Chapter Six
Islam as a New Urban Identity? Young Female Muslims Creating a Religious Youth Culture in Berlin

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The landscape of European cities has, since the 1960s, been influenced by immigration from former colonies or through working-contracts between European and non-European countries. In the last decade, Islam has become increasingly present in European societies through the global (negative) media focus, increased use of the veil (*hijab*) among young Muslims, and by replacement of the earlier provisory backyard mosques of the 1970s with purpose-built mosques of the late 1990s. Although the urban context is usually associated as a place where people turn away from religion and where religious communities fulfill few social roles,[1] the last decade has seen a return of religion within the urban space. Today, several youths from the second and third generation of migrants[2] in European cities are turning to Islam in a quest for authenticity, an individual identity, and as part of their group orientation. In Germany, the increased visual religious identification of youth with migrant backgrounds has caused surprise, stupefaction and excitement in a society largely believing that being German and Muslim is an oxymoron.

This chapter discusses the "turn to Islam" as a factor of identification among female youths born in Germany and addresses the following questions: How are youths embracing a religious lifestyle in the Western urban spaces compared to their parents? Can a Muslim identity be a way of situating oneself in western modernity, rather than a sign of enclosure or disavowal of the "modern" German?

First, I discuss the kind of identification with Islam among the young generation in Berlin and second, I examine their reasons for turning to Islam as a main reference point of identity. This chapter suggests that there is an increasing individualization of religious belonging at the same time that the German socio-political sphere is increasingly shaping the Muslim social field. I propose that a Muslim lifestyle does not necessarily involve segregation from the German society, but can, on the contrary, provide modes of situating oneself in the German social space. The data for this chapter is from an earlier fieldwork that included approximately fifty young female Muslims in Berlin (2004 to 2007).[3] The

youths, from thirteen to thirty years old, have parents from Egypt, Turkey, and Palestine and participate in the organization called "Muslim Youth Germany" (*Muslimische Jugend in Deutschland e.V.*, MJD). This religious youth organization arranges weekly meetings in which I participated during my fieldwork.[4]

Muslim Youths in Germany

Islam in Germany is generally represented by the immigrant workers arriving largely from Turkey in the mid 1960s, and their children and grandchildren who were born and educated in Germany. Whereas the German public was less concerned with the religious orientation of their immigrant population up until the 1980s, this situation changed rapidly from the early 1990s onwards (Soysal 2003; Spielhaus 2006).[5] The discursive change in the German media and public discussion in defining its migrant population as *guestarbeiter* (guest worker) to "Turks" and today "Muslims" must be understood as a combination of the end of the "dream of return" both among the migrants and the German population, an increase of visualization of religious markers (i.e., building of mosques and donning the veil), and global events like the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, after which the world turned its focus on "Islam" and "Muslims."

Today, the German Muslim population is around 3.4 million with 213,000 living in Berlin, the capital. These numbers, however, need to be taken with care since statistics on religious belonging is not well designed and do not reflect whether or not the individual actually identifies with Islam (Spielhaus and Färber 2006). When talking about religious belonging among young females in Berlin, the large intra-generational differences must first be noted. While some youths can be called "chic" Muslims as they combine headscarf, strong make-up and sexy clothes; others veil with more modest dress comportment; and again, others are not *visually* practicing Islam, although some might try to lead a religious lifestyle in the sense that they pray and fast. In addition, among the secular youths, some continue to recognize a cultural affinity with Islam. In this paper, I discuss young Sunni Muslims[6] for whom Islam is their main point of identity.

"Identity" is not considered as static or fixed, but continuously (re)created or formed in social interaction—identity is about ascription, both by individuals themselves and of individuals by others (Jenkins 1996). Groups identify themselves and are categorized by others. In modern society, identity is continuously constructed and in flux (Hall 1996). I follow Richard Jenkins (1996) in that others' perception of one's person will affect the perception one has of oneself and one's categorized group. This is particularly true when a person belongs to a minority group which is educationally and socially situated in a position of minor influence in public discourse. Identity formation and influence from peer groups or lifestyle groups are particularly strong among young people, when many seek a "self," and a purpose in life and are dealing with questions on "who to identify with" (Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995). A *religious identity* tends to be an identity which one was born into and socialized through the family and community. However, one of the characteristics of modern society is the increased leeway to choose and frame political and religious identities (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). A religious identity is not only the adherence to a particular religious or spiritual frame of reference, but also in relation to whether that religious belief becomes a resource which impacts one's daily life, feelings of belonging and representation.

Generational Changes in Religious Practices

Several researchers have pointed out the generational differences in religious identification among Muslim youths in West European societies compared to that of their parents (Nökel 2002; Tietze 2006). Transmission of religion from one generation to the other always implies some change in continuity (Hervieu-Leger 1998). Socialization of youths to religious norms and values takes place as a continuous cultural change, even if a society is tradition oriented (Hervieu-Leger 1998). Movement or migration adds another dimension to religious change as immigration always changes how religion is transmitted. Stephen Warner (1998: 3) asserts that "religious identities, often (but not always) mean more to [individuals] away from home, in their diaspora, than they did before, and those identities undergo more or less modification as the years pass." One main reason for this, is that "[t]he religious institutions they build, adapt, remodel and adopt become worlds unto themselves, "congregations," where new relations among members of the community—among men and women, parents and children, recent arrivals and those settled—are forged" (Warner 1998: 3). Furthermore, social alienation and frustration because of displacement impact ethnic and religious identification, and connected with the very move is the fact that religion and culture no longer are "prearranged identities" (Göle 2003: 813). By changing context, Islam is no longer automatically transmitted from one generation to another or considered as a norm taken for granted. Instead, the former conceptions of social practices are questioned and tested. Migration to societies that are highly modern adds to the escalation of generational change.

