



## INTRODUCTION

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# Beyond Endpoints

## *Rethinking How and Why to Study Radicalisation*

Hilary Pilkington

Definitions of radicalisation as the process by which actors come to engage in, or support the use of, violence to achieve their political aims are accompanied invariably by the acknowledgement that only a small proportion of those who hold radical ideas go on to commit acts of violence (see, *inter alia*, Borum 2011a: 9; Horgan 2012; Neumann 2013: 879). Given the implications of violent extremism for public safety, it is understandable that researchers prioritise the study of those who cross the violence threshold, even where they explicitly distinguish violent from non-violent radicalisation (Dalgard-Nielsen 2010; Borum 2011a: 8; McCauley and Moskalenko 2017; Lindekilde, Malthaner and O'Connor 2019: 23). In academic terms, by setting an endpoint – be it cognitive or behavioural extremism – the target population for study becomes more clearly defined and their trajectories to that point can be potentially traced, understood and modelled. As the many complex models to emerge over the last two decades demonstrate, this endpoint focus does not necessarily diminish the complexity of our understanding of radicalisation as a multi-dimensional and multi-factoral process (see, for example, Sageman 2004; Wiktorowicz 2005; Moghaddam 2005; Gill 2007; McCauley and Moskalenko 2008, 2017; Dawson 2017; Kruglanski et al. 2017; Bouhana 2019). That the study of radicalisation trajectories pivots on this endpoint, however, somewhat paradoxically works to undermine the important distinction between acts of terrorism/violent extremism and the process of radicalisation; the ‘how’ that the concept of radicalisation ostensibly prioritises. As Borum (2011c: 2) recognises, his own employment of the term ‘radicalisation into violent extremism’ risks con-

flating the concepts of radicalisation and violent extremism (terrorism) between which he intends to distinguish. At the same time, his reframing of 'radicalisation' as 'the array of processes by which people come to adopt beliefs that not only justify violence but compel it, and how they progress – *or not* [my emphasis] – from thinking to action' invites us to think about how trajectories stop, stall or divert away from behavioural extremism.

So why have relatively few researchers to date taken up the invitation to study those who embark on this journey but never reach its final destination? The relative neglect of the study of 'non-radicalisation' (Cragin 2014) or 'non-involvement in terrorist violence' (Schuurman 2020) might be explained by the difficulty of identifying, and accessing, an appropriate control group (Wiktorowicz 2005: 32) against which to study trajectories into violent extremism. Alternatively, as Dechesne (this volume) suggests, it might signal the difficulty of studying empirically something that exists only in relation to what it is not. Arguing below for the importance of understanding such journeys, we propose approaching non-radicalisation not as the absence of radicalisation (characteristic of a 'normal' control group against which the 'radicalised' may be compared) but as radicalisation that falls short of the endpoint to which the concept remains tied. In this sense, we might think of it as taking a number of forms – partial, stalled or partially reversed radicalisation – and combining different positions on the cognitive and behavioural radicalisation 'pyramids' (McCauley and Moskaleiko 2017) underpinned by varying levels of resistance or resilience to ideas or behaviours associated with extremism. Radicalisation along one dimension may even constrain radicalisation on another; developing radical ideas or grievances directed at an 'other' may lead individuals towards people or movements with more extreme ideas or action repertoires, which repulse them or cause reflection that stalls or even reverses radicalisation (see Pilkington and Vestel, this volume; Pilkington, this volume). Thus, while defining radicalisation as a process determined by an end state of violent extremism helps determine a clear empirical object of study, we make the case for understanding, and studying, radicalisation and non-radicalisation rather as a continuum along which individuals shift, in both directions, and whose journeys may be started, paused or reversed at multiple points along it.

Adopting such an approach is challenging empirically; it requires the study of a much wider variety of radicalisation pathways in contemporaneous settings. Drawing firm conclusions based on the study of contextually very different journeys, not to mention journeys that are still in progress, is difficult and any implications that can be drawn from findings must remain tentative. At the same time, we suggest, this approach

allows us to ask the most important question of all, that is, *what stops people radicalising*? It also enables us to answer this question not through inference (the absence of those factors found to be present in pathways to violent extremism) but from observing and listening to those engaged in radical(ising) milieus as to what protective factors and strategies are at work and how they might be strengthened. This volume consists of contributors' empirically grounded reflections on the process of non-progression to violent extremism based on research conducted as part of a single, transnational project (Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality – DARE) on young people's trajectories through radical(ising) milieus shaped by ideologies that we refer to as 'Islamist', on the one hand, and 'extreme-right', on the other. These terms are used in this volume in inverted commas to reflect their problematic, disputed and potentially offensive nature. We recognise this and that using these terms risks misrecognising the very phenomena – indeed, the individuals – that we seek to understand by collapsing a wide spectrum of positions and the core beliefs to which they are anchored. Despite extensive discussion with colleagues within and beyond the project, however, we have not found other terms that more adequately capture the wide range (and contexts) of milieus included in our study (see Appendix) while retaining the bridge between etic<sup>1</sup> and emic concepts necessary if the critical approach to radicalisation that we develop through this volume is to resonate beyond those already similarly disposed. The spectrum of views and behaviours included under these umbrella terms in this project is outlined briefly below and in Chapters 1 and 2. In this introductory chapter, the theoretical framework and methodological rationale for the project as a whole are set out, including how these terms are employed, and an outline of the structure of the book and individual contributions to it is provided.

### **Studying Radicalisation and Non-Radicalisation as Process and in Process**

The wealth of critical reviews of radicalisation studies (see, *inter alia*, Dalggaard-Nielsen 2010; Sedgwick 2010; Borum 2011a, 2011b; Christmann 2012; Kundnani 2012; Neumann 2013; Schmid 2013; Sageman 2014; Grossman et al. 2016; Horgan 2017; Malthaner 2017; Gøtzsche-Astrup 2018) permit us to forego summarising the field in favour of a more partial explication of the key issues of concern to this volume. To this end, we outline briefly our rationale for engaging with radicalisation discourse and for following 'trajectories' (routes) rather than seeking the 'roots'

of radicalisation within a wider understanding of radicalisation as a relational, contextual and situational phenomenon. We explain how this is operationalised empirically through a focus on radical(ising) milieus and the multiple pathways young people take through them. We consider the difficulties of studying a 'non' phenomenon and situate our approach within attempts to date to model 'non-radicalisation', understand the factors that protect or generate resilience or resistance to radicalisation and suggest how studying non-radicalisation outcomes among young people in radical(ising) milieus might inform policy and practice in countering violent extremism.

### ***Why Study Radicalisation?***

Why – given the extensive critique of the concept of radicalisation – engage in the discourse of radicalisation at all? Conceptually, Sedgwick (2010: 491) argues, 'radicalisation' has brought confusion rather than clarification to the study of political extremism. Since markers of 'moderate' and 'radical' shift across different national contexts, policy spheres and in relation to different extremisms, while it is rarely made clear what the continuum of radicalism being referred to is or the location of what is seen as 'moderate' and 'extreme' on that continuum, he proposes, 'radicalisation' is best deployed as a relative or relational concept. We agree both with Sedgwick's critique and his conclusion. This does not necessarily invalidate the concept, however, but rather confirms the importance of adopting a relational approach to radicalisation. At the same time, Sedgwick's critique indicates the need for radicalisation to be studied in context (see also Crenshaw 2007; Ravn, Coolset and Sauer 2019), including with explicit reference to what constitutes 'moderate' and 'extreme' in that context and, we propose additionally, for both etic and emic understandings of these to be taken into account.

Such contextualisation includes recognising the extensive body of work that critically deconstructs the political framing of notions of 'extremism' and 'radicalisation'. The contemporary use of 'radicalisation' is intrinsically associated with a specific – 'Islamist' – terrorism and situated in attempts to understand, and counter, an apparent new security threat in the wake of the 9/11 attacks (2001) (Neumann 2013: 878), the emergence of 'home-grown' terrorism in Western Europe (2004–05) and the departure (and now return) of 'foreign fighters' to support ISIS/IS. As a result, della Porta (2018: 462) states, 'radicalization has become a master signifier for the "war on terror"'. As documented in numerous studies, Muslim communities have been the primary target of counter-terrorism legislation initiated in the wake of this war (Choudhury and Fenwick 2011;

Hardy 2015; Kapoor 2018; Kundnani 2014; McGhee 2008), underpinned by elements of radicalisation scholarship, which, once taken up by law enforcement agencies, 'becomes a prospectus for mass surveillance of Muslim populations' (Kundnani 2012: 19). Processes of 'suspectification' (Hickman et al. 2012), through which counter-terrorism practices police the everyday lives of communities rendered 'suspect', are not only externally imposed but draw on the pro-active involvement of Muslims in their own policing (Ragazzi 2016: 729), leading to a fracturing of relations within Muslim communities as individuals internalise fears of state targeting (Abbas 2019: 261). In addition to the societal harm inflicted by such misrecognition, the deployment of a concept of radicalisation rooted in a state-led securitising discourse, alongside the exclusion of emic understandings, inhibits the conceptual purchase of the concept and its ability to inform dialogic counter-extremism interventions (see Kühle and Lindekilde 2012; Pilkington 2022).

