DIIS REPORT

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ROADS TO MILITANT RADICALIZATION

INTERVIEWS WITH FIVE FORMER PERPETRATORS OF POLITICALLY MOTIVATED ORGANIZED VIOLENCE

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Executive Summary

The present report is based on in-depth interviews with individuals formerly involved in politically motivated group violence, in order to acquire accounts of processes of radicalization in their own words. The main themes in the interviews were the following: 1) How did they become involved with militant activist groups? 2) What drove them to take part in specific militant operations? And: 3) What role did ideology, identity and social group processes play in these decisions? The latter theme is the main problem dealt with in this text.

Thus, drawing on the three main themes listed above, the main conclusions of this text fall into three different categories:

Ideology

While all the interviewees had politically oriented world views before joining militant groups, crucially none had a clear ideological standpoint at the time they became involved. Ideology might be a driving force once the individual had joined the group, but it did not map out his or her path to the group in the first place.

Identity

Identity played a key role in the decisions of these individuals to join violent groups. By acting, the individual moulds his or her identity to the ideological language of the group. Whether this acting is violent or non-violent thus depends on that language. Data suggest that these individuals deliberately sought out the groups that resembled their understandings of themselves the most.

Social Group Processes

All the groups dealt with in this text are parts of larger subcultures. The movement from non-violent to violent groups within these subcultures seems to be greatly affected by social group processes. In subcultures where violent factions are recognized, joining them can be a means of hierarchical mobility. Also within the violent factions, group processes play a key role in individual decisions. By being active in the group's planning and execution of specific acts, the individual becomes 'part of the brotherhood', which again supports the individual's view of him- or herself as an ideologically superior and active person.

Dansk resumé

Denne rapport er baseret på dybdegående interviews med individer, der tidligere har været involveret i politisk motiveret gruppe-vold, for at få adgang til disses egne fremlægninger af radikaliseringsprocesserne. De dominerende emner i disse interviews var som følger: 1) Hvordan blev de involveret i militante aktivistgrupper? 2) Hvad fik dem til at deltage i specifikke militante operationer? Og 3) Hvilken rolle spillede ideologi, identitet og sociale gruppeprocesser i disse beslutninger? Sidstnævnte emne er det problem, der danner centrum for denne tekst.

På baggrund af de tre ovenstående emner bliver konklusionerne draget inden for tre forskellige kategorier:

Ideologi
Selvom alle de interviewede havde forskellige politisk orienterede verdensbilleder, før de blev en del af de militante grupper, så havde ingen af dem en klar ideologisk holdning forud for deres deltagen. Ideologi er muligvis en drivkraft, efter at individet er blevet involveret i gruppen, men det var ikke den afgørende faktor, der førte dem ind i gruppen til at starte med.

Identitet
Identitet spillede en afgørende rolle i de beslutninger, der fik individerne til at deltage i de militante grupper. Gennem handling former individet sin identitet til gruppens ideologiske sprog. Hvorvidt denne handling er voldelig eller ej, afhænger således af gruppens specifikke sprog. Data peger i retning af, at disse individer bevidst valgte de grupper, der passede mest overens med deres egen selvforståelse.

Sociale gruppeprocesser
Alle grupperne i denne tekst er del af større subkulturer. Bevægelsen fra ikke-voldelige til voldelige grupper inden for disse subkulturer ser ud til i høj grad at være påvirket af sociale gruppeprocesser. I subkulturer, hvor voldelige fraktioner bliver anerkendt, kan deltagelse i disse være et middel til hierarkisk mobilitet. Inden for disse voldelige grupper, spiller gruppeprocesser også en nøglerolle i individuelle beslutninger. Ved at være aktiv i gruppens planlægning og udførsel af specifikke handlinger, bliver individet en 'del af broderskabet', hvilket igen støtter individets billede af sig selv som en ideologisk overlegen og aktiv person.

Introduction and Problem

Why do some young people who have been born and raised in a European democracy become radicalized in such a way that they are ready to commit or directly support violent attacks on European states, their representatives or citizens in order to achieve political goals?

Since the al-Qaeda attack on New York on 11 September 2001, this question has been asked repeatedly by researchers in many different fields. Common to most of them is that they tend to focus almost single-mindedly on the role of Islam, radical Islamism and Islamist terrorism. There are many reasons for this. The threat of Islamist terrorism is new and unknown to Europeans, and confusion and uncertainty has led to a demand for an answer to the question, Why? Why do these young Europeans, with the same opportunities for democratic participation, the same educational and job opportunities etc. as the rest of their European co-citizens, turn their back on society and seek to inflict harm to the very system that has helped them to a better life than they could possibly have had in the country of origin of their parents or grandparents? This is a reasonable and important question to ask, yet it contains some problems. The focus on Islam as a minority religion in Europe and as the epicentre from which the problems of militant activism and terrorism arise carries within it the threat of forgetting that militant activism is by no means a new problem. Throughout the twentieth century, politically motivated militant activism and terrorism have occurred in different shapes and sizes: nationalist movements, separatist movements, religious movements, left- and right-wing movements, and even eco and animal rights groups. The different types of groups and movements are all very disparate, as is the degree and type of violence they use. But they also all have a few core elements in common: they are groups, they all act on the basis of a religious or political ideology, and they are all willing to use some degree of militancy or violence to achieve their goals. Members of all of these groups have been faced with the dilemma of whether or not their cause was important enough to sanction violence and possibly face a court and trial. And in all of these cases, for some of the members, the answer has been yes.

In all of the above-mentioned types of group, ideologies[1] have occupied core positions in justifying violent acts. This shows that all ideologies are capable of justifying violence and acts of terrorism or militancy, but also that examining the ideology of

[1] Here and later, the term 'ideology' refers both to political and religious ideologies.

the perpetrators in itself makes no sense. Instead one must look at how the ideology is *used* and *interpreted* by the perpetrators, to what degree ideology, as well as both individual and group identity, play a role in the individual's decision to participate in violent action, and how ideology influences the creation of identity.

The answer to the question of how violent radicalization arises and what makes young people participate in or directly support terrorism cannot be found in the ideology of the individual perpetrator alone: it must be sought in processes, individually as well as on the group level, in which ideology and identity interact in the individual's decision to participate in these actions.

The purpose of the research project is:

1) To investigate the role of ideology in violent radicalization
2) To investigate the role of identity in violent radicalization
3) To investigate how the structures and dynamics of a group can contribute to radicalization.

Methods

One of the major problems in terror research has always been the collection of good data. The easiest sources for the researcher to access are newspaper articles, court transcripts, reports of interrogations and the like. These are all valid sources that can shed light on, for instance, the planning of an attack, the relations between the perpetrators, and other technical questions of 'how' and 'when'. The problem with these kinds of data occur when one seeks to answer the questions 'why'. In a court room, the person on trial will often either totally deny that he or she had anything to do with the attack or will come up with some ideological explanation. This ideological explanation of course offers some interesting insights and must be seen as important and valid data, but it fails to reveal whether individual perpetrators had other motivations, perhaps of a social or economic kind or the like. What drove this one person to decide to take part actively in the struggle against the perceived enemy, and why did the particular group that he or she became part of actually decide to plan and conduct an act of political violence? To obtain a valid answer to this question, the only possibility is simply to find and ask the only people who know: the perpetrators themselves.

Although this may seem the most logical procedure, it is also the one that is applied least in the study of political violence. Choosing the method of first-hand, in-depth interviews with the perpetrators of political violence brings with it a large number of problems: first they need to be located, then contacted, and then agree to be interviewed. All three aspects are in themselves difficult, and together may make interviewing them almost impossible. There are, however, a few things that can be done to ease the process. Interviewing prisoners makes it easier to locate and contact such individuals, but there is no certainty that they will agree to participate. Even before this, the researcher needs to deal with the prison service, which is often a problem in itself. Since one of the problems is simply finding out the names of people of interest, an effective method can be either asking activists from the opposing subcultures who they perceive as 'the enemy', or simply reading various internet debate forums where those associated with a particular subculture sometimes discusses their 'enemies' from the opposing wing. This has turned out to be a quite effective way of finding the names of active members of political subcultures. And once the name has been found, further research reveals whether or not that person has actually been involved in the activities described and, if so, whether he or she can be contacted and asked to give an interview. If so, after the interview the interviewer can ask the interviewee

for further contacts, the so-called 'snowballing method'. However, this might create a conflict in the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, who may have been promised full anonymity. First of all, they will often feel that they are being asked to inform on their old or current friends, and if they agree to give names, it can again be difficult to use that name while still preserving the anonymity of the person who gave it. Of course, in both cases there must have been a first interview, which then leads back to the initial problem.

In this report, a range of different approaches have been used to collect interviews, and all those mentioned above have been used. One interviewee contacted the project himself and six were contacted directly by telephone, of which four agreed to be interviewed and three were actually interviewed. Many were contacted by telephone who turned out to be 'just normal people' who coincidently happened to have the same name as a former perpetrator of political violence. At one point a lawyer was contacted about the possibility of handing over information to a client of interest to this project, but unfortunately the latter felt he had been insulted by the way he was addressed and declined to participate. Many others were contacted by e-mail, one of whom withdrew after a period of e-mail correspondence, many refused right away and an even more never answered. The prison service of a Scandinavian country outside Denmark was contacted about the possibility of interviewing two individual prisoners. At the time of writing, the prison institution has agreed, but agreement of the individuals themselves is still needed. Two were contacted through mediators, one of whom agreed and was interviewed, while the other one is still thinking about it. Of the five individuals who have been interviewed, one agreed to hand out cards to people he thought might be relevant. Two other people who have not been interviewed, but who have provided some good information about environments of interest, have also agreed to hand out cards. However, none of these attempts at snowballing has turned out to be a success. From the first step being made to approach people of interest to the project until the collection of data ceased, about eleven months passed. At that point several potential interviewees were thinking about whether or not they should participate, but unfortunately uncertainty over the project's financing made it impossible to continue the collection of data. The period of time from when the potential interviewees were contacted for the first time until he or she decided whether or not to participate varied from one week to six months. Most of the interviewees decided within two months.

A total of seven interviews have been carried out with five individuals, while three people who met the criteria for participation agreed to discuss certain topics and

aspects, but not to participate in formal interviews. Sixteen hours of interview recordings were transcribed, and the transcriptions were all read and approved by the interviewees. The interviewees were given a contract guaranteeing them the right to alter quotations if anonymity is jeopardized. This means that places, phrases or hints that might reveal the identity of the interviewee to the authorities, old friends or enemies have been left out or changed. For the same reason, all group names have been kept secret. Many of these groups are small and consist of a very few people who would easily recognize each other if they knew what to look for. Many interviewees were anxious about being recognized, and most were very preoccupied with their own safety and anonymity. In some cases it might be irritating for the reader not to know what group a certain quotation is referring to, but as the topic of interest is the social processes of and relations between group members, this can easily be done without knowing exactly what group the quoted individual represented at that time or specifically what crime he or she was found guilty of as member of that group. This started as a barrier and a cause of great irritation, but it turned out to be quite a helpful tool, as it forced the focus to be on the topic of interest instead of the crime, the exciting, action-packed stories or the group's political messages.

None of the interviewees were any longer active, meaning that they all told their stories in retrospect. It is obvious that the stories they told were different from the stories they would have told had they been interviewed while they were still active. This provides an opportunity to see the stories behind the ideological explanations. When asked to look back and explain their actions, the individuals were given an opportunity to tell their stories as they remembered them, what was important to them and why they acted as they did, without the constraints imposed by a radical political world view.

The interviews were carried out in the form of qualitative research interviews as described by Kvale (1996), that is, as a dialogue controlled by the interviewer that opens up a space for the interviewee to bring up ideas and subjects that he or she think are interesting and important. The criterion for the selection of interviewees was subject to a number of problems and discussions with colleagues. In the beginning the criterion was simply that the interviewee should have been convicted of an act of terrorism in any European country, and that he or she should have been born or brought up in a European democracy. The last part is still considered absolutely necessary, given that this project focuses on the process of radicalization in European democracies. The other part, however, has been changed a few times. The first problem that arose was that a conviction in itself seems to be a rather vague criterion. Not all perpetrators

of political violence or terrorism have been convicted, and not all who have been convicted would agree that they had perpetrated political violence or, even less likely, terrorism. At this point in the project, I felt that a conviction was important in order to be certain that the interviewees had done what they said they had done, which in its turn would be important for the credibility of the interview. This was questioned in the first interview, in which the interviewee, as well as talking about the act he had been convicted of, mentioned other acts that he had never been convicted of, but that could later be verified by research. The events he mentioned actually occurred, and there is no reason to believe that he lied about his role in them. Thus I had to choose either to change my criteria or to leave out everything about the events for which he had not been brought to trial from my later analysis. Being reluctant just to discard all this good and solid data, I chose to change the criterion that the interviewees should have committed a crime for which he or she could have been convicted after the present terrorist act and that could be confirmed by research.

