect neo-fundamentalism in post-millennium Europe. According to Wiktorowicz (2004b) there are certain exogenous conditions; structural political, economic and cultural strains and crises, which produce psychological distress and encourage individuals to participate in collective action. These factors alone can not explain radicalization, but they constitute preconditions for a climate in society that is conducive to radicalism. The exogenous preconditions can help explain how frustration and discontent can emerge among individuals and how experiences of discrimination, marginalisation and structural strains can contribute to the neo-fundamentalist radicalization in Europe.

The following question guide the study on the first level of analysis:

- *What are the exogenous preconditional and precipitant factors of contemporary neo-fundamentalism in Europe?*

I study structural conditions in Europe in order to explore motivational factors and causal mechanisms contributing to neo-fundamentalist radicalization.

Exogenous factors do not have a *direct* effect of people's behaviour, it is the social contexts and the individuals relation to others that influence human behaviour. Nevertheless the external factors have an effect on the social context and consequently an indirect effect on people's behaviour.

I have chosen a dialectical approach concerning structure and agency, more precisely the strategic-relational approach. Subsequently I view structure (exogenous factors) and agency as interacting. The exogenous factors create conditions that the actors try to overcome by developing strategies.

I start by presenting political preconditions and precipitant factors, followed by cultural preconditions and precipitant factors. I will not, however, study economic factors since I do not see a causal relationship in this case. There is much research pointing against the fact that economic deprivation can be linked with radicalization, and according to Sageman (2004) and Bakker (2006) radical Islamists are distributed across all socio-economic classes, which denies a causal relationship of an economic kind.



## 4.1 Political preconditions

### 4.1.1 Poor integration

Poor integration is often mentioned as one of the most prominent causal factors of radicalization (Staun 2009, p. 31). In 2006 the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) published a study on discrimination of Muslims living in the European Union<sup>4</sup>. The study is based on in-depth interviews with members of Muslim communities in ten member states. The interviews indicate that Islamophobia, discrimination and social marginalisation have a primary role in generating disaffection and feelings of alienation (EUMC 2006a, p. 3). In general, the respondents in the EUMC-report felt that the needs of Muslims are not a priority for policy makers and public authorities. Many respondents also feel that Muslims are generally underrepresented in public institutions and organisations, which accordingly hinders identifications with such institutions (ibid, p. 5). This poor integration of Muslim communities in Western societies implies that groups of people are excluded from active participation in the public domain (TTSRL 2008, p. 19). Scholars of *SMT* argue that feelings of belonging are one of the most significant motivations for social interaction. According to *SMT* collective political mobilization and sometimes violence occur when people feel deprived of economic, social or cultural benefits to which they feel entitled (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2008, p. 4).

In the report by EUMC it is stated that although differences in wages, type of employment and unemployment rate of migrants indicate persistent exclusion, disadvantage and discrimination, it would be misleading to attribute this only to religious or cultural differences. There is a variety of interrelated factors such as educational and professional qualifications, language skills, structural changes in the economy and the importance of informal networks that impact the performances of migrant groups (EUMC 2006a, p. 44). Nevertheless, one can find evidence that religious belonging does play a role in employment discrimination. For instance, the BBC's Radio Five Live programme carried out an exercise where 50 firms received applications from fictitious candidates with names strongly indicating white British, African or Muslim background. The white applicants were more likely (25 %) than the black (13 %) to be asked for an interview, but the Muslim applicants were the least likely (9 %) to be asked for interview (EUMC 2006a: 44). Similar findings have been made in other investigations. The study *Evidence of Ethnic Discrimination in the Swedish Labour Market Using Experimental Data* from Växjö University presents further evidence of ethnical discrimination in the recruitment process. Applications with identical skills were randomly assigned Middle-Eastern or Swedish-sounding names, and applications with a Swedish name received fifty percent more call-backs for an interview (Carlsson and Rooth 2007, p. 717).

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<sup>4</sup> EUMC. 2006a. *Muslims in the European Union – discrimination and Islamophobia*.

In most member states Muslims have low employment rates, and it can not only be explained by issues linked to human capital (language skills, educational and professional qualifications et cetera). There is a large body of evidence that demonstrates the persistent scale and dimension of discrimination in employment (TTRSL 2008, p. 48). Data further shows that not all migrants are equally exposed to racism and discrimination in employment. Muslims appear to be particularly affected (ibid.). This discrimination results in societal frustration and a sense of marginalization. The poor situation in the labour market is a particular cause for concern since unemployment is a key factor affecting integration (EUMC 2006a, p. 18).

Proponents of *SMT* agree that Islamic activism is a response to the psychological distress produced by these conditions. Research has indicated that many recruits have a high level of education and often migrate to urban areas in search of employment opportunities. These recruits are cut off from their rural roots and family, live in a new urban environment with different values, and often face blocked social mobility and discrimination. They suffer a sense of social alienation that renders them vulnerable to the Islamist message (Wiktorowicz 2004, p. 7). This is also pointed out in the interview with Arben (interview III), branch head of two community youth centres. He argues that it is the frustration that develops when a person do not get a job or feel as part of society that can make people susceptible to the Islamist message. That is, he says, why so called home-grown extremism is becoming more and more common in Europe.

Regarding residential segregation there is no official or research based data that specifically target Muslims, however according to the EUMC-report common themes emerge from reviving the existing evidence related to country of origin (EUMC 2006a, p. 54). Migrants, among them many Muslims, do generally suffer higher levels of homelessness, poorer quality of housing conditions, poorer residential neighbourhoods, significantly higher levels of overcrowding and exploitation through higher comparative rents or purchase prices (ibid.).

However, it is only a minority of those exposed to the same political, economic and social influences that become radicalized. This is a clear example of the radicalization process according to the advanced phase model by Wiktorowicz. The exogenous conditions does not necessarily result in radicalization, they serve only as preconditions. In addition the cognitive opening also has to be there in order for a person to go into the process of radicalization.

#### 4.1.2 Political relations

Political events and a state's foreign policy are often thought to nurture Islamic fundamentalism both at a local and global level (TTRSL 2006, p. 20).

A study from 2005 (FOSIS 2005) of Muslim students found that 83% were unhappy with British foreign policy, primarily in Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Afghanistan and the alliance with the U.S. This is all areas in which Muslims are perceived to be victims of Western aggression and persecution. An opinion poll

conducted for BBC in Great Britain showed that the majority of British Muslims feel that the war on terror is actually a war on Islam (BBC News 2002).

This is also confirmed by Muhammad Kaan (interview IV), who argues that political events like the bombings of WTC on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 and the following war on terrorism, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, the rise of right-wing parties and their rhetoric against Muslims are key factors that affect the radicalization among young Muslims. These are subjects that are discussed and heavily used in neo-fundamentalist groups in order to evoke hatred towards the West. According to Arben, Islamist groups deliberately talk a lot about world politics, and how Muslims all over the world are suffering, since they know that this is an effective way of recruiting young Muslims.

Hamid (2007) argues that radicalization has seen an upsurge as a consequence of the ongoing “war on terror” and increased repression of Muslims around the world. He states that influential think-tanks like Chatham House and the Oxford Research Group, among others, have all agreed on the link between US-led military operations and the increase in terrorist attacks (Hamid in Abbas 2007, p. 155). Generally, conflicts in the Middle East and the diplomatic position of Western governments are believed to contribute to radicalization (Staun 2009, p. 32).

The ethnical backgrounds of the leaders in HT generally have an impact on what conflicts they focus on and consequently on the material that is produced in the respective countries.

The spokesperson for the British unit of HT has a Pakistani background, and the supervisor is of Indian origin. In Denmark, both the spokesperson and the supervisor are of Palestinian origin. The different ethnical backgrounds affect the focus of discussions; and consequently in Great Britain much focus is put on the conflict in Kashmir and other conflicts closer to the Indian subcontinent, whereas in Denmark almost all focus is put on the conflict between Israel and Palestine. (Gröndahl et al 2003, p. 118).

An additional political factor that may affect Islamist radicalization in Europe is the rise of radical right-wing parties. It is argued that xenophobia and popular fears of Islam is what has given rise to these parties in recent years (Savage 2004, p. 35). According to Savage, the advances of radical right-wing parties (e.g. Belgium’s Flemish Bloc, Denmark’s People’s Party, the British National Party and the French Front National) have also led to right-leaning adjustments in the political priorities of mainstream parties. In a number of cases, European coalition or minority governments depend on the support of right-wing parties with pronounced anti-Muslim views to remain in office (ibid. p. 36). This shift is most evident in the actions to restrict immigration, an increased emphasis on national interests in EU policy debates, and recent moves as for instance those in Germany and France to ban the wearing of the Muslim headscarf in public schools, and in the Netherlands to expel up to 26 000 asylum seekers (ibid.).

To date Muslims in Europe have not engaged broadly in European party politics, and also political activism among Muslims has been rather limited (ibid. p. 38). According to SMT, the structural context is what is creating the conditions necessary for collective action. In other words, movement behaviour is shaped by

the broader political context (Wiktorowicz 2004, p. 39). This correlates with the relation between structure and agency called strategic-relational approach. The structural context in Europe is affected by actors, and as the dialectical approach suggest, the actors are in turn affected by the structural context and creates new strategies to overcome their disadvantages. Collective action and social movements are developing as a response to the structural context in Europe, and as a negative spiral this simultaneously fuels the stigmatization and marginalization of Europe's Muslims.

### 4.1.3 Precipitant factors

The International Institute of Strategic Studies (2004) in its *Strategic Survey* of 2003/2004 reported that the Iraq conflict had resulted in an acceleration of recruitment with up to 1000 foreign jihadists having infiltrated Iraq. This thesis is not about violent radicalism, but the numbers can highlight the role of political events as a catalyst for radicalism.

Trigger events and catalysts at the institutional level that can intensify a radicalization process are e.g. the malpractices at Guantanamo bay, and the abuse and torture of Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad.

## 4.2 Cultural preconditions

### 4.2.1 The media

Research shows that Muslims in Europe are frequently confronted with discrimination and stigmatization on account of their religion. They are victims of negative stereotyping and prejudicial attitudes, which have increased since 9/11 2001 (e.g. TTSRL 2008, CEPS 2007). Islam is frequently presented as a threat and a danger, or a form of subversion (CEPS 2007, p. 111).

In France, which has more Muslim citizens than any other European country, research has shown that generally the French media depict Islam as a threat to the laws of the Republic, to secularism, to freedom of expression, to women's rights, and because of the terrorism threat with which it is often associated, to the safety of the country or the West as a whole (ibid. 112). This is a clear indication that Islam is often incorrectly connected with Islamism. Despite some national differences, the mainstream media are acting rather similarly in Europe, often inaccurately associating Islam with Islamism, and siding occasionally against Islam and Muslims (ibid. 114).

In accordance with the *Group Process Approach* people can experience emotions in behalf of their in-group even if they are not personally involved. Stigmatization and demonization in the media consequently affects all those who identify with the group concerned. The stronger a person relates to the in-group

the stronger the reaction when members of this group are offended. Threats to a valued in-group usually lead to favouritism of the in-group and a rejection of out-groups (Staun 2009, p. 41). The empathy for fellow Muslims inspires many potential radical Islamists with a sense of duty and justice, which find effective expression in radical Islamist movements. Also the stigmatization in the media acts in favour of Islamist movements. According to Mohammad Kaan, Islamist movements readily link the negative and stigmatizing media representation of Muslims and Islam to the idea that Muslims are not welcome in the West. These movements enthusiastically speak of the Clash of Civilizations, and build many of their arguments on this concept. Negative and stigmatizing media images do nothing but fuel their arguments. Following the SMT theorists this is a common tactic in *Framing Theory*. The appeal of a *frame* derives from its resonance with the life experiences of the individual, and the credibility and effectiveness of the persons articulating and transmitting the frame. Individuals that feel targeted by the media representation receive explanations resonating with their experiences and feelings. Islamist movements are profoundly involved in the creation of meaning, as they convince potential participants to engage.

Journalistic practices of gathering and selecting news are limited by organisational constraints. Papers are dependent on large selling numbers, and thus have to produce sensational news in order to sell. This affects the selection of news and stories, often in a way that tends to put negative attention on Islam and Muslims. This, then, is just what the Islamist movements in Europe need in order to play along their framing strategy and fuel their explanations. Thus, the media and the Islamist movements are involved, so to speak, in a symbiosis which creates nothing but stereotypes, stigmatization and disintegration.

#### 4.2.2 The role of the Internet

Increasing attention is being paid to the role that the Internet has in the radicalization of young Muslims. Internet offers opportunities for contact between people from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. People who have never met can get connected through a virtual environment of shared attitudes and ideology. For radical movements the Internet offers beneficial characteristics as anonymity of communication, the possibility to access a very large audience, and possibilities to spread texts and videos. It offers a platform for young identity-seeking Muslims to express their grievances and obtain membership in a social group. According to the EUMC “the anonymity of the web facilitates communication on sensitive issues without exposure and thus to a certain degree neutralizes pressure from governments. The Internet has provided young Muslims, particularly in Europe, with a virtual community that serves primarily to ease the emotional strain on Muslim immigrants experiencing the difficulties of adapting to a new environment and feeling the need to maintain their religious identity” (EUMC 2006a, p. 28). According to Abu (interview II) the Internet is increasingly serving as educational platform for young Muslims in Diasporas. TV and Internet serve as educational facilities as there is a lack of educated imams in

many European countries. There are many imams in the Middle East that hold lectures for small groups over the Internet. These imams are mainly from Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and according to Abu this is what makes it dangerous. He argues that an imam has to be very acquainted with the respective countries psycho-social mentality; “It goes very wrong when an imam from Yemen teaches a Muslim in Sweden how to understand the Koran or gives advice concerning everyday issues”. He argues that an imam from Yemen or Saudi Arabia cannot give advice concerning questions related to European societies. Imams have to know the context as well as the Koran. “Imams working in Europe have to be educated here. In order to give the best possible advice he has to know the context. An imam has to know three things; Islam and the Koran, the psycho-social mentality or the context, and education. It is not enough to know the Koran by heart. You have to be able to relate it to the context in which you live. This is why “Internet-imams” are so dangerous” (interview with Abu).