The religious identity among the youths in this study is characterized by three partly interrelated aspects which concurrently mark a distinction from their parents' religiosity, namely: an effort to draw a division between "pure" and "traditional" Islam, focus on improving one's knowledge of Islam, and effort to live out Islam in the German language and space. These aspects, as it will be suggested, make it possible for the youths to argue that being a Muslim and a German is not a contradiction.

First, the youth deem their parents as not observing Islam "correctly," but as performing a mixture of religious forms and traditions brought with them from their (Turkish) villages. The youths instead seek a "pure" or "true" Islam (Roy 2004), detached from culture, ethnicity and nation by going back to the sources, particularly the Koran, *Tafsir* (commentary of the Koran), and the *Sunna* (the exemplary practice of the Prophet Mohammed). For example, during one weekly religious youth meeting, Fatwa (twenty-five years old, Egyptian parents) emphasized that some, in particular older women, exaggerate their tears during

their prayer in Ramadan or funerals, constituting more of a "performance" or "a competition" of who is feeling the most religiously, or who was the closest to the dead. "This is tradition," she argues, and not "correct religious behavior." Here, the division between "correct" and "wrong" is reflected upon within the framework of distinguishing between "culture" and "religion."[7] Such reflections illustrate that a correct religious performance within this religious group is recognized by certain normative standards, against which flawed performances are distinguished and assessed (Hirschkind 2001). An act "must be described in terms of the conventions which make it meaningful *as a particular kind of activity*, one performs for certain reason and in accord with certain standards of excellence and understood as such by those who perform and respond to it" (Hirschkind 2001: 633).

The emphasis on distinguishing between "pure" and "traditional" Islam is part of religious reform movements as well as among more fundamental religious movements in several European countries (Roy 2004).[8] The youths are part of similar processes taking place in different European societies, and also globally, in what have been called a "revival of Islam." Since the beginning of the 1990s, researchers interviewing young South Asian Muslim women in England find that these females establish a clear division between "religion" and "culture," a distinction which for their parents are largely interchangeable areas (Knott and Khokher 1993).[9] This orientation toward Islam resembles that of the "objectification" processes of the religious imagination in the Muslim Middle East in the 1990s (Eickelman 1992: 643). With the objectification of the religious imagination, Dale Eickelman (1992) points to the consciousness process by which Muslims become aware of their identity as Muslims. In this process the subjects explicitly ask themselves "What is my religion? Why is it important to my life? and, How do my beliefs guide my conduct?" (Eickelman 1992: 643). In the course of this objectification, religion is not becoming uniform or monolithic, even if some religious actors promote this perception. The so-called "objectified consciousness" is realized through *a process of modernization*, where the expansion of literacy, access to education and modern technology, like the internet, contribute to diminish the dependence on more traditional established authorities to make sense of their religion (Ismail 2004: 624-625).

Second, one consequence of seeking a "pure" Islam is an attentiveness to continuously improving ones knowledge of Islam and performing "correct" religious obligations, both internally and externally. The youths consider it insufficient to perform a religious act externally, meaning that one's body movements and comportment of the performance are correct. The internal, one's mind and thoughts, has to be included in the act in order for it to be judged as *a religiously moral act* (cf. Mahmood 2005).[10] I often hear youths point to the idea that if someone performs a good deed "just in order to tell others" and to demonstrate "how good one is," this deed fails to provide "good points" (as a "good deed" for Allah) since such an act must be performed with the "correct" intentions.[11] The following discussion illustrate this further: During one of the weekly religious meetings organized by the Muslim Youths Germany, Fatwa says: "I was thinking that from next Monday on we should fast, but I don't know if people

are motivated?"[12] One of the girls exclaims: "If we know that twenty of us are fasting, should that not be motivating enough?" Fatwa agrees, and another young girl enthusiastically suggests that "fasting is also weight reducing" as an incentive to fast. In response, Somaya (eighteen years old, Sudanese parents) wrinkles her nose, stressing that "diet should not be the reason to perform the fast."

Community feelings foster individual incentives to perform a religiously motivated act, like fasting. Moreover, Somaya's comment here reflects the idea that the act of fasting is only religiously "valid" in so far as the person conducts the act with correct motivations and virtues. Cultivating these dispositions, the young participants in the study learn to differentiate between performing practices which are motivated by religious experiences, or coming from religious moods, vis-à-vis those coming from secular, materialistic, traditional or fashion moods. Fasting in itself is not sufficient to count as a compelling religious act. Rather, fasting is only religiously valid in so far as the person conducts the act with truthful motivations.[13] The quest for "correct" bodily and sensory practices is part of what recent Islamist movements are seeking to reinstate or protect (Mahmood 2005; Asad in Mahmood 1996).

