

Muslim, Young and Urban

- A Comparative Ethnography of Representation and Mobility among Young Adults Who Identify as Muslim in Copenhagen, Denmark and Montreal, Canada

Amani Riad Mohammed Hassani

A Thesis

In the Department

of

Sociology and Anthropology

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (Social and Cultural Analysis) at

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

April 2018

©Amani Riad Mohammed Hassani, 2018

**CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Amani Riad Mohammed Hassani

Entitled: Muslim, Young and Urban: A Comparative Ethnography of  
Representation and Mobility among Young Adults Who Identify as  
Muslim in Copenhagen, Denmark and Montreal, Canada

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor Of Philosophy (Social and Cultural Analysis)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair  
Dr. Dan Otchere

\_\_\_\_\_ External Examiner  
Dr. Garbi Schmidt

\_\_\_\_\_ External to Program  
Dr. Norma Rantisi

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner  
Dr. Christine Jourdan

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner  
Dr. Greg M. Nielsen

\_\_\_\_\_ Thesis Supervisor  
Dr. Vered Amit

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Amy Swiffen, Graduate Program Director

Monday, June 4, 2018

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. André Roy, Dean  
Faculty of Arts and Science

## Abstract

### **Muslim, Young and Urban: A Comparative Ethnography of Representation and Mobility among Young Adults Who Identify as Muslim in Copenhagen, Denmark and Montreal, Canada**

**Amani Riad Mohammed Hassani, Ph.D.**

**Concordia University, 2018**

This thesis explores the lives of young adults (18-25-year-old) who identify as Muslim in Copenhagen and Montreal. As a comparative ethnography, it sets out to examine the transatlantic similarities and differences among young people who grew up in an era where Muslims were often represented as a foreign object in need of integration, and at times as threatening. The thesis investigates processes of representation depicting young Muslims' life histories, social positions and social identifications. Furthermore, it follows these young individuals' movements through their cities and the spatial narratives they construct through these movements. I have sought to unravel the complexity of my interlocutors' self-ascribed identifications of Muslim and Copenhagener/Montrealer – as well as the many other identifications they adopted - by furnishing their narratives with spatial representations; in many ways, these young people were shaped by *and* shaped the social spaces they inhabit. In so doing, the thesis seeks to counter the populist positioning of 'the Muslim other' by informing the broader themes entailed in the intersection between young adulthood, social mobility, spatial mobility, urban life and self-identification as a Muslim in a Western society.

The ethnographic methods I employed in this study were threefold; I used participant observation to study my interlocutors' social contexts, the cities they live in, and the public debates that permeate their city spaces. Semi-structured interviews were another important avenue for understanding how my interlocutors represented their lives, experiences and social positions. Finally, I used interlocutor-directed city tours to explore their movements in their localities. This last method was an essential instrument with which to situate and contextualize my interlocutors' lives, experiences and navigations within their cities.

## Acknowledgements

I want to start by thanking Vered Amit for her mentorship, guidance and constructive criticism. I was always eager to present my work to Vered, I knew her comments would be both challenging and enlightening, elevating my work to a standard I expected of myself. For all this, I am sincerely grateful to Vered's supervision and mentorship. I want to also thank Christine Jourdan and Greg Nielsen for the helpful comments and perspectives they provided. I am grateful to Concordia University for giving me a full tuition recruitment award, without which I most definitely would not have been able to start and complete my PhD-program. I am also thankful to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (Concordia University) for granting me a fellowship for three years and an additional one-year fellowship in Ethnic Studies and Social Diversity. I am grateful to the Augustinus Fond in Denmark for providing me a research grant to be able to travel back and forth between Copenhagen and Montreal to conduct fieldwork. I am indebted to all the young participants who allowed me to bear witness to their incredibly vibrant lives, experiences and movements. If it hadn't been for their kindness and openness, this study would not have been possible. I would also like to thank the mosques, organizations, study circles and Muslim Student Associations that allowed me to participate in their events, and advertise my project to their members.

Lastly, I am indebted to my family for all their love and support. Especially my husband, Tarek Younis, who has been an invaluable support and inspiration in the completion of this thesis. His support and insight formed the bedrock of my work. He made sure I stayed on track when I doubted my ability to succeed, and he continues to remind me of the greater purpose of my research. My children, Aya and Yaqeen, have been essential in keeping me grounded. They have been a needed distraction and relief when research became too overwhelming, and they were a constant reminder what I was doing all this for. In the end, I am grateful to God for the opportunities I been provided and the people who have helped me along the way.

# Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
Research Objectives and Questions.....	5
Thesis Structure.....	5
2. Literature Review.....	7
Social Categories and Representation.....	7
Urban Space and Pathways.....	11
3. Methodology.....	18
Field Sites.....	18
Interlocutors.....	20
Positioning.....	22
Research Methods.....	25
4. Exploring Processes of Groupness and Community.....	29
Reasonable Accommodation and Quebec’s Cultural Anxiety.....	30
Processes of Groupness and Community.....	35
Young Muslim Women: Stereotyped as Oppressed, Reified as Representatives of the Group.....	37
Gendered Difference: When the ‘Burden’ of Representation is Covert.....	54
Conclusion.....	62
5. ‘The Law of Jante’ and Social Mobility.....	64
”Den Lille Andedam”: National Identity and Danish Cultural Anxiety.....	66
Negotiating Social Position.....	70
Gendered Perspectives.....	86
Conclusion.....	97
6. Understanding Subjectivity through Spatial Biographies.....	99
Navigating Urban Spaces and Constructing Spatial biographies.....	100
Family History Narrated through a Childhood Neighbourhood.....	102
A Seasonal Walk through a Multicultural Neighbourhood.....	109
Planting Roots in a Suburban Immigrant Neighbourhood.....	115
Rootedness through Family Connections with a Religious Community.....	119
Conclusion.....	125
7. Spatial Narrative as a Representation of Social Position.....	127
Representing Social Mobility, Challenging Hegemonic Structures.....	128

Spatial Narratives as Creative Navigation.....	129
Challenging Social Perception – Constructing an Affluent Self Image .....	131
Creating a Copenhagener Self Image through City Spaces.....	138
Growing Up on the Other Side of ‘the Yellow Wall’ .....	146
Conclusion.....	155
8. Spatial Narratives as Biographical, Temporal and Subject-Constructive .....	156
Theorizing Mobility and Movements .....	157
The Tactics of Spatial Narratives .....	160
Temporalities of Spatial Biography: the Past, Present and the (Potential) Future.....	162
Investigating Subjectivity through Spatial Accounts.....	165
Mobility and Movements as Meaning-Making Processes.....	168
Conclusion.....	172
9. Conclusion.....	173
Limitations and Future Research.....	175
References.....	179

## 1. Introduction

My family migrated to Denmark from Yemen in the early 1970s and settled just outside of Copenhagen. My grandfather used to tell us how he discovered Denmark by chance; having lived for a little while in busy and cosmopolitan London – the first stop on his migration path – he fell in love with the quiet and small-town feel he experienced in Copenhagen. And so, he brought his wife and children – my mother included - to a city that was just starting to experience a slow increase in guest workers from Turkey, Pakistan, former-Yugoslavia and Morocco. These guest workers and their families were supposed to be temporary migrants but eventually settled in Denmark, their new home. In the 1970s, Copenhagen was far from cosmopolitan with little representation from the world beyond the Danish borders. Forty years later, and the Copenhagen my grandfather had discovered was transformed by virtue of economic progress and budding cultural influences through migration. Immigrants opened restaurants, halal butcher shops, international grocery stores selling foods and spices from around the world. They transformed the city spaces of Copenhagen, bringing the world to its shopping streets.

Meanwhile, Montreal had already experienced several decades of global migration from Europe and parts of the Middle East and North Africa, going back as far as the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (notwithstanding the French and British settlers who came centuries prior). Montreal's migrants were not guest workers; they came to settle as they searched for economic opportunities. While Danish migration policies have extensively limited the number of migrants who can gain permanent residency in the past 30 years, Canada still offers some (although limited) opportunities for migrants to settle through higher education, work, etc. Montreal and Copenhagen's different migration histories as well as their current migration policies influences the types of migrants and descendants of migrants that live in these two cities and their circumstances for settlement and social mobility.

This thesis, however, is not primarily about transnational migration. Rather, it is about the relationship between structure and agency; social category and self-identification; the city and the individual. It questions the Other's power to influence the production of social space through representation and mobility. My interlocutors are young people (18-25 years old) who self-identify as Muslims in Montreal and Copenhagen. I explore how these young people are shaped

by *and* shape the social spaces they inhabit. Some of my interlocutors are migrants, others are descendants of migrants and others are not migrants at all. However, their Muslim identification is often conflated with migrant identification – sometimes by choice, but more often than not by the world around them. This conflation is a symptom of their positioning as ‘the Other’. Yet it tells us little about their relationship to the social spaces they inhabit and their positioning within these.

A Muslim identification is elusive, and not at all reducible to migration history or religiosity. Thus, I did not take my interlocutors’ Muslimness for granted; I looked for people who self-identified as Muslim but did not specify what that should mean. It is easy to only focus on the religious part of my young interlocutors’ lives; their religious identities, social engagements and political interests are often pushed to the forefront in their narratives. But where does the conversation go when we stop asking questions about their feelings of marginalization within public debates and start exploring their lives in a more nuanced way? I do not suggest dismissing their experiences of discrimination. Rather, I propose that this is just one part of their lives, and by including other methods of investigating their experiences – such as the spatial tours I have employed in my fieldwork – we can go beyond a focus on ‘Muslims’ as a ‘group’. This allows us to explore the complex experiences of young people who identify as Muslims, but also claim a variety of other forms of identification, including Copenhageners or Montrealers.

A lot of research on young Muslims living in Western contexts tends to focus on the *Muslim* aspect of being a young Muslim, emphasizing their religious identity as all-encompassing in their lives. This research highlights the challenges these youth experience, whether related to cultural conflicts with their parents and religious institutions or the processes of discrimination and exclusion experienced within societies that are increasingly wary of Muslims (Zine 2001; 2012; Merry 2005; Fine and Sirin 2008). However, less attention has been given to young Muslims’ experiences beyond these cultural and political struggles. This seems to be a distortion of young Muslims’ reality. Without overlooking the critical importance of the marginalizing discourses that exist in many Western contexts, it seems reductionist to only see young Western Muslims as either political ‘targets’ or religious minorities. As researchers, we empower Western Muslims by exploring and giving voice to their political and cultural



struggles. However, by only focusing on this part of their lives, we risk reifying their Muslim identification and reducing their lives to a struggle vis-à-vis negative stereotypes and populist political and media rhetoric. Instead, I argue that sometimes self-identifying as Muslim means a lot to my interlocutors; however, in some contexts, this identification is less relevant (or not relevant at all). This thesis explores the ways young adults in Montreal and Copenhagen negotiate the multiplicity of the Muslim identity; from political category to group formation (Brubaker 2004). Throughout the thesis, I present cases of young Western Muslims' complex lives and individualities through their self-representations, narratives and movements. This thesis emphasizes the importance of appreciating the individuality and subjectivity of these youth, their skills in navigating a politically reifying Muslim categorization, and their attachments to the social spaces they inhabit.

I am critical of political and media discourses that represent Muslims in Western societies as essentially 'Other'. Their long-standing othering of Muslims in Western society has recently worsened through the moral panic instigated by a myriad of processes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the 'war on terror', the increase of Muslims in these societies through globalisation, and the question of religious rights in the public sphere (Nielsen 1992; Norton 2013). Yet, as Danish historian Jørgen Bæk Simonsen demonstrates in his historical analysis of Islam in Danish public discourse, Islam's presence in Denmark can be traced as far back as the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the first Danish research-expedition headed by Carsten Niebuhr went exploring in Egypt, the Arabic Peninsula and Syria (Simonsen 2004). Likewise, in Canada, the earliest narrations we have of Muslims entering the Montreal harbor goes back to the 1850s (Zine 2012). My research expands on these historical perspectives by demonstrating my interlocutors' rootedness, how they use these city spaces to represent their social positions and how they negotiate their belonging through their movements and representations. It is by moving with my interlocutors and drawing on their spatial narratives that their lives are contextualized within their localities. From this perspective, I seek to critique the perception of the Muslim Other, which for some people in the West seems to challenge a perceived cultural homogeneity within their societies. Naturally, this is not to dismiss the reality that a fairly large proportion of Muslims in both Copenhagen and Montreal are of immigrant background, arriving in these cities within the last 40+ years. Nevertheless, including second and third generation interlocutors who were born and/or raised in

these two cities presents a valuable perspective from which to critically interrogate their experiences. I have included convert Muslims too who, before conversion, were categorized as part of an ‘us’-category; this demonstrates a further important point of the ethnicization of Muslim identification.

Paul O’Connor (2010) provides an important perspective on the ways Muslims interact with their societies. In his study of young Muslims in Hong Kong, he demonstrates how Muslim youth navigate, interact and engage with social networks and broader society in ways that implicate both Muslim and non-Muslim relations alike. Such interactions become important elements in shaping young Muslims’ movements. By acknowledging and appreciating the diversity of people who identify as Muslims and the diverse ways in which they move and represent themselves through such movements, it becomes more difficult to view “the Muslim community” as a monolithic category of people who share similar lifestyles and beliefs. The diversity in their movements begs the question: in what contexts does Muslim identification become significant and in what ways does this form of identification influence everyday lives and movements?

Moving away from an understanding of ‘Muslim’ as an inherited or ascribed identity, I agree with sociologist Garbi Schmidt (2004) who argues that young Muslims often emphasize the choice in their religious identity (see also (Peek 2005)). By looking more acutely at young Muslims who view their religious identification as *chosen*, this thesis explores the intricacies in *choosing* to affiliate with a social category that is often represented in media and political discourses as antithetical to the mainstream population. Based on Schmidt’s observations, as well as my own research with young Muslims in Copenhagen and Montreal, I contend that the choice of enacting a Muslim identification is a process rather than a decision made ‘in the moment’; an amalgamation of improvised tactics through which one constructs a religious pathway over a period of time. Furthermore, it implicates a dynamic mixture of social relations and personal agency that involves *becoming* Muslim; a non-linear process that is shaped through particular choices made from moment to moment.

## Research Objectives and Questions

This thesis is based on a year-long comparative fieldwork between young Muslims in Copenhagen and Montreal. My research objective is two-fold: 1) investigate the processes of representation by both exploring group construction and self-representation, 2) explore my interlocutors' pathways through their cities and the spatial narratives they attach to their city spaces. These two objectives form a reciprocal relationship in this thesis. In this sense, my interlocutors' social representations are grounded in the societies they live in; their pathways within their city reflect these representations. The thesis is based on the following research questions related to these research objectives:

*Representation:* How do young Muslims represent themselves vis-à-vis others who share the same identification and when does the idea of group become important? How do young Muslims negotiate and represent an upward social mobility in a context that often questions their belonging and overlook their potentials and rootedness?

*Mobility and spatial narrative:* How do Muslim individuals construct and navigate social spaces in Montreal/Copenhagen? What meanings do they attribute to them and how are these expressed through spatial narratives? How do spatial narratives enable young Muslims to represent their rootedness, upward social mobility and express their intersecting identifications?

## Thesis Structure

The thesis is organized into four main parts: 1) introduction, literature review and methodology; 2) groupness and representation, 3) mobility and spatial narratives; and finally, 4) conclusion. Part one is made up of the introductory chapters that outline the subject matter of the thesis, presenting the research objectives, the literature the thesis engages with and the methodology.

Part two includes two chapters dealing with my interlocutors in Montreal and Copenhagen respectively. The focus of chapter 4 is to question social groups as a taken-for-granted concept. I explore the processes of groupness among my Montreal-based interlocutors, i.e. the ways they construct social identifications and group identity, and how they represent these. Social groups in this sense are not stable ongoing entities but are rather contextual and fluctuating. Chapter 5 looks closer at my Copenhagen-based interlocutors and their representations of social position

and social mobility in a political context, where Muslim citizens' cultural and social belonging are often questioned.

Part three of this thesis contains three chapters that utilize mobility as a methodological tool through spatial tours. In these chapters I explore my interlocutors' movements and the spatial narratives they developed through them. Chapter 6 focuses on my Montreal interlocutors' tours, exploring how processes of settlement and rootedness can be expressed through personal life histories as these have intersected with particular city spaces. Chapter 7 looks closer at my interlocutors in Copenhagen and explores how movement through city spaces can become avenues through which to construct and represent social mobility. Finally, chapter 8 draws on a comparative analysis between my interlocutors' spatial narratives in the two cities and discusses the ethnographic benefit in *moving with* interlocutors to understand the nuances of temporality, subjectivity and movement.

## 2. Literature Review

I draw upon analytical concepts related to representation and mobility throughout this thesis, examining the literature related to each within their respective chapters as I have outlined in the introduction (see p. 8-9). The following literature review relates to the overarching themes that extend across all the chapters. I start with an outline of Western Muslims and youth categories, and how these have been explored and represented in anthropological and sociological research. In the second part of this literature review, I highlight research on space and urban pathways. This literature presents us with a useful approach through which to investigate young Muslims' choices, practices and relations, and helps us appreciate the improvisations involved in creating certain pathways within urban spaces.

### Social Categories and Representation

#### Muslims in the West

Throughout the 1990s, studies of Muslims in the West have largely focused on the different challenges they experience as a 'migrant group', relating to issues of immigration, ethnicity, race and religion. 'Muslims in the West' became a hot topic in the early 1990s, especially in Britain, because of some British Muslims' protests against the publication of Salman Rushdie's book, *The Satanic Verses*. Most of the social science literature of the time looked at the political issues that arose as a result of this controversy (Asad 1990), questioning why Muslims responded in the way they did (Werbner 1991). Of course, there were also studies raising questions of gender relations, education and Muslims as immigrants and ethnic minorities (Dwyer 1993; Anwar 1993). By the late 1990s however, studies of 'Muslims in the West' seem to have increasingly focused on youth (Dwyer 1997; Vertovec and Rogers 1998), transnationalism, globalization (Werbner 1999; Haddad 1999), and the place of Islam in the West (Asad 1997). Many of the studies of Muslims in the 1990s provided an important and substantial contribution to our understanding of how minorities deal with public controversies, exclusionary policies and the process of establishing oneself in the host society. But these studies also tended to conflate the category of Muslim with immigrant and/or ethnic minority, overlooking the complexities involved in choosing a religious identity and how this choice may or may not influence one's other social identifications (e.g. ethnic, national, gender) and cultural practices. Furthermore,

equating Muslim as immigrant ultimately classifies Islam as a foreign element in Western society, thus possibly misinterpreting localized issues and responses to transnational connections.

As I fast-forward to the 21<sup>st</sup> century social science-literature on Muslims in the West, it is interesting to note how many of these studies place themselves within a “post-9/11” framework, situating their focus on Muslims within American and international politics. As such, the post-9/11 era of literature has focused largely on the effects of discrimination, racialization, radicalization and identity (Sirin and Balsano 2007; Maira 2004; Franz 2007; Merry 2005; Zine 2001; Fernando 2010; Poynting and Mason 2007; Asad 2003). These studies have expanded our understanding of Muslims’ role in challenging Western notions of secular liberalism and modernity (Asad 2003, Fernando 2010). However, it has been many years since the 2001-attack, and we must now question what lies beyond this somewhat limited approach to understanding Muslims as a marginalized group.

To do so, we must rethink the way we approach Muslims; less as a religious/ethnic/immigrant group and more as individuals who are moved by personal experiences and interactions. Muslim young adults (18-25) have the potential to contest our perceived notions of who Muslims are and how they engage in their localities. For instance, O’Connor (2010) provides an important perspective on how cultural hybridity influences young Hong Kong Muslims’ approaches to issues related to identities, life in urban spaces and performance of religious acts. With this focus, O’Connor challenges the idea of Muslims as a “problematic component of multicultural societies” (O’Connor 2010: 203), and argues that Hong Kong provides a significant alternative to recognizing Muslim youth beyond the ‘troubled’ label they are so often ascribed in the post-9/11 era. O’Connor is thus able to look at “the everyday street-level cultural mix that is pervasive and palpable to those who live in the city” (ibid.). He demonstrates how young Muslims in Hong Kong carve out a space for themselves in the localities they live, where they interact and engage with different cultures. They are not necessarily preoccupied with subverting dominant political structures; rather, they are more concerned with negotiating being part of and using public space (O’Connor 2010: 220). Inspired by this perspective on young Muslims’ navigation through spaces, I recognize my interlocutors’ engagement in responding to experiences of discrimination, exclusion and social justice (chapters 3 and 4) but I also highlight how they construct their own pathways through the city

spaces in which they feel rooted. While the studies mentioned above have provided important perspectives on the relationship between Western liberal societies and the minorities that inhabit them, there remains a gap in our understanding of how young Muslims, as individuals, creatively represent their identities and engagements and how they navigate the social structures that surround them.

#### Youth: young Muslims as relational actors

As I noted previously, since 9/11, young Muslims in Western societies have frequently been put in the media limelight; the media thus risks creating and exacerbating an anxiety with this growing religious minority who - with their insistent presence in various public spheres – may be viewed as ‘intruding’ on ‘essential’ values of Western liberty, secularity and enlightenment. While news media often present an image of young Muslims threatening Danish or Quebec values with their ‘foreign’ presence, the everyday practices of young Muslims’ paint a different picture (Hussain 2000; Bullock and Jafri 2000). Looking closer into these everyday practices enables us to investigate the complex interplay between social relations, socio-cultural context (local/national/global) and individual agency that all influence the ways in which young Muslims develop certain social and spatial navigational tactics in their cities. With this complex approach, I found inspiration in Christensen, Utas and Vigh’s argument that we must appreciate how young people interpret and produce sociocultural responses to the world, while also acknowledging their positioning through an examination of social relations and social structures (2006: 15-16). As a means of appreciating the complex factors that play into the way young Muslims experience and respond to their surroundings, I draw upon some of the classic theories within social and cultural analysis as well as the current trends that reformulate them in innovative ways.

The perception of youth as independent social actors and cultural producers was popularized by the Birmingham School, which sought to challenge the understanding of youth as a purely generational concept through a focus on working class cultures. With the Birmingham School, youth studies began to recognize the role young people play in cultural reproduction and class resistance; agency in this sense became a way to challenge hegemonic norms and values established by the ruling elite. In the context of young Muslims in the West, we can easily translate the Birmingham School’s class focus to analyze the relation between minority/majority

populations in Denmark and Quebec. However, I do not only focus on young Muslims' resistance towards hegemonic social structures, as my interlocutors were also engaged in other non-resistant activities. These young people, while resisting some elements, accept and incorporate other elements of the dominating culture, processes that are important in illustrating the complex experiences of living as a young Danish or Canadian Muslim. As such, while I am inspired by the Birmingham School's legacy, which established an important precedent for youth cultural production, I also look elsewhere for a more extensive definition of agency that is not reducible to resistance.

Deborah Durham provides a valuable critique of agency as established within a Western post-Enlightenment context and based on resistance and autonomy. She argues that instead of looking for youth resistance as an expression of agency, we need to “ask what kind of agency [youth] might have [...] and how their agency relates to others and to their society” (Durham 2008: 153). By investigating my interlocutors' identifications, self-representations and city pathways, I appreciate Durham's complex definition of agency as socially situated. In other words, agency need not only be an expression of resistance to hegemonic values but may also be inclusive of other societal ideals of equality and liberty. Thus, by not approaching young Muslims as an ‘other’ within their urban localities, I am able to highlight their creative negotiations between resistance and inclusion.

My interlocutors were not only influenced by their affinity to the constructed “Muslim community” but were also implicated in complex interactions of various factors including intergenerational influences, life in a culturally diverse city and also an individual subjectivity expressed through their spatial biographies and social navigations. In this regard, Karl Mannheim's concept of 'fresh contacts' (1970: 384) is useful to understand how young Muslims redefine and negotiate new ways of expressing cultural values and religious symbols within their cities. As defined by Mannheim, transmitted cultural knowledge becomes redefined as it is incorporated into a new social context by new generational actors (ibid: 385). Here, Jennifer Cole points out that ‘fresh contacts’ demonstrate “how each new generation approaches and assimilates shared cultural material” (Cole 2004: 574). In the context of my research, young Muslims experience ‘fresh contact’ when they have to find ways of incorporating symbols of ‘otherness’, such as wearing hijab, prayer and other religious values, in public spaces. Such



practices of religious and cultural expressions are influenced by sociocultural structures as well as these young people's personal agency (Cole 2004: 576). For instance, some of my female interlocutors' choice to wear the hijab can be understood as a 'fresh contact' since they often explained their choice by incorporating hegemonic cultural values of liberalism that are ingrained in both Danish and Quebec societies. They did not seek to enforce an 'otherness' or produce a counter-culture, which resists the hegemonic culture. Instead, they used an accepted 'us'-discourse of Western liberalism and individual freedoms to establish an accepted narrative that would allow for their incorporation in these spaces. Mannheim's concept of 'fresh contacts' thus demonstrates how young Muslims' personal, religious and cultural choices are situated within broader societal structures; as such, "youth cannot be analytically separated from the network of social relations in which they are embedded" (ibid: 585).

Being young and being Muslim are both positions in states of being and becoming; indeed, Christiansen et al. define youth as "a position in movement" (Christiansen et al. 2006: 11). In this sense, youth becomes a social position that is shaped by internal and external factors (i.e. being) as well as a function of social and generational process (i.e. becoming) (ibid.). The same can be said about being Muslim; it is never a static identity, but rather a position that is always in process, constantly influencing and influenced by internal and external factors. For instance, my experiences with some of my female interlocutors demonstrated the shifting dynamics in wearing hijab. As such, many young women often changed their decision to wear the hijab – having a sort of 'on-again, off-again' relationship with the practice – highlighting how the performance of wearing the hijab can be a fluctuating and socially constructed expression of religiosity. By acknowledging the processual character of the Muslim identification, I highlight the importance of appreciate the dynamic ways in which young Muslims experience and interpret their localities and produce cultural and social responses to them *and* with them (ibid: 15-16).

## Urban Space and Pathways

### Pathways through the city

In the past, anthropologists tended to focus on the distinct 'cultural worlds' of social groups (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). For instance, to study Muslims, the anthropologist would go to the mosque and other 'Muslim' institutions to investigate Muslims within their distinct cultural places (Jeldtoft and Nielsen 2011). However, as Gupta and Ferguson accurately critique, such an

approach often overlooks the important interactions between different types of people within a particular space (Gupta & Ferguson 1992: 7). As such, Muslims cannot be understood as merely members of a religious ‘community’ secluded from the rest of the society. On the contrary, young Muslims, more often than not, develop their various identifications in close interaction with non-Muslim friends, institutions and sociocultural environments. An understanding of the limitations of spatial separation paves the way for investigating how people attribute distinct meaning to space, thereby focusing on the process of place making (Henkel 2007: 58) – i.e. a space with meaning. For this reason, Heiko Henkel (2007) argues that we cannot appreciate the complex reality of Muslims’ lives if we restrict our perspective to Muslims’ ‘cultural worlds’. Based on his ethnography among religious Muslims in Istanbul, Turkey, he contends that the lifeworlds of Muslims cannot be spatially separated from the heterogeneous spaces of Istanbul (i.e. spaces that are not distinctly Muslim, Henkel 2007:58). Instead, he looks at how Muslims actually redefine heterogeneous spaces into Muslim places through practice, experience and perception (ibid: 68).

Inspired by Henkel’s argument, I seek to challenge the perception of Muslims as a separate social group inhabiting distinct cultural worlds within Copenhagen and Montreal. In fact, my interlocutors’ city tours demonstrate how their lives are engrained within their cities in diverse ways. They have different experiences and histories attached to their localities, and their movements through their cities demonstrate their individualized pathways that influence their religious, social and cultural identifications. By not focusing on Muslims within particular ‘Muslim spaces,’ I want to highlight that they are not a homogenous *group*; quite the contrary, they formulate their identities based on unique and diverse pathways through heterogeneous spaces.

According to Ruth Finnegan, the concept of pathways illustrates the relative and situational character of urban life both in social and geographical terms – where people choose to follow certain directions instead of others (Finnegan 1989; Amit-Talai 1994). Based on her study of local musicians in an English town, Finnegan defines pathways as “a series of known and regular routes which people chose – or were led into – and which they both kept open and extended through their actions” (Finnegan 1989: 305). In other words, we all choose to follow certain paths, both in a physical and a social sense, and the pathways we choose at any given moment

influence our practices and social relations. Vered Amit further develops this concept in her study of young people's urban pathways, focusing on how young people in Montreal and the Outaouais tactically use space, time and social roles "to organize their involvements and relationships in the city" (Amit-Talai 1994: 188). Incorporating the understanding of pathways into my study of young Muslims challenges the homogenous understanding of "the Muslim community" as an overarching category of people who share similar lifestyles and beliefs. By including a perspective of life course pathways, I stay open to the processual and indeterminate ways young Muslims choose, change and create social and spatial pathways. The importance of appreciating such multiple pathways is demonstrated in Glick Schiller, Caglar and Guldbrandsen's (2006) comparative study of born-again Christianity as a religious non-ethnic pathway to migrant incorporation. They argue that studies of migration and religion tend to focus on "ethnic communities", and thus often overlook other important pathways to workplace, neighbourhood, politics as well as religious organizations, where migrants form social ties with people of different national, ethnic and religious backgrounds (Glick Schiller, Caglar & Guldbrandsen 2006: 614). Drawing from this argument, we can appreciate how a focus on pathways – and mobility in general – enables a more dynamic appreciation of the multiple investments people have at any given time. Given anthropologists' tendency to seek the group as the focal point of social study, we often risk a reified understanding of 'community' that can potentially forfeit an appreciation of the individual experience for the sake of the social group. Investigating pathways and mobility, instead of groups, relinquishes us from the burden of trying to understand the categorical identity as a whole. Thus, this thesis does not seek to construct a summary analysis of such a highly diverse set of people as Muslims in Copenhagen and Montreal. Rather, I aim to demonstrate the distinctive pathways that young Muslims can create through their daily lives in these settings; these pathways present a way to understand how certain young Muslims negotiate their identities not as a community, but as individuals who are influenced by personal experiences and relations.

#### Everyday tactics and the production of social space

In this section, I want to link my research to a theoretical approach that focuses on everyday life, tactics and social space. Here, I am especially inspired by the work of Michel de Certeau (2011 [1984]), who emphasizes the importance of everyday life and underlines the value of

understanding ordinary people's practices beyond domination and resistance. I also find Henri Lefebvre's (1991 [1974]) theorization of the production of social space useful to think with. I argue that young Muslims' lives need to be understood from an everyday perspective, rather than focusing primarily on the spectacular events of social actions and protest. Indeed, pathways are constructed by means of daily negotiations and manoeuvring within urban space, and not in the extra-ordinary moments of social action. Urban space is not merely a compilation of physical structures, but it is rather experienced and used; in other words, it is socially produced and reproduced.

By concentrating on the uses of space, de Certeau illustrates how imposed structures can become reliable, thereby enabling the individual to develop tactics to manipulate these structures, hence "making it possible to live in them by reintroducing into them the plural mobility of goals and desires" (de Certeau 1984: xxii). De Certeau distinguishes between strategy and tactics to demonstrate an important difference between an ordinary individual's manoeuvring within such structures, and the more powerful strategists who are able to transform them. He thus defines strategy as the ability to manipulate power relations within a specific space - "able to produce, tabulate, and impose these spaces" (de *ibid*: 30). On the other hand, tactics can only make use of and manipulate such spaces finding "a degree of plurality and creativity" within confining structures (*ibid*). As "an art of the weak", tactics are the creative responses of non-powerful actors in moments of conjunctures within an imposed structural terrain of hegemonic power (de Certeau 1984: 37). The concept of tactics enables me to investigate how young Muslims engage and manoeuvre within urban spaces. In other words, the concept of everyday tactics allows me to understand how young Muslims employ creative attempts to manipulate the hidden potentials within societal structures in claiming a pathway towards self-expression and inclusion.

De Certeau describes how a person is not only subjected to structures, but can, in fact, enact their agency through such structures as well. He explains how city planners, government officials and other powerful people have developed the structure of the city; they have the privileged position to produce the city structures from above by deciding what buildings to construct and how to pave the roads etc. However, from the perspective of the individual, these overarching structures are less important to an individual's pathway through the city. Indeed, it is through the individual's movements and use of the city that the space is transformed into a place,

i.e. a living space. With this, de Certeau illustrates the importance of theorizing lived space, since it is through such spatial practices that social life is structured (de Certeau 1984: 96). In the context of young Muslims' practises, this theoretical perspective on space becomes an important avenue through which to understand young Muslims' attachments to their localities. They are thus not an 'other' in their city, but the city is ingrained in their memories and pathways in the same way they influence the space by their presence and practices. In other words, it is through their everyday practices that young Muslims become an integral part of the city's heterogeneous spaces; as de Certeau points out, "*space is a practised place*" (de Certeau 1984: 117, italics in original). Thus, by shifting the focus of analysis from strategist to tactician and from city planner to city dweller, de Certeau directs our attention to how structures influence agency. In this sense, the focus is on understanding how one is able to manoeuvre within these structures, and through the creative choice of practises, one is able to develop a certain if limited measure of autonomy in spite of the hegemonic structures of society (de Certeau 1984: 176).

Lefebvre's definition of social space is helpful to consider when trying to understand my interlocutors' agency vis-à-vis dominating social structures. Lefebvre defines space as perceived, conceived and lived (Lefebvre 1991). In this sense, space is continually produced through these three social processes. Perceived space is defined by spatial practice; conceived space is the representation of space; and lived space is experienced space (ibid.: 38-39). In synthesizing Lefebvre's theorization of the production of space, Christian Schmid defines these three processes of spatialization as phenomenological, representing both individual and social processes (Schmid 2008: 39). Thus, space is perceived insofar as it is experienced by the senses (sight, smell, touch etc.); the fact that space is conceived presupposes perception, i.e. the physical spaces are planned out by architects, engineers and city planners; and, finally space is experienced in everyday life by social actors as they move through and use the spaces (Lefebvre 1991: 40; see also Schmid 2008: 39-20). In this sense, space cannot be understood in and of itself; rather it is connected to a social reality (Lefebvre 1991: 85). Social space is thus understood "in an active sense as an intricate web of relationships that is continuously produced and reproduced" (Schmid 2008: 41). The focus here is on the relationship between actors and how these constitute spatialization. However, like de Certeau, who argues that social structures limit 'the tactics of the weak', Lefebvre's social space is ruled by a hegemonic class and cannot

be disconnected from the inherent power dynamics that influence the processes of production (Lefebvre 1991: 85).

De Certeau's perspectives on everyday life and tactics enables me to analytically explore young Muslims' movements within different spaces to appreciate how they tactically navigate within social structures. Lefebvre's understanding of the production of space adds to this understanding by allowing for a perspective onto the processual nature of space and how the experience of space can become imbued with social meaning. Social structures do not merely determine our agency without our knowledge; on the contrary, de Certeau suggests that the individual has some tactical ability to challenge these, although within definite limits, i.e. tactics as the art of the weak (1984: 37). My research suggests that these tactics of the weak may actually have a greater structural effect than both de Certeau and Lefebvre recognize in their theorization of space. We are not merely determined by social structures, but meet them in distinct and personal ways. Politicians' attempt to limit women wearing hijab and/or niqab (face-veil) from accessing public institutions and services - a discussion that exists in both Quebec<sup>1</sup> and Denmark<sup>2</sup> - is an example of how politicians can implement social and legal structures that limit certain persons' use of public spaces. One reaction to these legal limitations, could be that women wearing hijab and/or niqab accept the ban and modify their practices, accepting it as an inescapable condition of living in a 'secular' space. However, many of these women choose to keep this practice, and instead of modifying it, they seek to creatively negotiate themselves into these public spaces by invoking hegemonic cultural values of liberalism to manipulate structural domination. In this sense, it is not a question of producing a counter-culture, which resists the hegemonic culture. Rather, it illustrates Muslim Westerners' awareness of social structures and how they choose to act through and with these structures, rather than being subordinated to them. Responding to the structural limitations of hijab in public spaces, my interlocutors did not use an 'other'-discourse to counter the argument of "no room for religious symbols in secular space".

---

<sup>1</sup> The Charter of Values debate and more recently Bill 62 on religious accommodation that among other things prohibits women wearing face-veils from using public services are the most recent examples (for the specific legal implications of Bill 62, see <http://www.assnat.qc.ca/en/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-62-41-1.html>).

<sup>2</sup> The hijab-debate in Denmark has been ongoing for several years trying to limit women from wearing hijab and niqab in certain public spaces. Most recently, a similar bill to Quebec's bill 62 was suggested by the government with wide support across the political spectrum (see e.g. Kristiansen & Skærbæk, October 6, 2017: <http://politiken.dk/indland/politik/art6147189/Venstre-har-bestemt-sig-Sikrer-flertal-for-et-burkaforbud>).

Rather, they employed an accepted 'us'-discourse of Western liberalism and individual freedoms to establish an accepted narrative that would allow for their incorporation in these spaces without relinquishing their right to use symbols such as the hijab.

The Danish and Quebec debates on wearing the hijab in public spaces is only one example of the issues given media attention over the past few years, which seems to heighten a feeling of 'the Muslim others' threatening cherished values of secularity and freedoms. However, these types of negotiations happen daily, in much less sensational ways. These negotiations depict the important process of manoeuvring within dominant structures, which demands an individual's awareness and reflexivity to be able to improvise appropriate tactics. To briefly reiterate, young Muslims are influenced by the societies they live in; the places young Muslims inhabit influence their pathways and mobility (both spatial and social). Yet, these young Muslims also challenge, change and negotiate acceptable lifestyles and social positions through their movements in and through particular city spaces. Although both de Certeau and Lefebvre recognize the relationship between social structures and agency, they both seem to put an emphasis on the limiting effects of social structures. Their theorization of space is thus important to appreciate my interlocutors' movements through their urban spaces; however, I move beyond their emphasis on social structures and the limitations these put on actors, and instead stress my interlocutors' ability to tactically navigate and transform social space into their own narratives of self-representation and social positioning.

### 3. Methodology

In the following methodology section, I start with a description of the sociocultural background of my two field sites: Copenhagen and Montreal. I follow with a brief discussion of the benefits of a comparative approach, which focuses on exposing the similarities and differences between young Muslims in these two cities. Subsequently, I elaborate on how I recruited participants. I then discuss the specific research methods I applied to collect and triangulate my data. I also include a brief discussion of my unique position in the field, demonstrating my awareness of both the benefits and limitations of doing fieldwork ‘at home’.

#### Field Sites

Different countries have distinctive socio-political realities, social resources and avenues that must be respectively navigated by young Muslims residing in them. It therefore becomes important to comparatively investigate the similarities and differences among such youth in different urban contexts as these implicate different potentials for social navigation. My field sites were based in Montreal and Copenhagen, two cities that have in common recent experiences of escalations both in the diversity of their urban populations and in expressions of ‘cultural anxiety’ (Grillo 2003). In fact, in both Quebec and Denmark, political struggles with a *perceived* lost cultural homogeneity have in some instances produced challenging social circumstances for minority populations in general and Muslims in particular. Nevertheless, these cities also differ in terms of their migration history, the types of migrants they have attracted, and the entry points of these migrants (professional vs. unskilled, urban vs. rural, affluent vs. impoverished). A comparison provides insight into the opportunities and limitations these two cities offer young Muslims, which in turn influence their lived experiences.

Both Denmark and Quebec<sup>3</sup> have particular historical experiences with becoming secular nations. While the Danish constitution still stipulates that Denmark is a protestant Christian nation, and Quebec is still distinguished by its Catholic history, both nations have developed a clear division between religion and state. In Quebec, this happened during the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, which instigated substantial social, political and cultural changes within the

---

<sup>3</sup> Although Quebec is a province within Canada, it is important to recognize its distinct linguistic, historical and sociocultural context.



province that in turn influenced the role of religion among the population. In Denmark, this division already began during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century literary period known as ‘The Modern Breakthrough’ (*Det Moderne Gennembrud*), which introduced the first public and scholarly critique of religion in the country. Thus, religiosity in these two contexts is often linked to a specific historical critique of religious influence, a critique that today has been extended to non-Christian religions in general, and Islam more specifically.

Montreal and Copenhagen have many distinctive features in common. First of all, their national histories demonstrate the important position of secularism. Although there is an official divide between religion and state, it is often the appearance of non-Christian religious symbols that seems to provoke cultural anxiety among some members of the general public. Nevertheless, Copenhagen and Montreal thrive on their increased cultural diversity. Second of all, as harbour-cities, Montreal and Copenhagen have historically been the landing ground for merchants and immigrants alike. Third of all, since these two cities are both business and cultural hubs of their region, young people have tended to gravitate to these cities from the surrounding rural areas. While Copenhagen and Montreal enjoy this centralized position within their region, they are still far smaller in scale compared to global cities such as London, Paris and New York. Thus, Montreal and Copenhagen are on the periphery of these global centers since they are smaller in size, population and global importance; thus, increased plurality and multiculturalism is situated differently here than in the global cities. While research on young Muslims has often focused on global cities, we lack an appreciation of young Muslims’ experiences in more peripheral cities such as Montreal and Copenhagen. These two cities’ approaches to pluralism and diversity can be mined for important insights into how young Muslims navigate and engage with their local surroundings, which is often very different from young Muslims’ experiences in global cities.

Copenhagen and Montreal, as the most socially and culturally diverse cities in their regions, provide an important avenue through which to explore the cities’ regional and global positioning. Hannerz (1996) suggests focusing on a city’s position at a global level. He differentiates between the cultural production processes in peripheral cities, which are cities that do not have a strong place on a global scale and center-cities, such as London, New York and Paris, which are positioned as global centers (Hannerz 1996: 77). To add to this perspective, anthropologists Nina Glick Schiller and Ayse Caglar suggest a ‘comparative theory of locality’,

promoting a comparative scale-approach to understanding migrant settlement. They argue the importance of understanding how migration impacts a city's position on regional, national and international scales. They argue that scholars have "paid too little attention to the differential neoliberal restructuring and rescaling of cities and the way these processes reconstitute global capital and migration" (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009: 178). The authors thus seek to "address the relationship between place, global restructuring processes and migration processes" (ibid.). In this sense, migrants help position a city in national, regional and global hierarchies by contributing to its social and cultural diversity.

As field sites, Copenhagen and Montreal provided rich opportunities to explore how my interlocutors contribute to their city's positioning. Although most of my interlocutors were not migrants themselves but descendants of migrants, their visibility and movements through different city spaces became a reciprocal cycle where their self-representations as socially and spatially mobile urbanites in turn enhanced the city's image as culturally diverse. In other words, these young Muslims moved through the city in efforts to represent their social mobility, while these very movements in turn enabled the cities they inhabit to represent themselves as global cities through their culturally diverse populations.

Comparative fieldwork is uncommon among anthropologists today because of the logistical limitations of developing a rounded and comparative understanding of multiple field-sites (Hannerz 2010: 73). However, interest in both multi-sited and comparative studies has been increasing in recent years (Marcus 1995; Olwig 2007; Hannerz 2003; 2012). There is however an important distinction to be made between conducting a comparative study and multi-sited fieldwork. While in multi-sited fieldwork the ethnographer follows the same subjects through their movements through several linked networks (locally and/or transnationally), the ethnographer of a comparative study pre-chooses several empirical fields to compare, without a direct link between the fields' subjects. With this distinction, it is important to clarify that my study is a comparative study that seeks to investigate the similarities and differences between the circumstances of young Muslims in Montreal and Copenhagen.

Interlocutors

This thesis explores the lives of young adults (aged 18-25 years old) in Montreal and Copenhagen, who self-identify as Muslims. Based on these young people's life experiences and

city movements, I develop an understanding of young Muslim urbanites as social actors, which incorporates an appreciation of the complex interplay between agency, social relations and social structures.

In Montreal, I recruited my interlocutors through university Muslim Student Associations (MSA), social media, snowballing and social networks I had established during an earlier period of fieldwork in Montreal (as part of my University of Copenhagen M.A. degree in 2009) and which I had maintained and developed over the years of living in the city. In my nine months of fieldwork in Montreal, I interacted with many people that were not formally interviewed but who played a role in my overall fieldwork engagements and considerations. I also conducted 30 semi-structured, recorded interviews with young men and women (9 men and 21 women) in Montreal. Twelve participants were born and raised in Canada, five migrated to Canada before turning 10 years old, four migrated with their families as teenagers and five came as young adults for their university studies. All of my Montreal interlocutors came from comfortably middle class backgrounds. Either their families had created social mobility for themselves through their years in Canada (buying property, getting higher degrees, and/or starting their own business), or they had belonged to affluent families before their migration to Canada, which eased their move as well as helped them establish themselves as middle class within Canada.

