„I Have Become a Stranger in My Own Homeland.“

The Symbolic Stakes of Swiss Converts to Islam In Shaping Muslim Selves in Public and Muslim Arenas. A Performative Reconstruction of the Swiss Muslim Debate Between 2008 & 2011.

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Introduction

Seven missile shaped minarets protrude from the surface of the Swiss flag in the top half of the poster. The narrow black towers grow into the upper margin of the picture, obstructing the blank horizon like prison bars. The minarets cast long dark shadows onto the red-white of the Swiss flag. Entering the scenery from the left margin, a dark, fully veiled figure occupies more than a third of the image's space. The gender of the figure is ambiguous. She/he could be an immigrant Muslim woman covered by a burka. Or a male terrorist wearing a full mask.

The minarets in the background appear to back the movement of the ghostly figure onto the Swiss flag. They seem interchangeable with the figure. Moreover, they appear themselves like petrified copies of the dark human shape in the front. Or, the other way around, the figure could be an incarnation of the black towers. He/she faces us spectators with a challenging dark-eyed look. As we only see her/his torso, it is not sure if and how far he/she has already placed her/his foot onto the Swiss flag.

Given the multiplied minarets in the back outdoing existing minarets by far, the figure might be read as a predictive vision of the future guise of Helvetia herself, announcing the impending Islamisation of Switzerland. This anticipatory reading is backed by the „Stopp" written in thick black letters in the lower half of the poster as an appeal to defense.

Illustration 1: Anti-Minaret poster campaign: Thousands and thousands of minarets and burkas.

i.i. Absenting the minarets

Between early September and 29 November 2009, in the last ten weeks running up to the vote on the popular referendum demanding the ban of constructing minarets until the day of its approval by 57,5% of Swiss voters, the imaginary of a threatening Islamisation of Switzerland was spread by the poster campaign of the supporters of the initiative. Public spaces were plastered with thousands of burka figures backed by minarets.[1] As media analyses have shown, the public debate throughout the political campaign was dominated by an international framing that linked the projected future visibility of the minaret in Switzerland to global instances of Islamic terror and political Islam.

The collection of signatures necessary to motivate a popular referendum was initiated by an above part lines right-wing committee in the aftermath of the Danish cartoon affair in May 2007; the cartoon affair, along with 9/11, the terrorist attacks of Madrid 2004, and London 2005 were the scenarios most frequently invoked by the supporters to frame their demand of banning the construction of minarets (Ettinger and Imhof: 2011: 13).

[1] In concrete, up to date, there are only four of approximately 150, mostly minor mosques or Islamic associations who dispose of minarets as a visual aesthetic asset. However, they are not used acoustically to call for prayer (on facts and figures concerning Swiss Muslims' organizational profile see for example Behloul and Lathion 2007; see Müller and Tanner 2009 on minarets in Switzerland).

The popular referendum and its supporters, mostly close to the Swiss People's Party (SVP), achieved three quarters of actors' resonance in the media throughout the campaign (ibid. 2011: 16; 2009: 2). Taking up Europe-wide anxieties, the most frequently mediated topoi were the threat of the dissolution of the Swiss social fabric by a „creeping Islamisation" by Muslim „immigrants" and their children. Muslim immigrants were defined by their supposed support of „Islamic terror", the „establishment of a parallel society" and their endorsement of „female suppression". Conceiving of the public as a contested space of national representation, the populist supporters understood the ban of minarets as a „clear signal" for Muslims to „integrate" and endorse the values of „individual freedom" and „female autonomy" (Gianni 2013).[2] In the last weeks running up to November 29, feminist votes that appeared both in the German part of Switzerland and in the Romandie were to support the right-wing populist campaign. They voiced their concern about missing female agency from a liberal standpoint of gender equality and human rights (Gianni 2009: 15-16; see also Gianni and Clavien 2012 and Gianni 2013). On the other hand, votes opposing the initiative had also argued from a liberal and legal constitutional perspective, deeming the ban on minarets to be a breach with the principle of religious freedom and a discriminatory act against the religious and cultural minority of Muslims in Switzerland (Ettinger and Imhof 2009: 8).[3] In the course of the last weeks of the debate running up to the vote also the imaginary of the poster campaign was criticised as racist by responsible authorities like the federal commission against racism (EKR).[4]

However, while the imaginary of the anti-minaret campaign did encounter critical voices, it was notable that in three quarters of media contributions Switzerland's Muslim population was negatively framed in a generalising stereotypical manner, establishing a nexus of the Swiss Muslim population with extremist forms of Islam (ibid.: 4). Further,

[2] See the communiqué of the initiative committee, available under http://www.minarette.ch/downloads/argumentarium_minarettverbot.pdf, especially pages 3 and 11 mentions the symbolical function of the ban. (05.06.2012)

[3] Several cities and towns, notably Basel Stadt as well as the French speaking municipalities of Lausanne, Fribourg, Yverdon, Neuchâtel, Nyon and Morges forbade its display on public ground. In a similar vein, major media houses Tamedia and Ringier refused to feature the advertisement of the campaign in their print and online media. See David Vonplon: „Umstrittenes Minarett-Plakat: Auch die Medienhäuser tun sich schwer", *Berner Zeitung* 06.10.2009.

[4] Equally, the supporting committee homepage's feature of an online computer game named „minaret-attack", encouraging the player to score by shooting down minarets growing out of the Swiss ground before a muezzin pops up and calls to prayer, was widely criticised as discriminatory. This online game was adapted for a regional election campaign in Styria by the populist FPÖ in 2010. The game „Moschee-baba" was banned by authorities and taken offline after three days. Its producer, the Swiss publicity expert also responsible for the poster campaign was sued by the Styrian penal court, along with Styrian FPÖ chairman Gerhard Kurzmann for racist and religious incitement. In autumn 2011, they were acquitted. See N.N.: „Anti-Minarett-Spiel. Freispruch für Werbefachmann Segert in Graz", *Blick* 14.10.2011. Equally, the imaginary of the anti-minaret poster was iterated in various national and regional European contexts by populist parties and right-wing activist circles for election campaigns and anti-immigrant politics.

16% of media coverage featured evaluative statements, qualifying the presence of (migrant) Muslims as „threatening" (ibid.: 4; Ettinger and Imhof 2011: 31) to the integrity of Switzerland's social fabric, assuming a critical moral difference of the Muslim population as „culturally strange", namely „premodern" and „unenlightened". All these characterisations led to Muslims' problematisation as being „non-integrated" (ibid.).

Tracing the chronology of the discovery and problematisation of the Muslim population in Swiss public debates, Ettinger and Imhof have shown that Swiss media had established a binary hermeneutics of a „clash of civilisations" (Huntington 1993) in the early nineties as a general geopolitical topos with yet little national concern. However, it was only after the key event of 9/11 that „Muslims" a national issue (Ettinger and Imhof 2011: 9; 32; 36f.): Islam had become a political category of public concern.

i.ii. The public entry of Swiss converts to Islam

In winter 2009, in the immediate aftermath of the approval of the popular referendum on the ban of the minarets, the national Muslim debate took an ironic turn, as a handful of Swiss converts to Islam of either gender entered the Swiss public arena and appeared, given their ostentatious salafi habitus, as the realisation of the Islamisation scenario projected by the poster campaign. Headed by a number of Swiss converts, the *Islamischer Zentralrat Schweiz (IZRS)* was founded as the first basis organisation of Muslim individuals in Switzerland, organised along what they called „Islamic normative criteria". Thereby, it was notably Nora Illi, niqab-wearing Swiss convert and women's delegate of the *Central Council* whose fully veiled guise took up the imaginary of the anti-minaret campaign.

The *IZRS* with its convert protagonists was the first Muslim organisation to gain wider public visibility in Switzerland in a Muslim debate that was hitherto characterised by its particular lack of addressable Muslim voices. The converts' aim was to represent Muslims as a religious minority and claim the right of practicing Muslims to follow their orthopractic and moral interests, such as female veiling vis-à-vis the Swiss public and authorities. Claiming central public spaces for their events, the converts leading the *Islamischer Zentralrat Schweiz*, an organisation mostly made up of young Muslims – immigrants' children of various ethnic backgrounds – have spawned a self-reinforcing media hype between December 2009 and summer 2010.

Besides the public events, the *IZRS* offered its members educational programs, counseling support, and organised reunions and festivities starring international Muslim celebrities, such as Imams and Muslim *nasheed* singers from the Balkans, European converts or

preachers from the Arab world. The aim of the organisation, according to their own statements, was to forge a „Swiss Muslim identity“[5] that was to bring together Muslims from diverse backgrounds hitherto mainly organised in various ethnic mosques to comprehend themselves as a social minority united by their moral and orthopractic interests and their subjective desire to live an Islamic „way of life“.

Illustration 2: Nora Illi with her children in Ticino

i.iii. Convert Nora Illi as a talking curtain

During the convert hype, pictures of niqab-wearing Nora Illi, women's delegate of the *IZRS* haunted the front pages of online newspapers, daily tabloids and news magazines. Thus, one photograph showed Nora Illi during a holiday in Ticino. The convert poses with two of her children at the shore of Lago Maggiore, a popular photo opportunity whose familiarity was yet disturbed by the niqab-wearing mother in focus.

Yet another picture, which is especially intriguing, portrays Nora Illi on top of the Aletsch glacier with a child tied to her back in a baby sling. It presents a both comical and uncanny catachresis, the hybridisation of two very incongruous imaginaries, allowing

[5] See the *IZRS*'s homepage, „Visions“, http://www.izrs.ch/index.php/de/vision.html. (16.05.2012). In order to further introduce and sketch out the thematic scope of this thesis, I would like to continue with a close reading of a photograph series focusing on fully veiled Nora Illi which entered the public imaginary in the aftermath of 29 November 2009.

quite differing readings of the image.[6] According to the reading that dominated the media comments on Nora's private pictures, the photograph was interpreted as the converts' citational realisation of the Islamisation scenario summoned by the anti-minaret poster campaign, and, especially, the campaign's logo (see further on, illustration 4).

Illustration 3: Nora Illi on the Aletsch Glacier

The emblem of the minaret opponents that had launched the popular referendum in May 2007 shows a three quarter view of the relief of Switzerland. The white cross in the center of the relief is being perforated by a missile shaped phallic minaret from a realm below and outside the picture, tearing the white surface, folding the torn scraps of the fabric up

[6] In its use of the notion of the „public imaginary", this thesis follows the Lacanian term of the „imaginary". Along with the „symbolic" and the „real", it forms a tryptich of interlaced realms that structure the human psyche. As an order, the imaginary is related to similarity, metonymy, as it refers to the specular, excentric nature of narcissistic identification. According to Lacan, the illusion of coherence, integrity and totality projected by the image by which a singular or collective ego invests itself is constitutive in the process of symbolic integration as it provides a (momentarily) stable nodal point of identification, which is yet constantly undermined by the differential, metaphorical logic of the unconscious, relentlessly eroding stable meaning. See Macey 1994: vii.

to an alpine mountain massif. According to a diachronic reading of Nora's private picture, female convert Nora placed on the Aletsch Glacier succeeded the defloration scenario projected by the campaign logo.

Illustration 4: The logo of the anti-minaret campaign

Following this interpretational trajectory, the image indicated to Switzerland's Islamisation as a *fait accompli*, as the veiled figure posing was a „born" Swiss, standing as a synecdoche *pars pro toto* for Helvetia herself, who had been forcibly, overnight „taken by Islam" and whose violated national womb spawned the fertile minaret's offspring. However, what clearly disturbed this rape/Frauenraub scenario was that convert Nora Illi had, according to her own statements, embraced Islam willingly and veiled by choice, not by force. Thus, in April 2010, Nora Illi's niqab fuelled an emotionalised, nationwide debate that effected a number of both cantonal and national motions and state initiatives concerning the possible public ban of the burka. Full veiling as a „cultural" and/or „Islamic" sartorial practice was – at least to a majority of the Swiss, according to an online survey conducted by leading daily tabloid *Blick* in June 2010 – utterly non-integrable and opposed to Swiss „cultural values" and/or the principles of a liberal and secular European society based on gender equality, female agency, individuality, democracy and religious freedom.[7] As Illi stated in an interview given to *Blick* she feels Switzerland as a secular, liberal and plural society to be her homeland. But still:

[7] 93 percent of the voters were in favor of a Burka ban. See N.N.: „Grosse Burkadebatte in der Schweiz – ‚Wir wollen ihnen ins Gesicht sehen'", *Blick* online 03.05.2010.

> „Everyday I encounter people in the street who want to send me back to where I come from and then they are surprised to find me being Swiss.“[8]

However, according to Nora Illi's own reading of the image, as she was to lay out to me in an interview in spring 2011, the private portrait which was shot by her husband Abd al Qaasim Illi – himself a Swiss convert –, showing herself at a hiking trip in the Swiss mountain area, clearly cites a popular photo theme, „to show that hey [she is] part of Switzerland“ (Nora Illi 3754-3898)[9]. Niqab-wearing Nora Illi poses and posits herself as an interchangeable subject for any Swiss woman/man captured in this common leisure pastime in the Swiss alpine scenery, framing „being Muslim“ as a distinct variety of „being Swiss“. Thus, her aim was to ensure that „we Muslims can live our religion here in Switzerland.“ (Nora Illi 59064-59140)[10]

Hence, rather than reading her ostentatious Islamic demeanor as a threat to the integrity of Switzerland's social fabric, Nora Illi emphasised the image's inclusive telos, appealing for the social recognition and legal protection of her differing cultic, orthopractic and moral interests as a native Swiss who had converted to Islam. However, in diverse media formats, such as the popular discussion format *Club* on official Swiss TV-channel SF 1[11], a talk round set up by daily *Tagesanzeiger* in the theatre of the Züricher *Kaufleuten*[12], as well as an online chat on tabloid *Blick* in early May 2010[13], Nora Illi was countered by feminists, liberal Muslim women, Islam experts, right wing politicians, evangelicals and concerned Blick readers who contested Illi's claim on her right to fully veil.

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[8] „Täglich wollen mich Passanten in mein ‚Heimatland' zurückschicken und staunen dann, dass ich Schweizerin bin“. See Anna Vonhoff, „Islamischer Zentralrat der Schweiz: Hier sehen Sie die Frauenbeauftragte“, *Blick* 16.04.2010.

[9] „Für mich ist es weniger um ein Photo gegangen mit Clash-Effekt sondern um zu zeigen he ich bin Teil der Schweiz.“ (Nora Illi 3764-3898)

[10] „Wir wollen dass wir Muslime unsere Religion hier in der Schweiz leben können.“ (Nora Illi 59064-59140).

[11] see *Club* on May 11, 2010: „Braucht die Schweiz ein Burkaverbot?“ [„Does Switzerland need a ban of the Burka?“]. The TV-discussion was hosted by Christine Maier. Talk guests were Saïda Keller-Messahli (head of the liberal Muslim organisation Forum für einen Fortschrittlichen Islam), Amira Hafner-al Jabaji (Islam expert and Muslim), Rosmarie Zapfl (president of the feminist organisation Alliance F), Lukas Niederberger (theologian), and Daniel Zingg (member of the Kommittee gegen eine strategische Islamisierung der Schweiz). The program is available under http://www.videoportal.sf.tv/video?id=7816fbb8S68ffS4ofcS8295S81e64d583be7. (17.05.2012).

[12] The talk round took place on May 25, 2010. Invited talk guests varied only slightly from the *Club* broadcast a fortnight ago. Thus, Nora Illi responded to Julia Onken (feminist and psychologist), Saïda Keller-Messahli, Rosmarie Zapfl, Stella Jegher (Amnesty International), and Jacqueline Fehr (vice president of the socialist party Switzerland). The discussion is available under Maurice Thiriet: „Die etwas andere Burkadebatte“, *Tagesanzeiger* 26.05.2010, http://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/schweiz/standard/Die-etwas-andere- BurkaDebatte/story/27970944. (17.05.2012)

[13] see N.N.: „Nora Illi, die Frauenbeautragte des Islamischen Zentralrates im Online-Chat: Mein Mann sollte noch andere Frauen heiraten“, *Blick* 11.05.2010.

Yet, in her public statements during spring and summer 2010, the female Swiss convert appealed to her biographical capital – being a (native) Swiss convert and thus, having become Muslim by her own „choice" – as creditable symbolic capital for representing (practicing) Muslims' demands for social recognition and legal protection of (gendered) Muslim practices as a self-chosen mode of both individual and collective religious and moral self-cultivation. As the Council's women's delegate mentioned in an interview with the Genevan daily Tribune de Genève, her aim was to become a „talking curtain" [„un rideau parlant"], to cease to be the (passive, silent) object of media observation and to become a subject with a voice and opinion, speaking, *pars pro toto* for Switzerland's Muslim's interests:

> „Mais derrière il y a une âme, une opinion. Je voudrais qu'on cesse de me prendre pour un objet.."[14]

Against the public majoritarian reading of full veiling as an un-acceptable, non-recognisable form of female suppression endorsed by Muslim immigrants, Swiss convert Nora Illi aimed to represent the „being Muslim" of herself and other veiled practicing women as a self-chosen „way of life":

> „We [veiled Muslims, S.L.] are women who choose their way of life and how we want to proceed on it ourselvess. We are not restricted. Therefore, we can argue ourselves and take a stand."[15]

i.iv. „Convertmania": Reconstructing Switzerland's Muslim debate & the shaping of Muslim selves in Switzerland between 2008 & 2011

During the months following the approval of the anti-minaret referendum in November 2009, Switzerland experienced a veritable „convertmania": Salafi converts headed the most visible Muslim organisation and they reformulated Islam into „being Muslim" – a self-chosen „way of life". Converts aimed to redefine the concept of Islam both within Muslim fields as well as in public arenas – and they claimed credibility for their stake on Muslim leadership and representation exactly by their „being Swiss converts". In short: Converts answered to the perception of Islam as an object of national public concern in very telling ways.

While existing sociological analyses on European converts to Islam have repeatedly

[14] Nadine Haltiner: „Nora Illi, du punk au voile intégral", *Tribune de Genève* 21.05.2010.
[15] „Wir [verhüllten Muslimas] sind Frauen [...], die ihren Lebensweg, und wie sie den gehen möchten, selbst bestimmen. Uns sind da keine Einschränkungen gegeben. Daher können wir auch selbst argumentieren und Stellung beziehen." See N.N.: „Jetzt kämpft Nora Illi gegen das Burka-Verbot", *Blick* 05.05.2010.

emphasised the pivotal role of converts in the process of shaping Muslim forms in European societies (see notably Roy 2006; 2010; Köse 1994; Allievi 1999; Roald 2006), the salience of Swiss converts in both directing the public discourse on Muslims as well as in (re)shaping the organised Muslim field in the aftermath of 29 November 2009 was to be unprecedented in European comparison. Converts were everywhere: They claimed public spaces, they became visible as leaders and spokes-persons of Muslim organisations, and they were popular guests in TV-shows on the „threat of Islam". Converts seemed like the incarnation of the „Muslim other": They uncannily took up the imaginary of Muslims as „strangers" on the one hand. Yet at the same time they appealed to their symbolic capital as „born Swiss" to claim the citizen right of religious freedom and self-realisation. The converts seemed to uphold „pre-modern", „traditional" beliefs, they even seemed to outdo any „born Muslim" in terms of radicality. Yet at the same time their „being Muslim" was a matter of personal, subjective choice, as they did not tire to confirm, not a „culturally imposed" tradition.

Hence, their „being Muslim" followed the (post)modern logic of religion as a self-ascribed „identity", a self-chosen „way of life" deemed to be protected by the liberal secular state of Switzerland. Yet their self-confident appeal to their symbolic capital as „born Swiss" was mostly countered by the public fears of „convert zealotry" that posed a threat to Swiss society and its cultural and social fabric.

