HOW JIHADIST NETWORKS OPERATE

A grounded understanding of changing organizational structures, activities, and involvement mechanisms of jihadist networks in the Netherlands

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Chapter 1:

General Introduction

Over the last 15 years, a collective alertness for radicalization and potential terrorist activities has been present throughout the Western world. Anxiety gradually tempered in the wake of the London and Madrid bombings, but new tensions emerged due to the rise of novel extremist movements in war-torn countries in the Middle East since the eruption of the Arab Spring in 2011. Especially the rise of ISIS and its gruesome means of operation have enhanced the alertness for a terrorist attack. Terrorism is defined in this thesis as the use of force against innocent people, usually with a political or religious motive, and typically aimed at producing widespread fear (Forest, Green, & Lynch, 2011, p. 2). Following the enhanced alertness, governments have increasingly raised their national terrorist threat levels (e.g., AFP, 2015; May, 2014; NCTV, 2013; Valls, 2015), which has mainly been caused by the significant outflow of young people to conflict areas in the Middle East. The total number of people aiming for conflict areas in Syria and Iraq has increased significantly in the last couple of years. In February 2015, US officials estimated this total number to be around 3,400 (CBS, 2015), while the Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) estimated that by November 2015 approximately 220 people had left the Netherlands to travel to Syria and Iraq (NCTV, 2015b). Governments fear that these people become trained fighters who could pose a threat to society once they return. They are expected to either suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders, or to be trained, brainwashed, and transformed into jihadists so to execute attacks in their homeland (e.g., NCTV, 2015a; AIVD, 2015). As a result, not only have governments raised their national threat levels, they have also initiated counter-measures to prevent or obstruct people from departing to conflict areas or to reduce possible risks once they return (NCTV, 2014).

Although the label jihadism is disputable, it refers in this context to the Jihadi-Salafist ideology. The essence of this ideology is the return to a pure interpretation of the Islam as it was supposedly lived in the original Muslim community (*umma*) in the time of the prophet Muhammed and the following three caliphates (e.g., Cottee, 2010; Meijer, 2009; Wiktorowicz, 2006). Although Salafism is interpreted in various ways (De Koning, 2009, p. 377; Meijer, 2009, p. 3), the honoring of *tawheed* (the unity and uniqueness of Allah) and the purification of the Islam are central themes. For instance, all Muslims should adopt the lifestyle of the prophet as it is written down in the Quran and the Hadith, and in addition reject all human desires and rationalizations (Cottee, 2010). Contrary to purists and politicos, Jihadi-Salafists favor violent means to realize these goals (Wiktorowicz, 2006).

The anxiety about the return of so-called “foreign fighters” that may or may not sympathize with the Jihadi-Salafist ideology does not come as a surprise when you put a particular chain of events into the equation. The killing spree in Toulouse in 2012, the slaughter of a London-based soldier in 2013, the assault of a Jewish museum in Brussels in 2014, and the multiple attacks in Paris in January and November 2015 are often considered ideologically motivated terrorist attacks of which some are allegedly conducted by former foreign fighters or by individuals inspired by foreign conflicts.

The successfulness and horrific nature of these attacks, and the fact that such attacks threaten the fundamental values the West stands for, ignite the current anxiety in Western states. It furthermore enhances governments' tendency to act against alleged extremists, especially those who are considered jihadists. Although many of the previously mentioned attackers operated alone or as a duo, they can often be linked to much larger movements that pursuit similar goals (Moskalenko & McCauley, 2011; Nesser, 2012). Moreover, such jihadist movements or networks are often the instigator and motivator of the aforementioned attacks. This was already the case in more dated cases like the killing of Theo van Gogh by alleged lone-wolf Mohammed Bouyeri, who was at the same time linked to a much larger movement in the Netherlands (e.g., Vermaat, 2005). It is therefore interesting to scrutinize these larger jihadist movements or networks surrounding alleged extremists and foreign fighters, knowing that such networks have instigated, motivated, and facilitated terrorist activities in the past.

1.1 Aim of this study

This criminological dissertation therefore seeks to understand how jihadist networks function and develop over time and aims to answer the following research question:

How did jihadist networks in the Netherlands operate between 2000 and 2013 and what changes can be observed?

A *jihadist network* is defined in this thesis as an assembly of individuals that interact with each other during a particular episode, while conducting activities together that facilitate or establish a particular objective in which the Jihadi-Salafist ideology plays an essential role. Jihadist networks are often labeled by the public, media, politicians, the legislator, and academics as terrorist organizations. Although this is understandable, the terms "terrorist" and "terrorist organization" are not used in reference to the networks studied empirically in this dissertation. Rather, the more general term jihadist network, as defined above, is used. The reason for this is that "terrorism" is a highly ambiguous and politically loaded term about which no universal consensus exists. This can be derived from the fact that there are many different legal definitions of terrorism and terrorist organization, formulated by both national and international legislators.[1] Furthermore, the legislation on terrorist behavior and terrorist organizations is often interpreted in different ways by the Dutch court. Several cases have been re-examined

[1] Under Dutch law (sec. 83a of the Penal Code), a terrorist objective is understood to mean "the objective to cause serious fear in (part) of the population in a country and/or to unlawfully force a government or international organization to do something, not to do something, or to tolerate certain actions and/or to seriously disrupt or destroy the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organization".

multiple times by the Dutch court,[2] resulting in different outcomes of what constitutes terrorism or a terrorist organization. This illustrates the ongoing struggle of legal professionals when dealing with alleged terrorist behavior and terrorist organizations. For this reason, this study chooses not to refer to terrorism or terrorist organization, because it only complicates the development of a clear understanding of the networks under study. This does not mean that terrorism and jihadism are not at all related, but the two do not automatically go hand in hand. Firstly, the general understanding of a terrorist organization involves the explicit threat or use of violence,[3] which does not entirely comply with this study's definition of a jihadist network. Secondly, the studied (jihadist) networks may not always comply with the legal interpretation of terrorism and terrorist organization. For example, besides the assassination of Theo van Gogh, the Netherlands did not suffer from any other (lethal) terrorist attack by a jihadist or a jihadist network. Several attacks have been thwarted and people have been arrested for hate speech or behavior with alleged terrorist intent, but not many jihadists have been convicted under the Terrorism Acts. This makes the qualification of subjects under study as "terrorists" debatable.

The decision to study this particular episode and geographical area is based on past societal and policy developments. The Netherlands is a relevant choice for a case study, because it encountered numerous incidents of jihadist radicalization over the years. Although it never suffered from high casualty jihadist terrorist attacks, like those in New York, London, Madrid, and Paris, the Dutch police already investigated cases of alleged jihadist terrorism before 9/11. One of the jihadist networks investigated emerged in the year 2000. In the aftermath of 9/11, the governmental and societal responses to these terrorist attacks generated high social tensions between Dutch Muslims and other members of society (Buijs, 2009). These tensions were spurred by the critical statements about the Islam by several right-wing politicians, such as Pim Fortuyn, Ayaan Hirschi Ali, and Geert Wilders (Geelhoed, 2012). Frustrated by society's attitude towards the Islam, and possibly inspired by the 9/11 attacks, several young people in the Netherlands with a Muslim background or who converted to Islam in the Netherlands started to adopt radical narratives. The aforementioned assassination of Theo van Gogh by Mohammed Bouyeri for instance was both a consequence as well as an amplifier of this development. A few years after Van Gogh's death it appeared that the jihadist phenomenon in the Netherlands was on the wane, but looking back this was only a temporary decline. The start of the Arab Spring in 2011 stimulated more Muslims to take action than ever before and has rekindled the jihadist movement in the Netherlands.

[2] The well-known Dutch case of the so called "Hofstad group" has been re-examined and re-defined multiple times by the Dutch court. See for instance ECLI:NL:RBROT:2006:AV5108.

[3] See also the definition by Forest et al., 2011, p. 2

As mentioned, at least 220 people already left the Netherlands to pick up arms in Syria and Iraq to participate in local (ideological) wars. To contain the jihadist movement and to protect society, several policy measures have been initiated in the past. For instance, legislators have crafted different counter-terrorism acts, such as the *Wet terroristische misdrijven* in 2004 (i.e., Crimes of Terrorism Act), the *Wet ter verruiming van de mogelijkheden tot opsporing en vervolging van terroristische misdrijven* in 2007 (i.e., Act on expanding the scope for investigating and prosecuting terrorist crimes), and the *Wet strafbaarstelling deelneming en meewerking aan training voor terrorisme* in 2009 (i.e., Act criminalization of training in a terrorist training camp). These laws have enabled the public prosecutor to criminalize behavior with a particular intent or motivation as terrorist behavior and have at the same time expanded the investigative capacities of the police (Van der Woude, 2010). Also, policy makers have emphasized the threat of returning foreign fighters and introduced several key intervention points to reduce this risk (NCTV, 2014). As a result, these measures have led to an increase of terrorist indictments over the years, which indicates the intention of the Dutch government to counter any alleged terrorist behavior. Nonetheless, in spite of repeated governmental interferences, jihadist networks have remained present and have continued to emerge over time and to adapt to new circumstances. The Dutch government therefore not only intensified counter-terrorism measures, but also increased opportunities for independent academic research concerning jihadist terrorism and related issues to develop a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon, which is common practice in the Netherlands. For example, the government has commissioned several research projects (e.g., Koomen & Van der Pligt, 2009; Roex, Van Stiphout, & Tilli, 2010; Van den Bos, Loseman, & Doosje, 2009), and it has also granted access to confidential information for research purposes (e.g., De Poot & Sonneschein, 2011; Schuurman, Eijkman, & Bakker, 2015; Weenink, 2015). Especially the latter is unparalleled in academia outside the Netherlands, and offers unique research opportunities. The government's support for academic research has also paved the way for this study, since it is funded by the Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism, and is based on a selection of closed criminal investigations (see 1.5). In sum, for the reasons that the Netherlands has a relatively long history of jihadist networks and additionally offers unique research opportunities, this dissertation focuses on the Netherlands as a case study. It furthermore concentrates on the period 2000-2013, ranging from the year the police started to identify and investigate operational jihadist networks in the Netherlands (2000) until the most recent moment possible with regard to data collection (2013). Although jihadist networks already existed before 2000 (De Poot & Sonneschein, 2011) and continued to exist after 2013, a certain period had to be chosen.

For analytical reasons, the broad phenomenon of jihadist networks is differentiated into three parts that will function as central themes in this thesis. These themes are underlying *organizational structures* of jihadist networks, *activities* conducted by the jihadist networks, and jihadist *involvement mechanisms*. In comparison to the relatively

all-encompassing subject *jihadist network*, these themes are more manageable and more narrowed sub-fields to study. The logic behind the decision to study these themes in particular lies in the fact that they are the basic components of a network. Together, the themes encapsulate how the network is built and how it runs. This is essential information to answer the, at first sight, "broad" research question more in-depth. Moreover, by scrutinizing these particular themes, more specific knowledge will be gathered that can be useful to both academics and practitioners. A better understanding of jihadist networks will enhance the shared pursuit to disrupt such movements or to discourage their emergence. More precise conceptualizations of the central themes will be elaborated in paragraph 1.2. The remainder of this introduction consists of (1.2) a brief literature review, (1.3) the discussion of three approaches that are open to debate, (1.4) the approach of study, (1.5) the structure of the dissertation, (1.6) and an outline of the relevance of this study.

1.2 Research to date

In this paragraph past research about terrorist networks in general and the three prioritized elements of *organizational structures*, *activities*, and *involvement mechanisms* in particular, will be discussed. A brief and restricted overview of research will be outlined, indicating the issues that have received major attention. As mentioned before, although the focus of this dissertation is directed towards *jihadist networks*, the bulk of research that covers this phenomenon refers to jihadist networks as terrorist organizations. Therefore, most research is derived from the field of terrorism studies and accordingly terms like *terrorists* and *terrorist organizations* are utilized in the current paragraph. We will, however, return to the more neutral term *jihadist networks* in the remainder of this dissertation. In addition, despite this dissertation's focus on the Netherlands, the majority of studies cited will be international publications rather than solely Dutch studies.

1.2.1 Organizational structures

The first central element in this dissertation concerns the organizational structures of jihadist networks. With organizational structures we mean the type of relationship between the members or sympathizers of a jihadist network. Quite some scholarly attention has been paid to this topic. Scrutinizing these studies, there appears to be some confusion about what constitutes a jihadist network or a terrorist organization because scholars use different terms for similar structures or use the same terms for slightly different structures (Jackson, 2006; B.J. Phillips, 2015). The following paragraph therefore differentiates five different types of organizational structure that are distinguished in the literature.

The first type is the hierarchically well-organized terrorist organization. It is a tight pyramid-like organization with a central command cadre and a vertical and rather

inflexible chain of command. Members of such an organization are often specialized in a particular task (e.g., Dishman, 2005; Zanini, 1999; Zanini & Edwards, 2001). A supposedly crucial advantage of such structures is that they are effective in executing complex terrorist activities (Heger, Jung, & Wong, 2012). This type was mainly found during the 1960s or 1970s of the 20th century (Dishman, 2005; Zanini, 1999), especially when it concerned terrorist groups that operated nationally (Cragin, 2005). It is often referred to as the hierarchical approach, although some scholars call it a bureaucracy (Kilberg, 2012), or tightly coupled groups if the organization contains more than one department (Jackson, 2006). The most prominent examples of a hierarchical organization are probably Al Qaida (Mishal & Rosenthal, 2005) and the IRA (Horgan & Taylor, 1997) in the early years after their inception.

A second type that is often distinguished, and finds more empirical support in the literature, is the hybrid terrorist organization. The idea behind this structure is that the organization is decentralized into a network with different local and regional branches, but there is nonetheless a central command and control cadre or central steering that can ideologically, financially, and operationally support these branches. Examples of such group structures are Hezbollah in the 1980s and 1990s (Azani, 2013; Dishman, 2005), the IRA in the late-1970s (Jackson, 2005), Jemaah Islamiyah (Baker, 2005), Hamas (Mishal, 2003), and different Islamist movements (Mayntz, 2004). Again, the most prominent example that is described as a decentralized organization in the literature is the evolved form of Al Qaida (Dishman, 2005; Mishal & Rozenthal, 2008). While some argued that Al Qaida long remained a strict hierarchical organization (Gunaratna & Oreg, 2010), others show how Al Qaida is decentralized into a network of semi-independent regional branches or cells that to a certain extent operate autonomously, but that are at the same time supported and sometimes instructed by a cluster of terrorists called "core Al Qaida" (Crenshaw, 2010; Helfstein & Wright, 2011a; Sageman, 2004). Especially when it comes to more complex terrorist activities, the expertise and resources of core Al Qaida are important to the regional branches (Helfstein & Wright, 2011a).

A third type is based on the authoritative work by Zanini (1999) and Arquilla & Ronfeld (2001), who describe how the information age, or the rapid technological development worldwide, enhanced the decentralization of terrorist organizations even further. According to these academics, terrorist organizations should be regarded as loosely-coupled groups who communicate, coordinate, and prepare terrorist campaigns without a precise central command. The group structures are considered flat, with very little hierarchy, and with loose ties among the individuals and cells. Many studies have been inspired by this work, including most of the abovementioned literature. Moreover, this network approach ignited a whole line of research within terrorism studies that applied *social network analysis* (SNA) on terrorist cells and groups (e.g., Burcher & Whelan, 2015; Koshade, 2006; Krebs, 2002; Pedahzur & Perliger, 2006; see chapter 3 for more SNA literature). In essence, these scholars consider the global jihadist movement as a collection of *nodes* (mainly individuals) that are connected through *ties* (relations)

(see also Wasserman & Faust, 1994). The particular terrorist networks analyzed in their publications are described as clusters of nodes. The nodes either interact with each other directly or via a so-called *hub*, which is a significant node that ties insulated nodes. Through this type of analysis, scholars were able to actually visualize and statistically measure in what way (and how intense) different cells of terrorists are connected. It furthermore enabled them to empirically study the effects of a particular terrorist group structure much more thoroughly.

In addition to the decentralization tendency, the fourth type often referred is the global jihad depicted as a movement in which autonomous cells emerge, which have no direct or formal link to a larger organization or leadership. Also, unlike the type described by Arquilla & Ronfeld (2001), there is no direct connectedness between different cells. Although the cells may have been inspired by a larger organization or umbrella ideology, such as Al Qaida and Jihadi-Salafism, they are not operationally instructed in any way. This is often referred to as *leaderless resistance* (Joosse, 2007; Kaplan, 1993; Sageman, 2008), although many different labels have been applied to a seemingly similar structure. Such as free-floating cells (Gray, 2013), self-starters (Kirby, 2007), locally initiated cells (Gunaratna & Oreg, 2010), social movement cells, sympathizers (Helfstein & Wright, 2011a), or market groups (Kilberg, 2012). Although this type seems highly related to the top-down decentralization described above, these scholars explicitly state that the cells emerge on their own. They do not communicate with a central cadre and they rely on their own funding and resources. On the one hand, this type is therefore considered successful. Gray (2013) argues that despite the disconnectedness between a cell and a larger organization, the latter still aims for this type of movement structure in order to deny responsibility and reduce the probability that the larger organization is comprised when a local cell collapses. Helfstein & Wright (2011a) also claim that these sympathizers have a high probability of successful simple attacks due to their freedom and anonymity. On the other hand, Kilberg (2012) argues that the lack of leadership and functional differentiation within the cells may work counterproductively because they might lose sight of the ideological agenda.

A final type that is distinguished is the lone-wolf. Like the autonomous self-starters, lone-wolves are most commonly regarded as single actors that operate individually. They are neither connected to, nor directed by a group or network (Bakker & De Graaf, 2010; McCauley et al., 2013; P.J. Phillips, 2011; Spaaij, 2010), but they are often inspired by an "umbrella ideology" (Hoffman, 2005; Moskalenko & McCauley, 2011; Nesser, 2012; Spaaij, 2010). Also, individual terrorist activities have become more prevalent in recent years and are becoming more deadly than initially presumed by existing literature (Nesser, 2012, p. 69). The differences with the small self-starting cells, however, lie in the personal dispositions of the individuals. For instance, lone-wolves often lack social capacity to connect with other people and they are allegedly uncomfortable in group settings (Bakker & De Graaf, 2010; Pantucci, 2011; Spaaij, 2010). Moreover, several scholars state that most lone-wolves suffer more often from

psychopathological problems than organized radicals usually do (Hewitt, 2003; Jasparro, 2010; McCauley, Moskalenko, & Van Son, 2013; Nesser, 2012). Finally, the lone-wolves appear to make less rational decisions, because they sacrifice themselves and do not benefit from others. This suggests that they are more ideologically determined than organized radicals (Moskalenko & McCauley, 2011).

In sum, the foregoing review illustrates a diversity in the literature regarding the different type of organizational structures. This study will build on this in chapter 3 when it describes the type of organizational structures we found in the data.

1.2.3 Activities

The second central element in this dissertation is a jihadist network's core business. With this we mean the central goals or activities that a network is aiming for. Logically, one would quickly assume that the networks are mainly occupied with the preparation of a violent attack. As a result of this reasoning, numerous studies have provided chronologies of terrorist plots (e.g., Bakker, 2006; Hewitt, 2005; Jenkins, 2006; Jordan, 2012; Nesser, 2008) and several have tried to understand why certain plots succeed, while others are thwarted (Dahl, 2011; Jackson & Frelinger, 2009; Sageman, 2009). Additionally, particular terrorist proceedings, such as target selection (e.g., Asal et al., 2009; Becker, 2014; Drake, 1998; Libicki, Chalk, & Sisson, 2007; Luft, 2003; McCartan, Masselli, Rey, & Rusnak, 2008; Nesser & Stenersen, 2014; Sanchez-Cuenca, 2007; Wilner, 2010), the selection of weapons, or the method of a terrorist attack have received significant scholarly attention (e.g., Bale, 2012; Bonomo, Begamo, Frelinger, Gordon, & Jackson, 2007; Dolnik, 2009; Jackson & Frelinger, 2008; Jenkins, 1975; Nesser & Stenersen, 2014). Especially suicide bombings (e.g., Atran, 2003; Hoffman, 2003; Hafez, 2006; Merari, 2004; Silke, 2015; Snow & Byrd, 2007), the possible use of weapons of mass destruction (e.g., Forest & Howard, 2013), and the likelihood of chemical, biological, radioactive, and nuclear attacks (e.g., Ackerman & Pinson, 2014; Levi, 2009; Tucker, 2000) have been studied extensively in the past.

However, it is no *conditio sine qua non* that jihadist networks exist for the sake of high-impact violent attacks. They are also occupied with other goals beyond terrorist attacks. In order to establish an Islamic state and pursue the ideological goals encapsulated in the Jihadi-Salafist ideology, jihadist networks also conduct other activities. For example, "disseminating the ideology" is one of the core activities for members of a jihadist network. It appears to be a daily routine and is considered a necessary step to internalize the Jihadi-Salafist ideology among nonbelievers (De Poot & Sonneschein, 2011). In addition, "criminal activities" are frequently conducted by members of jihadist networks, because it supports the pursuit of ideological goals and terrorist activities, and facilitates the continued existence of the networks (De Bie, De Poot, & Van der Leun, 2014; Dechesne & Van der Veer, 2010). Furthermore, another activity that is seemingly more conducted currently than before is the preparation to go on Jihad. Members of jihadist networks make plans to become a "foreign fighter" and aim to travel to conflict

areas in, for instance, Iraq and Syria. They either want to participate in combat to pursue ideological goals or they want to be trained to conduct future terrorist activities (Malet, 2013). These three activities are among the core businesses of jihadist networks in the Netherlands (see also De Poot & Sonneschein, 2011); networks that have only sparsely conducted violent attacks in the past. Despite the lack of multiple terrorist attacks, these activities still pose a threat to society, because the nature of these activities demonstrates an affinity for violence and condescension towards the law. They are therefore criminological interesting and important to study. A brief overview of the literature focusing on criminal conduct and foreign fighting will be discussed below, while elements of disseminating the ideology will be discussed in the next paragraph and in Chapter 6.

An important goal for terrorist networks is to generate financial gain, because money is needed for the costs of living, accommodation, communication, recruitment, and operational costs. Much research has focused on the type of resources deployed to fund terrorism (Freeman, 2011; Levitt, 2006) or has focused on the channels through which the money flows (Jacobson, 2010; Passas, 2005). Terrorist networks can be financially self-supporting through different forms of criminal conduct. Scholars focusing on a so-called "crime-terror-nexus" have studied such conduct in great depth, and have mainly been interested in how and why crime and terrorism converge (Dishman, 2005; Hutchinson & O'Malley, 2007; Makarenko, 2004; Makarenko & Mesquita, 2014; Picarelli, 2006; Shelley & Picarelli, 2007). On the one hand, they study how terrorists and criminals collaborate, while on the other hand they describe how terrorist groups may change their ideological goals into financial goals. While most crime-terror-nexus studies have dealt with all sorts of crime, several other studies focused at specific forms. Crimes such as counterfeiting (Lowe, 2006; Noble, 2003; Sullivan, Chermak, Wilson, & Freilich, 2014), racketeering (Hamm & Van de Voorde, 2005), cigarette smuggling (Antonopoulos, 2007; Shelley & Melzer, 2008), kidnapping (Forest, 2012; O'Brien, 2012) and drugs trafficking (Eccarius-Kelly, 2012; Dishman, 2001; Piazza, 2012) have been widely studied in relation to terrorism, to clarify sources of terrorist funding. Furthermore, other types of crime such as human trafficking (Cornell, 2009; Shelley & Picarelli, 2007), fraud (Perri & Brody, 2011), and the passport forgery (Aydinli, 2006; Rudner, 2008) can be deployed for both financial gain, as well as operational benefits. Terrorist funding has long been regarded as a crucial bloodline of terrorist continuation. Hence, governments have been trying to detect and obstruct terrorist funding in order to counter terrorism (Giraldo & Trinkunas, 2007; Levi, 2010). Although government measures may have obstructed terrorist operations, several scholars argue that such financial measures have no effect in the long run (Aydinli, 2006; Basile, 2004). Finally, besides criminal conduct, many studies show that charity organizations are also often used to collect and transfer money to terrorist organizations (Croissant & Barlow, 2007; Raphaeli, 2003; Runder, 2010). *Zakat* for instance is a one of the five pillars of Islam which orders people to support the less privileged by donating a percentage of their income to a charity by choice (Raphaeli,

2003, p. 62). Such donations are sometimes used to fund terrorist organizations with or without the knowledge of its donors.

The Netherlands was dealing with numerous foreign fighting attempts at the moment this thesis was written. This is an activity that involves clear preparation, with a potential violent outcome. Interestingly, foreign fighting appears on the one hand to be a relatively novel domain within terrorism research, because it has rarely been studied as a separate and independent topic in the past. On the other hand, numerous studies dealt with this issue in the past in general terms, or used different definitions and conceptualization for a seemingly similar phenomenon. For example, foreign fighting has long been part of the studies on recruitment, but has become a topic on its own when it was no longer evident that foreign fighters were top-down recruited. Having said that, increasingly more publications have thoroughly and explicitly discussed foreign fighters in recent years, varying from primary attention to background characteristics of foreign fighters (Venhaus, 2010; Vidino, Pantucci, & Kohlman, 2010), to their motivations (e.g., Hegghammer, 2011; Malet, 2013; Moore & Tumelty, 2008; Nilson, 2015), and the general consequences of their mobilization (Bakke, 2014; Rich & Conduit, 2015). Due to the increased departure of European foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq and the concerns expressed about their return (Byman, 2015), it is likely that this issue will receive significantly more scholarly attention in the near future.

1.2.3 Involvement mechanisms

The third central element in this dissertation concerns jihadist involvement. More precise, the mechanisms that initiate, enhance, and sustain participation in a jihadist network. These mechanisms are often addressed in terrorism literature as either radicalization or the root causes of terrorism and have received significant attention in divergent ways. Whereas many scholars approach the issue of involvement by distinguishing contributing factors on an individual, group, and macro level (e.g., Kleinmann, 2012; Kruglanski & Fishman, 2009; LaFree & Ackerman, 2009), others devise trajectories or phase models where radicalization and root causes are merged in a solid framework that illustrates involvement as a gradual and sequential process that constitutes a beginning and a termination point (e.g., Moghaddam, 2005; Silber & Bhatt, 2007; Wiktorowicz, 2004). Neither of these approaches is replicated below, because stages are often interrelated and there are different pathways to a terrorist network membership (Horgan, 2008). There is such a large body of research on involvement that only a fraction will be reviewed. The outline is therefore not exhaustive, but it does highlight the factors that have received considerable scholarly attention.

A primary field of attention concerns the *psychological determinants* of terrorism (Bongar, Brown, Beutler, Breckenridge & Zimbardo, 2007; Borum, 2014; Horgan, 2004; Silke, 2003; Victoroff, 2005). Especially psychological disorders and mental illness among terrorists has long been a scholarly discussion (Silke, 1998). Whereas most scholars argued and showed that terrorists do not systematically suffer from psychological

disorders, or are at least not psychologically different from non-terrorists (Horgan, 2004; Meertens, Prins, & Doosje, 2006; Ruby, 2002), others did find a relatively high number of behavioral problems and mental disorders among suicide terrorists (Merari, 2010) and foreign fighters (Venhaus, 2010; Weenink, 2015).

Another longstanding debate has been the contributing value of the *economic background* and the level of education of a (potential) terrorist. There are great differences in findings on this issue, predominantly caused by differences in level of analysis and methods applied. For instance, several studies have investigated whether societal poverty or inequality correlates with the rate of terrorism incidents in a society and either found a positive correlation (Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Muller & Selligson, 1987) or no correlation at all (Piazza, 2006). To go even further, beyond the societal level, several scholars studied the personal backgrounds of terrorists and either found that terrorists are more likely to come from economically advantaged backgrounds (Berrebi, 2007; Pape, 2005), or that the economic background did not matter (Krueger & Maleckova, 2003). In addition, at an actor level, several scholars found that terrorists often have a higher level of education (Bakker, 2006; Berrebi, 2007; Sageman, 2004), whereas others found no link between terrorism and education at a national level (Brokhoff, Krieger, & Meijerhoff, 2010). In addition, Shafiq & Sinno (2010) show that the effect of income and education on attitudes towards terrorism differs per country, which may explain the outcome differences in the aforementioned studies.

A second strand of research on terrorist involvement seems to have consensus on the greater picture, but scholars differ on the details. They agree on the explanation that potential radicals and terrorists are in some kind of *crisis*, but they differ what causes this crisis. This line of research implicitly builds on, or touches upon, the psychological frustration-aggression theory (see Victoroff, 2005) and the sociological relative deprivation theory (Gurr, 1971), and claims that potential radicals or terrorists often suffer from a kind of frustration, grievance, alienation, or deprivation. These struggles may ignite aggression, or at least create some sort of identity crisis that needs to be resolved. Several scholars have studied alleged societal or state-level causes of a personal crisis and argued that for instance some kind of perceived injustice (Doosje, Loseman, & Bos, 2013; Post, Sprinzak, & Denny, 2003), government repression (Gurr, 1971; Piazza, 2015; Ross, 1993), social exclusion (Atran, 2006; Cottee, 2011; Khosrokhavar, 2005; Geelhoed, 2012; Young, 2007) or discrimination (Buijs, 2009; Slootman & Tillie, 2006) can function as a catalyst to a personal crisis. In addition, other researchers emphasized personal victimization, such as the loss of a family member (Bloom, 2005; Speckhard & Ackmedovas, 2006), imprisonment (Della Porte, 1992; Hamm, 2007), a lack of personal significance (Kruglanski, Chen, Dechesne, & Fishman, 2009), humiliation (Stern, 2003) or a hybrid identity (Buijs, Demant & Hamdy, 2006; Khosrokhavar, 2005; Slootman & Tillie, 2006) as contributors to a personal crisis. Several scholars focused on the other side of the spectrum and highlighted the role of religion (Jurgensmeyer, 2003; Pargament, Magyar, Benore, &

Mahoney, 2005), or a fundamentalist current within a religion (Kepel, 2006; Roy, 2004), to offer meaning in times of crisis.

However, several scholars criticize this approach and argue that the number of people dealing with such struggles does not add up to the limited number of people that become radicals (Davis & Cragin, 2009; Pisoiu, 2013). Moreover, Pisoiu (2013) states that it is unlikely that unemployment and discrimination lead to the adoption of such extreme measures like terrorism. A well-developed body of research therefore focuses on the *social dynamics* or *group processes* that enhance the process of radical or terrorist involvement. It is often argued that through socialization with people who are already radically involved or through social bonding within a (small) group of likeminded people, one can become initially acquainted with radical views (Crenshaw, 1985; Hegghammer, 2006; Malthaner & Waldmann, 2014; Neumann, Rogers, Alonso, & Martinez, 2007; Sageman, 2004), and eventually even conduct terrorist attacks like suicide bombings (Pedahzur, Perliger, & Weinberg, 2003; Post et al., 2003). Social movement theory (e.g., Della Porte, 1995) is often used as overarching framework in that regard, which shows how people with shared grievances collectively organize in order to make a stand. Subsequently, by disseminating a particular narrative, social movements are able to attract more people with similar grievances (Beck, 2008). Through identification with such movements and narratives, recruits find a sense of belonging, pride, or purpose (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010; Hemmingsen, 2012; McCauley & Segel, 1987; Neumann et al., 2007). Much research has focused on the micro-level dynamics that facilitate this socialization and identification process, which may lead to the internalization of an extreme ideology. Often cited social dynamics are for example groupthink (Horgan, 2004; Post, 1990; Tsintsadze-Maass & Maass, 2014), social cohesion (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008), and peer pressure (Bartlett & Miller, 2012; Hegghammer, 2006; Wiktorowicz, 2004). The initiation or direction of the socialization process may however differ. Some scholars outline a process in which people are top-down recruited by terrorist organizations or formal recruiters (Gerwehr & Daly, 2006; Hegghammer, 2013b; Kleinman, 2012; Özeren, 2014; Wiktorowicz, 2004), while others illustrate a process where people associated with radical movements through a bottom-up process of self-radicalization (Kirby, 2007; Neumann et al., 2007 Sageman, 2004; Silber & Bhatt, 2007; Taarnby, 2005).

Finally, other factors that might play a role regarding involvement, but are less central to the scholarly debate, are for instance the search for sensation or adventure (Bartlett & Miller, 2012), pleasure and excitement (Juergensmeyer, 2003), and the alleged romance of risk (Levine, 1999). In addition, the need for friendship, social status, etc. are also potential contributors which are less emphasized in the literature.

1.3 Approaches open to debate

The previous studies have increased our understanding of the three main elements, but are not exhaustive at the same time. This thesis therefore addresses three debatable approaches within the current literature, which will form the basis for further research. With debatable approaches we mean certain scholarly directions within terrorism research that raise questions or show ambiguities which have not yet been adequately addressed.

1.3.1 Limited focus on the how

When we take a closer look into previous literature we notice that many studies show ambivalent outcomes when explaining the phenomenon of terrorist networks. The nature of terrorism studies is so diverse, and there are so many publications, that even those scholars that try to systematically review the work of other researchers make significant different choices in doing so (e.g., Borum, 2011a, 2011b; Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010; King & Taylor, 2010; Kruglanski & Fishman, 2009; LaFree & Ackerman, 2009; Victoroff, 2005). As a result, it seems impossible to formulate a cohesive and coherent profile of terrorists, or of their activities, or of the groups or networks they belong to. In other words, the only realistic summary would be that terrorist networks are extremely heterogeneous (Bakker, 2006; De Poot & Sonneschein, 2011; Sageman, 2004; Victoroff, 2005).

The variation in outcomes might be caused by the scholarly emphasis on root causes that allegedly makes people adopt extremist beliefs. This study of the so-called *cognitive radicalization* process (see Neumann, 2013) mainly tries to understand the *why* behind terrorism: why do people radicalize; why do people assemble in extremist groups; and why do they advocate extremely violent and indiscriminate methods? In order to answer these questions, scholars scrutinized backgrounds, dispositions, and motivations of (potential) terrorists, which are considered root causes for people to internalize extremist beliefs such as the Jihadi-Salafist ideology. But the nature of these root causes varies extremely, making it difficult to give unified answers to the *why* questions. Several prominent academics have therefore started a fundamental debate about which direction to take within the contemporary academic terrorism discourse (Bartlett, 2013; Borum, 2011c; Horgan, 2013; Neumann, 2013; Pisoiu, 2013; Sageman, 2013). While doing so, several academics criticized the cognitive approach. Due to its misguided relation with terrorism, it is said to provide unsatisfying results. The critical academics underscore this claim with the assertion that not every person with radical beliefs becomes a terrorist (Horgan, 2013) and a radicalization process does not always have to be a proxy for a terrorist attack or other terrorist behavior (Borum, 2011c; Horgan, 2013). From a reversed perspective they also state that not all terrorists are ideologues or hold deep ideological beliefs (Bartlett, 2013; Borum, 2011b, p. 9; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2011; Schmid, 2013, p. 28).

A crucial point in the reasoning of these critical scholars is that there seems to be no inevitable link between extremist beliefs and terrorist action (see Neumann, 2013). This means that neither beliefs nor their underlying root causes form the most imminent terrorist threat to society. In order to recognize the real terrorist threat then, both the academic and investigative domains should initially try to understand *how* terrorist activities emerge, rather than aiming to understand *why* people are motivated to display such behavior or *why* they belief these actions are justified. Consequently, this alternative approach may actually be more useful to prevent a recognized terrorist threat from materializing. Or to quote Clarke & Newman (2006, p. vii), "understanding how it is done, helps us better know how to intervene". A shift in scholarly focus towards the behavioral or operational side of terrorism, the *modus operandi* (MO) in other words, could therefore be useful (see also Borum, 2011c; Clark & Newman, 2006; Cottee, 2010; Freilich & Chermak, 2009; Horgan, 2013; Schmid, 2013). By focusing on how people get involved with extremist groups, how they adopt violent behavior, and how they prepare for activities, the behavioral approach tries to understand the MO behind terrorism. Furthermore, understanding the *how* of jihadist networks enables us to formulate better *why* questions in the future. Because to be able to formulate a relevant and proper *why* question, you need a thorough understanding of *what* to explain first.

Although there is a fair amount of research on the MO of terrorism, as shown in paragraph 1.2, scrutinizing the operational side of terrorism has not yet been a priority in the academic literature. The exposure of terrorist proceedings has especially been lacking with regard to networks in the Netherlands. There is, however, a criminological approach that can be useful to study the MO of terrorist networks, but has thus far only received limited attention in this particular field. This is the so-called *opportunity approach*. With opportunity we mean the "access to a suitable environment in order to pursuit certain goals" (derived from Cloward & Ohlin, 1960).[4] The premise of the opportunity approach is that a particular situation creates an opportunity for crime, or otherwise stated, crime is the outcome of "choices and decisions made within a context of situational constraints and opportunities" (Clark & Cornish, 1983, p. 8). Likewise, Clarke & Newman (2006, p. 32) argue that just like regular criminals, terrorists make decisions within a context of opportunities and constraints that will eventually determine the outcome of terrorist activities. This context is often referred to as the terrorist opportunity-structure, which is the interplay of societal, economic, cultural, physical or even environmental factors from which the opportunities and constraints emerge (Clarke & Newman, 2006, p. 7). Not only does the opportunity-structure influence the outcome of terrorist activities, but it also determines whether and how

[4] Cloward & Ohlin (1960, p. 148) define the term opportunity as: "[...]access to both learning and performance structures. That is, the individual must have access to appropriate environments for the acquisition of the values and skills associated with the performance of a particular role, and he must be supported in the performance of the role once he learned it."

people cluster together in a network or group and how they stay involved (Hsu & Apel, 2015, p. 31; Kleemans & De Poot, 2008).

There are several reasons why the opportunity approach can be a useful perspective to the study of terrorism. First of all, it explicitly departs from a *how* perspective and advocates an explicit focus on the operational aspects of terrorism. The analysis of variable event conditions is thereby prioritized over the analysis of offenders' fixed personal traits. The logic behind this reasoning, according to Brantingham & Brantingham (1993), is that every criminal event happens under different environmental conditions. The interaction of a potential offender with his or her environment may therefore have far more impact on the potential occurrence of a crime than his or her individual characteristics. Likewise, Clarke & Newman (2006, p. 26-32) state that terrorism is also the outcome of a complex interaction between a motivated actor and his or her environment. They argue therefore that the roots of a terrorist ideology and the motivation of a terrorist are not the driving force behind terrorist activities (Clarke & Newman, 2006, p. 26). Thus, to understand how terrorism materializes, one should focus on the intersection of a motivated offender and the opportunities created by the environment. More specifically, by focusing on the actions and procedures (i.e., the intersection) it becomes clear how a motivated offender makes use of situational factors and opportunities. Such findings may identify commonalities in terrorist activities, and at the same time explain the heterogeneity of the offender population. Related to the first advantage, a second major strength of opportunity studies is that the findings are often of direct practical use. Research has shown that the removal of identified opportunities can enhance the reduction of criminal (e.g., Clarke and Mayhew, 1988; Guerette & Bowers, 2009; Lynch, 2011: Painter and Farrington, 1997) or terrorist behavior (Clarke & Newman, 2006; Dugan, LaFree & Piquero, 2005). Such knowledge can be of much use to policy-makers who aim to devise functional counter-terrorism measures (Hsu & Apel, 2015, p. 32). Target-hardening will for instance not only limit the damage inflicted by terrorists, it will eventually also wear the terrorists down because their violent measures are not as effective as they might have hoped for. According to Ross (2009, p. 242), this wearing down of terrorists can then initiate a peace process, which to a certain extent seems to be the case in Spain with the ETA in Spain and in Northern-Ireland with the IRA.

On the downside, several scholars have also questioned the applicability of opportunity theories (Bouhana, 2013). Especially since opportunity theories initially aim at high-volume crimes which are significantly different in nature from terrorist activities. One concern is that opportunity theories originally focused on the individual and its opportunistic decision-making process, whereas terrorism is often an organized phenomenon that requires much more planning and is less spontaneous (Lynch, 2011; Hsu & Apel, 2015). In addition, terrorism has a different utility-function from high-volume crimes, because it serves a different purpose for the offender (Lynch, 2011). Whereas criminals conducting high-volume crime are often interested in financial or

material gain, terrorists are mainly seen as pursuing a political or ideological goal. A final concern relates to terrorism's rare-event nature and the influence of opportunity-based interventions (Lynch, 2011). Because years may pass before a new terrorist event occurs, it is difficult to test whether opportunity-based interventions indeed reduced the occurrence of terrorism in the meantime. However, terrorist networks do more than just planning terrorist attacks. Other activities such as criminal conduct, foreign fighting, and disseminating the ideology occur on a much more regular basis, which suits the applicability of an opportunity approach.

Despite several disadvantages of the opportunity approach, this thesis adopts this approach as a welcome addition to the field of terrorism research. Its underexposure may partly be the result of the fact that the study of terrorism has been dominated over the years by specific academic disciplines such as political science, sociology, history, and psychology (Neumann & Kleinmann, 2013, p. 371). The use of the opportunity approach is limited in these disciplines. The field of criminology on the other hand has a much stronger relation with the opportunity theory, but has a surprisingly low contribution rate in terrorism research (Cottee, 2011 & 2014; Deflem, 2004; Forst, Greene, & Lynch, 2011; Freilich & LaFree, 2015; Neumann & Kleinmann, 2013). This is quite remarkable, or even "shameful" to quote Cottee (2011, p. 746), knowing that criminology analyzes criminal or unlawful behavior, which terrorism is in every respect (Clark & Newman, 2006). Adopting a criminological approach when studying terrorism could therefore significantly increase our understanding of this phenomenon (Deflem, 2004; Forst, Greene & Lynch, 2011; LaFree & Dugan, 2004), especially with regard to the role of opportunity structures and how opportunities are seized.

In several criminological theories elements of the opportunity approach are incorporated, or at least the importance of opportunity is acknowledged. Moreover, opportunity theories such as the *Rational Choice Theory,* the *Routine Activity Theory*, and the *Situational Crime Prevention Theory*, have already been deployed by several scholars to study terrorism. To illustrate, some scholars have applied the *Rational Choice Theory* in order to understand whether terrorists make calculated decisions when joining terrorist networks, choosing particular targets or methods, and even whether it is beneficial to become a suicide bomber (Belli & Freilich, 2009; Berrebi, 2009; Caplan, 2006; Ferrero, 2006; Iannacone & Berman, 2006; Newman & Hsu, 2012; Perry & Hasisi, 2015). In addition, using *Routine Activity Theory*, others aimed to understand how the convergence of motivation, guardianship, and target choice influenced the preparation of terrorist activities or even the probability of victimization (Canetti-Nisim, Mesch, & Pedahzur, 2006; Hamm, 2007; Parkin & Freilich, 2015). Furthermore, the *Situational Crime Prevention Theory* has been used to understand how concrete situational factors influence the occurrence of terrorist activities or ideologically motivated criminal activities (Boba, 2009; Clark & Newman, 2006; Fahey, LaFree, Dugan, & Piquero, 2012; Freilich & Chermak, 2009; Freilich, Chermak, & Caspi, 2009; Hsu & Apel, 2015; Kilcullen, 2009; Weenink, 2012; Yun, 2009). Also, although not literally an opportunity theory,

Social Learning Theory has been applied to demonstrate how people may radicalize when they are exposed to extremist narratives and start to act in accordance with such doctrines (Akers & Silverman, 2004; Freiburger & Crane, 2008; Hamm, 2007; Pauwels & Schils, 2014). Within these studies, the role of opportunity plays an important role, because it often influences whether someone is or is not exposed to certain narratives.

1.3.2 Limited methodological and empirical rigor

Another debatable approach is how scholars deal with methodological and empirical rigor. Several scholars have tried to assess the quality of the rapidly growing amount of academic publications on terrorism and radicalization (Czwarno, 2006; Freilich, Chermak, & Gruenewald, 2014; Neuman & Kleinman, 2013; Schmid & Jongman, 1988; Silke, 2001, 2004, 2009) and provided a thorough examination of past academic output. Some academics argue that, despite considerable room for improvement, the field of terrorism studies has positively developed over the years, whereas others predominantly issue a note of warning about the *status quo* of terrorism studies. Both positions will be elaborated on.

On the one hand, the field of terrorism studies has positively developed over the years due to creative and innovative approaches, leading to more high quality research (Neumann & Kleinman, 2013, p. 374; Silke, 2009, p. 47). Despite inherent difficulties and restrictions when obtaining empirical data, researchers have been able to gain firsthand data by conducting interviews with terrorists (e.g., Horgan, 2004; Ilardi, 2013; Nilson, 2015; Post et al., 2003), performing observations among radical extremists (e.g., De Koning, Roex, Becker, & Aarns, 2014; Geelhoed, 2012; Wiktorowicz, 2004), or conducting analysis of classified government information (e.g., De Poot & Sonneschein, 2011; Schuurman et al., 2015; Smith, Damphousse, Jackson, & Sellers, 2002; Smith & Orivs, 1993; Weenink, 2015). In addition, other scholars have been able to transform open source data into extensive research databases that are suitable for systematic analysis of terrorist events (e.g., Freilich, Chermak, Belli, Gruenewald, & Parkin, 2014; LaFree & Dugan, 2007). Beyond innovative data gathering, terrorism scholars have also successfully pushed the boundaries to analyze these data. For example, statistical analyses (Neumann & Kleinman, 2009, p. 371; Silke, 2009, p. 40;) and social network analyses (e.g., Barbieri & Klausen, 2015; Carley, Lee, & Krackhardt, 2001; Koschade, 2006; Krebs, 2001; Pedahzur & Perliger, 2006; Stollenwerk, 2015; Van der Hulst, 2009a) have become more common among terrorism scholars over the years, which has had a considerable impact on the validity and reliability of many research findings. Also, analytical perspectives from other disciplines like Criminology (Deflem, 2004; Freilich & LaFree, 2015) have increased, partly due to augmented interdisciplinary research collaboration (Neumann & Kleinman, 2013, p. 369; Silke, 2009, p. 39). The field of terrorism studies appears to be receptive for new methods and perspectives, which can amplify the growth of quality research in the future.

On the other hand, academics have also expressed concerns about the field of terrorism studies (for a thorough overview, see Stampnitzky, 2011). "Critical terrorism" scholars, for instance, claim that the dominant position of terrorism issues in the political and media domain has blurred an objective view on the phenomenon (Breen Smyth, Gunning, Jackson, Kassimeris, & Robinson, 2008), which has led to, among other issues, methodological problems, a lack of self-reflexivity, political subjectivity, state-centricity, problem-solving-orientation due to dependence on state-sponsorship (Jackson, 2007). Although these allegations are debatable (Horgan & Boyle, 2008), it shows that the aforementioned positive assessment is not unanimously shared. Moreover, Neumann & Kleinman (2013, p. 379) demonstrate that there is a substantial amount of rigorous research in the field of terrorism studies, but there are also significant pockets of poor research that must be tackled. The critique heard most often in that regard is directed to the empirical and methodological standards of many terrorism studies. Especially the lack of firsthand and raw data or at least the overreliance on secondhand and edited data in this field has often been emphasized (Czwarno, 2006; Neumann & Kleinman, 2013; Schmid & Jongman, 1988; Schuurman & Eijkman, 2013; Silke, 2004). A recent systematic review of past radicalization studies by Neumann & Kleinman (2013) shows that 45% of these studies based their findings on secondhand data sources. Moreover, 34% of publications assessed is characterized as methodologically or empirically weak, which is a cause for concern. In line with this concern, Sageman (2014, p. 8) claims that terrorism research has stagnated. He argues that scholars fail to generate solid evidence in their studies, due to the governments' unwillingness to grant academics access to classified data. As a result, scholars often rely on open sources such as media accounts, official government statements, and reports, which, he claims, tend to be biased and inaccurate. This strongly voiced account by Sageman has been contested by several prominent scholars who offer legitimate counter-arguments (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2014; Schanzer, 2014; Schmid, 2014; Stern, 2014; Taylor, 2014). Yet, Sageman's underlying message must be underscored: academic access to classified government databases, and the implementation of academic analytical skills to such data, could significantly contribute to the field of terrorism studies.

Building on the abovementioned observations, we can conclude that terrorism research is progressing in multiple ways, but there is enough room for improvement. Besides the need for more empirical studies using firsthand and unedited data, there is a specific and more practical methodological challenge. This refers to *methodological justification*, which means that scholars need to report open and clear in their scholarly publications about the analytical proceedings they conducted to arrive at particular findings and conclusions. Horgan (2012) and Freilich et al. (2014) already emphasized for instance that terrorism scholars need to be aware of (and transparent about) the required procedural steps and research protocols when reporting their results. Whereas many studies comply with this norm (e.g., Hegghammer, 2013a; Hemmingsen, 2012; Horgan, 2012; Orsini, 2013), there is still considerable ground to be won. In qualitative

studies, the presence of a detailed description of how data are collected, measured, and analyzed is unfortunately not always guaranteed. This means that the methodological rigor of these studies is difficult to determine. To illustrate, several academic studies that (claim to) use extensive empirical data did not include separate methodology sections in their papers, or they omitted some sort of empirical strategy that describes how they conducted their research (e.g., Campana & Ratelle, 2014; Gunaratna & Oreg, 2010; Post et al., 2003; Reinares, 2011; Wiktorowicz, 2004 & 2006). Of several studies that did have a methodology section, it sometimes does not go beyond the acknowledgement of the source of the data. For instance, the explanation how the data collection is achieved, what inclusion criteria are used to select relevant data, and how many documents or data sources were analyzed is not always common practice in this field (e.g., Gerwehr & Daly, 2006; Spaaij, 2010). More importantly, procedural and analytical steps underlying the research findings and conclusions are often not accounted for (e.g., Nesser, 2006; Sageman, 2008). Coding efforts are, for instance, often unspecified, in spite of their essential role in qualitative analysis, and findings are reported on without making clear whether a finding or conclusion is supported by multiple sources and whether the data contain sufficient evidence to draw such conclusions. For example, some scholars who interviewed multiple respondents repeatedly refer to "interview with confidential source" without numbering these interviews (e.g., Nesser, 2006). As a result, the reader does not know whether information comes from the same interview, or from multiple respondents. In sum, we argue that the lack of a thorough methodological justification has serious implications. We will get back to this in chapter 2.

1.3.3 Limited long-term perspective

A third debatable approach is the limited adoption of a long-term perspective that is able to identify changes over time. Instead of focusing on single cases and conduct cross-sectional research that may lead to a rather static view, Horne & Horgan (2012, p. 1) argue that terrorism research should study networks *temporally* in order to capture developments. Whereas single case studies provide valuable insight into a particular group or network and offer the opportunity for thorough analysis, scholars should at the same time pursue research that compares such findings from different periods. The relevance of their implications can then be determined in a much wider context. A long-term perspective is not absent in terrorism research though. On the whole, scholars have generally adopted a macro perspective on terrorism, focusing on terrorist events and processes through time (Jenkins, 1985; LaFree, 2012; Neumann, 2009; Sageman, 2004). In addition to this, several scholars have produced work that explicitly covered a delineated time-frame. To give a brief indication, some have for instance focused on the immigration status of terrorists between 1993 and 2004 (Leiken & Brooke, 2006), or have tried to identify common terrorist characteristics from case studies that emerged between 2001 and 2006 (Bakker, 2006). While some have provided updated

chronologies of previous terrorist attacks in Europe (Nesser, 2008; Nesser 2014), others have tried to discover the different links between local grass-root militants and international terrorist organizations over time (Jordan, 2014; Vidino, 2011). Beyond studying a particular episode, some scholars explicitly focused on the changing nature of terrorism or terrorist networks. For instance by measuring the increase of home-grown terrorism between 1998 and 2008 (Crone & Harrow, 2011).

Yet, building on the aforementioned two debatable approaches, an in-depth and methodologically sound analysis of the changing *modus operandi* over time, while using firsthand data sources, deserves more attention from the academic field. Insufficient empirical evidence on the changing modus operandi of terrorism causes a gap in our understanding of jihadist networks and can leave policy-makers empty handed when attempting to respond to current events. Especially when considering that measures that are blind for developments can become quickly outdated and ineffective. So far, this call has been answered by several studies that have compared operational procedures over time. For instance, the relatively dated but well-known *old versus new terrorism* debate already touched upon this issue when a range of scholars argued that the nature of terrorism changed so much that former assumptions were invalid (e.g., Hoffman, 2001; Laquer, 1999; Simon & Benjamin, 2001; for an overview, see Field, 2009; Neumann, 2009). Allegedly, the organizational structure had changed from a hierarchical one to a much looser network based structure, functional violence had been replaced by more symbolic violence, which had become more lethal and indiscriminate, and finally, the possibility of the use of weapons of mass destructions had emerged. However, this assessment of terrorism's changing nature encountered significant critique. According to those opposed (e.g., Copeland, 2001; Duyvesteijn, 2004; Spencer, 2006; Tucker, 2001), some alleged new aspects were already present in the past. Looking more closely into some of the studies that scrutinized *new terrorism*, this significant critique may have been caused by their debatable methodological and empirical rigor. Yet, several studies have adopted a more thorough methodological approach in relation to the developing *modus operandi* of terrorism. To name a few examples, Dugan et al. (2005) have examined the determinants of successful hijackings between 1947 and 2003 by employing econometric time series, while using a variety of open source and aviation databases. In a similar vein, LaFree, Yang, & Crenshaw (2009) studied three different terrorist waves between 1970 and 2004 focusing on the specific terrorist targets. Likewise, Santifort, Sandler & Brandt (2013) scrutinized a change in target choice and attack modes over a 40-year time period, using an extensive database. Nesser & Stenersen (2014) adopted a more qualitative approach when they tried to identify trends in weapon, attack, and target types between 1994 and 2013 based on a critical examination of open sources. Likewise, Jordan (2012) studied the target selection, method, training camps, and links to organizations between 2001 and 2010.

Overall, such studies have illuminated interesting changes in terrorist modus operandi, although detailed information from firsthand data sources in that regard

remains minimal. Especially when it comes to a more narrowed perspective on the Netherlands, such work has hardly been done. The aforementioned work by Nesser (2008, 2014), Bakker (2006), and Vidino (2011) have indeed used Dutch cases, but they have a predominant focused on Europe as a whole and their access to firsthand data is limited or at least methodologically less clear. Taking into account the *opportunity approach*, which argues that most criminal events happen under different environmental conditions, it is important to also scrutinize empirical realities on a national level like the Netherlands. This is necessary to close the gap in academia towards our understanding of jihadist networks in this particular context and to employ more tailor-made initiatives to counter terrorism.

