CHAPTER TWO

MAKING SENSE OF THE CITY: THE RELIGIOUS SPACES OF YOUNG MUSLIM WOMEN IN BERLIN

...in the city, different people with different projects must necessarily struggle with one another over the shape of the city, the terms of access to the public realm, and even the rights of citizenship. Out of this struggle the city as work – as an oeuvre, as a collective if not singular project – emerges, and new modes of living, new modes of inhabiting, are invented.

–Mitchell 2003, 18.

Introducing Berlin

In 1989, the two parts of Berlin were again joined together as the capital of Germany, at least administratively. Since then, the city has undergone transformations in which politicians, city-planners and the media have promoted the many faces of Berlin: Berlin as a capital (*Hauptstadt*) of the unified Germany, city of culture (*Kulturstadt*) of Europe, and struggling to be a world city (*Weltstadt*) globally. The image of Berlin as “multi-cultural” (or “*multi-culti*” in Berlin slang) is another characterization that is either promoted or fretted about when media and politicians discuss migrants’ loyalty (or lack thereof) to Germany. It is also used to explain social problems, or as “proof of a policy gone wrong.”

Since the arrival of the so-called guest workers (*gastarbeiter*) in the 1960s, immigration to European urban centers has been a change factor in the urban landscape, and an introduction to new modes of living.¹ Today, Islam is increasingly visible in European societies. This visibility is partly a result of the growing popularity of the headscarf among young Muslims, and partly a result of the provisional courtyard or factory hall mosques of

¹ The term “guest worker” is by no means neutral—rather, it draws attention to the ambiguity of the status of the migrant (Mandel 2008). Guests are, by definition, only temporarily present and are expected to return home. Guests should also follow the rules and regulations of the host. The second part of the word, workers, underlines the economic and use value of the migrant only in terms of her or his labor. It reduces them to their functions, and as Mandel powerfully argues, “it marginalizes and objectifies migrants, leaving limited conceptual, social, or linguistic space for meaningful incorporation into the society” (Mandel 2008, 55).

the 1970s having been replaced by purpose-built mosques since the late 1990s. The new four-story minaret-topped Omar Ibn al-Khattab mosque serving the al-Ahbash community officially opened in 2010 at the Görlitzer Bahnhof in the middle of Kreuzberg 36. It is merely one example of a previously hidden Muslim community now making its presence felt in Berlin with a multifunctional building that provides space for shopping, child-care, and prayer.

Estimates suggest that the Muslim population in Germany is approximately 3.2 million to 3.5 million—around four percent of the overall German population currently living in Germany (Bundesministerium des Innern 2007). There are around 213,000 Muslims in Berlin; an estimate that includes immigrants from countries where Islam is the main religion and German converts.² The accuracy of the figure is problematic as it includes

Figure 2. Ibn al-Khattab mosque at the Görlitzer Bahnhof, Kreuzberg. Photo: Synnøve Bendixsen

² Of these, 2.25–2.5 million are foreign Muslims, mostly Turks, and around 800,000 “German Muslims,” meaning German citizens, i.e. naturalized Muslims of various origins. This is only a rough estimate since precise statistical data do not exist, primarily because the German government does not keep statistics on or make distinctions concerning religious affiliation. In order to make estimations, statistical details about foreign nationals from predominantly Muslim countries and the number of naturalizations of former Turkish citizens are taken into consideration (Spielhaus and Färber 2006).

people who do not necessarily personally adhere to Islam; how to count Muslims is both a political question and a research dilemma (Spielhaus and Färber 2006). Among the two major branches of Islam, Sunni and Shiite, I focus on the Sunni branch, which represents approximately 90 percent of the Muslim prayer rooms in Berlin (Spielhaus and Färber 2006: 9).³

Berlin caters to a variety of organizations, mosques, and groups representing the varied interests of religious and secular migrants. Organizations specifically for Turks in Germany include Milli Görüş, DITIB (The Turkish Islamic Union of the Foundation for Religion), the followers of Kaplan (State of the Caliphate), the Refah Party, Süleymanci (Association of Islamic Cultural Centres), and Alevi organizations such as the Anatolian Alevi Cultural Centre (see appendix I). Religious spaces, such as mosques, provide services to the increasingly heterogeneous Muslim communities in Europe.⁴ Although it is estimated that around 40 percent of the Muslim population of Turkish origin in Germany visits a mosque at least once a week, there are no reliable figures; many prefer to pray at home, others see mosques as a social space where ethnic social networks are strengthened.⁵

Currently, the building of mosques is a highly controversial topic in several European cities. One of the central themes in the contestation over sites of worship is the semiotic role that such buildings play in the

³ Shiites are also known as Shia Muslims. There are several differences between the religious practices of Shiites and Sunnis, including conceptions of religious authority and interpretation, as well as the role of the Prophet Muhammad's descendants. Around 85 percent of the worlds' Muslims are Sunni, and 15 percent are Shiite, although this estimate fluctuates slightly. According to the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Religious Monitor (2008) interview sample of 2,000 Muslims in Germany, 69 percent classified themselves as Sunnis, 9 percent as Shiites and 8 percent as Alevis. Notably, 11 percent answered "other denomination" and 8 percent "don't know/no answer." Not all Muslims recognize Alevis as fellow Muslims. Sufi orders embrace mystical practices and can fall within either the Sunni or the Shia tradition. Some Sufis may accept teachings from both traditions.

⁴ Compared to the considerable focus on Sunni Muslims, there is relatively little focus on the around 60,000 Alevi in Berlin, a large percentage of whom are Kurds. One may question whether this is related to their relatively low visibility. The Alevi communities use *Cem* (cultural houses) rather than mosques. Because Alevi have fewer food and dress restrictions, this religious community is visible in Berlin in what may be considered "cultural" terms, including through restaurants with music performances and staff in ethnic clothing, but less in visibly "religious" terms. For example, only a few Alevi women in Germany wear the headscarf. Yet this perception of invisibility is only true to some extent: Mandel (2008) points to how the Alevi habit of concealment in Turkey (due to security concerns) has been broken in Berlin where they can be open and visually mark their cultural centers.

⁵ According to a study by the ZfT (Centre for Turkish Studies) 42 percent of Muslims with a Turkish background visit a mosque once a week; 21 percent never, or almost never; and 7 percent on holidays (Şen & Sauer 2006, 28).

articulation of opposing social identities in urban spaces. The construction of mosques continues to be controversial partly because it lends a greater visibility to Islam in the landscape of European cities, which to some conveys the message that the new community is “here to stay” and thus takes on a symbolic significance.⁶ In general, funding for building mosques is a topic of government concern as it relates to questions of the potential future religious, social, and political influences of Islamic donors both within and outside Europe. The heightened visibility of Islam has also led to vehement discussions because it raises questions of who belongs in the city, what the role of religion should be in the city, and whose city it is.

The perceptions and experiences of the young users of mosques and religious organizations have not yet been the subject of serious research. This chapter attempts to deal with part of this gap by examining how ideas and perceptions of Muslims spaces, and in particular mosques, are integral parts of the process by which young people craft a religious Self. Thus, I seek to further an understanding of mosques as “sites of practice” (de Certeau 1984) for young Muslims in their daily urban life. This involves going beyond the historical, architectural and geographical mapping of mosques. The analysis includes an examination of the social services and facilities (such as language and computer courses and women’s reading groups) available in those spaces, and of which groups take advantage of these services and facilities.⁷ However, my focus here is on the social processes involved in a young person’s adherence to and use of religious places, such as mosques. Who uses which religious spaces and why? What factors are at play in the processes through which young Muslims identify with religious social spaces in Berlin? What can an understanding of mosques as spaces contribute to our understanding of the religious identifications of youth in Berlin?

When personal experiences and meanings are attached to religious places, the place of the mosque or religious organization becomes a social space. The distinction de Certeau makes between space and place is

⁶ See for example Cesari (2005a), Eade (1996) and Saint-Blancat and Schmidt di Friedberg (2005). In Berlin, Jonker (2005) has examined how the struggle over the Mevlana mosque, situated only meters away from the well-known subway station Kottbusser Tor, went on for several years. According to Jonker, the conflict escalated due to opposing interpretations between the municipality and religious leaders about the use and nature of the space, in addition to cultural misunderstandings.

⁷ Spielhaus & Färber’s edited volume (2006) provides a good overview of such services and facilities in Berlin mosques.

crucial here. “Place” is the elements of the location, the “instantaneous configuration of positions” (de Certeau 1984, 117). “Space,” on the other hand, is the effect of “the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities” (ibid.). In short, it is “a practiced place” (ibid.). This distinction points to the significance in understanding the youths’ social and cultural experiences of the (religious) city in terms of space, rather than place. Social practices reside in, make use of, and give social meaning to or a “sense” of places. The social and cultural existence of a place is the arrangement of “spatial practices” or “proxemics.” These practices are organized at different levels, from urban built environments to the micro level of daily social events, such as the experience of walking (Stokes 1994, 22). The city is saturated with religious spaces that are variously experienced by Muslim youth. In order to understand how some places become religious spaces we need to pay attention to people’s social practices and experiences.

My focus in this chapter is twofold. First, the chapter introduces the city of Berlin and the religious organization MJD, which together form the main contexts for this book. I ask how the city as a space and social arena of interaction is continuously shaped, changed and imprinted by new social practices introduced by a new population – migrants from Muslim countries. With time, this population is also changing its relationship to the city and country of residence. I argue that these imprints on the city need to be understood as the visibilization of social practices that, on the one hand, seek to fulfill certain everyday social and religious needs, and, on the other hand, establish social spaces with which migrant populations in Berlin identify. Second, the chapter takes a close empirical look at the social spaces of mosques as contested spaces, both for non-Muslims and for Muslim youth. My focus here is on how religiously devoted Muslim women in Berlin experience and relate to mosques, and how they are establishing their local religious social spaces through this process. This will shed light on how particular spaces in the city, such as mosques, inspire associations and usage patterns that differ not just between the different groups of people living in Berlin, but even between members of what otherwise could be considered a homogeneous group of “young Muslims.” The various ways that youth understand mosques draws our attention to the process through which mosques as places are becoming heterogeneous and complex spaces. Here, I analyze young people’s narratives about their personal experiences of mosques, and consider how the stories transform these places into (subjective) spaces. In light of the

heated views aired in the media and by political actors and intellectuals about mosques and religious organizations, the wide range of experiences that young people have with regard to the same—and different—spatialized mosques, becomes a relevant research question.