Following the ambiguous reading of the photoseries that focuses on the Swiss convert to Islam, this thesis heeds to Nora Illi's appeal to be seen and heard as a „talking curtain" in current processes of Muslim self-formation that take place in both Muslim and public arenas in Switzerland. Thus, analyses focus on the figure of the „Swiss Convert to Islam" and his or her symbolic stakes in both public arenas as well as Muslim contexts, such as the *IZRS* and other Muslim settings in order to unfold this scenario of Muslim self-formation.

Hence, my thesis understands conversion to Islam as a form of self-formation that gains contours in a social and political setting in which Islam has become a category of public and political concern. Accordingly, I analyse the symbolic stakes of converts both within public and Muslim arenas as inherently interrelated articulations of their Muslim selves. Thereby, my aim is to take into account the power dimension of Muslim subjectivation: becoming and „being Muslim" takes place in a specific social scenario that accords converts with specific forms of symbolic capital. Thereby, the converts' understanding of „being Muslim" transforms Islam into a (post)modern form of self-articulation and self-formation that differs from traditional modes of religious belonging – a form of Islam that gains its contours within present Swiss society and is deeply dependent on the public

gazes on Islam and Muslims.

While I focus on converts to Islam and their symbolic stakes, my thesis aims to reconstruct the distinct social and political setting that made the entry of the convert protagonists and their specific claims on recognition and leadership possible and intelligible. Thereby, the case studies that make up this thesis examine converts to Islam as protagonists with a distinct set of symbolic, social and cultural capitals, and with distinct social, cultural, and religious interests.

My study on converts to Islam is both documentary and analytical. Taking the converts to Islam as leading protagonists, the four case studies that make up this thesis try to reconstruct the history of Muslim self-formation in Switzerland between 2009 and 2011. To do this, they follow the entry of converts to Islam into public spaces as well as their stagings and presence in Muslim settings.

At the same time, I take the convert to Islam and his/her specific symbolic capital as indicative for a global „hyperdiscourse" on Islam that also shapes Swiss discourses on immigration, integration, nationalism and secularity. My interest is thus to unfold the heterenomy of Muslim self-formation in a national setting that is characterised by its problematisation of Muslims and Islam.

i.v. Conceptual Framework

What links the four case studies in this thesis is its focus on the figure of the „convert to Islam". Or, more precisely, this thesis revolves around the analysis of „being a convert to Islam" as a strategic subject position on its own rights that accords converts with symbolic power both vis-à-vis the non-Muslim public, as well as within Muslim fields.

The analytical focus chosen aims to bring together a range of research perspectives and conceptual outlooks. Differing from existing research on European converts to Islam that focuses on questions developed in the field of religious sociology, social psychology or phenomenological sociology, this study adopts a performative, poststructural approach on conversion to Islam.

Hence, the symbolic stakes of Swiss converts to Islam of either gender are reconstructed before the epistemic background of what is often rhetorically invoked as a Europe-wide „crisis of multiculturalism" (see for example Grillo 2003; Turner 2006; Lentin and Titley 2001; Van Reedom, Dyuvenadak and Bertossi 2012; Vertovec 2011) fuelled by a global „hyperdiscourse" on Islam that has also undergirded public debates on immigration, integration, nationalism and secularism in Swiss public debates. To do this, it develops a

deconstructive reading on conversion accounts that draws on approaches developed in the field (post)structuralism, psychoanalysis and gender studies which it combines with narratological perspectives on religious conversion as a theme and dramaturgy.

Adapting this performative approach on Muslim self-formation, I will scrutinise in which ways the public problematisation of Muslim visibilities shapes the articulation of Muslim selves and forms of being, how this „culture talk" (Stolcke 1995) places the figure of the Swiss convert to Islam in a specific strategic subject position with particular forms of symbolic power in both public and Muslim arenas both in terms of his „being a born Swiss" as well as in terms of his „being a (new born) convert". As I will argue, „being (a born) Swiss" accords converts to Islam specific forms of symbolic capital in the present „culturalisation of the social ontology" (Yilmaz 2012) that operates on the assumption on a critical time-spatial moral difference between „being a born Swiss" and „being a Muslim (immigrant)" as the latter are characterised as „culturally strange", namely „pre-modern", „un-enlightened", and, thus, „non-integrated" (compare Ettinger and Imhof 2009: 4). Thereby, my aim is to connect the analyses of the symbolic stakes of Swiss converts to Islam to a wider research field on Islam in Europe that applies post-colonial and post-structuralist approaches on Muslim subjectivation to

> „trace discourses [on Islam and Muslims] within liberal-secular settings [and explore] the „effects" that these liberal-secular settings potentially have on pious Muslim subject [formation]" (Amir-Moazami, Jacobsen and Malik 2011: 1).

The „Muslim problem" (Scott 2007) comprises a conundrum of intertwined discourses which can and have been analysed under the aspects of nationalism, secularism, (new) racism or liberalism. My aim is to take into account the productivity of public discourses on Muslim self-formation. Thus, I understand discourses to be productive in the sense that they „systematically form the objects [and subjects, S.L.] of which they speak" (Foucault 1972: 49). Notably, I will take up and adapt Foucault's productive notion of power for the constitution of subjects. This approach has been developed by Judith Butler in her concept of performativity (see for example Butler 1993; 1997a; 1997b; 2006). Thus, following Foucault, Butler holds that „discourses can be understood as ‚substrate' of social processes, as heterogenous modes of the production and constitution of social reality."[16] (Bublitz 2003: 9).

[16] This quote is my own translation from the German original. „Diskurse können […] gewissermassen als ‚Substrat' gesellschaftlicher Prozesse, als in sich heterogene Produktions- und Konstitutionsbedingungen einer gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit gelten." (Bublitz 2003: 9).

i.v.i. The convert & her/his symbolic capital as „being Swiss“

Choosing this performative approach, my work differs relevantly from the conceptual framework of existing sociological and ethnomethodological studies that analyse European converts as empirical actors in both Muslim and public arenas (see for example Allievi 1999: 179-293; 339-345; Roald 2004: 253-289; see also Köse 1994; Setta 1999). In the line of social phenomenological research, the latter studies have mostly applied an interpretative approach that focuses on the reconstruction of individual experiences of converts (on interpretative, social phenomenological research perspectives see for example Knoblauch 2009: 299-323). My own perspective, however, takes the convert to Islam as a vantage point to reconstruct a wider political and social scenario of Muslim problematisation and Muslim self-formation.

Yet, drafting the thematic scope and conceptual framework of this thesis in 2008 – which, ironically, took place before the appearance of the convert committee of the *IZRS* whose impact on shaping Swiss Muslim selves was to exceed my expectations of potential findings at that point of time by far –, I started off from the observations made in empirical studies in terms of the engagements and roles of converts in both Muslim and public fields. Thus, existing research has repeatedly emphasised the pivotal role of converts of both genders in Muslim umbrella organisations or in the establishment of national and transnational Muslim networks (Allievi 1999; Roald 2004; see also Setta 1999) that connect Muslims along religious and orthopractic criteria. Often, as these studies hold, converts take in the strategic role of spokes persons, or occupy representative roles vis-à-vis the public in those associations, such as it was also to be the case with the public appearance of the *IZRS* and its convert committee.

Adapted to my own perspective, various studies indicate to the converts' strategic subject position as „born Europeans“. Given the present „ontologisation of the social“ along cultural criteria, converts disrupt common classifications and categorisations of Muslims as „immigrant“ strangers and therefore challenge the quasi „naturalised“ symbolic difference (see Bourdieu 1991: 220) between „being (a native) Swiss“ and „being (an immigrant) Muslim“. Thus, converts as „born“ Europeans can be conceived of as disposing of specific forms of symbolic capital: they are often perceived and perceive themselves as taking in a mentoring and negotiating role for Muslim interests vis-à-vis the public in terms of their „native“ background which allows them to counter nationalist and liberal problematisations of „Muslims“ as „culturally strange“ and in need to „integrate“ as dominant in present Swiss discourse (compare Imhof and Ettinger 2009: 4).

i.v.ii. The convert & his/her specific religious interests

In research, converts have often been described as guided by their specific interests to construct a „pure", „authentic" Islam detached from „cultural particularities" (Roy 2004; 2010), and, thus, transcending „ethnic" differences by their interpellation of „Islam" along „strictly" religious and orthopractic categories. Hence, existing studies have emphasised the pivotal role of European converts to Islam in shaping forms of „being Muslim" which is undergirded by secular and (post)modern concept of „religion". Converts are held to understand „Islam" as a self-contained system which can be described, characterised, and distinguished as an object from other symbol systems and cultural phenomena (see Eickelman and Piscatori 1996: 38; for a genealogy of the modern concept of „religion" see Asad 1993a; 1993b). „Religion" becomes a self-ascribed „identity" rather than a tradition. Hence, in Muslim arenas, converts are described to engage in the development of pedagogical and educational forms and programs eager to construct an Islamic „way of life" (Mannson McGinty 2006; Roald 2004; Zebiri 2008). Accordingly, in an interview I lead with Nicholas Blancho, convert president of the *IZRS*, he specified the interest of the convert in Islam as a

> „[…] certain way of life .. that is better for him […] I mean the reason for conversion is not simply, I want to be Bosnian or Albanian' right .. to convert entails a religious conviction .. religious agency..". (Blancho 1, 40297-41242)[17]

Given their desire to shape Islamic forms and selves detached from „cultural strangeness" – in the double sense of detaching „Islam" from a migration discourse as well as directing it to strictly „religious" and „moral" criteria distinguishable from „merely" cultural or traditional particularities –, converts have repeatedly been described in existing sociological and ethnographical literature as „transcultural" or „hybrid" actors (see for example Allievi 1999; Roald 2004; 2006; Niewkerk 2006; Zebiri 2008; Moosavi 2012). They are characterised as adapting Islamic forms and practices to the life worlds and plausibility structures of liberal and secular European settings and its notions of „religion" and „self" before the background of a geopolitical semantics of a „clash of civilisations".

Thereby, in a rather paternalistic manner – reiterating the (neo)racist implications of present ontologies of the social that are based on the assumption of the existence of a critical cultural difference of „born", „ethnic Muslims" that complicates their „integration" on their own terms – a number of those works have praised the convert as a „bridge

[17] „Seine bestimmte Art zu leben .. ein anderer Lebensstil .. der für mich besser ist […] ich meine der Grund der Konversion ist nicht einfach .. ich will sein wie ein Bosnier oder so wie ein Albaner oder .. zu einer Konversion gehört eben eine religiöse Überzeugung .. ja relgiöses Handeln." (Blancho 1, 40297-41242).

builder“ and „integration figure“ for „born Muslims“, as he/she constructs an Islam adapted to European contexts (ibids.).

However, given the framing of „Islam“ as a European „primary alter“ in present public self-constructions (Asad 2003c: 169) undergirded by the theme of a civilisational clash, research has also discussed converts as „renegades“, often drawn to „radical“, „purist“, „de-culturalised“, neo-fundamentalist and salafi forms of Islam. The trope of the convert as a „religious zealot“ opposing liberalism and secularism, notably in the questions of religious freedom, non-violence and gender equality has become ever more dominant since the growing visibility and popularity of „segregational“ salafi forms of Islam in the last decade (on salafism as a new global movement see Meijer 2009). This perception and discussion of converts as „fanatics“ that at times were even problematised as security risk (see Özyürek 2011 on the „convert alert“ in Germany) has been backed by the high number of Western converts involved in Islamic terrorist movements (see Sageman 2004; Kepel 2004; Roy 2004; 2010; Vidino 2005 for a discussion of converts' involvement in terrorist activities; Moosavi 2012). The framing of the convert as a „religious zealot“ that outdoes „born“, „ethnic“ Muslims in terms of radicality has also dominantly directed and structured the public observation of the convert committee heading the Islamic Central Council in the aftermath of the approval of the minaret initiative as will be reconstructed in this thesis.

i.v.iii. The interpellative capital of the convert

Though differing relevantly in terms of its analytical focus and conceptual framework – such as taking into account the power dimension of current nationalist as well as liberal and secular problematisations of Islamic visibilities on Muslim self–formation – my thesis relates to the general systematic observations of Olivier Roy on the (trans)formation of the categories of „religion“ and „culture“ under the constraints of late capitalist, globalised societies. Notably, I will relate to his discussions on the constitution of Muslim minorities in liberal and secular European societies (Roy 2006: 161; Roy 2010: 20). As I will argue, those self-constitutions take place before the global semantics of a „clash of cultures“. Hence, ever since what has often been framed as a „return of religion“ (Riesebrodt 2001), there has risen a „hyperdiscourse“ on Islam and modernity along civilisational lines that can be genealogically traced back to the 19th century and colonial encounters. Sociologist Armando Salvatore holds how the „[…] exercise of defining Islam has taken place across both divides of what can be defined a ‚transcultural space', between the ‚West' and the ‚Muslim world'. The transcultural character of this space of communication is due to the fact that the combination between xeno- and autostereotypes leads the weaker other to incorporate in its self-image traits developed by the stronger self, or opposes to them

some allegedly irreducible or ‚authentic' identity." (Salvatore 2001: 9) Further, Salvatore continues to argue how this „hyperdiscourse" is „propelled up by a revived western fear of an insurgent Islam, which has produced a largely insulated, self-sufficient realm of intellectual reflection and media attention to Islam. Islam is here mostly understood as a reservoir of meanings susceptible to be reassembled as an ideology, one allegedly clashing with the modern international order of secular nation-states." (ibid.: 9; see also Hüttermann 2006: 11) Thereby, similar to Fanonian considerations on the retroactivity of the constitution of national „consciousness" and cultural „identities" in (post)colonial settings (see Fanon 1981, notably 182-187), Salvatore emphasised the interpellative effect of Western discourses and gazes on Islam on the shaping of Muslim selves: „the impact is by now [...] partly incorporated in attitudes, disciplines and choices of Muslims as individuals and as groups. In the context of an increasing global attention to their religion as a tool of self-positioning and self- empowerment vis-à-vis the suspicious attitudes of state authorities [in] Western societies, Muslims mostly do not ignore the hyperdiscourse, but take issue with it." (Salvatore 2001: 10)

Not unlike Salvatore's observations, Roy holds that present Muslim self-constitutions, though taking place in liberal and secular European societies and marked by the process of „individualisation" and „des-institionalisation" of religious authority and its becoming an subjectively disposable asset of „identity", do not necessarily lead to the individual endorsement of liberal, secularised readings and what I will analyse as liberal „technologies of the self" (Foucault 1988) – understood as a specific set of practices of self-cultivation with specific goals and notions of self (compare ibid. 18) – in their conception of what it means and what it is to be Muslim. Moreover, Roy describes how this devaluation of traditional authority leads both to liberal and secular, „reformed" conceptualisatons as well as to value-conservative and even neo-fundamentalist, salafi modes of Muslim adherence marked by their emphasis on orthopraxy and communal containment by morally and aesthetically differing from the „culture" and the norms and gendered „technologies of the self" of the respective European societies (Roy 2006: 125; 154). Thus, while structured and rendered intelligible by the epistemic and institutional frame of (late) capitalist societies and the liberalisation of religion as „free choice" and marker of „identity", those new forms of shaping religious selves are perceived to draw up a moral tension in respect to liberal and secular rationalisations, bodily practices and ethics upheld in national European publics (see also Asad 2003e: 205). This holds especially true for new, salafi forms of „being Muslim", that rely heavily on the imaginary of Islam as a cultural and political alterity in terms of aesthetics and forms of (gendered) body techniques.

Focusing on the Swiss convert and his/her symbolic stakes, this thesis understands and

analyses the shaping of Muslim selves in both public and Muslim arenas in Switzerland before the background of a social crisis scenario triggered by Islam as a „disruptive event" (Peter 2011). To do this, I will expand on existing narratological conceptualisations of religious conversion. While existing narratological studies usually explore conversion narratives as a symbolic tool of self(trans)formation in a biographical register, the four chapters of this thesis explore its performativity on a social level – as an interpellative capital embodied by individual converts on the one hand, as well as a theme and dramaturgy allocated to collective selves.

Thus, I will follow the symbolic stakes of Swiss convert to Islam and explore the performativity of religious conversion as what social constructivist Thomas Luckmann has termed as specific „communicative form" (Luckmann 1987), or, as I would rather term it, as an „interpellative form" in both public and Muslim arenas to trace and reconstruct the interpellation of Muslim subjectivities in present Switzerland. Hence, as I will try to work out in this thesis, the pivotal role taken in by Swiss converts to Islam in shaping Muslim subjectivities both in public as well as in Muslim arenas in a Swiss scenario is quite remarkable and, so far, exceptional in comparison to other European contexts and, as I will argue, is due to the particular immigration history and the specific social, ethnic and religious profile of Switzerland's Muslim population. The convert committee heading the *IZRS* were the first visible figures aiming to interpellate and represent Switzerland's Muslims along religious and orthopractic criteria as religious minority, thus, to claim liberal and secular rights of non-discrimination, minority rights and representation for practicing Muslims to live their particular „way of life" which was answered by public arbitrations on the terms of symbolic inclusion of Muslims in debates on „integration".

Taking this performative turn, my approach relates to research on Muslims and Islam in Europe that apply post-structural, post-colonial and feminist approaches which can be placed into the wider context of what Talal Asad sketches out as the project of an „anthropology of secularism" (Asad 2003). The latter aims to uncover the interpellative effects of national, liberal and secular rationalities in the constitution of Muslim subjectivities and selves in present Europe (see for example Amir-Moazami 2007; 2009; 2011; Amir-Moazami, Jakobsen and Malik 2011; Bracke 2008; Fernando 2010; Jouili 2011; Jakobsen 2011).

i.v. iv. From transitional state to permanent status: The „Convert to Islam" as a social actor

The current process of embedding Muslim populations into the social fabric of Swiss society is strongly directed along a semantics of a „clash of civilisations" (Huntington 1993). The formation and shaping of both collective and individual forms of „being

Muslim“ is thus set within this distinct sociopolitical and geopolitical setting: Islam has become a political and public category. Likewise, the figure of the convert to Islam gains plausibility and intelligibility only within this specific historical, religious, social and geopolitical setting. Thus, it is only in this setting of Islam having become a political category that the convert as a social actor or type (Setta 1999; also Allievi 1998) has made his/her entry in both Muslim and non-Muslim arenas. And it is only in this particular setting that the convert exerts his or her symbolic power to both shape the public perception of Islam and Muslims and to gain recognition and authority to define „being Muslim“ within Muslim arenas.

Historically, the figure of the „convert to Islam“ has gained contours in the second half of the 20th century during decolonialisation, the beginning of migration and the process of embedding Islam – and Muslims – within Western secular non-Muslim societies: Islam has become a political category. Probably the best-known of this first cohort of early „converts“ is diplomat Leopold Weiss – aka Muhammad Asad. The Austro-Hungarian journalist and writer converted to Islam in 1926 after traveling the Arab world. He spent time in Saudi Arabia, where he befriended Ibn Saud, founder of modern day Saudi Arabia and served in secred Saudi missions. 1947, Asad received Pakistani citizenship and later served at several bureaucratic and diplomatic positions. He was Pakistans envoy to the United Nations. In Europe, Asad became famous for his apologetic literature on Islam, notably his opus magnum „The Message of the Qur'an“ (1980), an English translation and commentary on the Qur'an. Up until today, Muhammad Asads conversion narrative „Road to Mecca“ (1954) is widely read by converts and serves as a blueprint for Westerners turning to Islam (see Roald 2006: 175f.). Asad was one of the first converts accorded a „privileged“ position as convert both in Western publics as well as Muslim arenas as he was perceived as a „creditable“ apologist and interpreter of Islam.[18]

However, while the convert as a social type has made his or her entry in the 20th century, the „high time“ of converts to Islam, the birth of what might even by termed as a „convert hype“ set in after 9/11. The salience of the convert to Islam as a new social actor is also mirrored in existing studies on conversion to Islam. Up until the late 90ies, research was rare. Most of the studies conducted in the 90ies focus on conversion to Islam as a biographical choice (see for example Hofmann 1997; Wohlrab-Sahr 1998; Köse 1996; Baumann 2003; Niewkerk 2006). Given the perception of Islam as a culturally „backward“ patriarchal religion, attention was especially given to female converts and their takes on

[18] Other well-known early converts are Swiss Born Sufi Titus Burckhardt (1908-1984), French sufi René Guénon (1886-1951), or British-born converts Marmaduke Pickthall (1875-1936) and Martin Lings (1909-2005). Also convert women came to fame, for example American-born Maryam Jameela (1934-2010).

