8 Swiss Islamic Organisations and the Challenge of Radicalisation

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8.1 Introduction: Challenges in the Definition and Understanding of Radicalisation

When Islamic organisations in western countries, including Switzerland, confront the phenomenon of jihadist radicalisation, they face a biased set of interpretations and perspectives. The first problem is how to define the phenomenon, since religious concepts and the complex geopolitical context require prudent and deliberate consideration. In this chapter, we use the term *jihadist radicalisation* for pragmatic reasons to adopt the most well-known term. We are conscious of the different meanings of the word *jihad*: its misuse in the context of extremism[216] with its focus on "holy war", and *jihad* in the religious sense in the Quran referring to internal as well as external efforts to be a good Muslim or believer.

In addition, the term *radical* can also concern various other types of political or social orientation, fundamentally meaning the contrary of "moderation". Radicalisation indicates a relative position on a continuum of organised opinion (Sedgwick 2010), making it a vague term. *Radicalisation* can be defined as a process whereby an individual or group adopts increasingly extreme political or religious ideas and goals, becoming convinced that their achievement justifies extreme methods and even violence (Ongering 2007). For McCauley and Moskalenko (2011, 4), radicalisation is the "development of beliefs, feelings and actions in support of any group or cause in conflict". In contrast to activism, radicalism is understood as a readiness to engage in illegal and violent political action (Sedgwick 2010). According to Vidino (2015), jihadist radicalisation is taken to mean the process of adopting an extreme belief system, which sees a partial interpretation of jihad and the

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216   The term *Islamist extremism* or *Islamist radicalisation* is also widespread, but less so than *jihadist radicalisation.*

associated violence against "infidels" as a method to effect the desired societal change (the establishment of an "Islamic state").

Kundnani (2012) argues for a focus on radical jihadism as a political movement, thus shifting attention away from individuals and their deficits towards groups and their interpretation of political and social problems. In this sense, it is crucial to understand what stimulates the processes that drive young people towards jihadist radicalisation and what worldviews, experiences, needs, and problems act as push and pull factors on the path to radicalisation.

As has been shown in other studies, jihadists do not fit a "typical profile" (Steinberg 2015; Heinke and Person 2015) but are instead highly heterogeneous in terms of their social background, education, socioeconomic status, and so on. This is documented for the Swiss context, too (Eser Davolio et al. 2015). Although some of the persons involved can be unstable (Roy 2015), it would nevertheless be false to see jihadist radicalisation as a problem of personal deficits – nor of social or cultural problems (Schiffauer 2000). Wiktorowicz (2004) notes the importance of social influence in leading a person to join a radicalised group; he describes the process of radicalisation, moving from cognitive opening (receptivity to new ideas and world views) via a frame alignment, and socialisation in the extremist group that facilitates indoctrination, identity-construction, and value changes.

As far as security studies are concerned, their attention is focused above all on the factors that cause Muslims to support a radical interpretation of Islam that leads to violence – leaving aside questions of the context in which this violence occurs. One of the many consequences of this approach is the lack of reference to the role played by western governments in stoking conflicts in the Middle East (Kundnani 2012). The process of radicalisation is complex (Villiger 2017), we need to not only examine the historical conditions of each conflict in its totality but also the circumstances particular to each territory, and how an individual relates to those circumstances.

According to Al-Lami (2009), a clear distinction must be drawn between religious fundamentalism and religious conservatism, including Salafism, which rejects militant jihad on the one hand, and violent, militant radicalisation on the other. In this context we also have to consider the instrumentalisation of Islam by various stakeholders in the Middle East and elsewhere, who promote Islamism[217] and mobilise fighters and resources for wars and social influences to gain religious-political power. The phenomenon of jihadist radicalisation extends beyond the problem of jihad tourists or foreign fighters, since a growing number of sympathisers tend to advocate

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217   Islamism advocates that public and political life should be guided by Islamic principles; it is interchangeable with the terms *Islamic fundamentalism* and *political Islam* (Poljarevic 2014).

violence as a mean of achieving their goals (Frindre et al. 2011). Often, the individuals attracted by such ideologies are illiterate religious believers: since their knowledge of the Koran is limited, it is easy to influence and radicalise them (Dantschke 2015). They confront society with issues similar to those of other forms of extremism and are considered a threat to security and its shared values.