The two parts of the chapter tell parts of the story of how the city as an oeuvre (Mitchell 2003) continuously emerges, and how people relate to the different social spaces available. While the historical or visual mapping of physical space calls to mind the idea of fixed references and measurements in the urban landscape, such mapping cannot summarize how people view their spaces (Chambers 1993). As Chambers eloquently states:

The city plan is both a rationalization of space and time; its streets, buildings, bridges and roads are temporal indices. It permits us to grasp an outline, a shape, some sort of location, but not the contexts, cultures, histories, languages, experiences, desires and hopes that course through the urban body. (ibid., 189)

Social relations and processes create places in a material sense, but simultaneously produce meanings that people connect to places (Massey 1994). Social space, which includes a personal relationship with the space, is both produced and maintained by discursive and material practices (de Certeau 1984). Different actors relate to urban religious spaces, such as mosques, in different ways that can be read as “spatial stories” (ibid.), or that can be understood in terms of “mental mapping.” The short narratives I present, combined with other ways that the youth recollect, share, perform, alter, form, and merge their experiences and understandings of Islamic movements, form part of how the young people in this study identify as Muslims and frame and make sense of their (religious) life in Berlin.

Changing Sociological Landscapes

City Spaces Phase 1: The Arrival of Non-European Guest Workers in Berlin

In 1777, following an official visit to Berlin in 1763–4, the representative of the Sublime Porte, Resmî Ahmed Efendi, reported to his Sultan Abdul Hamid I that “the population of Berlin recognizes the prophet Muhammed and would not be afraid to accept Islam” (quoted in Thomä-Venske 1988, 78). His visit was part of the effort to improve the economic, political and military relations between the Ottoman state and Prussia. Although the population of Berlin did not convert to Islam, smaller Muslim groups continued to exist in the city (ibid.). Some years later, the death of the Ottoman ambassador to Berlin Giritli Ali Aziz Efendi in 1798 marked the opening of

the Muslim cemetery at the Colombiadamm. The German government financed a wooden mosque for the Muslim prisoners of war in Wünsdorf (Brandenburg) in 1915, which was demolished in 1930 (Höpp 1997). A more organized Muslim society developed in the 1920s, with the founding of an Islamic community (*Islamische Gemeinde Berlin*) in 1922, in which Muslims of forty-one nationalities participated. It presented itself as an association of all Muslims residing in Berlin and Germany (Thomä-Venske 1988). Their efforts to construct a mosque on the Kaiserdamm failed for economic reasons. In 1924, the Ahmadiyya community, which was newly established, started the building of a mosque in Brienner Strasse. This mosque was in operation from 1926–7.⁸

Islam's presence in the broader German society gradually grew as part of an immigration process: Turkish and Kurdish guest workers arrived following the bilateral recruitment agreements signed between Germany and Turkey. During the 1950s, West Germany experienced a tremendous post-war economic growth with full employment by the 1960s (Green 2004). In 1961, Germany and Turkey signed a recruitment agreement in which the latter would provide guest workers to West Germany.⁹ This was shortly after the construction of the Berlin wall, thus ending the influx of East German labor. Labor migration did not become a topic of public discussion, which must be viewed in light of the fact that Germany needed foreign labor. Labor shortages were impeding economic growth and, consequently, living standards. Additionally, the agreement did not intend to introduce permanent residence in Germany for the migrants; the workers from Turkey should ultimately return to their home country after a period of two to three years, to be replaced by new workers. Even though the first generation of Turks and Kurds received social benefits and similar employment rights as German workers, they were not expected to be involved in German society outside of their work place (Helicke 2002). The workers from Turkey were generally housed in company-owned hostels. As the main concern of the workers was to save as much capital as possible in order to return to Turkey, their social lives were largely focused around the workplace and they lacked the social rootedness family life can offer. The German population perceived this first generation in particular as a group

⁸ The old Ahmadiyya Mosque, which was initiated by Muslim diplomats, was erected in 1927 in the borough of Wilmersdorf. It was badly damaged during the Second World War and was placed under preservation order in 1993.

⁹ In 1955, the federal government signed a recruitment agreement with Italy mainly benefiting the agricultural sector.

of homogenous “Turks.” This presumption of homogeneity among the guest workers, who also included Kurds from Turkey, was reinforced by their lack of family life and institutional support.

In Berlin, a large number of immigrants were more or less assigned to live in the Kreuzberg neighborhood, an area that in the late 1960s was scheduled for regeneration. Originally, the intention was that immigrants would only temporarily inhabit this densely built neighborhood, which comprised late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century houses built for working-class families who settled in Berlin during the industrialization period (Häussermann and Oswald 1997). Nonetheless, with the prolongation of employment contracts these soon became permanent residences. Rather than sending workers back after a couple of years to receive new “fresh” workers, as the recruitment agreement had originally intended, employers found it more efficient and productive to continue to employ those who had already settled and trained instead of “returning” them and receiving new ones.

Unemployment grew among the German population as a result of the oil crisis in 1973. The German ban on recruitment (*Anwerbestopp*), which barred further recruitment of overseas labor, made it more difficult for foreign workers to leave West Germany and re-enter on an employment contract.¹⁰ Fewer Turks and Kurds in Germany considered returning home a viable option, particularly in light of the continuing job offers from German industry. Instead, they made use of family reunification rules (*Familiennachzug*) and brought their wives or husbands and children over. From the end of the 1970s, an increasing number of non-working dependents—women and children—meant a corresponding increase in demand for basic social services, such as education and housing. From this period onwards, the media gradually expressed more concern about “foreign infiltration” (*Überfremdung*) and claimed that the “German boat is full” (Mandel 2008, 53).¹¹ The notion that Germans and Turks shared throughout the 1970s and 1980s, that the Turkish presence in Germany was simply a temporary phenomenon, turned out to be erroneous. This notion had long-lasting effects on the social position of Turks and Kurds in Germany, as policies that could have eased the social interaction between

¹⁰ The ban on recruitment remained in force until 2002.

¹¹ The term “*Überfremdung*” was also used by Nazis to describe Jews and other “undesirables” in the Third Reich (Mandel 2008). Chapter 3 discusses the negative stereotypes about migrants in German media.

the newcomers and the populations already living in Germany (like language courses) were postponed.

The Socio-Historical Situation of Migrants from the Middle East

While migrants in Germany are often understood as synonymous with “Turks,” and since the twenty-first century with “Muslims,” the category also comprises people from the Middle East. Here, I provide a brief account of the migration process from the Middle East, as several of the active members and leaders in MJD have parents who are originally from Egypt, while other participants have Palestinian backgrounds or are Kurdish refugees from Iraq and Syria.

The migrants with Middle Eastern backgrounds have a somewhat different socio-historical relation to Germany compared to the Turkish and Kurdish immigrants. It is difficult to give an estimate of the number of people of Middle Eastern origin living in Germany. Various sources indicate numbers between 280,000 and 400,000. These figures comprise citizens of Middle Eastern countries, ethnic Arabs who are naturalized German citizens, people with dual citizenships, and stateless Arabs (Al-Hamarneh 2008, 26). Most are originally from Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia, and Syria. The migration narratives of migrants from the Middle East tend to focus on the political and socio-economic situation of the countries from which they have migrated: people from Morocco and Tunisia have parents who came as labor migrants to Germany through the bilateral governmental agreements; most people from Palestine, Iraq, and Lebanon arrived as political refugees; and a large part of people from Syria and Palestinian Arabs came as students and stayed (*ibid.*).

There are approximately 14,500 Egyptian citizens in Germany (Baraulina et al. 2007).¹² Traditionally, Egyptian immigrants in Germany were predominantly male students from upper-middle-class backgrounds who began to arrive in the 1950s.¹³ This migration based on educational aspirations still takes place. Some of these migrants represent the religious intelligentsia who left Egypt in the 1950s after the attack on President Nasser. In Germany, they became part of the Islamic elite and founded mosques and

¹² Egyptian authorities estimate this number to 24,000 people in 2007 (Baraulina et al. 2007). None of these numbers include Egyptians who have acquired German citizenship. This migrant group has a high naturalization rate as well as a high percentage of marriage with Germans (Gesemann 1995).

¹³ Most Egyptian migrants in Germany study languages and cultural sciences, engineering, and natural sciences (Baraulina et al. 2007).

took over leading positions in several Muslim organizations. For example, the Islamic Community Germany (IGD) was first established as a mosque-building initiative in 1958 by Egyptian Muslim activists. Today, it has established branches in several German cities.¹⁴ It is thought to represent the Muslim Brotherhood in Germany. The presumed and sometimes proved connection between Egyptian Muslim activists and the Muslim Brotherhood has also had an impact on organizations with a large representation of Muslims with Egyptian backgrounds, such as MJD. The high number of youth in MJD with Egyptian backgrounds has undoubtedly had, and continues to have, an impact on the organization's characteristics and Islamic teaching. Another consequence of their presence is that many of the youth have high educational ambitions, the effect of which will be reflected upon throughout the book.

City Spaces Phase 2: Ethnic Businesses and Infrastructure

The gradual transformation from temporary workforce to settlement went hand-in-hand with the increase of "community" structures. By the mid-1980s, Kreuzberg's infrastructure was dominated by its Turkish and Kurdish population; small grocery stores and shops for household goods were set up to meet demands for familiar provisions from the migrants' country of origin. In an effort to prevent ghettoization, foreigners were banned from living in certain parts of the larger cities in the period between 1975 and 1977 (Green 2004), as it was believed that an area with more than 12 percent of foreigners would be "outside of the limits of tolerance of the infrastructure and social peace" (Bade 1994, 54). Yet this restriction had little practical effect, due to the simultaneous trends in family reunification. In contemporary Berlin, more than 25 percent of the residents of the city-district (*Bezirk*) of Neukölln, Wedding and Kreuzberg (restructured as Kreuzberg-Friedrichshain) are not German citizens.