Islam as a life option (Hoffmann 1997; van Niewkerk 2006; Mannson McGinty 2008; Baumann 2003).

However, before the background of increasingly virulent „migration" and „integration" discourse and the growing salience of the „Muslim problem" (Scott 2007), research finally turned to the analysis of converts as „hybrid", „in-between" social actors in ethnological and sociological works (Allievi 1998; Setta 1999; Roald 2004; 2006) and – notably after 9/11 – also security studies (Sageman 2004; Kepel 2004; Roy 2004; 2010; Vidino 2005).

During the course of the 20th century „being a convert" has thus become a permanent social category, also within Muslim contexts. This is quite astounding, as, historically, there is neiter a distinct legal status nor a linguistic concept for the convert known within Muslim tradition. Yet, also within Muslim fields, being a convert to Islam has shifted from a transitional state of someone who has just taken on Islam – mostly described by the term „aslama" (to „surrender", „to become a subject") – to a *permanent categorical position*. As this thesis aims to show, the specific symbolic power accorded to the converts amounts to the contestation of traditional models of religious authority and religious power – and to the articulation of new, de-traditonalised modes of Islam and Muslim belonging. Thus, rather than being a „neophyte" taking in the low (and transitional) state of the „humble religious beginner", the „convert to Islam" has become a distinct social category within Muslim arenas.

Given the perception of Islam as a political category, a threat to the social integrity of European societies, and the positon of Muslims as „culturally strange immigrants" and „primary alters" (Asad 2003c: 169) it makes sense to understand and analyse Muslim arenas as fairly heteronomous in the Bourdieuan sense that the political field of power exerts its influence on Muslim fields and their mode of self-constitution and self-articulation (Bourdieu 1998: 19). In this heteronomous situation, traditional forms of religious authority are hence contested and religious hierarchies at times even turned upside down by convert „newcomers" with their specific capitals. Disposing of a distinct range of cultural, social and symbolic capitals as „being (born) Swiss", the convert can at times even attain a hegemonial position in the process of representing and defining what it means to „be Muslim". Hence, rather than lacking specific forms of religious capital as a newcomer to religious tradition, the convert coins his or her form of „being Muslim" exactly by the devaluation of traditional forms of Muslim authority and adherence, substituting them with new forms of creditable religious claims and modes of „Muslimness".

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My take on the phenomenon on conversion to Islam or, better, converts to Islam is distinctly postmodernist in the sense that it reconstructs the „micronarratives" (Lyotard) of the converts to Islam as constitutive for the construction of the social reality their self-alteration takes place in. Thus, I understand „being a convert" as a mode of self-articulation and self-expression rather than a matter of traditional religious adherence. As I will show, the form of Islam coined and adopted by converts today cannot be understood in the classical sense of moral and ritual adherence to a specific religious tradition but has rather become a „postmodernist", secular mode of self-articulation and self-expression that is performed – and needs to be performed – in both public as well as Muslim arenas.

Peter Berger called modernity the „age of conversion" (Berger 1954), as it becomes the age of „choice", also in terms of religious truth and practice. Postmodernity must therefore be called the „age of religious self-expression and identity". While modernism emerged in the late nineteenth century as the recognition that reality and access to reality are not pre-given, and therefore an infinite variety of religious truths are possible and available, postmodernism acknowledges that there is no access to reality – or any higher „truth" available at all. Culture and also „religion", has moved from the world of the pre-determined to that of individual choice and „identity". Therefore, converts conceive of their „being Muslim" as a desirable „way of life", as a both subjective as well as a collective „identity". In their self-testimonials and public performances, while drawing on the imaginary of Muslim alterity, converts conduct the double transvaluation of detaching „being Muslim" from „being a socially marginalised immigrant" on the one hand, and detaching it from following a „mere tradition". Hence, for example, female veiling is understood as a practice of moral self-education which diverges from liberal and secular ways of doing bodies and doing gender, yet which is authorised with often liberal and non-traditional rationalities and conceptualisations of „religion" as an asset of „self-realisation". Hence, the Islam shaped by converts is a particularily „de-traditionalised", „de-culturalised" form of self-alteration. Thus, the appeareance of the convert to Islam as a distinct social figure is also indicative of a reconfiguration and reformulation of Islam as „being Muslim", as both a subjective form of self-expression as well as a collective form of self-ascription and „identity".

i.vii. Chapter Outline

To conduct those explorations into the Swiss scenario of Muslim self-formation, this thesis will begin with a reconstructive analysis of the public entry of the *Islamic Coucil's* committee that dominated the media coverage on Islam and Muslims in the first half of 2010. Thereby, I will describe how the converts heading the Central Council have replaced

the minarets as *locum tenens* of the perception of a lack of common symbolic ground between „being Swiss“ and „being Muslim“ and triggered a public debate on socially acceptable forms of „being Muslim“. Hence, chapters 1 and 2 analyse the public entry of the Swiss converts to Islam heading the *IZRS* as both symptomatic and interpellative „crisis figures“ in a national Muslim „symbolic politics“ (Lentin and Titley 2011: 124) that operates on the assumption of a critical moral and cultural difference between the Swiss (native) majority and the Muslim (migrant) minority population, notably in terms defining religious authority and gender norms.

Chapter 1, „I have become a Stranger in my own Homeland“ opens up the thematic scope and conceptual framework of the analyses conducted in this thesis. It analyses a male Swiss Convert's speech entitled „Zum Fremden in der Heimat geworden“ in the first annual reunion organised by the *Islamischer Zentralrat Schweiz* in February 2010. I will embed the analysis of convert Jibril's speech into a portrait of the organisation, its protagonists, concept of „being Muslim“ based on interviews led with the convert committee, media articles and information taken from the Council's homepage. Combining existing narratological approaches on the dramaturgical structure and thematic topic of conversion narratives with a performative, poststructurally informed concept of subjectivation, the chapter analyses Jibril's speech as a performance instituting „being Muslim“ as a desirable mode of self- addressation and moral and orthopractic self-cultivation. Hence, in this first case study, I will discuss the symbolic capital of the figure of the Swiss convert to transvaluate public addressations of Islam from a problematic cultural difference ascribed to Switzerland's (migrant) Muslim population into a subjectively desirable religious „way of life“. Thus, I will show how the convert, in his speech, performs the categorical shift from public addressations as a „Muslim stranger“ to a subjectively endorsed religious form of self-addressation and self-cultivation detached from the ascription of „cultural difference“ and „ethnic difference“. As I will argue, the convert to Islam and his ambivalent symbolic stakes to both embody utmost „Muslim strangeness“ as well as to summon a redemptive trajectory of gaining recognition as „strong minority group“ gains its intelligibility and credibility by the „culturalisation“ of the social ontology (Yilmaz 2012) in present Swiss society, where „Islamic difference“ has become – with some years of retard, compared to the European context – a category of social liminalisation and regulation of „culturally“ and „morally differing“ migrant minorities.

Chapter 2, „Mister Blancho, Are You the Bin Laden of Biel?“, focuses on the analysis of the media coverage of the *Islamic Central Council Switzerland (IZRS)* and its male convert committee starting in December 2009, and culminating in the appearance of president Nicholas Blancho in the popular contradictory political TV-format Arena „Radikale

Muslim im Aufwind?“ [„Radical Muslims on the Rise?“] aired on 23 April 2010 in *SF*. In this chapter, I will reconstruct how in the media observation, the trope of the Swiss convert as „uncanny“ time-spatial revenant/renegade (Freud 1999 [1917]), an embodiment of the „Muslim problem“ (Scott 2014) 2007; see also Özyürek 2009) directed the ensuing Muslim debate. Thus, I will work out how the converts' public entry has led to debates on Muslim „integration“ and national belonging that were structured by the enlightenment narrative of modernities' break from religion as „irrational“, „repressive“, and „violent“ (see Asad 2003a: 11; 14) which was rehearsed in a gendered register, as it centered on the recurring problematisation of a perceived lack of „female agency“ within orthodox Islamic forms.

Combining social dramaturgical considerations with the performative conversion concept developed in the previous chapter, I understand the media coverage on the *IZRS* and its converts as an interpellative „crisis event“ (Lentin and Titley 2011). Thus, taking up the imaginary of the anti-minaret campaign, the medial observation of the convert protagonists has led to what I will term as a „subjective“ and „moral“ turn of the Swiss Muslim debate, as a number Muslim actors have gained visibility in the public, and have debated on socially acceptable forms of „being Muslim“ which has also effected the (re)configuration of a Muslim field. During the media coverage, various Muslim voices appeared in the media as competitors of the Central Council, notably liberal Muslim Saïda Keller-Messahli, president of the secularly oriented organisation Forum für einen fortschrittlichen Islam (Forum for a progressive Islam) as opponent of the male convert committee. Further, the media coverage featured broadcasts of Hisham Maizar, president of the *FIDS* and interlocutor Farhad Afshar, head of the national umbrella organisation *KIOS*, both contesting the *IZRS's* claims on defining religious authority and representing „diverse ethnic“ Muslims as „religious minority“. Thereby, the credibility of the respective Muslim actors' demand on symbolic inclusion and representation mainly depended on the Muslim actors' relative closeness to the endorsement of liberal and secular technologies of the self (opinions, values, gendered and sexual practices, liberal rationalities of authorising religious adherence).

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Proceding from the reconstruction of the public „convert hype“, the thesis will direct its focus away from the analysis of the public entry of the *IZRS* as a particular organisation headed by salafi Swiss converts. More broadly, it aims to grasp the convert to Islam who performs a subjective turn and embraces Islam as a synecdoche of a more general moral turn observable in the organised Swiss Muslim field. Thereby, analysing the Muslim self-constitution of Swiss converts to Islam of either gender active in Muslim venues, my aim

is to reconstruct current forms of Muslim education and subject formation in the Swiss (German) Muslim landscape based on fieldwork within various Muslim arenas conducted between 2008 and 2010. My interest thereby is to think together the public problematisation of Islamic visibilities with Muslim self-education and subject formation, thus to analyse the interpellative effects of public discourses on current Muslim self-formation.

To do this, chapter 3 discusses and analyses the narrative self-formation of a female Muslim convert active in new forms of over-ethnic communities and educational projects. Thus, the case study entitled „‚Before, I Never Wanted to Have Anything to Do with Islam': Redeeming Islam through a Female Convert's Gaze" analyses the conversion account of Mona, a young Swiss female convert to Islam as she staged it before a mainly Muslim audience with diverse ethnic backgrounds in a small Turkish mosque during a public Iftār in Ramadan 2008. The Analysis is embedded into a portrait of the young woman. As analysis will show, Mona's narration reverses convert Jibril's transformational trajectory as reconstructed in chapter 1; while the male convert narrates a story of „becoming a stranger" by becoming Muslim, Mona, taking in the observer position of a female Swiss narrator that discovers Islam, relates a story of „home-coming". In Mona's speech, the interchangeable critical objects in need of redemption are „male Muslims" as a synecdoche of „Islam" as repressive antagonist agent „chopping (women's) hands off" as invoked in the beginning sequences of her speech, introducing the subsequent dissolution of alterity. The object of alteration in Mona's observational speech is the narrator's gaze on „(male) Muslims"/„Islam", as she gradually comes to „see" that Islam is „different", as it leaves her „agency". Following Judith Butler's considerations on the productivity of censorship and foreclosure, I will analyse Mona's narrative as an interpellative speech which is undergirded by the epistemic rules of articulation set by contemporary public observation, of what qualifies as a socially acceptable and legally recognisable „livable" subject (see Butler 1997b; 2006). As I will argue, it is by presenting herself as an agentic subject in self-control, taking in the narrator's stance of „any Swiss (female)" that convert Mona can perform the redemption of both her subjectivity and „Muslims" and „Islam", which is set against the interrogation of her social surrounding and public observation who contest veiled Muslim women's agency.

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In a concluding step, the thesis will follow Mona's shift of gaze and link the analysis of the converts' media appearances as well as Mona's speech to the wider context of collective Muslim educational and organisational forms that currently gain contours in Switzerland.

Following social constructivist approaches that have argued that conversion narratives are always molded by the religious form the narrator is converting to (Peacock 1984; Taylor 1978 and Luckmann 1987), I will hold that Mona's presentation of conversion as a conscious, desirable and agentic mode of moral and ethical self-cultivation mirrors the notion of „being Muslim" as it is articulated in the *Islamologiekurs*, an educational program which was also visited by Mona.

The concluding case study, chapter 4, is thus based on data collected in the *Islamologiekurs (IK),* an Islamic program in German language popular with converts of both genders and young Muslims that takes place in the greater area of Zürich. The Islamologiekurs is close to the *Muslim brothers* and thus differs relevantly in terms of theology and aesthetics from the salafi outlook of the *IZRS*. Introduced in 2007, the form and aim of the *IK* presented a novelty in Switzerland. Analysis juxtaposes converts' accounts of their turn to Islam and their endorsement of Muslim practices to the collective Muslim self-formation performed in the *Islamologiekurs*. Analysis aims to show how the educational program of the *Islamologiekurs* varies the theme of interpellating and subjectifying a community of believers under a common „transcendent truth" and an all-encompassing „ethos" as it is worked out in Arnold Darby Nock's seminal socio-historical study of the emergence of the concept of religious conversion (1933). As analysis reconstructs, the *IK* iterates this theme of subjective moral interpellation and community building in a contemporary setting before the background public problematisations. Formulating a revived, all-encompassing Islamic ethos, it rejects public readings of Islam as a repressive „religion of law" or patriarchal culture. Rather, drawing on liberal and secular conceptualisations of „religion", it defines sharī'a as a subjective category of everyday Islamic practice and moral self-cultivation, as the source to enable an Islamic source to enable an Islamic „way of life" that leaves an individual „choices".

Drawing on the Foucauldian notion of „technologies of the self" (1988), I have worked out how in the *IK*, the self-formation as Muslims and the adoption of religious practice and the endorsement of moral precepts entails the endorsement of both liberal and traditional modes of religious authorisation (see for example Bracke, 2008; Jakobsen 2001; Jouili 2011). Liberal and secular modes of „individual agency" and „choice" as well as appeals to „citizen rights" intersect with traditional forms of religious authorisation, as it has also been observed in other studies of subject formations in European liberal and secular settings among Muslim active in Islamic forms. Those forms of new „community building" are based on individual (believers') subjective effort and will to constitute a „community of believers" (compare Roy 2006: 20; 48; 52; 153) and imagine it as one's proper „identity". This form of disembedding „religion" as a subjectively disposable means of communal self-expression and self-cultivation intersects with present „technologies of power"

(Foucault 1988: 18) – understood as practices and discourses that problematise, shape and regulate „Muslim others" – which are undergirded by the trope of a „civilisational clash".

The thesis ends with an outlook that summarises the argumentative trajectory and conceptual framework of the thesis and ends with a discussion of the contribution of the project to existing fields of research on Islam in Switzerland and Europe and some critical remarks on current Muslim politics in Switzerland and Europe.

i.viii. Data & formalities

The four chapters of this thesis are structured as closed, comprehensive case studies that can stand independently, yet they are best read as complementary, as they relate and refer to each other. Conceptualisations developed, analyses, information and data and field descriptions presented in previous chapters are taken up and expanded on in the following chapters. Thus, in terms of its formal arrangement, this thesis follows and rehearses the argumentative development of the analyses.

Each of the respective chapters is preceded by a summary and a short methodological introduction and contextualisation, presenting the data, empirical field and the analytical focus chosen. Analyses conducted in the respective chapters are followed by a theoretical discussion developing the conceptual framework of interpretation and relating the results and ideas to existing studies on Islam and Muslims in Switzerland and Europe-wide discussions.

Chapters 1 and 2 focus on the *Islamic Central Council* and its convert protagonists. The analysis of the *IZRS* is based on data collected in diverse public venues organised by the Central Council, such as the *Islamdemo gegen Islamhetze* 10.12.2010, annual reunions on 12.02.2012 in the popular venue of the Zürcher Volkshaus and 19.02.2011 in the Kongresshaus in Biel, and the *Demonstration gegen Islamophobie* 29.10.2011 which is complemented with media and document analysis. Chapter 1 analyses a Swiss convert's speech as he held it during the first annual reunion of the *Central Council* in the Züricher Volkshaus on 12 February 2010 which is embedded into a portrait of the *IZRS* that draws on qualitative interviews conducted with its committee members, press articles as well as documents found on the Council's homepage. In order to reconstruct the media observation of the convert committee of the *IZRS* as presented in chapter 2, I conducted a chronological compilation, qualitative analysis and selective, thematic and dramaturgical resumption of the media coverage on the *Central Council* between December 2009 and February 2012. Thereby, analysis focused on the reconstruction of confrontative television appearances of the (male) committee as well as TV-portraits of the male exponents in

Swiss official channel *SF (SF Club* from 30.03.2010 „Muslime in der Schweiz – Wie gefährlich sind Fundamentalisten?“, *SF Arena* broadcast on 23.04.2010 „Radikale Muslime im Aufwind?“, and the feature *SF-Aktuell* „Ein Glaube, zwei Standpunkte“ broadcast on 04.03.2010).

Analyses conducted in chapters 3 and 4 are based on data collected in the wider field of organised Islam between 2008 and 2010. Prior to the selection of the *IZRS* and the *Islamologiekurs* as focal points of my reconstructive field work and analyses, I had led a number of interviews with Muslim experts and converts that were in some way engaged in Muslim associations and institutional forms. I had realised a number of interviews with converts I had found via internet requests to various Muslim associations and interest groups existing at that time, such as the *Föderation Islamischer Dachverbände Schweiz (FIDS)*, the *Verein Islamischer Organisationen Zürich (VIOZ),* and the internet portal *Islam.ch*. I found some interview partners at other Islamic venues, such as during the venues of the women's *Association Culturelle des Femmes Musulmanes en Suisse (ACFMS)* I had attended in La Chaux de Fonds („Rencontre Annuelle des Convertis“ at the *Association Culturelle des Femmes Musulmanes en Suisse* on 22.-25.01.2009 and 21.-23.05.2010).