My Copenhagen interlocutors had a different demographic background than the Montreal participants. Although I followed the same recruitment model as in Montreal, Copenhagen presented different challenges in recruiting participants. The lack of student religious associations at Copenhagen's university campuses, meant that I could only recruit people who frequented the multi-faith spaces in their university campus. Thus, in Copenhagen, I included religious institutions and associations as recruitment sites. I relied heavily on personal contacts I had with people involved in these institutions to enable contact with their members. As in Montreal, I also recruited participants through social media and social networks I have maintained through the years I have lived in and travelled to Denmark. I interviewed 23 participants (10 men and 13 women). All interlocutors were born and raised in Denmark, except for four, whose families immigrated to Denmark before they turned 5 years old in the 1990s. Although country of origin may have influenced my interlocutors' experiences, I did not explore this aspect further unless they spoke about it as an important aspect of their lives. Denmark has

adopted very constrained immigration rules since the late 1990s, which has made it increasingly more difficult to gain permanent residency in Denmark. All of my interlocutors' families came in the 1970s, 80s or early 90s, so they all have long family histories in Denmark. Six interview participants had just completed twelfth grade (*gymnasium*, the Danish equivalent to high school), and were taking a gap-year before they were planning to start higher education. The rest of my interlocutors were all completing undergraduate university studies, and a few had already started graduate degrees. This is very similar to my Montreal interlocutors; however, while my Montreal interlocutors often had parents who had attended university, the parents of my Danish interlocutors had often not completed higher degrees.

#### Positioning

Ethnography is affected by the researcher's own personality and identities, which people in the field setting consequently react to (Langness and Frank 1981: 31-35). In other words, the mere presence of the researcher affects the field, and thus illustrates the social nature of ethnographic research. It is in the encounter between the researcher and the interlocutor that social research is conducted. Thus, the fact that I was previously familiar with both of the settings in which I conducted fieldwork, having lived in these two cities and engaged with many young Muslims over the years, provided me with a unique position – one with both benefits and limitations.

With regards to the benefits, my knowledge of activities and events in Muslim institutions and associations in these two cities allowed me to easily navigate the field sites. I hit the ground running, knowing in which institutions, key gatekeepers and places I would be able to initiate contact with potential interlocutors. My ease of access and deep knowledge of Montreal and Copenhagen, as culturally and socially diverse cities, were essential to enable the success of such an ambitious comparative program of fieldwork. Ethnographic research often aims at a rounded understanding of the society one studies, as such most ethnographers refrain from conducting comparative studies since these often limit one's ability to become immersed within both societies (Hannerz 2010). However, my choice of doing fieldwork in Copenhagen, the city in which I was born and grew up, and Montreal, a city in which I had carried out previous fieldwork and which had subsequently become my home for over 7 years, meant that I already had a complex understanding of both cities, their history as well as their Muslim and immigrant populations.

My familiarity with the two cities did not, however, always prove sufficient to ensure immediate access to the field sites and the recruitment of participants. In fact, and to my surprise, my access to my childhood city of Copenhagen – a field site I thought of as a ‘home’ field – proved to be more challenging than I initially expected. I had not lived in Copenhagen for several years before coming back for my fieldwork. During this time, the political and media discourses on Islam, Muslims and immigrants had grown much more hostile. The challenges I faced in trying to access the field (i.e. Muslim organizations, mosques etc.) as a researcher demonstrated the heightened attention by these organizations to their public profile. As an individual, I was always welcomed in these spaces; however, my access as a researcher had to be approved by the main board of trustees. Going through a more bureaucratic process of access was surprising (compared to the Montreal context) yet given the public and political debates on Muslims over the previous 10 years, the organizations’ hesitation with granting access to researchers was a testament to some of the challenges Muslims have faced in Denmark. For example, just a year after I finished my fieldwork in Copenhagen, a documentary aired on a major Danish TV channel entitled “Behind the veil” [*Bag sløret*]. This documentary supposedly “exposed the oppression of Muslim religious leaders” resulting in major legal restrictions on religious public speakers as a response to the findings of the documentary. The journalists employed a ‘Muslim-looking’ woman wearing a hidden camera and microphone to ‘investigate’ the problems within Danish mosques and Muslim organizations, including several with which my interlocutors worked closely. This documentary demonstrates the root of the representational problem for Muslims in Denmark: how to simultaneously depict oneself as a contributing citizen and a Muslim, when dominant public stereotyping often displays these two roles as mutually exclusive.

During the same period in which Danish Muslims have experienced a heightened negative media discourse and associated governmental policies, there has been an increasing research saturation of Muslim organizations, especially in Copenhagen. Schmidt (2011) highlights that this can pose specific difficulties in entering the field through organizations since they often have rehearsed answers to give both researchers and media alike, thereby making it difficult to go beyond group representations to understand the actual experiences (Schmidt 2011: 1223). To navigate around these limitations and problems of access to institutions, I relied heavily on

individual contacts and snowballing, and only used organizations as sites in which it was possible to engage young people who used these spaces. By not relying on religious institutions and associations, I approached my interlocutors as individuals, independent of their involvement in mosques and other associations. This approach meant that the hesitation I met from some organizations did not become a limiting factor but instead became an opportunity to follow my interlocutors in contexts that were important to them – sometimes this included particular mosques and other organizations, but other times it did not. By situating Muslims within the various localities, organizations and neighbourhoods in which they engage (and not only the religious institutions), I build on Schmidt's argument that we can come to understand the processes and experiences of choosing a Muslim identity, which is "as much a product of local time, place and ways of doing things as religious conviction" (Schmidt 2011: 1218). It is thus important to highlight the fact that religion is not always the main catalyst for acts, practises and movements through the city – what is important to investigate is *when* religious identity is put into use and what arises from such identity-tactics (ibid: 1227).

My position as a young Muslim woman often eased my rapport with female participants enabling me to participate in informal gatherings and socialize with them outside of formalized interview settings. On the other hand, being a woman also meant that interacting informally with male participants was limited, since such informal environments are often gender-segregated. However, in Montreal, where some Muslim Student Associations had allocated 'hang-out' spaces, such as an office space or library, it was easier to gain access to some of these social spaces, where both young men and women would engage in activities, study or just socialize.

Although I used male and female social contacts in an effort to achieve a rough gender parity in the recruitment of interlocutors, it nonetheless still proved more challenging to recruit male participants. This is reflected in the final gender imbalance among the people who ended up participating in my project in both settings. I could have chosen to limit my research focus to young women; however, I find it is crucial to appreciate the gender differences in young Muslims' experiences, since men and women are often represented very differently. Muslim women, for instance, are often portrayed in public media as oppressed and submissive (Zine 2002), while Muslim men are often viewed as aggressive and threatening (Dwyer, Shah, and Sanghera 2008). These diverging gender-images provide young Muslim men and women with

specific possibilities and limitations in daily practices that are important to recognize and compare; i.e. what does it mean to be perceived as an aggressive male as opposed to a submissive female? Focusing on one gender only would overlook the important differences, similarities and interactions between young men and women.

### Research Methods

This thesis is a comparative ethnographic study that focuses on particular case-stories drawn from my fieldwork research. These cases discuss broader themes related to the intersection between young adulthood, social mobility, spatial mobility, urban life and identification as a Muslim in a Western society. I applied three main qualitative methods to triangulate my data: semi-structured qualitative/narrative interviews; participant observation; and spatial tours. Besides these methods, I gathered information from news media and political debates before, during and after my actual fieldwork. This type of media-focused data collection was especially important during a heightened political drama such as the Charter of Values debate in Quebec in the fall/winter of 2013-14, or during the various smaller social dramas that arose in Danish popular discourses during my fieldwork.

### Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured and narrative interviews were an essential part of my fieldwork data. It was during these interviews that I discovered the level of reflexivity involved in interlocutors' social relations, practices, movements and life experiences. I prepared an open-ended interview guide focusing on themes related to being Muslim in Copenhagen/Montreal, e.g.: societal influences, peer relations and family background. My interview approach was fluid and dynamic, promoting a naturally flowing conversation through which my interlocutors could guide the interview in the direction they preferred. This allowed them to shape my questions and sometimes even take over in a more narrative-styled interview, where they led the conversation in directions I had not expected.

I reassured all of my interviewees that their participation in the study and information which they provided would be treated in confidence and that they could exclude anything we discussed during our conversations which they did not want featured in the thesis. This meant that a few interlocutors were comfortable to share private experiences with me, which they did not want included in my analysis. In turn, these interlocutors allowed me a position not only as a

researcher but a friend. This made it easier so engage with them on a personal and social level outside of the formal interview setting. However, developing friendships with interlocutors pose ethical considerations of how to handle their stories with responsibility and careful confidentiality; what Carolyn Ellis calls relational ethics (2007). Given this ethical dilemma and to strike a balance between researcher and researched, I shared my ethnographic thoughts with some of my interlocutors and tried to incorporate their thoughts on my research into my analysis<sup>4</sup>.

Some interviews were transcribed *ad verbatim*; others were summarized in time-segments, note-form and categories because of time constraints. An *ad verbatim* transcription of all 50 interviews and 17 spatial tours would have enabled an ease in choosing, accessing and analysing the cases. However, given my detailed notetaking and categorization when listening to the interviews and tours, I made sure to create an easy access to them, which in turn had a minimal effect on my analysis. Later in the analysis and thesis-writing process, particular quotes were transcribed *ad verbatim*, if they were included in the thesis.

#### Participant observation

During my fieldtrips to Copenhagen in the summer/early fall of 2013 and the summer of 2014, I participated in various neighbourhood activities, such as local festivals, cultural events and smaller scaled gatherings. These events were not necessarily Muslim-centric, but included local and municipal activities that promoted Copenhagen's image as a culturally and socially diverse capital. During these activities, I interacted with many different types of Copenhageners, who were invested in promoting the city's diversity. This type of broad scale participant observation that did not only focus on the category of Muslims, but included the city and its inhabitants more generally, helped me to situate my young Muslim interlocutors within this wider Copenhagen public. This city public often presented a very different and more inclusive framework of cultural diversity than was represented by the increasingly populist right-leaning political and media discourses. During my second fieldtrip to Copenhagen in 2014, I had already recruited half of my interlocutors and conducted interviews. This meant that on this second trip, I could conduct more personalized participant observation in the events and activities my interlocutors

---

<sup>4</sup> See for instance the introduction in chapter 7.



frequented as well as socialize and catch up with them on a more personal level. My second fieldtrip to Denmark was also more focused on conducting spatial tours with my interlocutors and so was less broad in scale than my initial trip in 2013.

My Montreal field site had more of a “home-field” advantage than Copenhagen, as I had lived in the city for several years prior to my fieldwork. This meant that I was well acquainted with key individuals, student associations, and community organizations, who also already knew of me and my research. University Muslim Student Associations were important field sites for regular participation (weekly meet-ups, hanging out in their offices, and participating and volunteering at their events). This type of participant observation helped me create a deeper rapport with my interlocutors and contextualize my interlocutors’ social lives. Once the Charter of Values bill was proposed in the early fall of 2013, it sparked protests, debates and demonstrations across the city. Although the bill particularly targeted Muslim women wearing the hijab, the Charter touched at deeper rooted issues related to the English-speaking minority, immigrants and the cultural anxiety experienced by French-speaking nationalists. This bill’s controversy allowed me to explore all of these issues through participation in these broader community debates. These debates ranged from CBC’s radio show “the Current” holding a public debate forum that attracted mainly an English speaking middle-aged audience, to university debates (both in English and French universities) that attracted a younger and more diverse audience as well as more Muslim-centric rallies and demonstrations protesting the bill as discriminatory. In the same way in which my Copenhagen participant observation was focused on a wider scale engagement with the city at large in order to contextualize my interlocutors’ experiences, my participation in these Charter events allowed me to gain a deeper insight into the issues related to French nationalists’ cultural anxiety about losing their perceived cultural homogeneity.

#### Spatial tours: mobility as an ethnographic method

To explore how my interlocutors use, relate and navigate through city spaces, I employed a method I call ‘spatial tours’, where I walked (and sometimes drove) with my interlocutors around city spaces that were meaningful to them. This method draws on the original methodological approach of mental mapping that Kevin Lynch (1960) developed. In his book *The Image of the city*, Lynch explores his interlocutors’ associations with city spaces and

explores how “legible” a city is to its inhabitants. In this sense, a legible city is one whose districts and spaces are easily identifiable to the people living in it. The method of moving with my interlocutors is also inspired by John Urry’s (2007) mobility paradigm. Urry’s focus on mobility as a paradigm diverts our attention from solely looking at social structures, to explore the potential of treating movement as a general social phenomenon including the local and global mobility of people, the physical mobility of objects, or even social mobility and the movement of concepts. Urry’s perspective allowed me to explore my interlocutors’ movements, not simply as migrants or descendants of migrants, but as localized young people who are rooted in their city spaces.

In total, I conducted 18 spatial tours (11 in Montreal, and 7 in Copenhagen<sup>5</sup>). In the same way it was easier to recruit female participants for interviews, it was also easier to recruit female interlocutors for spatial tours. This could be due to a better rapport established with these interlocutors, many of whom became friends of mine. In general, it was often more challenging to recruit people to do spatial tours, since these required more initiative from interlocutors to choose where to take me rather than to rely on my questioning. It was also much more time-consuming than a typical one-hour interview in a location of their choice. The fact that many of my interlocutors were still students and had flexible schedules meant that it was easier for some of them to find time for the tour. I expect that had they been older and had regular work-schedules and family obligations, it would have been more challenging to conduct the spatial tours. Yet, this method proved to be highly valuable in terms of expanding my understanding of my interlocutors’ biographies, subjectivities and mobility in ways that interviewing and participant observation did not reveal. The spatial tours allowed for a spatial appreciation of my interlocutors’ rootedness, which was manifested through the ease of their movements, the histories they attached to spatial structures and the negative and positive associations they attributed to particular city districts.

---

<sup>5</sup> One of the tours in Copenhagen was done through an interview instead of an actual walk tour because of the time constraints of the interlocutor.

#### 4. Exploring Processes of Groupness and Community

My fieldwork in Montreal coincided with a political controversy on religious symbols triggered by the Quebec provincial government, of the nationalist Parti Québécois, who suggested a new bill be introduced to the provincial legal system. Bill 60 was titled: *Charter affirming the values of State secularism and religious neutrality and of equality between women and men, and providing a framework for accommodation requests*. The Bill was popularly known as the Charter of Values and it was intended to ban all religious symbols in public institutions. Although presented as a general bill against all religious symbols, the media storm that ensued particularly focused on Muslim women wearing the hijab, who would be greatly affected if the bill passed legislation. The Charter-debate thus came to set the stage for my Montreal-based fieldwork.

Before I ventured out into the field, I planned on exploring young Montreal Muslims as a social category, and not necessarily as a ‘community’. As I came to realize through my fieldwork however, the concept of a ‘Muslim community’ was an important frame of reference for my interlocutors and had specific implications in their lives and social relationships. I started my fieldwork as the Charter-debate was gaining momentum, and this ushered in a range of different responses among my interlocutors. As I became more involved in my interlocutors’ lives, the lack of uniformity in their responses, the difference in strategies and even the disinterest of some interlocutors made me question what they actually meant when they said they belonged to a ‘Muslim community’.

Indeed, the majority of rallies, demonstrations and debates I attended during the Charter-debate represented a very diverse Montreal - not solely Muslims – coming together to construct a sense of community across social categories in solidarity with the targeted population groups (which was mainly Muslim women). Comparing my observations with my conversations with my interlocutors, it became necessary to question the emic concept of ‘the Muslim community’. It became essential to understand how my interlocutors relate to the idea of group by scrutinizing the relationship between category and group (as Brubaker urges us to do, 2002:169). Their understanding of ‘the community’ and the strategies to contest political and media stereotypes of Muslims in defense of this ‘community’ were nuanced and complex. In fact, it did not always represent equal or similar concerns among my interlocutors.

Through the detailed ethnographic material presented in the cases of this chapter, I argue for the importance of exploring the intricacies of belonging to a particular social category; how do individuals see themselves vis-à-vis others who share the same category? When does the idea of group become important? What are the processes involved in constructing such groupness or ‘community feeling’? And what happens if you are not able to be a part of that community?

#### Reasonable Accommodation and Quebec’s Cultural Anxiety

Before presenting my interlocutors’ cases and their experiences of belonging in Montreal, it is important to briefly describe the city and provincial context in which they live. In the Quebec context, the current French-Quebec cultural anxiety surrounding immigrants and religious minorities can be traced back to the 1990s. In the loss of the 1995 Quebec referendum to gain sovereignty from federal Canada, the French separatist premier Jacques Parizeau infamously said: “It’s true that we were beaten, but fundamentally by what? [...] By money and the ethnic vote, essentially” (Huffington Post, 2015)<sup>6</sup>. With these comments, Parizeau influenced the Quebec independence movement from its progressive roots of combating the marginalization of French Quebecers towards right-leaning political rhetoric focusing on identity and nationalism. Throughout the following decade, different controversies related to immigrants and religious minorities ensued. The debate on hijab as well as niqab (i.e. face covering) has been ongoing since 1995, when the Quebec Human Rights Commission ruled that it should be permissible for girls to wear the hijab. Nevertheless, the controversy surrounding hijab and niqab in public space continues to reappear in political and media discourse. In 2007, a media controversy broke out concerning the religious accommodation of a Muslim group visiting a *cabane à sucre*<sup>7</sup> (sugar shack). Other visitors objected to the group being served meals without pork as well as the small group praying in the waiting room near the reception hall (Fossum 2009: 86). There have also been controversies surrounding reasonable accommodation for other religious minorities. For instance, in 2001, there was a case against a Sikh student in a Montreal school who was not allowed to wear his *kirpan* (a blunt ceremonial dagger part of the religious dress Sikh men wear) to school; he took the case to the Canadian Supreme Court, who ruled he should have been

---

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/06/02/jacques-parizeaus-1995-r\\_n\\_7497024.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/06/02/jacques-parizeaus-1995-r_n_7497024.html) (13-03-2018)

<sup>7</sup> Small cabins where maple syrup is produced; certain times during the year these cabins open up their reception hall and serve meals made with maple syrup as well as different outdoor activities to the public.

permitted to wear the *kirpan* to school (Maillé and Salée 2013). In 2006, a controversy arose concerning a YMCA gym in Montreal that was located near a Jewish school; school administrators complained that their students could view women dressed in athletics garb exercising in front of a large gym window and consequently paid the gym to frost this window. Women attending the gym complained about the accommodation, and as with the case about the Muslim group visiting the sugar shack and the Sikh student wearing a *kirpan*, a moral panic arose in news media questioning whether reasonable accommodation had gone too far (Fossum 2009: 86). In response to the media representations of these cases, the leader of the then Action Démocratique du Québec (ADQ), a right-wing, conservative political party, Mario Dumont claimed the level of accommodation that were being granted minority communities was absurd and contradicted Quebec values (ibid). Adopting this moral panic, the small town of Herouxville – with a predominately French Quebec population – implemented a ‘code of conduct’ for immigrants who might come to live in the town (Maillé & Salée 2013: 14).

These cultural anxieties about ‘the migrant threat’ lead the then Liberal government to create the *Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences* headed by Professors Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor. They were to investigate the accommodation practices of cultural differences, consult individuals and organizations on their opinions, and finally give their recommendations based on their findings (ibid: 15). The Bouchard/Taylor commission’s recommendations can be summarized into five main categories: 1) defining policies related to interculturalism and secularism; 2) improving integration policies; 3) improving intercultural practices in public institutions; 4) ensuring adequate training for and accountability of institutions dealing with citizens; 5) addressing the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in public services, combating discrimination, offering support to immigrant women, and ensuring economic and social rights in the Québec Charter (Bouchard and Taylor 2008). The commission defined Québec interculturalism as an alternative to federal Canada’s approach to multiculturalism by emphasizing the position of the French language (ibid.). In this way, interculturalism is understood as “the acceptance of and communication and interaction between culturally diverse groups, without, however, implying any intrinsic equality among them” (Anctil 2011: 23). Hence, diversity is encouraged, however only under the condition that the “supremacy of French in the language and culture of Québec” is acknowledged (ibid.).

Although the Bouchard/Taylor report, published in 2008, downplayed the issues of Québec's cultural anxiety, in 2010 the debate resurfaced with the proposed bill 94 titled: *An Act to establish guidelines governing accommodation requests within Administration and certain institutions*. The bill, which was later scrapped, sought to prohibit women wearing niqab – the face veil – from working in public institutions or using public services. Bill 94 was the predecessor to bill 60 or the Charter of Values, which the government sought to implement in the fall of 2013.

This reoccurring debate on reasonable accommodations revolves around religious minority practices deemed as non-Quebecer. Looking at the reasonable accommodation debate from a historical perspective, Pierre Anctil provides an overview of Quebecers' reaction to the growing ethnic, cultural and religious diversity in their society (2011). To fully appreciate this reaction, Québec history needs to be understood in the context of the French resistance to British rule before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which gave rise to nationalist movements, analogous to the Irish and Scottish movements in other places of colonial Britain. Fast-forwarding to 1971, the then federal government led by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau proposed an official language policy along with multiculturalism. This meant that French and English languages were recognized as the official languages of the country, which were incumbent on immigrants to learn without requiring the adoption of either the French or English cultures. However, through the Bouchard/Taylor commission, Québec formed its own response to the notion of multiculturalism: interculturalism. Although interculturalism allows for minority cultural expressions, cultural diversity is limited since cultural expressions need to be situated within a hierarchical structure with French culture at the top. The controversy surrounding whether or not immigrants need reasonable accommodation is placed within a broader discourse of immigrants threatening French language and culture. Hence, Freiwald highlights that "the conflict that haunts interculturalism in Québec is rather between two rival models of community: nation (premised on peoplehood) and citizenship" (Freiwald 2011: 85). Ultimately, the political discourse may acknowledge the fact that immigrants can become legal citizens, however they may still be excluded from the Québec-nation based on their lack of conformity with Québec-culture.

This historical background is important in order to understand the Parti Québécois (PQ) government's attempt to limit religious symbols in public spaces in 2013. Coincidentally, the Charter of Values was introduced by Parti Québécois Minister Bernard Drainville around the time I began my fieldwork in Montreal. The Charter sought to prohibit certain forms of religious dress in public institutions - in the name of *laïcité* (secularity) – following similar bans in France. In the nine months in which I conducted fieldwork in Montreal, I observed and participated in events addressing the Charter debate until its culmination in the PQ government's political defeat to the Liberals in the elections of April 2014. During the Charter-debates however, the PQ deployed an extensive PR campaign promoting the bill in provincial media and public space (e.g. posters in metro-stations, news segments on TV, and public/local debates), resulting in province-wide discussions and public hearings. The debate consisted mostly of two opposing views: citizens challenging the bill as an infraction on personal freedoms, versus citizens supporting the bill as an important expression of Québec's secularity and gender equality. PQ politicians led by Pauline Marois and Bernard Drainville constructed a political crisis that focused on identity-politics underlining the cultural anxiety about the nature of a Québec identity. Ultimately, by attempting to strengthen a sense of ethnic cohesion among *Québécois de souche* (ethnic Quebecers), the PQ government targeted ethnic and religious minorities to highlight their otherness and need to conform to “essential” Quebec values such as *laïcité*. As an easy target (possibly because of their more recent migration history or visibility in dress and ethnicity) Muslims, and Muslim women in particular, took the brunt of the attention during the Charter debate. In January 2017, the spotlight trained on Muslim immigrants reached a particularly tragic crescendo with a shooting in which French-Quebecer Alexandre Bissonette shot and killed six men and wounded 19 men attending a mosque located in the capital city of Quebec. In early fall 2017, less than a year following the mosque shooting, the reasonable accommodation debate resurfaced as the Liberal government led by Philippe Couillard proposed bill 62: *An Act to foster adherence to State religious neutrality and, in particular, to provide a framework for requests for accommodations on religious grounds in certain bodies*. Following the guidelines of the Bouchard/Taylor report on defining policies related to interculturalism and secularism, the bill attempted to provide guidelines for public institutions dealing with reasonable accommodation<sup>8</sup>.

---

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-face-covering-couillard-analysis-1.4369789> (2018-04-15)

The bill was thus a successor to bill 94 and bill 60 (Charter of Values). Bill 62, which was passed in late October 2017, was met with widespread criticism for targeting women wearing the niqab and their access to public services, including health care, child care and educational institutions<sup>9</sup>. In early December, Québec Superior Court a temporary suspension of bill 62 based on its prohibition of a person working at or seeking a government service with their face covered. Nevertheless, the debate on reasonable accommodation and secularism in Quebec will probably continue to resurface as politicians are adamant about creating legislation to deal with the increasing cultural and religious diversity in the province.

This rather detailed background on Québec's history and controversies related to immigrants and religious minorities is important to appreciate my Montreal interlocutors' positioning vis-à-vis Québec nationalism. All of my interlocutors spoke both English and French, although some were better at one or the other language. The fact that they were either bilingual or trilingual (most also spoke their parents' mother tongue) meant that their national identification was not limited to Québec but included federal Canada. One male interlocutor, Isam, who moved to Montreal from Morocco when he was 1 year old, described this identification very succinctly:

I definitely see myself as a Canadian as well, I see Montreal as my city, not so much Québec [the province], although I love the French language. But I don't associate it with the Québec province. I think it's because of the whole separatist issue. It's just a matter of loyalty, Canada was the country that gave me citizenship, and I don't agree with the whole separatist thing. I never felt that Canada oppressed me because of my language [French]. I do understand that happened but I don't feel it's my battle. I grew up being accepted for the language I speak [French]".

My interlocutors' ability to connect with Canada as a national identity in the face of discriminatory discourse and policies meant that during a controversy such as the Charter-debate, several interlocutors were seriously considering a move out of Québec. This rhetoric of identifying with federal Canada (despite French being their first language) was a unique possibility that my Danish interlocutors did not have. Instead, they had to either insist on their

---

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/bill-62-examples-ministry-release-1.4369347> (2018-04-15)



Danishness in spite of such nationalist rhetoric or pronounce their foreignness based on their parents' immigration background (see chapter 5).

#### Processes of Groupness and Community

As I ventured into the Montreal field during a heightened political drama and focus on Muslims in Quebec, I was faced with my own sense of frustration over the stereotypes being propagated in the media. My feelings were reciprocated by some of my interlocutors. Layla, for instance, who I will introduce in more detail later, was one such interlocutor. We both volunteered in the Blue Hijab event, in which we were handing out flowers and a sympathetic letter explaining 'our' perspective on wearing the hijab to passersby at a Montreal metro station. However, we were both uneasy about how hijab-wearing women were represented in the letter. We shared a similar logic of the unfairness of the propagated political stereotypes of Muslim women during the Charter-debates, and we were more inclined to be unapologetic in our response, seeking political equality rather than the general public's sympathy. From the point of view of an outside observer, Layla, I and the rest of the young women involved in the event, all seemed similar; dressed in a similarly colored blue hijab with an attached white flower (representing the Quebec provincial flag), no one would suspect the internal disagreements. To paraphrase Layla's decision to participate, she would rather be supportive of the group's cause rather than refrain from helping based on her political opinion about fighting the Charter of Values as discriminatory. It is in this logic of participating for the sake of the group and representing a 'united front' that the notion of groupness is established. In other words, groups do not exist until they are *performed* (Brubaker 2002). And once the spectacle, event or 'community activity' is over, the group returns once again to being individuals who simply share a social category. Anthropologists have historically had a tendency to seek the group as the focal point of social study. However, as I demonstrate in this chapter – through my interlocutors' different approaches to representation and 'community' – we often risk a reified understanding of group that can potentially forfeit our understanding of the individual experience for the sake of the social group.

The concept of group was inevitably implicated when researching young people in Montreal, who self-identify as Muslims; their identities, the stereotypes that surround them and their process of belonging to a particular religious community are influenced by their notion of

belonging to a ‘Muslim group’. In this chapter, I explore this concept of group, not as an analytical concept, but as a concept *in the field*. In other words, as Brubaker argues, the concept of group cannot be taken for granted – it needs to be questioned. When and how is it relevant? And how is the idea of group implicated in people’s lives and narratives? The concept of group is thus an emic concept and not an etic one; in Brubaker’s words, “it is a key part of what we want to explain, not what we want to explain things *with*, it belongs to our empirical data, not our analytical toolkit” (2002: 165). Brubaker uses the concept of groupism to define the tendency to take groups as “discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogenous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis” (2002: 164). He suggests a different word to investigate groups; groupness is the notion that groups are not an entity but are contextual and fluctuating, it is something that happens (ibid.: 168). While Brubaker mainly focuses on groupness related to ethnicity, race and nationalism, the concept is just as relevant in the context of understanding young Muslims’ lives in a Western context. Their religious identity is often confounded with the notion of Muslims as a social entity “to which interests and agency can be attributed” (Brubaker 2002: 162). In other words, as with ethnic, racial and national categories (ibid.), there is a tendency to reify Muslims as an internally homogenous and externally bounded group. Such reification is often represented in political and media discourse on Muslims as a population group; however, as will become clear in this chapter, my interlocutors themselves often reified their Muslimness in monolithic terms, which in turn affected their sense of groupness. In fact, although I sought to explore individual experiences of being a young Muslim in Montreal, almost all of my interlocutors referred to the concept of “the Muslim community” as a social entity they were engaged in or related to. However, as with the concept of group, the idea of community needs to be analyzed and contextualized. As Vered Amit suggests (2010), community is a concept that is good to think with; in this case, because it is so frequently used by my interlocutors, it becomes a concept *for* analysis rather than an analytical concept similar to the concept of groupness. When I refer to community in this chapter, I am referring to my interlocutors understanding of the concept, which is often a localized, highly specific group of people who share religious, educational and social ties (e.g. the Muslim Student Association [MSA] at Montreal’s universities). In this chapter, I seek to explore how my interlocutors engage with political and media stereotypes, their feelings of belonging to a particular ‘Muslim

community’, their relations with non-Muslim peers and how they navigate different social contexts and relations. I thereby investigate the processes of groupness and what my interlocutors actually mean when they talk about ‘the Muslim community’.

Young Muslim Women: Stereotyped as Oppressed, Reified as Representatives of the Group

#### Becoming a representation of “Islam”

Layla was a 25-year-old Moroccan student attending one of Montreal’s French universities. I knew her prior to beginning my fieldwork in 2013 so, when I asked her to participate in my research project, she was eager to help. On a cold November afternoon, we met at her university campus after she finished her classes. Before our interview, however, we both needed to pray the afternoon prayer. Upon completing *wudo* [ablution], Layla took me to the allocated prayer spot that she and other Muslim students had unofficially adopted as their own. The prayer corner was in the building basement, next to student lockers, where people rarely pass by. It was my first time visiting this campus and I was surprised at the difference in prayer facilities between the English and French universities. Layla shrugged, and explained that it had been a long and ongoing battle to try to acquire an office space for the Muslim Student Association, not to mention a prayer space. We prayed and found an abandoned classroom in which to conduct the interview. We sat down to talk, and given our prior acquaintance, the interview discussion proceeded informally with little direction on my part.

Layla explained her move from Morocco to Montreal in very transformative terms; it forced her to form her identity, as she put it. She was only 19 years old when her parents sent her off to start university in Montreal. Though her brother would join her 6 months later, Layla’s need to establish herself alone in a new city was an overwhelming experience. To ease the transition, she resorted to what was familiar to her: choreographed dance. In Morocco, she lived a very active lifestyle and had been competing in hip hop-dance since she was 12 years old; so, in search of familiarity, Layla looked up a local dance studio she could join. She formed her first friendships there and, as she put it, “came in direct contact with Canadians, which helped to get to know Canadians”. She struggled however to keep up with the dance group’s ambitions while also sorting out her immigration papers and starting university. Following a snowboarding

accident that prevented her from dancing, she drifted away from the dance group. She explained that while settling down in Montreal, forging new friendships and getting to know a new city, she felt “all over the place”, unable to commit to any extra-curricular activities. Simultaneously, she described searching for a deeper existential meaning that could help ease her transition, which she found in Islam. She felt torn:

The choice was between religion and the Canadian way of life, because I was always half [invested in each]. [Only partly in] the [dance] group because I’m not drinking alcohol, I’m not going to the club, I don’t have a boyfriend, I’m doing Ramadan. All those things make me foreign<sup>10</sup>.

In this quote, Layla indicates the struggle she felt trying to be a part of her dance group, and “the Canadian way of life” it represented, and at the same time maintaining her religious values. With this challenge to find her place in her new society, the question of how Layla represented herself to the world around her became significant. She struggled with a situation in which because she did not wear a hijab, her non-Muslim friends did not recognize the extent of her religious commitment. She explained how they assumed she was “just like anyone else” until they learned that she prayed and celebrated Ramadan; only then did they notice she was “different”, as she put it. Layla was uncomfortable with this lack of initial recognition. She described a feeling of guilt over the way in which she appeared to the world:

[I felt guilty] ... because when you’re with non-Muslims, you’re always compared to ‘oh what you’re doing [...]’, and you feel like you cannot give them the answer, and you are not representing how it has to be, Islam. So maybe I was a good person, but I was not a good Muslim. I was doing the half. So, I’m not feeling Muslim, because I’m just doing like a half-Muslim.

The issues Layla described do not necessarily concern how others perceived her, but rather how she saw herself through her interaction with particular people. This is where the question of representation becomes pertinent; Layla was uncomfortable with the type of Muslim she thought that the world saw in her, she did not feel it properly represented “Islam”.

---

<sup>10</sup> Layla’s quotes are included *ad verbatim* with minimal corrections. It is however important to mention that Layla was very articulate in French and spoke it with great fluency, however because of my limited French skills, she agreed to conduct the interview in English. This confidence demonstrates her ability and willingness to engage with both language communities in Montreal.

There are several interesting factors that appear in Layla's narrative regarding her initial settlement in Montreal. Coming from an affluent family and growing up in a large Moroccan city, life in the urban metropolis of Montreal was not foreign to her. In fact, she easily reconnected with her old hobbies and lifestyle in Montreal, which gave her an avenue to develop relationships outside the typical international student environment that many international students often turn to. In Morocco, the question of representing 'Islam' was never an issue; everyone around you was Muslim and you simply lived your religiosity without giving it a second thought. However, in Montreal, Layla was suddenly asked about her religious beliefs, and why other Muslim women wore hijab and she did not. From never being questioned on her religiousness to it suddenly becoming a central focus of her encounters with some Montrealers, she started to feel a heavy burden to represent it the 'right' way. Thus, once she decided to wear the hijab two years later, she finally felt ready to represent the Muslim role she felt was expected of her:

I don't want to wear hijab and just be in my bubble with my Muslim hijabi girls. It's not a good thing because when I wear hijab I want to show non-Muslims what is hijab and to interact with them and to have one hijabi in their life to say: "She's normal".

Now that Layla felt she was able to "represent Islam", she did not shy away from discussing her religious identity and opposing existing Muslim-stereotypes. Through personal relationships, she ensured that at least her friends did not believe the negative popular stereotypes that were often attributed to hijab-wearing women. In facing stereotyping political discourse, which essentializes individuals into broad monolithic categories of 'the Muslim Other', Layla, and several other interlocutors, responded by trying to represent 'the True Muslim' within their surroundings. However, in doing so, they often risked reducing their nuanced lives, experiences and opinions into yet another monolithic representation of Muslims as a homogenous group. Taking a closer look at Layla's narrative, it is apparent that her personal friendships with non-Muslims and investments in social issues, such as helping people with disabilities, go beyond her own representational narrative. However, her narrative highlights the importance external stereotyping has on individual identification and how it can enforce feelings of groupness that seek to counter these stereotypes. It came into play in Layla's life, whenever she encountered prejudice because of her hijab:

You feel like you have more to show, two times, that you are capable to do it. Because the normal – what people do – is not enough, you have to show more and more that ‘I’m normal, I have the competence’. That makes you tired, to try and try and try to prove something you’ve already proven but no, it’s not enough, you have to prove it more. And sometimes that’s what makes people [other Muslims] just go into the bubble [...]. I feel like [the more] you try to convince the more tired you get. Like, I do my best, and if they ask, I will prove, but I don’t need to prove without asking me... especially when you’re already in a situation where you are [seen as] *soumise* [submissive].”

In the face of political stereotyping, Layla explained that you are expected to work harder to convince people that you are not only normal but also competent. Her own response to this was a more relaxed *laissez-faire* attitude:

Personally, I try to not internalize that image, the fact that I know this is your perception of me, helps me not to victimize myself. That's why it doesn't bother me what they think. [...]. That’s why it doesn’t touch me, because that’s not the definition I choose.

Layla contended that being conscious of existing stereotypes enables you to oppose them. She continued to explain that she chose to define herself differently from the general stereotypes of Muslim women that she has encountered. Thus, Layla took a critical stance towards self-victimization in the face of discrimination. Nevertheless, she could not escape the fact that because of the prevalent perception of Muslim women as subordinate, she was still forced to prove herself – on behalf of all Muslim women – when someone vocalized their negative opinion about what she supposedly represented.

#### Public representation as instigation for active self-identification

Fadila was a 19-year-old French-speaking Montrealer of Moroccan origins. She was born in France, lived the first 6 years of her life in Morocco before her family finally settled in Montreal, Quebec. As she described it, Fadila’s parents hated life in Morocco, and France was not much better – but they loved Montreal. Here, it seemed, they were staying for good; her parents were active in local Muslim organizations and felt settled in the city. Fadila developed her sense of Canadian belonging based on her parents’ attachment to Montreal. Thus, as she explained it, she may have had a Moroccan background, but she identified herself as a North American.

I first met Fadila during the Blue Hijab event, which she almost single-handedly organized. I later met her again at an English university in Montreal she had just begun attending. In our conversations, she described in detail how her activism had developed. Although she had attended a Muslim primary school in Montreal, she was one of the few Muslim students in her high school and CEGEP<sup>11</sup>. She wore the hijab, Fadila explained, but also accommodated her style of dress to the mainstream standards of her classmates:

Right now, I feel I'm wearing the most modest thing I can wear but before I was wearing skinny jeans, I was wearing tight stuff, and why? Because I felt like I wasn't accepted or something, but it's really something internal, it has nothing to do with what people were thinking, it was really what I was thinking they were thinking about me. So, it's something that really influenced what I was thinking. Especially when you're 15-16.

At the age of 16, Fadila was struggling to fit in among her peers, and therefore chose to dress like her peers to feel more accepted. She did not want to stop wearing the hijab, but at least she could make the hijab less conspicuous by dressing in more conventional clothes.

As Fadila started university, where she found a great deal of diversity, she became more comfortable appearing different as well. In turn, she dedicated herself more actively to social issues surrounding her. Fadila explained that because of her parents' activism in a local Muslim community center, she was brought up to appreciate the importance of engaging with societal issues. This experience gave her the motivation to get involved in issues she felt strongly about:

In that summer, the things that were happening in Egypt and Syria, and I started going out and demonstrating, I actually went to Ottawa to support the people of Rabi'a [Egyptian protest movement]. And Syria. I started helping with people outside [the Muslim community center]. And then while I was at [university], I decided to fill my time to help others. Because at some point I realized that my time is precious and I have to use it wisely. I got involved with Amnesty International in September. I was doing stuff with [a friend], and then I started [organization]. Did you hear about it? It was basically all going on with the Charter. So, with the Charter, I went out demonstrating against the Charter. And beginning this project took a lot of my time.

---

<sup>11</sup> CEGEP is a French acronym for "*Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel*" [General and Vocational College], which is a pre-university college that is part of Quebec's education system.

Fadila was volunteering in several projects; however, when the crisis surrounding the Charter began, an elder at the local Muslim community center urged Fadila to get involved; it was Fadila's responsibility, he argued, to defend hijab-wearing women from the Charter. Fadila felt compelled to spearhead a project that would voice her concerns about the Charter and this resulted in the Blue Hijab event. She worked on this event almost fulltime for three months. At the time of our interview, this event – having been implemented successfully – was still very important to her. The drama of the Charter was still ongoing, and she wanted to broaden the initial scope of the organization from its focus on the Charter, to an organization that educated others about cultural differences. She explained:

So, when I take a position in this project, I don't talk about politics, I don't talk about economics, I concentrate only on the social issues. So, there's a work, education you have to do on people, and education is not like, you can't do just an event like this [the Blue Hijab event]. Even if you plan it very well, you can't just do 4 hours of staying in a town and talking about education because education is a constant process. You have to work on it and work on it. So, I'm still planning a trip, we're going to Quebec this time, and it's not going to be only Muslim people, not only women, it's going to be all kinds of people, who will go to Quebec. Whatever their background, whether they are atheist, religion, no religion, people who feel like we should concentrate on values that unify us instead of dividing us. [...] What I'm thinking is to make a website, it asks you questions and these questions will lead you to specific videos about different cultures, about the hijab for instance – really specific questions that you usually are too shy to ask. So, you see, my purpose is to make the person watching this thing.... I want people to think because that's what we're lacking, people are really stereotyping, they are just following the crowd, they are not asking themselves questions.”

Fadila took her role to 'educate' people about the negative stereotyping of Muslims very seriously. The question of representation to Fadila is more public than personal as opposed to Layla's case, who wanted to develop personal friendships to counter political and media stereotypes of Muslims. For Fadila, it was her public and social responsibility to ensure that a broader public changed their perception of Muslims and that meant organizing public events in which she and her friends from the community center would represent a different image of Muslims.



### Dealing with conflicting strategies in social representation

The question of representation in Layla and Fadila's cases produce two very different strategies. Layla's strategy was to engage with stereotyping on a personal level, changing people's minds one interaction at a time. Layla's approach to representation did not require her to seek out the group or the community; rather, it was more about her interpersonal skills to form friendships with people of diverse backgrounds and through that challenge the stereotypes portrayed about Muslim women in the media. Fadila, on the other hand, felt the burden of her social responsibility, and believed she had to *do* something about countering stereotypes on a large scale. Fadila's approach was focused on public counter-representation as performative. It is in her approach that the process of groupness becomes an apparent *strategy* for analysis. As Brubaker argues, "[b]y *invoking* groups, they seek to *evoke* them, summon them, call them into being. Their categories are *for doing*—designed to stir, summon, justify, mobilize, kindle and energize" (2002: 166). Fadila sought to bring people together to challenge the negative political images about Muslim women; through non-political but highly public and performative events, such as the Blue Hijab event, she mobilized young women who wanted to react to what they felt were unjust representations of them in the media but did not know how.

Layla and Fadila's different representation strategies each pose opportunities as well as limitations when challenging negative stereotypes. It is fascinating then to see what happens when Layla and Fadila, who share a similar social category (here: Muslim), disagree on strategies of representation. As mentioned previously, Layla – though she volunteered at Fadila's Blue Hijab event – had her reservations about this approach of publicly contesting the Charter and its accompanying polemics. For Layla, opposing the Charter was not a question of representing a different image of the Muslim woman than the one constructed by the Quebec government's Charter of Values campaign; it was rather a political issue of discrimination, and needed to be addressed as such. In contrast, Fadila – wanting to avoid the question of politics – wrote a letter distributed publicly during the Blue Hijab event that sought to appeal to readers' sympathies. Layla carefully voiced her concerns to the organizers regarding the event's lack of political resistance towards what she perceived as discriminatory politics, but these concerns were overlooked as the event had already been planned out. She thus acquiesced and volunteered for the sake of camaraderie with the organizers. It is interesting to note here how careful Layla

was not to offend the team of organizers, although she strongly disagreed with their strategy. Given her attention to the prevalent discourse on Muslim women as submissive, she felt uncomfortable with the letter being distributed during the Blue Hijab event, which she found to be apologetic. Nevertheless, to present a united front in fighting the stereotype of ‘the submissive Muslim woman’, Layla chose to support Fadila’s initiative<sup>12</sup>, thus depicting a unified counter-representation of Muslim women. This is simply one example of many disagreements that happened among my interlocutors on a regular basis related to community events, volunteering project and other social gatherings. What happened in this case, was that Layla decided to show solidarity with Fadila and the other organizers for the sake of the group. It is in this decision that an important aspect of groupness is depicted – although often internally fragmented in opinions and outlooks on different issues, the group must *appear* to share a united front, i.e. present itself as homogenous. However, as we will see with Nadia in the following case, it is this attempt to create a unified counter-representation of ‘the Muslim’ through the process of groupness that reinforces its reification.