With time, the first generation also faced social problems if they did return to Turkey. No longer considered "Turks" but "*almanyali*" ("German-like") by their relatives and neighbors in Turkey, the idea of return came to be not only an economic issue, but also a socio-cultural one since many no longer felt at home in Turkey (Mandel 1989). Throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, Kreuzberg became known as Europe's "Turkish ghetto" and

¹⁴ It was named *Islamische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland e.V.* in 1982. It opened Islamic centers in Nürnberg (1984), Marburg (1986), Frankfurt (1989), Stuttgart (1992), Köln (1998), Braunschweig and Münster (2001). In 2003, it maintained 12 of its own centers and was coordinating its activities with more than 50 other mosque associations.

tourist busses drove through the neighborhood to allow tourists to gawk at the streets filled with restaurants and shops with signs in Turkish, street markets, women with long coats and headscarves, and men with moustaches playing with their worry beads. At the same time as the most dynamic cultural and alternative scene was located in Kreuzberg, the ethnic population gradually became a more visible part of this neighborhood's urban image. Certain streets in Kreuzberg became (in)famous because of the establishment of businesses with names such as "Taksim" restaurant or "little Istanbul" hairdresser; today, these are well-known Berliner landmarks, with Wrangelstraße and Oranienstraße as oft-cited examples.¹⁵ Ethnic grocers, bakeries, newsstands, clothing stores, and specialist suppliers, including specialist travel agencies, and football clubs functioning as coffee shops open only to members, serve an ethnic community and at the same time visibly express the community's presence. Ethnic businesses are often family run, and ethnic networks—people from the same village, city or region in their country of origin—are often mobilized.

Figure 3. Fruit and vegetable stand at Kottbusser Tor, Kreuzberg. Photo: Synnøve Bendixsen

¹⁵ Taksim is an upper middle class area in Istanbul where the most popular shopping street is located.

The second generation continued the early tendency towards “ethnic businesses”—partly due to a lack of alternative job opportunities. According to the Center for Studies on Turkey (CfST) at the University of Essen, job security and independence are the most frequently mentioned reasons for the trend toward self-employment among Turks.¹⁶ Although Turkish-owned businesses often try to remain independent from German state control, entrepreneurship also represents a possible means of integration, as they need to operate according to rules defined by the German state. Berlin followed a trend found in most European metropolises wherein employment opportunities largely reflected ethnic, religious and social status. One consequence of this urban organization was that ethnicity became increasingly bound up with class. Saskia Sassen (1999), amongst others, argues that in global cities this tendency is reinforced, thereby to some extent preserving ethnic distinctions.¹⁷ Although not a global city, Berlin has several similar characteristics, suggesting that the fusion of ethnicity and class also takes place in cities not defined as global. Importantly, this process had already started with labor migration in the 1960s: two-thirds of Turkish migrants came from rural regions and when they arrived in Germany, they occupied mostly badly paid and unpleasant jobs. Consequently, they came to occupy the lowest socio-economic and occupational positions.

City Spaces Phase 3: “Immigrants” and “Turks” Become “Muslims”

Islamic religious markers have become more noticeable since the late 1990s, both through the increasing focus on Islam by the media and politicians and through the social practices of Muslims. Islamic graffiti “imprinting” on the Berliner urban landscape, such as “Muslims are the best. Long live Allah!” or “Muslims love best” (Kaschuba 2007, 83), challenge urban spaces of belonging.¹⁸ The number of what I call “religious businesses” in Berlin neighborhoods in Wedding, Neukölln, and Kreuzberg has increased

¹⁶ Whereas the average unemployment rate in Germany was 10.1 percent in 2007, among the foreign population it was 22 percent (von Below and Karakoyun 2007, 34–42). In Berlin, it is estimated that the business start-up rate is twice as high among Turkish nationals as among Germans. In 2002, there were about 5,200 businesses owned by self-employed persons of Turkish descent (Pütz 2008).

¹⁷ Sassen (1999) compares this to industrial cities where more universal categories such as the working class, salaried employees, private employees, and civil servants are reinforced, thereby diminishing—at least to some extent—ethnic and cultural differentiation.

¹⁸ “*Muslime sind die Besten. Es lebe Allah*” and “*Muslime lieben am besten*,” author’s translation.

over the last ten years. This includes the introduction of more fast food restaurants with signs advertising “*halal döner*” (kebab made with meat slaughtered according to Islamic dietary laws), Islamic butcheries, and cafes with signs that say “no alcohol to be drunk here.”¹⁹ Many restaurants in these neighborhoods also have “Ramadan specials” where anyone can get a complete meal for five Euros for *Iftar* (the first meal at the end of a day of fasting during Ramadan). Information on which of the “Turkish” or “Arabic” *Imbiss* (snack bar) are religiously “correct” is passed via word-of-mouth among religious customers. Internet sites offer lists over which additives are religiously acceptable to eat and which groceries one should avoid due to the availability of pork products in one form or another.²⁰

Overall, the previous and more general immigrant identity has become more characteristically Muslim and is increasingly competing for a position in the public sphere. In the Neukölln neighborhood, Islamic books, CDs with readings of the Koran, “religious” toothbrushes, candies without gelatin, Muslim newspapers in German (*Islamische Zeitung*, IZ), Mecca Cola, a guidebook for food purchasing for Muslims in Germany, and hijab-Barbie (Barbie with a headscarf) can be bought while listening to Yusuf Islam or Ammer 114 (a German convert who is an “Islamic” hip hop artist – the number refers to the amount of verses in the Koran). By creating a particular atmosphere in the shop and in the neighborhood, shopkeepers can establish a religious brand and reputation among their customers. This also illustrates an increased commodification of Islam, through which the religious economic market turns piety into a commodity.²¹ Partly, “religion becomes something which can be bought and sold” (Lukens-Bull and Calbeck 2006, 307). At the same time, this should not be dismissed as merely a commodification of or capitalization on religious

¹⁹ Permission for the slaughtering of meat in the correct Islamic way is the result of a long process of negotiation with the German government. Butchers can also apply to an Islamic organization for a certification that they sell *halal* meat. Still, regardless of whether a butcher has a certificate, there are discussions among Muslims about which butcher is “really” *halal*.

²⁰ Many groceries contain the additive E441 (used in ice cream, chocolate, candies and different food products), which is produced using pork skin. E47-E474 also contains pork products.

²¹ Mandel (1996) has described how shopkeepers in Kreuzberg “use” the fear of *haram* (forbidden) meat and what is considered obligatory or *halal* (permitted) to their advantage. The result is an increase in shops that cater exclusively to Turks, creating a Muslim space in Germany, subdivided by Sunni or Alevi. This commercial orientation, she points out, also creates a place for migrants on their own terms. For a discussion about the commodification of religious items, see in particular Lukens-Bull and Calbeck (2006), and Metcalf (1996).

Figure 4. Bakery close in Reichenbergerstrasse, Kreuzberg. Photo: Synnøve Bendixsen

objects, because when someone buys the item she or he ascribes meaning to it, through which the object again may become a religious article.

The increasing number of young women donning the headscarf has resulted in the introduction of women-only hairdressers in these districts: the windows are covered to protect those inside against the glances of passers-by, and men are prohibited from entering. Wedding dress shops offer what is considered to be correct Islamic white dresses with matching headscarves. Allegedly, the assortment and prices of headscarves at the “Turkish market” situated on Maybach-Üfer (Kreuzberg) on Tuesdays and

Fridays can compete with those found in Istanbul. In recent years, the market has been renamed “*BiOriental*,” which plays on the educated middle class Berliner preference for organic (*Bio*) products and Germany’s traditional, rather fetishist, fascination for the “Orient.” Will the renaming cause a social upgrade of the market—making the claiming of space by certain businesses and consumers more acceptable? It remains to be seen, but the saying goes that the gentrification of a neighborhood is most visible when an organic grocery (*Bioläden*) moves in.

Gender-divided wedding parties or henna parties (engagement parties) are held in otherwise public spaces by covering windows from the gaze of outsiders, thus enabling women to dance with spaghetti strap dresses and without headscarves. German public swimming pools offer “women only” hours, which are frequently used by young veiled women and sometimes by their mothers. Young well-educated Muslims are establishing Internet platforms for Muslims in Berlin that collect information on religious, social, and political topics, and present ongoing projects in Berlin. Other educated women are establishing Muslim kindergartens or work as teachers in Islamic schools. These creative inventions and initiatives indicate

Figure 5. “Light of the Orient”, wedding dress shop in Wedding. Photo: Synnøve Bendixsen

how, as Göle points out, “Islam carves out a public space of its own, embodied in new Islamic language styles, corporeal rituals, and spatial practices” (Göle 2006a, 6). In Europe, it is also a consequence of civil, societal, and even market forces through which Muslim actors create “Muslim space[s]” (Metcalf 1996, 2), seeking visibility and legitimacy in the national public sphere.²²

Simultaneously with the carving out of religious urban spaces there has been a general re-categorization of Muslim migrants in the media and political debates. While a large part of this population used to be categorized as “Turkish” or (more rarely) “Kurdish,” or as “migrants,” they are now categorized as “Muslims,” independently of whether they would define themselves as Muslim or not. Consequently, the “immigrant” and his or her children and grandchildren are increasingly viewed as part of a (homogenized) “Muslim community,” the content of which is defined by non-Muslim media, politicians and even researchers. This reduction of a heterogeneous population to a simplified notion of “Muslim” denies part of the population the right to be viewed and evaluated as a worker, mother or father, musician, or writer, etc.

The discursive change from “migrant” or “Turk” to “Muslim” must be seen in light of at least two developments. First, by now it is a truism that the relationship between the (Christian) West and the (Muslim) East took on a new (“religious”) dimension in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in New York in 2001, Madrid in 2004, and London in 2005. This new dimension was also a factor in the categorizations of the “migrant” population in Europe as “Muslims.” Debates on conflicts of interest, social problems, and immigration in European cities generally shifted to a cultural and symbolic level. Although the media turned to the image of Islam as the enemy after these global events in particular, Schiffauer (2006a) suggests that the negative focus on Islam and Muslims was already latent. These events provided legitimate reasons for expanding on the enemy images.²³ What is clear is that in the last decade, political actors, media, and scholars have centered their attention on assumed Islamic particularities. Second, the increase in visible religious community structures, such as prayer rooms and mosques, evidences the end of the German and

²² Such “Muslim spaces,” Metcalf (1996) maintains, include the use of certain spoken and written Arabic words (such as “*Bismillah*” [in the name of Allah]) and photographs of calligraphy in homes.

²³ I discuss media and public opinion about “Muslims” in Germany and the effect of these discourses on the youths’ identification processes in chapter 3.

Turkish “myth of return” of the guest workers. Islam has become part of the city and its migrant population in a more visible manner. This brings to the fore questions concerning the relationship between visible religiosity and the urban. For a long time it has generally been presumed that modernization, including urbanization, would mean a decline of religious involvement. People in large cities and administrative and industrial centers were supposedly most likely to be less religiously involved.²⁴ Whether or not one agrees with the idea that religiosity or the role of religion has diminished, there has been a broad acceptance of the idea that the urban has been considered a non-space for religious markers, with the exception of church buildings and spires—which in any case to a large extent have become socio-historical rather than religious urban markers.