After an exploratory phase of reconstructing present organisational forms by way of qualitative interviews with diverse Muslim experts and converts of both genders active therein in the latter half of 2008, the focus of ethnographic fieldwork and interviews and the participant observation of converts engaged in organised Islam was laid on the *Islamologiekurs* taking place in Winterthur/Regensdorf since 2007. Bringing together around 70 participants of various ethnic backgrounds, among them a big number of Swiss converts, the *Islamologiekurs* presented itself as a novelty and an important nodal point of an emerging network of Muslims active in organised forms of Islam, such as umbrella organisations like the *FIDS* existing at that time. Chapter 3 is based on the analysis of a conversion account of Mona, a young female convert which had also participated in the *Islamologiekurs* and was one of my most important informants that also introduced me to the *Islamologiekurs*. The conversion account was presented during a public Iftār during Ramadan 2008 in a small Turkish mosque before an audience of diverse ethnic backgrounds I had visited in the exploratory phase of my fieldwork. Analysis is embedded into a portrait of the young woman as well as her engagements in existing Muslim forms and a close description of the Iftār event. Chapter 4 is based on the analysis of selected lessons of the *Islamologiekurs* which are juxtaposed with data gained from interviews led with the founder of the course, Amir Zaidan, as well participants, notably converts of either gender participating in the educational program between January 2009 and

December 2010. The core data of this chapter were collected in the weekend block seminaries of semester one and two of the *Islamologiekurs* between January 2009 and December 2009. The digital recordings of lessons attended amount to a total of approximately 320 hours, of which selected sequences and lessons were chosen for analysis. In total, I led in-depth interviews with ten male converts[19] and with seven female converts. With two of the male converts and with three of the female converts I conducted a second interview to deepen the topics touched upon.

Some venues visited as well as interviews, both formal and informal I led with various persons active therein mostly do not form explicit part of the analyses presented, yet they have, by way of a comparative methodological procedure (Bohnsack 2008), aided me to discern and work out generalisable trends in the current Swiss field of organised Islam. Thus, counter the more common procedure of qualitative analyses to produce complex typological statements by multidimensional comparison (ibid: 129-155; Lamnek 2010: 202-215; see also Flick 2007), I used comparative qualitative methods to de-complexify my ethnographic data and develop general statements by theoretical condensation.

Except for the expert interviews, all interviewees and personal data were anonymised, according to the ethical standards of qualitative studies (Flick 2007: 56-70; see especially 65-66; Hopf 2008). Quotations of transcribed qualitative data (speeches, interviews) are indicated by data name, followed by character count. Quotes of *SF TV*-television features (all features used can be found in the SF online archive) are indicated by minute to facilitate the traceability. To ease readability, quotes are presented in English translation in the main text (in the case of longer quotes, the original German transcription is added in a footnote below, whereas single words or short sequences follow the English translation in the main text by use of square brackets). Arabic terms are rendered in italics and according to standard English transliteration rules, as proposed by Hildebrandt (no year). Some words, such as Quran, Sunna, Niqab, Ramadan or salafi that have entered the European vocabulary were not transliterate.

[19] One interview I led with a male convert was not apt for transcription, due to the bad acoustic quality of the recording.

1 „I have become a Stranger in my Homeland“: Swiss Convert Jibril as the ‚Clear Bogeyman‘

The Transvaluative Symbolic Capital of Swiss Converts to Islam

1. Summary

This opening chapter unfolds the thematic and conceptual scope of this thesis. It analyses a Swiss convert's speech delivered at the first annual conference of the salafi organisation *Islamischer Zentralrat Schweiz* (*IZRS*, Islamic Central Council Switzerland). The conference was held in the *Volkshaus*, a popular venue in Zürich in front of an audience of several hundred Muslim individuals on 14 February 2010. The analysis of the speech is preceded by a portrait of the *IZRS* and its goals that is based on interviews conducted with members of its convert committee. Convert Jibril's talk was entitled „Zum Fremden in der Heimat geworden: Ansichten und Einsichten eines Konvertiten“ („I have become a stranger in my homeland: views and insights of a convert“).

Combining existing narratological approaches on the dramaturgical structure and thematic topic of conversion narratives with a performative, poststructurally informed concept of subjectivation, the chapter analyses Jibril's speech as a performance instituting „being Muslim“ as a desirable mode of self-addressation and moral and orthopractical self-cultivation. It is argued that in his account he not only realises his Muslim self as a Swiss convert, but, taking in the synecdochal position of representing „any Muslim“, he also moulds a self-formative narrative for the audience present at the venue, interpellated as religious believers. In his talk, Jibril presents an account of his becoming perceived as a „stranger“ in various social scenarios (private sphere, army, media) through his adoption of an Islamic habitus differing from his (former) social surrounding. Thereby, his account relates the „death“ of his „Swiss self“, and the concomitant „birth“ of his „Muslim self“. Thus, Jibril delivers a variation of the Pauline theme of death of the old sinner, and birth of new man (2 Kor 5, 17, Rö 6). Yet, as comparison to standard conversion narratives shows, his narrative diverges in terms of observer's perspective, time structure, thematic topic, and the presented locus of self-transformation. In the first half of his speech, the redemptive trajectory characteristic of conversion narratives that stages the overcoming of a deep crisis is reverted. Instead, Jibril's talk conveys the theme of permanent social crisis following Jibril's adoption of a

„strange“ Muslim habitus. While standard conversion narratives refer to the invisible „inner self“ as the locus of self-transformation, Jibril's alteration is located on his visible bodily surface. Following the narrative structure of his talk, the chapter shows how convert Jibril invokes and gradually adopts, thus subjectivises present public addressations of „Muslims“ as „strangers“ as they have become increasingly current in Switzerland ever since 9/11. Jibril presents his „becoming a Muslim“ as the retroactive assumption of the Swiss public's gaze, and thus places his alteration under a social frame of reference, avowing of the current state of public problematisation of the Swiss Muslim population. In his speech he comes to figure, *pars pro toto*, as the „clear bogeyman“ (Jibril) who embodies the public perception of a lack of common symbolic ground between „being Swiss“ and „being Muslim“. By juxtaposing contemporary Muslim's experiences of social exclusion to episodes from Quran and Sunna in the second part of his talk, the convert identifies the pre-hijra Muhammadan pariah with the present status quo of Switzerland's Muslims. Hence, paralleling his experience of becoming a stranger in differing scenarios to Muhammad's humiliation suffered from his Quraish perpetrators, the convert relocates his narrative under a salvational Islamic frame of reference, and thus qualifies „becoming a stranger“ in everyday scenarios and media addressations, being bereft of social and legal recognition as a constitutive (yet historically overcomeable) momentum of „being Muslim“ in a moral and religious register. The biographical, „birth giving“ caesura characteristic of conversion accounts stages a radical discontinuity between Jibril's „being Swiss“ „before“ and „being Muslim“ „after“. Thereby, the convert's speech subjectivises the public discovery and problematisation of the „Islamic difference“ of Switzerland's Muslim population. The Swiss convert to Islam that gains contours as „clear bogeyman“ in the first half of the speech appears as an embodiment of „constitutive Muslim strangeness“ in the current social crisis on the one hand. Yet, by transferring present Muslim social marginalisation into a Muhammadan scenario and reintegrating it into a salvational trajectory in the second half of his performance, he transvaluates his embodiment of „Muslim strangeness“ into embodied religious capital, as he frames it as the emulation of the prophetic habitus. Thereby, by synecdoche, he comes to stand, *pars pro toto*, and speak, for the present Muslim audience, interpellated as emulators of the prophetic sunna. Accordingly, his speech delivers a blue print for the self-addressation and self-cultivation of immigrants and second-generation youth of Muslim origin along religious normative criteria, as umma deemed to be socially and legally recognised religious minority in Swiss society.

Combining and adapting existing performative conceptualisations of religious conversion with approaches on (gender) transvestism, I will show that the figure of the

Swiss convert to Islam disposes of the performative capital of reiterating and subjectivising a social crisis, instituting „being Muslim“ as a desirable mode of self-addressation, by transvaluating it from public ascription of „cultural difference“ and „symbolic transgression“ to a category of subjective moral self-cultivation and religious self-addressation; as interviews with the convert committee show, the Swiss converts claim their „being Swiss“ as a creditable cultural capital to overcome the social crisis triggered by the perception of „Islamic difference“. Thus, the converts interviewed conceptualise „being Muslim“ as a self-chosen, agentic „way of life“ rather than an in-disposable collective category ascribed to Switzerland's Muslim population as „strange immigrants“. As I will conclude, the figure of the Swiss convert disposes of the performative capital of transvaluating „Muslim strangeness“ into a category of religious self-addressation and, thereby, summoning a redemptive trajectory of overcoming social and legal liminality by claiming secular and liberal rights as „religious minority“. I will argue that the converts' transformative capital gains intelligibility and credibility by the „culturalisation“ of the social ontology in present Swiss society, where constitutive „Islamic difference“ has become – with some years of retard, compared to the European context – a category of social liminalisation, governance and legal regulation of „culturally differing“ minorities.

1.1. Methodological considerations

The analysis of Jibril's speech is preceded by a portrait of the *IZRS* and its goals which is based on interviews conducted with convert president Nicholas Blancho, convert spokesperson Abd el Qaasim Illi and women's delegate convert Nora Illi, and complimented with information from the association's homepage and media coverage.

The data that form the focus of analysis were collected by participant observation at the venue of the *IZRS* on 14 February 2010. General observations were captured by field notes. The major part of the performances delivered during the event, including the speech analysed, was recorded by digital camera. Even though analysis is based on his spoken performance, the visual recording of convert Jibril's speech allowed to include gestural performances into analysis. Apart from the sequences containing consecutive translation into Arabic, Jibril's German speech was completely transcribed. Quotations are indicated by character counts. To ensure the comprehensibility of this case study, quotations have been translated into English. Peculiar or idiosyncratic German expressions have been added in square brackets. Analysis followed a sequential procedure (see for example Flick 2007: 436-450). The chapter presents the sequential structure of the convert's narrative to follow the thematic frame and dramaturgy developed as well as to trace the shifting of speaker perspectives assumed by the

narrator in the course of his speech. Redundancies, expletives and passages of minor analytical interest were left out. Also pauses, stammers, and slips of the tongue were not reproduced.

2. The Islamic Central Council Switzerland (Islamischer Zentalrat Schweiz)

Jibril's speech was delivered as part of the first annual conference of the *Islamischer Zentralrat Schweiz*. The *Council* was established on 25 October 2009[19], a month before the Swiss voters' approval of the minaret initiative on 29 November 2009. The organisation made its first public appearance on 12 December 2009, when its committee organised a controversial „Demonstration against Islamophobia" („Demonstration gegen die Islamhetze") on Federal Square (see below; see chapter 3). The executive board of the organisation, which is constituted as a membership organisation, is headed by a handful of Swiss converts of both genders, along with an equal number of second generation Muslims. The illustrious protagonists at the head of the *IZRS* are its male convert president Nicholas Blancho and convert spokes person Abd el Qaasim Illi, along with the latter's wife, niqab-wearing convert Nora Illi, head of the women's department. Convert president Nicholas Blancho, in the middle of his twenties at the time of the foundation of the *IZRS*, is student of law and Islamwissenschaft at the University of Berne. Grown up in the bilingual, former industrial town Biel in Canton Berne into a liberal middle class family, he converted to Islam at 16. He is married to a Muslim of Yemenite background, father of two children, and has spent some time in Yemen, studying Islamic sciences at University.

He is fluent in Arabic and almost memorises the Quran completely (Blancho 2 20035-20253).[20] Spokes person Abd el Qaasim Illi, also in the middle of his twenties, is currently student of history and Islamwissenschaft at Berne University. Grown up partially in an evangelical foster family in the eastern part of German speaking Switzerland, he converted to Islam after 9/11 in his early twenties, during his political engagement with the Palestinian question. He is known to have been a fierce supporter of the *PLO* and to have entertained contact to late *Hamas* founder Ahmad Yasin. Together with his wife Nora Illi, former punk daughter of psychotherapist parents who converted to Islam in her late teens, and their four children, he lives partially in Egypt, where Illi studied at the *al-Azhar* university. As Blancho, Illi is fluent in Arabic

[19] See the Councils' own account on http://www.izrs.ch/index.php/de/ueberuns.html. (25.07.2011)
[20] The second interview with Nicholas Blancho took place on 23 October 2011. All interviews quoted in this chapter were conducted in Swiss German, yet transcribed in standard German.

and knowledgeable of Islamic disciplines.

The *IZRS* has its head office in Berne. The association has rented a four room flat in the basement of a residential building. It hosts the president's and spokes person's offices, a secretariat, and a conference room.

2.1. The aims of the Islamic Central Council Switzerland: Forging a Swiss Muslim identity

According to their statutes, the organisation aims at encouraging the constitution of a „Swiss Muslim identity"[21] by projects of Islamic education and awareness-building among Muslims in Switzerland, as well as reaching out to the public by awareness and information campaigns to reduce prejudice, and represent Islamic interests vis-à-vis the public and authorities.[22] It was founded as the first grassroots organisation bringing together Muslim individuals. Even though sunna in terms of its normative orientation, given its focus on public awareness work and representation for practicing Muslims *in toto*, it also welcomes shī'ī members.[23] One of its middle term goals, given the existence of competent Swiss Muslim scholars and pedagogues, is to set up a Swiss fatwa council and establish private Islamic schools.[24] Besides, the *IZRS* has also announced their plans to open up an Islamic women's house.

Since April 2010, it also functions as an umbrella organisation of Islamic associations. Thus, along with the *KIOS* (Koordination Islamischer Organisationen Schweiz, established in 2000[25]) and the *FIDS* (Föderation Islamischer Dachverbände Schweiz, established in 2006), it vies for becoming the official representative of Muslim organisations vis-à-vis Swiss authorities and the wider public, an aspiration that was yet turned down by the public and authorities (see chapter 3). In 2012, following a report of the *OSCE* (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) which admonished a high level of „Islamophobia" in Switzerland, appealing to the constitution of a national Muslim umbrella organisation as a means to fight discrimination, the *Council's*

[21] see „Visions", http://www.izrs.ch/index.php/de/vision.html. (16.05.2012)
[22] see „Statuten", http://www.izrs.ch/index.php/de/statuten.html. (20.07.2011)
[23] see „Sunniten und Schiiten im Islam",
http://www.izrs.ch/index.php/de/standpunkte/sunniten-und-schiiten.html. (16.05.2012)
[24] see „Visions", op.cit.
[25] The *KIOS (Koordination Islamischer Organisationen Schweiz*) is a follow up organisation of the GIOS (Gemeinschaft Islamischer Organisationen Schweiz) which is said to exist since 1989. The *KIOS* was founded in 2000. Both the *GIOS* and its follow up organisation were founded by Farhad Afshar, a sociologist with Iranian shī'ī background. However, due to lack of any information on its members nor public awareness of the existence of the *KIOS*, its importance was until recently, as I would argue, neglectable. Equally the *FIDS,* until lately, did not reach a wider public, nor did it dispose of a functioning website until 2010.

competitor associations *KIOS* and *FIDS* announced their plans to fuse into the representative national Muslim parliament *Umma Schweiz*, made up of delegates of each canton's association members to speak for Muslim's religious and social interests.[26] The long term goal of each of the competing representational associations is to achieve the recognition of the Muslim community as a religious body of public interest on cantonal levels, in order to gain access to additional benefits, to guarantee freedom of worship for Muslims, and to fight against the discrimination of the Muslim population. Thus, in the long run, mirroring the federal organisation of Switzerland which organises matters pertaining to religious law on a cantonal level, the *Council* aims to set up strong cantonal branches to represent Muslim interests.[27]

2.1.1. Filling an organisational gap: from dispersed ethnic communities to a unified Muslim ummah

Asked about the association's history in an interview conducted in spring 2010, convert president Nicholas Blancho relates how the idea to found their own organisation only developed slowly, as he and a dozen of likeminded individuals present at the first general assembly in October 2009 found themselves more and more disappointed by the Muslim structures and umbrella organisations existing at that time. He recounts how, given the intensifying minaret debate in the run up phase of the vote, „people felt disorganised .. alone" (Blancho 1 726-854).[28] Spokes person Abd el Qaasim Illi recalls in our interview how they had visited a big number of mosques, and had contacted national umbrella associations like the *FIDS,* representing cantonal Muslim unions, in the months preceding the foundation to promote actions, yet how they had failed to mobilise those existing structures.[29] In his diagnosis, Illi detects both a „cultural" as well as a „generational" problem at the roots of the inertia of Muslim organisational forms existing at that point of time. Thus, Illi problematises the undemocratic and opaque structure of the local associations mostly founded during the nineties – the bulk of which are organised along ethnic lines, such as Albanian or Turkish mosques –, more prone to safeguard personal interests of its leading „functionaries" [„Funktionäre"] than to represent and defend the religious needs and interests of its individual

[26] The OSZE detected a dominant addressation (and problematisation) of migrant minorities from the Balkans and Turkey as „Muslims", leading to structural discrimination in the job market and in applications for naturalisation. The report links Switzerland's Muslim discrimination to the success and high public presence of populist right wing political actors, as well as un-sued Islamophobic contents spread in the internet. See for example N.N.: „Schweizer Muslime planen Parlament", *Tagesanzeiger* 07.02.2012.
[27] see „Visions" (op.cit).
[28] „Desorganisiert .. alleine" 726-854). This first interview with Nicholas Blancho was conducted on 11 May 2010 in my office.
[29] The interview with Abd el Qaasim Illi took place on 23 February 2011 in his office.

members, especially of the younger generation. While the younger generation, as Illi holds, had felt the urge to take action in the face of a growing problematisation of Muslims in the public, their ideas had been stopped short by the lack of intellectual expertise, as well as structural and financial support of existing local communities in the hand of the older immigrant generation (Illi 15412-16327). In a similar vein, both Blancho and Illi recount how they came to recognise established umbrella organisations like the *FIDS*, claiming a representative role, unable to defend Muslim interests, and react to the minaret campaign appropriately and efficiently (Blancho 1 558-1441). Illi bemoans the „old guys" [„alte Herren"] presiding over existing umbrella associations. He deems the latter's organisational umbrella form as „outdated" [„überholt"] and non-representational, as most of the approximately 50000 Muslims who are regulars in common Friday prayer are not actually members of the local communities they frequent. Accordingly, Illi contests the legitimacy of existing umbrella associations' claims on representing individual Muslims' moral and orthopractic interests (Illi 6004-6514).[30] Hence, following two previous consultory meetings, Blancho and his entourage had decided „that it was time to establish [themselves] [„dass es Zeit war dass wir uns war dass wir uns unabhängig gründen"] (Blancho 1 2094-2175).

Spokes person Illi sees the *IZRS*'s model of a basis organisation representing individual Muslims as a much needed offer to fill the gap of answering to the everyday problems and needs of Swiss Muslims. Thus, he recounts how ethnic communities often fail to meet the educational and representational interests of their younger members, alluding to a generational difference, which is revealed by the „young's" shift from entertaining „ethnic" interests to „Muslim" interests and needs:

> „we must offer an alternative .. more and more the young [Muslims, S.L.] do not feel represented anymore by their ethnic communities .. constantly .. daily we have some people .. students .. complaining about .. missing facilities and agency in their associations."[31] (Illi 16988-17461)

[30] see „Visions" (op. cit). Most likely, the number of 50000 Muslims regularily practicing in Muslim communities draws on a study commissioned by the federal commission for migration issues (EKM). The qualitative study established identity profiles of Swiss Muslims, estimating that only about 10-15 of Swiss Muslims were regularily practicing in Muslim communities. See Gianni et al. (2005: 10)

[31] Wir müssen eine Alternative bieten .. mehr und mehr Junge fühlen sich nicht mehr von ihren ethnischen Gemeinschaften vertreten .. ständig .. tagtäglich haben wir Leute bei uns .. Studenten .. die sich beklagen über ihre Gemeinschaften .. fehlende Initiative und Möglichkeiten. (Illi 16988-17461).