When self-representation clashes with group-reification and vice versa

Nadia introduces us to a different narrative of representation – one that is not so concerned with public perception and stereotyping but rather with the social identification of young Western Muslims. Nadia is one of several of my interlocutors who had lived a very transnational life. She was born in the US, lived in Canada for her earliest years, moved to Saudi Arabia by the age of 6 and then returned to Canada with her family when she was 16. In addition to her transnational migration history, Nadia’s ethnic background was both British and Syrian. In 2014, when I interviewed her in a downtown Montreal café, she was 23 years old, living on her own and completing her graduate studies while working part-time. Contrary to Layla and Fadila, Nadia was more concerned with her self-representation vis-à-vis other Muslims than she was with representing Muslims in the broader Quebec context in light of the Charter debate. Because of her mixed ethnic background, she had experienced challenges in being accepted among ethnic

---

<sup>12</sup> Layla and Fadila did not know each other very well before this event. Layla was six years older than Fadila and they were therefore part of different networks of friends, yet they attended and volunteered at the same mosque.

Syrians; she was never seen as fully Syrian or fully British. Compounding the dilemma of specifying her Muslim-identification, Nadia explained:

[T]he Muslim aspect of it, it's again also hard because there are different ways, or different extents of someone's Muslimness I guess. I don't know.

*Can you explain that?*

Well, obviously, there are some people who are considered more liberal Muslims and ones that are more conservative. And then, it's just, where do you fit in? I wouldn't consider myself liberal, but at the same time if I'm in a conservative context I would be considered liberal. So, it's hard.

*Do you struggle with the Muslim label?*

Not in society, but among Muslim communities, sometimes I do.

*Can you explain that?*

How do I put this... there are some people for instance who will view Muslims specifically, even among the Muslim communities - being a girl who does not wear hijab puts me in a position where it's not very easy to self-identify in that group. Not to say that everyone is like this. I've met a lot of sisters and brothers [i.e. fellow Muslims] who are accepting of girls who do not wear the hijab in that community or in that context. But there are some who for instance will feel like you have a lot to work on, and there's that kind of attitude. It's not always verbally expressed but it's a very implicit feeling that I get in some contexts.

Nadia describes here the issues she has faced with other Muslims as a young woman who does not wear the hijab. The issue she had as a self-identifying and practising Muslim woman was her inability to represent the 'True Muslim', as Layla also described it. Inadvertently, Nadia describes here the reification that becomes a consequence of the process of groupness. Nadia's appearance coupled with her religiosity challenges the image of a unified group represented through a reified understanding of who a 'True Muslim' is. Nadia ultimately problematizes the process of groupness in her difficult relationship with 'the group'.

In the Quebec context, as well as in other Western contexts that feature similar debates about the Muslim hijab, much attention is attributed to the hijab as the quintessential

representation of the Muslim woman. One of the ironic effects of this representation is that the hijab has come to be adopted as a primary symbol by some Western Muslims as well. Given this double-barreled set of associations, not wearing a hijab detracts from one's Muslimness as both Nadia and Layla have experienced, though in different ways. Nadia experienced this lack of Muslim identification from her Muslim peers, while Layla experienced it from non-Muslim peers.

These different experiences of Muslim categorization underline two important issues in the study of representation. On the one hand, there is the popular stereotype of how a Muslim is imagined to be, and on the other hand there is the Muslim response to this stereotype that seeks to represent the 'True Muslim' but, in the process, also risks re-enforcing a monolithic representation. In other words, if the popular stereotype – as represented in the media and political discourse – portrays the Muslim woman as a hijab-wearing submissive anti-gender equality person, as Layla explained it, then the Muslim counter-representation portrays the Muslim woman as a hijab-wearing empowered socially active person.

What happens, however, when you see yourself as a practicing Muslim woman without the hijab or involvement in social organizations, as in the case of Nadia? Nadia's narrative highlights the challenge some of my interlocutors experienced with the counter-representational discourse that exists among some Muslims when confronting dominant popular stereotypes. Nadia explains the challenges further in the following:

Just because I'm not so involved or they [other Muslims] don't identify me as a Muslim right off the bat. So, it's not really that anyone has approached me or said anything to me, but I don't exactly come off as Muslim just by appearance. And unless someone sees me in that context they're not going to know.

*How do you feel about that?*

It's very interesting, I'm sort of at conflict with that because there was a point in my life where I did wear the hijab and even then, I didn't feel like I fit in in the Muslim community. Because again, you could wear the hijab and people would have, not issues with how you wear it, but then they'd comment: 'You still have improving to do'. So, I think the hijab is a significant self-identifying symbol both in the society and in the Muslim community. So, I

don't know how to come to terms with that. When I did wear the hijab, I wasn't very involved in the Muslim community because I felt at times that I didn't meet the standard Muslim. For instance, I wouldn't dress in skirts, for the longest time I didn't like skirts, so I wore pants, and so sometimes my shirts weren't significantly long enough, so I didn't feel like I symbolized the ideal Muslim or hijabi symbol. So, I never got involved. But then afterwards, when I wasn't a hijabi, I did try to get involved, and I think I've come to terms with it more as a non-hijabi. It's a [work in progress], and I mean it is what it is. It's hard but it's something you need to be aware of. You either accept it and let it shape you or you choose to ignore it.

Nadia related an important issue when facing Muslims' own reification of their religious identity. Being of mixed ethnic background, people in general did not assume Nadia was Muslim. She did not find this challenging among non-Muslims because, as she explained, she could socialize with them on her own terms without compromising on her religious values. Nadia did however struggle with the fact that Muslims often had a preconceived notion of her religiosity because she did not wear the hijab or involved herself in Muslim community events. Nadia did not oppose wearing the hijab herself; in fact, she did wear it for 5 years when she first arrived in Canada to both self-identify and *be* identified as a Muslim. However, she eventually took it off when it became too difficult for her to deal with the challenges of having to live up to her non-Muslim friends' questions about the hijab, and other Muslims' social expectations on how a hijab-wearing woman is supposed to be. She explained that even while wearing the hijab, she did not feel she could represent the 'True Muslim':

The last year and a half when I was wearing it, I wouldn't say issues, but I had for instance I'd have non-Muslims question me about it, and sort of like: 'What's the purpose of it', or 'Oh it's for modesty, but why can't you be modest without wearing it'. And then I didn't feel like I could comment on that, I didn't know how to answer those kinds of questions. I didn't experience anything negative too much from non-Muslims but that was mostly because I was in a context where most of the people around me were educated or at least respectful enough not to enjoin anyone's personal choices. Obviously, that was before bill 60 [the Charter of Values], things may look a bit different right now. What bothered me most was that I had Muslims themselves sort of tell me: 'You wear make-up, what is the point of your hijab if

you wear make-up or why do you have nail polish on, isn't the point of the hijab not to attract attention. [...]

*It sounds like you had a lot of judgemental experience?*

Yes, and I think that drove me away from the Muslim community because I had this perception that all Muslims, all practising Muslims were judgemental in their attitudes, which I later discovered was not the case. So, then I just didn't feel... Like, I associated with Muslims, but I didn't associate with them, and then I couldn't really integrate in [Canadian] society with my hijab. So, I was at conflict with myself, and I think I wanted to have the chance to experience life without [the hijab] just to see how it would be different.

*So how was it once you took it off? Did it ease that whole pressure you felt?*

It eased it in a way that I felt less intimidated to integrate into the Muslim community, but it didn't really ease it in a way in terms of the non-Muslim community. Because in terms of socialization, or ways of socialization among non-Muslims, a lot of it involves going to events where there's alcohol or late night dancing or whatever and even as a non-hijabi, I would not feel comfortable being in that sort of setting. So even in terms of socializing or integrating in that, it did not make a difference whether I wore the hijab or not. But among Muslims, it did make me feel like, you know what... and it could be because I met some non-judgemental Muslims who were very supportive and who helped me integrate into that community that I changed my perception of the practicing Muslim community.

Nadia's biggest challenge with wearing the hijab was not the popular stereotyping of Muslim women, but rather that some Muslims did not think she represented the hijab well enough. Nadia felt overwhelmed with these experiences, especially when she simultaneously had to respond to questions from non-Muslim peers who assumed she was a representative of 'the Muslim group' because of her hijab. Nadia eventually took off the hijab to avoid this catch-22. In her own words, taking off the hijab helped her to feel "less intimidated to integrate into the Muslim community", and as she further explained, when she took off the hijab, her Muslim identification became a more internal and interpersonal process that did not require her to represent 'the Muslim group' either in public or among other Muslims. Moving away from this reified image of 'the Muslim' allowed her to formulate personal relationships that would introduce her to a more inclusive way of being Muslim.

Nadia's experiences demonstrate how groupness and the resulting reification of social identity can become a constricting factor in self-identification. In other words, Nadia felt personally invested in her religious identity, yet felt excluded from the Muslim group for lacking the ability to perform her Muslimness well enough to live up to the expectations of some of its group-entrepreneurs – i.e. social actors who seek to construct, promote and encourage groupness through symbolic, political and/or social factors (e.g. dress, community-activities, events etc.). Nadia did not feel particularly challenged by the popular stereotypes of Muslims represented in media and political discourse at the time of our interview. Likewise, her feelings of hesitation with answering her non-Muslim peers' questions about her Muslimness seemed to derive from the reification of the 'True Muslim' she felt among other Muslims. She did not feel she could live up to that image of Muslimness and therefore felt insecure in representing it to her non-Muslim friends. Nadia's case demonstrates the importance of not only exploring group-entrepreneurs' approach to groupness – as exemplified in Fadila's case – but also of including the many social actors who are less invested in 'the group'.

#### The comfort of 'the Community'

Samia is a 21-year-old woman of Algerian descent. She came to Montreal when she was 8 years-old with her parents and siblings who all settled in a South Shore suburb of Montreal. Samia's narrative is similar to Nadia's, in the sense that she too was mainly concerned with her relationship to other Muslims rather than people outside this denomination. However, unlike Nadia, Samia was in a position of leadership in the Muslim youth community. Because of her active involvement in the Muslim Student Association (MSA) at her university, and her responsibilities in running the religious circles in the MSA, she was in a more privileged position than Nadia to influence Muslim students' opinion. I got to know Samia very early in my fieldwork and my interactions with her were not limited to our interview and walk-tour, but extended to a more personal friendship. This meant I developed a deeper picture of her everyday life than I had with many other interlocutors.

Samia never delved into the question of popular stereotypes of Muslims in much detail in any of our conversations. She saw herself as an activist, but as she explained, her activism was not concerned with the position of Muslims in broader society. Rather, she was more concerned with being active in the 'Muslim community'. The 'Muslim community' here is limited to

students who chose to be active in the MSA. Samia dedicated most of her free time to the MSA; she studied and socialized with her friends in the MSA offices, she participated in and organized religious and social events for this group and spent a good chunk of her life invested in its activities – she was a group-entrepreneur seeking to keep ‘the Muslim community’ active. Interestingly, very few of her investments were concerned with broader social issues related to Muslim representation in public spaces (as opposed to Fadila).

In January 2014, when I met Samia in an MSA meeting space to carry out an interview, the Charter debate had started and hijab-wearing women in Montreal were at risk of discrimination because of the media and political discourses this debate had elicited. Samia, however, did not mention the Charter during our talk; she focused rather on her personal life trajectory. She described her life when she moved to Canada at the age of 8 until she moved back to Algeria when she finished CEGEP. Following 6 “depressing” months in Algeria, she then described her time since moving back to Canada. Since Samia first arrived in Montreal when she was 8, she had studied at French secular schools and French is the language in which she is most comfortable. This is important to highlight because despite the fact that her primary language was French, Samia still chose to go to an English university and invest her time mostly in English-Muslim events and initiatives. This must be understood within her wider narrative of always being the odd one out, whether in the French schools she attended in Montreal or her experiences in Algeria. She chose to wear hijab when she was 12; as one of the few Muslims at her school, she had to display confidence in her choice.

I wore it in my first year [of high school], it was new [to] me and I was in a new school and everyone knew me because of it. I never had a problem [with it]. I’m pretty sociable, so whenever they would ask me [about it] I would answer. [...] What formed my identity is the fact that I wore the hijab even if I [live] in a non-Muslim country, it’s as if I had to be more confident because of that. And people respect [you] when they see that you’re confident. [...] People would come and ask me about it, and I would answer and that’s it. If you want me as your friend you accept me as I am.

Wearing hijab at such a young age did not prevent her from being sociable, and she was not too concerned if others did not respect her choices. Around the time Samia started wearing hijab, she



also started competitive figure skating as part of Skate Canada<sup>13</sup>. She described how her skating club was accommodating towards her religious dress and would custom-tailor her costumes to include long sleeves and pants. However, when she progressed to a higher competitive level when she was 16 years old, the official dress code could no longer accommodate her religious dress. At this point, Samia noted she probably would have quit regardless because the environment and dance style had changed as they became older. Her choice to leave skating was thus not so much a response to the lack of accommodation (even though the strict dress code instigated the issue); rather, it was a question of how she wanted to be seen in public. Dancing and performing was not something she wanted to pursue as the hijab played a bigger role in her self-perception. As she finished high school and started attending a college with a larger Muslim student body, she immediately sought out the Muslim Student Association:

I knew there was an MSA, so on the first day I was like ‘Where’s the musallah [prayer space], where’s the MSA’. The first year I became [involved as a volunteer with the MSA] as well, and I used to give halaqahs [religious study circle]. Actually, I really liked CEGEP because there were a lot of Muslims. There was a lot of acceptance, it was inspiring, I loved it. Even the conversations with the sisters [other Muslim girls], it was interesting, people were more grown up. [In] CEGEP, I started gaining more knowledge, I did more than just receiving, I actually learned about activism. It changed my social life. I don’t have many non-Muslim friends anymore, I have them for class but that’s it, because I’m more interested in being with people who understand me more. [...] Even now, I have friends who are not Muslim, but my close friends are Muslims, because they can really help, they have the same vision as me. I can relate to them; they can relate to me.

Samia described her college years with a lot more fondness; the Muslim students had an association and prayer space, which was drastically different from her high school. She was excited to finally be part of a school environment where she was not the odd one out. As such, getting involved in the MSA meant she had a space where she did not have to explain herself or her religious choices, as she had to do when wearing the hijab in high school. People simply accepted her as she was, and that gave her the space to invest her time getting involved in the MSA. It became easier for Samia to not try to develop friendships with people outside of the

---

<sup>13</sup> Skate Canada is the national governing organization for figure skating in Canada – it is internationally recognized and recognized by the Canadian Olympic association.

student association. Samia's social circle was now mainly comprised of other Muslim young women who were also active in the MSA; they were thus young women who shared Samia's outlook on a lot of issues from religious to social.

For Samia, having spent most of her early years having to explain to her peers her religious viewpoints, it was a relief to finally not have to explain herself. Unlike Layla and Fadila, Samia's experiences demonstrate how not every young Muslim woman is equally concerned about public representation. For her, it was more important to engage in a dialogue about how Western Muslim saw themselves, not vis-à-vis a particular public discourse, but rather as a particular religious group. In her narrative, being active meant being useful and helpful to the 'Muslim community'; an effort at formulating a counter-representation towards particular forms of popular stereotypes becomes just a distraction from what matters: membership in the 'Muslim community'.

After CEGEP, Samia's parents decided to move the family back to Algeria. Samia described how she hated every minute of her six months there:

It's really cool to be a Muslim here, because I've tried to live in Algeria. My family moved back to Algeria, I think all Algerians have this dream of going back. So, I tried to go back and lived there for 6 months, I started med-school, went to university, but I hated it there. I couldn't relate to the people there, I had an Islamic education but it's different from theirs. Here, you feel as a woman, you have a responsibility towards society – there, no, you just have to sit down and do nothing, and talk about actors. [...] I had high goals, but everything collapsed there.

The life Samia had created for herself during her CEGEP years before leaving for Algeria was 'cool'; she felt she had a purpose through her activities in the MSA and was able to develop close friendships. It was depressing to have to leave all of it behind. In Algeria, although it is a Muslim majority country, she did not find a 'Muslim community'. Community in this context should not be understood simply as an imagined concept, a vague Muslim *Ummah*, i.e. the global community of Muslims (Esposito 2003). Rather, it is the much more tangible face-to-face community she was involved with during her years in her college, i.e. the MSA. Moving to Algeria meant she had to re-establish herself in a new environment where the processes of 'Muslim groupness' were irrelevant. She instead had to develop new friendships and basically

integrate into a new local culture, where her Muslimness was unnoticed, her agency curbed and her social involvement in society was insignificant. She may have been of Algerian origin, but life in Algeria was foreign to her, so no amount of ‘ethnic authenticity’ mattered. Samia was unable to socialize with her peers, go to the mosque or volunteer in religious ‘community’ activities as she was accustomed to in Canada. Her parents did not want her to return to Montreal on her own, but her father recognized her inability to settle in Algeria. Six months later, he agreed to let Samia return to Montreal for her studies. Back in Montreal with a greater sense of appreciation for the city, she enrolled in an English university and quickly sought out the university MSA. As Samia described it, the time she spent away from her family was life-changing:

So, when I came here, I came with this energy, I could do whatever I want, I can get books, I’m not here for nothing. When my dad came 6 months later, my dad was like ‘[Samia], you’ve changed’. Because I didn’t have family here, I got very involved in the MSA [...]. I was discovering myself, I had different friends who are more involved, I got close with them. I became really involved and got higher aspirations. I was so independent; before I didn’t want to take the bus [alone]. I was not attached to people anymore, before I was really attached to my parents. In those 4 months I didn’t have my parents to guide me, so I had to depend on myself [...]. I learned to be assertive [...], I learned that you can do everything in life, you just have to push yourself out of your comfort zone. I learned a lot about myself. I learned my passion, my skills [...]. Here [in Montreal], I connect with Muslims, but non-Muslims, we’re kinda just friends, school friends, I cannot connect with them either because we don’t have the same vision of life. With Muslims, here [in Montreal] that had to live in the same dilemma as me, they came from a different country or their parents came from a different country, they have their Muslim identity, they have their Canadian identity, they have their origin identity. So, I really connect with them because we understand each other.

Although at the time of my fieldwork, there was a lot of focus on the Charter at Samia’s university, it did not seem to play a role in her narrative. Her story of becoming who she was had little to do with the political climate of Quebec and everything to do with the opportunities Montreal provided in engaging with other Muslim youth. The Muslim community (i.e. the MSA) she engaged with did not require her to defend her religious or ethnic affiliations. Instead, it allowed her to create a space where she could focus on herself and develop a more independent

lifestyle than she had when she was living with her family while in college. Samia and Nadia were both mainly concerned with the ‘Muslim community’, and were not really engaged in the broader political debates surrounding Muslims in Quebec. Yet, what there were important differences in what each defined as the ‘Muslim community’. Samia was explicitly referring to young Muslims engaged in the MSA. When I asked her whether the mosque played a similar role in her relationship to the ‘Muslim community’, she explained that the mosque was simply a place she went to for prayers, but even then, she preferred using the allocated prayer rooms at her university. Many of my Montreal interlocutors explained that they felt excluded from the mosque community because of their young age. Instead, the MSA and other youth organizations were avenues for creating a ‘Muslim community’ that was geared towards the interests of young Montrealers. While Samia only felt excluded from the mosque, Nadia had felt an exclusion even from the younger ‘Muslim community’. However, because the MSA and other youth organizations are characterized by a high turnover in members (students graduate, young adults move to other cities etc.) as opposed to mosque institutions, Nadia eventually met a different ‘Muslim community’ who she felt were more inclusive, and her understanding of who the ‘Muslim community’ was changed accordingly. These two cases demonstrate how the analysis of groupness is a dynamic and fluent process that cannot take the group or community for granted but rather need to explore the various emic definitions that exist and how these may change according to individual experiences.

#### Gendered Difference: When the ‘Burden’ of Representation is Covert

The political climate that existed during the Charter debate put the hijab center-stage in certain forms of public discourse. Indeed, the hijab often becomes the center of political attention when discussing overt religious symbols. As such, the hijab was a prevalent symbol in my female interlocutors’ narratives; the question of the hijab always seemed to resurface when discussing their position as Muslims both in public space and vis-à-vis other Muslims. My male interlocutors did not face the same kind of overt reification of their Muslimness. Their appearance of being Muslim was not as apparent as their female counterparts who wore the hijab. This therefore allowed male Muslims to be more inconspicuous and, more importantly, to choose where to focus their attention. In other words, because my male interlocutors did not

receive as much political or media attention based on their religiosity, they were able to shift their attention to less public matters, i.e. personal friendships, hobbies as well as organizational work.

#### Being a representative of 'The Muslim'

Earlier in this chapter, I presented Nadia's observation that Muslim women can experience the reification of their Muslimness among other Muslims based on the symbol of the hijab. In a similar way, Mustafa, a 24-year-old Palestinian, allows us to understand a male perspective on representations between Muslims. Like Nadia, Mustafa had lived in Saudi Arabia until his family migrated to Canada when he was 7. Unlike Nadia's family however, Mustafa's family immediately sought to become involved in local Muslim organizations and mosques. This meant that as Mustafa was coming of age, people in these contexts would often know and associate him with his family, and he therefore did not encounter the same demands to account for the nature of his religious commitment as Nadia had experienced.

When Mustafa's family first moved to Canada, they lived in Toronto until he completed 10<sup>th</sup> grade. His family then moved to Montreal, which was difficult for Mustafa who had a well-established social life in Toronto. Starting at a school with little ethnic diversity, he learned to deal with being one of the 'brown' kids. Mustafa experienced difficulties identifying with any of the high-school cliques and being open about his religiosity:

It was a difficult change [...]. The most difficult part was finding a commonality between myself and the cliques that were already there, they referred to me as the brown kid that came. It wasn't meant offensively, I was just one of the brown kids, there were a couple of Sri Lankan kids: "You're a part of that group". It was hard to identify which group you fit with, I didn't like associating with any one group, given the fact that none of them represented me specifically, because they weren't Muslim. I was relatively quieter [...]. In high school, I don't think I was that open about having to go pray during lunch, I would just say I had to go for a minute, but sometimes they would be like: "OK we'll come with you", and they'd wait outside the room. I was shy about it, because it was different to them. They were curious, so it started conversations. I never experienced bullying of any sort. I didn't hesitate about carrying on with these conversations. I guess, I didn't know if they wanted to talk about it, specifically with youth here, I feel like religion is just like: "Dude, why are you

talking about that”. So, I wouldn’t bring it up, but if they ask I would talk about it. It would come up whenever they see me pray, or “You can’t come to prom, why [not]?”

Mustafa did not experience discrimination because of his religious beliefs; he basically formed his friendships in school like any of his peers. However, issues would arise when he could not hide the fact that he had to go pray during lunch or when it came to socializing outside of school, when Mustafa did not want to participate in the parties or any other religiously prohibited actions (e.g. casinos, drinking etc.). While he would use his parents as an excuse for his refusal to participate, he was still compelled at times to be honest about his own religious beliefs. Because of Mustafa’s social awkwardness in those high school years, he looked forward to attending a much more culturally diverse CEGEP. He started at the same CEGEP his brother had attended, and it was therefore easier to build on the same network of friendships that his brother had already established. He instantly sought out the MSA of the CEGEP, because that’s where all his brother’s friends could be found:

I was very active in the MSA in CEGEP. It was a comfort zone, I guess, it was easier. Granted it wasn’t as easy as I depict it now, because when you’re used to a non-Muslim crowd, your demeanor is very different, so sometimes the appropriate line is different between a Muslim crowd and non-Muslim crowd, that was a little difficult.

Mustafa explains here the transition from his high school friends to CEGEP. In high school, he managed to be inconspicuous by adopting his non-Muslim peers’ way of socializing. When he started being active in the CEGEP MSA, he had to adapt once more to his new environment. The MSA ultimately became a comfort zone; he was among other Muslims. As Mustafa indicated, it used to be challenging to have to explain and be open about his religious beliefs in high school, where conversations about religion were almost taboo. Besides the political and media focus on the Muslim stereotype, there was not much room to talk about one’s Muslim identification, as Mustafa experienced in high school. Rather, it became a question of representing Islam in its totality, i.e. why do you [read: all Muslims] have to pray or not drink alcohol etc. But in his CEGEP MSA, Mustafa experienced a more socially relaxed atmosphere without worrying about explaining his religious principles.

Besides continuing to be a part of the MSA even when he moved on to university, Mustafa also became a part of the Arab Student Association (ASA) at his campus. Here, he was quickly characterized as the religious guy, and while his friends at the ASA were also Muslims, Mustafa was represented as the *quint-essential* Muslim:

Believe it or not, a lot of non-MSA'ers look at the MSA as an extreme very Salafi-oriented association. I spoke one-to-one to the Arab students; when we started to talk about Islam, and they heard my views, they were completely thrown off because they had thought I was judgemental, pretty much looked at them as if they were *kafir* [apostates], believed that anyone who doesn't wear the hijab was awful, and they would've liked to join [the MSA], but then they kept away because they felt like they were going to be judged [...]. So even when I was [an MSA volunteer], it was one of my main objectives to reach out to those types. Unfortunately, the MSA doesn't foster that environment, even though they try, and I've tried but unfortunately, I wasn't too successful in reaching out to them and telling them: "We're normal, come join us".

In this quote, Mustafa is not referring to some right-wing discrimination against the MSA or visible Muslims in general. Rather, he is referring to some Muslims' preconceived notions of the MSA as representing 'the Muslim', and anyone who does not live up to that, at least superficially, is judged as a non-Muslim. The sentiments Mustafa heard from his ASA friends is comparable to what Nadia experienced when she first became acquainted with Muslims in Montreal; if you cannot perform your Muslimness well enough, you cannot be part of the group. Mustafa admitted that despite his involvement in the MSA, he was still unable to create an inclusive environment for all Muslim students regardless of their religious expression and practice. The problem Mustafa and other MSA interlocutors faced was trying to be inclusive but finding difficulties breaking away from being perceived as representatives of 'The Muslim'. Even in their own narratives, they would refer to the MSA as the 'Muslim community', and they expressed a sense of responsibility in representing this community to a broader public whether these were non-Muslims who only knew about Muslims from the popular stereotypes depicted in the media, or other Muslims who felt hesitant in becoming involved in 'the community'. However, the MSA was just individuals that had *constructed* a group of young people who self-ascribed to a Muslim identification. These individuals had different opinions on how one should

express this identification, whether through outwardly perceptible symbols (e.g. hijab/beard), inward processes of spirituality, or by simply self-ascribing to being Muslim.

#### Religiosity expressed through community

Adam is a 24-year-old young man of Persian and Armenian descent who converted to Islam during his CEGEP years. He was born and spent his early years in Iran until his family relocated to Montreal when he was 7. Growing up in a middle-class immigrant neighbourhood and attending a French immersion school, Adam lived around people who shared similar immigration experiences. Although Adam was raised as a Christian, living in Iran during his early years exposed him to a Muslim environment. This meant that post-9/11, he had a more nuanced understanding of Muslim identity:

[E]very time there was issues, especially obviously after September 11 everyone was talking about Islam, and so forth. My attitude was never the attitude of most people, whereas it's something foreign, they don't understand it so they kinda characterise it in different ways. Whereas for me, it was something I knew, you know, it's not 'other' for me. And I would always find myself in a position of defending Islam and Muslims, and just, like, giving [Muslims'] side of the story even though I wasn't Muslim, you know, it was just normal. Like, I remember in Religion-class in high school, I got into this whole argument with the teacher because he was characterising [Islam] in a certain way, and I was like: "No, it's not like that, you're comparing it wrong", and I'm pretty sure he got the impression that I was Muslim. So, they started this whole 'Dialogue with Muslims', and they were like: "You should come", but I was like: "But I'm not Muslim". It just kinda happened like that. And obviously, I looked Muslim, I was Persian, so there's a lot of associations for people to make. I just felt it was funny [...]. They would just assume I was Muslim because I looked the part, and I spoke out for it and I knew more about it than most people, so they just put me in that category and labelled me [...]. I just found it really funny, but it didn't make me angry, like: "How could you say that".

Adam explains here how people in his school environment would often assume he was Muslim simply because of his ethnic origins and his opposition to post-9/11 negative stereotypes about Islam and Muslims. He indicates here the general tendency of conflating religious and ethnic identification, especially regarding Western Muslims.



With religion becoming a more popular topic among his friends in CEGEP, Adam described an internal conflict between his identification as a Christian and his struggle to believe in its religious components. He eventually met a few Muslims at an Islamic Awareness Day [IAD] at his college. Though he mainly attended the event for the free cotton candy, he nonetheless got a chance to question the Muslim organizers about his own misconceptions about Islam:

At some point, I just developed my own understanding of how God works and what religion is, and I just stuck to that and kinda went my own way. It was around that time, it was last semester of CEGEP, there was Islam Awareness day [IAD], I went there, not even seeking any specific education. It was this really random thing that I wanted to know. Because at the time I was shaving my moustache, and my cousin, my Persian cousin, was like: “You shouldn’t shave your moustache, it’s like a wahhabi-thing [ultra-orthodox sunni-Muslim]”. And I was like: “What? I don’t understand”. So, I went to the IAD to kinda understand “Yo, what’s the deal with the mustache, like who has moustaches?”. I spoke to [X-friend] and [Yaqub, another interlocutor], they were super confused, and they were like: “What is this guy talking about moustaches”, so whatever, we just spoke.

In this quote, Adam is describing how his Muslim cousin assumed that Adam’s missing moustache was a sign of him representing an ultra-orthodox group of Muslims that he himself did not agree with. At that point, Adam was not a Muslim and did not know much about Islam, so his cousin’s comment confused him. The IAD was Adam’s first introduction to Muslims besides his cousin, and the meeting led him to revisit the concept of religion. This was particularly noteworthy for several reasons. The external characteristic of the ‘missing moustache’ was such an apparent symbol for Adam’s cousin that he quickly recognized, and hence confronted Adam about his resemblance to a group of Muslims he perceives as bad representations of ‘True Muslims’. It was the polemics surrounding the symbol of the moustache that raised Adam’s curiosity. Other male interlocutors likewise highlighted the association of a beard with Muslim religious observance. The beard and moustache thus become reified symbols of one’s religiosity, similar to the hijab, thereby becoming implicated in the process of preserving the group.

Although the symbols of the beard and hijab are widely recognized symbols of Muslim identification, they often exist simultaneously with a more personal process of constructing religious meaning. This is important to mention regarding most of my interlocutors because it is this internal process of creating meaning that precedes a wish to confront negative stereotypes and in turn become a representation of 'The Muslim'. For instance, Adam narrated a very personal process of becoming Muslim in greater detail. Not having any Muslim friends meant that he could only talk to his cousin about his Islam-related questions until he met other Muslims at the IAD. His mom, he explained, seemed open minded about his interest in Islam at first, but as he became more serious about it, her concerns became apparent:

I didn't make a big deal about it, because I remember her telling me that basically all religions are the same, she compared it with a cup; it's just one side of the cup, the top is all the same, it's just how you get there. So, I was like OK, for me that was like: "Yeah go ahead, if that's what you feel better with, go for it". But really, what she was saying was: "You shouldn't change what you have because they are all equally useless". So, she was open with it when I was talking about it. But then at one point, for me it wasn't a big deal when I was like: "Hey, I converted" and she's like: "What?!". Yeah, that was not a happy time [laughs]. I was so shocked, I was like: "But you said they were the same and the cup". I was just so confused with her reaction. That went on for a while, things got really tense [...]. Over time, we spoke about it a lot, and it helped. I always squared away my stuff, my school was in its place, I was healthy, I was playing sports, so she really had nothing to reproach and object, like: "Oh you're not paying attention to school" etc. I was always on top of everything, and that kinda helped ease her concerns. Because every time she would say something, I would be like: "Look, everything is going well". And you know moms, worst case scenarios pop into their heads: "Okay, my son is going to become an extremist, he's going to leave everything, he's going to hate me". And over time, just the fact that I don't, makes it easier to accept what is actually happening.

Adam saw his process towards becoming a Muslim as something personal that didn't have much to do with Muslim stereotypes but his mother had a greater struggle with his newfound religious interests because of these stereotypes. As Adam narrated it, his mother was fearful of what was behind those existing negative stereotypes and what that would mean for her relationship with her son. After becoming Muslim, Adam was not concerned with discrediting political or media

stereotypes of Muslims. Rather, he was much more focused on representing his Muslim identity to his mother in a way that would discredit *her* preconceived ideas about Muslims. In other words, by making sure his lifestyle and personality did not transform beyond recognition – i.e. staying on top of his school work and doing sports – he made sure that his mother could still recognize him as she had always known him. Her concerns about Adam becoming extreme in his newfound beliefs slowly subsided.

For Adam, becoming a Muslim did not bring with it the responsibility that some of my other interlocutors felt towards discounting stereotypes. Rather, for Adam, he suddenly felt a direct responsibility towards ‘the Ummah’. In Adam’s use of the concept of ‘Ummah’, he was not necessarily referring to the global community of Muslims, but actually referring to a more localized Montreal Muslim community:

When I converted, it was one of the first times I felt like I belonged to something. For people born into Islam, they take the concept of Ummah very lightly, but for me it was a big deal. Like, this is my nation, this is my community, and I felt a deep sense of belonging, and I wanted to do whatever I could right away.

It is easy to assume that Adam’s understanding of the ‘Muslim community’ as an actual all-encompassing social group. However, this assumption is similar to reifying Muslimness with external symbols such as the hijab or beard. Both understandings are symptoms of taking the group as an *a priori* concept. However, as Adam continued to narrate, it became clear that the Muslim community that he was referring to was mainly the MSA environment that he was surrounded by during his college and university years:

I never had an expectation to have strong ties to the mosque. Like, maybe if I had a strong relationship with the church [...]. But I’ve never had that experience of trying to build a relationship with the institution. For me I was at [x university], so most of the time, that’s where I prayed and went to Jumuah [Friday sermons], and when I didn’t go there, I’d just go to a mosque to fulfill my religious obligation [i.e. prayer]. It’s unfortunate. To me, the mosque as a center of social and political activity is in the history books, I’ve never encountered that in real life, and it’s not an expectation that’s entrenched for me.

After becoming Muslim, Adam never developed an attachment to the mosque, and it therefore never became for him a significant institutional entry point into membership in a Muslim community. Instead of the mosque being an important group-creating/community-building institution, it was rather the secular university that Adam attended, which became the significant physical *and* social space for *his* Muslim community [i.e. MSA] to which he formed a strong attachment. In other words, the MSA at his university became a real-life local manifestation of his imagined global community (cf. Anderson 2006 [1983]); and the MSA's social and religious events ensured that Adam's 'community' was continuously reproduced. However, once Adam finished university and left the MSA, it became more of a challenge to maintain that connection to 'the community', and he had to find other ways of getting involved.

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored the processes of groupness and community by examining religious representation, performance of religiosity and religious practice through the detailed narratives of my Montreal interlocutors. Critics of the analytical concepts of social groups (Brubaker 2002) and community (Amit 2002; 2010) inspired me to explore individual young Muslims' experiences in urban settings, rather than research the elusive 'Muslim community'. Nevertheless, as I started my fieldwork in Montreal, interlocutors kept talking about 'the Muslim community' as an important aspect of their social framework and reason for getting involved in different events. I realized that rather than dismissing my interlocutors' preoccupation with 'the community' and 'the Muslim group', I needed to approach them as concepts that were good to think with (Amit 2010) and objects of analysis rather than analytical concepts (Brubaker 2002). This chapter demonstrates how the concepts of group and community can be invaluable in depicting the nuances, complexity and diversity among people who share a social category. When we refrain from imposing our analytical concepts on our field and interlocutors, our interlocutors are empowered to share their own conceptualization of these concepts. In turn, these emic concepts depict a negotiated and processual understanding of groupness, i.e. the construction of 'the group' through social processes.

My Canadian interlocutors' concern with the 'Muslim community' was unique to the Montreal setting; my Danish interlocutors did not mention the concept of community in similar terms. However, 'the community' that my Montreal interlocutors referred to was not an abstract

imagined community (Anderson 2006); it was rather locally constructed through performances that brought together young people who shared the same social, economic and cultural/religious background as themselves. In this way, they did not necessarily feel a sense of community-belonging to Muslims in a North African village, but rather felt a more localized sense of groupness with other young Montreal Muslims in postsecondary education. It is this groupness that is continuously recreated through social and religious events *and* through public representations (e.g. the hijab or beard) to maintain a sense of 'group' belonging. The next chapter, which focuses on my Danish interlocutors, explores a setting where concepts of community and group were often omitted from the narrative; instead, their narratives emphasized their individual life and interpersonal experiences.

## 5. 'The Law of Jante' and Social Mobility

The ten commandments of Jante [Janteloven]:

1. You're not to think *you* are anything special.
2. You're not to think *you* are as good as *we* are.
3. You're not to think *you* are smarter than *we* are.
4. You're not to convince yourself that *you* are better than *we* are.
5. You're not to think *you* know more than *we* do.
6. You're not to think *you* are more important than *we* are.
7. You're not to think *you* are good at anything.
8. You're not to laugh at *us*.
9. You're not to think anyone cares about *you*.
10. You're not to think *you* can teach *us* anything<sup>14</sup>

I was first introduced to the Law of Jante (*Janteloven*) in primary school. I remember my teacher explaining the concept of *Janteloven*; its commandments expose Danish provincialism and yet it is so engrained in Danish sociocultural values. *Janteloven* is in fact taken from a 1930s-novel titled *A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks [En flygtning krydser sit spor]* written by the Danish-Norwegian author Aksel Sandemose (1936). The book is about the (fictional) town of Jante and its working-class population, who have established a sense of community through social uniformity and stability. Transgressing the unwritten law of Jante results in suspicion, hostility and potentially exile. *Janteloven* is not simply a figment of Sandemose's imagination, but rather a description of venerable Danish/Norwegian values. Some have even argued that this mentality built the foundations for Scandinavia's strong socio-democratic welfare policies that try to mitigate a class-based society (Avant and Knutsen 1993; Gopal 2000).

I introduce my Danish fieldwork with *Janteloven* because it emphasizes the provincialism that underlies stereotypes of ethnic and religious minorities in Denmark. This sort of narrowmindedness is not only present in right-wing political rhetoric. Rather, my interlocutors

---

<sup>14</sup> Translation of the Danish *Jantelov* taken from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law\\_of\\_Jante](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_of_Jante) (2017-08-09)

related experiences of discrimination and feelings of ‘othering’ in everyday interactions with ethnic Danish<sup>15</sup>. This has in turn amplified their own stereotypes of ethnic Danes and enforced the ‘Dane vs Other’ dichotomy that has become normalized in political rhetoric across the ideological spectrum. Hence, it becomes important to investigate how my interlocutors react to the stereotypes of Muslims and immigrants in light of the high level of social mobility they have themselves managed to achieve through education. My interlocutors implicitly dealt with *Janteloven* as it expresses an ‘us versus them’ mentality, not in a class-based sense as Sandemose describes in his novel, but in a political rhetoric that is increasingly ethno-nationalistic. In this context, the ‘commandments’ in fact validate and enforce the ethno-national discourse on citizenship as inherently ‘us versus them’, where minorities who are not able to convince their surroundings that they belong in the ‘us’ category are increasingly marginalized.

My fieldwork stretched over two summers in Copenhagen, where I recruited and engaged with my interlocutors. Throughout my fieldwork in Copenhagen, I frequented the same social gatherings and events as my interlocutors. For the past two decades, political and media discourses about Muslims in Denmark have often focused on reinforcing a representation of Muslims as immigrants. There is thus a conflation of ethnic and religious category in Danish public discourse, where immigrant/descendant=Muslim, which in turn influences securitization and integration policies and debates (Kublitz 2010; Rytter and Pedersen 2014). As I developed a rapport with several interlocutors, I realized that the question of representation was present in most conversations about their experiences as young Danish Muslims of immigrant descent. I became accustomed to how entrenched the representational discourse was in their lives. These 18-25 years old Copenhagen Muslims were raised at a time when the Danish People’s Party – a right-wing social-conservative party – grew from being an insignificant political actor to becoming the third largest governmental party. This chapter explores the experiences of young Danish Muslims whose high degree of social mobility make them a minority within the minority Muslim population in Denmark. They introduce us to the nuances of negotiating one’s social position in a context that often overlooks their potential, achievements and their sense of entitled national belonging to Denmark.

---

<sup>15</sup> I use the concept of ethnic Danes to refer to people who have a Danish ancestry.

“Den Lille Andedam”<sup>16</sup>: National Identity and Danish Cultural Anxiety

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ferdinand Tönnies (2002 [1887]) provided us with one of the most influential and substantial theoretical definitions for the concepts of community (*Gemeinschaft*) and society (*Gesellschaft*). He defined community life as an organic social process including deep personal relationships, whereas society is quite the opposite: superficial, unattached, contractual. Among my Montreal interlocutors ‘the Muslim community’ (read: *Gemeinschaft*) was an important framework to understand their individual social lives vis-à-vis their feelings of belonging to a religious group and the processes of religious groupness. However, in the Danish field, the concept of ‘Muslim community’ was almost nonexistent. My Danish interlocutors would rarely refer to Danish Muslims as belonging to a *lokalsamfund* or *fællesskab* (the two closest translations to *Gemeinschaft* or community). This is an important distinction between my Canadian and Danish interlocutors that I suggest lies within the different national models of Canada and Denmark. The Canadian national image of a culturally diverse society constructed around the old multicultural idea of a national mosaic of smaller ethnic, migrant, language, religious or social communities is transferred into citizens’ own sense of belonging. My Canadian interlocutors saw themselves as part of Canadian society simultaneously with being part of a Muslim community – nothing in their narratives of belonging challenged the national image of Canadian cultural diversity. My Danish interlocutors, on the other hand, faced the challenge of a national image of sameness as the cohesive factor connecting Danish society (Hervik 2004; Olwig and Pærregaard 2011; Jenkins 2011).

Tönnies equated *Gesellschaft* with the growth of capitalism, which according to him, essentially detaches people from each other and instead shifts the focus to a market society (Tönnies 2002). In the case of Denmark, the strong capitalist growth in the last century was coupled with a strong welfare model that sought to create less distinct class based differentiation between citizens. This welfare model was established around the idea of the Danish *Gemeinschaft*, representing Denmark as a community – a small duck pond (*en lille andedam*) with the illusion of all its inhabitants knowing and sharing the same lifestyle – rather than the

---

<sup>16</sup> Translated: “The Small Duck Pond” – an analogy made famous in H.C. Andersen’s *Ugly Duckling*. It refers to a small, protected and narrowminded country or society, where the inhabitants are easily appalled or made upset. It is often used to refer to Denmark as a “small community” rather than a nation, where people are expected to follow the social and cultural conventions (<http://sproget.dk/lookup?SearchableText=andedam>)



more socially detached society. In the Danish language, it is thus difficult to distinguish between the concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. My Danish interlocutors seemed to experience a challenge in this conflation of concepts – they would all argue to be Danish citizens doing their best to contribute to Danish society; however, they all struggled in different ways with the cultural framework of sameness they felt the Danish national identity was based upon.

*Janteloven* can be understood as a representation of this national identity of conformity. Written in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, its influence on the Danish national image is clearly represented in contemporary debates on Muslims and immigrants as a challenge to the national image of homogeneity. Sandemose voiced a subtle critique of Danish provincialism through his description of *Janteloven*. This deep-rooted provincialism becomes clear when exploring the Danish national image through contemporary political and media discourse. Rytter & Pedersen (2014) provide a detailed overview of the development in recent decades of negative political sentiments towards immigrants in general, and Muslims in particular. They argue that Danish political and media discourses represent a major but gradual shift in the representation of immigrants in public life over the past three decades that has normalized an integration and securitization paradigm, where immigrants and Muslims are perceived as a quintessential ‘Other’ (Rytter & Pedersen 2014). Rytter & Pedersen explain that during the 1990s, there was a rise in cultural anxiety (cf. Grillo 2003) – especially connected to a globalizing economy, the European Union, and other signs of globalization. This cultural anxiety was personified in the ethnic and religious minority population who were seen as “potential ‘enemies within’” (Grillo 2003: 2312). The result was that Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the Danish Prime Minister in the early 2000s, instigated what he called a battle of cultural values (*kulturkamp*), which sought to challenge immigrants’ culture, religions and lifestyles as inherently incompatible with Danish values (ibid.). This was a push towards the normalization of an othering rhetoric among both politicians and the news-media. The Conservative Minister of Culture at the time, Brian Mikkelsen argued that there was a need to challenge immigrants who insisted on practicing their “medieval norms” (Kublitz 2010:112). Not long after this shift in political rhetoric towards a “battle of values” (ibid.), the infamous cartoon crisis was initiated by a newspaper editor depicting Prophet Mohammed as a terrorist, in the name of upholding the ideal of freedom of speech (Henkel 2010; Kublitz 2010).