Religion and the Urban

Urbanization and industrialization in the nineteenth century transformed the social role of religion in the cities: secularization and a religious “indifference” dominated among the professional and commercial middle class in Germany. The movement of people from the country and into cities and industrial areas made the populations in urban centers in Europe more diverse. For the newcomers to the city, priests and ministers became important spokesmen and social network figures in ethnic communities. Churches were frequently the main basis for the communal life of the immigrant and adherence to a church represented a point of identification. As McLeod asserts: “To be a Catholic, a Protestant—or, for that matter, a socialist—was not only to believe certain doctrines, and behave in certain prescribed ways. It was to belong to a community with its own sense of common identity, and vigorous pursuit of common interests” (McLeod 1997, 78). It seems that already in the 1830s and 1840s the educated middle class in Berlin was rather detached from the church: “They belonged to the church, but each person made up his own religion. For the practical man, the church was an acceptable form of external display,

²⁴ The secularization thesis, to which Berger’s “The Sacred Canopy” (1967) is central, holds that societies were “progressing” through modernization and rationalization, and in this process religion would lose its authority in daily life, society, and governance. Berger later strongly modified his view of the decline of religion. Some scholars have argued that secularization is a sociological “myth,” or that Europe is the “exception,” but this discussion is beyond the scope of this book.

especially for family celebrations" (*ibid.*). However, the "home-based piety" could still be found among the lower middle class, while aristocrats as well as clerks and officials remained relatively church-oriented. Still, religious observance in several German cities was at such a low level that the variation within the urban population mattered less: "there seemed to be a clear contrast between the secularization of the cities and the piety of many peasant populations" (*ibid.*, 102).

Historically, the design of places of worship in urban spaces has represented the most controversial and symbolically laden theme when it comes to religious acceptance of a minority religion. Migrant groups settling in a new milieu ultimately have to organize their own places of worship within a particular historical and socio-political context. Such religious claiming of space has often not taken place without conflicts and disputes. The organization of Islam in Europe is no exception, although the scale of the conflicts may well be new. Muslim migrants in Europe had already begun setting up mosques in the early 1970s, both to create a supportive community structure and to raise children so "they would not be lost" to the "other" culture. The organization of collective Muslim identities and increased Muslim representation in urban public spheres have caused anger and anxiety in European societies. This response is admittedly not only because of their religious Otherness as a non-Christian religion or Islam as an "un-European" religion, but also because public expressions of religiousness position them as the 'other' of European secularity (Casanova 2006). Indeed, in Berlin, as in many other European cities, the influence of the Christian church declined significantly in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the 1960s, immigration to the cities did bring about a growing religious diversity. However, simultaneously as the religious culture in West Berlin was increasingly fragmented, in the 1970s and 1980s more and more West Germans declared themselves to be without religion and did not replace their rejection of religion with any other rival belief systems. As McLeod (1997, 146) asserts: "In an age of individualism more people felt strong enough to go it alone – and indeed resented the loss of freedom that any kind of commitment seemed to entail." Thus, the Muslim youths' everyday life must also be contextualized as positioned in an urban space where historically faith and religiosity have been seen as out of place.

At a national level, although Germany has been "secular" for some time, the religious authorities were not separated from the political powers as early as in other West European countries such as France and

the Netherlands. While Germany adheres to the concept of secularism, it is not radically secular in the French style (French: *laïc*). The Christian roots of the society are still apparent: there is no strict separation between religion and politics, and the Christian churches and the Jewish community have official representatives in social and political committees. Christian churches, and in particular Protestant churches, continue to be involved in public initiatives, including the construction of the German national education system in the nineteenth century (Mannitz 2004a).²⁵

That the position of the church in Germany is privileged is a fact often ignored (Schiffauer 2006a). It has been suggested that the problem Muslim organizations face in Germany is related less to whether or not Germany is a secular society and more to Islamic religious institutions wanting similar rights as the church. The German Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) guarantees religious freedom, including freedom to create religious communities. Such religious communities have the right to organize and determine their internal structure and decision-making process, and have the right to participate in the political life of Germany. However, to benefit from the rights associated with these provisions, the religions have to be registered as “public law corporations” (*Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts*). Achieving this status entitles them to receive a share of the religious tax revenues that the state collects from their members, to operate as a civil service employer, to apply disciplinary power, and to produce documents (Warner and Wenner 2006). It also includes other benefits, such as the right to be consulted on relevant public policy matters. Regulations on the prerequisites for registering as a religion includes that it must “be an established church,” “have a hierarchical organization,” and have its clergy be “appointed independently.” These rules exclude Sunni Islam from being a recognised corporate religion in Germany. Religions that have achieved this status include the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and Judaism. None of the many Islamic associations are public law corporations, but are instead registered as associations (*eingetragener Verein e.V.*) or as foundations (*Stiftung*). This status conveys some benefits, but these do not approach those afforded to public law corporations. Because Islamic communities in Germany have no public legal status as religious communities, they are not allowed to open schools or social

²⁵ In the federal district of Northrhine-Westfalia, churches run 80 percent of the kindergartens (Karakaşoğlu 2003b, 121).

activities with financial support from the state.²⁶ However, in Berlin Milli Görüş was allowed to establish a German Islamic school.²⁷

“Trust in God” is referenced in the preamble to the German constitution as a common moral basis and, in contrast to France, religious education is still guaranteed as a subject in state schools.²⁸ Berlin and two other federal states are exempted from this. After the “honor killing” of a young Turkish woman in 2005, the government of Berlin introduced a non-religious ethics course the following year. In 2009, there was a referendum on whether students should be allowed to choose between ethics and religion classes.²⁹ Ethics class is compulsory, while religion classes are optional extra courses. The debate prior to the referendum was less about whether or not God should enter the classroom, and more about how Muslims fit into Berlin and, ultimately, whether religious teaching fosters or hinders tolerance. Perhaps indicatively of Berlin’s long secular tradition in contrast to south Germany, the proposal was rejected, with a low 29.2 percent of all eligible voters casting a ballot.

Structuring Islamic Communities

In Germany, several of the many Muslim organizations are not hierarchically—or even horizontally—linked to each other. In contrast to the situation of the Catholic and Protestant Evangelical Churches in Germany, there is no single organizational focal point for the adherents of Islam. Islam being a decentralized and generally non-hierarchical religion that

²⁶ In 2000, a German court ruling granted the Islamic Federation Berlin (IFB, *Islamische Föderation Berlin e.V.*, an organization of mostly Turkish Muslims in Berlin) the right to outline and implement a curriculum for Islamic instruction in the public schools of Berlin, with the prerequisite that the curriculum complies with Berlin school laws and is supervised by the school administration.

²⁷ This was followed by other Muslim organizations with different religious, social and political agendas to demand similar institutions, including the Turkish state’s Diyanet (short for *Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği*, or DITIB), and the Directorate of Religious Affairs.

²⁸ The German Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) guarantees every person the right to express her or his opinion in words, written material, and pictures. Article 4 [Freedom of faith, conscience, and creed] in the German constitution states that “(1) Freedom of faith and of conscience, and freedom to profess a religious or philosophical creed, shall be inviolable. (2) The undisturbed practice of religion shall be guaranteed.” From online access of the German constitution: www.iuscomp.org/gla/statutes/GG.htm#4, accessed August 10, 2008.

²⁹ The “Reli” campaign was led by Christoph Lehmann and backed by Chancellor Angela Merkel and her ruling center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party, the Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the churches. The city-state’s government ruled by the Social Democratic Party (SPD), and the Left Party dismissed the proposal, arguing that all students should follow ethics classes in order to learn a common set of values.

has multiple and often competing schools of law and social requirements can partly explain this.³⁰ While German media and government are more concerned with the population being “Muslim” than with their ethnic background, ethnicity frequently plays a role when it comes to Muslims’ emotional and structural adherence to mosques and religious communities. Nevertheless, in realizing the need for longer term planning, some mosque representatives have increasingly been working together in order to achieve political recognition from German authorities. Over the past ten years, there has been an increase in cooperation and communication between the ethnically oriented mosques and the religious organizations, partially because a new generation is now more active within the organizational structures. Simultaneously, both the Turkish and German states have continued to try to bring Muslims under a greater degree of state control. In 1994, the Islamic Council for the Federal Republic of Germany (*Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland*) was established on the model of the Central Council of Jews in Germany. It aspires to represent the needs of the Muslim community by operating within a German legal framework.³¹

Established in April 2007, the Co-ordination Council of Muslims (*Koordinierungsrat der Muslime*, KRM), includes the four largest Muslim umbrella organizations: the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (*Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland e.V.*, ZMD), the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (*Turkish-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion e.V.*, DITIB, which represents 52.3 percent of organized Muslims with Turkish backgrounds), the Council of Islam (*Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik e.V.*, IRD) and the Association of Islamic Cultural Centers (*Verband der islamischen Kulturzentren e.V.*, VIKZ, which represents 13.6 percent of organized Muslims with Turkish backgrounds). (For a short explanation of these organizations, see appendix I). The Co-ordination

³⁰ It should be added that Shiites are much more centralized and hierarchical. However, there are few Shiites in Germany and in Europe in general. In contrast to Catholicism, Sunni Muslim religious leaders are not in possession of any enforcement mechanisms to ensure obedience from their adherents; there are no sacraments in Islam that can be withheld from Muslims in order to achieve obedience towards the imams or other “clerics” regarding policy decisions that the imams encourage or condone. The same is true of Shi’a Islam (Warner and Wenner 2006).

³¹ This Council can be said to have adopted the religious, social, and political discourse in Germany. Helicke (2002, 186) argues that the Council frames its discussions “in terms of human rights, modern individual needs, religious freedom, and human dignity, concepts which the German state and court system can understand.” A discussion of the institutional spaces made available for Islam in Germany is beyond the scope of this book.

