

‘MADE a Difference?’ – British Muslim Youth and Faith-Inspired
Activism between ‘Post-Conventional Politics’, ‘Post-Secularity’, and
‘Post-Immigration Difference’

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Abstract

How do young British Muslims understand their political subjectivity and operationalize their agency? How are they mobilized by UK-based Muslim activist organizations? And how can these questions inform broader debates about the Muslim presence in the British and European public spheres? These are the questions that this paper explores through an analysis of the case-study ‘MADE in Europe’, a youth-led, British Muslim faith-based organization concerned with issues of socio-environmental justice. Acknowledging the complexity of the relationship between religious commitment, social practice, and civic engagement, the paper adopts an analytical approach that attempts to move the debate on Muslim activism beyond crises narratives and reified categories. Through a contextualization within larger trends such as ‘post-conventional politics’, ‘post-secularity’, and ‘post-immigration difference’, the paper argues that the type of political subjectivity and agency expressed by MADE can signal a broader shift in the basis and nature of the presence of young Muslims in the UK¹.

Introduction

Young Muslims in the UK and Europe have increasingly become the focus of public debates in recent years, with intense attention focusing on themes such as belonging, values, ‘integration’, and participation in mainstream political and civic life. Exacerbated by concerns about security and prevention, the discourse has been dominated by “crisis narratives about disengagement, disaffection or extremism”²⁸⁹ that divert attention from forms of agency in which young Muslims *do* engage constructively with the public sphere and the political.²⁹⁰ As a result, little is known about how young Muslims understand their political subjectivity, whether they operationalize it through distinctive forms of agency, and about the *modi operandi* of UK-based Muslim activist organizations.²⁹¹

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On the methodological level, such a gap seems to be determined by “too little investment in understanding the complexity of the linkages between religious commitment, social practice and civic engagement.”²⁹² For this reason, the paper adopts a more differentiated approach that attempts to move the analysis beyond reified categories by contextualizing the specificity of a case-study (the faith-based Muslim organization ‘MADE in Europe’) against the broader background of three concepts/phenomena that somehow seem to characterize our era: ‘post-conventional politics’, ‘post-secularity’, and ‘post-immigration difference’. Exploring key material from the case-study, the paper contributes a broader picture of young British Muslims’ faith-based activism, and it presents some observations about the role and relevance of this particular faith-based organization for understanding broader dynamics of growth, maturation, and indigenization of the Muslim presence in the UK and Europe.

A Peculiar Convergence: ‘Post-Conventional Politics’, ‘Post-Secularity’, and ‘Post-Immigration Difference’

Faith-based Muslim activism in the UK and Europe takes place at a peculiar convergence between (at least) three facets of ‘post-’ that seem characteristic of our era: ‘post-conventional politics’, ‘post-secularity’, and ‘post-immigration difference’. This section outlines how appreciating the overlapping of such facets is essential to contextualize current reconfigurations of Muslims’ political subjectivity and agency.

Post-conventional politics

The turn of the century has witnessed the rise and proliferation of new forms of political subjectivity and agency across the globe. Once confined within the boundaries defined by the nation-state, party-politics, representative democracy and its institutions, the arena of what today constitutes ‘the political’ has considerably expanded as new understandings of and relationships between culture, identity, and citizenship have determined the normalization of the ‘post-conventional politics’ that emerged throughout the latter third of the 20th century.²⁹³

Articulating flexible and heterogeneous identities, political subjectivities in the current era are less ideological, programmatic, and collectivist than earlier forms, and their agency is articulated through more fluid, personalized, and *ad hoc* forms of expression concerned with *both* economic and cultural

dimensions.²⁹⁴ The “‘new, new’ movements”²⁹⁵ that characterize today’s “social movement society”²⁹⁶ seem then to express an “era of social justice activism” articulated through a “movement environment of large-scale direct activism, multi-issue networks, and untidy “permanent” campaigns.”²⁹⁷

Indeed, the consolidation of post-conventional modes of civic engagement in the current era is particularly relevant to young British Muslims not only as an alternative to the often “exclusionary norms and practices within mainstream political arenas,”²⁹⁸ but also as the expression of a new understanding of the relationship between identity, activism, and citizenship that shifts its terrain from national to global, and increasingly becomes related to cultural and moral rights and duties.

A renewed salience of the moral and religious dimensions in framing identity politics,²⁹⁹ in particular, raises important questions for the study of activism among young British Muslims and represents the core of the next facet of ‘post-’ discussed here: ‘post-secularity’.

Post-secularity

The discourse on post-secularity³⁰⁰ is important to inform the study of faith-based Muslim activism on two levels. On the one hand, a reference to post-secularity indicates a focus on the observed shift towards religious (as distinct from ethnic) identities among young people of minority ethnic heritage in general, and among young Muslims more specifically.³⁰¹ Questioning the assumption that “personal agency must necessarily be based on a secular, rational, and liberal individualist model,”³⁰² an analysis informed by post-secularity therefore looks at the fluid relation between faith-based/religious identity and social action, and contextualizes it against the interplay between the “religious, humanist, and secularist positionalities” of actors populating the “secularized social structures of modern late capitalism.”³⁰³

On the other hand, the post-secular blurring of conceptual boundaries between the private and the public is significant in light of the increasing presence of Muslims in the public sphere. Often concerned with the construction of ‘Muslim public spaces’ that incorporate faith-based elements, the Muslim presence (and, even more so, Muslim agency) challenges the “rigid dichotomy between the private and public spheres”³⁰⁴ traditionally endorsed by European society, and it highlights how the latter still has to “adjust itself

to the continued existence of religious communities in an increasingly secularized environment.”³⁰⁵ From this perspective, post-secularity can be thought of as a hybrid space where a “balance between shared citizenship and cultural difference”³⁰⁶ is possible.

