From:

In the current environment of a growing Muslim presence in Europe, young Muslims have started to develop a subculture of their own. The manifestations reach from religious rap and street wear with Islamic slogans to morally »impeccable« comedy. This form of religiously permissible fun and of youth-compatible worship is actively engaged in shaping the future of Islam in Europe and of Muslim/non-Muslims relations. Based on a vast collection of youth cultural artefacts, participant observations and in-depth interviews in France, Britain and Germany, this book provides a vivid description of Islamic youth culture and explores the reasons why young people develop such a culture.

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These slogans, brand mottos and lyrics encapsulate the spirit of a young, European Islam. They are found on T-shirts, in rap songs, youth magazines, online platforms, video clips, comedy shows and at youth meetings that have been developed by and for young Muslims in France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Having mainly emerged in the first decade of the twenty-first century, this phenomenon is rather young itself and is still a largely unfamiliar sight.[1]

This study is an exploration of the recent development of Islamic youth culture in Western Europe, which is a combination of religion and youth culture and which manifests itself in explicitly religious rap, Islamic comedy, young urban fashion with pious slogans or media products catering for young European Muslims. In this book, I aim to present a well-rounded picture of this youth culture and to shed light on its character and the details of its cultural components. Its emergence gives rise to many questions about contemporary Islam, the significance of youth cultures in society and in Islam, and about the context in which it takes place – Western Europe as a non-Muslim place with a significant Muslim presence. I have therefore researched into why Islamic youth culture has become established and what motivates people to create it, either individually or as part of a perceived movement.

My approach is an ethnographic one, providing a close description of Islamic youth culture in its diverse dimensions, and at the same time giving a thorough analysis of the reasons for its development. This takes into account a vast array of artefacts, my own observations among the participants and in-depth interviews with the producers of this youth culture, all of which I collected during extensive field research. To conceptualise this, I have drawn on youth culture theory and on concepts of hybridity, as well as previous research in the field of Islam in Europe. This combination should illuminate the study of the empirical phenomenon, which in turn reveals some of the limitations of these theoretic approaches.

The label "Muslim" can never be a given category, as it raises questions of self-identification and ascriptions by others. Thus, when I claim to research young Muslims, this requires some clarification. One definition that comes to mind is that of family background. Theologically, a child born into a Muslim family is automatically a Muslim, but this only applies to clear-cut cases and simplifies multifaceted issues. For instance, it homogenises people of various convictions, ranging from pious devotion to belief without practice, to agnosticism or indifference. All of these people could have a Muslim family background, but to label them "Muslim" would essentialise a very diverse population and take part of their identity as a whole – not to mention the exclusion of con-

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1   Arabic expressions are explained in the Glossary in Appendix F.

verts to Islam. Another basis for a definition would be self-attribution, regarding only those as Muslim who identify themselves as such, clearing the term of its predetermined ethnic dimension. But at times research practicality requires a slightly more pragmatic approach. For example, the following section presents data on the Muslim populations of Western Europe as background information. The figures correspond to people with family ties to Islamic countries rather than taking individual self-identification into account, since the large numbers are based on estimates. In this study, however, I look at "practising Muslims" with a high religiosity, who attend events with a strong religious focus or express their faith in public – often in the form of Islamic youth cultural artefacts. The population under study is therefore only a fraction of the larger category of all those who are Muslim by background.