Prime Minister Fogh's shift in political focus from the traditional liberal centrist position of his *Venstre*-party towards a more right-wing approach of 'protecting' Danish values, meant an increased focus on immigrant and religious minorities' (mainly Muslims) differences. Since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there has thus been an increased political focus on 'our Danish values' – e.g. the right wing Danish People's Party introduced a PR-campaign in 2007 with the slogan "We stand firm on our Danish values" ["*Vi står fast på vores danske værdier*"] (Rostbøll 2010: 391). This focus on Danish *common* values is not only driven by the political right-wing, but spans the spectrum of Danish political parties (ibid.). Rather, the focus on common values is based on the quest to maintain a 'social cohesion' [*sammenhængskraft*] in the 'Danish community' [*det danske fællesskab*] (Rostbøll 2010: 392). The connotations of Denmark as a little duck pond is reflected in many of the discursive symbols used in political rhetoric, where Denmark is represented as a homogenous community of people who share the same social and cultural values forming the basis of the welfare state. For instance, the employment minister in 2014, Mette Frederiksen (member of the Social Democrats [*Socialdemokratiet*], traditionally a labour focused left leaning center party), at the time of my fieldwork established a new *Fællesskabspris* [Community Award] based on the idea that what makes Denmark great is the notion of a close-knit national community that seeks to take care of each other:

What is special about Denmark is what we share. Our social security system, our good jobs, our free and equal access to education and health - our absolute trust and respect for each other. Have you considered that every time you get on the train, it's only possible thanks to the work of hundreds of men. What we take for granted in everyday life does not come out of the blue. The society that we Danes are rightly proud of, is the result of caring about each other - we want to engage with each other and carry the [social] burden together. An old proverb says, "that when two Danes meet, they shake hands. When three Danes meet, they form an association". (Frederiksen 2014, translated from Danish<sup>17</sup>)

---

<sup>17</sup> Det, der er det særlige ved Danmark, er det, vi er fælles om. Vores sociale sikkerhedsnet, vores gode arbejdspladser, vores frie og lige adgang til uddannelse og sundhed – vores helt grundlæggende tillid til og betænksomhed over for hinanden. Har du tænkt over, at hver gang du sætter dig i toget, er det kun muligt takket være flere hundrede mands arbejde. Det, vi i hverdagen tager for givet, kommer ikke af sig selv. Det samfund, vi danskere med rette er stolte af, er resultatet af, at vi vil hinanden – vi vil komme hinanden ved og løfte i flok. Et gammelt mundheld siger, "at når to danskere mødes, giver de hånd. Når tre danskere mødes, danner de en forening". (Frederiksen 2014, <https://www.b.dk/kronikker/faellesskabet-er-det-saerlige-ved-danmark>)

In this quote, Frederiksen paints a romantic picture of the Danish *Gemeinschaft*; it is not an impersonal society where citizens do not care about each other. Rather, by sharing the same values and social ideals, Danes want to feel close to their fellow citizens. As I have already noted, this imagery is recurrent in Danish political rhetoric across the ideological spectrum. However, in its idealization of the small duck pond, this national imagery reinforces a notion of a strong communal ‘us’ versus the different ‘other’. This ‘other’ is often represented as people who do not share the same social, cultural and religious values as the ‘Danish community’.

Danish sociologist, Peter Hervik demonstrates how the public discourse about ‘the Danish community’ and shared Danish values has become an important factor in ethnic Danes’ conceptualization of immigrants, refugees and their descendants (2004). His data is based on qualitative interviews conducted with ethnic Danes regarding their views of ethnic minorities during the 1990s. Although Hervik’s data is over two decades old, it is important to note how his data seems to correlate with the experiences my interlocutors described as occurring throughout their child-and youthhood in the early 2000s. The quotes Hervik highlight are not blatantly racist or even hateful towards cultural differences. Rather, his participants present their opinions about immigrants and/or Muslims as simply not compatible with the values of the ‘Danish community’. Hence, it is the responsibility of ‘the other’ to conform to Danish values to become an accepted part of ‘our home’ – “Denmark is a home. Immigrants are seen as guests in our home and as away from their own home” (Hervik 2004: 256, paraphrasing his participants). This perspective is important to keep in mind when reading my interlocutors’ narratives. In many ways, they have been incorporated into this dynamic of ‘us vs them’ from early childhood not just in political and media discourses, but also in their everyday interactions with classmates, colleagues and public institutions.

The ‘cultural anxiety’ (Grillo 2003) expressed in political rhetoric and news media seems to have penetrated the general public. Hervik demonstrates how a protectiveness towards Danish values and ‘host vs guest’ mentality influences ethnic Danes’ everyday relationships with ethnic and religious minorities (2004: 263). The cultural anxiety expressed among Hervik’s participants seems to be what my interlocutors are reacting to in some of their interactions with ethnic Danes, which sometimes seems defensive (“I’m not an immigrant. You have to know my history before you talk!” quote from Aisha in response to a classmate’s labelling, p.71) and other times more

confrontational (“I speak better Danish than you do” quote from Khalid in response to a rural Dane complimenting his language skills, p.96). Either way, most of my interlocutors in Denmark seemed to struggle with this cultural anxiety not simply as it was represented in political and media discourses but in everyday life whenever they faced any comments resembling an othering of their position in Denmark and reducing their status from citizen to ‘guest’. As one interlocutor, Iman, explained, it was easy to stop watching the Danish news and disregard political debates, it was however much harder to deal with comments from ethnic Danish peers regarding the stereotypes they thought she represented (see p.79).

Political and media discourses and the national imagery of the ‘Danish community’ is an essential background for understanding my interlocutors’ experiences of growing up in Denmark during the 1990s and 2000s. The following cases thus explore how my interlocutors perceive and navigate a social landscape that they experience as often excluding them from the ‘Danish community’ - how have my interlocutors responded, ignored or dealt with these feelings of exclusion?

### Negotiating Social Position

#### Defying Janteloven

Aisha was a 22-year-old woman of Moroccan descent. Her grandfather, a Moroccan tailor, came to Copenhagen in the 1970s as a guest worker. Aisha and her siblings were all born and raised in a borough not far from downtown Copenhagen. Aisha’s description of her upbringing is imbued with considerable fondness for her parents. Her father especially demonstrated to her the importance of standing up for one’s rights and was an important role model for Aisha in the face of discrimination.

When I met Aisha, she was finishing her postsecondary degree in a highly competitive field and planning on continuing with graduate studies. Aisha represents a minority of descendants of immigrants in Denmark who have achieved an upward social mobility through higher education (Dahl and Jakobsen 2005/2005). Their parents and/or grandparents were often unskilled workers (although in Aisha’s case, her grandfather was a tailor), who migrated to Denmark under the ‘guest worker’-scheme in the 1960’s and -70s. Although highly educated descendants of migrants, such as Aisha, are still a minority, the number of descendants achieving

higher professional salaries has increased by 30% in recent years (2010-14) according to Statistics Denmark [*Danmarks Statistik*] (Christensen & Stræde 2016<sup>18</sup>). My Danish interlocutors represent this increase in social mobility. My interlocutors were too young to be represented in this statistic that focuses on salaries earned after completing one's degree, yet all my interlocutors had finished at least secondary school and all of them were either in postsecondary school or planned to attend postsecondary school after a gap-year. Aisha's case illustrates the experiences of achieving social mobility while still facing marginalization based on her ethnic and religious background.

Aisha went to a Muslim primary school; this was a religious private school that taught the Danish national curriculum, however instead of classes on Christianity (which is part of the Danish national curriculum), the school had classes on Islam and the Arabic language. She described it as a positive experience; many of her childhood classmates remain her close friends today. She switched to the Danish public school system during her time in the *gymnasium* (the Danish equivalent to high school, years 11-13). She explained that there were challenges involved in being identified as a member of a religious minority in a secular school. The high school had a few Muslim students though, so Aisha never felt completely estranged. Aisha's high school years were her first experiences with the stereotypes of Muslims that can occur in Denmark:

I always feel like you're judged, you're always judged [...] I've also experienced it in high school. I once had a really big discussion with people. I never expected to discuss these things with [x], we never spoke about immigrants or ethnic minorities. My cohort in high school, half was 'new Danes', or whatever you want to call it, I don't like these terms.

*What would you call it?*

Danes. Dark-skinned Danes. Half were dark-skinned, and half were not. One day we were talking [...] about our graduation trip [*studenterkørsel*] and alcohol etc. And then one of my really good white, or light-skinned, Danish friends said: "Well listen, you guys are also [just] immigrants" and stuff like that. I was just like: "Wait a minute, I'm not an immigrant. You have to know my history before you talk! My grandfather was a guest worker, there's a big

---

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.mm.dk/indvandrere-og-efterkommere-stryger-til-tops-paa-arbejdsmarkedet/> (2017-07-28)

difference. We're neither refugees nor immigrants. Yes, we migrated, but even an international student is an immigrant here". Anyway, then I told her: "Listen, my grandfather, he was a tailor, he was a guest worker, he had his own shop right here on [a street in Copenhagen], so I don't know what you're talking about! The fact that he got his family sponsored, was an offer from Denmark, it wasn't something he himself had gotten. So, they [Denmark] actually invited my grandmother and my family [...]. So I don't know what you're talking about. I'm just as Danish as you are, just in a different way." So, I was very, I actually felt really hurt that people would call me...

*I think it's interesting that you define it as: "We're all Danes, there's just some who are a bit darker-skinned than others". Do you think your friend, did she characterize you as an immigrant because of your darker skin or because you're Muslim?*

Because I'm Muslim [...]. Because if I did what they did, she wouldn't have discussed this with me, [i.e.] the fact that I'm immigrant etc. Especially because I'm not that much darker skinned [...]. I could look Brazilian, Latin American, but I know this for a fact that it's because I'm Muslim and covered [i.e. wearing the hijab]. The more practising you are, the more 'immigrant' you are, if you can say it that way. That's how I feel.<sup>19</sup>

This lengthy excerpt highlights several issues that are pertinent to the 'host vs guest'-discourse about immigration and Muslims that I referred to earlier (see p.72). Aisha explained her frustration with having to clarify to others - even close friends - the distinction she made between being a Danish Muslim and being an immigrant. Aisha stressed her Danishness in the argument with her friend, and thus objected to the invalid representation of her as an immigrant, i.e. a 'guest' that needed to conform to the Danish way of doing things. She thus argued against cultural conformity as a way of determining Danishness and instead emphasized her own sense of national belonging by understating her family's migration history and instead highlighting her entitlement to being labelled Danish.

Over the last two decades, the question of Danishness vis-à-vis non-Western immigrants and their descendants (with a specific focus on Muslims) has been heavily discussed in public debates (see e.g. Rytter & Pedersen 2014, Hervik 2004, Jenkins 2011). In a recent debate on

---

<sup>19</sup> All interviews with Danish interlocutors in this chapter were conducted in Danish and later translated into English by myself.

Danish citizenship in the Parliament (February 2017), a broad majority of the government coalition parties (mainly right-wing, conservative and centrist parties) voted to continue to limit asylum from non-Western countries based on the fear that ethnic Danes have become a minority in some neighbourhoods with a large number of immigrants and descendants of immigrants (Munkholm 2017<sup>20</sup>). The intention of the statement was to reinforce a promise to limit asylum seekers' entrance into Denmark. However, the phrasing (formulated by the Danish People's Party and voted in by a Parliament majority) of Danes versus descendants of non-Western immigrants became the focus of attention in the ensuing media debate. The Parliament's statement thus became the most recent representation of the 'us vs them'-dichotomy that classifies descendants of non-Western immigrants (specifically Muslims, see e.g. Bloch 2017<sup>21</sup>), such as Aisha, as non-Danes because of their supposed lack of cultural similarity to ethnic Danes. Although this 'us vs them'-dichotomy is particularly promulgated by the right-wing political parties, the pervasiveness of this political representation seems to have normalized an integration paradigm in everyday life where people, such as Aisha's classmate, experience frustration with the lack of conformity from 'them' (cf. Hervik 2004). Such frustration as Aisha's classmate presented is not always based on xenophobia, but it is often an expression of discomfort – or 'cultural anxiety' – with changing 'Danish cultural traditions' to accommodate for the increased cultural diversity in Danish society (cf. Grillo's analysis of 'cultural essentialism' 2003).

Speaking against the 'us vs them'-dichotomy, Aisha was explicit in voicing her dislike of the term of 'new Danes'. The concept of 'new Danes' is fairly recent and is often used interchangeably for both new immigrants who have recently acquired their citizenship as well as migrant descendants. 'New Danes' evolved to distinguish immigrants and descendants, who had been Danish citizens for decades or even born as citizens, from ethnic Danes. The term 'new Dane' has thus become another form of categorical distinction, which connotes difference and marginality from wider society (see e.g. Dastager 2014<sup>22</sup>). Aisha displayed the discursive effects

---

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.b.dk/politiko/ellemann-slaar-fast-debat-om-danskhed-burde-slet-ikke-vaere-opstaaet> (2017-07-31)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.b.dk/politiko/jo-flere-der-er-i-danmark-med-muslimsk-baggrund-jo-stoerre-er-truslen-mod-den> (2017-07-31)

<sup>22</sup> <http://politiken.dk/debat/debatindlaeg/art5512535/Nydansker-Jeg-er-da-ikke-ny-i-Danmark> (2017-07-31)

of this problematic categorization when she struggled to find the right terms to differentiate between ethnic Danes and ethnic minorities.

In a discourse that associates *difference* with *bad/inferior*, any other term than ‘Dane’ is problematic. Aisha described a situation with an ethnic Danish friend in high school, who had used the word ‘immigrant’ in a derogatory way. Aisha’s friend was frustrated with their Muslim classmates who did not want to join the graduation festivities (driving around Copenhagen in a party truck) because of the alcohol consumption that is traditionally a part of these celebrations. Aisha showcased how her Danish friend was hinting that Muslims were choosing not to be ‘Danish’ - but ‘immigrant’ - by not joining these collective festivities. Aisha quickly reacted to her friend’s ‘accusation’ by stating that in fact, she “is not an immigrant”, and provided a more detailed description of her family’s migration history. It is significant to note that Aisha had internalized the negative connotation that can be associated with the immigrant-category. She differentiated between ethnic Danes and Danish citizens who are deprived of their *social* citizenship because of their cultural difference. Aisha therefore responded by opposing the immigrant label as it connoted someone who does not belong in Danish society.

At the end of this excerpt Aisha clarified that her Danish friend categorized her as immigrant not because of her family’s migration history but because of her Muslim lifestyle that prevented her from engaging in certain kinds of social activities. Later in the interview, she elucidated this point further when comparing herself with two Christian classmates who also chose not to engage in the same activities because of religious concerns. While her choices were considered ‘foreign’, Aisha noted that her Christian classmates were not assigned such labels. Aisha was frustrated with the difference in treatment. It highlighted to her, how her Muslim identity would always serve as a classification that excluded her from the Danish ‘us’-category. Aisha’s response demonstrates a critical resistance towards being placed in a position of inferiority to other Danes in her class. Because Aisha saw herself as a Danish Muslim, she resisted her Danish friend’s pressure to conform to certain conventions. She retorted that she was “just as Danish [...], just in a different way”.

Intergenerational experiences of national discourse



Iman was a 23-year-old woman of Moroccan descent. Like Aisha, her family had lived in Denmark for many years. Her mother was only 4 years old when Iman's grandparents immigrated to Copenhagen from Morocco; Iman therefore enjoyed having a larger extended family in Denmark. When I met Iman in her Copenhagen apartment, she was newly married. Her husband had recently graduated from university while she was finishing her final year of undergraduate studies. Iman's description of her family history in Denmark introduces the changing dynamics of immigration politics and their impact on young migrant descendants.

Iman grew up in a disadvantaged borough of Copenhagen marked by low-income households, substance abuse and other features of deprivation, though the area has been gentrified in recent years. She explained that her childhood memories of this neighbourhood were colored by discrimination. She would often receive discriminatory comments on the street from passersby:

It's as if the ones that are struggling the most have the most difficulties with minorities. [...] I remember one experience with my mom and siblings: people on the bus commented that we were exploiting the system. Back then there were a lot of prejudice against women wearing the headscarf, so they were always shocked when my mom opened her mouth and spoke Danish fluently.

Iman explained that she understood the cause of discrimination in her neighbourhood. People struggling with their own disenfranchisement and marginalization used minorities as a scapegoat. However, in this quote Iman recalled one incident of verbal discrimination clearly: a bully was surprised by her mother's fluency in Danish, thinking she would not understand his offensive commentary. Iman explained that it is difficult to acquire residency status in Denmark; hence, the immigrants and descendants that live in Denmark have been there for many years, and it is therefore rare to meet someone who does not speak Danish. A stereotype of Muslim migrants and their descendants lingers and often portrays them as lacking integration into Danish language and culture.

Iman clarified that the older she got the less she experienced discrimination. She believed it could be linked to the fact that she wore the hijab at a young age and was therefore more aware of people's reactions. She chose to wear a hijab while attending a Muslim private school (the

same school Aisha attended). Iman was inspired by her mother, aunts and cousins, however she later encountered resistance from others:

At the same time, I met resistance from the surrounding society saying I should take it off etc. "Tell your father you don't have to wear it!". I often felt defensive: "I actually have a free choice. No, my parents aren't strict or have high academic requirements for me, and no I will not be forced into a marriage." It required a lot of energy to continuously try to climb out of the box they put you in, especially in high school.

The discrimination Iman experienced was especially directed towards her choice to differentiate herself from other Danes by wearing the hijab. In this sense, the hijab became a representation of cultural distinction and was therefore perceived as connoting a lack of integration. Iman's hijab became a representation of 'foreignness' that resisted conforming to Danish normativity.

In turn, Iman herself was treated as a representation of the Muslim female stereotype: presumed to be oppressed by a patriarch, with no freedom to choose her lifestyle. Iman would retort that her religious lifestyle choices were her own. Her defensive insistence on her lifestyle being an autonomous choice rather than a result of family pressure highlights the social pressure she felt to challenge the stereotypes of Muslim descendants. If she could not live up to the imagined Danish homogeneity, she could at least defend her choice by claiming autonomy from her family. She could thus argue against the stereotype of immigrant parents' social control of their children, *pressuring* them to live a particular social, cultural and religious lifestyle that conforms with their 'countries of origin'. Following my fieldwork trip in December 2013, the Integration Minister, Anette Vilhelmsen, (at the time a member of the left leaning Social People's Party, *SF*) initiated a PR-campaign that sought to elevate awareness about and eliminate immigrant parents' 'social control' over their children's lifestyles. This 'social control' was represented as the parents' way of pressuring their children to wear hijab, achieve higher academic degrees, not drink alcohol or date etc. (Vilhelmsen 2013). Political and media discourses (across the political spectrum) about immigrant parents' social control that arose since this campaign was initiated, basically questions every decision that someone like Iman, i.e. a descendant of immigrants, makes, whether it is a religious, social or cultural lifestyle choice.

The questions Iman faced regarding her parents' level of 'social control' may not always have been ill-intentioned but may also have been an expression of genuine concern for Iman's ability to make free lifestyle choices. Yet, these concerns always came off as an offensive denunciation of Iman's family relationships, which she highlighted were based on encouragement and respect. Thus, Iman experienced these encounters with concerned ethnic Danes as discrimination based on her ethnic background. She felt she was not being judged fairly based on her abilities but rather based on her ethnicity and lack of Danishness. As she explained:

I became bitter [because of the discrimination]. It was a negative energy. I started to understand those troublemakers in *Nørrebro* [a neighbourhood district in Copenhagen] who face so much resistance that they chose the streets instead of school. To be told that you'll never be able to achieve this or that, you can never be as good at [speaking] Danish, your religion is old-fashioned, your culture doesn't belong. [...] I started to become bitter, and anti-Denmark. [...] A couple of years ago during the riots [by young men of immigrant descent] in Denmark, [Prime Minister Anders] Fogh said: "*We don't do that in Denmark*", but those troublemakers don't know anything but Denmark, why make it an 'Us vs Them'-question?

During Iman's high school years, the debates that surfaced in the media regarding Muslims and immigrants were not something she could simply tune out. As mentioned earlier in this chapter (see p. 66-69), during the early 2000s there was an increased political focus on Danish values vis-à-vis immigrants (particularly Muslim immigrants), which increased news media's focus on issues related to Danes versus immigrants (including second and third generation descendants). The comments that Iman is referring to from the former Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, focusing on this dichotomy highlights a 'host vs guest'-discourse which presumes that immigrants and their descendants should simply be grateful to live in Denmark (cf. Hervik 2004). In one speech, Rasmussen declared:

I would like to send a very clear message to our young people with immigrant background: I know many of you feel left out. But it does not work that you blame society or Danes. [...] Denmark is one of the best societies in the world. You are offered free education. You have social security like in no other country in the world. You have the right to speak and express

yourselves freely. The possibilities are open to those who can and will. (Rasmussen 2005, translated from Danish<sup>23</sup>)

Although this is not the quote that Iman was referring to, it highlights her concern of being represented as an ‘other’ that should be *grateful* rather than as a member of the general Danish population.

In her early schooling, her Muslim primary school created a safe space for her in which she did not have to deal with discrimination. However, once she started attending a secular high school, her Muslim lifestyle choices were suddenly subject to criticism in her school environment. The prejudice Iman felt during her high school years affected her attitude towards Danish society as well as ethnic Danes. Thus, she distinguished between ethnic Danes and other ethnic categories of non-Muslims. She clarified that she did have non-Muslim friends, however, none of them were ethnic Danes. Iman’s friendships reflected the ethnocentric divide she experienced in her interactions with ethnic Danes through her school environment. This ethnocentrism was further exacerbated by the political climate of the last two decades that has tended to overlook young (Muslim) migrant descendants’ experiences of systemic discrimination, e.g. in employment, schools and community-organizations (Larsen 2000; Dahl and Jakobsen 2005), and instead emphasized the distinction between ‘us=Danes’ and ‘them=immigrant/Muslims’. In a speech delivered at the 2005 Conservative National Meeting, the Conservative Culture Minister, Brian Mikkelsen, highlighted this distinction by undermining the legitimacy of Danish Muslims’ lifestyles:

We have also been fighting against the multicultural ideology that says everything is equally good. Because if everything is equally good, then everything does not matter. And we will not accept that.

A medieval Muslim culture will never be as valid at home [i.e. Denmark] as the Danish culture, which has grown from this piece of old soil that lies between Skagen and Gedser and between Dueodde and Blåvandshuk [Danish towns].

---

<sup>23</sup> Jeg vil gerne sende en meget klar besked til vore unge med indvandrerbaggrund: Jeg ved godt, at mange af jer føler jer sat udenfor. Men det dur ikke, at I siger, at det er samfundets skyld eller danskernes skyld [...]. Danmark er ét af de bedste samfund i verden. I får tilbud om gratis uddannelse. I har en social sikkerhed som i intet andet land i verden. I har retten til at tale og udtrykke jer frit. Mulighederne står åbne for dem, der kan og vil. <https://www.b.dk/nationalt/fogh-gav-opsang-til-indvandrere> (2018-04-05).

The battle of culture and values has been raging for some years now. And I think we can declare that the first part [of the battle] is about to be won. (Mikkelsen 2005, translated from Danish)<sup>24</sup>

As a reaction to this political rhetoric and its expression in her everyday high school interactions, Iman insisted on emphasizing her Moroccan background. She highlighted to her classmates the fact that it was not her choice to be born in Denmark. So, if her lifestyle was perceived as “too foreign” for Danish standards, she did not perceive herself as Danish anyways. Iman’s choice to underline her ethnic difference arose as a particular response to her perception of the exclusivity with which Danishness was being constructed in certain quarters – that is to say if Iman could not be perceived as Danish because of her Muslim lifestyle, it was not worth struggling for the label:

In high school, I insisted on being Moroccan, but when I travelled to Morocco I realized I’m not Moroccan in the least. I’m a product of Denmark, and I couldn’t imagine living anywhere else. [...] When people ask me how can I be Danish and Muslim, I answer: “1300 years ago, how could you be Danish and Christian”. It is a fixed mindset that dominates Danes a lot, but I don’t feel it in my everyday life. I choose not to keep up with politics, it makes me too frustrated. Everything that is about being Danish in public space I don’t interfere with. I keep my Danishness [*Danskhed*] at home, my ryebread, my *koldskål* [vanilla-buttermilk dessert], I laugh at my Danish movies, I live in Denmark, but everything else I don’t get involved in, because there’s no room for [someone like] me.

It is interesting to note that in this quote, Iman acknowledges that she was more Danish than she cared to admit during her high school years. She insisted, however, on keeping her Danishness private. It was not something up for discussion; if right-wing political discourse could not

---

<sup>24</sup>Vi er også gået til kamp imod den multikulturelle ideologi, der siger, at alt er lige godt. Fordi hvis alt er lige godt, så er alt ligegyldigt. Og det vil vi ikke acceptere.

En middelalderlig muslimsk kultur bliver aldrig lige så gyldig herhjemme som den danske kultur, der nu engang er groet frem på det stykke gamle jord, der ligger mellem Skagen og Gedser og mellem Dueodde og Blåvandshuk. Kultur- og værdikampen har nu raset i nogle år. Og jeg tror, vi kan konstatere at første halvleg er ved at være vundet. Det ser ud til, at de kulturradikale begynder at erkende, at deres storhedstid er slut. <http://jyllands-posten.dk/kultur/ECE4769343/Dokumentation-Kulturminister-Brian-Mikkelsens-tale/> (2017-08-01).

acknowledge her Danishness because of her ethnicity or Muslim identification, she would eat her ryebread and watch her Danish movies in private.

Most of my other interlocutors followed Aisha's example: they felt entitled to define themselves as Danish Muslims and negotiated their claim to be regarded as Danes in different ways through their everyday lives in Copenhagen. Iman, however, did not care to get involved in the debate with ethnic Danes in her daily life. Iman was born and raised in Denmark by parents and grandparents who had lived in Denmark for decades, and Copenhagen was therefore undeniably her home. It was redundant for her to even argue the question of her belonging to Denmark; it was simply a matter-of-fact. The political rhetoric had done its part in normalizing the integration-paradigm that enforced the idea that Muslim immigrants and their descendants still had to integrate into Danish society by adopting 'Danish values' (Rytter & Pedersen 2014). While Iman protested this integration-paradigm by understating her own feelings of Danishness, many of my interlocutors often got swept away by defensiveness when facing such demands of integration, which they eagerly tried to challenge by insisting on being both Danish and Muslim.

It is telling to juxtapose Iman's experiences with her mother's experiences when the family first arrived in Denmark during the 1970s:

Now, I have a very 'Danish' mom. We usually tease her by calling her Pernille. Her life in Denmark is completely different from mine. While I was a bitter teenager, she was a hippie-Dane. When she describes her childhood when she came with her parents as a four-year-old, she describes how she would sit on the bus and people wanted to touch her curls, and: "Wow, how beautiful you are". And Danish friends is something completely natural to her, she has a lot of those, even today. Yeah, I had Danish friends, but their parents were so scared: "Be careful" [their parents would tell their children]. Now, these were people from socially deprived families, so intelligence was also limited, but they weren't allowed to eat at our place. So, my whole life I've had friends that weren't ethnic Danes. My mother has experienced it differently [...].

Iman explained how her mother's and her own experience in interacting with Danish society were almost contradictory. Her quote highlights the temporality of political discourse and media-perpetuated stereotypes. When her mother first came to Denmark as a young girl in the 1970s, a more neutral discourse about immigrants existed among the general public with little political

concern about issues arising from increased immigration (Goul 2002: 12). Jørgen Goul argues that statistically, Danes were more hostile towards immigrant cultures in the 1970s compared to similar quantitative studies conducted in the 1990s. Yet because of the lack of political and media attention, the Danish public was simply not interested in immigration-issues (ibid.). Immigrants in the 1960s-70s were ‘guest workers’ who were helping rebuild Danish society in the post-WW2 period, and they were expected to return to their countries of origin at one point (Olwig & Pærregaard 2011: 12). In other words, because immigrants were expected to be temporary, their different lifestyles were not seen as a threat to Danishness unlike more recent political representations. The exotic appearance and curly hair of Iman’s mother, as she explained, were a source of positive distinction, rather than being signs of marginalized ‘otherness’ and inciting feelings of resentment. Iman’s mother therefore did not experience the same discrimination because of the lack of public attention surrounding her cultural, ethnic and religious differences. Her mother learned to navigate Danish social space with ease. This was something Iman was deprived of when growing up in a post 9/11 society.

Goul argues that the reason for the lack of attention to immigration in the 1970s is the fact that immigration was stable. Although the ‘guest workers’ were not going ‘home’, they only slowly increased in numbers from 33,000 in 1976 to 46,900 migrants in 1983, mainly due to family reunifications (Goul 2002: 12). In the mid-80s, however, there was a large increase in asylum seekers, which meant that by 1991, the number of non-Western migrants and descendants had increased to 120,300, and by 2001 the number was 262,700 (ibid.). Thus, already in the early 1990s, Danish political rhetoric and immigration policies had changed dramatically, depicting immigrants and refugees as unemployed and unable (or unwilling) to integrate into Danish society (Olwig & Pærregaard 2011: 11-12, see also Rytter & Pedersen 2014). These depictions of the ‘unintegrated immigrant’ paid little attention to the social and economic structures within Denmark that enforced these migrants’ and refugees’ marginalization (Olwig & Pærregaard 2011: 13)<sup>25</sup>. By the early 2000s, negative discourses against immigrants had increased dramatically and thus became Iman’s predominate experience with Danish society.

---

<sup>25</sup> The early immigrants were expected to be temporary migrants, and there were therefore no political initiatives to teach these immigrants Danish or include them in other welfare initiatives – that is until they started seeking reunification with their wives and children and became permanent migrants, who would need to use the Danish welfare system, e.g. schools, health care services etc. (Rytter & Pedersen 2014: 2310).

For reasons unknown to her, Iman's Danish childhood friends were not allowed by their parents to come to her house for dinner, and thus she quickly concluded she could not be friends with ethnic Danes. These experiences were very different from those of her mother's childhood.

Iman's narrative highlights an important perspective on how my Danish interlocutors respond to categorical representations and negative stereotypes. As I emphasized in Aisha's case, she insisted on the legitimacy of her Danishness while also being Muslim. This was her way of protesting representations of an exclusive Danish ethno-nationalist identity. Iman, however, protested the discriminatory differentiation between the *real* Danes (read: ethnic Danes) and not so real ethnic minorities by renouncing her entitlement to the Danish category qua her citizenship. By choosing to highlight her ethnic and religious difference instead, she was able to resist being defensive about her non-conforming (and thus 'un-Danish') lifestyle choices.

#### Navigating social space as a 'Dane'

"Denmark's first Islamic Sexologist"<sup>26</sup> – was a newspaper characterization that occurred in 24-year-old Fatiha's first public interview as a professional sexologist. Other Danish media outlets quickly picked up the story of "the Muslim hijab-wearing sexologist", and only a few days later Fatiha had a TV-appearance on a popular morning show. Fatiha argued that "Muslims have sex like everyone else, and therefore also have sexual issues"; her services thus provided advice tailored to Muslims combining sexuality and spirituality. Fatiha was trained in sexology at a Danish institute (a degree combining health care, counselling and consulting related to sexual health), and she was therefore no different than any other Danish sexologist, except for her religious background. And it was this that became the focal point of the media's attention. In her candid descriptions about Muslims' sexual lives and the challenges they may face, she seemed to also challenge the idea (among her classmates especially) that sexuality among Muslims (particularly women) was a taboo<sup>27</sup>. Fatiha initiated a debate on sexuality from a Muslim and

---

<sup>26</sup> I have not provided the references on these newspaper articles and TV show to protect Fatiha's identity.

<sup>27</sup> Although most of my interlocutors would agree to a religious prohibition of premarital sex in Islam, several of my interlocutors both in Montreal and Copenhagen were in fact married (a few even divorced) despite their young age and thus had active sexual lives. However, in the Danish context there seemed to be a stigma related to Muslims' early marriage. For instance, Iman explained that she would rarely tell her Danish colleagues and university classmates that she was in fact married because she was afraid of what they thought about her early marriage (she was 21 years old when she got married). In this regard, Danish political and media discourses on young Muslims'



health professional perspective, thereby challenging the power dynamics that usually exist in media discourse on Muslims. She engaged with the media, not only to challenge the stereotype of Muslims as prudish regarding sex, but also to address the Muslim public and provoke them to be open with their intimate partners about sexual issues. Fatiha's innovative approach to Danish media avoided the apologetic jargon of Muslims put on the defensive. While Iman in the previous case shied away from any topics related to the 'Dane vs Other'-dichotomy, Fatiha chose to face it head on. In her public engagements, Fatiha could not completely disregard the artificial dichotomy of 'us vs them'; acknowledging the stereotype of Muslims' conservative attitudes towards sex in one article, she asserted that these women were in fact the ones who most often would approach her to give talks as well as advise on sexual issues. She thus met support from Muslims on the services she offered rather than opposition. As her narrative demonstrates in the following, her own process of understanding the complexity of her intersecting identifications provided her the ability to navigate the media discourse to challenge and provide an alternative version of 'the Muslim Other'.

I met Fatiha on a Fall afternoon at the Copenhagen university campus for our interview. I had met her for the first time the week before at the campus cafeteria, where some of our mutual friends were meeting for a late afternoon coffee. She was happy to be interviewed. Fatiha explained her active involvement with the Danish media over the summer and wanted to share her experiences with me. Her involvement in the media was both proactive and controversial. She went from serving as the *object of debate* to insisting on a role as *debater*, breaking the dominant media narrative that perpetuates a certain power dynamic between politicians and the Muslim population<sup>28</sup>. Besides engaging in media debates, Fatiha also used her professional background to speak at public events to challenge existing stereotypes particularly regarding

---

sexual lives viewed the increase of premarital sex among young Muslims as a sign of their integration into Danish youthhood, while early marriage and limiting sex to a marital relationship as a sign of the immigrant family's social control (e.g. the political campaign in 2013 on social control, <http://www.denoffentlige.dk/ny-kampagne-skalm-dvirke-social-kontrol-og-aeresrelaterede-konflikter> (2018-04-05), or Pedersen & Øager's article from 2015 "Sexual revolution among Muslim Women" ["*Seksuel revolution blandt muslimske kvinder*"] <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/kultur/tro/seksuel-revolution-blandt-muslimske-kvinder> (2018-04-05).

<sup>28</sup> See e.g. Mikkel & Pedersen 2013 for a historical analysis of the political and media discourse of securitization and integration of Muslim immigrants and their descendants, and Henkel 2010 as well as Kublitz 2010 for an analysis of the Cartoon Crisis that has been the biggest media storm in Denmark in recent years.

Muslim women's sexuality. Fatiha's hopefulness in her ability to change public perception is greater than that evinced by most of my other interlocutors in Denmark.

Like most other Danish interlocutors, Fatiha belonged to an ambitious group of young Muslims who were part of an educated, Muslim minority elite who were experiencing a high degree of social mobility in comparison to the 1960-70s guest workers. Fatiha was born in a suburb north of Copenhagen, known for its upper middle class residents. Her father is Palestinian and her mother Polish; Fatiha's appearance could easily be mistaken for Danish. This meant she could navigate her social environments without drawing attention to her differences. Add to this that her mother changed her name to a more traditional Danish first and last name when she was 10 years old, and thus Fatiha went through her early life as if she was ethnically Danish:

During my upbringing, I was very torn in my identity. I didn't know how Danish or how ethnic I was. As a youth, I was very Danish, I went out to parties and drank and hung out with Danes. I just followed the crowd, followed the Danish cultural trends that if you're young, you should drink beer and go clubbing and have boyfriends. I didn't know what I wanted, so I just did what 'you' are supposed to do [...]. I always felt my parents were in the wrong because according to the media, they are foreigners, so I believed that. So, everything my parents said or did was old-fashioned and unmodern. So, I just adopted that discourse, I followed society, what Danishness was. I thought Danishness was the truth. I also didn't have much trust in my parents, so I just adopted what the Danish society said [...]. My mother is dead now, but she was Catholic Christian and my father is Arab Muslim; so, when we celebrated Christmas, my father would get upset and when we celebrated Ramadan my mother would get upset, so I was always torn and couldn't choose sides, so it was easier to just be Danish and not ask questions.

In this excerpt, Fatiha explained her difficulty growing up in a social context that focused on representing *one* particular identity, whether national, ethnic or religious – Fatiha felt uncertain about how to balance all of her possible identities and felt she needed to make a choice. It was difficult for her to understand her own position vis-à-vis her parents' 'foreignness' and the Danish mainstream culture as it is presented in public discourse. To avoid having to choose sides between her parents, it was easier to simply 'be Danish'. Fatiha defined Danishness (*Danskhed*) vis-à-vis foreignness in reductive terms; being Danish was partying and drinking, being foreign

(i.e. immigrant) was being unmodern. In her narrative, Fatiha explained how these dynamics came into play in her youth. Being Danish meant that she should engage in the same social activities as her ethnic Danish peers. As she explained it:

This Danishness was very superficial to me. It didn't give me answers to the more profound questions in life. I needed to discover that life was more than little Denmark, that there's more to it than nationality/ethnicity, than being Polish and Arab.

It is easy to sense Fatiha's frustrations about being expected to define herself in ways that she perceived as being reductive of who she actually was. But when Fatiha moved to Copenhagen at the age of 19, she was introduced to a greater diversity of people. Simultaneously with her growing interest in spirituality and religion, she reformulated her own definition of being Danish. She did not want to relinquish her affiliation with being Danish, likewise she did not want to continue the lifestyle she had previously associated as characteristic of being Danish. Thus, being introduced to a mosque that focused on promoting a religious community as well as a strong sense of Danish affiliation, Fatiha discovered a more diverse understanding of Danishness, which she could combine with her newfound spirituality:

My mom changed my name when I was 10-years-old to [X X], and that had an immense impact on how I saw myself and how others saw me, because nothing indicated that I wasn't Danish. But during my spiritual journey, I became very rebellious and changed my name back to the one I was born with. And then I was, like, people have to accept me as I am. I'm tired of having to be either/or. I need to be allowed to be me. There needs to be room for the indefinable person I am. I don't need people to pat my back because I changed my name to a Danish name.

Fatiha here eloquently describes the problematics of being dragged into a dynamic of 'us vs. them'. In this dynamic that Fatiha was introduced to at the young age of 10, both 'us' and 'them' became monolithic representations associated with dichotomous mutually exclusive stereotypes: 'being Danish is drinking alcohol/partying/modern', 'being Muslim is being foreign/unmodern/uneducated'.

Fatiha chose to defy the parameters of this dynamic by firstly changing her name back to her original name. In addition, she insisted on a personal identification that could include

everything she felt was a part of her, regardless of how uncategorizable it was. This meant that she could easily identify herself with all her national and ethnic affiliations simultaneous with identifying as Muslim – identifications she had previously thought were mutually exclusive (i.e. being Danish or Polish meant she could not be Muslim). Combining all her intersecting identifications provided Fatiha with a greater ease in engaging with society, as she related: “The great thing about Denmark is that no one knows what Danishness is, so there’s room to push the limits and the culture itself”. While growing up in a small town north of Copenhagen, she struggled with an essentialist understanding of culture (both nationalist, ethnic and religious). After moving to Copenhagen at the age of 19 and meeting the cultural diversity that exists in the city, she gained a sense of agency in challenging essentialist representations of both Danishness as well as Muslimness.

Unique to Fatiha’s case is that her response to stereotypical attitudes towards her Muslimness was not limited to her social surroundings, she actually felt empowered enough to engage with the media. This is something all of my other interlocutors shied away from. According to Mikkel & Pedersen (2014: 2314), the hyper-visibility of Muslims in public discourse is often coupled with a silence from young Muslims. In other words, it seems that the trend among young Muslims is to withdraw from the public sphere rather than engage with it in the same way Fatiha did. However, withdrawing from engaging with political and media discourses that many of my interlocutors felt restricted their sense of personal expression did not mean that they disengaged from society as a whole. They all had personal ambitions and an ability to achieve social mobility that could not be restricted by the ‘us vs them’-dichotomy they often experienced in political discourses.

### Gendered Perspectives

As I have highlighted throughout this chapter, Muslims in Denmark are highly visible in the political and media discourse, and historically have been perceived as synonymous with immigrants and their descendants (going back 2-3 generations). Along these lines, Muslim women are often perceived as under the ‘social control’ of their patriarchal family and thus as submissive and oppressed (Hervik 2002: 193). The stereotype of young immigrant (Muslim)

men, on the other hand, focuses on their potential for aggressiveness and violence, either as criminals or potential radical terrorists. For instance, Sune Qvotrup Jensen (2007) explores how young men of ethnic minority descent are viewed (especially through Danish media representations) as inherently aggressive and with a tendency towards criminal lifestyles, which in turn increases feelings of marginalization.

Laura Gilliam's (2005, 57-78) study of primary school children demonstrates how boys of ethnic minority descent often internalize these media representations of being 'troublemakers'. In a quote from one of the children she interviewed, the boy explained:

[S]ometimes they say on the news that the Arabs are the ones who make all sorts of trouble and stuff like that. [The interviewer:] *Yes. What do you think then?* [Enrico:] Then I think that that's right because it's only them who do that sometimes. (Enrico, Palestinian parents, Gilliam 2005: 72, translated from Danish<sup>29</sup>)

The boys Gilliam interviewed had internalized this 'other' stereotype, seeing themselves as academically weaker, more aggressive and less independent than their ethnic Danish peers (Gilliam 2005: 72). In many ways, it seemed relatively easier for my female interlocutors to contest stereotypes of submissiveness, especially given their social capital and academic achievements. Nevertheless, the young Danish men I met during my fieldwork found creative strategies to contest the stereotypes of their latent aggressiveness. Like my female interlocutors, they all represent well-educated and socially mobile young Muslims born and/or raised in Denmark. However, while most of the female interlocutors did not invest much time in extracurricular sports during their younger years, several of my male interlocutors spent a lot of their time invested in local sports, which came to shape much of their youth and gave them critical resources and social capital with which to contest certain stereotypes. In this section focusing on the male perspective, I make the argument that, investing their time in local sports associations became a creative avenue for these young men to gain cultural capital and navigate a social field that often overlooked their potential.

---

<sup>29</sup> [N]nogle gange siger de i tv-avisen, at araberne, det er dem, der laver alt mulig ballade og sådan noget. [Intervieweren:] *Ja. Hvad tænker du så?* [Enrico:] Så tænker jeg, at det er rigtigt, fordi det kun er dem, der nogle gange gør det." (Enrico, palæstinensiske forældre, Gilliam 2005:72)

## Chess as cultural capital and navigation strategy in Danish local associations

Ahmad was 19 years old, born in Copenhagen to parents of Moroccan descent, and attending his first year of university. Growing up in a north-west suburb of Copenhagen, Ahmad was surrounded by other Muslim migrant descendants. Ahmad went to a private Muslim primary school and switched to the public school system during his high school years. My Danish interlocutors who attended Muslim primary schools seemed to all share the feeling of being sheltered from discrimination that they later experienced in high school. Ahmad, however, did not experience the same level of discrimination that some of my other interlocutors had experienced. He described his high school experiences as positive. Ahmad was open about his religious principles when it came to socializing around drinking with his non-Muslim peers and he was quick to suggest alternative things to do, such as sports or going to the movies.