The next problem concerned the term 'terrorism' and the terrorist act. As I went more deeply into the material, the familiar problem of defining terrorism arose, and I had to leave that out of my criteria as well. The problem is that the term 'terrorism' is simply is too laden a word that changes meaning according to context and that the perpetrators of these acts only rarely use it for themselves (for a discussion of this, see also Tilly 2003). Thus the criteria were changed again, this time to cover 'people who were born and/or raised in European democracies and who, at a time in life in a group setting, planned and executed acts of politically motivated violence against representatives of the perceived enemy or with the goal of changing society as we know it'. Such interviewees may be members of left-wing groups, right-wing groups, eco-groups, animal rights groups, some types of groups of football hooligans who mix sport and political ideas, etc. The types of violence of interest to this project range from violent assaults on political opponents to armed robberies, sabotage, arson or the like, committed in order to influence an overall political agenda, specific political plans or ideas or in other ways to influence political opponents to stop or start certain actions. Throughout the text the term 'activist' is used to describe all the interviewees, no matter what kind of group they belonged to or what kinds of activity they were involved in.

Empirical Data

As mentioned above, the main interest of this project is to investigate the relationships between ideology, identity and the decision to participate in political violence. In doing so, I use the interviewees' own understanding of ideology and allow them to define the concept for themselves and the meaning it had for them when they were politically active. In the section dealing with identity, the concept is derived mainly from three different theories of identity: Gabriele Marranci's theory of identity as an expression of feelings and emotions (Marranci 2006); Richard Jenkins' theory of identity as the interaction of individuals between groups marking their differences through different actions (Jenkins 1997); and the theory of identity as a narrative process, mainly as used by Michael Jackson in his recent work, *The Politics of Storytelling* (Jackson 2002).

A number of themes have been identified as important to all the interviewees, and these will be used as a structure for this analysis. The first theme to be treated here will be the path to the political subculture. Why and how did interviewees become interested in politics in the first place, and what drew them to the radical violent groups. This is closely intertwined with the next theme: social processes in the group, group structure, recruitment to the first actual act of violence, friendship and excitement. The third theme to be treated is that of ideology and identity, asking how they interact, and the role they play for the individual. The last theme to be treated in this report is the path these individuals followed in leaving the groups. Why and how did they manage to break their ties to the groups they had joined?

The Path to Political Subcultures

For the interviewees in this survey, the paths leading to the political subcultures they became involved in were very different, yet they also had some common features. All interviewees were between fourteen and eighteen years of age when they first encountered the political groups with whom they were later to commit their politically motivated crimes, and all were, as is quite normal with teenagers, in the process of establishing new social ties. All appear to have been preoccupied with the concept of 'justice' in one form or another, and even though not all described themselves as political before they became involved in these groups, they were all inclined to believe strongly in the notion of right and wrong, namely that a person can make a difference by doing 'the right thing'.

When it comes to the choice to move from non-violent to violent activism, it appears to have made a difference whether the individual was active in the creation of a new group or was joining an already existing group. The first seems to be far more ideological and politically based, and this development is slower and requires more consideration. This is a gradual process that leads group members to take certain decisions that make them more and more open to the use of violent means. This process, as experienced by these interviewees, though different in its use of violence, to some degree resembles the two processes described by Donnatella della Porta and Marc Sageman respectively. In della Porta's case, terrorism is said to originate in an escalation of the use of illegal activity, which leads some groups to choose to act clandestinely instead of through parliamentary activity (Porta 1995: 124). For Marc Sageman, the terror cell emerges from a group of friends with a common interest and a common place in life and society escalating their discourse of common deprivation to a point of no return (Sageman 2004: 115). To the second of these two groups, in which the individual seeks to become member of an already existing group, many other things are at work, and the shift towards the clandestine seems to start long before the encounter with the actual group. To some former members, the choice of political group represents a break with one's surrounding society and family, particularly one's parents, and is described as a rebellion and a deliberate provocation. This is illustrated by quotes like '*It wasn't that it was my style or because I felt that it was super cool, but it worked well as a provocation* [...] *it was the most provocative ... to be a member of xxx. We were the smallest group on the wing, those who people feared the most ... or despised. So I entered the most extreme group from the beginning*'. For our understanding of processes of radicalization,

what is interesting here is that the interviewee had already decided to take part in direct action before he became part of a political group, and that his aim was to become a member of the group that, in his understanding, was 'the most feared or despised' and the 'most extreme'. The urge to provoke and to present himself as being at the opposite pole to the surrounding society, rather than the political message of the group, was a key factor in his choice of grouping.

Another interviewee described himself as someone who has always been concerned about political questions but who first started his political search at the age of sixteen. Of his path into the political subculture, he said: *'It wasn't so much a rebellion as a separation. I was looking for some values that we didn't have at home, a community that my family wasn't able to ... we were just me and my mom and my dad, so we weren't that many ... to be part of a community that was more spiritual than my family'*. The seeking that led this interviewee into militant activism was both value-based and socially conditioned, but it was no coincidence that the community that he chose was part of a radical militant subculture. The first time he met the group he was later to be affiliated with was at a large demonstration that he and a friend attended on their own. When a riot broke out, he observed a group rioting from a distance without actively taking part himself. About this experience he said: *'I thought that that was really exciting ... this group, they were all my age, I could identify with them and they made something of themselves. I didn't know them at that time, but I was fascinated by them'*. The later and more determined search that led this interviewee to the group he had encountered at the demonstration can thus be said to be not just value-based and socially conditioned, but also driven to a high degree by a fascination with activism itself. This resembles the story of a former member of the Weather Underground in the United States, who in an interview stated that 'We were entering an incredible time of revolution and I didn't wanna miss that. I wanted to be part of that. [...] I was gonna do whatever I had to do to be part of it' (Green 2003).

Youth Groups

In both the case of groups developing into accepting violence and the case of individuals joining already existing violent groups, the political groups function as youth groups of the sort described by Sven Mørch, a Danish psychologist and expert on youth research. For Mørch, youth is the period in a person's life in which a sense of individualization is created, individualization being understood as a process during which a person learns to function as a single individual in a social as well as in a

societal setting (Mørch 98: 45). This process of individualization, says Mørch, takes place in a variety of spaces, but mainly in three: at school, in leisure activities, such as sports clubs and other activity controlled or supervised by adults, and finally the youth group or peer group, which is mainly characterized by not being supervised or controlled by adults. In each of these spaces, the young identity builder can acquire and test different skills or personal and social competences, for instance, learning skills in school and social skills in leisure activity (ibid.: 47f.). The peer group is the space where one can test one's own self-perceptions without the concerned presence of adults, thus allowing the young individual to cross borders and break taboos in the testing of his or her own and others' identities. Participation in a wide variety of different spaces supports the individual in developing a broad identity, while the focus on single spaces can result in the individual missing certain skills. Focusing on single spaces can also result in problems in understanding other groups or people, which can then produce a strong tendency towards polarization (ibid.: 51). Combined with the testing of one's own and others' identities and loyalty toward certain ideas, this makes the youth space or peer group the perfect setting for the perpetration of group violence. It is also important to note Mørch's description of youth as a period in which, in order to be able to look ahead and set goals for the future, the individual needs to leave tracks and traces to show who they are, where they have been and what they have done (ibid.: 49). By doing this, whether symbolically or materially, they are allowed not only to narrate themselves as agents in their own lives, but also to create their own course of life, thus differentiating themselves from others and inventing themselves as individuals apart from their parents, teachers or other adult supervisors. These social processes that take place in youth groups are present in every youth group that is free from adult control, and thus also in political groups.

From this perspective, one's active participation in militant activism becomes a way to prove to one's peers that one is loyal towards both the idea or ideology of the group and the identity that one wishes to communicate to one's surroundings. To neither of the two interviewees quoted above was ideology the main reason for joining radical groups. However, this does not mean that they were completely uninterested in politics and ideology, but rather shows that a more present concern in choosing these particular groups was a fascination with militancy itself and the opportunity to prove oneself as an active participant in the perceived struggle between the political poles. These groups offered interviewees an opportunity to act instead of debating, something given great importance by nearly all the interviewees in this survey.

Countercultures

Interestingly the only interviewee who did not mention the opportunity to act as a key reason for joining a militant group strongly emphasized the group as a way of strengthening his knowledge of ideological topics. He was the only interviewee who did not consider himself a political person to begin with. But moving away from home and meeting new people made him change some aspects of his way of life and, although still without deep political motives, adopt a new lifestyle. This, he explains, was met with anger and aggression by his old friends: '... *and people noticed that. People who weren't my best friends, maybe, but who I used to hang out with and maybe played football with, and I discovered that when talking about this ... I have never seen anybody becoming as heated as when you tell them that you are xxx. [...] Well, it started to be like ... I really needed some arguments. [...] Maybe I didn't have the best arguments other than I just felt like doing it. And I started thinking, if that is what they want, I'd better start reading about all sorts of things. And I asked people why they did it, because I hung out with many others who felt like that. And I started to become more interested in these things – to sort of underline my arguments. And I had plenty of arguments ready for when I knew I had to discuss this with people. ... And later I have found out that this is really how you radicalize people. Confronting them and getting all heated up on them. Then you have to agitate even more for your ideas'*. This is interesting because to a large degree it resembles Richard Jenkins' ideas of the attractiveness of joining countercultures. Jenkins' theoretical framework was originally based on the work of Fredrik Barth, who notes that a group constructs itself in encountering other groups by stressing certain cultural elements that have a special meaning for the group members, setting up boundaries on the one hand, and constructing a common identity on the other (Barth 1969: 14). While Barth's concern is the group's isolated creation of itself, Jenkins' concern is the contact and interaction between them and how they take part in defining not only their own group, but also the other groups. Identity may be produced in the meeting of groups, but it is also constantly reproduced and negotiated. Relations between these groups are therefore crucial for the self-perceptions of groups and their members (Jenkins 1997: 53). The more dominant the majority group is, the more influence it has on the boundaries within which the minority group is allowed to construct or narrate its own identity.

In modern Europe, for instance, the great majority of people associate Islam with a lack of equal rights between the sexes, which is seen as conflicting with democracy, human rights etc. This offers the young Muslim three opportunities in the identity creation process: one is to deny that one is a Muslim; another is to fight against the perception of the majority by demanding the right to be, for instance, both Muslim

and democratically minded; and the third is to accept the boundaries set up by the vast majority, thereby limiting the identity creation to the offering of explanations as to *why* one is against democracy, women's equal rights etc. This last group is often the most despised but also the least contested. Their claims are easily understood and accepted by the majority, simply because they say what they are expected to say. For this reason, it is very easy for Muslims in Europe to form countercultures. They need not say or do anything other than what they are expected to in order to be viewed as a threat to the country. They are, so to speak, filling in a gap, playing the role of the enemy that the majority has constructed.

This radical Islamic counterculture offers a strong identity that is not contested or questioned and is taken seriously as a threat to the majority. For many young marginalized men, this is attractive (see, for instance, Roy 2004). This seems also to be the case in the story quoted above. By joining this radical group and adopting its ideology and rhetoric, this interviewee was offered a language through which he could formulate a critique that was recognized as valid by his opponents. Instead of opposing the radical aspects of the lifestyle his friends confronted him with, he adopted them and became a radical himself. Even though this particular interviewee later joined the militant faction of the group, this was not his intention to begin with, and as such he differs from the other interviewees, who joined an existing group at the outset.

Processes of Encapsulation-Implosion

Both those who joined already existing groups and those who actively participated in the creation of new groups to some degree experienced a process of 'encapsulation-implosion' (Porta 1995: 134). This describes the process in which a group closes around its own logic, leaving no room for interpretations other than its own, and shutting out everybody who does not share the perceptions of the group. As argued in the section on youth groups, this is considered a normal development for young people focusing on single youth spaces. As Mørch notes, this will often result in further polarization, of which we will find plenty of examples throughout this text.

This process especially seems significant for those who did not join an existing group, but who participated in the creation of a group. As mentioned above, the process took longer and was more complex. Recalling della Porta's words cited earlier, these individuals entered a process of escalation in the use of violence, in this case eventually leading them not underground, but to an acceptance of the use of deliberately violent operations, such as sabotage, arson and the like. These stories describe the

emergence of a political subculture and are characterized by being more goal-oriented than the former. In these groups, the members discussed how to achieve a certain goal, and the decision to resort to violent resistance occurred partly in these discussions and partly as response to influences from the surrounding society. One interviewee described how an entire subculture changed from being strictly non-violent to accepting violence over a six-month period of clashes between the group's members and the authorities. The increasingly violent clashes led many from the subculture to think, *'No, this cannot go on like this, I cannot stand being beaten like this. I'll have to either leave, and many did that, or I'll stay and fight back. And obviously enough people felt that way that we could stand together in doing so'*. To begin with, this meant more coordinated and planned resistance during riots, demonstrations and happenings, but this strategy was slowly transformed and developed into actual acts of sabotage against different perceived enemies to some degree representing the political views of the different opponents. The development described in the interview cited above, which is representative of this type of group member, is that he chose to stay in the group as it developed into an organization that accepted violence and did not leave it, as many did during this transformation.