Islam and Muslims in Germany

Muslims have been present in Germany since the seventeenth century, when during several wars the Ottomans came to Germany, either as prisoners of war or as military officials (Abdullah 1981). After World War I, students, intellectuals and converts made up the small but growing Muslim community that was mainly active in Berlin and opened the first mosque in Berlin-Wilmersdorf, which still exists today, in 1924 (Deutsche Islam Konferenz 2008). The first major wave of immigration from Islamic countries, however, came as a result of bilateral agreements between West Germany and several Mediterranean countries in the 1950s and 1960s, recruiting "guest workers" for the German economy, including contracts with Turkey in 1961, but also with Morocco (1963), Tunisia (1965) and Yugoslavia (1968) (ibid.). When Germany ended the agreements in 1973, many of the immigrant workers remained in their new home country and were often joined by their families. However, Germany denied their long-term presence and insisted on their status as temporary migrants (Penn/Lambert 2009: 35–36). Until 2000, this was reflected in the German citizenship rules, which were traditionally based on descent rather than place of birth. As Ruud Koopmans et al. (2005) show, Germany's naturalisation rate is still the lowest in Western Europe, which explains the high percentage of foreigners among Muslims living in Germany. Roger Penn and Paul Lambert point out, however, that a "partial incorporation" took place, since although full political and citizenship rights were largely denied, immigrants were granted inclusion into the state welfare system, including social security and public housing, the latter preventing ghettoised residential patterns from emerging (Penn/Lambert 2009: 37).

A report by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, BAMF) estimated the number of Muslims living in

Germany to be 3.8 to 4.3 million, or 4.6% to 5.2% of the general population, which is more than previous estimates have suggested (Haug et al. 2009). Around 45% have German nationality, while 55% own a foreign passport; German converts, of whom no reliable numbers exist, are not counted in this study (ibid.: 74–75). The estimate relies on a thorough analysis of nearly 50 Islamic countries of origin from which people have migrated into Germany. The most important regions from where foreign Muslims and naturalised German Muslims originate are Turkey (2,600,000), Southeast Europe (550,000), the Middle East (330,000), North Africa (280,000), South/Southeast Asia (187,000), then Iran, Central Asia and other parts of Africa (ibid.: 61–74). The vast majority are Sunni Muslims (72%), followed by Alevis (14%), Shiites (7%) and other smaller denominations (ibid.: 128–131).

The BAMF study reveals that the average age of Muslims living in Germany is rather young (just over 30), compared with the average age of the overall German population and of those with a non-Islamic migratory background. The proportion of children under 16 years (around 25% of German Muslims) is more than 10% higher than that of the general population, while the 16- to 24-year-olds (nearly 17%) make up 6% more than their corresponding age group among non-Muslims (Haug et al. 2009: 97–99). If the total Muslim population amounts to around 4 million, the share of young Muslims under 25 thus adds up to 42% or approximately 1.7 million.

Because Islam is not institutionalised like the Church, the religion has not acquired the legal status of a religious community in Germany, which would, for instance, be a prerequisite for providing Islamic education in schools. Religious organisations usually take the form of associations (*Vereine, e.V.*) that are recognised under general association law, and some of these have been acknowledged as religious communities on a local level (Robbers 2009: 141–142; Bodenstein 2010: 57–59). Owing to the lack of a formalised dialogue partner, the Interior Minister at the time, Wolfgang Schäuble, initiated the German Islam Conference (*Deutsche Islam Konferenz*) in 2006, which has become the most important committee for the state to interact with a broad variety of Muslim organisations and individuals shaping Islam in Germany (Robbers 2009: 142; Rohe 2010: 218–219). Committed to improving integration, it provides policy recommendations on topics including imam training, mosque construction or Islamic education in schools. Apart from an annual plenary meeting, several project groups meet frequently to develop more practical initiatives such as improved integration into the labour market or the prevention of radicalisation of young people.[2] Although it is obvious on the one hand, and highly contested by parts of the

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2   Deutsche Islam Konferenz: http://www.deutsche-islam-konferenz.de.

population on the other hand, it was an important affirmation by the former German President Christian Wulff to underline that Islam is a part of Germany, which he stated in a speech on the occasion of 20 years of German reunification (Der Tagesspiegel 03/10/2010).