Neumann (2009) states in his book *Old and New Terrorism* that the process of radicalization and recruitment no longer have to take place in a real-world group context. Propaganda materials are available online, almost every Islamist organization have a homepage, and radicalized individuals can find each other without running the risk of being exposed to the authorities (Neumann 2009, p. 63).

#### 4.2.3 Precipitant factors

There are several cultural factors that possibly have an effect on the Islamist radicalization in post-millennium Europe. Examples of cultural events that have served as provocation and catalyst are the Danish Mohammed-cartoon affair, as well as the release of the anti-Islam film “Fitna” in the Netherlands.

### 4.3 Chapter summary

A report from the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) from 2006 reveals that “it is evident that Muslims often experience various levels of discrimination and marginalization in employment, education and housing, and are also victims of negative stereotyping and prejudicial attitudes” (EUMC 2006, p. 110). This poses a serious threat to the integration of Muslims in Europe.

Perceived discrimination is compelling many second- and third generation Muslims to embrace Islam as their symbol of identity. This discrimination also contributes to the isolation in the in-group and the rejection of out-groups.

In addition to preconditional factors on a structural level, there are also a set of precipitant factors that function as trigger factors which can accelerate an ongoing radicalization process.

## 5 The neo-fundamentalist endorsement

In this chapter I study in which social environments the neo-fundamentalist movements have their largest popular support.

The operational question guiding my research on this level is the following:

- *What segments of society are most vulnerable to the Islamist message, and why?*

The members of neo-fundamentalist movements are all Muslims. Being a Muslim is a prerequisite for being a member of a neo-fundamentalist movement, but I want to make a few general assertions in order to dispel popular untruths. One prevailing argument in the Islamist debate as well as the terrorism debate is the trouble with Islam. To single out a major religion as a single explanatory model reflects uninformed and ignorant prejudice and lack of imagination. As mentioned before, it is of utmost importance to differentiate between the religion Islam and the ideology Islamism.

Most neo-fundamentalist movements are very disinclined to submit information about their members and sympathisers, therefore research has to rely on information that has leaked to the press and reports from former members. There is great diversity of the types of individuals who are involved in Islamic fundamentalism in Europe, which makes it an extremely difficult task to catalog them. However, even though they come from many different social, educational and professional backgrounds it is possible to single out some groups, according to their relation to Europe and to Islamist fundamentalism, with a higher representation than others (Vidino 2006, p. 24).

All radical Islamists follow their own individual radicalization process depending on their specific background and personal history (Staun 2009, p. 20). The process of radicalization is individual in character and depends on who the individual interacts with and when, previous experiences and not least chance encounters. Therefore the level of analysis should be on the individual level, and not on the level of large social groups. Nevertheless the question still arises regarding what social groups are most susceptible to radicalization tendencies and neo-fundamentalist ideas.

It is possible to discern three main categories; second-generation immigrants, Muslim converts, and young well-educated Muslims with a background as refugee or immigrant (Abbas 2007, p. 194).



## 5.1 Second-generation immigrants

The reason why second-generation immigrants would be susceptible to Islamist ideas is complex. According to Walter Laquer (2004) these individuals are often seemingly well-integrated in society. However a confused mindset is a mandatory first step towards joining a neo-fundamentalist movement.

Kepel (2004) argues that the second-generation immigrants that become attracted to Islamist ideas are disillusioned with a society that has excluded and marginalized them, and often feel that they get empty promises from decision makers and politicians. They cannot fully identify with the Islam and Muslim traditions of their parents, as their approach to the religion does not incorporate day-to-day challenges of growing up in a multicultural society. Further, they reject their parents' tendency to seek services from imams and "imported" traditions from their countries of origin. According to Mandaville (2007) young Muslims interpreted their parents' religious practice as one that tried to pretend they were still living in Pakistan, Algeria or Turkey, instead of recognizing that their new circumstances required a new form of religious imagination (Mandaville 2007, p. 294). According to senior researcher Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen at the Danish Secret Service, PET, it is not age, ethnic belonging nor social position in society that determines whether a person is in the danger-zone of being recruited to a radical Islamist movement. Dalgaard-Nielsen argues that it has to do with a search for identity. This search for identity can be especially acute in groups with immigrant background. The second- and third generation immigrants can be integrated to the extent that they do not feel a sense of belonging to their parents' country of origin, but at the same time they do not feel fully accepted in their own home-country (Information 2007-09-05).

Often, the younger generation turns away from religion all together and becomes largely secular. An important point to notice is that because of this secularization not all of those identified as European Muslims necessarily identify primarily or even strongly with Islam. Sometimes they are "Muslim" in the sense of having an ethno-national background from a Muslim country. When the majority society view these individuals through the lens of Islam or project Islam onto them it can turn out quite problematical (ibid.).

The second-generation immigrants are born in Europe and consider Europe their home, but still they are being marginalized and stigmatized by the majority society (Gröndal et. al. 2003, p. 31). They are looking for an identity and value the group identity and the distinct manner of living that a neo-fundamentalist movement represents.

Many of the young individuals with a Muslim background know very little about Islam and religious traditions before they come in contact with a neo-fundamentalist movement (ibid.). However, identity-seeking individuals are particularly likely to be appealed by radical groups and ideologies that provide an identity as well as behavioural guidelines. Second-generation immigrants that do not feel completely accepted by their parents' generation and cannot identify with their religious practices and traditions, or with their non-immigrant peers, often

turn to strong identification with the Ummah. The stronger the need to belong is, the more these individuals will be susceptible to peer pressure in order to associate with the group (TTSRL 2008, p. 37). According to the *Group Process Approach*, social processes such as socialization, bonding and peer pressure can lead “normal” people to do extraordinary things. For identity-seeking second-generation immigrants the urge to belong to a social group subsequently creates incentives to adapt to radical attitudes and opinions of others. Consequently, the need to belong may drive these young identity-seeking individuals into the arms of potential recruits and radical movements.

The movement offers the individual a sense of belonging, purpose, pride and worth. There is also the impact of social re-enforcers such as bonding and peer pressure within the group. Particularly young people, it is argued within the *Group Process Approach*, experience a strong need for identity and belonging; needs which membership in a tightly knit group can fill (Levine 1999, p. 17).

According to Roy (2004) radical Islamism is a consequence as Islam has become de-territorialized. The de-territorialisation throw open the whole question of Muslim identity. In traditional Muslim societies the question of identity does not come up, as a person’s identity is given by the social environment, the family and the political structure of the state. It is not a matter of personal choice as it is for second-generation immigrants living in the West. Within the *Politics of Identity* scholars argue that identity becomes problematical when it is no longer supported by the surrounding society. In the West there is a strong pressure to conform to prevailing norms and traditions. *Politics of Identity* can help understand why primarily second-generation Muslim immigrants turn to radical Islamism in Europe. These individuals are stuck between two cultures with which they cannot fully identify, which leaves them in limbo (Awan 2008, p. 15). The lack of identification with both majority and minority culture, as a result of being unable or unwilling to fulfil either group’s normative expectations, in combination with a strong need to belong makes the Islamist idea of the Ummah particularly appealing.

According to Timothy M. Savage (2004), Muslims in Europe identify increasingly first with Islam rather than with either their family’s country of origin or the European country in which they reside. This phenomenon is significantly more pronounced among younger Muslims (Savage 2004, p. 30). Some ethnic barriers between Muslims are beginning to lose their significance, and again especially among the young population. This can be explained by an emerging cohort of religious leaders who are not financed or sponsored by individual Muslim states, that has the vernacular, and who address the concerns of young European Muslims (ibid.).

The current generation of Muslims in Europe is adapting to aspects of contemporary European society at a faster rate than the first immigrants of Muslims did. Younger Muslims are adopting attributes of European societies in which they were born and raised, yet generally they do not feel part of the larger society. Even though they may be second- or third-generation citizens, they are often not viewed as fellow citizens by the general public but are still identified as foreigners and immigrants instead (ibid.). For these young Muslims, the concept

of the Ummah is appealing, just because it removes the ethnic barriers, and gathers all Muslims regardless of age, ethnicity or country of residence. The identity one has in the Ummah is that of a Muslim and nothing else, which can be a relief for young European Muslims that do not feel a sense of belonging either in the home-country of their parents or in Europe. They suddenly become part of a great communion and fellowship, and all Muslims become their brothers and sisters, which in turn creates a strong sense of group solidarity and group identification.

Similarly, identity is not a static construction, but can be defined at different levels of abstraction depending on different circumstances. Sometimes it may be in terms of individual uniqueness while at others in terms of group membership. The importance of a communal identity may come up in times of perceived group crisis, brought about by events such as the Iraq war, the Palestinian Intifada, and the war on terrorism. In these instances individuals become more inclined to reconsider what religion and religious identity really means to them (ibid.).

The absence of an appealing cultural paradigm from either the majority or minority group, makes the individual resort to a cultural entrenchment that assumes “a religious hue by default” (Awan 2008, p. 15), and thus turn religion from religion per se into an anchor of identity (ibid.).

## 5.2 Converts

The number and role of converts in Islamist organizations have been growing since the 1990s, and it is far from a marginal phenomenon (Roy 2004, p. 317). These are young individuals with an ethnic European background that have converted to Islam and wish to live a consistent Islamic life (Gröndal et.al. 2003, p. 31). As signalled by the relatively small proportion of Muslims that is potentially appealed to radical ideologies, it is only Muslims for whom being a Muslim is of strong emotional significance to the self-concept that are likely to be drawn to radicalism when they see the fellow Muslims being threatened (TTSRL 2008, p. 37). Converts that join HT often get involved with the movement shortly after their conversion. Some of the converts in HT put especially great emphasis on the feeling of solidarity and communion, as a support in their daily life, while others put more emphasis on the strong political elements in HT’s ideology and activities (Gröndal et.al. 2003, p. 31).

It is generally known that converts are often feeling alone and abandoned after their conversion<sup>5</sup>, until they create a new circle of friends and acquaintances with similar religious interpretation of life. Disillusioned with mainstream society these marginalized and isolated young men are attracted to the sense of community that Islam offers. According to the *Group Process Approach* people define themselves in terms of group membership rather than in terms of self. It is the social identity

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<sup>5</sup> See the interview with Mohammad Kaan.

that people derive from the group they belong to that allows them to differentiate between their own group, the in-group, and other groups, referred to as out-groups. It is argued that these group processes and group dynamics lies at the heart of Islamist radicalization and the collective action it produces. Converts match patterns similar to second generation immigrants in many aspects. The search for an identity that they cannot find in the surrounding society and the strong need to belong are common denominators.

Those who adopt mainstream Islam find comfort in its teachings, while those who adopt a radical form of Islam find a way to channel their anger into a structured movement that is, in their view, fulfilling God's will (Vidino 2006, p. 25). Paul Weller, professor of interreligious studies at Derby University, explains this phenomenon with *Politics of Identity*: "There is a clear rise in the politics of identity. Young white men who join Islam might be feeling out of place from modern life. So you find that when they join a religion like Islam they have an unbending view." (*Observer* 2002-02-24).

According to Abu, the imam that I interviewed, it is more likely that young individuals from a non-Islamic environment radicalize after their conversion than individuals being born in Muslim environment. The reason for this is that individuals from a non-Islamic environment are not as familiar with Islam and Muslim traditions, and are not used to interpreting the Koran. This makes them more prone to accept explanations and interpretations from, what Abu (interview II) calls "Internet-imams", for instance.

### 5.3 Highly educated refugees and immigrants

The third type of sympathisers is usually young well educated Muslims with a background as refugee or immigrant. They are typically either university students or have a well-paid job in for example the IT-business. They are also well integrated, on the surface. However, they commonly feel that the West are based on shallow and superficial values, and see it as their responsibility to "save" other Muslims from this shallow way of living (Gröndal et. al. 2003, p. 32). These kind of sympathisers are at the moment quite few, but they have great influence in the movements. One example of this is the Danish leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir, Fadi Abdullatif. He is currently working in an IT-firm and has a degree in social sciences from Roskilde University in Denmark.

Many Islamist movements have been very active at university campuses, especially in Great Britain. Hizb ut-Tahrir in Great Britain recruited many of their members at universities, and is now banned from British campuses. At almost every British university there is an Islamic Society (usually called ISOC) where practising Muslim students seeking soul-mates gravitate. Britain's Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) was created 1962, and its leadership has often had some ideological overlap with the Egyptian-based Muslim Brotherhood and/or Jamaat e-Islami (The Pakistan Islamist Party). This does not imply

sympathy for terrorism, but it can imply adherence to political Islam or neo-fundamentalism (The Economist, 2010-01-07).

Further, I want to refer back to what is said in chapter 4.1.1. in this thesis, concerning the generally poor integration of Muslims in the labour market. Being constantly discriminated and marginalised may result in a crisis or as Wiktorowicz (2004b) label it, a cognitive opening, which makes a person more vulnerable to the Islamist message.

## 5.4 Chapter summary

It is possible to identify three main groups among the neo-fundamentalist endorsement; second-generation immigrants, converts and highly educated immigrants or refugees. Young people with an immigrant background often see their membership in a neo-fundamentalist movement as a revolt against their parents, often more, ethnically based activities and traditions. For disentangled youth it is important that the Islamist movement has a universal message, irrespective of nationality.

The second-generation immigrants are born in Europe and consider Europe their home, but still they are being marginalized and stigmatized by the majority society (Gröndal et. al. 2003, p. 31). They are looking for an identity and value the group identity and the distinct manner of living that a neo-fundamentalist movement represents.

Converts often put great emphasis on the feeling of solidarity and communion, as a support in their daily life, which a neo-fundamentalist movement offers.