1.4 This study's approach

This dissertation seeks to build on the foregoing discussion by a systematic, empiric study of the central themes *organizational structures, activities*, and *involvement mechanisms*, and at the same time adopts a long-term and comparative perspective, while using a triangulation of data sources. More precisely, this thesis focuses on the *modus operandi* (MO) of jihadist networks and its members by scrutinizing the operational proceedings of the activities they conduct, by studying how the organizational structures are formed, and by looking into the manifestations of different involvement mechanisms and how this affects participation. To understand the MO and to find meaningful concepts that can explain the data found, this dissertation keeps an open mind for the role of opportunity. Without formally testing the theory, the opportunity approach is to a certain extent utilized to clarify how the environment influences the MO over time. Finally, the central theme *activity* is divided in this thesis into "foreign fighting", "conducting crime", and "disseminating the ideology". As explained under 1.2.3, jihadist networks do more than prepare terrorist attacks. These three activities are the most relevant activities for jihadist networks in the Netherlands.

Through this approach we will try to answer the earlier introduced main research question: *how did jihadist networks operate between 2000 and 2013 and what changes can be observed?* To make this research question more manageable and relate it more directly to the central themes, two particular sub-questions are introduced.

- *How does the interaction between the organizational structures and activities of jihadist networks in the Netherlands between 2000 and 2013 manifest itself?*

- *How and through which social processes do subjects get and stay involved in jihadist networks in the Netherlands between 2000-2013?*

The first sub-question primarily focuses on the central themes *organizational structure* and *activities*, while the second sub-question mainly focuses on the central themes *involvement mechanisms* and *activities*. This will be further elaborated under 1.5.

The following methodology and data have been deployed to answer the research questions. We have initially applied analytical methods derived from the *Grounded Theory* (GT) methodology. Grounded theory is an inductive approach that aims to generate a theory built on theoretical concepts or categories that emerge from the data. This approach does not take into account prior assumptions and disregards the use of hypotheses. The reason for this, as the founders Glaser & Strauss (1967) stated, is that novel researchers should be able to generate theories on their own. However, GT methodology is also useful beyond mere theory-building. The analytical methods underlying GT can also be used for other academic purposes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. ix), for example to scrutinize the MO of jihadist networks. This more liberal interpretation of the GT methods, which has become more accepted over the years (Charmaz, 2006), allows us to apply theoretical concepts from existing theories when useful, without clashing with the principles of *Grounded Theory*. This will be further elaborated in Chapter 2, which is a separate methodological chapter in which the data and an outline of the analytical procedures with regard to *grounded theory* are described. Besides the grounded theory methods, additional analytical methods to answer the research questions were applied. In order to uncover the underlying *organizational structures* of the jihadist networks, we have applied *social network analysis* (SNA, Chapter 3). On the one hand this enabled us to map and visualize the interaction between individuals. On the other hand it allowed us to apply quantitative analyses. In addition, we have applied *crime script analyses* (CSA) to study the procedural aspects of foreign fighting (Chapter 4). This permitted us to outline the preparatory stages of this activity. Unlike the analytical steps of the grounded theory methodology, SNA and CSA will not be elaborated in the methodological Chapter 2. These specific analyses will be explained in the particular chapters in which they have been applied (Chapters 3 and 4).

The data in this dissertation mainly come from a wide variety of rich sources derived from police files. In total we have analyzed 28 voluminous police investigations that cover a long time-frame from 2000 until 2013. Since police files are to a great extent built on monitoring behavior, the data are highly useful to study the MO of potential terrorists. Furthermore, the period explains the time-frame as formulated in the central research question. By looking into and comparing police investigations that stem from different years, we adopt a long-term approach. In addition, to comply with GT methods and add information to the limited police files, we also conducted 51 interviews with a variety of respondents. Respondents ranged from police investigators and public prosecutors, to lawyers and staff members from asylum centers and detention centers. Finally, we also attended several court hearings where we made trial observations. The nature of the data and the conducted analytical steps will be elaborated more in depth in Chapter 2.

1.5 Outline of this thesis

The structure of this thesis is as follows. As mentioned, Chapter 2 describes the data, explains how it was collected and outlines all the analytical steps taken. Then two parts follow, with two chapters per part. Each part focuses on a particular sub-question, while the three central themes are divided over the two parts. See also Table 1.1 for an overview. All chapters in this thesis are based on articles that already have been or will be published in international peer-reviewed journals. The first part of this dissertation, Chapters 3 and 4, tries to answer the first sub-question that aims at the changing MO of jihadist networks between 2000 and 2013.

Chapter 3 has a prominent focus on the *organizational structures* of jihadist networks. Its research question is: *To what extent do the organizational structures of the studied jihadist networks differ over time and what kind of roles do the studied subjects adopt in these networks?* To answer this research question it focuses on three specific networks that each represents a certain episode within the studied time-frame. The three different networks have a common ground, namely the primary activities conducted. All three networks prepared foreign fighting attempts, aimed to disseminate the ideology to as many people as possible, and conducted regular crimes. By applying a social network analysis, we uncover the specific underlying organizational structure of each network. We analyze which subjects interacted with each other within a network, and simultaneously quantitatively measure the strength of these ties. Through a qualitative analysis we scrutinize the nature of the ties in order to understand the role of each subject. This enables us to understand functional differences. We additionally compare the three networks on different aspects. Since each network represents a different episode, a comparison over time is possible. This way we can identify commonalties and differences between networks over time. Furthermore, the combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis enables us to identify the key players in these networks and look into their roles and behavior. Through the temporal comparison of networks, we can identify whether the roles of some key players evolve over time.

Knowing how certain networks are composed, Chapter 4 explicitly illuminates one of their *activities*. Chapter 4 has a primary focus on the networks' core activity "foreign fighting", although "disseminating the ideology" and "conducting regular crime" play an important role as well. The central research question in this chapter is: *How do jihadists prepare their foreign fighting attempts and has their modus operandi changed over time?* To answer this research question, we distinguish three particular episodes within the studied time-frame and we compare these episodes on the basis of five different preparatory stages. These stages are devised via a *crime script analysis*, which enables us to clearly illuminate all the proceedings of a potential foreign fighter. Because Chapter 4 builds on the *organizational* differences as identified in Chapter 3, these two chapters together illuminate how the organizational development of jihadist networks interacts with the changing MO of foreign fighters over time.

The second part of the dissertation, comprising Chapters 5 and 6, tries to answer the second sub-question, which aims at understanding the manifestation of involvement mechanisms. It focuses on the central theme jihadist *involvement mechanisms* but combines this with the theme *activity*. Yet, "foreign fighting" is no longer the primary activity, but the activities "disseminating ideology" and "conducting regular crime" are. In addition, although the second part of the dissertation still adopts a long-term perspective, the comparison of episodes has a less central position in these chapters. Rather, the chapters put more weight on the mechanisms that affect jihadist involvement and contribute to dissemination of the ideology. When there are temporal differences worth mentioning, these will be highlighted nonetheless.

Chapter 5 has a combined focus on the central themes *involvement* and *activities*. It elaborates on the *involvement mechanisms* theme via a thorough study of a subgroup of irregular immigrants in the jihadist networks. It aims to understand what it is that made jihadist networks attractive to irregular immigrants in the 2000-2005 period by focusing on the backgrounds of irregular immigrants in detention centers and asylum centers. The central research question is: *To what extent do pragmatism and ideology determine the attractiveness of jihadist networks to irregular Muslim immigrants?* Via interviews with staff members from asylum centers and detention centers we try to unravel the backgrounds of irregular immigrants in general. By comparing the findings from the interviews with the roles and behaviors of irregular immigrants from police data, we aim to demonstrate the jihadist networks' attractiveness for irregular immigrants. Because it has a temporal focus, this chapter will only tell us something about the attractiveness of jihadist networks for irregular immigrants in the past. Nonetheless, lessons learned from the 2000-2005 period can be useful for current and future situations.

Chapter 6, the final empirical chapter, first and foremost focuses on *involvement* and illuminates which factors or mechanisms contribute to a sustained involvement over time. It does so not by illuminating dispositional properties of the jihadists involved, but rather by focusing on how subjects deal with their environment's responses after they affiliate themselves with jihadist networks. The central research question is: *What mechanisms influence the jihadist involvement process in the Netherlands and to what extent do these mechanisms interact?* To answer this research question, the chapter describes two processes that apply to all subjects. By studying the core activity "disseminating the ideology", the first process portrays how certain mechanisms or factors aim to consolidate a subjects participation, but can change into discouraging mechanisms instead that can deter subjects from further jihadist affiliation. The second process describes a practice in which seemingly negative factors that could have a deterring effect on jihadist involvement are transformed by the subjects in order to encourage prolonged involvement instead.

Finally, Chapter 7 provides a summary of the main empirical findings and starts a general discussion by integrating theoretical and empirical findings from the previous chapters and addresses how these contribute to the current state of knowledge.

Table 1.1: Thesis outline.

	Thesis sub-questions	Chapter research question	Year of focus	Data	Method	N	Central theme
Chapter 3	How does the interaction between the organizational structures and activities of jihadist networks in the Netherlands manifest itself between 2000 and 2013?	To what extent do the organizational structures of the studied jihadist networks differ over time and what kind of roles do the studied subjects adopt in these networks?	2001 - 2013	10 Police investigations & 16 interviews & various trial observations	Grounded Theory Methods & Social Network Analysis	84	Organizational structures & activities
Chapter 4		How do jihadists prepare their foreign fighting attempts and has their modus operandi changed over time?	2000 - 2013	17 Police investigations, 21 interviews & various trial observations	Grounded Theory Methods & Crime Script Analysis	51	Activities
Chapter 5	How and through which social processes do subjects get and stay involved in jihadist networks in the Netherlands between 2000-2013?	To what extent do pragmatism and ideology determine the attractiveness of jihadist networks to irregular Muslim immigrants?	2000 - 2005	12 Police investigations, 33 interviews & various trial observations	Grounded Theory Methods	41	Involvement & activities
Chapter 6		What mechanisms influence the jihadist involvement process in the Netherlands and to what extent do these mechanisms interact?	2000 - 2013	28 Police investigations, 28 interviews & various trial observations	Grounded Theory Methods	209	Involvement & activities

1.6 Relevance of study

The scientific relevance of this dissertation lies in its contribution to the current state of knowledge. As was outlined in 1.3, there are particular topics in contemporary research that lack attention. This study tries to partially close this gap with its specific focus on the *how* of jihadist networks and their *modus operandi* in particular, a thorough empirical analysis of police data, and the adoption of a long-term and comparative perspective. By providing a "thick description" of behaviors and proceedings of individuals involved, this study clarifies an aspect about extremist individuals that is relatively underexposed, especially with regard to the Netherlands. Since this research is conducted via grounded theory methods, while using classified police files, this dissertation provides a unique contribution to the field of terrorism studies. Moreover, the thorough methodological justification and the illustrated grounded findings in this thesis are two proceedings that deserve much more attention in the current domain of terrorism studies. In that respect, this thesis hopefully inspires additional empirical attempts in the future.

The societal relevance of this dissertation lies mainly in the development of expertise that can inform law enforcement and intelligence agencies, other government institutions, and civil society. The focus on jihadist networks' proceedings is meant to

aid the government's attempt to counter potentially violent jihadist networks. One could even argue that investigative authorities, such as the police, can conduct more effective operations with the knowledge of the *modus operandi* of a potential terrorist network than with the knowledge *why* particular individuals develop radical ideas. Moreover, the root causes of radicalism could be categorized as a social problem, rather than a criminal one. That does not mean that root causes are not important, or that ignoring them is a wise practice. However, the root causes of extremism and terrorism should not be the primary concern of the police. Such knowledge will not immediately help to counter an imminent threat. It is more useful to have *operational* expertise of actors that are threatening national security. Moreover, if you look into the reports by several Dutch agencies working in the field of counter-terrorism or counter-extremism, this study could be of significant value. For instance, the Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism advocates in its report *The Netherlands Comprehensive Action Programme to Combat Jihadism* (NCTV, 2014) the intensification of knowledge and expertise on jihadist networks and especially foreign fighters in order to assess and counter the terrorist risk. In addition, the Dutch Intelligence Agency states in its annual report (AIVD, 2015) that the highest priorities for 2014 were the jihadist returning from Syria and Iraq, who went to join the armed forces like ISIS. Since both the AIVD and the Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism seek to understand the intentions of foreign fighters and assesses the threat of those jihadists, this research, with its emphasis on foreign fighters, could contribute to that understanding. To conclude, the relevance of this dissertation goes beyond temporal issues such as the contemporary returning foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq. This study aims to discover long-term trends, which are important to take into account when devising both contemporary and future policies. When keeping past and current trends and events in mind, academics, practitioners, and policy makers are much better equipped to read future warning signs and consequently respond adequately to any future threat or danger.

Chapter 2:

Studying Police Files with Grounded Theory Methods to Understand Jihadist Networks

2

Abstract

This chapter focuses on a challenge in the current terrorism literature, namely the methodological justification concerning the collection and analysis of empirical data. Lack of detailed methodological accounts of the collection and analysis of the data makes it difficult to evaluate presented findings, especially if these data are confidential or focused on specific aspects of the phenomenon. This chapter offers an extensive overview of the methodological procedures conducted in a large empirical research project on jihadist networks based on confidential police files (2000-2013), interviews, and trial observations. This way the chapter describes how grounded theory based methods can be used to collect and analyze such data and to develop and test new theories in this research field.

A slightly different version of this chapter was published as a separate manuscript:

De Bie, J.L. & De Poot, C.J., (2016). Studying Police Files with Grounded Theory Methods to Understand Jihadist Networks. Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 39(9). DOI:10.1080/1057610X.2016.1142241.

2.1 Introduction

In this dissertation, classified police files investigating the period 2000 to 2013, additional interviews, and trial observations are used as data sources. This chapter illustrates how grounded theory methods were used to systematically collect and analyze these complex data, and how this combination of data and methods led to new insights in this research field. This chapter furthermore builds on the second debatable approach that was explained in the introduction, which concerns the limited methodological and empirical rigor. In the introduction an important challenge in the field of terrorism research was emphasized, which is *methodological justification*. This means that scholars need to report openly and clearly in their scholarly publications about the analytical procedures they conducted to arrive at particular findings and conclusions.

Insufficient clarity about the methods and analytical tools has particular implications. When it remains unclear how scholars analytically arrive at their conclusions, it is difficult to assess the scope, reliability, and validity of these conclusions. Foremost, it may impede the development of high quality terrorism research. Because the devil is in the detail, the reader might be unable to value a study on its genuine merits and might raise the question whether scholars have indeed analyzed their data with rigor. In other words, the findings could come across as cherry-picking. It can also lead to insufficient practical utilization of higher quality research if policymakers have little confidence in the results. In the same vein, less well-designed research can be over-evaluated, which can lead to supposedly evidence-based countermeasures that do not fit the addressed phenomenon well in reality.

Although the methodological justification has increased significantly over the years, it is still not a common procedure in many publications. Reporting on actual research practices needs to become common practice to get terrorism research in position to shape the debate, both in science and in society. The aim of this chapter is therefore to illustrate how detailed methodological proceedings could and should be described. This chapter tries to be as clear as possible about the proceedings of the data collection and analysis in the overall thesis by elaborating on specific analytical steps.

2.2 Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory (GT) methodology offers suitable analytical tools to conduct systematic analysis of complex qualitative data, and has successfully been applied by several scholars in the field of terrorism (Bartlett & Miller, 2012; Pisoiu, 2011; Torok, 2013). GT methodology aims to generate a theory that is built on theoretical concepts or categories that emerge from the data and is particularly suitable for explorative research. A key strength of GT methods is, in the words of Bryant & Charmaz (2007, p. 33), that it offers a "foundation for rendering the processes and procedures of qualitative investigation visible, comprehensible, and replicable". At the core of this foundation are two basic

principles, which are *constant comparative analysis* and *theoretical sampling* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The former involves the continuous comparison between data and emerging concepts during each stage of the research. The latter refers to the process where preliminary findings from initial data gathering reveal tentative concepts, which in turn direct the collection of new independent data. This additional data is then used to validate or falsify the initial concepts that emerged from the original dataset. This chapter aims to offer analytical insight by reporting extensively about the procedures that need to be conducted to adhere to these two basic principles. These procedures are: sampling, coding, categorizing, memo writing, and theorizing, which need to be conducted simultaneously and continuously throughout the research.[5] Thoroughly carrying out these procedures will aid the systematic data analysis, which is considered a primary and essential feature of grounded theory methodology (Cooney, 2010).

Indisputably, transparent and systematic analyses are not exclusively assigned to GT methods, and we neither claim that GT methods are more transparent than other qualitative methods, nor that they are better analytical tools. Yet, we favored GT methods in this research project because the underlying methodological or epistemological foundation best matches the research goals of this project. As mentioned in the introduction, we aimed to understand how jihadist networks operate and how this changed over time. Moreover, we sought for new insights and the development of new explanatory models. To reach this explorative goal, we were better equipped with an approach that allows gathering data with an open mind than being bound by predetermined theories. This is the cornerstone of Grounded Theory. To illustrate, Glaser & Straus (1967) introduced Grounded Theory as a response to the dominant positivist epistemology. They questioned the deductive approach that solely focused on the verification of prior assumptions and hypotheses derived from existing theories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 10). Instead, Glaser & Straus (1967) supported an inductive approach that aims to generate a theory built on theoretical concepts or categories that emerge from the data. This approach ignores prior assumptions and neglects the use of hypotheses. The reason for this, they stated, is that novel researchers should be able to generate theories on their own, instead of becoming "proletarian testers" of the "theoretical capitalists" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Since this matches our research interest, we favored GT methods over deductive alternatives.

There is not just one absolute GT though. Diverging perspectives on the analytical procedures, for instance, ended the collaboration between Glaser and Strauss (Kelle, 2007). Furthermore, new versions of GT were developed and a distinction was made between Glaser and Strauss' *objectivist* and Charmaz's *constructivist* GT methodology. This resulted in different perspectives on the ideal GT end product. Nonetheless,

[5] For an extensive elaboration of the theory and its procedures, see Bryant & Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008.

the different schools all share a similar methodological spiral and all conduct similar analytical procedures to generate their theories (Higginbottom & Lauridsen, 2014; Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2008). We are primarily focused on the use and usefulness of these common procedures in terrorism research. Hence, we do not strictly follow one of the three approaches, although the methods applied in the research project are nonetheless more in line with Charmaz's constructivist approach. The reason for this is that, unlike the objectivists, we acknowledge that our findings are not necessarily objective facts, but our interpretations of documents and reflections from the respondents. Moreover, based on these interpretations and reflections, we have developed particular ideas and conceptualizations that could not have emerged from the data without our interference. Unlike the opinion of objectivists, we can therefore not be seen as completely neutral observers who inductively discovered particular concepts directly from the data (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130). Also, unlike the objectivist GT, we are not aiming to develop formal theories. Rather, we seek new insights that might explain or illuminate the situation studied, but these insights do not necessarily have to be developed into general theories that clarify other situations. In that same context, we also do not aim to develop a *core category* that summarizes all observations into a single explanation because we acknowledge that there is probably more than one. Hence, we focus more on categories or mechanisms in the various studies of this research project, which is more in line with Charmaz's constructivist approach.

2.3 Data collection

Since we aim to answer relatively broad and explorative research questions about how jihadist networks operate in the Netherlands and how this developed over time, we need rich data sources that can offer insight in such processes.

2.3.1 Police files

To literally see how the jihadist networks operate, the most ideal method would probably be a form of participating observation. However, because jihadist networks are covert and clandestine, it is highly questionable if the network participants would cooperate.[6] Moreover, safety would be an issue and many ethical issues would arise. We therefore directed our focus towards a *qualitative document analysis* of Dutch police files and court files. Such files yield highly valuable but foremost rich information that could fulfill our broad research needs. As other terrorism scholars have indicated as well (Della Porta, 1995, p. 18; Pisoiu, 2011), the value of information in police files and court documents is unprecedented. The police files contain the original wiretaps

[6] Several studies used observation of radical networks, such as Geelhoed (2012) and Wiktorowicz (2004). However, these studies concerned different research questions and did not focus on *how* the networks operated.

Table 2.1: Overview data collection police files.

Network no.	Criminal case no.	Number of police investigations	Number of subjects	Years investigated	Main indictment	Respondents (law enforcement)	Respondents (lawyers)
1	1	1	29	2000-2001	Terrorist attack	1	2
2	2	2	22	2001-2003	Terrorist attack	2	2
	3	1	10	2002-2003	Foreign fighting	1	No contact
	4	1	6	2002	Foreign fighting	2	No contact
3	5	1	11	2003-2005	Terrorist organization	2	No contact
4	6	5	48	2003-2005	Terrorist organization	2	4
5	7	1	3	2004	Terrorist attack	2	No contact
6	8	2	22	2005	Terrorist organization	2	2
7	9	2	26	2006	Terrorist organization	3	2
8	10	3	3	2001-2003 2006-2008	Terrorist financing	1	No contact
9	11	1	7	2007-2008	Terrorist attack	1	No contact
10	12	1	31	2008-2013	Terrorist organization	1	No contact
	13	1	1	2008	Terrorist attack		No contact
	14	1	4	2008	Foreign fighting	2	No contact
	15	1	4	2009	Foreign fighting		1
11	16	1	17	2010	Foreign fighting	2	Refused
12	17	1	3	2011	Foreign fighting	1	No contact
13	18	1	2	2011-2013	Foreign fighting	3	No contact
14	19	1	6	2012-2013	Foreign fighting	1	1

of both telephone and internet communication, recordings of in-house communication, transcripts of suspect interrogations, witness statements, observation reports, forensic reports, reports of house searches, expert-witness reports, but also (when archived correctly) the complete and *verbatim* court transcripts and lawyers' pleadings. The police files contain extensive information on the operational aspects of clandestine networks, because the police can unobtrusively follow and observe the participants of these networks without their knowledge, which bypasses the need for cooperation (Pisiou, 2011). Furthermore, since the files we studied covered a longer time-frame, we were able to look for possible developments. Nonetheless, since the use of these types of data also comes with limitations (see paragraph below), we do not claim that such files are better than other kinds of (open) sources. It rather matches our research interests.

The raw observation and wiretap material in the files, for instance, enabled us to literally monitor how people behave and communicate with each other (Pisiou, 2011, p. 5). Due to this large amount of raw information we regard the police information to a great extent as firsthand data. Surely, not all data is truly unedited because the observations and wiretap conversations need to be transcribed by investigators and sometimes translated. Yet, we assume that these transcriptions and translations are conducted objectively. Overall, access to such information is an empirical advantage that is hard to attain on the basis of media reports or even direct interviews. Moreover, police files yield more complete information than the excerpts from court transcripts that are often found in the media or online. The information in these police files concerns the underlying data on which criminal investigations and court cases are built. To conclude, police investigations are useful data according to grounded theory, since they are suitable to portray empirical events (Charmaz, 2006, p. 18).

In total we had access to 28 voluminous police investigations that focused on jihadist terrorism between 2000 and 2013, which was an intensive 1.5 year of full time data collection, that led to the analysis of 19 official criminal cases that were forwarded to the Dutch Public Prosecution Service (as several police investigations were merged into one criminal case). In these 19 criminal cases we discerned 14 jihadist networks, which means that – contrary to the police – we merged criminal cases if they focused on the same network.[7] In addition, we conducted the collection of data from these police files in accordance with the basic principles of GT methodology, because we collected the data during different periods. The first tier of data, which yielded 12 police investigations (or 7 criminal cases), was collected between May 2006 and May 2008 (see also De Poot & Sonneschein, 2011). Based on preliminary findings from the first tier, a second tier of data was gathered between July 2012 and December 2013, which initially resulted in 10 police investigations. However, due to the eruption of the Arab Spring, the emergence of particular categories, and the unclarities of a criminal case, we decided to add 6 additional police investigations to the second tier at a later stage. As a result, we analyzed a total of 16 police investigations (or 12 criminal cases) in the second tier. This dispersed data collection facilitated us to adopt a long-term and comparative perspective. The first tier of data covered the period 2000-2005, while the second tier of data eventually covered the period 2005-2013. Table 2.1 shows how the various criminal cases are spread over the different years. A few remarks need to be made in that respect. First, since several subjects operate in more than one network or criminal case, the total number of subjects in table 2.1 exceeds 209. Second, all individual subjects are numbered to guarantee anonymity. Whenever an example is provided in the following chapters to illustrate a particular finding, the subject concerned is therefore indicated with a number and not with his or her actual name. However, these numbers are not consistent throughout this dissertation. Subjects are renumbered per chapter in order to reinforce the anonymity of the subjects

[7] See chapter 3 for network conceptualization.

and the investigations, but also because each chapter deals with a different sample from the overall data-set of 209 individuals. This means that subject 21 in one chapter is not the same individual as subject 21 in another chapter.

The selected police investigations focused on several hundred individuals, which we eventually summarized to a total of 209 subjects. We did not copy police categorizations, but determined our own inclusion criteria.[8] The 209 subjects included are not necessarily terrorists or suspected terrorists. The basic inclusion criteria were that: (1) an individual expressed extremist Jihadi-Salafist sympathies or explicitly facilitated such a sympathizer; (2) we were able to gather information on the subject beyond his/her personal details; (3) the subject lived or regularly resided in the Netherlands. If the subject did not live in the Netherlands, but played an indispensable role in the network nonetheless, he or she was also included. An overview of the background characteristics of the 209 subjects is provided in Table 2.2. The Table shows that the majority of subjects was male and below 31 years of age. Their national origin differed vastly, although subjects from Moroccan descent were highly represented. Although information on marital status, education, and employment was available, there was a large group of which this information is unknown, and therefore drawing conclusions on these issues is difficult.

In order to gain access to the police files, a formal permission from the *Board of Procurators-General* was requested for both tiers of data. At the same time, an advisory board was assembled, entailing representatives from the Dutch National Police, the Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism, the Dutch Intelligence Agency, and the Dutch Public Prosecution Service. The representatives were all terrorism experts within their organization. In addition, biannual meetings were organized with the experts to reflect on our research progress during both data collection periods and to verify whether we complied with rules of data anonymity. Nonetheless, they respected our academic integrity and did not interfere with the reporting of our research findings. Initially they informed us about the availability and variety of police investigations relating to jihadist networks and they enabled us to physically access the police files. The police investigations from the first tier constitute an *initial sample* of which the inclusion criteria were the richness of the data and representativeness for different moments in time. The police investigations of the second tier were *purposefully* selected based on similar criteria and based on the categories rising from the first tier. We will describe this in the Data Analysis paragraph (2.4). GT methods allow purposeful sampling, because it maximizes variation of meaning (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 8; Morse, 2007, p. 234-235).

[8] When the police have reason to believe that certain individuals have the intention to act unlawfully under the influence of an Islamic fundamentalist doctrine, the police often start a criminal investigation under the categorization of terrorism. This consequently implies that the subjects monitored become labeled as suspected of terrorism, mobilized in terrorist groups. The label *terrorism* is a heavy burden, whereas many subjects within the movements analyzed appear to show different degrees of involvement, which does not always warrant the label terrorist.

After the consultations with the advisory board, we started the data collection at various locations of both the National Police and the Public Prosecution Service. Our working space was either a separate room near the executives or we were allowed to settle among them, depending on the person in charge. We used a personal and secured laptop to safely insert the data. This data collection was a very labor-intensive task due to the volume of the police files, which entailed thousands of pages per police investigation.[11] Eventually, it took several years to complete the data collection. In order to structure and guide this endeavor, a digital *documentation sheet* was used. The documentation sheet was merely to aid the researcher and to secure information from the police files into a format that could be used for future analyses. This sheet contained a variety of themes, such as *the investigation timeline, subjects' personal traits, division of roles, network characteristics, radicalization and recruitment processes, network activities, subject's environment, transnational connections, financial aspects, convictions, religious behavior,* and *ideology.* Each theme had several open questions that enabled the researcher to zoom in on certain aspects of the police files. Consequently, we inserted summaries of relevant information from the police files into the digital documentation sheet or we copied multiple excerpts from wiretap or interrogation transcripts. The documentation sheet was not a static research tool. We adjusted the sheet when it appeared to miss important themes or questions that emerged from the data. During the first tier of data collection we noticed the occurrence of subjects' flexible ideological behavior.[12] This was not yet a central theme in the initial documentation sheet, therefore we inserted it later on. On the other hand, possible activities such as suicide bombings were removed from the documentation sheet when it appeared that these activities did not occur in the Netherlands at all. As a result, through evaluation and constant comparison of data, we were able to continuously modify the documentation sheet. This approach is in accordance with more advanced versions of GT methodology, which acknowledges that a researcher has acquired certain ideas and perspectives about the world through education and prior reading. As a result, a researcher develops so-called *sensitizing concepts*, which are interpretive devices that function as a starting point to look at the data and to prepare interviews (Blumer, 1969; Bowen, 2008; Charmaz, 2006). The themes in the documentation sheet are such tools or devices, which we derived from studying prior terrorism and organized crime research (e.g., Kleemans, Van den Berg, & Van den Bunt, 1998). The themes were used to develop further understanding of the phenomenon and not to limit it. Furthermore, the themes were broken down in very general research questions, which were used to keep a focus at particular items that might be interesting. Hence, these themes and questions were not formulated to test hypotheses, but merely to guide our study of jihadist networks. When new questions arose, they were added to the documentation sheet.

[11] This varied between the police investigations. The smallest investigation could be a 1,000 pages, whereas the largest was over a 100,000 pages.

[12] see chapters 5 and 6.

Table 2.2: Background characteristics of the 209 studied subjects, based on police files.

Background characteristics	Absolute numbers	Percentage[9]
Gender		
Male	176	84 %
Female	33	16 %
	209	100 %
Age		
≤ 20	45	22 %
21-25	55	26 %
26-30	42	20 %
31-35	22	11 %
≥ 36	26	12 %
Unknown	19	9 %
	209	100 %
Origin		
Dutch	20	10 %
Moroccan	84	40 %
Algerian	37	18 %
Syrian	8	4 %
Tunisian	1	5 %
Turkish	7	3 %
Chechen	5	2 %
Pakistani	9	4 %
Iraqi	6	3 %
Other[10]	20	10 %
Unknown	2	1 %
	209	100 %
Marital Status		
Married / relation	82	39%
Single	36	17%
Unknown	91	44%
	209	100%
Education		
Max. secondary school	35	17%
Started tertiary education	41	20%
Unknown	133	63%
	209	100%
Employment / Study		
Yes	76	36%
No	41	20%
Unknown	92	44%
	209	100%

[9] Rounded figures.

[10] Libyan, French, Belgian, Afghan, Egyptian, Kuwaiti, Colombian, Somali, Mauritanian, and Rwandan origin.

2.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

The rich data derived from the police files function as the primary or core data in this dissertation. Despite their value, however, these data did not always provide enough context and required additional clarification. Also, due to our interpretation of the files, tentative categories emerged from the police files that needed validation or falsification. Therefore, we conducted additional semi-structured interviews with both the police investigators and the public prosecutors involved in drafting the criminal cases in order to enhance a comprehensive understanding of the studied jihadist networks from the police files. These interviews serve as secondary information in this research. We aimed at interviewing one police investigator and one public prosecutor per criminal case, although the numbers varied between cases. In total we interviewed 22 law enforcement respondents, which we have outlined per criminal case in Table 2.1. Some respondents were interviewed multiple times, whereas some interviews were held with more than one respondent. All interviews were conducted by means of a semi-structured questionnaire, with themes similar to the documentation sheet. The questionnaire was adjusted per interview to cover a particular criminal case. The interviews yielded useful information and the respondents provided valuable contextual information.

The interview procedures slightly differed per tier of data collection. During the first tier, the interviews were conducted at the start of the police file data collection. Besides the themes, the respondents were also asked whether all the relevant data was included in the police files and if they recognized the tentative categories that we derived from other police investigations. This way we verified whether the selected police files indeed covered a particular jihadist network and whether the tentative categories had actual ground. Also, we sometimes contacted the respondents again by telephone after we finished the data collection in order to clarify issues that remained ambiguous. We dispersed the timing of the interviews during the second tier. The first interview was conducted soon after we started our collection of data from the police files, while the (optional) second interview was conducted at the end of the data collection. This dispersion gave us more room to familiarize with the investigation before the first interview, and discuss and clarify issues in-depth during the second interview. It also enabled us to adjust the questionnaire in relation to the police investigation studied and the categories that emerged from it, adhering to the GT principles.

Despite this thorough and varied data collection, we noticed that not all emerging questions could be answered with data from police investigations. For instance, within the first tier of data we found that irregular immigrants were disproportionally present within jihadist networks.[13] Unfortunately, we could not directly derive from the police investigations what made the jihadist networks so attractive to irregular immigrants. Therefore, we conducted 23 additional semi-structured interviews with Imams (N = 10) and staff members (N = 13) from Dutch asylum centers (AC) and detention centers (DC). This way, we tried to draw a picture of the lives of irregular immigrants and asylum seekers prior to their jihadist involvement. The interviews with staff members were

conducted by means of a semi-structured questionnaire, which focused on items such as *general information on AC/DC, background asylum seekers/irregular immigrants, socio-economic factors, living conditions* and *religious behavior*. Because the decision to conduct interviews was based on the initial findings from the police files, and we constantly compared each interview with additional interviews and with the data from the police files, the additional data collection was in line with the principles of GT methodology.

Our data obviously relied heavily on the investigative authorities. Despite several features, such as our access to raw data, the inclusion of reports from examining judges, and the inclusion of lawyers' pleas, we admit that our data can be perceived as one-sided. Therefore, we interviewed several criminal defense lawyers who could shed a different light on the court cases.[14] As contact details of the lawyers were not always available, and because several lawyers did not cooperate or respond to our request, we were able to interview 6 criminal defense lawyers about the cases in which they were involved. Although this is a small number, together they represented a fair portion of our criminal cases.[15] Several of them had been working in this area of expertise for more than a decade and they have represented multiple cases and defendants over the years. As a result, most lawyers were able to provide valuable insights over a longer period, if not the entire period. These interviews were also conducted by means of a semi-structured questionnaire, which was slightly adjusted per interview to cover the relevant criminal cases. We provided the respondent with our findings and interpretations of the central themes (i.e., emerging categories) discussed above. Thus, we were able to validate our interpretation of the data from the police files and it provided the lawyers the opportunity to nuance our conclusions. Besides the fact that this procedure adheres to the GT principles, this was also necessary to ensure lawyer-client confidentiality. By laying bare the details of a case, we did not put the lawyer in a position in which he would disclose confidential information.

Finally, the interview settings and logistics were all similar, regardless of the type of respondent. The interviews were conducted at the personal offices of the respondents, or private areas were arranged in case the respondents did not have a personal office. This way, all interviews could proceed without interruptions from external factors. In addition, we guaranteed all the respondents that they – and the people they spoke about – were anonymized in our publications. With this promise we had permission

[13] See Chapter 5.

[14] We also tried to interview specific suspects via the criminal defense lawyers. Although the lawyers often encouraged this idea or introduced it themselves, a formal interview with a subject was never arranged.

[15] There were multiple criminal defense lawyers per criminal case and several criminal defense lawyers worked multiple cases. Due to the latter, our selection of respondents enabled us to obtain a lawyers' perspective for many cases as Table 2.1 illustrates.

to tape record all interviews (except for the interview with the Imams), which we then transcribed *verbatim.* The interviews lasted about 75 minutes on average, but varied between 45 and 100 minutes overall. The 10 Imams were interviewed in the setting of a focus group. Although we wished to interview them one-by-one, for logistical reasons permission was only granted for a focus group interview. During this focus group session, we discussed the main findings from the interviews with the staff members and verified whether the Imams noticed similar situations. This appeared to be a good starting point for the Imams to speak from their own experiences. This interview was not tape recorded, but immediately transcribed on the spot by a research assistant.

2.3.3 Trial observations

A final data source we deployed was the regular attendance of court hearings. We were able to attend more than 10 court hearings of 4 different criminal cases. This enabled us to see the suspects in person and gain a more vivid impression of their situation. Furthermore, because the suspects are questioned at trial, they may disclose new information of which we made extensive field notes. The information from the field notes was then added to the overall data. Also, when suspects were not temporarily detained and allowed to await trial in freedom, they were present in the public areas of the courthouse prior to and after the hearings and during the breaks. This enabled us to briefly speak with suspects, although they never disclosed any relevant research information and none of them agreed to participate in a formal interview. On the other hand, it did bring us into contact with several criminal defense lawyers, which led to the aforementioned interviews. Overall, each of the criminal cases had several court hearings, spread over several months. The court hearings contained several kinds of hearings such as pre-trial reviews, court examinations, verdicts and sentencing sessions. Unfortunately, we were not able to attend all court sessions, because many criminal cases were already closed at the time we started the research or were never brought to a Dutch court. We did, however, obtain most of the *verbatim* court transcripts from the court sessions we did not attend. Hence, we were aware of many additional statements from the suspects nonetheless. To conclude, attending those hearings opened doors for further data sampling (i.e., interviews with lawyers), and enabled us to compare our preliminary findings with additional information that was disclosed during a court session, again adhering to GT principles.

2.4 Data analysis

The triangulation of these different data sources led to significant new insights in jihadist networks. To discover and develop these insights, we analyzed the data simultaneously with the collection of data, leading to the identification of emerging categories. The emergence of preliminary categories initiated separate sub-studies within the greater research project on jihadist networks and at the same time directed further data

collection on jihadist networks. In order to transparently demonstrate how coding data led to the emergence of categories in more detail, we focus on one particular sub-study. In that particular research we studied so-called *jihadist involvement mechanisms* that enhance, discourage, and sustain possible affiliation with a jihadist network (see Chapter 6). In the following paragraph we will give an analytical overview of the data coding process at a more general level. We will additionally provide analytical transparency on a more concrete level by illuminating how such coding led to the emergence of categories in the study on jihadist involvement mechanisms. When we refer to that study, we change the format of the chapter into italicized sections. It must be stressed that we only show brief results. The other results of this study are outlined in Chapter 6. Furthermore, we divide the analyzing process into two procedures, namely 1) coding and categorizing, 2) and identifying relationships between the categories.

2.4.1 Coding and categorizing

One of the crucial procedures in GT methodology is *coding*, which Charmaz defines as "naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43-45). Codes offer a handle to interpret the data and to develop ideas about the data. In other words, a code is a link between the data and the final publication of findings. To arrive at this stage, the codes must first develop into categories and concepts, which can be viewed as higher level codes that have grown in complexity. Categories or concepts incorporate multiple codes and these codes eventually become the properties of the categories. The aim of collecting and analyzing data is to achieve theoretical saturation, which means that no more properties of the defined categories will emerge when new data are added. Although there are different interpretations about what constitutes a code or a category (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 18), the codes and the categories are the bones or the core of the analysis. *Initial* and *focused coding* (see Charmaz, 2006, p. 53-60) needs to be conducted to develop codes into an analytical framework.

We started using initial coding by zooming in on the documentation sheet with an open mind while asking the open question: "what do these data say?" To record what is happening in the data, we used a software program for qualitative data analysis, MAXQDA, to label segments of data (the information summaries and excerpts) by means of *line-by-line* and *incident-by-incident coding*. The former was predominantly used to code every sentence from the transcribed interviews and the excerpts in the documentation sheets. Incident-by-incident coding, however, was more suitable for the summaries from the police investigations, because summaries need to be interpreted as a whole (i.e., an incident), rather than by each individual sentence. Hence, line-by-line coding would not be very convenient in that context, because the summaries were often already expressed in our own words. Labeling segments forced us to narrow our focus to the information, which enabled us to distinguish and encapsulate pieces of relevant information into initial codes.

Several incidents in the police files highlighted how subjects communicated via multiple ways and shared all sorts of knowledge along the way. For instance, the interrogations contained confessions about how and what kind of material several subjects forwarded to others, while the wiretap transcripts illustrated discussions between subjects about this matter. These incidents were coded line by line with initial codes such as debating, attending educational gatherings, exchanging USB-sticks (with radical sermons and films), lending (religious) books, sending suras, and distributing factsheets emerged. These codes explicitly captured what was going on in the police files and remained very close to the data.[16]

To remain open to other analytical possibilities we adopted an additional approach called *focused coding*, which employs more directed, selective codes than initial codes. To develop such focused codes, the initial codes are used to scrutinize newly acquired data. By actively comparing the initial codes with the additional incidents, analytical thinking is encouraged, which helps to determine whether initial codes are adequate or need adjustment. Codes that are initially developed to capture a single incident influence the focus on the data such that similar data can be noticed and compared, leading to clarification of the data. Through constant comparing of data with data, data with codes, and codes with codes, focused codes can be refined. This refining could imply that codes are expanding, and develop into a category. As mentioned, categories are higher level codes and the focused codes are potential categories (see also Charmaz, 2006, p. 57-60).

When we compared the initial codes that were derived from prior studied investigations with the data from newly acquired investigations and conducted interviews, we observed similar incidents in the police files where subjects confessed, discussed, and held meetings to exchange knowledge. As a result, the foregoing initial codes such as lending (religious) books, or attending educational gatherings, for instance, were confirmed, sharpened, extended, and sometimes merged into focused codes, because they were indeed capable of summarizing additional incidents and situations. Moreover, through constant comparison we found that some of these focused codes together embodied a larger process, which was the distribution of ideological information. We therefore merged several focused codes in one and raised it to the level of a preliminary category, which we called "ideological information sharing". The foregoing focused codes became the properties of this category. However, due to our long-term perspective, we also found that "ideological information sharing" developed over time. Some properties were particularly present in earlier police investigations, but not so much later on. For instance, the exchange of ideological information moved from a physical to a virtual environment over

[16] See Chapter 6.

time, causing properties such as "exchanging USB-sticks" to be replaced by "sending ideological email attachments" in posterior investigations.[17]

However, categories are also provisional and one must therefore examine the adequacy of a category through theoretical sampling and constant comparison. This is done in a similar fashion as with the initial codes. This way, robust categories that capture larger mechanisms and processes can be developed. Furthermore, when the emerging categories are constantly compared, a set of initial categories often functions as properties or sub-categories of a higher level concept or category.

We found that "ideological information sharing" was not an independent category. When we compared it with several other preliminary categories, like "establishing brotherhood" and "boasting", we found that together these categories actually embodied a larger concept or category, which we called "encouraging involvement". This category stands for a process that supports a new recruit to remain associated with the jihadist movement, and the preliminary categories became subcategories or properties of "encouraging involvement". One should notice that each higher coding level becomes a more abstract term that covers a broader mechanism or process in comparison to the lower level codes and incidents.[18]

It is important to stress that the individual sub-categories or properties of "encouraging involvement" were supported by multiple segments of empirical data from a variety of investigations. This means that we did not cherry-pick seemingly interesting outliers, but kept studying whether our initial ideas were supported by more data. As a result, we could draw conclusions about this category that are grounded in the data.

2.4.2 Identifying relationships between categories

The development from initial codes to robust categories does not happen automatically, but requires a researcher's active analytical approach. The true analytical process is conducted by means of *memo writing*, which is the intermediate stop between collecting data and writing drafts of papers (Charmaz, 2006). Memos are written brainstorms or narratives about the data, which start developing as soon as the initial analysis of the data begins. Memos conceptualize personal ideas of the researcher about what he or she came across (Lempert, 2007, p. 245). It is through memo writing that data are actually compared with data, codes, and categories; and vice versa. In that respect, memo writing is an analytical tool used to arrive at the conclusion that a provisional code or category is valid or that additional data are needed. By writing memos the categories and their properties are defined, specified and elaborated.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

Through memo writing, the relationships between categories are further defined, which is the basis for a paper. Through sorting memos and visualizing relationships between categories, the analysis can be raised to a higher level, because the categories are integrated into elucidatory social processes. These overall processes are grounded in the data, but may also have a more general applicability. The following example illustrates the outcome of such an analytical process.

> *By means of memo writing we analyzed the category "encouraging involvement" further. By jotting down everything that came to mind about the category, we concluded that "encouraging involvement" was dependent on another category that we later redefined as "discouraging involvement". That category contained properties such as "police arrests", "hostile environment", "boasting", "conflicts", "pressure", and "intimidation", which were factors that could have a discouraging effect on people to associate further with jihadist networks. This relationship was partly revealed because these categories share amongst other things a similar (sub-)property, called "boasting". On the one hand, boasting was used by subjects to convince new recruits of the higher goal of the movement and to convert inconvenient arguments of likeminded subjects into better ones. Boasting was also used to overcome negative experiences and condemnations inflicted by society. Hence, boasting was an encouraging mechanism regarding jihadist involvement. On the other hand, however, we found that boasting was a tool during heavy debates and disputes, which could fuel conflicts and even repudiation of fellow members. In that regard, boasting carried too far and became a discouraging mechanism. By understanding this process of bravado and conflict, used to rebel against the out-group, but also to dominate the in-group, boasting became an interesting link between two important categories, and sharpened our understanding of the complex jihadist involvement process.*

The example above describes how continued coding, comparison, and memo writing opened our eyes to interesting processes that we could not been aware of prior to this study.

2.5 Benefits of combining police data and applying GT methods

Now that we have shown how the data were coded and how codes developed into categories, we want to discuss how the combination of police data and GT methods can methodologically contribute to the field of terrorism studies.

2.5.1 Benefits of police data

The added value of using police files as data can be found in its scope and nature. First, it offers an extreme amount of information, as we have shown in the data collection part. The police can reach much further into the lives and operations of alleged terrorists and criminals than many other sources. The wiretap transcripts for instance are unparalleled and provide incredible amounts of information that can be analyzed for academic purposes, provided that they can be sufficiently anonymized. Second, police data enabled us to scrutinize covert activities that would not have been easily accessible via other sources. For instance, the police files provided extensive information on crime, which was useful to distinguish particular networks (Chapter 3), but also to understand how foreign fighters financially covered their expenses (Chapter 4). Furthermore, through scrutiny of criminal conduct we were able to link irregular immigrants to jihadist networks (Chapter 5), a finding that is likely to have remained hidden when using other data sources. In addition, the aforementioned wiretap transcripts offer an insight into secretive jihadist-to-jihadist communication that would have been difficult to monitor via other means. It was especially useful with regard to the discovery of boasting and other forms of display of power between the subjects (Chapter 6). Surely, open social media accounts can be monitored nowadays, which could draw the attention to forms of display of power between the subjects, but this has only recently become a possibility. Due to our long-term and comparative perspective, we were also able to study private communication through in-house communication and telephone lines in much older police files during a time when communication between jihadists did not occur openly online.

2.5.2 Benefits of GT methods

The added value of applying GT methods in our research can first of all be found in the focused data collection. Due to constant comparison we were much more aware of the kind of data we needed to sharpen and enhance our understanding of a particular phenomenon. Via theoretical sampling we conducted additional interviews in the irregular immigrant study (Chapter 5) and we requested the Advisory Board for particular types of additional investigations with regard to both the foreign fighting study (Chapter 4) and the study on involvement mechanisms (Chapter 6). As a result, we were able to validate or falsify preliminary categories such as the pre-departure stages in the foreign fighting study (Chapter 4) and the top-down recruitment category in the involvement study (Chapter 6). Due to our explicit awareness of what type of information we wanted to test, we were also able to identify developments over-time in those studies. A second benefit is that GT methods allow us much more room to develop new insights on a higher abstraction level. Such insights would have been less likely to emerge when we would have used a deductive approach from the start. With deductive methods the study area is delimited by a hypothesis, which guides conscious choices concerning the data collection as well as the variables and concepts that are

tested. With such approach it would have been less likely that we would have acquired the aforementioned theoretical insights.

2.6 Limitations

Despite the value of the methodology illustrated, which is obviously labor intensive and time consuming, there are also limitations with regard to both the data as well as the use of GT.

2.6.1 Limitations of the data

The most prominent limitation of studying police files is the bias of information. The police do not cover all jihadist activities and not everything that is relevant to understanding jihadist networks is encapsulated in a police investigation. As a result, our 28 police investigations are a selection of a selection and can therefore not be seen as representative. The same applies to the chosen time-frame. Although we covered a relatively long period from 2000 to 2013, we did not analyze all jihadist activity during that period. Also, even if the police cover the majority of jihadist activity and although we had formal permission to access and analyze police files, we were still dependent on the cooperation of the police and the public prosecutor. We were unable to verify whether we were indeed provided with all the available documented information.

Additionally, the interviews suffered from a selection bias. As Table 2.1 shows, the number of interviews is not proportionate to the number of cases we studied. Unfortunately we were not able to interview all the people we aimed at. We did not structurally interview two law enforcement respondents (police investigator or public prosecutor) per criminal case and we also did not interview all lawyers involved. Although this limitation was beyond our control, it may have affected our perspective on the phenomenon.

The data might also be partially biased due to the context in which a (terrorism) police file is constructed. Terrorism cases are often believed to be formed and influenced under political pressure (LaFree & Dugan, 2007, p. 182), leading to misplaced labeling of groups and individuals as terrorists. This did not necessarily affect our research though, because we did not copy the labels from the police files. Rather, we used the information provided by the police and classified each individual or group under our own terms (see paragraph 2.3). We therefore refer to people as subjects, rather than terrorists, and we even disclaimed several alleged terrorism cases that to our standards had little to do with terrorism or jihadist networks. In general, the construction of a police file can also be influenced by investigation policies. The initial goal of the police files is to convince the judge and is therefore not supposed to be used as scientific data. Suspect interrogations are controlled and orchestrated by the police, which, according to Althoff (2013, p. 397), results in "forced communication" by the suspects. Whereas some subjects revealed everything they knew in order to be cooperative, others may have

twisted reality or disclosed as little as possible to avoid conviction. This implies a biased perspective and therefore police data must be handled with much caution. However, the recorded confidential communication between subjects should not be regarded as "forced communication", because in most cases the subjects were unaware of the fact that they were being monitored. However, there always remains a possibility that the final reports were filtered in order to persuade the judge. Althoff (2013, p. 397) reminds us that "court files are constructions of social reality in the context of criminal law", as the offender perspective and circumstances are primarily formulated through the lens of the authorities. Despite this accurate notion, we were to a great extent able to check the data ourselves, because we had access to the original transcripts. We therefore scrutinized this material intensively, and, as a result, relied on our own qualifications. In addition, we triangulated the information with other sources that offered a dissenting opinion, which enabled us to nuance our perspective. For instance, interviewing lawyers and studying their pleas clearly provided us with an alternative or altered perspective on the case. The same applies to the trial observations and scrutinizing court transcripts. In court, the various sources of information were assessed by a judge in the presence of all relevant actors. If there was a case of distorted information, this would have been the moment for opponents to protest. Furthermore, we also studied the examining judges' reports. In the Netherlands examining judges already play an active role during the investigation. They examine the pre-trial decisions made by the public prosecutor in order to protect the suspect and to ensure a fair process (see also Van der Meij, 2010).

Finally, an important point for discussion concerns the replicability of the research; one of the pillars of academic research and the main reason for a comprehensive methodological justification. Although the use of classified police files seems an odd choice in this regard, it may actually be a very suitable data source for a replication study. Although police files are not openly accessible, every researcher can request a formal admission. Other researchers are free to follow the same route as we did and apply for the exact same police files. Furthermore, such police files are relatively static data sources because all the included information is archived. This means that once a researcher has been granted permission to access the files, he or she will find the exact same data as we did and will be able to replicate our study. It must be stressed that the Dutch government is relatively liberal in comparison to other countries when it comes to studying classified information by academics (see for instance Kleemans & De Poot, 2008; Kleemans, Kruisbergen, & Kouwenberg, 2014; Schuurman et al., 2015; Van Koppen, 2013; Weenink, 2015), and this approach may therefore not be easily conducted elsewhere.

2.6.2 Limitations of the Grounded Theory methods

Studies using GT methods have encountered serious critique in the past.[19] Probably the most problematic issue is the conceptualization of GT methods. Many researchers claim to be using GT methodology or GT principles, but seem to confuse regular qualitative

analysis with grounded theory (e.g., Abbas & Yigit, 2014, p. 5; Brookman, Mullins, Bennet, & Wright, 2007, p. 865). For instance, coding data is not enough to be regarded as GT method (e.g., Bartlett & Miller, 2012, p. 53; Ricciardelli & Spencer, 2014, p. 435). As a result, the label of GT bears a semblance of methodological rigor, but quite often the detailed information of the procedures applied is missing, which makes it difficult to determine whether or not GT principles are applied. Therefore, we tried to be as explicit as possible in this chapter to outline the different methodological steps. There is also an ongoing discussion about what the end product of a GT study should look like (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130). Since we do not adhere to, for instance, the Glaserian approach that only approves formal theory building, our study may not be characterized as a traditional GT study. However, other prominent scholars such as Corbin & Strauss (2008, p. ix) acknowledge that formal theory building should no longer be the only end goal, and they support the wider application of this methodology for different purposes.

On a more practical level, a debatable practice in our research is the revision of the documentation sheet while gathering data from police files. Although this is entirely in line with GT rules because it enhances theoretical sampling and constant comparison, it might increase the selection bias as well. Since we were not always able to re-analyze the already analyzed police files with the revised documentation sheet, this may have led to some under or overrepresentation of results. Nonetheless, we tried to incorporate new issues in former cases with the data still available to us. Another way to scrutinize new issues was the use of an additional data source, such as interviews with key respondents.

Another critical issue in GT methodology is saturation. *Theoretical saturation* implies that new information or incidents become interchangeable with earlier gathered data, which means that there is no more room for further exploration of the defined categories (Holton, 2007, p. 278). However, we are unable to make a claim of saturation yet, because it is difficult to determine whether we have reached this point. Our data collection was limited by time, money, and regulations and we cannot judge whether new aspects of the phenomenon would emerge if the data collection would be continued, neither can we predict how the phenomenon will develop over time. We did reach saturation on the studied cases, but cannot predict the added value of expanding the data collection with new cases. Nonetheless, we could always continue our research in the future. Additional research would furthermore be necessary to validate or falsify our findings on a wider scale. Since our research has been limited to cases from the Netherlands, our findings and the concepts developed are merely applicable to those networks under scrutiny. Although we studied a significant number of cases and subjects, the current findings and concepts have no general explanatory power until additional research is conducted.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter we drew scholarly attention to a recurring shortcoming in the current terrorism research, which is the lack of methodological justification. By offering an overview of the methodological procedures conducted in this dissertation, we illustrated how analytical transparency can be achieved and how GT based methods can be used to collect and analyze such data.

Despite considerable drawbacks of both GT based methods and police data, we will illustrate in the following chapters how this combination of data and methods led to new insights on jihadist networks. The combination of data and methods led to theories and conclusions that would have been difficult to achieve by other means. We do not claim that the use of GT methods and police files comes without flaws, and it is not our intention to claim that this combination of data and methods is better than other methodologies. We will show, however, that the combination of police data and GT methods offers a suitable and complementary approach to the current field of terrorism studies. In order for this research field to progress further, researchers should be encouraged to seek new types of data or analytical tools to complement conventional methodologies. At the same time scholars should be transparent about the way they arrive at their conclusions. In a field that yearns for systematic analysis and rigor, openness about how this is established is more than a worthy pursuit.

