# CHAPTER TWO

# YOUTH, EXTREMISM AND THE LIMINOID RADICAL RIGHT-WING ANTI-ISLAMISTS VS RADICAL ISLAM IN NORWAY

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As a life phase, youth embodies both vulnerability and a sensibility for the power relations in which they find themselves. At times such a state is reflected in an ability to point out, to "feel", and to reflect upon contemporary society's "sore spots". This ability sometimes leads to extreme political positions and attitudes, but also to the pointing out of deep societal problems and challenges. On such a background, the article will explore and compare the processes through which some young actors in right wing milieus, on the one hand, and young Muslims, on the other, become radical and relate to the extremist "poles" of both these strands in today's multicultural Norway. The informants are members of NDL (Norwegian Defence League), SIAN (Stop the Islamisation of Norway) and Vigrid (a declared Neo-Nazi group with Odinist overtones) on the right; they are more scattered on the Islamic side, but relate to Salafism, in both violent and non-violent forms. To what extent may these processes of radicalisation be seen as expressions of youth cultural rebellion, sensitive societal insight or as a generation gap? The analysis builds on Victor Turner's conceptualisation of what he terms "the liminoid" (Turner 1974).

## Introduction

As a life phase, youth is in several ways characterised by vulnerability (Ericsson 1968). First, there are biological processes that generate demanding transformations in each. Second, adolescence is an intense period during which one develops an identity, searches to find a place in a social group and explores gender relations. Some will feel the need to see some clarification in existential dimensions relating to religion and life views, and some are concerned with the power relations of society and the

social position in which they and their significant others find themselves. Especially in contemporary western societies where traditions and established ways of life tend to lose much of their orienting power, and young people may significantly feel the burden of finding their "own" ways of handling life –such a vulnerability is utterly present (Giddens1992, Bauman 2007; Horvath 2013).

In recent times, radical ideologies, political extremism and terror from both the right wing, as well as from jihadists have manifested in Europe in several ways, profoundly challenging the existing social order (e.g. Jupskås 2012; Khosrokhavar 2009, 2017; Roy 2017). In Norway, a young man in his early thirties killed 77 people in Oslo and at a Labour party camp for youth in 2011 as an attack upon the multicultural society (Borchgrevinck 2012). Attacks on mosques and asylum centres take place in many European countries, not least related to the refugee crisis of the Syrian war (Napoleoni 2014). At the same time, extreme Islamists are responsible for series of terrorist attack. 9/11 is a cornerstone, followed by the bombs in Madrid and London, the attack on Charlie Hebdo, the killings in Bataclan, Paris, in the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, in the airport and metro in Brussels, in the airport in Istanbul and so on.

In many of these examples of violence young people take part in most extreme groups (Griffin 2012, Vestel 2016). As also stated by Mudde, the general literature on political socialisation teaches that it is during youth that the central political attitudes develop (Mudde 2014, 7).

Against such a backdrop, this article will explore and compare the processes through which some young actors in right-wing milieus, on the one hand, and some young Muslims, on the other, become radical and relate to the extremist "poles" of both these strands in today's multicultural Norway.

To what extent and in what ways are these apparent radicalisation processes solely expressions of youth cultural rebellion, sensitive societal insight or a critical generation gap? Implicit in my question is also an assumption that young people attracted to radical and even extreme positions along this continuum, may also be reacting to experiences of social injustice. This question is an often-missed point in public debates about radicalisation. But to undertake such a perspective, it is necessary to explore young people's experiential horizons. In the following, we will analyse four cases that illuminate some of the complexities in the more superficial understanding of what radicalisation implies. To do this, I will argue, it might be fruitful to approach them through the lens of the conceptualisation that anthropologist Victor Turner has termed the "liminoid".

## The Liminoid: Vulnerability, Creativity and Extremisms

In Victor Turner's seminal analyses of transition rituals among the Ndembu people in Zambia, he directs our attention towards the phenomenon known as *liminality*, rooted in the word "limen" which in Latin means "threshold" (Turner 1992).[1] It describes a transitional state, where tribal leaders take the Ndembu youths out of their daily modes of living, and into a ritualised and guarded space. The liminal state questions and to some extent violates society's hierarchies, values and general order. In the liminal state, it is possible to "test", question and transgress the "limits" of ordinary society. In this state, one is being "betwixt and between", in this case between childhood and adulthood (Turner 1992, Thomassen 2009; Griffin 2012, Horvath 2013). Turner's root example of liminality is, in other words, the *transitional quality of youth*. The wisdom of the ritual may perhaps reflect exactly the assumption that young people, being not yet socialised into grown-up performativity, are potentially unruly, creative, transgressive, challenging and to some extent even dangerous to the order of the society in which they live. Through the ritual, this liminal unruliness is permitted to unfold, within a safe and ordered framework, for a short period. The experience ends with "coming back to society" and acceptance as a full member, and the restoration of order.

Turner has suggested that the term liminoid can describe similar qualities in modern societies. Roger Griffin, building on Turner, uses the term *liminoidality* to more clearly than Turner, underline that Griffin sees this as a more *permanent state of transition* in modern societies, and where the return to a previously existing order is lacking or is considerably more unclear and liquid (Griffin 2012, 52).

In many ways, young people in contemporary society have manifested a series of such qualities, especially in their often very spectacular subcultures (Turner 1992, Griffin 2012, 139-141). For example, in the middle of the fifties, there were riots around early rock 'n' roll.[2] Then, we found experiments with drugs, "mind-expanding" practices, sexuality, strange clothing and large protests in the countercultures of the sixties (Griffin 2012, 139). In the seventies, we saw the outrageousness of punk (Hebdige 1993). In the eighties, hip-hop emerged from several urban areas (Chang 2007). Up to and including the present, we see the cultivation of horror and the grotesque in early heavy metal, of death and so-called

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[1] Turner is drawing here on Arnold van Gennep's theories on "liminality" (Turner 1992)

[2] See for example Kvalvåg 2012.