2.1.2. The activities of the Central Council: forging a sense of community among practicing Muslims

The activities of the *IZRS* focus on public and political action on the one hand, and awareness building, consultation and education of Muslim individuals on the other hand. Following the media effective organisation of the demonstration against Islamophobia on 10 December 2009 that marked the opening event of the *Council*'s public appearance, the *IZRS* was to organise a „Day against Islamophobia and Racism" on Federal Square, in November 2011. Further, to reach out to the non-Muslim public, the *IZRS* organises regular information campaigns and public relations events, such as information stands in major Swiss towns like Zürich, Basel, St. Gallen, Winterthur, Neuchâtel, Lausanne, Geneva, Berne, Solothurn or Chur, where it distributes brochures on Islam and interacts with the public. To complement these communication actions, the *Council* also advertises an Info phone line for the (non-Muslim) public, companies, schools and authorities on its homepage.[32]

The organisation offers its members consultation and legal support in matters pertaining to the head scarf or attending swimming lessons of their children with public schools, or prayer facilities in the work place or during military service (see below). Further, in terms of negotiating Islamic interests vis-à-vis private companies, it aims to become a Muslim advisor for the distribution of halal labels with major companies and distributors (Blancho 1 1312-1951).

The organisation's homepage is made up very professionally and is constantly updated.[33] It presents the standpoints, goals, the organisation structure, and announces current events related to the organisation. It also posts photographs, videos and documents of past events and conferences.[34]Besides, it maintains a comprehensive press review and regularly posts comments, essays and articles on current topics related to Muslims and the *IZRS*. Members also get news alerts through sms-messages on upcoming events and can follow the *Council* on social networks like Twitter and Facebook.

In terms of everyday Islamic practice, the *Central Council* offers on its homepage an

[32] However, when I tried to call the number in early May 2012, it had ceased to operate.
[33] See start page under http://www.izrs.ch/index.php/de/home.html. (20.07.2011)
[34] The council also maintains an official „ICCS channel" – the acronym stands for *Islamic Central Council Switzerland* – on *youtube* where they regularly upload videos of their conferences, speeches and so on. Also Jibril's speech is posted as a video. Besides, a number of speeches delivered at the venue, including Jibril's address, are accessible as manuscripts on the *IZRS* homepage. See links under http://www.izrs.ch/index.php/de/veranstaltungen/14022010-symposium.html. (30.07.2011)

online *fatwa* service in cooperation with an international network of scholars. It also witnesses conversions and issues conversion certificates, and distributes starter manuals for new Muslims (converts). The *IZRS* organises and advertises educational and recreational programs such as seminaries, workshops and family camps. Yet, exceeding interests pertaining to cultic and moral questions in the stricter sense, its homepage also advertises free health insurance consulting. In late January 2012, the *Council* announced their plans to issue a *Swiss Muslim Card (SMC)* that would grant its holders special price conditions in selected fitness centers, swimming pools, restaurants, hotels, and department stores. Further, the *Council* signaled that they had contacted a popular health insurance company to negotiate a special package deal for its members. At the same time, they announced their plans to install their own online „Muslim TV Channel" by summer 2012, featuring political discussion formats, a weekly news magazine with reports and features that broadcast from an Islamic perspective, as well as Islamic sermons.[35] Little earlier, the committee signaled their plans to build the up to date biggest mosque in Switzerland in the western outskirts of Berne with the financial help of donors from Qatar and Kuwait. The Islamic center is meant to host gender segregated prayer facilities, conference and seminary rooms, a commercial area, as well as gender segregated parking floors.[36]

While up until the Arab spring starting in late 2010, commentaries and essays on the *Council's* homepage were strictly focusing on national affairs, since then, the *IZRS* also comments on international issues concerning Muslims as a global community. Thus, in November 2011, the homepage reported on president Nicholas Blancho meeting with Rachid al-Ghannouchi in Tunis. The report featured a photograph of Blancho shaking hands with the leader of the *an-Nahda* party.[37]

The *Council* also aims to support and secure the scholarly education of future Imams and pedagogues in Switzerland. As Illi holds, he had been in contact with responsible directors of the Cairene *al-Azhar* university shortly before the Arab revolution brought daily affairs to an end in early 2011, to discuss possible education deals for Swiss students (Illi 44630-45048). While Illi does not outright reject the idea of setting up

[35] See N.N.: „Blancho lebt nicht vor, was er predigt", *Berner Zeitung* 22.01.2012.
[36] see N.N.: „Radikale Muslime planen grosse Moschee in Bern", *Berner Zeitung* 15.01.2012. A similar project presented by the Bernese Cantonal umbrella association *Umma* (est. 2000) (presided by Farhad Afshar) in Spring 2007 was turned down by the responsible city council for reasons related to building law. Initiator Afshar had planned to build an Islamic center, hosting a museum, a mosque, as well as business and commercial facilities and a hotel in the industrial area of northern Berne. See N.N.: „Stadt Bern will kein Islam-Zentrum im Wankdorf", *News.ch* 01.06.2007.
[37] see http://www.izrs.ch/index.php/de/news/621-nicolas-blancho-trifft-in-tunis-mit-enahda-fuehrer-rachid-al-ghannouchi-zusammen.html. (15.05.2012)

Islamic faculties in Swiss universities in order to educate Islamic scholars and pedagogues for Swiss Muslim associations and children's Islamic education, as it has been demanded by a number of political actors, migration, legal and Islam experts, as well as a number of Muslim actors themselves[38], he is clear that this must not be used as a governmental means of controlling and regulating Islamic authority:

> „We support this idea .. it is only that we are careful [...] it cannot be that the state or some institute .. a non-Islamic institution in some university is establishing a discourse on Muslims .. not that a Muslim is forced [...] to do his diploma here in Switzerland to be able to teach here .. the system must stay open."[39] (Illi 47654-48114)

2.1.3. The public events: demonstrations, family retreats, information stands

Both the public and the internal reunion events organised by the *Central Council* feature a mixture of international convert speakers, Muslim authorities and celebrity Muslims from the Balkans known to the bulk of the association's members as well as celebrity scholars from the Arab world. The events also host food stalls and commercial stands selling Islamic clothes and accessories or advertising ethnic businesses.

The *IZRS* has organised the largest Muslim reunion in Switzerland so far. Thus, the second annual conference under the motto „Islamische Identität in der Moderne" [„Islamic Identity in Modernity"] was held in the city hall of Biel and brought together around 2000 Muslim individuals from all over Switzerland and neighboring Europe.[40] The conference was accompanied by a demonstration of about 50 far-right activists and evangelicals in front of the town center of Biel.

Next to speeches delivered by Nicholas Blancho and niqab-wearing women's delegate Nora Illi who appealed on present Muslims to become „one unified Islamic body" (Nora

[38] This demand exists since about 2009, see N.N.: „Imame auch in der Schweiz ausbilden", *NZZ* 21.07.2009. See also a survey commissioned by the *Swiss National Research Fund*, NFP 58, Themenheft 1: „ Iman-Ausbildung, islamische Religionspädagogik und andere Aspekte des Islam in der Schweizer Öffentlichkeit", June 2010, available under http://www.nfp58.ch/files/downloads/NFP58_Themenheft01_DE_def.pdf. (14.05.2012)

[39] „Wir unterstützen diese Idee .. es ist einfach so dass wir vorsichtig sind [...] es kann nicht sein dass der Staat oder irgend ein Institut ein nicht islamisches an irgend einer Universität einen Diskurs über Muslime aufbaut .. nicht dass ein Muslim gezwungen ist [...] in der Schweiz das Diplom zu machen .. um hier unterrichten zu können .. das System muss offen bleiben." (Illi 47654-48114)

[40] In terms of visitors, the annual conference even outdid the Muslim youth event „Vom Schatten ins Licht" [„From shadow into the light"] held on 18 December 2010, organised by the grassroot youth collective *Ummah* (est. in 2009) in Zürich (see appendix chapter 5) which had attracted around 1000 visitors. See the *Council*'s announcement „2000 Besucher an der Jahreskonferenz des *IZRS* in Biel", available online under http://www.izrs.ch/index.php/de/medienmitteilungen/480-2000-besucherinnen-und-besucher-an-der-jahreskonferenz-des-izrs-in-biel.html. (15.05.2012)

Illi Biel 10063-10113), the event hosted the speeches and performances of illustrious Muslim celebrities such as renowned Quwaity Quran reciter and nasheed singer[41] Mishary Alafasy, British journalist and convert Yvonne Ridley, Albanian nasheed singer Adem Ramadany, Islamic boy band Labbayk, Albanian Imam Shefqet Krasniqi and German *Style Islam* founder Melih Kesmer.[42] Equally, the „Day against Racism and Islamophobia" in November 2011 featured illustrious speakers such as British convert journalist Lauren Booth, sister in law to Tony Blair, convert *Quran* translator Abdullah Frank Bubenheim, and, again, musical entertainment by nasheed singing boy-band Labbayk. As Illi tells me, in terms of the realisation of public relations events and awareness campaigns, the *IZRS* tries to learn and copy the strategies of international and highly professional Muslim organisations, such as the British branch of the *Kauthar institute*[43] which they regularly visit for inspiration (Illi 6547-7003). While the first events saw a (highly controversial) cooperation with German convert preacher Pierre Vogel and his affiliated organisations *Einladung zum Paradies* and *Wahre Religion*, the *Council* quit its contacts with the latter and went over to invite celebrity Muslims from all over the world.[44] The media and official security bodies have repeatedly charged the *IZRS* of receiving funding by Saoudi donors for its costly events. However, the *Council* regularly rejected the charges, emphasising that they received their money from their member fees and inland donors as well as from loans.[45]

[41] Nasheed is an Islamic form of male vocal chant with religious content. Often, it is sung by male a-capella formations. While it is sometimes accompanied by percussion instruments or synthesizer, there are no string instruments, as, according to traditional scholars, the latter are deemed to be morally harmful, and thus were judged haram (prohibited). Nasheed music is very popular among young Muslims active in revival movements. Famous nasheed singers or bands have pop star status.

[42] While the organiser's announced the key note speech of famous US-american convert Yusuf Estes, his participation was cancelled due to health reasons.

[43] The *Kauthar institute* is an Islamic education institute which offers various courses in Islamic disciplines. It is the flagship of the da'wa movement mercy mission, an international Islamic waqf foundation. The *Kauthar institute* has branches in Australia, South Africa, Malaysia, Great Britain, Canada and France. The general outlook of the organisation seems salafi (see further below for discussion of the term), as the bulk of the teachers have studied at Medina university. See their homepage http://www.alkauthar.org/. (20.05.2012)

[44] However, media also criticised the *Council* for inviting celebrities like Imam Shefqet Krasniqi, Imam at the Central Mosque in Pristina, known for upholding extremist, anti-Christian views, or US convert Yusuf Estes rejecting public education for Muslim children. See N.N.: „Mutter Teresa ist Teil der Unterwelt, weil sie keine Muslimin war", *Tagesanzeiger* 18.02.2011.

[45] Between early summer 2010 and spring 2011, the *IZRS* was observed by the federal intelligence service for its alleged connection to international Islamist terror circles. In 2011, observation was discontinued, as the security services did not judge the organisation as a threat to inland or international security. See N.N.: „Islamischer Zentralrat soll Gelder aus Saudiarabien erhalten", *Tagesanzeiger* 26.06.2011.

2.1.5. Appealing on Islamic normativity as a common denominator to unite Turks, Albanians and Swiss

The *IZRS* seeks to foster the constitution of a „Swiss Muslim identity" based on the normative sources of Quran and Sunna, termed *Islamic Normativity (iN)* by the organisation.[46] Thus, Illi claims the Council's legitimacy of representing Switzerland's „orthopractic" Muslims by appealing to the principle acknowledgement of the legally and morally normative character of the Quran and Sunna as minimal consensus among each and every individual ‚born' Muslim, be they practicing or not[47]:

> „No matter if you are secularily [laizistisch] oriented or orthodox [...] somebody who says I am Muslim .. he won't reject the pillars of Islam .. or say no this is not binding for me .. or it is wrong .. no .. they always would say .. I am too weak I do not practice it but it would be correct in principle .. and this is why I would say it is plain sailing to focus on Islamic normativity."[48] (Illi 31004-31864)

Accordingly, the *Council* aims at gathering together and representing those individuals in Switzerland who cultivate their „being Muslim" along those Islamic normative terms. Drawing on widely spread estimations, it wants to reach the about 50000 Swiss Muslims whom they deem to be „orthopractic" in the sense described above.[49] In terms of community building, Illi sees the novum of the *IZRS* exactly in its aim of gathering culturally differing Muslims hitherto separately organised in ethnic Turkish, Albanian, or Bosnian mosques together along moral and orthopractic criteria, as a community of believers and practitioners and giving them a voice:

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[46] Illi takes this term from Islamwissenschafter Tilman Nagel, as he tells me (Illi 26604-26983). The term „Islamic normativity" was introduced by Islamic scientist Baber Johansen in the 1980ies to comprehend the textual sources Quran and Sunna as well as the hermeneutical and legal disciplines (fiqh) applied to realise the sharī'a. In this sense, sharī'a is less understood as a positive body of legal and moral precepts than a regulative idea instituting, authorising and directing the process of legal and moral reasoning (Johansen 1999). Yet, in the *IZRS*'s definition of Muslim authority as *iN*, the third branch of Muslim authority, fiqh (methods and principles of legal and moral reasoning developed by Muslim scholars beginning in the early 9th century) is not mentioned. This might be due to the salafi outlook of its committee members who reject the authority of traditional Muslim scholarship. For more details on salafism, see further below.

[47] The Quran ordains that the followers of Islam need to „obey Allah and obey the Messenger (i.e., Prophet Muhammed)." The Quran stresses the importance of keeping the commandments mentioned in the *Quran* and following all the teachings of Muhammed and labels everyone who complies as „Muslim". See for example 4:59; 3:110.

[48] „Egal of sie jetzt laizistisch eingestellt sind oder orthodox [...] jemand der sagt ich bin Muslim wird jetzt Grundpfeiler vom Islam nicht ablehnen oder sagen nein das hat für mich keine Verbindlichkeit .. oder das ist falsch .. nein .. sie würden sagen immer ich bin einfach zu schwach ich mache es nicht aber richtig wäre es halt .. und deshalb würde ich sagen haben wir ein leichtes Spiel wenn wir Normativität ins Zentrum stellen und sagen Normativität ist was uns Muslime eint." (Illi 31004-31864)

[49] See „Visions" (op. cit.)

> „This was always the only goal of the *Central Council* [...] the only thing that unites us is Islamic normativity .. if you are Turkish or an Albanian or Swiss you do not have a lot in common in terms of cultural background .. consensus is difficult .. at most on an Islamic normative level .. and this is what we specialise in and what we promote .. and this will also be in the centre of our future communication."[50]

Given the perceived lack of projects unifying Muslims along strictly normative criteria so far, Illi emphasises the *IZRS*'s community building role, as it answers to and focuses on the common experience of social discrimination and exclusion as a unifying concern of practicing Muslims with otherwise differing „cultural backgrounds", walks of life and traditions in terms of cultic and aesthetic matters. He defines the *Central Council* as a help point for Muslims faced with everyday problems pertaining to practices like wearing the headscarf:

> „[...] today Muslims need this [...] that they can grab the phone and say .. listen .. the teacher wants to forbid the headscarf .. this helps to make Muslims aware that they can achieve something if they stand together."[51] (Illi 10774-11025)

Faced with the current problematisation of Muslims and Islamic practices, he sees it as the *Council's* mission to forge a sense of self-assertion and a sense of their common social identity as belonging to a specific minority group in their everyday struggles to defend their Islamic interests. In their interviews, both Blancho and Illi welcome and affirm inner-Islamic plurality, understood as ethnic diversity and traditional scholarly differences of Muslim individuals in terms of cultic practices or aesthetic preferences in clothing and grooming matters, as well as scales of orthopraxy endorsed. Yet, given this internal variety, Illi emphasises the need of forging a sense of unified Muslim identity:

> „Each and everyone have their own manhaj [„method", way of being Muslim] .. his or her way of practicing .. maybe one is more orthodox the other is less orthodox .. he or she is not orthodox at all .. this cannot be the object of discussion inside the *Council* .. we have to take care of the needs of the Muslims in this country .. of course we need to teach them sense .. yet not in the sense of a [particular fractionalising] truth claim but in the sense of what it means to be a Muslim."[52] (Illi

[50] „Das ist immer das einzige Ziel des Zentralrats gewesen [...] das einzige was uns eint ist die islamische Normativität .. ob sie Türke sind oder Albaner oder Schweizer .. haben sie nicht viel gemeinsam auf kultureller Ebene .. Konsens ist schwierig .. allerhöchstens auf der islamisch normativen Ebene und das ist was wir bewirtschaften und sonst nichts und das sehen wir auch in Zukunft als Zentrum unserer Kommunikation." (Illi 5250-5740).

[51] „[...] in der heutigen Zeit brauchen die Muslime das [...] dass sie das Telephon in die Hand nehmen können und sagen .. hört .. der Lehrer will das Kopftuch verbieten .. das trägt dazu bei dass die Muslime merken wenn man zusammensteht dass man tatsächlich etwas machen kann." (Illi 10774-11025

[52] „Jeder hat seine eigene manhaj, seine Art und Weise zu praktizieren .. vielleicht ist der eine

11266-11834)

Equally Nora Illi, Qaasim Illi's convert wife, will dwell on the *Council*'s role of forging a unified Islamic umma which comprehends cultural particularities as Islamically accepted, even desired differences in legal opinions. Drawing on the scholarly concept of ikhtilāf [al-'ulemā, al-fuqahā][53], as Nora holds, the *IZRS* aims to transvaluate „cultural differences" as a particularising momentum into desirable inner-Islamic plurality pertaining to differing opinions of sunnī legal schools mutually accepted by the ahl as-sunna wa l-jamā'a[54]:

> „We are only strong as community .. if the Turk does his thing with his community and the Albanian does his Albanian thing and the converts do their stuff .. this will lead to nothing .. we are an umma .. and everything fits into it .. this is important to me [...] we have normativity which proscribes a number of precepts this is the basis we can agree on and everyone who is okay with this is welcome .. if you go into detail .. in Islam there are four legal traditions .. what do we want this is a reality .. this is the umma [...] and we have ikhtilāf and it is good to have ikhtilāf .. but still we ought to feel as a community."[55] (Nora Illi 71493-72544)

2.1.5. Islam as an „all-encompassing way of life"

Blancho sees it as the utmost goal and vision of the *Council* to foster the social competences of Muslims, and show that there is no contradiction between being a

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orthodoxer der andere weniger orthodox der oder die eine gar nicht orthodox .. das kann nicht Gegenstand der Diskussion innerhalb des Rates sein .. wir müssen uns um die Anliegen der Muslime in diesem Land kümmern .. selbstverständlich und wir müssen ihnen einen Sinn vermitteln .. nicht im Sinne von einem Wahrheitsanspruch .. aber Sinn in dem Sinn was es bedeutet Muslim zu sein." (Illi 11266-11834)

[53] Drawing on Prophetic sayings such as „ Ikhtilāf al-'ulemā raḥma min Allāh " (difference among scholars is a mercy of God), or „Al-ikhtilāf yu'addi ila t-takawul" (difference leads to perfection) in early sunnī scholarship, differences in the interpretation of Quran and sharī'a were conceptualised as natural effect of a flexible, contextualised system of law. See van Ess 1997: 654-660; *Encyclopedia of Islam, second ed. (EI²),* „Ikhtilāf"(2012)

[54] The interview with Nora Illi was led on 12 March 2011. It was conducted in the *Council's* head office.