Extremist generally refers to movements and parties, ideas and attitudes or patterns of behaviour that reject the democratic constitutional state, the division of power, the multi-party system, and the right to opposition. Extremists replace political opposition with the distinction between friend and foe. As a result, they firmly reject other opinions and interests and believe in certain, allegedly irrefutable politico-social ideas. Here an interlinking of interpretations with paradox effects can be observed: on the one hand, the societies in western countries tend to stigmatise Muslim minorities as "suspect communities" (Kundnani 2012, 96), and on the other hand, radical preachers and IS-propaganda accuses western societies of Islamophobia and racism, convincing Muslim immigrants of the perception that they are not desired, refused, and excluded, in order to mobilise them against western countries. Furthermore, western societies confronted by IS-terrorism try to fix and localise the danger, often pointing their finger to mosques as only place they can find that looks suspicious to them (Müller et al. 2018). The phenomena of jihadist radicalisation in social networks and the worldwide web is fluid and not easy to fix.

The topography of jihadist radicalisation thus makes it difficult for Muslim organisations to find a common understanding of and a position towards this phenomenon inside their own organism and towards the outside (local society, media, politicians etc.).

8.2   Islamic Organisations Facing the Susceptibility of the Second Generation and the Phenomena of (Re-)Conversion

Given that Islam in Switzerland is quite a "new religion", Islamic organisations generally provide the first immigration generation, the second and sometimes even the third generation with religious services, creating spaces for the religious and social activities of the community. They educate children and adolescents to prepare them for a religious life, so must be able to confront and discuss radical ideas and influences – often transmitted from the outside (the internet, radical preachers, etc.).

Since jihadist radicalisation especially regards the second generation and converted Muslims (Eser Davolio et al. 2015), special attention is paid to the context of adolescence and young adulthood (15–25 years). During this transitional period, young people begin to develop their own life plans during adolescence and start defining themselves in a professional, social, and political context. In migration societies such as Switzerland, gaining a sense of social belonging – not to mention national allegiance – is a key aspect of adolescent (self-) positioning. This is framed by the *dominant societal perception of belonging and non-belonging* (Mecheril and Hoffarth 2006). Puberty is a phase of heightened susceptibility to extreme positions and lifestyles as well as errors in judgement that may cause harm to others (Heinke and Person 2015), since it combines immature cognitive control and forward planning with a greater willingness to take risks. Therefore, adolescence can pose the danger of young people being drawn towards extremist positions, regardless of whether or not they come from a migrant background.

Within this general framework of theories on youth, King (2006) and King and Koller (2006) postulate that adolescents with a migration history find themselves in a special situation in the sense that they additionally have to reconsider their relationship with "family issues" related to migration, e.g. how the family interprets the reasons for migration or reacts to the experience of social marginalisation in western countries, including Switzerland.

Another reason why redefining the relationships between young people and their families – a constitutive part of the transition to adulthood – is so challenging for those from a migrant background is that the process takes place in the context of social marginalisation and devaluation (Mecheril and Hoffarth 2006; Mey and Rorato 2010). Social abasement not only affects the individual in question but the family as a whole, thus making the adolescent process of detachment from close family ties complicated and ambivalent. On the one hand, it implies the individual distancing themselves from the stigma of where they come from, while on the other it means abandoning the very context they had previously relied on to protect them from painful experiences of social rejection.

The highly politicised, exclusionary debate regarding national identity in Switzerland is probably of greater relevance to the perception of a lack of social acceptance than inequalities in education and work, since it particularly affects the children of immigrants. The introduction of simplified naturalisation for second-generation immigrants has been rejected in three separate referendums (1984, 1992, 2004). But even naturalisation is no guarantee of inclusion as individuals often continue to encounter marginalisation and discrimination because of their name, for example for job applications, despite their Swiss passport. As a result, the denial of belonging ("we Muslims are

also part of this society") despite a person's best efforts can lead to frustration and resignation – or, in some cases, embracing radical positions.

The anti-minaret initiative, which was put to the vote in 2009, and the debates associated with it, can be seen as an expression of the "Islamisation" of non-belonging, where Islam as a faith becomes the focal characteristic of non-belonging, transcending all issues of foreign origin. "I am a product of the anti-minaret initiative," says one young man who converted to Islam but only decided to take up organised action following the anti-minaret initiative (Sheikhzadegan 2013, 62).