"satanism" in death metal and black metal (Moynihan and Søderlind 1999). At the turn of the century, the neo-psychedelic house and techno music arose. These phenomena stood for a variety of experiments, societal critique and behaviour that challenged societal norms and attitudes in both creative and destructive–societally threatening–manifestations, as described in the literature of subcultures (e.g. Hebdige 1993, Willis 1990, Vestel 2004, Buckingham and Kehily 2014, Griffin 2012, Huq 2014). Even if much of the research into these subcultures can appear too concerned both with the spectacular and also with a fetishising of the resistance aspect of many youth-based subcultures, the liminoid qualities of these subcultural expressions are hard to deny (Buckingham and Kehily 2014).[3]

Thomassen, who has recently taken the theorisation of the liminal/liminoid further, has underlined even more explicitly that "critical life stages" such as puberty or teenage, may exemplify types of liminal experiences (Thomassen 2009, 17). While liminality in traditional Ndembu society was something imposed on its youth from society in the shape of an already existing ritual, in modern societies, it is more a state of being with a much more unclear societal framing. From such a perspective, we may add, youth cultures, in all their liminoid aspects, may also bear forth a creative sensitivity. This ability to encircle the "sore spots" of society reflects, to some extent, the tendency to display and develop what we may term a "lived comment". At times they develop a kind of analysis and critique of important aspects of power relations in the societies in which they live. In the following, we will explore the fruitfulness of the liminoid perspective to enhance the understanding of four empirical cases

## Method, Context and Some Compromises

The research questions address the questions raised above in the exploration of four individual case stories, through which the subjectivity of experience will be our lens (e.g. Linger 2005).

This article grew out of an extended research project stretching from 2012 to 2016. This project explored young people's relations to radical positions in Norway: right-wing Islam critics, on the one hand, and radicalised or extreme Muslims, on the other (e.g. Vestel 2016, Vestel and Bakken 2016; Pedersen, Vestel and Bakken 2017).[4]

Importantly, the original research project was not about terror-research in the traditional meaning, where one tries to understand and develop detailed models of processes ending up in actually realised acts of terror (see for example Hegghammer 2013). In contrast, the focus has been on the grey zones: that is, not upon the inner cores of extreme groups, even if these are also interesting. I have intended to explore youth and adults who find themselves at the edges of these core milieus, but who are close enough–through ideas or through actual contact–to be able to reflect upon actions and attitudes held by the more extreme milieus.

The sensitivity of the theme and the overall attention in the media complicated the process of establishing contact with potential informants. The number of informants is therefore very few, and it is not possible to draw broader conclusions from the empirical material. Nevertheless, I will argue that the cases may illuminate some critical aspects of the understanding of the complexities of young people's motivations and trajectories toward extremist positions.

The primary data are qualitative interviews undertaken between 2012 and 2014. The informants are of two categories: one category consists of youths or adults who tell about their trajectories and developments in and sometimes out of extreme positions when they were younger. The other group includes youth workers and other adults who know or have had close contact with young people with different degrees of extreme positions. Supplementing the empirical sources are newspaper articles, homepages, official documents, documentary films, books written by journalists, and the like.

On the right-wing side, I came into contact with two men of about 40, who had a significant contact net and who had been in various radical right-wing milieus for several years. Through one of them, I gained contact with two young men in their twenties. These four men had, as far as I know, never met physically, but were part of the same virtual network on the Internet. I also gained contact with a 28-year-old man who had been a member of the declared neo-Nazi group "Vigrid" several years before, but who had left the group and was now working in antiracist organisations.

To explore the radical/conservative Islam side, I made contact with two youth workers working in a mosque frequented by radicalised young

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people. One was in his twenties, the other in his late forties with around two decades of experience, and one older leader in the same mosque. In addition to these, I met two young converts in their twenties; one was formerly part of an extremist milieu but broke out, and is now engaged in de-radicalisation work. The other had spent her youth in a rough, multicultural youth milieu, but is now involved in similar work on preventing violent radicalisation. I also obtained several interviews with one young man who describes himself as "radical", and who has an extensive contact net, even in milieus regarded as extremist. The last informant is a youth worker with several decades of experience, who had known several young people who later became part of extremist milieus since they were young.

From both milieus, I obtained contact lists of young women suggested for interviews. None of them answered my repeated calls.

Ideally, the informants should be young people with first-hand experience within extremist groups. The fact that I was unable to recruit such subjects reflects the difficulties of finding informants willing to talk.

The strength of the project is the focus upon the "grey zones". The grey zone provides the advantage of a far broader perspective than traditional terrorist studies and also opens up for a stronger emphasis upon their personal development–the informants´ understanding of their situation–where even the emotional dimension in their horizons stands out (e.g. Vestel 2016).

Within the framework of this chapter, it is not possible to do more extended and detailed analyses of each case. Instead, they serve as "stories" whose core analytical points will be summed up in the concluding remarks.

## Right-Wing Radicalisation

Concepts like post, high, late or liquid modernity can describe the time in which we live (see for example Giddens 1992; Bauman 2000, 2006, 2007, Griffin 2012). The absence of the grand narratives, the dissolutions of the power of traditions–of the preformed lines for how people should live their lives–and the decline of religious and other authorities mark the period. For some, this decline of former authority structures creates reactions, not least in the shape of fear. This decline is relevant both among many immigrant families and within groups belonging to the majority; life in post-, high-, late- or liquid modernity seems chaotic, disordered and threatening (Bauman 2007). It is a state where liminoid

experiences, phenomena and relationships have become more or less permanent (Griffin in Horvath 2013).

For many of the present actors on the right wing in Norway, as indicated by their names and their self-presentation (in quotation marks below), unease with the turbulence of the times seems to reflect a feeling of loss, of being threatened by the immigrant strangers. Their world as it is known is changing, they fear for the future, and tend toward nostalgic longing for earlier times, where identity and culture were more homogenous, ordered and transparent. Some examples: the Norwegian "Popular movement against immigration" ("*Folkebevegelsen mot innvandring*") tries "to stop immigration from foreign cultures", wishes that "Norway remained a wholesome national state" and emphasises "the historical unity of the people".[5]

*Vigrid* has taken its name from the area where the final battle– Ragnarok–between the supernatural forces will take place, according to Nordic mythology (Bæksted 1978, 186). In this battle, the world as it is known will disappear, and something new will be born. Vigrid members wish for a "Nordic society based on Nordic religion and Nordic values and cultural norms", they approve Odinism and Nordic beliefs, and they regret that "the national state of Norway is history and probably will not return". Vigrid has also declared for Nazism (hear Espeland's radio documentary 2014). *Den Nordiske Motstandbevegelsen* (The Nordic Resistance Movement) celebrates Hitler and wants a "return to our pre-Christian ancestors' ways of thinking" and the purity of the race. Fjordman–the ideologue most quoted in Breivik's manifesto–insists on the necessity of defending ourselves, also with arms, against those who engage in "a war of extinction" against European civilisation (Sætre 2013). SIAN (Stop Islamisation of Norway) wants to save the country from "The consequences of Islamisation", while NDL (Norwegian Defence League) declares itself ready to fight "extremist tendencies in the Norwegian society" and to defend the Norwegian, as the name indicates.

All these actors occupy different positions in their relationship to their ultimate aims for Norwegian society, the acceptance of democratic rules, and the use of violence. In such a sense they have some more or less clear ideological-emotional contents that play a central role in their appeal to young people.