There have been several attempts by Muslim representatives to create umbrella organisations for the many associations, in order to speak with one voice. Around 150,000 Turkish Muslims are represented by the Turkish Islamic Union of the Institution for Religion (*Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion e.V., DITIB*), which is supervised by the Turkish Presidency for Religious Affairs. The Central Council of Muslims in Germany (*Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland e.V., ZMD*) represents numerous mosque associations with a total of 12,000 members of chiefly non-Turkish background. The Islam Council for the Federal Republic of Germany (*Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland*) has 136,000 members and hosts the Islamic Community Milli Görüş (*Islamische Gemeinschaft Milli Görüş, IGMG*), an international Turkish movement that has been strongly criticised for anti-democratic tendencies, but which has also been described as "post-Islamist" (Schiffauer 2010). Finally, the Union of Islamic Cultural Centres (*Verband der Islamischen Kulturzentren e.V., VIKZ*) represents 20,000 Sunni Muslims (Robbers 2009: 143). In 2007, these four umbrella organisations (DITIB, ZMD, Islamrat, VIKZ) established the Coordination Council of Muslims in Germany (*Koordinierungsrat der Muslime in Deutschland, KRM*) to facilitate cooperation in matters of common interest (ibid.; Bodenstein 2010: 60). There are several other organisations, including the Federation of European Alevites (*Föderation der europäischen Aleviten, AABF*), representing at least 20,000 German Alevites. The problem is, however, that the majority of German Muslims are not part of these large organisations, whose representatives therefore cannot claim to speak on behalf of the entire Muslim population, since only 10 to 15% seem to be represented by the umbrella organisations (Robbers 2009: 143). Five organisations have been banned for not acting in line with the constitution (ibid.: 142).

The largest youth organisation is the Muslim Youth in Germany (*Muslimische Jugend in Deutschland, MJD*), founded in 1994 in Berlin, which has several hundred members according to its own website.[3] Local groups meet regularly, and an annual gathering with up to 1,500 young people takes place at Easter every year. While the MJD attracts most young Muslims, not least by being ethnically mixed as well as highly organised and present all over Germany, other organisations also have a youth branch, including the Milli Görüş and smaller mosque associations.

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3   Muslimische Jugend in Deutschland: http://www.mjd-net.de.

Around 2,600 buildings serve as mosques, many of which are not purpose-built, as only about 180 of them have been erected as a traditional mosque, with another 150 currently under construction. There have been a few conflicts with sections of the general population regarding the construction of some of the mosques, but the establishment of prayer houses is recognised and protected as a matter of religious freedom by the law (Rohe 2010: 221). Islamic education is usually provided by mosque associations, but as part of the school curriculum it remains a matter of debate. A number of German states have introduced such classes, but this is far from providing a general model on the federal level (ibid.: 223; Robbers 2009: 144–146). In 2010, the German Council of Science and Humanities (*Wissenschaftsrat*) recommended that universities should take over the training of Islamic schoolteachers and imams (Wissenschaftsrat 2010: 35–44, 69–80), which is currently being put into practice at the universities of Erlangen-Nürnberg, Frankfurt, Münster and Osnabrück. The degree of advice that Islamic organisations should provide in this process is still under debate (Euro-Islam 30/01/2010).

Wearing the headscarf, *hijab*, is permitted in public spaces, schools and offices, but in many German states it is banned for schoolteachers. Federal law requires an equal treatment of religions – either allowing or banning all religious symbols – but it is up to the individual states to implement laws based on this. Court appeals and public debate are likely to continue (Rohe 2010: 228–229).

Recent public debates on Islam in Germany have included a variety of topics and voices. In 2010, Muslims and non-Muslims alike discussed the question whether it were possible and legitimate to criticise Islam, making use of the full spectrum of opinions from Islamophobic statements to rational, weighted arguments, to apologetic declarations (Euro-Islam 05/02/2010); in the same year, a small anti-Islamic party *(Die Freiheit)* was founded. Following the recommendation for universities to train imams and Islamic teachers, discussions began about the role of state institutions in religious affairs and the influence of religious institutions on state curricula. The ongoing discourse about security issues and radicalisation was fuelled once more by the attack of a radical Islamist, who killed two American soldiers at Frankfurt airport in March 2011. Debates emphasised the possibly growing influence of extreme Salafist thought among German Muslims (Der Spiegel 14/03/2011). Islamophobia is addressed once in a while, though tentatively, but it was discussed profoundly after a supremacist stabbed and killed Egyptian Marwa el-Sherbini in a Dresden courtroom during a trial in which he was charged with previous racist remarks against the woman (Die Zeit 14/07/2009). Highly emotional disputes were fought after the 2010 publication of Thilo Sarrazin's book, which depicts Germany's alleged "down-