Indeed, the fluid relation between sameness and difference is closely linked also to the third facet of ‘post-’ discussed here: ‘post-immigration difference’.

Post-immigration difference

Debates around Muslims in the UK and Europe often unfold within two kinds of broader themes: the cultural-centered debate about ‘British or European vs. Muslim identity/values’; and the societal-focused debate about adaptation-integration-multiculturalism. Both themes are, in fact, two sides of the same coin: an attempt to conceptualize ‘post-immigration difference’ and consequently operationalize ‘other-ing’ on the basis of that difference.³⁰⁷

The ‘post-’ of post-immigration difference thus refers to the acknowledgment that the diasporic dimension of the Muslim presence in Europe and Britain is increasingly becoming inadequate to represent alone minority-majority relations which today have less to do with migration than with the specifically European/British Muslim dimension of second and third generation Muslims (and indigenous European Muslims).³⁰⁸ The ‘difference’ of post-immigration difference, then, refers to how people from minorities (in this paper, young British Muslims) identify themselves, how they identify others, and how they are identified by others.³⁰⁹ The differences at issue are “those perceived both by outsiders or group members – from the outside in and from the inside out,”³¹⁰ and they can be located in the range of possibilities between positive distinctiveness and negative alienness.

Post-immigration difference as a whole therefore expresses the fact that as “Islam increasingly represents the internal religious other in Europe,”³¹¹ British and European Muslims are often still thought of as ‘the Other.’ Yet, they differ from Muslims who migrated to Europe and therefore represented the ‘external Other’: “an other of Europe from within Europe,”³¹² the British/European Muslim is the ‘internal Other’ same but not quite; different, but also similar.

The convergence of post-conventional politics, post-secularity, and post-immigration difference shapes the political subjectivity and agency of young British Muslims in the current era. The next two sections outline how these

are being reconfigured through the faith-based Muslim organization MADE in Europe (MADE).

A ‘Muslim Youth Movement’ (?)

In order to understand MADE’s relevance within broader debates on British Muslim political subjectivity and agency, it is essential to focus on how this organisation frames itself as a *movement*.

MADE consistently articulates its discourse using references to the idea of ‘movement’, and it regularly utilises the vocabulary associated with this concept both at a macro- and a micro-levels. On the macro-level (i.e., in answering the quintessential question: ‘*What is MADE?*’), the idea of movement plays a pivotal role in characterising the organisation through a discourse populated by statements that either equate MADE with a movement, or highlight the movement-like nature of its mission. From this quintessential perspective, MADE is a “Muslim-led movement of young people who want to see our [British Muslim] community leading the fight against global poverty and injustice;”³¹³ it is an organisation which aims to mobilize a grassroots “Muslim youth movement of faith in action.”³¹⁴

The predominance enjoyed by the idea of movement is also paralleled on the micro-level (i.e., in answering the pragmatic question: ‘*What does MADE do?*’), as MADE consistently applies the vocabulary associated with this idea to articulate virtually all of its projects. Thus, for example, MADE’s “flagship campaign”³¹⁵ on maternal health (‘At Our Mothers’ Feet’³¹⁶), is described as one through which MADE “worked closely with UK Muslim leaders, scholars and communities to build a movement of grassroots support for UK Muslim NGOs to incorporate maternal health into their programme work,”³¹⁷ and thanks to which “[t]he movement for maternal health in the UK Muslim community has well and truly begun!”³¹⁸ Similarly, MADE’s environmentalist advocacy (‘Green Up My Community!’ campaign) is described as aiming “to inspire a new pan-European Green Muslim Youth movement”³¹⁹ in order to get “Muslim institutions – particularly our mosques – at the forefront of the environmental movement, preaching green from the pulpit and demonstrating eco-consciousness in everything they do.”³²⁰ Again, MADE’s campaign on workers’ rights (‘Every Garment Has A Name’³²¹) is framed as a “movement (...) to ensure garment workers’ rights,”³²² and the support for Palestinian farmers (‘#BuyPalestinian’³²³) is articulated as an expression of

MADE's efforts to contribute towards "building a fairtrade movement (...) in Palestine"³²⁴ in order to "support the Palestinian cause and stand up against injustice and oppression (...) through our purchasing power."³²⁵

At a complementary level, the movement-related vocabulary is also adopted to articulate MADE's efforts in partnership with other organisations. Thus, for example, the day MADE took part in an inter-faith initiative to form the 'Christian-Muslim Youth Forum on Climate Change'³²⁶ is seen as a "day [that] saw a new movement of young people of faith coming together as part of a global movement (...) as stewards of the earth and [*sic*] demand that more is done to tackle climate change."³²⁷ Similarly, MADE's adoption of the internationally-known charitable challenge 'Live Below the Line'³²⁸ is described as a way to offer young British Muslims the possibility to "help build a movement of passionate people who want to change the way we think about extreme poverty."³²⁹ Again, the 2013 'Enough Food for Everyone, IF' campaign³³⁰ is referred to as "truly a historic movement" to "end global hunger" a movement which "young Muslims can and must be at the forefront of."³³¹

Finally, MADE's efforts in framing itself as a movement do not end with the articulation of its own discourse and projects. Indeed, MADE also attempts to consolidate the credibility of its image as a movement through relevant frame articulators (both internals, and externals) that publically endorse such a framing.³³² For example, young people who have volunteered for MADE in different capacities (i.e., internals) reinforce the idea of MADE as a movement by expressing the sentiment of 'feeling part of a growing movement':

"I feel part of a solution and part of a movement to educate and address important issues that we have in this unequal world. (...) We can do so much. My first step towards a solution is through volunteering with MADE in Europe, so that I feel part of the movement and solution to this extreme poverty."³³³