Islamist movements have been active on university campuses especially in Great Britain, which have resulted in many highly-educated members in these movements. Also, immigrants and refugees with high education facing structural discrimination in the labour market may result in a cognitive opening, which makes a person more susceptible to the Islamist message.

## 6 Case study of Mohammad Kaan

On this most concrete level of analysis, I study the causal and motivational factors of radicalization on an individual level as well as the actual recruitment process of a former member of Hizb ut-Tahrir, Mohammad Kaan. The operational questions guiding my research at this level are the following:

- *What are the characteristics of individuals drawn into these movements?*
- *Which psychological and social circumstances make people susceptible to the ideas of Islamism?*
- *What makes some people susceptible to the radical Islamist messages and some resistant?*
- *How does a person become radicalized?*

I start this chapter with a brief introduction and presentation of the interviewee Mohammad Kaan. After that I answer the questions by analyzing the interview with relevant theories.

Mohammad Kaan (born Kristian<sup>6</sup> Kaan) who is now 34 years old was born in Denmark by Danish parents in 1975. He grew up in a suburb of Copenhagen called Valby. His childhood was dominated by a Danish middleclass lifestyle, school and football practice. His parents were not religious and religion was never a central part of his life as a child or young adult. However he had some friends with Muslim background, and got a good impression of Islam through them. Among the Muslim families he knew, he noticed a community spirit and a unity which he had not experienced anywhere else.

When Mohammad was 18 years old he met a Turkish young woman with Muslim background. At that point in his life he, like many youngsters, was developing his identity as a young adult and felt a need for some sort of stability and security in life. He became attracted to the stability that Islam provided and the binary system of right and wrong that it stood for. Consequently Islam becomes the stability he seeks and it gives him guidance in life and also a chance to get to know himself better. To be able to marry the young woman, Kristian decides to convert to Islam and consequently takes the Muslim name Mohammad. From the age of 18 to 23 he was a moderate Muslim practicing his religion in private, just like the majority of Muslims in the world today. After some years as a private practicing Muslim his life changes dramatically as he meet a member from Hizb ut-Tahrir.

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<sup>6</sup> Mohammad and Kristian are feign names in order to protect the anonymity of the interviewee.

In the following subchapters I explore the causes and motivational factors for Mohammad's radicalization and the recruitment process that he went through. The subchapters are named after the different stages in Wiktorowicz's model of recruitment, as I think this is a suitable division. I illustrate certain passages by citing Mohammad from the interview (quotes in italics).

## 6.1 Exogenous conditions and cognitive opening

During the first five years as a Muslim Mohammad experienced negative attitudes and stigmatization that he had never experienced before and never expected. As an ethnic Dane he was used to feel like a part of society and treated like anyone else, not being alienated and looked at with suspicion. According to Mohammad it all felt very surreal and it eventually triggered an identity crisis.

*When my name was Kristian I was automatically and naturally included in society. I was used to that and I had not thought about the fact that there might be other reactions when I was identified as a Muslim. Suddenly I felt that people kept a distance to me and looked at me differently. These reactions cumulated inside me during these five years and I started to develop negative feelings towards these reactions. After five years in this environment and with experiences of the Danish majority culture versus the Muslim minority culture I felt that I could not handle it anymore. That was around the time when I met Hizb ut-Tahrir. At that time I was an easy target and I easily accepted their arguments when they said that the only reason we do not feel part of this society is because we are Muslims... and of course I accepted it, it was the exact things I had experienced after converting to Islam.*

Within the *Group Process Approach* Marc Sageman (2004) argues that chance encounters might play a decisive role in recruitment. Further, Albert Bandura (1982) argues that chance encounters have a stronger influence when the individual goes through a period of confusion with regard to his or her cultural or religious values. Mohammad's case fits well into what Sageman means when he argues that getting involved in radical movements might be a question of being at the wrong place at the wrong time. Mohammad's recruitment process was initiated by an old friend that he met just at the "right time". Had he not met his old friend who himself had become radicalized through HT, he might not get involved in a radical movement at all. He met his friend after being exposed to stigmatization and discrimination; he was in a state of disillusionment and confusion and was therefore an easy target. The symbolic universe of HT seemed compelling and the explanations they gave him seemed accurate, which according

to Bandura strengthens the impact of the chance encounters (Bandura 1982, p. 751).

The identity crisis prompted him to “really think” about his life and question his identity as a Muslim and a Dane. Mohammad’s experiences of stigmatization and discrimination can according to *Theory of Recruitment* be classified as social, cultural and personal exogenous conditions. These exogenous conditions and the identity crisis he went through when experiencing this led him to a cognitive opening as he reassessed his beliefs and identity and opened to the possibility of new ways of thinking. He becomes susceptible to the views and ideas of HT and accepts their explanations. According to Wiktorowicz (2004b, p. 7), the cognitive opening is the first step towards radicalization.

Mohammad was a very religious person and thought about his identity in terms of religion. The identity crisis that the exogenous conditions trigger is crucial for HT recruitment, since it creates a new openness to socialization while pushing forward a re-evaluation in terms of Islam rather than other possible ideologies. HT tries to attract potential members by offering an identity of empowerment as part of the Ummah, in the context of stigmatization and discrimination. The leader of the neo-fundamentalist movement Al-Muhajiroun explains the role of the movement when the potential member experiences this cognitive opening:

*Here is my role. [I say] you belong to a very great nation, Islam. You belong to the history of civilization; 1300 years of a ruling Islamic system...If there is no racism in the west there is no conflict of identity. People when they suffer in the west, it makes them think. If there is no discrimination or racism, I think it would be very difficult for us. (Interview with Omar al-Bakri Mohammed in Wiktorowicz 2004b, p. 16).*

Obviously, these movements thrive on the dichotomy between Us and Them and the discrimination that many Muslims experience in the west. The greater the polarization between Us and Them, the poorer the integration of Muslims in Europe, and the more discrimination and marginalization of Muslims in Europe the better the circumstances for movements like HT. They actively oppose integration and democracy (interview with Mohammad Kaan).

The movement offers a new sense of self and an identity and pride tied to Islam instead of ethnicity. According to HT you have to problematize your identities. You can not be a Muslim and define yourself by your ethnic identity at the same time. The identity of a Muslim shall rest in Islam and not in ethnicity, in other words you shall not connect to a country or nationality but to Islam. This suddenly makes the individual feel linked to a huge group of people and a great communion (interview with Mohammad Kaan).

Within the *Politics of Identity* Olivier Roy (2004) argues that Islamism develop in response to the quest for identity that often arise when Muslims leave Muslim societies and immigrate to the West. The identity as a Muslim is no longer supported by the surrounding society and there is also a strong pressure to



conform to the West's prevailing cultural norms and traditions. Second- and third generation immigrants as well as converts might feel that they are stuck between two cultures with which they cannot fully identify, and accordingly feel a strong appeal in the Islamist ideology and the idea of the global Ummah. HT uses this when recruiting new members, and tell them that their identity shall not rest in a nationality or ethnicity, but solely in being a Muslim. Marginalized individuals and especially young people trying to find an identity and feel a strong need to belong are susceptible to this message about the global Ummah (interview with Mohammad Kaan). Mohammad describes it like this:

*We all thirsted for an identity, but we were in the middle of no-man's-land. This is exactly what HT takes advantage of when they recruit new members. The party presented us with a whole package consisting of belief, a political conviction and a strong social communion, which we gladly accepted. In HT we could find the answers we were looking for. There was no question that the Koran couldn't answer.*

HT takes advantage of the alienation and search for an identity that these young people struggle with. According to Olivier Roy (2003) neo-fundamentalism is particularly appealing to alienated youth because it turns their cultural alienation into a justification for forging a universal Islam stripped of customs and traditions and thus adaptable to all societies (Roy 2003, p. 5). Neo-fundamentalist movements in Europe do not target communities with ties to a culture of origin, but individuals in doubt about their faith and identity. By emphasizing the transnational Ummah, they address the universalist yearning of Muslims who cannot identify with any specific place or nation.

## 6.2 Religious seeking and frame alignment

According to the *Theory of Recruitment* developed by Wiktorowicz, the step after the cognitive opening is religious seeking. Wiktorowicz argue that the greater the role of Islam in an individual's identity, the greater the likelihood he or she will respond to the opening through religious seeking.

Religious seeking can take two forms, either individuals look into religion more deeply relying on friends and family for directions and literature, or the individual are fostered and guided by the movement (Wiktorowicz 2004b, p. 9). Mohammad was guided by HT as he was directly incorporated in activities and socialized into the movement. He started to go to meetings and soon became part of a study circle. He started to look to Islam for the solution of different problems. HT gave him explanations and convinced him that the Islamist ideology provided solutions to the concerns.

*For me as a young person this all made sense. I felt it was wrong of course that poverty was increasing in 2/3 of the world and 1/3 of the*

*world lived in abundance and almost died from obesity. This is where this man came into the picture, he talked about that this was the reason that Islam existed. We were here to break down the existing world order and then build up a new and better one...According to them, the poverty in the world was to blame for the current world order. They told me that their intention was to remove this world order and replace it with the order of God and laws of God.*

In *Framing Theory* the key to mobilization is dependent upon whether the movement's version of reality resonates with the potential recruit's version of reality. In this case it is clear that Mohammad share the experiences that HT draws upon. For him it makes sense when HT gives him the explanation that these reactions are a result of the fact that he is now a Muslim. He did not experience anything like this before his conversion, so their explanations fit his "schemata of interpretation". What Mohammad experience here is sometimes called frame alignment; there is a clear emergence of congruence between Mohammad's and HT's beliefs and values.

The three core framing tasks in framing theory are all utilized by HT when mobilizing Mohammad. First, they identify the injustice in the world as a problem caused by the current world order. Secondly, they argue that the solution to this problem is to break down the current world order and replace it with a new order of God. Thirdly, they argue that the goal for HT is to break down the current world order and re-establish the Caliphate, which will end all injustices. This is a way to motivate the potential recruits and transform them into participants instead of bystanders. Mohammad was motivated because he thought that HT could make the world a better place by building a new world order. He did not know that Islam could be political before, and was deeply impressed by what he was told by the members of HT.

*I was paralyzed, [they] made me feel like I had been fooled all this time, and that someone on purpose had avoided to tell me about the remaining 50 % about Islam. According to them, the poverty in the world was to blame for the current world order. They told me that their intention was to remove this world order and replace it with the order of God and laws of God...I believed in Islam, and if it was true that Islam could do all this and make the world a better place, then that was fantastic I thought. I had to get to know these people. I was deeply impressed by them.*

Mohammad was impressed by HT's willingness to talk about important issues and their confidence that Islam was the solution. Further he was impressed by the deep knowledge of Islam and the political part of Islam that he had been "deprived of" before. During the religious seeking sparked by the identity crisis and frame alignment he becomes open to the new ideas and perspectives presented by HT.

According to Lorenzo Vidino (2006) almost all Islamists feel attracted to the strict rules and binary system of right and wrong in Islam. Young men with no direction can find in radical Islamism a guide for daily life, and they believe that by following precise orders they can avoid going astray (Vidino 2006, p. 26).

### 6.3 Socialization and joining

As mentioned above, Mohammad became part of a study group in HT, and additionally he was invited to dinners, debates, and meetings and the movement started to feel like a family to him. The members became his friends and he was overwhelmed by the companionship he experienced. The religious lessons combined motivational appeals with ideological underpinnings and those who continued to go to the lessons and study group sessions become increasingly socialized or indoctrinated into the movement ideology.

He met a lot of people that had experienced the same stigmatizing and discriminative actions from the majority society.

*In Hizb ut-Tahrir I met people with other ethnicities than myself. There were people from Pakistan, Turkey and from different Arab countries, and there were also Danish converts like me. We did not all have the same ethnicity, yet a narrative started to develop that included all of us and that everybody felt part of. We shared negative experiences with each other and in that way created a reality from the fact that we were excluded because we were Muslims and because Islam was central in our lives. In Hizb ut-Tahrir they talked a lot about a clash of civilizations and a clash of cultures. I was very young, I had just finished high school and I did not know that much about the world yet, and I definitely did not know enough to deconstruct a whole ideology like Islamism. I just thought that what they said made sense to me and sounded right.*

According to Mohammad there are several narratives circulating in these movements, which contributes to an acceleration of feelings of marginalization. The reason for marginalization and exclusion from society is, according to HT, that they are Muslims.

HT use examples from politics and society, in order to build on the narrative of discrimination and marginalization, and in that way mobilize the members.

According to Mohammad the incorporation in HT takes from three to six months, and during that process you are indoctrinated into thinking in terms of “Us” and “Them”. HT divides the world into “Us: Muslims” and “Them: the West”. This creates an extraordinary spirit of community and fellowship among the members, which according to the *Group Process Approach* can lead “normal” individuals to do extraordinary things. In October 2002 Mohammad held a speech

on Axeltorv in Copenhagen. He talks aggressively about the USA, Israel, Denmark and its hypocritical pseudo-democracy that at the time had taken the Danish leader for HT Fadi Abdullatif to court for having urged the killing of Jews. When Mohammad thinks back at this he finds it hard to believe that he swallowed their message and ideas so completely without reservation. His only explanation is that he was brainwashed by a movement with sect-like methods. The *Group Process Approach* as well as *Politics of Identity* also gives valuable insights when analyzing Mohammad's incorporation of the Islamist message. He was indoctrinated into the "Us" and "Them" dichotomy and experienced a feeling of community that he had never felt before as a Muslim, which in turn made him do things he would otherwise not have done.