Council attempts to coordinate the interests of the member organizations and represent them vis-à-vis the state and the public. According to their own estimates, the Co-ordination Council of Muslims represents around 410,000 believers from approximately 1,530 mosque organizations (Şen & Sauer 2006).³² However, as Barbara John (2007, 63) argues: “The direction that Islam will take in Germany, is decided neither by the gathering at the Islam conference [DIK, *Deutsche Islam Konferenz*] nor by the Co-ordination Council of Muslims [KRM] of the affiliated umbrella organizations.”³³ The role of Islamic communities and organizations has changed over time, in relation not only to the alteration of the status of migrants, but also in relation to the social and religious needs of the younger generation born in Europe. In most European cities, there are an increasing number of social and cultural events taking place within mosques and religious organizations. According to Cesari:

Such events tend more and more to be aimed at both the Muslim and the non-Muslim populations of a residential area. This inscription of the religious at the heart of non-religious activities is often incomprehensible to European secularised minds for whom the religious is most often confined to places of worship. (Cesari 2005a, 1028)

Since the mid-1990s, there has been some effort in Germany to make mosques more open to non-members. This has included more contact with other organizations in the neighborhood (Jonker and Kapphan 1999). The annual “open mosque day” (*Tag der offenen Tür*) arranged on October 3 (the day of unification and a public holiday in Germany), is part of a strategy to make the mosque symbolically more open.³⁴ Nonetheless, when

³² There are around 2,500 to 2,600 Muslim mosque organizations in Germany (Şen & Sauer 2006, 35). Most of these belong to one of the umbrella organizations that represent the “Muslim population.”

³³ Author’s translation from German: “In welche Richtung sich der Islam in Deutschland entwickelt, das bestimmen weder die in der Islamkonferenz Versammelten noch die im Koordinierungsrat der Muslime zusammengeschlossenen Dachverbände”. In September 2006, the Federal Minister of the Interior, Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble, initiated the German Islam Conference which aimed to function as a negotiation and consultation process between representatives of the German state and Muslim communities. The state initiative has proved controversial and has been subject to much critique—in particular in terms of the Muslim and mosque actors that have been included and excluded. See the homepage of the German Federal Ministry of the Interior, “*Deutsche Islamkonferenz*,” at www.bmi.bund.de, accessed March 18, 2007.

³⁴ October 3 has been the Day of the Open Mosques (TOM, *Tag der offenen Moschee*) in Germany since 1997, when it was initiated by Council of Muslims in Germany (*Zentralrat der Muslime*, ZMD). On this day, several hundred mosques in Germany, and 15–18 mosques in Berlin, keep their doors open for visitors and put on a special program for

explaining my research I often received comments from non-Muslim Germans who were surprised and asked whether I had access to mosques. This suggests that there are ongoing, and in some cases well-founded, presumptions that mosques are not “open” to non-Muslims.

Practicing Muslims have always been able to choose between communities and organizations with various interpretations of Islam. Today, this range is larger than ever. The numerous associations, foundations, informal study circles, and institutions (mostly divided along ethno-national lines) contribute to a diversity of interpretations and practices among Muslims. To some extent, Islamic organizations and communities compete to attract followers in Western settings.³⁵ Compared to the first generation of migrants to whom kinship and regional loyalties were more crucial in the choice of religious spaces, the younger generation born in Europe is largely leaving these loyalties behind. Instead, and to varying degrees, they select among and switch between Islamic organizations depending on different considerations, including their personal, familial, ethnic, national, age, and political and religious outlook. Muslim youth are not merely passive consumers of religious messages, but participate in the process of interpretation and choosing where to participate in religious practice. In this process, as I will suggest, they relate to mosques as social spaces and incorporate religious communities in their mental mapping of Berlin.

Mosques: Contested Religious Spaces

The social role the mosques play for migrants, particularly in establishing social networks, has been recognized in social research since the 1970s. Within the mosques, participants can find sport clubs, women's and youth associations, “after-school” or computer help, and advising and translation

non-Muslims. The mosques arrange tours of the mosques, podium discussions, book exhibitions, and food stands.

³⁵ To analyze the complex relationship between Islamic communities, European states, and Muslims, Yükleyn (2007, 56) introduces a heuristic tool he calls the “Islamic market model.” With “religious market” he points to the “production, reproduction, and distribution of religious views in a population” (ibid., 52). In Europe, there is a strong correlation between the religious communities and organizations, religious demands from the community, and the various state policies through which a religious market emerges (ibid.). Yükleyn argues that religious organizations constitute a “Muslim Faith Market” where the different spaces become known for a field of specialization (such as the teaching of Koran recitation among the Süleymanci) and thus attract a particular type of followers. Although the term remains controversial, the concept points to how various Muslim spaces emerge (or perish) in interaction with the demands from Muslims.

agencies (Jonker and Kapphan 1999; Spielhaus & Färber 2006).³⁶ In Berlin, extensive research on Muslim religious organizations and prayer spaces at the end of the 1990s estimated that there were 80 mosques in basements, shops, factory halls, decrepit buildings, and private apartments (Jonker and Kapphan 1999). More than 70 percent of these were located in Kreuzberg, Neukölln, and Wedding. Today, there are approximately 120 mosques or prayer spaces, many of which have moved beyond their former locations, and a few of which are built with minarets (Spielhaus & Färber 2006).³⁷

Despite the increase in the number of mosques, the construction of religious buildings with minarets remains particularly controversial. German media commonly cite fears of either “Islamization” of Berlin neighborhoods due to an increased visibility of a religious community, or of alienating the non-Muslim population living in the area, as grounds for objections to the building of a new mosque. The increased visibility of Islam in the cityscape is perhaps less the result of an Islamization or an actual increase in religious adherence among the Muslim population, and more a consequence of religious communities moving out of hidden spaces and entering the “mainstream” area of the city. For Muslims who attend mosques, the architectural inclusion of purpose-built mosques in the cityscape may well bring with it an improved self-esteem (Kaschuba 2007). Religious sites represent new Muslim entries into the public sphere and provide symbolic references for an Islamic life in a city where the majority of the inhabitants are non-Muslims.³⁸ Nawar, a 17-year-old born in Berlin to Egyptian parents, told me that what she likes about Berlin is that “there are spaces for everyone here.” She added that Berlin is the only place in Germany where she would want to live, as the city offers her the necessary choices of living spaces.³⁹ Next, I look closer at how this

³⁶ A mosque is not a holy building like a church, but symbolically it is very import to Muslims. There are two types of mosques: the main mosque is called *jamaca* or *Cami*, and this is where the Friday prayer is conducted. The *jamacas* are often richly adorned. The other type of mosque is *masjid* or *Mescit*, houses of worship, and these are mostly local and smaller places. Nearly all mosques in Berlin are *Mescit*, but are nevertheless called *Cami* (Jonker and Kapphan 1999).

³⁷ Mosques and religious organizations and institutions are difficult to measure and estimates need to be handled with care (Spielhaus & Färber 2006).

³⁸ The increase of visible, purpose-built mosques may well include other (religious, economic, social and political) changes in the religious movements, a question which is beyond the scope of this book.

³⁹ Yet this is only true of the former West Berlin. There is a clear difference between how the migrant population relates to former East and West Berlin. Few migrant structures are established in the former East and it is only recently that some communities have started

plurality of religious spaces is felt and experienced by young women who practice Islam. After introducing three different religious spaces in which I conducted fieldwork, I continue to examine how young people experience the mosques as social spaces in Berlin.

Identification with Religious Social Spaces

Every Monday, young women, some alone and some in groups, leave a subway station in the middle of Kreuzberg and walk along a trafficked road, but deserted sidewalk, passing a window with the sign “Islamic Relief,” and stopping next door at a Muslim bookstore with green signs above the window.⁴⁰ As they enter, bells from the door are heard. Inside, bookshelves line the wall, and there is a tall counter under which veiled Barbies (named Fulla) and *halal* candies are arranged for sale.⁴¹ By 5 p.m. young women are still arriving here at MJD, a Muslim youth organization. On some days, there is a small line of young women waiting for the bathroom in order to perform their ritual washing for the prayer (*salat*). Others take off their shoes and enter the back room where they grab two green pillows—one to sit on and the other for their backs—before finding a place on the floor, chatting. The small, carpeted room is decorated with the 99 names for Allah in Arabic as a “wallpaper” border and has a blackboard on one of the walls. On a regular day, there are 10 youth, on a busy day there may be more than 25 young women from all over Berlin. For some it takes only a 20-minute walk to arrive, others have spent more than one hour on the

to build mosques in former East Berlin, and this turned out to be quite controversial. In October 2008, the Ahmadiyya community opened the Khadija mosque in former East Berlin (Pankow-Heinersdorf). It is the first purpose-built mosque in East Germany. In March 2007, there was a fire on the land that the mosque owns. The opening was accompanied by considerable police protection.

⁴⁰ Islamic Relief (IR) is an Islamic international relief and development nongovernmental organization that was founded in the UK in 1984.

⁴¹ For several years, MJD Berlin used the premises of the bookshop and publishing firm “Green Palace.” When this publishing firm was reorganized in 2010, they left the premises. Consequently, MJD had to find a new meeting place. For a while, MJD borrowed the prayer rooms of the Bosnian mosque in Kreuzberg, but after some months they started to hold their meetings in the rooms of the Bilal Mosque (where the German-speaking DMK is also located) in Wedding. For a while, MJD in Berlin had an additional meeting every second Wednesday for the older participants who wanted to work more intensively on religious education. My impression is that the teachings were more structured during these meetings. For example, participants were given homework consisting of memorizing parts of the Koran. My focus during my fieldwork was on the weekly meetings, which were more open to non-members and included a broader spectrum of participants in terms of age, and religious aspirations.

subway. The young women are here to attend a religious gathering with Islamic lectures, discussions, and Koran readings.

The meeting starts with a reading of the Koran, first in Arabic (with one woman correcting the Arabic pronunciation), followed by the translation of the reading in German and a *tafsir* (commentaries to the Koran). Afterwards, the girls do a round of introductions whenever there are newcomers. The girls and young women introduce themselves first by their name, age, nationality (which is often a mix), and what they do. The meetings continue with presentations about religious books and PowerPoint presentations on, for example, the contemporary value of different *ahadith* in their own lives in Germany. The participants (especially the women of Egyptian descent) tend to either have a middle class family background or be upwardly mobile due to their success in the educational system. Many of the women over 18 are university students; the younger ones are often pursuing *Abitur* (diploma from German secondary school qualifying for university admission), or are still attending compulsory school. The ethnically mixed group speaks German, not only during presentations but also in everyday friendships. If someone starts talking in another language, one of the other youth usually demands “German please!” as she also

Figure 6. Outside the MJD premises. Photo: Synnøve Bendixsen

wants to understand what the others are laughing about. Participants give the religious presentations themselves, and the meeting is led by a young woman of the same age as the participants. The young attendees often interrupt the presenter with questions, additional information or corrections. This willingness or expectation that the young people take on responsibility for organizing events, presenting religious topics, and providing Islamic knowledge to their peers is particular to this space, as I found out after visiting another youth group in Finnowstrasse, Neukölln.