"The movement is growing and more and more people are coming on board. Don't let the train leave before jumping on – you won't regret it!"³³⁴

Additionally, authoritative frame articulators from both Muslim and mainstream development organisations (i.e., externals), consolidate the idea of MADE as a movement by expressing comments such as the following:

"MADE in Europe is a very good initiative. It should be seen as more than just an organisation - it is a movement. I really believe in volunteerism and the power of the youth."³³⁵

“Muslim communities in the UK have a vital role to play in challenging the inequality and injustices around the world. (...) We are pleased that MADE in Europe is taking a leading role in mobilising grassroots action.”³³⁶

Considered altogether, the aforementioned evidence highlights that MADE strategically commits a lot of efforts into building and consolidating its reputation as a movement (rather than as a faith-based organization). The question that this paper raises is: what does this tell us about the relationship between MADE and current reconfigurations of young British Muslims’ understanding of political subjectivity and agency?

MADE’s self-ascribed identity as a movement seems to indicate a political subjectivity and a operationalization of agency which – similarly to social movements – fluidly shift across the spectrum of possibilities within the arena of the political. The task of assessing whether MADE really represents a movement is well beyond the scope of this paper – indeed, it remains a difficult task and the subject of intense debates defining what exactly a movement is, and what its relations with NGOs are.³³⁷ However, it is important here to highlight that insofar as advocacy-based NGOs like MADE are actively involved in awareness-raising activities (i.e.: in the process known as ‘conscientization’³³⁸), they do play a key role in either developing or sustaining movements by “encouraging the right type of atmosphere for mobilization around pressing issues.”³³⁹ In light of this, MADE shares with a social movement the potential to mobilize young British Muslims (and other actors of British Muslim civil society) on the basis of shared (or partially shared) values, around specific issues, and through extra-institutional tactics.

The next section highlights how MADE engages in such mobilizing efforts on multiple yet interconnected dimensions, with the goal to prompt a specific change of consciousness whilst resisting something (policies, systems, or specific lifestyles).

Distinctiveness Beyond Dichotomies

Among the publically available material produced by MADE, the video ‘*Intro to MADE in Europe*’³⁴⁰ represents an archetype of how the organization understands and articulates its political subjectivity and agency, and is therefore analyzed here as an emblematic case-study.

Throughout the first half of the video, MADE contextualizes the target of its

mobilizing efforts (the “average Muslim”³⁴¹) within a mainstream, secular, public sphere characterized by a cultural norm which is largely oblivious to the moral questions surrounding ordinary and seemingly harmless actions. Part and parcel of such a norm, the average Muslim engages in a mainstream, secular, public lifestyle which is shared with much of the rest of British society as an epitome of the Global North.³⁴² In doing so, he shares and perpetuates a system of production-consumption that MADE characterizes as being based on excesses, cruelty, and harm both towards fellow humans, animals, and the environment.

Halfway through the video, the average Muslim’s ride to the mosque signals a transition from a mainstream, secular, public dimension to a more distinctive, religious, and private one. Whilst so far the video highlighted the negative connotations of the average Muslim’s behavior as a member of mainstream British society, it is precisely on the level of his distinctive religious identity as a Muslim that the ethical short-sightedness seems to reach a climax. In a very symbolic way, it is through one of the acts of social responsibility that most emblematically stand as a marker of Muslim religious agency and identity (i.e.: charity-giving) that the average Muslim discloses a sense of moral contentment which MADE criticizes as oblivious, at best, and as self-contradictory, at worst. While charity-giving seems to represent a satisfactory enough form of agency for the average Muslim (who “has always felt that he has done his part”³⁴³), this is not the case for MADE.

Clearly, MADE is critical of both the lifestyle and the understanding of faith-based agency endorsed by the average Muslim, and it identifies the Mosque as the potential epicenter of his ethical inconsistencies. However, it also acknowledges the potential indeed, it could be read between the lines, the duty for the Mosque to be a fundamental conscientizing platform.

In fact, it is precisely in the Mosque that the ‘old’ average Muslim undergoes an internal reformative process, a change of consciousness that drives a transformation into the ‘new’ average Muslim. Such a conscientization is accompanied by a radical change in the way the average Muslim perceives the ‘inside-the-mosque’ sphere vs the ‘outside-the-mosque’ spheres. The apparent separation of these two dimensions (which seems to symbolize a mistakenly assumed dichotomy between the ‘secular-public’ vs the ‘religious-private’), is gently but firmly dissolved by the conscientizing wind represented by the words of a Prophetic saying. Through its transformative capacity, the

Prophetic message symbolically transmutes the Mosque's pillars into trees and its floor into grass, disclosing a continuum between different spheres (inside-outside; private-public; distinctive-mainstream) that was earlier unknown to the average Muslim. Only now, from the height of a conscientized viewpoint rooted in faith, the 'new' average Muslim can finally appreciate the interconnectedness between belief and praxis, 'religious' and 'secular', 'private' and 'public' only now he "realises the changes he needs to make."³⁴⁴

The video therefore suggests that the worldview advocated by MADE emphatically links faith and action by blurring the traditional European boundaries between 'the private' and 'the public'. The new average Muslim not only adopts a faith-informed *private* lifestyle based on ethical consumption and 'green' habits, but also becomes a *public* faith-inspired activist: the personal *is* political, and the mobilized Muslim becomes a member of the movement of "Muslims leading the fight against poverty, injustice, and environmental damage by raising awareness and campaigning for change."³⁴⁵ Importantly, the video not only strongly suggests that MADE understands the 'mainstream-secular-public' and the 'distinctive-religious-private' as overlapping dimensions of the same continuum of Muslim agency and identity. Crucially, it also sketches how MADE consistently applies this perspective in its mobilizing efforts.