fall" caused by the country's many Muslims who did not contribute to the economy and instead took advantage of the welfare system or were criminals (Sarrazin 2010). Although the author enjoyed significant popularity from sections of the population, he faced massive criticism from the majority of politicians and members of the public, who largely stood by their Muslim fellow citizens. Even if similar debates take place in other European countries, the German case is often marked by a certain indecisiveness about how to deal with Islam, which has not been recognised as playing a significant role in public life for a long time, and – for better or worse – all varieties of opinions are present in public debate.

Islam and Muslims in France

Historically, the relationship of France and Islam stretches back a long time, for as early as 716 a group of soldiers from North Africa arrived and later built a mosque in Narbonne near the Mediterranean. Similar appearances continued until the nineteenth century, but with the colonisation of Algeria in 1830, France was exposed to more intense contact with Muslim populations (Fetzer/Soper 2005: 63). The first wave of immigration took place during World War I, when North Africans, but also West Africans and Comorians came to serve in the army and work in factories, whose contributions were rewarded with the construction of the large Mosque of Paris in 1926 (ibid.). The second and much larger immigration wave was due to economic recruitment after World War II, and by 1975 over a million workers from Islamic countries, mainly Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, but also Senegal, Mauritania and Mali had arrived in France, and in fact in possession of full French citizenship (ibid.; Penn/Lambert 2009). After 1974 recruitment stopped, but as in Germany, family reunification continued and turned temporary migration into a permanent settlement. Despite a few attempts to cap immigration, France has become a multi-ethnic society, and the liberal citizenship law has been widely upheld, granting French nationality to anyone born in France, irrespective of their parents' origin (Fetzer/Soper 2005: 65).

Providing reliable numbers with regard to France's Muslim population is a challenge: an 1872 law continues to disallow any state census to identify people by their religion, and any data collection in this respect is carried out by commercial companies on behalf of news agencies, who widely differ in their methodological approach, focus and agenda (Zwilling 2010: 183). The High Council for Immigration estimated the Muslim population to be over 4 million in 2000 (Haut Conseil à l'Intégration 2000: 26). Other estimates ranged from 3.7 up to 7 million, with the National Institute of Statistics claiming in 2007 that Muslims made up 7.1% or 4.5 million of the total population (Zwilling 2010: 184). Data

on self-definition and religiosity vary no less. One survey found that 3% of the total population identified themselves as being Muslim (ibid.), while another showed a result of 5.8% (IFOP 2009: 4), with one third of people with a Muslim family background claiming to be believing and practising, over a third to be believing but not practising, and one fourth to be of Muslim origin only (ibid.: 7). The majority originate from North Africa, in particular from Algeria (1,500,000), Morocco (1,000,000) and Tunisia (350,000), but also Turkey (315,000), sub-Saharan Africa (250,000), the Middle East (100,000) and a few other regions (Haut Conseil à l'Intégration 2000: 26).[4] With these countries of origin, French Islam is to a large extent Sunni. On average, the Muslim population is very young, as 35% are 15 to 24 years old, compared with 16% of the general population (IFOP 2009: 5).

The most relevant principle defining the relationship of any religion with the French state is *laïcité*, keeping religious and state affairs separate. While this means that the state does not generally recognise or support any denominations – and, above all, religious authorities have no influence on public affairs – there are a few exceptions to the rule. Religions that were recognised before this law was established in 1905 enjoy concessions such as tax exemptions, permission to found religious associations or subsidies to maintain places of worship, only some of which are available to Islam, and usually every issue, for instance the introduction of Islamic finance, is subject to debate (Zwilling 2010: 188). The principle itself continues to be passionately discussed, and especially left-wing defenders of multiculturalism, some Christian and Jewish representatives, along with most French Muslims and human rights advocates propose a "soft *laïcité*", urging the state not only to respect all religions, but also to actively further their practice (Fetzer/Soper 2005: 74).