Third, in their struggle to live a religiously oriented life, Muslim adolescents emphasize that this religious lifestyle is actually sought *in* German society. Most are particularly preoccupied with how to construct and negotiate a modern life in Germany without compromising what they feel are their religious duties and obligations in their daily life. One of the youth comments: "Living in this society, there are distractions everywhere. It's more difficult to be motivated to keep all the obeisance and religious needs." Consequently, many participate in religious groups and organizations as it aids disciplining themselves, and to be with "similar people." In the religious weekly Muslim Youth Germany meetings, questions concerning how to live as a "good" Muslim in a society that is not only non-Muslim but also largely considered as secular, is a topic of constant concern. For example, during a question round among the youth, some of the females asked, "Is one allowed to show one's hair to a lesbian?" and "How can one avoid being influenced by fashion, or be diverted from their prayers by non-practicing friends or TV shows?"

One consequence of the youths' emphasis on practicing a "pure" Islam is that they seek answers and knowledge in books and through the internet, and are easily rejecting the religious authority of their parents who they believe are following a traditional Islam. This approach to Islam makes it possible for young females to de-legitimize their parents' "religious" positions as based on "culture." To some extent, this situation leads to a "crisis" of their parents' authority (Roy 2004; Khosrokhavar 1997: 144); the youths are not discussing religious issues with their parents and feeling that they know more about Islam than their parents call upon "a higher moral authority and greater Islamic knowledge" (Mahmood 2005: 116; Cesari 2003; Salih 2003; Jacobsen 2006). Sometimes the young women even attempt to influence their own mothers' practices, such as educing them to veil, and assess their parents critically for their lax religious lifestyle. In consequence, the age hierarchy under which textual authority is in-

voked and, to some extent, the youth can become religious educators of their parents.

However, even if I agree that the youths' individual orientation to Islam leads to some extent to emancipation or more freedom of movement, my fieldwork indicates that this aspect needs to be adjusted or modified. During my fieldwork I realized that the parent's authority is often *re-emphasized* through Islamic discourses. Presentations frequently stress the youths' obligations and duties as daughters (or sons), and the significant role and position of parents within Islam. Breaking with the family is considered as a great sin, and should be avoided as far as possible.

The changed role of religious authority of their parents indicates not only a generational shift, but also an increasing individualization of Muslim identity. How Islam is played out and how the youths are "being Muslims" are negotiated in relation to new religious authorities, including internet blogs, television preachers, books, religious groups and personal judgment. Furthermore, as the youths are not active in ethnic oriented mosques and organizations, they emphasize a universal Islam where the world wide *ummah* (community) is the reference, the youths' religious activities and identification are de-ethnicized. Turning to Islam is not making the youths feel more "Turkish" or "Egyptian." Rather, it detaches their ethnic identity from their religious identity. At the same time, many youths feel that it is difficult to *feel* like a "German" due to continuous framing of Islam as incompatible with German values.

Representing Islam

Typically, the female youths are treated as non-German and/or as "others" by strangers they encounter in daily life and by their school teachers. This representation is related to stereotyping and prefabricated ways of looking at the headscarf by the media (Schiffer 2005). The habits of categorization are often related to second-hand experience, the media. Media is our most important source of information, in particular to themes which we otherwise have little access to, of which consequently media structures our perception (Schiffer 2005). Being German and Muslim is a problematic identification due to the current media framing of "Islamism" (*Islamismus*) and "terror," and the construction of "Islam as strangeness" (*Fremdheit*) (Schiffer 2005) and as representing values incompatible with German values. Islamism and the suppression of Muslim women are symbolized through the continued use of references to or images of the headscarf in the media. A chain of associations, by now unconsciously, has been constructed in that television or newspapers make use of women with headscarves in particular reports. This collective stereotyping or profiling of what "Muslims are" or how they are supposed to behave in which Islam apparently dictates how Muslims behave and think, is not only affecting how the non-Muslim population think about Muslims and Islam, but also how Muslims identify and behave in the European public spheres. This process is gendered in which the image of the veil is constructing an idea of Muslim women as submissive, subverted, traditional and/or passive.

A politician with migrant background is quoted in the tabloid newspaper, *Bild am Sonntag*, as appealing to Muslim women saying, "Arrive today, arrive in Germany. You live here, thus take off the headscarf!"[14] The statement suggests that wearing a headscarf is considered as incompatible with being German, or with having "arrived"—not only physically, but mentally or affectively—in German society. The relation between veiling and being perceived as a non-German becomes particularly clear when talking to German Muslim female converts. Both Muslim and non-Muslim population consider these women as no longer German once they don the veil. Also "born" Muslims feel a difference in the public perception of them after starting to veil. For example, Ines, a seventeen year old of Palestinian background believes that when she started to wear the headscarf, it changed the way her urban surroundings consider her. She narrates:

> Sometimes at the metro, there are like three people sitting across you, and they stare, look at you like this' [she looks at me from head to toe] 'as if they were in the Zoo . . . and I, like, think, come on hey, stop looking at me like that, as if I am a monkey in a cage! And sometimes you are also imagining it, like, that (you think) they are looking, and then there is maybe no one who is really looking at you, it drives you crazy . . . And then they ask why foreigners become criminals? Like, imagine, I feel it like that, and I am not even a foreigner, I am German. And they are still not treating me as a German. Imagine how it must feel for a real foreigner, someone who is not a German! . . . I have been German since I was able to think, and now, since when I started to wear a headscarf, I am not German anymore. They treat you differently, you can just feel it.