[55] „Wir sind auch nur stark als Gemeinschaft .. wenn der Türke sein Türkenzeug macht seiner Gemeinschaft und der Albaner macht sein Albanerzeug und die Konvertiten machen ihr Gschmeus .. das führt zu nichts .. wir sind eine umma .. und dort hat alles drin Platz .. das ist mir eben auch sehr wichtig [...]wir haben die Normativität die ein paar Regeln vorschreibt .. das ist die Grundlage .. auf das können wir uns einigen und alle die das unterschreiben können sind willkommen .. wenn sie in die Detailfragen gehen in dieses wir haben im Islam nun mal die vier Rechtsschulen .. was wollen wir es ist eine Realität das ist die umma [...] und wir haben ikhtilāf und das ist eigentlich auch das schöne dass wir ikhtilāf haben und .. aber wir sollten uns als Gemeinschaft fühlen trotz allem." (Nora Illi 71493-7254)

competent student, a successful manager and being a virtuous Muslim (Blancho 2 27717-28115). He deems it important to overcome the perception of Islam as an impediment to progressivity, social success and recognition (ibid. 5522-5786). He sees the inception of a new self-awareness and self-understanding among Swiss Muslims as a matter of a generational shift linked to the migration situation and the wrong concept of „being Muslim" upheld by the migrants' generation. Blancho describes this shift as a move from an unreflected mode of Muslim belonging linked to one's „cultural" or „ethnic" origin to a self-assertive, conscious, „progressive" adoption of Islam:

> „[...] I think this development .. on the one hand we have people from the first [immigrant, S.L.] generation with low education levels .. people who have been Muslim for cultural reasons .. and not because they have really understood that they are Muslim and why .. and now we explain .. that we support them .. that Islam can be an input for their entire ideas and that Islam needs to be progressive".[56] (ibid. 5167-5786)

According to his emphasis on the social dimension of being Muslim, Blancho understands Islam as an „all-encompassing way of life", a moral and ethical guideline that is not limited to cultic practices, but also ought to direct everyday moral and ethical demeanor, one's inner attitude as well as one's behavior vis-à-vis society. Counter to public readings of Muslim (visible) practices and traditional modes of religious authorisation as „pre-modern", „backward" (see chapter 3) and thus, difficult to reconcile with social „integration" into a liberal and secular setting, Blancho links the idea of social success to a way of life directed by Muslim authority, which not only legally and morally proscribes the cultic relation between God and humans, but also between humans in their everyday life, thus ought to direct the individual Muslims' entire social life as an ethical guideline[57]:

> „This is interesting in that Islam proposes the concept of proscribing the relation god human und the relation human human [...] the task of the *Central Council* .. not only the *Central Council*'s task but the general task is to show and to teach youth to understand that Islam not only demands a little cultic practice but that Islam is something very all-

[56] „Und ich glaube diese Entwicklung dass man einerseits Leute hat die von der ersten Generation her einen schlechten Bildungsstand haben und auch kulturell bedingt Muslime gewesen sind und nicht wirklich weil sie es verstanden haben dass sie Muslime sind und warum sie Muslime sind und sich auch nicht bewusst sind was das überhaupt bedeutet sondern dahingehend dass man den Muslimen erklärt eben .. dass wir sie fördern .. dass Islam ein Input für ihr gesamtes Gedankengut ist und dass Islam progressiv sein soll." (Blancho 2 5167-5786)

[57] In this statement, Blancho possibly alludes to the classical scholarly division of legally and morally binding practices in matters pertaining to devotional matters (al-'ibādāt) and matters pertaining to civil interactions (al-mu'āmālāt), yet he might also think of Muslim ethics ('ilm al-akhlāq) as a traditional Islamic discipline of ethical self-cultivation.

> encompassing [...] that the life of a Muslim is not just theology but that life of a Muslim is also politics .. social .. about social conditions and and and."[58] (Blancho 2 13724-14575)

Blancho finds it important to foster the young Muslim's self-understanding as capable and self-assertive part of society. A recurring theme in our interview is his emphasis on the Muslims' need to get educated and integrate themselves in the work market. Taking in their position as „born" Swiss – devoid of the „cultural lack" they diagnose with „ethnic born Muslims", notably the parents' immigrant generation – both Blancho and Illi affirm the existence of a Muslim problem. Yet, as Blancho holds, while this is often in the media and the public conflated to an „Islamic problem" in terms of religious normativity and practice, convert Blancho sees it more as a „migration problem" (Blancho 1 19834-20747; see also chapter 3) which both he and Blancho understand mainly as amounting to a lack of what could be summarised as „cultural capital"[59] of Switzerland's Muslims today in two respects; thus, on the one hand, they lack embodied „religious capital" which means correct knowledge and practice of „being Muslim" as an all-encompassing ethos, an agentic „way of life" (see above); on the other hand, disposing of little social, economic and creditable cultural capital in Swiss society, they need to catch up in terms of their education as well as their general cultural and social competences in everyday situations, thus to become knowledgeable of cultural particularities of Switzerland, yet without „assimilating" in terms of the authorisation of their moral and habitual demeanor in everyday life. In our first

[58] „Es ist Aufgabe des Zentralrates .. nicht nur vom Zentralrat sondern allgemein ist einfach dass man zeigt und dass man die Jugendlichen dazu bringt zu verstehen dass Islam erstens nicht einfach so ein Konzept ist dass ein bisschen Kultushandlung von Dir verlangt sondern dass Islam etwas sehr allumfassendes ist [...] dass das Leben von einem Muslim nicht nur Theologie ist sondern dass das Leben eines Muslimen auch Politik ist .. gesellschaftlich .. sozial .. soziale Verhältnisse und und und .." (Blancho 2 13724-14575)

[59] Here, as in the following, I draw on the Bourdieuan notion of „capital", notably „cultural" capital available to social (individual as well as collective) actors to gain social recognition in both Muslim as well as public arenas for their claims on Islamic authority and/or representation of Muslim's interests by converting it into „symbolic capital". The notion of „cultural capital" refers to both embodied (education, explicit as well as implicit knowledges, sensibilities, bodily habitual demeanor such as dress habits, ways of speaking, moving and interacting) as well as institutionalised capital (Swiss passport, education titles, family name etcetera). „Symbolic capital" is understood to be the actual social credibility and value of „cultural" capital in the respective discursive market of a social arena. „Symbolic capital" thus depends on the respective „market value" and recognition of both embodied and institutionalised capital forms in public discourse on the one hand, and in Muslim arenas on the other hand. As differing „cultural" capital forms always intersect in social actors, their actual convertibility into „symbolic capital" in a specific social field, and, thus, symbolic power to influence and mould the respective field, depends on the respective configuration of various capital forms, such as „being native Swiss", „being male", „being female", „being Muslim", which can reinforce, but also transvaluate, and delegitimise one another, as will become clear in the analyses. See Bourdieu 2001: 113f; 1999: 47f.; 2001: 309f.; for the importance of introducing an intersectional perspective in analyses of social difference see for example Hess et al. 2011; Walgenbach et al. 2012[2].

interview, Blancho compares the Islamic community he aims to establish with what he conceives of as sub-cultures and minorities such as lovers of folk music or pot smoking alternative youth. Hence, the *Council* aims to gain recognition of „Islamic difference" as what Blancho understands as an expression of Swiss democratic plurality, granting its citizens the possibility to belong to differing habitus groups, thus, he aims to transvaluate „Muslim strangeness" into „Swiss diversity":[60]

> „Swiss society is no monolith where everybody thinks alike .. there are Swiss who listen to folk music .. accordion [Schweizerörgeli] .. for them this is Switzerland .. others are liberal and follow some socialist postsocialist ideas and Che Guevara and easy cool and they smoke pot .. and for them this is Switzerland .. I mean communities are there they exist and they will always have differences [...] I think they can all live in one society .. the model of society is pluralistic [...] yes with a headscarf one has a different demeanor and maybe it is an alternative life but I think this is the future or what the future is for me or how it ought to be .. that it is tolerated .. that what a Muslim does is normal." (Blancho 1 23261-25466)[61]

Hence, the *IZRS* aims to achieve the recognition of what they term „orthodox" Muslims as a specific religious minority differing in terms of cultic, aesthetic and moral forms of self-cultivation, yet socially recognised as citizens and competent on the labor market and in education matters. In a similar vein, aiming to detach „Islamic difference" as a religious category defined along normative criteria from „ethnic difference" which amounts to a lack of recognised Swiss „cultural capital", convert Illi repeatedly points to the problem of „cultural" difference which he singles out as the defective category of difference which hinders Muslims in Switzerland so far to claim their equal rights and gain social recognition for their „Islamic difference" as „religious minority". Thus, while he was astonished about the „harshness of reactions" [„Heftigkeit der Reaktionen"] in the public on himself and the committee as „Swiss converts to Islam", he muses

> „how would it have been if an immigrant Muslim had founded such an organisation and had appeared in the public in such a self-assertive manner ... I think the

[60] Compare my analysis of the photograph series of fully veiled Nora Illi set in familiar Swiss photo opportunities, framing herself as an interchangeable Swiss subject.

[61] „Die schweizerische Gesellschaft ist kein Monolith wo alle einfach gleich denken .. also es gibt die Schweizer die traditonelle Musik hören .. Schweizerörgeli für sie ist das die Schweiz .. andere sind liberal und folgen irgendwelchen sozialistischen postsozialistischen Gedankengütern und Che Guevera und easy cool und kiffen und so weiter .. für sie ist das die Schweiz und ich meine die Gemeinschaften die Communities die sind da und die werden immer Differenzen haben [...] Ich glaube sie alle können in einer Gesellschaft leben .. das Gesellschaftsmodell ist pluralistisch [...] ja mit einem Kopftuch hat man vielleicht ein anderes Auftreten oder und vielleicht ist es ein alternatives Leben aber ich glaube das ist die Zukunft oder was die Zukunft für mich ist ist oder sein sollte ist dass es eben toleriert ist .. dass das was ein Muslim macht ist genauso normal wie das." (Blancho 1 23261-25466)

public cry out would have been even bigger." (Illi 1560-1737)[62]

Furthermore, he argues that:

> „if a foreigner [sic] wants something here or claims something .. then reactions are 'if you don't agree you can go (back)' [...] we have in the beginning .. before we went to the media .. we have visited mosque after mosque [...] to speak about our project and everyone has affirmed us that it is a big advantage that we are Swiss." (ibid. 3560-4155)[63]

2.1.6. Blancho and Illi's own „manhaj": claiming centrality versus charges of propagating particularity

Given their ostentatious salafi habitus, controversial media appearances and public statements (see below, see chapter 3), Illi's former contacts to Palestinian Islamist leaders, as well as their initial cooperation with salafi German convert preacher Pierre Abu Hamza Vogel, Blancho and Illi are mostly judged as „radicals" and „extremists". Thus, media, experts, as well as a variety of Muslim actors contest the *Council's* „central" claim on representing Muslim interests, charging the *Council* of propagating a „sectarian", „exclusivist", „literalist", „Saudi" or „salafi" interpretation of Islam hardly representative of the bulk of Switzerland's south-east European and/or practicing Muslims.[64] Yet, faced with those charges, both Illi and Blancho distance themselves

[62] „wie wäre es gewesen wenn eingewanderte Muslime so eine Organisation gegründet hätten und mit einer solchen Vehemenz an die Öffentlichkeit gegangen wären .. der Aufschrei wäre noch grösser gewesen." (Illi 1560-1737)

[63] „wenn ein Ausländer hier etwas will oder fordert dann heisst es schnell wenn es Dir nicht passt kannst Du gehen [...] wir haben am Anfang bevor wir gross an die Medien sind .. sind wir von Moschee zu Moschee gegangen [...]und haben über das Projekt geredet und alle haben uns bestätigt dass das ein grosser Vorteil ist .. dass wir Schweizer sind." (Illi 3560-4155)

[64] „Salafism" – in the Swiss media mostly used synonymous with „wahhabism" – has gained momentum and visibility in the aftermath of 9/11 both in European public perception (the bearded men, the fully veiled women) (see Meijer 2009: 1-2) as well as among young Muslims and converts (see ibid.: 14). It is problematised for its radical outlook and its missionary zeal among young Muslims in Europe. Its highly performative and visual appeal is in alliance with the new media. Salafi preacher's videos as well as mass conversion videos by German organisations – often headed by converts like Pierre Vogel (alias Abu Hamza) or Sven Lau – like „Die Wahre Religion" or „Einladung zum Paradies" were widely distributed among young Muslims' and converts I have encountered. Salafi circles are described as „quietist" and „segregationalist" (ibid.: 9). As the means to return to the pristine essence of Islam, salafism espouses a return to the study of the basic sources of Islam, the Quran and the Hadith. Both drawing on the 18th century sunnī movement of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab and the later 19th century reformists' appeal to return to the salaf al-ṣāliḥ, the first three generations of the Islamic community, salafi scholars reject taqlīd, the „blind" following of the four canonical law schools as well as scholastic philosophy (kalām) in terms of creed ('aqīda) which were both developed by later generations. It accepts ijtihād, individual legal reasoning, albeit along very strict rules. Being wary of legal madhāhib and their

from proselytising, emphasising their affirmation of the inner-Islamic plurality of the *IZRS* (see above, also Illi 8423-8729). Furthermore, it is exactly on the question of the social involvement and progress of Muslims that the *Council*, as Illi holds, differs scholarly from what they themselves call „neosalafi" positions, which they have repeatedly rejected as „authoritarian" Saoudi teachings propagated by Muslims like Pierre Abu Hamza Vogel or likeminded Islamic actors returning from their studies in Medina. Thus, Illi defines Vogel and his likes as strict followers of medieval hanbali scholar Ibn Taymiyya and his pupil Ibn Qayyam, „whose opinion is almost sacrosant" for them, while he distances himself from taqlīd, emphasising the need to practice ijtihād[65] to adapt an Islamic way of life to the contemporary situation. Equally Blancho, repeatedly summoning the Quranic appeal on Muslims to use their reason,

> „because the Quran mentions again and again afāla ta'aqilūn .. don't you want to be reasonable .. use your reason" (Blancho 2 37338-37467)[66],

emphasises the Muslim's need to be „progressive" and use ijtihād as hermeneutical means of transformation and adapting to modern times. Thus, he challenges the public notion of orthodox forms of Muslim practice as inherently „pre-modern", as devoid of „interpretational agency" and „progressivity" as modern forms of religious authorisation commonly ascribed to secular and „reformed" readings of religious texts (compare chapter 2; see also Imhof and Ettinger 2009: 4; Asad 2003a: 11). Both Illi and Blancho

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hermeneutics, salafi adherents rely heavily on hadith and prophetic emulation as the central pillar of moral and orthopractic authorisation (see Meijer 2009: 3; Lacroix 2008: 6-7). Teaching ideal is an informal teacher–pupil relationship (Meijer 2009: 9).

[65] Ijtihād means literally „(self) exertion". It is a terminus technnicus in Islamic law, firstly, until the ninth century, for the use of individual reasoning in general and later, in a restricted meaning, for the use of the method of reasoning by analogy (qiyās). Individual reasoning, both in its arbitrary and its systematically disciplined form, was freely used by the ancient schools of law. It was 9th century legal scholar to reject the use of discretionary reasoning in religious law on principle, and to identify the legitimate function of ijtihād with the use of qiyās the drawing of conclusions by the method of analogy, or systematic reasoning, from the Quran and the sunna of the Prophet. This important innovation prevailed in the theory of Islamic law. From about the 9th century the idea rose that only the great scholars of the past, and not the epigones, had the right to ijtihād, and the principle of the infalliblity of earlier scholarly decrees was established (ijmā') which came to replace the application of ijtihād.This amounted to the demand for taqlīd, the unquestioning acceptance of the doctrines of established schools and authorities. However, the question of ijtihād and taqlīd continued to be discussed by Muslim scholars. The appeal to reapply ijtihād intensified from the 18th century onwards, among reformist individuals and schools of thought who advocated a return to the pristine purity of Islam upheld by the thirst generation of the Islamic umma, such as the salafiyya, and modernist voices from the last decades of the 19th century onwards which laid the emphasis on adapting Islamic normativity to contemporary rationalism and modernism. Both tendencies reject traditional taqlīd. See*EI*^{2}, "Idjtihād" (2012); Johansen (1999); Hallaq (1997).

[66] „[Der]Quran erwähnt immer wieder afāla ta'aqilūn .. wollt ihr denn nicht verständig sein .." (Blancho 2 37338-37467). This and similar phrasings are recurring in the Quran, in differing contexts pertaining to (un)believers, see for example 2:171; 40:67; 10:42; 8:22; 10:100.

told me that they orient themselves in their own Islamic practice mainly along the ḥanbalī madhhab[67], yet that they endorse a comparative approach, drawing also on other legal traditions and ijtihād (Illi 26942-27695; 41941-4 2213; Blancho 2 37561-38027). Further, while Illi judges „neosalafi" positions as „segregational", he positions himself foremost as „just sunni", thus reaffirms his claim on representing the Islamic center:

> „I have never affiliated myself to a specific manhaj or madhhab exclusively .. I have always defined myself as ahl as-sunna wa l-jamā'a .. placed the community in the center."[68] (Illi 40082-40298)

2.1.7. Claiming social recognition & legal protection for Muslim interests

In their public statements, the *IZRS* argue from the liberal perspective of equal rights and religious freedom as well as non-discrimination of minorities guaranteed by the Swiss secular constitution (see chapter 3). Thus, they defend the free exercise of Muslim cultic and moral practices as falling under the scope of freedom of worship and freedom of opinion. Thereby, it was to become the female headscarf, especially in its extreme versions (niqab) that has figured so far as the preferred object of contestation to negotiate the scope of problematised visible Muslim practices mandated by Islamic normativity deemed to be protected by religious freedom, and, thus, acceptable in public space (see below).

On 29 November 29 2010, the *IZRS* announced the launching of a counter popular referendum, in order to repeal the constitutionally mandated ban on building minarets voted for by the Swiss one year before.

2.1.8. The members of the IZRS: facts and figures

Today, the association counts, according to its own statement, 1700 individual members,

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[67] The ḥanbaliyya is one among four legal traditions in sunnī Islam. It is characterised by heavily relying on Quran and hadith in its legal and moral reasoning, and its rejection of speculative theology (kalām) endorsed by other schools. The dominant fact of Hanbalism is the appearance of reformist Wahhabism in the 18th century that came to be the state doctrine of the Saoudi state. The waḥḥabiyya heavily relies on the ḥanbalī 14th century scholar Ibn Taymiyya and the latter's renown pupil Ibn Qayyam. While Hanbalism cannot be conflated to Wahhabism, it is difficult to draw clear boundaries. Equally, salafī forms of adherence which have gained momentum since 9/11 draw on waḥḥabī ideas as well ideas originating in reformist Islamic discourse from the last quarter of the 19th century, propagating a return to the Islam of the pious forefathers (as-salaf al-ṣāliḥ. See *EI²* „ḥanābila" (2012).

[68] „Ich habe mich nie irgendeiner speziellen manhaj oder madhhab angeschlossen .. ich habe mich immer ahl as-sunna wa l-jamā'a genannt .. die Gemeinschaft ins Zentrum gestellt." (Illi 40082-40298)

and represents the interests of 13 Islamic communities.[69] According to a news paper with access to the member statistics, 80% of the council's members are under 35 years old, 60% are male, 40% female. 60% of the members possess a Swiss passport.[70] Only 10% are converts, according to the self-declaration on the membership application forms. Of this group, 60% are female, declaring to be housewifes. The bulk of the members work in the technical sector or in the service sector, others have social jobs.[71]

Even though the association's individual members mostly have a Muslim background, the *Council* is being perceived as a „convert community" and it is the Swiss convert protagonists at the executive forefront that have incited the interest of the public.

3. Public observations: The convert committee in the focus of media attention

Right from the start, the public appearance of the convert protagonists of the *IZRS* was accompanied by intense media coverage. Different from other Muslim associations in Switzerland, the *IZRS* preferably holds its venues in central public spaces, like Federal Square, the Volkshaus in Zürich, the Congress Center in Biel, or community centers in minor towns and cities.