Like in Germany, many French Muslims are organised into small mosque associations, but there are several umbrella organisations on the national level. The main one is the Union of Islamic Organisations in France (*Union des Organisations Islamiques de France, UOIF*), founded in 1983 and representing a variety of ethnicities. Predominantly Algerian Muslims are organised into the *Grande Mosquée de Paris* (*GMP*), while Muslims of Moroccan origin are represented by the National Federation of Muslims of France (*Fédération Nationale des Musulmans de France, FNMF*) or the Assembly of Muslims of France (*Rassemblement des Musulmans de France*, *RMF*). The Coordination Committee of Turkish Muslims of France (*Comité de Coordination des Musulmans Turcs de France*) and the Milli Görüş (*CIMG France*) represent Turkish Islam. There is also the French Federation of Islamic Associations of Africa, the Comoros and

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4 Numbers are minima, based on a total of 4.2 million Muslims in the year 2000.

the Antilles (*Fédération française des associations islamiques d'Afrique, des Comores et des Antilles, FFAIACA*). These organisations send representatives to the French Council of the Muslim Religion (*Conseil Français du Culte Musulman, CFCM*), which was founded in 2002 at the request of the French state in order to be able to communicate with Muslim representatives via an official body (Zwilling 2010: 189–191).

There are also several youth organisations, most notably the Young Muslims of France (*Jeunes Musulmans de France, JMF*), which were founded in 1993 with help of the UOIF, and the French Muslim Scouts (*Scouts Musulmans de France*) in 1991 (ibid.: 190). The Union of Young Muslims (*L'Union des Jeunes Musulmans, UJM*) has been active in Lyon since 1987, and the Muslim Students of France (*Étudiants Musulmans de France, ÉMF*) since 1989.

Around 2,150 mosques were counted in France in 2006, most of which are located in private houses or former factories, while only about 120 are actual mosque buildings. There are 20 large buildings with minarets and about as many again that can host over 1,000 worshippers (Zwilling 2010: 191–192). Important building projects are planned or under construction in several cities. No religious education is given at public schools. There are private religious schools, most of them Catholic, but a handful of private Muslim secondary schools have opened in the past decade. Often it is also possible for Muslim children to attend Christian schools and receive Islamic classes there. Most religious education is carried out by mosque associations, often with a connection to a particular country of origin (ibid.: 193–194). The majority of imam training courses are only offered by private institutions (e.g. *Institut Avicenne des Sciences Humaines*), and one programme is also offered at a Catholic faculty, teaching "Interculturalism, Secularism and Religions", which is made use of by imams from the Grande Mosquée de Paris, but has not yet been more widely accepted. Since 2009, the University of Strasbourg has been the first state institution to offer a masters degree, specialising in Islamic studies (ibid.: 194).

The most controversial issue caused by the secular state policy has been the *affaire du foulard*, or the headscarf affair of 1989, when three pupils were suspended from school for refusing to remove their headscarves in the classroom. A long and heated debate was fought among politicians, state institutions, headmasters, defenders of a stricter form of *laïcité*, religious authorities, human rights groups and parents (Fetzer/Soper 2005: 78–79; Gaspard/Khosrokhavar 1995). The Conseil d'État, the highest court of administrative law, ruled that a *hijab* could be worn if it did not disturb the functioning of the school in any way. Thus, it usually remained the decision of the principals, some of whom granted veiled girls access to their schools, while many others did not and banned all

religious symbols. Some cases were taken to court and the students got reinstated, but in other cases the girls either studied by distance learning or dropped out of education altogether (Fetzer/Soper 2005: 79–81). Sharif Gemie points to the manifold meanings researchers have found to be attached to the veil by those who wear it, and especially to the usually strong commitment to being French (2010: 38–42). Nonetheless, a law was finally passed in 2004, banning all religious symbols from public schools (Sénat 2004). The debate was reignited in 2008 when discussion of the face veil, referred to as *burqa* or *niqab*, led to an investigative committee passing a law in 2010, to take effect in 2011, banning the face veil from all public places (Assemblée Nationale 2010; Le Monde 26/01/2010).