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[5] All quotes are collected from the groups' and networks' respective homepages in 2010 –2014, unless other sources are indicated.

In the following, I will discuss how the informants on the right wing side relate to the attitudes and ideological positions reflected in these groups.

There are also more extra-ideological motivational structures or dimensions that may play an essential role in these processes, as Bjørgo and Gjelsvik and I have pointed out (see Vestel 2016; Bjørgo and Gjelsvik 2015). These structures become evident in the following case story where the interactions between ideology and extra-ideological aspects are salient, all relating to liminoid states on various levels.

## Kim's Story

Kim is now 28. He was a member of Vigrid nine years ago, but after several years left the milieu, and works today in an antiracist organisation. He still experiences harassments from an extremist right-wing milieu (*Den Nordiske Motstandsbevegelsen*), which know about his past–which indicates that his former membership still has significant repercussions. I ask him: How did his contact with Vigrid begin? Were there any particular experiences that he sees as essential for joining the group? We also ask, in what ways may his engagement with the group eventually reflect a youth cultural or a generation based way of being? And how may the theory of liminality shed light upon Kim's story?

He says he was "*a typical victim of bullying*" both in primary and secondary school. He moved from school to school, without any improvement of his situation. He got into contact with a milieu of petty criminals, stealing cars. He says that all his friends had problems with child care institutions, and many had problematic families. "*My own family was very structured, though, but it did not help.*" When he was around 17, a group of youth of immigrant background attacked him and his friend. "*It was completely unprovoked. They knocked us down. That experience did something to me*", he says.

Being involved in a milieu of petty criminals, Kim already had some experience of being in a liminoid situation, at odds with societal norms. Besides, the repeated experiences of being bullied, as a vulnerable child, also built up to the need to regain self-esteem and respect. With such a background, the event when Kim and his friend were physically attacked, invaded and humiliated by this youth group seems to have become what we may term a critical happening in Kim's life. The attack was an event that may have particular potential for becoming a turning point, where new directions and ways of seeing the world and oneself may emerge and manifest on both a micro, meso and macro levels (see Andersson, Jacobsen, Rogstad and Vestel 2012; Rogstad and Vestel 2011). If the position of youth reflects a unique vulnerability, then being humiliated, physically attacked and threatened may create in him correspondingly strong impulses to resurrect himself through engaging in compensating counter-aggression. In the sense that conflicts imply a state of a not-yet-decidedness about who has power, they have a liminoid aspect.

At the time, Vigrid was not unknown in the area. Some days later Kim and his friend contacted the group, through information they found on the internet. For persons already possessing the liminoid attributes of being outcasts (petty crime, car theft), the threshold of contacting an even more transgressive group may be lower. They met "Bjørn", one of the leaders.

> He was very nice. He knew what to say to young people like us. I remember that I somehow reacted when he said that the killing of Benjamin Hermansen[6] was a good thing, though, and that Benjamin sold drugs to Norwegian youth. But then, two days after that, we were baptised.[7]

Right from the start, Bjørn's approval of the killing of Hermansen, the 15-year old of Norwegian Ghanaian background by three young neo-Nazis, the anti-immigrant and racist ideology set the tone of their first contact. But despite this glimpse of reflexive hesitation in Kim, they went ahead.

Kim's descriptions of this "baptism" have strong parallels to Turner's description of the ritualistic aspect of the liminal. As in the Ndembu case, two authoritative adults that represent the guardians of power in the group, "Bjørn", and "Tore", another leading figure in Vigrid at the time, lead the baptism into Vigrid:

> We went out to the woods, to a place that according to archaeologists was important for the Vikings. Tore and Bjørn had brought ice-lumps and torches t put in a big circle. Bjørn brought two swords. Then Tore was on one side, and I on the other, with Bjørn and my friend that crossed each other's swords. Tore started to read from the Edda-verses and asked me to step into the circle. Then they crossed their swords over my head, while Tore was saying: "Now you are a human being". He meant that "human

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[6] Benjamin Hermansen was killed in 2001 by a group of young neo-nazis with some connections to Vigrid. It created huge reactions and the protest demo with 40 000 participants is considered to be the largest demo in post-war Norway (Andersson et al 2012, 245).

[7] Kim is here referring to a statement he claims was uttered by "Bjørn". To my knowledge there is no evidence that Benjamin Hermansen sold drugs.

beings" did not include those who are not baptised [laughs a little, indicating the absurdity of this statement]. But there and then it felt somehow "good" and "tough", you think there is something great about it.

The choice of a place associated with the Vikings, the reading of the *Edda* verses and the use of ancient weapons (swords), all point to the cult of the past and of the Nordic mythology that plays such an essential part in Vigrid's worldview. Here the ritual's message may be taken to mean that the ceremony takes the two boys out of the ordinary life, and into the liminal circle (of oppositions; ice and fire, humans and non-humans). Through the reading of the "magical text" (Edda) and the use of swords, they are entering a new status—as "human beings". The ritual may be seen precisely as a confirmation of the new worldview where the Vigrid members are the in-group of "true humans", and where all non-members are "the Others", that is, excluded as "non-human". A more explicit example of the symbolic de-humanisation of an out-group seems hard to find. Later on, Kim went through a similar ritual; this time termed a confirmation.

It is well known that more radical and transgressive youth cultures also tend to mark themselves as different from other groups, such as the "mods" versus "the rockers" (Hebdige 1978). "Freaks" were a counterculture of the sixties versus the "straights" (Willis 1978); the "black metal" opposed the Christian (Moynihan and Søderlind 1998), thus strongly cultivating animosity of the in-group versus the Others. These tags may be one more expression of their liminoid character, following Griffins' understanding of what he terms "the radicalisation of an "in-between generation". Here he refers to the youth cultural rebellion of the sixties (Griffin 2012, 139-141). Again we see the similarities between the liminoidality of the right-wing extremism of the Vigrid youth, and the radical orientations of some of the youth cultures up to the present day's black metal, in the shape of a divided worldview, or "splitting" in Griffin's terms (Griffin 2012, 92). They may at times be rooted in experiences of unease and grievances that may or may not be made explicit through expressions of resistance, or articulated as critical views of the world. It is important to underline that the cultural expressions of youth do not necessarily manifest as spectacular, but may just as likely express themselves in a more low-key manner. Nevertheless, often it is exactly the tendency to speak in capital letters, to display what Griffin calls an "adolescent sense of self-importance" and to simplify their worldview into a black-and-white version that may be characteristic, not least in matters of power relations (Griffin 2012, 141). Such amplify the "limen".

