Wer ist hier Muslim? (Who is Muslim here?) addresses the concept of 'Muslim' in its multiplicity of meanings and applications in contemporary Germany. As many researchers who conducted fieldwork after the dramatic events in the early 2000s that so fundamentally changed the social and political climate with respect to Islam, Spielhaus was confronted with a tremendous increase of public voices all of which articulated their take on Islam in a different way. It generally leaves the researcher with an ambiguous and often paradoxical feeling. On the one hand there is an apparent need for more information and insight into a variety of issues related to Islam, while on the other hand it seems that everybody acting publicly already has a firm opinion about the issue.

Spielhaus' study is an attempt to come to grips with this complex field in the German political realm. The title of the book should thus not be read as a normative question to be solved in one direction. Rather it should be understood in a rhetorical sense: who is actually able to speak on behalf of Muslims and on behalf of Islam? Who can determine the boundaries of these broad categories? The book is based on her fieldwork which she started in 2004 as a PhD student. But instead of a bloodless mapping out the many voices as they appear in the media, Spielhaus conducted research on two concrete cases. One is the founding and development of the 'Schura Hamburg' in 2007, a representative body of Muslims in Hamburg that was officially recognized by the local government. The other case concerns self definition of a number of prominent figures in Germany with a migration background who recently decided in public speeches and debates to explicitly refer to themselves as Muslims. The analyses of these cases are built around three interlocking dimensions: (1) community building, (2) senses of belonging, and (3) issues of representation and opinion-making. The focus on these two cases and also the narrowing down of the research field to German-lingual sources are in my view the strongest and most relevant parts of the study.

Nonetheless, in the first chapter the author starts out with an account of the evolving image of Islam and a state of the art with respect to the scholarly publications on Islam in Germany and the various subfields and perspectives that are applied. For the case at hand this might be a necessary endeavor but it always remains to be seen whether these kinds of overviews are contributive unless a very clear question is addressed. The second chapter is a discussion of the research methodology in which the author explains why she deliberately confined herself to a limited subfield in the vast topical area she covers. The third chapter provides an overview of the public debates on Islam as they emerged in the past two decades in Germany. Again, I think that such an overview runs the risk to be either over-detailed or incomplete. Here the author was maybe a bit too ambitious and it would have been better if she had elaborated even more the two central cases at the expense of trying to be comprehensive. The fourth and fifth chapter are the most instructive and rich in data and present the results of the two case studies. In the concluding chapter Spielhaus addresses the compelling question of whether cases such as the two addressed in her study do indeed structure the noisy debates on Islam, or rather add to their complexity.
I would say the latter. The case studies show that there is no easy answer to the question who is Muslim and what is Islam. Cases such as these indeed complicate the categorizing even further. But this is not at all problematic; it is precisely how discursive dimensions of political processes operate. This is exactly why I consider an ethnographic study such as this one relevant and much better than the numerous articles and books based on a few media sources that lament about the bad image of Muslims in the West after 9/11, or studies that pretend that ‘Muslim’ is simply a theological category. Spielhaus convincingly demonstrates how the three interlocking dimensions, community building, belonging, and representation produce ever shifting and overlapping categories of practice with which politicians, policy makers, public servants, academics and not least ‘Muslims’ add to the complexities of the debate.

When reading the case of the ‘Schura Hamburg’ it becomes immediately clear that the ‘obvious’ categories with which the actors (from both sides) enter the negotiations are not as clear as they initially seem to be. The relatively simple demographic category of Muslim turns out to be much more complicated in negotiation processes. This becomes clear when Spielhaus discusses the history of the building of mosques in Hamburg. This complexity is certainly not just a matter of different ethnic, religious or theological backgrounds, but is directly influenced by the very process of negotiation over the years. After the installation of the Schura the picture becomes even more complicated when questions of representation adds yet another layer of meanings. Policymakers, administrators and representatives of Muslims have their own conceptions about how things should be accomplished and they prefer transparent categories, preferably their own.

The case of the prominent opinion leaders is even more complicated. In the case of the Schura it is predominantly a matter of organizational and political power that in the end determines the terms of reference in the settlement. In the case of public leadership and representation the pace with which categories shift and overlap is even faster than in the relatively concrete case of the Schura in which negotiations took place in the relative intimacy of the negotiation rooms. The public debate by definition takes place under the public eye and is directly influenced by public opinion. Everybody who has taken part in these debates knows how difficult it is to control this process. Spielhaus shows how people of migrant background who were hardly attached to Islam suddenly found themselves trapped in the turmoil. They were quickly caught up in all kinds of situations in which they were forced to take sides without being able to reflect on it.

The strict delineation Spielhaus applies by confining herself to the German-lingual debate works well here for analytical purposes, although it is clear that with the globalization of modern media the German debate spills over into and is in turn influenced by the international dimensions of the issue.

The study by Spielhaus convincingly demonstrates that the shifting meanings, the political application and the concomitant efficacy of the categories Islam and Muslim are utterly contextual. They can only be captured by thorough ethnographic fieldwork. It also shows that in negotiations and discussions between collective and individual actors there is a continuous dialectic of discursive fixation and flow. Negotiation processes require clear and fixed delineations between categories, but the very process of negotiation and discussion puts these categories in question. Spielhaus’ study bears relevance to similar processes in