The youth group Youth Club Assalam (*Jugendtreff Assalam*, IKEZ) in Finnowstrasse is situated some subway stops away from MJD. On Friday afternoons, young people walk towards one of the many courtyard mosques in Finnowstrasse, located in an area with residential apartment buildings. Turning left by a gas station, passing the green football field, the young women enter a tall gateway leading to the inner court. During some events, a sign that is drawn as a traffic light and says “STOP. Only for sisters. Entrance forbidden for brothers” hangs on the door leading down to the basement (where there is also a sport room). On a regular Friday, the girls and young women enter the main entrance, leave their shoes on the racks, bypass a small food shop and walk the stairs two floors up. Chatting amongst each other, most make jokes in Arabic while putting their chairs in a circle. The youth are here to listen to religious topics.

The youth organization in Neukölln exists within the mosque structures, makes use of imams, and attracts a more ethnically homogeneous group of participants, most of whom have an Arab background. The majority of the participants live in the surrounding neighborhood. Presentations are introduced by older, religiously educated women or an (male) imam, and are in German. During the religious lectures, the young people are expected to answer questions, but are rarely asked to contribute with presentations. Two of the youth leaders, Fahra (23) and her 25-year old sister “grew up with MJD” and brought with them the knowledge and some of the structure to this other youth organization. Fahra emphasized that the participants in this youth group cannot be expected to take on the responsibility of presenting religious themes and religious content, as she did not consider them as mature as the participants in MJD. Additionally, I noticed that even though the age range is similar to that in MJD, the educational and career ambitions are more limited. When introducing themselves at a Friday “spending the night” at the mosque, I observed that the participants had different future prospects compared to most members of MJD. The majority had no intention of pursuing *Abitur* (diploma from German secondary school qualifying for university

Figure 7. Inside the courtyard, entrance to the mosque and Youth Club Assalam. Photo: Synnøve Bendixsen

admission), and certainly did not plan to attend university. To the question of “where they see themselves in five years,” most mentioned marriage and children. This contrasts with MJD, where most emphasized future employment or educational plans.

During the round of introductions, I also observed that the youth did not mention their ethnic backgrounds. When I expressed my surprise about this to Fahra, she pointed out that although their parents came from Jordan, Egypt or Syria, “they are in any case all Arabs.” Compared to MJD, which emphasized their “multi-cultural” characteristics, Fahra explained that ethnic background is rarely a topic here because being of “Arabic descent” is the main identity marker. The panethnicity of “Arab people” includes all Arabized people of the world defined genealogically (tracing ones ancestry to the tribes of Arabia and the Syrian Desert) or, more importantly today, linguistically (Arabic being a person’s first language and by extension, their cultural expression).⁴² In several religious circles in Berlin, I noticed a feeling of pride among youth of Arabic descent,

⁴² The youth identify as “Arabic” to various degrees.

which was often primarily explained in terms of their mastering the language of the Koran. At the Youth Club Assalam, during the evening with food and fun, no one complained if someone chatted in Arabic—except Fahra, who asked everyone to speak German as their guest (meaning me) did not understand Arabic.

In contrast to the two spaces described above, further north of Neukölln one of the largest gatherings of Muslim women in Berlin meets on Sunday afternoons in the Al Nur mosque. This mosque, which is housed in a former factory building, is located on a road leading to an industrial area. It attracts a variety of Muslims from all over Berlin, including regulars from the two above-mentioned spaces. While most of the female participants are between 15 and 35 years old, older women are also regular attendees. The male and female participants have their own entrance and areas. Girls and women sit on the carpet on the second floor, where they can follow the charismatic Islamic preacher Abdul Adhim (who sits among the men on the first floor), through a live feed on a TV screen.⁴³ Many take notes while listening to the presentation, which is in German interspersed with Arabic quotations from the Koran. There are no introductions among the attendees; this event is not a space where the women are expected to get to know each other. Most sit in small groups of friends with different ethnic backgrounds, including German converts.⁴⁴ This is a different type of meeting from the two above, performed in a preaching style and with little opportunity for discussions and direct questions about what is being said. The presentations are often emotional, evoking Paradise and Hell, and sometimes tears can be seen in the eyes of the women. The lecture series is also available on CDs that are for sale. At the end of the sermon, women (and men) can write their questions on a piece of paper that is collected by a child and brought to the imam on the first floor. The women follow

⁴³ The Moroccan preacher Abdul Adhim is a controversial figure in Germany. He is widely known in Germany due to his sermons and commentaries on YouTube. In 2009, the German news magazine Focus presented him (under the name Abdel Hadim Kamouss) as one of the German Islamists and as a “star” on the Islamic scene. According to Focus, the Federal Criminal Police Office (*Bundeskriminalamt*, BKA) investigated “Kamouss and other extremists” in the social environment of the Al Nur mosque because they were supposed to have founded a terrorist cell. Kamouss was found not guilty in 2005 due to lack of evidence.

⁴⁴ I often heard of, and personally observed, German Muslims who converted in this mosque. Although probably exaggerated, the newspaper *Die Zeit* argues that each week five people convert to Islam in this mosque (*Die lässigen Gehirnwäscher*, by Julia Gerlach, October 4, 2007), www.zeit.de/2007/41/Islam-Prediger, accessed January 20, 2009. Youth I talked with argued that this was the main reason that the German media write so negatively about the mosque: it represents a space where Germans are becoming Muslims.

Figure 8. Entrance to the Al Nur mosque, Neukölln. Photo: Synnøve Bendixsen

the TV screen with high expectations as he reads the questions and provide answers.

These three religious groups represent a small selection of the diverse religious spaces available in Berlin. Young people who seek knowledge about Islam and who, to varying degrees, identify as Muslims, visit these spaces. However, what is taught, how it is taught, and what effect it has on the attendees varies. Although I spent most of my fieldwork with MJD, I participated to some extent in all three of the above-mentioned organizations, talking and listening to the women's narratives and experiences of the religious spaces they visited or that were part of their daily lives. These stories tell us about how religious places become spaces for individuals and part of the lived experience of the youth. Lived religion is partly made up of the practice of people turning these "stories" into everyday acts (McGuire 2007, 197). An understanding of these spaces is thus part of the larger picture of the youth's identification with Islam in Berlin and of how they craft a religious Self.

Current research on mosques in Europe frequently presents a homogeneous and uniform image of the various Muslim communities. This ignores how the ever-more complex, multiple and diverse religious

associations and organizations make it increasingly necessary for active users to find ways to orient themselves. Pluralization and decentralization are two characteristics of Islam that have become even more pronounced in the modern age (Casanova 2001). The complexity of Islamic organizations in Berlin is related to migration processes and the subsequent transnationalization and urbanization of religion, and to new educational possibilities for the generation born in Germany. Islamic teaching in Berlin is inspired by authorities in the Middle East, Turkey, or other European countries that are frequently made available on cable TV. The increasingly important role played by transnational Muslim networks, make cities like Berlin, Paris, and London part of interconnected religious cities.

Additionally, migration to Germany brought with it a new relationship between society and the religious community that migrated, as it was also a move from rural areas to an urban context. The urban represents a larger and more heterogeneous pool of religious options to choose between and a reduction of the social control of where individuals participate religiously. That access to religious education has widened, not only for families who have migrated, but also within countries such as Turkey and Egypt, also adds to the fragmentation of religious authority. The complexity of the global Islamic revival makes it difficult, for Muslims and non-Muslims, to generalize about Muslim institutions and religious movements and their participants and discursive practices. Looking more closely at the reasons the women give about why and where they participate is instructive for an understanding of the urban experience of religious lifestyles in contemporary Berlin. Through participant observation, I was able to gain an understanding of young people's experiences of mosques and religious organizations in Berlin, and of how the youth make sense of these institutions. I realized that in their engagement with the different religious spaces available, the city becomes a negotiated reality.

For these young women, most of whom were born in Germany and belong to the Sunni branch of Islam, mosques are places where they can perform their religious practices, pose questions, and meet people of the "same kind." Physical proximity remains relevant for women in choosing which mosques to attend regularly. In my experience, while some mosques are tied to a city-district and primarily have participants who live close by, other mosques attract Muslims from all over Berlin. Several of the women did not attend a particular mosque even if they "really like the imam" because "it's too far away" and so "it takes too long to get

there!" Nevertheless, when discussing where they would regularly go, in general the women stressed who were there (ethnicity, mixed or whether their friends or family attend), what was taught (the branches, which school of thought, and whether it is strict), and how it was done (i.e. how the gender division during the service is solved). I found that a combination of three aspects is particularly relevant to the youth's experiences of the religious spaces: their identification with their ethnic background, the reputation of the religious space, and the teaching and presentation style in the religious space. I discuss all of these aspects in the next three sections.⁴⁵

Ethnicity-Based Religious Spaces

Since the mid-1990s, young Muslims born in Germany have either called for modifications in the established mosques or established their own religious inter-ethnic, "multicultural" spaces where the ethnic or national belonging of their parents is put aside. For migrants, ethnic belonging has long played a special role in the organization of religious social spaces. Mosques and religious communities and organizations are most often divided by their members' ethnic or national origin. In Berlin, there are amongst other Albanian, Arab, Bosnian, Kurdish, Indonesian, Palestinian and Turkish mosques or religious associations. Ethnically or nationally oriented mosques conduct the religious services and presentations in Turkish, Arabic or Bosnian—all conforming with and reinforcing the ethnic community of the participants.

Over the last few years, there has been a tendency among younger generations of Muslims to distinguish between their parents' Islam, which they see as traditional, and the "pure" or "de-culturalized" Islam (Roy 2004) which focuses on the worldwide religious community—the *umma*. Although ethnicity remains important for some, others feel uncomfortable within the religious, ethnic, or national structures of their parents. As many younger Muslims make a sharper distinction between ethnic

⁴⁵ This should not be considered representative of all Muslims living in Berlin. Among the older women and men there may be other perspectives and factors involved. Insofar that people can change their loyalty or allegiance to one particular mosque or religious organization, this mental mapping has to be understood as fluid, not static. Perceptions can change with age, marriage, and because participants in a mosque change. Furthermore, although I focused only on mosques and semi-public religious organizations, there are also private Koran reading groups in homes, and some individuals prefer to practice their religion alone. I focus on those Muslim youth who choose to participate in a mosque on a regular basis, to learn about Islam and be part of a religious community.

and religious identification—in contrast to their parents' generation—youth consciously refuse the ethnicization of Islam as *fitna* (van der Veer 2004, 12), which in modern usage is frequently used to describe forces that cause fragmentation, chaos or discord within the Muslim community.⁴⁶

In this contestation, the language of religious instruction becomes particularly relevant: learning about Islam in German is crucial because many young people feel more comfortable with German than with Turkish or Arabic. In addition, gaining Islamic knowledge in German makes it easier to explain Islam to non-Muslim Germans. In organizations like Inssan and MJD in Kreuzberg, or the German-speaking Muslim group Berlin (*Deutschsprachige Muslimkreis Berlin e.V.*, DMK) in Wedding, the religious teaching, presentations, and discussions are in German, except for the reading of the Koran, which continues to be in Arabic, usually followed by a translation in German.⁴⁷ Several organizations and mosques attract a mixture of ethnic or national origins, including Egyptians, Pakistanis, Palestinians, Turks, and German converts, as they teach in German. The increase in the teaching of Islam in German also potentially plays a part in restructuring the relevance of an individual's ethnic background in the religious sphere.