Indeed, a fluid relationship between spheres can be appreciated throughout MADE's effort to negotiate a shared understanding of what is in need of change (diagnostic framing); what alternative roadmap needs to be adopted (prognostic framing); and why the call to join the movement is urgent (motivational framing).³⁴⁶

In its diagnostic framing, MADE conceptualizes two main problematic conditions. In the 'mainstream-secular-public' sphere, the problem is an unjust and cruel system of production-consumption imposed and perpetuated by the very Global North of which MADE and British Muslims are part and parcel. As a development organization, MADE highlights the negative nature of 'mainstream-secular-public' issues such as over-consumption, poor working conditions, and pollution. On the other hand, in the 'distinctive-religious-private' sphere, the problem is reducing the meaning of 'being a Muslim' to a matter of superficial ritual observation drained of ethics. As a faith-based Muslim organization, MADE highlights

what it perceives to be the average Muslim's inadequacy of putting into practice the Islamic ethics of socio-environmental responsibility. In both cases (secular and religious), this is a critique 'from within'. It is by emphasizing routine behaviors that are likely to be shared by most Britons that MADE prompts British Muslims to undertake a critical self-examination as members of a shared Global North. And it is by mentioning Islamic references that are likely to be familiar to most Muslims that MADE prompts British Muslims to undertake a critical self-examination as members of a distinctive faith community.

In its prognostic framing, MADE raises the question: is charity-giving enough? The answer is a negative one on two levels. As a development organization, MADE criticizes the possibility that the solution can be limited to financially supporting relief work or development projects through charity-giving. Rather, what is needed is a complete change of consciousness and behaviour that must be translated into everyday ethical choices and actions a macro-theory of change which MADE as a faith-based organization consistently articulates through the use of the Qur'anic principle that "Allah will not change the condition of a people, until they change what is in themselves" (Qur'an 13:11).³⁴⁷ Critiquing an understanding of faith-based agency which is restricted to charity-giving, MADE as a movement in the era of 'new, new' social movements calls for a holistic, fluid approach to agency, and it does so from a faith-based perspective: "Islam advocates for more than just giving to charity" and British Muslims "are called upon as citizens, people of faith and as human beings, to stand up and take action."³⁴⁸ Indeed, MADE advocates a solution which is not uniquely Muslim in its outer manifestation in the public sphere and therefore can be (and in fact, is) shared with both secular and other faiths-based organizations and movements. In MADE's narrative, an ethical lifestyle and advocacy-based activism constitute a shared platform for civic engagement by virtue of not being exclusively faith-based. However, MADE also clearly frames the 'Muslim-ness' of such a solution. Firstly, by quoting the Qur'an and Prophetic sayings, MADE articulates the solutions as organically stemming primarily from an Islamic frame of reference. Secondly, by characterizing its call to action as "inspired by the teachings of the greatest activist of all time: Prophet Muhammad (PBUH),"³⁴⁹ MADE identifies the ultimate rationale for taking action as belonging to the realm of faith.

Finally, MADE engages both the 'mainstream-secular-public' and the

‘distinctive-religious-private’ in its motivational framing, too. On the one hand, MADE aims to motivate British Muslims as members of the Global North by anchoring its own narrative to an empirically credible set of facts that stand as evidences ‘from out there, in the real world’. Further to this, recognizing that British Muslims (as other members of the Global North) might perceive certain issues as remote (‘there’, in the Global South), MADE aims to build salience by bringing the issues back home through an emphasis on their link to the local context (‘here’, in the UK).³⁵⁰ On the other hand, MADE’s approach to motivating British Muslims as members of a community of faith is two-pronged. Firstly, MADE emphasizes its narrative’s fidelity and centrality within the Islamic framework by intentionally framing the call to action from a faith-based perspective mainly through the use of short quotes from the Qur’an or Prophetic sayings that could reiterate its ethical-activist message.³⁵¹ Symbolically, it is precisely through a Friday sermon (on the Islamic principle of being stewards of the Earth) that the average Muslim of the case-study video is conscientized. Indeed, despite the clear overcoming of hermetic dichotomies between multiple dimensions of identity, the ultimate motive of MADE’s call to action is rooted in faith. Whilst the outer manifestation of MADE’s political agency is agreeable to like-minded sectors of mainstream society, the urgency of its inner motivation stems from a specific, subjective religious identity. That is why taking action “is not the responsibility of others. As Muslims, the fight against poverty and injustice starts with you!”³⁵²

Conclusions

In an era in which post-conventional politics, post-secularity, and post-immigration difference seem to converge, the political subjectivity and agency of British Muslim youth is progressively being reconfigured. MADE as a case study informs our understanding of such dynamics on two main levels.

On the one hand, MADE is symbolic of the fact that, as recent research suggests, young British Muslims “are active and engaged, and particularly in issues that concern wider society or that impact upon a broad sense of social justice.”³⁵³ Facing a leadership crisis both in the mainstream and Muslim spheres, and with limited prospects for effective participation in formal political processes except through the domineering framework of security and prevention, the British Muslim youth exemplified by MADE are seeking alternative arenas and modes of engagement in the arena of post-conventional

politics. Developing creative ways to express their “considerable and healthy appetite for a spectrum of dissent and activism,”³⁵⁴ MADE’s activists express a type of agency that is typical of the era of ‘new, new’ social movements that is, one committed “to living differently now, as opposed to programmatic or linear attempts to shape the future.”³⁵⁵