Ines feels that there is a clear change in how her immediate surroundings react and behave toward her after she started to veil (Bendixsen 2005). She personally does not see any contradiction in being German and veiled, but experiences that she is treated as a "foreigner" due to this practice. Growing up in a place where she seldom socialized with people of migrant background, Ines had mostly "ethnic" German friends before the age of fourteen. After a turbulent youth, she turned more religious when she moved to Berlin and decided to veil at the age of seventeen. Until then, she says, she had no problems considering herself as a German, a feeling that changed after she visually expressed that she is a Muslim and the subsequent external reactions toward her. In the above conversation, she particularly emphasizes the experiences of being "othered" by gazes from strangers.

"German & Muslim = Good Like That"[15]

Several Muslim youths are trying to combine "being German" with "being Muslim." They employ several tactics[16] in pursuing this endeavor, including learning Islam in the German language, emphasizing certain common values and moralities, and trying to change the negative stereotyping of Islam in Germany. Without the intention of returning to their parents' homeland, many youths of

the so-called second generation consciously learn about Islam in the German language in which they are more fluent (Nökel 2002). Consequently, youths can explain Islam to their non-Muslim surroundings in a more straightforward way. Furthermore, the majority focuses on how to best practice Islam, their religious behavior and belief, *in Germany*, which is considered a secular society.

Perhaps paradoxically, the females' religious identification can assist in embracing a German and "modern" identity. The youths encounter daily expectations which they feel are contradictory from those of their parents on the one hand, who fear that their daughters are becoming "too German," and from their teachers and peers, on the other, who they think will consider them as "too Turkish." The clear distinction that the youth make between ethnicity and religion makes it possible for them not to feel "betwixt and between" their parent's home country and Germany. Certain values, such as punctuality, honesty and hard work are appreciated both in Islam and in German culture. By framing these as "Islamic," the youths can negotiate a "third space" (Bhabha 1994).[17] For example, Fatima (thirty years old, Turkish parents) remarks that "religion can be a bridge," because it combines both; "one can say 'I am a Muslim' and it does not matter whether one is German, Turkish or Arabic." When young women look for a marriage partner, it is increasingly important that their future husband is a religiously observant Muslim, without regard for his ethnic background. The majority still marry within their ethnic groups—most likely due to language, social network and expectations from their parents. Nevertheless, a marriage choice is more complex, as Naila (seventeen years old, Egyptian parents) comments: "For sure, I will never marry an Egyptian from Egypt, you know," and explains that it is important that her future husband should not only be a Muslim, but also know the "European lifestyle."

The effort of living out a "correct" Islam by the youths is localized and situated in Germany as a non-Muslim society and as a place where many adolescents feel that "Islam is misunderstood and misrepresented." For example, at one Friday presentation in a German-speaking mosque which the youths often visit, the presenter says "Islam is being criticized because we are doing wrong things. We are mirroring Islam for these people, and when we mirror the wrong things then we are guilty in that they are not coming to Islam because we are mirroring wrong." Such utterance situates the religious practice of youths directly in their physical locality and suggests their larger duty to perform Islam "correctly" in a specific socio-historical context. The representative role the youth's sense as a consequence of "othering" processes cannot be underestimated.[18] Many youths, females in particular, experience being "walking representatives of Islam" in their daily life vis-à-vis both non-Muslims and the Muslim population. With this follows a feeling of obligation to improve the stained (Goffman 1963) image of Islam in the German public where they are depicted as suppressed or victims of patriarchal forces—thus at the same time, portraying "the Muslim man" as a suppressor.

What I call "daily micro-politics" are tactics (de Certeau 1984) the youth make use of in an effort to improve the negative representation of Muslims. Such tactics include a continuous attentiveness to how they behave in the street,

such as smiling to strangers, being helpful, or to enhance their Islamic knowledge to improve their answers to questions about Islam. The self-awareness of representing Islam increases social pressure, from themselves, other Muslims and non-Muslims on the young females: as the females try to promote an authentic or ideological image of Islam and Muslims, it involves high demands on their daily behavior in the street. The price for "being in a community" (Bauman 2001: 4) includes self-control and living up to constructed expectations on what it means to be a "good, correct Muslim."

The youths' identification with Islam is not only affected by their status as members of a post-migration religious minority (Cesari 2003), but also by global events, the introduction of technology and opportunities provided in the urban space. The transnational element of the youth's orientation to Islam as a consequence of modern technology cannot be underestimated; figures like Tariq Ramadan,[19] the Egyptian religious scholar al-Qaradawi[20] and the popular Egyptian television preacher Amr Khaled are references and authorities for youths all over the worldwide *ummah* (Mandaville 2005). Through the online discussion groups and cable TV shows, ideas and concepts are spread and discussed between different local spaces. The recent popular Baba Ali figuring in "ummah films" on YouTube is one example of a young, American-Iranian Muslim who creatively contributes to a transnational Muslim youth culture with his funny, satiric clips with titles such as "Culture vs. Islam," "Muslim while Flying," "Looking for a Spouse Online" and "The Parent Negotiations."[21]

Social class and educational level of youths affect how a religious identity is lived out (Ismail 2004; Salih 2003) and where they participate religiously (Bendixsen 2007). Emphasizing knowledge as the only way to live Islam "correctly" seems to attract youths who already are, or in the future will belong to an upward mobile part of the migrant population because of their parents' or own educational success. It can be suggested that educational level has a stronger effect on the youths' relation to Islam (cf. Salih 2003) than merely their economically defined class and migration background.