This is where Salafism can capture the attention of young people with its ideology of victimisation (Glaser 2015) and its promise of identity and greater recognition, appealing to a sense of justice and conveying the message that proponents will become part of a large community which claims to follow nothing but the truth (Dantschke 2015). Salafism must be seen as a movement that shares common breeding ground with jihadism – they both attract young Muslims of the second generation and converts – although Salafism should not be seen as the roots or origin of jihadism (Roy 2017). The process by which young people are drawn to fundamentalist Islam can also constitute an expression of protest, an attempt to distance themselves as far as possible from their parents' world-view. In such cases, the wearing of Salafist dress should likewise be seen as an attempt to provoke (Roy 2017).

The majority have not experienced any serious form of religious socialisation or education that would enable them to take a critical view of religious content (Dantschke 2015). In the case of young women attracted to Salafism, the following push factors must also be taken into consideration: first, wearing a hijab or niqab makes them stand out, as a result of which they get into daily microconflicts in school and so on and are more frequently exposed to hostility and discrimination. Second, humanitarian motives and frustration at international inaction over the suffering of the Syrian population are often important (Dantschke 2015).

The pathway to joining such sect-like Salafist groups or jihadist groups is linked to typical marginalisation processes, such as the creation of alternative worlds of meaning and belief and the propagation of a black-and-white world view, which can lead to a loss of reality and an undifferentiated perception of differing opinions, not to mention opposition within the group (Waldmann 2011). Black-and-white thinking is also transposed to the assessment of international conflicts and ultimately leads to a victim ideology that is linked to both virulent anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism (such as the Israel-Palestine conflict) (Steinberg 2014). Consequently, young people radicalised in this way see themselves as the avant-garde of a religious revolution with strict social and moral controls (Hamed 2014), who follow

a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, reject all social and political modernisation and aspire to de-westernise the world (Wichmann 2013).

Such a reinterpretation of social and political connections culminates in the jihadist ideology in the disdain of so-called unbelievers, but also the worth of the believers' own lives, due to an apocalyptic view of the future (Roy 2017).

8.3   Methodology

The empirical analysis of this chapter is based on the analysis of qualitative interviews conducted across the whole country Switzerland between April 2015 and June 2015 (see Annexe A for details on the ten interviews realised in Italian- and French-speaking parts of Switzerland). Through the interviews, we mainly explored two analytical axes: (1) the impact of the radicalisation issue on the perception and experiences of discrimination; and (2) the forms of activism in Islamic associations in western Switzerland and Ticino that counter the radicalisation of young Muslims.

The interviews were completed with additional information gathered from concerned cantonal services (Cantonal Office for Child Protection, La Chaux-de-Fonds (interview realised by Elisa Banfi 05.06.2015); the 'Contact Group-Muslims'/Office of Multicultural Cohesion, canton of Neuchâtel (interview realised by Elisa Banfi 02.06.2015); and Office for the Integration of Foreigners, canton of Geneva (interview realised by Elisa Banfi 22.06.2015).

8.4   Radicalisation as well as the Perceptions and Experiences of Discrimination across the Islamic Associations

More than half of the associations interviewed agreed that the radicalisation phenomenon has an impact on the discrimination against the Muslim community in manifold ways. Confirming what the academic literature has shown in other national contexts (Fetzer and Soper 2005; Helbling 2010, 2014; Duderija and Rane 2019), the interviewed Swiss Islamic associations assert that, following the terrorist attacks in Europe between 2003 and 2015 and the departure of young European people to engage in the jihadist groups abroad, the stigmatisation of the Muslim community has increased. The perception of the interlinkage between discrimination, stigmatisation, and radicalisation takes different forms according to cantons and the types of associations.

In the canton of Geneva, two associations – Meyrin's Muslim Cultural Association / Association Culturelle Musulmane Meyrinoise (ACMM) and the Geneva Islamic Cultural Foundation / Fondation Culturelle Islamique de Genève (FIC) – pointed out how stigmatisation stemming from the radicalisation phenomenon results in difficulties for religious women and young people in improving their professional integration. The two associations reveal different organisational structures. In fact, the ACMM is a municipal local association, structured to promote citizen values and democratic forms of participation (Fetzer and Soper 2005; Helbling 2010, 2014; Duderija and Rane 2019); however, the Geneva Islamic Cultural Foundation is managed by the state of Saudi Arabia, which also finances the organisation's fees and staff salaries. Its executive board comprises representatives of the Muslim World League and the state of Saudi Arabia (Bennani-Chraïbi et al. 2011; Khan 2011; Banfi 2018). Both associations played a divergent role in the history of the Islamic associations in the canton of Geneva[218], but they converge in observing similar impacts of the debate on radicalisation and increasing barriers in the access to employment opportunities for young Muslims.