Indeed, MADE’s alignment (whether real or self-ascribed) with the ‘new, new’ social movement-type activism represents a different way to understand Muslims’ political subjectivity and agency in the UK and Europe. Moving beyond the reactive mode that characterized (and, to a certain extent, still characterizes) much of Muslim activism throughout the last two decades of the 20th century,³⁵⁶ MADE adopts a proactive approach that is not determined exclusively or mainly by need or crises, but rather by personal interests and lifestyles. Incorporating movement-like, informal, diverse modes of direct activism framed loosely around issues of socio-environmental justice, MADE is an expression of how commitment to religious values can determine specific orientations in the everyday politics of lifestyle actions concerned not only with Muslim-centric issues, but rather based on a much broader understandings of justice and the common good.³⁵⁷

In a post-secular environment where young British Muslims increasingly consider their faith as a crucial inspirational element for activism,³⁵⁸ MADE as a faith-based organization clearly attempts “to revitalise the [Muslim] tradition’s argumentative and symbolic resources.”³⁵⁹ Yet, in its framing of the solutions within an Islamic discourse, MADE expresses a political subjectivity that is far from sloganeering, and rather develops complex forms of interaction between “‘Western’ and ‘Muslim’ cultural and normative assets.”³⁶⁰ Advocating moral and ethical values rooted in faith, MADE seems to “demand, though in different guises, the ‘return’ to a Muslim way of life.”³⁶¹ At the same time, by attempting to provide a model of possible faith-based activism in a shared public sphere, MADE’s work is intimately connected with an understanding of political subjectivity and agency that acknowledges distinctiveness while allowing the possibility of overlapping spaces. Indeed, in its navigating between multiple spheres, MADE represents both a “faith-based charitable or development” organization and “a faith-based socio-political” organization.³⁶² Similarly to the former, it raises awareness of socio-environmental injustice among young Muslims and mobilizes them in support of development causes. Like the latter, it mobilizes Muslims on the basis of faith-based identities in pursuit of broader objectives located in the

area of public policy debates concerned with international development and a broad sense of socio-environmental justice.

On the other hand, the kind of political subjectivity and agency expressed by MADE also reflects and determines a specific understanding of the relationship between majority/minority an understanding that shapes the nature and modes of ‘integration’ at the levels of both personal identity formation and collective action.

Often “caught in the dilemma of being recognised as a legitimate minority culture, while escaping the predicament of being a minority to watch and monitor, continuously needing to prove its loyalty,”³⁶³ the section of British Muslim youth represented by MADE seems to understand its relationship with mainstream society in a way which transcends watertight dichotomies and overcomes forms of passive disaffection and ‘minority consciousness’. In a complex landscape where most young British Muslims seem to prioritize the label of ‘Muslim’ above that of ‘British’ whilst simultaneously feeling “that they strongly belong to Britain,”³⁶⁴ MADE’s activists blend a strong sense of ‘Britishness’ with the self-consciousness of belonging to a distinctive faith community.

Indeed, the evidence discussed in this paper highlights how MADE’s articulation of a distinctive faith-based perspective and the identification of Islam as the ultimate motive underpinning agency run alongside a strong sense of belonging to the mainstream. In this blurring of dichotomies, it could be argued that MADE represents a platform concerned with creating a political space for the articulation of multiple identities that “do not dilute essential components but revitalise them through their contacts or conflicts with other elements of identity.”³⁶⁵ Insofar as the internal pluralizing of identities “is essential to an integration in which all citizens have not just rights but a sense of belonging to the whole, as well as to their own group,”³⁶⁶ MADE is not only the expression of a new type of identity politics among second and third generation Muslims concerned with authenticity and belonging to multiple spheres. It also represents an indirect challenge to the power relation underlying current understandings of ‘integration’. Far from demanding to be merely tolerated, the young British Muslims of MADE seem to claim to be accepted as an equal partner in the public (civic and politic) arena a demand for recognition that is rooted in a desire for participation as members of society, rather than as members of a minority. This “call for hybridising the

notion of the public sphere³⁶⁷ expresses a redefinition not only of Muslim political subjectivity but also of the spaces where that can be manifested in agency through an approach that “challenges the idea of the mere coexistence between abstract, mutually aseptic others as members of a pre-established game.”³⁶⁸ Such an effort can be read as MADE’s determination to challenge ‘other-ing’ in its worst connotation (i.e., that based on a ‘negative difference’ articulated through “alienness, inferiorisation, stigmatisation, stereotyping, exclusion, discrimination and racism”³⁶⁹) and affirm a ‘positive difference’ based on the senses of identity and distinctiveness that a section of young British Muslims have of themselves.³⁷⁰

In conclusion, then, the relevance of MADE as a case-study lies not only in its potential to support young British Muslims to maintain and develop their faith-based identity and agency in constructive ways. It also lies in its conceptualization of a minority-majority relationship that sees Muslims no longer as the ‘other’, the ‘exotic’ or the ‘oriental’, but as the local and the indigenous.³⁷¹ Indeed, by challenging the stereotype of Muslims in Europe as an alien community whilst simultaneously retaining a distinctive Muslim identity, MADE can play a pivotal role in reconfiguring the public sphere “on the basis of a notion of intercultural civility.”³⁷² Such a reconfiguration “would make obsolete the much-cherished and much-criticised goal of a cultural ‘integration’ of Muslims in Europe”³⁷³ and rather promote the emergence of a ‘post-integration era’³⁷⁴ that can benefit not only Muslims but also the “long-term vitality of European polities”³⁷⁵ to the extent that they are willing and capable of acknowledging and appreciating the Muslim presence on the basis of the delicate balance between sameness and difference.

²⁸⁹ Therese O’Toole and Richard Gale, “Contemporary Grammars of Political Action among Ethnic Minority Young Activists,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): 126.