A Modern Muslim Identity?

The "turn to Islam" is an urban phenomenon in Germany, which can also be found in Cairo (Ismail 2006) and Istanbul (Sanktanber 2002). A city offers a variety of religious spaces representing different religious orientations and congregations providing particular "infrastructures of action" (Ismail 2006: 12). Salwa Ismail suggests that the "turn to Islam" within the urban space is not only a consequence of people moving from rural to urban, thus facing alienation in the urban anonymity and weakening of community structures. More important is mobilizing urban opportunities for a religious organization to situate its message in the social antagonism and positions that have historically always been a part of the urban landscape (Ismail 2006: 112-113). Religion can be practiced alone, by use of the many online groups on the internet, in new religious study groups, or in the more traditional, ethnically oriented mosques. The variety of religious

spaces in urban Berlin makes it possible for the youth to pursue a more individual and privatized orientation toward Islam, and consequently, to develop a religious youth culture.

"Turning to Islam" as a focal orientation of identity involves not only a religious moral orientation, but certain aesthetic, search for "pious fun" and religious consumption. Religious businesses or religious consumption are part of the youths' identification with Islam; in "religious shops," particularly in Kreuzberg, Wedding and Neukölln,[22] the youths can purchase CD readings of the Koran, candies without gelatin,[23] Mecca Cola, a counseling book for food purchase for Muslims in Germany, and *hijab*-Barbie (Barbie with a veil) while listening to religious songs by Yusuf Islam or Ammer 114[24] —a German "Islamic" hip-hop artist. Information on which of the "Turkish" or "Arab" *Imbiss* are religiously "correct" is passed via word-of-mouth.[25] Islamic graffiti on the Berliner urban landscape such as "Muslims are the best. Live Allah!" or "Muslims love best" (Kaschuba 2007)[26] both challenge urban spaces and present spaces of belonging (Bendixsen 2007).

Turning to Islam also includes a consciousness on how Muslims dress in public, an effort to behave in a religiously correct manner in terms of gender relation in the public sphere, and refusal to visit places with high alcohol consumption. In this religious identity formation, several seek to improve themselves religiously by increasing their knowledge and enhancing their moral behavior, for example to pray more or to wear the headscarf. There are diverse reasons why young females decide to veil; some of the young women are forced by their parents, for others the headscarf is a fashion or a political statement, and some veil because of religious conviction. In the latter case, veiling is part of a continuous personal effort to improve themselves as "pious subjects" (Mahmood 2005), to please God and to reach Paradise in the afterlife. Seeing other veiled women in the street becomes part of their feeling of belonging in Berlin; "We are always so happy to see someone with a headscarf, particularly here [Reinickendorf] where there are not that many," exclaims one youth during a picnic. It improves their self-consciousness as Muslims and group identification with Islam in Berlin. The veil is not only a religious obligation, but in the sociohistorical climate, it has turned into a symbol of solidarity among female Muslims and by wearing it, creates spaces of belonging in a non-Muslim society.

Salwa Ismail (2006) argues that "[t]he view of Islamism as anti-modern rests on the assumption that modernization is associated with secularization and the retreat of religion from the public sphere. Islamism thus appears as an expression of an anti-modern strand that, for some, is inherent in the religion" (Ismail 2006: 3).[27] Instead of considering Islamism as an anti-modern movement, Ismail refocuses our attention to its rejection of the Western perceived hegemonic ownership or mega-narrative of the modern.

In contrast to this perception, wearing headscarf with jeans and fashionable colors is not about bricolage, but an act through which the youths situate the religious practice in the society in which they live. Further, at a picnic with a group of veiled youths, Rüya says jokingly to her sisters, "We have to be modern, after all we are Muslims!" This narrative of modernity, uttered half playful and half serious, should be understood within a context where Islam and Muslims are considered as "traditional," backward and resisting the modern (secular) society. Even if Rüya recognizes that the non-Muslim German majority consider religious adherence to Islam as traditional, Rüya promotes modernity through her devotion to Islam as a spiritual and social self-fulfillment in Germany.

Living a religious life and seeking modernity is not contradictory for these youths. Scholars point out that even if the traditional systems of believing are rejected by modernity, belief is not abandoned (Casanova 2001; Berger 1999). Individual, self-reflection and search for knowledge are part of the youth's religious identity, an identity which is felt and lived out as a "free" and conscious choice. They continuously distinguish their religious practices from their parents, which they consider traditional. The females, for example, often joke and make fun of their mothers' "unfashionable headscarf," distinguishing their parent's practice from their own. Simultaneously, even if this religious identity is more individualized than their parents, it does not mean the end of orthodoxy or that they are creating a random "pick and choose." The need for legitimacy and validation of the religious practice continues to be largely part of their religiosity. As Danièle Hervieu-Leger stresses "there is no religion without the authority of a tradition being invoked (whether explicitly, half-explicitly or implicitly) in support of the act of believing" (2000: 76).