In the canton of Vaud, the president of the cantonal umbrella association, the Union of Muslim Associations of Vaud / Union des Associations Musulmanes de Vaud (UVAM) observed that the stigmatisation of the Swiss Muslim community encourages people to take refuge in Islamism. In his interview, he stated that jihad is a noble concept in Islam and that radical Islamists are misusing it and talking fraudulently about jihad to attract people. For him, the problem relates to the interpretation of the basic principles of Islam and the definition of what Islam is or is not. Furthermore, he addresses two critiques: one to an out-group actor, the media, for the creation of a false link between radicalisation and Islam, and the other to in-group actors, Muslims who strengthen this link. A critique of in-group actors also came from the representative of the Integration Cultural and Religious Albanian Centre / Centre d'Intégration Culturel et Religieux Albanais (CICRA), who stressed that Muslims are sometimes responsible as the producers of a negative image of Islam, which has a deleterious impact on reality. The imam of the CICRA highlighted the proactive role that Muslims can play in countering forms of discrimination by changing the image and reality of Swiss Islam.

In the canton of Neuchâtel, the Cultural Association of Muslim Women of Switzerland / Association Culturelle des Femmes Musulmanes de Suisse

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218   The ACMM has paved the way to reduce the isolation of Islamic organisations from a network of non-Muslim associations and institutional actors. The Geneva Islamic Cultural Foundation's membership has increased through different events and it has addressed the non-democratic nature of the Islamic leadership and the external interference of foreigner countries on the Swiss Islamic centres.

(ACFMS) described the influence of terrorist events on the stigmatisation of Muslims in the country. Those in the organisation fear negative consequences for young Muslims due to the negative and hostile environment. Especially after January 2015[219], the association and its members were shocked in the face of public positioning against Islam in the region. For that association, their counteraction must take two main forms: on the one hand, more careful religious teaching inside the Muslim community and, on the other hand, a social engagement to counter racism, Islamophobia, and unemployment outside the borders of the religious community.

However, not all associations associated the discourse on radicalisation with the more unfavourable collective feeling against Muslims. Four associations expressed the conviction that other factors led to the rise in the hostilities against Muslims in Switzerland. In the canton of Fribourg, the Muslims' Association of Fribourg / Associations des Musulmans de Fribourg, also described a climate of increasing discrimination against Muslims (insults, threats, and forms of discrimination in the labour market). However, the organisation identified the voting on the 9th February[220] as a pivotal moment in terms of more than the problem of radicalisation. The ban on minarets distressed the association and the general assembly (formed by 80 percent of Swiss citizen members). In fact, they perceived the ban and the political campaign related to it as an act against the religious rights of Swiss citizens practising Islam. In the canton of Ticino, the two interviewed associations the Islamic Association without Frontiers / Associazione Islam senza Frontiere and the Iranian cultural association / Associazione Culturale Iranica denounced the climate of intimidation and discrimination that would be produced by the Italian policies and especially the discourse of the Lega Nord. For these associations, people's ignorance of the Islamic reality in Ticino also contributes to increased fears and hateful speech.

Active in the cantons of Vaud and Valais, Aigle's Muslim Association / Association Musulmane d'Aigle (ASCMC) mainly associated the discrimination with the precarious conditions of Islamic places of worship in

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219   On 7 January 2015, Saïd and Chérif Kouachi killed twelve people and injured eleven others in the offices of the French satirical weekly newspaper Charlie Hebdo in Paris.

220   Beginning in 2007, the Committee Against the Construction of Minarets in Switzerland proposed amending Article 72 of the Swiss Constitution by adding a paragraph on the ban of minarets by an initiative. Article 138 of the Swiss Constitution states that 100,000 citizens can, within eighteen months of the official publication of their initiative, propose a complete revision of the Constitution. By 28 July 2008, 113,540 signatures had been validated. Once validated by the Federal Assembly, the proposal was submitted to the vote of the people. On 29 November 2009, the initiative was accepted by 57.5 percent of the votes and by twenty-four cantons with a participation rate of 53.76 percent.