The concept of radicalisation has been used increasingly in relation to the right-wing spectrum over the recent period due to a revival of militant right-wing extremist groups and associated political violence, the growth in anti-migrant and Islamophobic sentiment and hate crime, the ongoing evolution of an active extreme-right online milieu and evidence of the transnational organisation of extreme-right groups (see, *inter alia*, Koehler 2016; Lee and Knott 2022). Recent studies have suggested that 'far-right radicalization' is spread through a social contagion process in which social media use and group membership enhance the spread of right-wing extremist ideology (Youngblood 2020), while actors narrate their own radicalisation as a process of gradual awakening as they move through increasingly extreme ideological stances and identities (Lee and Knott 2022: 230). However, the most recent systematic reviews of academic studies continue to show a persistent under-representation of right-wing radicalisation in the literature; between 8% (Franc and Pavlović 2021: 5) and 11% (Ahmed and Lynch 2021: 6) of academic publications in relevant fields were focused on the 'far-right'.<sup>2</sup> The reasons for this are most likely a compound effect of a number of characteristics of right-wing extremism and its relation to political violence that tend towards the exclusion of manifestations of right-wing extremism from the discussion of radicalisation. These include the tendency towards individual (lone actor), rather than organised group, perpetration of right-wing extremist violence (Ahmed and Lynch 2021: 2–3; Ravndal 2016: 7) and the internal ideological heterogeneity within extreme-right milieus leading to their characterisation as being comprised of 'freelance extremists' (Ahmed and Lynch 2021: 15). They also include the apparently low incidence of right-wing terrorism; TE-SAT (Terrorism Situation and Trend)

reports, which monitor terrorist attacks (completed, foiled and failed) in the EU, show that over the period 2019–21, just nine of 127 (7%) of such attacks were related to right-wing terrorism (Europol 2022: 8).<sup>3</sup> However, as Bjørgo and Ravndal (2019: 7) note, these data reflect the wide variation in how countries record ‘terrorist’ offences; right-wing offences are often registered as hate crime, right-wing extremist violence or ordinary violence rather than terrorism. For example, arson attacks on buildings accommodating refugees, where they do not lead to fatalities, often do not reach the threshold to be considered terrorism (ibid.: 8). Thus TE-SAT reporting is indicative of the wider problem of assessing the significance of right-wing violent extremism and, in particular, determining the relationship between hate crime and terrorism. For some, hate crimes are close to, if not precursors of, terrorism since they do not target specific behaviours but are directed at out-groups and seek to instil fear across a wide section of the community, while for others such crimes lack key characteristics of terrorist acts in that they target discriminated minorities rather than those in power, they are mainly unplanned and may not be publicity-seeking (Koehler 2016: 89). These differences in the manifestation, and understanding, of radicalisation across different forms of extremism confirm the importance of its deployment as a relational and relative concept.

Notwithstanding these important critiques, the concept of radicalisation retains value in its capacity to understand violent extremism as the outcome of a *process*. As such, it has helped propel a shift in research away from largely failed attempts to identify shared socio-demographic profiles of violent extremists in order to target prevention measures towards ‘at risk’ individuals (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010: 810; Borum 2011a: 14; Horgan 2008: 80; Beck 2015: 26–30; Sageman 2014: 620). While initially the literature focused on processes of cognitive and ideological transformation at the individual level – the role of social ties and small-group dynamics (Sageman 2004), personal and political grievances that preface cognitive openings to radical ways of thinking (Wiktorowicz 2005), gradual intensification of engagement with extremist movements or actors accompanied by withdrawal from earlier networks and bonds and, finally, acceptance of alternative values and readiness to engage in violent action (Moghaddam 2005) – there is a more recent recognition of the importance of contextualising these processes by understanding them in relation to radical movements and the wider societal and political environment (Malthaner 2017: 370, 379–82). This shift is encapsulated by Horgan’s (2008) call for a search for the ‘roots’ of violent extremism to be replaced by understanding ‘routes’ to violent extremism and underpins a trajectories-based approach to radicalisation. This has facilitated the

identification of stages through which individual actors progress towards terrorism (ibid.) and important transitions or turning points in radicalisation (or deradicalisation) journeys (Sieckelinck et al. 2019). However, mapping such trajectories demonstrates there are multiple pathways into extremism (Linden and Klandermans 2007; McCauley and Moskalenko 2008: 429) and different people on a shared pathway have varying outcomes (Borum 2011b: 57). Moreover, the retention of the endpoint of violent extremism as the defining characteristic of a radicalisation pathway can lead to linear interpretations of radicalisation models – such as the ‘staircase to terrorism’ (Moghaddam 2005) or ‘pyramid model’ (McCauley and Moskalenko 2008) – and thus to a ‘conveyor belt’ understanding of how people become involved in political violence (Moskalenko and McCauley 2009: 241). Throughout this volume, we also are primarily concerned with the trajectories of young people (rather than their socio-economic backgrounds or psychological dispositions). However, we trace pathways through radical milieus not in the abstract, but in situ, and with the starting assumption that individuals will move both towards and away from more extreme positions and that most will never reach the ‘endpoint’ of either attitudinal or behavioural radicalisation.

### ***How Should We Study Radicalisation?***

The premise of our approach is that radicalisation is best understood as a profoundly societal phenomenon. This is articulated neatly by Lindekilde, Malthaner and O’Connor (2019: 23) in describing their own theoretical framework as ‘based on a notion of radicalization as a fundamentally social process, shaped by patterns of interaction with, exposure to, and participation in specific social settings or radical groups’. At the individual level, this means we see the interaction between political, social and cultural context and an individual’s cognitive development as crucial to understanding the radicalisation process and the pathways leading individuals towards extremist behaviour (Costanza 2015: 3). Thus, while we do not engage in socio-demographic or social-psychological profiling of those we study, we consider their life histories and experiences as central to understanding their trajectories. At the social level, we capture this interaction through a focus on radical milieus as the settings in which trajectories of radicalisation and non-radicalisation are played out. Radical milieus are social formations through which collective identities and solidarities are constructed and take a multitude of forms (religious, ethnic or political) (Malthaner and Waldmann 2014), may be territorially rooted (or not) and display varying degrees of cohesiveness. They provide the immediate social environments from within which those engaged in vi-

olent activity can gain affirmation for their actions but, more routinely, provide an environment in which 'grievance' narratives and 'rejected' or 'stigmatised' knowledge are shared and come to form the basis of internal cultures (Malthaner 2017: 389). In this sense they share features of the 'cultic milieu' (Campbell 1972, 2012) in which 'proscribed and/or forbidden knowledge is the coin of the realm' (Kaplan and Löow 2002: 3) albeit that, in conditions of increasing heterodoxy of mainstream culture, the non-orthodox 'truths' they find may lie in complex conspiracy theories rather than the worlds of the occult, spiritualism and mysticism. Thus, milieus may be both physical and virtual (usually both) and not only ideological but also emotional spaces providing opportunities for voicing anger at perceived injustice, identifying 'like minds' or shared hurts and giving meaning to, and making sense of, life. They are also sites where important bonds are forged with others; bonds that are particularly important for individuals whose family or peer relationships have been either lacking or traumatising.