Push and Pull Factors Illuminating "the Islamic Turn"

The question of why women embrace religious norms and religious communities has been central in studies on Muslim women since the 1990s and has been addressed in different ways. The fact that women embrace Islam and religious organizations regarded as subjecting female bodies to patriarchal gender structures have been considered as a paradox, or representing a "perplexing question" by feminist scholars (Moghadam 1994; Saghal and Yuval-Davis 1992). Some scholars have a tendency to consider women who actively participate in religious organizations as victims of "false consciousness" —disciplined by fundamentalist formations (Grewal and Kaplan 1994).[28] Related to the debate on multiculturalism, Susan Okin (1997), a liberal feminist philosopher, claims that there is an inescapable tension between gender equality ideals and cultural recognition of groups. Continuing in this vein of understanding, other scholars argue in a universalistic feminist matter, that though Muslim girls seem to choose wearing the veil, this does not mean that they are autonomous, as the veil is a (*the*) symbol of subordination (Badinter 1989). In this view, as the content of women's "cultural norms" —such as modesty, self-discipline, and seclusion—is in opposition to personal autonomy, the women risk to be subordinated by adhering to their cultural communities.

Since the 1990s several scholars argue that Muslim youth's "turn to Islam" is part of "identity politics" (Cesari 2003; Khosrokhavar 1997) —a modern phenomenon—with similarities to social movements. Just like other youth subcultures which have developed in the urban spaces throughout the years (Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995) identification with Islam seems to be a response to

socio-economic conditions. It is one possible way to create a space and place within a life-world which does not offer many positive prospects for a socially and economically secure future. As such, "being or becoming a Muslim" is seen as a possible solution toward discrimination (Cesari 2003), and a way out for youths who are more or less excluded or feel rejected from society and search for a purpose in life (Khosrokhavar 1997). Implied in this perception of young Muslims' activities is the idea that Muslims are searching to publicly articulate an "authenticity" (Göle 2003), often through symbols that represent their religious identity as a way to claim *recognition* from the larger society (cf. Fraser 2000).

Identifying with Islam is a way to gain more emancipation from their families. By referring to religious argumentations, youths easily legitimate certain aspirations such as education and working in public. Veiling provides girls more freedom in that their parents will trust their behavior more in public (cf. Jacobsen 2006; Salih 2003; Nökel 2002). Distinguishing Islam from tradition and customs also facilitates their refusal of certain stigmatizing practices, such as forced marriages and "honor killings." By positioning both as the result of tradition and not Islam, the youths argue that "it has nothing to do with me, as it has nothing to do with Islam" both to other Muslims and to non-Muslims.

At the same time, understanding the turn to a religious identification simply as a reaction to external social structures as push factors becomes a too functional analysis and neglects both the specific individual and the global processes of which their religious identification constitutes a part. During my fieldwork with the young females, I realized that one needs to take these youths' religiousness seriously. This includes a stronger focus on the females' religious agency as well as the pull factors from religious organizations. Religious agency, following Laura Leming (2007) is "a personal and collective claiming and enacting of dynamic religious identity. As *religious* identity, it may include, but is not limited to, a received or an acquired identity, whether passed on by family, religious group, or other social entity such as an educational community, or actively sought. To constitute religious *agency*, this identity is claimed and lived as one's own, with an insistence on active ownership" (Leming 2007: 74). This religious agency is, like all agencies, not situated in a vacuum, but is performed within particular socio-historical contexts.

The decision to participate in a Muslim organization or to identify with Islam is shaped by religious and spiritual desires and experiences.[29] Several young women start practicing Islam actively due to a dream related to their—until then—lax religious praxis or because they are feeling confused. "Being a Muslim" and struggling to become a "better" Muslim is also about seeking to identify oneself as a religious person where motivation to becoming a pious or virtuous subject is a vehicle for daily activities, including efforts to perform their five obligatory prayers, struggle to merge internal motivation with external motions, but also forming characteristics which they consider important in Islam, such as modesty and being helpful.

This religious agency is often neglected, perhaps because the "turn to Islam" is considered as an (unfortunate) return to tradition and parental home

country's culture. What should be clear by now is that the youths are not (re)turning to a static, unchanging religious tradition. Rather, they are actively pursuing religious morals and values which are situated in their own material and socio-cultural living condition. This does not mean that the youths are creating an individual religion where they pick and choose from Islam as "religion a la carte" or a religious bricolage, which some scholars tend to suggest (cf. Karakasoglu 2003; Khosrokhavar 1997: 128). On the contrary, the youth's quest for a "pure" Islam where validation of the "correct performance" is situated within a search for authenticity makes it necessary to legitimate their practices, for themselves and their peers, by positioning these practices vis-à-vis the religious sources. Most religious actors need a religious community in order to be with "others like them" and to create a universe of meaning where "what makes sense to you also makes sense to me" (Hervieu-Leger 2001: 167). An individual requires confirmation from outsiders for the meanings she/he makes use of in making sense and significance of their daily life (Hervieu-Leger 2001).

One *pull* factor which is often ignored is the effort from religious organizations to attract the youths as these organizations may represent spaces where the youths are not "othered" or considered as abnormal. In continuation, Hans Joas (2004) points to the need for religious people to articulate their faith or their experience of self-transcendence—a practice which is difficult. Religious experiences happen to individuals and are felt or apprehended rather than cognitively recognized. Although these elements contribute to make the experiences real, they make them only real, as the phenomenologist William James ([1902] 1994) suggests, for those who experience them. Consequently, Joas (2004) emphasizes that people need spaces in where they can share these feelings and experiences with others who also experiences them, although in a different way. These *pull* factors from religiousness and religious organization must be included in a deeper understanding of the "turn to Islam."