Chapter 3:

Changing Organizational Structures of Jihadist Networks: A Social Network Analysis

3

Abstract

This paper uses social network analysis to study and compare the organizational structures and division of roles of three jihadist networks in the Netherlands. It uses unique longitudinal Dutch police data covering the 2000-2013 period. This study demonstrates how the organizational structures transform from a hierarchical cell-structure with a clear division of labor to a horizontal and dense networks with less clear orientation on tasks. The core member types in the jihadist networks transform from international jihad veterans with clear leadership skills to home-grown radicals with less status and often a lack of expertise. Furthermore, several jihadists evolve over time, when they used to be supporters, but become core members in posterior networks.

A slightly different version of this chapter was submitted as a separate manuscript:

De Bie, J.L., De Poot, C.J., Freilich, J.D., & Chermak, S. (2016). Changing Organizational Structures of Jihadist Networks in the Netherlands: A Social Network Analysis. Under review.

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter we aim to provide a more thorough understanding of the jihadist movement in the Netherlands by analyzing unique longitudinal Dutch police data. By using *social network analysis* (SNA) we try to capture changes in the organizational features of Dutch jihadist networks and their members' roles during the 2000-2013 period. SNA is known as a suitable method to uncover the structure, social dynamics, and members' position in a group, also with regard to illicit networks (Ressler, 2006). Over the last decade several studies have used SNA to illuminate organizational structures of terrorist groups (e.g., Carley et al., 2001; Van der Hulst, 2009a; Stollenwerk, 2015). It has been used to visually map structures (e.g., Koschade, 2006; Harris-Hogan, 2012), identify key players (Belli, Freilich, & Chermak, 2015; Pedahzur & Perliger, 2006; Van der Hulst, 2009a; Wu, Carleton, & Davis, 2014), and uncover organizational developments over time (Jordan, 2014; Magouirk, Atran, & Sageman, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005; Saxena, Santanam, & Basu, 2004). These studies have deepened our understanding of terrorist groups, and jihadist networks in particular. Furthermore, also for operational purposes SNA has been increasingly used by law enforcement and intelligence agencies (Van der Hulst, 2009b). The current study builds on prior SNA research by combining their objectives, but also by critically reflecting on several concepts and approaches.

The first points of discussion are the often referred concepts in the academic and policy domain about criminal and terrorist networks' features. One specific feature of illicit networks is that their organizational structures are highly affected by the outcome of an *efficiency-security trade-off*. Efficiency refers to the shortest possible way of communication, which is necessary to execute tasks effectively. The most suitable network structure in that regard would be a *dense* and decentralized network, because that entails many direct communication lines between members. In contrast to that, secrecy refers to minimal communication between members, because it may lead to exposure of the network. A suitable network structure would therefore be a centralized and less dense network with mainly strong ties, minimizing the level of direct information transfers and maximizing trust between members (e.g., Krebs, 2002, Koschade, 2006; Malm, Kinney, & Pollard, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). In essence, the trade-off means that illicit networks need to balance between the need to take collective action, and the need to assure trust and secrecy within collaborative settings in order to be effective but withstand law enforcement interventions at the same time (Morselli, Giguere, & Petit, 2007, p. 144). Allegedly, most terrorist networks choose security over efficiency because they often aim for a one-time action only. They prefer not to rush their plans to use the one shot they have, and therefore rather avoid frequent communication to keep a low profile (Belli et al., 2015; Krebs, 2002; Morselli et al., 2007). Yet, in order to achieve the desired aim, efficiency cannot be dismissed entirely. The necessary balance between efficiency and security therefore seems to be found in the *compartmentalization* of networks, which is based on Granovetter's (1973) *weak-and-strong-ties*. It states that by compartmentalizing the network in different cohesive sub-cells with strong redundant social ties, that only have weak non-redundant social ties with other sub-cells and/or a network's core, not the entire network will be exposed once a member or sub-cell is removed by law enforcement interventions. Compartmentalization thus increases efficiency within the sub-cells, but maintains the security of the network as a whole (Aylin, 2009; Baker & Faulkner, 1993; Duijn, 2014; McGloin, 2005; Pedahzur & Perliger, 2006; Perliger, 2014, Williams, 2001). Helfstein & Wright (2011b) however, argue that this network type should not be undisputedly assumed for all terrorist networks, basing their claim on research in which the analyzed terrorist attack networks were not centralized or compartmentalized at all. This warning against hasty assumptions can be endorsed via the notion that SNA is relatively difficult to apply to illicit networks due their covertness and fuzzy boundaries (Buchan & Whelan, 2015; Malm, Nash, & Moghaddam, 2015; Sparrow, 1991). Covertness makes it difficult to determine who belongs to a network, resulting in fuzzy boundaries that complicate the assessment that a network is complete. These difficulties facilitate the possibilities of missing data and incorrect relations, which can affect the quantitative SNA measures that are highly sensitive for minor adjustments (Krebs, 2002).

Another point of discussion concerns the role and position of a network's key player. It is often claimed that high actor level centrality scores classify individuals' roles. For instance, a subject is considered a *leader* when he has many direct contacts (high *degree centrality*), due to his centralized position (e.g., Qin, Xu, Hu, Sageman, & Chen, 2005; Stollenwerk, 2015; Wu et al., 2014). Also, a subject is considered a *broker* when he is on the path of two unrelated subjects (high *betweenness centrality*). In other words, when he connects isolated or distanced compartments within the network (e.g., Van der Hulst, 2009a; Perliger & Pedahzur, 2011; Morselli & Roy, 2008; Saxena et al., 2004). Identifying such key players is often assumed to have potential regarding disruption strategies (Koschade, 2006; McGloin, 2005; Morselli & Roy, 2008; Van der Hulst, 2009b), although arguments against it have been expressed as well. A first argument is that the removal of centralized actors only has a temporary effect, often caused by the network's resilience which enables it to find an immediate replacement (Duijn et al., 2014; Mullins, 2013). A second argument is that the most centralized actors are not always the most important actors (Carley et al., 2001; Mullins, 2013), but rather the most visible ones (Peterson, 1994). The reason for this is the distinction between social and human capital. Whereas the former merely reflects the number of a person's connections, the latter displays personal qualities, such as skills and expertise (Duijn et al., 2014). These qualities are difficult to determine with mere centrality metrics. Targeted removal of central actors is therefore not necessarily the silver bullet to counter-terrorism strategies (Helfstein & Wright, 2011b, p. 792). Rather a combination of the social and human capital of an actor needs to be assessed, by conducting both centrality metrics and a qualitative analysis, to determine the centralized position of an actor and his or her qualities and assets (Duijn et al., 2014, p. 3; Mullins, 2013; Van der Hulst, 2009a, p. 24).

A final point of discussion is that, with the exception of a small number of researches, many SNA studies portray a rather static picture of clandestine networks (Mullins, 2009a). These SNA studies highlight how one particular network operates at one specific moment in time, without enabling a comparison with networks from different episodes. Focusing on a single time period, while useful, could overlook organizational changes or the transformation of group members' roles, positions, and activities (Mullins, 2013). Moreover, there is only limited attention paid to whether changing organizational features and roles affect each other over time. Identifying dynamic changes would add to the understanding and could also aid policy makers in devising counter terrorism measures.

Based on the foregoing discussions we can conclude that findings about illicit network structures and roles based on SNA are interesting, but have to be interpreted with care and caution. In other words, conclusions derived from previous studies should not be instantly assumed to be applicable when dealing with illicit networks in other settings. In this chapter we therefore apply SNA to examine to what extent particular network features apply to the case of jihadist networks in the Netherlands. Although several studies have already applied SNA to Dutch case studies (e.g., Duijn et al., 2014; Van der Hulst, 2009a, 2009b), they did not focus on the possible change of network features, and hardly used any qualitative analysis. The central research question of this chapter therefore is: *To what extent do the organizational structures of the studied jihadist networks differ over time and what kind of roles do the studied subjects adopt in these networks?* To answer this question, we analyzed the temporal development of the jihadist movement of the Netherlands between 2000 and 2013, by comparing different jihadist networks from different points in time. This way, we try to identify differences and similarities in these networks' *organizational structures* and *subjects*' *roles*. Through mapping and visualizing the networks via SNA, a mental picture of complex linkages is provided (Saxena et al., 2004) which enabled us to discover patterns of behavior (Koschade, 2006; Mullins, 2009a). We use a mixed-method of qualitative and quantitative analysis, which adds a layer of precision in connecting social ties and their influence on behavior (Malm et al., 2015). In addition, instead of focusing on global jihadist movements or international terrorist organizations, our focus is on local jihadist networks in a Western European country. This will add to our understanding and may aid policy makers in their attempt to counter terrorism, as the many Western European Muslims traveling to ISIS controlled conflict areas to participate in the Jihad is currently a pressing issue (see also Chapter 4). It is important to empirically uncover the local networks behind foreign fighters and see how these networks have changed over the years.

The following paragraph will describe the data and methods that have been used to achieve this goal. After that we will outline the quantitative results of our analysis, which will be followed by a combination of the quantitative and qualitative findings. Finally, we reflect on our findings in the conclusion and discuss the implications and value of SNA in that regard.

3.2 Data and Methods

3.2.1 Data

The data used for this chapter are police investigations that focused on jihadist networks. The information from the police files was analyzed both quantitative and qualitative. This mixed method is important to deepen our understanding of the phenomenon and reduce the aforementioned risk of misinterpretation (Van der Hulst, 2009a). We were granted access to 28 voluminous confidential police investigations into jihadist terrorism between 2000 and 2013, focusing on different jihadist networks and involving hundreds of individuals. Based on these police files, this study created a sample for further analyses that contained 209 unique individuals. These 209 individuals were not all terrorists or violent extremists and not all of them were convicted or indicted with criminal charges. Our inclusion criteria for the 209 subjects were that: (1) a subject expressed extremist jihadist sympathies or that he/she explicitly facilitated such a sympathizer; (2) we were able to gather information on the subject beyond his/her personal details; (3) the subject lived or regularly resided in the Netherlands, or played an indispensable role in the network from abroad.

The police investigations yielded rich data based on various sources such as original wire taps of telephone and internet communication, recordings of in-house communication, transcripts of suspect interrogations, and witness statements, observation reports, forensic reports, house searches, and expert-witness reports, and importantly, complete and verbatim court transcripts and lawyers' statements. Court data is often considered to be the most reliable data source in terrorism research (Freilich, Chermak, Belli, et al., 2014; Sageman, 2004). We used a data collection sheet to systematically gather information from the police files, which contained several items concerning group structure, individual biographies, activities, ideology, recruitment process etc. In addition, we also conducted 28 semi-structured interviews with leading police investigators, public prosecutors and criminal defense lawyers who were involved in the 28 police investigations. The interviews, which were all recorded and transcribed *verbatim*, enabled us to place the documentation into context and provided valuable insights due to collaboration with practitioners. Finally, we attended over 10 court sessions of the criminal cases that were still under judicial review, which resulted in a large volume of valuable field notes.

For the purposes of the current chapter, the information from the police files, interviews, and field notes was transformed into a data-set suitable for both quantitative and qualitative analysis, which will be discussed below. The use of police files, or at least archival data and court documents, is often praised by SNA scholars (Baker & Faulkern, 1993; Krebs, 2002) when applying SNA to clandestine networks, and again it has been labeled by some as the "gold standard" (Belli, Freilich, & Chermak, 2015). The reason for this is that this source contains a large amount of relational data, documented over an extended period of time, which makes it highly suitable to uncover social interaction (Koschade, 2006, p. 562).

3.2.2 Network conceptualization

In the remainder of this chapter we merely refer to the term (*jihadist*) *network* as our unit of analysis. The studied networks are a selection of individuals from the aforementioned 209 subjects. We categorized individuals as belonging to one *jihadist network* when these subjects interacted with each other during a particular episode, while conducting activities together that were aimed at particular objectives, in which the Jihadi-Salafist ideology played a central role. Hence, the network boundaries are primarily formed by the subjects' interactions, activities, and shared violent jihadist ideology, rather than actual terrorist or violent acts.

To illuminate jihadist network structures in different time periods in the Netherlands, we selected 3 networks from the overall data-set that were similar in terms of core activities, but differed regarding the time period during which they were active. On the one hand, all 3 networks primarily aimed at the *activities* as outlined in the introduction (Chapter 1). The core business of all 3 networks was the facilitation of foreign fighting journeys to conflict areas, the dissemination and consolidation of the Jihadi-Salafist doctrine, and conducting criminal activities. At the same time, each network represented a particular episode; together they cover the larger time-frame 2000-2013. Regarding the number of subjects of each selected network, we applied an additional inclusion criteria apart from the ones mentioned before. If we had no information on the network positioning of a subject, we removed that subject from the analysis, which was actually only in a minority of cases. Network 1[20] operated between 2001 and 2003 and contained 34 individuals. The average age of this network's subjects is 28.7 years and most subjects were born outside the Netherlands. It operated during a time when jihadist networks did not receive significant attention by the police, the media, or the public. Because not many jihadist networks operated in the Netherlands before, network 1 can be considered one of the pioneering networks. We identified this network by merging 3 criminal cases, containing 4 police investigations. Next, network 2 operated between 2005 and 2006 and contained 25 individuals. The average age is 22.2 years and many subjects are second generation migrants who were born in the Netherlands. Network 2[21] operated immediately after the first spike of societal attention for jihadism. Whereas these subjects had specific predecessors they could use as an example, the police were much more aware of their existence at the same time. We identified network 2 by using a single criminal case, containing 2 police investigations. Finally, network 3[22] operated between 2008 and 2013. The average age is 23.7 years and most subjects are second generation migrants who were born in the Netherlands. The third network has a much longer life span than the first two networks. The reason for this is that the third network is based on a variety of police evidence, from 4 different police investigations, that did not yet lead to one coherent criminal trial. As a result, these investigations did not yet lead to the collapse of the network, as was the case with the first two networks. Moreover, the network could continue to exist and was still active when the police information was analyzed for this research. This means that we focus on a particular (but long) operational episode of network 3 and a complete and conclusive picture of network 3 cannot be guaranteed. Nonetheless, the independent investigations could still provide valuable information to conduct SNA.

[20] This is network 2 in Table 2.1 (Chapter 2)

[21] This is network 7 in Table 2.1 (Chapter 2)

[22] This is network 10 in Table 2.1 (Chapter 2)

3.2.3 Quantitative analysis

Interactions between subjects were quantified to apply SNA. An observed interaction between two subjects was labeled an undirected tie. Such interactions include face to face meetings, or internet and telephone communication. Hence, unlike many other studies, the dyads in our study mean that the nodes actually knew each other. Moreover, we also measured the frequency or intensity of the interaction; in other words, the strength of the tie. We registered all observed ties in a value matrix, in which the rows and columns are defined by the subjects (i.e., nodes) and the cell values indicate the strength of the relationship between two nodes. The strength of the relationship measured as one of three values: a "1" indicating a "weak" relationship (i.e., at least one interaction between two subjects, although more interactions are likely), "3" indicating a "moderate" relationship (i.e., multiple interactions between two subjects during the investigation), or "5" indicating a "strong" relationship (i.e., multiple interactions between subjects, primarily on a daily or weekly basis).

We next processed the valued matrices in SNA software packages "Pajek" and "Gephi", which enabled us to apply the aforementioned network metrics *density, degree, betweenness* and *closeness centrality*. *Density* refers to the proportion between the number of observed ties and the maximum number of all possible ties in a network (Belli et al., 2015). A density score ranges from 0 (no ties) to 1 (everyone is connected to each other). *Degree centrality* refers to the number of direct contacts a node has, which according to the literature implies a subject with power or leadership. Standardized scores range from 0 to 1; a high score indicates that a subject is directly connected to many others in the network, whereas a low score indicates direct connections to only a few subjects. In a similar vein, *weighted degree centrality* also incorporates the strength of a relation. A high score indicates that a subject has a strong relation with many others in the network, whereas a low score indicates weak connections to only a few subjects. *Betweenness centrality* refers to the extent to which a particular node is on the shortest path between pairs of nodes in the network and therefore has a potential for control of communication (Freeman, 1979), which implies a subject's broker position. Standardized scores range from 0 to 1; a high score means that many shortest paths go through this node, whereas a low score indicates that no to a few shortest paths go through this node. *Closeness centrality* refers to the ability of subjects to access other subjects and measures the number of steps it takes for a subject to get to another.

Unlike degree centrality, closeness centrality scores reflect the indirect contacts of a subject. A high score means that a subject has relatively short paths to other subjects in the network and is thus able to access others easily, whereas a low score means his paths are relatively long, which makes other nodes less accessible (Freeman, 1979). Together, these metrics indicate a subject's centrality and power in the network.

Finally, in order to measure the extent of compartmentalization, we attempted to identify communities of nodes within the network that have a higher density compared to other communities in the network. This study therefore used the *modularity* measure, which identifies meaningful communities and incorporates the weight or strength of the relations. Modularity looks for communities of nodes that are more densely and stronger connected to each other than would be expected if they were connected by chance. It is a measure that is used to look for how "good" a clustering actually is (Good, De Montjoye, & Clauset, 2010; Sah, Sing, Clauset, & Bansal, 2014). Networks with a high modularity score have a strong community structure. The nodes within the communities have dense and strong connections, but sparse or weak connections with nodes from other communities (Newman, 2006). A modularity score of 0 means that the measured communities are purely random, whereas values above 0.3 are considered good and meaningful divisions (Newman & Girvan, 2004).

3.2.4 Qualitative analysis

The information from the police files, interviews, and field notes was also coded to conduct a qualitative analysis. The coding process was inspired by ground theory principles and conducted with the help of software program MAXQDA. It started with an *open* or *initial coding* procedure, which in this study was the *incident-by-incident coding*. While comparing different incidents, relevant codes regarding the subjects' social relationships and roles emerged. Subsequently, *focused coding* was applied to evaluate the initial codes. Through this procedure, the codes developed into useful concepts about the activities, network structures, and division of roles (see Charmaz, 2006, p. 53-57). By constantly comparing data with data, codes and qualitative concepts, the qualitative findings were specified and elaborated.[23]

3.2.5 Limitations

The use of police files as data source for grounded theory methods and SNA comes with particular limitations. The most important one is the "boundary specification problem", meaning that we may be analyzing an incomplete network. The police cannot monitor all potential jihadist sympathizers, or measure all interactions between them, which may lead to missing data. This in turn can lead to validity and reliability issues, especially with regard to the centrality metrics (Borgatti, 2006). In the same vein, because the subjects do not seem to have an explicit policy about who to include in their network,

[23] For a more extensive outline of the used GT methods, see Chapter 2.

Table 3.1: Network level descriptives and metrics.

	Network 1	Network 2	Network 3
Years of operation	2001-2003	2005-2006	2008-2013
Size	34 subjects	25 subjects	25 subjects
Density	0.210	0.380	0.393
Average node	6.94	9.12	9.44
Average path length	2.266	1.687	1.637
Modularity	0.471 (4 communities)	0.305 (3 communities)	0.232 (3 communities)
Degree CD(ni)	0.388	0.466	0.435
Betweenness CB(ni)	0.464	0.185	0.158
Closeness CC(ni)	0.524	0.466	0.435

and they probably do not have a solid idea themselves about what constitutes their network, the boundaries of a network should be considered unclear or fuzzy (Sparrow, 1991). Nonetheless, as explained in 2.5.1, police data have significant advantages compared to other data due to the much further reach into the lives and operations of alleged terrorists and criminals. This way the data enable you to thoroughly scrutinize the tie strengths.

Also, it is important to stress that our findings may be partially biased. The observed network structures may be the outcome of a particular police investigation strategy, and the differences between networks over time may have been caused by adjustments in police investigation strategies. In other words, the police may have identified particular network structures in the past, but prioritized one over the other at different stages. This creates the possibility that we may find a difference in network structures over time, while this may actually be a selection effect. On the other hand, we merged particular police investigations in order to identify our own types. This is a great advantage of the current study, because it enables us to have a broader view than the predetermined organizational structures.

3.3 Quantitative Results

To compare the 3 networks, we have conducted basic quantitative analyses of which the results are captured in Table 3.1. Several metrics in Table 3.1 show how well the nodes or subjects in the networks are connected. Network 1 has a notably lower *density* of 0.210, meaning that only 21% of all possible connections exists, whereas the other networks score considerably higher density values of respectively 38% and 39.2%. This means that over time, the studied Dutch jihadist networks have become denser and the subjects have become more connected to other jihadists. Although all density scores seem low at first sight, they are relatively high compared to other terrorist groups (e.g.,

Belli et al., 2015; Krebs, 2001; Stollenwork et al., 2015) and organized crime networks (e.g., McGloin, 2005; Morselli, 2009) which often portray density scores between 10-20% or lower. The fact that network 1 is less dense is also a notable finding: although it is a considerably larger network, it's subjects have on average less connections and need a longer route to get to other nodes than the subjects in other networks. Based on this finding, we may conclude that over the years, it became easier for the subjects in the studied networks to find access to others. This is further accentuated by the modularity scores, which indicate how well subjects cluster in larger communities. Networks 1 and 2 have stronger community structures than network 3 and the modularity score of network 3 is slightly under the threshold of 0.3. This means the clustering structure of network 3 is less meaningful, which could be the effect of a dense network.

In addition, the network level centrality scores (degree, betweenness, and closeness) show the extent of variety in actor level scores. All 3 networks indicate a moderately centralized structure due to their similar *degree* scores of around 0.4. However, network 2 and 3 score higher, implying that these later networks are somewhat more centralized around a few prominent people. However, it must be stressed that the centrality score of network 1 is heavily affected by the network size, which is considerably larger than the other networks. This may impede its degree centralization. With regard to betweenness, network 1 scores considerably higher than the other networks, implying that there are a few prominent subjects in network 1 who connect isolated parts of the network. This is less the case in the other networks which were active in later stages of the studied time-frame. The higher closeness score of network 1 in comparison to the other networks indicates more variety among the subjects in the degree to which they have access to indirect contacts in this network.

To see whether the three centrality measures significantly differ between the 3 networks studied, we measured the actor level degree, betweenness, and closeness scores (see Tables 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 for the actor level scores within each separate network) and then compared the network means by conducting a Kruskall-Wallis test (a Levene test showed unequal variances between networks, hence a Kruskall-Wallis instead of an ANOVA). We found a significant difference between the networks with respect to degree (χ^2 = 19.690 df = 2, p = 0.000) and closeness centrality (χ^2 = 44.338 df = 2, p = 0.000), but not for betweenness centrality (χ^2 = 0.603 df = 2, p = 0.740). This tells us that the degree and closeness centrality scores are not evenly distributed among the networks, but the distribution of betweenness scores appears to be similar. We then conducted a pair-wise Games-Howell post-hoc test and found that network 1 was significantly different from network 2 and 3. We found no significant difference between network 2 and 3 (see Table 3.2). Following the assumptions from the literature, this means that the division of roles is significantly different in network 1 compared to the other two networks.

Table 3.2: Post-hoc test for comparison of actor level degree and closeness centrality means.

			Mean Difference	Std. Error	Significance
Degree	Network 1	Network 2	-0.1796794*	0.0435568	**0.001**
	Network 1	Network 3	-0.1830074*	0.0439018	**0.001**
	Network 2	Network 3	-0.0033280	0.0557479	0.998
Closeness	Network 1	Network 2	-0.1568148*	0.0238577	**0.000**
	Network 1	Network 3	-0.1716588*	0.0225228	**0.000**
	Network 2	Network 3	-0.0148440	0.0276138	0.853

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level.

The foregoing centrality metrics give us an understanding of the structures and division of roles in the 3 networks studied. However, the numbers only give limited insight in these network, because they do not tell us much about *how* network 1 actually differs from the other networks and *how* the individuals perform their alleged role. Also, because the quantitative analysis has difficulties identifying false positives (Mullins, 2013), we are not sure whether the centrality metrics form a good indication of the subjects' roles. In order to deepen and contextualize our findings, to detect more subtle differences in the network structures and performed roles, and to obtain a more thorough understanding of how the analyzed networks differed over time, we combine our quantitative network analysis with a qualitative network analysis in the next paragraphs.

In the next paragraphs, we will discuss each network separately and illuminate the network's *organizational structure* and *subjects' roles*. Network structures will be visualized in so-called sociograms: the connections or ties between studied subjects are shown by the edges between nodes, while the edge thickness indicates the strength of their relation. Also, the nodes will be clustered in different communities, based on a modularity measure, which is demonstrated by the colors in the sociograms; nodes belonging to the same cluster have the same color. We will describe, interpret, and contextualize the quantitative clusters with qualitative analyses. Additionally, we will describe which subjects played a prominent role within the network. We therefore divided the subjects in two categories: *core members* and *supporters*. Core members are the precursors in the network, who incite others to embrace the ideology and to conduct particular activities. Sometimes they are "leaders", but foremost they form the backbone of the network. It is questionable whether these networks would survive without these core members. Supporters, however, are subjects who follow the core members and facilitate the network in different ways. They play a less dominant role, but form the majority of the network. We will mainly focus on the core members and illuminate only a minority of subjects in the next paragraphs.

3.4 Combining quantitative and qualitative results

3.4.1 Network 1

3.4.1.1 Network structure

The first network prepared several foreign fighting attempts to primarily Afghanistan and Pakistan and recruited numerous new members between 2001 and 2003. It has a strong international foundation, which resulted from the connections with the GSPC in Algeria, and the fact that several members came to the Netherlands after they fought jihad in other countries to expand the jihadist movement. The qualitative analysis shows that network 1 was a relatively well-structured and organized network. It seemed to be compartmentalized in several sections for operational reasons, which partly explains the lower density score and longer path length. The visualization of this structure is captured in Figure 3.1. The network was centralized around 4 core members, who are indicated with diamonds in the sociogram (subjects 2, 14, 16, and 19). The core members were each in charge of a separate cell of recruits with whom they had a hierarchical relation. The core members and their cells seem to operate autonomously, although the core members communicated with each other on a regular basis. The other nodes in the sociogram are the *supporters*, illustrated with a circle, which are mainly recruits, followers, or operational facilitators.

To validate the compartmentalization, we applied a modularity measure and found that the communities resemble the cells to a certain extent. The blue community (density = 1)[24] consists of core member 14 and 3 followers with whom he regularly participates in sporting classes, allegedly for terrorist training purposes. The yellow cluster (density = 1) consists of core member 19 and 2 supporters. The red community (density = 0.54) forms the ideological core of the network, encapsulating 2 core members (2 and 16) and many other key facilitators. The inclusion of 2 core members in one compartment seems odd, and is probably a direct effect of excluding several recruits from the dataset due to a lack of information.[25] The network is in reality much larger than the 34 nodes, which explains why the modularity measure does not fully correspond to the qualitatively identified compartmentalization. Besides the clustering around core members, this network also contains a subgroup of subjects who merely conducted criminal activities, commissioned by core member 2, such as large scale passport forgery, shoplifting, burglaries, and drug transportations. These crimes were used to logistically or financially support the journeys to conflict areas (see also Chapters 4 and 6). This additional network partitioning is illustrated by the modularity measure, which clustered several subjects into one community (green community, density = 0.47) who were mainly undocumented. Many of them form the periphery of the network with

24 Density is not weighted, just based on plain number of contacts.

25 This means that the centrality scores are affected by this omission and qualitative data is therefore necessary to draw a more realistic picture.

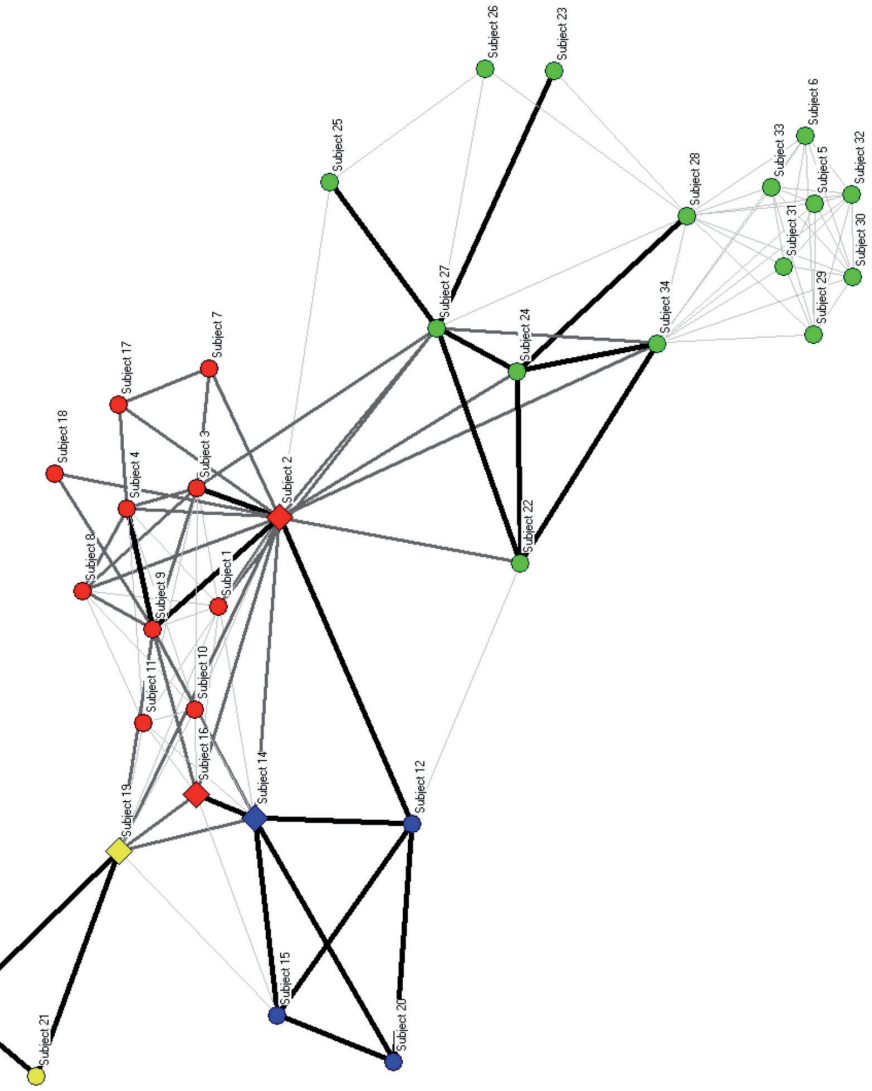

Figure 3.1: Sociogram network 1.

weak connections throughout the network, although those subjects involved in many criminal activities were strongly connected to each other and only weakly connected to the ideological communities. Most subjects in the green community were less ideologically devoted to the Jihadi-Salafist doctrine or the goals of the core members, and the pragmatic value of the network seems to be the most appealing factor to them (see also Chapter 5).

Due to the network's compartmentalization, subjects were able to conduct large scale crimes on a structural basis by one community, while other communities successfully focused on the recruitment, training and ideological education of new members. As a result of this seemingly strict division of labor and connections the overall density was decreased, which lowered chances of exposure. At the same time this increased the density within the separate communities which increased the efficiency of communication.

3.4.1.2 Roles

Taking a closer look at the individual subjects, we observe that the core members do not have an entirely equal relation. Subject 2 seems to be the *primus inter pares*. He is a charismatic ideologue who acquired a high social status due to his religious knowledge and numerous international contacts (in 119 countries according to his phone records). He is known by fellow subjects as the "President of the Room of Safety and Stability" where he ideologically educates other subjects. The police for instance found a so-called "Jihadi-library" in his home with thousands of radical tapes and documents. Besides being an ideological and operational leader, he is also a broker between the core group and the green cluster. He communicates primarily with the main criminal facilitators subjects 22, 24, 27, and 34, who at the same time predominantly communicate with subject 2. This narrowed communication flow explains the high network level betweenness and closeness scores. The central and broker positions of subject 2 are also illustrated by the centrality scores in Table 3.3, where he ranks first for all centrality scores with quite a lead towards the rest. However, the centrality scores in Table 3.3 only partly correspond to the qualitative categorization of the other core members (highlighted cells), because they are not structurally ranked as the most centralized subjects. We notice for instance that subject 16, who is a jihad veteran with extensive ideological knowledge, has a very low rank on all centrality scores, despite his status as a popular and admired theologian who builds close relationships with new recruits. On the one hand this is caused by the aforementioned exclusion of many recruits. On the other hand, the demotion of core members from the top centrality ranks is the result of the unexpected centralized position of the criminal facilitators, such as subject 27, 34 and 28 in particular. Subject 27 is probably the most important criminal facilitator due to his solid relation with subject 2, who commissions him to forge passports. During house searches, the police found many false passports and professional equipment that enabled him to forge the passports. In addition, subject 27 is also accused of helping subject 2 to escape from

Table 3.3: Actor level centrality scores for network 1.

Network 1				
CD(ni)	**Weighted CD(ni)**	**Rank**	**CB(ni)**	**CC(ni)**
0.5758 Subject 2	0.3455 Subject 2	**1.**	0.4897 Subject 2	0.7021 Subject 2
0.3636 Subject 28	0.2061 Subject 27	**2.**	0.2856 Subject 34	0.5690 Subject 34
0.3636 Subject 34	0.1939 Subject 14	**3.**	0.1305 Subject 19	0.5500 Subject 27
0.3030 Subject 14	0.1758 Subject 9	**4.**	0.1264 Subject 27	0.5238 Subject 22
0.3030 Subject 27	0.1576 Subject 19	**5.**	0.0602 Subject 28	0.5156 Subject 1
0.3030 Subject 19	0.1455 Subject 34	**6.**	0.0498 Subject 14	0.5077 Subject 24
0.2727 Subject 3	0.1394 Subject 3	**7.**	0.0368 Subject 12	0.5000 Subject 14
0.2727 Subject 1	0.1394 Subject 24	**8.**	0.0327 Subject 1	0.5000 Subject 19
0.2727 Subject 9	0.1273 Subject 12	**9.**	0.0239 Subject 22	0.4925 Subject 9
0.2424 Subject 31	0.1212 Subject 4	**10.**	0.0218 Subject 3	0.4853 Subject 3
0.2424 Subject 30	0.1152 Subject 22	**11.**	0.0177 Subject 9	0.4853 Subject 11
0.2424 Subject 29	0.1091 Subject 16	**12.**	0.0131 Subject 16	0.4853 Subject 10
0.2424 Subject 32	0.1030 Subject 15	**13.**	0.0112 Subject 25	0.4853 Subject 16
0.2424 Subject 11	0.0970 Subject 28	**14.**	0.0092 Subject 24	0.4583 Subject 4
0.2424 Subject 10	0.0910 Subject 20	**15.**	0.0077 Subject 11	0.4521 Subject 12
0.2424 Subject 33	0.0910 Subject 8	**16.**	0.0077 Subject 10	0.4521 Subject 8
0.2424 Subject 4	0.0788 Subject 1	**17.**	0.0064 Subject 4	0.4459 Subject 28
0.2424 Subject 16	0.0606 Subject 13	**18.**	0.0063 Subject 15	0.4459 Subject 25
0.2121 Subject 6	0.0606 Subject 21	**19.**	0.0043 Subject 26	0.4286 Subject 7
0.2121 Subject 5	0.0545 Subject 17	**20.**	0.0011 Subject 8	0.4286 Subject 17
0.2121 Subject 8	0.0545 Subject 7	**21.**	0.0006 Subject 7	0.4231 Subject 18
0.1515 Subject 24	0.0485 Subject 32	**22.**	0.0006 Subject 17	0.4074 Subject 31
0.1515 Subject 12	0.0485 Subject 29	**23.**	0.0003 Subject 31	0.4074 Subject 29
0.1515 Subject 22	0.0485 Subject 11	**24.**	0.0003 Subject 30	0.4074 Subject 30
0.1515 Subject 15	0.0485 Subject 33	**25.**	0.0003 Subject 32	0.4074 Subject 32
0.0909 Subject 25	0.0485 Subject 10	**26.**	0.0003 Subject 29	0.4074 Subject 33
0.0909 Subject 26	0.0485 Subject 31	**27.**	0.0003 Subject 33	0.4024 Subject 6
0.0909 Subject 17	0.0485 Subject 30	**28.**	0.0000 Subject 20	0.4024 Subject 5
0.0909 Subject 20	0.0424 Subject 6	**29.**	0.0000 Subject 6	0.3976 Subject 26
0.0909 Subject 7	0.0424 Subject 5	**30.**	0.0000 Subject 23	0.3929 Subject 23
0.0606 Subject 13	0.0424 Subject 25	**31.**	0.0000 Subject 21	0.3626 Subject 15
0.0606 Subject 23	0.0364 Subject 18	**32.**	0.0000 Subject 5	0.3474 Subject 20
0.0606 Subject 21	0.0364 Subject 23	**33.**	0.0000 Subject 18	0.3402 Subject 13
0.0606 Subject 18	0.0182 Subject 26	**34.**	0.0000 Subject 13	0.3402 Subject 21

prison in collaboration with subject 22, 24, and 34. Because subjects 28 and 34 have the most direct contacts with many relatively "isolated" undocumented immigrants in the network's periphery (with whom they allegedly commit crimes), they score relatively high on betweenness centrality. This is an interesting finding, because the centrality scores thus direct us to the most important criminal facilitators of the network, but not to all core suspected terrorists. Hence, the qualitative analysis provides context that is necessary to interpret and validate key subjects identified by the SNA, based on their centrality scores. The same applies to several key subjects who were not identified as brokers based on their centrality scores. In the analyzed network these subjects have many international contacts, which they use to explore and utilize financial opportunities worldwide (subject 21), to coordinate jihad travels abroad (subject 17), or to collaborate with other jihadist networks overseas (subject 9). However, because their contacts are external and for obvious reasons not included in the network data, their betweenness scores and ranks are considerably low (see Table 3.3).

3.4.2 Network 2

3.4.2.1 Network structure

Network 2 is a home-grown network that operated in 2005-2006. The network prepared 2 foreign fighting attempts, although for the most time it aimed to disseminate a radical doctrine. The underlying structure of network 2 was very different from the structure of network 1. Instead of a clear hierarchical cell structure with leading core members, subordinate recruits, and strong international connections, network 2 is a horizontal network with a weak leadership, no international foundation, and mainly consisting of so-called *home-grown jihadists* who grew up in the Netherlands. The home-grown jihadists are a mix of young foreign fighting potentials and jihadist sympathizers of whom many got involved with the jihadist movement through self-radicalization. Despite self-radicalization, the subjects looked for guidance and support from other jihadists. Several subjects in network 2 were able to provide this support, which demonstrates a form of demand and supply between subjects.

Due to the flat and decentralized structure of the network, the (potential) foreign fighters could not rely on large scale criminal activities that would logistically or financially support the journeys. Instead, they had minimal financial capital which they acquired from low paid jobs, and they were forced to make use of low profile training opportunities (see also Chapter 4). We observed that, like network 1, network 2 compartmentalized in a certain way to expedite these actions and to become operational. More precisely, several potential foreign fighters gathered in small groups or cliques and relied on the expertise of a single senior jihadist (subject 21, see 3.4.2.2 for more details). Two cliques were found; one aiming for Chechnya (subjects 64, 65, and 68), another for Iraq/Afghanistan (subjects 37, 59, 60, and 66). The latter clique explicitly requested the assistance of subject 21 because of his international contacts and ability to collect money. This senior jihadist was open to this request and eagerly tried to

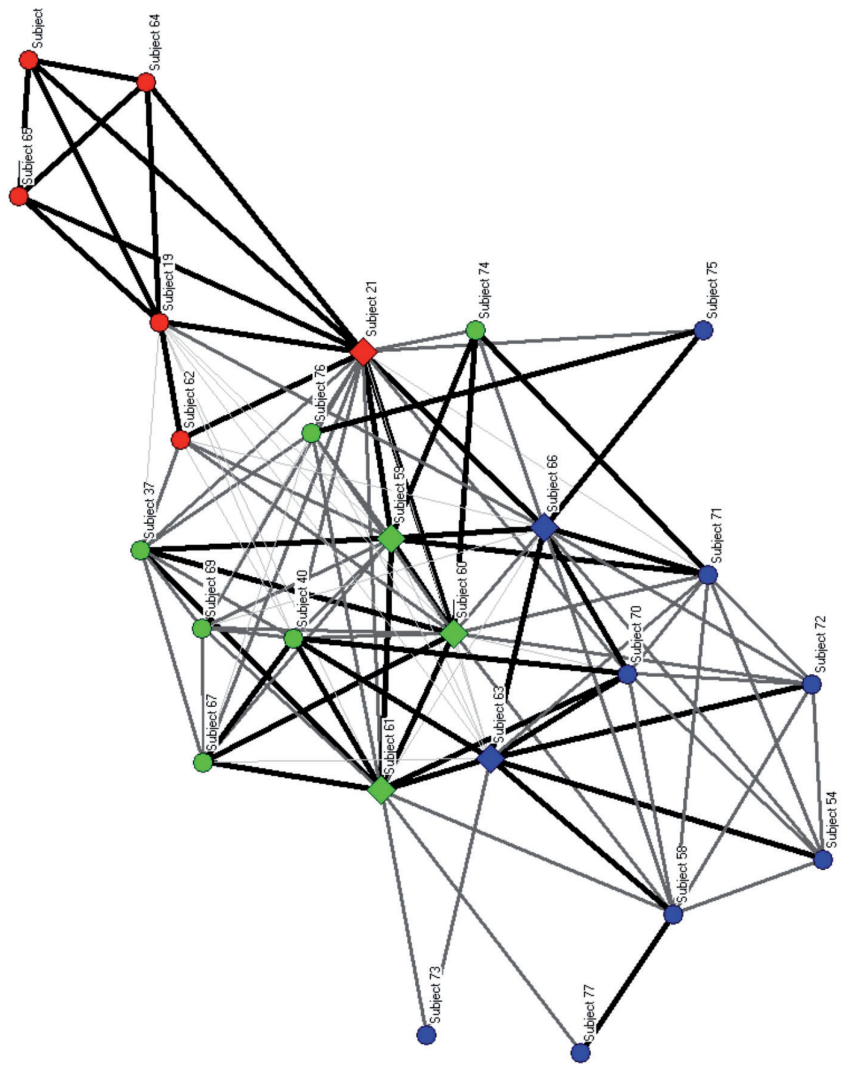

Figure 3.2: Sociogram network 2.

facilitate the logistical and financial side of the journey and guided them through the mental and physical preparations of the journey. Although the compartmentalization of 2 foreign fighting cliques was not as efficient due to double preparations, it did enhance security. Once the first clique got arrested in Azerbaijan, this did not lead to the immediate exposure of the second clique.

However, the compartmentalization is not absolute, but rather variable and depends upon the type of activity the members are conducting. For example, regarding the other core activity of disseminating and consolidating the Jihadi-Salafist doctrine, we found that the subjects did not cling to the foregoing delineated cliques. The reason for this is that unlike network 1 this activity was not guided by senior ideologues, but several young jihadists volunteered as missionaries of the Jihadi-Salafist doctrine and aimed to educate others through a horizontal rather than hierarchical form of communication. As a result, the subjects frequently interacted during (secret) ideological gatherings, where they would exchange and discuss ideological material (see also Chapter 6). The gatherings occurred in different settings that constantly altered in formation of attendees, leading to many different people meeting each other. Whereas the network's density and average connection increased due to this interactive nature, the average path length and the network level betweenness and closeness scores decreased in comparison to network 1, as shown in Table 3.1 and Figure 3.2. Moreover, it also intensified relational strength in comparison to network 1, as illustrated by the edges in Figure 3.2 and the relatively higher weighted degree centrality scores in Table 3.4. This increased social interaction was very efficient for the dissemination and consolidation of the ideology, although it did increase the risk of exposure as well.

The modularity measure captures both core activities in a meaningful and interesting network compartmentalization. The red community (density = 0.80) contains the first clique of foreign fighters (subjects 64, 65, and 68) – which is scarcely connected to the other two communities – and the operational guide (subject 21) of both foreign fighter cliques (see 3.4.2.2 for more details on this community).[26] Additionally, the green community (density = 0.81) is the core of the network in which most male jihadist sympathizers are located. This community is the most active in the network and several subjects are indicated as core members in Figure 3.2 (diamond nodes), because they are the forerunners on different levels. It contains the other clique of foreign fighters (subjects 37, 59, 60, and 66), complemented with subjects that are primarily active with educating the Jihadi-Salafist ideology to random *supporters* (circle nodes). This green community is highly connected to the blue community, but can be distinguished based on gender. The blue community (density = 0.53) merely contains female subjects (with the exception of peripheral subject 73), who communicated on a regular basis

[26] A disadvantage of using a modularity measure is that it is unable to indicate overlap of clusters. A subject can therefore only be part of one community, whereas in reality he might be part of more than one community (as is the case with subject 21).

and who often gathered separately from the men. Again, this compartmentalization is not absolute, because several female subjects are married to subjects from the green community and thus interact frequently as Figure 3.2 illustrates. Also, several female subjects (like subjects 63, 66, and 70) are sometimes present during male meetings, although they are seated in separate rooms or are separated by curtains. This indicates that the community boundaries are somewhat fuzzy, and the strictly delineated cliques only emerge for preparing the foreign fighting attempts. In comparison to network 1, the compartmentalization of network 2 therefore has a different nature.

Table 3.4: Actor level centrality scores for network 2.

Network 2				
CD(ni)	**Weighted CD(ni)**	**Rank**	**CB(ni)**	**CC(ni)**
0.7917 Subject 21	0.5750 Subject 21	**1.**	0.2079 Subject 21	0.8276 Subject 21
0.7083 Subject 60	0.4750 Subject 60	**2.**	0.1232 Subject 61	0.7742 Subject 60
0.6667 Subject 61	0.4667 Subject 61	**3.**	0.0860 Subject 63	0.7500 Subject 61
0.6250 Subject 63	0.4333 Subject 59	**4.**	0.0823 Subject 66	0.7273 Subject 63
0.6250 Subject 66	0.4250 Subject 66	**5.**	0.0693 Subject 19	0.7273 Subject 66
0.5833 Subject 59	0.3917 Subject 63	**6.**	0.0660 Subject 60	0.7059 Subject 59
0.5000 Subject 19	0.3000 Subject 70	**7.**	0.0261 Subject 59	0.6667 Subject 19
0.4167 Subject 70	0.3000 Subject 40	**8.**	0.0236 Subject 58	0.6316 Subject 70
0.4167 Subject 40	0.2833 Subject 19	**9.**	0.0177 Subject 71	0.6316 Subject 40
0.4167 Subject 37	0.2833 Subject 37	**10.**	0.0149 Subject 70	0.6316 Subject 71
0.4167 Subject 71	0.2833 Subject 71	**11.**	0.0128 Subject 76	0.6154 Subject 69
0.3750 Subject 69	0.2583 Subject 58	**12.**	0.0057 Subject 40	0.6154 Subject 67
0.3750 Subject 67	0.2417 Subject 67	**13.**	0.0047 Subject 37	0.6154 Subject 76
0.3750 Subject 76	0.1917 Subject 69	**14.**	0.0027 Subject 69	0.6154 Subject 37
0.3750 Subject 58	0.1917 Subject 76	**15.**	0.0015 Subject 67	0.5854 Subject 62
0.2917 Subject 62	0.1917 Subject 72	**16.**	0.0007 Subject 72	0.5714 Subject 58
0.2917 Subject 72	0.1750 Subject 62	**17.**	0.0007 Subject 62	0.5455 Subject 72
0.2500 Subject 54	0.1750 Subject 74	**18.**	0.0005 Subject 75	0.5333 Subject 74
0.2083 Subject 74	0.1667 Subject 68	**19.**	0.0000 Subject 74	0.5217 Subject 54
0.1667 Subject 65	0.1667 Subject 65	**20.**	0.0000 Subject 77	0.5106 Subject 75
0.1667 Subject 68	0.1667 Subject 64	**21.**	0.0000 Subject 64	0.4898 Subject 64
0.1667 Subject 64	0.1667 Subject 54	**22.**	0.0000 Subject 68	0.4898 Subject 65
0.1250 Subject 75	0.1083 Subject 75	**23.**	0.0000 Subject 73	0.4898 Subject 68
0.0833 Subject 73	0.0667 Subject 77	**24.**	0.0000 Subject 54	0.4706 Subject 73
0.0833 Subject 77	0.0500 Subject 73	**25.**	0.0000 Subject 65	0.4706 Subject 77

3.4.2.2 Roles

When we focused on the individual subjects, we found that the quantitative analysis corresponds to our qualitative categorization of several *core members* (subjects 21, 59, 60, 61, 63, and 66; diamonds in Figure 3.2). These subjects indeed have the highest scores on the centrality metrics in Table 3.4 (highlighted cells). In comparison to network 1, however, we found that the core members differed in nature. The qualitative analysis demonstrates that instead of being an operational leader, they rather appear to be forerunners in the network. Instead of being an explicit jihad recruiter, they prefer to go on jihad themselves. They have a guiding instead of a leading role, and they motivate instead of recruiting others to internalize the ideology and become a valuable asset to the jihadist movement. They portray this role mainly during the many ideological gatherings they attend and often organize, which enabled them to frequently meet and communicate with most *supporters*.

The position of subject 21 is an interesting example in that respect. As mentioned, he is an operational guide who facilitates the foreign fighting journey to Chechnya (subjects 64, 65, 68) and Iraq/Afghanistan (subjects 37, 59, 60, 66). He acquired his aforementioned status through his work as a financial facilitator in network 1, for which he travelled the world. At that time he closely collaborated with subject 19, who he considers his ideological mentor. Subject 19 was one of the core members in network 1, but only plays a marginal role in network 2. The fact that subject 21 and 19 live together explains the number of contacts subject 19 still has in network 2, resulting in relatively high centrality scores. They are both grouped in the red community together with a clique of foreign fighters (subjects 64, 65, 68) who mainly prepared their journey from the house of subjects 21 and 19. Because these foreign fighters have no contact with other subjects in the network, subject 21's betweenness score increased. According to the qualitative analysis, subject 21's role in the green community is just as important, which makes his community position complex. For example, he assists the foreign fighters from the green community with the collection of money and he brings them in contact with a passport facilitator, subject 62 (red community). In order to meet subject 62, the telephone communication goes solely via subject 21, making him indispensable. Interestingly, while he operated with minimal influence in network 1, he became the most centralized subject in network 2. Although he ranks first on all centrality metrics, his guiding position is not unimpeachable. For instance, subject 21 fails to materialize the planned preparation and consequently the potential foreign fighters will never depart. His status eventually deteriorates once the other subjects ideologically outgrow him and because he beats his newlywed wife subject 66, which is core member 59's sister.

Whereas subject 21's position as a core member eroded, the positions of several other members developed. Core member 61 for instance acquired high social status due to extensive ideological knowledge and is a respected ideologue in the green community. He is much younger than the ideologues in network 1, but people look

up to him regardless. The fact that he speaks Arabic, unlike other home-grown jihadists, contributes to this. It grants him authority and access to many ideological sources. He spreads his knowledge via the ideological gatherings, which he organizes in collaboration with his wife, subject 63. They meet many other (potential) jihadists this way, which explains their high centrality scores. At the same time, subject 63 has a strong ideological position of her own. She is an ideological forerunner in the blue female community and she encourages the women how to behave.[27] Subject 63 also introduces several women to the male subjects in the green community. You could say that she connects the clusters and that subject 61 partly thanks his increased centrality scores to her. This broker-like position is further underlined due to her active distribution of ideological material through chat boxes and websites to external sympathizers. This is how she lures subject 73 into the movement, for example. Because we cannot include all her external contacts in the dataset, her broker position is not reflected as strong in the associated betweenness score as it could have been. Regardless, when it comes to consolidating and spreading the extremist Jihadi-Salafist doctrine, subjects 61 and 63 form a much bigger threat than subject 21, despite their lower centrality ranks.

Building on the assumption that core members with high centrality ranks have some sort of power, high ranked subject 60 merely indicates weak signs of power. Subject 59 on the other hand shows much more leadership potential, although he is the lowest ranked core member on three out of four centrality metrics. Subject 21 for instance uses him as his right hand and mainly communicates via him. Also, subject 61 allows subject 59 to lead some of the lectures after a while. Eventually, it is subject 59 who openly disapproves with subject 21's ideological knowledge, behavior, and position and arouses others to do the same. Hence, the roles seem to change.

3.4.3 Network 3

3.4.3.1 Network structure

Network 3 operated between 2008 and 2013 and has a comparable network structure to network 2. It is a horizontal and fluid network without a formal centralized leadership. It mainly consists of home-grown jihadists of whom several were also present in network 1 and 2 (subjects 19, 21, 64, 65). Despite its resemblance, we also found that the social interaction within network 3 was more diffuse and dynamic than within the other networks. The extended time-frame of network 3 illustrates this dynamic nature. We found that over the years, the jihadist movement became one large pool of jihadist sympathizers who gathered in different formations at different locations to exchange ideological information and to consider the possibility of violent measures.

This pool of jihadists had an open character, meaning that the network boundaries are fuzzy, leading to high social mobility between network members as well as with external people. This manifested as follows. Within this large pool of jihadist sympathizers, we

27 Female core member 66 functions in a similar way, but to a lesser extent.

found that subjects adopted a more outward focus to exchange ideological information. Besides the traditional private lectures and gatherings, we noticed for instance that online communication became one of the most important means of mass communication to openly expose and spread the ideology. We also observed that so-called *street preachers* (subjects 21, 84, 85, 86) randomly and openly addressed strangers to inform them about the ideology. Likewise, they distributed flyers in the surroundings of Mosques and in public areas to promote upcoming ideological events. Such events were for instance ideological demonstrations, where a variety of likeminded people publically shared their (radical and provocative) thoughts and ideas. Hence, distribution of the ideology became more public and had an outward character, thus eroding the traditional secretive nature and enhancing exposure. This may have been caused by the political and judicial climate. Whereas the government explicitly targeted people who seemed to spread extremist narratives in the era of network 1 and 2 – forcing these subject to be secretive – the subjects in network 3 seemed to have learned from the fact that hardly anyone was convicted for merely doing so, allowing space for public representation. This increased the social mobility of subjects, as said, and intensified relations as the edges in Figure 3.3 and the relatively high weighted degree scores in Table 3.4 show. Moreover, this resulted in a slight increase in network density and average node contact, and a slight decrease in the average path length and the network level centrality scores as portrayed in Table 3.2. This means that network 3 became slightly denser than network 2. Although these quantitative differences are minimal and not necessarily significant, the qualitative analyses clearly show that due to the dynamic social interaction, network 3 resembled a fluid protest movement, rather than a static group. The outermost boundary of network 3 as well as the inner contours of the network structure are therefore less perceptible in comparison to network 1 and 2. Due to the unclear outermost boundary, network 3 was probably much larger than the 25 nodes we studied; according to the criminal investigator the network counts 50 people in total, including less significant sympathizers in the network's periphery. Unfortunately, we were unable to identify all related subjects. In addition, due to the unclear contours, clusters within the network are difficult to identify. The modularity score of network 3 was below 0.3 (see Table 3.2), which means the threshold for meaningful clusters is not reached. Furthermore, we were unable to meaningfully elaborate clusters from the modularity measure with qualitative analyses, which confirms the fluid nature of the network. Modularity communities are therefore omitted from Figure 3.3.