Of key importance to our concern in this volume is the recognition that radical milieus are not only sites of encounter with radical(ising) messages and agents, encouraging and exacerbating violence, but are often diverse and multi-dimensional social environments in which individuals may criticise or challenge the narratives, frames and violent behaviours encountered (Malthaner and Waldmann 2014: 994). As Malthaner and Waldmann (*ibid.*) have argued, radical milieus may not only contribute to radicalisation but also constrain it by offering alternative (non-militant) forms of activism. Thus, central to our approach is understanding the interplay between trajectories and milieus. Radical milieus are not static 'contexts', 'factors' or 'sites' of radicalisation; the milieu is rather an evolving relational and emotional field of activity (*ibid.*: 983) that underpins and envelops radical ideas and behaviours. Moreover, radicalisation does not take place in a single, stable environment but 'in a dynamic constellation of multiple spaces and social relationships that change over time' (Lindekilde, Malthaner and O'Connor 2019: 23–24). Thus, by studying young people's lived experience in selected milieus, we are able to gain a critical window onto life trajectories as they unfold in a context in which often narrow arrays of life options funnel individuals towards more radicalised belief systems (Costanza 2015: 2–3). In methodological terms this means following young people into the everyday contexts and milieus in which they encounter radical(ising) messages and agents and respond to them (see below) rather than analysing retrospectively reconstructed trajectories based on secondary sources documenting life stories of terrorists or through biographical interviews with 'former' violent extremists. By adopting a relational, contextual and situational approach



to understanding radicalisation, operationalised through a milieu-based research design affording extended engagement with young people, we are able to study radicalisation not only *as* process but *in* process.

Conceptually, the observation of, and listening to, individuals' reflections on how, and in what context, they experience encounters with radical(ising) messages, and how they receive and respond to them, requires attention not only to context, situation and interaction, but also to agency. As Lindekilde, Malthaner and O'Connor (2019: 23–24) note, 'Individuals are not passive objects of radicalizing influences but actively engage in interactions, formation of new social ties, and evaluation of radicalizing teachings'. Indeed, while all the milieus studied as part of the DARE project were selected as sites where young people encounter radical(ising) actors and messages, we found that most individual trajectories through these milieus involved choices not to engage in, or support, political violence to achieve their aims (even where others in the wider milieu did so). Thus, while these young people's engagement in the milieus might reflect a relative shift towards more extremist positions – embarkation on a radicalisation pathway – the fact that only a few crossed the threshold into violent extremism makes clear the need for more complex ways of understanding those trajectories as ones of partial, stalled, reversed or non-radicalisation. In seeking to understand specifically why and how people do not engage in political violence, despite significant and often justified grievances and in contexts (or milieus) in which others do turn to violence, two emergent concepts in debates about what stops radicalisation are important: non-radicalisation and resilience to radicalisation.

### ***What Stops Radicalisation?***

'Non-radicalisation' was first identified by Cragin (2014) from a study of secondary data sources indicating a series of factors important in dissuading individuals from joining terrorist groups (resistance), on the one hand, and leaving such organisations (desistance), on the other. These factors might be broadly summarised as relating to: the costs of participation; the perceived efficacy of violence; social ties to the organisation; and moral (non)acceptability of violent action.<sup>4</sup> The model of non-radicalisation derived was subsequently empirically tested by Cragin and colleagues through a study involving semi-structured interviews with a small number of Palestinian political activists (associated with groups pursuing a violent agenda) and a survey of six hundred Palestinian young people (aged eighteen to thirty) living in the West Bank (Cragin et al. 2015). Although the DARE research design and fieldwork contexts are quite different from their study, some core logics are shared. This relates, first and

foremost, to our concern with young people who have been exposed to, or considered, radical ideologies or violence but (mainly) rejected violence. Underlying this is a shared interest in understanding non-radicalisation in contexts in which encounters with radical(ising) messages are an everyday experience. Such contexts problematise how we measure levels of radicalisation, or willingness to engage in violence, especially through the use of survey methods, which differentiate too simply between those who justify political violence and those who are attitudinally opposed to it (Cragin et al. 2015: 16; see also Pilkington, Chapter 6, this volume). Secondly, in both cases, a clear distinction is made between attitudinal and behavioural radicalisation while non-radicalisation is used to refer to resistance to either extremist ideas or behaviour, or a combination of both (Cragin 2014: 338). Thirdly, both see non-radicalisation, like radicalisation, as best understood as a process characterised by a series of stages in which 'individuals weigh their various options or choices between violent and nonviolent pathways' (Cragin et al. 2015: 11). While this is a conclusion of the Cragin et al. (ibid.) study, in the DARE research it constitutes the starting point and, in conjunction with its ethnographic and trajectory-based research design, means its findings can illuminate this process. It does so by revealing how similar factors work differently in different contexts and trajectories, identifying when and how young people make key choices and elaborating an understanding of shifts towards and away from extremism beyond binary outcomes of radicalisation or non-radicalisation (see Pilkington and Vestel, this volume; Pilkington, Chapter 6, this volume).

The study of this kind of non-radicalised 'control group', Cragin (2014: 350) suggests, opens the way to reconsidering the current emphasis on pre-empting<sup>5</sup> radicalisation in policy and practice debates; it might be more effective, she argues, 'to instead encourage non-radicalization'. Indeed the discussion of 'resilience'<sup>6</sup> in debates on countering extremism as 'when people are exposed to one or more of the predisposing or enabling conditions for radicalisation but do not make the transition into violent extremism or terrorism' (Council of Europe 2018: 11) suggests it is a quality or capacity that underpins non-radicalisation outcomes. Notions of resilience and resilience building, at individual and community levels, are central to 'whole-of-society' (Grossman 2021: 293–95) or 'holistic' (Barzegar, Powers and El Karhili 2016: 7) approaches to countering violent extremism (CVE) and have been subject to similar criticism to that levelled at societal approaches to understanding radicalisation. This is that, without a clear delimitation of the object of intervention (violent extremism or terrorism), CVE might come to encompass an 'unreasonably wide scope of activity' and produce 'unintended consequences' (Berger 2016: 8, 34

cited in Grossman 2021: 294). The opportunistic and inconsistent deployment of the notion of resilience to violent extremism by governments can reinforce a sense among some communities of securitisation by stealth (see, for example, Hardy 2015; Rosand 2018: 74). However, 'resilience' has proven to be of ongoing interest to CVE policy makers and practitioners for thinking about how equipped society is to recover from the after-effects of terrorist attacks and/or how resilience to extremist ideologies might be fostered long-term in communities that may be vulnerable to, or targeted by, such messaging (see Kerst, this volume).

Discussion of the wider conceptualisation of resilience and its application to the CVE field is beyond the scope of this volume (see Hardy 2015; Stephens and Sieckelinck 2021; Grossman 2021). Its emphasis on *the capacity* of an individual or community to survive external shock through a process of change and transformation, however, offers a way to shift focus from 'risk' and 'vulnerability' to capacities of (often marginalised) individuals or communities to cope with, and respond positively to, adversity – albeit at the risk of shifting responsibility for managing structurally generated, and unequally distributed, risk and harm from government to those communities or individuals (Hardy 2015: 82). Individual resilience to violent extremism has been identified as enabled by psychological traits such as, *inter alia*, empathy, self-control, value complexity, self-esteem, tolerance of diversity and ambiguity (Sieckelinck and Gielen 2017: 4; Grossman 2021: 298). It can also be generated by interactions between individual and societal institutions and processes, which create positive emotional and educational environments, open-mindedness and resources and strategies for coping with adversity (*ibid.*). Approaches to building resilience that move beyond a binary understanding of resilience as risk versus protective factors are of particular value; they allow a more social-ecological understanding that differentiates between risks (as adverse circumstances or environments affecting entire groups or communities), vulnerabilities (as specific challenges or difficulties that enhance risks) and protection (as factors that mitigate vulnerabilities and risks) (Grossman 2021: 303). Social-ecological paradigms of resilience, which stress the interdependence between individuals and social systems and institutions, potentially provide a pro-social and less security-driven approach to countering radicalisation, which mirrors existing approaches in other policy areas (such as disaster preparedness and recovery and public health) and avoids targeting particular communities as vulnerable, deficient or suspect (*ibid.*: 301–302). In so doing, they mirror some of the most promising developments in understandings of radicalisation emanating from multi-level 'ecological' approaches (Dawson 2017: 3; Bouhana 2019).