Conclusion

Is the combination of youth, religion and an urban lifestyle a contradiction? Or, is the urban space opening up for a variety of religious orientation in the twenty-first century, a period depicted as uncertain, ever changing and disintegrating communities? It is my perception that the modern process of individualization takes place (Bauman 2001) at the same time as there is a continued process of ascription, categorization, and "othering" processes. Any individual outwardly resembling a Muslim is expected to represent Islam in any situation. The conditions of community formation are upheld (Baumann 2001), although the form of religious communities has changed. In this process, a new religious lifestyle among the young Muslims is developing in urban spaces.

Without undermining the authentic religious experience of the identification with Islam or Muslim identity, I suggest that this process has similarities to "lifestyle subcultures." The youths' focus on moral values and universality as a reaction both toward the secular, materialistic, and Eurocentric majority in soci-

ety on the one hand, and a traditional, cultural, local and nostalgic orientation of the "migrant community" on the other. In this space, specialized religious knowledge becomes a kind of "subcultural capital" (cf. Thornton 1995). Noticeably, the youths most attracted to this religious identification are not uneducated youth, but those who in many ways, are the most equipped among the "migrant" youth, in the sense that they master the German language, focus on higher education and have ambitions of a future working career. At the same time as localizing themselves through the urgency of improving the image of Islam in Germany, they also transcend the physically bounded site by drawing on globalized networks and influences, (re)capitalizing on the Islamic notion of community, the *ummah*.

Notes

1. Some sociologists of religion have pointed to the perception that there is a necessary incompatibility between religion and modern, urban life was too quickly taken. Stark argues that in Japan folk religion "flourishes among the young, successful, educated urbanites." It is worth noting that Stark has been critiqued, justifiably so, on his particular selection of statistic and data in order to completely reject the thesis of secularization. See Rodney Stark, "Secularization, R.I.P.," *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 268.

2. The concept of second generation of migrants has been rightly problematized for constructing the idea that people who are born in the country are still "migrant" just because their parents come from a different country. I still use the concept here for lack of a better concept that recognizes the particular socialization in a transnational space, meaning that they, through a *Biografiebildung* (biography formation) in their parent's home country—as well as in the migration "community," are embedded in familial and other relevant social relationships and networks. See Ursula Apitzsch, "Migrationsbiographien als Orte transnationaler Räume," in *Migration, Biographie und Geschlechterverhältnisse*, ed. Ursual Apitzsch and Mechthild (Münster: Verlag, 2003).

3. The participant observation (eighteen months) was conducted as part of my PhD thesis entitled "It's like doing SMS to Allah": Young Female Muslims Crafting a Religious Self in Berlin" in Social Anthropology at the Humboldt University (Berlin) and École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris), 2009.

4. The youth is the main focus of MJD as the stated goal is "to integrate Muslim youths by providing an opportunity to develop their creativity and talents as *young German Muslims* in the German language." See MJD, www.mjd-net.de (accessed February 1, 2008). Similar Muslim youth organisations exist in Austria, Italy, France, Sweden and Norway and MJD is represented at the European level by FEMYSO (Forum European Muslim Youth and Student Organisation) established in Leicester (UK) in 1996.

5. Like most European scholars, German scholars were mostly concerned with how ethnic and national identity and culture continued to have an impact on migrants' life choices up until the late 1980s. Particularly when large parts of the migrant population protested publicly in Britain during the Rushdie affair in 1989 scholars refocused their attention to the (changed) role of religion of migrants and their children born in Europe. See Steven Vertovec, "Religion and Diaspora" (paper presented at the conference on New Landscapes of Religion in the West, University of Oxford, September 27-29, 2000).

6. In Germany, the largest groups are the Sunni (approximately 2.2 million), followed by the Shiite (approximately 400,000), and the Alevite (approximately 340,000). See Susan von Below and Ercan Karakoyun, "Sozialstruktur und Lebeslagen junger Muslime in Deutschland," in *Junge Muslime in Deutschland* (Farmington Hills: Barbara Budrisch, 2007), 33.

7. Hirschkind, performing fieldwork in Egypt, similarly found that many were distressed by people crying during religious sermons for the "wrong" reasons. See Charles Hirsckind, "The Ethics of Listening," *American Ethnologist* 28, no. 3 (2001): 623-631.

8. Hermansen argues that "[i]nternationalist Muslim revivalist movements such as *Jama'at Islami* [Islamic Party] and the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan al-Muslimin*) have encouraged this concept of a 'cultureless' Islam around the world." They are, she further holds, incorporating the identity element into the organization by insisting on "Muslim and proud of it." See Marcia Hermansen, "How to Put the Genie Back in the Bottle?" in *Progressive Muslims*, ed. Omid Safi (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2003), 309.

9. They reject their parents' conformity to ethnic traditions that the parents consider as emblematic of religiosity (e.g., manner of dress), while embracing a Muslim identity in and of itself. Among these young women, Knott and Khokher explain, there is a "self-conscious exploration of the religion which was not relevant to the first generation." See Kim Knot and Sadja Khoker, "Religious and Ethnic Identity among Young Muslim Women in Bradford," *New Community* 19 (1993): 596.

10. Similarities can be found in Christianity.

11. It is the belief that doing "good deeds" (*al-amal al-saliha*) secures God's blessing and aids in the formation of virtuous dispositions. The good deeds must be performed with the right sincerity of intent (*al ikhlas*) in order to perceive "good points" believed to improve a Muslim's chance to enter paradise. See Saba Mahmood, "Women's Piety and Embodied Discipline," (Unpublished PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Stanford University 1998), 102-104.