Notwithstanding the fluid nature of the network, we did identify a form of network compartmentalization. Like network 2, subjects assembled in cliques of 4 people to go on jihad. For example, subjects 64 and 65, who already belonged to a foreign fighting clique in network 2, were separately identified as part of a clique that headed for Somalia (subjects 78, 79, 65, 80) and Turkey (subjects 64, 82, 85, 91) in 2009. Another clique aimed for Pakistan (subjects 78, 81, 94 and 85) in 2011, although only subject 78 reached the final destination. In addition, several foreign fighting attempts were

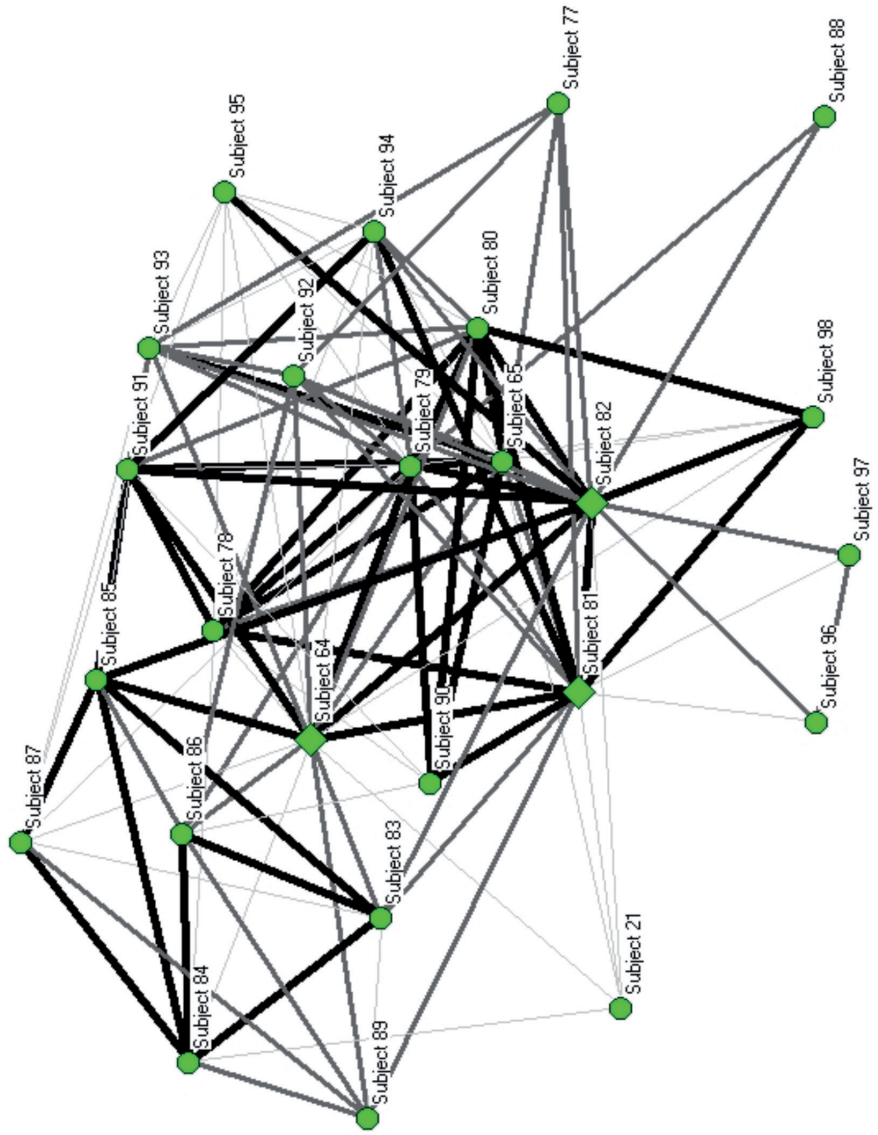

Figure 3.3: Sociogram network 3.

made to Syria in 2012 and 2013, but the data are less clear about any clique forming (see Chapter 4). Unlike the distinct compartmentalization in network 1 and the clearly separated cliques in network 2, the formation of cliques is highly variated in network 3, as several subjects belong to more than one clique. This illustrates, more than in network 2, that subjects in the fluid network only collaborate in small and distinguishable groups when they become operational for the Jihad. Unlike network 1, they seem to operate autonomously and cannot rely on the benefits of organized crime for financial and logistical support in that regard (see Chapter 4).

Having said that, we do notice some parallels to network 1 as network 3 became slightly more organized and international over the years. Several core members took the lead in that respect, when they galvanized others to become more proactive in the jihadist movement. They did so in a more planned manner when compared to network 2. The subjects in network 3 tried to give the previous protests and demonstrations a formal nature by branding it. Particulars symbols or trademarks were created to label the movement and to announce and advertise upcoming events, draw additional support, and legitimize their actions in response to criminalization by the government. As a result, they expressed themselves as a protest movement, rather than a terrorist organization. In addition, the foreign fighting attempts became better organized as well, which is illustrated in 3.4.3.2. The intensification of contacts abroad was at the basis of this. Whereas the international fundament of network 1 was the result of incoming international jihadists who brought jihadism to the Netherlands, home-grown jihadists from network 3 spread their wings, gained international experience through foreign fighting, and then returned to share their experience. Unlike network 2, they successfully created an international basis for themselves after multiple foreign fighting attempts.

3.4.3.2 Roles

Building on the organizational development and internationalization of the network, we take a closer look at several individual subjects who were responsible for this. Due to the extended time-frame, the division of roles changed over time, which was especially notable with the core members. When this network initially drew the police's attention, they primarily focused on subject 64. He was a foreign fighter in network 2 and enjoyed the status of a jihad veteran in network 3. Accompanied by several others, he preached radical statements in a local mosque, leading to his expulsion. Henceforth, he started collecting jihad money and became a forerunner of the Jihadi-Salafist doctrine outside the mosque, which increased his direct contacts and high degree centrality score. As part of a clique he traveled to Turkey in 2009, where he allegedly dropped off to become the broker between the Netherlands and Pakistan. Whether he became a successful broker is difficult to validate, because we have no evidence of foreign fighting attempts coordinated by him. If he indeed was able to coordinate foreign fighting attempts from his base in Turkey, his betweenness score could have been much higher, if we had included

Table 3.5: Actor level centrality scores for network 3.

Network 3				
CD(ni)	**Weighted CD(ni)**	**Rank**	**CB(ni)**	**CC(ni)**
0.7917 Subject 82	0.5917 Subject 82	**1.**	0.1797 Subject 82	0.8276 Subject 82
0.7917 Subject 64	0.4667 Subject 81	**2.**	0.1203 Subject 81	0.8276 Subject 64
0.6667 Subject 79	0.4462 Subject 64	**3.**	0.1098 Subject 64	0.7500 Subject 79
0.6667 Subject 81	0.4333 Subject 79	**4.**	0.0748 Subject 79	0.7500 Subject 81
0.6250 Subject 65	0.4083 Subject 65	**5.**	0.0369 Subject 65	0.7273 Subject 65
0.5000 Subject 80	0.4000 Subject 80	**6.**	0.0257 Subject 93	0.6667 Subject 80
0.5000 Subject 93	0.3333 Subject 91	**7.**	0.0185 Subject 86	0.6667 Subject 93
0.5000 Subject 91	0.2833 Subject 85	**8.**	0.0184 Subject 91	0.6667 Subject 91
0.4583 Subject 78	0.2750 Subject 78	**9.**	0.0180 Subject 78	0.6486 Subject 78
0.4167 Subject 94	0.2500 Subject 93	**10.**	0.0138 Subject 84	0.6316 Subject 94
0.3750 Subject 95	0.2167 Subject 86	**11.**	0.0136 Subject 83	0.6154 Subject 95
0.3333 Subject 87	0.2167 Subject 84	**12.**	0.0125 Subject 87	0.6000 Subject 83
0.3333 Subject 83	0.2167 Subject 83	**13.**	0.0113 Subject 85	0.6000 Subject 85
0.3333 Subject 86	0.2000 Subject 92	**14.**	0.0104 Subject 92	0.6000 Subject 92
0.3333 Subject 85	0.2000 Subject 94	**15.**	0.0095 Subject 80	0.5854 Subject 90
0.3333 Subject 84	0.1917 Subject 90	**16.**	0.0056 Subject 90	0.5714 Subject 87
0.3333 Subject 92	0.1500 Subject 98	**17.**	0.0051 Subject 89	0.5714 Subject 98
0.2917 Subject 90	0.1500 Subject 87	**18.**	0.0051 Subject 21	0.5714 Subject 86
0.2500 Subject 89	0.1333 Subject 89	**19.**	0.0019 Subject 94	0.5581 Subject 89
0.2500 Subject 98	0.1250 Subject 77	**20.**	0.0005 Subject 77	0.5581 Subject 21
0.2083 Subject 21	0.1083 Subject 95	**21.**	0.0005 Subject 95	0.5455 Subject 77
0.2083 Subject 77	0.0583 Subject 97	**22.**	0.0000 Subject 88	0.5455 Subject 84
0.1250 Subject 97	0.0583 Subject 96	**23.**	0.0000 Subject 97	0.5000 Subject 96
0.1250 Subject 96	0.0500 Subject 88	**24.**	0.0000 Subject 98	0.5000 Subject 97
0.0833 Subject 88	0.0417 Subject 21	**25.**	0.0000 Subject 96	0.5000 Subject 88

external contacts. This would further validate his broker position. Nonetheless, he got arrested in Turkey for his alleged connections with Al Qaida, which meant other people had to fill his position. Subjects 81 and 82 seemed to fill this gap and became the primary core members in network 3 (highlighted cells in Table 3.5). They are known throughout the network, which explains their high centrality scores. Moreover, according to an investigator, all subjects from network 3 are in contact with them. However, because we based the connections in our SNA on evidence from the police files, their centrality scores may be underrated which would be in line with the investigator's statement. Together they become the network's forerunners who ideologically motivated the supporters

and prepared the jihad journeys, although there seems to be a distinct division of labor between them. For example, like subject 64, subject 81 is considered a jihad veteran due to his part in the 2011 clique that travelled to Pakistan. He was arrested and detained for 8 months at the Iranian-Pakistani border, which brought him a significant social status upon return. The police consider him to be the operational coordinator who arranges all foreign fighting attempts to Syria in 2013. Since he is able to directly communicate with fixers on the Turkish-Syrian border, he facilitates the logistics for the foreign fighters. Due to his external contacts overseas, he is regarded as the prime broker and his position is of crucial importance to successfully coordinate other subjects' foreign fighting attempts. However, he does not have the highest betweenness score, which is probably the result of not including external contacts. Whereas subject 81 has the external focus and arranges the practical side of foreign fighting attempts, subject 82 has the internal focus and communicates with many jihadist sympathizers and other followers who may want to become a foreign fighter. He is being monitored by the police for several years and has extensive ideological expertise. He provides lectures in different mosques or in informal house settings. He also is one of the initiators to brand the movement. Under these brands he organizes several protests and demonstrations through which he incites others to internalize the doctrine. He expresses himself as a leader during these events, via which he builds many direct contacts. This explains his top rank position on all centrality metrics. He became well-known in the Netherlands and does not appear to be afraid of public attention. He explicitly faces the media and he does so on a regular basis; he publishes online and he was interviewed on national television. In sum, both quantitative and qualitative analyses seem to confirm that subjects 81 and 82 successfully succeeded subject 64 as the primary core members in network 3, who tried to bring the operational foundation of the network to a new level.

If we look at Table 3.5, there are some other subjects that deserve attention. Subjects 79 and 65 for instance have relatively high centrality ranks, but are not considered core members. They were part of the 2009 clique travelling to Somalia, where they were arrested and which led to the deportation of subject 79 to his native country Morocco. Allegedly he was re-arrested and severely tortured by the Moroccan authorities, which only motivated him more to travel to Syria in 2013, where he eventually died in battle. In addition, subject 65 was already part of a foreign fighting clique in network 2, which shows his long-term presence in the jihadist movement. However, he struggles with mental issues and consequently shows odd behavior. Although subjects tolerate his behavior, it seems to make him unsuitable for a key role. These backgrounds of both subjects illustrate their determination and may explain the high number of direct contacts they made during different foreign fighting attempts, gatherings, and events. This does however not indicate power, leadership, and a centralized position, despite their relatively high centrality scores, especially when you take into account the mental health of subject 65. Because they have no significant operational or broker positions either, we categorized them as active supporters rather than core members.

Finally, looking at Figure 3.3 and Table 3.5, we found that aforementioned subject 21 is again present in network 3. His presence did not last forever though, because he died in Syria in 2013, after more than a decade of jihadist involvement. Known as the most centralized person in network 2, his low centrality scores in network 3 imply that he only plays a marginal role in this network, as was the case in network 1. But like in network 1, the qualitative analyses do attenuate his "limited" role. He is one of the aforementioned *street preachers* who motivated potential new sympathizers. Because of these external contacts, street preachers functioned as brokers in order to expand the network or at least the jihadist movement. This broker-like position is not reflected in their centrality scores, because the potential sympathizers are not included in the dataset. Despite the importance of qualitative data to identify key subjects, the information on this case was to some extent limited. Most subjects probably had contact with more people within and outside the network than we were able to observe. This affects both the centrality scores, as well as the additions we could make, on the basis of our qualitative analysis. Nonetheless these additions are a valuable contribution, as we tried to illustrate in the foregoing examples.

3.5 Conclusion

By means of *social network analysis*, based on longitudinal data derived from police files, interviews, and field notes from court sessions, this chapter analyzed network features of the jihadist movement in the Netherlands between 2000 and 2013. The main research question is: *To what extent do the organizational structures of the studied jihadist networks differ over time and what kind of roles do the studied subjects adopt in these networks?* To answer this research question, a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative analyses was used to compare three different networks that were active during a particular episode.

We found that the jihadist movement changed from a hierarchically organized network with a distinct cell structure and a strong international foundation, to a fluid dynamic home-grown network without a clear leadership. The analyses and different sociograms show that over time the relationships between subjects intensified, and subjects appeared to be located closer to each other. Somewhat counter-intuitively, the networks became denser over time, in spite of their fluid nature. Yet, network 3 also demonstrated parallels with network 1, which suggests an ongoing development of network structures. A more detailed depiction of this dynamic nature can best be illustrated with regard to the *efficiency-security trade-off*. The most desired network structure that can effectuate a balance in this trade-off is often considered by other scholars to be a compartmentalized network. We can conclude that the networks studied also demonstrated a form of compartmentalization. The sociograms and the modularity scores quantitatively illustrated several dense communities in which the members are more strongly connected to each other than to subjects from other communities.

However, what has received much less attention in the literature, is that the nature of compartmentalization can differ; both between and within networks. Whereas network 1 demonstrated the often referred and preferred compartmentalization of a strictly distinguished and non-redundant cell structure, network 2 and 3 did not. This is not very odd, considering the fact that the density of network 2 and 3 was much higher than network 1, suggesting a more coherent organizational structure with more redundant ties. Nonetheless, based on qualitative analysis we found that network 2 and 3 did show a relative compartmentalization in the sense that subjects formed cliques within their embedded and dense social environment. Hence, somewhat counter-intuitively, it appears that compartmentalization can thus occur alongside a higher network density. An explanation for this is that network structures are flexible and may vary per activity. On the one hand, when subjects aim to conduct criminal activities or prepare foreign fighting attempts for example, they tend to cluster together in smaller and denser cliques or communities. In network 1 there was a clear division of labor in that respect, which was accompanied with separated communities. Foreign fighters in network 2 and 3 then were more socially embedded in the larger network, but they shielded their foreign fighting preparations from the rest of the network by working in smaller cliques. Hence, by keeping the communication purely functional, this increased the efficiency in the cells and cliques but protected the rest of the network from unwanted exposure. On the other hand, the core activity of disseminating the ideology required a different balance in which compartmentalization was less preferred. In network 2 and 3 for instance, the ideological dissemination had a broader reach due to the increased use of the Internet. This outward focus and altered settings increased higher network density, which facilitated the process of ideological dissemination even further. Instead of covertly compartmentalizing the network, the social mobility among jihadists intensified, leading to more and more network exposure. Although there was some form of compartmentalization in the sense that gatherings were separated based on gender, this separation was grounded on religious rather than security considerations. Exposure and minimal covertness rather appear to be the purpose of disseminating the ideology, especially in network 3, which means that efficiency seems to be favored over covertness. This indicates that secrecy is not always prioritized in the efficiency-security trade-off, as often implied by other scholars, but depends on the activity.

Within the foregoing network structures, different kinds of actors play an essential role to conduct the various activities. With both qualitative and quantitative analyses we identified so-called core members. They were ideologically and/or operationally more active than others and clearly motivated others to become more active and involved. What is most interesting in this regard is that several subjects were present in more than one network, some of them even in all three, and that their roles developed over time. Some started as supporters in a network's periphery but developed into core members in posterior networks. An explanation for this development is that they learned and gained social status from previous experiences. This is an interesting finding that has

received minimal attention in the literature so far. In addition, we also found that core members differed in nature. For instance, the international jihadists in network 1 appear to be more leader-like core members who seem to be both ideologue, operational leader, and broker, whereas the mainly home-grown core members in network 2 seem to be forerunners who guided instead of directing or recruiting other subjects. Core members in network 3 display resemblance to those from network 2, but with seemingly more operational power and charisma. In other words, network 3's core members mix particular features from their predecessors.

3.5.1 Implications

The dynamic nature of both network structures and roles shows that certain assumptions and conclusions in the literature, as indicated in the introduction, cannot be instantly derived from the quantitative SNA findings. The current findings show that network features can be far more complex than these assumptions indicate. This has several implications for both the academic and the policy domain.

First, the identified changes and differences between networks show how transient or perishable certain findings may be when merely looking at a static picture. This does not mean that the current findings are more valid than other studies, but unlike a static network analysis it emphasizes that organizational features and roles are more dynamic than often expressed. Not only due to the passing of time, but also because subjects adopt a dynamic network positioning to conduct different types of activities.

Second, although SNA was a suitable analytic tool to identify the differences, it was necessary to complete the analysis with complementary qualitative assessments. Without these assessments, we found that the assumptions regarding the implications of quantitative findings were not undisputedly correct. For instance, as illustrated above, the efficiency-security trade-off is not as straight-forward as expressed in the literature; compartmentalization does not always guarantee a strict balance and jihadists do not always favor security at all costs. Yet, we must be aware that the networks studied are essentially extremist networks, rather than terrorist organizations. The one-time action assumption regarding terrorist groups does therefore not fully apply, limiting its influence on structure type. An additional assumption refers to the centralization of actors. We found that the most centralized actors are not necessarily leaders, and brokers (especially those with an exterior focus) could not always be identified with betweenness scores. The reason for this is that the qualities of different core members (human capital) are not easily detected with quantitative analysis only. While this partially disputes the role assumptions, this anomaly can also be caused by the boundary specification problem. Due to our inclusion criteria we have omitted certain subjects from the analysis, which certainly affected the centrality scores. Nonetheless, we also noticed that facilitators without any leadership competence were indistinguishable from the network's core members in terms of centrality ranks. This was not necessarily an effect of boundary specification, but the fact that facilitators can be equally socially mobile.

Third, building on these SNA remarks, we argue that the value of SNA for law enforcement and intelligence investigations is ambiguous. It is certainly useful to visualize a network and to illuminate the centrality differences between suspects in a quick and orderly fashion, but without additional qualitative assessments it is doubtful whether SNA inspired disruptions strategies are successful. To disrupt a network, more specified qualitative knowledge on the network's *modus operandi* is required. Several scholars have therefore argued that a better way to use SNA with regard to disruption strategies, is to combine it with a qualitative *crime script analysis* (Duijn et al., 2014; Duijn & Klerks, 2014; Morselli & Roy, 2008).[28] This is a tool that enables systematic categorization of all network proceedings in different stages so to draft a general outline of the network's MO. Combining this network's procedural blue-print with quantitative SNA will aid to determine the aforementioned *human capital*, which can be used to determine crucial intervention points. More specifically, it enables clarification of the most crucial players in the network's *proceedings*, rather than just the most central subjects within the network's *intercommunication*. In that respect, Chapter 4 will apply crime script analysis on the preparation of foreign fighting attempts. Finally, the findings from both chapters will be integrated in Chapter 7 to illuminate policy implications.

In relation to this, this chapter demonstrated that identification of the core activities of a network is important. Awareness of diverging agenda's and varying goals is essential if you want destabilize a network, because it may alter the network's structure or its reliance on either efficiency or security. This awareness may determine the effectiveness of a particular disruption strategy. For instance, in a high density network that primarily aims to disseminate the ideology, the often cited kingpin method will not disrupt a network. In that case, removing alleged leaders will not interrupt the communication flow between densely connected nodes, although removing external minded brokers may prevent a network from growing. On the contrary, when a network is preparing violent measures, removing central figures may be effective since they appear to have a coordinating role. Also, because it is more likely that security is enhanced by some form of compartmentalization, as illustrated in network 1, removing the essential ties between these communities may disrupt the communication flow and the necessary proceedings. However, as shown in this chapter, extremist networks are likely to be oriented on both activities, which may involve dynamic network structures. In such cases, keeping network density low, but preventing the network from compartmentalizing could be a useful starting point to disrupt both activities.

To conclude, despite inherent limitations, this chapter demonstrates the dynamic nature of the jihadist movement in the Netherlands. A mix of quantitative and qualitative SNA illuminates how networks are structured and how certain features within the

[28] See also Bruinsma & Bernasco (2004). They do not formally and systematically apply a crime script analysis, but they integrate elements of social network theory with the MO of different illegal markets and criminal networks.

jihadist movement have evolved over time. Additional studies must nonetheless be conducted to validate the current findings, especially since the phenomenon is changing rapidly and becomes more pressing at the moment this thesis is in press.

Chapter 4:

Shifting Modus Operandi of Jihadist Foreign Fighters: A Crime Script Analysis

4

Abstract

This chapter describes the development of foreign fighters' preparatory modes of operation between 2000 and 2013, based on an analysis of 17 closed police investigations and 21 semi-structured interviews with police investigators, public prosecutors, and lawyers. Through the use of grounded theory methods and a crime script analysis, we find that the phenomenon is not as new as is often portrayed. It changes over time as changing opportunity structures have an impact on the activities foreign fighters undertake during the preparation phase. We demonstrate how geopolitical changes, social opportunity structures, and technological developments affect the modus operandi over time. One of the implications of our findings is that the dynamic nature of the foreign fighting phenomenon requires flexible and tailored prevention measures.

A slightly different version of this chapter was published as a separate manuscript:

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4.1 Introduction

Since the eruption of the Arab Spring in 2011, numerous Muslims from Western European countries have sought ways to assist fellow Muslims in their rebellion against oppressive regimes (Zelin, 2013). This also includes nationals from the Netherlands, of which the number of "foreign fighters" in Syria and Iraq was estimated to be around 220 in November 2015 (NCTV, 2015b). Responding to the scope of the phenomenon, the Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism raised the level of terrorism threat from limited to substantial in March 2013, mainly out of concern for the return of potentially traumatized and well-trained militant foreign fighters who may plan attacks in Western Europe (NCTV, 2013). Consequently, policy makers are increasingly seeking new intervention methods, in particular to prevent departure (NCTV, 2014).

Despite the steep increase in attention, which suggests a unique situation, the phenomenon of foreign fighting is far from new. Prior to the Arab Spring, numerous individuals travelled to foreign countries in order to participate in or facilitate a conflict (Hegghammer, 2011; Malet, 2013). Although these endeavors have been studied by different scholars, we argue that most studies mainly focus on the *why* of foreign fighting. As a result, the *what* and *how* of foreign fighting remains relatively underexposed.

This chapter aims to paint a more long-term picture of the operational aspects of foreign fighting in order to understand how the manifestation of jihadist foreign fighting has developed over time. We thereby explicitly focus on the *modus operandi* of jihadist networks in the Netherlands during the preparation stages of foreign fighting. We try to discover how operational aspects and considerations of individuals within these networks either change or coincide by focusing on three episodes between 2000 and 2013. Therefore, the central research question in this chapter is: *How do jihadists prepare their foreign fighting attempts and has their modus operandi changed over time?* To this end we conducted an in-depth analysis of confidential police investigations, we interviewed key respondents from investigative authorities and legal professions, and we attended several court hearings. Additionally, we used grounded theory methods and applied crime script analysis to highlight underlying opportunity structures that influence the preparation stages. This criminological perspective, which is often lacking in the current terrorism discourse (Freilich & LaFree, 2015), may contribute to the development of intervention and disruption policies. We will briefly discuss the current literature in the following paragraph. After that we will describe our methodology, followed by a categorization of the three episodes we have discerned within the timeframe 2000-13. In order to compare those episodes, we study operational aspects by elaborating scripts that prospective foreign fighters follow before and during departure.

4.1.1 Status quo of current foreign fighting literature

The number of foreign fighting studies has increased over the years and has altered in nature. In spite of this increase, studies on foreign fighting appear to predominantly focus

on certain issues. A primary theme is the background characteristics of a foreign fighter. Some studies discuss, among other things, the foreign fighters' economic background (Venhaus, 2010; Vidino, Pantucci, & Kohlmann, 2010; Williams, 2011) or their national origins (Hewitt & Kelley-Moore, 2009; Moore & Tumelty, 2009), while others illustrate biographies of actual (Stenersen, 2011) or hypothetical foreign fighters (Weggemans, Bakker, & Grol, 2014). Overall, the backgrounds of foreign fighters are relatively diverse, and there does not seem to be one quintessential foreign fighter profile.

Second, a majority of studies discuss the foreign fighters' goals and the different underlying motivations such as grievances, feelings of revenge, and a search for identity, thrills, recognition, status, security, and money (Felter & Fishman, 2007; Hegghammer, 2013a; Malet, 2013; Moore & Tumelty, 2008; Williams, 2011). In addition, several scholars illustrate the role of the social environment in that regard (Hegghammer, 2013a; Venhaus, 2010), and emphasize the importance of jihadist veterans (Cilluffo, Cozzens, & Ranstorp, 2010; Malet, 2013; Watts, 2008).

Third, many studies emphasize the possible consequences of the influx of foreign fighters in conflict zones. Some raise awareness about possible terrorist threats towards Western states (De Roy van Zuijdewijn & Bakker, 2014) or other countries in the world (Pham, 2011), whereas others demonstrate how foreign fighters can successfully or unsuccessfully influence a foreign conflict (Bakke, 2014; Moore, 2012; Rich & Conduit, 2015). Finally, several academics and consultants have suggested how governments should respond to these developments (Bakker, Paulussen, & Entmann, 2013; Skidmore, 2014).

4.1.2 Limited focus in current literature

The foregoing knowledge is important, but has a limited scope at the same time. The reason for this is twofold. To start, the empirical foundation of most studies is for instance quite minimal. Only a minority of scholars use firsthand data, whereas others base their findings on open and indirect sources. Although open sources are generally accepted, it must be stressed that many studies often lack a systematic and transparent analysis of the data. This makes it difficult to value a study on its genuine merits. A second limitation is the reach of most foreign fighting studies, which is often caused by the lack of engagement with prior academic work. This is unfortunate, because it hampers a developed understanding of the foreign fighting phenomenon. Furthermore, the reach of foreign fighting studies is also limited because many scholars limit their focus to merely understand the *why* behind foreign fighting. Although we have gained a better understanding of *why* people fight abroad and the dangers that may bring; the question of *how* the mobilization of foreign fighters actually occurs appears to be far more difficult to answer. Previous studies based on our data collection showed that situational factors are important in order to understand the development of jihadist movements (De Poot & Sonneschein, 2011). The current literature on foreign fighting, however, is quite limited in that respect. Most studies seem to underestimate the

importance of situational factors and do not fully elaborate how situational factors can influence the modus operandi of foreign fighters over time. This is unfortunate, because such insights may aid policy makers who face the complex task of devising prevention strategies that are robust enough for future developments.

To be more specific, the manifestation of foreign fighting can be shaped and limited by the underlying *opportunity structure*: the complex interplay between the physical and socio-economic environment, the routines of particular actors and the combination of facilitators and limitations, which all combined determine the opportunity for crime (Clarke, 1995). Scholars using a *situational approach* (Clarke, 1995; Cornish, 1994; Felson, 1998) attribute great value to the role of opportunity and less to the dispositional features and motivations of an offender. In this study, "opportunity" refers to access to a suitable environment in order to pursue certain goals (derived from Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). These scholars argue that no single factor can explain the occurrence of a crime, because every criminal event happens under different environmental conditions (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1993). In other words, the interaction of the potential offender with his or her environment may have far more impact on the potential occurrence of a crime than individual characteristics. Hence, the analysis of crime conditions should be prioritized over the analysis of offenders' personal traits. The criminological opportunity theories rooted in this approach (e.g., routine activity, rational choice, and crime pattern theory) are usually applied to conventional crimes, although in recent years several studies have successfully used them to help understanding the modus operandi of organized crime networks (Von Lampe, 2011) and terrorist activities (Clarke & Newman, 2006; Freilich & Newman, 2009; Parkin & Freilich, 2015; Perry & Hasisi, 2015).

4.2 Approach

4.2.1 Grounded theory

The present chapter seeks to analyze the modus operandi of foreign fighting preparations over time through the use of a *grounded theory approach*. Grounded Theory is an alternative for a positivist methodology that aims to test and verify hypotheses from prior research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theorists, try to inductively (and in later versions abductively) generate a theory through the unprejudiced analysis of emergent categories from the data. The grounded theory approach, which is iterative, draws on a *comparative method* and *theoretical sampling*. The comparative method involves comparison between data and emerging concepts during each stage of the analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 106), while theoretical sampling means that emerging categories direct the process of data gathering or sampling over time (Morse, 2007). In order to adhere to these premises, the procedures of sampling, coding, categorizing, analyzing, and theorizing need to be conducted simultaneously and continuously throughout the research.

4.2.2 Crime script analysis

Since we aim to illustrate the foreign fighters' modus operandi, we have slightly modified the grounded theory approach to make it more fit to our purposes. In contrast to the grounded theory approach of Glaser & Strauss, we did not generate an abstract theory in this chapter but formulated a *crime script* instead. Crime scripts are schemata that can generate, organize, and systematize our knowledge about the procedural aspects (so-called *script actions*) and requirements of criminal acts (Cornish, 1994, p. 160). It does so by breaking down a criminal endeavor into functionally, spatially, and temporally defined events (so-called *script scenes*) which may or may not follow a strict sequential order (Levi, 2008). In that respect, foreign fighting should be regarded as a *criminal event*, which is the termination point of *criminal involvement*.[29] Criminal involvement includes a sequence of stages in which a potential offender chooses to desist from or continue with a crime (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1993). A *crime script analysis* enables us to explore these different stages or "scenes", which may reveal procedural aspects of foreign fighting and the underlying opportunity structures. We therefore argue that generating a crime script is far more useful than generating an abstract *theory*. Moreover, combining this procedural blue-print with the social network analysis from Chapter 3 will aid the development of disruption strategies of jihadist networks, because it will give a better understanding about who to remove. This will be further elaborated upon in Chapter 7.

4.3 Data and Methods

4.3.1 Data

Grounded theory methods and crime script analysis are very suitable to study the *how* of a social process and are less aimed at the *why* (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130). In order to conduct this research, we had access to 28 voluminous confidential police investigations into jihadist terrorism between 2000-2013. This admission was part of a larger research project on jihadist networks in the Netherlands, focusing on 14 different jihadist networks and involving 209 individuals.[30] The 28 police investigations were purposefully selected with

[29] In December 2014, the Dutch Criminal Court convicted one man for his participation in the conflict in Syria. He was sentenced three years imprisonment (ECLI:NL:RBDHA:2014:14652). Also, in October 2013, another man was convicted for his intention to join the conflict in Syria. He was convicted for attempted murder under Articles 46 and 289 of the Dutch Penal Code, because of his intention to kill Assad (Criminal Court Rotterdam, October 23th 2013, ECLI:NL:RBROT:2013:8265). We therefore regard foreign fighting as a criminal offence. It is labeled as such by the investigative authorities in the Netherlands, unlike in some other jurisdictions. As this is to some extent speculative, we regard most subjects in our analysis as prospective foreign fighters.

[30] These 209 individuals consist of radicalized persons (and their facilitators) who lived or regularly resided in the Netherlands. Some subjects did not live or regularly reside in the Netherlands, but played an indispensable role in the network nonetheless.

the help of terrorism experts from different investigative authorities. Criteria of inclusion were variation and richness of the data. This is in accordance with grounded theory methods, which stimulate to seek for optimal experiences. Through purposeful sampling, the scope of the phenomenon can be determined and variation can be maximized (Morse, 2007). In accordance with the two *grounded theory* premises, the data was gathered during different periods and was directed by emerging concepts in later periods. The first tier of data, yieldeding 12 police investigations, was gathered between May 2006 and May 2008 (see also De Poot & Sonneschein, 2011). Based on preliminary findings from the first tier, a second tier of data was gathered between July 2012 and December 2013 and entailed 16 police investigations. In total, 17 police investigations concerned actual foreign fighting activities. A data collection sheet was used to gather information from the police files. This sheet contained several items and open questions, concerning group structure, activities, ideology, etc., which provided structure while gathering data from the voluminous police files. It must be stressed that the data collection took several years to complete due to the volume of the police files. These investigations yielded rich data based on original wire taps of both telephone and internet communication, recordings of in-house wire taps, transcripts of suspect interrogations, witness statements, observation reports, forensic reports, house searches, expert-witness reports, but also (when archived correctly) the complete and *verbatim* court transcripts and lawyers' statements.

While coding and analyzing the data from the police investigation, several questions came up due to the emergence of categories and concepts. After the initial document analysis, we therefore also conducted 28 semi-structured interviews with key respondents, of which 21 interviews were related to foreign fighting. As we were unable to gain access to cooperative former foreign fighters, we relied on key informants such as leading police investigators, public prosecutors, and several lawyers who defended various suspects in the 17 police investigations. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interviewing this diverse group of respondents enabled us to place the documentation into context, and to reshape the initial emerging categories. Additionally, we attended several court sessions of the criminal cases that were still (or again) under the court's review, gathering additional information on the cases. Just like the document analysis, attending court sessions and conducting interviews occurred during different stages of the research. In sum, this triangulation of sources formed an important aspect of the research conducted. The collaboration with practitioners provided valuable insights, which fill a lacuna in the current terrorism discourse (Sageman, 2014).

Overall, we found 51 unique subjects out of a total of 209 subjects in our dataset, who attempted to leave the Netherlands between 2000 and 2013 in order to train for, participate in or facilitate participation in foreign conflicts. Nine subjects were hindered in their attempt, whereas 42 subjects actually succeeded in leaving the Netherlands once or more often. In total, 26 subjects eventually reached their intended destination, and 16 subjects were forced to stop along the way. As our focus is on the modus

operandi during the preparation stages, successful, failed, and not completed journeys are equally relevant.

4.3.2 Analysis

During and after the collection of data, the information was coded with the help of a software program (MAXQDA) for qualitative analysis.[31] We started with an *open* or *initial coding* procedure, which in this study was the *incident-by-incident coding* (Charmaz, 2006, p. 53). While comparing different incidents (segments of texts) of alleged terrorist activity, relevant codes of jihadist involvement emerged. *Focused coding* was then applied to assess the initial codes' adequacy and depth (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). Through this procedure, initial codes developed into categories and sub-categories with associated properties. By repetitively comparing data with data (incidents with incidents), data with codes and categories, and re-examining the properties of the initial (sub-) categories, theoretical saturation was eventually achieved. This meant that no new properties or dimensions of the categories emerged from the data (Holton, 2007, p. 278). Next, the relationship between the categories was specified and elaborated. This way a grounded understanding could be developed.[32]

4.3.3 Categorization

Since we aim to illustrate a development of the foreign fighters' modus operandi over time, we compare *script actions* from different episodes. In order to do so, we have categorized the different foreign fighting attempts from the police files into different episodes based on (1) the chosen destination by (potential) foreign fighters and (2) whether the initiative to depart was initiated top-down or bottom-up. Firstly, focusing on the intended destinations of all 51 subjects, we found that between the year 2000 and the first half of 2011, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Chechnya were the most popular destinations. Between the second half of 2011 and 2013 this shifted towards Syria and the previous theatres fell out of favor. Secondly, focusing on the direction of initiation, between 2000 and 2002 there was an explicitly organized top-down initiation, which depended on direct links to the conflict areas. From 2003 the phenomenon of home-grown radicalization arose, and the initiation process became more bottom-up. Networks of home-grown radicals predominantly proceeded without the operational help of an international network. The subjects did have relevant international contacts, but they took the initiative.

[31] Due to the volume of the data we were not able to apply inter-coder reliability, which may have increased the possibility of errors. However, because GT methods forced the coder to recode the data multiple times, coding errors were reduced.

[32] For a more extensive outline of the used GT methods, see Chapter 2.

Table 4.1 shows the three episodes based on these distinctions. The subject numbers are sorted per attempt, which means that several subject numbers are recurrent because they travelled multiple times. The first episode pertains to 2000-2002 because of its organized structure with a top-down approach and its focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan. The second episode, between 2003 and the second half of 2011, concerns the same destinations but with a different initiation process. Finally, the third episode, between the second half of 2011 and 2013, has a similar initiation process as the previous episode, but the subjects now mainly aim for Syria.

4.3.4 Limitations

It must be kept in mind that our data have certain limitations. Police investigations only cover a certain proportion of jihadist activities that can only be analyzed from the start of an investigation. This means that we do not know everything about the 51 subjects and our findings cannot be extrapolated to a broader perspective. Furthermore, the initial goal of the investigations as laid down in files is to inform and convince a judge, which may lead to a certain bias. Althoff (2013, p. 397) states that "court files are constructions of social reality in the context of criminal law". Suspects' statements are the result of "forced" communication which is selectively transcribed, which implies a biased perspective, and therefore the data must be handled with much caution. However, the subjects are unaware of the recorded internet and telephone wire taps, which can therefore not be regarded as "forced communication". Moreover, due to the fact that we had access to the raw data, we were largely able to control the data ourselves, and we did so intensively. As a result, we did not uncritically adopt police choices and categorizations, but relied on our own qualifications. To conclude, despite downsides, these police investigations offer a unique perspective on jihadist networks and their modus operandi as to foreign fighting. Without the realistic possibility of conducting participative observation or to interview the individuals directly involved, there are few alternatives. Moreover, with the combination of a criminological perspective, the triangulation of data sources, and the collaboration with practitioners, we have sought to add to the field of terrorism research.

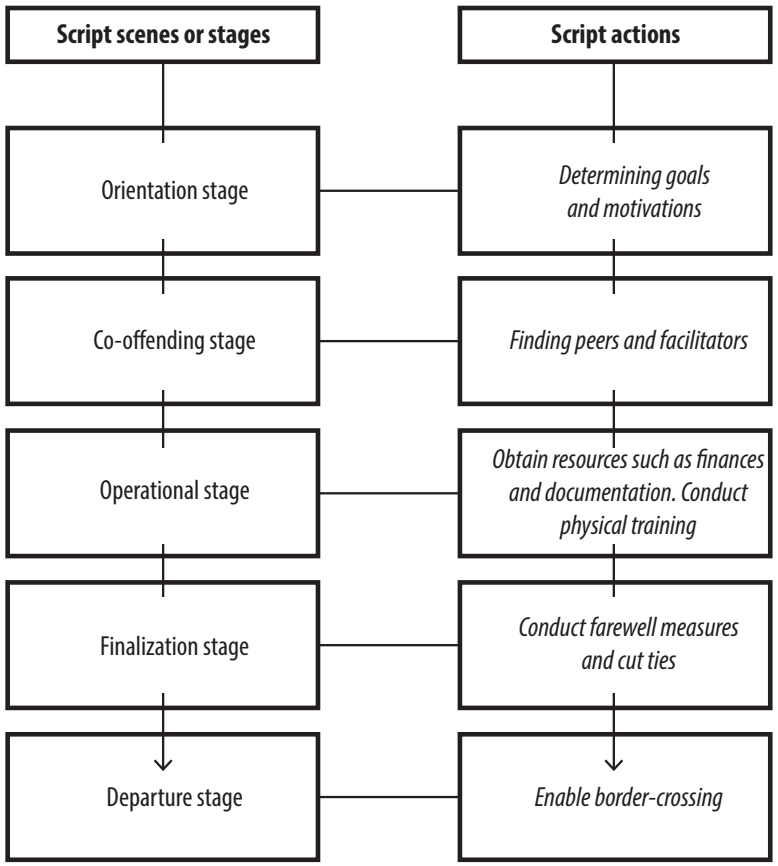
4.4 Results

We can empirically distinguish five preparation stages from the data (Figure 4.1). In the next paragraphs we will compare the three episodes within all preparation stages as outlined in Figure 4.1, by illustrating the different *script actions*. We will focus on both the differences and similarities between the three episodes. It should be noted that in reality, the separate stages are not always as distinct from each other as they appear, but are defined as such for analytical reasons. We will first briefly introduce the subjects.

Table 4.1: Mobilizations of jihadist foreign fighters from the Netherlands. Directions indicated with * are indistinct, because the data are not as abundantly clear about the initiation as other mobilizations.

Episode	Subject no.	Year	Goal	Initiative	Left?	Arrived?	Intended destination
1	1	2000	Training	Top-down	Yes	Yes	Afghanistan
	2	2001	Training	Top-down	Yes	yes	Afghanistan
	3	2001	Facilitation	Top-down	Yes	Yes	Chechnya + Bosnia
	4	2001*	Facilitation	Top-down	Yes	Yes	Afghanistan
	5 & 6	2001	Facilitation	Bottom-up*	Yes	No	Afghanistan
	7	2002	Fighting	Top-down	Yes	No	Afghanistan
	8	2002	Fighting	Top-down	No	No	-
	9	2002*	Facilitation	Top-down	Yes	Yes	Afghanistan + Pakistan
	10	2002	Facilitation	Top-down	Yes	Yes	Pakistan
	11	2002	Fighting	Top-down	No	No	-
	12	2002	Fighting	Top-down*	Yes	Yes	Pakistan + India
	13	2002	Fighting	Top-down*	Yes	Yes	Pakistan + India
2	14	2003	Fighting	Bottom-up	Yes	No	Chechnya
	6	2003	Training	Bottom-up*	Yes	Yes	Pakistan
	15	2003	Training	Bottom-up*	Yes	Yes	Pakistan
	16	2003	Training	Bottom-up	No	No	Afghanistan + Pakistan
	15 & 17	2003	Training	Bottom-up	Yes	Yes	Pakistan
	18, 19, 20	2005	Fighting*	Bottom-up*	Yes	No	Chechnya
	21, 22, 23, 24	2006	Fighting	Bottom-up	No	No	Afghanistan + Iraq
	25	2006	Training	Bottom-up	Yes	Yes	Pakistan
	3 & 26	2006	Facilitation	Top-down	Yes	Yes	Afghanistan
	3 & 26	2008	Facilitation	Top-down	Yes	Yes	Pakistan
	18, 27, 28, 29	2009	-	Bottom-up	Yes	No	Somalia
	19, 30, 31, 32	2009	-	Bottom-up	Yes	-	-
	33-41 (9x)	2010	Fighting	Top-down	Yes	No	Chechnya
	27, 31, 42, 43	2011	Fighting	Bottom-up	Yes	Yes	Pakistan
3	44 & 45	2011	Fighting	Bottom-up	Yes	Yes	Libya + Iraq
	44	2012	Fighting	Bottom-up*	Yes	Yes	Syria
	46	2012	Fighting	Bottom-up	Yes	No	Syria
	47, 48, 49	2012	Fighting	Bottom-up	No	No	Syria
	6	2013	Fighting	-	Yes	Yes	Syria
	19	2013	Fighting	Bottom-up*	Yes	Yes	Syria
	27	2013	Fighting	Bottom-up*	Yes	Yes	Somalia
	28	2013	Fighting	-	Yes	Yes	Syria
	31	2013	Fighting	Bottom-up*	Yes	Yes	Syria
	32 & 42	2013	Fighting	Bottom-up*	No	No	Syria
	48	2013	Fighting	-	Yes	Yes	Syria
	50	2013	Fighting	-	Yes	Yes	Syria
	51	2013	Fighting	Bottom-up*	Yes	Yes	Syria

Figure 4.1: Crime script analysis of foreign fighting.



4.4.1 Personal traits of subjects in the sample

The police files enabled us to identify background characteristics and personal traits of most subjects (Table 4.2). Firstly, the ages vary between 14 and 43 years old and the average age on a first attempt is 24.9 years.[33] As Table 4.2 shows, the average age in episode 2 appears to contain a somewhat younger sample of subjects compared to the other episodes. However, a Kruskal-Wallis test showed that there was no statistically significant difference in age between the episodes ($\chi^2 = 1.665$, df = 2, $p = 0.435$). Secondly, episode 1 mainly contains first generation migrants from Middle Eastern and Northern African countries, whereas episode 2 predominantly contains home-grown second generation Moroccan immigrants. Episode 3 is more mixed in this respect. Thirdly, based

[33] Based on 49 out of 51 subjects.

Table 4.2: Personal traits.

	Total number	Episode 1	Episode 2	Episode 3
Age[34]				
Average	24.7 years	26.6 years	23.4 years	27.1 years
14 – 20	16 (33%)	3 (25%)	11 (35%)	2 (14%)
21 – 30	22 (45%)	4 (33%)	15 (52%)	3 (53%)
≥ 31	11 (22%)	5 (42%)	3 (13%)	3 (33%)
Total	49 (100%)	12 (100%)	29 (100%)	8 (100%)
Gender				
Male	50 (98%)	13 (100%)	29 (97%)	8 (100%)
Female	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
Total	51 (100%)	13 (100%)	30 (100%)	8 (100%)
Education				
In secondary school	3 (6%)	-	3 (10%)	-
Finished secondary school	9 (17%)	-	7 (23.3%)	2 (25%)
Drop out	11 (22%)	2 (15%)	7 (23.3%)	2 (25%)
Completed tertiary education	2 (4%)	-	1 (3.3%)	1 (13%)
Unknown	26 (51%)	11 (85%)	12 (40%)	3 (37%)
Total	51 (100%)	13 (100%)	30 (100%)	8 (100%)
Origin[35]				
Algerian	5 (10%)	5 (38%)	-	-
Moroccan	28 (55%)	3 (23%)	24 (80%)	1 (12.5%)
Turkish	5 (10%)	1 (8%)	1 (3%)	3 (37.5%)
Other[36]	13 (25%)	4 (31%)	5 (17%)	4 (50%)
Total	51 (100%)	13 (100%)	30 (100%)	8 (100%)

[34] We only included a subject's information about age, gender, education, and origin during his/her first attempt. If they attempted to leave again in the same or succeeding episodes, this information is not included. All percentages are rounded.

[35] Refers to the country that someone actually is closely related to given their own country of birth or that of their parents (Statistics Netherlands, 2014).

[36] Afghan, Dutch, Egyptian, Iraqi, Kuwaiti, Pakistani, Rwandan, and Tunisian origin.

on information about education, employment, and criminal history, most subjects in this study were found to have a low socio-economic status in all three episodes. Despite the fact that jihadists are often depicted as well educated, Table 4.2 shows that many subjects dropped out during or right after secondary school. Their employment history consists mainly of low-paid and untrained jobs in call-centers, supermarkets, security jobs, and gardening stores. They are mostly temporarily employed, and some receive a monthly state benefit. Additionally, although this information was not available on all subjects, at least 17 out of 51 subjects have a criminal history in petty theft, violence, burglary, and in some cases extortion and possession of child pornography. Information on criminal histories is mostly lacking in episode 1, but the files document that core activities of the jihadist networks in this episode are drug trafficking and passport forgery. Fourthly, we found signs of psychological issues among subjects in mainly episode 2 and 3. Several respondents claim that episode 1 contains subjects with psychological issues, but we found no evidence of that in the selected cases. Several subjects in episode 2 experienced traumatic events, which clearly affected their personality. They also demonstrate violent behavior. Six out of 15 subjects in episode 3 have mental issues according to health care professionals, varying from moderate mental instability to serious psychiatric disorders. In sum, besides a minor difference in country of origin, we did not find major differences between the subjects active in the three episodes. The same cannot be said about the modes of operation, as we will illustrate below.

4.4.2 Orientation stage

In the orientation stage, subjects set their goals and develop motivations to engage in a conflict abroad. Table 4.1 shows that in all episodes the initial goals of the subjects are training, facilitation, and fighting, of which the latter is the sole remaining goal in episode 3. We noticed that in some cases the situation or environment supplied the motivation to travel, which is called *situational induced motivation* (Wortley, 1997). If the environment induces motivation, this also means that situational or contextual changes can influence the type of motivation. This may be uncovered by focusing on the dynamic ideological rhetoric that is used by foreign fighters to condemn and target their enemies.

Our data suggest that most subjects in episode 1 value the target areas purely from a religious-moral perspective. Inspired by videos, media reports, and other propagandistic material, their main goal is to establish an Islamic state in at least all Muslim countries. Many claim that their aspiration is opposed by the current rulers, who threaten the Islam and suppress the Muslim inhabitants. A violent uprising against these Western-influenced unbelievers is necessary and legitimate according to religious scripts, in order to install a real Islamic state, which is governed by sharia law. Furthermore, Western influences are mocked because of their despicable nature that contradicts Islamic precepts. Many blame the West for secularization and other pernicious developments

in Muslim countries, and accuse the West of unjustly claiming ownership over several praiseworthy inventions and developments.

A contextual change, however, alters the target suitability in episode 2. Due to the American invasion in Iraq and Afghanistan, the argument that the Islam is under threat by unbelievers is now embodied by explicit military force. The invasion was a major televised conflict, leading to high conflict visibility and awareness among subjects. The growing use of internet during episode 2 also removes communication constraints, because the virtual community enables many subjects to inform each other about the atrocities and fuels discontent about the enemy. "The West" becomes the prioritized target that is valued differently than before as political motivations come into play. The perceived animosity between Muslims and unbelievers is fueled by the desire for revenge and a state of emergency, because most subjects are willing to defend themselves in a state of war. Moreover, some subjects want to expand the battlefield to European states that ally with the United States and are believed to have condemned Islam after 9/11. According to some, the apostates who verbally attack the Islam and the prophet have to be liquidated:

> *"We have indeed slaughtered a lamb in accordance with the true Islamic way. This will be the punishment of all in this country who miscall and defy Allah and his messenger. Tomorrow you will be next, you […]. Inshallah, Allah Akbar, the Islam will prevail. We will hunt you down, you the enemy of Allah."* (Wiretap, subject 6, 2003)

As most subjects want to defend the Islam, practical military training by jihadists in Afghanistan and Pakistan is necessary. External motivation to engage in fighting is visible in all subjects' appeal to Muslim morality, stating that one is obliged to help other Muslims in need and to defend Islam. The statement of "*fard al ayn*" is heavily emphasized in that regard, which many subjects explain as an obligation for every Muslim to conduct jihad and to be prepared to take up arms:

> *"I don't do this because I like it, but because the Almighty has ordained it."* (Wiretap, subject 15, 2003)

Internal motivation is illustrated through foreign fighters' solidarity with oppressed Muslims with whom they claim to share feelings of pain. Many subjects argue that they cannot sit still and enjoy the fruits of life while their fellow Muslims are discriminated, murdered and raped. Another internal motivation comes from the status that can be gained by joining a foreign conflict and dying for a higher cause. Martyrdom is perceived by many as the most acclaimed sign of devotion towards the Islam, which will be rewarded by admission to paradise.

Changes in the geopolitical landscape, caused by the Arab Spring, alter the target value in episode 3. Western states are no longer prioritized as target, but dictators in

Muslim countries such as Syrian President Assad must be violently deposed. The Syrian conflict is also a major televised event, and the use of internet and social media in episode 3 as primary communication resource among all foreign fighters highly contributes to the conflict visibility. This fuels similar external and internal motivations as noted in episode 2. The underlying ideological rhetoric is furthermore reinforced by prophetic predictions. The Arab Spring is regarded as a sign of the forthcoming Armageddon that is preceded by the appearance of the antichrist and its fight against Isa, which will take place in the geographical area of Syria. Some subjects believe that the conflict in Syria is the pinnacle in this epic battle in which they want to take part. Others use less prophetic arguments, but clearly reject a secular regime. Hence, they want to join jihadist groups instead of the secular Free Syrian Army.

> *"Even if every soul in Syria is exterminated and no sole escapes! Do not let any Kuffar get involved as happened in Libya. Blood in Libya was spilled because a Taghut was replaced with a Taghut."* (Farewell letter, subject 47, 2012)

In sum, the main episodic difference is the target suitability decision, which is always clearly influenced by geopolitical changes and military interventions. Target selection moves from Middle Eastern leaders to the West and back to Middle Eastern leaders. At the same time, this alters the ideological rhetoric from a religious-moral perspective towards a more defensive militant stance with a religious coating over time. In addition, the geopolitical changes in episode 3 also enhance the accessibility of the conflict theatre because Syria is easier to enter than Afghanistan. A similarity in this stage (mainly visible in episode 2 and 3) is conflict visibility through media exposure, which has a compelling impact on the motivations. Media sources shift from conventional sources to a combination of television, internet, and social media, which increases the scope of conflict exposure over time.

4.4.3 Co-offending stage

In the co-offending stage, we found that subjects build instrumental or trustworthy social ties with so-called *social facilitators (*Ekblom, 2003). Due to diverging *social opportunity* structures (Kleemans & De Poot, 2008), the subjects connect with different social facilitator types per episode,[37] who can facilitate, stimulate or legitimize the planned journey.

The first social facilitator type is the *heartland-oriented* (see also De Poot & Sonneschein, 2011) who leads relatively well-organized jihadist networks in episode 1.[38] The heartland-oriented type actively searches for potential foreign fighters in the

[37] The co-offending stage outlines the importance of social ties with social facilitators, although such ties remain important in the other scenes as well.

[38] See also the *international jihadists* or core members in network 1 in Chapter 3.

Netherlands, triggers their motivations, prepares them for combat and matures them for leaving. Furthermore, the heartland-oriented type uses his instrumental contacts in his country of origin and in places he previously fought jihad, in order to pave the way to go abroad. He thus actively creates opportunities.