Switzerland. For members of the ASCMC, Islam in Switzerland must come out of the "cellars" and have visible and enjoyable places of worship in order to positively influence the Swiss Islamic community. However, since January 2015, according to the president of the association, the media's amplification of the Charlie Hebdo massacre has had major negative consequences for the situations of Swiss Muslims.

Summing up, a conspicuous number of associations have specified that the discourses and events concerning radicalisation are a relevant cause of the worsening conditions of the Muslims in Switzerland. However, some associations qualify other explanatory factors, such as the influence of foreign policies and the initiative campaign of 9th February.

8.5 Counteracting Jihadism and the Radicalisation of Youth within Islamic Associations

The majority of associations display an interest in and commitment to discussing topics related to jihadism and radicalisation with their members, especially the youngest ones.

In the canton of Vaud, the interviews showed how the umbrella cantonal association and its affiliated associations take different positions on anti-radicalisation activities. For instance, some associations, such as CICRA, prefer avoiding any risk by expelling from the centre any members, young or adult, who manifest any radical thinking and preventing people with radical ideas from attending the centre.[221]

The president of the UVAM stated that Swiss Muslim associations do not have any responsibility for departures to Syria because these departures do not involve their members and that they should also fight the "digital Islamic populism" that uses social networks and the internet to recruit young Muslims. However, he added that the UVAM does not have the economic resources and technical capacity to fight against jihadist discourse in the blogosphere.

By assuming an intermediate position, the ASCMC, after the events of the January 2015, has met more often with its Muslim members in order to reinforce a peaceful view of Islam through Koranic courses and the dismantlement of the negative and violent interpretations of Islam that blogs and websites on the internet broadcast. The president of the ASCMC emphasised that Muslims in Switzerland are mainly learning how to practise Islam

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221 In Ticino, many members of the Iranian Cultural Association fear that the attendance to the centre could harm their public reputation. For that reason, speeches about radicalisation or jihadism are avoided in order to not create panic among members of the association.

through the intermediation of Swiss Muslim associations. In his opinion, associations and mosques are therefore crucial, especially today, in combatting and counteracting the incorrect information about Islam produced by virtual and digital actors. In Aigle, after moving the Islamic centre to downtown, the members of ASCMC have felt more committed than before to the territory. Members of the ASCMC observed that people, Muslims and non-Muslims, who have questions or fears stemming from the internet sources of information can inform themselves more properly through the courses on Islam proposed in the mosque. The moving of the Islamic centre to downtown, in the view of the president and some executive committee members, creates more opportunities to organise courses for youths and adults to unmask jihadist information about Islam. This way, the trust among members can counterbalance the influence of digital actors and internet information.

This position is similar to that of the Muslim Associations of Fribourg in the canton of Fribourg, which is that organised public debates on ethical issues through proposed courses on Islam promote the religious practices compatible with Swiss customs and laws. Also, in Ticino, the Iranian Cultural Association organises religious classes for children and would like to organise conferences for a young public to denounce the crimes of ISIS using an Islamic perspective.

In the canton of Geneva, between 2014 and 2015, the Islamic Cultural Foundation of Geneva observed a breakdown of the traditional methods of transmitting religious knowledge to young people. Increasingly, young people attending their mosques use YouTube, Facebook, and other social networks to learn Islamic norms. According to the imams of the foundation, digital learning is dangerous and must be countered by the relationships with the imams in the mosque. The imams and the directors of the mosque in 2015 aimed to counteract the radical thought concerning Islam by organising many debates with young members to enable them to speak about fears and doubts with imams.

However, between 2015 and 2017, several people attending the prayer at the mosque of the Islamic Cultural Foundation of Geneva were accused of being in contact with jihadists. Two of them, young adults, departed to join Daesh.

As a consequence, the media and some political parties accused the space that was created by the foundation to counteract the Daesh propaganda of being, on the contrary, a space of radicalisation that played a role in the departure of the young foreigner fighters. Furthermore, the *Tribune de Genève*

accused two imams of the foundation of being *fichés S* in France – and finally they were fired in December 2017.[222]

Another case of direct intervention against radicalisation has been occurring in the canton of Neuchâtel. In La Chaux-de-Fonds, the ACFMS has been trying to communicate with other civil society actors to identify cases of radicalisation. However, since the first departures to Syria from Europe, all associations have been more attentive to the needs of their young members in their discussions of cases of extremism. According to the ACFMS, young people react more instinctively to discrimination than adults do.