Cognitive Openings and Humiliation by Proxy

Asked directly whether involvement in political activism followed a traumatic experience, only one interviewee responded positively. All interviewees were asked to try and remember whether they could find anything in their history that, according to mainstream radicalization theory, would make them weak or vulnerable to radical ideas (Wiktorowicz 2005: 20), and they only seemed to be able to come up with experiences that must be considered normal for young people, such as changing schools or meeting new people and making new friends. None of them thought of these events as something that made them search for a new meaning of life or new grounds to stand on. One mentioned his having dropped out of school as a reason for meeting new people, but his search for a political group actually started long before he did so. He had been reading magazines and pamphlets and even attended a few meetings with people to some degree representing the political subculture. Even though he chose to become more involved with this subculture after dropping out, this in itself cannot be considered a cognitive opening in his case; rather, it was his existing political involvement that made him break with school and old friends. In one case an interviewee mentioned the death of his father as the reason why he became interested in politics. He and his mother were left alone with debts and had trouble affording their daily costs. This made him angry with society, which he felt

had let them down and failed in its responsibility, and his belief in the welfare system vanished. This, he says, was the first time he felt the indignation and the urge to act that is common to all the interviewees in this survey. Dramatic events like the one mentioned here may be relevant, but they are also far from necessary for the young man or woman to become involved with radical ideas and groups. This indicates that youth and the physical changes that the human brain undergoes during youth can be sufficient cognitive openings in themselves.

This interviewee's experience with the death of his father, leading to a feeling of indignation towards the surrounding society, could be interpreted as an experience of humiliation of the sort mentioned by Farhad Khosrokhavar. In his understanding, terrorism results from a feeling of humiliation and is a consequence of an urge for revenge against those who are perceived as responsible for the humiliation of the individual or others that the individual feels he or she is associated with, in this case described as humiliation by proxy (Khosrokhavar 2006). But again this interviewee is the only one who followed mainstream perceptions of a process of radicalization. None of the other interviewees can be said to have had experiences of humiliation that led them towards the political subcultures and from there on to groups prepared to use violence to achieve political goals. As previously noted, they were all preoccupied with the notion of right and wrong and had a strong belief that one could make a difference in the world by doing 'the right thing', but, asked directly whether they could recall one or more experiences where they felt humiliated or discriminated against that led them towards these groups, only the one discussed above replied positively. Once an interviewee has joined a violent group, however, the notion of humiliation by proxy seems difficult to overlook. All the interviewees claimed that their actions were to some degree necessary to help others who in one way or another were being discriminated against or humiliated and who did not themselves have the necessary resources to resist. What is interesting here, though, is that this explanation for acts of violence is invoked after one has joined the political subculture, and although the feeling of humiliation by proxy can thus be said to function as a justification for the acts themselves, it is not as an explanation for the decision to join the group in the first place. In one case, humiliation by proxy can be said to have played a role in actual recruitment to a violent group, as shown below in 'Recruitment, Case 3'. The same can be said about indignation as a response to blocked social mobility and frustration over one's limited opportunities in society as the main reason for people to join violent groups (see, for instance, Wiktorowicz 2004a). The interviewees in this survey can all be said to have come from well-functioning homes and from families with both education and jobs. As all interviewees represented the majority

population in terms of ethnicity and religious background, they did not feel the same grievances as the young emigrant trying to set up a platform in his or her new European homeland. What this study shows, however, is that they made some of the same decisions and choices in life, which to some degree led them to the same place in life. This does not necessarily indicate that these aspects are not important in a process of radicalization, but rather that such a process can easily take place without this and still lead to similar places.

Having described here what drove the interviewees in this survey to join political subcultures and what surprisingly did not have that much of an influence on their choice, the biggest puzzle still remains: what made the interviewees turn from being part of a political subculture to being part of a group that actively supported and performed violent acts as part of a political struggle. As indicated in the sections above, two core issues seem to stand out in the choice of the interviewees to join a subculture, namely a search for identity, and the social processes and forming of countercultures in youth groups. In the following, these core issues and their relation to ideology will be examined.

Social Processes

As mentioned above, the social processes of a particular youth group are of immense importance to how the group itself develops. Here social processes are understood as a conglomerate of social factors, including the hierarchy and structure of the group, the discourse that is used by group members to illustrate affiliation to the group, relations between different groups in the subculture, and the codes that group members can use to rise in the hierarchy and gain status and recognition in the group. As has just been described, for the interviewees the choice of political group was not a rational choice based on how and where the greatest degree of influence could be exerted on the political agenda, but rather a result of which groups appealed to the individual and how the one chosen supplemented the individual's perceptions of who he or she was. This will be elaborated further in this and the coming chapters. Common to all the interviewees was the fact that, once they were in the group, strong ties bounded them not only to other group members, but also to the overall political agenda of the group. The new group members had an overall idea of where they were on the political spectrum before joining the group, but the detailed core issues, whatever they might be, seemed to become apparent and be adopted by the new group members within the first few months. This was the case for goals as well as means. The idea that violence is an acceptable way of achieving political goals was held by very few before encountering the groups, but, as one interviewee put it, if that is what the group stands for, you just have to accept that to remain a member of that group:

Interviewer: '*How would you, as a member of that group, stand if you chose not to participate in these operations?*'

Interviewee: '*Well, in that case you wouldn't be a member of a group that was declared to be violent and that sympathizes with xxx. If xxx shoots someone and you start to cry and say that they too are human beings ... I mean ... you would have to find yourself another group then.*'

Interviewer: '*So did anyone have to leave the group because of that?*'

Interviewee: '*No! In that case you wouldn't be in a group like that in the first place.*'

Interviewer: '*But you said that it was a coincidence that you ended up in that particular group ...* '

Interviewee: '*No, it wasn't a coincidence. I met the group, I thought they were very sympathetic and I liked them and I found out what they stood for, and the more I found out, the more I agreed with them.*'

Even though this interviewee said that it was no coincidence that he ended up in that particular group, he also stated that he was presented with their ideology and political ideas along the way as he got to know them better, meaning after he joined them.

Group Structure

Understanding the group processes involved requires a brief analysis of the actual structures and dynamics of the groups themselves. All the groups that the interviewees were active in were described as having between four and ten core members. All the groups were part of a larger subculture consisting of individuals who to some degree knew about the illegal activities of the group but who, for different reasons, did not participate in these activities themselves. Violent groups are dependent on this larger subculture. They recruit from it, and there seems to be an exchange of members back and forth between the violent and the non-violent groups within the same subculture. Some subcultures have only one violent faction, whereas others have many to choose from. In the latter case too there seems to be an exchange back and forth between the different violent groups within the same subculture. The small violent groups are all very different in their structure of leadership. Some interviewees told stories of regular leaders who acted as decision-makers in deciding what and where the group should strike next, while others described the leaders more as team builders who made the group work together. In other cases, different group members with different competences worked as leaders in different situations. If, for instance, a specific group member had special knowledge about the geographical area where an operation was going to be launched, that group member would typically be asked to take the lead in the part of the operation going on in that specific area. In other cases, the person leading the operation might lose concentration, be struck with nerves or the like, and then had to ask another group member to take over the leadership. What all of these have in common is that in none of the cases was the leader elected or pointed out officially and put in charge for a certain period of time. In all cases the leaders, or the leading figures, were said to have been put in that position because they were the most active members at the time, the ones with the most ideas or the most experience. As one interviewee put it: '*There were two who were very active and who investigated all of these things. Who had maps of the facilities and how big each facility was … collected all this information which was totally … you just didn't understand how they could get this information*'. Later this same interviewee said about the same two individuals: '*They were the ones who sort of started the operations. … They could suddenly come back and say, "We've spent the last four nights looking at where we could go the next time" without having told anyone … they were really the soul of activists, who really lived for these things*

… '. The role of the other group members mostly came after this detailed information has been collected. This meant that their influence was somewhat restricted to the practical planning or selection of the targets that had already been decided on by the leading figures. One interviewee answered the question 'What role did the rest of the group play' like this: '*Well … we were … sometimes we would be those who would hold back and say, "This can't be done, that's too crazy … there are too many" … because we looked at maps and pictures and stuff like that made for the occasion … "there are too many houses and too many people live there. That's no good; how are we suppose to get away?" We debated these things … so we talked about it and debated it back and forth, the risks and whether it was doable. And the practically oriented would normally be on our side and talk down the ideologically minded. Because sometimes he had some pretty wild ideas that really wouldn't work. This is mostly how it was*'.

Leaders and Hierarchy

As in these cases, it seems quite normal for there to be two main leading figures, one being mostly ideologically oriented, and one being mostly oriented towards the practical questions of how to carry out an operation. These two leading figures might be interpreted as the two that Petter Nesser describes as 'the entrepreneur and the protégé' (Nesser 2006: 11). However, it is important to note the difference between the structure of leadership described here and the more static structure presented by Nesser. First of all, the data collected in this survey suggest that the two leaders have about the same amount of influence and that the influence they have is based more on the resources they have that allow them to spend more time on the work of the group. Though they do not ascribe themselves a leading role, the other members of the group have a responsibility for deciding which of the operations they want the leading figures present to carry out. The structure suggested by Nesser opens up a space for giving the leading role to the ideologically skilled alone, whereas the data collected for this report suggest such an opening for all the group members. The group member profile that Nesser calls a misfit (ibid.), that is, a character who has been involved in crime, drug abuse or the like, could, according to the structure of leadership presented in this report, easily take a leading role by using his skills in car theft, burglary and other things that might come in handy, skills that an ideologically well-grounded student in a university rarely has. This means that, once a person has been accepted as member of a group, there are two ways to gain status and rise up hierarchy: being actively involved and convincing in respect of ideological issues and debates in the group; or being actively involved in taking the initiative in planning and carrying out

new operations. In both cases, though, talk must be followed by action. All the leaders described by the interviewees were respected as people who took the first step in actual operations.

No matter whether an activist chooses to be practically or ideologically oriented, those who gain the most influence are those who spend the most time with the group. There are many reasons for this way of distributing influence in these groups. One is very practical and simply has to do with who has the time required: being involved in group activities at this level takes up a lot of time. As described above, the leading figures in one of the groups would sometimes go out for several days surveying locations, drawing maps etc. so as to be able to plan the operations thoroughly. Another interviewee described the first group he became a member of as being run mainly by a group of four individuals. Their involvement in the larger group's activities also functioned as part of their day job, and this meant that they were able to be engaged in the cause more than full time. If you are present when issues are being discussed, you have an influence; if you are not present, you have no influence – it is as simple as that. Another reason is that those who are able to spend more time in the group than the average member have the advantage of defining the discourse that is used among the group members. One interviewee remembered his first times with the new group and their discourse like this:

Interviewee: '*I was directed towards the things that those I looked up to were interested in. You want to be part of the conversations that are being led and the discourse that they use, so I talk about the same things that they do and try to understand what they say, try to understand it through that filter that they have ... you try to wear those glasses and see the world through them, and it is definitely in the group that I get those glasses. [...] When you enter the group, you adapt to that very quickly or else you cannot be a member of that group, then it's not the right group to be in. [...] So politically there are some requirements to your attitude and to what you are interested in to be part of that subculture.*'

[...]

Interviewer: *'But isn't it like that in normal political parties as well?'*

Interviewee: '*Well, yes. But this environment is so fragmented that it is some very specific details you have to agree on.*'

Another reason why this type of power distribution may be an advantage to the group can be derived from the theories of youth-group mobilization of Eric L. Hirsh, in which the members of the group undergo processes of:

1) Consciousness Raising, in which the group wins supporters to its cause through debates at open meetings; 2) Collective Empowerment, in which the new sympathizers to the cause publicly or semi-publicly prove their affiliation to the group by demonstrating and agitating for the cause; 3) Polarization, in which, because of the negative response from the surrounding society, the group builds up an image of those who do not support the cause as inhuman and untrustworthy; and 4) Collective Decision-making, by which the group members feel particularly bound by the decisions of the group, simply because they have been part of the decision-making process and as such feel responsible for it (Hirsch 1990: 244-6). When, throughout the interviews, it was emphasized that the decisions of the group were taken collectively, according to Hirsh this might very well be because this is the only way to get all group members to act together in situations that can be perceived as dangerous or in other ways as critical to the group members or to those who are exposed to their activities. However, the case set out by Hirsch is quite different from those presented here. While the case presented by Hirsh envisages a group of recruiters going to a school and trying to encourage the pupils to join a protest movement, all the cases presented in this report are of individuals who sought out the groups themselves. As a result of that especially, the role of conscious-raising is quite different. Those who are already in the group do not need to persuade anyone to join the cause, and therefore they can be much more selective in who they want to accept as group members. But this makes the 'collective empowerment' aspect all the more important because this is where group members in non-leadership positions can prove to the others that they agree with the cause, that they have understood it and that they are ready to fight for it. This is done by agitating for the ideas, by implementing the discourse of the ideology and, most importantly, by doing so in a public or semi-public setting. In this way, group members put themselves at risk, showing the other group members that they can be trusted and that therefore they should be accepted and recognized as full members of the group. Those who for one reason or another do not fit into these frames are eventually pushed out. An interviewee who had taken part in pushing out others who did not want to implement the discourse of the necessity of militancy said: '*It would have been valuable had we recognized that fairly large culturally oriented part of the subculture that we more or less squeezed out, because there simply wasn't room for being an experimenting artist and a rebellious warrior at the same time. In that way, my self-criticism and rationalization today is that the militancy played too big a role – way too big a role.*'

Status and Hierarchical Mobility

Right beneath the surface of the discourses that the group members use to show affiliation to the group lays the concept of status. As described above, adapting the special framework of the group is essential for the group members' ability to be in the group in the first place, but if they want to be more than just accepted, they have to find ways to do this. This is a complicated matter because it contains so many layers and levels: those of the group members in between, the individual group member and the leading figures in the group, as well as relations concerning in-group and out-group members. The social processes concerning the discourse of the group members as described above is mainly relevant in the wider subculture before the individual is recruited by the actual violent group or faction. No individual who is not willing to adopt the ideological and discursive framework of the subculture will ever be invited to join the militant factions. This means that the analyst has to observes the status of individuals and hierarchical mobility both before and after recruitment.