> *An international network recruits over 30 Muslims and prepares them for battle in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Scanning potential recruits during soccer matches and in local mosques is the starting point of top-down recruitment. A recruiter's notebook reveals that recruiters focus specifically on length, age, religious devotion, employment, possession of a car, and location for prayers.* (Wiretap & house search, subjects 7 to 13, 2002)

The second social facilitator type is the *senior jihadist*, who mainly appears in episode 2 and 3. Partly due to the arrests and deportations of the heartland-oriented type, the presence of relatively well-organized networks diminishes after episode 1. They are replaced by home-grown radicalization networks that are less formally organized and in which the initiative to leave the Netherlands is bottom-up. A large group of subjects look up to senior jihadists and seek their operational assistance due to their knowledge and experience. Several senior jihadists who just returned from jihad theatres in Pakistan and Afghanistan now explicitly look for radicalized Muslims who are interested in their stories and willing to follow their example.

A third social facilitator type is visible when some foreign fighters function as an intermediary or a *broker* between different areas. Potential foreign fighters in the Netherlands contact these brokers and consult them about possible destinations, routes, permits, and more (see also *departure stage*). Some of the heartland-oriented type also function as brokers, while others leave the Netherlands as "regular" foreign fighters in episode 1 and 2 and become brokers during successive episodes. See also Chapter 3 where the role of a broker was identified based on a subject's centrality metrics. In addition, some brokers function as intermediaries within the hierarchical international networks we mostly found in episode 1. Similarly in episode 2, 2 appointed local leaders – of 2 foreign fighter cells in Belgium and the Netherlands – are the chosen and sole messengers between their cells and higher ranked intermediaries. They cannot, however, communicate with the heartland-oriented type ranked above the intermediaries.

The final social facilitator is the *fellow foreign fighter* type with whom subjects appear to connect in most cases in order to travel in small groups and share knowledge and expertise. Table 4.1 shows that many attempts are conducted collectively. Although

[39] Given the scope of this chapter, we do not discuss radicalization and peer pressure extensively. See for instance Chapter 6.

media reports indicate attempts by entire families (Groen, 2014), we did not find such evidence in the selected cases. In the first episode all new recruits are clustered together by the heartland-oriented type, which results in interrelations that are useful and trustworthy during their journey. The home-grown subjects in episode 2 and 3, however, meet their companions at religious demonstrations and in mosques where their aspirations are shared.[39] Moreover, the rapid emergence of internet and social media during these episodes facilitates the search for co-offenders and senior jihadists. Some subjects in episode 3 for instance appear to have no contact with senior jihadists at all and merely consult fellow Muslims in the Netherlands online. They brainstorm about their future trips via chat boxes and discuss the correct interpretation of Islam.

Regardless of social media's potential, the search for social facilitators is not always successful. Some subjects have the ambition to travel to Syria, but do not know whom to consult specifically. They therefore make a public appeal to brokers in conflict areas by posting a call for help on social media and even by approaching them directly by email:

> *"Peace be with you, I want to "activate" with the Almajahidin in the land of Damascus and Inshallah I'm on my way to Turkey. Can you help me and Allah will reward you" […] Are you from the land of Damascus, because I look for someone who can direct me to Syria from Turkey. Do you know someone who can help me get into Syria?"* (Wiretap, subject 46, via Twitter, 2012)

> *"Give me advice where I can go to when I arrive in Bagdad. In which neighborhood can I find the Mujahedeen? I will tell them that I have emigrated. Do you think it is a good idea when I go to a Sunni Mosque and that I ask for the road to Allah? What do you advise me?"* (Wiretap, subject 44, via Internet forum, 2011)

These seemingly impulsive attempts are unsuccessful, and both subjects initially fail to leave the Netherlands. In other cases the alleged broker did not live up to expectations:

> *Subjects 21 to 24 are determined to defend fellow Muslims in Afghanistan. They seek assistance from an alleged senior jihadist (subject 50), who has been collecting jihad money for years. He sets up a meeting with a passport and visa facilitator, but despite several meetings the required documents are never delivered. In addition, he also promised the necessary finances but he did not even exceed the amount of €100, whereas the required amount was €900.* (Subjects 21, 22, 23, and 24, 2006)

Besides the failure to connect to a broker, social ties with fellow foreign fighters can just as well hamper preparations. Conflicts appear to be the rule rather than the exception, and the most important obstacle we observed is where a subject is too talkative about his jihadist ambitions. Subject 47, for example, brags about his plans to female Muslims in order to seduce them. His companions, subjects 48 and 49, think he thereby jeopardizes

their plans. Another example is where a subject informs unsuitable co-offenders and therefore discloses too much private information:

> *"You only send jokers. I bet none of them actually goes. You are telling too much about me, which isn't necessary. Agi, you bring the entire group into jeopardy because of all your talking. How can you trust people you have never seen?"* (Wiretap, subject 14 to subject 15, 2003)

A final and rather common example is when subjects differ in their interpretation of the Jihadi-Salafist ideology. The consequences of such conflicts can be the dissolution of the group or the failure to travel to a conflict area. For instance, subjects 48 and 49 decide to head for Syria without subject 47. They reschedule their flight to a month earlier without informing subject 47, literally leaving him behind because they do not agree with him.

To conclude, the main difference between episodes is the changing *social opportunity structure*. The heartland-oriented type and the relatively well-organized networks in episode 1 (and partly episode 2) disappear and are replaced by senior jihadists and more loose collaborations of home-grown radicals in episode 2 and 3, sometimes resulting in less efficient or conflicting social ties. On the other hand, while some social facilitator types disappear and emerge over time, others, such as fellow foreign fighters and brokers, are permanently present. Also, social media and the internet function as an alternative environment for the lack of organized networks in episode 2 and 3, enabling potential foreign fighters to find, gather and communicate with these different social facilitators in a virtual community.

4.4.4 Operational stage

In the third script scene, subjects perform concrete actions in preparation for their trip. An important requirement is to find ways to obtain resources as this largely shapes the opportunity to become a foreign fighter. Organized criminals and terrorists are often presumed to be more resourceful than "regular" criminals, which makes them less dependent on a given opportunity structure (Von Lampe, 2011, p. 21). Ekblom (2003, p. 250) states that they create their own opportunities because they are more determined and equipped to utilize different resources, and consequently may adapt more easily to situational changes. The question arises to what extent foreign fighters are indeed resourceful in this respect.

The first necessary resource is *financial*. We observed that the networks during episode 1 mainly acquire their money through organized crime. Typical are theft and forgery of passports (the latter also allowing them to travel),[40] transnational drug smuggling, and frontier-running (De Poot & Sonneschein, 2011, p. 108). Jihad journeys

[40] See Chapter 5.

are also financed through other means, such as selling a house, collecting money, or by committing insurance fraud. Overall, the journeys to conflict areas in episode 1 are both organized and financed by the network. However, this changes during episode 2, when subjects more often (partially) organize and finance their own journey. Organized forms of crime seem to disappear. Instead, the individual subjects seek more practical solutions to make money, depending on the opportunities they encounter. The subjects during this episode are mainly young home-grown radicals who keep low-paid jobs on the side. The estimated costs of a journey in episode 2 amount to €1,000 - €2,000, which several subjects attempt to acquire by borrowing money, selling commodities, using personal savings or asking for donations. Subjects 21 to 24, for example, collect money under false pretenses: allegedly in the name of *zakat*, they intend to spend it on airplane tickets. In episode 3 we observe an identical estimation of costs and similar forms of acquisition, such as selling personal possessions like furniture or electronic goods. However, in contrast to episode 2, collecting money also happens more professionally, with the help of accessible tools:

> *So-called "benefits" are organized wherein subjects lecture a group of Flemish Muslims in Belgium via Skype in return for money. They even advertise for these benefits via custom-made and graphically designed flyers on which one subject is presented as the "guest speaker".* (Wiretap, subjects 47, 48, and 49, 2012)

For both the online streamed lecture as well as the designed flyers, the subjects have modern software and devices at their disposal that were not easily accessible in previous episodes. Such devices facilitate intensified communication and orientation, but also provide additional functionalities or opportunities to collect money. Some subjects for instance purchase products from online web shops with a credit card but before the money due is actually debited from their bank account, the subjects have already resold the products and left the Netherlands. Another criminal activity to make money is a single case of extortion:

> *Subject 44, who has a reputation for not returning borrowed money, secretly filmed his intimate moments with a girl. He threatened to publish the material, unless she transferred a few hundred Euros.* (Police respondent 15, subject 144, 2011, interview March 2013)

A second necessary resource is *travel documentation*. During episode 1 the forgery of documents satisfied the need for money as well as for passports. In episode 2 and 3 some subjects are told to hold on to their current Dutch passport as it will prove helpful at foreign borders. As a minority of subjects does not own a Dutch passport, they look for a forged one. As the subjects are not equipped with skills to forge documents – unlike subjects in episode 1 – they obtain the forgery via an intermediary.

In addition, the subjects mainly apply for visas and other permits through the regular (legal) channels. In some cases they decide to apply for permits during their transit stop in Egypt or Turkey. Also for the purchase of transportation tickets we observe a similar process in episode 2 and 3 (information on episode 1 is scarce in this respect). Some self-appointed intermediaries claim to arrange the tickets and permits, but more often we observe that subjects look for tickets simply through local or online travel agencies. From the extensive internet wiretap transcripts we were able to see how many different destinations and flights are considered, and how the search often leads to the cheapest option with alternative routes, and transportation as a result. Concrete opportunities and actual costs eventually determine the destination, route, and means of transportation.

> *Subjects commonly plan to travel from Amsterdam to Gaziantep (near the Syrian border) directly. The route is often altered to an alternative place of departure such as Zaventem (Belgium) or an alternative place of destination such as Georgia. All because the total transportation costs to Syria may possibly drop a few hundred Euros, varying between €500 and more than €1,000.* (Wiretap, subjects 46, 47, 48, and 49, 2012)

A third necessary resource is the *preparedness and ability to fight or train abroad.* While they prepare for departure, most subjects typically conduct physical exercises, which were relatively similar between episodes. In one network in episode 1, the leading heartland-oriented type organized survival camps for 21 recruits[41] who are brought to outdoor areas where they canoe and throw tree trunks to gain stamina and strength. During episode 2 and 3 we observe similar organized outdoor activities for large groups of 30 recruits.[42] However, we also notice that the secretive nature of the training activities in episode 3 is less prominent than during episode 1 and 2, as subjects openly make use of public opportunities to train. For example, in one case they sign up for survival contests in Belgium where they publicly attend outdoor running competitions under their own name. They even publish official contest photos online, accompanied with propagandistic battle slogans. On the other hand, a more low-profile kind of training of small groups is also visible in both episode 2 and 3. All subjects are limited in their resources, and visiting an official gym with professional equipment is deemed too expensive. Cheap alternatives are exercising in the local woodland, running up and down hills while carrying a heavy backpack, lifting weights at a friend's house, or doing pull-ups using an overhanging bridge while standing in the middle of a ditch. In addition to these straightforward methods, there are some cases of more advanced

[41] These 21 recruits are not all part of our dataset of 209 subjects. Unfortunately, we did not find any personal information on these persons.

[42] Ibid.

forms of training, such as droppings in remote areas and simulating combat situations through paintball games while singing jihad songs. Subjects 28 and 30 are trained by a former professional soldier from the Dutch Marine Corps, who now moves within a jihadist network. He is regularly spotted with known jihadists, exercising in the dunes. Some subjects advise each other to join a local rifle club, although we cannot confirm actual membership. Finally, subjects repeatedly talk about martial arts and the anatomy of the human body in order to understand how an assault can cause most damage. The experience of some subjects with street fighting seems to give them confidence and power in this context.

To conclude, we noticed that organized criminals are initially better equipped than others. The organized networks in episode 1 enable all subjects to obtain and utilize financial and documentation resources because of their links to organized crime, whereas subjects in episode 2 and 3 cannot fall back on such an environment. Nonetheless, most subjects in episode 2 and 3 seize opportunities to collect money and prepare their journey. They become pragmatic – conducting regular petty crime and using regular channels for documentation – and creative – conducting cybercrime and utilizing modern software and devices – in order to create similar opportunities. Secondly, all episodes show similar types of physical training activities, although they differ significantly in the degree of openness. The training activities during episode 1 and 2 are mainly secretive, whereas the subjects in episode 3 are not afraid to publicly train and thereafter to promote their activities on social media in order to get attention and support. The – somewhat speculative – reason for this could be that subjects have learned from previous episodes where people were arrested but never convicted for merely training.

4.4.5 Finalization stage

During the finalization stage, subjects take different measures to say farewell and cut off social and administrative ties right before departure. Here we can differentiate between emotional and pragmatic measures. During episode 1, most subjects make both written and audio recorded martyr testaments, at the urging of a heartland-oriented type or fellow foreign fighters. Foreign fighters are explicitly guided through this process, and not making such recordings does not seem to be an option. The testaments have a clear emotional but primarily ideological character, in which subjects bid their loved ones farewell and explain the ideological purpose and consequence of their journey. They legitimize their future actions by appealing to a higher cause and citing phrases from the Quran. Their appeal indicates a form of mental or spiritual preparation, which can give them a final push. The testaments furthermore serve a pragmatic purpose, as they function as propaganda material, and as proof that the subjects committed themselves to the ideological cause, thus hindering their withdrawal.

In the second and third episode we observe similar measures, but the recordings seem to disappear. The subjects shift to merely written farewell letters in which their aspirations are outlined and legitimized. Other emotional measures are physical goodbyes

and reconciliations, where the subjects visit relatives and show an unusually affectionate side of themselves.

> *In some cases they cuddle their little brothers, hug their parents, and tell their relatives they love them and they might never see them again. One subject wants to take his girlfriend out to a place of her choice just before he leaves. He is considerate and sweet in that stage, while he often used to be rude and obnoxious.* (Witness statements & wiretap, subjects 18, 19, and 20, 2005; subject 33, 2010)

Their reconciliation with family members is not self-evident though. Subject 14 and his unknown associate explicitly discuss how to avoid their parents, with whom they live, during their last night before departure. They want to leave the house undetected. It shows the youthfulness of some endeavors, now that their seemingly heroic and holy journey might be jeopardized by the fact that they need to sneak out of their parental home. We also observe pragmatic measures during both episodes 2 and 3, such as closing bank accounts, ending insurance policies and telephone subscriptions, or quitting a job, giving away or selling one's belongings, deregistering oneself from the municipal registration, and terminating accommodation leases. Additionally, equipment such as outdoor clothing, camping tents, first aid kits, army boots, and outdoor jackets, to name a few items, are purchased by some after actively searching for the cheapest options in online web shops. Even if the purchase requires manual modification:

> *A purchased inferior outdoor-jacket turns out not to be waterproof. The subjects then make it water proof by covering it with silicon spray and testing it with tap water from the kitchen. The same subjects consider the possibility of pre-fab housing in Syria in order to improve the comfort of their accommodation.* (Wiretap, subjects 47, 48, and 49, 2012)

The most pragmatic measure that we noticed is when subject 18 reports himself to the police before he leaves the Netherlands, because he still has a 30 days outstanding imprisonment that could jeopardize his departure.

We can conclude that, unlike episode 1, episode 2 and 3 show a wide variety of typical emotional and pragmatic measures. Such measures may also have existed in episode 1, but these data are scarce. All episodes do show subjects' (emotional) leave-taking. The use of written messages in episode 2 and 3 seems odd compared to the recorded statements in episode 1. Technological developments would suggest the opposite. Possibly, the thoroughly ideological nature of the travel attempts in episode 1 requires an official martyr's statement. By contrast, the travel attempts in episode 2 and 3 are more ad hoc, politically inspired and less ideologically driven, which diminishes the time and need for recorded ideological statements. Written statements may have a lower threshold. The operational stage already illustrated that most subjects in episode 3 are technologically well-equipped.

4.4.6 Departure stage

In the final stage the subjects depart for their intended destinations. The accessibility of a conflict area in this stage mainly depends on specific social facilitators, such as the brokers who prepare recruits for foreign fighting and enable border-crossing. Below, we will discuss a number of typical broker type examples.

From all 51 subjects, we found 5 subjects (5, 10, 19, 27, and 42) who first travelled to conflict zones and later became a broker, paving the way for future foreign fighters. Some of them become intermediaries between the Netherlands and conflict zones; others become so-called *fixers* on the spot who enable border-crossing. During episode 1, subject 5 travels to Turkey and Syria in 2001 where he tries to obtain a visa for Iran. While in Syria he facilitates other jihadists by picking them up and taking them to other fixers who are located at the train station in Damascus and who are able to smuggle jihadists across the Iraqi border. He claims to have helped 15 to 20 jihadists who were all alleged suicide bombers. In addition, subject 10 travels to Iran in order to help other jihadists cross the borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan. He facilitates the jihadists with safe houses in Iran, and arranges tickets, money, and transportation. During episode 2, subject 19 travels to Turkey with subjects 30 and 31, but then stays behind in Turkey while the others return to the Netherlands. Allegedly he was supposed to function as a broker between the Netherlands and Pakistan, but was arrested by the Turkish police for his connections with Al Qaeda. Brokers can also adapt to problematic situations they may have encountered during earlier attempts:

> *Subject 27, residing in Waziristan, informs a potential foreign fighter to scout for Afghan fixers in a particular neighborhood in Istanbul first, before attempting to continue to Iran and Afghanistan. This advice probably stems from his own previous failure to travel to Tehran directly from Istanbul with subject 32, 42, and 43, when they were forced to go back three times in a row due to incorrect visas. In addition, he advises her not to travel on a student visa to Pakistan but to travel via Iran. He advises her to pretend to be a Shiite while in Iran and claim to be a visitor to the grave of the late Ayatollah Khomeini. She is allowed to lie under the pretext of taqiyya according to subject 27, which refers to the possibility to hide one's religion as a defense strategy.* (Wiretap & police respondent 22 , subject 27, 2009, interview November 2013)

The example above shows how subjects cope with complications, but also how flexible they deal with their own ideology, since Shiites are normally despised by jihadists. A final broker type we found is subject 42. He was arrested and detained in Iran for 8 months for his attempt to reach Waziristan during episode 2, which gained him significant status upon his return to the Netherlands. He then becomes the main broker between the Netherlands and Syria during episode 3.

> *All subjects who intend to travel to Syria aim for Turkish cities near the Syrian border, such as Gaziantep, Adana, and Antakya. As soon as a foreign fighter reaches Turkey, subject 42 guides him towards the fixer who is located in one of these cities. He communicates with both the foreign fighter and the fixer via telephone, but does not let the fixer and the foreign fighter communicate directly. Subject 42 then contacts another broker on the other side of the border in order to inform him about the approaching foreign fighter who needs to be picked up. The telephones are then shut down, and the fixer takes over.* (Wiretap & police respondent 22, subject 42, 2013, November 2013)

The broker is involved throughout the entire process, also when something happens with foreign fighters during battle. He communicates with all parties on a daily basis and uses a separate phone for this communication. Contacting him on a different and personal phone is not appreciated. He makes himself irreplaceable by not sharing the fixers' identities with fellow jihadists, thereby reducing the likelihood of detection.

Finally, the lack of instrumental brokers and fixers obstructs the accessibility of a conflict area and can either cause an immediate withdrawal, or may produce impulsive behavior. Specific behavior that is meant to avoid attention can then paradoxically lead to unwanted attention, detection, and failures. Subjects 18, 27, 28, and 29 for example do not use a fixer at the Somalian border, which results in their arrest in Kenya. Their claim to be on holiday in this dangerous area raised suspicion with local inhabitants, who then informed the police. Others jeopardize their own ambition due to incautious behavior:

> *The journey of subject 14 to Chechnya is interrupted near the Russian border. In order to avoid border patrol agents, he decides to leave the road and walk through snow-covered fields. Paradoxically, this impulsive escape route completely drenches his clothes and requires him to hide in the nearest village. In the meantime, the border patrol is able to follow his footsteps in the snow, which leads them directly to his hiding place.* (Suspect statement, subject 14, 2003)

We conclude that in all episodes, brokers or fixers are important and even indispensable gatekeepers, because they provide vital and up to date (travel) information about various locations.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter tried to answer the research question *"How do jihadists prepare their foreign fighting attempts and has their modus operandi changed over time?"* by analyzing 17 police investigations from the period 2000-2013, supplemented with 21 interviews. We used grounded theory methods and generated a *crime script* to highlight

the opportunity structures within three different episodes. We compared these episodes and found that we could distinguish five important stages that together encapsulate the preparation of a foreign fighting attempt. These stages differed between episode and we found that *geopolitical situation, social opportunity structures*, and *technological developments* are three important situational factors causing the periodic changes and similarities in *modus operandi*.

Geopolitical situation. In all three episodes the contemporary geopolitical situation influences the target suitability decision and consequently determines the foreign fighting theatre. Since the latter is highly context-specific per episode, this alters the ideological rhetoric of the Jihadi-Salafist doctrine, as expressed in the orientation and finalization stage. Although this rhetoric changed from a religious-moral perspective in episode 1 towards a more defensive militant stance in episode 3, the expressed motivations always have an ideological basis or coating. This situational factor is probably the most difficult to tackle when trying to prevent or disrupt potential travels. As long as oppression in Muslim states exists, and as long as Western states interfere with Middle Eastern politics, potential foreign fighters may use this as a legitimization to travel abroad.

Social opportunity structures. All three episodes are characterized by a particular social opportunity structure, which not only determines the social environment of the subjects but also explains the procedural differences between episodes. The heartland-oriented types, for instance, orchestrate most foreign fighting attempts during episode 1. At the same time they lead organized networks that are able to facilitate many practical issues that require specific expertise or manpower. As discussed in the operational stage, the networks in episode 1 conducted different forms of transnational organized crimes,[43] which makes them comparable to regular transnational criminal networks. These networks are replaced by loose collaborations of home-grown radicals over time. As a result, the subjects in episode 2 and 3 could not depend on the organizational benefits and resources, but relied on senior jihadists and fellow foreign fighters, and accordingly became more pragmatic and creative. Despite these differences over time, several social facilitators, such as the fellow foreign fighter and the broker type, were continuously present and often indispensable in the departure stage. Having said that, the best possible chance to disrupt or prevent future foreign fighting attempts is to interrupt interaction between a potential foreign fighter and a broker. Disordering their communication will aggravate accessibility to jihadist groups in conflict areas, which may lead to a decrease in the number of foreign fighters.

Technological developments. The development in conflict visibility, type of communication, and technological devices gradually influences the modus operandi of foreign fighters over time. It correlates with the two aforementioned situational factors and is present in each preparation stage. Firstly, *conflict visibility* significantly impacts the

[43] See also Chapters 3 and 4.

target decisions of all subjects during the orientation stage. Conflict visibility intensified over time due to the increased use of internet and social media in episode 2 and 3. Secondly, the *type of communication* changes over time. The increased use of internet and social media during episode 2 and 3 enables potential foreign fighters to seek out co-offenders, veterans or brokers in the orientation and co-offending stage. This virtual community is able to replace close-knit groups and creates a platform to discuss political issues and persuade potential foreign fighters. Over time, the changing communication influences both the target suitability and the social opportunity structure. Thirdly, over the course of 13 years' time, new *technological devices* became available. The influence of these devices is mainly visible in the operationalization stage in episode 3. The increased use of smart-phones and laptops with associated new software and functionalities facilitates communication and preparations. It increases accessibility to brokers and conflict areas and facilitates the search for alternative measures after the decline of organized networks. Although technological development seems irreversible, it does not have to be a problem. As long as investigative authorities are able to utilize technological developments as much as it is utilized by the people they are monitoring. Moreover, it is important not to lag behind, but to be a few steps ahead of potential suspects. In other words, investigative authorities must use technological developments to their own advantage in order to disrupt and prevent future foreign fighting attempts. This may require specific training of specialized investigators.

To conclude, policy makers need to have a thorough understanding of the phenomenon they want to prevent. This chapter has offered insight into the foreign fighting phenomenon by thoroughly analyzing empirical data on foreign fighting and by making the data transparent through crime script analysis. Our research has certain limitations as well. Although we take into account a longer period of time than is usually done, our data also reflect a specific time and place due to a selective sample, which limits possibilities for generalization. Secondly, revealing situational factors is allegedly difficult with regard to terrorism and organized crime, due to their complex and rare-event nature, which also limits our results. However, the combination of a crime script analysis, the triangulation of data sources, and the collaboration with practitioners is a valuable method to clarify how developments over time influence changing preparatory stages of foreign fighting. This criminological perspective can add value to the field of terrorism research, which may provide reference points for policy makers as they attempt to formulate tailored prevention measures.

Chapter 5:

Jihadist Networks and the Involvement of Vulnerable Immigrants: Reconsidering the Ideological and Pragmatic Value

Abstract

Research has shown that irregular migrants were disproportionally present in jihadist networks in the Netherlands between 2000 and 2005. Building on this study by analyzing files of closed police investigations and interviewing Imams and personnel within asylum centers and detention centers, this chapter explains the attractiveness of jihadist networks by a combination of pragmatic and ideological factors. The studied cases demonstrate how jihadist networks are able to satisfy certain needs of these irregular immigrants in a pragmatic way, and how criminal activities play an important role in this process. They also show how jihadist networks can fill a void for some of these irregular migrants who are in search for meaning and identity. The Jihadi-Salafist ideology does not seem to be the core pull factor explaining the attractiveness of the jihadist networks in this study.

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5.1 Introduction

Jihadist terrorism is a form of crime in which radical networks, relying on an extremely violent ideology, are planning, preparing and executing terrorist acts. Academics and criminal investigative authorities tend to label the latter as "ideologically motivated crime". Subjects within these radical networks are often depicted as protesters with a utopist image of society that is strongly supported by ideology. Ideology is seen as motivation for individuals to form groups and engage in criminal conducts. On the other hand, literature has also shown that many subjects are not protesters *a priori* but vulnerable individuals who search for solutions in order to deal with their alleged deprived situation (Berman, 2009; Buijs et al., 2006). In that regard, the pragmatic value of a network, rather than its ideological goals, might just as well be an attractive feature to vulnerable individuals.

Dutch criminal investigative authorities have been focusing on alleged ideological motivated criminal conducts intensively since 2001. The resulting police investigations pertain to both subjects that could be regarded as protesters, as well as vulnerable individuals such as young second generation Muslim migrants who show signs of an identity crisis. Furthermore, in the first tier of the data collection of this dissertation, the presence of a particular vulnerable group within the jihadist networks was found, namely a relatively large number of *irregular* Muslim immigrants. These irregular, undocumented, or unauthorized immigrants never acquired a residence permit for the Netherlands, their application was denied, or their permit had expired (Engbersen & Van der Leun, 2001).[44] From the 90 analyzed male individuals who were active in the first tier of data, almost half (41 subjects) resided illegally in Western Europe.[45]

This remarkable finding has not been thoroughly investigated. Also the relationship between specifically *irregular* Muslim immigrants and radicalization in general has hardly been studied. The presence of *home-grown*[46] terrorists is often related to the attractiveness of radical ideologies, but the background of an alleged protesting home-,

[44] Common term in the Netherlands for individuals from third countries who reside in the country without lawful permission of the government is illegal migrant. We refrain from using this term here because of its stigmatizing nature and have replaced it by irregular migrant. We reserve the term illegal for the nature of the residence or stay (Illegal stay). This can imply that a person entered the country illegally, but many irregular immigrants in the Netherlands over stay their visa. For a discussion on terminology and an overview of studies in this field, see Engbersen, Van der Leun, & De Boom (2007); Schrover, Van der Leun, Lucassen, & Quispel (2008); Van Meeteren, (2010).

[45] The 23 active women in the analyzed networks were all legally residing in the Netherlands. Less than estimated 10% of the total number of migrants in the Netherlands appears to be irregular. See for instance Van der Leun & Illies (2010). Therefore, the fact that half of this study's male actors are illegally residing indicates disproportionality, although in absolute terms it only concerns a small number.

grown terrorist can significantly deviate from the profile of a, potentially vulnerable, first generation irregular immigrant. This raises the question why in the period of time under study the analyzed jihadist networks were so attractive to this group of irregular Muslim immigrants. More specifically, this chapter explores to what extent the ideological and pragmatic values of jihadist networks are important features that could attract irregular immigrants. Answering this question may help rethinking certain assumptions about the relation between ideology, crime and extremist environments.

Following terrorism expert Crenshaw (1981, p. 396), we approach this case from two complementary perspectives. On the one hand, from the perspective of the individual, who is driven by ideological motivations due to different circumstances. This ideological perspective emphasizes the background of the subjects, the radicalization process, the narrative of the ideology, and their relation with society. On the other hand, from the perspective of the jihadist network, regarded as a community which can draw individuals for different reasons. This community can satisfy different needs of its members in a pragmatic way. From this perspective the pragmatic benefits which are associated with group participation are emphasized, without ideological motives playing a significant role. One of such pragmatic solutions can be crime (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). As displayed in the crime-terror nexus literature, several scholars elaborated how and to what extent organized crime groups and terrorist groups either converge, collaborate, or imitate each other more and more in the last two or three decades when trying to achieve their allegedly distinctive objectives (Dechesne & Van der Veer; 2010; Dishman, 2005; Mullins, 2009b; Picarelli, 2006). According to this literature, terrorists' motivation behind this interaction is to invigorate funding, preparation, and execution of terrorist plots (Dishman, 2005, p. 244; Gartenstein-Ross & Dabruzzi, 2007; Hutchinson & O'Malley, 2007, p. 1097; Makarenko, 2004, p. 130; Naylor, 2004; Perri & Brody; 2011, p.49; Shelley & Picarelli, 2005, p. 54). None of the studies in this context, however, seem to address the issue of attractiveness of terrorist groups for new members through the adoption of crime.[47] This chapter aims at filling this gap by exploring the incentives that terrorist groups can offer to certain irregular migrants through a combination of ideology and pragmatic solutions such as crime.

The methodology we have deployed to study these aspects will be elaborated in the next paragraph. Based on a literature study, the third paragraph will briefly outline the jihadist ideology and what jihadist networks have to offer in theory. We will combine radicalization studies regarding the role of ideology with migration studies concerning the role of the community and practical solutions. Radicalization studies tend to focus on Muslims without paying specific attention to their residence status; migration studies

[46] Muslims who lived the greater part of their lives in a Western society and who also radicalized there. See Vidino (2009).

[47] Only Mullins (2009b) touches lightly upon this issue when he compares the pathways into crime and terrorism. He does not stress the attractiveness of crime within terrorist groups however.

that focus on irregular migrants do not pay much attention to ideology or religion. Based on an analysis of police files and additional semi-structured interviews with experts in the field, we will illustrate in paragraphs 4 and 5 how both ideological as well as pragmatic values can determine the attractiveness of jihadist networks to irregular Muslim migrants. We base these findings on the activities and behavior of members of the jihadist networks. We do not seek for the explicit motivations that drove them to join these networks, but we seek to understand their attitude by analyzing their (documented) behavior. We selectively focus on migrants without civil rights, who have come to the attention of the police and the Ministry of Justice because of their involvement with terrorism related issues. It should be kept in mind that for the majority of irregular Muslim migrants in the Netherlands, this is not the case. Whereas some seek crime as a solution, the majority does not (Engbersen & Van der Leun, 2001; Leerkes, Engbersen, & Van der Leun, 2012; Van Meeteren, 2012). Joining a jihadist network is even rarer.

5.2. Data and methods

5.2.1 Approach

In order to answer the research question *"To what extent do pragmatism and ideology determine the attractiveness of jihadist networks to irregular Muslim immigrants?"*, we first look at the background of the irregular immigrants present in the investigations. Their basic needs and frustrations point to the features that could make a jihadist network attractive to them. Hence, we look at the practical solutions jihadist networks have to offer, in order to lay bare the pragmatic value of these networks. Second, we also look at the behavior and activities of irregular immigrants within the networks, for indications of the ideological value of jihadist networks. We try to accomplish this by analyzing to what extent their behavior is characterized by Jihadi-Salafism. Ideologically characterized behavior not only implies a positive attitude towards the ideology, but also suggests that a subject is internalizing the ideology. Although the relationship between attitude and behavior is complex (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005) our data will help to understand ideological attitude by analyzing behavior knowing that Jihadi-Salafism explicitly prescribes and demands particular behavior as a signature of its doctrine (Roex et al., 2010; Wiktorowicz, 2005). We deal with the latter more in detail in 5.3.1.

We applied *grounded theory* methods in this study, which is an alternative for the positivist approach that aims to test and verify hypotheses from prior research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded Theory (GT) is an inductive approach that aims to generate a theory through the unprejudiced analysis of data. The basic principles of the GT approach are the *comparative method* and *theoretical sampling*. The comparative method involves comparison between data and emerging concepts during each stage of the analysis (Glaser & Strauss, p. 106), while theoretical sampling means that emerging categories direct the process of data gathering or sampling over time (Morse, 2007, p. 229-244).[48] The procedures of sampling, coding, categorizing, analyzing and theorizing need to be conducted simultaneously and continuously throughout the research in order to adhere to these premises.[49]

Data in the area of jihadism are not easy to gather, as radicalized irregular Muslim migrants who are active in jihadist networks are not easy to find. They keep a low profile because of their lack of residence status and their involvement in criminal networks. Hence, we used three kinds of methods. First, we analyzed radicalization studies and migration studies to discover the parallels between the two disciplines. Second, we analyzed closed police investigations on different forms of jihadist terrorism. Third, we conducted interviews with employees of detention centers and asylum centers who have a qualified perspective on the problems and behavior of irregular migrants (detention centers) and potential irregular migrants (asylum centers). Although these are rich data sources in particular when combined, a limitation is that we cannot generalize the data due to an unrepresentative sample.

5.2.2 Police investigations

For this chapter we only used the first tier of data that we collected from the police files, containing information on the 2000-2005 period. From that period, we analyzed 12 selected police investigations on jihadist terrorist activities in the Netherlands. A specified documentation sheet was used in order to analyze the suspect hearings, witness statements, original wiretap transcripts (both telephone and internet), observation reports, house searches, and other relevant information. This information illustrated the behavior of the subjects. When we found that many subjects in the analyzed investigations were undocumented, we explicitly focused on the 41 undocumented jihadists from these files[50] to further analyze their behavior. This is in line with the grounded theory principles. Table 5.1 shows the background characteristics of the migrants concerned. Due to limited information on the background, we did not conduct any further analysis of these data. The relatively high number of Algerians stands out though. However, previous research (Engbersen & Van der Leun, 2001) shows that for example undocumented immigrants with a Moroccan background often present themselves as Algerians in order to hamper expulsion. Hence, there are reasons to use these background data with some care. In the following paragraphs, we will provide examples taken from the police files in separate (often italicized) fragments, summarized in our own words, in order to clarify. These fragments can be seen as typical examples.

[48] For an extensive and general elaboration of GT methodology, see Corbin & Strauss (2008); and Charmaz (2006).

[49] For a more extensive outline of the used GT methods, see Chapter 2.

[50] In total, the first tier of data contained 119 actors. Of those, 41 were illegally residing in the Netherlands.

Table 5.1: Demographic facts of 41 irregular immigrants within the criminal investigations.

Background facts irregular Muslim migrants	Absolute numbers
Gender	
Male	41
Female	0
Age	
≤25 year	9
26-35 year	19
≥36 year	10
Unknown	3
Native country	
Algeria	27
Morocco	5
Other	9
Unknown	0
Marital status	
Married	10
Single	2
Unknown	29
Completed Education	
Tertiary Education	5
Primary/Secondary school	2
Unknown	34
Employed [51]/study	
Yes	19
No	3
Unknown	19

[51] Further information about employment is lacking, this is most likely to be illegal labor.

The police investigations in our study are composed as follows. When there is reason to believe that certain individuals have the intention to act unlawfully in accordance with an Islamic fundamentalist doctrine, the police often start a criminal investigation under the categorization of terrorism. This consequently implies that the monitored subjects become labeled as suspects of terrorism who have mobilized in terrorist groups. Although we use these particular investigations for academic research, we are reluctant to use the same categorizations as the police. In reality the so-called *groups* are less well defined than the investigations often portray them to be. Also, the inclination of *terrorism* is a heavy burden, whereas many subjects within the analyzed networks appear to show different degrees of involvement, which does not always warrant the label of terrorist.

The 12 analyzed police investigations focus on 6 separate jihadist networks, which means that some of the investigations focus on the same cluster of subjects. This is often already acknowledged by the police, but in some instances we took the liberty to merge several investigations due to their interconnectedness. As explained in 3.2.2, we categorized a cluster of subjects as one network when the subjects interacted with each other and conducted several activities in order to establish the same objective. This objective refers to a concrete action – such as suicide bombing – and not merely the overarching ambition of Jihadi-Salafism. Even with these criteria it remains arguable whether one is dealing with entirely independent networks or with a large movement that contains several semi-independent subgroups.

The nature and composition of these networks are summarized in Table 5.2. It illustrates the years under investigation. Although police investigations started in a particular year, the investigators often adopted a retrospective view to look back in time. This is why the investigation of network 1 started in 2001, although certain activities of the network already started in 2000. Regarding the composition of the networks, network 1, 2 and 4 contain many subjects, but they do not all interact with each other with the same frequency. Each network has a core of subjects that interact with each other more frequently than with those in the periphery, which also reflects their involvement and degree of support (see Chapter 3 for an example of different tie strengths between subjects). Table 5.2 also shows the number of irregular immigrants involved per network and the (terrorist and criminal) activities they conducted. Except for the actual liquidation executed by a member of network 4, the irregular immigrants were all involved in the mentioned activities.[52] Paragraphs 5.4.1.2 and 5.4.2.3 will elaborate on the subjects' activities more in detail and will portray the different types of involvement.

[52] The fact that these irregular immigrants were arrested is not a result of migration control. The investigations started under the presumption of terrorism and the monitored groups happened to include subjects without a residence permit.

Table 5.2: The nature of jihadist networks based on police investigations.[54]

Network no.	Years investigated	Number of subjects	Number of irregular immigrants	Intent of terrorism	Criminal activities
1	2000-2001	29	9	- Plans for suicide bombing at the American embassy in Paris or an military encampment in Belgium	- Passport theft - Passport forgery - Burglary - Credit card fraud/ skimming - Trade in counterfeit clothing
2	2001-2003	36	26	- Facilitating liquidation - Recruiting foreign fighters for jihad - Facilitating foreign fighters for jihad - Weapon trade	- Passport theft - Passport forgery - Shoplifting - Drug trafficking
3	2003-2005	11	4	- Recruitment for jihad - Possession of weapons	- Passport forgery - Human trafficking
4	2003-2005	48	3	- Ideological liquidation - Plans for attacking government buildings - Weapon trade	- Passport fraud - Identity fraud - Shoplifting

The use of police files as a source of data has inherent limitations: (1) not all jihadist activities and background data are known to the police; (2) whether to start an investigation is guided by investigation policy choices and priorities; (3) the initial aim of the files is to inform a judge; (4) the case selection is limited to the period 2000-2005; (5) and finally, we are able to analyze the networks only from the start of an investigation. The subjects are most likely to have entered the jihadist networks then already, and therefore processes that have led to this entrance can only be reconstructed partially and with great prudence.[53] According to Althoff (2013, p. 397), "court files are constructions of social reality in the context of criminal law". Furthermore, the statements of suspects are the result of "forced" communication, which implies a biased perspective. It is indeed crucial to handle the data with prudence. However, the recorded internet and telephone wire taps cannot be regarded as "forced communication", neither can the confiscated materials from the house searches. In that regard, Van Koppen (2013) claims that compared to other countries, Dutch criminal investigations provide rich information due to the extensive use of wiretapping, observation techniques, and the absence of plea-bargaining. The latter holds even more for terrorism investigations. However, it still

[53] For methodological limitations see De Poot & Sonnenschein, 2011, par. 1.3.

[54] Several subjects reside in more than one network. This means that the total number of irregular immigrants exceeds 41.

stands that the data are gathered and selected by police officials first, which transforms the information into secondary and biased data. Nevertheless, in accordance with Van Koppen, due to the fact that we had access to the original transcripts, we were for a great part able to check the data ourselves. Finally, without the possibility to conduct observations within jihadist networks, there is no realistic alternative. We recognize that not directly interviewing suspected jihadist terrorists is a disadvantage, but these police investigations offer a unique perspective on jihadist networks and their modus operandi, which is very difficult to obtain otherwise.

5.2.3 Interviews

In order to balance the abovementioned problems and to find more data about our research topic, we additionally interviewed key respondents. This is in line with the grounded theory principle of theoretical sampling. We conducted 10 interviews with public prosecutors and team leaders of the police who were closely involved in the studied police cases. Furthermore, to broaden our view on irregular immigrants, we also conducted 23 interviews with key informants from asylum centers (AC) and detention centers (DC).[55] The reason for choosing these two organizations is twofold. First, these are the locations where, for this research, relevant migrants visibly concentrate. Asylum seekers in an AC are legally speaking not yet irregular migrants; they may however become so potentially. Second, the data from the police files show that a portion of the subjects who were actively involved during that period had met each other in asylum centers and prisons. Previous studies also indicate that prison populations can be used to radicalize and recruit new members (Cuthbertson, 2004; Hamm, 2007; Hannah, Clutterbuck, & Rubin, 2008). Some of these studies clarify that especially vulnerable people are targeted (Trujillo, Jordán, Antonio Gutierrez, & González-Cabrera, 2009) who also pragmatically adopt new behavior (such as religious conversion) in order to cope with the prison environment (Mulcahy, Merrington, & Bell, 2013). Since we are interested in irregular migrants, we focused on detention centers instead of prisons, because that is where (criminal) irregular immigrants are detained in the Netherlands. In the AC and DC thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff members from different locations and with different executive positions, who work in close relation with the population of migrants over a longer course of time. We decided to interview these key informants (instead of irregular migrants) due to their experience over the years (including our research period) and their experience with many irregular immigrants and asylum seekers. The police investigations do not focus on a contemporary episode but stem from a few years back. Hence, the key informants we selected were able to provide information over a longer period and it is questionable

[55] Detected irregular migrants and asylum seekers who exhausted all legal procedures and who are obliged to leave the country, are detained or upheld in DCs.

whether irregular immigrants and asylum seekers who currently reside in DCs and ACs would be able to do so. In addition, these staff members are able to provide information about the living standards of a large number of irregular immigrants and asylum seekers and compare this with the living standards in different years. Furthermore, 10 Imams who work for the Custodial Institutions Agency have been interviewed in the context of a focus group interview. They all work in a DC,[56] where at the time 11 Imams were employed. Overall, the 23 respondents and the locations where they work are partially selected on the willingness to cooperate to this research. Hence, our sample of key informants is a convenience sample. Moreover, the informants are an indirect source of data, which again indicates that we should handle the outcomes, will be presented in paragraphs 4 and 5, with prudence.

5.3 Radical irregular Muslim migrants. A multidisciplinary perspective

5.3.1 Jihadi-Salafism

The subjects in jihadist movements are associated with the *Salafism* doctrine. This ideology aims at a return to the pure interpretation of Islam, as it was lived in the original Muslim community (*umma*) in the time of the prophet Muhammed and the following three caliphates (Cottee, 2010; Meijer, 2009; Wiktorowicz, 2006). The heterogenic Salafist movement contains several ideological interpretations (De Koning, 2009, p. 377; Meijer, 2009, p. 3). Wiktorowicz analytically distinguishes between three types of Salafists: the purists, the politicos, and the Jihadi-Salafists who all share a common creed or *aqidah*. Within this *aqidah*, the *tawheed* (the unity and uniqueness of Allah) and the purification of Islam are central themes. All Muslims should adopt the lifestyle of the prophet, as laid down in the Quran and the Hadith, and reject all human desires and rationalizations (Cottee, 2010; Wiktorowicz, 2006). The religious precepts stemming directly from the Hadith are of essential importance to purify Islam (Roex et al., 2010; Wiktorwicz, 2005). The *aqidah* prescribes that every form of religious innovation (*bid'a*), that does not flow directly from the Quran or the Hadith, is a threat to its pure form (Wagemakers, 2009; Wiktorowicz, 2006). The foregoing shows that the common creed of this ideology prescribes explicit behavior. This implies that analyzing behavior of alleged supporters of this ideology, could indicate to what extent they value, support, or internalize the ideology. For example, not explicitly pursuing ideological goals, such as the implementation of sharia law, not willing to desist from unorthodox liberal and Western customs and crime, or not trying to comply with prescribed behavior, such as clothing, chastity, or nutrition regulations, does not suggest unconditional support for the purification of Islam. The three types of Salafists, however, differ in how they think Islam should be purified and Salafist goals should be reached. Purists advocate

[56] In AC no imams are employed.

education, propaganda and emphasize an orthodox lifestyle. Politicos resort to political tools, while Jihadi-Salafists preach violent means (Buijs et al., 2006; NCTb, 2008; Sageman, 2004; Wiktorowicz, 2006). This dissertation focuses on the latter group. According to Jihadi-Salafists, the violent jihad (armed struggle or holy war) is the tool to purify Islam (NCTb, 2009; Sageman, 2004; Wiktorowicz, 2006). There is, however, no consensus on the violent jihadist doctrine. Various scholars state that violent jihad can be both religiously as well as politically motivated, the war can be focused on Islamic as well as non-Islamic countries, both at protecting as well as expanding the *umma*. Although many individual nuances around the application of jihad exist (Meijer, 2009; Roex et al., 2010; Roy, 2005; Sageman, 2004, Wagemakers, 2009; Wiktorowicz, 2005; Zemni, 2006), they do share a common creed.

5.3.2 Background factors of radical Muslims and irregular migrants

An analysis of selected radicalization and migration studies brings to the fore that similar background factors have been described for, on the one hand, radical Muslims and, on the other hand, irregular migrants. Three core factors can be derived. Firstly, radical Muslims and irregular migrants suffer respectively from relative and absolute *deprivation*. This perceived deprivation by radical Muslims is influenced by the generally low socio-economic position of Muslims in Western societies, which in their opinion is unfair and disproportionate (Buijs, 2009; Moghaddam, 2005; Silke, 2008). They feel that society failed them (Buijs et al., 2006; Horgan, 2008; Nesser, 2011). The absolute deprivation of irregular migrants correlates with, amongst others, their formal exclusion from society due to the restrictive migration policy in the Netherlands. Especially since the enactment of the *Wijzigingswet Vreemdelingenwet en enige andere wetten* (1998; Amendment of the Dutch Aliens Act), which enhanced the exclusion from public services such as non-essential health care, public housing, and social security. Second, identity problems are an important communal factor. One reason are the perceived feelings of threat by Muslims due to the negative stigmas in society (Buijs et al., 2006; Geelhoed, 2012), another reason is that the identity of irregular migrants as head and caretaker of the family is being jeopardized due to their inability of providing an income (Leerkes, 2009). Finally, the studies clearly point to *mental problems* as a core factor. For both groups, deprivation and identity problems are described as leading to insecurity (Engbersen et al., 2002; Slootman & Tillie, 2006), psychological and physical problems (Burgers & Engbersen, 1999; Muijsenbergh & Schroever, 2009), and strong emotional responses (Loza, 2007; Sternberg, 2003).

5.3.3 Ideological and pragmatic responses

The responses of individuals to the aforementioned problems emphasize the importance of social ties. Adding to that, social movement theorists argue that especially grievances, efficacy, identity issues and emotions such as fear and anger motivate people to participate in protest groups (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans,

2013), which are comparable to the factors mentioned by radicalization studies. The latter focus on the role religion, ideology, group membership, and solidarity can play when personal identity is under pressure. Individuals, who feel trapped in insecure and threatening situations, seek to find meaning and control within religion, and in contact with fellow deprived peers (Kay, Gaucher, Napier, Callan, & Laurin, 2008; McIntosh, Silver & Wortman, 1993; Pargament et al., 1990; Pargament, et al., 2005). According to radicalization studies deprived Muslims are attracted to religion and to fellow Muslims who, close or abroad, find themselves in similar deprived or threatening situations. This offers control and mental relieve. For the majority of deprived Muslims these moderate solutions are sufficient, but a sub-group develops feelings of vengeance against the majority population or against a foreign power that oppresses fellow Muslims abroad. In some cases, an ideology such as Jihadi-Salafism can be embraced since its narrative explicitly counters the majority group of Western societies or other foreign powers. Distrust, distance, isolation from society, and potential violent means can be legitimized (Bartlett & Miller, 2012; Buijs et al., 2006; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008; Silke, 2008; Slootman & Tillie, 2006; Wiktorowicz, 2004).

Studies on irregular migrants, on the other hand, more often depart from a functionalist perspective. Based on Merton's (1945) strain theory, they argue that by a lack of resources, practical coping strategies are adopted in order to deal with deprivation (Caplowitz, 1979, Mingione, 1987; Engbersen et al., 2002). These studies assume that individuals approach communities if these can practically help them by providing for their social and material needs. The social capital of irregular migrants is embedded in a network of relatives, friends, and acquaintances (Engbersen & Van der Leun, 2001; Portes, Guarnizo, & Haller, 2002; Van Meeteren, 2012). The accessibility to this type of capital is dependent on nationality, ethnicity, language, and kinship (Engbersen et al., 2002). Common backgrounds are useful when searching for contacts and seem indispensable for gaining access to labor, financial or material gifts, and housing. When the social network of irregular migrants does not suffice to provide for the basic needs in a legal manner, some irregular migrants get involved in criminal activity (Figure 5.1). To these groups, survival crime can offer a practical alternative (Engbersen & Van der Leun, 2001; Leerkes et al., 2012; Van der Leun, 2003). In fact, organized crime studies sometimes show a similar process: individuals can – due to a shared ethnic background – accomplish practical tasks for criminal organizations and thereby facilitate criminal activity, without being a member of the networks, and sometimes without being fully aware of the criminal nature of the activities (Hobbs, 2001, p. 553).

5.3.4 Interaction of ideology and pragmatism

We assume that the behavioral responses described in the literature are to some extent biased because both strands of studies prefer to emphasize either an ideological or a pragmatic perspective. Merging existing theories and findings will help getting better insights into the interaction of ideology and pragmatism.

Figure 5.1: Separate perspectives.

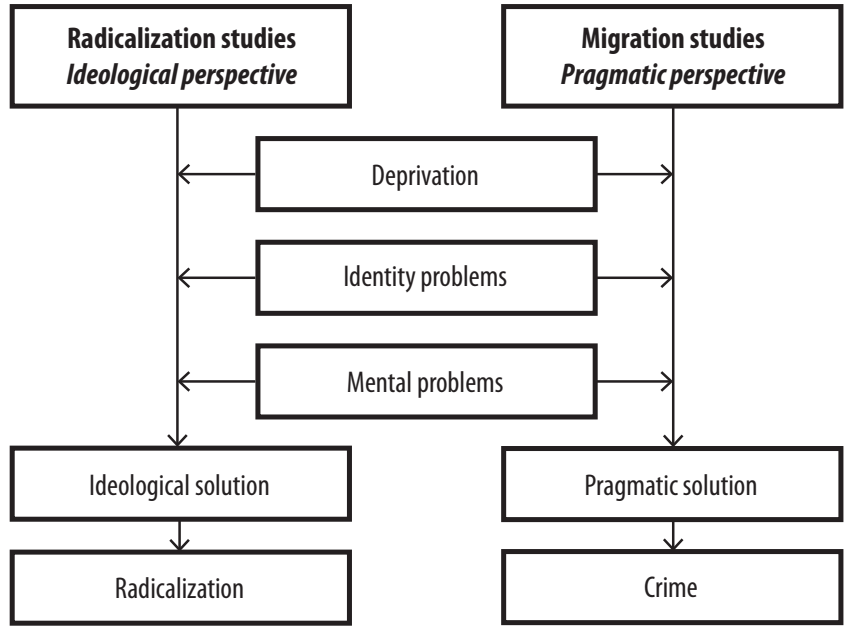
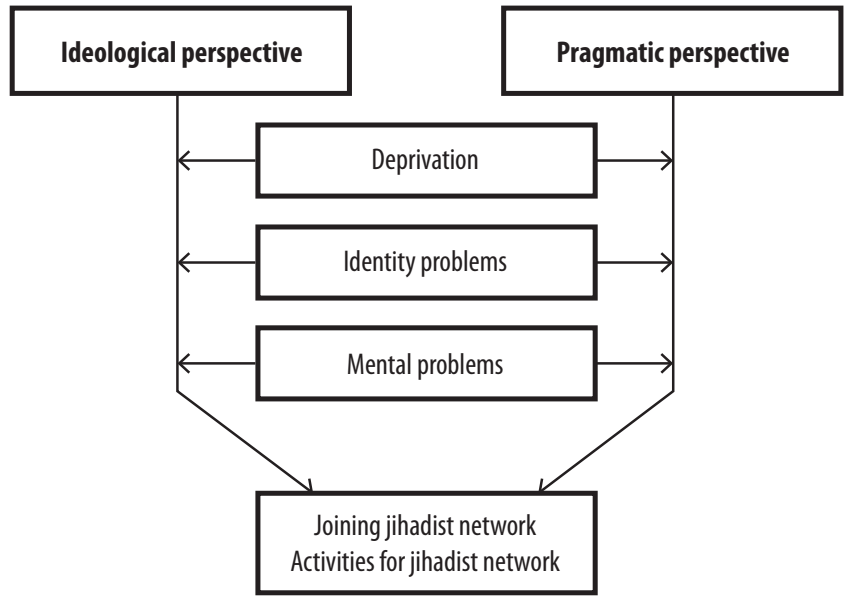


Figure 5.2: Interaction of ideology and pragmatism.



Radicalization studies for instance often assume that the subjects who entered jihadist networks are actually radicalized and have fully embraced and internalized the Jihadi-Salafist ideology (Demant, Slootman, Buijs & Tillie, 2008; Meertens et al., 2006; Moghaddam, 2005; Silber & Bhatt, 2007; Wiktorowicz, 2004). Although this probably accounts for some of the subjects, one could wonder whether this assumption is always applicable and whether the process of radicalization should be regarded as a *conditio sine qua non* for all subjects involved. Jihadist networks are extremely heterogeneous and variable (Bakker, 2006; De Poot & Sonneschein, 2011; Sageman, 2004). Besides faith and belief in a higher purpose, these networks can also provide other benefits, according to the economics of terrorism, such as social and material support and access to different kinds of goods and services (Berman, 2009; Ferrero, 2006; Iannacone & Berman, 2006). This pragmatic approach offers a relevant perspective. Studies on to the economics of terrorism as well as the earlier mentioned studies on the crime-terror nexus do touch upon this pragmatic nature of certain activities of the terrorist groups. These studies emphasize the growing collaboration between organized criminal and terrorist groups, which has been enhanced by globalization and the rise of the information age, the changing nature of state involvement and the way the composition of organizations is constructed. Especially the development from a hierarchical organization to a network structure has made collaboration between criminals and terrorists easier. The most important reason *why* terrorist groups would conduct criminal activities has to do with financial gain, which enables them to survive and to fund, prepare, and execute terrorist activities. Some scholars even argue that due to this convergence the ideological motive could also transform into a purely profit-oriented motive (Curtis & Karacan, 2002, p. 22; Dishman, 2001, p. 44; Shelley & Picarelli, 2005, p. 54). Although these studies touch upon the interaction between pragmatism (crime) and ideology (terror), they mainly analyze the crime-terror nexus from the perspective of established networks or criminal organizations. As Picarelli (2006, p. 7) correctly notices, the individual as a subject of analysis is widely ignored. Furthermore, studies mainly focus on crime in relation to the end-game of the network (financing terrorist attacks), without much regard to the entry motivations of individuals. Dishman (2005, p. 237) notes that some political militant groups introduced financial incentives to recruit new members, but does not further investigate this. Hence, the criminal attractiveness of terrorist groups in relation to entry mechanisms of new recruits has not received systematic attention so far. Emphasis on potential individual recruits in relation to the attractiveness of crime, however, could broaden our view on the crime-terror nexus and illustrate its importance in relation to entry mechanisms.