²⁹⁰ For the purposes of this paper, I use a broad conception of both the terms ‘political’ and ‘agency’. As it will become clear in the course of the paper, both are contextualised within a larger environment of ‘post-conventional politics’ that include non-institutional targets, tactics of action, and forms of agency. In particular, in this paper I utilize the concept of ‘political subjectivity’ to express how identity (and, in particular, its religious dimension) shapes the understanding of the political and of political activity; and I use the concept of ‘agency’ to mean a type of more or less organized/collective action in the public realm that reflects a concern and an engagement with social, political, and public policies and debates.

²⁹¹ O’Toole and Gale, “Contemporary Grammars of Political Action among Ethnic Minority Young Activists,” 127–128; Mohammed Ralf Kroessin, *Mapping UK Muslim Development NGOs* (Birmingham: International Development Dept., University of Birmingham, 2009), 3.

²⁹² Richard Gale, “Muslim Youth, Faith-Based Activism and ‘Social Capital’: A Response to Annette,” *Ethnicities* 11, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 402.

²⁹³ Ingolfur Blühdorn, “Self-Experience in the Theme Park of Radical Action? Social Movements and Political Articulation in the Late-Modern Condition,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 9, no. 1 (February 1, 2006): 24; David S. Meyer and Sidney G. Tarrow, *The Social Movement Society: Contentious Politics for a New Century* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1998); Claus Offe, “New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics,” *Social Research* 52, no. 4 (December 1, 1985): 817–68; Kevin McDonald, *Global Movements: Action and Culture* (Wiley, 2006). The first move towards a type of agency which is articulated

through extra-institutional channels is usually identified with the ‘new social movements’ emerged in the increasingly post-industrial Western societies of the 1960-70s. Based on the notion that ‘the personal *is* political’, the new social movements emphasized identity-based criteria (e.g. age, gender, culture, lifestyle, ethnicity, etc.) and started to engage the political outside of traditional norms. The shift towards the terrain of culture and lifestyles, and the advocacy for more collective or intangible goods represented the emergence of a form of post-conventional politics which later become known as ‘identity politics’. Space restriction forces me to remain at the level of generalities of this complex issue. For useful reviews on the themes of the salience of ‘identity’ and ‘culture’ among new and contemporary social movements, see: Mary Bernstein, “Identity Politics,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 31 (January 1, 2005): 47–74; Kate Nash, “The ‘Cultural Turn’ in Social Theory: Towards a Theory of Cultural Politics,” *Sociology* 35, no. 1 (February 1, 2001): 77–92.

²⁹⁴ Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Cornell University Press, 2014); Michel Wieviorka, “After New Social Movements,” *Social Movement Studies* 4, no. 1 (May 1, 2005): 1–19; Jacqueline Kennelly, *Citizen Youth: Culture, Activism, and Agency in a Neoliberal Era* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Carles Feixa, Inês Pereira, and Jeffrey S. Juris, “Global Citizenship and the ‘New, New’ Social Movements Iberian Connections,” *Young* 17, no. 4 (November 1, 2009): 421–42; McDonald, *Global Movements*; Lauren Langman, “Occupy: A New New Social Movement,” *Current Sociology* 61, no. 4 (July 1, 2013): 510–24; Blühdorn, “Self-Experience in the Theme Park of Radical Action?”; Meyer and Tarrow, *The Social Movement Society*; Donatella Della Porta and Sidney G. Tarrow, *Transnational Protest and Global Activism* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

²⁹⁵ Feixa, Pereira, and Juris, “Global Citizenship and the ‘New, New’ Social Movements Iberian Connections,” 423.

²⁹⁶ Meyer and Tarrow, *The Social Movement Society*.

²⁹⁷ W. Lance Bennett, “Social Movements beyond Borders: Organization, Communication, and Political Capacity in Two Eras of Transnational Activism,” in *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*, ed. Donatella Della Porta and Sidney G. Tarrow (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 212.

²⁹⁸ O’Toole and Gale, “Contemporary Grammars of Political Action among Ethnic Minority Young Activists,” 132.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 129; 137–138.

³⁰⁰ Characterized by a sheer variety of meanings attached to the term and by tensions (sometimes incompatibilities) between some of them, the discourse on ‘post-secularity’ seems to be “shot through with uncertainty about the question of whether it refers to a concept or a reality.” [James A. Beckford, “SSSR Presidential Address Public Religions and the Postsecular: Critical Reflections,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 13]. Yet, despite the possibility that post-secularity might refer more to an intellectual artefact than a real phenomenon, the concept is utilized here to refer to the objective growing visibility of religions in general, and Islam more specifically in the public sphere of European and British society.