Kim gradually absorbed the ideology of Vigrid. He says he became more conscious of keeping away from people of brown skin, he became more aggressive and made a lot of fuss in his local area. In addition to these developments, large parties gathered lots of young people.

> It was a huge milieu at that time—big parties. One party took place in a farmhouse far away into the woods. 30-40 people were there—young girls and older boys. We met loud white power music and swastika flags everywhere. It was not until after we went through our confirmation that we saw the swastika. (...) I guess I was brainwashed at that stage. (....) At the parties, there were lots of drugs, alcohol and guns. You could get anything. Some of the folks at the parties were quite harmless people who had just arrived into bad company, but others (...) You could almost see that they were dangerous people. I felt it was ok back then, but when I look back, they were quite crazy.

Loud music, drugs, weapons, provoking symbols like swastikas and parties held in particular places: the aura of the liminoid transgression of norms had a strong appeal to young people.

Kim sums up the process and how he came to see himself as a part of Vigrid:

> I went from being a bullied victim, who people harassed (...) But after I joined, I became a person who felt I had power! I felt important (...) I radiated things that people thought were dangerous. At first, it was only black clothes. Then as I got more brainwashed, it became T-shirts and buttons with swastikas and such things. (...) I experienced that people moved over to the other side of the pavement when they saw I was coming!

The feeling of power, respect and his feeling of "radiating" danger seemed to be Kim's reward for his new identity. His identity played on provoking symbolic markers—for example, the swastika. The swastika has explosive potential for youth cultural communities, as in the use of swastikas by the punks, symbols of Satanism by the black metals, and the physical self-harming and self-destruction by the "emos" (Hebdige 1998; Vestel 1999; Moynihan and Søderlind 1998; Vestel 2014, 2016).[8]

But as time passed, Kim's parents found out about their son's attitudes and associates. They told him to either leave Vigrid or to leave home. Kim

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[8] "Emo" is a youth subculture that originated from the hard-core punk scene in Washington in the eighties, and that put primary emphasis on emotions and introspection. "Emos" were also associated with self-harm and depression, and appeared in many countries in the first decade of the 2000s (see Vestel 2014).

chose the latter and moved into a house together with some fellow Vigrid associates.

But after some time, he got a girlfriend, and she got pregnant. The relationship came to be another critical marker in his young life, and the start of leaving the group:

> We talked about it. I knew that if I continued in the milieu, there would be little chance to keep the child because police and the childcare would say that we were unable to take parental responsibility. I called my parents, and they said I was welcome to return home. (...) To me, that was the most important thing: that my parents reacted positively. So I left.

It was not easy to leave. Kim received several threats from the milieu; they would shoot him in his knees, kill him and so on. He then moved to a school in a different part of the country. Kim said he still had several of the same attitudes as in Vigrid, not least a problematic relationship to immigrants. But then he got work as a gatekeeper in a venue drifted by some Turks. "After some time we became good friends. I believe that it was that friendship that moved me to change my attitudes."

A central driver in Kim's trajectory towards the radical right seems to be his repeated experiences of being bullied, the turbulence of changing schools and becoming involved in petty crime. When he and his friend then experience the attack by youth with an immigrant background, the need to take revenge and to regain respect seems partly to direct his aggression into a more ideological direction against this new enemy, in the shape of the "foreignness" of the attackers. The availability of the ideologically framed aggressions that Vigrid had already articulated then became a driving force into a new and strong identity, with all the appeal that mysterious rituals, the assumed power of the Vikings of the past, heavily loaded symbols and big parties could offer a grieved and vulnerable young boy. Here the sum of such spectacular paraphernalia with an active youth cultural appeal, paired with transgressive ideological drivers, on the one hand, seem to interact with the extra-ideological drivers of the young bullied victim, already on the edge of societal norms as a petty criminal, on the other.

Kim's story is nevertheless only one among many others. To give a broader picture of the dynamics towards a radical right-wing position, here is our second story on the extreme right-wing direction.

## Arild's Story

Arild (37) works as an engineer. He has for a long time been active in various right-wing milieus and has a big network. "From moderate anti-Islamists, to considerably harder people, extremists and neo-Nazis, even people who support Breivik's actions", as he puts it. He has been a member of the Norwegian Defence League, in their early years, and is now firmly associated with SIAN (see, e.g. Strømmen 2014; Jupskås 2012 for an overview of the right-wing landscape in Norway).[9][10] He actively distances himself from violence, and from Breivik especially, whom he says has put the right-wing side's fight against Islam several years back with his offensive actions. He is a devoted anti-Islamist but strongly emphasises that he is not against Islam or Muslims in general. I ask how his attitudes developed. Were there some experiences or some patterns that, as he sees it, had particular importance for his development? He explains:

> I grew up in a small village until I was 20. It was a little area with not many inhabitants. Then came the asylum centre. There were lots of conflicts. Lots of fighting and quarrelling among the asylum seekers, and they were nasty with the local young girls. Often the police had to clean up the place.

"Foreigners" in the shape of asylum seekers in a considerable number thus entered his village, and created almost shock-like experiences among the original inhabitants, as he puts it. He continues:

> There were people from many countries, with different religions, ways of being, and we who lived there felt they could do just what they wanted. They burnt down the centre because they were angry. Drugs came to our

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[9] NDL is a sister organisation of EDL (English Defence League) and operated for the first time under the NDL name in a demonstration held by EDL in 2010. They declare themselves to be solely against Muslim extremists, and not Islam in general. In Norway the organisation has a turbulent history, and seems to be inactive at present. "Defence Leagues" have arisen in a large number of countries. Nationalism and animosity towards various expressions of Islam, and immigrants, are core values (see Pilkington 2016, Busher 2016, Vestel 2016).

[10] SIAN emerged in 2008 from various organisations and networks critical to Islam in Norway. "SIAN works against and wants to stop and reverse the islamisation of Norway (....) Islam is a threat against our peace and freedom. Not only in Norway, but all over the world Islam is accompanied by non-peace." (from their home page, downloaded 04.10.2014). It has sister organisations in several European countries (Strømmen 2014)

village, and they did not care where they used them. They fought in the streets. These things were not natural in such a small town. We got the whole big-city problematic flung straight in our faces.

Witnessing adults fighting with sticks on the local football field, flinging nasty comments to the local girls and setting the asylum centre on fire may readily be experienced as profoundly offensive and create massive grievances in the local community. These grievances may be felt not least by youths 16-20 years of age, as Arild was when all this happened.

Young people tend to use public space more actively and in different and more complex ways than their elders. And as eager young users of the public space–with all that their age implies–vulnerable gender relations, confusing identity struggles and strong feelings for the place where they have all grown up–their sense of being offended is not hard to understand.