Engaging with the debate on resilience – notwithstanding its potential for responsabilisation of individuals and communities noted above – is important not least because of its capacity to see individuals not only as perpetrators or victims. This is important especially in relation to young people, who tend to be positioned as vulnerable to, or at risk of, radicalisation. The empirical tracing of complex, multi-directional pathways to partial, stalled or non-radicalisation, which are charted according to choices young people make (albeit structurally and situationally shaped choices), we argue, is crucial to understanding how exposure to calls to extremist ideas and behaviour are resisted in everyday contexts and thus to developing strength- rather than risk-based approaches to resilience building. Crucial to such strength-based approaches is the recognition that protective factors are not simply inferred from (as the inverse of) risk factors – and thus found wanting among those groups deemed ‘at risk’ – but that individual resilience is strengthened by developing attitudes and behaviours that empower individuals and provide resources that mitigate risk. The development of these protective factors is facilitated, moreover, by a range of promotive factors – such as dialogue, inclusion, care, vigilance, social safety and education – which underpin societal resilience (Sieckelink and Gielen 2017: 4–6; see also Council of Europe 2018: 111–14). While this may not allow for the measurement of effectiveness against specific counter-extremism targets, it is a logical outcome of the recognition that radicalisation and extremism are societal, not narrowly security-related, phenomena. As Ezekiel (2002: 60) so powerfully attests, in seeking to resolve the same social structural issues and life crises, relatively few people join racist or violent extremist groups; the more usual outcomes are ordinary coping, numbness, malaise, alcoholism, chronic anger and individual violence. If a broad, strength-based resilience approach empowers those who might take these routes instead, this does not indicate the failure of the resilience-building measure to target extremism but its success in protecting against multiple individual and social harms.

The DARE research project, and the contributions to this volume that draw on its findings, starts from an understanding of radicalisation as a societal phenomenon whose processes can, and should, be studied empirically not only through retrospectively constructed narratives of those who have reached its ‘endpoint’ (manifest in support for or participation in political violence) but through engagement with individuals at different points in their journeys via social settings where radical(ising) messages and agents are encountered. By seeking to explain involvement in political violence by studying only those who have committed such acts – while excluding those who move in the same milieu but do not

become violent extremists – violence always appears as the radicalisation endpoint or apex of the pyramid (Pilkington 2017; Schuurman 2020: 16). In practice, the majority of those moving through radical milieus engage with, appropriate some and reject other ideas and behaviours that they encounter there. This leads to trajectories not only of radicalisation but partial, stalled, reversed or non-radicalisation. While we take seriously concerns that such an extension of the notion of radicalisation could lead to further securitisation and stigmatisation of those who engage with radical milieus or ideas, we argue that, on the contrary, understanding such engagement as a societal rather than security-focused issue allows us to draw on a wider range of theories and strength-based approaches to understanding not only risk and protection factors but the agency of individuals and capacities of communities to resist extremism (see Kewley 2017). By moving beyond a gateway theory – that engagement with radical ideas and participation in radical milieus leads to violent extremism – we are able to release the potential of resilience-based whole-of-society approaches to CVE from the logics of securitisation. Moreover, engaging directly with those in radical(ising) milieus who have non-radicalisation trajectories provides insight into how peer practices and informal settings can be mobilised to recognise, and draw individuals back from, extremism.

### **The DARE Project: Design and Methods**

The contributions to this volume stem from the EU Horizon 2020 DARE (Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality) project (2017–21).<sup>7</sup> The project set out with the overall objective of shifting how we address radicalisation through understanding it as a societal rather than purely security-related phenomenon. Its research programme focused on ‘Islamist’ and ‘extreme-right’ radicalisation, specifically young people’s encounters with forces, messages and agents of radicalisation and the choices they make in response to them. Empirical research was carried out in twelve countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russia, Tunisia, Turkey and the United Kingdom (UK). The target population of ‘youth’ was defined very broadly as those between the ages of twelve and thirty, although in practice most of the empirical research was conducted with the participation of those aged eighteen to thirty-five.

The terms ‘Islamist’ and ‘extreme-right’ were employed as umbrella terms to indicate the broad range of milieus with which we engaged, which were characterised by significant internal diversity as well as very

different national and regional settings (see Appendix for a brief overview of these milieus). 'Islamist' is used to indicate a wide range of ideological positions rooted in the interaction between Islam and politics in distinction from 'Islamic', understood as relating to Islam as a body of religious thought. We draw here on the much more nuanced discussion of differentiations within and between Islamic worldviews and violent and non-violent Islamist ideologies such as that developed by Wilkinson et al. (2021: 5–6) and on the relationship of these to the conceptualisation of radicalism and extremism (see Schmid 2014: 15–18). However, the ascription of more nuanced categorisations is problematic in our case due the particular focus of the DARE study on young people who, in the milieus studied, were still working through their own positions in relation to mainstream Islamic worldviews and Islamist ideologies rather than having clearly established positions. Thus, the term 'Islamist' is used very loosely, to capture a broad spectrum of individual pathways, from those encountering Islamist ideas through to those convicted of Islamist-inspired terrorist offences. The terms 'extreme-right' or 'right-wing extremism' are used as a short-hand to refer to an extremely wide range of political ideologies broadly characterised by authoritarianism, opposition to democracy and exclusionary nationalism (including biological and cultural racism), although most young people in the milieus studied would not identify themselves with these positions and, with some notable exceptions, did not oppose democratic governance. Some milieus, or elements of them, might be more accurately characterised as 'anti-Islamist' rather than 'extreme-right', that is, as engaged in active opposition to what their participants refer to as 'radical Islam' or the 'Islamification' of Western societies but often reflecting a general antipathy towards Islam or all Muslims. These terms – 'Islamist' and 'extreme-right' – are deeply contested and, in many cases, are descriptors that are consciously rejected and viewed as stigmatising by those to whom they are applied. Thus, where ethnographic material is drawn on, these terms are modified in some contributions to reflect country- or region-specific debates and/or used in quotation marks to indicate that these are terms applied to these milieus in public discourse but are not how actors in the milieus identify themselves.

The framework for the project, its main strands of work, approach and methodologies are outlined below to contextualise the more specific questions addressed and methods used, which are detailed in the individual contributions to the volume. The project employed a multi-method approach including meta-analysis, online data analysis, an experimental survey and historical and ethnographic studies of radical(ising) milieus in the course of pursuing four main strands of work. These research foci are outlined below, including a more detailed description of the ethno-

graphic studies of trajectories through radical(ising) milieus as most contributions to this volume draw on empirical findings from that dimension of the research.

### ***Inequality and Radicalisation***

The research focusing on inequality and radicalisation involved a systematic review of 141 quantitative studies and a meta-ethnographic synthesis of ninety-four qualitative empirical studies (published between 1 January 2001 and 31 December 2017) on the relationship between inequality and radicalisation. These reviews analysed what the evidence to date tells us about the presence and consistency of any relationship between inequality at the individual and societal levels and established the need to distinguish between objective and subjective measures of inequality when considering that relationship (see Franc and Pavlović 2021; Poli and Arun 2019; Franc, Poli and Pavlović, this volume). The relationship between inequality and radicalisation was explored also through secondary quantitative data analysis of seven European survey data sets (Storm, Pavlović and Franc 2020) and a survey experiment among representative online panel samples of 18–35-year-olds in three countries, which explored the relationship between perceived inequality, negative intergroup attitudes and activist and radicalised intentions (Pavlović, Storm and Franc 2021).

This strand of work has also been informed by the ethnographic studies conducted on young people's trajectories through radical(ising) milieus (see below), which confirm the finding from the systematic review that there is a relationship between perceived socio-political and socio-economic inequalities and injustices and pathways to extremism, but it is neither linear nor consistent. These ethnographic studies found that perceived socio-political inequalities were more readily articulated as drivers of radicalisation than perceived socio-economic inequalities. The perceived socio-political inequalities referred to by actors in both 'extreme-right' and 'Islamist' milieus were expressed as a series of grievances, which are subjectively experienced as systematically unfair treatment. They do not consistently explain radicalisation but they help understand how feelings of victimisation, a sense of injustice and lack of human rights protection may play a role in radicalisation, both at individual and group level.

### ***Online Radicalisation***

A study of radicalisation through social media participation in 'Islamist' and 'extreme-right' milieus was conducted in seven European countries (Belgium, France, Greece, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and the

UK). Data were analysed from just under six hundred Twitter accounts and showed that, over the period studied (2010–19), ‘right-wing extremist’ Twitter activity increased while ‘Islamist’ extremist Twitter activity was scattered.<sup>8</sup> The content and use of Twitter also differed across the two types of milieus. ‘Extreme-right’ accounts demonstrated a set of shared ideological positions, were more radical in their messaging and more engaged with one another (through sharing materials or retweeting). The ‘Islamist’ accounts appeared more as a ‘store front’ to reroute users to other online platforms and content, mainly promoted religious fundamentalist beliefs and associated lifestyles and displayed low levels of sharing or retweeting content.