Studies on irregular migrants, which do stress pragmatically motivated behavior by individuals, are informative here, but they largely leave the role of religion and ideology out of the picture. Although some studies show that churches and religious communities are in fact an important source of social capital due to direct and indirect contacts within churches, this is, however, again explained from the pragmatic perspective (Burgers & Engbersen, 1999). These studies rarely incorporate the search for meaning and control in religion and the ideological value a network can have (Figure 5.2). Social movement theorists, however, argue that the earlier mentioned grievances, efficacy, identity, emotions, and social embeddedness can motivate immigrants to participate in protest groups (Klandermans & Van Stekelenburg, 2008).

5.4 Results

5.4.1 Pragmatic attractiveness

5.4.1.1 Problems and needs of irregular Muslim migrants

Key informants emphasized that asylum seekers share relatively small and sober living spaces with several people. Privacy in ACs is limited and social conflicts occur on a regular basis. Asylum seekers are supposed to organize their own leisure activities, but have difficulties integrating into society due to their lack of contacts and language skills.[57] In addition, their financial opportunities are limited to the weekly compensation by the Dutch government, as they are not allowed to work. Furthermore, in a DC irregular migrants are subjected to a prison regime, which means they cannot leave the premises to work or undertake any social activities in society. Contrary to the AC, social activities are organized in the DC and the living facilities offer a little bit more privacy than in the AC. Nonetheless, the living conditions are still frugal and, according to the National Ombudsman (Verhoef, Van Dorst, Van der Kleij, & Adric, 2012) inhumane.[58]

Until 2010, asylum seekers had to deal with asylum procedures that could last for years. Since the *Amendment of the Dutch Aliens Act 2000* in 2010 this process has been accelerated,[59] but asylum seekers are still confronted with time consuming procedures which tend to make them passive. DC respondents state that rejected asylum seekers often do not leave the country after the final negative decision (Staff members 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5). Consequently, according to the respondents, they become irregular migrants, who have very little to fall back upon and therefore start committing petty crimes. Many of them, according to our respondents, return to the DC after a while and attempt to start a new asylum procedure. The inflexibility of the authorities regarding the asylum procedure and the negative decision in their case is perceived as unjust by many migrants concerned. In the DC this is combined with feelings of anger, since the migrant perceives his behavior as non-criminal while he is literally detained. This dissatisfaction fuels a sense of us-*versus*-them. The detention Imams also observe these feelings and attempt to mollify them. Still, some of the Muslim migrants think they are detained

[57] In ACs language skills are not taught to immigrants without a permit.

[58] Also ACs are claimed to be inhumane. In May 2014 a German judge prohibited the return of an asylum seeker to a Dutch AC because the risk of possible inhuman treatment was too high (Kas, 2014).

[59] The Amendment of the Dutch Aliens Act 2000 in 2010 has accelerated the process of notification of a procedural decision concerning an asylum request. In addition, it prohibits repeated requests.

because they are Muslim, which makes it difficult to change their views (Focus group Imams, Detention Center, April 12th 2012).

A positive decision by the authorities (in both AC and DC) is usually met with a positive response, but a negative outcome can cause an emotional outburst of anger and disappointment, according to the respondents. This reaction varies from verbal expression to aggression. In most extreme cases, staff members are threatened or the migrant may demonstrate suicidal intentions.

> *"Sometimes it can become personal. They start threatening you and shout 'I will not leave! I will not let myself be deported'[…]. They sometimes threaten you with death, such as 'If I run into you outside…you wait, I'll get you. I will kill you if I run into you outside'."* (Staff member 1, Detention Center, interview March 2012)

Also in these situations the detention Imam may play a neutralizing role, because they are relatively close to the migrants (Focus group Imams, Detention Center, April 12th 2012). The respondents in both AC and DC unanimously state that basically all migrants develop some kind of mental problems, which can be intensified when the migrants have to deal with a negative decision concerning their asylum application or due to the living conditions. This often leads to conflicts, depression, or social isolation.

> *"The threshold for conflicts is much lower after some time. Nothing major, but for the people enough to let the bubble burst. This can be caused by the living conditions but predominantly by the psychological problems and the pressure of the procedure. They have a lot to deal with in this couple of weeks."* (Staff member 21, Detention Center, interview February 2012)

The aforementioned problems of deprivation and mental instability of irregular migrants in the literature are thus confirmed by the interviews. Although the interviews mainly focused on migrants in an asylum procedure, we can assume that these problems do not disappear when asylum seekers become irregular immigrants without safe haven. These problems rather increase.

5.4.1.2 Pragmatic solutions by jihadist networks

Based on the police investigations that we have studied we observe that the jihadist networks have certain pull-factors, which can pragmatically provide for the cost of living of irregular migrants. *Heartland-oriented* jihadists,[60] subjects who were already radicalized in their native country, play an important intermediary role in this process. They have similar migration backgrounds as the irregular Muslim migrants and therefore may explicitly anticipate the needs of this population.[61] First of all, the majority of the irregular immigrants in our files shares housing with fellow subjects.

> *A leading actor (subject 14, network 2) was aware of the fact that subject 20 (network 2) had a hard time adapting in the Netherlands because he disliked the heavy labor of his current job. As a result, subject 14 offered subject 20 to stay at his house, who in his turn seized this opportunity. In addition, subject 39 (networks 3 and 4) had met so many likeminded in the AC, which meant he could continuously move in and out with other members of the group. The same applied to subjects 40 and 41 (network 4), who alternately resided at the houses of 7 different members of the network.*

Second, all analyzed jihadist networks offer housing facilities to foreign jihadists who only temporally reside in the Netherlands.

> *Subject 21 (network 2) coordinated the housing of international jihadists from the GSPC. Furthermore, he also ensured that other members of the network are housed. He either made his own house available or ensured that people could reside with others. For instance, focusing on the social surroundings of subject 22 (network 2), he appears to be a lonely man. He is then facilitated by subject 21 who offers him a bed and maintenance.*

Furthermore, the files indicate that certain houses are explicitly rented out to irregular migrants. For example, from the observation reports the police noticed that subject 35 (network 2), managed three attaching houses in which several irregular immigrants were living.

The networks also offer travel opportunities in order to enter, leave, or reside in the Netherlands. One of the core activities of networks 1, 2, and 3 is theft and forgery of passports, in order to enable its members to travel to jihad training and fighting hotspots abroad.

> *During a house search of subjects from network 2, the police found a wide variety of stolen documents. These included Somalian passports, Algerian identity cards, and a Somalian marriage certificate. Besides these documents, a stock of passports was found which was stolen from a foreign municipality a few years before. Furthermore, also members from network 3 kept a variety of stolen passports, photographs, and identity notes. The latter implies new orders for forgery.*

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[60] In Chapter 3 the *heartland-oriented* were referred to as *core members* or *international jihadists* in network 1. In Chapter 4 they were also explicitly mentioned as one of the *social facilitator* types.

[61] The role of the *heartland-oriented* jihadists depends on the context and time. The current files are from before 2005, an era in which there was little policy concerning recruitment. In the meantime, there have been relevant policy changes, such as the establishment of a terrorist wing in prisons and the commencement of some migration related counter-terrorism measures, which emphasized the aforementioned problems in AC and DC and made it difficult for recruiters to continue their work in the previous fashion. See Veldhuis, Gordijn, Lindenberg & Veenstra (2010).

We did not observe explicit activities of theft and forgery in network 4, but the subjects did possess false passports on a large scale. In addition, theft and forgery of false passports is a lucrative business, because the passports are sold to both irregular immigrants as well as other networks. Subjects from network 1 claim to make a 150 German Mark profit for each sold forged document. In network 2, the profit per forged document varied between 50 and 300 Euros. These revenues are used to finance terrorist purposes, maintain the members of the networks, or to support other jihadists worldwide. In the financial investigations we observed that some transactions made by members from network 1 were directed to other foreign jihadists who allegedly send this to training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan. This means that theft and forgery of passports at first facilitates the jihadist movement, although it also offers an alternative for the asylum procedures of irregular migrants. By explicitly responding to this vulnerable population, the jihadists are able to effectively commit some of them through, for instance, collecting an open debt.

> *According to subject 35 (network 2) himself, he started to work for the network in return for a passport that he could not pay for. By helping with forgery and bringing in new customers, he could pay off his debt. He was also financially assisted in renting his apartment and in return the network positioned counterfeiting equipment in his apartment.*

Binding irregular immigrants can also occur through human smuggling and sham marriages. Network 3 uses these methods in order to offer an alternative migration entry and in addition successfully commits moderate Muslims. Subject 36 (network 3) for instance, tried to obtain Dutch citizenship with the coordinated help of a jihadist who had already helped him to travel to the Netherlands by human smuggling. Thereupon, we noticed in the wiretap transcripts, they tried to arrange a sham marriage and made several attempts by persuading a woman to marry subject 36 for the reward of 2,000 Euros.

Possession of official documents offers a semi-legal existence, including the opportunity to be formally employed and gain access to social services. More in particular, subject 5 (network 1) tried to obtain a Dutch social security number by registering at a government institution while using a forged French passport. In addition, earlier mentioned subject 21 (network 2) provided several irregular immigrants with a social security number and a forged passport (next to food, shelter, and train tickets), which they used to register at an employment agency. As a result, some of the irregular immigrants started to see him as social worker and stayed closely connected to him. In network 3 we also observed that several members were closely linked to a shadowy employment agency that deliberately worked with false passports. The members brought in new irregular immigrants who had just entered the country via human smuggling to this agency, which in turn arranged jobs for the immigrants concerned.

5.4.2 Ideological attractiveness

The previous paragraph has stressed practical solutions for the needs of irregular immigrants, which points to the pragmatic value of jihadist networks. In order to explore the ideological value, we analyze to what extent the jihadist networks can also fulfill non-material needs (5.4.2.1) and to what extent the activities and roles of the subjects within the network appear to be characterized by Jihadi-Salafism (5.4.2.2).

5.4.2.1 Irregular immigrants in search for meaning

The aforementioned practical solutions are primarily offered through criminal activities. The question remains whether crime alone could resolve identity problems and structural insecurity and how pragmatism (crime) and ideology relate to each other or interact. The interviews have shown that due to their deprived living situation irregular immigrants are in need for meaning, security, and safety. As a result, the majority of the respondents from the DC states that some irregular migrants are attracted to religion in order to find meaning and safety (Staff members 1, 2, 4, and 5, DC; all 10 Imams), mainly if they are in a hopeless situation. They sometimes react by becoming more devout and stricter with respect to religious rules. Some irregular Muslim migrants assume that when they put more faith into the hands of Allah, their saving and reward (including the possibility to stay in the country) will follow. The Imams stress that religion offers the migrants something to hold on to. It also offers them an understanding of and justification for their detention: Allah punishes them for their former moderately religious lifestyle. By adopting a more conservative or even orthodox lifestyle they feel they experience suitable punishment (Focus group Imams, Detention Center, April 12th 2012).

5.4.2.2. Ideological nature of jihadist networks

Joining religious movements and following a creed may enable people to find a community and might offer meaning and security to vulnerable migrants. The police investigations document how this often starts with an explicit bonding process. Religious conviction is a factor that brought many irregular Muslim migrants in contact with other members in the first place. Some subjects sought fellow Muslims inside an AC in order to meet new people. People kept in touch after they left an AC and these premature friendships functioned as a safety net when in need for overnight housing (see for example subject 39 in 5.4.1.2). In addition, several subjects frequently visited a Mosque to meet new people. For example subjects 3, 6, 7, and 8 from network 1 all met each other in a local Mosque. Also more in general, the movement offers a welcoming environment to new likeminded people who are rapidly embraced by the collective. The religious group identity comes forward as a significant factor in this process as it provides a sense of belonging. For example, people studied the Quran, attended political-religious meetings and prayed together. Despite the differing degrees of religiosity, the fact that members share a religion and share similar accounts of (relative)

deprivation, appears to have spurred solidarity and cohesion. In addition, networks 2 and 4 showed that the members frequently met at specific places in order to discuss about whatever was important and necessary for the movement. The files showed how their interpretation of an ideological narrative sometimes polarized their relation with Dutch society, emphasized the importance of the in-group, and also dictated to look after their fellow comrades within the in-group. This reflects a community aspect, where the safety of the in-group is secured. Moreover, safety and security of the in-group was also enhanced by Islamic purification demanded by the ideology. Members were denounced if they did not comply with the ideology's prescribed behavior. Some members from networks 1 and 4, for instance, initially adopted a *Takfir* doctrine, which enabled them to repudiate members from the in-group if they for example did not pray enough or did not demonstrate full (ideological) support. But foremost, this particular doctrine was used to denounce all nonbelievers in general.

To conclude, the emphasis on community and the feeling of belonging on the basis of religion and shared ideology points to the ideological value of the network. However, the shared religious group identity neither means that all subjects' activities are entirely characterized by the Jihadi-Salafist ideology, nor that all subjects should be considered radical. In the following we delve deeper into this issue.

5.4.2.3 Ideological hierarchy

The population of irregular Muslim migrants in our study is heterogeneous. On the one hand, there are illegally residing *heartland-oriented* subjects who imported the Jihadi-Salafist ideology into the Netherlands and whose status is based on Quran knowledge and former jihadist experiences. In total we have labeled 7 subjects as illegally residing *heartland-oriented* (subjects 4 and 9 from network 1, subjects 14, 16, and 21 from network 2, subject 37 from network 3, and subject 39 from networks 3 and 4). On the other hand, we found a much larger group of irregular Muslim migrants who could not claim a higher social status based on religious knowledge or jihadist experiences. For this reason we assume that they only fulfilled an active position in the jihadist movement after they migrated to the Netherlands.[62] Their marginalized position seems to be an important factor in influencing their involvement with the analyzed networks and the Jihadi-Salafist ideology. We support this conclusion with several findings.

First, there are many indications in the analyzed files showing that the heartland-oriented are more structurally devoted to the Jihadi-Salafist ideology then the other Muslim immigrants. The former explicitly spread the Jihad-Salafist ideology and encourage others to strictly apply orthodox rules. On the contrary, the other irregular Muslim migrants seem to be less religiously devoted and strict:

[62] Five of the remaining 34 irregular jihadists found themselves in a grey area, now that we doubt their background. They only seemed to have radicalized after they entered the West, but they do seem to upgrade their social status due to previously required knowledge and skills.

> *Subject 19 (network 2) mentions he is addicted to cocaine. This could have been the result of the drug transportations by network 2, although we cannot verify this. In addition, in the wiretap transcripts, subject 36 (network 3) speaks more about women than about religion and he brags about the number of women he shares his bed with. He personally claims that he also smokes cigarettes. Other subjects do not want to shake his hand because of his unorthodox habits.*

We noticed this type of unorthodox behavior throughout the jihadist movement and it does not only apply to irregular immigrants. However, devotion is difficult to measure and the perceived importance of an orthodox lifestyle can sometimes be unclear within the networks.

Second, irregular immigrants play an unequal part in establishing ideological goals and these differences correlate with status and division of labor. The heartland-oriented are leaders whose status is based on religious knowledge, charismatic appearance, and jihadist experiences in their native Islamic countries. Their core activities are preaching, spreading the ideology, recruiting new members, preparing terrorist attacks, and facilitating jihad trainings.

> *Subject 9 (network 1) used to be involved in terrorist operations in Muslim countries, but is now a recruiter who converts vulnerable people to the radical form of Islam. These recruited people, such as the alleged suicide bomber within this network, were predominantly self-declared drug addicts or people with social and mental problems. In addition, earlier mentioned subject 21 (network 2) used his status to indoctrinate new members, to spread fatwas on disobedient subjects and to guide them through the recordings of video testaments. He appears to be well-schooled in the jihadist doctrine and preaches his knowledge on cassette tapes. Finally, subject 39 (network 3 and 4) is an inspirer and ideologue of network 4. He positions himself as a forerunner of the radical Islam. He preaches the correct interpretation of the Quran to members of the network; an ability he already utilized during his residence in Asylum Centers a few years earlier, witnesses claim. He does not tolerate any contradiction against his interpretation of Islam and some members find his appearance intimidating. He is eventually suspected of providing a fatwa that allegedly induced an ideologically inspired liquidation.*

On the other hand, the other irregular Muslim migrants seem to lack ideological status within the movement and their core activities have a predominantly facilitating nature. Some of them were for instance actively engaged in theft and burglaries.

> *Subjects 5, 6, and 7 from network 1, conducted several residential burglaries, where they specifically aimed for passports. However, they also stole domestic goods such as an alarm clock, coffee, fruit, towels, shampoo, reading glasses, and a sleeping*

bag. Furthermore, several irregular immigrants from network 2 (subjects 23, 26, 34, and 35) were notorious shoplifters who specifically aimed at stealing clothes.

The purpose of the stolen goods was initially to provide for foreign jihadists during their temporary stay in the Netherlands. However, regarding the nature of many of these goods, we assume that it is also a way to provide irregular migrants with basic possessions. In addition, in networks 1, 2, and 3 the irregular immigrants were also engaged in forgery of stolen passports.

During a house search in the apartment of subjects 6 and 7 (network 1) the police found a counterfeiting workshop and confiscated around 60 stolen documents (passports, ID-cards, driving licenses) from all over the world. They also found all sorts of equipment used to forge these documents; needles, (municipality) stamps, markers, folding and cropping equipment for photo processing, and press moulds. Also, subject 35 (network 2) possessed counterfeiting equipment that enabled him to forge Dutch, Belgian, French, Spanish, and British documents. The police also found laminate, a laminator, blank cards, blank identity cards, punch letters, an instruction manual, and printers.

Some irregular immigrants, such as subject 22 (network 2), claim that they explicitly conducted these criminal activities to help other irregular Muslim migrants. We noticed that subject 22 showed no intent to accomplish any ideological goal. He also stated that he was more intimidated by other Muslim extremists than that he supported them. Another criminal activity conducted by jihadist networks was credit card fraud. Again, several irregular Muslim migrants (subjects 6 and 8, network 1) were engaged in this activity that involved significant financial gain.

The subjects travelled throughout Europe in order to buy stolen credit cards and then used them in other countries. They also possessed a skimming machine and the records of 45 different names and account numbers. They had connections with people across the world, which were able to either send or place skimming equipment.

A final activity which involved large sums of money was the transportation of drugs.

Subject 15 (network 2) coordinated the drug trade in order to generate income. The police traced three separate drug transportations executed by this network. They confiscated 27,000 Euros when they intercepted the first transport. A third transportation failed because one of the members stole the transportation truck and sold the cocaine for his personal gain.

The police investigations suggest that many irregular Muslims migrants within the jihadist networks aim at financial and material gain and for who a holy war is of insignificant importance. Their status, type of labor, and limited – or even absent – signs of ideological involvement show that their behavior is hardly characterized by the Jihadi-Salafist ideology. These findings suggest that the attractiveness of a jihadist movement for vulnerable migrants is not necessarily determined by ideology. We rather observe a combination of utility and a need for meaning and security, taking into account that their behavior was often based on pragmatic considerations.

This relative lack of ideological involvement in relation to criminal labor, could suggest that these subjects are "external" criminals from an organized crime syndicate that formed some kind of alliance with a jihadist network. Except for maybe the international credit card fraud, we cannot establish whether this is the case. We do see that most of the subjects are religiously involved (albeit sometimes very moderately) and some explicitly searched for meaning, which means it is unlikely they are merely the product of a crime-terror alliance. In accordance with most literature on the nexus of crime and terror (Dishman, 2001; p. 48; Hutchinson & O'Malley, 2007, p. 1102; Makarenko, 2004, p. 133), the execution of the aforementioned criminal activities by the extremist networks can therefore be regarded as "in-house capabilities". We found different types of criminal involvement that seem to corroborate this. On the one hand, networks 1 and 2 recruited many vulnerable young Muslims, including irregular immigrants with a criminal history. They were allowed to continue with their criminal activities, which were even justified by ideology. They could steal from *kuffar* (nonbelievers) as long as they would hand over the shares to the network. Members from network 3 emphasized that stealing from *kuffar* is in essence a justified act. As a result, the criminal activities were now sugar-coated with a religious dip.

5.5 Conclusion

Many terrorism studies assume that subjects within extremist movements have embraced and internalized a radical religious ideology, implying that these subjects are per se attracted and motivated by ideology. This chapter has challenged this assumption. Departing from the central research question *"To what extent do pragmatism and ideology determine the attractiveness of jihadist networks to irregular Muslim immigrants?"* this chapter has emphasized the complexity of attractiveness. Next to the ideological value, jihadist networks can also have a pragmatic value for people in a vulnerable position, such as irregular migrants. This holds in particular for their limited legal options to survive as a result of tough policies on irregular migration, as is the case in the Netherlands.

The analysis of a selective sample of irregular Muslim migrants involved in jihadist networks between 2000 and 2005, was based on a range of police investigations and interviews with key informants. Based on the interviews, we started out by mapping the

problems that asylum seekers and irregular migrants in ACs and DCs encounter in their daily lives. The data showed that many of the migrants involved appear to struggle with feelings of deprivation and mental issues. Next, based on our analysis of extensive and well-documented police files, we focused on the practical solutions jihadist networks can offer. Criminal activities appeared to offer the most helpful solutions, which clearly indicates the pragmatic value of the networks. However, although crime may satisfy basic needs, it might not resolve the structural insecurity many irregular immigrants experience. Hence, we analyzed the activities and behaviors of irregular Muslim migrants as reflected in the files, in order to explore whether the attractiveness of jihadist networks could be found in the Jihadi-Salafist ideology. Our analysis suggested that due to the subjects' interpretation of the ideology, with its emphasis on community values, the jihadist networks seemed to offer a sense of belonging to the migrants concerned. Yet, Jihadi-Salafism did not seem to be the core instigator of the observed activities. Not all members of jihadist networks appeared to be attracted by the ideological value and strove to realize the proclaimed ideological goals. At least for our case study, the pragmatic value seemed to be more important than is often assumed. This may be a particular finding for a particular phase and place, but it does have wider implications as it sheds a different light on the crime-terror nexus discussion. A pragmatic solution – such as engaging in income generating crime – is not only beneficial to fund terrorism and facilitate the pursuit of ideological goals, but can also attract vulnerable new members. They may even adopt the ideology in order to engage in the movement, but that would require further research.

Despite the limitations and lack of generalizability caused by the use of indirect methods and a selective sample, our study highlights processes that have been largely overlooked so far. Our case study emphasizes that crimes which are commonly seen as ideologically motivated are in fact based on more complex motives. The relation between ideology and crime should not be taken at face value and the pragmatic value of radical movements deserves more attention.

Chapter 6:

Involvement Mechanisms of Jihadist Networks

Abstract

Association with a jihadist terrorist network often provokes responses by a member's social environment and fellow likeminded jihadists. In order to deal with these out- and in-group responses, jihadists need social or ideological handles that offer resistance and sustain their involvement over time. This chapter will show how jihadists deal with different responses and how this affected their degree of involvement. Therefore, 28 voluminous police investigations from the Netherlands were analyzed (yielding rich information on 209 subjects) and 28 semi-structured interviews with police investigators, public prosecutors, and defense lawyers were conducted. By scrutinizing the social mechanisms that enhance, discourage, and sustain possible affiliation with a terrorist network, this study discovered two important findings. First, jihadist involvement appears to be an unstable and dynamic process rather than a one-step event terminating in a solid membership. Subjects have to constantly deal with antagonistic mechanisms that either encourage or deter them from further involvement. As a result, there seems to be no "termination point" to the process of radicalization or recruitment, as the degree of involvement can change over time. Second, all subjects had to deal with these mechanisms, which means that also the involvement of experienced subjects was unstable.

A slightly different version of this chapter was submitted as a separate manuscript:

De Bie, J.L. (2016). Involvement Mechanisms of Jihadist Networks in The Netherlands. Revised and re-submit.

6.1 Introduction

The involvement process of new members into extremist networks has been extensively studied (Borum, 2003; Geelhoed, 2012; Horgan, 2008; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008; Slootman & Tillie, 2006; Wiktorowicz, 2004) and has gained importance due to the contemporary conflicts in Syria and Iraq and the rise of ISIS. Such conflicts are new incentives for Western youngsters to participate in the jihadist movement, and it is therefore crucial to increase our understanding of jihadist involvement. The phenomenon of jihadist involvement is often depicted as a combination of radicalization and recruitment processes. The former is the change in beliefs and the internalization of a new mindset which is often studied at the individual level (Taarnby, 2005; Neumann et al., 2007), whereas the latter involves the practical and active steps of joining or being drawn into a radical group (Neumann et al., 2007). Although studies on radicalization and recruitment have indeed increased our understanding of jihadist involvement, most studies appear to be inconclusive when it comes to involvement mechanisms. This also thwarts the development of counter-measures.

The inconclusiveness is the result of two shortcomings. The first shortcoming is that some scholars claim that recruitment follows a distinct direction, while these directions actually have a lot in common. Whereas some scholars outline a process where jihadists are top-down recruited by terrorist organizations or formal recruiters (Gerwehr & Daly, 2006; Hegghammer, 2013b, Özeren et al., 2014; Wiktorowicz, 2004), others illustrate a process where recruits associate with jihadist movements through a bottom-up process of self-radicalization (Bakker, 2006; Neumann et al., 2007; Sageman, 2008; Sageman & Hoffman, 2008; Taarnby, 2005). It appears, however, that both approaches emphasize the importance of *frame alignment* and *social context*. Frame alignment is the reconstruction of a recruit's mindset in accordance to the extremist movement's narrative (Neumann et al., 2007). Studies from both recruitment approaches seem to agree that there is some kind of crisis at the basis of this mindset reconstruction, such as different political and personal forms of perceived injustice or victimization (Bjørgo, 2011; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008; Pape, 2005; Silber & Bhatt, 2007; Vertigans, 2007), marginalization or relative deprivation (Berman, 2009; Ferrero, 2006; Juergensmeyer, 2003), and identity-problems (Buijs et al., 2006; Geelhoed, 2012; Slootman & Tillie, 2006). Through such a crisis, recruits become more receptive for alternative worldviews (Gerwehr & Daly, 2006; Taarnby, 2005; Wiktorowicz, 2004), such as the Jihadi-Salafist doctrine (Stahelski, 2005; Wilner & Dubouloz, 2011). Although frame alignment may be triggered by either recruiters (top-down), fellow peers, or by themselves (bottom-up), the material process appears to be similar. Moreover, while the top-down approach emphasizes the *directing* role of a recruiter, the bottom-up approach stresses the *guiding* role of likeminded peers and the necessity of a gatekeeper (Neumann et al., 2007). Although this seems a clear dividing line, the boundary between guidance and direction is very thin. To illustrate, a jihadist teenager may have natural authority over

his peers, which makes his role seems more directive rather than guiding. The label recruiter would be odd though, because he simultaneously radicalized with his peers.

The second shortcoming is that many studies do not elaborate beyond initial entry mechanisms of new recruits, while jihadist involvement also refers to how recruits stay involved. Classic phase models (Moghaddam, 2005; Precht, 2007; Silber & Bhatt, 2007) describe jihadist involvement as a gradual and sequential process that constitutes a beginning and a termination point. Borum (2011c, p. 2) claims, however, that many conceptual models of radicalization are underdeveloped as they often lack a social-scientific and empirical basis and have not been rigorously tested. Although the models can offer valuable insights, it is questionable whether an involvement process indeed follows a linear and consecutive order of stages (Bartlett & Miller, 2012; Borum, 2011b; Patel, 2011). The reasons for this are the selection on the dependent variable and statistical discrimination, ingrained in phase models (Veldhuis & Staun, 2009, p. 13-20). Selection on the dependent variable refers to the sole focus on successful pathways of involvement, without checking if radicalization factors are absent in unsuccessful pathways. Statistical discrimination means that a very general trait, which is shared by many random and innocent individuals, is defined as a specific radicalization factor.

The foregoing shortcomings show an ambiguous understanding of jihadist involvement, due to a too narrow focus, arguable assumptions, and a lack of systematic analysis of empirically gathered data. Although these problems are understandable given the difficulties of obtaining reliable information in this area, this chapter tries to avert ambiguity by building a more grounded understanding of jihadist involvement through the use of *grounded theory methods* in combination with a long-term perspective. The central research question is: *What mechanisms influence the jihadist involvement process in the Netherlands and to what extent do these mechanisms interact?* To answer this research question, this chapter does not focus on individual trajectories, but seeks to systematically illuminate the mechanisms influencing jihadist involvement in the Netherlands over time. By delving deeper into the social mechanisms and social responses that enhance, discourage, and sustain possible affiliation with a jihadist network, an alternative framework will be offered. This chapter does not focus on *why* people are attracted to the jihadist movement, but primarily aims to understand *how* different social proceedings affect trajectories of involvement. Empirically, it is based on the analysis of 28 extensive police investigations, supplemented with 28 interviews with key respondents and additional observations in court. Before the findings of this study will be reported, the next paragraph will elaborate on the used methods.

6.2 Data and Methods

6.2.1 Approach

Grounded Theory (GT) is an alternative for a positivist methodology that aims to test and verify hypotheses from prior research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theorists,

however, try to inductively (and abductively) generate a theory through a more open analysis of emergent categories from the data. The principles of *constant comparison* and *theoretical sampling* are at the core of this approach. The former involves comparison between data and emerging concepts during each stage of the research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 106), while the latter means that emerging categories direct the process of data gathering or sampling over time (Glaser, 1978). In order to adhere to these principles, the procedures of sampling, coding, categorizing, analyzing, and theorizing need to be conducted simultaneously and continuously throughout the research.

6.2.2 Data

This chapter is primarily based on a unique source of confidential police files, which offer valuable insight in the *modus operandi* of jihadist networks in the Netherlands over time. Access was granted to 28 voluminous police investigations into jihadist terrorism between 2000 and 2013,[63] focusing on 14 different jihadist networks and involving 209 individuals.

The data was gathered during different periods. The first tier of data, which yielded 12 police investigations from the period 2000-2005, was gathered between May 2006 and May 2008 (De Poot & Sonneschein, 2011). Based on preliminary findings from the first tier, the second tier of data was gathered between July 2012 and December 2013 and entailed 16 police investigations from the period 2005-2013. This extended time-frame enabled the adoption of a long-term and comparative perspective. A data collection sheet was used to provide structure while gathering data from the voluminous police files.[64] This sheet contained several items and open questions, concerning group structure, activities, ideology, etc. The data collection was a very labor intensive task due to the volume of the police investigations, which took several years to complete. The investigations yielded rich data based on original wire taps of both telephone and Internet communications, recordings of in-house wire taps, transcripts of suspect interrogations, witness statements, observation reports, forensic reports, house searches, expert-witness reports, but also the complete and *verbatim* court transcripts and lawyers' pleas.

The 209 studied individuals predominantly consist of radicalized persons – or their facilitators – who either regularly resided in the Netherlands or played an indispensable role from a distance. Whereas most subjects were officially suspected of being a member of a terrorist organization, others played a facilitating role nonetheless. This chapter focuses on the entire group of 209 subjects in order to explore the relevant mechanisms

[63] The 28 police investigations were purposefully selected with the help of terrorism experts from different investigative authorities. Criteria of inclusion were the richness of the data and diversification over time. Purposeful sampling maximizes variation of meaning and determines the scope of the phenomenon (Morse, 2007, p. 234-235).

[64] Derived from Kleemans, Van den Berg & Van de Bunt (1998).

without too much selection bias. The focus was not merely on new recruits, but also on the subjects that were associated with jihadist networks for a longer time. Since a long-term and comparative approach was adopted, particular aspects that affected subjects in different stages of involvement were explored.

While coding and analyzing the data derived from the police investigations, several questions arose due to the emergence of categories and concepts. Therefore, 28 semi-structured interviews with key respondents were conducted during different stages of the research. Unfortunately, we were unable to gain access to cooperative (former) radicals, and we therefore relied on key informants such as leading police investigators, public prosecutors, and several lawyers who defended various suspects in the 28 police investigations. The interviews were recorded and transcribed *verbatim*. In addition, during the final stages of the document analysis, also several court sessions of the criminal cases that were still (or again) under judicial review were attended, which resulted in additional case information.

Unlike the original aim of traditional GT, this study primarily aims to develop a grounded understanding of jihadist involvement mechanisms, rather than generating a theory. And instead of solely relying on inductive reasoning, sensitizing concepts were developed, which functioned as interpretive devices to help analyzing data and preparing interviews.

6.2.3 Analysis

With the help of a software program for qualitative analysis (MAXQDA), all the information from the data collection was coded. Through an *open* or *initial coding* procedure, which in this study was the *incident-by-incident coding*. While comparing different incidents (segments of texts) of alleged terrorist activity, particular relevant codes of jihadist involvement emerged. Subsequently, *focused coding* was applied to assess the initial codes' adequacy and depth (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). Through this procedure, initial codes developed into categories and sub-categories with associated properties. By constantly comparing data with data, data with codes and categories, and re-examining the properties of the initial (sub-)categories, saturation of data was reached. This meant that no new properties or dimensions of the categories emerged from the data (Holton, 2007, p. 278). This way, the relationship between the categories was specified and elaborated.[65]

6.2.4 Limitations

As the police only have a certain proportion of jihadist activities in sight, networks can only be analyzed from the start of an investigation. In some cases, where the police is unable to obtain information in relation to the past, this means that some information about the very first instance that people start associating with jihadist networks might be missed.

[65] For a more extensive outline of the used GT methods, see Chapter 2.

Furthermore, the initial goal of the investigations is to inform a judge. Therefore, Althoff (2013, p. 397) argues that "court files are constructions of social reality in the context of criminal law", because the offender perspective and circumstances are described by the authorities. The statements from suspects and witnesses are the result of "forced" communication which is selectively transcribed. However, the recorded internet and telephone wiretaps cannot be regarded as "forced communication" and should therefore to a lesser extent be seen as "constructed social realities". Except for the fact that these transcripts are selected and processed by police investigators, we can assume that these conversations happened as they did. Moreover, due to the fact that we had access to the original transcripts, we were largely able to check the data ourselves.

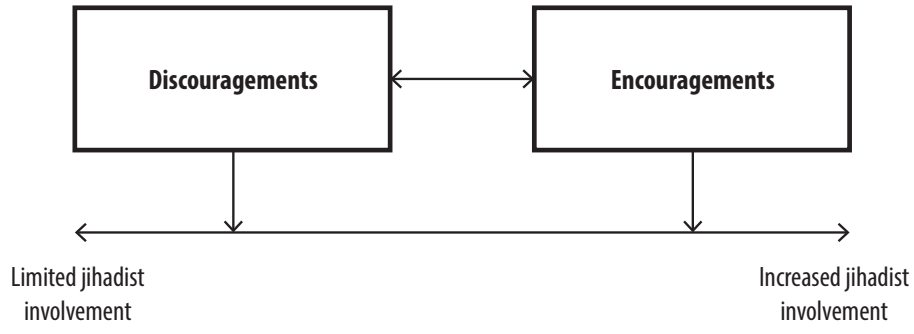
In sum, it should be kept in mind that the presented findings are solely based on this study's selection of data and cannot readily be generalized. Yet, despite downsides, these extensive and rich criminal investigations offer a unique perspective on jihadist networks. The described multi-layered process ensured a detailed, systematic, and transparent analysis of the data. Without the realistic possibility of conducting participative observation or to interview the individuals directly involved, there are few alternatives.

6.3 Results

As mentioned in the introduction (6.1), this chapter will primarily deal with the social mechanisms regarding jihadist involvement. More specifically, it will depart from – or build up to – the social responses coming from a (potential) jihadist's social environment. For instance, because the studied jihadist networks are considered deviant by Western societies, jihadist involvement initiated informal disapproval and condemnation by the public or formal criminalization and counter-terrorism measures by the government. Also, jihadists encountered reprisals within their own networks. Jihadist networks upheld certain norms and standards of their own, to which some members (unintentionally) did not live up to. This provoked responses by fellow jihadists.

In order to deal with in- and out-group responses and other consequences, jihadists needed social or ideological handles that offered resistance and sustained their involvement over time. In that context, this chapter will show how jihadists in fact dealt with different factors and (anticipated) consequences and how this affected their degree of involvement and that of others. The focus of this chapter is on these particular mechanisms, and not on individual involvement trajectories. Such mechanisms can be distinguished into *encouraging* and *discouraging involvement mechanisms*, and this study found that subjects constantly dealt with both mechanisms, often in ambivalent ways. Jihadist involvement and participation in a jihadist environment was therefore highly unstable over time. To illuminate this instability, this paragraph will describe two processes (see figure 6.1). On the one hand, the subjects dealt with encouraging involvement mechanisms that stabilized a subject's continued involvement over time.

Figure 6.1: Transformation process involvement mechanisms.



However, these encouragements can be carried too far by some subjects and as a result became discouragements for other subjects instead. On the other hand, subjects simultaneously dealt with discouraging involvement mechanisms, inflicted by outside-groups, which hampered a stable and continued involvement over time. In order to overcome these obstacles, the discouragements were sometimes transformed into encouragements. Overall, both transformation processes were continuously present and were not distinctive for a particular step or stage. The following paragraphs will deal with these processes more in detail. Although the processes are displayed in a particular order, in reality they may have occurred simultaneously or in a different succession.

6.3.1 Process I: Encouraging mechanisms carrying too far

In order to arm themselves against reprisals and negative consequences, the subjects needed to share their knowledge and the ideological attitudes needed to be aligned, as is highlighted in the paragraph below.

6.3.1.1 How subjects exchange and discuss ideological material

Based on the police files, it was found that *distribution and production* of ideological sources of information was crucial across time. Through the continuous exchange of ideological materials, such as books, files, videos, cassettes, storage devices, and other types of written, visual, or audio material, subjects informed and stimulated each other to gain in-depth knowledge of radical ideas. This interaction was initially conducted face-to-face, but the more recent criminal investigations showed that this process moved towards a virtual environment over time. Radical websites, social media accounts, or YouTube channels, easily supplied the materials and met the needs of (new) subjects. The thresholds thereby lowered and the target group expanded. Besides exchanging it, subjects also created and produced radical materials. Whereas some subjects translated

ideological Arabic texts in order to distribute among those who did not speak Arabic, others explained the ideology themselves through written testimonials. Some subjects developed flyers to promote upcoming events such as public readings or protests, while others produced ideological videos to distribute ideological claims or persuade new recruits to follow the lead of the mujahedeen. Interestingly, both new and experienced subjects distributed and produced materials in all periods under study. This process of *Dawah* (invitation to practice Islam) seems to be an ongoing core activity of all subjects and is regarded an obligation.

These encouragements were not solely open-ended and unordered, but could also have a more instructing nature. For instance, *readings and lectures* in private settings were very directive and helped to align attitudes. The police observations, interrogations, and wiretaps showed that these gatherings were regularly organized in living rooms, backrooms of Internet cafés, garages, and Mosques; although over time it became more customary to conduct readings and lectures online. Some subjects would lecture others for hours during online chat sessions. Whereas many of such sessions were asymmetrical with a clear teacher and student distinction, other sessions had a more symmetrical nature where all subjects contributed on an equal level:

> *Several subjects used Skype or audio functioning group chats which enabled them to inform a broader audience and exchange information at any given time. In group chats, each subject was allotted two minutes of speaking time in which they were permissioned by the others to lay bare their arguments. If they exceeded their two minutes, their microphone was shut down.* (Wiretap, group chats subjects 170, 171, 172, and other unknown subjects, 2012)

These physical and virtual lectures directed the interpretation of the exchanged materials and instructed behavior in accordance to the Jihadi-Salafist doctrine. Particular phrases and stories from the Quran, the Hadith, and the Sunna were cited and explained to the attendees. Much emphasis was put on the marginal societal position of most subjects, which was reinforced through the display of videos containing horrific pictures of abused, murdered, or otherwise victimized Muslims. The combination of lecturing and displaying videos of maltreated Muslims functioned as an incentive to internalize ideological beliefs. It seemed to widen the distance to mainstream society in order to pave the way for rebelling against alleged enemies of Islam.

Whereas the gatherings enhanced social cohesion, segregation between male and female subjects was often noticed at the same time. Due to strict orthodox rules, it rarely occurred that both genders followed a lecture in each other's company. Women either resided in a different room while listening to a senior jihadist, or separate female gatherings were organized. As was also illustrated in Chapter 3 regarding network 2, a separate lecture was often led by energetic female jihadists, who played an important role in supporting jihadist involvement among women.

The context of gatherings and online lectures developed over time, leading to far more interaction between attendees. Before 2003-2004, the sessions were mainly monologues by senior core members (or heartland-oriented) with jihad experience and extensive knowledge of the material, trying to convince and persuade the attendees. Subjects stated to look up to these senior jihadists, often disabling them to give any retort. In later criminal investigations, however, these senior core members were often succeeded by much younger subjects who were far from omniscient.[66] This consequently created room for debate and discussion, because a lack of undisputed expertise removed previous constraints to question the lecturer. Just as with the distribution of material, also new subjects quite rapidly contributed to the discussions and did not feel restrained to present their views. Furthermore, it appeared that many meetings were no longer a lecturer-listener formation. Several subjects clustered together to search for answers, and they benefited from each other in their collective quest for information. Gradually, a more dynamic, interactive and reciprocal process evolved, in which it was less clear who informed whom.[67]

6.3.1.2 How subjects inflict pressure and start conflicts

Directions and instructions were imposed upon subjects while exchanging information, which sometimes developed into pressure. Whereas pressure was often useful to encourage others, pressure could sometimes carry too far and have a discouraging or even deterring effect. This study found several courses of action, spread over the entire studied time-frame, which balanced on this fault line and sometimes tipped over to the side of deterrence. Based on wiretaps and interrogations for example, many subjects, both new and experienced, tried to unify the sometimes contradictory attitudes through *behavioral criticism*. They repeatedly reminded and compelled each other how they should arrange their lifestyle and how they should behave in accordance to the Jihadi-Salafist doctrine. Some subjects repeatedly reminded others via phone calls to pray at set times, while others pressured subjects to quit their jobs, choose a suitable profession or useful education. Most subjects encouraged others to wear particular clothing, grow a beard, and stop listening to music. Some subjects even instructed others whom to interact with. If subjects failed to meet the alleged requirements, their behavior was disapproved and widely condemned, and alternative behavior was proposed. Whereas such interactions indeed encouraged some subjects to adopt one particular interpretation, it also caused friction between other subjects. In that case, behavioral criticism can be interpreted as unwanted pressure. In a minority of cases unwanted pressure developed into intimidation and fear.

[66] See also Chapter 3, which illustrates how core members evolved over time.

[67] On the development of group structures, see also Chapter 3.

"It just got worse, because Azziz[68] *was no longer allowed to smoke and drink in his own house. Azziz thought it [JLB: the network] was like a sect. […]. Azziz did not want this and became frightened. His friend Omar was also there sometimes and he became frightened too. Then Azziz started to make up all these excuses to keep subject 84 out of his house. Subject 84 then started to circle around Azziz' house with his bicycle. Azziz did not like this at all and got scared."* (Witness statement about subject 84, 2005)

Intimidation and fear were mainly used by relatively experienced subjects who seemed to lack natural authority. In order to compensate this deficiency, they intimidated new and vulnerable recruits, such as individuals lacking self-esteem and looking for a peer-group. These recruits appeared to find meaning and comfort through association with inspiring people who disseminated appealing ideological ideas and even told them how to behave. When these recruits became disillusioned with the plans of the network, however, intimidating subjects increased pressure, causing the vulnerable recruits to unwillingly follow up orders. Subjects 99 and 104, for example, sold their furniture out of fear for subjects 65 and 81. This fear was inflicted through intimidation by showing them weapons, forcing them to hold artillery, and threatening with violent repercussions.

"He grabbed some kind of Rambo-knife and he made cutting motions with it. He pretended as if he controlled someone under his foot. He said that this was for the Kuffar." (Interrogation, subject 99 about subject 65, 2005)

Consequently, subjects 99 and 104 became afraid of their likeminded peers and they wanted to abandon the movement. The most extreme examples show that, in a minority of cases, encouragements can carry too far and transform into discouragements. In other cases, the intimidation was more subtle but nonetheless went too far for the subjects concerned.

In other cases the pressure transformed encouraging situations into harsh disputes and conflicts. These conflicts were primarily noticed in the police files from 2003-2004 onwards. The debates became conflicts because many subjects did not accept criticism, while the room for criticism at the same time expanded. Some subjects got very upset when they were contradicted by others, especially when they (usually more experienced subjects) considered themselves ideologically superior. This led to heavy disputes where subjects tried to reinforce their interpretation upon others. Such disputes occurred between both male and female subjects, with both similar and different degrees of involvement. Based on wiretap conversations and according to several female subjects, especially the aforementioned energetic female jihadists had a sharp tongue to criticize other female subjects. Irrespective of gender, the disputes were characterized by a

[68] Fictitious name.

survival of the fittest mentality, because subjects continuously showed off and tried to overrule each other. Several subjects used a lot of boasting and showed some kind of arrogance or pretense in their conversation with other subjects. By using clamorous communication they seemed to exert their superiority over others.

A) "So you are saying they will go there, receive education and return afterwards? What kind of bullshit are you talking?!"

B) "It is not me; it is you who is talking bullshit!!" (Wiretap, subject 78 to subject 79, 2004)

Moreover, virtual environments in particular were suitable platforms to firmly address diverging opinions.[69]

"These guys are telling lies. Don't lie. Why are you talking about jahilya of his grandparents? Those are false acquisitions. You are a sick person! Whenever you lose an argument you start telling lies." (Wiretap, group chat with subject 171, 2012)

The Internet wiretaps show that most subjects created an account on particular (radical) websites, while using a pseudonym. This enabled them to anonymously contribute to religious or ideological discussions. Online published material, for instance, was often succeeded with a thread of replies from different people with radical sympathies, who all claim to have a monopoly on the truth. Likewise, in group chats or one-on-one conversations on MSN, PalTalk, Skype, etc., subjects repeatedly tried to overrule the other interlocutor by claiming that their perspective was based on proof.

A) "He claims that it isn't proof. Hahah, this reminds me of school: reading comprehension. Abudullah[70] *is ignorant. He is the one talking without proof."*

B) "This is becoming language philosophy how he [JLB: Abdullah] explains it. We were talking about Kuffar and Taghut in NL, right? Abdullah, you must come with a better explanation if you want to discuss." (Wiretap, group chat with subject 171, 2012)[71]

[69] Repeated observation of communication in virtual environments may be better documented than real-life communication.

[70] Fictitious name.

[71] It was not always clear who the other persons, besides subjects 171, in a group chat were. Therefore we indicated the quotes A and B.

Neither of the disputing parties seemed ready to give in. They constantly overrule each other in return for credit from the virtual audience in group chats. Subjects laughed at those who made an arguable claim and they ridiculed the other by calling him names or making condescending remarks, or spreading harmful rumors. Outmatching another subject seemed to increase a feeling of importance. The subject who tasted defeat was being belittled by the in-group reprisals he received. Therefore, subjects could not give in when they wanted to save face. Hence, some discussions rose to such a level that conflicts were unavoidable.

A) "You are of the hypocrite kind. No you are a dirty hypocrite. Still you haven't answered me. You point your finger at me, while you don't have any [JLB: proof] *to stand on. You benefit from everything the west has invented. You are the colonizer's bootlicker!"*

B) "Benefit? Do you regard the west as a God now? Did the west give birth to the world or something? Or is it Allah who created the world?"

A) "He is more Mushrik [JLB: polytheist] *than he appears."*

B) "[...] All wealth and earth is Allah's. Even a 5 year old toddler knows that. What a retarded statement does this guy make."

A) "Wollah! Don't offend retarded people!" (Wiretap, group chat with subject 172, 2012)

Unresolved conflicts and debates were often followed by severe reprisals by other subjects from the in-group.

Experienced subject 25 spread rumors about the alleged visits to prostitutes by experienced subject 146. By way of revenge, subject 146 reported subject 25 to the Immigration Service while claiming that this person was a terrorist threat. As a result, the government prohibited subject 25 to travel and it immediately drew the intelligence agency's attention. (Interrogation, subjects 25 and 146, 2004)

The most feared reprisal was the (threat of) repudiation from the movement. Declaring a fellow subject to be disbelieving, so-called *takfir*, was a means to discharge someone. This means that this subject is considered to be a nonbeliever and that repercussions against him are justified. Despite several threats of cutting of limbs, actual violent repercussions were however not found in this study.

Subject 141 is involved for a few years, but did not meet the requirement of orthodox clothing. He was wearing Nike shoes, a sign of apostasy, and was therefore repudiated from his group in the name of takfir. After all, Nike is a Greek god and a Muslim is not allowed to worship another god but Allah. (Wiretap, subject 141, 2006)

In sum, this section illustrated how subjects tried to regulate each other's behavior and how this affected their involvement. Although the encouragements aimed at stabilizing involvement in jihadist groups, they affected subjects differently. Whereas the discussions about radical materials encouraged many subjects to engage in the jihadist movement, it paradoxically pushed other subjects away when pressure led to fear and conflicts. These social processes were far from linear and unidirectional, but did change over time to less hierarchical more internet-based processes.

6.3.2 Process II: Transforming discouragements into encouragements

Alongside the process in which encouraging involvement mechanisms sometimes transformed into deterring mechanisms, subjects were simultaneously confronted with a reversed process. Association with jihadist networks has particular consequences, such as the negative societal attention that it draws. Especially after 9/11 and the murder of cineast Theo van Gogh in 2004, the Dutch government intensified its focus on jihadist networks. Government policies were devised that extended police authority, increased surveillance of suspicious environments, and raised the number of interventions such as closing websites and arresting individuals who formed a security threat (e.g., Van der Woude, 2010, p. 202-310). Moreover, media attention and societal worries about extremism rose. This created an environment of increased perceptivity towards Muslims and immigrants within Dutch society (Buijs, 2009), and both new and experienced jihadists needed to operate within this context. The question is how this intensified focus by the government and society impacted upon the involvement of people in jihadist networks. This paragraph will therefore illustrate how subjects coped with this environment, distinguishing between behavior towards society's hostile attitude and behavior towards repudiations and arrests.

6.3.2.1 Dealing with a hostile environment

Mainstream society disapproved and condemned the subjects' beliefs through negative media attention and public censure by right-wing politicians. This social climate was present at all studied times, but rapidly increased after 2004 (Buijs, 2009). Besides more general shifts in political climate and public opinion, the police files show that subjects also encountered disapproval from people in their direct social environment. For instance, several subjects expressed how people in their neighborhood looked frightened when they saw a subject dressed in traditional clothing. Moreover, friends and family also often criticized the subjects and threatened with measures to revoke the subject's current attitude and behavior. This usually started with encouragements

to walk another path in life, for instance by forwarding job applications or introducing acquaintances who were eligible to marry the subject. Relatives often assumed that when a subject found a job, a wife or husband, and became a parent, he or she would start living a more tranquil and civil life. Some partners of subjects allegedly took more extreme measures, as a police investigator referred to in an interview:

> *"His girlfriend started to act really strange. She feigned a pregnancy at a particular moment; we had the idea that it was fake. It was the way she talked and it occurred completely out of the blue. From their telephone conversations, we had the idea that she was afraid, that she knew what he was about to do. This [JLB: feigning a pregnancy] was a means to prevent him from departing."* (Police respondent 14, subjects 118 and 122, 2010, interview August 2012)

Some relatives also tried to influence the subject's likeminded associates, for instance by threatening the suspected recruiter with violence if he did not leave the subject alone. Furthermore, when such measures had no effect, relatives sometimes reported the subject and his/her associates to the police or the intelligence agency. In several instances, this measure led to *police arrests*, which will be discussed later. Eventually, the condemnations often developed into an actual breach between the subject and his or her family. Whereas these reprisals could hamper or question a subject's jihadist involvement, this study also documented the following mechanisms that subjects applied in order to cope with these social discouragements.

Brotherhood. Subjects often equated likeminded jihadists as *brothers* and *sisters*. Brotherhood was a highly valued element throughout the movement and was continuously emphasized in conversations during difficult times. This emphasis offered a sense of belonging and companionship, which is something many subjects claim to have not experienced before. Many subjects expressed that they came from environments in which they did not experience the warmth of oneness, solidarity, and attachment. The affection between subjects sometimes seemed to lead to genuine friendships, which was greatly appreciated. Some male subjects claimed that a particular peer was the brother they had always wanted. Hence, brotherhood was an appealing factor that needed to be cherished according to the subjects.

> *"Brother, know that I wish you the best. Whatever you wish for me, I wish even more for you. Whenever you did something wrong, I immediately forgave you. [...] Have faith, my little brother. We will not be abandoned. Have patience, Janah (JLB: paradise) is close, I will never forget you. I have loved you since the day I met you. You are a little brother to me. Whenever you suffer, I suffer. Have a little more patience."* (Text message found in confiscated phone, subject 163 to subject 198, 2005)

The perception of brotherhood appeared not only to be the fulfillment of personal needs, but also hardened suspects against the exclusion from and condemnation by society. The idea that their brotherhood was under threat motivated suspects to neutralize out-group reprisals. They argued that the brotherhood was superior to the out-group, which seemed to stimulate the adoption of radical beliefs and routines. Subjects encouraged each other to continue their battle against unbelievers for the sake of the brotherhood, which increased the willingness to protect the in-group and the oppressed brothers elsewhere.

> *New subject 147 communicated with an unknown broker who resided in a conflict zone. They talked about the fact they "are determined to sacrifice everything for the sake of Allah". This broker appears to be holding rewards to subject 147 for his sacrifices. He congratulated him, but warned him to be careful. Subject 147 was very pleased with him and called him the brother he had wished for a very long time.* (Wiretap, subject 147, 2011)

Boasting. This study found that participating in a radical network seemed to generate perceptions of importance. Subjects' reasoning, customs, possession of weapons, and historic nicknames seemed to give them prestige. Especially the use of boasting during conversations and discussions suggests an utterance of such perceptions. Whereas boasting was a hampering factor in 6.3.1, this study noticed that boasting was simultaneously expressed so to deal with discouraging factors in process II. For instance, being publically classified as a "terrorist" can be seen as stigmatizing and deterring towards further jihadist participation. However, several subjects used this criminalizing classification as a confirmation of their importance. They seemed to see the label "terrorist" as a badge of honor depicting toughness and fearlessness. This image of toughness and importance was derived from the way they communicated.