Thus, it was also the *IZRS* that organised a „Kundgebung gegen die Islamhetze" [„Demonstration against Islamophobia"] on 10 December 2009 on Federal Square, in front of the Swiss houses of parliament, in the aftermath of the voters' backing of the minaret ban. All through the preparatory phase of the demonstration, this event was accompanied by high media attention due to the announced appearance of notorious Pierre Vogel, a German convert and salafi preacher who had studied at the Saudi university of Mekka. Vogel, observed by German authorities, was denied entry at the Swiss borders for fear of religious agitation and thus did not appear on stage.[72]

This event inaugurated a self-reinforcing media hype revolving around the organisation and its convert protagonists. The converts made their appearance in various media forms between March and late June 2010. Portraits, interviews, risk profiles, TV-

[69] http://www.izrs.ch/index.php/de/gv/430-beschluesse-der-zweiten-ordentlichen-gv-am-11122010-in-bern.html. (19.07.2011)
[70] This number points to the young age of the *Council*'s members, as today only approximately 33 of Switzerland's Muslim population in total (around 400000 individuals) hold a Swiss passport according to estimations (Gianni [forthcoming]). Thus, the members of the *Council* are predominantly immigrants' children having grown up here in Switzerland.
[71] Katia Murmann: „Islamrat-Mitglieder: Jung, weiblich, gut ausgebildet", *Der Sonntag* 17.04.2010.
[72] Matthias Raaflaub: „Überraschung bei Islam-Demo blieb aus", *Der Bund* 14.12.2009.

discussion formats on the convert leaders of the *IZRS* and its danger potential were to dominate news coverage on Islam and Muslims in Switzerland in the first half of 2010 (Ettinger and Imhof 2011: 18; 32). In the course of the media hype in the early summer months of 2010, the figure of the „radical convert to Islam" as religious zealot and powerful leader figure luring „migrant", „ethnic", „born" Muslims into a „new born", radical, deculturalised Islam (Roy 2006; 2010) became topical (see chapter 3).[73]

Notably, following the entry of male protagonists in the preceding months, it was the public appearance of fully veiled convert Nora Illi in April 2010, wife of spokes person Abd el Qaasim Illi, the newly designed responsible for womens' issues in the council, that triggered a moral panic and fuelled a nation-wide debate about banishing the „burka" (see introduction).[74] Nora Illi was to become the media „ratings hit" [„Quotenhit", *Der Sonntag* on 16 May 2011] after her nomination as official responsible of the committee's women's department, taking a firm stand in several media formats in April and May 2010 against a possible ban as it was discussed on a national level by that time.[75]

[73] see for example, Philip Gut: „Bin Laden in Biel", *Die Weltwoche* 14/2010; Guido Kalberer: „Konvertiten sind am radikalsten", *Tagesanzeiger* 05.05.2010; Hugo Stamm: „Fanatismus ist Lernbar", *Tagesanzeiger Online* 22.04.2010 and by the same author „Gott schütze uns vor den Konvertiten", *Tagesanzeiger Online* 30.04.2010.

[74] For an analysis of Nora Illi's public appearance see Leuenberger (2011).

[75] On Mai 4, 2010, the parliament of canton Argovia approved to motivate the articulation of a state initiative that would demand a ban of Islamic face veils in Swiss public arenas on a national level with 89 against 33 votes. While right conservative *(SVP, EVP),* moderate conservative *(CVP, BDP)* and liberal fractions *(FDP)* of the cantonal parliament approved of the motion brought forward by the ultraconservative Swiss Democrats *(SD),* social democrats *(SP)* and the green *(GP)* voted against the initiative. The fractions in favour of the initiative argued that the „Burka" is a „power symbol of male dominance over women" [„Machtsymbol der Dominanz des Mannes über die Frau"]. They further denied that it was an expression of religious belief. While the opponents of the initiative questioned the adequacy of the legal measures proposed by the initiative as „hysteria" and „scare-mongering" [„Angstmacherei"], they backed the supporter's interpretation that the „Burka" was a „symbol of female debasement" [„Zeichen der Herabminderung der Frau"]. [N.N.: „Forderung nach schweizweitem Burkaverbot", *NZZ* 04.05.2011]. On 21 January 2011 the appointed national commission turned down the initiative, as they denied the adequacy of the motion, arguing that female full veiling for religious reasons was too rare a phenomenon in the Swiss public sphere to justify legal amendments. The commission judged existing legal measures that foresee personal identification of persons in public arenas as sufficient. [N.N.: „Die vorhandenen Gesetze reichen aus", *NZZ* 21.01.2011]. On Mai 19, 2011, a committee above party lines handed in more than 11000 signatures at the cantonal parliament of Ticino, thus successfully launching an cantonal initiative for „A ban on face veiling in public space" [„Für ein Verhüllungsverbot des Gesichts an öffentlich zugänglichen Orten"]. According to the initiative committee, the ban is not only directed against Muslim female full veiling but also against hooded hooligans and left autonomous demonstrants. [N.N.:„Burkaverbot wird Abstimmungsthema", *NZZ* 19.05.2011. The consideration of a motion by far right politician Oskar Freysinger (SVP) for a national ban on „public hooding" [Öffentliche Vermummung] followed on 28 September 2011. It would cover a ban of Muslim full veiling as well as other forms of hooding in public transport, official public spaces, and at demonstrations. [N.N. „Burkaverbot rückt auch

Since this first half of 2010, the events and announcements of the *Central Council* have up to date stirred media attention on a regular basis. Thus, some of the announced events did not take place. Given the controversial status of the *Central Council*, an event organised by the affiliated youth organisation *Vereinigung Islamische Jugend Schweiz* (*VIJS*) which was to feature a key note speech by Nicholas Blancho was cancelled in summer 2011.[76] Also the public „Day against Islamophobia and Racism" organised on 29 October 2011, was accompanied by controversial discussions, as the *Council* had advertised for the event with an emblem referring to the Jewish Yellow star with „Muslim" written in old-German letters on it, suggesting an equivalence between the Jewish shoah and the social and legal discrimination of Switzerland's Muslims today. It was distributed as a sticker or in flag form to present visitors of the venue. Jewish representatives as well as the competing Muslim organisation *FIDS* bemoaned this action as „unfortunate" [„bedauerlich"], „just stupid" [„einfach blöd"] and contra-productive, deeming it the wrong means of tackling the existing problem of Muslim discrimination.[77] In February 2012, the annual reunion 2012, announced unter the title „Islamic Unity 2012" that was to focus on „Der Ursprung der Moral" [„The origin of morality"] had to be cancelled, as the town of Bülach revoked their renting agreement with the *IZRS* for fear of religious and political agitation.[78] Only a few days later, the *Central Council's* plans to build the up to date biggest mosque of Switzerland in the industrial areas of Berne West were made public. Former convert committee member Oscar Bergamin (see chapter 3) who had quit the organisation in late 2011 caused a further media eclat as he revealed to weekend news paper *Der Sonntag* that Blancho had contacted controversial organisations linked to Islamist terror in Qatar and Kuwait as possible donors for the super project, while Blancho distanced himself from Bergamin's statements.[79] The news article was doubled by a *Tagesanzeiger* article a

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in der Schweiz näher", *Tagesanzeiger* 29.09.2011]. The motion was rejected by the national council of states on their session on 6 March 2012. [N.N.: „Abzocker-Initiative und Burkaverbot: Der Ständerat in Kürze", *Tagesanzeiger* 06.03.2012].

[76] The *VIJS* had rented a communal center in the outskirts of Lucerne, yet, according to the *IZRS,* local politicians revoked the rental agreement and the respective facilities were rented by the *Young SVP* for a counter event, which was, however, disturbed and eventually brought to and end by protesting members of the *VIJS* posing the bulk of the audience. See the Council's commentary, N.N.:„Blancho in Luzern. Über Islamophobie und Rassismus wird nicht verhandelt, sondern dagegen wird gekämpft", posted on 26.06.2011, available online under http://www.izrs.ch/index.php/en/news/542-blancho-in-luzern-ueber-islamophobie- und-rassismus-wird-nicht-verhandelt-sondern-dagegen-wird-gekaempft.html. (17.05.2012) For the media presentation of the incidence see for example Marcel Habegger: „Islamisten verhindertn Anlass der JSVP", *20 Minuten* 26.06.2011.

[77] Reto Wissmann: „Zentralrat provoziert erneut", *Tagesanzeiger* 28.10.2012.

[78] See N.N.: „Hinterwäldlerisch: Bülach wirft Islamisten aus der Stadthalle", *Tagesanzeiger* 12.01.2012.

[79] Daniel Glaus:„Radikale Muslime suchen Geldgeber in Golfregion", *Der Sonntag* 15.01.2012.

week later, where the *Council*'s plans to issue a *Swiss Muslim Card (SMC)* for its members and an Islamic TV-channel were made public (see above).[80] The article featured critical voices of (ex)members of the organisation, charging its convert leaders of exercising pressure on its members, such as that the latter were admonished to follow the council's facebook entries daily and click on the „like" button. Anonymous voices bemoaned that the leaders were demanding excessive voluntary work of their adherents, while they themselves accommodated themselves in luxury hotels on the association's costs. Besides, the article revealed that both Blancho and Illi had in the meantime taken second wives.

3.1. Jibril Zwicker in the press

Also Jibril, the convert delivering the speech analysed below, was to come into the focus of media attention in early summer 2010, and again in spring 2011.[81] Up until May 2010, the young man in the middle of his twenties had served as an officer/lieutenant [Oberleutnant and Werkschutzoffizier] in the Swiss army and aspired to become captain/major [Hauptmann]. In 2008, Benjamin Zwicker had converted to Islam and calls himself Jibril Muhammad ever since. Since then, the mechanical engineer had critised the army's inadequate policies concerning Muslim members' religious interests and needs, notably the lack of possibility for ritual prayer during shifts as well as the absence of provisions allowing segregated showering.[82] The convert was repeatedly subjected to safety checks. In early 2010, the responsible authorities assessed him to be a security risk for the army. According to a news paper quoting extracts of the officials' report, it argued that the convert's „compliance to his religion" [„Hörigkeit gegenüber seiner Religion"] and the „unconditioned and unquestioned practice of it" [„absoluten und unhinterfragten Ausübung derselben"] were conflictive with his army loyalty and allegiance to state interests.[83] He was to be exempted from his current post in the army headquarters. Backed by the *Council*, Jibril appealed against this decree to the Federal Supreme Court. In May 2011, the Federal Supreme Court turned down Jibril's appeal, backing the army's assessment.[84] Since 2011, Jibril Zwicker is member of the *Council's*

[80] N.N.: „Blancho lebt nicht vor, was er predigt", *Tagesanzeiger* 22.01.2012.
[81] see for example, Claudia Marinka:„Militär: Fundamentalist plant Karriere in Armee", *Der Sonntag* 01.05.2010.
[82] Johanna Wedl: „Ich bete auch in einem Bunker", *Tagesanzeiger* 05.05.2011.
[83] Furthermore, the responsible authorities ruled that the convert was to hand in his army weapon, and that he was to be denied access to weaponry and ammunition. In addition, he was to be excluded from further education and promotion in his army career, and must not partake in peacekeeping missions abroad. See for example, Thomas Hasler: „Zum Islam konvertierter Offizier ist ein Sicherheitsrisiko", *Tagesanzeiger* 07.05.2011.
[84] ibid.

committee and responsible for public events.

4 The Symposium in the Züricher Volkshaus

Jibril's performance took place at an early venue of the council in February 2010 about a month before media attention intensified due to the *IZRS*'s organisation of a family retreat in Disentis, Grisons, hosting Pierre Vogel as a key speaker, and Nora Illi's appearance as a member of the association's committee in April.[85]

The *Symposium* in question was the first annual conference organised by the *IZRS*. It started at 11 am and lasted until 5.30 pm. It was held in the *Volkshaus*, a popular theatre and event hall in the heart of Zürich. The topic of the *Symposium* was „Die Schweiz nach dem Minarettverbot. Wohin steuert die Islamdebatte?" ["Switzerland after the ban on minarets. Where is the debate on Islam heading to?"]. In front of the premises, green colored posters bearing the Arab greeting „*Ahlan wa Sahlan*" and its German equivalent „*Herzlich Willkommen*" advertise the event. Young bearded and bare shaved men and women, mostly wearing a headscarf gather around the entrance. Some by-passers stop for a moment in wonder at the rather unusual sight. The *Volkshaus* is known to be the location of pop and rock events. A number of sturdy dark bearded security men control the entrance door and oversee the foyer of the *Volkshaus*. In the entrance hall, men and women browse through information stands and book tables, before they are guided by signposts and security staff to the gender segregated seating areas. The men are seated in the hall in the ground floor, while the women and children move to the upper galleries of the theatre.

The bulk of the audience, about 700 individuals of both gender, seem to have a Muslim self-understanding. One can hear Swiss German, Turkish, Albanian, and Arabic voices. The men and women are mostly young, in their twenties or early thirties. There are a lot of children. They run around in the entrance area and play on the staircase. Many of the men wear a facial beard and a prayer cap. Some are even dressed in traditional Muslim qamises or jalabiyyas, worn over cotton trousers in discreet colors. Other young men are beardless and casually dressed, in a sportive or elegant manner. The majority of the women present, not all, wear a headscarf of some sort. Some of them have artfully draped turbans matching the color of their winter coats and tunikas. Some of the younger women are dressed in form-fitting colorful clothes, others, often mothers, wear long 'abayas in discreet colors. Less than a handful of omen wear niqab. At lunchtime

[85] Nora Illi was designed to be responsible for the womens affairs department founded in the association's general assembly on April 10, 2010. See for example Anna Vonhoff: „Islamischer Zentralrat Schweiz. Hier sehen sie die neue Frauenbeauftragte", *Blick* 16.04.2010.

and in the afternoon, there are pauses for prayer and recreation. Then, people will flock to the toilets, the assigned prayer spaces and the entrance hall. Some will leave the establishment to get fresh air. During the big break at lunchtime, free mineral water and tuna and cheese sandwiches are distributed in front of the premises. A dozen journalists have posed their cameras and microphones in front of the stage. During lunch break, they interview organisers and visitors. Most of the pressmen leave afterwards. The logo of the newly founded organisation is attached to the forefront of the lectern on the left side of the stage.

Illustration 5: Blancho talks to media.

In the background towards the middle of the stage, the organisers, translators and the moderator are seated at a conference table. The table front is covered by a big poster carrying the motto of the conference „Lernen, mit dem Islam zu leben" [„Learn to live with Islam"], which is also the title of president Nicolas Blancho's greeting address.

4.1. The *IZRS* introduces its project of overcoming social & legal marginality: from pre-hijra exclusion to the Medinian umma

Convert Blancho has a long beard, colored with henna. His head is covered by a white prayer cap. He wears a long black coat over a tieless black suit. Also convert Abd el Azziz Qaasim Illi, equally notorious spokesperson of the *IZRS* has a red beard.[86] He too

[86] In salafi or hanbali circles relying heavily on the sunna of the prophet as sources of Muslim authorisation, wearing a beard like prophet Muhammad is judged mandatory. While it is not allowed, according to a number of prophetic sayings, to dye the beard with black color, it is allowed to treat it with henna to cover grey hair or, as seems to be the case with European converts, to make the beard look fuller. As I became aware in personal encounters with the

is wearing a white prayer cap and is dressed in a long black coat. After Lunchbreak, Illi will hold a lengthy and intellectually demanding speech about „Das Irrationale in der Islamophobie" [„The irrational in Islamophobia"] where he will compare the current discrimination of Muslims with the exclusion of the Jews in European national states in the 20th century. In his opening address, Blancho will present the *Council's* aims and will appeal to the present Muslims to join the organisation to forge a strong and capable community, and donate money.[87] Framing the Swiss Muslim's current experience of social and legal discrimination as a reiteration of the Mekkan situation of the early Muhammadan pariah circle before the hijra, where Muslims were exposed to „persecution, repression, murder and torture by the Meccans" [„Verfolgung, Unterdrückung, Tötung und Folter der Mekkaner"], Blancho presents the *Council*'s foundation as an equivalent to the Medinian hijra which marked the very beginning of Islamic time and the constitution of a Muslim umma, enabling the Muslims to create „clear structures" [„klar Strukturen"], and „organise Muslims" [„Muslime organisieren"], a change from a state of passive repression endured in Mekka to the powerful social status attained in Medina. By metaphoric shift, paralleling the Muhammadan appeal to emigrate, in his speech, Blancho takes in the prophetic lead in his appeal to forge a „capable" [„handlungsfähige"] Muslim *umma* in present post-minaret ban Switzerland. Thus, while in the prophetic time back then, emigration was the resolution to overcome the liminal status of the prophet and his adherents, Blancho emphasises that the proper means of forging a strong umma in the present Swiss scenario is identity politics, to educate a community of self-assertive Muslims, to appeal to the existing liberal and secular legal structures of Swiss society and gain legal and social recognition for their particular Islamic interests as social minority. Thus, counter the public imaginary of an Islamic threat, Blancho reverts the perpetrator-victim ascription, as he frames the present situation as an instance of Muslim misrecognition and discrimination.

The conference is opened with a Quran recitation performed by a dark skinned recitator. Then a number of speeches, starting with the president's address, will tackle topics related to the current political and social situation of Muslims in Switzerland. The program consists of talks, the reading of poems, and open discussion. Besides Blancho, Illi, Jibril and another young convert, also two convert women hold speeches. One of

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Council's president, Blancho additionally treats his beard with an intense fragrance, explaining this practice as said to have been the sunna of the prophet to do so.

[87] A written script of Blancho's speech is available as pdf on the *Council*'s homepage. See under http://www.izrs.ch/PDF/14022010/Lernen_mit_dem_Islam_zu_leben_14022010.pdf. (19.05.2012)

them, judging from her voice a young woman, is wearing a niqab and reading an essay she has written on her thoughts after the minaret ban. The other convert woman, wearing abaya and headscarf, is delivering a speech entitled „Die Rolle der islamischen Frau vor dem Hintergrund ihrer Rechte." [„The role of the Muslim woman in respect of her rights"].

5. Jibril's speech

The speech whose convert narrator has adopted the name of the archangel of prophetic interpellation[88] is announced under the title „Zum Fremden in der Heimat geworden: Ansichten und Einsichten eines Konvertiten" [„Having become a stranger in the homeland: views and insights of a convert"] in the program flyer available at the entrance. It is one of nine contributions and is held in the afternoon, after the big break for lunch and dhuhr (noon) prayer. As the entire event is also translated into Arabic consecutively, his talk is interrupted several times by the translator. Including those interruptions, his speech lasts for about 25 minutes. Jibril enters the stage. He is dressed in a charcoal coat, worn over a long white qamis and cotton trousers. His head is covered with an off-white turban, and he has grown himself a reddish beard. He places himself behind the lectern and starts his talk.

Illustration 6: Jibril begins his speech.

[88] Jibril is the interpellating archangel, as he is believed by Muslims to have been the angel who revealed the Quran to the prophet Muhammad, and sent a message to most prophets, if not all, revealing their obligations. Jibril is named numerous times in the Quran, see for example 2: 97, 98; 66: 4 and 2:97. Hagiography holds that he appeared to Muhammad in a dream and seized him physically until the latter agreed to announce the Quranic revelation.

5.1. „Not long ago, I was an Other“: Becoming Muslim as radical self-alteration

Jibril opens his performance with a supplication prayer in Arabic. Then he starts his narration, taking in a retrospective stance.