In particular, the relationship between the members of the violent and the non-violent groups who accept the importance of violence seems to be heavily influenced by the concept of status. Where the interviewees mainly spoke of differences in resources within the violent groups, they spoke directly of status in the relationship between the violent and the non-violent groups. Those who entered the associated subculture quickly became aware of who belonged to which factions, who belonged to activist or violent networks and where the group members of status were located in the subculture. These people were described by some as 'the rock stars of the subculture', and there is no doubt that they had an influence on the new members who entered the subculture. One interviewee told a story about a trip he made with members of the subculture before he became affiliated with the violent groups. On this trip, *'I met someone who was very radical. He had been doing time for the sake of the cause. That was kind of cool. Many thought that he was really going down a sidetrack, but in a way he definitely had authority'*. Later in the interview the same interviewee talked about how he gained status from being part of a violent activist group: '*I am the one who carries out the operations and there is some respect about that. And even though it is a secret who are responsible for these operations and people don't know about it, they know about it anyway*'. This notion, that the subculture members know who belongs to the violent fractions, even though it is supposed to be a secret, is a story that was repeated throughout the interviews. This is first explained by stories that the members of the subcultures were able to 'figure it out', because they saw who was friends with whom, what rhetoric the different group members used etc. But many, though not all, also admitted to having 'leaked' or told stories about their activities to oth-

ers. They might not have told everything, but only bits and pieces. Sometimes this was done because the activists needed to find some sort of relief from the stress they carried with them, and sometimes it was simply because they were good and exciting stories that created an image of the storyteller as a person who turns words into action. This is a clear indicator of action as a status-marker, but also of action being a strong identity-marker for the individual. This will be discussed later. The ability to tell stories about participation in violent or militant operations becomes important to the activists in the groups. If they want to be part of those who turn talk into action, this is mandatory. One interviewee expressed it this way: '*Of course it is as valuable to organize local civic kitchen arrangements as it is building barricades. Theoretically. Socially that's just bullshit. Everybody knows what story is the more exciting. It is not whether the soup was burned, but how crazy it was when the cops came and you threw stones at them when they attacked*'.

From this perspective, recruitment from the subculture into the violent groups can be seen as an invitation to hierarchical mobility within the subculture. As one interviewee put it, it is like being invited to play for the national football team. This is not overall uniform picture, though, and far from all the interviewees expressed this view. What was, however, a uniform picture was a feeling of recognition among those being recruited. Being asked to join the operations of these 'secret' groups is a sign that one has been noticed and that one is being viewed as 'all right' and trustworthy. All the interviewees described this as satisfactory and as being decisive in their choice to participate. One interviewee expressed the feeling of being invited to join a violent group like this: '*Being asked something like this is a declaration of confidence. I had figured that out and I thought about it, that they would let me into this group who had done these things earlier ... that I should be part of that ... that was a huge thing. Because these guys, especially one of them, I looked up to. Not as much the others ... but one of them I looked up to, and that meant something. It certainly did.*' This notion that one has been invited to join a violent group as something flattering should be kept in mind throughout the following chapters.

Recruitment

As mentioned above, there are two types of cases that differ a lot: one of members joining already existing groups, and one of members creating their own group. This difference is also easily traced when it comes to actual recruitment for the first planned and coordinated violent act. When it comes to the latter, in which the violence occurs alongside the development of the group, its goals and ideology, no

real recruitment seems to take place: those who participate in the violent acts are those who stay in the group and accept its progression from non-violent means to violent means. Those who take part in the discussions but do not agree with the shift to violence tend to organize in different groups within the same subculture, or else they leave the subculture by either losing political interest or by becoming members of established parties.

For those who join already existing groups, the story is quite different. The actual recruiting seems to be rather pragmatic and practice-oriented. A group decides to recruit a new member when it is short of hands for a specific operation. Of the five interviewees, three told stories of how they were recruited. Even though there are differences, the similarities are striking. They were all 'members' of the surrounding subcultures at the time of recruitment, and they were all somewhat radicalized at the point of recruitment, meaning they accepted that some degree of violence must be used in order to achieve political goals. They all knew about the violent groups or factions they were being recruited to, and they already had an idea that they might enter such a group. In other words, they were not hijacked against their will on the street by a radical extremist with a hidden agenda. They might not have been on a quest for admission to the group, but they definitely had an idea that something like that could happen for one or more reasons: for example, they had lost their faith in the ability of other institutions to solve the problem the group is dealing with; they believed that the cause was important enough for them to risk a prison sentence; they felt attracted to the strong friendships in the group; there was some status involved; they found the group's operations exciting and thrilling; the invitation itself represented a form of recognition that was hard to turn down; and the idea of being part of a secret, law-breaking, political activist society fitted in well with their own perceptions of themselves.

Recruitment, Case 1

In the first of the three cases, the interviewee told a story of his being approached by a friend he knew from the subculture. He knew that this friend was part of a more radical faction, and he had some idea of what they were doing. After a short stay in prison, he was invited to join the group. As he put it himself, the stay in prison gave him some credibility in the subculture. The other group members now knew that he could be imprisoned 'without talking'. On the question of whether the stay in prison made him more inclined to join the group, he said: *'No, I think I would have done so anyway. I was fairly well prepared for it, I was training in kick-boxing, and I was fully accepting that I should be able to defend myself if necessary.'*

He was invited to a meeting, where he found that he already knew all of the members except a few. Nothing really happened at this meeting – there was no introduction to the group structure, its methods or anything like this. It mostly concerned suggestions for and the planning of future operations. The first actual operation with this group came a few weeks later, but it was not very clear in the interviewee's memory. Being friends already, and now also members of the same group, the group members often met for social interaction and quickly spent most of the day together. Whenever an operation was coming up, they discussed how to solve the specific problem, what methods should be used etc.

Even though this interviewee did know of the existence of the group, he was surprised by its structure of leadership. It turned out that decisions regarding future targets were actually made outside the group by a few older former activists who had some authority in the subculture. This, he says, '*I found really cool, because I like being part of something well-organized, well-considered, and that there is some structure in the things I am doing. It gives you some confidence in a way, and a faith that what you are doing makes sense. That it makes sense to others than just me and the other group members*.' Later the interviewee said that: '*If they* [the representatives of the leading organizations] *thought we should do this, we just did it. In that way, we were like soldiers. I didn't feel that it was my task to make those decisions. Of course, you can back out if there is something you don't feel like doing – you can just say, "I'll stay out of this", but of course then you might not be asked to come the next time*.' Asked if he would like to have known more details about how the group was structured before joining it, he clearly said no. That was not important in his decision to act as he did. For him, participating in these operations was a duty and a logical consequence of the political discourse in the environment he was part of at that time. This will be dealt with further in the chapter on identity.

Recruitment, Case 2

In the second story of recruitment, again the interviewee was first invited to participate in a meeting. He knew the group members from the subculture where he used to hang out, and he had talked to some of the members when these were handing out flyers. The violent faction had been heavily criticized by some of the other members of the broader subculture because of the nature of its operations, and because of this they wanted to gather together all the members of the subculture that they felt would support them: '*Then I was invited to ... we were to meet these people and discuss with them what should be done and whether they should continue with these operations. ... They wanted to collect as many people as possible who might agree with them, but who had different views and*

angles. Well, after that meeting I knew who they were, and I started to think that what they were doing was really interesting'. He then started to hand out flyers, participate in demonstrations agitating in favour of the cause and attend minor public events. Asked what made him turn from this kind of action to violence, he simply replied: *'Oh well ... someone asked me if I wanted to join in,'* and later continued: '*I think they wanted to see how I reacted in extreme situations. You know, standing there staying cool ... and I think they had talked about me being a possible person to bring to this kind of operation. It was really a small-scale thing ... I was just told to stand and look out and say when everything is clear, and that's what I did, and that was that. ... I remember coming home and going to bed, and I thought "Man, that was easy"'.* Thus joining the violent militant faction was not much of a question for him: when a door opened, he quickly decided to enter without much doubt. Asked if he ever felt sorry for those he inflicted harm on in this first operation, he said: '*No, I really didn't. And I think I concentrated on not doing that. It's the question of justification that you have to ask yourself all the time. Of course I have felt that it was too bad for this particular person, but then again I have convinced myself that there was no reason to do that. Because otherwise there would be no ... it would be too difficult to do these things'.*

After this first illegal operation, the interviewee was accepted as a full member of the group and slowly started to become part of the planning of future operations as well. He thus participated in a number of different operations and actions until his arrest, and as a full member of the group he even participated in the recruitment of new members. But in this case, as described above, recruiting is not a question of persuading people who are ignorant of the conflicts in which the group interests itself, but rather to consider offers from people who, for one reason or another, have an interest in joining the group themselves. His own description of how new members were recruited is quite simple: *'We have to consider ... there are people who in one way or another ask, "Can we come next?" or "What is this thing? Do you know anything about this?" or "Do you know these people? I really want to come to do something as well". And of course there are ongoing debates on who can join and who cannot join. Were there some that couldn't be trusted and you thought "This guy can't keep his mouth shut"? [...] Because it's not something that should be bragged about, because it's not for fun, it's not about getting status in some subculture that you just go out and do it. It is like, if the means become more important than the ends, then you really have a problem'.* Interestingly, though, this interviewee also mentioned the recognition and excitement that came with participating in these operations and how to some extent this became a driving force for continuing to participate. These issues will be dealt with in the following chapters.

Recruitment, Case 3

The last of the three stories reveals a more classic process of recruitment, yet here too the interviewee knew about the group and agreed with their aims and methods before they approached him for the first time. This interviewee was first presented to the group he was later to join through the media. As an active member of the subculture that this group was embedded in, he and some friends managed to get their hands on some issues of an American magazine that was promoting the activities of a particular violent activist group. This group of friends met a few times and read the magazines together, and the interviewee recalls: *'I looked in them* [the magazines] *and I thought to myself, "I'll be damned, that's fucking hard core; I don't know if I'm ready for that." But then I realized that there was a group who had been active for a while … in xxx* [home country] *… in that way, because sometimes in these magazine there were articles about operations in xxx, and I thought "Who the hell could that be … do I know any of these guys?" And it turned out that I was right among them … and had been for two years'.* Before actually being recruited, the interviewee was already a member of a subculture that, even though it was not violent, accepted some degree of violence in achieving political goals, and moreover had been hanging out in the same environments as these particular members of the violent group of interest. This again indicates that the recruits are already in a state of mind of willingness to be recruited before they actually are.

So far this story is very much like the other two, but from this point on it differs. Where the others told stories of 'just being asked to come along', one after a short introduction, the other after distributing flyers in the streets for a while, this interviewee experienced something quite different. As quoted above, he said that he discovered that he was 'right among' those who were responsible for the violent acts of the group, while to the question of how he discovered that, he replied: *'Well, I was tapped on the shoulder … I suppose you could say … and asked if I wanted to meet with someone someday … because I had been hanging out with this crowd of ten to fifteen people for a while, and three to four of them were militant activists, and they were the ones who tapped me'*. He was invited to join them for a private dinner party. He knew most of the people there, as they had debated and talked about political questions that were of common interest. He as the novice in this particular political environment, them as the ideologically well grounded who were willing to share their knowledge. Because of these discussions and debates, he thought they might have had a feeling for where he stood, although '*I never said things like, "This is outrageous; something must be done" or anything like that, because I really didn't have those kinds of feelings, but I think they had a sense of me being open to the idea*'. At the dinner party they

talked and debated different issues, as could be expected of a group of young people with a common political interest. The issue of militant activism was not really raised until a later point, when one of the people joining the dinner party put a video-tape in the machine: '*And so we watch this video, and it's really action packed ... and after that we talk about the film, and at that point I am asked directly if I want to join in an operation ... and ... at that point I say that I have to think about it. Because I had just been confronted with what you can experience in such operations. The video showed different types of sabotage. That had been filmed ... while [it was] taking place. And we are, like, sitting in a group – that's very clear to me when I think about it now – we are in that group and get so indignant, we build on something, something that we all have in common: a common indignation and frustration over the state of things. That these horrible injustices are taking place right in front of us and nobody does anything. That was the feeling I had when the film ended. ... I had had these frustrations for a long time because I had read those magazines and knew how the injustices were really built into the foundation of the society, and the feeling I had was that I simply didn't want to be part of that society, so I had to do something to break loose from it*'.