> *"I have been busy lately. Plotting an assassination attempt here, carrying out an attack there, enough to drive you mad [...] I'm just busy now motivating people to slaughter a father."* (Wiretap, subject 79, 2004)

The media played an important role in that regard, because increased attention from journalists seemed to confirm subjects' feeling of importance. Based on wiretaps and in-house recordings, it was found that several subjects explicitly followed different media outlets to see what was said about the movement. They cancelled appointments in order to watch talk-shows, watch the news, and obtain information about their impact. Experienced subject 81 even kept a record of all his media appearances. He kept a bulletin-board in his basement where he kept several newspaper clippings about his arrests, trial proceedings, and court verdicts; and he used online search engines to look for his name. When attention led to an in-depth interview or TV appearance, subjects

turned negative attention into financial benefits, as some subjects started to ask for remunerations:

> *Subject 80 was interviewed twice by a weekly national magazine and a national television program regarding his jihadist involvement. He sought acknowledgement for this achievement when he repeatedly asked fellow subjects whether they had read and seen his interviews. He claimed that he was awarded 1,500 Euros for an appearance and stated, "that's a bonus for talking rubbish". Thereafter, he functioned as an intermediary between the newspaper and likeminded subjects to set up additional interviews. Based on a recorded conversation between a journalist and subject 80, the newspaper offered 1,750 euro's for an interview or 1,500 Euros if they could follow a jihadist for a day. Subject 80 was however too ambitious with his counterproposal of 2,500 Euros, which the newspaper declined.* (Wiretap, subject 80, 2005)

6.3.2.2 Dealing with actual repudiations and arrests

Beside the condemnations from a hostile environment, both new and experienced subjects also dealt with more concrete measures taken by the out-group during all studied stages. For instance, most subjects followed a particular Imam whose interpretation of the Islam they initially approved of. However, when they openly disagreed with the Imam due to their radical perspective, they often were excluded from local Mosques according to various witnesses. Likewise, they were banned from religious websites when they expressed radical beliefs. In addition, many subjects experienced *police interferences* such as regulatory controls on the street, strict surveillance through wiretapping of which many experienced subjects seemed to be aware, but also arrests and criminal charges. Many subjects, in all periods studied, expressed that these actions were deliberate punishments for their religion and their appearance. Both new and experienced subjects discussed how the police and the government generalized all Muslims as potential terrorists.

> *Subject 153 did not trust the police and she claimed that they suspect everyone with a beard, a white djellaba, and burka. She also became very upset when she needed to take off here niqaab during an interrogation. She told the officers, "Allah is the only legislator. I follow the Quran and the Sunna, the path walked by the prophet. I only abide to the Islamic law and I do not have to justify my actions to you people".* (Interrogation, subject 153, 2006)

The situation that Muslims needed to repeatedly identify themselves to the police was perceived by many subjects as unjust and discriminatory. Consequently, many subjects felt that they were constantly monitored and that they would be arrested without probable cause. Since the beginning of 2000 and the increased perceptivity by the government later

on, several individuals in het Netherlands had been arrested for their involvement with jihadist networks, their alleged radical attitude, or their part in terrorist preparations. These arrests led to an acquittal, dismissal, or conviction, and could leave a heavy burden on the arrested subjects. Arrests often led to an undetermined period of pre-trial detention, no contact with the outside world, loss of employment, and several other consequences that come with detention. These circumstances were perceived differently among subjects. Being detained can unintentionally be very stigmatizing for some subjects. They found it hard to be criminalized, while according to their own thoughts they had done nothing wrong. Moreover, beyond criminalization, they were accused of "terrorism", making the stigma seemingly more severe. Likewise, the police entering their homes with force and extensive manpower, the use of violence, being blindfolded, and not being informed about indictment details, was an intense experience for some subjects. In a minority of cases, subjects accused the authorities of disproportionate use of violence or psychological manipulation during interrogations or detention.[72] A lawyer reveals how one relatively new subject at that time was affected by the trial of his case:

> *"After the arrest he never had anything to do with the rest of these guys. The trial had a substantial impact on him and he therefore chose to distance himself from them."* (Lawyer respondent 27, subject 140, 2006, interview May 2014)

Whereas the foregoing interventions de-motivated several jihadists, or at least interfered with their plans, other subjects were not immediately discouraged. They often portrayed a positive attitude towards these seemingly negative situations. The following will outline several encouraging mechanisms that were found throughout the studied time-frame.

Expanding the scope. When subjects were removed from platforms for ideological exchange, they often saw this as an opportunity to create their own community and expand their scope. This study found that they actively attempted to reach new audiences. This resulted in for instance the abovementioned readings and lectures, but also in spontaneous conversations with strangers in the streets. In addition, some subjects started to organize public protests and communal gatherings. These religiously oriented demonstrations aimed to propagate the ideology, inform the nonbelievers about the ideology, and to provoke law enforcement according to a police respondent. Just like the readings and lectures, the protests enabled subjects to meet fellow likeminded, which increased social interaction between relatively unacquainted subjects. Another more organized and structured form of scope expanding was the branding of the movement. Over the years, several subjects had tried to brand their radical milieu of likeminded under a specific trademark. These names were designed to generate popularity and support.

[72] Despite accusations, disproportionate use of violence was only applied by non-Dutch officials in Azerbaijan and Morocco during an arrest abroad. Psychological manipulation was measured one time during an interrogation and was only from hearsay during detention.

This marketing strategy aimed for a more credible movement and disengagement from terrorism. The subjects behind such trademarks thought that the brand could sell the ideology, thus attracting and encouraging more people, but also to raise money. For example, the foregoing demonstrations were often advertised under a trademark. Unlike the other settings of informing, scope expanding was primarily initiated by the more experienced subjects, because they primarily aimed at potential new recruits.

Prevention. Generally, the police arrests raised awareness among subjects, who often adjusted their behavior to prevent future arrests. For example, by meeting at remote and secluded locations, subjects hoped to avoid attention. Some even exchanged their traditional Islamic clothing for more Western and, in their own words, "sexy" outfits. This way they kept their lifestyle a secret, hoping to avoid any negative attention. Furthermore, subjects were very suspicious of new people and they warned each other to be alert for potential intruders from the authorities. Also, they advised each other to ignore notorious Mosques in order to avoid attention. This intensified awareness sometimes led to very concrete measures. In one case, the experienced subjects created an information pamphlet called "*Lessons in Safety*", which explained how to act in case of an arrest and how to position oneself during an interrogation. The pamphlet voiced a tone of paranoia, because it warned subjects for Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay-like habits in Dutch detention facilities.

> *"During detention they put you in an isolation cell, they give you little to no food, the food is burned, they don't allow you to sleep due to strong light, they wake you up every two hours, they undress you regularly, turn on loud music in your cell, they turn the temperature up and down, through cold water over you, make you wear woman's clothing, put you in unhygienic areas and prohibit you from contacting the outside world."* (Pamphlet found among various subjects)

Boasting. Due to the intense experience of an arrest, trial, or detention, subjects often expressed a strong and over time increasing antipathy towards the intelligence agency, the police, the public prosecutor, and the government as whole. By boasting about their experience of an arrest, the subjects seemed to deal with these frustrations and portray an arrest as a status-enhancing incident. To illustrate, many senior subjects discussed their previous police arrests, and they underscored an alleged supremacy over the government agencies. Subjects bragged about their resistance during an arrest, and they praised the violent struggles of others. Also, a large-scale operation by the police or the intelligence agency acknowledged their importance, in which the subjects took pride.

> *Several experienced subjects boasted about their arrest and how they bravely resisted. One boasted about his knowledge of the prison's corridor structure, while another claimed that although he was blindfolded, he knew the exact transportation route of the police. During this transportation he allegedly frustrated the driver by mentioning the street names they were driving through. Moreover, even during detention they bragged about their triumphs when they did not abide to the penitentiary rules.* (Wiretap, subjects 79, 81, and 82, 2005)

These examples show that despite the subjects' subordinate position following an arrest, they still tried to portray control over the situation, transforming defeat into victory.

After care. Subjects also encountered material and logistic problems after an arrest, but detention did not mean that a subject was lost and forgotten. For example, fellow subjects discussed particular defense lawyers in order to assemble a proper criminal defense team, and simultaneously often raised and transferred money to the detained subjects. Moreover, the wives of convicted subjects were also financially supported during the absence of their husbands.

> *Subject 104 ran into subject 86 in a bookshop and gave her 50 Euros because her husband was detained, which caused problems in maintaining her children. Additionally, the employer of the same bookshop (subject 113), requests her radical husband (subject 117), to wall paper the apartment of subject 86 before her husband returns from detention.* (Wiretap and interrogation, subjects 86, 104, 113, and 117, 2005)

Despite the fact that the financial aid was far from generous, social bonds with fellow jihadist sympathizers were maintained in this way, which functioned as an encouragement to return to the movement after detention.

6.3.2.3 Coping with danger

Alongside the encountered psychological discouragements, subjects also anticipated future physical implications of their choices. For instance, many subjects prepared, or discussed the idea of joining the holy war in a foreign battle field.[73] The prospects of participating in such battles are in general far from positive for Western youngsters who grew up in peaceful circumstances. Most subjects seemed to realize they had to operate in hazardous areas while many were not sufficiently trained, increasing the chance of severe injury or death. Hence, such prospects appear de-motivating towards further participation. Whereas some indeed banned the idea of foreign fighting, other subjects continued planning nonetheless. The latter subjects interpreted these alleged negativities as symbolic awards.[74]

[73] See also Chapter 4.

[74] Such perceptions could also relate to cognitive dissonance. This will not be discussed further though, because the data is not fit to illuminate this in detail. See however Maikovich (2005).

Embellishment of war and death. Attending jihad for instance was usually described by the subjects as an adventurous and enriching endeavor. Several videos were found of recorded foreign fighters who appealed Western Muslims to follow their lead. They tried to persuade Western Muslims by glorifying the battle fields and idealizing the training camps.

> *"We expect all our Turkish brothers on these beautiful holy battlefields. This must be the most beautiful thing Allah offers you. I have never been this happy. There is nothing more beautiful than a holy battlefield."* (Videotape, documented by subject 167, 2006)

Furthermore, attending jihad was often related to Mohammed's quests. Several subjects stressed that the prophet joined numerous holy wars in his life in order to save the *umma*, which seemed to convince both experienced subjects as well as new recruits to follow Mohammed's example. Placing them on the same pedestal as Mohammed made jihad participation a glorious prospect. In addition, by admiring or at least expressing a positive attitude towards violence several subjects seem to deal with the almost inevitable negative consequences of combat. They talked with excitement about harming the enemies and demonstrated a fearless attitude towards their own death.

> *"We are not afraid of death, because we love death. For us, death is just magnificent."* (Wiretap, subject 157, 2006)

By romanticizing combat and death, attending jihad was often portrayed and perceived as a higher cause worth pursuing. Acquisition of martyrdom is a good example of such a higher cause, which is established after joining the holy war and dying as a mujahedeen. Both new and experienced subjects claimed in various statements to pursue a martyr's death, because it is considered the highest possible goal for a Muslim, which comes with multiple status-enhancing awards. Martyrs are considered heroes, their actions are framed as compassionate, and their death is often glamorized. Suicide bombings for instance are regarded as an altruistic act, as opposed to "ordinary selfish suicides". Furthermore, according to several testimonies, martyrs are attributed with mythical qualities, such as being impenetrable by bullets, indestructible by bombs, and armed with unlimited ammunition. Subjects also convinced each other that when a mujahedeen died, in spite of these mythical qualities, their dead bodies allegedly remain intact, their wounds do not fester, and blood keeps floating through their bodies. Martyrdom is also believed to come with the *shada*. A *shada* is regarded as a divine testimonial that enables a martyr to promote 70 additional people to Allah. In general, it sometimes appears as if acquiring martyrdom is the sole ambition of several subjects when they claim that they solely wanted to enter a conflict zone to attain martyrdom and not necessarily to establish an Islamic state. Since such statements are at odds with their

ideological goals, the explicit martyr ambitions could also be seen as a tool to overcome the negative prospects.

Place in paradise. Another utopist award is a place in paradise, which is thought to be granted when becoming a martyr. Based on material found and subject statements, most subjects assumed that if their regular behavior was in accordance with the ideology, they would be rewarded with eternal afterlife in paradise. Likewise, if it was not, they would be punished with a place in hell. This assessment is expected to take place on the so-called *judgment day*, when Allah would determine whether they had been a proper and faithful Muslim. This forthcoming judgment was emphasized throughout their involvement to encourage internalization of the ideology, but also to overcome the negative prospect of a possible death. For example, subjects showed each other videos with pictures of fallen mujahedeen who had a smile on their face, indicating that they were satisfied with their sacrifice that led them to paradise. Numerous of such peaceful and delighted faces were spread throughout the jihadist movement to inform other subjects and encourage them to follow the lead of the killed mujahedeen. Also, this romanticism of death had such an inciting effect, that for some subjects a place in paradise appeared to be their primary goal.

> *"It is not important and it is not even our wish to witness the rise of a true Islamic State. The most important goal is to be awarded by Allah."* (Videotape, documented by subject 167, 2001)

To conclude, the second process illustrates how subjects dealt with many (alleged) negative responses, consequences, and prospects that arose when sympathizing with a jihadist doctrine. Subjects seemed to apply different mechanisms in order to overcome these discouragements. Whereas in several situations subjects labeled the negative incidents as so-called *ordeals* they had to pass through before they are awarded by Allah, in other situations these circumstances were not perceived as negative at all.

6.4 Conclusion

By answering the central research question *"What mechanisms influence the jihadist involvement process in the Netherlands and to what extent do these mechanisms interact?"*, this chapter aimed to develop a better understanding of jihadist involvement in the Netherlands. This study therefore analyzed the process of jihadist involvement between 2000 and 2013, while using grounded theory methods. In order to do so, 28 voluminous criminal investigations were scrutinized, which yielded rich information on 209 subjects. Additionally, 28 semi-structured interviews with police investigators, public prosecutors, and defense lawyers were conducted, and several court hearings were attended. This chapter elaborated how particular social mechanisms work and how they enhance, discourage, and sustain possible affiliation with a jihadist network. Several conclusions can be drawn from this analysis.

The answer to the research question is twofold. The first conclusion is that jihadist involvement covers more than the initial entry process. This research shows that involvement is an unstable process, in contrast to most phase models, which portray involvement as a sequential process in which subjects go through various stages terminating in a solid membership of a jihadist movement. The reason for this instability is that involvement is not a linear process. Individual trajectories of subjects were not described in that regard, but particular mechanisms that influence these trajectories were illuminated instead. Subjects have to constantly deal with mechanisms and consequences that either encourage or deter them from further involvement. Although the type, shape, and intensity of particular mechanisms may have been dissimilar in different periods studied, and affect individuals in different ways, both encouraging and deterring mechanisms were continuously present and in interaction with each other. As a result, these antagonistic involvement mechanisms could transform from encouragements into discouragements and vice versa. Therefore, there seems to be no "termination point" to the process of radicalization or recruitment, as the degree of involvement can change over time.

The second conclusion is that *all* subjects had to deal with the different involvement mechanisms. In other words, the foregoing transformation processes applied to both subjects that were only recently involved, as well as to the more experienced subjects. Furthermore, in contrast to the top-down and bottom-up discussion, it was also found that *all* subjects were influenced by other subjects, which means that not only new recruits but also more experienced subjects were still influenced by others. Nevertheless, the degree of influence differed per subject and the direction of influence developed over time. Whereas horizontal influence between subjects was always reciprocal, vertical influence was not. In the earlier cases, before 2004-2005, leading jihadists primarily influenced the lower ranked jihadists, but not the other way around. In these incidences the categorizations "recruiter" and "recruit" may have been appropriate. In later investigations, however, hierarchical structures started to level out, which meant that subjects in alleged lower ranks began to influence those with a more leading position as well.[75] As a result, the recruitment categorizations do not appear to be very suitable anymore. This development was enhanced with the rise of internet, which facilitated interaction and removed communication constraints.

Regardless the value of these new insights, and despite the systematic analysis, the current study cannot be taken as evidence for the phenomenon of jihadist involvement as a whole. For instance, we cannot determine whether the findings apply to contemporary European jihadists in relation to ISIS in Iraq and Syria. For broader applicability, future research must test the current transformation processes, while including ISIS related case studies.

[75] See also Chapter 3.

Nonetheless, this chapter provides an alternative framework to study jihadist involvement. It illustrates that involvement processes are far more dynamic than is often assumed and that government responses, such as condemnations and prosecutions, can sometimes have unintended consequences when jihadists incorporate law enforcement effects. Therefore, these findings may have significant value to the development of prevention policies. This chapter therefore suggests that policy makers should primarily focus on the two transformation processes described. First, investigative authorities should try to have a better understanding of the first transformation process where encouraging involvement mechanisms carry too far and become discouragements instead. Anticipating on these negative effects and emphasizing them could have preventative effects. Emphasizing and stimulating *confusion* and *friction* among jihadist-sympathizers could lead to pressure and conflicts, which can affect and disrupt jihadist involvement. Second, the government and the social environments of (potential) jihadist sympathizers could try to disrupt the second transformation process where subjects transform discouragements into encouragements. The government should, for instance, be more aware of the counterproductive effects of an arrest. Instead of explicitly and widely exposing the arrests and convictions to the public via the media, the government could consider to reduce coverage of law enforcement actions in order to eliminate ammunition for suspects to boast about it. For the same reasons, the government could in addition try to temper the alleged heroic deeds and status of jihadists. Although these are simplified and ambitious suggestions, they signal where room can be won when destabilizing jihadist involvement.

Chapter 7:

General Discussion

7

The Netherlands has been confronted with the presence of several jihadist networks over the years, some of which have imposed serious terrorist threats. Since the eruption of the Arab Spring, the rise of ISIS, and the mobilization of foreign fighters from Western European states in recent years, the likelihood of a terrorist attack in Western Europe has significantly increased (NCTV, 2015b; AIVD, 2015). The anxiety about a possible forthcoming terrorist attack that came along with the recent political developments, significantly increased the attention for jihadist networks and their members in recent years. Whereas the media consistently report about the actions of jihadists both abroad as well as domestically, academics and practitioners try to comprehend the logic and the mechanisms behind the existence as well as the functioning of jihadist networks. Despite the urgency to understand how such networks function, little is known about the operational procedures of these networks and how such proceedings may have altered in the past. Moreover, in case of the Netherlands there have been no attempts so far to systematically compare jihadist networks over time and see whether their *modus operandi* has changed and developed. This knowledge is however of vital importance to accurately assess a contemporary terrorist threat and to effectively counter this threat accordingly. In response to this knowledge gap, this dissertation primarily aims to understand the operational proceedings of jihadist networks in the Netherlands and aims to see whether these networks have changed over time. To materialize these aims, three central themes have been introduced which enabled a more systematic and manageable research: *organizational structures, activities,* and *involvement mechanisms*. This study is based on confidential information from 28 police investigations, 51 semi-structured interviews, and 10 trial observations. Grounded Theory methods were furthermore applied in order to let empirical findings determine the direction of the thesis. With the combination of these types of data, while following Grounded Theory principles, we aim to contribute to the field of terrorism studies. This final chapter shows how this approach has led to new insights and furthermore discusses to what extent it has deepened our understanding of jihadist networks. The following paragraphs will first summarize the main findings of this thesis by recapitulating the previous chapters. Thereafter, the main conclusions will be provided by answering the two central-sub question and by discussing what we have learned. Based on these findings and conclusions, the main research question will be answered, followed by the implications and suggestions for further research.

7.1 Summary of findings

7.1.1 Organizational structure and division of roles

Chapter 3 aimed to answer the research question: *To what extent do the organizational structures of the studied jihadist networks differ over time and what kind of roles do the studied subjects adopt in these networks?* To answer this research question, Chapter 3 explicitly focused on three jihadist networks from three different episodes to identify specific *organizational structures* and *division of roles*. By integrating a quantitative social

network analysis (SNA) and qualitative analysis, this study finds both differences and similarities between networks. To start with the organizational structures, the jihadist network from the first episode was a hierarchically organized network with a distinct cell structure and a strong international foundation, whereas the posterior networks were more fluid dynamic home-grown networks without a clear leadership. More specifically, the fluid home-grown networks appeared to be somewhat denser than the hierarchical network. The main similarity between the networks on the other hand was a form of compartmentalization of the network structure. In all three networks studied, several operational communities or cliques were found in which the subjects interact more closely with each other than with other subjects. However, we demonstrated that this compartmentalization is not always absolute. Rather, network structures appeared to be flexible and can vary depending on the type of core activity. Whereas preparation of foreign fighting attempts requires close and secret collaboration of only a few individuals (i.e., compartmentalization), dissemination of the ideology requires repeated communication between many subjects (i.e., high density). This explains the counter-intuitive occurrence of compartmentalization in relatively dense networks. As a result, the network structures appear to be dynamic, which implies an ongoing development of the jihadist movement. This is furthermore emphasized by the findings that network 3 showed signs of formalization and internationalization like network 1, but remained a flat organizational structure like network 2.

Besides organizational structures, Chapter 3 also focused on the division of roles and found that subjects can be distinguished in core members and supporters. The former are ideologically and operationally more active than the latter and appear to be the precursors of the networks. The centrality metrics from the SNA only partially confirm the centralized position of the core members, which raises some questions about the assumptions underlying SNA or the use of SNA in general (see also methodological reflections below). Nonetheless, through the temporal comparison of networks, we were able to identify particular subjects in more than one network. What is most interesting in that regard is that the roles of some key players evolved over time. Some subjects for instance evolved from a marginal to a more leading player over time, while the reversed process was also observed. In addition, the role of the core member does not have a clear cut profile, but differs per network. Whereas the core members in network 1 appeared to be leader-like subjects, the core members in network 2 came across less authoritative. They rather seemed to fulfill a guiding role. The core members of network 3 on the other hand showed characteristics from both their predecessors. These differences were further elaborated in the final empirical chapter on transforming involvement mechanisms (Chapter 6).

7.1.2 Modus operandi of foreign fighters

Chapter 4 illuminated the proceedings of numerous foreign fighting attempts and aimed to answer the following research question: *How do jihadists prepare their foreign*

fighting attempts and has their modus operandi changed over time? By using a crime script analysis, five preparatory stages emerged from the data which highlighted the opportunity structures of the foreign fighting attempts. The *orientation stage* shows how the subjects select their target and formulate their ideological rhetoric to justify their actions, while the *co-offending stage* highlights the social opportunity structures that enable cooperation between potential foreign fighters. The *operational stage* then indicates the concrete measures conducted by the foreign fighters to financially, logistically, and physically prepare themselves for their journey. During the *finalization stage*, the subjects undertake several efforts to say goodbye to their loved-ones and to tie operational and administrative loose ends. Finally, in the *departure stage,* potential foreign fighters actually try to leave the Netherlands and reach their intended destination. The role of the broker is indispensable in that regard, which emphasizes the centrality of such subjects as illustrated in Chapter 3.

In addition, the three studied episodes are compared in Chapter 4 to understand whether the MO has changed over time. Although all five preparatory stages are relevant in the three episodes studied, the specific script acts differ because each episode has a different underlying opportunity structure. We found that the *geopolitical situation*, the *social opportunity structures*, and the *technological developments* are three important situational factors causing the periodic changes and similarities in MO. Foreign fighters from the first episode (2000-2002) for instance, were mainly motivated to protect Muslim states in the Middle East from non-religious leaders that were often inspired by the West, thereby using solely religious-ideological rhetoric. They were inspired by international foreign jihadists, like the core members from network 1 as illustrated in Chapter 3. Those core members instigated the jihadist networks in the Netherlands and facilitated logistic and financial support due to large scale crime. Foreign fighters from the second episode (2003-2011), however, prepared their attempts in a completely different environment. They were motivated to protect Muslims in the Middle East from Western occupation, thereby predominantly formulating a defensive militant rhetoric. Furthermore, the international jihadists were no longer present, as was also illustrated in Chapter 3. The foreign fighters therefore mainly relied on each other and on former foreign fighters. Also, because large scale crime was no longer facilitated, they found creative alternatives to generate funding and utilize operational means. Finally, the foreign fighters from the third episode (2011-2013) were motivated to protect Muslims in the Middle East from dictators who maltreated their citizens. Just like in episode 2, a defensive militant rhetoric was used, although covered with a religious coating. They furthermore relied on former foreign fighters like the core members in networks 2 and 3 as illustrated in Chapter 3. In order to prepare their foreign fighting attempts, they heavily relied on technological developments. The use of the Internet (e.g., social media) as main communication tool, and the use of devices such as high-end laptops and smart-phones, increased accessibility to likeminded people, brokers, and conflict areas.

7.1.3 Irregular immigrants in jihadist networks

Chapter 5 focused on the central theme *jihadist involvement mechanisms*, where the focus is narrowed to a particular sub-group, namely immigrants without legal residence. Furthermore, it focused on two particular factors, namely the value of pragmatism and ideology in relation to involvement. The research question of that chapter was: *To what extent do pragmatism and ideology determine the attractiveness of jihadist networks for irregular Muslims immigrants.* Unlike the other chapters it only focused on the period 2000-2005 because thereafter the number of irregular immigrants in the studied networks seemed to have declined significantly. To answer the research question, we first explored the background of irregular immigrants to understand their needs. Chapter 5 illustrated that most immigrants living in detention centers and asylum centers have to deal with a lack of financial opportunities, time-consuming and de-motivating asylum procedures, minimal housing facilities, and a strict regime in case of detention centers. Due to these circumstances, we found that they often struggled with mental issues and feelings of deprivation, which in a minority of cases also resulted in aggressive behavior. When comparing these backgrounds with the behavior of irregular immigrants in jihadist networks, we found that jihadist networks could offer practical solutions that meet the needs of random irregular immigrants. For instance, jihadists often shared their houses with irregular immigrants, thus fulfilling the need for accommodation. It also illustrated how the networks were involved in different forms of crime such as large scale passport forgery, burglaries, and theft, which on the one hand offered financial opportunities, and on the other hand provided alternative travel documentation. Many irregular immigrants were also involved in these crimes, which illustrates the pragmatic value of the networks. In addition, we analyzed the behavior of the irregular immigrants in the jihadist networks further to understand whether networks were able to resolve the structural insecurity many irregular immigrants experienced. The Jihadi-Salafist ideology seemed to offer a sense of belonging to the subjects due to its emphasis on community values. However, the ideological value of the network's attractiveness appeared to be limited. Except for the heartland-oriented jihadists, most other irregular immigrants in jihadist networks did not seem to strive to realize the proclaimed ideological goals full-heartedly, nor did they intend to live up to the ideological rules. In sum, we observed a combination of utility and a need for meaning, belonging, and security, which seemed to make the jihadist networks attractive to vulnerable immigrants.

7.1.4 Mechanisms enhancing, sustaining, and deterring involvement

Chapter 6 aimed to answer the research question: *What mechanisms influence the jihadist involvement process in the Netherlands and how do these mechanism relate to each other?* To answer this research question, Chapter 6 especially focused on how subjects disseminate the ideology. On the one hand, factors such as the *exchange* and *creation of ideological material*, *organizing readings* and *lectures*, and *discussing ideological content* were found, which all can be considered encouraging mechanisms

in relation to jihadist involvement. On the other hand, other factors such as a *hostile environment, government measures, group conflicts*, and *danger* are found, which all can be considered discouraging mechanisms in relation to further jihadist affiliation. We also focused on how these mechanisms relate to each other and found that the factors constantly interact. Based on the interaction of these antagonistic factors, two processes were identified in which involvement mechanisms influence each other to such an extent that the involvement process can be transformed. The first process shows how particular proceedings in the dissemination of the ideology could carry too far. Procedures such as the *exchange* of *ideological material, ideological lectures*, and *behavioral criticism* for instance are sometimes forced upon fellow jihadists in such a way that it could lead to feelings of pressure and fear. It sometimes even results in heavy disputes and conflicts, which drives some subjects away. Hence, the encouragement to learn and internalize the ideology and consolidate jihadist involvement is sometimes transformed into situations where subjects are discouraged to remain involved in a jihadist network. The second process describes how seemingly negative situations in relation to their jihadist involvement are interpreted as something positive. For instance, Chapter 6 showed how subjects deal with a *hostile environment* and (the fear of) *repudiations and arrests,* and how they cope with *danger.* Instead of perceiving those situations as negative, subjects often used them to their own advantage. This way, seemingly discouraging involvement factors are transformed by the subjects in order to encourage prolonged involvement instead. It must be stressed though, that the type, intensity, and shape of the encouraging and discouraging factors may have been dissimilar between different networks and periods, and that they did not necessarily have the same effect on each subject. Nonetheless, both encouraging and discouraging mechanisms were found in all episodes of the studied time-frame and both types of mechanisms constantly interacted. Moreover, Chapter 6 also showed that *all* subjects seem to be dealing with the different involvement mechanisms, both new and experienced subjects. It is also found, in contrast to the often referred top-down and bottom-up discussion (Hoffman & Sageman, 2008), that all subjects influence each other. This means that also relatively new recruits influence other recruits or even more experienced jihadists when it comes to disseminating the ideology. One needs to keep in mind though, that the degree of influence differs per subject. Also, as was already mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4, the direction of influence between subjects does not always go both ways. Especially in the earlier periods of the studied time-frame, core members influenced the supporters, but not the other way around. With the rise of the Internet and the disappearance of the more hierarchy orientated heartland-oriented jihadists,[76] communication occurred on a more equal basis and supporters started to influence the core members as well. As a result, categorizations like “recruiter” and “recruit” become less appropriate than they used to be, because the knowledge and power gap between subjects is reduced.

[76] The heartland-oriented is one of the core member types in Chapter 3 and one of the social facilitator types in Chapter 4.

7.2 General conclusions

7.2.1 A changing nature

The empirical findings in this dissertation give us a rich insight into the environment of jihadists in the Netherlands. The findings illustrate the versatility as well as the complexity of the networks’ proceedings. The previous chapters illuminated a jihadist movement that has a relatively constant ideological character, but is dynamic in its appearance and performance. This dynamic nature is especially illustrated in the chapter on organizational structures via a social network analysis, and in the chapter on the preparatory stages of foreign fighters via a crime script analysis (Chapters 3 and 4). The findings show how the form and reach of communication among jihadists changed and how this gradually altered their social environment. Furthermore, in order to adapt to their changing environment, the foreign fighters gradually altered their means of preparation to successfully travel to overseas conflict zones. Hence, the jihadist movement developed over time. These findings enable us to answer one of the central sub-questions: *How does the interaction between the organizational structures and activities of jihadist networks in the Netherlands manifest itself between 2000 and 2013?* The interaction between the social make-up of the networks and the actions of their members is constantly present and visible in the police files studied. But because the jihadist movement develops over time, the nature of this interaction is relatively complex. The relationship between the change in organizational structure and the change in proceedings is therefore not entirely clear-cut. We cannot claim without doubt that a change within organizational structures causes a change within an activity, or vice versa, nor do we know which alteration occurs first. Yet, one important finding regarding organizational structures does immediately come to mind in that respect. We found that network structures are flexible and can vary depending on the activity. To be more specific, different forms of compartmentalization occur when subjects prepare foreign fighting attempts, but the (mainly posterior) networks adopt a more dense structure when subjects aim to disseminate the ideology. This finding implies that a change in activity proceedings changes the organizational structures. However, the compartmentalization finding should not be interpreted as such. Not the procedural change *within* an activity initiates compartmentalization in later networks, but rather the shift *between* activities changes the network structure. Since we are aiming at procedural changes *within* an activity, we should thus redirect our focus to the three core activities and compare both directions of the relation to fully understand the interaction between organizational structures and activities.

7.2.1.1 Foreign fighting

The first direction, change in organizational structure leads to a change in foreign fighting attempts, is to a great extent visible. The main observed procedural changes are probably the coordination and the type of funding of the attempts. Both changes are

a direct effect of an alteration in the social opportunity structure. Whereas Chapter 3 hierarchically distinguished this social opportunity structure in *core members* and *supporters*, Chapter 4 distinguished different *social facilitators*. Regardless of the differences in terminology, changing the social opportunity structure seems almost synonym for changing the organizational structure. The reason for this is that the disappearance (through arrests and deportations) of the heartland-oriented jihadists, and their replacement by home-grown jihadists and former supporters, directly led to the disruption of the well-organized jihadist networks. To be more precise, the essential features of a hierarchically organized network, such as the division of labor and a hierarchical relation between subjects, are no longer in place once the network merely contains home-grown jihadists. Home-grown jihadists rather operate on a horizontal level and have no operational skills in particular. Organizing the network in such a fashion consequently means the loss of expertise, international contacts, and operational and management skills, which are necessary features to conduct large scale crime like drug trafficking and passport forgery. This subsequently alters the type of criminal conduct and thus the type of funding foreign fighting attempts.

If we then move to the reversed direction – an alteration in foreign fighting proceedings leading to a change in organizational structure – finding increased openness about training practices comes to mind. It seem logical that this increased openness could have led to more network exposure, which in its turn could have led to government interventions and consequently the disruption of a compartmentalized and well-organized network structure (i.e., change in organizational structure). However, the chapter on the preparatory stages of foreign fighting attempts explained that previous and unsuccessful prosecutions by the government were actually the cause rather than the effect of an increased openness about the training purposes. Governmental interventions disrupted and thus changed the network structures. Thereafter, when the government failed to successfully convict the suspects, statements about the training intentions no longer seems to incriminate the remaining subjects, which created room to share their intentions publically. In other words, organizational changes occurred prior to procedural changes.

7.2.1.2 Criminal conduct

The direction from organizational change to procedural change in relation to criminal conducts seems very likely as already discussed above in the elaboration on foreign fighting preparations. Regarding the reversed direction, it seems unlikely that any alteration in the criminal proceedings occurred prior to this organizational change because that would have been a financially irrational decision. To illustrate this, criminal conduct such as drugs trafficking and passport forgery was very lucrative to the first studied networks, and much more rewarding than conventional crimes conducted by the later networks. There seems to be no obvious reason to forfeit this lucrative business, other than external factors forcing the networks to abandon this practice.

The main cause of not conducting organized crime anymore is that the expertise and coordinating skills to execute such crimes disappeared once the facilitators and the leading heartland-oriented jihadists were captured and deported. Hence, a changing social opportunity structure seems to cause procedural changes, and not the other way around.

7.2.1.3 Disseminating the ideology

Like the other two activities, the change in organizational structure also seemed to influence the dissemination of the ideology over time. Again, an alteration of the social opportunity structure seemed to affect this. The succession of heartland-oriented jihadists by young home-grown jihadists led to an alteration in how the subjects interacted with each other. The decreasing age gap and the fact that core members were no longer omniscient regarding the ideology, meant that the communication no longer suffered from a hierarchical distance. As a result, subjects were able to discuss the narratives rather than uncritically follow someone's ideological interpretation. Likewise, they internalized aspects of the ideology they preferred, instead of adopting one solid and undisputed dogma.

If we then move to the reversed direction – an alteration in ideological dissemination leading to a change in organizational structure – we can build on the foregoing. The organizational structure is not solely altered due to the replacement of the core member type, because this organizational change is highly facilitated by the situational factor of *technological development*. To illustrate, the rise of the Internet in particular instigated alternative communication tools and became the primary mode of communication. Web forums, chat boxes, and social media increased the frequency of interaction between subjects and furthermore extended their social capital. This means that interaction not only increased between existing links, but also between unrelated people. As a result, the search for likeminded people accelerated. No longer were people in search for meaning depended on others who claimed to have expertise in a particular field, such as the ideological doctrine. The rise of the Internet has created a virtual community, in which elements of the doctrine can be discussed on a horizontal level and new knowledge is quickly obtained. This facilitated the dissemination of the ideology in frequency and range. As a result of these practices, the virtual community enabled everyone to participate and the strict top-down communication flows eroded. Therefore, a highly organized and strictly compartmentalized network with higher ranked recruiters and ideologues who aimed to indoctrinate new recruits seemed no longer necessary and appears to have been replaced by the fluid, dense, and horizontal home-grown network, with a minimal knowledge and power gap between its members. On the other hand, one needs to keep in mind that the decline of hierarchical organizations already occurred long before the technological development was at its current peak. It therefore remains questionable whether the latter caused the former.

In sum, for most of the activities it appears that the organizational changes occurred prior to the procedural changes. In other words, the subjects seem to do things differently once they start to interact differently. However, clear causal relations in any of the directions were difficult to determine. The nature of the interaction between organizational structures and activities is to a great extent influenced by situational factors, like the social opportunity structure, government interventions, and the presence of Internet based communication tools. Through the course of time, these opportunity structures altered, which influenced the interaction between organizational structures and activities differently.

7.2.2 Jihadist involvement

Whereas the jihadist networks' appearances and performances seem to be dynamic, the jihadist character of the networks is relatively constant. With this we mean that throughout the studied time-frame, subjects consistently deal with the interpretation of the Jihadi-Salafist ideology, which forms the backbone of the jihadist movement. Despite the continuous interaction with the ideology by all subjects studied, each individual is, however, differently affected by the ideology and its byproducts, which influences the type and intensity of jihadist involvement. The chapter on a sub-group of irregular immigrants and the chapter on transforming involvement mechanisms (Chapters 5 and 6) illustrate this and enable us to answer the second central sub-question: *How and through which social processes do subjects get and stay involved in jihadist networks in the Netherlands between 2000-2013.* The focus on social processes in both chapters shows that internal dispositions of jihadists are not the only relevant features that need to be scrutinized when trying to understand jihadist involvement. Also the subjects' interaction with their social environment – and the opportunities and constraints that the environment offers – can have a significant impact on jihadist involvement.

The study of a specific sub-group of irregular immigrants showed that due to the opportunities that emerge from the irregular immigrants' interaction with the environment, jihadist networks appear to be an attractive alternative for them, which they may not have consciously considered if these opportunities had not emerged. To illustrate, because irregular immigrants and asylum seekers often struggle with mental problems due to their deprived circumstances, they seek a social environment that provides a sense of meaning, relief, and a sense of belonging. They find this among their peers, such as fellow deprived immigrants, and especially among people with a common cultural and religious background. In this study these people share an ethnic and Muslim background. Due to this search for meaning within the Muslim community, which includes the asylum centers and detention centers, the opportunity emerges that they not only encounter moderate Muslims, but also meet more radical and jihadist actors. This may be partially coincidental, and partially due to explicit recruitment by the jihadist networks. These networks are attractive alternative environments because they not only offer a sense of meaning and belonging, but they also meet the practical needs

of irregular immigrants such as money, accommodation, and travel documentation. It is interesting to see that the opportunity to affiliate with these networks appears to be the result of the situational concurrence of people's current deprived situation, their religious background, and their explicit intention to socialize with peers, rather than an outcome of their psychological internal dispositions that explicitly drive them towards radical measures. In other words, it is more likely they became aware of the networks' benefits once they became acquainted with jihadists, rather than that they purposefully sought an entrance into these radical networks in the first place. The latter can be derived from the finding that the ideological value is constrained because the irregular immigrants do not all seem to strive to realize the proclaimed ideological goals. The ideological value of the networks in respect to irregular immigrants is primarily based on the finding that ideology or religion offers a sense of community, rather than that it offers a radical doctrine that explains all their problems and tells them what to do. Hence, considering the situational circumstances of irregular immigrants and their search for community, the combined pragmatic and ideological values give rise to the opportunity for them to affiliate with jihadist networks.

Whereas the chapter on irregular immigrants primarily seeks to understand what makes a network attractive for certain categories of individuals, the chapter on transforming involvement mechanisms mainly illustrates what happens once subjects indeed start to affiliate with jihadist networks. It demonstrates how subjects constantly deal with situational factors that emerge from their interaction with different social environments, which influences how they behave. In other words, social processes create both opportunities as well as constraints to prolonged jihadist involvement. For example, the condemnation by jihadists' family members or by society in general is a response to their shown radical behavior and attitude, which in its turn causes a heavy burden, forcing jihadists to adapt to this discouraging situation. On the other hand, their routine interaction with likeminded peers creates an environment in which their radical behavior is applauded, which encourages their jihadist involvement. In essence, jihadists' behavior is a continuous outcome of the interaction with their social environment. Jihadist involvement therefore covers much more than a radicalization or entry process into a jihadist network. The condemnations, government interventions, and behavioral critique from the in-group, to name a few examples, keep pressuring the subjects long after they start to affiliate with a jihadist network for the first time. In some cases this leads to an alteration in their involvement. This suggests that entering a jihadist network is not that black and white, and that both getting involved as well as staying involved are very unstable. This instability is furthermore enhanced by the interaction of the relatively antagonistic encouraging and discouraging factors. Boasting or bragging for instance functions in some situations as an encouragement that downplays the condemnations and interventions by the out-group and transforms it into a sign of prestige. This constant interaction between boastings as encouragements and condemnations as discouragements, or any other type of encouragement and

discouragement, can transform the process of jihadist involvement over time. Unlike the often cited phase-models, this transformation process illustrates that jihadists do not necessarily follow a trajectory of phases or stages that lead to a termination point where a membership of a jihadist network is obtained. In other words, the involvement process is not a sequential process. In essence, situational factors constantly create new conditions for the subjects studied to decide whether prolonged involvement suits them. As a result, the extent of jihadist involvement appears to be determined by social processes between jihadists and their environment, rather than their internal dispositions or firm ideological conviction. The latter is continuously tested by the situational factors, which shows that ideological beliefs do not guarantee a steady jihadist involvement.

These findings and conclusions, however, need to be interpreted in light of the spirit of times. The involvement opportunities that have emerged in a certain episode may have been the result of situational factors that are only relevant and present in that particular episode. Policies, societal developments, and geo-political situations are all temporal factors that can have an unabiding effect on both the attractiveness as well as the involvement mechanisms of jihadist networks. Some of the discouraging factors, for instance, have a greater impact at certain moments in time compared to other moments. This is especially the case with government interventions and a hostile environment. To illustrate, although alleged terrorist activity has been continuously investigated in the Netherlands since 2000, attention by the Dutch police significantly increased after the murder of cineast Theo van Gogh in 2004. The same temporal development applies to the disapproval of fundamental religious attitudes by mainstream society, although this already began to intensify after the 9/11 attacks. To facilitate the objective of disrupting jihadist networks, the Dutch government commenced several laws as of 2004 which extended police authority and increased surveillance of suspicious environments. As a result, attention by the police significantly increased, which induced more discouragement than before. This anxiety gradually declined in the years preceding the Arab Spring in 2011 though, which means that sympathizers are less discouraged by the government and society to start or continue any jihadist involvement. As of 2011, however, a similar trend as in 2004 emerges with new policies and interventions to disrupt jihadist networks, and revived condemnations from society, thus intensifying discouragements towards jihadist involvement again.

In addition, the chapter on irregular immigrants, which pertains to the period 2000-2005, also highlights the influence of circumstances. Whereas a relatively high number of irregular immigrants was found in the police investigations in that period, the police investigations in the period thereafter hardly contain any irregular immigrants. The reason for the absence of irregular immigrants in later investigations could be derived from the fact that the opportunities or situational factors that made the jihadist networks attractive to irregular immigrants seemed less present. For instance, due to the removal of the heartland-oriented jihadists in 2003-2004, the networks no longer

conduct organized crimes that facilitate certain needs of irregular immigrants. In other words, the forged passports and financial benefits no longer seemed to be supplied and did thus not meet the demands of irregular immigrants. This suggests that the jihadist networks are less attractive due to a lack of opportunities for this specific category of subjects. This does not mean that the pragmatic value is no longer relevant. New developments could for instance increase the number of irregular immigrants, or alter the *modus operandi* of the networks, making them attractive again to vulnerable immigrants. One needs to keep in mind though, that the irregular immigrants in the first tier of data had to deal with the outcome of tough migration policies, enforced by the Amendment of the Dutch Aliens Act in 1998. This amendment excluded irregular immigrants' from public services such as non-essential health care, public housing, and social security, suddenly deteriorating their living conditions. This suggests that current and future irregular migrants – for instance from the current influx of refugees coming from Syria – are more likely to be attracted to jihadist networks if they are not properly accommodated. Proper living conditions and positive prospects may diminish the influence of particular situational factors that used to make jihadist networks attractive to vulnerable immigrants. This implies that a general increase of irregular immigrants does not necessarily mean that the number of irregular immigrants in jihadist networks will increase with the same rate. But it does imply that policies with respect to irregular immigrants may have side effects for certain subgroups of migrants that should be taken into account.

7.2.3 Main conclusion

The summary of findings and the answers to the two central sub-question in the previous paragraphs enable us to answer the main research question in this dissertation: *How did jihadist networks in the Netherlands operate between 2000 and 2013 and what changes can be observed?* This study demonstrates that terrorism and jihadism are mutable phenomena that manifest themselves dynamically in time and place. This means that the concern raised in the introduction of this dissertation, namely that no definite profile of a terrorist or terrorist network has yet been developed, is further confirmed by the findings in this dissertation. Both the diverging root causes as well as the altering *modus operandi* seem to disable us to formulate a clear-cut and undeniable synopsis of what constitutes a jihadist or a jihadist network. This study found that the jihadist movement in the Netherlands has developed over time, both in appearance and performance. To formulate it concisely: it operates differently when it interacts differently. Does the confirmation of earlier expressed concerns means that we did not learn anything valuable, and that we are still standing where we began? Quite the contrary. This thesis aimed and succeeded to increase our understanding about what causes the differences between the jihadist networks' appearances and performances. We can conclude that the *modus operandi* of jihadist networks depend to a great extent on the networks' opportunity structure. The interaction between the opportunities

and constraints, which emerges from the environment in which the networks operate, influence the *modus operandi* of the studied networks, which instigates change.

Breaking this down to the three central themes within the networks' *modus operandi*, a change in the opportunity structure seems to cause a change in the way the jihadist networks are organized, the way the networks conduct their core activities, and the way the subjects' involvement is enhanced, sustained, or dissuaded. Moreover, these changes within the central themes appear to be highly related, meaning that an alteration within one theme may instigate or enhance the change in another theme. For instance, the change in the social opportunity structure, which is an alteration in the presence of particular core members and supporters, does not only transform the organizational structure of a network. These organizational changes consequently influence the periodic differences in proceedings of the core activities of preparing foreign fighting attempts, disseminating the ideology, and criminal conduct. More precisely, it alters the way foreign fighting attempts are funded and coordinated; it changes the way the ideology is discussed and internalized among jihadists; and it decreases criminal opportunities, thereby eroding the attractiveness of the networks to vulnerable subgroups. These changes are at the same time strongly enforced by additional situational factors such as technological developments. The rise of the Internet, for instance, makes the networks fluid and dense; enhances communication between brokers and potential foreign fighters; minimizes knowledge and power gaps between subjects; and creates more room for discussion about the radical doctrines.

Next to these observed transformations, particular commonalities were also found. The networks studied, for instance, share different organizational features, such as the compartmentalization of organizational structures and the presence of core members and brokers. Also, such brokers appear to be indispensable to prepare foreign fighting attempts, while the core members are the forerunners to disseminate the ideology and often the coordinators of criminal conduct in all episodes. In addition, most encouraging and discouraging factors that enhance, dissuade, or sustain jihadist involvement appear to be present in all episodes, although the type, intensity, and shape of the factors may differ and affect subjects in different ways.

If we take a step aside from these conclusions, we must realize that during the publication of this dissertation new developments have begun to emerge that will influence the opportunity structures discussed. The continued war in Syria, the rise of ISIS, the different coalitions that are formed to fight ISIS, the increase of refugees fleeing Syria and Iraq, Western foreign fighters returning to Europe, and the growing anxiety among civilians regarding a potential terrorist attack, all affect the opportunity structures of (potential) jihadist networks in different ways. This means that the jihadist movement will further develop and adapt to a new environment. This does not mean that the findings, explanations, and conclusions in the current thesis have already become outdated. Again, quite the contrary. The conclusion that the jihadist movement constantly develops due to a changing opportunity structure confirms *a fortiori* that we

need to realize that jihadism is not a static phenomenon. We need to anticipate quickly on new developments and trends, because accustomed approaches might not match contemporary issues. This awareness of possible change is exactly what this study tries to demonstrate: a dynamic phenomenon that requires a flexible approach. Hopefully this awareness will contribute to the understanding of current and future developments.

7.3 Reflections and implications

7.3.1 Theoretical reflections

Chapter 1 introduced three debatable approaches in the current terrorism literature that raise questions or show ambiguities which have not yet been adequately addressed. A first topic refers to the relatively one-sided perspective on jihadist networks since many terrorism scholars generally depart from a *why* perspective when studying this phenomenon. Understanding the root causes of radicalization, for instance, has long appeared to be the main driver of many terrorism scholars. A second issue refers to scholars adopting a static view when they primarily study a single moment or network in time, without comparing different incidents over time. Despite the ambiguities, many scholars keep departing from a *why* perspective and continue to adopt a static view in their theoretical explanations and frameworks. Consequently, as argued in Chapter 1, there appears to be no coherent profile of a jihadist and the network he or she resides in, which has started an ongoing debate between several prominent terrorism scholars. Due to this lack of academic consensus, this thesis aims to shift the academic focus from relatively general questions about why terrorist networks exist and why people get involved in terrorist networks, to more specific questions about how these jihadist networks operate. In other words, more attention should be paid to the *modus operandi* of jihadist networks. The current study illustrates that this shift in focus can lead to unique research findings, especially when it focuses on uncharted research areas. For instance, the topic foreign fighters is a relatively unexplored area within the field of terrorism studies, and the current findings on *modus operandi* of foreign fighters are therefore a significant contribution to our limited understanding of this issue. Such explorative research offers a new framework that can be useful to practitioners as well as to scholars looking for an empirical foundation to depart from. Furthermore, understanding *what* the foreign fighters do and *how* they operate is the basis for subsequent research on the root causes (i.e., the *why*) of foreign fighting. To understand the *why*, you first need to know what it is you are trying to explain. Hence, by adopting a different perspective and by drawing specific research questions, we have been able to gain a better understanding of how jihadist networks operate. These results enable one to draw more specific research questions about the root causes.

In addition, this thesis does not just shift its focus towards a *how* perspective, it furthermore utilizes aspects of the opportunity theory. By combining this with a long-term approach, through a comparison of different networks over time, it enables us to

find explanations for the heterogeneity of jihadist networks in general. This illustrates that the existence of jihadist networks and the occurrence of their actions are to a great extent the outcome of an interaction between situational opportunities and constraints, rather than a direct effect of the personal factors and dispositions of the jihadists involved. Such clarifications have only received limited attention within the current field of terrorism studies, which emphasizes the importance of a shift towards alternative theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, because this study focuses on a longer time-frame and compares different incidents over time, the emergence of particular situational factors from this comparison leads to possible explanations for the differences and commonalities in jihadist proceedings. Hence the relevance of alternative approaches and new theoretical frameworks for the study of terrorist or jihadist networks. There are more reasons why this approach is important. Besides the relevance for the study of terrorism in particular, the use of opportunity-theories and situational factors in this context also shows that this theory can be used to illuminate *social processes* related to crime and terrorism, rather than solely describing the action-orientated proceedings of the actual crime or terrorist attack. In other words, the power of the opportunity theory is much broader than how it was initially implemented by Clark & Newman (2006) who predominantly focused on the tangible and concrete *situational crime prevention*. Although they did use social aspects as situational factors regarding the occurrence of a terrorist attack, the concrete attack itself was still the primary unit of analysis. This thesis, however, also shows how situational factors can help to explain or illuminate the social processes preceding or surrounding a potential terrorist attack, such as the involvement processes of the subjects studied, the attractiveness of a jihadist network, and the underlying organizational structures of a jihadist network. By expanding the focus from the criminal or terrorist act towards, for instance, the radicalization and recruitment process, this thesis demonstrates the theoretical importance and potential of the opportunity theory beyond the theory's usual units of analysis.

In addition, by highlighting situational aspects and expanding the use of the opportunity theory, this thesis also displays the potential of criminological contributions to the field of terrorism studies. The call for more criminological research in this field (Cottee, 2011; Freilich & LaFree, 2015) is therefore more than justified. This thesis illustrates that criminological contributions to terrorism studies do not have to be limited to the responses to terrorism, such as the evaluation of newly implemented counter-terrorism laws and their effect on human and civil rights (e.g., Mythen & Walklate, 2006). Departing from the idea that terrorism and related networks are manifestly criminal, this thesis illustrates that focusing on radical behavior through a criminological lens leads to new and unique insights. Firstly, this suggests that terrorism studies scientifically progress if future research utilizes criminological theories more when focusing on the behavioral side of terrorism. Secondly, it also suggests that criminology has a much wider reach than currently expressed in the academic environment. Moreover, the current thesis confirms Cottee's (2011, p. 476) argument that it does not follow that

criminological theories cannot illuminate behavior other than ordinary or regular crimes. It is well-suited to scrutinize crimes that are for instance political in character. Even if criminologists remain relatively absent in the terrorism domain, as argued by Cottee (2011), this domain could still benefit from criminological theories.

To illustrate, the current dissertation does not only deal with the criminological opportunity theories, but also touches upon several other criminological theories, such as strain theories and social learning theories. Regarding the former, Chapter 5 illustrates how Merton's (1957) *Strain Theory* can be of use to explain how vulnerable irregular immigrants become potential recruits for jihadist networks. In essence, the theory claims that society is suffering strain when there is a sort of mismatch between the desired societal goals and the legal means available to actually reach these goals. This discrepancy generates a social pressure to seek alternative means to reach the desired goals and crime is such an innovative method. To be more precise, according to the theory people constantly compare themselves with people who are better off and as a result they can feel relatively deprived. This creates a desire to attain a similar living standard. When legal means to attain this goal are out of reach, people can feel some form of social pressure to seek illegal means instead. Hence, crime is an innovative way to close the gap. Although the theory initially aimed at conventional crimes, it can also be used to explain terrorism (Agnew, 2010). In that regard, Chapter 5 shows how irregular immigrants, hoping to find a better life in the Netherlands, are deprived from a comfort lifestyle when they reside in asylum and detention centers. This can initiate a feeling of relative deprivation, which consequently develops into mental problems. Hence, they can experience a form of strain in their pursuit for a better life. Because the legal options do not bear fruit, they alternatively find refuge in extremist environments that meet their needs, which mainstream society is not able to provide for. This briefly illustrates how the *Strain Theory* has much broader implications regarding major societal issues, such as migration and terrorism, than merely explaining conventional crimes, such as property offences or the start of delinquent subcultures.