According to Mohammad Kaan, HT is constructed the same way as a sect, where the members are gradually indoctrinated and pay some percent of their income to the association. HT is clearly a sect-like movement, and after having left the movement and seen how other sects work Mohammad can see several similarities. It is the same psychological and emotional mechanisms and the type of manipulation and pressure that force people into sects. According to Torben Ruberg Rasmussen, professor in Middle Eastern studies at Syddansk University in Denmark, it is obvious that HT is a sect. The movement is very closed and religious, and the primary logic is to constantly hold the truths of the movement in opposition to society. In that way they encroach in every aspect of the members' life and existence (Gröndahl et. al. 2003, p. 137).

Mohammad is anxious about HT's ability to attract young rootless Muslims. Gröndahl (2003) argues that there is not much that indicates that HT has achieved or is close to achieving their utopian goals regarding the re-establishment of the Ummah. The danger with a movement like HT is that some members may think that the movement do not deliver in terms of action. These members may be radicalized and inspired by a neo-fundamentalist movement like HT, but then leave for a movement that is more able to take action (Gröndahl et. al. 2003, p. 126).

The only way to stop this development is by building a strong and qualified opposition among the moderate majority of Muslims in Europe. Moderate Muslims have to give these Islamist movements qualified opposition.

## 6.4 Chapter summary

It is possible to identify the different stages in Wiktorowicz's *Theory of Recruitment* when analyzing the case of Mohammad Kaan. The experiences of stigmatization and discrimination from some segments of the majority society affected Mohammad in a way that made him develop negative feelings towards the majority society. The shocking experiences also resulted in a crisis which developed slowly during the first five years as a Muslim. This crisis produced a cognitive opening which made him susceptible to the Islamist message. He was introduced to HT by an old friend and immediately was very impressed by the

movement's message and ideas, and not least the very charismatic and well-speaking leaders. He is told that Islam is not a religion, but an ideology and this is an eye-opener for him. He is fascinated by the Islamist message that HT proclaims to be able to heal the world by re-establishing the Caliphate.

It is clear that *Group Processes* have contributed to the radicalization process of Mohammad Kaan. The socialization mechanisms as well as the bonding and the close fellowship that developed in HT had great influence on Mohammad. The movement became like a family to him and the strong bonds made him do things that he never would have done otherwise.

HT uses many of the methods of a social movement, and *Framing* is a central part of the recruitment work. HT gave Mohammad "explanations" for the stigmatization and attitudes he had experienced and heavily exploited the negative feelings he had developed. They took the discrimination he had experienced and explained it with the fact that he was a Muslim, and slowly Mohammad's version of reality started to resonate with HT's version of reality. This *framing* appeared to have played an essential role in Mohammad's process of radicalization.

To sum up, Mohammad Kaan was a typical recruit. He was a young Muslim convert, feeling abandoned by the majority society and urging for a sense of belonging. He was the perfect target for a neo-fundamentalist movement like HT. He was fascinated by the Islamist message, and HT gave him answers and explanations for all his negative experiences. The strong feeling of solidarity and communion, the bonding with fellow group members and the seemingly true explanations for all he had experienced made him convinced of the righteousness in HT's ideas. In his own words he was indoctrinated, and manipulated into joining the movement. He sees clear similarities between HT and sects that use psychological and emotional manipulation in order to gain members.

## 7 Conclusion

This thesis examines the motivational factors and causal mechanisms behind Islamist radicalization in post-millennium Europe. My ambition is to link structural factors with social factors and individual motivation in an integrated analytical framework.

In order to answer the main research question the study is divided into three levels of analysis: the European level (neo-fundamentalism in Europe), the social level (the neo-fundamentalist endorsement), and the individual level (case study of Mohammad Kaan).

As mentioned several times throughout this thesis, it is the ideology of Islamism, and *not* the religion Islam that is the foundation for Islamist movements. This is a very important distinction, and necessary to keep in mind when reading this paper.

I lean heavily on causal realism; hence I see structure as both constraining and enabling actors. I also regard structure and agency as continuously interacting.

On the first level of analysis I study, on a structural level (exogenous factors), political and cultural factors that serve as constraining and enabling mechanisms. These factors are considered preconditions for radicalization. In addition to the preconditional factors I give examples of precipitant factors that serve as triggers to an ongoing radicalization process. The exogenous factors shape and constrain an individual's environment, but do not have a direct effect on behaviour. An individual does not exist in a vacuum, but is part of a social context. This context has an indirect effect on the individual's behaviour, but individual factors are necessary to initiate a radicalization process.

Poor integration is mentioned as one of the two political preconditional factors. It is often mentioned as one of the most prominent factors of radicalization. It is shown that Muslims more often than others are discriminated on the labour market (e.g. Carlsson and Rooth 2007). Since employment is a key factor for integration, the poor labour market situation is of great concern.

The constant feeling of rejection and marginalisation in society contributes to feelings of discontent and frustration. Factors like poor integration, discrimination on the labour market, and a perceived "war against Islam" together with other circumstances perceived as unjust can ignite a strong sense of in-group devotion and consequently result in the rejection of out-groups.

It is especially for people where identity with the relevant group is central to the individual's self-identity, that threats to the group are likely to increase radicalization tendencies. In other words, the degree to which people identify with a relevant group determines the extent to which they are affected by political and cultural circumstances. This becomes clear when analysing radicalization through the *Group Process Approach* and *Politics of Identity*. Scholars of the *Group*

*Process Approach* argue that people, who strongly identify with a specific social group, tend to perceive threats to that group as personal threats. People can experience emotions on behalf of their group and can be motivated to act toward group goals, especially when the group is perceived as being threatened. Similarly, poor integration and exclusion of Muslims in Western societies might play a significant role for radicalization and further polarisation.

The structural discrimination of Muslims pose a threat to economic and political integration, and it also have serious social and psychological consequences that in turn threatens social and cultural integration (Staun 2009: 32). The identification with the in-group grows stronger and offers a sense of belonging and worth. This combination of rejection from the surrounding society and a sense of belonging with the in-group offer a significant precondition for radicalization.

Radicalization of minorities can have profound consequences for European societies. Not only can it forebode terrorist activity, but as neo-fundamentalist movements actively work against integration, participation in society and democracy, it can lead to even more severe polarization and inter-group conflicts.

Marginalized second-generation immigrants, converts and highly educated immigrants or refugees constitute a fertile recruiting-ground for Islamist movements.

The second-generation immigrants that become attracted to Islamist ideas are disillusioned with a society that has excluded and marginalized them, and often feel that they get empty promises from decision makers and politicians. They cannot fully identify with the Islam and Muslim traditions of their parents, as their approach to the religion is biased by everyday challenges of growing up in a multicultural society.

The number of converts in Islamist organizations has been growing since the 1990's. These are young individuals with an ethnic European background that have converted to Islam and wish to live a consistent Islamic life. (Gröndal et.al. 2003, p. 31). Converts that join Islamist movements often get involved with the movement shortly after their conversion. Many converts put great emphasis on the feeling of solidarity and communion, as a support in their daily life, while others put more emphasis on the ideology, the political elements and activities. Converts are often closely attached to their religion, and wanting to prove themselves to their new fellow Muslims they take their conversion very seriously. For this reason they have a strong desire to demonstrate their religious commitment. Recent converts might also be unsure of their way in Islam, and experience a lack of clear identity foothold. It is generally known that they are often feeling alone and abandoned following their conversion, and the feeling of communion and membership in a strong group is often welcoming. As such they are ideal target groups for Islamist movements.

Individuals in Islamist movements come from a wide range of social, cultural, educational and professional backgrounds, but the common denominators when mapping the Islamist endorsement is feelings of marginalisation and stigmatisation together with a strong search for identity. Each individual is motivated by their specific combination of reasons and events; their personal

history, whom they meet at a certain point in time, how they interact with the group of people they radicalize with et cetera. The reason only a few of all individuals exposed to the same structural factors become radicalized, is because radicalization depends on a number of other things than just the structural factors. These factors are only the first step towards a radicalization process. In Wiktorowicz (2004b) advanced phase model (see p. 24 in this thesis), the exogenous conditions (preconditional factors) are the top of the funnel. These factors are a necessary first step, but not enough to become radicalized.

In the case study of Mohammad Kaan I examine a complete radicalization process, and all the steps necessary in order to complete a radicalization process. The case study is a good example that radicalization is an individual condition that is significantly caused by a combination of structural and individual motivational factors and causal mechanisms. Processes of radicalization are social processes which are inherently individual in nature, and depend on the specific background, situation, and personal characteristics of the person involved.

Neo-fundamentalist movements are often seen as step-stone for more violent organizations. They indoctrinate young individuals with radical Islamist thought, but since the neo-fundamentalist movements do not support the use of violence (at present), recruits may leave in favour of more “active” movements.

Further, radical Islamism is problematical because it casts a shadow of suspicion on Islam as a religion and Muslims in general, and in addition the roots of radicalization is often not acknowledged or understood.

The 15 million Muslims now living in European Union, representing 3% of the total population (CEPS 2007, p. 5) constitute the largest minority religion in the region and the biggest Islamic diaspora in the world. The fact that the neo-fundamentalist movements actively work against integration of Muslims in the West is a serious problem. This in combination with the above mentioned issues can in its extension create inter-group conflicts, and intensify the polarization between the majority and the Muslim minority in Europe, and consequently increase marginalization, segregation, Islamophobia and Islamism.

The findings in this study suggests that Islamism and Islamophobia are dynamically interconnected. As I take inspiration from a strategic-relational approach with regard to structure and agency, I regard structure as the starting point. Action only takes place inside a pre-existing structured context. Actors are reflexive and formulate strategies in order to overcome problems connected to structural context.

Understanding Islamism is an urgent concern. It is a seemingly new actor in world politics and in order to deal with it we have to understand its essential nature as well as the recruitment patterns it manifest.

Neo-fundamentalist movements are not terrorist organization, but they can be thought of as a step-stone for terrorists. The movement indoctrinates individuals with radical ideology, priming them for recruitment by more extreme organizations where they can take part in actual, often violent, operations.

As outlined above, there is no single explanation for radicalization. Instead it is a complex interaction of several different factors and mechanisms, both structural factors (exogenous factors) functioning as preconditions, individual



factors and the experience of a cognitive opening, together with chance encounters. Chance encounters are for instance the meeting with a person that can function as access and a way in to a radical movement.

In other words, the radicalization process is the sum of a unique mixture of political, cultural and social dynamics, in combination with personal experiences and chance encounters. However, it is not the cognitive opening or the meeting with a person from a radical environment or the situation in the Middle East per se that cause a process of radicalization. It is the combination of the factors and mechanisms that makes the difference, together with the timing. This leaves us an element of coincidence, that may not correspond with social science in general, but is obviously an essential factor nevertheless.

## 8 Executive summary

The executive summary follows the same disposition as the thesis. I start with a short introduction, followed by a presentation of the purpose and research question(s), an overview of the methodological and theoretical framework, a summary of the analysis and, finally, some concluding remarks.

### 8.1 Introduction

The terrorist attacks in Madrid 2004 and London 2005, introduced two new concepts to the European public debate; “home-grown terrorism” and “radicalization”. Suddenly, the terrorist threat originated from fairly well-integrated citizens living in Europe. Since then, radicalization of young Muslims living in Europe have been one of the most pressing and elusive challenges for governments, policy makers and scientists.

*Radicalization* can very briefly be explained as the processes that leads an individual to political or religious activism with the aim of carrying out radical changes in society. Radicalization and recruitment are increasingly the subject of scientific study, however, no universally accepted definition of the concepts has yet been developed.

Since I am focusing on non-violent radicalization I have chosen to use the definition developed by the Dutch General Information and Security Agency (AIVD) that can be applied to both violent and non-violent radicalization.

AIVD defines *radicalization* as follows:

**The growing willingness to pursue and/or support far-reaching changes in society which may constitute a danger to (the continued existence of) the democratic legal order (aim), which may involve the use of undemocratic methods (means) that may harm the functioning of the democratic legal order (effect).** (AIVD, 2005, pp. 13-14).

### 8.2 Purpose and Research question

The purpose of the study is to give a comprehensive analysis of the ideological neo-fundamentalist radicalization in post-millennium Europe with a focus on motivational factors and causal mechanisms. The ambition is to link structural

factors with social factors and individual motivation in an integrated analytical framework.

The main research question is formulated as follows:

- *What are the motivational factors and causal mechanisms for the neo-fundamentalist radicalization in post-millennium Europe?*

The study is divided into three levels of analysis; the European level, the social level and the individual level. I formulate operational questions for each level of analysis.

On the first level of analysis I explore the causal factors on a structural level in Europe regarding radicalization among Muslims. The following question guide my study on the first level of analysis:

- *What are the structural preconditional and precipitant causal factors of neo-fundamentalism in post-millennium Europe?*

On the social level of analysis I study in which segments of society radical Islamism gain most support, in other words, what individuals that are most susceptible to the Islamist message. The following question is guiding the study at this level:

- *What segments of society are most vulnerable to the Islamist message, and why?*

On the most concrete level of analysis, the individual level, I provide a case study of a former member of the neofundamentalist movement Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT). The following operational questions are guiding the study at this level:

- *What are the characteristics of individuals drawn into these movements?*
- *What psychological and social circumstances make people susceptible to the ideas of Islamism?*
- *What makes some people susceptible to the radical Islamist messages and some resistant?*
- *How does a person become radicalized?*

### 8.3 Methodological framework

In order to find explanations on the European and social level of analysis I conduct literature studies combined with semi-structured interviews. I lean heavily on a dialectical approach concerning structure and agency and regard them as continuously interacting. Further, the ontological standpoint is based on causal realism as defined by Brante (2001).

On the third level of analysis, I conduct a case study of a former member of the neo-fundamentalist movement Hizb ut-Tahrir. The case study consists of a semi-structured deep interview.

## 8.4 Theoretical framework

The theoretical foundation of the thesis consists of *Social Movement Theory (SMT)*, *Framing Theory*, *Theory of Recruitment*, the *Group Process Approach* and *Politics of Identity*.