Yet ethnically oriented mosques remain the majority, and for some youth their ethnic belonging continues to be relevant for their experience of the religious spaces. The following assertion from Azhaar (25) suggests this:

Sitting in a mosque in Wedding, Azhaar said: "Sometimes it is nice for me to also have presentations in Arabic. Like, I have attended DMK since 1998, and I am very pleased with it (...)." She was interrupted by women around her who laughed and teased her, saying that it sounded as if she was making a commercial for a washing product or the like. Azhaar continued: "But it is like that! But sometimes I also like to hear it in Arabic, and so I go to the mosque in Neukölln [the mosque in Finnowstrasse]."

Here, the importance Azhaar places on Arabic is less about it being the holy language of Islam, and more about Arabic as an emotional aspect of her religious practices. While a regular in a German-speaking mosque, Azhaar also attended an Arabic-speaking mosque—thus she alternated

⁴⁶ The word "*fitna*" comes from an Arabic verb that means to "seduce, tempt or lure." There are many variations of meaning, but usually they all refer to a feeling of disorder.

⁴⁷ There are around seven religious organizations in Berlin with German as the main language of instruction (Özyürek 2007).

between two different religious spaces depending, at least partly, on her emotional frame of mind.

Identification with one's own or parents' ethnic identity also emerged in situations where others criticized this ethnic group, as in the following exchange between Amal (22) and Latifa (17):

After the weekly MJD meeting during Ramadan, Amal and Latifa decided to go for the prayer in a small Turkish mosque located at Kottbusser Tor, and I joined them. When the prayer finished, Latifa looked displeased and said quietly: "That was quick!" I asked: "You think it was too quick?" Latifa responded: "I will tell you later." The room was completely filled by women speaking in Turkish. There was a line to get our shoes, and then a line to get out of the mosque. Outside in the courtyard, the men were standing around; some were waiting for their wives, sisters or mothers. Several cars were lined up along the road. Afterwards, at the subway station, Latifa and Amal talked. Amal said: "It is not Sunna to sing in between the prayer-cycles (*rekâts*) and that is not how it should be. (...) They were reading too quickly, you don't have time to understand what is being said! So you don't really know what you are reciting. You just do it. It is not the point to do it that quickly; one should also understand it." Latifa seemed a bit insulted. "It is like that among us," she claimed. She started to talk about which school of law DMK, which both of them were attending at the time, belongs to and which school she belonged to. Amal was not satisfied with this answer and said: "I will go and tell my husband [he is Arab] that the Arabs have really developed it. That theirs are better. He will be happy." Not leaving the topic, Latifa argued: "Maybe it is Sunna! You don't necessarily know every Sunna." Amal replied that she will ask at home. She was pretty sure that it is not. Latifa said: "It is how *we* do it. It's not wrong!" She added that the first time she was in a Turkish mosque it had not been as quick as today: "It was also quick, but not as much as here."

Growing up in Berlin with Turkish parents, Latifa had only recently become religiously active when I met her, and had not been very active in Turkish mosques before she came to the ethnically mixed MJD and DMK. She seemed equally surprised and displeased as the German convert Amal when we left the mosque. Yet, as Amal started to talk negatively about the "Turkish" way of reciting the prayers, Latifa gradually started to defend her "ethnic community's" way of praying. She began to talk about "among us," referring to her ethnic religious social field, and emphasized "we" when she said: "it is how *we* do it." Here she was not defending Islam, but was rather defending the way "her" Turkish compatriots practiced the Islamic prayer from criticism from a German convert (who was married to an Arabic imam). For Latifa and Amal, the space of the mosque becomes both Islamic and ethnically defined through this discussion, but whereas

Latifa felt emotionally attached to the ethnic religious group, Amal contested the correctness of how the prayer was carried out and insisted on the “un-Islamic” performance that took place in this ethnic religious social field.

The Reputation of Religious Spaces

Despite the continuation of ethnically homogeneous mosques and associations, cooperation across ethnic lines and between different Turkish mosques is on the increase. Simultaneously, most mosques and religious organizations are careful when selecting the partners they cooperate with. I have already mentioned the element of contamination within the media and the German public: if one organization that is considered “moderate” works with an organization that the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution considers “fundamentalist,” this can have negative consequences for the reputation of the “moderate” organization. The young participants discussed such fears of contamination and paid attention to the reputation of the mosques with which they were involved. The following discussion after the regular Friday service among women active in several Muslim organizations is indicative of this:

During a tea and cake session after the Friday prayers in the German-speaking mosque DMK, a woman expressed regret about the recent German newspaper reports in which DMK was suddenly tagged as “fundamentalist” and in which the German journalist argued that there were extremists in the congregation. One of the women, Heidi (31), who worked in DMK, pointed out that that they [DMK] had even voted no to a project initiated by Inssan [a project that included several Muslim organizations] because Milli Görüş was involved in the project.⁴⁸ They [DMK] wanted to be “careful with whom they cooperate, who is in the project,” she recalled disappointedly. Aishegül (31), who was personally familiar with both DMK and Inssan, responded: “Yes, but with Milli Görüş it’s just their reputation which is bad, not the people. And now DMK is also considered to be fundamentalist!” Heidi agrees, but points to the fact that DMK is not on the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*) list like Milli Görüş is. Aishegül pointed to the paradox: “DMK didn’t want to cooperate with Inssan. Now [after the newspaper article], maybe Inssan doesn’t want to cooperate with DMK. (...) They didn’t want to cooperate on the project promoted by Inssan because they were afraid of the cooperation they had

⁴⁸ The German-based Turkish organization Milli Görüş is on the list of the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and is viewed as a “threat” to German democracy. The Federal Office considers Milli Görüş to represent Islamic fundamentalism

with an organization which is under observation by the Protection of the Constitution, and now people might not be going to DMK, because they get afraid." She further hinted at the impossibility of following the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution in deciding whom to cooperate with or not since it kept changing who it believed to be suspicious and because it tended to have a weak basis for its accusations.

The above discussion shows how the "politics of contamination," or the "associative thinking" (Friedman 1999), which works both among majority and minority groups, affect internal Muslim networks, potential co-operations, and partners. It also affects individual mosque participant's choices about where to attend religious services, as many were afraid that the reputation of the mosque could "spill over" on to their individual person. Yet the discussion also indicates that a potential consequence of such associative thinking when it comes to Muslim organizations is that Muslim citizens may at some point stop trusting the pronouncements of German governmental bodies as they may believe that the decisions these bodies make are not based on facts, but rather on (exaggerated) fear.

Still, the reputation of a mosque, among Muslims and in the German media, played a role in the individual youths' decisions of where to receive Islamic instruction. For example, Aishegül told me that since she lived very close to the Al Nur mosque in Neukölln, she sometimes prayed there, but some of her friends, who would never visit this mosque, asked if she was not afraid that "they" (German media and authorities) might take pictures of her there. Some youth avoided mosques that were under surveillance by the German police or media because they feared being linked to "dangerous" spaces by the German government. Hawa (22) told Fatima the following when asked why she had not come to the overnight event at DMK that MJD had organized the previous Saturday:

My mother does not like me to sleep over at unfamiliar places. They are afraid of raids against the mosque. So much is happening these days. So much is written in the media about what is supposedly going on in the mosques. They [her parents] don't know what is being said there and who are there. There are so many mosques that are under surveillance. They think about my career. They don't want to risk me being put on a list with extremists. My parents are very social. They don't want to risk that I am

and to prevent immigrants from participating politically in German society. It also reports that the daily newspaper *Milli Gazete*, which is viewed as the main publication of Milli Görüş supporters, have published anti-German and anti-Semitic statements. See Yurdakul (2006, 155–157) and Schiffauer (2004). For a discussion on Inssan and the focus the German public has on this organization, see Bendixsen (2006).

connected with the wrong names. I would like to be more active, but the entire media storm is making us limit our activities. It is such a pity.

The current political discourse about mosques in Europe places certain restrictions on the leeway organizations and mosques have with regard to cooperating and interacting with each other, but they also restrict religious actors who need to know who is under suspicion at various times in order to decide how to relate to that particular space. Individual worshippers mainly hear about these issues via rumors, discussions, and “warnings” from other worshippers. The extent to which such reputations actually prohibit a person from attending a specific mosque depends on various individual and family factors, including one’s career aspirations and relation to German society.

Teaching and Presentation Style of Religious Spaces

In Islam, there are four major Sunni schools of jurisprudence (*madhahab*): the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi’i and Hanbali Schools. There are also different theological traditions (*Kalam*) and numerous varieties of congregations.⁴⁹ The Islamic “sub-communities” have particular political orientations, such as political Islam, or are influenced by movements such as Hamas or the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Whether or not the imam (who is often officially employed by the mosque) is a figure of authority and reverence for the young women was particularly important when they decide which mosque to attend regularly. However, I found that the young people I spoke to formed an impression of individual mosques based less on the particular theological tradition per se, and more on whether they considered the mosque to be “strict,” “relaxed,” or “open.” The young Muslim women seemed broadly knowledgeable about which religious discourses to expect in different mosques, and whether they would feel that these religious meanings and concepts would be imposed on them (by mosque participants, the imam, or religious leaders) in the various mosques. The following statements from the women I worked with illustrate this:

Sitting in a German-speaking mosque in Wedding, Jannan (20) said: “What I like about DMK is that it is so open, that they do not follow particular meanings [interpretations] which are then pushed on you. There is space for you and for different meanings [interpretations]. And it is not obligatory—you can come when you feel like it.”

⁴⁹ For a more detailed overview of the different schools of jurisprudence see e.g. Murata and Chittick (1994).