Ahmad focused on the positive aspects of growing up in Copenhagen, avoiding discussions of discrimination. This indicates several interesting aspects of his past experiences. From the outset of our conversation, Ahmad mentioned in detail his active involvement in a national association that seeks to encourage children to play chess. Ahmad had positive encounters with ethnic Danish peers and adults who shared his interests in chess outside of a school setting. Ahmad was introduced to the chess association when the general secretary recognized his enthusiasm for the game. The general secretary encouraged him to join to promote the game among other ethnic minority youth:

[...T]he general secretary from the association thought I was pretty good at the game and asked if I wanted to help promote [the chess association] with the sole purpose of showing ethnic diversity. I told him I could understand that, then I said yes [to the invitation]. And then little by little I got more influence and became a member of their board in the [X] branch and was given the opportunity to make decisions. And later on, I was also allowed to participate in projects and help with that, and then I got the opportunity to become a member of the [X] board, and then... I know it's only chess, but it's actually a very big deal.

*How has it influenced you?*

With organizational work, how to... it's basic stuff, because I didn't know, I was a primary school student, [I didn't know] how to sit in a meeting with adults, how to reach a joint decision as a group, how to set deadlines, how to plan ahead, how to deal with unexpected

factors that arise [...], how to be considerate of others' opinions. So, it did two things: it shaped me as a person and as a citizen. He [the general secretary] wanted, I think [...], to make sure I don't end up in a bad environment. Later, he got to know me very well and understood that I would never end up in those environments.

From the way Ahmad described it, the general secretary seemed to have seen potential in Ahmad. The fact that Ahmad's school was located in an inner-city area that had in the past been close to neighbourhoods of high crime and gang activity seemed to have been a motivator for the general secretary to take Ahmad under his wing as a way of protecting him from that environment. Ahmad accepted the general secretary's offer to become a representative of ethnic minorities – literally a poster-child for diversity. However, he made sure to demonstrate through his work in the association that he was never an 'at-risk-youth'. He was regularly invited to municipality meetings with other local associations as he became older and started coaching chess in a local school. Ahmad described being introduced to a local soccer coach at one of these meetings. He explained that soccer and other sports played an even bigger role than chess when he was growing up, and thus when the local soccer coach offered him an assistant coach position he was excited to accept. Ahmad highlighted this experience to underline the fact that being involved and engaged in local activities gave him experience in dealing with local authorities. In turn, it gave him the ability to navigate these social fields with ease, often bettering his social position through his involvements.

Throughout Ahmad's narrative, he demonstrated a certain degree of tactical skills in navigating the stereotype of young male migrant descendants that depicts him as a potential threat. Ahmad explained that he was invited to become an active part of Danish School Chess based on his immigrant descent and his enrolment in an inner-city school. However, instead of objecting from the outset to the categorization of being 'at-risk', he wanted to 'promote' his Muslim private school by representing them in the chess association. As he progressed in the association, he eventually challenged the general secretary's assumption of being 'at-risk'. Simultaneously, he gained important cultural capital in how to deal with people he did not necessarily have much in common with outside of a particular activity. More importantly, he learned how to engage with adults in a professional setting. This gave him confidence in local politics as he learned to navigate the field of requesting municipality grants for community

projects. Ahmad's narrative exemplifies how being in close interaction with Danish associations from a young age allowed him to develop personal relationships with people of authority who also believed in his abilities and saw his potential beyond the stereotypes of young male migrant descendants. These relationships became an important avenue for Ahmad to develop a cultural capital that allowed him to navigate local authorities and in turn challenge preconceived notions of who he represented as a young Muslim male of immigrant descent.

#### Representing Denmark in international sports tournaments

Khalid was a 24-year old young man who was born in Morocco but whose family migrated to Denmark when he was only a few months old. Since arriving in Denmark, he and his family had lived in an inner-city neighbourhood in Copenhagen. Khalid described growing up in this neighbourhood as a positive experience. He grew up in an area that is popularly known for higher crime rates and social problems; however, the street he lived on was filled with good friends that shared his outlook in terms of religiosity, ethical values and academic ambition.

Khalid attended a private Muslim primary school and later switched to a public high school. Similar to other interlocutors who had attended Muslim primary schools, he described the switch at high school as a major change of environment. His high school had a substantial number of Muslim students, so Khalid never felt like a minority among his peers. Nevertheless, during his first year of high school, a huge conflict between Muslim students and the school administration broke out. The school's Muslim students had adopted an unofficial prayer space in the basement, which they would use on a regular basis between classes to catch up on their prayers. The students would gather in the basement on Fridays during their lunch break to hold the weekly sermon (*jumuah*). During one sermon, a teacher entered the basement to talk on his phone. Khalid explains the social drama that ensued:

It was a Friday prayer that triggered it all. There was a teacher [X], he was really disrespectful, he was talking really loudly, and the one leading the Friday prayer said under his sermon that you're supposed to be quiet – he was referring to him [the teacher] without saying it directly. [The teacher] yelled back: 'Hey, it's *my* damn right to talk, and I don't care about you'. He continued to talk and refused to leave. Then he pulled [the student leading the sermon] to the [administration] office, and he [the student] was expelled the following week because of it. But there were huge protests and political drama. At one of the morning



assemblies one person went up [to the stage] and took the microphone from the principal, and said everyone who wants to pray Friday prayers in the school leaves now [as a protest]. And I think 90% of the school left, and they [the school administration] got very provoked by it and that's what triggered him [the student who led the sermon] being kicked out of school. It ended with us having to pray Friday prayer in the parking lot. That was a bit inconvenient, but that's how it goes.

This incident prompted a large-scale media debate on whether (Muslim) students should be allowed to pray on school property or not (e.g. Berlingske, November 26, 2005<sup>30</sup>, Klingsey 2005<sup>31</sup>). In one article that included an interview with the teacher Khalid is referring to in the above quote, the teacher responded to the question: "So, it didn't have anything to do with religion":

No, and if they had just been reciting verses from the Quran individually, then we'd let them go on and informed our colleagues that they were only praying and talking about Islam, because there is nothing wrong or provocative in that. The difference is that it had become a major meeting with political content in what he [the student] was saying. The Friday prayer is a symptom that the school has some extreme students who do not quite understand what it means to be part of a high school and members of a democratic society. They mix politics and religion in one big pot [...]. It may be uncomfortable to impose sanctions on some students because the school has certain values and beliefs. It's always easier to say yes than no. And then some may have also been nervous that when you say no to Muslims, you're afraid that you'll be accused of being racist and that you do not understand them. And it can therefore be even harder to say no to a peaceful Muslim student who comes and asks for a prayer room (teacher, Berlingske 2005, translated from Danish<sup>32</sup>).

---

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.b.dk/kultur/laereren-fra-vestre-borgerdyd> (2018-04-05)

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.information.dk/2007/07/rektorer-oensker-centralt-forbud-religioese-aktiviteter> (2018-04-05)

<sup>32</sup> Nej, og hvis de bare havde reciteret koranvers hver især, så havde vi ladet dem fortsætte og orienteret vores kolleger om, at der kun blev bedt og talt om islam, for det er der intet forkert eller provokerende i. Forskellen er, at det var blevet til et stormøde med politisk indhold i det, han siger. Fredagsbønnen er et symptom på, at vi på skolen har nogle ekstreme elever, som ikke helt forstår, hvad det vil sige at være en del af et gymnasium og medlemmer af et demokratisk samfund. De blander politik og religion sammen i en stor pærevælling, [...] »Det er måske ubehageligt at skulle lave sanktioner over for nogle elever, fordi skolen har nogle værdier og grundholdninger. Det er altid nemmere at sige ja end nej. Og så har nogle måske også været nervøse for, at når man giver muslimer et nej, er man bange for at få skudt i skoene, at man er racist, og at man ikke forstår dem. Og derfor kan det være endnu sværere at sige nej til en fredelig muslimsk elev, der kommer og spørger om et bederum, <https://www.b.dk/kultur/laereren-fra-vestre-borgerdyd> (2018-04-05)

The problem, according to the teacher, was the fact that the students were discussing politics in their religious sermon – had it purely been a religious gathering, he would not have had a problem with it. He went on to explain in the article how teachers were struggling with some of their Muslim students who were very vocal in their critique of the school values and even challenged their curriculums. It is important to evaluate these two accounts of the same incident.

Khalid emphasized the teacher's sense of entitlement to disturb the students who had congregated in a secluded area of the school in their spare time. This entitlement may have been based on the teacher's status as a member of staff, and an associated sense of authority over school premises. It could also have been based on his identification as an ethnic Dane and an associated sense of entitlement to decide what was Danish enough to be allowed in a public school. Khalid only indicated his own sentiments by highlighting the fact that the teacher was provoking the students by his interruptions and apparent disrespect. The fact that the school sided with the teacher was a significant point in a school that had a large Muslim student body. The school's choice to expel the student leading the Friday prayer for his political views further exacerbated the frustrations felt by Khalid and his fellow students.

This controversy, however, expands beyond this Copenhagen high school, and highlights more profound challenges in the Danish context of negotiating minority rights vis-à-vis perceived Danish values. Mikkelsen & Pedersen (2014:2314) point out that many young Muslims (who have tried to engage in the political debate) have been silenced by increased political and media scrutiny. Khalid's high school experience, and the teacher's reasoning for the school's silencing of students' political speech, indicates that Mikkelsen & Pedersen's observations may not be limited to political or media spheres. The silencing of young Muslims seems to have been transferred to this high school, where Muslims were expected to comply with what is presented as 'Danish values' or face exclusion from the institution.

A few years following this incident, and only a month before I commenced my fieldwork in Copenhagen, the debate about praying on school property was reignited. Students at Khalid's old high school petitioned the principal for an official quiet room: an inclusive space for all students to spiritually connect with themselves or their religion. The students suggested converting the basement into an official prayer space or a quiet room for spiritual reflection for

all students. Their argument was that it was already being used and had been used as such for decades, and so it would make sense to make it official. The petition became part of a media debate on spiritual spaces in public schools. The principal opposed the petition, despite the support it received from a large portion of the student body. In one article (Albrechtsen 2014<sup>33</sup>), the principal reasons:

[W]e have a lot of quiet rooms in the high school. We have libraries, study spaces, where students can sit and immerse themselves in the subjects they are here for: to gain knowledge. That's why you go to school, to focus on acquiring knowledge and become smarter. That is the reason we have spaces, where you can sit and do that [gain knowledge] in a calm and quiet manner, but we will not allocate spaces where you can do anything but that. (School principal, translated from Danish<sup>34</sup>)

This quote from the high school principal demonstrates the high tensions that have existed between the large Muslim student body and the high school faculty ever since Khalid was a student. The principal argued that a high school is an institution of learning and nothing else. Nevertheless, Danish high schools are often the setting where youth are first introduced to political, religious, and other socially relevant issues. Therefore, it is important to note how the issue of a designated spiritual space as well as leading a religious sermon in a secluded area can be viewed as a challenge to “the democratic society”, as the high school teacher described it. In the teacher’s description of Muslim students who do not know how to be members of a democratic society because of their communal prayers as well as their vocal criticism of school policies, he was adopting the political rhetoric that problematizes the Others’ religious and political opinions as representations of non-Danish values. This controversy thus demonstrates how political and media rhetoric can have a real effect on everyday relationships, in this case, between Muslim students and non-Muslim faculty members. Not all Muslim students would make use of a spiritual space and, likewise, not all non-Muslim faculty would oppose such a space, but it is important to note that for a school that had such a large Muslim and ethnic

---

<sup>33</sup> <http://nyhederne.tv2.dk/samfund/2014-05-16-intet-bederum-p%C3%A5-skole-du-beder-heller-ikke-p%C3%A5-biblioteket> (2014-05-17)

<sup>34</sup> ”[V]i har masser af stillerum på gymnasiet. Vi har biblioteker, studieområder, hvor elever kan sidde og forbyde sig i det, de er der for, nemlig at lære noget. Det er ligesom det, man kommer i skole for, at have fokus på at tilegne sig viden og blive klogere. Derfor har vi områder, hvor man kan sidde og gøre det helt stille og roligt, men vi påtænker ikke at lave områder, hvor man kan gøre andet end det.”

minority student body, all the faculty members were ethnic Danes. As such, the teacher that Khalid described as initiating the drama, and the principal's opposition towards a recognized quiet space had the potential to underline a particular boundary between faculty and student. This divide was experienced by Khalid as a power struggle between "Danish versus Muslim", although he recognized the fallacy in this dichotomy as he described himself as a Danish Muslim<sup>35</sup>.

Khalid's self-identification as a Danish Muslim was not something he took lightly. He explained:

Of course, I see myself as Moroccan as well, it's not like I'm white and look like everyone else. I don't. I see myself as Moroccan as well, but I grew up here, I speak Danish like all other Danes, but then I just have that added fact that I'm Muslim, and that's something I am before anything else.

Khalid equated his Moroccan identity with his appearance because he looked different than ethnic Danes. It seemed implicit in Khalid's narrative that putting too much emphasis on his immigrant background would play into the dynamic of 'Dane vs Other', thus highlighting his position as Other and limiting his rights as a Dane. It was particularly important for Khalid to argue for his Danishness, because he had actually represented Denmark in international competitions as a national champion in a martial arts sport that he had practiced since he was 8 years old:

I think the reason why I see myself as a Dane is the fact that I represented Denmark for eight years while on the national team. And when I go out into the world and represent Denmark, then it's with the Danish flag and not the Moroccan or Turkish or something else. And people abroad also talk to you as if you're a Dane. We were in Vietnam for a tournament, I had to fight an Egyptian and it was just during the Cartoon crisis. It was a couple of months

---

<sup>35</sup> The debate on prayer-spaces in schools was once more reignited in July 2017, where a report by the Ministry of Education demonstrated that out of 1261 primary and secondary schools, only 27 schools answered yes to having prayer/spiritual facilities; 15 of these schools highlighted that these facilities were primarily used by Christian students (<https://www.b.dk/politiko/undersogelse-saerligt-kristne-benyttet-bederum-paa-skoler>). Responding to these numbers, Marie Krarup, a representative from the right-wing Danish People's Party, retorted: "There's something wrong with the facts", arguing that there are no problems with Christian students singing morning psalms or saying a prayer – it is the Muslim prayer that is "uncustomary" on Danish schools and needs to be banned (Jørgensen 2017, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/df-om-bederum-paa-skoler-der-er-noget-galt-med-fakta-ikke-med-vores>, 2018-04-06).

after it happened and there was all that fuss, in 2005 or 2006. In my first fight, I faced Egypt, and they hated Denmark, the Arabs really hated Denmark. So, the guy I had to fight couldn't tell that I was Muslim. I just thought how can you not see that. Then he looks at me and says: "I hate Denmark" before the fight, and I thought why would you say that before we fight, then I just said: "*Assalamu 'alaikum akhi*" [Peace be with you, brother, translated from Arabic].

In this quote, Khalid described representing Denmark in an international martial arts tournament during the Cartoon crisis in 2006. The crisis arose following a newspaper's publication of cartoons ridiculing Prophet Mohammed by depicting him with a bomb on his turban (and other offensive drawings). The newspaper's editor, Flemming Rose, argued against what he viewed as self-censorship from Western artists who feared Muslims' reaction and therefore did not represent them in their art: "These examples give cause for concern regardless whether these fears are falsely based. The fact is that it exists and that it leads to self-censorship. There is an intimidation of public space" (Rose 2005, translated from Danish<sup>36</sup>). Although Rose argued that this was a tendency happening around the Western world, his editorial column should be read within the context of the then right-wing government's 'Battle of Values' (Kublitz 2010, Mikkel & Pedersen 2013). In the name of protecting the (Danish) value of freedom of speech, Rose argued:

The modern secular society is rejected by some Muslims. They claim a privileged position when they insist on special consideration of their religious feelings. It is incompatible with a worldly democracy and freedom of expression, where one must be prepared to be mocked and ridiculed. (Rose 2005, translated from Danish<sup>37</sup>)

To Rose's and the rest of the Danish public's surprise, the Cartoon crisis received massive media coverage around the world, and especially Middle Eastern press. It resulted in heavy diplomatic criticism from Middle Eastern ambassadors in Denmark as well as wide-ranging consumer

---

<sup>36</sup> "De anførte eksempler giver grund til bekymring, hvad enten den oplevede frygt hviler på et falsk grundlag eller ej. Faktum er, at den findes, og at den fører til selvensur. Der sker en intimidering af det offentlige rum." <http://danmarkshistorien.dk/leksikon-og-kilder/vis/materiale/jyllands-postens-begrundelse-for-at-bringe-muhammed-tegningerne-2005/> (2017-08-09)

<sup>37</sup> "Det moderne, sekulære samfund afvises af nogle muslimer. De gør krav på en særstilling, når de insisterer på særlig hensyntagen til egne religiøse følelser. Det er uforeneligt med et verdsligt demokrati og ytringsfrihed, hvor man må være rede til at finde sig i hån, spot og latterliggørelse." <http://danmarkshistorien.dk/leksikon-og-kilder/vis/materiale/jyllands-postens-begrundelse-for-at-bringe-muhammed-tegningerne-2005/> (2017-08-09)

boycotts in several Middle Eastern countries (Kublitz 2010). Denmark, ‘the little duck pond’, was now under massive global scrutiny. In this heated context – where the Danish media’s negative representation of Muslims had received global attention – Khalid was in a position of having to represent Denmark in an international context that saw Denmark and its population as an anti-Muslim monolith. It surprised Khalid that his Egyptian opponent could not recognize the fact that Khalid himself was Muslim. Khalid responded by giving a Muslim greeting and thus highlighting the fact that he, a Danish representative, was in fact Muslim, thereby challenging his opponents’ image of Danes as inherently anti-Muslim.

While Khalid represented Denmark internationally through his sports achievements, his Danishness was often questioned when competing nationally:

Something that’s made me stay away from ethnic Danes, I’m just going to say it: I have a lot of prejudice and those were already confirmed to me when I was really young, 9-10 years-old, a little cheeky kid, when we were out competing and had won gold, and we were waiting for our medals. It was in Esbjerg [a city in rural Jutland], when a man with a South-Jutland accent comes to me, you almost couldn’t understand what he said. Then he says: “You’re actually good at speaking Danish” [imitates a South-Jutland accent], then I said: “Sorry, what are you saying?”, then he says: “YOUR DANISH IS GOOD, A’RIGHT”. I just thought, of course I speak Danish, is there something wrong with you or what [laughs]. I told him: “I speak better Danish than you do”. It wasn’t just that experience, we’ve also been in Thisted, or whatever, Skanderborg, Århus, and all the other places. You’re met with prejudice when you leave the environment you’re used to here [in Copenhagen].

His experiences internationally made it easy for Khalid to see himself as a Dane and be a representative of Denmark in the international sporting arena. However, admitting his own difficult relationship with ethnic Danes, he also noted that whenever he had to travel and compete *within* Denmark (especially the rural parts of Denmark), he and his team mates – also of ethnic minority background – would have to face the fact that they were often not perceived as Danes. The comment from the man from South Jutland in Khalid’s quote was not necessarily discriminatory; in fact, the man seemed to be complimenting Khalid on his Danish language skills. However, as a child, Khalid was made aware of his Danish non-belonging by the man’s

comments on his Danish skills. The man would not have made the same comment if Khalid had more ethnic Danish features.

Khalid explained that the challenge of feeling both Danish and Muslim had become less problematic as he ventured into professional life. Finishing his MA degree before turning 25, and juggling several jobs in-between his studies, he engaged with Danish society as a professional and not an immigrant youth from an inner-city neighbourhood defending his right to be perceived as Danish. Similar to Aisha, Fatiha and several other Danish interlocutors, once they reached a certain level of social mobility through education, the power dynamics changed and their position to argue for their rights as contributing Danish citizens was reversed. Their influence on political, media and policy discourses remains limited (cf. Mikkel & Pedersen 2014); however, their everyday interactions with ethnic Danes challenges the public rhetoric and stereotypes of young Muslims as ‘others’. Instead, as Fatiha argued, the very definition of Danishness is what is being challenged, contested, negotiated and redefined in these everyday interactions, where my interlocutors’ adamant self-identification as simultaneously Danish and Muslim is fuelled by their social mobility.

## Conclusion

This chapter explores how my interlocutors navigate the Danish terrain of cultural anxiety. Whether in their everyday life or when following media and political discourse, the question of self-representation in the face of being stereotyped filled a large part of my interlocutors’ narratives. Mikkel & Pedersen (2014) look at the changes in Danish political and media rhetoric a decade after 9/11, and argue that immigrants and their descendants, particularly Muslims, have become highly visible in political and media discourses and at the same time, increasingly silenced and excluded from engaging in these discourses (2313). Their article focuses on the normalization of Muslims as potentially dangerous in public discourses in the way they are represented in securitization and integration policies. They thus conclude that a “decade of suspicion” will inevitably affect Danish Muslims and their relationships with the majority population, especially the millennial generation who have only experienced this type of othering and suspicion in public debates (Mikkel & Pedersen 2014: 2317). This chapter has presented cases of young Muslims who have been affected in various ways by the increased focus on immigrants and Muslims in public debates since 9/11. My interlocutors’ concern with

responding to Muslim stereotypes has become an important factor in their lives. Often their academic successes became important cultural capital with which to establish credibility in the face of discrimination. My interlocutors' successes were a strong counter-narrative to the idea of the hijab-wearing immigrant woman who does not speak 'proper' Danish or the delinquent inner-city Muslim man who cannot stay out of trouble. Regrettably, the normalization of Muslim stereotypes had influenced several interlocutors' interpersonal relationships with non-Muslim ethnic Danes. They often either tried to avoid these relationships or these relationships became focused on disproving existing stereotypes. The public focus on Muslims was otherized in the sense that either you were white, cultural-Christian and Danish and therefore not Muslim, or you were of immigrant descent and therefore Muslim. As such, in my Danish interlocutors narratives regarding their experiences within these dichotomized discourses of 'us vs them', their struggle for society's acknowledgement of their Danishness seemed to follow them from early childhood (cf. Mikkel & Pedersen 2014). Since most of my interlocutors were highly educated, they represented a minority among the Muslim minority, and as such had a greater capacity to defy the unspoken *Jantelov* by emphasizing their religious difference and their social and academic achievements while simultaneously insisting on being Danish.

It is evident in this chapter that my interlocutors' narratives seemed to sometimes essentialize the ethnic Dane by identifying this representation with the political rhetoric of anti-immigrant sentiments. However, it became clear to me – as my rapport with some of my interlocutors developed further – that this was just a simplification of the normalization of the othering-discourse that has penetrated the general public. In reality, they engaged and had meaningful relationships with ethnic Danes that did not simply adopt the 'us vs them'-dichotomy. Rather, they had friends, colleagues and role models that challenged the idea of the 'anti-immigrant/Muslim Dane' – however these relationships only became apparent, when I stopped asking them about being Muslim in Denmark (a topic that is rigged with feelings of alienation and marginalization from the general 'Danish community'), and instead asked them to demonstrate what was important in their lives through city tours (see Chapter 4).



## 6. Understanding Subjectivity through Spatial Biographies

The thesis has so far focused on my interlocutors' categorical identification as 'Muslim youth' and what this identification means for their lives, experiences and social relations. This chapter, and the chapters to follow, will challenge the idea that my interlocutors' shared identification as 'Muslim youth' necessarily means that they also share similar mobility histories, socioeconomic circumstances or spatial connections. This chapter, focusing on my Montreal interlocutors, presents unique spatial narratives that challenge the assumption of a 'Muslim' *entity*. I asked them to show me their cities; they were free to interpret this in whatever way they wanted and construct a tour of the spaces they found important. Several interlocutors chose to make their tours spatial representations of their lives, taking me to childhood playgrounds, past homes and current neighbourhoods. The narratives they constructed through these tours became narratives of self, i.e. a depiction of their subjectivity. I present my interlocutors' autobiographies as they were translated into spatial narratives. By walking with my interlocutors through their city spaces, I shift my anthropological gaze from categorical signifiers (i.e. Muslim/immigrant/youth) to unique life narratives of settlement and rootedness in a city. Highlighting the particularities of my interlocutors' experiences, identifications and outlooks, demonstrates the value of moving past *a priori* categorical determinations to investigate easily overlooked aspects of my interlocutors' experiences when the focus is merely on social categories.

My Montreal interlocutors never spent much time or effort in trying to convince me that they belonged in their city, province or nation. They were already well-rooted in their city spaces and they continued to develop these roots, as their localities changed with economic and social restructuring. Migration research in the early 2000s oriented attention to the ways in which migrants and their descendants maintained transnational ties, but this could have the effect of diverting attention from their local rootedness in their country of settlement. What happens when we stop assuming that young Muslims, whether migrant or not, are foreign to the societies they live in? What happens when we treat it as unexceptional that they live and relate locally – regardless of differences of dress, religious devotion, or summers spent in their parents' countries of origin. My Montreal interlocutors all had different spaces they felt connected to through past experiences and memories. They took me on tours of their version of the city; and

whether they had lived there for a few years or had been born and raised in the city, they all had a spatial-narrative. This chapter focuses on how my Montreal interlocutors rooted themselves in their locality through space, time and memories. These memories connected them to the history of a certain place; they knew if a building had been renovated, if a street had been transformed and they related it to their own memories of this site. This chapter does not only demonstrate the rootedness of my Montreal Muslim interlocutors. It also highlights the more general temporal dimensions of city spaces and how they connect to personal biographies. My interlocutors were spatially mobile; many of them came from immigrant backgrounds, and their spatial connection to Montreal was colored by their family's settlement. Yet other interlocutors were themselves migrants to the city, some international but others rural-urban migrants, such as Amy, who had moved to Montreal from a small-town in Ontario. My interlocutors' movements and different spatial biographies depict how diverse, nuanced and distinguished their individual urban experiences are; they have different migration histories as well as socio-economic circumstances and their connections with different parts of Montreal are unique to their personal experiences. I explore how my Montreal interlocutors weave a spatial life narrative through the spaces they showed me. In the process, the spaces become autobiographic, enriched by nostalgic meaning and highlighting important life moments. In other words, the space becomes a physical representation of moments and periods in one's life history (Amit and Knowles 2017).

#### Navigating Urban Spaces and Constructing Spatial biographies

My interlocutors in Montreal had different migration histories, spanning from transnational migration to rural-urban migration. In many ways, their unique migration histories only allow a limited understanding of their lives and connections to Montreal. Placing their experiences within migration literature that focuses on the processes of movement as larger journeys, only provides a limited understanding of their lives in the city. The more contemporary focus on mobility and its connection to smaller journeys as well as continuous journeys highlight the more nuanced experiences of my interlocutors (cf. Knowles 2011; Amit and Olwig 2011). The importance of locality and neighbourhood was ever-present in my fieldwork in Montreal. My interlocutors only tangentially referred to their (or their family's) migration experiences in their spatial accounts; what mattered was the relationships with and pathways they had themselves constructed to the city spaces.

In an essay on spatial and urban culture, Georg Simmel explores “the significance that the spatial conditions of a sociation possesses sociologically for other determinants and developments” (Simmel 1997: 138). In this text, Simmel focuses on defining the different uses of space; it is only from understanding the use of space, he argues, that we come to understand what society may comprise. An important point Simmel makes about space and distance is an emphasis on the psychological aspects of these concepts, thus arguing that it is not a physical proximity that binds people together, but rather the inhabitants of the spaces who attach social meaning to space. Simmel thus gives us a deeper theoretical basis for understanding the relationship between physical and social space. The spatial accounts I present in this chapter demonstrate the social meaning my interlocutors attribute to their localities; whether through their life histories or social and emotional connections to particular spaces. Their journeys through their city are temporal connections. In other words, my interlocutors’ spatial narratives connect time and space – they demonstrate the meaning attributed to physical space through different times in their lives. My interlocutors’ meanings were constructed based on what they wanted to emphasize. For instance, they may have underplayed their parents’ financial struggles and the challenges of settling in a new country, and instead emphasized the social life they enjoyed growing up in an inner-city neighbourhood.

The young adults that I present in this chapter all felt a strong connection to particular areas of Montreal and its suburbs. Nevertheless, their personal histories of migration, settlement in the city as well as their socioeconomic circumstances were very different. They had different starting points and possibilities of both spatial and social mobility in their cities. In many ways, these young people’s city tours force us to recognize the particularities in their experiences. This only became possible once I moved away from a categorical emphasis on their Muslim identification; moving away from this emphasis meant that I could explore their different experiences, identifications, prospects and outlooks that they each had developed through their engagement with particular districts of Montreal.

My approach in following my interlocutors’ movements through the city draws on the original work of the Manchester School and its important contribution to the concept of social networks. For instance, A.L. Epstein’s (1969) case study of a rural migrant’s movements through the city, demonstrates the migrant’s vast social network. Based on this case, Epstein sought to

understand the social life of the city by analyzing what was happening to the African rural migrants living in these cities (Epstein 1969: 89). What is important to highlight in Epstein's study in relation to my interlocutors' city tours is the social importance of spaces that they demonstrate through their spatial narratives. Epstein's case study illustrates how detailed case examples can depict the particularities in the process of settlement and social networks one develops in a city through the use of spaces. It is through these types of particularities that the cases in this chapter reveal the complexities of my interlocutors' individual experiences, attachments and engagements with their city. As Caroline Knowles (2010) argues, "[people's] lives and subjectivities are about where they go and why, how they go, and who they encounter on the way" (376). Knowles further develops the connection between subjectivity and spatial biography in a recent article with Vered Amit (Amit & Knowles 2017). Here, she argues that spatial biography, i.e. narrating life stories through spaces, makes space "legible in its distinctiveness and through the navigational practices involved in negotiating it." (Amit & Knowles 2017: 12). The small-scale journeys my interlocutors took me on, connecting seemingly random city spaces, demonstrated their subjectivities. This subjectivity was established through their spatial biographies, where both their physical movements and verbal narratives created a connection between the city spaces (cf. *ibid.*). Their tours allowed me to move beyond an *a priori* understanding of their group-identification with immigrant or religious communities, and to explore how these types of identifications were only one part of their complex life stories.

#### Family History Narrated through a Childhood Neighbourhood<sup>38</sup>

On a cold January morning, Sidra took me on a tour of her childhood neighbourhood in southwest Montreal. Her family first moved to this neighbourhood after they arrived in Canada from Bangladesh, and they have lived there ever since. Sidra's tour exemplifies the lifelong connections one can create with a residential neighbourhood – knowing every corner and crack in the pavement. Her tour was full of personal life details; where she had played hide-and-seek, the apartment where her best friends lived, the good she experienced growing up there and the stigma that was attributed to the neighbourhood but that she ignored while living there. As an inner-city area, this southwest neighbourhood has been affected by poverty and crime, and thus

---

<sup>38</sup> I have omitted the neighborhood name to protect Sidra's confidentiality.

for many years there was a social stigma to living in the area. However, the neighbourhood's tainted history was changing during the time of my fieldwork as gentrification efforts were reinvigorating the neighbourhood and young professionals and students wanting close accommodation to the city center were moving in.

When I interviewed her at her university campus, Sidra gave me an extensive description of her experiences in coming of age in Montreal. A few weeks later we set up a time when she would take me on a tour of her version of Montreal – the places that had been significant in her life. Sidra's parents immigrated to Canada when her oldest brother was very young, and they have since lived in the same district in southwest Montreal. This area of Montreal has historically housed many Caribbean and South Asian immigrants, often working-class and living in social housing. The population demographics had been rapidly changing over the previous decade as the neighbourhood was experiencing a financial boost through various gentrification initiatives: the construction of condos, townhouses and the proliferation of new commercial enterprises attracted to the area because of its close proximity to Montreal's city center. Sidra, who was 21 at the time of my fieldwork, had lived in this district since she was born. While her parents had lived in different apartments, they had stayed in the same neighbourhood. Her tour of the area provided an interesting glimpse of the relationship between personal biography and city history. As the district became transformed by gentrification, Sidra and her family experienced social mobility. Her parents' neighbourhood store that was situated next door to the second of Sidra's childhood rental apartments was doing well enough for her parents to upgrade, buying a duplex property in the neighbourhood just before property values significantly rose in this quarter. This fortunate investment meant that Sidra and her three siblings, all university students, could live in close proximity to their university campuses, and her parents could supplement their income by renting out the spare apartment to university students needing affordable accommodation.

I met Sidra at a metro station in her residential neighbourhood. The first thing she wanted to show me was the community garden where her family had maintained a plot when she was a child. On that cold January morning, it was difficult to picture what the garden looked like under all that snow, but Sidra was there to describe the many summers her parents had spent in that garden:



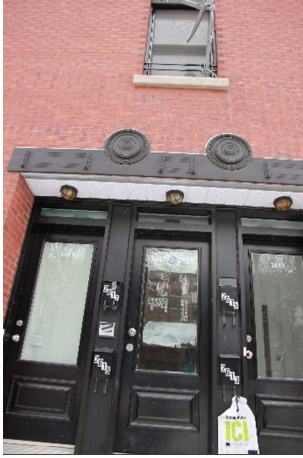
It's one of those community gardens, so everybody has their own plots. We grew all sorts of things: tomatoes, squash, spinach, chili peppers. They've changed it, they didn't have that fence. We don't actually have a [community] garden [plot] anymore, because we have a big backyard and my parents grow things there. We had it when we lived in an

apartment. It was free. The main supervisor passed away a few months ago, they're all senior citizens. And every year they would have a harvest festival - "The best garden" kind of thing. One of my parents' friends would win every year.

This first stop on Sidra's city tour represented neighbourhood life for her parents as new immigrants. The community garden was a way for her parents to get to know their neighbors. The fact that the neighbourhood had a substantial number of Bangladeshi and other South Asian immigrants, meant that the garden became a way to socialize with neighbors without feeling foreign. In the quote, she described how her family stopped needing the communal gardens as they upgraded to their current house, which had a large garden where her parents grew their vegetables. Meanwhile, the garden supervisor passed away and most of the people she had known who still maintained community garden plots were senior citizens. The physical garden became a relic of her parents' initial integration into Montreal community life; as their social mobility increased, the garden lost its function. Nevertheless, as Sidra narrated, the garden was still an important symbol of her parents' experience of settling down in Montreal; it was a nostalgic reminder of where her family had started and how far they had come since.



As we walked past the community garden, we passed by a church that had been there since Sidra was a child. The church reminded Sidra of Ramadan celebrations during her childhood – it was a religious relic that had been there since she was a child. The fact that the church did not represent Islam was irrelevant, it was still a symbol of religious belief and celebrations. She explained how her parents would send her and her sister out to the Bangladeshi families in the neighbourhood to give them food, a tradition many Muslim families share during the Ramadan season.



All the kids in the neighbourhood, we were all friends. We used to play hide and seek all around the neighbourhood. There's a little courtyard, where we would play soccer. Our friends would yell from downstairs: "Guys, come down and play". That's all we did – just go out and play.

This is our door and we used to practice Bengali writing on the door with my mom's lipstick. [The door] was green before but now they've renovated it.

Those three windows up there were ours. [it smells like cooking].

It's probably Bengali cooking. It's an immigrant neighbourhood, there's a mixture of everything. This is definitely renovated, it was not like that.

Walking past Sidra's first home, she alternated between reminiscing about her childhood experiences and explaining what had changed since. To a certain extent, this southwestern district was still an immigrant neighbourhood; however, it had been spruced up and re-developed since Sidra's childhood. Perhaps, like Sidra's family, many of her childhood friends have experienced similar social mobility as they grew up and their families became more established in Montreal. Those who chose to stay in the neighbourhood after its gentrification were the ones who were financially able to, while others had been forced to move further away from the downtown area.



So, this is the park, it's my childhood park.

Do you see those green things, there used to be a huge basket swing and all of us kids used to sit there and two other kids would go on the sides and swing. It would go super high.

There used to be a huge slide – well, it's not that huge anymore. We used to hang on these and my aunt used to push us. It's the same slide, same swing-set.

It was important to Sidra to show me her childhood park; this was where she had spent a large portion of her childhood. Whether playing with her aunt, who would look after her, or with the

neighbourhood children, this park was an important reminder of her connection to the neighbourhood. It was a biographical piece of her humble beginnings growing up in an inner-city neighbourhood. While there were many social problems in her neighbourhood, the way Sidra reminisced about her childhood experiences was mainly positive:

We make the most of the things we have. We moved when I was 11. And then we moved but we're close by so we can walk there. It's near [X]-metro. And our store is around there as well so you can meet my mom. This whole neighbourhood is very family friendly.

Although many families that lived in the area were struggling financially when Sidra was a child, she and the other neighbourhood children seemed to make the most of their circumstances. The benefits of living in a neighbourhood that had so many young families, outweighed the hardships and uncertainties faced by their parents who often were struggling and newly arrived immigrants.

The next stop on Sidra's tour was a brief visit to her family's shop:



And that's our store. It's a very residential neighbourhood. Downtown is just up the tunnel, Concordia is right there. [We walk inside the store, we greet Sidra's mom and her friend] This is mostly an African neighbourhood, so we sell things we've never heard of, like plantain, we love their plantain, we got those for them. And this, they call it Malanga, so there's a lot of new foods I've discovered. We've got our Arab grape leaves. And there's a lot of Bengalis around here as well so we have our Bengali chutney. [We look around the store] The house we used to live in is right next door.



This is our third house, second in this neighbourhood. We used to see the highway. I don't like too much quiet, I was born in the city.



With every stop along the tour, the narrative arc of Sidra’s spatial biography became clearer. Her relationship not just with her neighbourhood, but with the larger city is rooted in every memory she had of her past. The city and car noises that might be viewed as bothersome by many people were for Sidra a happy reminder of growing up right in front of a busy highway. As such, Sidra concluded “I was born in the city” – she found comfort in its noise. The next stop on Sidra’s tour was the local mosque she and her sister used to go when they were growing up.



We’re headed to [X-mosque] now. [Greet someone] It’s nice coming here [the street she used to live in] because I see them [neighbors] and they recognize me.

This is [X]-mosque. The front entrance we use when we have halaqah [Islamic study circle]. It’s mostly a Bengali mosque, so there isn’t many Bengali women coming to Jumua prayers. It’s a cultural thing. The first Eid prayer, me, my sister and mom went to, was three years ago.

As we approached the metro station to travel to the mosque, Sidra greeted an acquaintance on the way. It happened several times during Sidra’s tour that she would greet people on the street – young and old and of different ethnicities. It gave me a sense that I was on her turf; this neighbourhood that stretched over three metro stations was in fact *hers*. The neighbourhood included representations of her ethnic heritage but also all the cultural artifacts and foods that she and her family had adopted as a result of owning a store in a culturally diverse neighbourhood. The neighbourhood also enabled her increase in religiosity as she explained that the mosque was not necessarily a women-centric place in Bengali culture, yet she, her sister and mother had started coming to the mosque more frequently as they became acquainted with this local mosque. This southwestern district thus gave Sidra the possibility of rooting and developing herself within the neighbourhood, allowing all her intersecting identifications to meet and integrate seamlessly.

We left the mosque and headed for our final stop on Sidra’s tour: her current family home.



As you can see the distance from the metro to our house is much further away than before. One of the buses in front of the house takes us straight to [my university] and another bus goes to [another university], where my brother goes.

I'll take you home, my sister doesn't know you're coming, so it's a mess.

So, this is our house.

This is the gate to our backyard. It's nice in the summer, we have flowers here. I'll bring you over in the summer, it looks nicer. This is the backyard. This is where we do the gardening and we have a little shed, we have a little pond thing. And we have an apple tree and a pear tree.

[Inside the house: Sidra shows me around] We're renting out the basement. And we have tenants upstairs.

We moved here 5 years ago. We were so sad when we left our apartment because there were so many memories... It's quiet but still close to downtown.

This is the bus stop to go to school. My parents when they were looking for a place, they found a bunch of cheaper places in the suburbs, but they were thinking of us and how we would have to commute. [Sidra greets a neighbor, explaining:] He's kinda *the* neighbourhood, the person everyone knows. He just moved in, in the summer and he's a carpenter, I introduced myself to them. I've always liked that everybody is super close [in the neighbourhood].

Ending our tour in her family home epitomized the social mobility she and her family had experienced within the same neighbourhood. When viewing her first family home at the beginning of our tour, Sidra highlighted how the apartment building had been renovated and looked different than its appearance when she was a child and the neighbourhood had not yet been redeveloped. Her current family home looks newly renovated and depicts a new version of this urban quarter; it represents a settled middle-class immigrant family with grown children that are finishing higher degrees – the epitome of social mobility.

Many struggling families in this district have been pushed further out to the periphery of the city because of gentrification schemes that have increased rental prices. Sidra's parents were

able to make a fortunate investment that ultimately allowed them to sustain the roots they had planted in this area. As we left her family home and headed towards the metro, her final comment as she greeted the neighbourhood carpenter was telling of her connection to the neighbourhood. She enjoyed feeling a sense of closeness with her neighbors, even with the many changes that the quarter had experienced in recent years. Her personal biography was connected to the neighbourhood, so much so that she took it upon herself to introduce herself to new neighbors, as if inviting them into *her* neighbourhood.

#### A Seasonal Walk through a Multicultural Neighbourhood

Amy was and still is an aspiring and very talented artist. At the time of our interview and walk tour, she had recently graduated with an art degree and was completing her graduate school application to several prestigious university art departments. She is of Anglo-European descent and grew up in a small town in Ontario. She was introduced to Islam by her high school ethics teacher not long after 9/11 and some years later, at the age of 17, she decided to convert to Islam.

Amy started her tour from her apartment in a western district of Montreal on a freezing but sunny December day. In -20 degrees we left her cozy studio apartment and walked down the residential street of duplex houses and apartments. I gave Amy the camera to allow her to control what to take pictures of. Amy's artistic gaze colored most of her being-in-the-city. She was excited to take me on a tour of her favourite area: Cote-des-Neiges, just a short walk from where she lived. This was a walk she often took when needing artistic inspiration – looking up to notice her surroundings, she urged me to notice things around us to which I normally would not have paid attention.

We'll walk to Cotes-des-Neiges and you'll see my [city]. One of my professors was telling me if you have an artistic block, and you keep hitting that wall and you can't figure out how to get through it, she gave us a list that I thought was kinda a stupid thing to do to try to get you out of your habit. The best thing ever that worked for me, it probably makes me look like an idiot, is: look up. You know how many things I've noticed just by looking up. There's so much emphasis on eye-level, when you look up you start seeing things like this guy over here has the coolest patio, I see it all the time, I'll take a picture of it. The detail on



the rod iron, I love it. And you start seeing the differences between things. [...] Sometimes you'll see cats and dogs just staring at you. I've always lived on this side of the city. It's great, close to downtown, close to everything. I love this place, it's very quiet. The older I get the more I like quiet.

Downtown you'll notice little bird trees if you look up. That's actually where a lot of my inspiration comes from, even in my art work, comes from looking up. Even if you wanna talk spiritually. It reminds me that this little microcosm of my life that makes me freak out, there's something so much bigger than me. It puts things into perspective.

As we walked down the street she lived on, Amy described how important her neighbourhood was to her. She had lived in Montreal ever since she started her undergraduate degree four years previously, and during that time Montreal had become what she associated with home. The small Ontario town she was born and raised in became too confining for her to express herself. For Amy, the neighbourhood she now lived in allowed her to be close to urban life yet feel the solitude and quiet of suburbia. This was evident as we walked down her street on a weekday morning – no cars or noise to be heard. She explained how her routinized walk down towards Cotes-des-Neiges (CDN) street was often an inspirational experience, as she tried to become unhabituated to her environment by looking up over her eye-level.



This is my normal route if I want to go to CDN [the main street in the area]. I would go without a purpose. I'll show you, I have an obsession with Saint Joseph Oratory. I've gone in a couple of times. On my Instagram, I have this documented changes of weather of [the] Oratory, and I just love it. I've found it when it's foggy, covered in snow. It's quiet. Even as a Muslim. I was raised Christian, right, even some of those notions I have of prayer and sanctity is not against Islam. It's something I let myself engage in even though it might not be a direct part. For me it's the only symbol I have in Montreal of that feeling of greater importance than just this daily status quo of people just running around chaotic. I'll take a picture of it from my

favorite spot. Do you see the windows around the bottom of the dome, they light up at night, and they're like gold.

As we walked down the main street taking us to a large intersection, Amy took a picture of St. Joseph Oratory in the distance. The Oratory is a hallmark of Montreal's skyline and a major tourist attraction. For Amy, however, it was a spiritual reminder. She was raised Christian, and although she was now Muslim, she still associated the Oratory with a sense of spirituality. The Oratory became a reminder of something more profound than the hustle and bustle of urban life. It was even a reminder of the changing seasons and thus the changing times. Amy kept noticing the Oratory in the distance throughout our walk, taking pictures of it from different angles. With these continuous reminders, she made sure I understood its significance. The Oratory was a public reminder of spirituality for her – she did not have to go to a mosque or remove herself from the world; she simply had to look up to the horizon and she would be reminded of a greater sense of existence.