The ethnographic studies of young people’s radicalisation trajectories also considered encounters with radical(ising) messages online. Online spaces were found to be a significant source of such messages and to contribute to a sense of injustice or victimhood as well as lead to invitations to join extremist movements. At the same time, offline relationships – with those in the milieu, friends and family members – were found to be of continuing importance, and friends, family and authority figures within the milieu were said not only to encourage radical views or actions but also to constrain them. The complex interweaving of online and offline channels of radicalisation are explored in a number of the contributions to this volume (see, for example, Dechesne; Pilkington and Vestel; and Poliakov).

### *Historical and Interactional Radicalisation*

Reflecting recent policy concerns with the potential for ‘cumulative extremism’ to occur as opposing movements (e.g. ‘Islamist’ and ‘extreme-right’ movements) interact, five case studies were conducted (in France, Germany, Greece, Turkey and the UK) tracing the dynamics of radicalisation in the context of contests between opposing movements and the state.<sup>9</sup> The findings suggest interactional radicalisation is far from a binary process, involving two opposing groups; it is shaped by multiple actors, including the state and media agencies, as well as the context within which groups are operating. It was also found that violent contestation between opposing groups does not necessarily lead to more violence; de-escalation and non-escalation, leading away from violence, also occur. Such multi-directionality challenges the ‘spiral’ narrative of cumulative radicalisation, the outcomes of which, we argue, are better visualised as a series of ‘spikes’.<sup>10</sup> Internal group culture was also found to be important in understanding the likelihood of a group escalating to violence or responding in a non-violent manner; non-violence is often the



outcome where there is non-equivalent interaction, that is, where one actor is concerned with the other but this concern is not reciprocated. Our findings confirm that 'extreme-right' actors are more concerned with 'Islamist' actors than 'Islamist' actors are with 'extreme-right' actors (see also Sakellariou, this volume). The studies also found that the 'state' can be an active actor in the radicalisation process. In the same five countries, historical case studies of radicalisation were conducted also and a number of key themes were identified. The first was the important role of historical 'counter memory' in radical milieus – in particular narratives of grievance and humiliation – in understanding the construction of the ideological prism through which individuals in the milieu were invited to think about the past, present and future. The second was the role of conspiracy theories – especially antisemitism – in radicalisation 'waves', which were found to be uniform neither in content nor degree across contexts. The third was the relationship between radical thinking and radical action, in particular the move to violence, where the studies found no simple or consistent relationship; one does not have to be present for the other to occur. Finally, the case studies explored the relationship between radical milieus, violent political groups and the broader social and political climate and found that the radical milieu might act both as an accelerant and as a potential inhibitor to radical action (see also Busher, Holbrook and Macklin 2019).

### ***Trajectories through Radical(ising) Milieus***

The focus on trajectories of radicalisation and non-radicalisation in this volume means that most contributions draw primarily on the ethnographic strand of work in the DARE project. This element of the research sought to elicit emic understandings of 'radicalisation' by asking how young people in radical(ising) milieus themselves understand this phenomenon, and the discourse surrounding it, as well as the role such discourse itself potentially plays in radicalisation trajectories. It aimed to unpick why some young people become engaged in violent extremist ideologies while others, in similar structural locations, take non-radicalisation trajectories. Understanding how sustained inequalities and perceived injustice impact these outcomes was central to this. The ethnographic studies also sought to tease out the role of social relationships (in-person or virtual) in facilitating radicalisation of ideas and behaviour and how extra-ideological factors – emotional experiences, sense of identity and 'coolness' of radical milieus – shape radicalisation trajectories. At the heart of these ethnographic studies was the aim to capture young people's trajectories as they unfolded – with all their stops and starts,

forward and backward movements, motivational logics and inconsistencies – rather than elicit the individual’s retrospective narration of their trajectory using a life-history or biographical interview approach. Thus, in devising the case studies of young people’s trajectories, researchers sought appropriate ‘Islamist’ and ‘extreme-right’ milieus as the focus of study. By studying young people’s engagement with radicalisation messages in situ (in their everyday milieus) and over a sustained period of time, the aim was to capture the complexity and situational nature of the paths young people take. This approach was premised on the theoretical understanding of radicalisation as relational, interactional and situational set out above.

Ethnographic studies were conducted in ten ‘Islamist’ and nine ‘extreme-right’ milieus across twelve countries (see Appendix for an overview of the cases and national locations). For the purposes of selecting case studies, the notion of milieu was operationalised broadly – as the people, physical and social conditions, events, networks and communications that shape a person’s subjectivity and life trajectory – to allow flexibility. The selected milieu was not required to be territorially fixed and it was anticipated that in most cases it would not be. However, to constitute a milieu, there should be an evident connection (human, material, communicative, ideological) between individuals interviewed and observations conducted. An appropriate milieu for selection should also be a space of encounter with radical or extreme messages (via the presence in the milieu of recruiters, high receptivity to radical messages and so on). However, anticipating the high degree of dissonance between how movements and ideologies are described exogenously and endogenously, it was not a requirement that participants in milieus themselves thought of the milieu – or themselves – as ‘extreme-right’ or ‘Islamist’. Indeed, from an ethical as well as methodological standpoint, it was important that we approached young people without pre-defining them as ‘radical’ or, conversely, ‘normal’ but as milieu actors, all of whom were of potential interest, since our concern was with the social interactions, attitudes and behaviours that are shaped and play out within these milieus. Thus, the boundaries of the milieu were drawn to include those at the margins, who ‘sympathize or share some elements of opinions or style; who mingle socially with activists; and who drift in or out of the scene’ (Bjørge 2009: 30). This was particularly important given the high degree of stigmatisation and surveillance that milieu actors already experience. There was also no requirement that the selected milieu be ‘typical’ of the country or that multiple milieus be included in order to cover the range of different forms that radicalisation takes. Rather, the selected milieu should constitute a pertinent case in the country context and be

sufficiently similar to other milieus in other country locations to allow the transnational synthesis of cases.

Empirical research for the case studies mainly took place from April 2018 to April 2019, although, in some cases, field research extended longer. All researchers completed ethical clearance procedures ahead of commencing fieldwork either through their own institutional ethical review committees or via a formally constituted procedure for ethical review via a sub-committee within the consortium management structure.<sup>11</sup> All participants in the studies were recruited on the principle and practice of informed consent and relations with respondents were conducted in strict adherence to the ethical guidelines adopted for the project.<sup>12</sup> In most cases the identity of research participants was protected by assigning a pseudonym (often chosen by the individual themselves) but where even this was felt to present a potential risk, numbers were assigned. The sub-committee on ethics operated throughout the project, providing a point of reference for all researchers to raise questions and issues arising in the course of fieldwork, analysis and writing up of findings.

The case studies conducted were all 'ethnographic' in that they employed a research method involving 'direct and sustained contact with human agents, within the context of their daily lives (and cultures); watching what happens; listening to what is said; asking questions...' (O'Reilly 2005: 2). This minimal definition of an ethnographic approach meant all case studies were fieldwork-based – a total of 534 field diary entries based on observation were recorded across the nineteen case studies – while retaining sufficient flexibility to ensure the appropriateness of the methodology for the range of milieus in which researchers were working. The relative weight between observation and interview material, for example, varies significantly between case studies. Each case employed a combination of fieldwork techniques including: semi or unstructured person-to-person audio recorded or online interviews with milieu actors; the creation of a detailed field diary to record observations, reflections and questions for further inquiry; and written records of informal conversations with individuals or groups. Events attended included religious services and related social events, organisation meetings, demonstrations, protests, leisure events including football matches, informal get-togethers, discussion groups and criminal trials. A wealth of visual and online materials (streamed chat shows, videos and other materials created by respondents) as well as text documents (information booklets, flyers for events, mission statements, stickers, pamphlets etc.) were also collected.