This last quote also serves as a key to the discussion of the role of identity that will be dealt in later sections. After the video session, the interviewee thought over what to do, and a few weeks later, when he met one of the people from the dinner party again, he let him know that he was willing to participate in operations. Asked how he thought things over, he replied: '*I thought of the consequences of being caught or restrained or something like that. But I didn't stress that very much ... because I felt that it was more important that something was done than me serving a short sentence*'. Later, when asked about the influence of the other members in his decision to join this violent group, he stated that: '*In a way, there was a kind of pressure to do it as well because I had come to know these people and I didn't want to disappoint them. I thought a lot about that afterwards ... I mean, you enter a circle of friends. I still had my old friends, but in this period I distanced myself a little from them and spent more time with the people from the subculture ... and in a way you can say that it put pressure on me ... not to disappoint them, not to say no when asked ... because they had taken the time to debate these things with me that really occupied me, and I felt that, in a way, it would be natural to say yes.*' This quote could indicate that this interviewee was really entering the group with little knowledge and understanding of the operations he was to take part in, and that he was really being pressured to join the group by older, charismatic leaders. This, however, is far from the truth. Of the cases analysed in this section, this particular interviewee turned out to be the ideologically most well-grounded and had the most political experience before joining the violent fraction, and also the one

with the clearest political agenda and the fewest regrets regarding his actions with the violent group. After a few weeks the group came by the interviewee's apartment and asked if he wanted to come and join an operation: '*Apparently that was the right time then. So I just put away all my reservations, changed my clothes and went out with them. And then I did my first operation. [...] I was standing guard. I think that's a typical job for someone who is just let in. They get to look out and stand guard to begin with. And that's what was in the job. Stand guard and run really, really fast back to the car when it was over, because somebody turned the lights on*'.

Increasing One's Recruitability

As the data presented have shown, there are many ways to become a member of a group that is actively involved in acts of political violence. Some groups develop into cells from peer groups with a common political interest by undergoing a process of escalation in the use of illegal activity and 'encapsulation-implosion' (Porta 1995), thus resembling the development described by Marc Sageman and his theory of 'a bunch of guys' (Sageman 2004). As these data show, it would be wrong to conclude that no recruitment takes place, as all three cases displayed above have clear elements of recruiting activity. However, it is important to keep these two types of access to the groups completely separate: they are very different and should not be mixed up. In none of the cases presented here did the recruitment result from ideological preaching by charismatic recruiters, as emphasized by some sociologists working with European radical Islam (Kepel 2004, Roy 2004). The cases above seem to agree more with the theories of Nesser and Wiktorowicz, who describe a process in which the group members recruit among their peers, family members, social networks, work places etc. (Nesser 2006, Wiktorowicz 2005: 85). According to Nesser, the entrepreneur 'is indeed a "recruiter"' (Nesser 2006: 12), and the recruits are 'socialized by friends and acquaintances in militant milieus' (ibid.: 20). The cases presented above and the stories that all the interviewees in this survey told about who would be of interest to a recruiter seem to differ from the theories of Wiktorowicz and Nesser in one key respect: all these recruits worked their way into a position of 'recruitability' before they were approached by the group's members. As Donatella della Porta emphasizes, terrorists exhibit a legal political commitment before joining the underground groups, which indicates that recruits are people who already have a political identity (Porta 1995: 141ff.). It is therefore clear that the interviewees in this survey did not engage in recruiting in broader social networks such as work places, family and the like. The mechanism displayed above seems to be far better described in terms of potential recruits making themselves recruitable by seeking out places and environments where

the militants hang out, engaging in work or debates and the like that support the group, trying to acquire the skills they know will be an advantage in such operations, and waiting to be asked. As one interviewee described it, potential recruits would often approach group members to ask them how they could join the group, or if they knew who to talk to to be asked to join. Taking into account the way in which joining militant groups can be a form of hierarchical mobility, it is interesting to see how some members of these subcultures work to increase their recruitability, hoping to be approached by members of the 'secret' violent groups who can offer them a place in those groups they perceive to be the most important in the struggle for political change.

Excitement and Friendship

As mentioned previously, militant activism is, among other things, used by existing members of the group to test each others loyalty towards the ideology, and thus it functions as a form of collective empowerment, as Hirsch's theory claims (Hirsch 1990). But as many of the quotes throughout this text reveal, militant activism is also something that group members perceive as exciting and thrilling, an experience that is often compared to extreme sports. It is important to note, though, that none of the interviewees mentioned the urge to have thrilling experiences by breaking the law through militant activism as a driving force in joining an activist group. As opposed to activism, violence itself had no influence on the interviewee's choice to join a militant group. All the interviewees described the first planned act of politically motivated group violence that they participated in as somewhat intimidating and stressful. But they also described how it quite quickly turned into a kick, an adrenalin rush. One interviewee said that: '*In the beginning I found it quite difficult – I had stomach-aches if I were to do something that I felt was dangerous in any way, felt some pressure over it, but I did it anyway. I slowly defeated that feeling and got more focused on this as what I was doing now*'. This shows that, over time, extraordinary situations that expose activists to pressure and stress become ordinary. In the beginning they are themselves confused about their actions, but if they continue, they learn to deal with them and are not as affected as they were to begin with. Over time, the stress and pressure changes from being a problem into something amusing, exciting and satisfactory. Regarding violent resistance and militant activism as a satisfactory experience, one interviewee said: '*When the first stone is thrown ... whether you like it or not, that is an enormously satisfying experience. After having been beaten that much and having been running around wildly to escape, then, to see your enemies flee ... that's just ... I think it's very human to see your enemy give up and run the other way – that's a boost!*'

Activism as Extreme Sport

As mentioned above, several interviewees compared militant activities to extreme sports such as bungee-jumping and parachuting – they are intimidating and take a certain amount of courage, but at the same time thrilling and entertaining. One of the interviewees who made this comparison quickly added: '*That's a comparison I am making today – I wouldn't have done so at the time. But it was a cool thing to do – I liked it*'. Another interviewee described partially the same feeling, though in quite different terms that might offer a deeper understanding: '*I can say that I was shiver-*

ing nervously every time we were going out on an operation. But once you get started, you forget about it completely. You get amazingly concentrated and focused, and I liked that feeling. That you pay 100% attention to your surroundings, totally focused, totally clear in the head, that was just great in a way ... you know ... because you have all these thoughts going through your head before you start, like "Oh no, to get caught", "How hard will the sentence be" and "What will my mom say" – all of these things, and you just forget about that completely once you get started and get the satisfaction from knowing that what you do will cause maximum damage to your enemy. That's a rush.' This quote is interesting because it adds a further aspect to the notion of political violence as entertaining, thrilling and exciting. The young man proves to himself and his friends that he is capable of controlling his body in extreme situations. He is exposed to an enormous amount of stress but does not break down, keeps an overview of the situation and is capable of completing the operation in defiance of the state of mind he is in. Moreover, though this might be more speculative, the total control, concentration and focus described in this quote to some degree resembles how cocaine-users describe the feeling of using the drug. The adrenalin has an effect on the young man's body that is appealing to him, that gives him a feeling of control and of conquering his own body, both physically and psychologically.

Many different aspects are therefore embedded in the organized violent group action: it is considered to be an exciting thing to be participating in; it provides a clear sense of empowerment to the group members, who, through these operations, can strike back at whoever they perceive to be the enemy; they are offered an experience of total bodily control, a feeling of being in charge that appeals to most young men and women; and to some it works as a way of winning acceptance in the wider subculture. Asked specifically about this last aspect, one interviewee said: '*I wish I could say that it didn't mean anything, but it definitely did. It was part of making it a boost and it made you think, "Cool". And I have thought a lot about this, now that it has been some years. It would be great to be able to say that it was solely out of ideological reasons that I did it and that it was only with eye for the target. But it was also about status and it was also about acceptance, and it was also about ... when people parachute, I did this ... to get a rush*'. As mentioned above, the parachute metaphor was used quite frequently by several interviewees. It was characteristic of the use of language on the part of all the interviewees that they talked about the operations as 'great', 'fun', 'exciting', 'thrilling' etc. Directly confronted with this, most interviewees acknowledged that this was really how they felt, but they also emphasized the importance of the ideological goal and other aspects. Only one interviewee moderated this and said that his choice of phrases must be due to the overall jargon that was used among the violent activists

at the time. This discourse had been so internalized that even after many years away from the environment this is the language he used, even though this is not how he really felt. Regarding this, he commented: '*I don't feel that I had that feeling as much as those around me. They really thought that it was amusing and exciting. I didn't feel that way. To me it was more that this was something that had to be done. Of course, I got some adrenalin from it, and sometimes I may have thought that it was fun, but that wasn't the driving force ... to me it was more a duty, something you had to do to do the right thing*'. Later in the same interview, he said: '*It was something you could spend days talking about. ... "Oh man, then he did this, you know, and so I did that" ... it was as if you had played a football game and afterwards you really go into detail and talk about what happened. And that was the amusing part. Not actually doing it, but the sense of community you had afterwards. That, I thought, was great to be part of.*'

Being Part of the Brotherhood

This sense of being part of a special community was quite common among the interviewees, and there is no doubt that participating in violent group acts strengthens that feeling. There are many reasons for this. Being together as individuals in this type of operation creates a collective secret among the members that they must keep themselves and trust the others to keep as well. They have extreme experiences that they can only discuss with the other group members, and they gain a feeling of being each other's guards. They must trust their fellow group members to watch their backs, and this trust they have towards each other in an actual operation is transferred to their social life in the group in everyday life. One interviewee put it this way: '*There is a very special feeling when you are together with those people that you have done these things with. It's like ... it's almost like being part of some kind of brotherhood. ... I don't know how to explain it, but you get an incredible nearness to these people that you have done these things with. You get a different understanding of them because you have been in extreme situations with them. And ... because they were almost the sole people I hung out with when we were ... in civil ... so to speak*'. This is interesting, as to a high degree it resembles the motives of young soldiers presented in the Wong et al. report, *Why They Fight*, about American soldiers in Iraq and their motivations for fighting. This study shows that the primary motivation of the soldiers is the protection of their 'buddies', not letting them down, wanting to fight side by side with them, and the strong friendships that develop, resembling family ties (Wong et al. 2003: 9-14).

This indicates that the strong family-like friendships that groups create by going through extreme experiences together is not unique to militant activists but is a

general feeling in this type of group. Paired with the theories of Mørch referred to above, this also suggests that some youth groups deliberately seek out dangerous or extreme situations, both to test members' loyalty to the group and to gain this special feeling of belonging to a brotherhood and not merely a circle of friends. That youth groups engage in extreme activity therefore ought not to come as a surprise, but is something to expect. Even though it is not common, collective violence is one of many different types of extreme situation that a youth group can chose to engage in. Active participation in this kind of action as a way of showing affiliation to a certain group will be discussed further in the chapter on identity.

Being part of this special brotherhood, which allows its members to break taboos and do things that are not accepted in the wider society, also brings about a feeling of a certain superiority, a power to decide right from wrong and an ability to decide what means are acceptable at what times and what goals to achieve. This again contributes to the strong ties of the group members and strengthens their notion that they are part of a special society and privileged to a certain degree. One interviewee said this about this feeling as a young group member: '*You have no limits as a revolutionary. You have to do whatever it takes. If it is necessary, you even have to kill. If it's not necessary, cool – I mean, you would be an idiot if you killed just to prove that you are a revolutionary, but if it is necessary … '* And in the words of another interviewee: '*That was the feeling we had, that we were so closely knit as a group that we knew that we could do these things; we knew that 'the sky's the limit' we were fucking unstoppable, right? We could do anything. We could blow up their buildings if we wanted to … so it was like, we couldn't be stopped and we didn't give a damn what other people thought of us because we were so firmly decided that what we were doing was the right thing, because we knew that we were hitting them where it hurt them the most'*. As shown in these quotes, this sense of being unstoppable and having the moral capability to decide whether it is all right to kill or not is very important to the identity of the group, a topic which will be dealt with further in the next chapter.