Public discourse has in the past few years been marked by discussions on the visibility of Islam, often still focusing on the headscarf, more recently on the face veil and minarets (Zwilling 2010: 200), but including Islamic swimsuits in public swimming pools. The polemics of the extreme right-wing party *Front National* have often stirred a debate on Islamophobia (Libération 04/01/2011). That France continues to struggle with defining the status of Islam and of immigrants more widely was demonstrated in the national identity debate in early 2010. Nicolas Sarkozy's government initiated the debate in which citizens were asked their opinion on what it meant to be French, on values, patriotism and minorities, and which was strongly criticised by observers of different political backgrounds as being specifically derogatory to Muslims (Time Magazine 12/02/2011).

Islam and Muslims in the United Kingdom

First contact between Muslims and Britain is traced back to the Bengali and Kashmiri sailors of the British East India Company, who arrived in the UK in the nineteenth century. They were joined by sailors from Yemen from 1869, and Indian soldiers also fought for the British in World War I (Ansari 2004; McLoughlin/Abbas 2010: 545–546). But as with Germany and France, major immigration did not take place until after World War II. The 1948 British Nationality Act granted British citizenship to any person from a Commonwealth country, so that many migrants from India and Pakistan in particular came to the UK, but laws passed between 1964 and 1971 restricted access again, and in 1981, the concept of the initial Nationality Act was revoked (Penn/Lambert 2009: 42). Subsequently, a restrictive migration policy was introduced alongside a commitment to a pluralist and multicultural society, protecting and even encouraging ethnic and cultural differences, including the formation of ethnic communities – in great contrast to both France and Germany (ibid.).

For the first few decades of Muslim presence in Britain after 1945, the size of the population could only be guessed at, and estimates ranged from 550,000 to 3 million, or usually around 1 to 1.5 million. The 2001 Census provided the first reliable numbers, estimating the total number of British Muslims to be 1.6 million, which then rose significantly in the following decade (Gilliat-Ray 2010: 117). According to Sophie Gilliat-Ray, the strong increase was due mainly to a high birth rate among Muslims, but also to recent immigration, some conversion to Islam and a stronger identification with the label "Muslim" in the post 9/11 environment and the "war on terror" (ibid.). In 2009, the Office of National Statistics published a figure of 2.4 million Muslims living in the UK, amounting to 4% of the population (The Times 30/01/2009). Countries of origin are predominantly Pakistan (43%, based on the 2001 Census), Bangladesh (17%) and India (9%), with some smaller minorities from West and East Africa, the latter coming originally from India (McLoughlin/Abbas 2010: 546; Gilliat-Ray 2010: 120). Like in France and Germany, the Muslim population shows a significantly young average age. In 2001, they already had the youngest age profile with around one third (34%) under the age of 16, compared with one fifth (20%) of the general population. Also, the 16- to 34-year-olds make up another third of the Muslim population, but only a quarter (25%) of the general population (Office for National Statistics 2004: 3). The growing birth rates will have increased this proportion even more.

The relationship between religion and the state is a matter of the UK's constituent countries England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, each of which has a different approach; for instance, the Church of England is the only established religion that has no counterparts in the other nations of the UK. There is no general law that determines how the state should treat religions, but some modes of practice have evolved over time (McLoughlin/Abbas 2010: 546–547). Moreover, there is no constitution that protects the freedom of religion as a fundamental right, as is the case in Germany and France. The state has, however, developed a "pragmatic approach to religious pluralism", and protected minority groups, but the legal status of Muslims is not fully determined (Fetzer/Soper 2005: 34). Since 1992, a few committees have been established by various governments to increase the interaction between faith groups and the state (e.g. the Faith Communities Consultative Council). The terrorist attacks of 7 July 2005 ("7/7") have put the spotlight on Islam and security issues, and the Preventing Violent Extremism programme has become one of the major points of contact between Muslims and the state (McLoughlin/Abbas 2010: 548).