Another young woman, Riffat (20), started to attend the youth group *Jugendtreff Assalam* (Youth Club Assalam) in Finnowstrasse because her mother had heard from their relatives that it was a good place for youth:

I never go to Al Nur. They are so strict there! I have a friend who is there. Once, on a day trip, they were going to cross the Kurfürstendamm and everyone had to wear a headscarf! I do not wear a headscarf! With Finnowstrasse, when we are going out, like eating together, I don't have to wear a headscarf. At the other place, they immediately ask me why I am not wearing the headscarf. Here [Youth Club Assalam], the woman asks also sometimes "when are you going to wear it? Soon, *inshallah* (God willing)" and I always answer, "when I get married." Here they are completely relaxed. (...) It's the best here, they [the leaders] are also young, so they understand us better!

In contrast to Riffat, Helene (33) said the following about Al Nur:

I have been going to this mosque for one year. I used to go to the Turkish [mosque], but didn't like it because [they were too strict]. Here it is ok that I am not wearing the headscarf, they do not look down on you because of that. Because they say that the most important thing is that you pray. (...) The Turkish [mosques] put more stress on my wearing the headscarf.

Their awareness of expected behaviors within the individual mosques became relevant as they chose between the various religious spaces (Bendixsen 2007). What is striking is that rather than referring to schools of jurisprudence or to the Islamic authorities taught in the religious spaces, most of the women had a perception of whether a mosque was "open," a "free space," or "too fundamentalist," "closed," and "strict." Additionally, the youth's perception of the social expectations that other mosque participants place on them as female religious actors, specifically in regard to veiling, also (re)produces the relevance of gender and sexual difference to how they related to these spaces. This is partly based on individual perceptions.

The different appraisals of the same religious spaces suggest that personal orientations or preferences between various ways of reciting, performing the prayer, and conducting the Islamic teaching and seminars, also shaped the youths' mental mapping of the religious places and are part of the decision they make about which religious community to attend. As Riffat and Helene's statements point to, some women considered a place to be "too strict" while others believed that the very same place was "open," thus showcasing two different experiences of the space. Indeed, I found that many young women had very different views and feelings about the same mosque. Whereas Amal (23) said about Al Nur: "It's my favorite mosque, I became a Muslim there," and one of her friends, Ines

(20), often went there because she enjoyed the charismatic imam's Sunday sermon, another friend, Somaya (17), explained that she did not like the atmosphere in that particular mosque. This, she said, is because the "Arab girls" there "group" themselves together so she did not feel welcome. She preferred DMK, she said: "Even if it is so small. They could do something more with the rooms. But there, when you come, you feel that they welcome you." However, Aishegül (31) stopped attending DMK at one point, because she found their religious seminars and events "too boring."

The young women often visited different religious communities recommended by friends or family before they became regulars in one particular organization or mosque. Their choice of a mosque was explained with comments like "you learn so much there," "I like the atmosphere," "the imam there is highly respected," and references to how approachable they found the other mosque participants. The women avoided certain mosques for reasons such as, "the other women are not friendly," "they only have uninteresting presentations," "the imam prays too quickly during Ramadan," or "there, they only speak Turkish." While the latter statement is indicative of the importance of the ethnic make-up of the mosque and is also a practical matter (this person does not understand Turkish), and while some point to the authority of the religious leader in the mosque, frequently the characterizations of the spaces are emotionally based.

Almost all of the women I spoke with had a clear idea of their favorite or preferred religious space(s). Fatma (28) and Aishegül (31) were two exceptions in this regard. Aishegül (with Turkish parents) told me:

I never went to only one mosque. A lot of people go to one particular mosque, like to a Turkish or Bosnian one or so on, and belong to that. I don't do that. I go everywhere." Though Aishegül attended DMK more regularly, she said: "During Ramadan, we pray together, you know. And then I usually go to the one close to where I am. Sometimes I go to an Arab mosque. They recite very nicely, read beautifully. But there are always so many children there, and they make so much noise that sometimes you cannot even hear what they say. That is why I sometimes go to the Turkish mosque. The Turkish are really strict. And they have fewer children with them. They do it in 20 prayer cycles, but they read so quickly that you cannot really listen to it. The Arabs read 12 times, but they read it very slowly so it takes longer than with the Turks. It is so beautiful to hear. And sometimes I go to the Bosnian mosque. There, they read one each and then you can hear the differences in each reading and they read so beautifully, some are really good. That is, all are good, but some are even better. And you would like to see who is reading it. There you can see the men, because the women and men are not divided. They have only one room—that is why. And also there are not that many [attendees], so it is possible.

Prayer in Islam is highly formalized with certain components that are clearly defined, although there are some differences among the four schools of Sunni Islam. The five daily obligatory prayers comprise a specific number of prayer cycles (*rekâts*), which each have a sequence of positions.⁵⁰ Being a keen mosque attendee, Aishegül was knowledgeable and had specific expectations about how the prayer would be performed in various mosques. These expectations, which she partly related to the ethnic or national identity of the mosque, contribute to shaping her religious map of Berlin. For Aishegül, the emotional experience of visiting and praying in the different mosques determined her feelings about the spaces and ultimately the choice of where to attend. Aishegül visited mosques to perform her religious duty, but her choice among the religious spaces was partly determined by the feelings and emotions the space stirred in her. The level of education of the mosque attendants or religious group as well as the individual person also mattered. For example:

Fahra (23) exclaimed that although she grew up with MJD and learned a lot there, she felt more comfortable in Finnowstrasse, Neukölln. She said: "It is normal that most of the women there [MJD] have a college degree. (...) When you are only doing vocational training yourself, it can sometimes make you feel uneasy, even if the others are not making a fuss about it. Here [Finnowstrasse], it is not that normal that they go to college. It feels better."

As she herself had "only" completed vocational school, she preferred a religious organization where the majority of the participants had a similar level of education.⁵¹ Social class or social capital (Bourdieu 2004 [1977]) thus also informs individual mappings of the religious spaces.

⁵⁰ Each of the five daily prayers can be performed in a few minutes for those who are familiar with their complex configurations. Nonetheless, each prayer session can be extended by adding extra prayer-cycles or a more personal prayer (*du'a*, supplication) (Henkel 2005). For ethnography on prayer in Turkey, see Henkel (2005). He suggests that, "within the Hanafi madhab (which is followed by the great majority of Turkish Sunni Muslims) there are slight differences in the performance as it is prescribed for men and women. Strictly speaking there are, of course, also nuances in the performance that vary between one person and another and even from one performance to another" (Henkel 2005, 492).

⁵¹ At the age of 10 to 12 years old, children finish primary school and are recommended by the teachers for one of three high school tracks, of which only Gymnasium grants the diploma (*Artium*) needed to enter university. After graduating from *Hauptschule* and *Realschule*, youth can go to university by attending continuing education programs. In general, graduating from "the lowest track" of secondary education (*Hauptschule*) has been devalued in recent decades, putting young people in a disadvantageous position when applying for vocational training or jobs, whereas the "intermediate type", (*Realschule*), provides better prospects for vocational training. In 2002/2003 43.8 percent of young migrants attend *Hauptschule*, and only 13.9 percent of them attended Gymnasiums. Among ethnic

Making Sense of Religious Spaces in the City

The spatial incorporation of Islamic communities in Berlin, both in the form of the material urban environment, such as the presence of religious buildings, and everyday urban practices and cultures, such as veiled women in the street and *halal* butchers and restaurants, create and reinforce religious markers in the urban space. Such religious spatial practices are transforming urban space, and are part of an increasing range of sites and spaces of belonging.

Religious actors perform a complex mental mapping when they make sense of the variety of political, social, ethnic, and national orientations in religious places, a process through which places become spaces to which the actors turn. An individual's perceptions and spatial practices become part of their mental maps, which produce their experiences of mosques and the city. Michel de Certeau (1984) argues that the experience of walking in the city will depend upon which city you walk in, why you are walking, and who you are. Experiences of a specific mosque likewise depends upon which mosque you attend, for what reasons you are there (religious teaching, or being social), and your personal characteristics. Identification with a religious space depends on an intersection between ethnicity, language, religious orientation, gender, and social class.⁵² As some of the faith communities, including MJD, have branches in different cities, such spaces of faith also represent a (potential) social network, linking German cities through the religious spaces and their followers.

Young Muslims' religiosity continues to be constructed in relation to both the collective religious spaces and their personal feelings towards these communities. I have suggested that mosques are contested spaces, potentially "dangerous," not only with regard to funding and building permissions, but also as social spaces for young Muslims seeking a local faith community.⁵³ One consequence of distinguishing between a "pure" and "cultural" Islam is that German becomes more attractive as the language of instruction, again appealing to followers with various ethnic

Germans, only 18.6 percent attend *Hauptschule*, and 32.3 percent attended Gymnasiums (von Below and Karakoyun 2007, 34–42).

⁵² Though I do not deal with it here, I expect age also matters.

⁵³ Another space for religious knowledge and identification that I have not touched upon here, but which is increasingly important, is the internet. Today, Muslim youth can find websites with competing authorities, some self-appointed, others more educated experts. This contributes to establishing a new sphere of transnational Muslim communities with debates that cross localities, cities, and nations.

backgrounds. It also facilitates religious communication and discussions with non-Muslim Germans. The ethnic orientation of a mosque still matters, as whether or not someone is emotionally or socially attached to her ethnic community informs the decision of whether to attend an ethnically homogenous mosque. Nonetheless, the presumed “openness” or “closeness” of the Islamic teaching and teachers, the events and seminars, as well as its regular attendees, are all important factors when choosing the faith community in which to participate. The youth did not explain this orientation in theological terms, but related it to emotional insights and past experiences, whether personal or from family members and peers.

Parents still play a role in recommending or opposing places. However, while many are used to establishing ties to religious social spaces through their family (Ehrkamp 2005), this process has become more individualized. This individual decision-making is deeply embedded in and shaped by the socio-historical and political position of Muslims in Europe. What has also become clear is that the German context and the manner in which the German government responds to the different Muslim organizations and mosques ultimately have a direct impact on how young Muslims interact socially with these spaces. The continuous gaze from the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution inform their mental mapping and for many it necessitates an extensive up-to-date knowledge of how various religious spaces are assessed by this office and how these spaces relate to yet other religious spaces. Another option is to “not care” about the viewpoint of the Federal office. In general, though, reputation matters to followers. The German context also shapes what is taught and discussed within the religious spaces—which I examine in more detail in chapter 3.