- ³⁰¹ O’Toole and Gale, “Contemporary Grammars of Political Action among Ethnic Minority Young Activists,” 137.
- ³⁰² Beckford, “SSSR Presidential Address Public Religions and the Postsecular,” 4.
- ³⁰³ Beaumont, Justin, “Transcending the Particular in Postsecular Cities,” in *Exploring the Postsecular: The Religious, the Political, and the Urban*, ed. Arie Molendijk, Justin Beaumont, and Christoph Jedan (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2010), 6.
- ³⁰⁴ Armando Salvatore, “Making Public Space: Opportunities and Limits of Collective Action Among Muslims in Europe,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30, no. 5 (September 1, 2004): 1025.
- ³⁰⁵ Jürgen Habermas, “Notes on Post-Secular Society,” *New Perspectives Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (September 1, 2008): 19.
- ³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.
- ³⁰⁷ Badredine Arfi, “‘Euro-Islam’: Going Beyond the Aporiatic Politics of Othering1,” *International Political Sociology* 4, no. 3 (September 1, 2010): 236–52; Tariq Modood, “Post-Immigration ‘Difference’ and Integration: The Case of Muslims in Western Europe,” *New Paradigms in Public Policy* (British Academy Policy Centre, 2012).
- ³⁰⁸ This applies particularly to nations such as the UK, where migration happened mainly in the third quarter of the twentieth century.
- ³⁰⁹ Modood, “Post-Immigration ‘Difference’ and Integration: The Case of Muslims in Western Europe,” 25.
- ³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.
- ³¹¹ Salvatore, “Making Public Space,” 1027.
- ³¹² Arfi, “‘Euro-Islam,’” 236.
- ³¹³ “WHAT WE DO” MADE in Europe Website, ‘About’ section, accessed May 27, 2014. <https://www.madeineurope.org.uk/about>.
- ³¹⁴ MADE in Europe, “MADE in Europe. Annual Review 2009/2010” (London: MADE in Europe, 2010), sec. Mission2022011; MADE in Europe, “MADE in Europe. Annual Report 2010/2011” (London: MADE in Europe, 2011), sec. Mission; MADE in Europe, “MADE in Europe. Annual Report 2011/2012” (London: MADE in Europe, 2012), sec. Mission.
- ³¹⁵ MADE in Europe, “MADE in Europe. Annual Report 2012/2013” (London: MADE in Europe, 2013), 6.
- ³¹⁶ MADE’s longest campaign so far, lasting 3 years, from 2011 to 2013
- ³¹⁷ MADE in Europe, “NGO Resource Pack. Top 20 Global Maternal Health Interventions” (London: MADE in Europe, 2012), sec. Introduction. About At Our Mothers’ Feet. .
- ³¹⁸ “AT OUR MOTHERS’ FEET” MADE in Europe Website, ‘Campaign Success Stories’ section, <https://www.madeineurope.org.uk/campaign/past/aomfsuccess> (accessed 27 May 2014).
- ³¹⁹ “”GREEN UP MY COMMUNITY”” MADE in Europe Website, ‘Latest News’ section, <https://www.madeineurope.org.uk/updates/news/item/green-up-my-community> (accessed 27 May 2014).

³²⁰ “GREEN UP MY COMMUNITY!” MADE in Europe Website, ‘CAMPAIGN’ section, <http://www.madeineurope.org.uk/campaign/greenup> (accessed 27 May 2014).

³²¹ Through which MADE joined international efforts to lobby clothing brands to sign up to the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Accord and pay up into a compensation fund following the tragic collapse of the Rana Plaza Factory in Bangladesh in 2014, which killed 1127 garment workers and injured thousands more.

³²² “NO HUMANS WERE HARMED IN THE MAKING OF THIS T-SHIRT” MADE in Europe Website, ‘Blogs’ section, <http://www.madeineurope.org.uk/updates/item/no-humans-were-harmed-in-the-making-of-this-t-shirt> (accessed 27 May 2014).

³²³ Which followed the Israeli attack on Gaza through operation Protective Edge, started on 8 July 2014.

³²⁴ “FOSIS ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2012”, MADE in Europe Website, ‘Latest News’ section, <http://www.madeineurope.org.uk/updates/news/item/fosis-annual-conference-2012> (accessed 27 May 2014).

³²⁵ ‘The Muslim Power of Boycotting & Ethical Purchasing’ MADE in Europe Website, ‘Blogs’ section, <https://www.madeineurope.org.uk/updates/item/the-muslim-power-of-boycotting-ethical-purchasing> (accessed 20 August 2014).

³²⁶ With the ‘Christian Muslim Forum’ in view of the then UN Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen. The forum developed the ‘Christian-Muslim Youth Statement on Climate Change’

³²⁷ “MEETING THE ARCHBISHOP” MADE in Europe Website, ‘Blogs’ section, <https://www.madeineurope.org.uk/updates/item/meeting-the-archbishop> (accessed 27 May 2014).

³²⁸ Live Below the Line is an annual anti-poverty campaign organised since 2010 by the Organisations ‘Global Poverty Project’ and ‘Oaktree Foundation’: it challenges participants to feed themselves on the equivalent of the extreme poverty line for five days.

³²⁹ “LIVE BELOW THE LINE” MADE in Europe Website, ‘Blogs’ section, <https://www.madeineurope.org.uk/updates/item/live-below-the-line-2> (accessed 27 May 2014).

³³⁰ The initiative brought together over 100 charities and faith groups to lobby the UK government to tackle global hunger.

³³¹ “ALLAH CREATED ENOUGH FOOD FOR EVERYONE” MADE in Europe Website, ‘Blogs’ section, <http://www.madeineurope.org.uk/updates/item/allah-created-enough-food-for-everyone> (accessed 27 May 2014).

³³² For a discussion on the importance of the credibility of frame articulators, see: Robert D Benford and David A Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment,” *Annual review of sociology* 26 (2000): 619–621.

³³³ “PART OF A SOLUTION” MADE in Europe Website, ‘Blogs’ section, <https://www.madeineurope.org.uk/updates/item/part-of-a-solution> (accessed 27 May 2014).

³³⁴ “SHABAANA KIDY, ULTIMATE CAMPAIGNER!” MADE in Europe Website, ‘Blogs’

section, <https://www.madeineurope.org.uk/updates/item/shabaana-kidy-ultimate-campaigner-2> (accessed 27 May 2014).

³³⁵ Dr Hany El-Banna, founder of one of the leading UK-based Muslim NGOs, Islamic Relief. In: MADE in Europe, “MADE in Europe. Annual Review 2009/2010,” sec. People’s Page.

³³⁶ Gillian Temple, former Head of Public Engagement at one of the leading mainstream NGOs, Oxfam. In: *Ibid.*

³³⁷ Lucy Earle, “Social Movements and NGOs: A Preliminary Investigation” (INTRAC. International NGO Training and Research Centre, 2004); Alejandro Bendaña, “NGOs and Social Movements A North/South Divide?” (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2006).