In the *Theory of Recruitment*, Wiktorowicz (2004b) develops an advanced phase model. This model is describing different phases that the individual is going through during the radicalization process. In contrast to most other existing models describing radicalization, it focuses on the radicalization processes that religious radical individuals is part of while joining a radical religious or religiously inspired movement or sect, that at least officially refrain from the use of violence. I use the advanced phase model in the case study on the third level of analysis.

## 8.5 Analysis

The study is divided into three levels of analysis. Together the levels form an integrated analytical framework answering the main research question.

Each level of analysis has specific operational questions.

### 8.5.1 Neo-fundamentalism in Europe

On this level of analysis I study, on a structural level, causal mechanisms that may affect neo-fundamentalism in post-millennium Europe. According to Wiktorowicz (2004b) there are certain exogenous conditions; structural political and cultural strains and crises, which constitute preconditions for a climate in society that is conducive to radicalism. The exogenous preconditions can help explain how frustration and discontent can emerge among individuals and how experiences of discrimination, marginalisation and structural strains can contribute to the neo-fundamentalist radicalization in Europe.

The operational question on this level is:

- *What are the exogenous preconditional and precipitant factors of contemporary neo-fundamentalism in Europe?*

I study structural conditions in Europe in order to explore motivational factors and causal mechanisms contributing to neo-fundamentalist radicalization. Preconditional factors do not have a direct effect on individual behaviour, but they can shape and constrain the individual's environment and in that way have an indirect effect on radicalization.

The precipitants include events that call for revenge or immediate action, such as provoking acts or speeches.

I have divided the political preconditions into two parts; poor integration and political relations. Several studies show that Muslims often are being stigmatized, discriminated and marginalised in Europe. It is evident that Muslims are discriminated on the European labour market. This is a serious issue since employment is considered essential to integration.

Political events and a state's foreign policy are often thought to nurture Islamic fundamentalism both at a local and global level. A study from 2005 (FOSIS 2005) of Muslim students found that 83% were unhappy with British foreign policy, primarily in Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Afghanistan and the alliance with the U.S. These are all areas in which Muslims are perceived to be victims of Western aggression and persecution. An opinion poll conducted for BBC in Great Britain showed that a majority of British Muslims feel that the war on terror is actually a war on Islam. The precipitant factors on the political level are e.g. the war in Iraq and the position of governments in the West, the malpractices at the Abu Ghraib prison and the Israel/Palestine conflict.

The cultural preconditions are those connected to for instance the media and the Internet. Research shows that Muslims in Europe are frequently confronted with discrimination and stigmatization on account of their religion. They are victims of negative stereotyping and prejudicial attitudes in the media, and this have increased since 9/11 2001 (e.g. TTSRL 2008, CEPS 2007). Islam is frequently presented as a threat and a danger, or a form of subversion (CEPS 2007, p. 111).

Increasing attention is being paid to the role that the Internet has in the radicalization of young Muslims. For radical movements the Internet offers beneficial characteristics as anonymity of communication, the possibility to access a very large audience, and possibilities to spread texts and videos. It offers a platform for young identity-seeking Muslims to express their grievances and obtain membership in a social group. On a cultural level, precipitant factors are e.g. the Mohammed-cartoons and the release of the anti-Islam film "Fitna".

### 8.5.2 The neo-fundamentalist endorsement

In this chapter I study in which social environments the neo-fundamentalist movements have their largest popular support.

The operational question guiding my research on this level is the following:

- *What segments of society are most vulnerable to the Islamist message, and why?*

The members of neo-fundamentalist movements are all Muslims. Being a Muslim is a prerequisite for being a member of a neo-fundamentalist movement, but I want to make a few general assertions in order to dispel popular untruths.

One prevailing argument in the Islamist debate as well as the terrorism debate is the trouble with Islam. To single out a major religion as a single explanatory model reflects uninformed and ignorant prejudice and lack of imagination. As mentioned before, it is of utmost importance to differentiate between the religion Islam and the ideology Islamism.

It is possible to identify three main groups among the neo-fundamentalist endorsement; second-generation immigrants, converts and highly educated immigrants or refugees. For disentangled youth it is important that the Islamist movement has a universal message, irrespective of nationality. The second-generation immigrants are born in Europe and consider Europe their home, but still they are being marginalized and stigmatized by the majority society (Gröndal et. al. 2003, p. 31). They are looking for an identity and value the group identity and the distinct manner of living that a neo-fundamentalist movement represents. Converts often put great emphasis on the feeling of solidarity and communion, as a support in their daily life, which a neo-fundamentalist movement offers.

### 8.5.3 Case study of Mohammad Kaan

On this most concrete level of analysis, I study the causal and motivational factors of radicalization on an individual level as well as the actual recruitment process of a former member of Hizb ut-Tahrir, Mohammad Kaan. The operational questions guiding my research at this level are the following:

- *What are the characteristics of individuals drawn into these movements?*
- *Which psychological and social circumstances make people susceptible to the ideas of Islamism?*
- *What makes some people susceptible to the radical Islamist messages and some resistant?*
- *How does a person become radicalized?*

It is possible to identify the different stages in Wiktorowicz's *Theory of Recruitment* when analyzing the case of Mohammad Kaan. The experiences of stigmatization and discrimination affected Mohammad in a way that made him develop negative feelings towards the majority society, and after a while experienced a cognitive opening. Together with chance encounters and his personal experiences he went into a radicalization process, following all the steps in the advanced phase model.

## 8.6 Conclusion

Neo-fundamentalist movements are not terrorist organization, but they can be thought of as a step-stone for terrorists. The movement indoctrinates individuals with radical ideology, priming them for recruitment by more extreme organizations where they can take part in actual, often violent, operations.

There is no single explanation for the phenomenon of radicalization. Instead it is a complex interaction of several different factors and mechanisms, both structural factors (exogenous factors) functioning as preconditions, individual factors and the experience of a cognitive opening, together with chance encounters. Chance encounters are for instance the meeting with a person that can function as access and a way in to a radical movement. A radicalization process is the sum of a unique mixture of political, cultural and social dynamics, in combination with personal experiences and chance encounters. However, it is not the cognitive opening or the meeting with a person from a radical environment or the situation in the Middle East per se that cause a process of radicalization. It is the combination of the factors and mechanisms that makes the difference, together with the timing.

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# 10 Appendix

This appendix presents summaries of the interviews I conducted. With respect to the confidentiality and anonymity of the interviewees I use feign names on all except for Dr. Jörgen Staun who do not mind to have his name written out.

## 10.1 Interview guide

The interviews had a time limit of about one hour. However, the interview with “Mohammad Kaan” took approximately 2.5 hours. The questions vary according to the interviewee but all interviews are conducted in a semi-structured manner. In the sections below I will first present the interview questions, followed by brief summaries of the interviews.

I have made an exception regarding the interview with “Mohammad Kaan” where I have chosen to print the whole interview, since it provides such insight and is so interesting for the purpose of this thesis.

### 10.1.1 Interview questions

#### Generally about radicalization:

- What are the trends and tendencies regarding neo-fundamentalist radicalization in Europe?
- What has created political room for the radicalization in Europe?
- What are the main long-term causal factors for radicalization in Europe?
- To what extent can imams prevent radicalization of young Muslims? (this question was only posed to imam “Abu”)

#### The neo-fundamentalist endorsement:

- How is the composition of members in neo-fundamentalist movements? Is it possible to discern a significantly high representation from certain segments of society or social-classes among the members?
- What are the main motivational factors for a person to join?

#### Ideological radicalization versus violent radicalization

- To what extent are neo-fundamentalist movements a step-stone towards more violent radical movements?

## 10.2 Interview summary I

**Date:** April 8<sup>th</sup> 2009

**Location:** Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), Copenhagen, Denmark

**Interviewee:** Dr. Jørgen Staun, researcher at DIIS

Dr. Jørgen Staun (JS) on:

### The neo-fundamentalist radicalization in Europe:

It is very hard to scientifically measure radicalization or how many people that becomes radicalized. However, the debate around radicalization has increased the past years, and I believe also the radicalization per se has increased. We know that the number of terrorist acts and terrorist attempts have increased, and the number of persons involved in radical movements have increased. This can be seen as an indicator that radicalization has increased.

Even a non-violent organisation like HT affects violent radicalization since it affects the discourse around radicalization, Islam and the West. If a non-violent organisation argues that there is inequalities in society that *someone* should do *something* about, or if they argue that the West is fighting a battle that oppress Islam, then they also in a way say that it is ok to fight against all this.

If you look at for example The Netherlands, Denmark and Great Britain, they are all immigration-countries. One factor affecting the number of individuals that are drawn to radical movements is that fact that it is a very diverse group of people that immigrate. Moreover, there are differences in how well these countries integrate their immigrants. Lacking integration is an important factor when explaining radicalization.

Great Britain used to have the political standpoint that let radical Islamists settle down in Great Britain if they were sought after in their home countries. This was individuals that were sometimes still active, what we call insurgents or terrorists. At the time decision makers and politicians in the UK did not believe that these insurgents would attack targets in Europe, however after 9.11 this view changed.

### Causal factors of radicalization in Europe

Essentially it is a problem concerning integration and identity.

However, there are many factors involved when a person goes into a radicalization process. It is a process that takes several years. However, what is common is the search for identity and a higher meaning in life, combined with

chance encounters – meeting the “right” persons at the “right” time in life. Neo-fundamentalism has gained popularity since it gathers Muslims from all over the world – regardless of nationality or ethnicity. You don’t have to try to belong somewhere and you don’t have to try to fit in, according to neo-fundamentalism the Ummah is the only community you belong to.

#### Who are most vulnerable to radicalization?

It is not just the ideology that is the driving force behind a radicalization process. Several factors have to be present in order for a process of radicalization to take place. The individual has to be at a turning-point in life, or what Wiktorowicz calls a cognitive opening. People that go through a life crisis usually deal with it by visiting a psychologist, drink a lot of alcohol, shop more than they should or become addictive in some other way. However, an individual that go into a process of radicalization is always religious in advance. This is a common denominator. They turn to their religion for answers, and when they are most susceptible to solutions and answers they meet someone from a radical movement. It is a question of timing; there are several factors that have to occur at the same time. You have to meet someone that can introduce you to the movement at a time when you are susceptible to their message.

#### How to prevent radicalization

What is most interesting in this area of research is to find out what it is that makes a person go on from a neo-fundamental movement to more violent organizations. We know that far from everybody does, but we don’t know much about the ones that do. What factors are involved here? This is an interesting issue in order to prevent violent radicalization.

## 10.3 Interview summary II

**Date:** April 9<sup>th</sup> 2009

**Location:** The home of Imam “Abu”, Malmö, Sweden

**Interviewee:** “Abu”, Imam and a member of the European Islamic Conference (EIC).

“Abu” on:

#### Radicalization in Europe

I believe that the biggest problem and concern regarding radicalization of young Muslims is the lack of education. It is important to educate young people about Islam in the right way. If they do not get the right kind of education about Islam they can easily be used by extremist groups that lead these young individuals on the wrong track. Especially young identity-seeking people are vulnerable to these extremist groups. Many of the extremist Muslims today lack accurate education about Islam. There are



not enough Mosques in Europe to educate all the Muslims living here now. Muslims are today a part of the European population, and we have to work together to achieve peace and understanding. Young Muslims in Europe should not have to learn about Islam in a cellar-Mosque by a self-proclaimed imam without adequate education. The uneducated “imams” in the cellar-Mosques cannot answer questions regarding society and so on. They can only read the Koran but they cannot interpret it the right way since they do not have the adequate education. This is very dangerous. There should be possibilities to visit a real Mosque and be educated by a real imam with adequate education. I think this is a very important foundation.

Nowadays there are big problems with radicalization via TV and the Internet. Now it is possible to talk to imams through the TV or via the Internet. Many imams in the Middle East hold lectures over the Internet for Muslims in other parts of the world. I call these imams “Internet-imams”. It is dangerous when an imam from Saudi Arabia or Yemen shall answer questions regarding everyday issues in for example Sweden or Germany. An imam has to be familiar with the psychosocial mentality of the respective country and the specific context. It is not just about knowing the Koran. This is why imams working in Europe have to be educated here.

#### The causal factors of radicalization in Europe

There are certain things that are very important, and one is to prevent the problems in time. We know what the problems are and we know the situation. We have to cooperate in order to prevent future problems. Second, we cannot let extremist groups recruit young Muslims in Europe. If young Muslims feel that here is no justice and equality they become easy targets for extremist groups. It is the marginalization and feelings of alienation that make it easy for these extremist groups to recruit. The international relations matters as well; there are immense frustration among many Palestinians towards America for example. They are frustrated because America has occupied their country.

I have talked to many radical young Muslims, and they constantly refer to the war in Iraq, the war on terrorism which they feel is a war against Islam, the occupation of Palestine. They see this as examples of the fact that the West is against them.

#### Who are the most vulnerable to radicalization?

I actually believe that it is young individuals from a non-Islamic environment that are most liable to radicalize, because they do not know anything about Islam. This might make converts more prone to radicalize since they do not know that much about Islam from the beginning. Muslims generally know the Koran and can read it themselves. We have to educate young people about Islam, so they know what it really means.

#### How to prevent radicalization

Decision makers and politicians in Europe have to understand that we have to build real Mosques so that Muslims do not have to go to cellar-Mosques. We have to make Mosques more transparent and the way to do this is to build real Mosques and get rid of the cellar-Mosques. Secondly, we have to create an imam-education in Europe. Then we can make sure that the imams working in schools and youth community centers have a European imam certificate. In this way we can prevent inappropriate persons from trying to influence the young people.

I promote so called Euro-Islam. It is a way to connect Islam with the surrounding context and society. We have our own traditions in Europe; democracy, freedom,

justice, equality, human rights, development et cetera. What is Islam? It is the Koran and the Prophet Muhammad, nothing else. It is possible to combine the European context with Islam. It is possible to combine Islam with every context in every country. We cannot have traditions from Saudi Arabia here in Sweden, it is absurd. Many Muslims might think of me as not being enough Muslim, but I am only rational. I cannot agree when an imam in Saudi Arabia says that a woman is not allowed to drive a car. You cannot say that in the name of Islam. That is not Islam, that is traditions. Today there are two types of Islam, one that wants to integrate with the rest of the world, and one that wants to be isolated and that believe that everybody else is wrong.