This is a corner I spend a lot of my life at, because I either get off the bus here and I go down here and wait for the 165 to go downtown. Or this is where my meandering begins if you can call it that. This connects me to everything, I do groceries that way, I have friends who live that way, this goes to the [sufi]-center, the spiritual center [mosque] I go to. Obviously, home is this way, and school is that way. So, it's kinda my four corners. I like it at night because of the Christmas lights.

Not everything posed as much spiritual and artistic symbolism for Amy as the Oratory. Some places were just avenues to reach other destinations, such as the intersection she described above. The intersection linked four roads that connected her to various parts of the city; one street took her to her favourite shops and restaurants, the area in which she socialized with friends as well as in which she found solitude in the crowd – this was the area that she wanted to show me in particular. Another street took her to the mosque she preferred to frequent, while yet another street connected her to downtown Montreal, where she went to university. And finally, one street led her home to her cozy studio apartment.



Okay, so we're going into Renaud Bray [a large French bookstore franchise]. I'm also going to explain to you about that corner where there's Christmas trees. During the year, it's a [farmer's] market, I love this place. All I do is eat berries, so these people, they know me. It's pretty cheap too. They start back up in April.

Before entering the bookstore, Amy pointed out a corner of the street ahead of us and took a picture. At that moment, it was a Christmas tree market, however, during the warmer months that corner was transformed into a farmers' market where Amy loved to shop.



I get a lot of inspiration walking around looking at stuff because I get to control the input than just walking down the street where there's a flow of input going in everywhere. There's a lot of stuff around, but it's more that I've gone to a place to zen out.

The bookstore Amy wanted to show me was a large franchise bookstore with mostly French books and other eclectic and decorative items. While Amy did speak French, it was not her first language, but she explained that the store was a place of inspiration found in the random and unique items it carried. She pointed out that in the store, she could control what drew her attention as opposed to walking down the street where there was a continuous stream of inputs beyond her control. Throughout her tour, Amy narrated this juxtaposition between the love she had for living in a city environment and often finding all the stimulus too overwhelming. To relieve this tension, she sought places like the bookshop or little parks and markets that sheltered her from the chaotic feel of the city.



Let's do the park and then café, but there's not much to see there because it's covered in snow. It's a place I go in the summer time, because I would just lay and just veg, read a book, where I would leave my phone at home and just sleep. It's very important for me to disconnect. It's becoming unconnected from here and becoming connected to something else. Tapping into this kind of... I was given a glimpse into spiritual and creative potential and I realize if I want to attain that, I have to work at it. I guess for me one of the things is that feeling unmediated in order to mediate myself is maybe the optimum for myself.



So, this area here usually has a lot of flowers... these shrubs, its kinda like a privacy fence, so I can sit on the benches here, I get the sun. I also get privacy, because you have kids playing here, but here it blocks it out. In the summer, I would lay there in the grass field but now it's a hockey rink.

Behind the busy main street of Cotes-des-Neiges, Amy took me to one of the parks she would go to during the summer, explaining the differences between the seasons where in the winter there was a hockey rink, which in the summer was a large grass field. With every stop on the tour, Amy constructed meaning through her narrative; the Oratory, the intersection and the bookshop were all given personal significance in the course of her narration. The park was no different, and Amy explained that this place was where she came to disconnect from her phone, from people, from social demands and reconnect with herself. While she was explaining her need to feel unmediated, her phone vibrated and she exclaimed: "That's it – people can basically get a hold of you on text, Facebook, Messenger and Instagram, you can literally be at someone's beck and call at all times if you let them." This notion of always having to be accessible to people seemed to be a disruption to Amy, as if she had to stop her train of thought to engage with people through various social media outlets. Amy's attempt to find solitude in the park, where she could be anonymous in the crowd, was challenged by her phone – a virtual space that connected her with her social network even when she tried to escape it.

There we go [*we arrive at a café*]. In the summer time it's nice because it has a little patio. Everything is nice in Montreal in the summer. The girl and guy who own this place, I think they're married, they can't be older than you. You'll see why I like it in a sec.



The art: it's part of it [why I love it. *Shows me around the place*]



I've taken pictures before here. All of the renovations they've done themselves.

The final stop on Amy's tour was a small independent café on a side street to CDN. There was a small patio outside the entrance, and Amy commented – as she had done throughout her tour – how the summer made this café even nicer because of the patio. Inside the café there was a distinctive urban aesthetic interior design with vintage sofas and rustic wood tables and modern political art on the walls combining feelings of a quant old fashion living room with a modern urban – almost hipster – feel to it. We ended our tour with a cup of tea and a long talk about where she was headed in life. Amy was planning to leave Montreal to live in Istanbul for a few months while waiting to hear back about her application to a graduate school in London, UK<sup>39</sup>. She was excited about exploring her opportunities outside of Montreal, she had already lived in Istanbul during an internship program and was excited about the prospects of going back there as well as the potential of living in London.

My conversations and tour with Amy exemplify how personal connections to – and use of – city spaces can become deeply rooted over a relatively short period of time through a process

---

<sup>39</sup> She was eventually accepted into a prestigious graduate art program in London, and went on to complete her MA in the UK.



of habituation. As Amy pointed out things of significance to her, she continued to highlight how these places changed in function and importance to her during different times of the year.

Contrary to Sidra, Amy had only moved to Montreal as a young university student. As such, she did not share the lifelong history in the city that Sidra had. So, while Sidra could take me on a lifelong narrative through her childhood neighbourhood, Amy allowed me to appreciate the process through which someone *creates* ties to a locality. It is through the habitual use of space and allowing oneself to create meaning and add personal importance to that space that one adopts a locality as one's own. Amy took me to spaces that she had grown accustomed to by walking and using them throughout her years in Montreal. Amy was at a crossroad in her life when she took me on her tour; she was about to move to a new city and hopefully develop new connections to its spaces. What Amy's tour exemplifies is the fact that being rooted in a locality is something that is developed not only through lifelong connections but may also become significant over a shorter period of time through one's use of the spaces in everyday life. Rootedness is established through the process of habituation when city spaces go from being new and unfamiliar to being familiar and personally connected to a part of one's life history.

#### Planting Roots in a Suburban Immigrant Neighbourhood

Adam took me on a short walk through the suburban neighbourhood he and his family had first lived in when they immigrated to Canada. This was an immigrant neighbourhood located in the West Island of Montreal, a suburban area. Unlike Sidra or Amy's neighbourhood, the immigrants living in this West Island district were mostly middle-class professionals, temporarily living in rental apartments until they could save enough capital to buy a property.

Adam's tour was not about the interaction between urban restructuring and social mobility as in Sidra's case. Rather, Adam depicted the opportunities that were available to immigrants that had educational and social capital *prior* to immigration. These immigrants had an easier pathway towards establishing a foothold – financially, professionally and socially in their new country. The middle-class position of Adam's family helped obviate a struggle to fit in. Whether in his mother's church, in the neighbourhood he grew up in or even as a Muslim convert – throughout, Adam seemed to have been well-rooted in a Montreal middle-class category. Adam's family migrated to Canada when Adam was 7 years old, and the main area of his tour

traversed the neighbourhood where he lived from his early time in Canada until he completed high school:



This is where I used to live for a few years, most of high school. It's like a townhouse. It's a complex of buildings, and in the back, you have an open space where they have a pool and a field and that's where we used to play a lot as kids. My summers, we would just spend outside playing tag, guns, soccer, sports. That's where I spent my time as a kid.

[I]t's kind of a ghettoish neighbourhood, you had a lot of kids doing drugs, smoking and stuff like that. Now that I think about it, I kind of consider it a minor miracle that I never fell into this kind of thing. I didn't think about it at the time, but now that I look back at it, I realize how bad it really was. I was never interested and no one tried to get me into it. It's not so much disadvantaged, it's kind of a half way community. A lot of immigrants come here before they move on to more suburban areas. There are some lower class white families, and you have kids. In any area where there's a lot of young people and not a lot of parental supervision, kids do whatever they want.

The neighbourhood Adam showed me was located behind a major road in West Island. The West Island is an area of Montreal that is usually associated with middle and upper-class families who often speak more English than French. As we walked closer to the small townhouses clustered together, Adam pointed out his old childhood home. As he explained in the above quote, this neighbourhood was more likely to house struggling residents than other areas of West Island. The neighbourhood attracted working class families looking for affordable housing, but it also attracted immigrants who, while living in the neighbourhood, could look forward to better job and career prospects when they moved on to bigger and more permanent homes in more affluent neighbourhoods. Adam was conscious of the class-based differences between himself and his childhood friends. Reflecting back on his years in this neighbourhood, Adam explained that it was not necessarily the most disadvantaged neighbourhood; nevertheless, some of the neighbourhood youth did struggle with alcohol and drug abuse.



Most of the immigrants I knew who lived here, came in, stayed a few years and then moved out into a house or further away. I think I lived here for maybe 5 years. Where I live now, it's not the same, it's very suburban. I don't know any of my neighbors, no one really talks to each other, we don't play on the street, it's not like around here

where everyone knew each other and played.

Like other immigrant families, Adam's family lived in the neighbourhood for a few years before they were able to afford buying a nice house further away from the busy main street. However, Adam described how the move to a more upscale suburban area resulted in a sense of unfamiliarity – neighbors did not know each other like in the close-knit neighbourhood that was his first Canadian home. Comparing the two neighbourhoods, Adam seemed nostalgic about his childhood home. Despite some of its negative traits, he had enjoyed being surrounded by other young children when living in his first West Island home. Adam described his experiences growing up in this area as carefree; he spent most of his time playing in the park that was reserved for the residents of the townhouses. The only struggle he related was the make-belief feud between the kids in his block and the neighboring block.



And we would have fights... So, there's a fence there and we would have beefs with the people from across the fence, they were known as "the across the fence" people. Just childish stuff like that. And then there was also "the across the street" people, but then we kinda got along with them. Just fun child times. There used to be a hole that made it easier to

go from one neighbourhood to another and we would always close it because we can't have a hole with 'the across the fence' people. So, when people [adults] found it, they would be like "Why the hell are you blocking this hole, what is wrong with you kids?!". There was no difference in the social class or anything between us.



So, this is ‘the other side’ people, I hate them already. So, we used to play a lot of games. [*There’s no playgrounds?*] No, we just played, we invented. If you go that way there’s a park. That’s the thing about West Island, it doesn’t get bad, this isn’t a bad neighbourhood. This is more middle-class than for instance Parc Ex, this is like a halfway house. Families come here, they just need to get their capital, money together to buy a house, as opposed to Parc Ex. Here, it’s people who come from upper-middle-class backgrounds in their home [countries] with a job or opportunity – with something – and they kind of pick it up here and go from here.

Adam showed me the neighbourhood park where they used to play and one area in particular, linking one park with a neighboring one through a broken fence, Adam narrated how he and his friends would create alliances against the children from an adjacent neighbourhood. Although they seemed aware of their different ethnic and social backgrounds, Adam and his friends were connected by the fact that they lived in close proximity to each other and were around the same age. This meant that Adam did not have to go far to find friends, but the dependence on residential proximity also meant that these friends were the ones he lost contact with soon after he left the neighbourhood:

The friends I made here are the ones I drifted away from just because of the things we cared about, the conversations to have versus what they wanted to talk about. With them I tried a little more because of the memories, but again there’s nothing for us to relate to anymore, it was all forced unless I was to abandon what I liked and just go drinking etc. My Muslim friends are more varied because we have fun in different ways, while these friends can only have fun in a specific way and it’s dependent on alcohol.

In many ways, Adam’s tour focused on his nostalgic memories of childhood, where alliances and friendships were developed based on being on the right side of the communal fence. However, as he grew older, his family moved and more importantly Adam’s circumstances changed. Adam became more focused on his school as opposed to his neighbourhood friends, who did not plan on continuing onto higher education. They did not share his love for video gaming either, and in turn he did not share their association of fun with drinking alcohol – and so, Adam and his childhood friends drifted apart. What remained however was the nostalgic sentiment of coming

of age together in a neighbourhood where working-class white Montrealers lived side-by-side with middle-class immigrants trying to realize social mobility. Adam's narrative highlights how migration often leads to downward social mobility. Often migrants, especially if they enjoyed a higher socio-economic status in their countries of origin, struggle to gain social mobility or even sustain a similar status in their destination. Adam and his family's migration experiences were not much different. They left Iran where they had enjoyed an upper-class lifestyle and settled in Canada where initially they were a part of a lower-middle-class community. However, it wasn't long before they gained social mobility, as his parents were able to transfer their professional positions to Canada. This meant that although they had a few years of struggling to raise enough capital to buy a house, they eventually moved into a middle class suburban neighbourhood.

#### Rootedness through Family Connections with a Religious Community

Yaqub's family had lived in Montreal for almost three generations – his mother had attended high school and university in the city, and his father ran a successful business. Yaqub's tour was therefore not about establishing roots but rather demonstrating the city roots established from the time of his grandfather, who helped construct one of the first mosques in Montreal in the 1960s. His tour exemplified how spatial rootedness can be affected by family history, and how this history frames a sense of connection to the city.

Yaqub's tour was different from other tours I had been on in Montreal since we had to drive rather than walk to many of his destinations. He had lived most of his life in the West Island suburb of Montreal, so Yaqub was accustomed to driving or taking the bus to different places, whether school or social activities. The first stop on his tour was the main mall in the West Island:



This is Fairview mall, it was basically my whole high school career, I guess. Me and my friends, whenever we would meet up, we would always come here. We used to go to the mall a lot, walk around, chill out here.

Yaqub would spend a lot of his spare time in the mall socializing with friends during his high school years. The idea of hanging out and socializing in the mall is typical for North American suburban youth. Because of the city infrastructure and the way North American suburbs were initially constructed, the mall has become one of the few places suburban youth can go to socialize.



Wherever we needed to go, whatever bus we needed to take, this is where we would be. We would hangout a lot here, me and my Muslim friends. I would come here, when I was... later in high school I used to skip a lot of classes, so I would come here in the morning, especially on Fridays, because I wouldn't go to school on Fridays, it was my day off.

I would just skip [school] on Fridays. I would go to the food court, eat breakfast and prepare my khutbah [sermon] for Friday [prayer service]. Then I would go give Jumuah [Friday prayer sermon], play basketball, then leave, and play basketball again at another gym, and then go eat pizza and then go home. This was like the hub. It would start here and end here.

This was only for high school. My CEGEP was much further. High school is literally one stop down with the 202 or the 203. So, this was the hub, hang out here, food court inside, and going to Foot Locker a lot, checking out shoes and clothes a lot.

The mall was also the point of departure if Yaqub needed to go anywhere. This is where the main bus terminal was located, providing him with transportation to school, home or any other place. Yaqub was often in charge of giving the Friday sermon at his high school MSA, and would therefore often skip school to go to the mall in the morning, prepare and then go to Friday prayer. Yaqub could only skip school without academic repercussions because of his studiousness in class; being academically ambitious meant he could allow himself to skip school every once in a while. Yaqub's high school years were a social time for him, where he developed friendships both in and outside of school. Unlike most youth, Yaqub developed many friendships through his participation in religious circles and religious community work. This meant that the school environment was not his only means of socializing.



This is my old house, I was brought up here for the majority of my life. All of my teen years pretty much. A lot of experiences here, my brother was born here. We used to have the halaqah [religious study circle] in here, in the basement. We used to have two basketball nets. Our neighbors were Muslims as well, so they had a basketball net and we had one, and we set up... When we were kids, we would play basketball after the halaqah on the streets in the driveway.



If you can see all of those dents, those are from me when I used to play hockey.



Our hedges used to be bigger than that, they were gigantic. I still remember when we first planted them, they were so small, these tiny things. It's been 5-6 years since we moved from here. This isn't my first house, that's further down west [the main road], but I was young so I don't remember that one that much. This was the main one. A lot of memories here, good times. We had a lot of activities here. My friends would come hang out until late at night. We used to have the halaqah here, a lot of Muslim events, gatherings and stuff, like our current house. We used to do food basket in the garage, the Ramadan food basket. [Our house] has always been very active, this house and our new house as well. Alhamdulillah [praise be to God], people were always coming and we're very familiar with the Muslim community at large.

There's a park right behind here where I used to play soccer a lot, and there's a yellow park right there. We used to call it the yellow park [...], everything was yellow there, we used to go there when I was younger. All of these houses didn't exist when I was younger, so there

were little fields, so we would burn ants and stuff. We used to sword fight with brooms and stuff right here, and play basketball, obviously.

This stop on Yaqub's tour was his childhood home and street. He narrated his childhood memories of the place, explaining how the street looked different when he lived there, with fewer houses and more green areas. He figuratively transformed the house and street through his narrative taking me 10 years back to when he used to live there. He highlighted the few things that physically remained, e.g. the dents on the carport from when he used to play hockey. Other things, such as the hedge and the new houses, had been transformed to the point of having no connection to his memories of the street. It was clear that the physical signs of his memories were slowly disappearing through the changes the new house owners had made to his childhood home. Even on this suburban street, the physical transformation was evident. Nevertheless, I sensed the nostalgia Yaqub was transmitting through his narrative, describing how the space looked when he was a child, and how the difference in layout allowed a different use of the space.



This was like one of the first non-desi halal places that we used to go to. So, when we used to go to the older halaqah, by that time I was 15-16 until almost 20, for like 4-5-6 years, this is the place we used to always go to after halaqah, literally for 5-6 years straight. There were no other halal places, sometimes we would go to, like, BK [Burger King] and get a fish burger, it used to be back there, but it closed down. Sometimes we would go to Harvey's and get veggie stuff. This was where I was first introduced to Arab food, we loved it. Now I feel bad we don't come here anymore, very rarely. Now there are other alternatives. For a while we used to go to Buffalo Bills [this branch was known to sell halal meat] down there. Now there's so many different things.

After visiting his childhood home, Yaqub took me to the Falafel joint that had been his favourite when he was younger. He explained that this was the first non-Desi halal restaurant in the area and therefore it became a very popular place after his Friday night halaqah at the mosque. He and his friends would come to this place to eat and then either play sports, go to the movies or "chill at somebody's house", as he explained it. The place is not as popular among his friends anymore,



because with the change of demographics and more Muslim restaurant entrepreneurs in the West Island, there were many other halal and vegetarian options, reducing the Falafel joint to a nostalgic souvenir of Yaqub's youth.



So, this is [X] *masjid* [mosque]. Obviously initially it wasn't like this, it used to be a house. It was expanded around 8 years ago, so it was a house before. Obviously, that was more homey, that was mainly where I was brought up and I can more relate to. It was like *my masjid*. We used to spend all of our time there, especially in Ramadan. We used

to – every month – we used to have dinner. All of the families would get together, come here, all the family friends from the community. So, I think it was the last Sunday of every month. As a kid, I spent all of my time [here]. Ramadan, you would be here a lot, do *iftar* [breaking the fast] here every Sunday. And me and my friends would play hand-hockey in one of the rooms, hang out, and when it was longer days we would even nap sometimes. All the elders would be napping downstairs and we would be playing upstairs. And when you get older, you wanna skip on *Taraweh* [Ramadan night prayers], so we would go hang out. There was a park there, we would walk around. In the winter there used to be a huge snow hill back there where they would put all the snow, then we would have snowball fights and king of the hill and stuff like that. So, a good portion of my Islamic life was spent here. It was the families that would come with kids around the same age. For us, we're all older now, so it's not the same. But it was fun, it was like... this was our community gathering, this was the hub when we were younger. For me, now it's not as much, we're doing so many different things. When you're younger, you just do whatever your parents tell you to do, come here, and, like, everyone is in a similar stage in life. Now everyone is in different stages of life, some people are graduating, kids, different countries, cities. The *iftars*, the old-timers don't come anymore, now it's more the young families, so there's definitely more of a disconnect now.

This last place Yaqub wanted to show me was the mosque he had been attending throughout his life. He described how the physical building itself had changed dramatically since he was a child. With that change, he had also lost some of the sense of rootedness that he associated with the old building. It was in that building where his childhood memories of playing and enjoying the

community events were formed. Yaqub provided a detailed narrative of why this mosque was so important to him; he described the childhood fun he used to have with other young kids attending the mosque with their families. His parents would bring him to the mosque for both religious and social events; even the religious events would often turn social when he used to skip the Taraweeh prayers (night prayers in Ramadan) to go hang out with his friends from the mosque. Yaqub was eager to narrate the fond memories he connected with this particular mosque. It was because of these memories that he would continue to prefer this mosque over others in the area. Even though, as he explained further, he had become more distanced to this particular mosque's religious interpretations as well as to the people who attend it, it was still the mosque he felt most comfortable with because of his long personal history with it. From other interlocutors, I was told how the older South Asian immigrant generation in charge had a culturally conservative way of running the mosque. This meant that different religious interpretations were limited, and members of the younger generation were often restricted in their use of the mosque as a space for religious study circles and other social activities. This disconnect between the mosque and the younger generation as well as Muslim women was not unique to this particular mosque. During my fieldwork, there were various initiatives to bring awareness to the lack of women in leadership positions in Montreal's mosque boards of trustees. In the same way, very few mosques had dedicated youth sections that would incorporate the youth and young adults in their mosque activities (besides the typical Sunday Quran schools). This meant that for Yaqub and most of my other interlocutors, the mosque played a very small role in their religious practices, besides a place to attend Friday prayers. Rather, Muslim Student Associations as well as informal social networks, where friends would meet on a weekly basis to study and discuss religious topics, were more important to my interlocutors.

Yaqub's tour depicted the long multi-generational connection he and his family had established in Montreal since his grandfather immigrated in the 1960s. Because of his long family history in the city, spanning three generations, Yaqub grew up in a stable middle-class environment. His family's comfortable socioeconomic position during his childhood meant that his experience of social mobility was different from Adam's. It was a given that Yaqub would attend university, while Adam was surrounded by peers who had not prioritized higher education in the same way he and his family did. Adam was supported by his family in his efforts to

achieve social mobility, however this was not shared by his childhood friends, who had other life expectations. In Yaqub's case, he and the middle class friends he grew up with, were expected to attend university as a step towards accepted middle class adulthood. Comparing Yaqub and Adam's tours demonstrate their very different pathways towards social mobility; the differences in their families' and their own migration experiences as well as their social networks in the city created different starting points for their social mobility.

## Conclusion

This chapter explored what happened when I stopped asking my Montreal interlocutors about their Muslimness and started asking them about their city. I relinquished my research-power and handed it over to them; they were empowered to decide what was important. They showed me childhood homes, stores, parks, neighbourhoods, mosques, restaurants – any space that was important to them was interesting to me. Through these tours, Montreal was represented in a multitude of spaces that had personal significance to my interlocutors. In these representations, Montreal was not *one* city designed by urban planners, investors and construction contractors. Rather, the city was comprised of a wide range of distinct and differently experienced city-spaces. My interlocutors personalized these spaces by weaving them into their life stories. As their narratives were rooted in the city, my interlocutors also became witnesses to the city's history.

This history had a direct impact on the physical preservation of their memories. The top-down restructuring of city spaces was not concerned with Sidra's fond memories of the green door of her first childhood home in southwestern Montreal – a place where she and her sister marked their belonging by practicing their Bengali writing on the doorway. Yet, Sidra's memories remained and became a testimony for what used to be and what has taken its place since. The notion that our nostalgia is connected to a space set in a particular time is one of the most valuable insights of the tours I conducted with my Montreal interlocutors. We remember and narrate our stories as they were set and experienced in the past, regardless of how the physical space has changed since. However, as my interlocutors took me to visit these sites of their core memories, they looked for what remained and what had changed. Finding a lasting sign from one's childhood, e.g. the dents in Yaqub's old carport, validated one's narrative.

Likewise, noticing the changes, and reminiscing about how it used to be, highlights the nostalgia connected to a particular time and space that can only be reminisced about but never recreated.

## 7. Spatial Narrative as a Representation of Social Position

In chapter 6, I explored how my Montreal interlocutors construct and narrate their rootedness in Montreal by spatializing their life histories. In this chapter, which focuses on my Copenhagen interlocutors, I further develop the idea of spatial narratives by exploring how certain spaces are viewed as representative of one's self. My Danish interlocutors would often narrate reasons why it was important to include one street section while a different part of the same street was the exact opposite of what they wished to affiliate themselves with. By claiming some spaces and rejecting others, my Danish interlocutors demonstrated the selectiveness of a spatial narrative. The spaces my interlocutors *chose* to take me to became ways of constructing a particular self as demonstrated through city spaces.

The tours I explore in this chapter all included an exploration of Nørrebro, an inner-city area of Copenhagen that has a history of being a multicultural working class neighbourhood. It has previously struggled with poverty and high crime rates but parts of Nørrebro have experienced a level of gentrification in recent years, attracting a trend-setting and artistically oriented population. Nørrebro<sup>40</sup> is however different from Sidra's description of a southwestern district in Montreal. Rather, Nørrebro can be compared to Williamsburg in Brooklyn, New York or Brick Lane in East London – although on a much smaller scale. Similar to these global trendsetting neighbourhoods, Nørrebro has a working class history but is quickly becoming one of the most popular areas to live for young people studying or working in Copenhagen. Nevertheless, not all of Nørrebro has been gentrified and my interlocutors were quick to inform me about which parts of it they identified with positively and which were the less attractive areas. Besides Nørrebro, many interlocutors chose to show me different parts of downtown Copenhagen, including their favourite cafes and walking streets. While chapter 6 explored the biographies of my interlocutors in terms of their personal connection with specific localities in Montreal, this chapter looks closer at how spaces can be representations of social position rather than personal history. The three interlocutors whose tours I explore in this chapter do not know

---

<sup>40</sup> I have chosen to disclose the real name of the district since several interlocutors chose Nørrebro as the site of their tour and I am therefore not risking exposing their identity as opposed to the district Sidra chose for her tour, a place she had lived her entire life and unique to her spatial narrative, and could therefore risk exposing her identity.

each other; yet, they all chose to focus their tours in particular areas of Copenhagen. I was surprised to discover that they wanted to take me to some of the same places and share with me the same notions of why some places are better than others. There seemed to be some sort of "common local knowledge" that Nørrebro beyond a certain street is a less 'charming' place to associate with, or that some cafes, restaurants and clothing stores are trendier than others. From among several tours I conducted in Copenhagen, I selected these three cases because they demonstrated different experiences of social and spatial mobility, and yet similar notions of space as representative of their current and prospective social position.

### Representing Social Mobility, Challenging Hegemonic Structures

When I gave my Danish interlocutors the task of showing me their city, they angled their tours in ways they wanted to represent themselves. The tours gave them an opportunity to create a counter-narrative to political and media discourses (see chapter 5), and emphasize their progression towards social mobility. They thus put questions of social class and position at the forefront of their city tours with little direction from me. My interlocutors' emphasis on social position in their city tours can be theoretically linked to the legacy of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). The Birmingham School (the popular name for CCCS) explored the hegemonic structures of class and how white working-class men developed a resistance to these structures through cultural production. In the Danish case, my interlocutors sought to challenge the hegemonic structures of class, ethnicity and religion, and the conflation of these three concepts into the dichotomy of 'Dane vs Other'. Their cases are in some ways reminiscent of the resistance towards hegemonic social structures that Paul Willis discusses in *Learning to Labor* (1981 [1977]). Willis explored how young, white, working-class men reproduced their class position by resisting a school culture that sought to make them conform to the accepted social ideals of society. Their resistance to these hegemonic forces was marked by class disruptions, smoking, drinking and violence, while simultaneously constructing positive images of manual labour as essentially masculine ideals. In the case of my Danish Muslim youth, they resisted the stereotypes associated with being young, Muslim and of immigrant descent, i.e. lower socioeconomic status and education. By emphasizing their higher educational background, hanging out in trendy cafés, and associating with the affluent parts of Copenhagen, my interlocutors – both women and men – produced a self-image of affluence to counter the

hegemonic structures of 'us vs them'. Willis concludes that the working-class youth's resistance was a form of cultural production, which subsequently reproduced these young men's social position in society (Willis 1981: 120). In the case of my interlocutors, the tours enabled them to produce a counter-narrative to the political stereotypes that dominate Danish discourses. Through this counter-narrative they emphasized their level of social mobility as a challenge to the existing stereotype of Muslim immigrants and descendants as a lower social class.

### Spatial Narratives as Creative Navigation

Being young Copenhageners, my interlocutors knew how to navigate their city spaces. They lived in the surrounding suburbs of Copenhagen, but when it came to depict their city spaces, they all made conscious choices in what they wanted to show me to demonstrate their city life. They would show me the trendy café in the gentrified part of Nørrebro rather than the cheap shawarma shop in the less regenerated part of the district. It appeared to be a way of challenging the image of Muslims' socioeconomic inferiority through their navigation through these city spaces. My Danish interlocutors were tactical in their choice of movements through the city, demonstrating their deep knowledge of the social connotations linked to particular spaces and areas. Chapter 6 demonstrated how spatial narratives can be biographical, linking the past to the present, constructing a life-story through my interlocutors' movements. The cases I present in this chapter show how spatial accounts can be avenues to understand the everyday agency that social actors have regarding the city structures they move through and how they represent themselves and their social mobility through their navigational skills.

Michel de Certeau (1984) emphasizes the importance of everyday life and underlines the value of understanding ordinary people's practices beyond domination and resistance. Indeed, spatial pathways are constructed by means of daily negotiations and manoeuvring within urban space, and not in the extra-ordinary moments of social action. These daily negotiations and use of space is what Henri Lefebvre (1991) conceptualizes as the production of space, or spatialization. In other words, social space is (re)produced through interactions, relationships, movements and experiences. In chapter 5, I highlighted how my Danish interlocutors experienced and reacted to political and media discourses on ethnic and religious minorities (in particular Muslims). It is important to understand Danish Muslims' experiences of the dominant 'us vs them' opposition that has become increasingly popular in Danish public discourses.

However, this is only one side of the story focused on the hegemony of the social structures and my interlocutors' capacity for action in such a context. Shifting the analytical gaze to how my interlocutors move through the physical structures and paths of Copenhagen depict their tactical choices in using city spaces to create a different narrative and thus produce a different representational space (cf. Lefebvre 1991:42). The different spaces in Copenhagen that my interlocutors took me to represent the hierarchal differentiation they attributed to the city – some areas were deemed fashionable, trendy and 'authentic', while others had a lingering connotation of social deprivation. These spatial representations are what Lefebvre refers to in his theorization of the production of social space; my interlocutors attributed particular social meanings to the spaces around them. My interlocutors made distinct choices in their tours; through these choices they constructed creative attempts to manipulate the hidden potentials within societal structures to claim a pathway towards self-expression and social mobility.

The main component in my interlocutors' navigational tactics is creative improvisation. According to John Liep, cultural creativity can be understood as the production of "something new through the recombination and transformation of existing cultural practices or forms" (2001: 2). In the context of the spatial narratives represented in this chapter, the question revolves around how and why young Muslims chose certain city spaces rather than others to represent themselves. Ingold and Hallam argue improvisation is creativity through process; in other words, "the objective is thus to look at the movements that create creativity" in improvisation (Ingold and Hallam 2007: 2-3). The concept of improvisation thus focuses on how my interlocutors negotiate the social connotations of particular spaces vis-à-vis their own social position. Amit and Knowles (2017) have recently further developed the theorization of improvisation in relation to mobility by suggesting using the concept of tacking to connect the concepts of navigation and improvisation with different processes of mobility. Re-conceptualizing the nautical term of tacking, Amit and Knowles highlight how the concept focuses on "a process of ongoing adjustment" (2017: 3). The ability to change course and adjust to circumstances requires knowledge, experience and improvisation (ibid.). In the context of Copenhagen, my interlocutors' deep knowledge of the different districts, their life experiences in these areas and the social connotations they knew these areas represented, enabled them to effortlessly navigate these spaces to construct the narrative they wanted to represent, a narrative that emphasized their



social mobility, their resources and their embeddedness in the city. Amit and Knowles argue that “[n]avigation shapes the character of space and how we might think about it, through the movements and objects of routes: what passes through a street, a neighbourhood, a city, co-constitutes it” (2017: 11). My Danish interlocutors thus transformed the Copenhagen landscape through their navigations, and through these movements they enable Copenhagen to strategically formulate its identity as a culturally diverse global city.

The tours described in this chapter demonstrate the importance of spatial narratives. Walking with my interlocutors and emphasising the social significance they attribute to particular spaces, reveal how spatial narratives can become important avenues for understanding the interplay between social actors and structures. The ways in which my interlocutors improvised their movements and narratives, demonstrate how improvisation is both retrospective and prospective (Amit & Knowles 2017: 6). My interlocutors’ ability to improvise and construct a spatial representation of self, required a social knowledge of the city spaces that predated their tour. Their choice of movements were not unreflective but rather demonstrated a deep social knowledge and experience with the city which was represented in their spatial narratives. It is important to distinguish between the tours my interlocutors took me on, which were a representation of how they wanted to appear, and then actually inhabiting the city. In other words, their tours were not an image of their everyday movements; rather, they projected an image of my interlocutors’ social mobility and position vis-à-vis the stereotypical representation of Muslims and descendants of immigrants in Danish political and media discourses. At the same time, their tours also depicted an image of Copenhagen as a diverse city that embraced the cultural differences that my interlocutors represented.

#### Challenging Social Perception – Constructing an Affluent Self Image

Khadija<sup>41</sup> was a 21-year-old woman of Egyptian descent. She was one of the most internationally connected of my Danish interlocutors. As a child, she had attended American international schools, and while she came to Denmark when she was only 2, a few years later at 7 years old, her family moved to Cairo, Egypt, where she lived for 8 years. Growing up, her father was a successful entrepreneur, and so, although they lived in a rental apartment in a working-class

---

<sup>41</sup> Khadija’s tour was conducted in English, and thus all quotes are *ad verbatim* transcripts

neighbourhood in Denmark, they had a comfortable lifestyle both in Denmark and Egypt that enabled her parents to pay for her international schooling. Her world was colored by her experiences as an "international", as she called it. Given this 'international' background, Khadija was more comfortable in English, the language in which most of her schooling was provided, than either Danish or Arabic. Khadija's transnational life history meant that most of her friends had also attended international schools and as such came from affluent families. Both in her tour and our 3-hour long interview, Khadija's self-representation focused on social position and her self-identification in relation to other Muslims and immigrants in Copenhagen. Khadija perceived herself as different from the stereotypical Muslim in Copenhagen. In contrast, she hung out with an affluent crowd, went to trendy upscale cafes and restaurants and would not spend much time in Nørrebro, which in her view still represented a social class different from hers. Nevertheless, we started our tour in *Kaffehuset* (the Coffee House) at the edge of the trendy part of Nørrebro. The café had beautiful murals on one of the walls, antique quaint furniture and attracted young people similar to Khadija: i.e. socially mobile and ethnically diverse students who could afford to pay 35DKK (approx. 6CAD) for a Chai Latte:



We are on Nørrebrogade [no.] 25, which is 20 minutes away from my house on bike. I sometimes come here to meet my friends for coffee, because it's not far from my house. Either we study, I've come here a couple of times for work and meetings and stuff like that. It's chilled and low-key. I bike here, I like biking around Copenhagen. It's fairly new, I think it's a group of guys who own it. So usually I just order a chai latte – oh God, I need to try new things – and sugar-free of course and *minimælk* [skimmed milk] and whatever. And then I just sit and chill. But it's been a while because usually I spend most of my time at university and it's in Roskilde [one-hour commute from Copenhagen], so I'm definitely not taking you there because it's really far.

I can't differentiate between the two [chilling and studying], they're super interlinked which is super unhealthy but I haven't figured out the balance just yet. So, I come here to hang out [and] I always come here to study and have meetings. A place where I'm totally just hanging out, I usually just walk around and go to *Strøget* [the Walking Street] and then *Nyhavn* [New

Habour], and then I like to chill around the *Kongelige Teater* [the Royal Theatre] because I love ballet and stuff like that. [...]

*Is this area [Nørrebro] not important to you?*

No, I don't relate too much to *Nørrebrogade*, I just come here because it's close. It's usually *Nyhavn* and *Kongens Nytorv*. There's a salad place I really like to eat at and then the *Kongelige Teater* and just walk around there. And then usually, I'm at friends' houses or at home.

Our meeting point for Khadija's tour was outside *Kaffehuset*, a coffee place on Nørrebro Street a short bike ride from her home. She explained that this was a convenient café to come to because of its close proximity. However, it is worth noting that on her route to this café she passed by several other coffee shops. She did not explain her choice, but it is note-worthy that three other interlocutors also took me to this same café. The café is located at the edge of Nørrebro, bordering the Queen Louise bridge that leads to downtown Copenhagen. This is the part of Nørrebro that has a trendy vibe, and as another interlocutor explained, the trendy vibe ends at 'the yellow wall'. 'The yellow wall' is a well-known landmark that borders a cemetery – *Assistensens Kirkegård* – where many of Denmark's cultural icons are buried, e.g. Søren Kierkegaard and H.C. Andersen. According to this interlocutor, anything beyond 'the yellow wall' is less trendy and represents a more stereotypical version of working-class socially deprived Nørrebro.

Nørrebro was not an important place for Khadija because – as she explained – she only went there out of convenience as she lived just northwest of Nørrebro. She associated more with places in downtown Copenhagen, which was her next stop on the tour:



Downtown Copenhagen - I think I am mostly [here]. If I were to hang out with people for lunch, or something, that would be here [downtown]. Nørrebro, it's not something I don't like, it's just not my clique. I don't know if I do it on purpose, if I don't want to be associated with that place or if it's genuinely because I don't feel like I'm associated [with Nørrebro]. I feel more connected here [in downtown Copenhagen].



Can you see it: “Fred co.”, you go downstairs. It’s a salad bar, it’s the most amazing salad bar ever. This is it, it’s always crazy busy. I come here and have salad or lunch. I would definitely come here with friends. And then Nyhavn is that way.

Khadija wanted to show me one of her favourite salad bars. It was located on a side street to *Strøget* not far from *Kongens Nytorv*. These smaller streets in downtown Copenhagen are well known for their hip cafes and bars. Khadija’s salad bar lived up to this standard; the people coming out of the salad bar looked young, affluent and ethnically Danish. Because of Khadija’s international school background, she did not have many Danish friends. Nevertheless, most of her friends were affluent, belonging to a different social position than what most of Nørrebro represented to Khadija. Taking this into consideration, Khadija’s hesitation to associate herself with Nørrebro makes sense. Nørrebro is anything but affluent, it is more closely linked with youth subcultural trends representing both leftist and minority cultural trends, and as such attracting a bohemian artistic culture along with the working-class immigrant and marginalized citizens of Copenhagen. Khadija’s self-perception becomes more apparent as we walk towards *Nyhavn*, and she explains her love for high-culture:



The Royal Theatre had a summer show, I went to [it] and they showed the previews of the shows, so I already know what shows I want to go see. I wish I could go more often, but it’s so expensive and I’m a student. There was a stage and we were sitting on the grass. And, I like jazz and Frank Sinatra, so they have a show called “Fly Away” that I really wanted to go see, but it was too late. My high school friend Amy, we decided to become each other’s culture buddies, she also just finished her BA in social sciences. I’m in my first year.



[The musician plays ‘What a Wonderful World’, and Khadija hums along] I like this atmosphere... It’s sitting outside, it’s chilling, it’s nice.



One of my friends, her father was the manager of the commercial office in the Egyptian embassy a couple of years ago, so they used to live down this street there, I think that apartment was my dream apartment if I were to make that much money. So, we used to chill at her house and we would come here. It’s cool, she’d open the window in the morning and there would be a new boat.



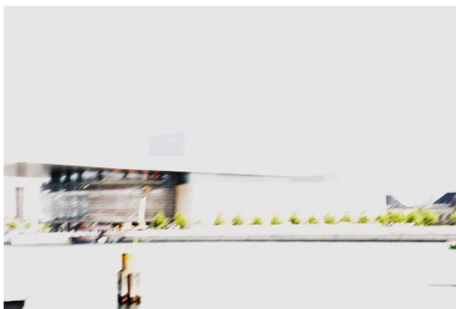
I used to come here when I was younger. There’s an ice cream shop I’ll show you... My dad used to take us to that ice cream shop, it’s really good ice cream. It’s both part of my past and my current life. Because my dad would always take us to this ice cream shop.

As she explains above, Khadija is fascinated with musical expression, including ballet, opera and jazz – all affluent art forms. Humming along to ‘What a Wonderful World’, Khadija tactfully opposes the stereotypical representation of inner-city Muslim youth as less exposed to global high culture. It is often assumed that youth who grow up in the working-class suburbs of Copenhagen are not exposed to high culture – Muslim and non-Muslim alike. Khadija chose to show me sites that represented a rebuttal of this stereotype, demonstrating instead her fascination with a world very different from her working-class neighbourhood in the northwest of

Copenhagen. The ballet ad-posters on *Kongens Nytorv* provided her a narrative-opportunity to discretely position herself within an affluent social class; the only challenge was her lack of funds to afford this lifestyle. Pointing out her friend's house in the middle of *Nyhavn*, one of the most exclusive addresses in Copenhagen, highlighted Khadija's positioning even further. The next few stops on her tour further demonstrated her affluent self-image:



This is the Royal theatre. I've never been inside, but I'm hoping this semester I'll go see "Come fly away".



That's the Opera house, I would love to go to the Opera as well. It's only because I'm a student and money is tight but otherwise I would do all of that. It's lovely.



This is D'Angleterre. It's a really fancy hotel. I've never been, but me and my friend have a deal; if I'm 25 and I'm not married, we'll have a dinner there. Here or *Den Sorte Diamant* [The Black Diamond, the Royal Library], there's a really nice restaurant there.

Khadija showed me three sites she identified with her 'imagined' self: the Royal Theatre, the Opera House and Hotel D'Angleterre. Khadija was not intimately familiar with any of these sites. In fact, she had never been inside any of them; yet, they demonstrated a lifestyle Khadija aspired to. She wished she had the financial capacity to make these sites a part of her life – to live a life of affluence where money was not a factor. This was not a farfetched dream for Khadija; she was a first-year university student with good employment prospects when she

graduated. Thus, planning a birthday dinner at D'Angleterre when she turned 25 was not unrealistic – this would be a time in her life when she would have graduated university, working fulltime and having a decent income and no dependants.

Khadija was not unaccustomed to a life of privilege. Khadija narrated, however, how her father's business partner "robbed the living day out of him", which meant that Khadija and her family had to succumb to a lower-middle class lifestyle and were financially less comfortable when they returned to Denmark. Khadija could not identify herself with this social position, which became apparent in her choices of sites. Her fascination with ballet and opera, and her love for exclusive salad bars and restaurants, all depict a self-image of belonging to an affluent class. Khadija struggled to identify with the existing stereotype of the hijab-wearing woman from Nørrebro. Her hijab highlighted her Muslimness however; and this meant that she had to construct a narrative (both in her tour and interview) that challenged what she perceived as the popular perception of this female Muslimness.

Khadija's tour demonstrated how city-spaces become representative of an imagined self. During our interview, Khadija spent a long time narrating a life story that highlighted her association with an affluent social class related to her international school background. Her school connected her with friends of a different social position from her neighbourhood in northwest Copenhagen – a neighbourhood known as a working-class area. Her city tour demonstrated this association even further. She showed me sites that represented the lifestyle she aspired to, as well as the small luxuries (e.g. the expensive salad or hot beverage) that she could afford herself occasionally that allowed her to feel part of this social class. The reality was that Khadija was not far from living the affluent lifestyle that she could not currently afford. Being part of the small elite of young Muslims in Copenhagen enrolled in higher education, Khadija could easily make an comfortable middle class wage in a few years and would belong to a higher social position of Muslims. This affluent association was not unique to Khadija, but represented most of my Danish interlocutors' tours to different degrees.

## Creating a Copenhagener Self Image through City Spaces

Dania<sup>42</sup> was a 22-year-old young woman of Palestinian background, born and raised in a rural town on Funen island (*Fyn*). She moved to Copenhagen when she started university and had since adopted the city as her home. She did not see herself ever moving back to her rural childhood town. In this regard, Dania followed the typical stream of rural-urban migrants who are moving from rural areas in Jutland and Funen to the capital for higher education and professional opportunities (Sørensen 2015<sup>43</sup>). Dania's appreciation for Copenhagen's cultural diversity and the lifestyle it allowed her became clear in her tour as she took me to her favorite shops and streets in Nørrebro. While Khadija's tour aimed at constructing an affluent self-image through city spaces, Dania took me on a tour to depict an *urban* self-image, as opposed to her rural background. She chose to show me sites that depicted why her self-representative tour centered on Nørrebro especially.