In addition, Chapter 6 touches upon social learning theories in two ways. First of all, it relates to Akers' (1973) *Social Learning Theory*, in which he elaborates "differential reinforcements". Reinforcements are either punishments or rewards that follow particular behavior. When criminal behavior is more rewarded than punished, an individual is more likely to continue this behavior. This relates to the discussed encouragements and discouragements in Chapter 6. However, whereas Akers implies that punishments will most likely deter individuals to conduct future criminal behavior, Chapter 6 illustrates that certain reinforcements are not always perceived as punishments and therefore have not the intended effect. Akers does not explicitly take into account that a punishment can transform into a reward, although he does argue that prior social conditioning determines how a certain reinforcement is perceived. Nonetheless, Chapter 6 explicitly illustrates how the studied subjects can adapt to punishments and perceive them as rewards. It does not necessarily contradict Aker's *Social Learning Theory*, but builds

on it and then expands the idea by describing how criminals or jihadists can respond to reinforcements in a different fashion. Secondly, Chapter 6 touches upon labeling theories, and Lemert's (1951) *Primary and Secondary Deviance Theory* in particular. He defines sporadic and minor rule violations as primary deviance. Secondary deviance is criminal behavior that emerges from the authority's response to the primary deviance. The deviant is stigmatized by the authority's intervention and will now act in accordance to this stigma. In that respect, Chapters 6 showed how the labeling of a subject as "terrorist" by society or the government reinforced a subject's status within the jihadist movement, thereby encouraging continued jihadist involvement. Likewise, government interventions such as a police arrest can generate a feeling of importance, thus encouraging continued involvement. The difference is that Lemert aimed at minor deviations that are dramatized by the government and as a result encourage more extreme deviant behavior that otherwise might not have taken place. Chapter 6 on the other hand already focuses on radical behavior that, in contrast to Lemert's minor rule violations, is more likely to continue when the government does not intervene. Furthermore, most subjects in this study already see themselves as belonging to a deviant subculture, which is also an explicit goal they were trying to achieve in the first place. In that sense, labeling the individual as deviant does not necessarily encourage him or her to conduct secondary deviant behavior, but rather stimulates his or her primary deviant behavior. However, at the same time the findings from chapter 6 shed a different light on what "secondary deviant behavior" entails. Due to the government interventions and the label "terrorist", the position of a jihadist within the network is reinforced which gives him or her more status and often more power and ability to influence many others. The latter indicates that stigmatizing one individual can work as a catalyst, as multiple other individuals start to conduct similar deviant behavior as well. Therefore, secondary deviance not only refers to the brutalization of individual behavior, but may also have a spiraling effect in their social environment.

Finally, the integration of different theoretical approaches is useful to raise the level of empirical research into terrorism, from which new insights may emerge. This thesis displays that besides the changes in higher levels of abstraction, such as the shift to the *how* perspective and the adoption of a criminological lens, terrorism studies also benefit from the integration of disciplines on a lower level of abstraction. The integration of the migration domain with the radicalization domain in the chapter on irregular immigrants, for instance, offers a unique contribution to the identification of the attractiveness of jihadist networks. It highlights how unrelated, yet vulnerable people can become potential recruits for jihadist networks. Innovative approaches are necessary for the current field of terrorism studies to keep up with recent developments and find explanations for the emergence of new radical movements such as ISIS and understand behavior of ISIS' potential targets.

7.3.2 Methodological reflections and future research

7.3.2.1 Data

A third and final debatable approach that is outlined in the introduction refers to the amplification of methodological and empirical rigor in terrorism research. Too often, terrorism studies barely meet a minimal standard of sound academic research. Although the lack of empirical data is to a certain extent understandable in this field, attempts should be made to find alternative ways. The use of police information as firsthand data, for instance, offers a unique insight into jihadist networks, as this dissertation illustrates. Especially since the principal objective is to illuminate behavior of subjects residing in these networks, the nature of police information enables me to have a significant close look at such behavior. The wiretaps in various studied police investigations for instance lay bare extremely covert behavior, which eventually appeared to be one of the most crucial sources of information. As already mentioned in the methodology chapter, this close observation of relatively concealed networks enabled me to identify processes that would have been unlikely to be identified with other data sources. This indicates the value of police files as a form of firsthand data (see also Sageman, 2014; Schuurman & Eijkman, 2013) and emphasizes the need to invest time into this type of labor-intensive research. In addition, terrorism studies relying on police data are often more quantitative in nature, such as the work by Brent Smith who uses FBI data to mainly conduct quantitative analyses (see for example Smith et al., 2002), whereas the current study is mainly qualitative in nature. This combination of police data and a qualitative approach makes this dissertation a unique contribution to the field of terrorism studies.

Although police investigations contain information that is generally unparalleled within the field of terrorism studies, such data still come with several drawbacks that can affect the validity of the research findings. The first drawback in this thesis is the selection bias. At first sight the selection bias stems from the decision to purely focus on the Netherlands and the period 2000-2013. This means that the findings should only be interpreted in relation to that particular geographical area and that particular episode, and should not be used for generalization. Next to the bias in place and time, there is also a bias in content. The police do not investigate all jihadist networks, and not all activities conducted by the investigated networks are monitored, meaning that not all relevant issues to understand how jihadist networks operate are encapsulated in a police investigation. For this reason, a triangulation of data sources was used to partially overcome this selection bias. By additionally conducting trial observations and 51 interviews with key informants, the results are expended and the initial conclusions are nuanced. Yet, the validity of the research could have progressed if not only key informants were interviewed, but a sample of (former) jihadists as well. We have tried to reach out to some of them, but when it became clear that we would be unable to gather a representative sample, we abandoned the attempt. This decision was also enforced by the labor intensity of scrutinizing 28 voluminous police investigations. This is nonetheless unfortunate, because a useful sample of primary respondents could

have improved our empirical concepts. Especially with regard to the central theme of *involvement* in Chapters 5 and 6. Since these chapters focus to a certain extent on the decision-making process and the moment a subject starts to affiliate with a jihadist network, it would have been better to incorporate the actual considerations of the subjects themselves. This particularly applies to the chapter on irregular immigrants, in which the attractiveness of a network and thus the preliminary stage is the main focus. Yet, police data usually contain information after the first association with a network, making it difficult to reconstruct what happened before. Although we tried to overcome this issue by interviewing key informants in asylum centers and detention centers, these interviews cannot indicate a causal relation. After all, we compare two different populations; a group of irregular immigrants involved in jihadist networks (police data) and a group of irregular immigrants and asylum seekers that are unconnected to jihadist networks (interviews). Future research should therefore explore alternative measures to reach out to primary respondents that could elaborate on the decision-making process that occurred prior to jihadist involvement. This way, studying alternative and less related research populations can be avoided, which increases the validity of the findings.

The foregoing reflection does not mean that the use of police information for academic purposes is inadequate. As advocated by Schuurman & Eijkman (2013) and Sageman (2014), confidential files can be an important data source. However, another disadvantage of police data is the lack of transparency. In the sense that the greater academic community is not able to verify the analyses in this thesis, because it is has no access to the data and we are not allowed to share the raw data with other scholars. As a result, our academic peers need to trust our judgment of the data without being able to see it for themselves. This inhibits academic exchange and obstructs peer feedback. As Sageman (2014) correctly argues, the assistance and willingness of the government is necessary in that respect, since they need to authorize scholars' access to confidential sources. Besides few exceptions, this willingness is unfortunately too often lacking. The current thesis shows how important this type of research can be, and thereby heavily relies on the assistance of government officials in the Netherlands. The current research project is therefore an example to other countries how a government can aid academic research by removing several obstacles. Not only to support new research initiatives, but also to increase possibilities for academic replication. Since replication is one of the pillars of academic research, and the main reason for a comprehensive methodological justification as outlined in the methodology chapter, access to confidential data is important for academic progress.

7.3.2.2 Methodology

Another aspect concerns the analytical approach of empirical data and the justification thereof. Therefore, next to triangulation of data sources, this thesis also used multiple analyzing tools. The use of crime script analysis, for instance, is an innovative way to

lay bare the different opportunity structures in relation to foreign fighting attempts. At the same time it provides a suitable framework to present operational proceedings in a categorized and structural fashion. Likewise, the main advantage of social network analysis (SNA) is that it visualizes the qualitative research in a straightforward modus. Through SNA we quantified certain data, which enabled me to standardize particular findings, thus making it possible to compare extensive qualitative information in a more systematic and organized manner. Whereas the comparison of the different organizational structures would have been too elaborate and detailed when solely focusing on extensive qualitative output, the use of qualitative analyses is at the same time crucial for a representative picture of the data. An integration of both SNA and qualitative analyses is therefore highly recommended. Solely using SNA metrics could lead to misinterpretation of the data. The results illustrate that the underlying assumptions of SNA are not always accurate and may sometimes even appear to be short-sighted without the addition of qualitative data. Although qualitative assessments were already incorporated in Chapter 3 for this reason, there is another possibility to overcome the SNA issues. Namely, the findings from Chapter 3 should be combined with the findings from Chapter 4. This combination of SNA and crime script analysis has been advocated by several scholars (e.g., Duijn et al., 2014; Duijn & Klerks, 2014; Morselli & Roy, 2008) as a favorable mixed-method to combine the best of both worlds: the network's procedural blueprint with the network's communication outline. This combination can help to determine the human capital and therefore the most crucial players of network, which can be used for intervention. The paragraph *Policy implications* (7.3.3) will deal with this more in depth.

Another method is the use of Grounded Theory (GT) methods, which guided the majority of the research in this dissertation. GT methods are not accustomed use in terrorism studies, but have nonetheless major benefits due to the two underlying principles *theoretical sampling* and *constant comparison*. Whereas the former directed our data sampling, the latter enabled us to formulate concepts that would have been less likely to have emerged with a strictly deductive approach. Two examples can illustrate this. For instance, the preparation stages in the foreign fighting chapter directly emerged from the data and were initially identified as provisional categories. Only through constant comparison and theoretical sampling we found that these preparation stages were valid in each episode. The properties of these categories, however, differ between the episodes. The more data were gathered (i.e., theoretical sampling), the more properties could be added or redefined, thus identifying a difference in preparation over time. It is less likely that such concepts would have been developed through theory testing, because that requires familiarity with these stages beforehand. Knowing that the foreign fighting domain is a relatively novel field, this knowledge had yet to be developed. Likewise, the finding in Chapter 6 that involvement is an ongoing and unstable process, was found after constant comparison and theoretical sampling. It was only after we found that subjects constantly dealt with discouraging mechanisms

that we started to compare such factors with encouraging mechanism and identified a transformation process in which encouraging mechanism converted into discouraging mechanism and vice versa. Also this process is new and not yet incorporated in existing theories, meaning that it would be less likely to have emerged via a deductive approach.

Despite the value of the two GT principles, the methodology comes with certain drawbacks. First, the data that is gathered through theoretical sampling remains a selection. Theoretical saturation can also not be guaranteed, because it is very likely that additional data would have sharpened the findings. Although this may raise concerns about the generalizability of the findings, theoretical sampling could push a researcher to continue a seemingly endless sampling process that obstructs the process towards academic output. In other words, a balance must be found between continued sampling and academic output. Second, the nature of this research guided by GT principles remains explorative. Although with respect to originality it is an advantage that concepts emerge from the data, at the same time it limits the robustness of such findings when saturation cannot be guaranteed. More data is thus needed. Therefore, two suggestions can be made for future research. First, instead of starting from scratch, future qualitative research should build on the current thesis and use the findings as directives to conduct theoretical sampling. This way, more data is gathered that can validate, falsify, or redefine the current findings on a wider scale. Second, future research can also build on the current thesis through means of quantitative research. Instead of using the current findings to direct the sampling process, it can also be used to formulate hypotheses that can be tested accordingly. Both suggestions lead to a larger N which increases the chance to formulate more generalizable and validated conclusions.

To conclude, despite challenges, the findings in this thesis are a valuable contribution to the field of terrorism studies. The findings are based on a wide range of data, varying from different sources, which enhances our empirical knowledge of jihadist networks. Furthermore, by reporting openly about the decisions made, methods used, and analyses applied, it tries to be as open as possible. Through these efforts it aims to abide to *methodological justification*, despite the fact that the data is classified. Such justifications are unfortunately rare in the current terrorism field, and future research is encouraged to adopt a similar reporting style.

7.3.2.3 Research questions

Next to methodological suggestions, recommendations regarding the direction of future research should also be made. The current thesis uses three central themes to depart from, but thereby consequently limits the area of research. Although this was the purpose of choosing central themes, other relevant themes are left untouched. For instance, with regard to terrorism related activities the main focus of this thesis is on foreign fighting and the dissemination of an extremist ideology, which means the preparations of terrorist attacks are omitted. Although the data does contain information on this issue, incidents are minor and therefore not a priority in this research. Nevertheless,

such violent activities are essentially the most threatening and identifying preparation stages of such acts could be very helpful to both academics and practitioners. Yet, confidential data will be of the essence in that regard and authorization by the government, as mentioned before, is therefore highly encouraged. Not only with regard to police data, but also regarding intelligence. Building on the need for intelligence data, such information is especially crucial when it comes to the preliminary preparation stages of all sorts of activities. The very first steps of potential terrorists are important to understand how the core operational activities will unravel later on. If we want to understand how these proceedings work, scholars should initially direct their research to the very first moment jihadist networks and people's motivations emerge.

Furthermore, terrorist attacks can potentially be a follow-up to a foreign fighting experience, which is often emphasized by the government (NCTV, 2015a; AIVD, 2015). Future research should therefore focus more on the relation between returning foreign fighters and their potential threat to society. Currently this relation is often assumed, but not yet empirically investigated. Even in this research, which also incorporates subjects that left the Netherlands several times and returned, the potential threat of returning foreign fighters is not thoroughly evaluated. In that respect, future research should also add recent cases that focus on ISIS related foreign fighters. Since we have learned in the foreign fighting chapter that motivations and ideological rhetoric depend on the target area, the current orientation on ISIS controlled areas implies that different motivations could be at play momentarily. Future research should therefore compare former cases with ISIS cases to detect a possible difference in motivation and other proceedings, which consequently enables practitioners to respond.

Another recommendation is a comparison between countries. Although several attempts have already been made, comparisons of jihadist networks' *modus operandi* are scarce. A comparison between countries could for instance shed light on this thesis' finding that opportunity structures influence the MO of jihadists. For example, a comparison with case studies from the United States could indicate whether opportunity is indeed an essential factor in the decision to become a foreign fighter in Syria. Whereas Syria in comparison to Afghanistan is less complicated to reach for European foreign fighters, and thus increases the numbers of foreign fighters from European states, this logic may or may not apply to foreign fighters from the United States who at first sight have more logistical obstacles to take when they want to travel to any Middle Eastern state anyway. The question would therefore be whether the number of foreign fighters from the United States has increased and how this relates to the opportunity-structure.

7.3.3 Policy implications and recommendations

This final paragraph describes the implications of the empirical findings of this dissertation for policy makers, investigative authorities, or any other institution that aims to devise or execute counter-terrorism measures. It is important to stress that current or past government policies on jihadism will not be explicitly evaluated. A careful evaluation

requires a thorough and systematic analysis of these policies, which would be an entire study on its own. Since such an evaluation is beyond the scope of this dissertation, existing government policies on jihadism will not be explicitly discussed. Instead, several findings are highlighted to illustrate their relevance for current and future counter-terrorism measures. Furthermore, because government measures can have a strong impact on the jihadist movement, as the previous chapters already illustrated,[77] we will not only discuss the potential *positive* effects of government measures, but also the potential *negative* counterproductive effects that are too often overlooked. However, with exceptions, we aim not to be too directive and too practical when it comes to recommendations. Policy makers and investigative practitioners are better equipped and trained to devise and execute intervention measures than researchers. Researchers have a much greater impact by offering and clarifying the empirical findings that can then be used by policy makers and practitioners (see also Kleemans, 2015).

As argued in the main conclusion, the *modus operandi* of jihadist networks in the Netherlands is highly influenced by their underlying opportunity structures. Whenever the opportunity structures change, it seems to change the MO. Hence, distorting the opportunity structure (i.e., removing opportunities) may lead to a distortion of the MO and the disruption of a network. Counter-measures should, however, not have a one-size-fits-all nature because it depends on what scale a network or (potential) jihadist is operating. In other words, not every subject is equally active and threatening, which requires different approaches. Policy implications on three different levels are therefore distinguished. Namely, (1) disruption of an operational network, (2) disrupting potential subjects from becoming part of a jihadist network, and (3) preventing a network to come into existence.

7.3.3.1 Disrupting an operational network

The first abstraction level suggests how an operational network can be made ineffective or disrupted. It is therefore the most concrete abstraction level, which requires concrete and practical suggestions that could be predominantly useful for investigative authorities such as the police and intelligence agencies. Based on the general conclusions in 7.2.1, a potentially effective counter-measure would be to disrupt the organizational structure, since the proceedings of a jihadist network often depend on the organizational features. To disrupt these features, however, investigative authorities should not assume that a pre-existing network-type is at place and consequently force related counter-measures

[77] For instance, the removal of the heartland-oriented or international jihadists affected the organizational structure and facilitated the development from a hierarchical structure with an international foundation, towards a home-grown movement. In addition, the arrests and labeling of subjects in general affected the jihadist involvement of individual subjects; some subjects were deterred, while others gained more status. Also, unsuccessful convictions increased openness about the training purposes and therefore increased the exchange of information between subjects.

on a network. Rather, each jihadist network under investigation requires an individual assessment of its core activities, structure, and members' roles in order to be effectively destabilized or for its terrorist intentions to be thwarted. A potential method to conduct such an assessment is by combining a social network analysis and a crime script analysis. Both analyses are not only useful to researchers, but could be applied by practitioners as well. Departing from these analyses, practitioners could aim to destabilize the inner structure of the network under investigation by decreasing the network's density, but preventing it from adopting a compartmentalized structure. This way a network's efficiency-security balance will be disrupted, because the efficiency in communication and the security of compartmentalized information and proceedings will decrease. To establish this, particular ties between subjects need to be removed. Practitioners should aim to identify subjects that have a specific human capital and therefore have a significant value (Duijn et al., 2014). In other words, subjects that play a crucial role within a network.

For instance, practitioners could apply SNA, because it enables them to visualize a network structure, which will indicate to what extent a network is compartmentalized in several relatively isolated clusters. These clusters are connected via so-called brokers, individuals with a high betweenness score. Intuitively, these positions imply strategic weak spots in a network. Removing a broker between these clusters would lead to absolute isolation of a particular network cluster, thus interfering with the network's communication. Whether this will mitigate the network's effectiveness, depends on the operational value of the isolated cluster. This value can be assessed with a crime script analysis (Duijn et al., 2014). The crime script analysis in the foreign fighting chapter illustrates how important a particular activity can be for the continuation of a network's overall objective. For instance, acquiring funds or determining travel routes are crucial proceedings to complete a foreign fighting attempt. If the crime script analysis indicates that particular activities are indeed indispensable, removing the identified cluster responsible for these activities will mitigate the effectiveness of a network, and maybe initiate the collapse of a network as a whole. However, investigative authorities must remain cautious for the possible resilience of a network, since it might be able to cope with an intervention and replace the removed broker or cluster. Mullins (2013) and Duijn et al. (2014) even warned and demonstrated that an intervention might encourage the remaining clusters to work harder to fill the void, leading to a higher density and thus an increased network efficiency. In other words, one must be aware of a potential backlash and thus a counterproductive effect.

When applying SNA on a terrorist or extremist network, a seemingly logical recommendation would be to cut out the most centralized or leading people in the network. In other words, the "kingpin-approach". However, the chapter on organizational structures indicated that beheading the network from its leaders may not always work out as expected. The reason for this is twofold.

First, removing a key player in general, will most likely result in removing just part of the communication which may be easily replaced due to a network's resilience. Therefore, what could be more effective is not to remove the interaction, but to change the nature of the interaction. A relevant finding in that regard comes from the chapter on transforming involvement mechanisms, which illustrates how encouragements like lectures and discussions can sometimes carry too far and transform into pressure, conflicts, and disengagement. Especially intelligence agencies could anticipate on this transformation. For example, by injecting misinformation via informants (Mullins, 2013), such as rumors or false accusations, this may initiate confusion, pressure, and friction among jihadist-sympathizers. The findings from Chapter 6 showed how jihadists have a tendency to discuss without self-reflection or willingness to compromise. They see themselves as ideologically superior and cannot stand any critique. In response to critique they try to overrule the other party, which often leads to heavy disputes or conflicts. By inflicting misinformation, jihadists will most likely regard this as critique or a personal attack which can initiate disputes and conflicts. This way, jihadist involvement can be affected and disrupted. However, one should be aware that such measures could also lead to a sort of self-selection or filtering effect. In other words, weaker subjects who cannot stand the pressure are singled out, while mentally and verbally strong subjects remain in place. This mechanism would not weaken and disrupt the network, but will only make it more robust, thus making the government measure counterproductive. Therefore, it is import to inject misinformation at strategic points in the network's structure. For example, conflicts between the core members of a network seem to have more disruptive potential than conflicts between a core member and a supporter. This can be derived from several relevant findings. The findings from different chapters show that the core members are the precursors of the network and form the backbone of these movements. Several core members reside in more than one network over the years, which illustrates their potential to develop and gain more and more human and social capital over time. Most importantly, the findings imply that networks are unlikely to exist without the presence of, and collaboration between, core members. Initiating conflicts between these core members therefore has the potential to destroy a network as a whole and possibly disrupt their presence in future networks.

Second, the chapter on organizational structures demonstrates that the SNA identified central actors in a network are not necessarily the leaders. This does not mean they are irrelevant, but additional qualitative assessments are necessary to identify each player's role. We found that among the centralized subjects are also the facilitators who enable the network to be operational. For example, most chapters described particular subjects who conduct criminal activities that facilitate the networks' core business. A crime script analysis would indicate in what stage of the preparation and to what extent such facilitators are indeed crucial to facilitate a particular activity. The foreign fighting chapter shows that such facilitators are indeed extremely important to the network. Removing the most centralized facilitators could therefore

lead to the disruption in the throughput of essential needs, disrupting the networks proceedings.

Whereas the foregoing suggestions primarily depart from SNA findings and then use crime script analysis to determine whether and where to intervene, we could also adopt the reverse direction and start with a crime script analysis. We learned from the foreign fighting chapter how indispensable brokers between geographical locations appear to be. Without these brokers potential foreign fighters are most likely unable to reach the intended destinations. Building on this information, it seems logical to apply SNA as a next investigative step, which will identify *brokers* based on the betweenness centrality scores. However, because such brokers usually have an outward focus they are difficult to recognize with SNA only. The reason for this is that their external contacts are often not encapsulated in the network under investigation, because these contacts are not immediately visible. The SNA can nonetheless be of use as a next investigative step, but only if intelligence is not limited to a restricted jurisdiction like the Netherlands. It would be more effective to continue monitoring the foreign fighters that already left, which will expand the outer contours of a network. This way, interaction between foreign fighters, overseas jihadists, and the brokers in the Netherlands remain in sight, which can be used to identify crucial communication flows that are essential to future foreign fighting attempts. This requires much longer investigation efforts and cooperation with foreign agencies. Only by expanding the areas under investigation, important information about an investigated network can be completed, which enables SNA to function properly regarding the identification of crucial brokers.

7.3.3.2 Disrupting growth of a network

The second abstraction level comes into play when networks are difficult to obstruct, but authorities still aim to prevent a jihadist network from growing. This refers to the prevention of people affiliating with a jihadist network, which in essence means that the networks need to be isolated to prevent them from reaching out to potential new members. The recommendations can be useful for both investigative authorities as well as other policy makers that aim to counter jihadist networks and radicalization.

There are two directions from which a network can be isolated from its environment: from an outside perspective and an inside perspective. The latter is closely related to the mitigation of a network's effectiveness, because it means the network's core activity of disseminating the ideology must be thwarted. The chapters on organizational structures and transforming involvement mechanisms illuminate how so-called street preachers and alike try to transfer their knowledge of a radical doctrine to other people that are open to it. By removing or blocking the activities of these subjects, who are also considered brokers with an external focus, the tentacles of a network that lures new members will be cut off. The manifestations during which these activities most often occur, and that are accessible for the public, are demonstrations and protests. However, prohibiting such events is constitutionally risky because it implies a violation of the

freedom of speech. Yet, policy makers need to keep in mind that such events function as a voice of the radical doctrine. Especially since many of those events are video-taped and spread via the Internet. Blocking websites that advocate and support the dissemination of a radical doctrine could therefore be an effective measure since it removes the opportunity to spread the word. However, like the prohibition of protests, this may conflict with the freedom of speech and policy makers need to be cautious with such measures. Not only because it may violate the constitution, but also because jihadists may capitalize on such measures and use them to their own advantage. The findings in the chapter on involvement mechanisms, for instance, show how subjects create a form of brotherhood that hardens them against out-group reprisals. Constantly blocking their websites could be perceived as a direct attack against the group, which might enhance their feeling of brotherhood and could consequently invoke repercussions. Hence, it could lead to counterproductive effects. Furthermore, isolating the network from an outside perspective means that the opportunity for a potential recruit to affiliate with a network must be removed. In other words, jihadist networks should no longer become attractive. This study found that potential foreign fighters base their motivation for jihad and their target of choice on geo-political situations. This situational factor is extremely difficult to tackle, since policy makers on a local or even national level are not in the position to influence the conflicts and political landscape in the Middle East. This means that as long as people in the Netherlands feel that injustice has been done to people they care about, there will remain a breeding ground to stand up and take action. However, what policy makers and politicians could influence is whether these potential foreign fighters become a danger to national security, as this highly depends on the role the Netherlands play in foreign conflicts. The results show that once a Western state intervenes in such conflicts with military force, the state becomes a direct enemy to jihadists. The current role of the Netherlands in the international coalition against ISIS could therefore backfire when jihadists or people who sympathize with ISIS feel that the Netherlands is a legitimate target due to this role in the coalition. The government needs to be aware of such mechanisms that come into play once they become military active in political sensitive areas like the Middle East; now and in the future. The government's attitude towards Syrian president Assad, who is considered an absolute enemy of ISIS and the people he oppresses, may therefore be of crucial importance and may determine the status of the Netherlands in the eyes of jihadists. In sum, measures that are devised to secure national security and protect national interests, such as military interventions in foreign conflicts, could have a counterproductive effect when they incite violent responses by home-grown (or international) jihadists against innocent citizens. If these measures are deemed necessary, it is important to also consider implications in the Netherlands.

Another recommendation regarding a jihadist network's attractiveness is based on the second transformation process of involvement mechanisms as described in Chapter 6. These findings demonstrate how subjects transform discouragements into

encouragements. Government institutions and the social environments of (potential) jihadist sympathizers could try to disrupt this transformation process. The government should, for instance, be more aware of the counterproductive effects of an arrest. Instead of explicitly and widely exposing the arrests and convictions to the public via the media, the government officials could consider to reduce coverage of law enforcement actions in order to eliminate ammunition for suspects to boast about it. Although the government cannot and should not control the media, they could choose not to conduct a televised interview about an arrest, but merely publish a brief statement online. This may seem like an insignificant measure, but the findings illustrate how jihadists capitalize on (visual) media exposure. Especially television coverage generates a feeling of importance among the studied subjects and significantly increases a jihadist's status within the network. For the same reasons, government officials could in addition try to temper the alleged heroic deeds and status of jihadists. Not only by undermining the alleged rewards, but also by pointing out the subjects' responsibilities towards their family or by expressing the damage they inflict upon their community. Furthermore, the subjects' search for significance, which has been demonstrated in different ways in Chapter 6, is an important element that should be properly addressed. Pointing out alternative options that involve a certain status within their community could offer an alternative route towards a feeling of importance. This way, tools to enhance the status of a jihadist network are removed which may reduce network's attractiveness or the ability to transform discouraging mechanisms.

A final implication regarding the attractiveness of a network aims at the involvement of vulnerable subjects. In the chapter on irregular immigrants we demonstrated how a combination of pragmatic and ideological considerations might attract irregular immigrants. Although we did not look into a causal relation, the fact that jihadist networks were able to meet the needs of irregular immigrants, raises serious concerns about the position of vulnerable people in need. At the same time it must be stressed that after the first period under study we hardly observed irregular immigrants anymore. We also did not observe any large scale crimes and passport forgery anymore, which may have contributed to the inability of the jihadist networks to meet the immigrants' needs. What can be learned from this development though is that the attractiveness of a network is context-specific. This means that although in recent years no large numbers of irregular immigrants were found, this may alter in the future. A recommendation would be to stay aware of the possible crime-terror nexus, in which jihadists cooperate with criminals. If contemporary jihadist networks continue to develop and enable themselves to operate on a more professional level, as signaled in the organizational structure chapter, the possibility that they either cooperate with criminal networks or create criminal in-house capabilities will rise. This may increase the attractiveness of a jihadist network and thus the appeal towards vulnerable people in need. Although it may be difficult to prevent jihadist networks from developing these criminal skills or criminal ties, the government can anticipate on the needs of vulnerable people that are otherwise met by jihadist

networks. The current influx of refugees from Syria and surrounding areas should raise serious awareness regarding this matter. Properly accommodating the refugees could reduce their vulnerability and diminish the possibility that they are attracted to extremist environments. The current public fear that jihadists from ISIS could reside among the refugees is understandable, but an often-heard response to keep all refugees out, to isolate them from society, or deprive them from all comfort, could potentially do more harm than good as the findings from this dissertation demonstrate.

7.3.3.2 Preventing a network from coming into existence

All the foregoing recommendations refer to measures needed to tackle an already existing jihadist network. For several reason we could argue that it may be even better to prevent such networks from coming into existence at all, because it will most likely reduce hazardous consequences such as arrests and stigmas that can affect a former jihadist for the rest of his or her life. This is a very difficult endeavor because it implies that policy makers need to be aware of the very first preliminary stages of radicalization and recruitment. Unfortunately, not much empirical knowledge has been developed about these preliminary stages, because it is difficult to obtain data about these specific moments. Of course, scholars have provided descriptions about the preliminary stages or radicalization process by interviewing (former) jihadists (e.g., Geelhoed, 2012; Wiktorowicz, 2004), but most of these descriptions are in retrospect. What would be interesting is to monitor the very first moment potential recruits or potential jihadists start to assemble, to capture that process and use it to devise counter measures. Yet, due to their covert nature, these are difficult to monitor. The government, police, and intelligence agencies in particular, have the position to obtain covert information via their investigative powers. In order for policy makers to devise useful counter measures, more academic research is needed that is based on that kind of intelligence. Access to such data is therefore of the essence. Having said that, it should be one of the primary policy priorities that government officials grant researchers access to confidential information on jihadist networks. It is one of the measures that should be conducted to understand what happens at the very beginning and tackle the problem before it arises. “Prevention is better than cure” is especially applicable when it comes to jihadist networks and terrorism, because it may save numerous lives. Even though jihadist networks, like many studied in the current thesis, are not always violently operational yet, knowledge is required to alert us when violence may be used in the near future. This indicates the necessity for additional research on the basis of confidential data that encapsulates the earliest moments when these threats start to arise.

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Samenvatting

De werkwijze van jihadistische netwerken

Een onderbouwd inzicht in veranderende organisatiestructuren, activiteiten en betrokkenheidsmechanismen van jihadistische netwerken in Nederland.

Achtergrond en doel

In verschillende Westerse landen heeft de afgelopen 15 jaar een voortdurende angst geheerst voor extremisme en terrorisme. Hoewel deze angst nog enigszins leek af te nemen in de periode na de aanslagen in Londen en Madrid, is de angst juist weer aangewakkerd na de opkomst van nieuwe extremistische bewegingen sinds de start van de Arabische lente in 2011. De opkomst van ISIS en haar gruwelijke misstanden in Syrië en Irak heeft ook mensen in West-Europa geïnspireerd om naar deze landen toe te reizen en zich bij ISIS aan te sluiten. Westerse overheden vrezen vooral de eventuele terugkeer van deze personen, vanwege mogelijke trauma's en nog verdere radicalisering en eventuele terroristische voornemens. Deze angst is niet heel vreemd gelet op de recente reeks gewelddadige en jihadistisch gerelateerde gebeurtenissen in Europa, waarvan de aanslagen in Parijs in januari en november 2015 het meest in het oog springen. Van sommige van de hierbij betrokken terroristen wordt gedacht dat zij eerder als jihadganger in verschillende jihadistische strijdgebieden hebben gestreden. Hoewel sommige van deze terroristen alleen opereren, zijn ze over het algemeen gelieerd aan netwerken die hen faciliteren bij het plegen van een aanslag of het voorbereiden van een jihadreis. In dit proefschrift wordt de vraag gesteld hoe dit soort netwerken eruit zien, hoe ze opereren en in hoeverre dit door de jaren heen is veranderd.

Dit proefschrift richt zich vooral op een drietal onderdelen van jihadistische netwerken, namelijk de *organisatiestructuur,* de *activiteiten*, en de *betrokkenheids-mechanismen*. Laatstgenoemde zijn factoren en omstandigheden die van invloed zijn op de mate van individuele betrokkenheid bij een jihadistisch netwerk. Hoewel de drie onderdelen geen ontgonnen gebied zijn binnen de terrorismeliteratuur, richt eerder onderzoek zich voornamelijk op de vraag *waarom* deze netwerken ontstaan en hanteert men beperkte methoden van onderzoek. Daarom richt dit onderzoek zich meer op het *hoe* en *wat* van de jihadistische netwerken. Tevens richt dit onderzoek zich, anders dan de meeste terrorismestudies, op een langere onderzoeksperiode, namelijk van 2000 tot 2013. Dit biedt de mogelijkheid om de drie aspecten die worden bestudeerd over een langere periode te analyseren en zo te achterhalen in hoeverre de netwerken door de tijd heen anders zijn gaan opereren. Om de gevonden overeenkomsten en verschillen te duiden en te verklaren wordt vooral naar de onderliggende gelegenheidsstructuren gekeken.

Het bovenstaande gebeurt aan de hand van een systematische en onderbouwde analyse van drie verschillende databronnen, waarvan politiedossiers de kern vormen. Hoofdstuk 2 zet uiteen hoe vanuit principes van de *grounded theory* methode informatie uit 28 grootschalige politieonderzoeken is verzameld en geanalyseerd. Deze politieonderzoeken bevatten informatie over 14 jihadistische netwerken en 209 personen. Dit zijn overwegend personen die het Jihadistisch-Salafistische gedachtengoed aanhangen en mensen die een jihadistisch netwerk faciliteren door bijvoorbeeld geld van jihadisten te bewaren of informatie door te spelen tussen jihadisten. Daarnaast zijn er 51 interviews afgenomen bij verschillende respondenten, zoals Officieren van Justitie, politiemedewerkers, advocaten, imams en personeelsleden van Asielzoekerscentra en Detentiecentra. Tot slot zijn er ongeveer 10 rechtbankzittingen bijgewoond en geobserveerd. De interviews en observaties dienden vooral om de informatie uit politiedata beter te kunnen plaatsen.

Organisatiestructuur

In hoofdstuk 3 wordt gekeken in hoeverre drie jihadistische netwerken in Nederland uit drie verschillende periodes van elkaar verschillen qua organisatiestructuur en rolverdeling. Aan de hand van een sociale netwerk analyse (SNA) laten de data zien dat het eerste netwerk uit de periode 2001-2003 een hiërarchisch en sterk georganiseerd netwerk is. Het netwerk heeft een internationale basis en de structuur wordt gekenmerkt door een duidelijke cel-verdeling. Het tweede en derde netwerk, uit respectievelijk 2005-2006 en 2008-2013, bestaan daarentegen hoofdzakelijk uit *home-grown* radicalen: jongeren die in Nederland zijn opgegroeid en hier zijn geradicaliseerd. De netwerkstructuren zijn vlak en fluïde en kennen geen duidelijke aansturing. Zodoende laat de netwerkanalyse een ontwikkeling in organisatiestructuur zien. Daarnaast blijken de netwerken overeenkomsten te vertonen op het punt van compartimentering. In alle drie de netwerken onderhouden jihadisten in kleinere clusters intensiever contact met elkaar dan met andere jihadisten in het netwerk. Deze compartimentering blijkt echter niet altijd op te treden, maar is afhankelijk van de gebezigde activiteiten. De voorbereiding van de jihadgang gebeurt bijvoorbeeld heimelijk en in kleine groepjes, terwijl het delen en uitdragen van de ideologie openlijk en in het bijzijn van zoveel mogelijk mensen gebeurt. Deze bevindingen impliceren dat netwerkstructuren dynamisch en flexibel zijn en geen vast karakter kennen.

Ook is gekeken naar de rolverdeling van de jihadisten. Er worden twee types onderscheiden, namelijk de *kernleden* en de *supporters*. Eerstgenoemden zijn de voorlopers in een netwerk die anderen aanmoedigen om de ideologie te internaliseren en om bepaalde handelingen te verrichten. Het is de vraag of de netwerken blijven bestaan zonder de aanwezigheid van dergelijke kernleden. Supporters daarentegen zijn subjecten die de kernleden volgen en die het netwerk op verschillende manieren faciliteren. Door de relatief lange onderzoeksperiode worden sommige personen in meerdere netwerken door de tijd heen waargenomen. Interessant aan deze langere onderzoeksperiode is dat jihadisten die in meer netwerken opduiken zich kunnen ontwikkelen van een marginale actor tot een leidinggevende figuur. Ook laat de analyse zien dat kernleden geen vast profiel hebben, maar door de tijd zijn veranderd van autoritaire leiders tot minder invloedrijke begeleiders.

Activiteiten

Uit de geanalyseerde gegevens komt naar voren dat de bestudeerde jihadistische netwerken zich hoofdzakelijk bezighouden met een drietal kernactiviteiten. Dit zijn de voorbereiding op de jihadgang, het uitvoeren van criminele handelingen en het uitdragen en verspreiden van de Jihadistisch-Salafistische doctrine.

Hoofdstuk 4 brengt de voorbereidingshandelingen van de jihadgang in kaart, waarbij ook het plegen van criminaliteit een belangrijke rol speelt. Door middel van een *crime script* analyse worden vijf verschillende fases onderscheiden die aan een jihadgang voorafgaan. In de *oriëntatiefase* bepalen jihadisten de bestemming en stemmen zij de ideologische retoriek daarop af, terwijl in de *contactfase* nuttige contacten gelegd worden voor de facilitering van de reis. In de *uitvoeringsfase* verrichten de jihadisten concrete handelingen om toegang te krijgen tot het strijdgebied. De handelingen lopen uiteen van het vergaren van financiële middelen en reisdocumenten, tot fysieke voorbereiding op de strijd. Zowel het genereren van financiële middelen, als het verkrijgen van reisdocumenten gaat vaak gepaard met criminaliteit. In de eerste jaren van de onderzochte periode bestond dit uit hoofdzakelijk georganiseerde criminaliteit, zoals vervalsing van paspoorten, drugstransporten, winkeldiefstal en woninginbraken. In latere netwerken zwakt het georganiseerde karakter van criminaliteit af, hoewel nog steeds door kleinschalige misdrijven geld wordt gegenereerd. In de *afrondingsfase* worden vervolgens testamenten opgenomen, wordt er afscheid genomen van familie en vrienden en worden praktische zaken afgehandeld. In de *vertrekfase* reizen de jihadisten daadwerkelijk uit, waarbij de hulp van een zogenaamde *broker* onmisbaar is. Dit is een tussenpersoon die een jihadganger in contact brengt met jihadisten op de plek van bestemming. Zonder hulp van een broker lopen de uitreispogingen vaak uit op een mislukking.

In het hoofdstuk wordt beschreven hoe deze vijf voorbereidingsfases zich in drie periodes binnen de gehele onderzoeksperiode hebben voltrokken, en hoe verschillen in de werkwijze kunnen worden verklaard. Dit hoofdstuk laat zien dat de *geopolitieke situatie*, de *sociale gelegenheidsstructuur* en *technologische ontwikkelingen* drie belangrijke situationele factoren zijn die periodieke verschillen veroorzaken in de werkwijze van jihadgangers. Zo zijn de jihadgangers in de eerste periode (2000-2002) vooral religieus gemotiveerd om moslimlanden in het Midden-Oosten te beschermen tegen ongelovige leiders. Ze worden geïnspireerd en gefaciliteerd door internationale jihadisten die hen financieel en logistiek faciliteren door middel van georganiseerde misdaad. Jihadgangers in de tweede periode (2003-2011) zijn daarentegen meer politiek gemotiveerd om moslimlanden in het Midden-Oosten te beschermen tegen de Westerse militaire invasie. Zij doen dit vaak zonder begeleiding van internationale jihadisten en met aanzienlijk beperktere middelen dan voorheen. Desalniettemin vinden zij alternatieve en creatieve manieren om hun jihadgang voor te bereiden. Tot slot zijn de jihadgangers in de derde periode (2011-2013) politiek gemotiveerd om onderdrukte moslims in het Midden-Oosten te beschermen tegen dictators, hoewel dit vaak gepaard gaat met religieuze onderbouwingen. Ze voeren vergelijkbare voorbereidingen uit als de jihadisten in de tweede periode, maar leunen meer op moderne technologische middelen zoals sociale media, laptops en smartphones. Het gebruik van deze moderne middelen vergemakkelijkt de communicatie tussen jihadgangers, brokers en jihadisten op de plek van bestemming.

Betrokkenheidsmechanismen

De derde activiteit, het uitdragen en verspreiden van de Jihadistisch-Salafistische doctrine, heeft grote invloed op de betrokkenheid van de leden van jihadistische netwerken. Tegelijkertijd speelt het uitdragen van de doctrine een centrale rol bij het aantrekken van nieuwe jihadisten. Door bijvoorbeeld ideologische teksten te vertalen en vervolgens in online omgevingen te verspreiden, of door ideologische discussies te voeren tijdens religieuze bijeenkomsten in huis of in de moskee, worden geïnteresseerden geïnformeerd over het gedachtengoed van de beweging. Tegelijkertijd spelen ook andere factoren dan ideologie een rol in het aantrekken van nieuwe jihadisten. Hoofdstuk 5 laat bijvoorbeeld zien dat een combinatie van ideologie en praktisch nut een subgroep van irreguliere migranten kan aantrekken. Op basis van interviews met sleutelinformanten binnen Asielzoekerscentra en Detentiecentra wordt geïllustreerd dat deze subgroep in zeer sobere omstandigheden leeft, over zeer beperkt financiële middelen beschikt en lang moet wachten op een definitieve uitslag van een asielprocedure, hetgeen tot onzekerheid leidt. Dit heeft tot gevolg dat zeer veel irreguliere migranten en asielzoekers volgens de informanten kampen met psychische problemen en gevoelens van deprivatie. Deze gedeelde achtergronden worden in verband gebracht met het gedrag van irreguliere migranten in jihadistische netwerken, omdat irreguliere migranten hierin oververtegenwoordigd zijn. Deze analyse toont aan dat de netwerken praktische oplossingen bieden voor de problemen van irreguliere migranten. Zo wordt huisvesting op grote schaal met elkaar gedeeld en worden ook de eerder beschreven criminele activiteiten zoals paspoortvervalsing, winkeldiefstal en woninginbraak uitgevoerd om irreguliere migranten te voorzien van verblijfs- en reisdocumenten en financiële middelen. Daarnaast biedt de Jihadistisch-Salafistische ideologie een vorm van zingeving en het gevoel ergens bij te horen, wat de structurele onzekerheid van irreguliere migranten enigszins kan doen afnemen. De analyse laat echter zien dat wanneer irreguliere migranten zich affiliëren met een jihadistisch netwerk, zij vervolgens hoofdzakelijk betrokken zijn bij het uitvoeren van criminele handelingen en niet zozeer bij het plannen en uitvoeren van ideologische activiteiten, zoals het verspreiden van ideologisch materiaal of het plannen van een terroristische aanslag. De meerderheid van de irreguliere migranten lijkt zich niet fanatiek in te willen zetten om de ideologische doelen na te streven of de orthodoxe leefregels te willen naleven. Dit impliceert dat ideologie een beperktere aantrekkingskracht heeft op irreguliere migranten dan de pragmatische waarde van de jihadistische netwerken. Wel moet benadrukt worden dat dit een tijdsgebonden bevinding is, aangezien de analyse

enkel betrekking heeft op een gedeelte van de onderzoeksperiode. De data die gebruikt zijn voor dit hoofdstuk beslaan de jaren 2000 tot en met 2005.

Hoofdstuk 6 richt zich nog explicieter op het uitdragen van de ideologie en vooral op de sociale processen die daarmee gepaard gaan. Enerzijds zet het hoofdstuk een proces uiteen waarin de betrokkenheid bij jihadistische netwerken wordt tegengewerkt. De analyse laat zien dat ogenschijnlijk motiverende factoren, zoals gedragsbeïnvloeding of ideologische discussies, kunnen doorslaan en transformeren in demotiverende factoren. Zo kan gedragsbeïnvloeding worden geïnterpreteerd als een pressiemiddel, waardoor angst en een gevoel van intimidatie ontstaan binnen een netwerk. Dit kan een negatieve uitwerking hebben op sommige leden van het netwerk, waarop zij besluiten afstand te nemen. Ook kunnen de herhaaldelijke discussies omtrent de interpretatie van een ideologie uitmonden in conflicten. Grootspraak en stoerdoenerij of zelfs bluf dragen sterk bij aan dit proces, wat ervoor zorgt dat mensen minder betrokken raken of zelfs worden weggestuurd. Kortom, gedragingen die bedoeld zijn om betrokkenen de juiste interpretatie van de ideologie te laten internaliseren, kunnen soms een averechts effect hebben. Anderzijds illustreert hoofdstuk 6 een proces waarin betrokkenheid soms ook juist onbedoeld wordt gestimuleerd, doordat ogenschijnlijk negatieve situaties en sociale reacties worden omgevormd tot iets positiefs. Zo worden bijvoorbeeld negatieve stigma's vanuit de maatschappij, zoals de bestempeling als "terrorist", gebruikt als geuzennaam wat jihadisten status binnen het netwerk oplevert. Hetzelfde geldt voor arrestaties door de politie, die naast een onaangename opsluiting ook als blijk van erkenning kunnen dienen. Hoe groter de politiemacht bij een arrestatie, hoe meer status dit oplevert onder jihadisten. Ook hier hebben grootspraak en bluf een belangrijke functie, aangezien het een vorm van controle biedt over een situatie waarin een jihadist overduidelijk machteloos is. Deze herinterpretatie van de situatie laat zien dat bepaalde overheidsinterventies soms gepaard gaan met onbedoelde en contraproductieve bijeffecten. Hoewel de intensiteit en vorm van de (de)motiverende factoren per persoon of netwerk kunnen verschillen, lijken deze factoren zowel op nieuwe rekruten, als op ervaren senior jihadisten van toepassing. Tot slot laat hoofdstuk 6 zien dat niet alleen ervaren jihadisten nieuwe rekruten beïnvloeden, maar ook andersom. Dit is vooral waarneembaar in de latere jaren van de onderzochte periode. Door de opkomst van internet en het vertrek van dominante internationale jihadisten vindt beïnvloeding in latere jaren meer op gelijkwaardige basis plaats, terwijl in de beginjaren vooral sprake was van een hiërarchische *top-down* beïnvloeding met een charismatische rekruteerder en een volgzame rekruut.

Conclusie

De empirische hoofdstukken laten zien dat jihadistische netwerken dynamische samenwerkingsverbanden zijn die zich afhankelijk van het moment in de tijd verschillend manifesteren. De jihadistische beweging in Nederland heeft door de jaren heen andere verschijningsvormen en een ander werkwijze gekregen.

Deze veranderingen binnen de jihadistische beweging lijken voor een groot gedeelte afhankelijk van onderliggende gelegenheidsstructuren. Wanneer de gelegenheidsstructuren wijzigen, dan heeft dat vervolgens invloed op de manier waarop jihadisten zich organiseren, op hoe zij hun kernactiviteiten uitvoeren en op de mate van jihadistische betrokkenheid. Technologische ontwikkelingen bijvoorbeeld, zoals de opkomst van internet en sociale media, zorgen voor een intensievere en minder hiërarchische communicatie tussen jihadisten, met hechtere netwerken tot gevolg. Daarnaast zorgt een verandering in de geopolitieke situatie voor een transformatie in ideologische retoriek en de keuze van strijdgebieden. Maar bovenal lijkt de werkwijze te wijzigen op het moment dat sociale verhoudingen binnen een netwerk veranderen. Sociale veranderingen hebben ertoe geleid dat jihadreizen door de jaren heen anders gefinancierd en gecoördineerd worden, dat de ideologie op een andere manier verspreid en geïnternaliseerd wordt en dat het belang van georganiseerde criminaliteit voor de netwerken is afgenomen.

Naast veranderingen laat de analyse ook constante factoren zien binnen de jihadistische beweging. Zo wordt compartimentering van netwerken in alle periodes aangetroffen en lijken specifieke kernleden en brokers altijd aanwezig. Zonder de aanwezigheid van deze typen jihadisten lijken de netwerken en de uitreispogingen gedoemd te mislukken. Een andere constante factor binnen de gehele onderzoeksperiode is de aanwezigheid van motiverende en demotiverende factoren, zoals gedragsbeïnvloeding, discussies, conflicten, stigma's, etc., die de betrokkenheid van jihadisten beïnvloeden.

Desalniettemin moeten we beseffen dat alle bevindingen binnen een bepaalde context en tijdsgeest hebben plaatsgevonden. Nieuwe ontwikkelingen, zoals de oorlog in Syrië, de opkomst van ISIS, de oprichting van de anti-ISIS coalitie, de toename van Syrische en Irakese vluchtelingen, terugkerende jihadgangers en de toenemende maatschappelijke onrust omtrent terroristische dreigingen, hebben ook allemaal invloed op de gelegenheidsstructuren van jihadistische netwerken in Nederland. Dit proefschrift laat zien dat de jihadistische beweging zich in het verleden heeft aangepast aan de situatie en impliceert daarmee dat de beweging dit ook zal doen bij nieuwe ontwikkelingen. Het is daarom van belang dat de overheid en de maatschappij voortdurend anticiperen op mogelijke toekomstige ontwikkelingen.

Beleidsimplicaties

Hoewel het ontwikkelen en evalueren van beleid dat terrorisme tracht tegen te gaan niet de opzet van deze studie was, biedt dit proefschrift enkele aanknopingspunten die kunnen helpen te anticiperen op nieuwe dynamiek in het verschijnsel jihadisme. Een flexibele opstelling voor de aanpak van jihadistische netwerken is daarbij een belangrijk uitgangspunt en heeft tot aandachtspunten op drie niveaus geleid.

Ten eerste vergt de verstoring van al bestaande en operationele netwerken aandacht. Dit zou kunnen door interventies te richten op het laten uiteen vallen van de organisatiestructuur. Men kan proberen de netwerkdichtheid zo laag mogelijk te

houden, maar voorkomen dat het netwerk een gecompartimenteerde vorm aanneemt. Hierdoor wordt de balans tussen efficiënte netwerkcommunicatie en netwerkveiligheid verstoord. Een manier om dit te bewerkstelligen is door te focussen op personen die een cruciale positie innemen bij het in stand houden van de balans. Een andere manier om een organisatiestructuur te verstoren is door in te spelen op de neiging van jihadisten om fel te discussiëren en door in te spelen op hun onvermogen tot het sluiten van compromissen tijdens die discussies. Door dit gedrag te stimuleren kunnen conflicten binnen een netwerk ontstaan die de samenstelling van een netwerk kunnen beschadigen. Men zou daarbij rekening kunnen houden met de strategische posities van sommige subjecten. Conflicten tussen kernleden bijvoorbeeld zullen een groter effect hebben op de samenstelling en de toekomst van een netwerk, dan een conflict tussen twee supporters.

Ten tweede dient de aanpak zich te richten op het voorkomen van verdere groei van al bestaande netwerken. Enerzijds moet men trachten de ideologische verspreidingsactiviteiten te beperken. Anderzijds moet men proberen de gelegenheid en de motivatie voor potentiele rekruten om aansluiting te vinden bij de jihadistische netwerken te beperken. Onder andere de (toekomstige) positie van Nederland binnen de anti-ISIS coalitie zal daarbij een belangrijke rol spelen. Wanneer de Nederlandse overheid kiest voor een intensievere rol in de strijd tegen ISIS, dan dient men zich bewust te zijn van de implicaties in eigen land. Een vijandige opstelling richting ISIS kan radicalisering onder jongeren in de hand werken. Bovendien kunnen overheidsmaatregelen een averechts effect hebben doordat jihadisten status ontlenen aan interventies en arrestaties. Minder expliciet de media zoeken bij succesvolle interventies zou bijvoorbeeld een simpele doch effectieve methode kunnen zijn om de groeiende status van gearresteerde jihadisten te limiteren. Tot slot laat het voorbeeld van de irreguliere migranten zien dat ervaren deprivatie een rol kan spelen bij toetreding tot jihadistische netwerken als alternatief voor legale mogelijkheden om hun positie te verbeteren. Bij de opvang en monitoring van nieuwe vluchtelingen is dit iets om rekening mee te houden.

Ten derde zou het voorkomen dat jihadistische netwerken überhaupt ontstaan, de meest effectieve manier zijn om de ernstige gevolgen voor de maatschappij en voormalige jihadisten te voorkomen. Deze preventieve aanpak wordt echter deels bemoeilijkt doordat weinig bekend is over de beginstadia van jihadistische netwerken. Het is moeilijk voor onderzoekers om informatie te vergaren over het beginstadium, gelet op het heimelijke karakter van de netwerken. Verschillende opsporingsdiensten zijn daarentegen beter in staat om data hieromtrent te verzamelen. Een aanbeveling zou zijn om extra alert te zijn op beginnende netwerken en eventueel ook onderzoekers meer toegang te geven tot vertrouwelijke informatie daarover. Dit zou uiteindelijk kunnen helpen om onderbouwde interventies te formuleren en te ontwikkelen.

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D

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Jasper de Bie

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Curriculum Vitae

Jasper Lowie de Bie (20th October 1987, Zaanstad) finished his secondary education in 2006 at the Da Vinci College in Purmerend. He studied Criminology at the VU University Amsterdam as of 2006 where he obtained his bachelor degree in 2009. During his bachelor he also worked at the Dutch Police for almost 3 years. He then visited Stellenbosch University, South Africa, for a full year to study several law and political science courses. He also conducted empirical research in the greater Cape Town area for his master thesis on racial hatred and xenophobia in South Africa. He obtained his master degree in International Crimes and Criminology in 2011 at the VU University Amsterdam. As of September 2011 he started as a PhD candidate at Leiden University, Institute for Criminal Law & Criminology, and the Research and Documentation Center (WODC) of the Ministry of Security and Justice. In 2015 he visited John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York, as a Fulbright visiting scholar, to conduct part of his PhD research for the duration of 6 months.