## 10.4 Interview summary III

**Date:** April 15<sup>th</sup> 2009

**Location:** “Arben’s” office, Sweden

**Interviewee:** “Arben”, the branch head of two community youth centres in a segregated area.

“Arben” on:

### Radicalization in Europe:

Islamic extremists do not want to integrate. They dislike integration just like the Swedish Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna). They do not want to integrate since society is built up of rules, ideas and culture that are not compatible with their beliefs. They do everything they can not to become integrated. The people they hurt most are moderate fellow Muslims, like myself. Moderate Muslims, both in the Middle East and in Europe, are the ones most eager and anxious to combat radicalization. We feel that they destroy not only for themselves but for all Muslims. They talk about things that are not Islam and that is nowhere to be seen in the Koran. They fool young Muslims to believe that they are teaching them Islam, when in fact they are brainwashing them with everything but Muslim philosophy and way of thought.

### Causal factors of radicalization in Europe

What I have seen, it is the result of marginalization and alienation in society. Lacking integration in European societies, and the fact that Muslims often feel discriminated against and alienated from society. When a person feel alienated he or she starts looking for another group to belong to, and build an identity around. I have seen predominantly two different kind of groups of this kind, and it is religious groups and criminal gangs. However, I have only seen violence among criminal gangs.

### Who are the most vulnerable to radicalization?

The self-proclaimed imams, often active in so called cellar-Mosques, actively try to recruit young Muslims to more extremist stances. They do this by talking about Islam and about the fact that they are Muslims and they claim that because they are Muslims this society does not want them here. They argue that “we” as Muslims are not welcome in this society just

because of the fact that we are Muslims. They constantly talk in negative terms regarding Sweden, the rest of Europe and America. They talk much in terms of “we” and “us” referring to that they are Muslims. They talk much about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; that our Muslims brother and sisters are bleeding, and it is all being caused by America. They often stress that “we” have to help our brothers and sisters. Talking about world politics is an easy way to recruit – young people always want to do something for their home-country, and then I am not talking about Sweden. They also talk a lot about a fight between cultures, or a clash of civilizations if you want. They argue a lot in favor of this idea. They talk about Islam and the West and they argue that these are incompatible.

They say that Muslims have been oppressed for thousands of years and that this was caused by the West. Further they tell these young people not to be fooled by the West again, and instead help their fellow Muslims.

They talk a lot about what is happening in the Middle East, in Gaza, Iraq and Afghanistan.

They watch films about this and bump up each other. This is very dangerous for young people, since they are much more responsive and impressionable than adults. It is easy to brain-wash a teenager. If you are 18-19 years old you are ready to make an effort for society. You are also in an age where you are very susceptible and easily influenced and affected.

They easily become exalted by the thought that they can have the possibility to make a change in the Middle East for example. They feel that they gain an identity, and that they can make a difference. When you are young, and insecure and looking for an identity, it is easy to be attracted to these thoughts and then recruited.

I have seen examples of radicalization myself. For instance, there was a man from Palestine living in the same area as me. He worked as a mechanic fixing TV's and radios and that sort of things. He was not particularly religious and he was married to a woman with native Swedish origin. However after 15 years here in Sweden he is now the leader of an extremist association. Everything that has made him become extreme in his views has happened to him while living here. He was not like this when he came here. It is obvious that the poor integration, the fact that we do not get any jobs or at least proper jobs related to our education, the feelings of marginalization and discrimination affects people. People become frustrated when they do not get any jobs after several years of studies and work in their country of origin. This makes people weak and unstable, and then it does not take much effort to recruit them. They are desperately looking for explanations and solutions and can easily become susceptible for the Islamist message.

#### How to prevent radicalization

I think all focus should be put on integration. It is devastating to a young person to constantly be questioned because he or she comes from another country or has another religious background than the norm. This is the main issue we have to work on in Europe; we have to break the marginalization and alienation in order to prevent further radicalization. We have to improve the living-standard for immigrants living in the so called million-program housing facilities. The residential segregation is extreme in some cities, and this has to be dealt with, since it affects the well-being of both parents and their children. I also see very much hidden racism in today's society, among clerks and officials for instance. However, the labor market will soon go through a huge shift when the older generation retired. We just have to wait it out I think, the old generation will be replaced with younger people who have travelled some more and maybe know people with different backgrounds. I think this will have a very positive effect on integration.

## 10.5 Interview (full-length) IV

**Date:** April 20<sup>th</sup> 2009

**Location:** The home of “Mohammad Kaan”, Copenhagen, Denmark

**Interviewee:** “Mohammad Kaan”, former member of Hizb ut-Tahrir

**Q:** Can you tell me a little about your life before you joined HT?

**A:** I was 23 when I joined. I am born and raised in Copenhagen. I come from a family background where religion never have been central, if we went to church then maybe it was around Christmas or something like that by it was very rare. Why did I then choose Islam? Well, it is all about coincidences. Partly it's because I'm raised in an area of Copenhagen, Nørrebro, where there live a lot of people with a different ethnic background and I had a lot of Muslim friends when I grew up. I went to their homes and saw the family structure and the traditions and the feeling of solidarity that they had and compared it to mine. I come from a very small family, it was just me and my parents and not a very strong connection to other relatives. So these large family structures made a big impression on me then. I had only positive experiences from Islam, and at home I never heard anything negative about Islam or Muslims. The reason I converted then was that I met a Turkish-Macedonian girl. She never imposed her religion or traditions on me, but her parents held on strongly to their traditions and culture. They had lived in Denmark since the 1970's, spoke Danish fluently and had worked hard from the beginning; still the Turkish-Macedonian traditions were strongly established. Denmark is a very individualized country, whereas in Macedonia it is the communion, family, and reputation that are central. Her parents wanted her to find a man from their own culture with the same norms and values in life. I decided to convert to Islam for the sake of our relationship. I wanted us to be able to have good contact with her family and I wanted to be accepted by her parents. It meant a lot to me. We talked a lot about Islam and I think she enlightened something latent that I had inside me. I had never practiced religion before, and when looking back now I understand that at that point in time I really needed security and stability. Islam becomes that place where I find what I need and find what I was looking for.

It is a lot about coincidences. Had I still been in the Muslim environment with peaceful and private practicing Muslims that I knew from when I first converted, I would never have ended up in this Islamist movement. However, what happens is that I meet a Turkish man who has immigrated to Denmark through marriage. Before he came to Denmark he was a quite ordinary and typical Muslim, but when he comes to Denmark something happens inside him. I don't know if he feels marginalized, he is after all used to be part of a Turkish majority. He tells me that he experiences a cultural difference and that everything seems very strange and unknown here in Denmark. He starts to go to nightclubs and live a quite profligate and depraved life, even though he is married. Then, all of a sudden, he starts to become very religious and at the same time very introvert. Personally I believe that it has to do with the cultural chock he experienced between life in

Turkey and life here in Denmark. He is not radical in the beginning, but he is very religious and study the Quran thoroughly, just like I do at the time. I read both the Quran in English and the *hadith*. It was all about reading these texts and trying to live by these rules as far as possible. I met him by a coincidence since we were both going to Quran tutoring. Our meeting meant a lot to me at that time. I was on leave from my job so I had a lot of time for discussions about Islam and for Quran tutoring. However, six month passes and I don't hear from my Turkish friend and I don't see him around, and one day he calls me in the middle of Ramadan. This is the turning point for me I would say, this is where I go from practicing ordinary Islam privately in my home to meet with political Islam, the ideological Islam and the Islam that constantly talks about clashes between cultures and oppositions between Islam and not Islam. In the beginning I didn't notice that he had changed, it was just like an ordinary meeting with an old friend. We had some dinner and talked about everyday things. I was 23 at this time, and what happens is that there are two more people at this dinner. During the six month that we didn't have contact he met people from Hizb ut-Tahrir and he had been indoctrinated and incorporated in their world of ideas. Anyway, the evening started completely innocent and ordinary and I told them about my values and morals and what I had learned when studying Islam – that you should always be honest in your actions and never do something for your own personal gain but you should do it for God et cetera. At a point during the evening I can notice that they get tired of my individualized focus of religion and all my moral talk about praying every day and give doles to the poor et cetera. That was the way I understood Islam at the time. At a point I remember that there was a man who got a bit irritated in comparison to his understanding of the religion. He was very charismatic and eulogistic and he was at the time a very prominent person in Hizb ut-Tahrir and he was also of Turkish origin. His language skills were incredible, I have met many immigrants and their children but I have never heard anyone talk so well and completely without an accent. He spoke the most perfect Danish. This also shows that he was very intelligent and not least incredible charismatic. I was almost magnetized by him. He used the same discourse and the same texts that I was used to from traditional Islam. This made a big impression on me, he took the same texts that I knew from before and talked about the in a new way. He told me that “everything you have said is completely true, it is part of Islam, but it seems like the kind of Islam you have learned in the Mosque and from the different imams that you have met, is only a kind of Islam that touches upon your personal relationship to God. It doesn't touch upon what Islam has to do with society, politics, economic and ethics.” He told me that I used part of the Islam and forgot the rest, and the destiny for such a person is a miserable life and then a powerful punishment in the life after this. You shall not forget that I was a very religious person at the time, so it was like it was God that told me this and not him. The things he said he cited from the Quran and it hit me very hard. I sat there for a while and took it all in. After a while he asks me if I am aware of the history of Islam and of the life of the Prophet. I had not engaged in that at the time and I had not read so much about Islam's history. However, he knew the history and the life of the Prophet very well so he could in detail tell me about it. He told me that the Prophet and his

group had started as an opposition against the dominating social system in Mecca. Islam had operated undercover for fear of reprisals. Eventually however they were found and tortured et cetera, all the things that happen in today's society too. This story made a huge impression on me. I have understood that this understanding of the history of Islam is the same for most Islamist movements. They look at the Prophets and the way he worked as an excellent period in history. All Islamist movements competes about following the way of life that Mohammed lived. That is also why some movements are called Salafi movements. It is because they want to go in the footsteps of the Prophet and his followers. It is about a question of legitimacy. To be able to say that you are following the footsteps of the Prophet but the others are not.

For me as a young person this all made sense. I too felt it was wrong that poverty was increasing in 2/3 of the world and 1/3 of the world lived in abundance and almost died from obesity. This is where this man came into the picture, he talked about that this was the reason that Islam existed. We were here to break down and then build up. He said that there was a lot of Muslims in the world that were religious and lived like good Muslims, but we had been seduced by religious preachers that told us to see Islam only as a religion, when Islam in reality is an ideology. They told us that we have to follow the Prophet not only half the way but totally. I sat there totally paralysed by these words. Ordinary Muslims don't think of Islam as an ideology and a political system that includes everything on your life. I was paralyzed, he made me feel like I had been fooled all this time, and that someone on purpose had avoided to tell me about the remaining 50 % about Islam. According to them, the poverty in the world was to blame to current world order. They told me that their intention was to remove this world order and replace it with the order of God and laws of God. It was completely idealistic and altruistic. I believed in Islam before, and if it was right that Islam could do all this and make the world a better place, then that was fantastic I thought. I had to get to know these people. I was deeply impressed by them. I found out later however, that they are trained in rhetoric and agitating, and when an argument comes up they always use the Quran, religious texts or *hadiths* to deny it. They always use these religious texts to defend their thoughts and actions. They often make political analyses and often historicize the issues using texts referring back to the imperialist era. It is not just Islamists that use this era in their rhetoric, also national movements use it.

They put much emphasis on convincing people that Islam is not a religion. The one who thinks that Islam is a religion is to be seen as an agent from the West that bears strange thoughts about Muslim culture. In that way they stigmatize those Muslims that want to have a dialogue or those who only want to practice their religion in the private sphere of their own homes for example. They actually say that these people are agents for the western world, whether you are aware of it or not you are an agent for a western school of thought. It is an antagonism. They cannot operate with these Muslims. These kind of Muslims are their biggest threat. In their world you cannot be a Muslim in your own way, you can only practice Islam their way. Thus, when a Muslim say that he or she can be religious but at the same time a citizen of the world and secular, then it goes in stark

opposition and contrast to Hizb ut-Tahrir's, and other Islamist movements, agenda. Therefore, their biggest threat is ordinary secular Muslims. Others, like Christians for instance, they do not care about since they are not believers anyway and already counted out at doomsday. They explain these secular Muslims in two ways; either they are seduced by Western culture and are not able to see for themselves and therefore it is our job to give them knowledge, and that's why we are trained to know these texts at heart and embellish them and then supply these people with our knowledge – that is what the movement is all about, to embellish and deliver the message to as many Muslims as possible. In Hizb ut-Tahrir we had an obligation to try to convince others of our message and invite others to our movement. Other religious movements do not have this obligation, but we did. We had it in our mind all the time, we should walk over to Muslims wherever we saw them and start to talk and discuss, maybe have a cup of coffee or some food and then start our talk. Our mission was to make them see things the way we did. We got trained in doing that, there were even a special chapter in one of the books, it was chapter 4 in the first book, that is called something like “how to invite others”. We had to study that and learn how to embellish the message in a way so that people got convinced and attracted to our message. Constantly we had to work on recruiting new members; it was all about recruitment and mobilization.

According to Hizb ut-Tahrir it is impossible to be Muslim and nationalist at the same time. You have to problematize your identities. The Muslim identity shall rest in Islam and not in an ethnicity. In other words, you shall not connect yourself with a country, but only with Islam. The effect of this way of thinking is that suddenly you are part of a huge group of people all over the world. You are told that all the problems that Muslims are facing today are caused by the fact that they have left Islam, and that there is no Caliphate.