12. Note that this was not during Ramadan. The youths are sometimes fasting throughout the year as an act that gives "good points," but also in order to complete their past Ramadan as women have to break the fasting month during their period of menstruation.

13. Note here the notion of *niyya* (Arab, "intention"). This notion emphasizes the importance of pronouncing the intention in the heart before performing the outer act in order for it to be a valid religious act in Islam. For example, the prayer, pilgrimage and fast are not valid if the proper intent is absent. One hadith (#1 in *al-Nawawi's* Forty Hadith) states that "actions are according to intent" or "actions are what they are by virtue of intent."

14. Ekin Deligöz, member of the Bundestag of the Green party, is quoted in Spiegel online as saying that prominent German-Turkish have appealed to Muslims in German to take off their headscarf as a sign of their willingness to integrate: "the person who veils is consciously bounding herself off from the German society" (my translation from German). Spiegel, *Deutsch-Türken gegen Kopftuch*, Spiegel, http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,442656,00.html (accessed October 20, 2006).

15. My translation from the German: "Deutsch & Muslim = Gut so," written in a power point slide presented in the Berlin weekly meeting on the topic "Muslim and German" by one of the national representatives of Muslim Youth Germany (MJD).

16. De Certeau makes a distinction between strategies and tactics: "A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it . . . I call a 'tactic,' on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a 'proper' (a spatial or institutional location), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other . . . A tactic insinuates itself to the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance."

See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xix.

17. Third spaces, according to Bhabha, are "discursive sites or conditions that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, and rehistoricized anew." See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 37.

18. In postcolonial theory, which is my approach here, the notion of the "Other" refers to "the discursive production of another" —a process typified by the way in which Europe produces an Orient-as-other, also described as "othering." See Gayatri Spivak, "More on Power/Knowledge," in *The Spivak Reader*, ed. Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean (London: Routledge, [1992]1996). There is a general tendency to consider "others" as categorically and essentially different. In this idea of difference, are potentials for hierarchical and stereotypical thinking, which it is why the effect of "othering" bears resemblance to racism. See Slavoj Zizek, "Eastern Europe's Republics of Gilead," *New Left Review* 183 (1990): 50-62.

19. Ramadan in particular encourages young Muslims to regard their position in non-Muslim homelands not as one of weakness, but rather as a source of strength. See Peter Mandaville, "Sufis and Salafis," in *Remaking Muslim Politics*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).

20. Al-Qaradawi produces a discourse, which is modern and moderate at the same time. Its more formal dimensions (using more traditional *fatwa* methodology or ruling on a question of Islamic law) preserve the authenticity of Islamic traditionalism. Religious programs on *al-Jazeera* and translations of his books have made him a representative of the most popular contemporary transnational Islamic discourses with devotees from the *banlieus* (suburbs) of Paris to the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) of Southern Asia. See Mandaville, "Sufis and Salafis."

21. See Ummah Films, http://youtube.com/ummahfilms (accessed November 20, 2008).

22. These are neighborhoods in Berlin with a large representation of working class and population with immigrant background.

23. Many groceries contain the additive E441 (used in ice cream, chocolate, candies and different food products) which is produced through swine skin and the E47-E474 contains swine products, considered as *haram* (forbidden) to eat in Islam. There is a difference among Muslims in the degree to how careful one is concerning eating these products.

24. The number 114 refers to the number of *Surahs* (chapters) in the Koran.

25. Mandel has described how shopkeepers in Kreuzberg use the fear of *haram* (forbiden) meat and what is considered obligatory or *halal* (permitted) to their advantage. The result is an increase of shops that cater exclusively to Turks, creating a Muslim space in Germany, subdivided by Sunni or Alevi. She rightly points that this commercial orientation is also creating a place for migrants, on their own terms. See Ruth Mandel, "A Place of their Own," in *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe*, ed. Barbara Metcalf (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1996), 147-166.

26. My own translation from the German language. Original: "Muslime sind die Besten. Es lebe Allah" and "Muslime lieben am besten." See Wolfgang Kaschuba, "Ethnische Parallelgesellschafen?" *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 103 (2007): 83.

27. Islamism is a contested term, and rightly so. Ismail refers to "Islamism" as both Islamist politics and re-Islamisation, the latter of which relates to my usage here. Islamisation is "the process whereby various domains of social life are invested with signs and symbols associated with Islamic cultural traditions, Examples of this process include the

wearing of the *hijab* (veil), the consumption of religious literature and other religious commodities, the publicizing of symbols of religious identity, the reframing of economic activity in Islamic terms." See Salwa Ismail, *Rethinking Islamist Politics* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 2.

28. Bracke suggests how this idea of "false consciousness" is based on a gendered and ethnicized way of thinking. See Sarah Bracke, "Author(iz)ing Agency: Feminist Scholars Making Sense of Women's Involvement in Religious 'Fundamentalist' Movements." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 10, no. 3 (2003): 337.

29. As Rambo correctly intervenes: "[r]eligion and spirituality, like aesthetics, should be considered a domain of life and experience that has its own validity." There are, he continues, "experiences, both cognitive and affective, that are distinctive to religion and spirituality." See Lewis Rambo, "Theories of Conversion," *Social Compass* 46, no. 3 (1999): 264.

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