We met near Blågårdsplads, a side street to Nørrebrogade. This street had been a hub for criminal and gang activity just a few years ago<sup>44</sup>. It was still dealing with the remnants of this recent history as some of the infamous gang leaders could sometimes be spotted hanging out outside some of the cafés on the street. Nevertheless, Blågårdsplads has gone through massive gentrification with trendy restaurants, cafés and vintage clothing stores opening, attracting young Danes seeking a more 'authentic urban' experience. The charm of Blågårdsplads lies in its cultural diversity and its urban history – giving the street character, making it interesting for people seeking an escape from the commercialism that dominates the high streets of Copenhagen. Dania belonged to this segment; as a young university student from Funen, she sought out the excitement and diversity of Nørrebro. She had turned Nørrebro and Blågårdsplads into her home turf rather than her more affluent Frederiksberg address. The borough of Frederiksberg neighbors Nørrebro, but it is socially better off; it is a rich borough with a less multicultural vibe yet still young and trendy. Dania explained that she did not really feel connected to Frederiksberg in the same way that she did with Nørrebro. Nørrebro had become

---

<sup>42</sup> Dania's tour was conducted in Danish, and her quotes were transcribed *ad verbatim* and then translated into English by myself.

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.dr.dk/ligetil/indland/flere-flytter-fra-landet-til-byerne>, 2017-09-06

<sup>44</sup> <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/nyheder.tv2.dk/nyheder.tv2.dk/nyheder.tv2.dk/nyheder.tv2.dk/nyheder.tv2.dk/nyheder.tv2.dk/nyheder/article.php/id-2265553%3Akriminelle-bander-bl%C3%83%C6%92%C3%82%C2%A5g%C3%83%C6%92%C3%82%C2%A5rdsgadebanden.html>, 2017-09-06



the hub of her social and volunteer life. The first stop on her tour was at the humanitarian NGO, where she volunteered:



[We enter the NGO's office, and Dania introduces me to the volunteers] It's a cozy workplace. I volunteer here. This is the main office where we have our volunteer meetings. [...] I've organized volunteer events, I've helped a lot with humanitarian [dinner events], where we get dinner sponsored and collect donations. [...]

Many of us come here, not because we are eager to do Islamic [volunteer] work. I think I'm very passionate about humanitarianism and helping others, and that's my entire [social] network. Because it is my closest friends who work here [...]. So, you meet up and hang out and work together rather than meeting as a bunch of different people who don't know each other. When you know each other so well, it feels like a small community [...].

Dania took me inside the offices of the NGO, showed me around and introduced me to the volunteers and the general secretary, who were working in the office. The NGO had a bookstore selling Islamic books, toys and prayer mats and a second-hand clothing store across the street. Dania told me how she started volunteering in the second-hand store every Saturday, and later continued to volunteer at the main office. The choice of volunteering at this particular NGO may have been the fact that her close friends were already volunteering there, so it combined socializing with work that was meaningful for her. The NGO was also a small-scale organization where everyone knew each other intimately, contrary to other mainstream NGOs in the area. The other place Dania volunteered at was a community center for refugees and asylum seekers, which provided them with a place of support and socialization. Being a university student and speaking Arabic fluently, Dania was a useful resource for the asylum seekers, helping them read their official documents and prepare for their court hearings. Like the NGO, the refugee community center was also small-scale and local to Nørrebro, however less Muslim-focused.

Dania was not eager to be active in the Muslim community; she highlighted this both in her narrative and the sites she chose to show me. While a couple of her friends were also involved in the Danish mosque not far from the NGO's office, Dania explained that she rarely went to the

mosque. However, when she did, it would be to attend an Islamic study circle or Friday prayer. She would usually go to the Danish mosque, because many of her friends went there; only occasionally would she go to other mosques:

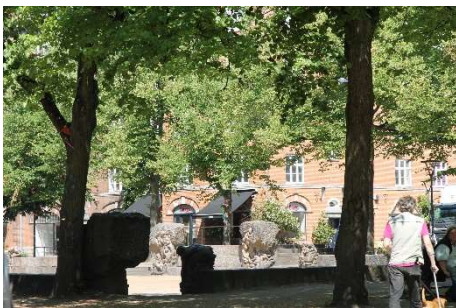


Now we'll walk over to the DIC [Danish Islamic Center] [*the center is closed*]

I want to clarify that I don't often go to DIC. That's very important to point out. I spend most of my time going past [the NGO] and talk to people from [there]. Most of my friends volunteer there, very few of my friends volunteer at DIC. If we're going to *dars* [Islamic study circle] or Friday prayer, then it's up there [DIC]. But I would also go to *Wakf* [Islamic Faith Community] or the new mosque [Central Mosque] and listen to a *dars*, or Taiba [a mosque in inner-Nørrebro], which is the most hardcore [i.e. conservative] version. And that's because I like to get a mix. If there are prejudice against a particular [mosque], then I'll go there and listen. I don't isolate myself whatsoever. The good thing about DIC is the ethnic diversity, and you can dress the way you want and no one will judge you.

Dania explained how she was eager to interrogate any prejudice against different mosques or Muslim groups by actually attending their prayer services and/or study circles. Nevertheless, mosques and the different Muslim groupings in Copenhagen did not play a large role in Dania's life. Similar to Khadija, Dania did not feel a need to underline her Muslimness to me; her hijab was a clear enough symbol of that. What mattered to Dania was to highlight what was important to her: volunteering, ethnically diverse grocery stores and urban life – Nørrebro represented this to her.

The next stop on her tour was a stroll through *Blågårdsplads* [Blågård Square]:



This is Blågård Square. I spend most of my time on this street, this walk we're going on now. I shop a lot, but I don't think it's relevant for your project to take you shopping, because that is not where I unfold my Muslim identity. [I do that] more in this context. [It's not] just my Muslim, but also my other ethnic background [*anden*

*etnisk baggrund*] that is more expressed here than it is where I live in Frederiksberg. I don't spend any time there [in Frederiksberg]. I have a nice park right next to me, I've been there twice. It's just not a place [for me]. This [Nørrebro] is where I go with my friends; we'll go by a cafe, where I'm taking you to now, walk over to the NGO, greet people, sit and grab a coffee with [the general secretary], chat a bit, go to DIC. So, this walk, I come here once or twice a week, do grocery shopping, Arabic vegetables. I bike through here. Halal meat, I buy here perhaps once a month, [I] buy vegetables, squash, if I want a good *sameh* [Palestinian dish], which is stuffed squash with meat and rice – I can't get that at Fakta [Danish discount grocery store]. *Lubia* [wide green beans], *bamiya* [okra], lentils. So, it's also here food-wise that I get to express myself. Food, like Ahaaa [Middle Eastern restaurant], that's popular Palestinian food, it's one of the most student friendly places. They have it here [on Blågård Street] and on Nørrebro Street, I mostly come here because it's more local, where the other [Ahaaa] is more fancy.

While we were walking through Blågårdsplads, Dania explained how this street was not just a representation of her Muslim identity but a place where she could also express her Palestinian identity. The restaurants on the street provided a mix of Arabic foods and healthy salads, all offering halal meat options. Dania pointed out one of her favorite Arabic restaurants, Ahaaa – well-known for its falafel sandwiches. Although the restaurant had become a franchise with another location further down Nørrebro Street, Dania explained that she preferred the one on Blågårdplads as it was more “local” and less “fancy”. With this, she indicated her implicit quest for an authentic local Nørrebro experience, something that was less “fancy” and more urban.

The next few stops on her tour developed this urban multi-ethnic quest further – she showed me a restaurant she went to often. Owned by Turkmens, the restaurant served an Arabic/Turkish fusion menu with complimentary tea for customers, recreating a sense of being “back in the Middle East”, as Dania explained.



I eat here often. This is a real local place, where we come to eat, and then it's called *Beyti*, 'my home' in Arabic. [...] You feel like you're back in the Middle East.



[We go inside the restaurant, and Dania points out the complimentary tea offered to customers] The tea really reminds me of the home country, and you can easily sit here after a meal and drink five of those.

Next stop on Dania's tour was her favourite Middle Eastern grocery store located at the end of Blågårdsplads:



I want to show you the grocery store here, because I come here often or the one down at Nørrebro station, there's also a grocery store there that has a wider selection and cheaper prices. I want to say that this [Blågård Street] is a very hip place for non-Muslim Danes. [...] The good thing about a place like this are these types of vegetables that I use:

*mujadara* and *couscous* and *knafa* [different Middle Eastern dishes]. It's funny, this smells like home [the smell of spices coming from the grocery store] but this [points at the flowers and cafes across the street] also smells like home.

It seemed random as we looked through the crammed aisles of dried legumes and assortments of rice and other imported goods, but every now and then, Dania would draw my attention to a

particular item demonstrating her own fascination with finding these items so close to home, yet so far away from their origin.

In many ways, Dania's city did not represent her history of growing up in rural Denmark. It was not a biographical journey through the streets she had made her own either. Her tour was a construction of a certain version of herself; besides being Muslim, Palestinian and from rural Funen, Dania was also a Copenhagener living in Frederiksberg and biking her way through the urban streets of Nørrebro – or rather, the charming side of Nørrebro that had just the right balance of urban living, trendy cafes and Middle Eastern stores.

Dania took me to Elmegade, a side street to Nørrebro, almost opposite to Blågårdsplads. Several other interlocutors also took me to Elmegade – this is a small street full of independent Danish fashion designers and unique stores and cafes. To me, it represented the bohemian-turned-hipster version of Nørrebro that attracted young Danes with money and a wish to escape the large scale franchises of the Copenhagen high street. The clothes on display on this street still followed the Danish fashion convention of monochrome color-palette and simple design. As we passed by one of these clothing displays, Dania commented on her own style of dress:



I wear Western clothes a lot because I think clothes really symbolize who you are. I've chosen not to wear *abaya* (Middle Eastern-style long dress) consciously, and that's because it just doesn't fit with the sort of person I am. So, I also shop in Scandinavian shops. I find it's really important that there's a balance. The reason I've come to this

street [Elmegade], is because there's a lot of local designers, so the clothes you buy here, some of it is hand sewn and there's only [the items] that are in the shop. Something like that [the dress in the middle on the picture] with a pair of black jeans and sandals. That's what I like about this street – it's small-scale entrepreneurs that have opened their own [store].

Dania explained a conscious effort to represent herself through her clothing choices. She chose not to wear an *abaya* and preferred instead to buy clothes in Scandinavian stores. Even when it came to her choice of hijab-style, she would only choose to wear certain colors and simple designs. She took me to one of her favorite hijab shops, where she explained how she would

choose earth-colored and simple toned shawls, staying true to the Scandinavian aesthetic palette of simplicity and inconspicuous colors.

For the next stop on her tour, Dania took me to *Kaffehuset* that is located on Nørrebrogade – almost between Elmegade and Blågårdsgade. It is the same café in which I met Khadija, and which several other interlocutors took me to as well.



This is *Kaffehuset*. It was actually a *Baresso* [a franchise coffee place similar to Starbucks] before they sold it. So, it's the same type of interior design. I think that mural is so beautiful. We usually sit here on this, we call it the grandmother-couch, it's like a little grandmother-living room. This is where we usually sit when we have meetings with the [NGO second-hand store], and then we're all just gathered around this little table. And we also had our meeting for the Eid'enhagen here [a Copenhagen Eid festival Dania helped organize]. [...] Nørreport [station] is that way and this place is a little in the middle of everything, so it's used really well. It was a group of young guys who bought it and then sold it to one of them.



Dania enjoyed the atmosphere in the café with its beautiful mural and unique vintage furniture. She would usually meet with the NGO-volunteer team at this café, where the owners sponsored their coffee and snacks. The café had a local feel to it with pamphlets and posters about events going on in Nørrebro. With its welcoming atmosphere, it was easy to imagine how the café attracted my interlocutors for work, study and socializing. When visiting this popular café, my interlocutors would mention the owners. Dania explained that the owners were a group of friends who were happy to sponsor the NGO's meetings; another interlocutor mentioned that they were Muslim. In either case, the owners seemed to represent something more than just café owners. They were local Muslim Copenhageners, whose café represented something that my interlocutors identified with: it was trendy, upscale and halal. Although my interlocutors, Dania included, did not exclusively go to Muslim-owned restaurants and cafes, the fact that *Kaffehuset's* owners' religious background kept becoming part of the narrative is noteworthy. *Kaffehuset* did

not look ‘multicultural’; in fact, it looked like any other non-franchise coffee shop in Copenhagen. It is perhaps this inconspicuousness that appealed to my Danish interlocutors; *Kaffehuset* was a representation of what it meant to be a young successful Muslim Copenhagener.

Dania’s last stop on her tour was behind ‘the yellow wall’ to *Assistentens Kirkegård* [The Assistant’s Cemetery]. We walked into the cemetery and Dania took me on a picturesque walk through the garden:



This is behind the yellow wall – *Assistentens Kirkegård*. People use it as a park. It may be that there are dead people lying around everywhere, but people use it as a park. It’s very normal culture here on Nørrebro. I would buy an ice cream and walk through the cemetery. It’s a long path and then there’s trees all the way and you don’t see the tombs.



Do you remember Natasha [Danish reggae singer and rapper] who sang “*Giv mig Danmark tilbage*” [“Give me back Denmark”]. H.C. Andersen, Dan Turell [Danish authors], they’re buried here, so it’s a popular place.

[...] Isn’t it nice, then you eat an ice cream [Dania explains as we walk through the path surrounded by trees]. You wouldn’t think you’re in the middle of Nørrebro, it’s so nice and peaceful.



[...] It’s because [the city is] so busy that the cemeteries are used so much, because there are so many people and so busy out there [points beyond the wall]. You come in here and there it’s just shhh. It’s like those big walls isolate.

You get to escape a little. My mother is like “*Astraghfirullah*” [may God forgive], but to me it’s really just a park [...]. It’s not like you think about the fact that it’s a cemetery.

The walk through the cemetery was serene and calm, sheltered from the busy main road of Nørrebro. As we walked, Dania commented on how people – herself included – used the cemetery as a park that offered an escape from the stress of urban life. We sat down on a bench near Natasha Saad’s (reggae musician) and Dan Turell’s (fiction author/poet) graves. Despite her mother’s shock over her taking casual strolls through a cemetery, Dania explained that “it’s not like you think about the fact that it’s a *cemetery*”. The grave plots seemed to be mere accessories to a beautiful oasis of large trees and calmness in the city center. As we sat there in the afternoon summer sun, Dania ended her city tour, stopping behind the yellow wall – not venturing beyond this point to the ‘other side’ of Nørrebro.

Dania was born and raised in rural Denmark; she is one of many Danish youth escaping rural life for city centers such as Copenhagen and Aarhus for higher education and work opportunities. Dania’s tour did not focus on how Copenhagen had become her home through the years, but rather how the sites were ways in which she wanted to represent herself. The tour was about constructing a spatial-representation of self – and in Dania’s case, this meant including sites that demonstrated everything that defined her as Muslim, Danish and Palestinian. It was more than that however, her tour was not just about representing her national/ethnic/religious identifications, it was about how she saw herself as a young university student who had developed through the years from being a young rural girl in a big city to becoming an urbanite with social and cultural capital allowing her to seamlessly become part of the trendy section of Nørrebro’s urban landscape.

#### Growing Up on the Other Side of ‘the Yellow Wall’

Khalid grew up on the other side of ‘the yellow wall’<sup>45</sup>; the side my other interlocutors did not want to include on their tours. To Khalid, life on that side of Nørrebro had a long personal history. He took me to his childhood neighbourhood in inner Nørrebro; however, he first started his tour introducing me to the places he went to on a daily basis that ultimately demonstrated his current social position and future social mobility. Taking me on a wide-ranging tour, Khalid put his life and current social mobility in a biographical context, allowing me to gain a nuanced

---

<sup>45</sup> ‘The yellow wall’ is the popular name for the *Assistensens* cemetery which divides the trendy part of Nørrebro from the less gentrified part of the neighbourhood



understanding of how life on this side of Nørrebro was not as one-sided as both the media and my other interlocutors represented. In fact, Khalid argued that despite its bad publicity, it was the local opportunities of his neighbourhood as well as his childhood friends that helped motivate him to see potential in his own abilities. Besides this biographical aspect, Khalid also represented himself through his tour by bringing me to his workplace, where I met his manager and saw the prestigious offices where he worked while finishing his MA thesis. With these sites, he was constructing a version of himself that challenged the stereotypical representation of young Muslim men living in inner-Nørrebro as prone to delinquency.

Our meeting place for Khalid's tour was the new central mosque in Copenhagen. We met right after Friday prayer outside the mosque; this was the first site on his tour. Khalid explained that the mosque had opened two months prior, and ever since, he had been coming there every day for some of his five daily prayers. He lived only a 10 minutes walk away and his university campus was also only 10 minutes away. Khalid took me on a tour of the new mosque, showing off its beautiful features and facilities:



This place [the mosque] recently opened, two months ago, just before Ramadan, and I've used it every day, for some of the prayers at least. So, it's been and is a part of my daily life, especially because I go to school close by and I live not far from here. It's all close by.

My friends and I, one friend [picks us up] for *fajr* [daybreak prayer]. [...] Even though it's close, we're too lazy [to walk]. So, we drive for *fajr* and drive home again. [...].

I know I'm going to use this place [the mosque] a lot, because there'll be a library here. [Me and my friends] have gotten a little influence in what books will be here, so it'll be cool. I'm not part of [the mosque board], I was just asked for suggestions.

It's really cool – [there's] a reception and things like that, you don't see that very often in mosques in Denmark.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Khalid's tour was conducted in Danish, and the quotes were transcribed *ad verbatim* and then translated into English by myself.

Khalid seemed proud to show off the mosque; from the *wudu* (ablution) area to the conference rooms and library, he noted what a rare sight it was to see in a Danish mosque. Other interlocutors also commented on the importance of this new and modern mosque. It seemed to be a long-awaited landmark of their belonging to Copenhagen and by extension Denmark. Other interlocutors may not have used this grand mosque as much as Khalid, however, it was a stamp of their presence in the city's landscape.

Next stop on Khalid's tour was his part-time position as a consultant at a prestigious company. The company was located just north of Nørrebro in one of the most exclusive addresses by the Copenhagen harbour in Hellerup:



I work in two different places. This is [...] a consultancy company. It's easier to drive up here, and I've done that since I got the job. It takes 10 minutes from home. [...] It's been hectic having two workplaces and a thesis. When all of this has been going on at once, I haven't had time for anything else. But now that I'm not here [at the consultancy company] as much, I work at [X] and write my thesis.

It's a very classy area. It's not at all what I'm used to in Nørrebro, I can assure you that. Sometimes you get some weird looks. People thought I was out-of-place. I've gotten looks from people who thought, what is this guy doing here. But most people have been nice about it. I think I'm the youngest person working here as well. It's funny, there's two immigrants or Muslims who work here, there's me and then someone from [the mosque] who works at Microsoft. I've had lunch with him a few times. But there aren't a lot of Muslims here. It's been a bit easier to be one of the few Muslims here, because people usually draw on their personal experiences with Muslims. Like, here in the beginning of Ramadan, one of them said to me: "Well Khalid, are you going to fast? I knew someone he had to get drunk before fasting in Ramadan." [...] You have to think about it, of course there's 2 billion Muslims and we're not all the same. [By being one of the few Muslims,] I don't have to be considerate about what they think about other Muslims doing this or that. It's my daily life, if they don't like me praying there, they can look out the window [laughs]. I do my job and that's what I'm hired to do.

It looks a little like CBS [The Copenhagen Business School], it's a business environment. This is the cafeteria, they don't always have halal food, so you settle with a salad. That's not a big deal, you live in Denmark, and you know you can't eat everything. We've always gotten free food at the cafeteria, so there's no reason to pack a lunch. There's a coffee machine and foosball [...]. I would definitely want to work in a place like this when I finish [university].

Khalid explained how his workplace was different from what he was used to in Nørrebro; his workplace was much more upscale. He described getting looks from people who probably thought he looked out-of-place because of his ethnic background, although they were polite about it. Being one of the youngest employees simply added to his colleagues' curiosity. Khalid's description of being out-of-place says more about his *feeling* out-of-place than the actual reactions he received from colleagues. He was young and one of only two Muslims in the whole multi-company building. More importantly though, Khalid compared his workplace with Nørrebro. It is in this comparison that Khalid displayed his own awkwardness with his change of social position; he was no longer a Nørrebro kid fighting against common stereotypes of Muslim young men. Instead, he was an accepted part of a professional work environment where he was a qualified employee first and foremost. As we walked around his workplace neighbourhood, Khalid pointed out the expensive apartments and the view of Øresund Bridge connecting Denmark and Sweden. He continued to explain his discomfort with social mobility – it was not an easy process and required him to step out of his Nørrebro comfort zone:

I feel comfortable in this area [of my work place] when I'm at work. [I'm] also dressed in professional clothes, but it's not really me. You feel most at home where you've lived your whole life and where you grew up. But you have to leave your comfort zone to gain success in life. In a way it's been difficult, because you've experienced barriers, but it wasn't difficult to get [a job] out here. [...] I got the job when I was doing an internship at [X] right next to where I live. [...] The new [manager there] still had a lot of connections in the industry, so I spoke with her about doing an internship in the industry. I told her: "Please help me get the right connections, because you know I don't have those connections. A lot of people have families who work in companies etc., I just don't have that. And you know I have the potential to do a good job, so help me out [...]" So she called someone who works up there [at the consultancy agency], one of the most leading in the field, who was her friend.

Then they called me and invited me for an interview, and I went on vacation and started working there right after.

Khalid got his current position through his social capital; being able to network with his internship supervisor, he was conscious of his need to be proactive in promoting his competencies. He played on the stereotype that Nørrebro kids like him (i.e. from a working-class neighbourhood) did not have a professional network in the same way middle class Danes may have. The fact of the matter was however, Khalid's social network was predominately comprised of young professionals and he was therefore much better equipped to achieve social mobility than the stereotypical Nørrebro youth. It was because of his social navigation skills that Khalid knew how to approach his supervisor, highlighting his competencies and professional ambitions. This seemed to be a recurring theme among my Danish interlocutors: they saw their own potential to achieve a higher level of social mobility in comparison to their working-class neighbourhoods, and they were not hesitant to display this self-image to me.

As we started to leave his workplace, Khalid explained his perspectives on success and the importance of creating a good professional impression:

There's a good story about *Sayedna* Yusuf [Prophet Josef], when he was asked by the king if he could come interpret the dream, he said yes, he didn't hesitate. You have to step up when you need to. You also have to make an effort. You have to build relationships, and that's what I did with my [supervisor]. Initially, she didn't like me and didn't want to hire me [after my internship], but I made a good impression and was open with her, when we spoke about our private life [...], so they also know that you're a person. [...]. The [supervisor] definitely had her prejudice that had to be taken down slowly.

*Isn't annoying having to deal with this type of prejudice?*

It's not annoying. I see it as a necessity. You're not like everyone else in Denmark, and you have to remember you're Muslim first and foremost, and you should show your best qualities, because then you can't fail – to display good manners and *akhlaq* [character].

In this description, Khalid highlighted the difficulties that exist when having to deal with stereotypes in the workplace. As a Muslim male, Khalid had to respond to his supervisor's prejudices against him to develop a better rapport with her. This meant that he had to be sensitive

and take the time to answer her questions about Khalid's personal and religious life. He explained how disproving people's preconceived notions about him as matter of fact; as a *Muslim* minority in Denmark, you are not like everyone else and you *have to* represent good manners. Khalid had been sensible and strategic in developing good professional relationships, yet he could not escape a certain representational discourse even in his city tour. Whether he was showing me his workplace, school or usual lunch spots, the question of representation continuously crept up in the narrative. His life story was a side note to the spatial narrative; the spaces on his tour were rather representations of his identity-narrative rather than his life-narrative.

He parked the car not far from his university campus and we walked to his school. Passing by the kebab shop where he got his usual lunch shawarma next door to a Danish *smørrebrød* shop, he commented:



[Referring to the first picture] Here I've eaten a lot of shawarmas [Arabic or Turkish seasoned meat sandwiches], it's not the best but it's the only one so close to school. But lately, I started to eat a lot of *smørrebrød* [open-faced ryebread sandwiches], it's very Danish. Even though it says Royal Beer [on the side], she makes fishcakes and fish filets. It sounds very Danish.



Although Khalid probably grew up eating ryebread sandwiches for his lunch (a staple for most Danish school children), buying *smørrebrød* was not something he was used to until he found this place close to his university. His choice between a shawarma and *smørrebrød* became a representation of his self-identification; being the preferred fast food for many Copenhageners, the Turkish shawarma can be found on almost every corner of Nørrebro. Growing up in Nørrebro, the local shawarma shop next to his university was the obvious choice for Khalid's

lunch. It seemed to have taken him some time to give the next door neighbor – the smørrebrød shop – a chance. Once he did however, their rye-bread open-face fish sandwiches became a new favourite. It is interesting to note how Khalid highlighted the fact that it was “very Danish” to eat smørrebrød – “[i]t sounds very Danish”. Khalid’s choice of food became incorporated into his narrative of identification; the large beer poster decorating the side of the smørrebrød shop initially put Khalid off as it represented a part of Danish identification he could not adopt, but the Danes’ love for rye bread and fish sandwiches he could easily make his own. A recurring theme among my Danish interlocutors revolved around their search for small points of identification through which to claim their city and national belonging. Whether it was through their choice of restaurants or the places where they would shop for clothes (e.g. see Dania’s explanation on her choice of clothes) – these places became ways of representing belonging.

The next stop on Khalid’s tour was his university campus; living close by meant that he could study at the university library. We went to the library where the group rooms were filled with students studying for their exams, and then walked to a neighbouring building where the prayer room was located:



There’s a prayer room here [on campus] that I’ll take you to. The mosque hasn’t always been here [...]. But I haven’t used the prayer room so much because I’m often too lazy to go down here, I just use the group rooms for prayer, and also there’s better *wudu* [ablution] facilities [read: washrooms] there than by the prayer room. When I have lectures and only have a 10 minutes break, I would pray here [in the prayer room]. It’s only Muslims who use this room, but they don’t call it a prayer room but a devotional space for all religions.

The prayer room had an inconspicuous sign on the door (see picture in the middle) to let people know that this was a “devotional space”. Khalid noted that it may have been officially open to the public, but only Muslim students on campus would use the room for prayer. This became apparent as we entered the room, which was decorated with Islamic calligraphy on the walls. Khalid would only use the room in between lectures when he did not have much time to find an empty room. When studying at the library, he would simply use the private group rooms there.

Quiet spaces and prayer rooms have been the subject of a resurging political debate in Denmark; some politicians as well as school administrators have used the topic to make a point about Danish secularity arguing that prayer rooms should not be a part of public institutions (see chapter 5 for an analysis of this). Khalid's nonchalant presentation of the prayer room as a simple accommodation that made it easier to find a quiet place to pray between lectures demonstrated how the debate was disconnected from the everyday lives of young Muslims. For people like Khalid, it was not essential to have a prayer room. Prayer was an integrated part of his daily routines and use of city spaces. Without an allocated space for prayer, he would simply pray where it was most convenient and somewhat secluded, whether in his university library or a quiet corner in a shopping mall.

Khalid showed me several other locations on his tour, including the apartment building where he grew up and the places he hung out. They were all a part of how he wanted to represent himself and his Nørrebro background. One place played an especially large role in Khalid's life and that was the martial arts club where he had trained since he was a young child. Located across the street from Khalid's childhood home, the martial arts club had been and was still a favourite place for Khalid to meet up with his childhood friends. Martial arts had played a large role in Khalid's life, and it was a given to show me the place that had been so important in shaping the person he was. The large reception room had a large foosball table, ping-pong table, a lounge area and a small kitchen. More importantly however, the room was decorated with trophies that according to Khalid, had mostly been won by him and his friends. On the wall, next to the trophy display there was a large picture showing 17-year-old Khalid with his friends greeting the Crown Prince of Denmark and the Crown Princess of Sweden. They had won the Danish championships and were asked to display their trophy to the Crown Prince and Princess. Khalid downplayed the significance of the picture, stating: "It was nice saying hi, but it isn't a big deal". Khalid made a point to note that all his friends on the picture were Muslim and they all lived in the same childhood neighbourhood in which he had grown up. Khalid noted however the social delinquency that had surrounded him in his teenage years as we looked out one of the windows facing Mjølnerparken (which is particularly notorious for its social issues). Seeing a young Danish father and his daughter sitting on a bench outside the window, Khalid explained:



Those blocks there are Nørrebro's Mjølnerparken. Once a while back, you could see burning cars from up here. Ten years ago, you wouldn't see a man sit down there with his daughter, there was too much trouble. But that's not the case anymore. It's definitely become more peaceful, and I don't doubt that the Martial arts club played a part in that.



This is used by the tough Nørrebro guys, who come out here to smoke weed, and every time they're kicked out by us guys that come up there [in the club]. Unfortunately, it's also used for that. It's strange, because you sometimes you see some of them in the mosque, and then they come here to hide away and smoke weed.

As we walked out of the club, Khalid pointed out a bike shed known to be a place where youth would come to smoke weed. Khalid was clearly not part of the environment that is typically associated with his neighbourhood, and he seemed almost disappointed to acknowledge that this was the reality of young men around him.

Khalid's spatial narrative had largely bypassed the social issues usually attributed to this section of Nørrebro, i.e. "beyond the yellow wall". Showing me his version of inner Nørrebro highlighted the discrepancy between his social position and the stereotype that was usually attributed to young men resembling him in this area. This side of Nørrebro was an area several interlocutors did not want to identify with because of the social stigma connected to it. However, Khalid wanted to display what this side of Nørrebro meant to him and how it was an essential part of how he had come to see himself. Nørrebro – 'beyond the yellow wall' – may represent problematic social issues to many people. To Khalid and his neighbourhood friends, however, this neighbourhood was a catalyst for realizing the potential they had discovered at their local martial arts club. Khalid's self-image was constructed on this basis – he was never a troubled youth needing to be supported by inner-city initiatives and role models. Rather, he had been surrounded by people cheering for him since his early childhood, reinforcing his self-perception



of being different than the stereotype of the young Muslim male from Nørrebro. His city tour was a representation of the actualization of this potential into social mobility; starting with where he was in his life now, working at a prestigious company while finishing his MA degree, and ending his tour with where it all began in his childhood neighbourhood in inner Nørrebro; challenging the dominant perception of Nørrebro 'beyond the yellow wall'.

## Conclusion

There was a recurrent pattern in the city tours on which I was taken by my Danish interlocutors. The tours were surprisingly similar. After visiting the trendy café *Kaffehuset* in Nørrebro a few times, I started seeing a pattern in the tours. *Kaffehuset*, a Muslim-owned café, depicts an image my interlocutors wanted to be associated with: affluent, successful and inconspicuous. My interlocutors represented these attributes in different ways throughout their city tours and the spaces they highlighted. Although my interlocutors came from different suburbs surrounding Copenhagen, they all chose to take me to various areas of Nørrebro and downtown Copenhagen. I gave them the same instructions – to show me *their* Copenhagen – and they all chose to show me spaces that were representations of how they perceived themselves. Most of them did not choose to take me to their childhood neighbourhoods, but rather focused on their lives at the moment of the tour. Being young and living within relative proximity to downtown Copenhagen and the trendy spots of Nørrebro, they constructed an image of themselves as socially mobile members of the stream of young people across Denmark who seek out the capital for higher education, work opportunities, trendy cafes and a multicultural environment. In this context, my interlocutors' Muslimness became a part of the Copenhagen image of cultural diversity rather than a symbol of otherness.

All my Danish interlocutors presented me with nuanced family and life histories that challenged the existing stereotypes about young Muslim Copenhageners and simultaneously re-enforced their own self-perception of being a part of an educated and socially mobile generation. Their city tours were a representation of this self-perception and demonstrated how spatial narratives can become important avenues to construct a self through use of city spaces.

## 8. Spatial Narratives as Biographical, Temporal and Subject-Constructive

A while after I concluded my fieldwork, a Montreal interlocutor and friend, Lisa, asked me about the progress of my research; she was especially interested in hearing the ‘results’ of the spatial tours I had been conducting; a part of my research she found fascinating from the start.

Apologetic about the slowness of my research progress, I shared with her some of my initial thoughts and my uncertainty about what direction I should take in employing this ethnographic material. Instead of leading the conversation, I tried to make room for her to share her interest in my research. Lisa was a 3<sup>rd</sup> year English literature major with a love for culturally diverse and socially critical literature. In one of her literature classes, they had been discussing the Australian aboriginal practice of ‘walkabout’ as a rite of passage. Lisa was reminded of the city tour on which she had guided me when she read the literature describing the aboriginal significance of ‘walkabout’. For her, her tour represented a sort of ‘walkabout’ that she had been doing throughout her life that she had invited me into. Lisa took me on a walk around Old Pointe Claire Village in the West Island of Montreal; we walked as she had done countless times throughout her childhood and youth; usually aimlessly. Through her narrative, this aimless ‘walkabout’ was instilled with importance as a spatial representation of her life narrative. It was through this kind of narrative process that was employed by my interlocutors as they guided me through their local pathways, that the significance of their movements was demonstrated: these movements were biographical, subjective *and* social.

This chapter provides a conclusion to the ethnographic material presented in chapters 6 and 7, highlighting the theoretical significance of the urban ‘walkabouts’ my interlocutors took me on, demonstrating how spatial accounts can provide rich ethnographic windows onto life stories and self-representation. My interlocutors’ ‘walkabouts’ lacked the spiritual meaning and nomadic lifestyle that characterize the traditional walkabout (Prout 2008). Nevertheless, these urban walkabouts highlight the importance of routinized and localized mobilities. The pathways we use on a regular basis become instilled with both biographical and representational importance. Whether the walks I was taken on demonstrated personal history, self-representation or both, they were significant factors in demonstrating the pathways crafted by my interlocutors

through the localities in which they resided. Such pathways created lingering connections to their being-in-the-city. In general, city spaces exist irrespective of our use of them; however, the unique pathways that we create as we walk, drive or bike through the spaces create a relationship between us and those spaces. It is the pathways that are the connecting factor between social actors and physical spaces. Spaces are thus attributed personal meaning and become proof of our life pathways and/or representations of our personal identities, social mobility and future potentials.

I start this chapter by placing my ethnographic material within a wider theoretical background focused on mobility and movement. I initially decided to use spatial tours as an ethnographic method building on a larger theoretical legacy of migration studies, and more contemporary approaches to mobility and movement theory within social and cultural research. In Chapter 6 and 7, I sought to develop an appreciation of pathways and the choices my interlocutors made in selecting certain pathways as part of their tours rather than others, both biographically and socially. In this concluding chapter, I bring together the ethnographic materials presented in the previous two chapters, drawing comparisons between my Montreal and Copenhagen interlocutors. The aim of this chapter is thus to depict the value in comparative ethnography, as it brings our attention to the local, socio-political and global similarities and differences that would otherwise go unnoticed.

### Theorizing Mobility and Movements

In his book *Mobilities* (2007), John Urry argues for an approach to understanding mobility as a paradigm, thus encompassing an understanding of “how all social entities, from single households to large scale corporations, presuppose many different forms of actual and potential movement” (Urry 2007: 6). In other words, he seeks to transform scholars’ attention away from social structures and order towards a paradigmatic focus on mobility. Urry expands the definition of mobility to include widely disparate phenomena: corporal travel, physical movement of objects, imaginative travel, virtual travel, communicative travel, as well as social mobility and movements of ideas and concepts. This multi-stranded concept of mobility is particularly relevant to my research since my interlocutors used the spatial tours to demonstrate both their physical and social mobility. Firstly, their movements within city spaces demonstrated their ability to navigate the social structures, i.e. choosing to go to one neighbourhood for its positive

social connotations while dismissing a nearby neighbourhood for its stigmatized associations. Secondly, their spatial mobility was a representation of time, i.e. depicting past experiences and connections to localities or describing future aspirations and expectations through their movements. Thirdly, my interlocutors represented their own social mobility through their spatial narratives, i.e. from growing up in an inner-city neighbourhood to becoming successful university students (e.g. Sidra from Montreal and Khalid from inner Nørrebro).

The mobility paradigm promoted by Urry draws attention to the wide range of moves people may make in the course of their lives, and there is an increasing awareness of how “moving people construct and *re*construct places, social relations and social contexts in the course of and through their ongoing experiences of movement” (Amit & Olwig 2011). In this sense, it is about people’s capacities, social context and ability to improvise when they move. This requires our understanding of people’s movements to be contextualized within a broader understanding of their lives, their aspirations, as well as their closest social ties. Sociologist Caroline Knowles (2011) demonstrates how this approach can in fact contribute to our understanding of both urban landscapes and the people who inhabit them. Following the city movements of her interlocutors in Montreal and in Hong Kong, Knowles provides an important perspective as to how cities can become places of biographical enactments (Knowles 2011: 138). She argues for the importance of investigating movements within cities. Understanding movement, she points out, enables us to understand how we are formed by the places we go to and the way we get there – it is thus a way to understand subjectivities (Knowles 2011: 139). Knowles’ approach to movement is based on following the everyday journeys of people and objects, demonstrating the social aspects of these moves. Knowles further develops the connection between subjectivity and spatial biography in her latest article with Vered Amit (2017). They argue that not only is the subject navigating city spaces, but the life stories are being navigated in mobile-spatial terms:

Spatial biography foregrounds the spaces that condense the movements connecting and constituting them: the telling of a life through its scenes of enactment and co-composition, a here, and then a there, weaving time flexibly through the prism of memory, and the reconfigured modalities of space, as personal stories (Amit & Knowles 2017: 12).

Spatial biography thus becomes an enactment of personal history through movement. It allows for a different life story to be told, one that is grounded in a physical space as well as memory. Some of my interlocutors chose to construct a spatial account that created a spatial biography. For instance, Sidra took me from one space to another; connecting the spaces through her memories, noting the change of the space or sometimes the lack of change. Her spatial biography ended in her present family home. This family home became a strong symbol of her and her family's social mobility without her explicitly narrating this change in social position. This was only possible since the preceding spatial account allowed for a comparison between the spaces of her past and the spaces of her present.

Finnegan's concept of pathways, which I presented in the literature review (see p. 15-16), complements the concept of spatial biographies in the ethnographic accounts I have presented in Chapter 6 and 7. My use pathways is not necessarily focused on planned and structured paths through city spaces in one's daily life. Rather, like both Finnegan and Amit use the concept, my interlocutors' pathways demonstrate their knowledge of their city. Some gave me a spatial narrative of their life stories, others wanted to focus on spaces that represented their lifestyle and social position. Pathways through the city can therefore also become avenues to construct and represent one's social position in society. This way of navigating through the city, avoiding some streets and including others, demonstrates my interlocutors' knowledge of their cities and how they locate themselves within them. My interlocutors had free reign to show me spaces that were meaningful to them; they ended up constructing pathways that involved a dialectic between time and space, depicting past, present and sometimes future use of urban spaces and what these meant to them. The concept of pathways thus allows for the processual way in which my interlocutors choose, change and recreate social and localized pathways. Hence, an important component of pathways is the idea that they

are relative only and, despite their continuity over time, changing rather than absolute – unlike the picture conveyed by the more concrete-sounding and bounded concepts of 'world' or 'community' (Finnegan 1989: 323).

Allowing my interlocutors to construct and enact their unique pathways to me, enabled me to go beyond exploring them as a social group and instead look at young people who share similar social categories (Muslim, young, urbanite) but enact these in unique and personalized ways.

These spatial accounts thus allowed me to explore the social and spatial lives (past, present and future) of young Muslims, not as a community, but as individuals who are influenced by personal experiences and relations.

As presented in the literature review (see p.14), Henkel (2007) argues that to appreciate the nuanced lives of Muslims, we cannot restrict our perspective to Muslims' 'cultural worlds'. Muslims' lives are not spatially separated from the heterogeneous spaces of the cities they live in (Henkel 2007: 58). Instead, he argues that Muslims actually redefine the city spaces into "Muslim places" through their practices, experiences and perceptions (ibid: 68). All the tours on which my interlocutors took me included institutions (schools, mosques, clubs), personal spaces (homes), and public spaces (streets, parks, cafés, shops). These were not necessarily redefined into "Muslim places" as in Henkel's ethnography, but they enabled an appreciation of my interlocutors' personal attachments to and social positions in their city spaces. The benefit of opening the space of narration to include anything of importance to my interlocutors, highlights how these young people were embedded within the spatial fabric of their cities – they navigated the space with an awareness of the social connotations and histories of particular localities.

#### The Tactics of Spatial Narratives

Michel de Certeau's (1984) emphasis on everyday life beyond ideas of domination and resistance is essential for understanding young Muslims' experiences in a nuanced way beyond the social dramas that often dominate public debates. Many of my interlocutors responded to such dramas with social actions and protest; yet this was only one part of a much more complex and less dramatic regime of everyday life. My Montreal based fieldwork coincided with political initiatives to ban religious symbols (the Charter of Values). Although several of my interlocutors were engaged in resisting these political ploys of domination, when it came down to how they saw themselves and their position in this urban context, they presented a different story. There was no equally heightened social drama in Denmark at the time of my fieldwork; however, there was a similar tendency among my interlocutors to underplay overt resistance in depictions of their daily movements. In both contexts, my interlocutors did not represent their everyday lives or their movements through the city within a narrative of resistance. Rather, their pathways were

constructed by means of ongoing daily negotiations and manoeuvring within urban space, and not in the extraordinary moments of social action.

By concentrating on the uses of space, de Certeau illustrates how imposed structures can become reliable, thereby enabling the individual to develop tactics to manipulate these structures; hence “making it possible to live in them by reintroducing into them the plural mobility of goals and desires” (de Certeau 1984: xxii). De Certeau distinguishes between strategy and tactics to demonstrate an important difference between an ordinary individual’s manoeuvring within such structures, and the more powerful strategists who are able to transform them. He thus defines strategy as the ability to manipulate power relations within a specific space - “able to produce, tabulate, and impose these spaces” (ibid.: 30). On the other hand, tactics can only make use of and manipulate such spaces through “a degree of plurality and creativity” within confining structures (de Certeau 1984: 30). As “an art of the weak”, tactics are the creative responses of non-powerful actors in moments of conjunctures within an imposed structural terrain of hegemonic power (ibid.: 37). My interlocutors demonstrated their tactical abilities through their spatial accounts. They used these tactics in their everyday routines without making them explicit. These tactics however were nonetheless revealed through the movements and narratives expressed during their tours. For instance, Khadija’s choice of avoiding parts of Nørrebro, and instead focusing on downtown Copenhagen highlighted her ability to socially navigate the social structures that were entrenched in these city spaces. Some spaces represent lower socio-economic status while other spaces represent affluence. Khadija’s choices of the spaces to include in her account demonstrated her acute awareness of her own self-representation through these city structures. This is where her tactical skills became important; they provided her an opportunity to represent her quest for social mobility within social structures over which she had little power. In other words, the concept of everyday tactics allows an appreciation of how young people, such as Khadija, construct creative attempts to manipulate the hidden potentials within societal structures to claim their social position within their city spaces.

De Certeau describes how a person is not only subjected to structures, but can, in fact, enact their agency through such structures as well. He explains how city planners, government officials and other powerful people develop the structure of the city. They have the privileged position to produce the city structures from above by deciding what buildings to construct and

how to pave the roads etc. However, from the perspective of the individual, these overarching structures are less determinative of an individual's pathways through the city. Indeed, it is through the individual's movements and use of the city that the space is transformed into a place, i.e. a living space. With this, de Certeau illustrates the importance of theorizing lived space, since it is through such spatial practices that social life is structured (de Certeau 1984: 96). By shifting the focus of analysis from strategist to tactician and from city planner to city dweller, de Certeau directs our attention to how structures influence but can also be subverted by individual agency. The focus is thus on understanding how one is able to manoeuvre within these structures. It is through such creative manoeuvring that one can develop a certain if limited measure of autonomy in spite of the hegemonic structures of society (de Certeau 1984: 176). In the context of my interlocutors' tours, de Certeau's perspective on space becomes an important avenue through which to understand my interlocutors' attachments to their localities. The city is ingrained in their memories and pathways in the same way they, in turn, influence the city spaces through their presence and practices. In other words, it is through their everyday movements that young Muslims become an integral part of the city's heterogeneous spaces; as de Certeau points out, "*space is a practised place*" (de Certeau 1984: 117, italics in original).