**Q:** Who do you choose when recruiting new members? Are there certain profiles that you are more prone to try to recruit?

**A:** I don't know if the people in the highest steering group have made any profiles or have any clear thoughts of who to choose, but what I could see here in Denmark, was that those who get recruited here seldom have an education. Those that are educated regularly are in the higher steering committee. In Great Britain on the other hand, a majority of the members are academics with a Pakistani background. Here in Denmark, the recruitment base are usually the made up by a lower middleclass, people with shorter education or maybe some sort of craftsman education, or people working in the service sector – it can be bus divers, or taxi drivers. Then there are maybe some engineers, computer technicians, economists, but these people are very few making up around max 10 % of the members.

Hizb ut-Tahrir is usually more successful in areas where there live a lot of people with other ethnic background than the majority. They also have a lot of recruitment places in those areas, like citizen centres for instance that they use frequently. For example, you can see in their Danish homepage, [www.khilafa.dk](http://www.khilafa.dk), that they have meetings every Friday evening at Valby citizen centre. That is a place where they try to attract new potential recruits. During those evenings there are usually some well established members that have been in Hizb ut-Tahrir for

many years present, giving a seminar or a speech about a given subject. It is usually something that is in the media and is of current interest. I am sure that right now they are talking a lot about the incident here in Denmark with the Somali woman wearing a nikhab and was denied entrance on the bus with her bus card, because the bus driver couldn't see if she was the person on the card. There was a huge debate in the media about whether this was a case of discrimination or not. That is typically an event they would use in order to mobilize. Moreover, there were recently an investigation of how Danish workers felt about the fact that their Muslim co-workers took time during the day to pray, or if they wore a headscarf. They were not very happy about it. That is also a typical article that HT will use. It is news and articles that everybody have heard about, since they are printed in mainstream media. HT then use those articles and debates and say that it is just another proof of the hatred and resentment that the Danish establishment have towards Islam, they constantly work to strengthen the oppositions. They strive to make the young people feel besieged so that they alone can shape them. It is all very well thought through and organized, and it is not until you get a bit higher up in the organization that you can actually see that. It was actually first by the time I achieved a place in the administrative sector in HT that I could see that they used people as puppets. I didn't know that before I got so far up in the hierarchy that I could see it myself.

The incorporation takes around three to six months and during that process you are indoctrinated into the thought of "Us" and "Them". According to Hizb ut-Tahrir "Us" are all Muslims and "Them" are the West.

The members use a comprehensible rhetoric that is very appealing to a young person. Suddenly it seemed so easy to live, things came in a natural order, and everything was either "black or white"/halal or haram. It is obvious to me now, that Hizb ut-Tahrir is customized to recruit lost and seeking young people. They explain to these young people why they feel marginalized and why they do not feel as part of this society. When recruiting young people you focus on tensions and strains in different parts of society. Young people that come to Hizb ut-Tahrir often feel rootless and unsettled and are looking for an identity. Hizb ut-Tahrir gives them a strong community spirit. Suddenly they get lots of new friends and are invited to dinners and debates of different kinds. The community spirit gets very familiar, and you isolate yourself from other communities and fellowships as time goes on and you get more and more involved with Hizb ut-Tahrir.

**Q:** How did you get so far in the hierarchy? How did you manage to get a place in the administration?

**A:** Well, the movement is very mechanical and organizational in its construction. You can call it passing through or screening. Because when you take in people from the street you cannot be sure that they hold the right characteristics. Hizb ut-Tahrir couldn't have a member that at the same time sell drugs or have a unsatisfactory behaviour, go out with a lot of women and so on. The members have to be good role models of the organization. They screen people during this first passing through. This screening is initiated with a small



pamphlet of about 20 pages. It is called “*Methods of change by Hizb ut-Tahrir*”. I have seen other Islamist movements use the same kind of tactics and methods. In the pamphlet you can read about what they call the methodology of success, or the *mihaj*. The pamphlet very briefly presents how Hizb ut-Tahrir think things should be like. Firstly, we shall cultivate ourselves as Muslims. We shall learn more about our history and about Islam and about what Islam is all about. There it comes up again, that Islam is not a religion, but an ideology. They take up questions like if it is accepted to be both nationalist and have affection for your country of origin, it is acceptable to mix Marxist theories with Muslim thoughts and theories, what about capitalism, and liberal ideology et cetera. They discuss a lot of issues even though it is in a very pseudo-scientific way. It is also very brief and one-dimensional.

Then there is the process where they discuss these issues with you with the purpose of deconstructing and breaking down certain things inside of you. For instance, if you have some sort of nationalistic aspiration in relation to Turkey, then they tell you that Turkey is a artificial product of historical events, they tell you about Ataturk and how he killed Muslims and that he was actually a British agent. They tell you these things with the purpose of deconstructing your nationalistic aspirations and thoughts. Then they tell you about the Prophet and how he gathered the Muslims around the thought of the Ummah, and not around the thought of the Arabian Peninsula, and how Islam then expanded. However, the political and social context that existed then cannot be compared to the present context. You cannot compare two different contexts like that. At the time when I was recruited I wasn't able to see through all this and neither were my fellow students.

They constantly remove thoughts or attitudes that you have had. They ask you if you want to see yourself as a Danish citizen or as part of a much larger communion, the Muslim Ummah. They tell you that the Muslim communion, the Ummah, is like a body with fever in the way that if one part of the body is ill then the rest of the body will react with spasms and twitches. So, if Muslims are being attacked in Kashmir, Chechnya, Palestine or Iraq or any other part of the world, then the rest of the Ummah shall react and not be indifferent. Then they top this by saying that the one that wakes up in the morning without worrying about his Ummah, he is not one of us. Talk about getting forced to get interested in politics and what is happening in the Middle East. You are simply forced towards a political direction; there is no time for the spiritual dimension. According to them you shall do what is required such as pray 5 times a day, but other religious activities than that it is just waste of precious time in relation to what we have to accomplish. They do not at all prioritize the spiritual and individual forms of religion, in order to get more time for the most important, the political. You get programmed in that way of thinking.

I remember one boy that was recruited by me; he was so much like I was in the beginning. He couldn't understand with his heart or head or anything in himself that we were supposed to go out and kill other human being in jihad. I had it the same way in the beginning; I couldn't come to terms with this thought. They say that the point of departure is that we shall not kill any human beings, however

there can come situations where it will be necessary. What situations could that be then, well if there is an enemy that attacks you then you have to defend yourself. But this boy couldn't understand why *we* should expand. The way I was taught this and the way he finally accepted it was that the key to the system in Islam is God, and it is God that has created all humans. Now shall we follow God's manual or a manual made up by humans? Humans that are just like you and I, that follow their needs and constantly changes their minds et cetera. They have the idea that God and only God knows what people need and what people want. In this way we thought that we did people a favour when we incorporated them in *sharia*, we thought we did an act of mercy. We made people for the first time live in an Islamic system, instead of in the greedy capitalism, or the imperfect communism. Now I can see that it is self deceit, it is a utopia, but when you are inside this movement you think it is the only right thing and everybody around you confirm you, there is much group dynamics and communion dynamics affecting you. There is nobody that talks against you or confront your ideas. Even if you had a doubt you wouldn't dare to utter it. You like to be part of this group. You have seen those people that have been excluded from the movement; they have a really hard time. They are being put on ice completely. You know where the limits are, the invisible limits. You love this group, suddenly your whole identity is built up on it, and it becomes everything to you. Now afterwards I can honestly say that I have been damaged by this, I am very sceptical towards groups and movements. Even professional movements make me very sceptical. I am constantly on guard so that I don't change my values or norms. The power in these groups is incredible. They can make people move in a different direction and change their mind and values into a completely different one, without you actually being aware of it which is the most frightening. Before I joined HT I was a believer of democracy, pluralism et cetera, but what happens in HT is that I gradually becomes part of their values and ideas and actually work to emphasize oppositions in the world and remove the possibility for dialogue. We held a distance from the concept of dialogue since we saw it as a way of undermining and weakening the whole project of the state, the reestablishment of the Caliphate. What would happen if Muslims accepted Christianity, Judaism, capitalism, communism et cetera and if these issues were debated and people found some synchronizing or common ground where they could meet at the same level. This was impossible, so there was to be no dialogue what so ever. We had the truth and everybody should just adapt, and that should happen with the use of power at some point. However this is the last stage in the reestablishment of the Caliphate. The different stages, which are also presented in the pamphlet, are first "education" of the Muslims in the organization and officially. We are obligated to do this. I think it is common in populist movements with this idea. Secondly comes something called "interaction", and this focus primarily on Muslims. If you manage to win over a non-Muslim then it is a bonus but it is not a priority, but the focus is on Muslims. During the interaction you try to win their hearts and minds and make them see that they have to fight for this cause and for this project. These two first stages are going on parallel to each other, then the last stage is the "takeover", which is nobody knows so much about. It is very secret; nobody talks

about it since it can be dangerous to do so. This is the case also in the Middle East; everybody knows that it is very dangerous to be a political dissident in the Middle East. They say that they have secret groups, like the ones in Egypt that organized the coup there in 1952. That is what HT is imagining too, a coup d'état. They want to have the power and the monopoly of violence.

What puzzles me today when I think about it is that they use pamphlets that were written in the 1950's, with no revision since then. At that time we had the Cold War and a totally different context. Now they just say that the enemy today is capitalism and not communism.

However, in order to take infiltrate and take power they have a special unity called *Al-Nusra*, "al" means "the group" and "nusra" means "those who seek support", it is a concept in Islam. It goes all the way back to the time of the Prophet and Mecca, which is a focal point around which everything moves. They look at how the Prophet changed a non-Muslim social and political system into a Muslim/Islamic system. This is what guides them. In Mecca the Prophet's ideas about Islam were met by violence, power and destruction. However, in Medina he gains power. This is because there was an ideological infiltration in Medina that makes it possible for the Prophet to attain power from the tribe leaders that had it. After this they take power in Mecca by the violence. So the methodology is to in the first stages try to convince people without the use of violence, however, when the opportunity comes and you have reached the people in power then if it is necessary it is allowed to use violence. They are not Al-Qaeda in the sense that they don't need to attain power immediately and they don't shoot like crazy or bomb trains et cetera, but when they come to the point in time when they have the military means needed they will do a coup d'état, there is no doubt. I know this, this is their key method in the last stage, and I have also defended this at one time. They are non-violent in the way that they have never done anything violent or ordered any violent actions, but I am convinced that when the day comes that they have the possibility, they will make a coup d'état, of course not in Denmark, but in the Middle East. It is to read black on white in their books. They are not anti-violent, they just say that they will not use violence right now. This will come first after they have infiltrated.

**Q:** Where do they want to re-establish the Caliphate? Is it just in the Middle East or other countries as well?

**A:** It depends for instance on the geographical position of the country – how high is the risk that countries like Israel, or the USA could attack? So, the geographical terrain and position has to be in a way they cannot be invaded overnight. They have stated that they will start with Turkey or Egypt.

People that are not very well acquainted with these kind of Islamist movements don't understand the seriousness of these movements and the threat it states. It is not just a bunch of guys sitting around and coming up with weird ideas, these men in the management are very well educated and the ideas are thoroughly thought through. Therefore it is at least a little comforting to know that they don't have a very large resonance in the Muslim world, because they are revolutionary. However, what I have heard it is Turkey and/or Egypt, but HT is

not transparent. These facts are not openly accessible; it is just accessible in certain layers of the hierarchy. I have heard it internally though, but I never reached that high in the hierarchy. These issues are very hush-hush and not something they talk about openly.

Afterwards I think it is a form of fantasy. It is easy for them to say to me that is far down in the hierarchy that we have something going on and we have things under control, and we will do something when the right time comes, and I choose to believe it because it is a way of making yourself big and think that you have power even if you in reality are marginalized.

They create these narratives in order to keep the faith of its members.

**Q:** How long were you a member of HT and what made you leave the movement?

**A:** I was 23 when I joined and 28 when I finally left HT. I saw through a lot of things that I didn't see when I was recruited. At that time I was young, naïve and ideological, but after being there for 5 years I started to see through certain things. What was relieving for me was when I started at the university. For the first time I experienced a milieu of study where it was not about adopting a certain opinion, but at the university I learned that a certain issue or problem can be studied in different ways and one is not more trustworthy than the other. You were allowed to debate and come with different opinions as long as you empirically can underpin your argumentation.

When I so started at the university and talked about what Islam said and what *sharia* said and so on, I was not met by contempt or condemning attitudes, which I was used to outside of HT. Instead they asked me questions and got me to think in a more critical way. The teachers and my fellow students had a fantastic way of asking questions and be critical without being condemning. When I talked about Islam for instance, they asked me if I meant urban Islam that functions in a big city context or is it an Islam that functions in small villages on the countryside et cetera. Slowly I started to see things differently and I realized that Islam is many things and it changes not only in relation to time but also in relation to context. Islam in Cairo and Islam in the small villages in the country are very different. They practice Islam differently and they see Islam differently. So I understood that it is not possible to tell Muslims that there are only one Islam and one way to practice Islam. This is very hard for me, I mean I have spent 5 years in this movement, and I suddenly realize these things. It really hurts and it is very existentially shattering. I had built up a comfort and security in knowing these things, it is always good and very comforting to have the knowledge and wisdom. It was also hard for me to take part in the meetings we had while I slowly understood that their arguments didn't hold. I understood that it was just half an argument, they didn't hold and they weren't real. I started to think about other perspectives and counter-arguments, but I held it to myself. I knew that if I told anyone about what I thought I would be excluded. The first year at the university went ok, and I held my thoughts to myself. However during the second year I can feel these thoughts are getting more and more overwhelming and I have a harder time to swallow their arguments and to stand up for this one-dimensional

ideological order. I feel that the academic way of looking at things from different perspectives et cetera wins. However I cannot leave my friends in HT, they are like family to me. I am deeply split by these feelings.