The earliest Muslim organisation reaches back to 1970, when the Union of Muslim Organisations of the UK and Eire (UMO) was founded, but it was not

able to exert much influence. After the Rushdie Affair in 1988–1989, the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA), which was particularly successful at fighting against religious discrimination, formed the Muslim Parliament of Great Britain. In 1997, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) evolved out of the UKACIA and has been one of the main organisations, although it has had an unsteady relationship with the government owing to some extremist statements made by individual members, and only a proportion of British Muslims feel represented by the Council. Other bodies include the Islamic Society of Britain, the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) of mainly Arab background, the British Muslim Forum, consisting chiefly of Pakistani Muslims, the Sufi Muslim Council, and separate umbrella organisations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Quilliam Foundation was founded in 2008 by former *Hizb ut-Tahrir* members as an "anti-extremism think tank", researching British Islam and identifying radical currents (McLoughlin/Abbas 2010: 548–551).

The largest youth organisation is Young Muslims UK (YMUK) with regional bodies and local youth groups. Islamic societies at British universities have been represented by the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) since 1963. The Muslim Youth League UK (MYL UK) are a branch of the international movement *Minhaj ul-Quran*, founded by Muhammad Tahir ul-Qadri in Pakistan and promoting a moderate, anti-extremist interpretation of Islam. There is also a scout group, the Muslim Scouts Fellowship (UKMSF). Additionally, some authors add the radical group *Hizb ut-Tahrir* to the list of youth movements, because it has been particularly attractive to young Muslims (Gilliat 1997: 105–106).

The number of mosques in Britain today is not easily measured, as not all of them are registered with local authorities. Estimates therefore vary between 850 to 1,500 (Gilliat-Ray 2010: 181) or 2,000 (McLoughlin/Abbas 2010: 551). As in other European countries, their buildings and functions vary significantly, and only a minority of mosques have been purpose-built. Mosques also take over most of children's religious education, where the demand for new teaching methods is starting to be met. State schools teach general religious education, though with a Christian emphasis, but there are also Islamic schools, both publicly funded (11 primary or secondary schools) and many more privately funded ones (ibid.: 552–553). Imam training is not offered at public universities, some of which, however, train teachers and youth workers within their Islamic studies curriculum. Several private Islamic institutions train imams, often taking over models from Islamic countries, but other approaches are also taken by the Muslim College in London and the Cambridge Muslim College, which was founded in 2009. As for clothing norms, there are no restrictions on wearing headscarves

at schools or in public offices, including the police and armed forces, as part of the uniform. The face veil and long coats are also increasingly common, although they may not always be permitted, for instance, by school headmasters (ibid.: 557).

The recent public discourse has first and foremost dealt with many forms of radicalisation: an organisation that has kept reappearing under different names (lately Islam4UK) was banned for its extremist incitements, and the national Prevent Violent Extremism programme continued to target radicalisation, especially of young people, with questionable success (The Independent 31/03/2010). At the same time, right-wing extremism and populism was discussed, particularly after the formation of the English Defence League in 2009, which allegedly fights Islamic extremism, but in reality opposes all forms of Islam and the presence of Muslims in England (Euro-Islam 13/09/2009). Islamophobia continues to be a point of discussion (The Guardian 20/01/2011), and in a more subtle form entered a debate stirred up by David Cameron, when he claimed in 2011 that multiculturalism had failed in Britain. After the French decision to ban the face veil, the issue was also discussed in the UK, but a ban was never likely to be introduced owing to the country's longstanding recognition of (visible) cultural differences (BBC 18/07/2010).