Violent Activism as Life-Enriching Experiences

But there are also other similarities between the datasets used in the Wong report and in this report. Among the most important motivations for the American soldiers to engage in the army was, as mentioned already in this report, excitement and adventure, but also the opportunity to seek out experiences before looking for a job (Wong et al. 2003: 9). The idea that extreme situations are something that the individual can use in the process of growing up and gaining experiences to prepare

him or her for life after the youth group is also found among the interviewees to this report. For instance, one interviewee says that: *'I really don't like to talk about being a man and being tough* [in this quote 'tough' is translated from 'having hair on the chest'], *but it toughened you up, it really did, coming from the safe suburb to the big city meeting these people and standing all alone with it. Ninety percent of the population are against you, and at the same time you have to convince yourself that what you are doing is the right thing and keep on doing it – that really does toughen you up. And it toughened you up to put yourself in such extreme situations, and that also forms who you are and what you become after that. I think that it meant a lot more for who I became as a person than I had thought back then'.* As mentioned above, the most important motivation for the American soldiers in Iraq to keep fighting is the protection of and loyalty towards other soldiers, but, contrary to the expectations of Wong et al., another important motivation for the soldiers is idealistic, in the sense of a feeling that they were making a difference and actually seeing Iraqis being able to make positive changes with their lives after being liberated by the soldiers (Wong et al. 2003: 17-18). Not surprisingly, idealistic notions were also a huge motivation for the interviewees in this survey. This will be dealt with further in the following chapters, but alongside this there was, as with the American soldiers in Iraq, a satisfying feeling of actually achieving certain goals. Even though they all, when looking back, stated their awareness that the impact they had had was either very small or none at all, they believed at the time that they were making a huge difference and that violence was the reason why. Regarding this enthusiasm, one interviewee said: '*We were like ... caught in the enthusiasm because we really thought ... "Oh my god, now we're really kicking their ass, they're scared like shit and they are doing all these things to prevent us from doing this ... we've really frightened them", and the revolution was almost within reach*'. All but one of those interviewed felt that they had had some degree of success with their operations. They may not have reached their goals, but they created a debate through the media and thus raised the consciousness of the wider population. From this perspective, violence is a way of accessing the media, of being taken seriously by other actors and of frightening the perceived enemy. Violence thus becomes '*a duty. It is something that you have to do to do the right thing*'. And of violence as the way to obtain these goals, another interviewee said: '*We could see that it worked. As soon as we started to fight back, we were invited to negotiations ... especially when you are like 14-18 years old, you don't have the big nuances. We got beaten, we were chased around the town, we were let down every time we tried to negotiate, the moment we said "OK, let's fight", the politicians agreed to negotiate. What kind of a signal is that to send to young people ... I mean, that's brain dead*'.

Ideology and Identity

One of the leading hypotheses throughout this project has been that the motivations for young people to join these groups should be sought in the cross field of the identity of the individual, the identity of the group and the use of ideology in these groups. As shown in the chapter dealing with the path of the interviewees to entering political subcultures, none of those interviewed had clearly structured conceptions of ideology before entering these subcultures. Most entered with only a vague idea of deeper ideological foundations, and only a few could explain why that exact political expression appealed to them. Still, it would be wrong to say that ideology played no role at all. None of those interviewed thought they could have been active on the opposite wing, and as noted above, they were all preoccupied with notions of right and wrong that resulted in some degree of political thinking. From the beginning of their political search process, they had been looking in a certain direction, which to some was the same as the political position of their parents, while to others it was not.

In all these cases, therefore, before meeting the larger subculture, these political ideas were rather vague and unarticulated. It is clearly not ideology that leads the individual in the direction of the groups. As Donatella della Porta stresses, ideology plays an important role in pushing some militants towards terrorism, yet it does not determine their choice of armed struggle (Porta 1995: 122). Once individuals have entered the group, ideology comes to play an important role, as it does to the actual groups and their understanding of their place in the world. All the interviewees said that ideology was intensely debated among group members and that ideological literature was distributed, written and read. Interestingly, parallel to this claim, they all claimed too that they were not very interested in ideology. Ideology and ideological discussion may have been part of everyday life as part of the internal discourse – one could almost speak of a jargon – but this did not make the interviewees look at themselves as ideologically thinking persons. As described above, the individual group member's ability to use this jargon was crucial for their place in the group and decisive for their further participation in its actions and operations. An individual who did not use the ideological jargon of the group would simply have had to leave it.

Thus one of the most important functions of the ideology and the use of ideological language in everyday life in these small, ideologically based youth groups becomes proving the affiliation of the individual to the group. This curious use of ideology has puzzled many who believe that affiliation to an ideology must be something that

the individual bears in mind at all times and that binds him or her to the writings of the founders of that specific ideology. When ideology is used as a language, as suggested here, the individual is not bound to specific ideas as long as he or she is able to communicate within the boundaries of that ideology. To some this may seem inconsequential, and the community based on it may appear fruitless and empty, as when Roy criticizes the 'new fundamentalists' for being rootless and an example of anti-culture (Roy 2004: 31, 65, 147). It is, however, interesting to see how this use of ideology becomes exactly the opposite: producing a culture and a narrative that the individuals can use to construct their own identity as individuals with a role and a place in history. As Richard Jenkins points out, although identity is constructed in relation or opposition to other groups in society, this does not make it any less relevant or valuable. As Wiktorowicz emphasizes, radical Islamists seek to create a community of true believers tied together by a shared interpretation of Islam by promoting a set of values and identities that challenge the dominant cultural codes (Wiktorowicz 2005: 17). In this sense, ideology becomes mainly a collection of critical signs used by its devotees to communicate their affiliation to it and thus their membership of a certain group, which again means that they can ascribe a certain identity to themselves. But ideology is not just a language used to communicate affiliation and identity within the group. As will be pointed out later in this chapter, ideology also plays an important role in communicating identity and affiliation to specific groups to the rest of the surrounding society.

Activist Identities

As shown above, ideology became a way for the interviewees to illustrate their affiliation to a certain community and thus a certain identity. It is interesting that all the interviewees in this study described themselves as being preoccupied with action and with getting things done, rather than debating and discussing ideology. This suggests that, to this type of group member, the ideological aspects are merely something that must be in agreement with the fundamental political ideas of the individual and that must exist in order to frame the operation. Apart from that, being active is the primary concern for the individual activists. About this, one interviewee said: '*We saw ourselves as activists more than as intellectuals. We saw ourselves as different from those who just sat and read. ... We would rather do something than sitting around debating our own initiatives to death*'. Another said that: '*I'm an impatient soul, so I can't be bothered with plenums and grand meetings. That's for people in parliament. I have no use for wasting eight hours of play-talk in some parliament. Something has to happen!*'. Or, in the words of a third interviewee, who, during his first years in the established

political youth organizations, began to read all the 'right' books and debated in accordance with the prevailing culture there: '*... and so I got this very academic approach to it and became very debating and chattering and I just got so extremely tired of that because it is so hollow, such a façade – I just could not relate to that ... they had meetings and seminars with debates during the day, but in the evening it was all just drinking and girls and crap like that, and that wasn't politics to me. That was unnecessary, and it had nothing to do with the issues of the case ... to me.*' And so, after moving to another town and socializing in new environments, he '*met a lot of new people who had the same thoughts as me – that politics is not about round-table discussions, it is about doing something actively*'. This should not, however, be understood to mean that ideology was of no interest to the interviewees, only that it was not the primary concern of everyday life. One of the above-quoted interviewees, for instance, when asked about the thoughts he had had when he was about to participate in a violent operation for the first time, answered: '*I had no second thoughts about that. There was an ideology behind it, you know. We could justify anything with that ideology*'. And, in the words of another interviewee: '*I definitely think that you need to explain this to yourself and your surroundings, legitimizing the things you do, but it is not self-therapeutic, it's serious business. We send the press releases to the press to show that this was not just random vandalism – it is not a substitute for cutting seats on a train. We have pointed out a target, we have acted in full awareness of the situation, we have planned it and executed it and we have done so because of this and this*'. This indicates that, even though all the interviewees pointed out that they were acting instead of debating, and even though ideology was not their main reason for joining these groups, ideology was important in framing their own places and roles in society as militant activists. As was the case with the soldiers quoted in the Wong report mentioned earlier, action cannot stand alone: it needs to have a deeper meaning and must be related to a greater good. Ideology is used to legitimize violent acts not just to the surrounding society, but also to the individual activists themselves. As can be read from many of the previous quotes, even though no real dehumanization is taking place, the ideologically rooted view of the world is used to point out an enemy and to empower the activists to act violently towards him.

Bringing Harmony between the Autobiographical Selves and Emotions and Feelings

From the quotes displayed above, it also appears that militant activism functions as a foundation for the identity of the individual activist. This was clearly the case for all but one of the interviewees. It was their choice to play an active role in the

armed struggle that defined their identity as individuals in the subculture, and the ideology helped them to obtain this identity. In the words of Gabriele Marranci, activists create harmony between their autobiographical selves and their feelings and emotions through acting. Marranci presents a theory of identity that attempts to combine sociological understandings of identity with psychological and biological understandings of the human body and mind, thus creating a theory in which the bodily reactions and psychological perceptions of a situation, together with the sociological context of the individual, forms his or her identity. A person presented with stimuli, such as a video showing Muslims being killed in the Iraq war, produces emotions defined as bodily reactions such as heightened blood pressure, adrenalin production or sweating. These emotions are then interpreted by the individual as feelings of, for instance, fear, anger or sorrow (Marranci 2006: 43ff.). These feelings affect the autobiographical self of the individual and thus shape the individual's way of interpreting different aspects of him- or herself, for instance, one's interpretation of one's Muslim identity. This 'shaping of an identity' is expressed through verbal or symbolic actions which Marranci calls 'acts of identity' (Marranci 2006: 50).

Thus communicating affiliation with a certain ideology, such as political Islam, can be seen as an act of identity that brings harmony between an individual's autobiographical self and his or her feelings and emotions. Marranci then defines identity as 'a process that allows human beings to make sense of their autobiographical self and to express it through symbols, which communicate at an inner level with feelings that are in other ways incommunicable' (Marranci 2006: 51). This was characteristic of all but one the interviewees. They understood themselves as acting rather than debating persons, as belonging to subcultures that emphasize the significance of making an actual difference, and they themselves wanted to take a stand in the world. After a period of time merely talking, the choice seemed to lie between either acting or leaving the subculture. Without this creation of harmony between the autobiographical selves and emotions and feelings, the individual cannot recognize himself or herself as genuine, as opposed to just hollow and a façade, as in the above quotations. Of the transition from non-violent action to violent action, one of these interviewees later stated that: '*It was just a natural development of the process I was undergoing at that time, you know, just to do it. It was a necessity because I didn't want to be like a balloon, filled with hot air, just going the way the wind blows. I had seen that so many times, and it led nowhere*'. To this interviewee, as well as all the other interviewees in this survey, the violent act can be viewed as an act of identity. By acting, the individual communicates his or her identity not only to the surrounding society, but also to the individual self and the subculture that he or she is part of.

Positioned as an Avant-Garde

As mentioned in the chapter on hierarchical mobility, it is important to the individual to be recognized as putting action behind the words in order to be part of the prestigious group in the particular subculture. But there is more to it than just being let into the inner core of the 'secret group': it is also a question of negotiating identity. In the data, there are numerous examples of interviewees stating that their group really was the avant-garde, the final frontier, the place for those who really meant what they said, as opposed to the others in the subculture. This is interesting given the theories of Richard Jenkins, as described above in the chapter on the path to the political subculture. This also resembles the findings of Wiktorowicz, who states about his interviewees from al-Muhajiroun[2] that they promote a set of values and identities that 'challenge dominant cultural codes. In doing so, they seek to create a common community of "true believers"' (Wiktorowicz 2005: 17). The group members ascribe themselves a certain meaning as part of a certain group in a certain environment, which gives them a number of groups against which to define their boundaries and thus strengthen their own identity. The primary group for this purpose is, of course, the perceived enemy, which is seen as a direct threat for many different reasons, practical as well as metaphysical. Opposition to this enemy is what binds together the entire subculture. But within the subculture, several smaller groups exists that differ from each other in various ways, and to the individual members of the subcultures affiliation to the different groups seems very important for their personal identities. The interviewees in this survey described the subcultures in which their groups were embedded as containing four general groupings: 1) those who rejected direct action in the pursuit of political goals. This group is small and the one with the least influence. 2) Those who accepted direct action but rejected violent activism. This group is by far the largest and presumably the one with the most influence. 3) Those who accepted violent means in achieving political goals, but for several reasons did not participate in violence themselves. This group operates in the grey zone between the former and the next group, which is where the members of the next are recruited. 4) Those who accept and use violent means in the pursuit of political goals. This group is by far the smallest, and its influence on the other groups is difficult to measure. It is certain, though, that the members of this group often have a lot of social capital because of their loyalty to the project. By many they were seen as some sort of authority, and their opinion seems to have had a lot of weight in debates among the different groups in the subculture. Even though this group might have

[2] al-Muhajiroun was a radical Islamic group founded in London in 1986 as an offspring of Hizb ut-Tahrir, whom the founder, Omar Bakri Muhammad, believed was too soft, especially because of its rejection of militancy. al-Muhajiroun was banned in 2005 under the Terrorism Act for glorifying terrorism.

been the one that engaged the least in ideological debates, their views on ideological questions seem to have counted heavily because of their ability to prove through concrete action that they had actually risked their own freedom for the sake of the project. Therefore, to the members of these groups, activism plays a more important role than ideology, not only for one's perception of one's own identity, but also in positioning the group among all the other groups in the subculture.