Moreover, the association of La Chaux-de-Fonds was involved in a process of deradicalisation with a girl that the Cantonal Office of Child Protection had assigned to it. The girl was not a member of the association. The association agreed to host her by answering the request of state services to explain to the girl that her approach to the Koran was not "correct".

In this exemplar case, the involvement of the Islamic associations in deradicalisation projects was very problematic for the association and the teenager. The teenager had been placed in different state youth residences since her childhood. Her parents were of immigrant origin and of the Christian tradition. In 2010, the social assistance in charge of the young girl proposed to the family a new placement in a state residence, but the family refused and broke the link with the Office of Child Protection. In 2012, the tension with the parents violently escalated and the girl renewed contact with the assistant. At this moment, in the middle of a violent adolescent crisis, the young girl began to wear the headscarf and niqab, she was assessed as having converted to Islam. This appearance of a religious symbol created a double reaction both by the state actors and her family. The tension with family concerning the conversion became very violent and the social assistant in charge of her lost the emotional contact with the girl. In fact, the girl accused state civil officers of being racist and anti-Muslim.

Since the appearance of the religious symbol (the headscarf but especially the niqab), the state actors have not dealt with her as a minor individual (as she was) but as an adult allegedly converted to a not-compatible religion. The minor was not seen as a young minor girl with social rights but as a problematic Muslim convert. In 2013, the situation worsened and the girl started to travel in Paris, Lyon, and Marseille to join radical mosques. The risk of her departing to Syria was estimated to be plausible. In November 2013, the situation exploded when the state residence in which social assistance had placed her expelled her. The Director of the residence required that she take off the niqab in order to be accepted into the state foyer, but the girl refused.

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222   *Fiché S* is an individual considered to threaten the national security by state authorities (Marzouki 2010; Gautron and Monniaux 2016).

Meanwhile, the relationships with her family became so violent that she had to be placed, for her safety. Thus, the Director of the residence called social services and suggested that it send the girl to an Islamic association such as the ACFMS. Seeing the emergency situation, social services contacted the Director of the ACFMS and asked her to accept the girl for a process of deradicalisation. At the end of November, the young girl was officially placed in the ACFMS by the judge in charge of her case. The ACFMS accepted her but wrote a letter to the judge, explaining that the association was not a professional service for deradicalisation projects and that the members were volunteers. The ACFMS suggested to the judge that, to help the girl, the best solution would be a host family and not the centre but that the centre would accept the girl. After a meeting with some leaders of the ACFMS, the girl accepted the placement in the association, to the relief of her parents. Her placement in ACFMS was officialised in December 2013. During her stay in the ACFMS, she temporarily reconciled with her parents. The leadership of the ACFMS helped her to write a letter to the Director of the former residence to excuse her for the previous aggressive behaviour. However, in January 2014, the situation again worsened and the girl left the ACFMS placement without the authorisation of the social assistance and the judge and returned to her family. The girl again started to travel to Paris and Lyon to visit Islamic centres. After returning to Switzerland, the niqab was the reason for the failure of her project of professional integration in a nursery in which the Office of Child Protection inserted her.

For the ACFMS, this involvement in a "deradicalisation process" was difficult because the Islamic symbols were only a way to express relational difficulties. Furthermore, the ACFMS leadership had to deal simultaneously with state actors, the family of the girl, and the minor herself. Some members of the ACFMS were in possession of a master's degree in education and helped in the relation with the minor. The centre answered the emergency request of state actors, even if it estimated that another solution would have been preferable. This case showed the inability and the stress of social assistance services in dealing with the eruption of religious symbols in care relations with minors. They do not have procedures for dealing with this religious symbol and other state actors' reactions to this symbol.

On the side of the social assistants, they would have needed more analytical tools and to have had cantonal or federal cooperation to assess the real risk of departure for the girl. They would also have needed precise information on the Islamic centres that the girl attended and on the ACFMS. In fact, state actors placed her in ACFMS without previously assessing the orientation of the Islamic centre.

On the side of the ACFMS, the Islamic association tried to explain that the Koran and Islam are not excuses to insult people or to hide psychological problems but the task was complex, the conditions for the socioeducative intervention uncomfortable. The organisation had to deal with the family, the social assistants, and the judge, without this process of deradicalisation being officially set-up and evaluated. The ACFMS was dealing with a "converted" girl who used some Islamic symbols without knowing anything about the Koran or even practising the Five Pillars.