Research Setting

Apart from providing a short overview of Muslims in Germany, France and the UK, the background information presented also highlights the setting in which this research project took place. Despite different migration histories, all three countries have already had a significant Muslim population for decades, and they also have the largest Muslim minorities in Europe today. Islam is not only present, but also institutionalised to varying degrees and has become a part of public life. Ties with countries of origin are upheld, but in most cases the main focus has shifted to the European home country. The religion's manifold and diverse character is not only illustrated by great variations in religious practice, but also by the demand for a number of different organisations, which, despite their dissimilar orientations, do not even represent the entirety of Muslims in the respective countries. The population is in addition remarkably young, which bestows an increasingly important role upon Muslim youth.

Most importantly, however, the research took place in a turbulent post-9/11 and post-7/7 environment. Before 2001, Muslims had already been living in non-Muslim spaces, and some issues of living together had also given rise to discussions then. But since 9/11, and in the UK especially after 7/7 as well, Muslims have been in the spotlight where they may not even have been recognised as

Muslims before, but perhaps rather as people with a Turkish, Algerian or Pakistani background. Since then, they have not been able to afford *not* to take a position on Islamic extremism. They have had to deal with heightened security measures against their communities, at times with a general suspicion against members of their faith, and with the reality of Muslim radicalisation, abusing the religion as a lethal weapon. This has often led to a stronger identification with Islam (e.g. Gerlach 2006; Gilliat-Ray 2010), and despite some resignations, in many cases also to an increased desire to explain one's faith in order to reach a stage where Islam can be thought of independently of terrorism. This has been of particularly vital concern to young, believing members of the Islamic faith in non-Muslim environments, who will spend their entire lives as Muslims in these countries. It is in this setting that Islamic youth culture has developed.

About This Study

The idea for this research project developed in stages. Studies at the American University in Cairo (2004–2005) exposed me to very devout young Muslims, who were consuming a lot of American youth and pop culture and who were not shy about expressing both their piety and their fashionability. On my return to Europe, I researched the 2005 riots in French *banlieues*, and while I focused more on youth, segregation and urban conflict (Herding 2007), in the course of this research I came across examples of an Islamic youth culture that combined youth cultural expressions with a strong religious commitment. I began to wonder why I had not seen manifestations such as religious rap or fashion items with Islamic slogans in the Islamic world and what it was that made them so specifically European or Western. Not finding any satisfying answers in the academic literature, which had hardly even touched upon this phenomenon, I decided to look at Islamic youth culture in more depth, and I present the results of my research endeavour in this book.

Writing on Islam in Europe is always a minefield, because many people have many and divergent opinions on this complex field. I am certainly not free from writing from a particular angle myself, but my intention is not to give an evaluation of Islamic youth culture or to judge it. This study is an analysis of what Islamic youth culture is, why it has come into existence and what its wider implications are. Very often, the data speak for themselves.

The title of this book, "Inventing the Muslim Cool", is adopted from an informal conversation with a producer of Islamic youth culture, who put this forward as the major goal of his media company. It also alludes to a documentary film, "New Muslim Cool" (Taylor 2009), which depicts the early stages of a similar scene of young and cool Islam in the United States. Moreover, the title is

a hint at the fact that the study focuses on the *process* of making Islamic youth culture.

To set the scene for the empirical findings and their analysis, Chapter II introduces the theoretical framework and the methodology applied in this study. Chapter III is a comprehensive presentation of Islamic youth culture, both descriptive and analytical, introducing artefacts and examples from the areas of music, comedy, fashion and the media. Chapter IV is a discussion of my findings from participant observations among the consumers to show what the phenomenon looks like in practice and how it can be grasped as a youth culture. From an analysis of interviews with the producers, I have developed a typology, which I will present in Chapter V. Going beyond the empirical findings, in Chapter VI, I will discuss their implications for the phenomenon and its context, as well as for the theoretical literature. Finally, the Conclusion recapitulates the most important insights gained from the entire research project.