³³⁸ The term ‘conscientization’ and its derivations are used in this paper drawing from the educational and social concept developed in the early 1970s by the Brazilian educator and activist Paulo Freire (and also adopted by liberation theologies and other forms of social justice movements around the world). The concept refers to the process of critical consciousness raising in which learners-activists develop both a deeper understanding of cultural and socio-economic norms, and the motivation and capacity to act in ways to change such norms. Conscientized learners-activists understand cultural, socio-economic, and political dynamics and contradictions, and take action against the oppressive/unjust elements which characterize them.

³³⁹ Lucy Earle, “Social Movements and NGOs: A Preliminary Investigation,” 6.

³⁴⁰ MADE in Europe, *Intro to MADE in Europe – Muslims Campaigning against Global Poverty & Injustice*, YouTube video, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91FAQRGoMXc> (accessed 27 May 2015).

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

³⁴² Within the field of development studies, different approaches and terms are used to explain global socio-economic and geo-political differences: all remain contested and considered somehow reductionist. The paper adopts the terms of ‘Global North’ and ‘Global South’ because it recognizes their potential to highlight an unequal distribution of access to resources on a global scale whilst recognizing that the ‘South’ also exists in the ‘North’ and vice versa. Also, this vocabulary is less prone to the hegemonic thrust which was inherently embedded in earlier definitions (such as ‘First World’ vs. ‘Third World’; ‘Developed World’ vs. ‘Developing World’; ‘Center’ vs. ‘Periphery’). Indeed, ‘Global North’ and ‘Global South’ are adopted in this paper as terms that provide a more open approach to “the very complicated politics of difference and inequality found within these two regional constructs” Vincent Jr. Del Casino, *Social Geography: A Critical Introduction* (John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 126.

³⁴³ MADE in Europe, *Intro to MADE in Europe – Muslims Campaigning against Global Poverty & Injustice*.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁶ For an overview of how social movement theory conceptualises core framing tasks, see: Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements,” 615–617.

- ³⁴⁷ MADE in Europe, *Intro to MADE in Europe – Muslims Campaigning against Global Poverty & Injustice*. This verse is also present in the header section of most of MADE's website pages, and it is consistently quoted in MADE's published material.
- ³⁴⁸ MADE in Europe and Oxfam GB, "Islam in Action! The Ultimate Campaign Toolkit" (London: MADE in Europe, 2011), 5.
- ³⁴⁹ MADE in Europe, *Intro to MADE in Europe – Muslims Campaigning against Global Poverty & Injustice*. The four letters P-B-U-H combine to form an acronym for the phrase "Peace be upon him," which is the English rendering of the Arabic *alayhi al-salam*, a devotional phrase used by Muslims whenever mention is made of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).
- ³⁵⁰ "The average UK household"; "air pollution in the UK." Ibid.
- ³⁵¹ MADE in Europe and Oxfam GB, "Islam in Action! The Ultimate Campaign Toolkit," 31.
- ³⁵² Ibid., 3; 5.
- ³⁵³ Ahmed, Sughra and Siddiqi, Naved, "British by Dissent" (The Muslim Youth Helpline, 2014), 74.
- ³⁵⁴ Ibid., 76.
- ³⁵⁵ McDonald, *Global Movements*, 64.
- ³⁵⁶ Zafar Khan, "Muslim Presence in Europe: The British Dimension – Identity, Integration and Community Activism," *Current Sociology* 48, no. 4 (October 1, 2000): 31.
- ³⁵⁷ O'Toole and Gale, "Contemporary Grammars of Political Action among Ethnic Minority Young Activists," 133.
- ³⁵⁸ 70 percent of the respondents surveyed by the 'British by Dissent' report mentioned that faith encouraged their activism and that, in turn, the latter impacted very positively on their being Muslims. Ahmed, Sughra and Siddiqi, Naved, "British by Dissent," 52.
- ³⁵⁹ Salvatore, "Making Public Space," 1025.
- ³⁶⁰ Ibid., 1026.
- ³⁶¹ Ibid.
- ³⁶² Gerard Clarke, "Faith Matters: Faith-Based Organisations, Civil Society and International Development," *Journal of International Development* 18, no. 6 (August 1, 2006): 840.
- ³⁶³ Salvatore, "Making Public Space," 1027.
- ³⁶⁴ Event Report, "Young, British and Muslim: Academic Research and Real Lives." (AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Research Programme, 2011), 1.
- ³⁶⁵ Salvatore, "Making Public Space," 1024.
- ³⁶⁶ Modood, "Post-Immigration 'Difference' and Integration: The Case of Muslims in Western Europe," 14.
- ³⁶⁷ Salvatore, "Making Public Space," 1024.
- ³⁶⁸ Ibid., 1027.
- ³⁶⁹ Modood, "Post-Immigration 'Difference' and Integration: The Case of Muslims in Western Europe," 29.
- ³⁷⁰ Tariq Modood, "Multicultural Citizenship and Muslim Identity Politics," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 12, no. 2 (2010): 157–158.

³⁷¹ Akbar S. Ahmed and Hastings Donnan, eds., *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity*, 1st Edition edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 1994), 5.

³⁷² Salvatore, "Making Public Space," 1029.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1024.

³⁷⁴ This term has been used by public intellectuals such as Tariq Ramadan to indicate a condition where Muslims in Europe can accept, nurture, and develop multiple dimensions of their identities while confidently moving between them in a way which enables both faithfulness to Islam and commitment to civic participation as 'members of society' rather than as a 'members of a minority'. Tariq Ramadan, *What I Believe* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 69.

³⁷⁵ Salvatore, "Making Public Space," 1024.