One interviewee talked about this by describing the tone among the members of the radical group of which he became a member after being in more moderate environments for a short while: '*... and here it is always about who is "the real thing" and who is "the cool", and the moderate groups weren't as cool as ours.*' The moderate groups are seen as soft and compromising, and as a result they are left behind by some young people who cannot identify with this. By breaking all contact with these soft groups, the activists can stand out both as representatives of the true understanding of the ideology and as its protectors and combatants. This quarrel between the groupings and how those who accept violent activism can use this to put themselves in a favourable position in the face of those who do not is illustrated by this story about a public demonstration that many different groups took part in: '*... here we really quarrelled with the other groups who had arranged this, and we really screwed up their arrangement big time. And yes, that was really mean, but ... we were militant and we were activists and we had no time to wait for all that (...) we did all these crazy things ... "hey, lets burn their flag", so we put it on a long stick and set it on fire and swung it around ... that there were other people there, that they had brought their children ... we were at war, "Fuck that, we'll destroy it all" ... you know, we were completely blind to other people who might think differently*'. By joining groups that advocated militant activism, young men and women can ascribe themselves a special place and position in the subculture as a whole. Specifically about this, one interviewee said that: '*We were the hard core of the hard core ... in the way that we were those who did the things that the others didn't dare, but still thought it was the right thing to do ... we were those doing the dirty job*'. And in the words of another interviewee: '*those who lived underground or who had been imprisoned for life, they were the avant-garde. We came right after that*'. The groups that these interviewees belonged to would not be what they were unless they consisted only of members prepared to act violently. This is what defines them and makes them different from the other groups. Some of the interviewees were in these groups mainly because they had an urge to act, while others acted mainly because they had an urge to be in the group. To all of them, however, their identities as acting individuals depended on the group's ability to keep up this

impression in the subculture. If the group fails to do this, the individual members will lose their recognition.

Producing Recognizable Narratives

Because of this, it is important that the group members produce effective narratives that are recognized by their surroundings. To produce a narrative is to tell a story. Through the narrative process, the individual transcends the private into the public by telling a story that presents the individual in a certain way, representing certain values and elements that the individual wants to be associated with. This allows the individual to form the story and thus create a successful identity, or at least not as unsuccessful as it might have been if told in different terms (Jackson 2002). This does not mean that the stories people tell about themselves are pure fantasy and all made up, but the analyst must be aware that the story is edited and constructed by the narrator before, during and after the context in which the story is being told (Månson 2002). This means that, in the construction of a narrative, the narrator will often emphasize certain aspects and repress others as not supporting the story that the narrator wishes to tell. By doing this, the narrator is allowed to regain a sense of agency. This influences the way the individual understands him- or herself, and thus identity is created by telling the story (Jackson 2002). In choosing how to narrate oneself, it can be effective to adopt the narratives of commonly known role models. When this is done, the individual tries to pick certain aspects of his or her own life and to present them in a framework that makes them fit the narrative of the role model.

An example of this may be young European Muslims use of the narrative of Muhammad to create meaning out of their own confused situations. By doing this, their perceived isolation and deprivation becomes a self-chosen *hijra*[3] away from *jahilliyya*[4] that will inevitably lead to the final victory.[5] Those who choose to use this narrative are no longer vulnerable victims, but strong, God-fearing warriors waiting for the right

[3] The Arab term describing the period in which the Prophet Muhammad was send into exile in Medina away from the holy town of Mecca. By modern European Muslims, the term is often used to describe their position as believers in a country with a non-Muslim majority.

[4] The Arab term originally used to describe the historical period before the Prophet Muhammad, hence a time with no Islam. Since the work of Sayyid Qutb, the term has frequently been used of those who do not believe or of the time in a person's life before he or she turned to Islam – thus a Muslim can find him- or herself surrounded by *jahilliyya*.

[5] Islamists call the history of the Prophet Muhammad with the two core elements of *hijra* and *jahilliyya* (see notes 3 and 4), especially since Qutb, as the *minhaj* (method) of the Prophet. He who succeeds in copying this *minhaj* will also be able to fight the *jahilliyya* (see note 3) and rise to a true Islamic state for the benefit of all mankind (see Qutb 1993).

moment to conquer the world. This is seen very clearly in, for instance, Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones*, in which he encourages Muslims all over the world to copy the life-path of Muhammad and the first generation that followed him, also known as *salaf as-salihin* or 'the righteous forefathers' (Qutb 1993). All the interviewees in this survey had an urge to act and identified themselves as activists as opposed to ideologists. In the words of Marranci, they all sought to create harmony between their emotions and feelings and their autobiographical selves through acts of identity. These are communicative tools that the individual can use to narrate certain messages to his or her surroundings. This means that the act satisfies two basic needs at the same time: first the urge, the bodily restlessness felt by the individual, that makes direct action necessary and 'natural'; and secondly, the individual's need for an activist identity. By acting, the individual feels active. This may seem logical and banal, but it is not as simple as that because of the notion of recognition just mentioned. As shown here and previously in this text, and as pointed out by Martha Crenshaw more than twenty years ago (Crenshaw 1986: 13), violent activism can at the same time function as a vehicle for rebellion, self-assertion and identity definition. If, however, the acts are not recognized by the receivers as communicating an activist identity, it fails in its purpose. Because of this, it is important to the individual activists that the groups to which they belong are recognized and understood in the surroundings in accordance the the message they wish to communicate. This does not mean that groups are necessarily consciously aware of this or that they deliberately communicate slogans that are received correctly in the associated subcultures, but that there are right and wrong ways of acting, and that this is important for the way the members organize the group, for the possibilities that each individual has and for which actions are perceived as good and which are not.

This means that, within each subculture, there is a certain way of doing things that each group fits into very well. The group members copy the previous groups that have been drawn from the subculture, and organize as closely as possible to those that they want to resemble. One interviewee told a story of how, after he had entered the wider subculture and was still on his way to the militant groups, he became heavily preoccupied with literature on the older militant groups of the subculture. These are written narratives that can be viewed as historical documentation, but also as manuals for new members. They reveal stories of how to socialize, how to fight and with whom, what to do in which situations, and what the political explanations for this were. This is used as guidelines by the new member to make sure that the things he or she says and does fall within the boundaries of the acceptable in the subculture, or, put differently, to make sure that their actions are recognized by their peers. This

is also what others have called 'the software' of the terror cells (see, for instance, Harrow 2008: 6-7). By applying this software, the activists are taught how to act in specific situations, but also how to frame their actions to make sure that they are recognized correctly by others. About this reading, this interviewee also said: '*... so you get an impression of what it is that this subculture does and what it is that I want to do because I want to be like them. Because I would like to live a life as described in those books*'. So these books offer a framework for the actions of the interviewee to make sure that they both make sense to himself and are recognized as meaningful by his peers. At a different point in the interview, the interviewee was asked whether the violent actions were really a search for adrenalin kicks:

Interviewee: '*I think it was more a search for a story. A good story*'
Interviewer: '*The story of you as an activist?*'
Interviewee: '*Yes maybe ... the story of having been a part of making history in the subculture. I think that this was very much the driving force for me. This "Wow – to have done something wild", that wasn't very important to me. It was more to be able to say that I was a part of this. That I thought was really cool ... I got this idea and then I did this and that in that situation"*'.

In an interview conducted by Donatelle della Porta, a former member of the Brigate Rosse says about the same topic: 'It [ideological literature] was a way to identify ourselves with the history and the tradition of the progressive movements of our century' (Porta 1995: 149).

Communicating Identity to Oneself and to Others

The quotes presented just above show that the interviewees wanted to be part of a certain community that operated in a certain way with certain arguments, so that they could be part of the story of that community. So they read the books, learned the special language to narrate in or, in other words, bought the software. And it worked As one interviewee said when asked if, after the first operation, he could be said to have gained the identity of xxx: '*Yes, you could say that. And it was strengthened through the magazines I read because now I was one of the masked people I saw at the pictures ... and I think that the organization ... or the entire phenomenon ... works like this – you become a member of a community that says "heroism" and "outstanding performance" and all of these things. You are like a "superhuman" because you do the things that no one dares, you do what everybody talks about but no one acts upon*'. So in this case the interviewee found himself reflected in the pictures in the magazines

that he and his friends were reading, which clearly contributed to his feeling of being activist, thus satisfying his needs for an activist identity. But, as noted above, this identity must also be recognized by others to have an impact. At a later point in the interview, the same interviewee said:

Interviewee: '*I remember, while I was still active, when you were in some place, at a concert or something, and someone comes up to you and says "Hey, now something happened again, that's pretty wild ha?", and all you could say was, "Yeah that's pretty wild … but I don't know who did it …" But you really felt like saying, "Yes! That was me!", right? All the time you had to go with this in mind, not telling anybody that you did it, but you really wanted to say, "That was me, I did it!", to get this satisfaction or recognition or whatever … it's a bit narrow-minded, but this is the thought you get. That you want to tell, but you don't.*'

Interviewer: '*And it's not like … I mean, I often hear that officially no one knows who did it, but they know anyway … .*'

Interviewee: '*Yes. And they knew it all right.*'

Interviewer: '*So how did this … I mean, even though you didn't say, "It was me!", did you get the recognition after all? Because people knew it anyway?*'

Interviewer: '*Well … yes … you did. From those who sympathized.*'

Interviewer: '*Did that mean anything for your participation?*'

Interviewee: '*Well, to me it meant that I kept doing it, I guess. That I felt that what I did was the right thing. Because not only are you recognized through seeing your operation mentioned in an international magazine published worldwide, that you see it and say "Hey, I took part in that operation, I was part of that". It gives you recognition because others all over the world approve your actions. But also locally, you got a pat on the shoulder when someone came up to you and says, "Hey, what's up? A lot of things are happening at the moment, ha?", and you say "Yes. Sure is" … "Cool …", they say. And you don't speak more about it, but you know that they know that you are part of it. [… And that gave you some recognition, knowing that someone knew, and that was enough*'.

And of those in the subculture who did not approve of their actions, he said: '*They were not in the game; that was just too bad for them, because those old assholes we could easily do without. That was the attitude because they were old and pig-headed and … you can never reach them. The only ones you can reach are the enemy themselves!*'

This last quote shows that, as long as the activists have a feeling of being recognized as advocates for the cause, they are absolutely certain that what they are doing is right.

The fact that not everyone in the subculture approves of their actions is not important to them – they have all the recognition they need. This is a story that was repeated all through the interviews. Some were more widely recognized than others, but they all had some groups within the subculture that disapproved of what they had done. None of the groups, though, meet only disapproval, and all find great confidence in being recognized by others. Interestingly, this recognition can also come from the mainstream media. All of the interviewees had the experience of the mainstream media having reported something that they had done or had been a part of which left them more confident about their activism. These experiences were not about the media agreeing with their operations, but often consisted in the mere fact that they were reported. When their operations were reported and they got to hear about them on the radio or saw them on television, they were laden as meaningful, and the activists could now be certain that what they had done was important and was worth carrying on with. The more dangerous and serious they were made in the reporting, the more recognized they perceived their operation to have been. This mechanism was also mentioned in relation to, for instance, police officers telling the media how seriously they took the threat of the activists. The more serious activists are perceived to be by the politicians, the police or the general public, the more certain they seem to be that what they are doing is having an effect, and that it pays to continue.

Here ideology comes in handy again. As shown above, ideology functions mainly as an identity marker for the individual activists among themselves, and as a tool to frame the operation in a political context. But it also functions as a way of communicating to the surrounding society. It might be difficult to communicate different messages through the mainstream media since these have only very little time and space to offer to politically engaged people or to organizations outside the established parties. To find a way into the media, it is therefore helpful for the activists to present themselves as a threat, as this is something the media has always found interesting, and this can be done either by producing violence or by saying something that the media recognizes as threatening. The mechanisms in the latter are the same as those that are active in producing recognizable narratives. By implementing and using ideological language, they are perceived as representing the threat of that particular ideology. One interviewee told how he often tried to get journalists to come to peaceful demonstrations that he and others were arranging, and was met with the question 'Will it be violent?' When the answer was, 'No, hopefully not', the journalists would reply, 'Oh, in that case it's of no interest. Call me if something happens'. Violence sells newspapers and thus becomes a way of distributing ideas. So in order to attract the interest of the media, it can be in the interests of the activists to use language that is

known to represent the threat of the time: al-Qaeda, Baader-Meinhof, neo-Nazism, eco-terrorism or the like. Ideology communicates identity and works as a commercial poster selling political ideas to the mainstream media and the public.

Leaving the Groups

As this text started out by describing the path of the activist into the political era, so it should end by providing a description of the way of the activist out of the groups. Interestingly it is more difficult to obtain a clear picture of the way out than the way in. Whereas all the interviewees had clear memories of their path into the groups, the way out was often more blurred. This is because, for most of the interviewees, the way out was slow and gradual. Some still saw themselves as part of the subculture, though no longer as activists, while others had broken completely with their old environment. Some had been part of the violent groups in certain periods and in other periods not, and thus been moving in and out these categories, being sometimes in and sometimes out. Others had followed a strict line leading them in and out of the violent groups only once.

Generally it seems that there are two main reasons for violent activists to leave militant groups, which can appear both separately and at the same time. The first main reason is that the activists meet new people and new environments or subcultures through work or education that makes them view their own activities from a new perspective. In the encounter with radically different people and environments, they are offered new ways to understand the world and a new framework that makes them doubt the things they have been taking for granted for a long time. One interviewee said that, after he started working with people from outside the environment, '*I grew tired of the subculture. I saw a different world ... I saw a world outside the subculture that I hadn't seen for many years*'. This led the interviewee to doubt his actions and his way of thinking: '*I had a feeling, towards the end, that I had been going down a side track. Politically, I felt that I could argue for anything, no matter how crazy or insane or undemocratic an operation I did with violence and all that stuff. That I could argue for it with the framework I had. I started thinking that I could do anything and still argue for it, so maybe it didn't really make sense. [...] I'm not quite sure how this thought appeared, that I could justify anything; I just remember that it occurred at some point*'.