The literature analysing "conversion" in case of radicalisation takes *conversion* to mean both conversion from another religion or from an atheist position to Islam as well as reversion (Wensierski and Lübcke 2012), which describes the turning of a Muslim from a secularised position to a strict or fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. In the case of conversion for spiritual, social, or political reasons (token conversion, e.g. following marriage to a Muslim, is not included here), this step will appear irrational if the processes of alienation and frustration experienced prior to the actual conversion are not taken into account. Most of the biographies analysed clearly show that the decision to convert was preceded by a crisis situation (Wohlrab-Sahr 2001). Conversion thus offers an orderly and simplified world view and gives meaning to an individual's way of life; it enables previous role expectations to be thrown overboard and radical new roles to be adopted (Gooren 2007). The new social networks, which are able to establish stronger ties than any previous relationships, also play an important role in this process, but generally only once the individual has already turned in a religious direction (Gooren 2007).

Conversion to Islam can cause young people with previously aimless and unstructured lives to lead a more methodical lifestyle, if they find orientation and structure through a way of life dedicated to Islam (Sheikhzadegan 2013) linked with remoralisation. Given the stigmatisation of Islam in Switzerland, conversion to Islam may constitute identification with those who are marginalised (Sheikhzadegan 2013, 64) and can provocatively be understood to mean dropping out of the dominant order as a means of "symbolising within society maximum distance from that society" (Wohlrab-Sahr 2001, 797). The embracing of (political) Islam coupled with the wearing of obviously Islamic clothing is described by Schiffauer (2000, 294) as *outing* … "the highlighting of differences as a means of demanding recognition for your own way of life". He claims that by converting to Islam, individuals find themselves in the middle of a debate that has had a polarising effect for centuries (Schiffauer 2000, 294). The interplay between individual factors of this kind must be looked at separately in each conversion process (Gooren 2007).

Some people refer to Salafism as a sect-like movement when discussing conversion to this extreme view of Islam. There are indeed parallels to

be found with certain features that characterise sects in terms of Salafism's world view and image of man (the division of the world into good and evil), its claim to absoluteness, the promise of salvation and healing with universal recipes for all problems, its unrealistic expectations of what can be achieved and feeling of community allied with the requirement of unconditional loyalty that includes the suppression of criticism from within its own ranks. Its manipulative methods of attracting, indoctrinating, and misleading supporters are also similar to those used by sects. However, it would be mistaken to reduce this fundamentalist interpretation of Islam with an affinity to violence to the status of a sect (meaning an offshoot of a religious belief system with negative connotations). It is more appropriate to speak about a religious movement that takes over every aspect of people's lives.

8.6 The Influence of Digital Islam on Radicalisation and the Politicisation of Young Muslims

The experience of the ACFMS confirms the same assessments of the other interviewed associations. They agreed that young and extremely radicalised Muslims did not attend the Swiss Muslim associations in the main. According to UVAM and CICRA in Lausanne, young people who become radicalised are mostly not integrated into the Swiss community and do not frequent the Swiss Muslim communities. The president of the association albinfo.ch suggested that the religion of young people is being politicised mostly via digital connections. A minority of young people discover a new relationship to religion that no longer passes through the mosques but rather goes through the internet. This politicisation of religion could have a relevant consequence on the Islamic organisations across cantons.

In fact, according to the President of albinfo.ch, in recent years, the participation of young people in Muslim cultural centres and mosques has been increasing. Indeed, mosques and associations' centres have multiplied and diversified sociocultural and religious activities for the youth. At the same time, all the interviewed associations underlined the lack of economic and personnel resources for meeting the needs of the juvenile Muslim population in Switzerland. For instance, in Neuchâtel, the association proposed internship positions for young people within their own association. This helps parents to support young people in order to avoid them being radicalised. The ASCMC and the Muslim Association of Fribourg observed that, if young people do not want to ask their parents sensitive questions, they can speak instead with other members in the association and with imams. Spiritual

guides therefore allow young people to express their doubts and fears and avoid forms of radicalisation.

The two associations have recently observed the formation of very active youth groups among their members. According to both associations, in both cases, young Muslims are well integrated at the socioprofessional level; only young people who have just arrived in Switzerland, refugees, and asylum seekers have problems concerning economic and cultural integration. Also, according to the UVAM, there has been a reinforced commitment from Muslim young people since the minaret initiative. For instance, the Cantonal Office for Integration of Lausanne with the UVAM organised a coaching programme for Muslims who have employment problems. The CICRA Lausanne organises billiards tournaments in the mosque in order to attract the most marginalised young people and implement anti-alcohol and anti-drug prevention programmes through the teaching of Islamic values.