As part of the ethnographic fieldwork, across all nineteen cases just under four hundred interviews with 369 young people were conducted. These interviews used a common skeleton interview schedule, which was

designed to be used as a baseline for interviews for both the 'extreme-right' and 'Islamist' case studies. It consisted of twelve blocks of questions including, in each block: a series of opening questions pertinent to the theme of the block; suggested prompts; and follow up questions. While each of the themes underpinning these blocks of questions were intended to be addressed in each case study, partners were encouraged to adapt and add to the 'prompts' and 'follow up questions' elements of the skeleton interview schedule in order to reflect their country or case context. As part of the implementation of cases, partners translated, amended and extended the skeleton interview schedule. The interview schedule was long and often a second interview was conducted with respondents to ensure key issues were covered. The interviews were conducted as informally and organically as possible – moving between themes and questions as they occurred naturally in the conversation rather than asking questions in the order presented in the interview schedule – and a one-page graphic representation of the themes and their purpose was produced for interviewers to use as an unobtrusive aide memoire. Individuals were interviewed in dozens of venues, from home, leisure and sports clubs, indoor public spaces such as cafes, shopping centres and bars, outdoor public spaces such as parks and squares through to prisons and court buildings. For each interviewee (or other key respondent), researchers also completed a socio-demographic data sheet collecting standardised data on age, gender, education, employment, household, ethnicity and religion. These profiles of the respondent sets were used in the case study reports, but were not intended to 'profile' individuals or milieus or to try to gain a representative sample from the milieu. Researchers were guided only to stay as close as possible to the target age range for the study and to try to capture the experiences of women as well as men. In many cases, interviews with 'experts' or milieu members outside the target age range of the project were also conducted. These individuals were often crucial to gaining access to the selected milieus or to provide a more holistic view of the milieu, and the interviews were used to inform analysis and interpretation. In relation to gender, on average across all milieus, around three-quarters (77%) of the respondents were male and just under a quarter (23%) were women. This gender imbalance was discussed on an ongoing basis during the course of fieldwork and, in most cases, the imbalance reflects the composition of the milieus studied. However, in three 'Islamist' case studies (in Russia, France and Belgium) and one 'extreme-right' case study (in France), the milieus were exclusively, or almost exclusively, male. This was due to the high proportion of respondents being accessed in prison settings in the French and Belgian cases and due to the strong gender norms in the

Russian case, which made it difficult to access female respondents. The absence of women in these four cases also lowers the overall proportion of women across all cases.<sup>13</sup>

The data collected from the ethnographic study of the selected milieus were analysed in a two-stage process. First, the data were analysed holistically by the field researchers as individual case studies to produce case study reports<sup>14</sup> and then a cross-case analysis was conducted employing a meta-ethnographic synthesis method (see Dechesne, this volume; Pilkington and Vestel, this volume). This two-stage approach was adopted to ensure the meaningful analysis of individual case studies in context, following the epistemological premise underpinning Burawoy's (1998: 13) extended case method that 'context is not noise disguising reality but reality itself'. While seeking to understand (non)radicalisation beyond the single case study, the DARE project also started from the premise that these locations are not limitations on, but central to, the knowledge produced through social research. Details of the data analysis method used at each stage can be found in Pilkington and Vestel 2020 and Pilkington and Vestel 2021 and it is briefly outlined below.

At the individual case study level, data analysis was conducted using a 'multi-grounded theory' (Goldkuhl and Cronholm 2010) approach, which works on the principle not that new theory is induced from data analysis but that theory is essential to interpretation and knowledge production and can result in the revision or refining of theory. In practical terms, this meant that researchers employed standard inductive coding followed by a process of theoretical matching and validation against both data and existing theoretical frameworks at the interpretative level. Coding was conducted by all teams using NVivo 12 computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. At this first stage, all qualitative data sources (for example, semi-structured interview transcripts, field diaries, images, social media communications) from each milieu studied were coded in native language by partners as separate, individual NVivo 'projects'. These data were coded, in the first instance, to a maximum of two hierarchical levels: inductively generated codes (in native language<sup>15</sup>); and 'parent' codes (in English) imported from an agreed 'skeleton coding tree'. The development of the 'skeleton coding tree' from initial, pilot coding as well as from the interview schedule and initial research questions, meant that it was possible to group most inductively generated codes under appropriate pre-determined parent codes. However, where inductive codes did not fit – for example because this activity or experience was specific to the case – new parent codes were created for that case only. Equally, if no data fitted a pre-designed parent code, this was left unpopulated and researchers reflected on the absence of such data in their reports.

Extensive guidelines on coding, designed to standardise coding practice (length of text coded, multiple-coding, types of codes generated and so on) as far as possible across cases, were provided across the research team. Following coding to two hierarchical levels and the production of documents required for cross-case analysis, researchers continued to analyse their data sets, drawing on theoretical frameworks as appropriate to their particular case to generate third-level nodes or 'themes' and interpret their data and prepare the case study report.

The second stage of analysis consisted of conducting cross-national synthesis analyses for the nine 'extreme-right' milieus and the ten 'Islamist' milieus. These transnational multi-case analyses were conducted separately but using the same methodological approach based on the meta-ethnographic synthesis approach (Noblit and Hare 1988; Britten et al. 2002) but adapted to allow for the synthesis of transnational qualitative empirical data rather than published studies (Pilkington 2018). This constitutes an alternative to comparative approaches which pre-determine the parameters for comparison and often translate into a common language only 'indicative' interviews or interview summaries, which tend to lose the 'outliers' or refutational cases, the inclusion of which is crucial to the principles of qualitative research. It combines context-sensitive coding of data in original language (as set out above) with the production of detailed primary data summaries ('node memos'<sup>16</sup>) and respondent profiles ('respondent memos'<sup>17</sup>) in English. These, alongside the single case study reports, were used as the objects of synthesis. In this way, the synthesis approach facilitates the construction of a 'bigger picture' from profoundly contextually embedded data and allows for not only commonalities but also differences to be elucidated and for the retention of a significant amount of contextuality. The details of the five stages of the synthesis process, and how the approach used here differs from classic meta-ethnographic synthesis, are set out elsewhere (see Pilkington 2018; Pilkington and Vestel 2021) and are not detailed here. However, it is important to note that, following an initial scoping of the data, the following five questions were used to guide the syntheses:

- How do milieu actors understand 'radicalism', 'extremism' and 'terrorism'?
- How and where are radical(ising) messages encountered in the milieus studied?
- How do milieu actors understand (in)equality and its role in radicalisation?
- How do milieu actors recount their trajectories towards and away from extremism?

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- What do milieu actors want to change in society and how do they envisage achieving that change?

These questions were used in the synthesis of both ‘extreme-right’ and ‘Islamist’ cases (see Dechesne, this volume; and Pilkington and Vestel, this volume).

### *Limitations of the DARE Project*

There are, of course, many limitations to the DARE study. First, while the specific research design and method employed has allowed us to uncover some of the complex non-linear, situational and affective dimensions of radicalisation pathways, the milieu approach that facilitates this also has its drawbacks. The inclusion of milieu actors who had not crossed the threshold into violent extremism provides the basis for our reflections on trajectories of non-radicalisation but may limit comparison with other studies where ‘radicalisation’ was studied based on the trajectories of those who had crossed that line. There is also an inevitable element of self-selection in terms of access to radical milieus and to individuals and groups who were willing to engage in such a research study. Secondly, these same access factors mean that the milieus studied, as well as the local and national contexts in which they are situated, are extremely diverse and not open to simple comparison. Thirdly, the ethnographic approach is focused on eliciting actors’ own understandings of the world, their experiences of it and journeys through it, which we see as vital to our understanding of radicalisation. Readers should be aware that this means some extracts from interviews and diaries used in this volume contain discriminatory and offensive material. Contributors have not reproduced this gratuitously, however, and have sought to interrogate, triangulate – through observation – and critically interpret these accounts. It is important to note here also that the ‘close-up’ nature of the ethnographic approach brings with it ethical responsibilities that, in some cases, outweigh the goal of interpretation. This means that, when interpreting data, some potentially important explanatory factors are not outlined in publications because their explication might reveal details (of movement affiliation, personal traits or relationships, key incidents in moving individuals towards or away from radicalisation) that could lead to the identities of individuals or groups being exposed (to others in the movement as well as outsiders) in a way that could cause harm to research participants.