#### Temporalities of Spatial Biography: the Past, Present and the (Potential) Future

The notion that our nostalgia is connected to a space set in a particular time is one of the most valuable insights of the tours I conducted with my Montreal interlocutors. We remember and narrate our stories as they were set in and experienced in the past, regardless of how the physical space has changed since. However, as my interlocutors took me to visit these sites of their key memories, they looked for what remained and what had changed. Noticing the changes, and reminiscing about how it used to be, highlights the nostalgia connected to a particular time and space that can only be reminisced about but never recreated. Yaqub's tour in Montreal demonstrates how spatial narratives can become important ways of constructing one's biography by moving through the spaces that represent past life experiences. Here, the spatial structures become avenues to the past. This was represented through Yaqub's spatial account. Going to his childhood home, visiting the mosque he used to attend, the malls and restaurants; these spaces became a depiction of his lifelong connection to a particular locality within a Montreal suburb. The narrative links he constructed as we moved from one place to another highlight how small



scale and localized movements can become part of a greater life story, connecting spaces that are only linked through the personal meaning one attributes them (Amit & Knowles 2017). Such spatial narratives also demonstrate the construction of belonging to a locality. As Yaqub reminisced about playing hockey in his childhood home and the dents it created in the carport, he also called the present state of the space to become a witness of his past. As we moved through the spaces, they interchangeably either became witness to Yaqub's life narrative or a display of how these spaces exist irrespective of him. Public spaces can betray our personal connections as urban planners, social structures or simply time and weather change the physical appearance of these spaces. As Yaqub demonstrated in his narrative, we are left with mere indicators of our memories and lost connections, yet we maintain their nostalgic significance through narrative.

Taking a different approach to spatial narrative, Khadija in Copenhagen took me on a tour of her potential future. She took me to the Royal Theater, the Opera House, up-scale restaurants; all places she had only passed by on her walks through downtown Copenhagen. The fact that Khadija did not have any social connection to these places at the moment of her tour was not the point. Rather, Khadija used the opportunity of her tour to construct an image of where she wanted to be in the future. The spatial narrative became an avenue to display her future self – a sort of futuristic spatial biography – tracing her future pathways through the city rather than her biographical pathways of her past. Khadija's spatial account demonstrated the potential for social representations of spaces to become significant in the construction of subjectivity. To Khadija, these spaces of Danish high culture and middleclass markers served to represent her aspirations for the future. These spaces represented Khadija's hope for her future social mobility, a social pathway she had already ventured on by starting a university degree that would ensure her a greater sense of financial comfort than the one she had at the moment. With this futuristic spatial narrative, Khadija's tour displays the theoretical potential in investigating the temporal future through movements.

Historical accounts have long had a place in anthropological query; in an ethnographic sense, this has meant noting down life narratives as they were told by interlocutors and triangulating these accounts with archival data. Building on this ethnographic tradition, a broader understanding of mobility and the narratives that can be constructed through 'moving' with our interlocutors opens up for a different approach to temporal exploration. With this approach, the

physical space becomes the triangulating proof of our interlocutors' narratives. It thus enables them to exercise greater epistemological influence to decide whether the focus of their life story should be placed in the past, present or the future. Yaqub chose a spatial rendition of his past, in the form of his childhood- and youth in suburban Montreal. Khadija depicted her potential future; this rendition of the future was open-ended, her aspiration may be challenged in the future, she may struggle to find a well-paying job after finishing university or she may find other cultural interests than ballet and opera. Yet, with this future-oriented spatial account, Khadija not only displayed her future aspirations but also revealed her *expectation* of social mobility. This future was well within her reach, and depicting these spaces as potentially 'hers', cemented her agency (i.e. her capacity for action) in making it happen.

Research on the future as a concept has investigated this notion of hope as the driving force for the future (Pedersen 2012; Cole and Durham 2008, 3-24). However, it has often focused on marginalized actors who are in precarious situations, whether socially or financially, with limited potential to actually achieve the social mobility to which they aspire. This is not the case with Khadija; according to the stereotypes on Muslims in Denmark, Khadija, as a hijab wearing young woman of immigrant background, represents a marginalized population group in Denmark. However, because of her social position as a university student and more importantly her own self-perception of being different from this stereotype and rather belonging to a more affluent middle class, Khadija did not represent herself as marginalized and she did not see her social mobility as a vague distant hope – it was merely a matter of time and effort in establishing her career and financial security following graduation. In fact, her spatial account seemed void of the typical uncertainty most young would have about their futures (A. L. Dalsgaard and Frederiksen 2013).

Both Yaqub and Khadija allowed me to discover the potential in spatial narratives as representations of temporality. According to Dalsgaard and Nielsen (2013), the study of time has been a longstanding challenge for ethnographers; how do we observe and explore the meaning of time for social actors? When I designed this research project and included the method of touring the cities with my interlocutors, I did not expect that I would be conducting an ethnography of time. Nevertheless – and to my surprise – my interlocutors took my idea of urban tours and transformed it as a way to tell a story of time through a spatial account. Yaqub and Khadija

demonstrate examples of how spatial narratives can become a re-construction of one's past *and* a construction of one's potential future. It is easy to identify with Yaqub's visit to his childhood home and neighbourhood, observing its changes as well as what remains. Likewise, for any struggling young student, the dreams of Khadija - what she will do once she achieves financial stability – is all too familiar. While Yaqub's tour explored notions of memory and nostalgia, Khadija's tour explored notions of potential and hope. Their tours demonstrate how spatial narratives can be stories of what *was*, *is* and (hopefully) *will be*. In these cases, the present is used as a temporal point of departure for either the past (Yaqub) or the future (Khadija).

#### Investigating Subjectivity through Spatial Accounts

Amy in Montreal and Dania in Copenhagen – although worlds apart in a geographical sense – share some important similarities in their spatial accounts. Both came from small rural towns; they moved to their new urban homes as they started university. In their tours, they exemplify the rural-urban migration so many young people experience as they seek education and opportunities in the big cities. While similar in this regard, Amy and Dania also demonstrate the different approaches to rooting oneself in a new locality – how do you become an urbanite? And what spaces do you seek to realize this process of becoming? Amy and Dania had different ways of constructing their belonging, and subsequently their movements. Yet both their tours exemplify the importance of subjectivity in the process of creating roots in a locality.

Amy took me on a walk through her local pathways, displaying her routinized pathway through her neighbourhood. During our interview, she had shared with me the frustration of her rural upbringing to explain why she had come to view Montreal as her “home-city”. Although a common perception of rural life is of tranquility and simplicity; for Amy, her life in a small rural town was too small, close-knit and culturally uniform to allow her to fully explore who she could be. Throughout her tour, Amy seemed to have found more tranquility in getting lost amidst the urban crowd of the busy high street close to her home than in her childhood town. The city's cultural and social diversity allowed Amy to discover herself and her artistic voice in a locality that not only allowed her alternative creative expressions but commended her for it. It is through Amy's walk on *her* pathways, that one comes to appreciate this urban becoming. Amy had constructed a sense of belonging to Montreal through these pathways, and it was in this process that Amy also went through a process of *becoming* a Montrealer. Amy demonstrated this process

of becoming an urbanite through narrating her emotional and creative attachments to the city spaces on her tour. Following her graduation from university she went on to pursue graduate studies in London, UK, after which she moved on to a university position in Istanbul, Turkey. Her initial migration from rural Ontario to Montreal was only the first stop on the larger transnational migration pathways that ensued. However, in many ways it was this initial rural-urban migration and the localized movements that constructed her urban subjectivity, which in turn made the global cities of London and Istanbul so attractive to her. Amy's transnational mobility demonstrates how movements are often a series of moves "from the countryside to the city, within geopolitical regions, across state and regional borders, visits back and forth across dispersed social networks, return migration" (Amit & Olwig 2011: 4). The focus is here on the wide range of moves people may make in the course of their lives, and, as Amy's improvised movements depict, there is an increasing awareness of how "moving people construct and reconstruct places, social relations and social contexts in the course of and through their ongoing experiences of movement" (ibid.). Amy was initially unsure whether she would end up in British Columbia, Canada, or London, UK, for her M.A. studies, but she had sent out her applications and was ready to improvise depending on the results of her applications. Meanwhile, she had gotten an offer to go to Istanbul to teach an art course in the summer, and while the offer came unexpectedly, she was excited at the prospects. A few years after my fieldwork, I can now see how Amy's ability to navigate opportunities as they presented themselves to her, enabled her current internationally mobile lifestyle. Her case demonstrates how people's movements must be contextualized within a broader understanding of their lives, their aspirations, as well as their social ties.

Dania focused her tour on taking me to her favorite neighbourhood, not necessarily where she lived (i.e. the more affluent Frederiksberg) but where she "expresses herself", i.e. the trendy part of Nørrebro. It is in this expression of how she wanted to be perceived that the process of urban becoming is displayed. Like Amy, it was through her choice of spaces in her tour that Dania constructed a particular version of her subjectivity. Her subjectivity became an expression of her seamless integration into the urban landscape. In other words, while her hijab and ethnicity would stick out as out of the ordinary in her rural Danish town; in Nørrebro, her appearance became incorporated into broader public representations of Nørrebro's cultural

diversity and inclusivity. Thus, she was not only affected by the process of becoming urban, but her very subjectivity became incorporated into the social landscape that defines Nørrebro's public image.

Dania was preparing to go for a semester abroad to Malaysia as part of her university degree. As she described her trip, she was excited at the prospects, yet she was sure that it would only be a temporary experience; the ultimate goal was to settle in Copenhagen. The major and life changing migration for her would be her rural-urban migration; the process of becoming a Copenhagener was more representative of how she saw herself. Her travels and exploring the world outside of Copenhagen and Denmark were temporary mobilities, and never intended as places to settle in. Like many other Danes, Dania had thus internalized the age-old Danish proverb: "abroad is good, but home is best" [*ude godt, men hjemme bedst*"].

Amy and Dania's spatial narratives are actually migration narratives. Rural-urban migration is one of the longest standing examples of human migration, and these two examples demonstrate the process of adapting to and adopting one's new urban locality. Amy and Dania had both sought the cultural and social diversity of big cities, and they both displayed an image of themselves as urbanites, understating their rural backgrounds. Indeed, it is interesting to note in Amy and Dania's spatial accounts how little importance they accorded their rural backgrounds. For instance, they both took me to their favourite park, where they went to escape the urban chaos; however, this was not explained as a longing for their rural homes (although that may have been the case). Rather, they both explained it as a break from the hustle and bustle of the city. This is noteworthy because it is through their constructed relation to the city, rather than through a nostalgic connection to their rural homes that they emphasized their urban belonging.

I highlight here Amy and Dania's cases, because they depict the subject constructing process of rural-urban migration that many young people experience. Through their years in respectively Montreal and Copenhagen, they have chosen certain pathways, neighbourhoods and streets as part of their habitual being-in-the-city that allowed them to construct certain versions of themselves as young, well-educated, culturally explorative and socially conscious urbanites. It is in these choices, and ultimately in the choice of representing themselves through their spatial

narratives as inhabitants rooted in these two cities that they construct their urban subjectivities. Nevertheless, Amy and Dania's spatial narratives are only one example of how subjectivities are displayed through routinized pathways. In fact, whether my interlocutors focused their spatial accounts on their life stories, future aspirations or present social positions, these accounts were always an expression of their agency in constructing and representing certain subjectivities.

#### Mobility and Movements as Meaning-Making Processes

So far in this chapter, I have drawn analytical comparisons between my interlocutors in Montreal and Copenhagen. Such comparisons allow us to appreciate the differences and similarities that spatial narratives highlight. As previously mentioned, I relinquished my ethnographic power when I asked my interlocutors to take me on a tour of their city. I left the question broad and open to their interpretation. This resulted in rich ethnographic material depicting my interlocutors' unique histories, social positions and subjectivities. Participating in their movements while listening to their reasoning and narratives for imbuing certain spaces with particular importance – and sometimes undermining other spaces' importance – put my interlocutors in a broader structural context, where they were able to display their agency through their narrative choices. They chose the spaces being highlighted, the direction we went, and which stories of the past, imaginaries of the future or their social image in the present they wanted to highlight to me. The interviews I had conducted with all of them before their spatial tours only demonstrated one side of their lives. The interviews were limited by my own analytical scope, what I thought was important to ask about, what I thought was important to represent. As with all ethnographers, the question of ethnographic representation doing justice to the complex lives and subjectivities of our interlocutors always lingers. The tours I conducted incorporated my interlocutors in the epistemological process of ethnography – they were doing ethnography with me, and they were instilling this ethnography with analytical potential through their narratives and reflections as we were walking through their city spaces.

Let me return to my friend and interlocutor, Lisa, who I introduced at the beginning of this chapter. She felt she had taken part in my research not just as a participant, but as a collaborator. Therefore, it was satisfying for both her and myself to be able to share analytical ideas about the tour on which she had taken me. Lisa allowed me to incorporate her into the early stages of processing my ethnographic material following the conclusion of my fieldwork. By inviting her

to share her thoughts on my research, she put my research in a wider literary framework comparing it to the cultural significance of aboriginal walkabouts, also called temporary mobility in current Australian policy discourse (Prout 2008). Like the aboriginal walkabout, the walk she took me on had a cultural, social and personal significance for her.

Moving away from the limiting perspectives of traditional mobility research as a linear movement from point A to point B, allows for the complexities of different types of movements to be appreciated. In their tours, Lisa and my other interlocutors in Montreal and Copenhagen demonstrated the complexities of movements through seemingly random pathways and places. However, their aimlessness was instilled with meaning through their narratives as we walked while they explained the significance of particular spaces. Henrik Vigh's (2009) definition of social navigation – a way of acting in moving terrain (i.e. a motion in motion) – helps us appreciate the complex navigation skills of my interlocutors. While Vigh's work focuses on youth in Guinea Bissau that have little chance of achieving social mobility because of limiting social structures, my interlocutors represent a lot more agency (read: capacity for action) in navigating their social terrains. As my interlocutors physically navigated the streets of their city, informing me of our next destination on their tour, explaining its place in their life story, they depicted their agency not only in navigating the physical structures and spaces of their city, but just as much in the social terrain that provided opportunities or challenges as they moved through their daily lives.

These tours were a moving representation of my interlocutors' subjectivity realized through their individual choices; both in making certain spaces and pathways part of their daily routines *and* in representing a certain version of their rootedness, social position/mobility and future prospects as localized in these city spaces and paths. Amit and Knowles (2017) argue that such navigation strategies display life stories in mobile-spatial terms – what they call spatial biography. They define spatial biography as “telling of a life through its scenes of enactment and co-composition [...] weaving time flexibly through the prism of memory, and the reconfigured modalities of space, as personal stories” (ibid.: 12). Some of my interlocutors did exactly that (e.g. Sidra, Yaqoub, Adam, Lisa); they took me on a journey of their past as witnessed by the spaces in which they created these memories. Lisa, for instance, took me on a walk of Old Pointe Claire Village in the West Island of Montreal. This walk was a recurring destination throughout

her childhood and teenage years: when her grandmother visited from Scotland as a child, they would share an ice cream as they walked through the village and nearby lake. When she got a job as a teenager at a nearby community organic store, she would take that walk on her own. Later in life, it was a place in which to celebrate national holidays and see the fireworks with family or friends. The pathways she took me on, displayed the various meanings the spaces had at different times in her life. They were not simply a temporal account of her connection to the spaces. The spaces were however instilled with different meanings at different times in her life, and it was through the spatial narrative that she constructed these various meanings:



My love for this place started when I was a kid and my grandmother would visit from Scotland, and she loves to take walks and to look into the stores, “have a rake”, she would call it, so kinda like sorting through stuff seeing what’s there. Not necessarily buying anything, just looking. So, we would take the bus together, come here, walk, get ice cream, go down to the water and sit. My grandmother came pretty regularly up until I was 10-11. She would come at least once a year and sometimes more [but then] my grandfather’s knees got bad [they got too old to travel].



Later in my teens, I would like to come and go down to the water. Sometimes if I had to, like, think of something, or there was a couple of times I had stuff that troubled me, I would like to come to the water and just sit and think. So even before I was Muslim and since I became Muslim, it’s just a favorite spot to go if I just need to clear my mind and work things out. It’s my little spot. And then also, they have Canada



Day celebration here and St Jean Baptiste, so they have a festival here and big fireworks, it's very nice.

Some of my favorite stores have been here [Old Pointe Claire village], there was a place called Izzy's that made handmade soap. There was this place that sold natural foods and stuff, that was when I was 18, but then they closed down. And another one of my favorite places was the cooperative Le bon Voisin, they had all local organic food and they had lunch and dinner in the weekends. I volunteered with them and helped out with food but then that closed down too. They were all near Wild Willy's [ice-cream shop].

I feel like it's mostly the same [as my childhood], but what it means for me has changed slightly over time. So, before it was a place where my grandmother used to take me, after that it was the cooperative café that sold the organic stuff where I could find a community, people who were likeminded and I could share ideas with. It became a place for me where I could come and think and see unique stores, it wasn't like big corporations. I think, they have some kind of board where they don't allow franchises to this area, or else for sure it would be. So, they do protect the area from corporations...

I highlight a segment of Lisa's walk here because it displays the meaning-making process of spatial biographies; how the past is reinterpreted through the present, highlighting the multiple interpretations and meanings instilled in certain spaces and pathways through a temporal analytical gaze. Lisa had thought about where she wanted to take me, what spaces of her past she wanted to emphasize; what memories from her past were important to highlight as a continuous meaningful life narrative. For Lisa, who is a Muslim convert, this continuity in her life course was important to emphasize through her tour; her choice to become Muslim was an extension of the person she was and is becoming and she wanted to emphasize this through her spatial biography creating links between her past and her present. Thus, the fact that Old Pointe Claire had changed in meaning throughout her life did not minimize its importance. Rather, it was a point of continuity in her life narrative, its meaning evolving with her through time. This is especially possible because Old Pointe Claire village had not changed significantly since her childhood, and so it became a symbol of continuity in Lisa's life that had involved major changes in terms of life choice (i.e. changing religion and thereby also her social life and relationships).

## Conclusion

The ethnographic exploration of movement and spatial narrative can have multiple functions. First, through spatial accounts, which included subjective choices and self-reflexivity, my interlocutors constructed their own stories and self-representations – ultimately demonstrating their agency in navigating city spaces, both physically and socially. These spatial accounts provided my interlocutors with the potential to re-represent themselves, their connection to their locality and their own self-image through movements. Secondly, these movements provided ethnographic insight into my interlocutors' unique experiences, complex lives and personal identities. They were all young between the ages 18-25 from Montreal or Copenhagen who self-identified as Muslims; however, their spatial narratives beyond these similar external factors demonstrate the extensive and important nuances that pose implicit questions about the nature of ethnographic representation. How can we, as ethnographers, investigate people who share certain categorical identifications (in this case: being Muslim, young and urban) without assuming groupness, and thus risk reducing the lived complexity to simplistic representation (Brubaker 2002). Following my interlocutors' local pathways – taking into account the temporal and the social aspects of their narratives – highlights how a focus on spatial accounts provided my interlocutors with a narrative tool that allowed them to demonstrate more nuances than they could depict in the qualitative interviews or even through my participation in their social and political events. Although these other ethnographic tools did provide insights into their histories and everyday priorities, it was the spatial accounts that allowed for their own agency and subjectivity to be expressed.

## 9. Conclusion

This thesis explores the lives of young adults who self-identify as Muslim in Montreal and Copenhagen. The emphasis on self-identification is evident: to avoid reifying and pre-emptively categorizing their Muslimness, thereby overlooking its fluid, processual and situational characteristics. Sometimes being Muslim was a significant identifier to my interlocutors, at other times other elements such as urban, young adult, female (or others still), were more imperative to their everyday lives. The thesis moves beyond the academic focus on Muslims' experiences of exclusion, discrimination and marginality in a post-9/11 Western context. Rather than assuming the stigmatization of those who identify themselves as Muslims, I investigate the complex circumstances through which young Muslims may feel limited by social structures. More importantly, however, I explore their creative efforts to manipulate such structures through self-representation, mobility and the use of spatial narrative to represent their belonging. This means that while young Muslims may actively resist discrimination and exclusion, they may also creatively incorporate societal norms as an expression of a localized Danish or Canadian Muslim identification.

Chapter 4 focused on my Montreal interlocutors' emphasis on the importance of 'the Muslim community', not as an abstract concept, but as real and concrete. I explored *when* evoking 'the group' became important, and *who* this group included. Did it include all Muslims, or only local Muslims, or Muslims that looked a certain way? I realized that, for most of my young interlocutors, the Muslim community was a very particular group of young people, living in Montreal, representing a very particular way of being Muslim. This sense of groupness had to be continuously recreated and maintained through social and religious events as well as public representations, where for many the hijab and (to a lesser extent) the beard were major signifiers of one's Muslimness. By approaching social groups as objects of analysis rather than analytical objects, we are able to expose the nuances, complexities and diversity among people who feel they share a sense of 'community'. This chapter demonstrates how emic concepts, such as 'the community', actually represent negotiated, contested and processual identifications of 'the group', thereby unraveling its social construction. In Chapter 5, I examined processes of othering from the perspective of my Copenhagen interlocutors. My Copenhagen interlocutors represented

a group of highly educated, socially mobile, young Muslims. They are not a representative sample of Muslims in Denmark; in fact, they are of the few who have been able to create a degree of upward social mobility, despite having been raised in some of Copenhagen's socially deprived neighbourhoods. My interlocutors were very affected by the othering rhetoric they experienced in Danish politics, and their struggle to be accepted as Danes was evident in many of their narratives. However, thanks to their cultural capital, they were in a unique position to counter-represent the perceived 'Muslim other' by emphasizing their social and academic achievements while simultaneously insisting on being Danish Muslims.

The last three chapters explored the various avenues that spatial narratives can be analyzed as important experiences and representations of my interlocutors' lives. Chapter 6 demonstrates how spatial narratives can be autobiographical, presenting our memories in time and space. The space becomes a testimony of one's connection to the city through narrating memories. It rooted my Montreal interlocutors in their localities – no amount of othering-discourse or populist politics could take away the subjective connection they had created with these spaces. The focus of chapter 7 explores how spatial narratives can be a way of representing one's social position. The chapter demonstrates how my Copenhagen interlocutors express their upward social mobility through city spaces. By taking me to places that were upscale and trendy – their prestigious workplaces, their universities as well as the inner-city neighbourhoods they grew up in – my interlocutors were acutely aware of demonstrating their successes through the spaces they moved through. In these spaces, they were not Others, rather their difference became a part of Copenhagen's cultural diversity. Chapter 8 takes a comparative approach exploring the conceptual themes that my interlocutors' spatial narratives share. It examines the differences between the Montreal and Copenhagen cases, looking at questions of temporality, subjectivity and mobility as a way of creating meaning. The chapter demonstrates the advantages of employing mobility not merely as an object of analysis but as an ethnographic method that empowers interlocutors to influence the directions of research by directing the ethnographer's gaze, deciding what is important to observe and why.

The comparative approach that this thesis takes demonstrates both the similarities and differences between Muslims in Montreal and Copenhagen. By exploring the complex realities experienced by young Muslims in their urban localities, I go beyond the socially constructed

dichotomy of ‘traditional other’ (i.e. being Muslim) versus ‘modern us’ (i.e. being Western) that has become implicit in some right-leaning political discourses (see Rytter & Pedersen 2014 for a discussion of the Danish political context, and Maillé, Nielsen & Salée 2014 for a discussion of Quebec’s political discourses). Throughout this thesis, I do not represent young Muslims as part of a distinct community separate from their broader societies but as young Copenhageners and Montrealers who happen to self-identify as Muslims, and who must improvise alternative ways of navigating being Muslim, young and urban at the same time.

My research makes a case to include both perspectives of resistance and incorporation to appreciate the complexities of what it means to be a young Muslim in Copenhagen and Montreal. Secondly, my ethnography contributes to our understanding of young people as relational actors. Young people are influenced by social structures and relations; nonetheless, they also have an agency that is not limited to resistance but includes interactions with friends, families and sociocultural surroundings. Finally, this research expands our understanding of how urban environments move people; how people navigate, incorporate and change through urban space. Working from a theoretical framework inspired by Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre, this thesis contributes to our understanding of how urban spaces play into our lives. This research provides an important contribution to our understanding of young Muslims’ urban lives in appreciating the complex reality that shapes young people’s agency and social relations. By exploring the urban pathways of my interlocutors, I thus contribute to the theoretical discussions within mobility and urban studies. The ways my interlocutors represent themselves through spatial narratives contributes to our understanding of social spaces, taking into account both the social representation of particular streets and districts, and using these to emphasize one’s position. My interlocutors demonstrated their rootedness within their cities through the spatial narratives they constructed. It is through such spatial representations that they inadvertently depicted their belonging in stark opposition to hegemonic political discourse that seeks to represent them as ‘Others’.

#### Limitations and Future Research

It was an ambitious task to attempt to conduct a comparative cross-Atlantic ethnography in only one year. My research would have benefitted from longer time spent in the two cities, engaging with my interlocutors in different circumstances. My time spent in Copenhagen was limited to

two summer/fall trips (2-3 months each). The short time I had to recruit participants, do participant observation and conduct spatial tours, meant that I was limited in the informal interactions with my Copenhagen interlocutors. There was less time to go grab lunch or coffee compared to my Montreal fieldwork experience.

My language proficiency (or lack thereof) in French meant that my recruitment of interlocutors in Montreal was limited to bilingual participants. There is nonetheless a segment of French-speaking young people who do not speak English (or only speak it to a limited extent) that I did not engage with. One might expect that the experiences of French-speaking youths are different. My English-speaking interlocutors, for example, did not feel limited to life in Quebec, and saw more opportunities and felt a greater belonging with the rest of Canada. Beyond interviews and spatial tours, my position as a female researcher limited my access to informal interactions with my male interlocutors. This meant that there was a discrepancy in the rapport I established with my female and male interlocutors. Indeed, many of my female interlocutors later became my friends. The dynamics of gender relations between male and female Muslims may have thus affected the type of stories, narratives and experiences they shared with me.

My interlocutors demonstrated their extraordinary ability to create agency through limiting social structures, resisting as well as incorporating hegemonic social structures through everyday negotiations, social mobility and spatial narratives. Future research should explore the intricacies of agency vis-à-vis social structures, exploring the various ways actors in disadvantaged power positions influence these social structures through their uses of space. By moving with our interlocutors through their city spaces, we allow them to demonstrate their subjectivities through spatial narratives. This in turn enables a more collaborative approach to ethnography, where our interlocutors lead our analytical gaze towards what is important to them. The approach of incorporating spatial narratives and the use of mobility as an ethnographic tool as well as an object for analysis needs further development. Mobility as a methodological tool has the potential to expand our understanding of our interlocutors' use of space in various ways, allowing access to different aspects of their lives. Moving with our interlocutors also has the potential to challenge the bias social researchers inevitably bring to our research. Hence, by allowing our interlocutors to take charge of the directions we walk – describing what is important to notice and what meanings they attribute to different spaces - they expand the

perspectives of our analytical representations beyond the limitations of a sit-down qualitative interview. Through a comparative transatlantic perspective on two cities, my research has attempted to expand the way we understand the differences and similarities of young people who identify as Muslims in the West, taking their socio-political and urban contexts into consideration. Comparative research is challenging with time and travel constraints, but its benefits are undeniable; it allows the researcher to gain a broader perspective on local issues. More research needs to include and compare such localized and individualized perspectives of young Muslims across nation-states.

Finally, it has been four years since I started my fieldwork in Denmark and Canada; since then several of my interlocutors have graduated, started families, migrated to other countries or cities. Exploring the social and spatial mobility of the young people I met during my fieldwork at a later point in their life would allow for an exploration of the intricacies of life pathways. When I met my interlocutors in their early 20s, their everyday lives and movements through the city was influenced by their social position, their coming of age status, as well as their self-ascribed identity as Muslim Copenhageners/Montrealers. They had plans and hopes for their future; imaginings of how they would configure the city spaces to match their hopes and aspirations. But life often presents different opportunities and expectations that can drastically change pathways in different directions. These natural evolutions in their life course demonstrate the value of conducting longitudinal studies with emerging adults.

By choosing to research young people who self-identify as Muslim, I have run the risk of reproducing the overemphasis of “Muslim” as an important signifier that differentiates my interlocutors from their social contexts. However, I use my interlocutors’ self-ascribed Muslim-label to explore the ways they themselves reproduce this identification and negotiate different ways of incorporating it into societies in which their Muslimness may often be viewed as a foreign element. This thesis is thus an attempt to discuss how ethnographers can represent people who are reified by populist rhetoric and sometimes even by themselves without reproducing such reification in our research. In many ways, I take an optimistic approach towards the lives of the young Muslims I explored in this thesis. I argue for their ability to circumvent social structures by navigating and using social spaces to enforce a representation of belonging. My interlocutors creatively incorporated hegemonic cultural elements (style, speech, representations) that would

ease their upward social mobility, while simultaneously resisting in various ways populist rhetoric that sought to marginalize them. Such agency to resist was only possible because of their own representations of belonging. They embodied these representations in their interviews and spatial tours, which in turn localized them within their cities. It will be important to explore how such emerging adults change the cities they inhabit just as much as the cities change around them.



## References

- Amit, V. and K. F. Olwig. 2011. "Introduction." *Anthropologica* 53 (1): 3-14.
- Amit, Vered. 2010. "Community as 'Good to Think with': The Productiveness of Strategic Ambiguities." *Anthropologica* 52 (2): 357-363.
- . 2002. *Realizing Community: Concepts, Social Relationships and Sentiments* Psychology Press.
- Amit, Vered and Caroline Knowles. 2017. "Improvising and Navigating Mobilities: Tacking in Everyday Life." *Theory, Culture & Society* 34 (7-8): 165-179.
- Amit-Talai, Vered. 1994. "Urban Pathways: The Logistics of Youth Peer Relations." *Urban Lives: Fragmentation and Resistance*: 183-205.
- Anctil, P. 2011. "Reasonable Accommodation in the Canadian Legal Context: A Mechanism for Handling Diversity Or a Source of Tension?" In *Religion, Culture, and the State: Reflections on the Bouchard-Taylor Report*, edited by Howard Adelman and Pierre Anctil, 16-36: University of Toronto Press.
- Anderson, B. 2006 [1983]. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* Verso Books.
- Anwar, Muhammad. 1993. "Muslims in Britain Demographic and Social Characteristics." *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs Journal* 14 (1-2): 124-134.
- Asad, T. 1997. "Europe Against Islam: Islam in Europe." *The Muslim World* 87 (2): 183-195.
- . 2003. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* Stanford University Press.
- . 1990. "Multiculturalism and British Identity in the Wake of the Rushdie Affair." *Politics & Society* 18 (4): 455-480.
- Avant, Gayle R. and Karen Patrick Knutsen. 1993. "Understanding Cultural Differences: Janteloven and Social Conformity in Norway." *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*: 449-460.
- Bouchard, Gérard and Charles Taylor. 2008. *BUILDING THE FUTURE: A Time for Reconciliation, Abridged Report*: Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.
- Brubaker, R. 2004. *Ethnicity without Groups* Harvard University Press.

- . 2002. "Ethnicity without Groups." *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes De Sociologie* 43 (2): 163-189.
- Bullock, Katherine H. and Gul J. Jafri. 2000. "Media (Mis) Representations: Muslim Women in the Canadian Nation." *Canadian Woman Studies* 20 (2): 35.
- Certeau, Michel de. 2011 [1984]. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by S. F. Rendall University of California Press.
- Christiansen, C., M. Utas, and H. E. Vigh. 2006. "Introduction." In *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood: Social Becoming in an African Context*, edited by C. Christiansen, M. Utas and H. E. Vigh, 9-30. Uppsala: Nordiska afrikainstitutet.
- Cole, J. 2004. "Fresh Contact in Tamatave, Madagascar: Sex, Money, and Intergenerational Transformation." *American Ethnologist* 31 (4): 573-588.
- Cole, J. and D. L. Durham. 2008. "Introduction: Globalization and the Temporality of Children and Youth." In *Figuring the Future: Globalization and the Temporalities of Children and Youth*, edited by J. Cole and D. L. Durham, 3-24. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press.
- Dahl, Karen Margrethe and Vibeke Jakobsen. 2005. *Køn, Etnicitet Og Barrierer for Integration*. Copenhagen: The Danish National Centre for Social Research.
- Dalsgaard, Anne Line and Martin Demant Frederiksen. 2013. "Out of Conclusion: On Recurrence and Open-Endedness in Life and Analysis." *Social Analysis* 57 (1): 50.
- Dalsgaard, Steffen and Morten Nielsen. 2013. "Introduction: Time and the Field." *Social Analysis* 57 (1).
- Durham, D. 2008. "Disappearing Youth: Youth as a Social Shifter in Botswana." *American Ethnologist* 31 (4): 589-605.
- Dwyer, C. 1997. *Construction and Contestations of Islam: Questions of Identity for Young British Muslim Women*.
- . 1993. "Constructions of Muslim Identity and the Contesting of Power: The Debate Over Muslim Schools." *Constructions of Race, Place and Nation*: 143-159.
- Dwyer, C., B. Shah, and G. Sanghera. 2008. "'From Cricket Lover to Terror Suspect'—challenging Representations of Young British Muslim Men." *Gender, Place & Culture* 15 (2): 117-136.

- Ellis, Carolyn. 2007. "Telling Secrets, Revealing Lives: Relational Ethics in Research with Intimate Others." *Qualitative Inquiry* 13 (1): 3-29.
- Epstein, A. L. 1969. "The Network and Urban Social Organization." : 116-132.
- Esposito, John L. "2003 the Oxford Dictionary of Islam." .
- Fernando, Mayanthi L. 2010. "Reconfiguring Freedom: Muslim Piety and the Limits of Secular Law and Public Discourse in France." *American Ethnologist* 37 (1): 19-35.
- Fine, Michelle and Selcuk R. Sirin. 2008. *Muslim American Youth: Understanding Hyphenated Identities through Multiple Methods* NYU Press.
- Finnegan, R. 1989. *The Hidden Musicians: Music Making in an English Town*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fossum, John Erik. 2009. *The Ties that Bind: Accommodating Diversity in Canada and the European Union* Peter Lang.
- Franz, Barbara. 2007. "Europe's Muslim Youth: An Inquiry into the Politics of Discrimination, Relative Deprivation, and Identity Formation." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 18 (1): 89-112.
- Freiwald, B. T. 2011. "'Qui Est Nous?' some Answers from the Bouchard-Taylor Commission's Archive." In *Religion, Culture, and the State: Reflections on the Bouchard-Taylor Report*, edited by Howard Adelman and Pierre Anctil, 69-85: University of Toronto Press.
- Gilliam, Amy. 2005. "Det Er Os Der Laver Ballade: Etniske Minoritetsbørns Erfaringer i En Københavnsk Folkeskole." In *Lokale Liv, Fjerne Forbindelser. København*, edited by L. Gilliam, K. F. Olwig and K. Valentin, 57-78: Hans Reitzels Forlag.
- Glick Schiller, Nina and Ayse Çağlar. 2009. "Towards a Comparative Theory of Locality in Migration Studies: Migrant Incorporation and City Scale." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35 (2): 177-202.
- Gopal, Kusum. 2000. "Janteloven—modviljen Mod Forskellighed." *Tidsskriftet Antropologi* 42: 23-43.
- Goul, Jørgen Andersen. 2002. "Danskernes Holdninger Til Indvandrere. En Oversigt." *AMID, Institut for Historie, Internationale Studier Og Samfundsforhold*: 1-31.
- Grillo, Ralph D. 2003. "Cultural Essentialism and Cultural Anxiety." *Anthropological Theory* 3 (2): 157-173.

- Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson. 1992. "Beyond "culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference." *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (1): 6-23.
- Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck. 1999. "The Globalization of Islam: The Return of Muslims to the West." *The Oxford History of Islam*: 601-641.
- Hannerz, Ulf. 2010. "Anthropology's World." *Life in a Twenty-First-Century Discipline*. London: Pluto Press.
- . 2003. "Being there... and there... and there! Reflections on Multi-Site Ethnography." *Ethnography* 4 (2): 201-216.
- . 2012. *Foreign News: Exploring the World of Foreign Correspondents* University of Chicago Press.
- Hannerz, Ulf. 1996. *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places* Routledge.
- Henkel, Heiko. 2010. "Fundamentally Danish? the Muhammad Cartoon Crisis as Transitional Drama." *Human Architecture* 8 (2): 67.
- . 2007. "The Location of Islam: Inhabiting Istanbul in a Muslim Way." *American Ethnologist* 34 (1): 57-70.
- Hervik, Peter. 2004. "The Danish Cultural World of Unbridgeable Differences." *Ethnos* 69 (2): 247-267.
- . 2002. *Mediernes Muslimer: En Antropologisk Undersøgelse Af Mediernes Dækning Af Religioner i Danmark* Nævnet for etnisk ligestilling København.
- Hussain, Mustafa. 2000. "Islam, Media and Minorities in Denmark." *Current Sociology* 48 (4): 95-116.
- Ingold, T. and E. Hallam. 2007. "Creativity and Cultural Improvisation: An Introduction." In *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*, edited by T. Ingold and E. Hallam, 1-24: Berg.
- Jeldtoft, Nadia and Jørgen S. Nielsen. 2011. "Introduction: Methods in the Study of 'non-organized' Muslim Minorities." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34 (7): 1113-1119.
- Jenkins, Richard. 2011. *Being Danish: Paradoxes of Identity in Everyday Life* Museum Tusulanum Press.
- Jensen, Sune Qvotrup. 2007. "'Fremmed, Farlig Og Fræk'." *Unge Mænd Og Etnisk/Racial Andenhed-Mellem Modstand Og Stilisering*. Aalborg: SPIRIT PhD Series.

- Knowles, C. 2010. "Mobile Sociology." *The British Journal of Sociology* 61 (s1): 373-379.
- Knowles, C. 2011. "Cities on the Move: Navigating Urban Life." *City* 15: 135-153.
- Kublitz, Anja. 2010. "The Cartoon Controversy: Creating Muslims in a Danish Setting." *Social Analysis* 54 (3): 107.
- Langness, Lewis L. and Gelya Frank. 1981. "Methods." In *Lives. an Anthropological Approach to Biography*, 31-61. Novato: Chandler & Sharp.
- Larsen, Alex. 2000. "Etnisk Diskrimination, Ligestilling Og Integration På Arbejdsmarkedet." *Tidsskrift for Arbejdsliv* 2 (2): 67-83.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 1991 [1974]. *The Production of Space*. Translated by D. Nicholson-Smith. Vol. 34.
- Liep, John. 2001. *Locating Cultural Creativity* Pluto Press.
- Lynch, Kevin. 1960. *The Image of the City*. Vol. 11 MIT press.
- Maillé, C. and D. Salée. 2013. "Quebec, Secularism and Women's Rights: On Feminism and Bill 94." In *Revealing Democracy: Secularism and Religion in Liberal Democratic States*, edited by C. Maillé, G. Nielsen and D. Salée, 11-34: PIE Peter Lang.
- Maillé, Chantal, Greg Marc Nielsen, and Daniel Salée. 2013. *Revealing Democracy: Secularism and Religion in Liberal Democratic States* PIE Peter Lang.
- Maira, Sunaina. 2004. "Youth Culture, Citizenship and Globalization: South Asian Muslim Youth in the United States After September 11th." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24 (1): 219-231.
- Mannheim, K. 1970. "The Problem of Generations." *Psychoanalytic Review* 57 (3): 378-404.
- Marcus, George E. 1995. "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1): 95-117.
- Merry, Michael S. 2005. "Social Exclusion of Muslim Youth in Flemish-and French-Speaking Belgian Schools." *Comparative Education Review* 49 (1): 1-23.
- Nielsen, Jørgen S. 1992. *Islam, Muslims, and British Local and Central Government* Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations.
- Norton, Anne. 2013. *On the Muslim Question* Princeton University Press.

- O'Connor, P. 2010. "Everyday Hybridity and Hong Kong's Muslim Youth." *Visual Anthropology* 24 (1-2): 203-225.
- Olwig, Karen Fog and Karsten Pærregaard. 2011. "Introduction: "Strangers" in the Nation." In *The Question of Integration: Immigration, Exclusion and the Danish Welfare State*, edited by K. F. Olwig, 1-28: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, in press Newcastle.
- Olwig, K. F. 2007. *Caribbean Journeys: An Ethnography of Migration and Home in Three Family Networks* Duke University Press Books.
- Pedersen, Morten Axel. 2012. "A Day in the Cadillac: The Work of Hope in Urban Mongolia." *Social Analysis* 56 (2): 136-151.
- Peek, Lori. 2005. "Becoming Muslim: The Development of a Religious Identity." *Sociology of Religion* 66 (3): 215-242.
- Poynting, Scott and Victoria Mason. 2007. "The Resistible Rise of Islamophobia: Anti-Muslim Racism in the UK and Australia before 11 September 2001." *Journal of Sociology* 43 (1): 61-86.
- Prout, Sarah. 2008. *On the Move?: Indigenous Temporary Mobility Practices in Australia* Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research.
- Rostbøll, Christian F. 2010. "Indvandring, Offentlig Mening Og Politisk Teori." *Politik* 13 (2).
- Rytter, Mikkel and Marianne Holm Pedersen. 2014. "A Decade of Suspicion: Islam and Muslims in Denmark After 9/11." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37 (13): 2303-2321.
- Sandemose, Aksel. 1936. *A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks* AA Knopf.
- Schiller, Nina Glick, Ayşe Çağlar, and Thaddeus C. Guldbrandsen. 2006. "Beyond the Ethnic Lens: Locality, Globality, and Born-again Incorporation." *American Ethnologist* 33 (4): 612-633.
- Schmid, Christian. 2008. "Henri Lefebvre's Theory of the Production of Space: Towards a Three-Dimensional Dialectic." In *Space, Difference, Everyday Life*, 41-59: Routledge.
- Schmidt, G. 2004. "Islamic Identity Formation among Young Muslims: The Case of Denmark, Sweden and the United States." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 24 (1): 31-45.
- . 2011. "Understanding and Approaching Muslim Visibilities: Lessons Learned from a Fieldwork-Based Study of Muslims in Copenhagen." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34 (7): 1216-1229.

- Simmel, G. 1997. *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, edited by D. Frisby, M. Featherstone. Vol. 903 Sage Publications Ltd.
- Simonsen, Jørgen Bæk. 2004. *Islam Med Danske Øjne: Danskeres Syn På Islam Gennem 1000 År* Akademisk forlag.
- Sirin, Selcuk R. and Aida B. Balsano. 2007. "Editors' Introduction: Pathways to Identity and Positive Development among Muslim Youth in the West." *Applied Development Science* 11 (3): 109-111.
- Tönnies, F. 2002 [1887]. *Community and Society (Gemeinschaft Und Gesellschaft)*., edited by C. P. Loomis. New York: Dover.
- Urry, J. 2007. *Mobilities* Polity Pr.
- Vertovec, Steven and Alisdair Rogers. 1998. *Muslim European Youth: Reproducing Ethnicity, Religion, Culture* Ashgate Publishing.
- Vigh, Henrik. 2009. "Motion Squared: A Second Look at the Concept of Social Navigation." *Anthropological Theory* 9 (4): 419-438.
- Werbner, Pnina. 1999. "Global Pathways. Working Class Cosmopolitans and the Creation of Transnational Ethnic Worlds." *Social Anthropology* 7 (1): 17-35.
- . 1991. "Shattered Bridges: The Dialectics of Progress and Alienation among British Muslims." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 17 (3): 331-346.
- Willis, Paul. 1981 [1977]. *Learning to Labour*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Zine, Jasmin. 2012. *Islam in the Hinterlands: Muslim Cultural Politics in Canada* UBC Press.
- . 2002. "Muslim Women and the Politics of Representation." *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 19 (4): 1-22.
- . 2001. "Muslim Youth in Canadian Schools: Education and the Politics of Religious Identity." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 32 (4): 399-423.