Summing up, the digital propaganda of foreigner Islamist groups has manifold impacts on the real life of the Islamic organisations across cantons. On one hand, it can lead non-Muslim young people or non-practising Muslim young people towards violent interpretations of Islamic principles. On the other, it can increase the politicisation and practices of young Muslims by which Islamic organisations have to cope by multiplying qualified activities for young members.

8.7 Internal and External Pressures on Islamic Organisations

Islamic organisations can easily become blamed for supporting extremism but the underlying circumstances are often specific: for example, the media bring up information that a former steering committee member of a Muslim organisation is involved in extremist activities. Even if this member no longer has ties with the organisation, it places the entire organisation in a bad light. Alternately, consider a mosque which has volunteers translating the services in German where one volunteer is accused of translating in a way to radicalise young Muslims with his fervour. Since it is not easy to find volunteers with such skills, the mosque may continue to rely on this person due to the lack of alternatives but risk being blamed with naivety or even complicity.

These two cases show the need for Muslim organisations to take a clear position. There are external and internal pressures to make statements and communicate their position both inside their communities and to the public and media. Since reproach or charges are levelled especially by the media in often quite an accusatory way, Islamic organisations tend to be pushed into

a defensive position. They must decide whether to reject the accusations or remain passive. Both options can create further mistrust, which is why it is important to analyse any criticism seriously and deal with the public need for information. In turn, this requires competencies in public relations and networking to establish trusting relationships in the local community respectively for each municipality. To see problematic tendencies or dangerous radicalisation processes within their Muslim communities, the organisation and their steering committee need background knowledge about such phenomena and its prevention.

8.8   Conclusions

Our data analysis shows that, to face radicalisation problems, Swiss-Islamic organisations mostly need to develop their networks and to exchange ideas with other civil society actors and institutions. Administration and civil actors are becoming increasingly active in cooperating with Islamic organisations to address the phenomenon of radicalisation. However, institutions especially do not always seem to be conscious of the sensitive positioning of Swiss Islamic organisations. In fact, the majority of the Islamic leadership in Switzerland is still dealing with external, foreign actors who are trying to influence Muslims residing in the country. Furthermore, the radicalising processes often spreads to individuals who do not have any religious background. Hence, Islamic organisations can organise prevention activities, counselling, and monitoring of young people without being completely effective against digital propaganda. Moreover, their actions are weakened by foreign states' influence, structural fragilities, and the lack of legitimacy behind part of the Muslim and non-Muslim population. Building mutual confidence between institutions and Islamic organisations is required before allowing the development of common projects that fight radicalisation processes. Qualitative data show a conflict between the urgent institutional needs to find solutions and the lengthy process required to build such solutions in cooperation with local Islamic organisations.

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Annex A: Islamic Associations Interviewed

Associations	Date	Address
Associazione Islam senza Frontiere Biblioteca, Moschea e Centro Islamico	07.04.2015	Via Bossi 2 6830 Chiasso
Associazione Culturale Iranica	07.04.2015	Via Monte Boglia 6 6900 Lugano
Iseni Bashkim Director of albinfo.ch	08.05.2015	Avenue de la Gare 33 1001 Lausanne
ACFMS Cultural Association of Muslim Women of Switzerland / Association Culturelle des Femmes Musulmanes de Suisse	09.05.2015	Avenue Léopold Robert 109 2300 La Chaux-de-Fonds
UVAM Vaud Union of Muslim Associations / Union Vaudoise des Associations Musulmanes	14.05.2015	UVAM 1000 Lausanne
CICRA Integration Cultural and Religious Albanian Centre / Centre d'Intégration Culturel et Religieux Albanais	18.05.2015	Chemin de la Colline 7 1007 Lausanne
ACMM Meyrin Muslim Cultural Association / Association Culturelle Musulmane Meyrinoise	26.05.2015 02.06.2015	26 Promenade des Champs Fréchets Case postale 240 1217 Meyrin 1
Association Socio-Culturelle des Musulmans du Chablais	06.06.2015	Rue de la Gare 7 1860 Aigle
Association of the Muslims of Fribourg / Association des musulmans de Fribourg	18.06.2015	Route de la Glâne 9 Case Postal 108 1701 Fribourg