In relation to the meta-ethnographic synthesis of milieu studies, it is also important to note a number of limitations. Although all cases syn-

thesised in this study were drawn from a common research project (supported by cross-project guidelines and protocols), differences between data remained. This was partially a result of the inductive rather than deductive process of selecting cases, which meant that the cases reflected a broad range of milieus (see Dechesne, this volume; Pilkington and Vestel, this volume) experiencing different proximities to radical(ising) messages and being more or less internally homogenous. The nine 'extreme-right' milieus studied, for example, might be considered to fall into two broad clusters of cases (see Figure A.1): those where the milieu consists of activists in nationalist, radical or extreme-right or 'new right' movements (France, Malta, Norway, Netherlands, UK); and those where the milieu is focused around a non-political interest (e.g. football, shooting, religion) but there are ideological connections between the milieu and nationalist, radical or extreme-right movements and ideologies (Germany, Greece, Poland, Russia). However, it should not be assumed that those active in ideologically-oriented movements are necessarily more radical in attitude or behaviour. Placing the milieus on a 'political compass' according to views within the milieu relating to (i) level of support for democratic or non-democratic forms of governance or non-democratic ways to achieve change (a 'pro-democracy-anti-democracy' spectrum) and (ii) degree of identification with, and prioritisation of the needs of, a nationally or ethnically defined in-group and expression of hostility towards out-groups or minority groups (an 'inclusive-exclusive' spectrum), suggests the most anti-democratic and most exclusionary positions are found in the Greek milieu, with the Polish, Russian, French and part of the Maltese milieu also showing more anti-democratic and exclusionary attitudes than the other milieus (see Pilkington and Vestel 2021: 17–19). The ten 'Islamist' milieus also varied significantly, not least in that they included studies in countries of both Muslim majority (Turkey, Tunisia) and non-Muslim majority (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway, Russia, UK) composition. These studies might be very loosely grouped into two clusters (see Figure A.2): those conducted in urban districts or neighbourhoods associated with Islamist activism, migrants from Muslim majority countries and, often, social deprivation (Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Tunisia, UK); and those focusing on particular sites or channels (family and informal networks, non-official prayer houses, civil society organisations, prisons) of potential 'Islamist' radicalisation (France, Greece, Russia, Turkey). The degree of proximity to violent extremism also varies significantly across these milieus; the closest proximity is found in the milieus studied in Belgium and France (where research was conducted in prisons) and in Tunisia and Turkey (where recruitment to jihadist organisations in the districts studied was high). In other mi-



lieus, research participants were resident in neighbourhoods or engaged in groups or networks associated with such recruitment but not taking up these offers themselves.

The cases also reflect a certain unevenness inherent in any multi-sited ethnography. While some studies were deeply ethnographic, including extensive field diaries, visual data and 20–30 semi-structured interviews, others – especially in countries with small ‘extreme-right’ or ‘Islamist’ scenes – generated fewer interviewees. Others secured substantive interview material but the case afforded less opportunity for ethnographic observation; in three cases, where all or many interviews were conducted in prison, for example, observation opportunities within prison were limited and interviewees were almost all men. We should also note that, notwithstanding the synthesis approach, which was designed to capture as much context and particularity as possible, only a fraction of the data collected across the milieu studies could be included. In the initial selection of questions to guide the synthesis, we focused on questions that allowed inclusion of the maximum number of studies. This meant a number of important issues, especially in terms of personal and affective dimensions of radicalisation – the role of stress, anxiety, trauma, adverse childhood experience, for example – are under-represented due to non-availability of such personal data across all cases or all individuals in cases.

Finally, while the project had an integrated research design – with each of the strands of research briefly outlined above intended to inform and enhance understanding of other strands – in practice, given the time-limited nature of the project, these strands were conducted in parallel and findings from one strand were fed into the design or revised design of other strands less consistently than we would have liked. Moreover, given the focus of this volume on trajectories of radicalisation and non-radicalisation, the specific findings related to other aspects of the research, especially online radicalisation, interactional radicalisation and preventing and countering radicalisation, are not fully represented.

## Contributions to the Book

The volume is structured in three parts, moving from the more general to the more micro level of analysis. In Part I, a cross-European perspective on trajectories of radicalisation is presented drawing on the meta-ethnographic synthesis of ten cases of ‘Islamist’ radical(ising) milieus (Dechesne, Chapter 1) and nine cases of ‘extreme-right’ radical(ising) milieus (Pilkington and Vestel, Chapter 2). Both chapters identify the milieu approach as central to understanding how young people’s trajectories

of radicalisation and non-radicalisation are shaped through processes of encounter with, and responses to, radical(ising) messages. Dechesne argues that this approach avoids the tendency of security-focused perspectives to amplify the role of identified factors in problematic forms of radicalisation by failing to consider their contribution also to cases of non-radicalisation. Based on findings from the ethnographic study of milieus with a high prevalence of 'Islamist' extremist messaging (including prisons, mosques and relatively deprived areas with a known presence of 'Islamist' extremist recruiters) in ten countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Tunisia, Turkey and the UK), Dechesne identifies participation/non-participation in society, a conflict/cooperation mind-set and engagement/non-engagement in violence as key components of radicalisation *and* resistance to radicalisation. In Chapter 2, Pilkington and Vestel draw on the synthesis of research findings from the study of 'extreme-right' milieus in nine countries (France, Germany, Greece, Malta, Poland, Norway, Russia, the Netherlands and the UK) to explore how young people's trajectories of radicalisation, including partial, stalled or non-radicalisation, are shaped in concrete social contexts. They identify social structures, within which young people are embedded, and the extremist ideas and behaviours diffused within the milieus they inhabit, as key factors in shaping trajectories as reflected in a range of ideologically and experientially articulated (political and personal) grievances. However, trajectory outcomes are found to be strongly mediated also by situational and affective factors, which can encourage young people to advance along, but also halt and draw back from, radicalisation pathways. Through tracing individual trajectories, the radical milieu appears as a site of encounter and engagement with radicalising forces, messages and agents, which can facilitate the movement towards extremism, but also constrain radicalisation and pull young people back from extremism. Thus, Pilkington and Vestel concur with Dechesne that the same factors, or dimensions of, radicalisation can simultaneously be a source of radicalisation and non-radicalisation.

Part II explores a range of sites and channels of radicalisation and non-radicalisation. In Chapter 3, Franc, Poli and Pavlović provide a review of the evidence base to date on whether, and if so in what contexts, inequality drives radicalisation. Drawing on a systematic review/meta-ethnographic synthesis methodology, they consider the findings of over two hundred empirical studies for what they tell us about the relationship between inequality and radicalisation in relation to 'Islamist' and 'extreme-right' radicalisation. They find some evidence for the existence of either a direct or indirect relationship between inequality and radicalisation but also studies that find no such relationship or a bi-directional

relationship (inequality facilitates radicalisation but radicalisation also plays a role in producing inequality). The inconsistency of findings reflects the multi-dimensionality of inequality and the authors emphasise, in particular, the importance of distinguishing between objective and subjective dimensions and the salience in existing studies of subjective (perceived) inequality and of socio-political rather than economic inequality in facilitating radicalisation. The conditionality of findings also reflects differences in what outcome variable (indicating 'radicalisation') is taken across different strands of radicalisation and different country contexts (the definitional problem discussed earlier in this introductory chapter). The authors conclude that the link between inequality and radicalisation is context dependent, if not case-by-case dependent. In Chapter 4, Sakellariou considers the question of the relationship between religion and political violence, specifically how this relationship has been presented in relation to Islam in contemporary political and public discourse in Greece. Drawing on the ethnographic study in the Athens region of an extreme-right milieu, he shows how Greek Orthodox anti-Muslim groupings work together with anti-immigrant, extreme-right nationalist groups, such as supporters of Golden Dawn, to shape increasingly anti-Muslim public discourse, epitomised in the extended fight against the construction of the first official mosque in Athens. Drawing on a parallel ethnographic study with participants in a Muslim milieu, centred on non-official prayer houses in Athens, the potential for the targeted stigmatisation of Muslims as well as physical attacks on individuals and sites of worship to facilitate a process of reciprocal radicalisation is demonstrated. The responses, and strategies, developed by these milieu actors from within to prevent such escalation are explored and the implications of this for understanding the relationship between religion and violence considered. In Chapter 5, Poliakov considers family, friendship and kinship networks as channels of radicalisation, non-radicalisation and deradicalisation. Based on in-depth interviews with young men from the North Caucasian republics of the Russian Federation, now living in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, he argues that these networks function as an enabling infrastructure for mutual emotional support, the development of a common identity and the reframing of views. The family, he suggests, is pivotal to two distinct patterns of radicalisation among this second urban generation of young people. On the one hand, intergenerational conflict, and emotional disengagement, within the parental family, reinforced by discrimination and horizontal inequalities encountered in Russian cities, can facilitate pathways of radicalisation. On the other hand, the establishment of relationships of affinity and trust with other family members (especially siblings) or within leisure or sports-based

peer groups may open young people to radical worldviews or steer them down paths of non-radicalisation and deradicalisation.