In 2014 Arild explained his negative stance towards Islam by referring to the problems around the asylum centre as he grew up:

> So what was the problem? Not all of them could be idiots? It was those things around the asylum centre, and what you read in the media about what has happened in other places that formed my impressions. Today I believe that the main problem was the crash between a Western, open, democratic society, on the one hand, and the parties, states, and interpretations of Islam in the cultures from where they come, that were the connections.

The intrusion and behaviours of the asylum seekers may be parallel to the role of the attacks by the youth of immigrant background experienced by Kim and his friend. But in Arild's and his fellow youths' cases, the grievances were not fuelled by previous extra-ideological traumas, as far as we know.

I mention Fjordman to Arild (he was Breivik's chief ideologist) and others' statements that Norway is at war with Islam. Arild does not immediately support such an utterance, but instead, he points to very concrete statements by radical Islamists about their wish to impose sharia laws that Arild finds both provoking and highly frightening. He says:

> I am not at the stage of believing in a child-pram jihad–that Norway is at war or civil war that is unjustifiable.[11] (...) I believe in a completely

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[11] "Child-pram jihad" refers to the assumption that producing large numbers of children is used by Muslims to outnumber, "win the war with the West" and «take over» the dominance of the country.

conscious wish to take over from those who live according to sharia, from the Islamists: for example, Anjem Choudary in England,[12] the Prophet's Ummah in Norway[13] and Islam4UK (....) They have one book, one law, one language and a common agenda! That is frightening! (....) They say it explicitly. And all their attitudes are based on rules, ways of living, threats, attacks on our societies, on terror and killings. It is a whole package, and they are several thousand strong. It is naïve to believe that this is not what they want. We must confront it, stop it, and forbid it before it goes too far.

We notice that for Arild, an essential frame for understanding the behaviours of the asylum seekers, is, as he sees it, Islam.

In other words, Arild's anxieties have many sources. The declared aims of violence-supporting neo-fundamentalist Islamist groups; the atrocities of the terror actions some of these groups have executed or supported; the highly problematic support of provoking attitudes towards women, people of alternative sexualities and apostates; the tolerance of the so-called *hudud* punishments (see below). All this provides highly understandable reasons to fear and to feel alien about many of the values and attitudes associated with extreme Islam.

The phenomenon of globalisation generates liminoidality in several ways. The very intensification of immigration increases the number of people representing "the foreign", in language, looks, food, attitudes, religion, values and ways of living. There arises a potential for resistance, hatred, critique, provocation and perplexity that some citizens, especially of homogenous countries and areas, may feel and follow. What consequences will this have for the perception of the future? One of my other informants, a friend of Arild's, said:

> Where can we live in the world, we white Europeans–in Svalbard?[14] [he shakes his head] (...) I want to leave. I want to turn everything off! Also SIAN and NDL. Disconnect. I do not believe there is hope! At some time, the society will be all the way out to the left, and then everything has gone

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[12] Anjem Choudary, to whom Arild refers, is an English born Islamist and a lawyer of Pakistani background, leader of at least two organisations that are now forbidden according to English anti-terror laws: Al Muhajiroun (found illegal in 2004), and Islam4UK (illegal in 2010). Choudary declared support for Al-Qaeda's attack on the twin towers.

[13] The Prophet's Ummah is an extremist Salafi group in Norway that has supported violent jihad and a series of terror actions around the world (Nesser 2015, 270-271; Vestel 2016, 121-125, Lia and Nesser 2016).

[14] "Svalbard" is a Norwegian archipelago between the mainland and the North Pole. It is here pointed out as an especially unpleasant, cold and far away part of Norway, not suitable for 'normal' living.

to hell. (…) Now it is we who assimilate. It is we who are losing our own culture.

For those who feel threatened like this, a warlike perception of reality seems to occur, with the chaos and the lack of clarity of a more or less permanent liminoid situation. And the main enemy, as these radical right-wingers see it, is Islam, especially in its extreme forms.

## Radical Islam

The question naturally arises: what motivates those that the right wing Islam critics see as their "Others"? After a closer look at elements of the radical Islamist movement in Norway, two young Muslims' trajectories toward a radical position may add to our understanding.

Growing up in immigrant families in a globalised world, some young people experience discrimination, suspicion of being a potential terrorist, and a general dislike from various actors in the society where they live (see Rogstad and Vestel 2011; Andersson et al. 2012; Khosrokhavar 2009, 2017; Roy 2017). This situation, in several European countries, stimulates an emerging polarisation, where neo-fundamentalism and a turn to conservatism seem to be elements of a reactive pattern (Leiken 2012; Khoshrokhavar 2017, 21-22). According to Linge and in line with this development, we have seen a conservative awakening among young Muslims in Norway in recent times (Linge 2013, 45, see also Vestel 2016, Lia and Nesser 2016). Some of these processes manifest in the emergence of extremist groups, where the search for an authentic Islam–often in the shape of Salafism–seems to be incorporated into a more general resistance against the Norwegian society (Bangstad and Linge 2013, see also Leiken 2012).

The landscape of radical Islam in Norway seems somehow less fragmented and complex, in comparison with the multitude of small right-wing groups and networks–at least judging from what gets attention in the media.[15] Especially two groups with relatively young members, oriented more or less towards Salafism, have been at the fore in the Norwegian press in recent years.

The Prophet's Ummah (*Profetens Ummah*) started initially as a Facebook group emerging from the so-called "Gaza riots" in 2009. Later, a demonstration was held in Oslo in 2010, protesting against the publication of a satirical drawing of the Prophet Muhammed as a pig (see,

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[15] See Akerhaug 2013; Nesser 2015; see Lia and Nesser 2016 for an overview, as seen from a terror research perspective; Arntsen 2016; Seierstad 2016.

e.g. Lia and Nesser 2016, Andersson et al. 2012). 3000 people participated. Here, the then 24-year old Mohyeldeen Mohammad held a much-commented speech:

> When will Norwegian authorities understand the seriousness of this? Maybe not before it is too late. Perhaps not before we get a September 11th on Norwegian soil. "This is not a threat; it is a warning" (in Andersen and Eisenträger 2010).