The best thing an Islamist could do is to go out and talk to all the people he usually talks about. Dialogue is really the vaccine against extremism, but of course they have to want this dialogue and be willing to open up for discussion. But how do you interact with these milieus if you are in a movement like HT, when HT exhorts people to keep a distance from these milieus? HT stigmatizes them and says that they are agents and that they lead us towards destruction, in other words that we shall have nothing to do with them. I was also warned before starting at the university. It is probably due to earlier experiences. Many movements and certainly Islamist movements and of course HT have a extremely hard time recruiting academics with a background in science of arts or social sciences. Most of their members with a higher education come from technical backgrounds. This is because people educated in social sciences or science of arts have some sort of vaccination against “truth”, they don’t just believe without questioning, instead they debate, discuss and look critically on issues and statements. We learn to critically look at sources. I don’t want to stigmatize technically educated persons, but it has to be something with their education that does this. People educated in social science or science of arts simply learns to think in a different way.

**Q:** Was there any criticism from HT concerning your choice of education?

**A:** There were warnings. I started to study Arabic, and they were happy about that choice, but they also warned me and told be to stick solely to the grammar and the linguistics. They told me to be prepared and very careful when it comes to sociological theories and psychological theories. I shouldn’t see it as exact science. I did that in the beginning, but at the same time I got so stimulated by the study milieu and the open debates, and I am a person that likes to interact and I learn best by interacting and talking to other people. The most important thing is that the study milieu in the university is so stimulating and that there are never anybody that are condemning. They know what Islamism is, and they know these different ideologies. They know about Al-Qaeda and that they are quite far out on one extreme and that there also are moderate Muslims that want to be incorporated in the democratization process and so on. When you meet people that know these things, you are not met by condemning, but instead of curiousness, interest and dialectics. People that are really interested and want to do something.

Unfortunately I cannot discuss or debate with HT now. I am stigmatized by them. That is their punishment, they consider me persona non grata, and I don’t exist for them anymore. This is fine with me, I don’t mind really.

But anyway, one way or another we have to try to debate with Islamists. That is the only way to “cure” this development. When I say this I mean the higher part of the management and newly recruited members that you can create some doubts in.

**Q:** Were the other persons that started at the university while you were in HT?

**A:** Yes, but mostly on technical educations, and some started to study economics. However there was one that started to study journalism, but he also left the movement after a while. It is almost laughable when you think about it. Those that start in technical educations, there was also a controller and an accountant, they stay in the movement.

**Q:** Do you still have contact with anyone from HT?

**A:** I tried, but I am stigmatized. However I have heard through a trustworthy source, a person that has family members in HT but he is not a member himself. He is a very good friend of mine, and according to him they say that I am now an apostate, which means that I am no longer a Muslim. I can call myself a Muslim, but according to their definition I am not. I understand that it is because they have to protect their movement.

Much of the problems that Muslims face today is due to the fact that they see the Quran as a manual to be followed blindly. They have to read it critically and discuss the content. It is not a manual. This is my experience. However I talk very quietly about it since it is still very taboo to criticize the Quran or Islam, especially in the Middle East. People have been killed for doing that. Though I think it is the only solution, the Quran has to come down to the same level as the Bible and other holy texts are and it has to be criticized and debated. We have to agree that is a product of history and that it can be criticized, that doesn't mean that you cannot continue to believe in God. The difference is that you are not ruled by a text, but you can yourself decide how to practice your religion and how your relationship with God should be like. This is a necessary step that has to be made, and this is also what movements like HT is most afraid of. If there is to be a clash of cultures, maybe this is what it should be about.

**Q:** How did your family react when you joined HT?

**A:** My father reacted very large-minded. He wasn't overwhelmed about my decision to join but he never showed that he was disappointed or displeased with it. He told me afterwards that it reminded him a lot about his own period of young adulthood, and his engagement in leftist movements. There are many similarities between the leftist ideologies and Islamist ideologies, for instance the issue of why small parts of the population have all the money while the rest live in poverty.

But my father was completely calm concerning my joining with HT, and I think that this was very important to me. I have spoken to a lot of parents and many react too aggressively when their children convert. This can make the children feel more alienated and therefore an easier target for Islamist movements. This feeling of alienation and marginalization was something I myself experienced. After I converted and changed my name and my religion, I was met by attitudes that I had never experienced before. If I had converted to Buddhism I don't think I would experience this, it was because it was Islam. Of course this has gotten worse after 9/11 and the Taliban's in Afghanistan et cetera, but there are certain attitudes and problems concerning Islam in some segments of society.

You are met by a contempt that are actually directed towards the Taliban's, the stoning of women and some *sharia* rules, and it is ok to contempt those things; actually you *shall* contempt those things. But people have to remember that just because a person convert to Islam doesn't mean that he or she agree with the *sharia* rules and the oppression of women and so on.

Also, politicians and decisions makers have to much more careful about what they say. Today, we can all divide between Islamists and Muslims and that is the first step. What bothers me is that in the government, there are persons that grant millions of kronor to integration projects and counter-radicalization projects et cetera, and at the same time they talk about Muslims and Islam as a problem. That is highly counterproductive. I cannot understand this. It is totally without meaning. Give millions to integration and then stigmatize these people in the media. This is exactly what benefits movements like HT. I don't want to scandalize HT or anything like that, I just want to make clear what they stand for.

**Q:** Do you think movements like HT are step-stones towards more violent radical movements?

**A:** Yes I think so, but I haven't personally seen anybody from HT being recruited to Al-Qaeda. HT goes out and officially criticizes Al-Qaeda. I have never heard that they praise the 9/11 attacks, the attacks in London or the killing of certain individuals et cetera. According to HT these actions are un-Islamic. But if the question is if there is a risk to end up in radical violent milieus, then I'd say that there is. But it doesn't depend on the organization as such, but on the individual. HT and jihad salafists like Al-Qaeda are competitors. A member of Al-Qaeda would say about a person in HT that all he does is talk, but he doesn't act. They think that the only way is to remove the roots of the problem with weapons and violence. On the other hand, a person from HT would say that this is completely unrealistic; you cannot fight the superpowers of the world alone. What you do is like a mosquito sticking an elephant.

HT is in oppositions also with the Muslim Brotherhood. The movements are similar in many ways, but today the Muslim Brotherhood is pro-democracy and pro-parliamentary, which they weren't before. HT on the other hand is still against democracy.

The organization doesn't suggest that you move on to more violent organizations, but they have been active in creating the irreconcilable mental geography that the West, Europe, Russia, China, Israel et cetera have one purpose and one purpose only, and that is to destroy Islam and Muslims all over the world. They bring up examples from Chechnya and Bosnia, but of course they forget to mention that in Sudan the Muslims do this to other people. This narrative makes you incredibly angry and bitter. So if you gets really angry and lose confidence in HT and thinks that they just talk and don't act, then because you are already disposed to the hatred towards the other and you are filled with hatred, definitely you could move on to a more violent organization. But it depends on the individual and not on the organization.

If you should indicate to HT that you want to move on to a more violent organization, then they would argue against it for sure. You are with them or you

are out, there is nothing in between. The thing is that all these Islamic movements have the same goal, but different methods. It is the methodology that separates them.

**Q:** What about Al-Muhajiroun, the violent spin-off organization to HT? How was that movement created?

**A:** The creator Omar Bakri was in the management of HT in Great Britain for many years. However, at one point he countered the strictly hierarchical rules of HT and put his views above the HT's. He said that the Caliphate could definitely be created in Great Britain - that was his radical idea. According to HT the starting point for the creation of the Caliphate shall be in a country where the majority of the population is Muslim and it shall be either Turkey or Egypt. When he still kept agitating for his idea, he was excluded. During this excluding-process he created Al-Muhajiroun. Then he became a direct opponent to HT but he still used their ideology, spiced up with jihad. He have recruited young people and sent them to Afghanistan on training camps and so on.

The thing is that all the Islamist movements are in complete agreement over the fact that we shall create a Caliphate, it is the methods to do it that divides them.

**Q:** Do the members of HT belong to certain segments of society with reference to education and social class?

**A:** It differs from country to country I think. In Great Britain many of the members are very well educated, and a majority has a Pakistani or Asian background. I think it has something to do with expectations from the family and things like that since they are very concerned about getting a good and long education. So in Great Britain many members are well educated, while in Denmark for instance most of the members come from Turkey or Iraq and what I have seen is that if there are somebody that are well educated they are in the top of the hierarchy and in the management here.

They recruit most of their members from these milieus where there are a high concentration of immigrants and a lot of young people that feel marginalized. That is where most of the members come from, here in Denmark at least.

**Q:** The majority of members in movements like HT are second generation immigrants, why is that so do you think?

**A:** To begin with I think you have to use some constructivist theories here. Why use concepts like second generation immigrants, new Danes, neo-Danes et cetera, when a person might be born in Danish hospital and has lived all his life in Denmark? He or she is not an immigrant, he or she is born here, why not just call them Danes, or maybe Danes with other ethnic background. By calling them second-generation immigrants or new Danes society excludes them. We cannot continue to focus on the problems, if we do that then immigrants will start to understand themselves as problems. There are problems, of course, but we have to make clear that it is a small segment and not all Muslims or other immigrants. What bother me most is the stigmatization and the fact that we still use old



concepts. The open debate in society has to become much more nuanced. We cannot stop organizations like HT or extreme right-wing parties to take certain standpoints and angles, but the common decision-makers and people that have access to the media have to think about not producing or creating stigmatization. Words create things. I have seen it so many times.

Also, it is a fact that young people living in e.g. Rosengård in Malmö or in Norrebro here in Copenhagen more easily fall into criminality or radicalization, but, and this is important, it has nothing to do with religion or that they are Arabs, it is the social context in which they live that is to blame. It is a social responsibility to deal with these socially marginalized areas. Society has actually created this, and now they have to deal with it and repair it.

Society has to start to include these young people and call them Danes. Young people that feel marginalized and excluded from society and then listen to the messages of HT are such easy targets. We have to make them feel part of this country and part of this society, it is the only solution. I have experienced this stigmatization myself after converting to Islam. Before that I interacted with people just like any other Dane and people didn't look at me in a strange way, over night when I converted to Islam and got a new name I was viewed with suspicion and by some even with contempt. Things changed, both implicitly and explicitly. It was really surreal. I was the same person for Gods sake; I had just changed my name and converted to Islam. I know what this constant stigmatization does to people; I have been through it myself.

I remember when people at my work found out that I had converted to Islam; there were constant remarks from some of them. I felt like everybody was watching me and looked at me as a different person. Those who didn't say things nevertheless didn't stand up for me when the others commented on my religion. I had a really hard time trying to understand how in the world my conversion to Islam could provoke these reactions. I almost started to doubt that I had really done something that was wrong, that justified their reactions. People who didn't know me couldn't place me in a certain category, sine I spoke perfect Danish, I was born and raised in Denmark and my Parents were Danish. Instead they started to ask where my parents originally came from, and ironically our family stems from Western Jutland in Denmark. No matter what I did I was outside all existing categories. I didn't belong anywhere really. Suddenly people, both those that I had known for a long time and strangers, started to regard me solely on behalf of my religion. I became witness to the Islamophobia that some Danes have, and which I wasn't familiar with before. I was met with different parameters, like I had changed, but I didn't feel that I had...but it could almost feel as if I had. As a part of the world around me started to force me into a narrow and prejudiced Muslim box, I actually started to feel more and more alienated in the midst of my well-known everyday life. I took people's reactions very personal, as I wasn't able to put them in perspective as I do today. I was always met by cold dissociation that is difficult to put words on since it was mostly unspoken and implicit; nevertheless the feeling was very real, like people pushed me away from them with an invisible hand. I had always loved to be among people and I was very

social and out-going, but after my conversion I felt like people no longer saw me as a human being but as a Muslim first of all.

What is most frightening is that I later adopted the same implacable attitudes that I met from some of my fellow countrymen, just with the opposite idea.

I remember that I struggled with my identity for many years. I didn't know who I was or where I belonged. However, my disorientation was nothing in comparison to what I heard from the other young men in my study circle. Most of them felt divided between their parent's traditional culture from their country of origin, and the society they had grown up in. They couldn't identify with their parents traditions, but at the same time they felt - just like I did - that they didn't belong to Denmark either. They constantly asked themselves if they were Turkish, Lebanese, Pakistani, or Danish or maybe none of those. We all thirsted for an identity, but we were in the middle of no-man's-land. This is exactly what HT takes advantage of when they recruit new members. The party presented us to a whole package consisting of belief, a political conviction and a strong social communion, which we gladly accepted. In HT we could find the answers we were looking for. There was no question that the Quran couldn't answer.

Actually HT is built up just like a sect. The members are gradually indoctrinated and manipulated just as in other sects...there is frightening similarities. They use the same tactics as for example the Scientologists, the same psychological and emotional manipulation mechanisms, and the same idea that the members shall pay some percent of their income every month to the movement. Of course I couldn't see these similarities while I was still a member, but after I left and I had the opportunity to re-evaluate the process I went through and the tactics they use it is obvious to me that HT is a sect.

**Q:** What are the external motivational factors for HT?

**A:** It is the idea that Islam shall rule. Even if for example the USA showed itself from their best side, HT would still be hostile since they have this dogmatic and ideological standpoint that Islam shall dominate. They selectively use what USA does or what Israel does to make their point. If you ask them about what is going on in Sudan, they say that they of course condemn it, but it cannot be compared to what is happening in e.g. Palestine and Iraq.

I would say that HT and other Islamist movements are a problem in the sense that they take young people that feel marginalized and push them in the wrong direction; that is the big problem with these organizations as I see it. They deprive them the possibility to be included in society and be part of this society. That is the underlying danger. I started to hate other people for the first time in my life when I was in this organization. It is not in my nature or personality to hate people, but for the first time I started to do that and it was produced by HT.