This might also be affected by an operation that had got out of hand and had confronted the interviewee with the full consequences of the violent behaviour of the group. This shock, combined with meeting people from outside the subculture and doubts that arose over the consistency with which the ideology was invoked to justify violent events and operations, made him want to leave the subculture for good. The first step in this direction must then be identified as having a job in an environment

outside the subculture. It is important, though, to emphasize that the job must be outside the subculture. There are many examples of activists who have jobs in different types of companies that are placed within the subculture, and this often make their loyalty towards and interest in the subculture stronger rather than weaker. Of those who lost contact with the subculture because of their job or education, some also returned again after they had completed school or left their jobs. As soon as they had more time, they started to become involved in either violent or non-violent political action again, mainly because this was where their friends and networks were. Leaving the subculture often means breaking with one's networks.

The other main reason for activists to leave groups concerns the penalties they have incurred in acting with the group. Many of the interviewees had served many sentences and stated that at some point they grew tired of spending time in prison. There are many aspects to this. One is that, after activists have been sentenced a certain number of times, they start to be sentenced to prison for even lesser breaches of the law. Since many activists take part in many demonstrations, this quickly becomes problematic to them. Another aspect is simply that they grow older and start to acquire grown-up responsibilities which are difficult to combine with serving time in prison. They get married, have children and careers and thus become less willing to risk their social lives for the sake of the cause. Another reason for leaving violent activism behind in the course of time is simply that this type of activism is perceived as closely related to youth. Of his exit from the group, one interviewee said: '*I was in my early thirties, and there you start to see things a little differently, a little more relaxed. That "glaze of youth" starts to be a little rusty. And you know, I always despised those 45-year-olds who run around with a beer in their hand to a demonstration along with a lot of young people. [...] I am 41 years old now. I have my own goddamn problems.*' And later he said: '*It has to end at some point. So you can choose between entering one of the established parties and doing some practical political parliamentary work, or you can be one of those 45-year-olds running around with the young people where everybody else looks at you and thinks, "Get a life". And I didn't want to do any of these things, so I just said "Goodbye"*'. Others again decide to leave because they are emotionally affected by discovering how much their imprisonment and their lives as activists are affecting their friends and families. Those who have kept their political activism secret are exposed to their friends and families by their imprisonment, and now they have to be able to justify their actions to them. One interviewee said that: '*During my stay there* [in prison] *I got so many letters from people who weren't political at all but who were my friends, friends I had had for many years, and so I find out how affected my friends and my family really are by having to live with me being an activist who does these things*'.

This interviewee then told a story of his friends who, just after his imprisonment, had strange experiences that they believed to be the secret police following them in the streets. About this he said: '*I would not be able to live with my friends and family being put under surveillance. That's where I draw the line. I just wouldn't be able to live with that. At that point, I knew that I would never do anything like this again*'.

In different combinations, most of the interviewees mentioned most of the above as elements in their decision to leave the violent groups. Only one interviewee mentioned none of the above, saying instead that he left the violent activist groups to be able to carry out other kinds of assignment for the political cause, which required that he left all criminal activity alone. After the interview was finished and the conversation continued more informally, he said that, if he were to make the choice today, he would choose differently and stay with the group so as to take part in further militant activities.

None of those who were interviewed was exposed to de-radicalization or any other attempt to reintegrate them into society and make them break loose from the radical subcultures. The reasons mentioned for the break were diverse and led in many directions. Only one regretted his actions, and he was also the only one to claim that he had completely lost interest in political issues in general, and those of his old political subculture in particular. Regardless of the reason for leaving the groups, the break with the subculture was the result of their own considerations and reflections. They measured the positive and the negative consequences and made a choice from them. Just as the path into militant activism seems to follow a certain development that the individual undergoes at the age of 14-16 years, so the way out seems to follow a certain development at the age of 25-30.

Summary and Conclusion

As this report has shown, processes that lead an individual to participate in politically motivated violent group action are complex and difficult to pin down. Finding one clear answer to the question of why some individuals become terrorists while others adhering to the same ideology do not is like trying to find the answer to why some students become doctors while others become biologists, astrologists or something completely different. Looking at each case in isolation, it is possible to see a clear line of events leading the individual to take the decisions that led him or her to the position that he or she is in today. However, looking at the field and all its actors as one entity, the picture quickly blurs and becomes difficult to see in detail. This does not mean, however, that it is impossible to find structures and elements that are repeated in all the cases, and this is what this report has tried to focus on. Each theme has been illustrated with quotations from interviews to give the reader an opportunity to draw his or her own conclusions and to pin down the nuances.

As said at the beginning, the focus in this report has been three main themes: the role of ideology and the role of identity in violent radicalization, and the role of group structures and group dynamics in the same. All the answers given here are, of course, found within these themes, simply because this is where the analysis has been centred. Other researchers looking at different themes may come up with different answers, but this merely illustrates the complexity of the phenomenon.

One of the surprising conclusions derived from this study is that ideology seems to play a minor role for the members of violent groups. All the interviewees explained that their interest in ideology came after they had been introduced to and affiliated with the broader subculture, and that ideology could not be said to have led the way into the political groups for them. As expected, most of the interviewees had a solid ideological foundation and reported reading ideological literature, participating in debates on ideological issues and so forth, but also common to all the interviewees was a strong urge to act instead of debating and reading. They all explained how the reading and debating opened their eyes to different types of injustice and how they felt the inadequacy of their own ability to solve these problems through traditional parliamentary methods such as debating and public consciousness-raising. Their answer to this was a process of heightened acceptance of violent means, which led them into a recruitable position from which they increased their recruitability by using a certain language, taking part in certain actions and hanging out with certain people as result

of their own interest in being affiliated with the violent groups. In this process a break seems to take place, one in which ideology is placed in the background. Realizing the inadequacy of ideology in the solving of concrete problems in the here and now, the individual group member lets ideology go as the primary focus of his or her actions. This does not mean, though, that the individual group member does not consider the act to be ideologically grounded, only that they feel they have entered an era of acting rather than talking, so that 'talk' loses its relevance to some degree. By being part of a group responsible for violent acts, they have gone beyond ideology. However, recognition by supporters in the surrounding subculture and agreement that violent acts are legitimated by their shared ideology is very important to individual group members. As seen in the first recruitment case, there may be examples of the ideology being 'outsourced' to people who are not directly involved in the group, but whom the group believes to be well grounded and holding important views. The group's members themselves are not preoccupied with ideological thinking during the planning of an operation, and because of this, groups may have members who hardly have any affiliation with ideology but who nonetheless agree on key issues concerning the ideology. As shown also in the case of American soldiers fighting in Iraq, operations and political activities need a political framework as a greater good for the individual members to be able to fulfil their tasks in the extremely stressful situations in which they find themselves. Thus ideology functions as an identity marker, as a way of framing an operation, towards both other group members and the surrounding society.

Identity also plays an important role in the decision of the individual to participate in violent group action. All of those interviewed had clear pictures of themselves as activists and as being part of an avant-garde that was trying to create a better world. This was an important part of their identity. The violent acts made them feel as if they were really doing something about it, thus helping them create harmony between their emotions and feelings and their autobiographical selves. By taking part in the violent acts, they narrated themselves as revolutionaries, rebels, freedom-fighters etc., and thus created an identity for themselves that they could rely on and use to communicate to others regarding who they were and what they stood for. Because they were part of a subculture whose members recognized certain types of violent behaviour, violence itself became an effective form of communication.

Violence itself is thus satisfactory to the individual on several levels: it does some kind of damage to the enemy and as such has an effect on the political agenda; it helps the individual activist feel that he or she is actually doing something and making a

difference to the world; it helps the individual build up an identity as someone who acts instead of talking; it helps the individual communicate this identity to others; and it makes others recognize the individual as something other than just another ideological talker.

As noted above, individual group members entered a process of a heightened acceptance of violent means in achieving political goals based of their perception of ideological discussions and debates as inadequate, which again led them to a recruitable position. But this is not the only thing opening individuals to the idea of being part of violent resistance. Another important motive seems to be violence as means of hierarchical mobility. The interviewees all came from subcultures in which the violent activists were more or less broadly accepted as having special authenticity and as people whose opinions were worth taking into account. An offer to join one of the violent groups can thus be understood as an opportunity to rise in the hierarchy. For most of the interviewees, this was something they found it difficult to speak about. First of all, they did not want to leave the impression that they had done these things for glory and the acceptance of their peers, and it was obviously difficult for them to maintain the perception that the operations were solely politically motivated by the activists themselves when the talk touched on this aspect. On the one hand, they clearly felt that their operations had been somewhat discredited once they were seen as a way for the individual to rise in the subcultural hierarchy, but on the other hand, they admitted that they liked, and to some degree were driven by, the special status that their position as a violent activist gave them. As outlined in the section on social processes, the way for young people in violence-accepting youth groups not just to rise in the hierarchy, but simply to be accepted as a loyal and full member of the group, entails adopting the ideological discourse of the group. This means that accepting violence as a means of achieving political goals quickly becomes normal and something that is not questioned. This creates an environment in which violence is broadly accepted but only perpetrated by a few core members of groups who are typically situated outside the subculture, yet still deeply imbedded in it. Once this discourse is adapted, it is therefore understood as constituting a special recognition of the activist when he or she is invited to join one of these groups.

This leaves a picture of the process that the individual undergoes towards participation in politically motivated group violence as something that is heavily controlled by social processes in the particular group. One cannot view a process of radicalization without taking into account the group that the individual is a part of, how the group is structured and what discourses are dominant. What distinguishes those who join

the violent groups and those who do not seems to rely on coincidence, opportunity and the identity of the individual to a much greater degree than ideology. Because of this, this study does not offer a bullet-point model of militant radicalization (see, for instance, Wiktorowicz 2004b: 1): the processes involved are simply too complex and rely too much on coincidence and the situation of the single individual. Also the empirical data for this study show that there are great motivational differences between individuals who join already existing groups and individuals who help form their own groups.

All the interviewees in this study had a clear political starting-point. It was not a matter of coincidence whether any of them ended up at one or the other end of the political spectrum, and they could all be described as indignant. They had political issues that they felt were of extreme importance, and they also felt that no one was acting on them or seriously trying to do anything about them. This is a very bodily feeling: it can be described as an itch in the body, an urge to act. The ideological interest is often not invoked until after the encounter with the group, party or organization that the individual becomes a member of, and the ideology helps the individual frame his feeling of injustice and to structure and articulate his complaints. The ideology helps the individual to reach a higher degree of certainty that his or her sense of something as being wrong is in fact right. A feeling of being righteous, as having a deeper insight into what is fair, just occurs, but this is not what leads the individual actually to participate in violent acts. This ideological basis and belief in one's own ability to judge right from wrong is an important element, but what brings the activist to the point of deciding to take part in the perceived battle lies in the cross field of identity and social processes. In the subcultures mentioned in this paper, acceptance of violent means was mandatory for the interviewees to become or stay core members of the group.

This suggests that the individual adapts and uses this rhetoric and thus becomes open to recruitment to the violent groups. As seen in the section on the path to the political subculture, in some cases the individual even seeks out the subculture and accepts violence deliberately, since this satisfies the itch described above. This leaves an impression of someone who is actively putting him or her self on the line for the sake of the cause. This is appealing to young and indignant men or women. Applying this rhetoric is in itself satisfactory, as it supports the identity of the young activist as being exactly this: an activist. The individual then experiences on the one hand that the urge to act becomes more present: a solution is found, and it finally seems possible actually to do something about the injustices that are being committed.

On the other hand, one's identity as an activist is recognized and contested at the same time. It is recognized by one's peers in the subculture, who also accept violence but do not act it out, but it is contested by those who do act, including often the individual him- or herself. This leaves the individual with a feeling of inconsistency and insufficiency and makes the urge to act even stronger. The invitation to join a group that uses violent means is therefore often very well received by the activists. It is an invitation finally to act on one's indignation, to get something done and to satisfy the itch that is constantly bugging one. It makes it possible for the individual actually to make some changes in the world. Now, as part of the group, the individual also experiences a rise in the hierarchy of the subculture and becomes part of a secret brotherhood that offers many interesting and exciting experiences to its members. The feeling of a need to protect and help the other group members, the need to keep up with them in planning an operation or other event, and the feeling of bodily superiority that comes with the performance of these operations are all elements that make the individual continue with these operations.

As noted before and as shown here, the motivations for participating in violent group action are complex and difficult to point out. Each person and each group is different, as are the processes leading the individual to participate in these acts. The hope is that this text has shed some light on the processes that some of these individuals undergo, and that we as researchers have added an extra piece to the puzzle regarding these matters. When examining ideologically motivated violence, one must look beyond ideology in order to find the motivation.

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