In Part III, the focus turns to exploring the situational and interactional dynamics of radicalisation. In Chapter 6, Pilkington draws on ethnographic research with young activists in 'extreme-right' movements in the UK to explore the significance of micro-situational interactions for explaining trajectories into and away from (political) violence. Drawing on ethnographic and interview data, the chapter identifies a disjuncture between research participants' almost universal rejection of the legitimacy of violence in pursuit of political causes and the engagement by some of them in violence. Focusing on four individual cases – three of whom were involved in violence, one who was not – the chapter explores the significance, as well as limitations, of micro-situational interactions for understanding where, when and what violence occurs. The author concludes that violence is neither the apex of radicalisation pathways, nor wholly situationally explained, but a socio-cultural practice imbued with a range of meanings for individuals and embraced or rejected in response to situational and interactional dynamics shaped by chains of previous encounters outside of political activism. In Chapter 7, Conti challenges the vision of prison as a 'terroristogenic' site that has become embedded in public as well as academic discourse. By drawing on ethnographic research in a French prison, with prisoners convicted of terrorism-related offences and those convicted of other offences, he is able to explore the complex interactions within the prison environment that lead some young prisoners to turn to radical Islam while others do not. A key factor in this is the inequality that permeates the daily life of Muslim prisoners, leading to a widely shared sense of injustice, which exacerbates existing crises of identity and sense of social anomie. Against this background, Conti considers the offer radical Islam provides to those whose links to society are already fragile, to make a complete break with that world and be resocialised into a new affective community of the neo-*Ummah*. Tracing individual journeys in which radical Islamism is adopted, it is shown to offer the basis of a new, valorised identity, a means to seek justice for a persecuted and humiliated Muslim community and a feeling of, at last, not being the 'losers' but the 'chosen ones'. Alongside such trajectories, he identifies cases where individuals resist the offer of these radicalising messages and are able to mobilise resources – family, spiritual, social connections – to re-establish roots and connections that protect them against radicalising messages. He concludes that the differences between these outcomes are often no more than 'tiny threads' maintaining affective and social connectedness. In Chapter 8, Kerst draws on the findings of his research with young members of marksmen's clubs in Germany to ex-

plore how milieu members respond to radical(ising) messages, and their messengers, which they encounter in everyday situations. These marksmen's clubs are traditionally politically conservative and have attracted right-wing or extreme-right actors seeking to influence, and appropriate, certain aspects of the club milieu. He finds a wide spectrum of responses, ranging from outright rejection – of the message, its messenger or both – to their uncritical acceptance or trivialisation leading to a potential normalisation of the views expressed. By considering how these responses are shaped by the context and interactional dynamics of their encounter, he explores some of the factors that encourage and maintain resilience to radicalisation at both the individual and milieu level.

The concluding chapter elaborates a number of themes that emerge across the very different case studies drawn on through the volume and critically reflects on their implications for the theoretical models and debates that shape contemporary radicalisation research. It proposes that radicalisation is best understood as a relational concept reflecting a social phenomenon that is the product of social interactions rather than social profiles or psychological dispositions. It draws on findings from contributions to the volume to suggest that such interactions – with family, friends, movement leaders, influential figures, institutional actors – may facilitate but also constrain radicalisation. It argues that, if we are to avoid overdetermining our understanding of this process by the exclusive study of its relatively rare endpoint in violent extremism, it is vital that we study not only radicalisation but partial radicalisation, stalled radicalisation and non-radicalisation. Further, while recognising the particular contribution of radicalisation studies in understanding how, rather than why, people engage with radical ideas and behaviour, it is argued that the 'why' question must not be ignored. Indeed, understanding the concerns that drive people to activism in radical milieus may help explain why so few journeys through them end in violent extremism. Finally, it calls for the study of radicalisation journeys that do not end in violent extremism for what they tell us about the protective factors, resilient qualities and individual agency that combine to establish the 'red lines' that milieu members choose not to cross. This situated knowledge of actors in radical(ising) milieus, it suggests, may inform work to strengthen resistance to violent and anti-democratic responses to individual and collective grievances.

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**Hilary Pilkington** is Professor of Sociology at the University of Manchester and Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences. She has conducted ethnographic research on youth and youth subculture, youth political participation, activism and extremism and published also on ethnographic research methods and meta-ethnographic synthesis. She was coordinator of the H2020 DARE (Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality) project (University of Manchester, 2017–21). She is a member of the Academic-Practitioner Countering Extremism Network of the Commission for Countering Extremism and served as independent Commissioner on the GMCA Preventing Violent Extremism and Promoting Social Cohesion Commission.

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**NOTES**

1. The terms 'emic' and 'etic', emanating from linguistic anthropology, are used here in line with their adoption in the social sciences to distinguish between concepts and categories rooted in actors' self-understanding and 'insider accounts' ('emic') and those devised and deployed by external, scientific or policy/practice communities ('etic') (Whitaker 2017; Sieckelinck et al. 2019: 677).
2. The Ahmed and Lynch rapid appraisal considered articles published in three academic terrorism studies journals (2001–18) while the Franc and Pavlović systematic review, conducted as part of the DARE project, considered a wider range of publications (2001–17) based on quantitative empirical studies on the relationship between inequality and radicalisation. The parallel meta-ethnographic synthesis of published qualitative empirical studies conducted as part of the DARE project found a higher proportion of studies (25%) to be focused on the 'extreme-right' (see Franc, Poli and Pavlović, this volume).
3. While the incidence rate between 2019 and 2021 is clearly heavily impacted by COVID, comparative figures from 2017–19 suggest that right-wing extremism accounted for just 2.6% of terrorist attacks reported by EU member states (Europol 2020: 11).
4. It should be noted that Cragin (2014: 347) emphasises the importance of differentiating between factors of 'resistance to' and 'desistance from' violent extremism.
5. Pre-emption implies that the risks of radicalisation are knowable and can be intercepted or averted by taking precautionary action. In radicalisation policy and practice this approach underpins resilience-based policies that seek to

- teach individuals to live with uncertainty and develop skills that allow them to adapt and respond to risks and harms that are likely to occur (Hardy 2015: 80).
6. Resilience is used to describe the capacity to absorb the impact of, and recover from, shock, trauma or disturbance (Hardy 2015: 79).
  7. For further details of the project and the findings of the project in a series of reports, Research Briefings and Policy Briefs, see <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/dare/>.
  8. For the country-level reports, as well as an introduction to these studies setting out the methodology employed, see <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/dare/home/research-reports/online-radicalisation/>.
  9. For the country-level reports on case studies of interactional radicalisation, see <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/dare/home/research-reports/interactional-radicalisation/>.
  10. See <https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=58627>.
  11. The project received ethical approval from the EU prior to the conclusion of the Grant Agreement No. 725349 (2017). Each Consortium partner subsequently secured ethical approval through its own institutional ethics board for the research in which it participated or through the DARE Ethics Sub-Committee. As Coordinator, the project was submitted to the University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee 4 and received approval Ref: 2017-1737-3255 (14 June 2017) with subsequent amendments and reapprovals (25 April 2018 and 11 June 2020). The procedures and standards of this Committee were used to inform the DARE Ethics Sub-Committee.
  12. Detailed guidelines on methods for data collection and analysis, ethical and security protocols including procedures for transcription, pseudonymisation, preparation, storage and sharing of various forms of data (textual, visual, audio etc.) were provided for all researchers in a dedicated project Data Handbook. This Data Handbook also included the ethical guidelines, protocols on researcher safety and research instruments such as the shared interview schedule and the skeleton coding tree. Some of these are outlined in Pilkington and Vestel 2020.
  13. In three cases – the studies of ‘extreme-right’ milieus in Germany and Malta and of the ‘Islamist’ milieu in Turkey – the respondent set was roughly evenly split between young men and young women even though the milieu studied was predominantly male.
  14. The individual case study reports on ‘Islamist milieus’ can be found at <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/dare/home/research-reports/islamist-radical-milieu-studies/>. The case study reports on ‘extreme-right’ milieus can be found at <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/dare/home/research-reports/extreme-right-radical-milieu-studies/>.
  15. This inductive coding was conducted in the languages of the interviews being coded but ‘node’ names were subsequently translated into English to facilitate cross-national analysis.

16. 'Node memos' are thematic memos including detailed descriptions of the range and content, as well as illustrative quotes, for each node.
17. 'Respondent memos' were generated in English for each individual respondent, providing a quick reference point for the main socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent and other contextual information of relevance to the interpretation of the data.

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