Many perceived the speech as a threat, and Mohammad as a member of the emerging Salafi group. It seems that the core of the Prophet's Ummah in 2013 consisted of about 30 people with around 100 persons more loosely associated (Vestel 2016). The group is declared Salafist, supports violent jihad and the most severe punishments in the Koran–the so-called *hudud* punishments–including the death penalty for homosexuality, apostasy, stoning for adultery and cutting off of hands for theft (Bangstad and Linge 2013, 254). The group's spokesman, Ubaydullah Hussain, supports Bin Laden. He endorsed the terror action in In Amenas, Algeria, killing 23 hostages (2013), the bombs against the Boston Marathon (2013), the attack by Al-Shabab in the Westgate shopping mall in Kenya (2013), and so on.[16] Some describe these terror acts are "hitting back", an act of revenge for the humiliation and the violence experienced by Muslims in various areas of the world, and an expression of the war against Islam's enemies and especially the West. As the Syrian situation has developed, the Prophet's Ummah has also expressed support to IS, and its self-proclaimed "leader of all Muslims" and the Caliphate, Abu Bakr Al-Bhagdadi (Napoleoni 2014).

The group represents a variety of geographical and cultural backgrounds, including Chile, Pakistan, Algeria, Kosovo, Somalia, Eritrea and Norway. Many of the members were in their twenties when they joined the group. Several of the group's members have died in Syria, several received charges for terror, and some are in jail. In 2017 it is unclear whether the group still exists. The group's spokesman has recently appealed against a conviction for facilitating the recruitment of young people to IS.

*Islam.net* is an organisation started in 2008 by a group of male engineering students at the Oslo and Akershus University College. The organisation is very conservative and also belongs to the Salafi tradition,

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[16] One of the terrorists in the Westgate attack was a 23 year old Somali-Norwegian man, who grew up in the Norwegian town of Larvik (Akerhaug 2015, Lia and Nesser 2016, 124-125, Sømme Hammer 2014).

even if they have been reluctant to confirm this in public (Bangstad and Linge 2013). Their leader, Farhad Qureshi (Pakistani background), has been spoken of as "Norway's most influential lay preacher" (Linge in Lunde 2014). According to Islam.net, it had around 2000 paying members, and around 12 000 "friends" on Facebook in 2013 (Bangstad and Linge 2013, 258). Well-informed Muslim leaders among my informants hold this to be highly exaggerated. The group's most central activity is to do da'wa, that is, missionary work. They arrange large yearly "peace conferences" that draw some thousand participants (Linge 2013, 43). They also support the *hudud* punishments but deny that they want Shariah implemented in Norway, as they see this as only valid for countries declared to be Muslim. Islam.net has invited several very controversial preachers to their meetings, including for example Haitham Al-Haddad, who may have said that Jews are descendants of apes and pigs, and that practising homosexuality may be a worse sin than killing (Brandvold 2012).

The organisation Islam.net differs from the Prophet's Ummah primarily in that it does not support violence, and is not as explicitly politically engaged as the latter group.

Both groups are labelled "radical" in the media and have received much attention in the Norwegian press. How do young Muslim informants relate to the attitudes and ideological positions reflected in these groups? What characterises their attractions and trajectories toward them? Two case stories may illuminate these questions.

## Fareed's Story

Fareed (29, cultural worker) has an extensive network that also includes close contacts and knowledge of several actors that are known as extremists to the Norwegian public. He distances himself from violence, but because of his many connections and familiarity with actors associated with a wide variety of positions, his story and reflections on himself and the more radical groups may give us important clues about the processes of radicalisation, as related to the age of youth and liminoidality.

Fareed speaks of himself as "radical", and expresses a strong protest against what he terms the "coup" of the word "radical" in the media and governmental sources, as that necessary implying support for violence.[17] *"There is far too little "radicalisation" in Norway... When the world looks this way, I am surprised by the lack of engagement"*, he says. For Fareed this is what his political engagement is about; civic engagement and a

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[17] See also the discussion of the term "radicalisation" in the introduction.

strong concern for what he sees as social injustice, primarily as related to Muslims and Islam. How did he get there? What may his story tell us about the processes of radicalisation in today's Norway, and the role of religion in the developmental horizon of this young Muslim?

He tells me that even though he grew up in a home where religion and moral questions were important, it was not until Fareed was 24 that he started to pray in a way closely related to the process of seeking an identity:

> It takes time to get to know oneself. Who are you? Where do you belong? Is it breakfast on the 17th of May, with champagne or... [laughs]. One finds oneself, as one grows older. It's a little struggle that many boys and girls of immigrant background strive to resolve for quite a long time.[18]

The questions he asks himself reflect the classic liminoid phase of youth when one is in a state of following hunches and struggles of reflexivity to search out an identity, and a place to belong in the social world. Being from an immigrant family, the "betwixt and betweenness" stemming from the tension between his parents' orientations and the Norwegian society's ways and positions, may amplify the presence of these questions. For Fareed, this implied an emerging consciousness about world events where Muslims were victims. This process seems to become an important part of the orientation back (or forward?) to an identity where religion has an important place. For him, the participation in some central demonstrations had an important role. He mentions especially the demonstration in 2010 against the caricature of the Prophet as a pig, from which, as mentioned, the Prophet's Ummah later emerged:

> After I got to know the prophet Mohammed (peace be with him) and got the love for him... Then I understood why so many people got mad. (...)

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[18] May 17th is Norway's Independence Day A wide variety of public celebrations occur, not least the popular "Children's marches" in cities and villages all over the country. The children, dressed in their finest, shout "hurrah" and make lots of noise as they march, with long rows of adults and family watching them. Later Norwegian flags and citizens fill the streets, and the royal family greets the people from the balcony of the palace. "Norwegian-ness" is celebrated, and many people young and old–start the day with a breakfast gathering. Sometimes these also include "party" drinks, like champagne. In other words, this is a day on which Norwegian identity is celebrated, as Fareed hints. Politicians and authorities do underline the importance of welcoming immigrants to take part in the celebration, thereby provoking some of the country's more radical right-wing oriented and immigrant-sceptical actors.

Then it just boiled inside! (…) Also because it was no caricature, it was one they had never seen. It was all to provoke…!

No living creature today knows how the prophet Muhammad looked. This simple fact underlines that the "image" was meant to provoke and offend the religion and its follower, as Fareed sees it.

The publication of these caricatures made him feel threatened and humiliated as; they made him "boil inside". Again, the liminoid state of being a youth and a Muslim orienting himself in a globalised and tension-filled world, reflect this vulnerability.

As he became increasingly engaged in societal matters and the struggle relating to an identity as a young Muslim, a wedge of doubt and a feeling of being a stranger emerged, creating much troublesome ambivalence:

> In later years, I have felt more and more like a stranger in my own country. The more I have become engaged, the more I have felt like a stranger and not welcome. … I do not care when I read the comments on the internet because I have had so many good experiences as I grew up.

Here, he contrasts the large number of negative comments against Islam, immigrants and Muslims in general that have increased in social media and the newspaper's comment columns in recent times, with his own positive experiences with all-Norwegian friends and acquaintances. Note the similarities with Arild's right-wing friend in the previous chapter, who stated that he feels somehow like a stranger in his own country as a result of the growing number of immigrants and especially: *"Where can we live in the world, we white Europeans—in Svalbard?"* Fareed adds:

> But it is especially when it comes from the government, when you see that the comments are not justified, then you feel it. Especially the last five years. (….) You feel that Muslims are particularly under suspicion (…), especially the reports from PST [Police Security Services].

Fareed reacts against governmental authorities, politicians and the Security Services of the Police, whom he feels lack the willingness to address problematic aspects of the Western powers over the years, and especially the injustice done towards Muslims and Muslim societies. This shows up in the growing suspicion and the "terrorist stamp" that tends to be a part of the generalised image of Islam and Muslims, and that makes him pose several counter-questions that put the war against terror in a particular perspective:

> If you compare the terror done by people of Muslim background, you will see that democracy has killed considerably more. It was not the Muslims who started the first world war where 15 million died, nor the second world war where 55 million died, nor the atom bombs in Hiroshima or Nagasaki did we make. The carpet bombing of Afghanistan (…) the war in Iraq has killed quite a lot, and there is Guantanamo where people are put in jail without a trial for several years, and the country where we live is also at war in Afghanistan (…) Then you have what's happening in Burma with the Rohingya, where Norway should have a clear responsibility after giving the peace prize to Aung San Suu Ki (…) We have long since lost our right to call ourselves a nation of peace.

For Fareed, as he emphasises several times in our dialogues, it is these world events that are most important for his societal engagement. As a young man, he undergoes a long process where he struggles to find an identity--on the limen, so to speak–and finds it in the shape of his status as a Muslim. He becomes conscious of what he and radical Muslims (both violent and non-violent) in many corners of the world see as examples of humiliation, violence and atrocities in world events. For some groups, like the Prophet's Ummah, these humiliations become a central part of their process. The organisation ends with a standpoint where terror, violence and a black-and-white worldview characteristic of the liminoid position become the only right thing to support: "us" (the Muslims) as opposed to "them" (the non-Muslims, the kuffar).

For people like Fareed, the emotional pressure created by these world events is an essential driver in his societal critique; but the critical difference between Fareed and the Prophet's Ummah is that he hates the use of terror. But his frustration increases when these highly problematic events are not sufficiently discussed among the public, not even in the mosques, because of the fear of being accused of stimulating radicalisation:

> I have talked with many leaders in the mosques and heard their Friday prayers (…). But they often end up with talking about how careful one should be, that one must not ally with violent ideologies and so forth. (…) Then I come home and read about 11 Afghani children killed in a drone attack. Then you do not give a shit about what the imam said. Or when you see on the internet four American soldiers pissing on a dead Muslim, or six Afghan bodies, or soldiers who have raped young girls and destroyed the Koran (…) Then you are just sad that the imam did not say how things are.

The macro-political events, Norwegian foreign policy supporting the US, the unwillingness of the Norwegian public--especially public authorities–to address their problematic aspects, and the general suspicion

of Muslims and Islam are all elements that give young Muslims such as Fareed good reasons to be angry.

Much of this emotional climate and the accompanying despair and anger felt by young Muslims seems to be reflected in what Roy has called "neo-fundamentalism",

> [which] has gained ground particularly among second- and third-generation migrants in the West. Even if only a small minority is involved, the phenomenon feeds new forms of radicalisation, among them, support for Al Qaeda (Roy 2004, 2).

For Fareed, the anger over these macro-political events and structures were the most important and comprised the core in his development towards his highly critical standpoints and resistance to the forces behind these developments. Here, the liminality of real wars and invasions feed counter-reactions, in the shape of these young Muslims' resistance critique and "counter-liminality": that is, liminality as a response to another liminality–the liminality of war and invasions.

But there are, of course, other dimensions in the trajectories towards a radical position, such as the life-changing power of religion, which we will explore in our next case.

## Bengt's Story–The Convert

Converts in various countries may tend to become involved with radical milieus, according to some scholars (Roy 2004; Leiken 2012). Leiken writes that extremists often see converts as especially suitable recruits (Leiken 2012, 234). This willingness probably relates to the salient vulnerability in the early period after the conversion, in a position of liminoidality: conversion is precisely such a passing of a "limen".

Bengt (23) is a young convert who very early became part of a milieu that after some time became well known as Muslim radicals in the Norwegian public. How did his movement towards radical Islam happen? And what role did liminoid phenomena have in such a development?

When he was 16, he became increasingly interested in politics. He became a member of a socialist youth organisation and a milieu of politicised punks in the Oslo area. He explains:

> What I liked about punk was that it tried to protest in a radical way against things like poverty and international politics. My father was right wing, and I felt that my parents forgot the world around them, in a way. (…) As I grew up, I also became very critical towards all religion. I decided to learn

> about them one by one. That is the way I started to read about Islam because I thought that was the worst of the religions, the one that was furthest from myself.

Politics and a feeling for social justice were important for Bengt, reflecting the liminoid sensitivity for injustice characterising many young people. Time passed, and even if he started out to read about Islam to enable himself to argue against it, he gradually became more favourable, partly because he found values that resembled his own, and his socialist organisation. "*The struggle against injustice, poverty and such things*" also had strong resonance with punk's critical stance against power.

While this was happening, his sister fell seriously ill, a critical event that further intensified his search for what the religion might offer:

> That did something to me. (…) One experiences how fast things in life might take a different direction. After my sister's illness, I started to think about what I did with my own life. What is important? (…) That's how it was when I seriously began to think about religion. It was not simple–sort of the meaning of life. I have understood as I became older that those things that my sister went through meant a lot to me.

At last Bengt converted. Converts may appear become very conservative in their early phase, almost to convince themselves and their surroundings about the seriousness of their choice. This conservatism underlines the affinity for extremes in a liminoid situation, such as a religious conversion. Bengt terms it "*my black and white -period*", to highlight the simplifying worldview and his attitudes and ways of being at that time:

> I think the reason was that my parents opposed it so strongly. My father yelled, and my mother cried! I ate my dinner in my room. I thought I just had to stand up against it. They did everything to get me away from it. But then I just had to compensate and make things even more precise and stronger. (…) I started to use the *abaya* [long, closed shirt like a tunic], grew a beard and such things. It was my choice.

Here one can ask to what extent his behaviour was an expression of a rebellion against his parents, the identification with the underdog anchored in the ethos of punk, or the new and existential identification with Islam as a religion, which these elements reflect? Probably one cannot eliminate the possibility that all these impulses interact at once. He continues the description of his then "black and white" worldview:

Right after the conversion, I believed that Muslims did not do anything wrong. Everything should be Islam. I wanted to support Islam against the West. I would defend all Muslims no matter what they did. (...) It was more of a rebellion, at first. I could say my prayers very loud because I knew that my parents could hear it. And what happened on September 11, I meant it had nothing to do with Islam.

Gradually his parents came to accept his choice, and Bengt gradually changed his appearance. After half a year he felt he could start to relax a little more, he said. But his worldview was extreme:

I spent hours watching YouTube videos, jihad videos where US soldiers killed small children. They were of course cut and pasted to fit in. I never the Taliban kill children ... It was, sort of, only the Americans I saw. In that black and white period, I thought that the Jews and the Freemasons and the US stood behind everything.

Bengt was befriended in this early period by a group of young Muslim men, who among others, were working to arrange the demo in 2010 against the recently published caricatures of the Prophet as a pig. When Mohyeldeen Mohammad held his speech, Bengt says that those involved were splitting into two camps; one that supported Mohammad's words, and the group in which he belonged, who felt that these radical utterances had spoilt the demo.

There were several liberal Muslims also behind the demo.[19] I felt it was a monster I had participated in creating. But my other Muslim friends became part of the other side who supported it. I regretted that Mohyeldeen did what he did.

It was this critical event that made Bengt decide to break out of the milieu he had become part of: he could not support their views, not least regarding violence, which gradually seemed to become accepted. Some of these young people developed after a while into the Prophet's Ummah, as described earlier.

Bengt describes how neighbours and people in his local milieu received the knowledge of his conversion: they yelled at him and showed disrespect and hatred toward his parents as well. He also had a series of unfortunate experiences both locally and in Oslo, where he often visited his mosque.

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[19] With "liberal Muslims", Bengt seems to mean Muslims he sees as representing a more "modernised" view, where the more severe demands of the Koran were practiced less strictly.

Many young people complain about society's focus upon Islam as only something negative. Many of my friends feel like they are the trash bins of community, and everything that Muslims do is wrong.

In other words—also in Bengt's story—we hear the echoes of world events, but also, and not least, we get a glimpse of the burden of suspicion, negativity and discrimination that young Muslims experience in their daily lives.

## Some Concluding Analytical Remarks

This chapter has approached youth as a liminoid phenomenon in post, high, late or liquid modernity—as a state that may be interpreted as having several liminoid features, including uncertainty regarding the outcome of complex processes. Economic crises, ecological threats and wars may create uncertainty. The increased speed of movement of people, money, consumer goods, ideas and cultural impulses may create uncertainty. Immigration and emigration, the loosening grip of traditions and the opportunities and confusions of new technology may create uncertainty. (see, e.g. Horvath 2013; Griffin 2012, 52; Bauman 2006, 2007).

As a life phase in a context of high modernity, youth as a liminoid phenomenon implies a fundamental vulnerability that opens up for several experiential states and possibilities, both related to the self and the more significant power structures (politics), as seen in our cases. Here, extremist positions are a possible outcome. The experiential states related to liminoidality in our four cases can be summarised under five headlines, each indicating a complex of drivers in the radicalisation processes. These processes may in themselves be liminoid phenomena: becoming radical implies passing the thresholds or the limits—the limen—of the dominant values and worldviews.

### Five Experiential States Related to the Radicalisation Process Characterising Youth in a Liminoid Life Stage

1) *Vulnerability* for both personal and societal grievances and social injustice.

Some experiences may provoke and enhance vulnerability in an early stage of "waking up". These include: being bullied; the "offensive behaviour" of asylum seekers intruding in one's home area; being "Othered" by the majority society, politicians and state leaders: a sister's

illness; the search for identity and the "in-between-ness" of growing up with an immigrant background. Such factors can trigger the emergence of an orientation toward political action and attitudes that for some may lead to radical positions.

2) This vulnerability or sensitivity leads in some cases to specific *analytical insights and capacities*–also for what we may see as misconceptions–with a particular eye for asymmetric power relations.

Such experiences of vulnerability may induce a search to make them meaningful. One seeks to discover–rightly or wrongly–patterns and causes of these experiences. One can take ideological-political positions, in some cases with religious aspects, which provide vital insight into the mechanisms of social injustice. In all cases, albeit to various degrees, this may manifest in a highly simplified polarised or "split" worldview, with a "good" in-group, and "bad" out-group, in line with Griffin's suggestions (Griffin 2012, 92).

3) This analytical insight–even if only articulated as a hunch or a vague feeling–may lead to *creative actions* in the shape of resistance and agency aiming for societal change, i.e., political engagement.

Joining a radical group, participating in demonstrations, spreading messages, taking standpoints–in more massive critical confrontations or the quiet conversations of everyday life–exemplify such creative actions. At best they are addressing essential manifestations of injustice that have the potential to induce societal change. In the worst cases, violence aims to obtain political change, to get attention for wrongs, or only to create fear among the Others.

4) Various *critical events*, manifested on both macro, meso and individual levels seem to influence and orient these states and possibilities.

The critical events are like those in point 1, but these may also become turning points, which can amplify processes of radicalisation or de-radicalisation: being physically attacked; Muslim extremists declaring the need for extreme interpretations of Sharia laws; illness or birth in the

family; wars, invasions and state suppression in Muslim societies, a conversion, a provocative speech.

5) For all these states and possibilities, the forming of *a community* seems central for those who share the implied positions.

In most of these cases, the search for identity and a similar community seems to be a highly significant impulse and part of the complex of drivers in a radicalisation process (e.g. Goerzig and Hashimi 2014). With whom to identify is often a core question in the liminoidality of youth, as "finding a home" among the like-minded, may be seen as a repeated theme in our cases. The power of such communitas–the feeling of togetherness and unification experienced in sharing a liminal situation–may be compelling (Turner 1974). When radical or extreme political or politico-religious positions form the basis for such a community of shared identity, it may direct the individual into attitudinal and emotional states. Such states may work both constructively as a critique of social injustice, or very destructively, when the illegitimate use of violence, often against what most of us would see as innocent victims, is seen as a solution.

All of these states relate to the liminoid and represent aspects that radical young people in both strands of extremes have in common, as we have seen. Nevertheless, the difference in focus is one striking difference between the radicalised right and radicalised Muslims; the radical Islam critics focus on the Muslims in the country of immigration.

The radical Muslims, on the other hand, tend to have a considerably stronger focus on the conflicts, wars and invasions into Muslim areas on the global level of the world events. And their local experiences of marginalisation and exclusion are, in many ways, read into such a larger narrative.

In both cases of extremism, the lens of liminality / liminoidality seems promising as a tool to enhance our understanding, also for future research.

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