> „Not long ago .. I was an Other .. had you made my acquaintance at that time .. I think you would not recognise you anymore .. I don't want to lose many words about who I was or what I did .. a'uduh bi llāhi .. but Allāh ta'āla the Allmerciful .. he had mercy for me .. he showed me the way .. hand gave me comprehension .. al ḥamdu llilāh .. he lifted the veil from my eyes .. he broke the seal over my ears and over my heart .. and he made me .. .. al ḥamdu llilāh.. the biggest present one can be given in this dunya .. he made me Islam to be my religion [er machte mir den Islam zur Religion] .. subḥān allāh.“ [89] (Jibril 1-672)

The opening prayer recited by Jibril places his following speech into an Islamic frame of reference. As the bulk of the present audience most likely does not have extensive command of the Arabic, his invocation in the Quranic language qualifies him as a particularly competent and virtuous Muslim speaker. Following the Arabic supplication, Jibril introduces his present self as somebody who „not long ago [...] was an Other“ (1-54) in the opening phrase of his talk. The first person narrator assumes a retrospective perspective, taking in the standpoint of „present Jibril“. Jibril, however, does not „want to lose many words about who [he] was“ (184-259). For the time being, the audience is left at a loss concerning the narrator's former self as well as the quality of his change. To convey the radicality of his alteration, Jibril summons the audience as potential external observers that would not identify present Jibril as the same person [„you would not recognise me anymore“] (116-180), had it made his acquaintance „not long ago“ (1-12). Thus, Jibril summons an absolute discontinuity between „the before“ and „the after“ of the aspects of his persona disclosable to eventual outside observers and acquaintances, indicating it as a change of his „social I“ in a Goffmanian sense. After drawing up this total biographical caesura and building up the audience's expectation, Jibril proceeds to qualify this recent and sudden alteration as „the biggest present one can be given in this dunya“, a merciful act of godly working (551-621). Jibril is using well-known Quranic metaphors [the lifting of the veil, the breaking of the seal over his ears

[89] „Noch vor gar nicht so langer Zeit war ich ein Anderer .. hättet ihr meine Bekanntschaft zu jenem Zeitpunkt gemacht .. ihr würdet mich heute nicht wieder erkennen .. ich will nicht viele Worte darüber verlieren wer ich war oder was ich tat .. a'uduh bi llāhi.. doch Allāh ta'āla hatte Erbarmen mit mir und deutete mir den Weg und schenkte mir Einsicht .. al ḥamdu llilāh .. er hob den Schleier von meinen Augen und brach das Siegel über meinem Gehör und meinem Herzen .. er der Erhabene liess mich die Wahrheit erkennen und gab mir das grösste Geschenk welches ein Mensch in dieser dunya erhalten kann .. Er gab mir den Islam zur Religion .. subḥān allāh.“ (Jibril, 1-672)

and his heart, right guidance on the straight path][90](392-487) to describe the transitive moment of sensual rapture effecting „Islam to be [his] religion“ (624-658). By summoning Allah as the transcendent force to account for his alteration, Jibril qualifies himself as a convert to Islam. His conversion is presented as an act of radical discontinuity between the nameless person „before“ and his Jibril self „now“, which would not be recognised as „the same“ by previous acquaintances.

5.2. „I had become an Other for them […]I had decided to become a stranger“: Conversion as both passive moment & active process

In this first sequence, Jibril posits himself as a passive object of godly workings upon his body. Drawing on Quranic metapors, he presents his turning point as the opening of his visual and auditory faculties, the unclosing of his chest, an overwhelming bodily rapture which will eventually lead him on the „[straight] path“, which is, at the same time, introduced and specified by Jibril as an absolute break between a former social self and Muslim convert Jibril. Presented as a transcendent process of alteration, this change is only communicable by allegorical language, for the narrator lacks of any self in this moment of passage. While Jibril summons this instance of passive rapture, where he is momentarily bereft of any agency whatsoever, in the following passage, he posits himself as the subject of this process as an active decision:

> „But ever since I have decided to follow the straight way that allāh subḥāna has provided for his servants my living conditions began to change drastically .. a procedure many of you might have also experienced or may inshallah experience .. suddenly I was to my friends not the cool guy one can chill out with anymore .. I had become an Other for them .. a stranger […] the fact that I acknowledge the qur'ān al-karīm and the words of our beloved prophet 'alayhī ṣalātu wa sallam as the only universal truth led to a change in my attitudes and values .. subḥān allāh .. I had decided to become a stranger..“[91] (Jibril 673-1504)

[90] In the Quran unbelief (kufr, from kafara, to cover, to conceal) is recurringly described with veiling and closing metaphors as the sealing of the heart and the ears, and the veiling of sight. See 2:7; 4:155;7:100; 7: 101; 9: 87; 9:93; 10:74; 16:108; 30:59; 40:35; 42:24; 45:23; 47:16; 47:18; 63:3. Islam is summoned as straight path (al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm), see 1:6; 5:16.

[91] „Doch seit ich mich entschlossen habe dem geraden Weg zu folgen den allāh subḥāna für seine Diener vorgesehen hat begannen sich meine Lebensumstände drastisch zu verändern .. ein Vorgang den vielleicht viele von Euch erlebt haben oder inshallah erleben werdet .. auf einmal war ich für meine Freunde nicht mehr der coole Typ mit dem man sich lässig einen wegchillen konnte .. ich war für sie ein Anderer geworden .. ein Fremder […] die Einsicht welche mir gegeben hatte und die Tatsache dass ich seine Worte den qur'ān al-karīm und die Worte unseres geliebten Propheten 'alayhī ṣalātu wa sallam als das .. als die einzige universelle Wahrheit anerkannte führte zu einem Wechsel in meinem Weltbild und in meinem Wertesystem.. subḥān

In the sequence above, Jibril abruptly assumes an active role. In the very first line, the narrator goes over to present himself as an Ego assuming a deliberate reorientation, a change of heart of his own choice [„I have decided to follow the straight way"] (681-739). While in the preceding passage, his alteration is introduced as sensual rapture induced by external godly force, in the opening of the following sequence Jibril goes over to present it as a religious decision he has actively taken. The acknowledgement and confession to the „universal truth" of Quran and Sunna (1348-1486) which has lead to a *metanoia*, a turn around of his „attitude" and „values" (1493-1556), draws a continuous line to his present Muslim self standing on the stage and professing his confession in front of the audience.

5.2.1. „I have decided to become a stranger": Becoming Muslim, Becoming a stranger

Right from the beginning of this sequence, Jibril introduces a parallel alteration storyline (972-1239). Speaking from the position of his present Jibril self, he opens up a synchronical observation perspective, where he posits himself, again, as „an Other", this time qualifying his alteration as „becoming a Stranger" (1189-1239). Thus, as already begun in the first storyline where he invoked the audience as hypothetical former social acquaintances as the „witnesses" of his change, he continues to further specify his Muslim alteration along social categories. Therefore, he assumes the viewpoint of his former non-Muslim peer group. He invokes the scenario of "chilling out with them" (972-1086), a pastime he has ceased to uphold since his becoming Muslim. Jibril accompanies his narration by caricaturing the casual flowy gestures of his former friends that stands in contrast to his present bodily habitus. In this short imitation Jibril presents the audience with a hint about his former self which he already presented as radically discontinuous to his present self in the preceding passages of his talk. His change is communicated by taking the observation perspective of his non-Muslim friends. Thus, the object of absolute alteration is affirmed as his „social I", alluded to by the narrator's invocation of his peer group's perception of difference. In this episode, Jibril qualifies his alteration as a deplorable loss of social recognition, the loss of his cultural habitual capital which accompanies his taking up of a differing Muslim bodily habitus. Invoking it as an experience possibly shared by the present audience, he assumes the position of a Muslim collective.

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allāh.. ich hatte mich dafür entschieden ein Fremder zu werden.." (Jibril 673-1504)


Illustration 7/8: Jiblil imitates the chilling out habitus of his former self

As in the storyline conveying his religious conversion, in the first instance, Jibril introduces himself as a passive onlooker in this process of social differentiation and exclusion, describing how in their eyes, „for them", he has „become a stranger" (1088-1187). However, in the next passage, again, Jibril actively assumes the role assigned to him by external observation, when he ends this episode stating that he „ha[d] decided to become a stranger" (1521-1625). In the consecutive sequences leading up to middle of the speech, Jibril will continue to present a number of scenarios in contexts ranging from face-to-face interaction, official scenarios to media observation where the theme of the external observation of visible habitual difference and, concomitantly, deplorable exclusion are linked in the figure of „Stranger Jibril".

5.2.2. Embracing „true religion": Jibril as active confessor

Following the presentation of the „chill out" episode, where he takes the position of his onlooking environment, Jibril presents himself as a proactive confessor of his religion against an opposing non-Muslim environment. Jibril recounts his futile attempts to familiarise his family and friends with Islam and win them over as sort of a „da'wa"[92] (1631-2129).[93] Jibril mimes a discussion with imaginary non-Muslim counterparts who question the desirability of being Muslim as a personal choice: „why did you choose

[92] Da'wa (call, invitation) as an Islamic notion means „invitation" and is understood as an appeal to follow Islam. In contemporary Islamic revival movements, Muslims often subscribe to the idea that the best da'wa to convert others is being a role model, an exemplary Muslim for others on the one hand, as well as informing other Muslims and non-Muslims about Islam so that they get interested in Islam themselves. See *Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, „Dawah" (2012); Ramadhan (1997).
[93] „Auch in der Familie gab es natürlich dementsprechende Umgestaltungen .. wobei sich hier verschiedene Verhaltensweisen herauskristallisierten .. diese reichten von grossem Verständnis .. al ḥamdu llilāh .. bis hin zu absolutem Befremden .. wobei wir wiederum beim Thema wären .. trotz zahlreicher Versuche die Exotik und Fremdheit durch Wissen und Anlehnung an althergebrachte Werte zu ersetzen .. also eine Art der da'wa zu machen .. wollte das Unverständnis bei vielen meiner Zeitgenossen nicht weichen." (Jibril 1631-2129)

such a difficult, such a strict religion“ (2131-2160). His interlocutors' objections figure as rhetorical counterpoint to authorise his conversion as a turn to the „universal truth“ (2244-2744) of „Islam“. Thereby, Jibril opposes his imaginary interlocutors' liberal, consumerist authorisation of religion as a „subjective choice“ of „pick and chose“ (Davie 1994; Carrette and King 2011), – „as if one was choosing one's religion to match one's shoes“ [„als ob man seine Religion passend zu den Schuhen wählt“] (2165-2225) – to his invocation of „universal truth“ as legitimate mode of religious authorisation.

Following the „chill out“ episode, Jibril assumes the active role of a strong advocate of „Islam“ as „true religion“ against an objecting environment. Again, the narrative pattern of moving from a passive position of invoking external addressation to an active stance of affirming the onlookers' interpellation is discernable in this episode.

5.2.3. „When I arrived on duty with full beard […] they withdrew their trust in me“: Shifting allegiances

Leaving a private scenario, in the next passage, Jibril proceeds to recount his experience in the Swiss army. As before, the topic of becoming perceived as radically and critically different underlies his narration. Echoing the passive stance he assumes in preceding episodes, he recalls his becoming a stranger in the army collegues' perception. Again, it is his differing habitus, notably visible bodily features, orthopractical, moral and ritual routines, that render him worthy of, this time, official army observation, and, eventually lead to his discharge:

> „Before I accepted Islam […] I was in certain circles highly thought of and respected .. I was officer in the Swiss army and have to my knowing always served to the army's satisfaction […] when I arrived on duty with my full beard and served my daily prayers .. when I quit eating the meat I was served and abstained from aperitif receptions with my officer collegues .. in other words when I quit drinking alcohol .. what happened .. I was told that my new ideas were likely to involve investigative measures .. in other words they withdrew their trust in me .. subḥān allāh.“[94] (Jibril 2803-3645)

[94] „Stellt euch vor .. meine lieben Geschwister .. bevor ich den Islam annahm […] war ich in gewissen Kreisen angesehen und respektiert .. beispielsweise bin ich Offizier der Schweizer Armee und habe dort .. soviel ich weiss .. stets gute Dienste geleistet .. doch als ich auf einmal mit Vollbart zum Dienst erschien und meine täglichen Gebete verrichtete .. kein Fleisch mehr ass .. welches in den Gerichten serviert wurde und nicht mehr an den Apéros in der Offiziersmesse teilnahm .. sprich .. keinen Alkohol mehr konsumierte .. wurde ich darauf hingewiesen .. dass aufgrund meiner Ideologie eventuell investigative Massnahmen gegen meine Person angestrebt werden könnten .. zu Deutsch .. man hatte mir kurzum das Vertrauen entzogen.. subḥān allāh.“ (Jibril 2803-3645)

In the episode above, Jibril presents a plot about shifting allegiances. Echoing preceding passages, the before-after structure of the sequence introduces his former army officer self as utterly discontinuous to his present Muslim self, proposing the mutual exclusion of „being Muslim" and „being Swiss army officer". Jibril summons shifting cultural habitual routines (3162-3424) – the withdrawal from former eating and drinking habits, the uptaking of Islamic ritual practices and visible markers (full beard) – to present his „birth" as Jibril as his simultaneous „death" as Swiss army officer. As in the passages above, Jibril gains his Muslim contours by differing from his face-to-face environment. In the army scenario, it is the category of the „Swiss", his political integrity and credibility as loyal citizen that comes undone in his person when Jibril „arrive[s] on duty with full beard". Thus, his differing habitual demeanor is paralleled to political transgression. The withdrawal of the army's trust from bearded Jibril figures as a powerful image of losing his symbolic capital as Swiss citizen.

5.2.4. „The one who commands the right […]he is the enemy of the state number one": Public Observation of Muslims

Continuous to the army episode, the following sequence of Jibril's speech iterates the theme of suspicion and unjust critique leveled against the convert (3650-3888). The scope of observation is widened from face-to-face interaction to the general level of the public and media (3650f). While up until now, Jibril summoned the perception given to his own person as a convert, Jibril successively opens up his first person narrator position from singular to plural, coming, as a synecdoche, to eventually represent any Muslim present [„how many times have some of us heard .."] (4402-4478):

> „We can clearly detect the medias role in opinion making .. even though I had always served to their [the army's, S.L.] satisfaction the media is more trusted .. and prejudice is more trusted .. than in [personal, S.L.] acquaintance with me [...] my beloved brothers and sisters .. fear is instilled and estrangement increases [...] how many times have some of us heard purportedly silly remarks like have you fastened the bomb belt [...] a'uduh bi llāhi.. the one who commands the right and forbids the wrong .. he is the unjust .. he is the enemy of the state number one.." [95] (Jibril 3605-4772)

[95] „Und hier sehen wir ganz klar eine Meinungsbildung durch die Medien .. trotz der Tatsache dass ich immer gute Dienste geleistet hatte .. setzte man mehr Vertrauen in auf mich übertragene medienabhängige Klischees als auf eigene Erfahrung [...]die Angst wird geschürt und die Entfremdung nimmt zu [...]wie oft schon mussten sich viele von uns solch unausgegorene Sprüche anhören ..na .. den Bombengürtel schon umgeschnallt [...] eine gefährliche Entwicklung [...]a'uduh bi llāhi derjenige der heute das Gute gebietet und das Schlechte verwehrt .. er ist der Ungerechte und er ist der Staatsfeind Nummer eins." (Jibril 3650-4772)

Jibril refers to himself as someone who is „commanding the good and forbidding the wrong“ (4642-4706). Thus, he alludes to the Islamic principle of ḥisba which describes each individual Muslim's duty to admonish his surrounding of a proper moral and ethical behavior.[96] Summoning the well-known Quranic phrasing, he constructs his self relating to a moral frame of reference. However, his Muslim moral and ethical sense of „the good“ is contrasted to the public perception of him and his likes as „being the enemy of the state number one“ (4709-4772). Thus, the moral frame of reference is paralleled with a political, legal constitutional frame of reference. Again, the theme of both summoning and bemoaning a constitutive mutual exclusion of „being (a good, virtuous) Muslim“ and „being recognised as (trustworthy) Swiss citizen“ is iterated.

5.3. Jibril as „Clear Bogeyman“: Subjectivising public observations

The following sequence marks the end of his biographical account. Jibril proceeds to assume the subject position as a member of the *Council*, before he will again resume to speak for Muslims in general. To begin with, he refers to a recent article published in free daily tabloid 20 Minuten. Jibril quotes a conservative member of parliament demanding surveillance of and security measures against the *Central Council:*

> „I quote it can't be denied that the group [...] poses a security risk for Switzerland .. they are a new danger not known before .. the radicalisation of young moderate Muslims could lead up to religious riots [...] and I quote the organisation needs to be observed and in case of further provocations needs to be monitored by state security .. penal measures against the group are not feasible before something happens .. end of quote .. yes .. brothers and sisters .. there are masses of internet sites attacking in a racist and inhumane manner Islam and Muslims .. hate campaigns without sense and logic [...] with a clear bogeyman [klar geprägte[s] Feindbild].. a'uduh bi llāhi. "[97] (Jibril 5027-6035)

[96] The concept draws on Quranic phrasings 3:104; 3:110; 7:157; 9:71; 9:112; 22:41. The term ḥisba is used to mean on the one hand the duty of every Muslim to „promote good and forbid evil“ and at the other, the function of the person who is effectively entrusted in town with the application of this rule of supervising moral behaviour, especially in the public market. In terms of its concrete social and political implications as an individual duty, the concept is underdeveloped. See „ḥisba“, *EI*^{2} (2012).

[97] „Ich zitiere .. es ist nicht von der Hand zu weisen .. dass die Gruppe eine sicherheitspolitische Gefahr für die Schweiz darstellt .. es handelt sich um eine neue Bedrohung .. die man so bisher nicht kannte.. die Radikalisierung junger moderater Muslime könnte zu religiösen Auseinandersetzungen führen [...] und weiter heisst es .. die Organisation muss beobachtet und im Falle weiterer Provokationen vom Sicherheitsdienst überwacht werden .. strafrechtlich kann man erst gegen die Gruppe vorgehen wenn etwas passiert .. Zitat Ende .. ja .. Brüder und Schwestern .. es gibt ganze Internetseiten die sich in allzu oft rassistischer und menschenunwürdiger Art und Weise über den Islam und diejenigen die ihn praktizieren

When Jibril reaches the end of his recital, he accompanies it by the gesture of pointing to himself as the „clear bogeyman“ of media observation (5999-6035). Quoting Swiss media, Jibril places himself in an observing stance vis-à-vis the media. He thereby reverts the attribution of perpetrator and victim. Drawing on an anti-discriminatory, anti-Islamophobia vocabulary, in Jibril's account, the Muslims themselves are presented as the victims of irrational, morally wrong „hate campaigns“ (5922-5932) purported by state security measures and media. Thus, in the last two sequences, the autobiographical focus of Jibril's account is successively replaced by a general perspective on Muslims' experience of social exclusion. With his assumption of „being the clear bogeyman“, Jibril subjectivises public problematisations. At the same time he takes upon him, by the synecdochical effect of his self-refering gesture, the position of Swiss Muslims *in toto*, thus relating his individual subjective experience of loss of symbolic capital as a convert to „any Muslim's“ experience of social marginality.

Illustration 9: Jibril refers to himself as the „clear bogeyman“

5.4. „We are not the first to be tried in this way [...]remember our beloved prophet“: Introducing an Islamic frame of reference

The middle of the speech is marked by a caesura in the dramaturgy of Jibril's narration. Jibril interpellates the present audience as Muslims [„we are Muslims al-ḥamdu llilāh “] (6173-6208) who should not leave the „straight path“[al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm] (6212-6333). Jibril invokes Quranic exhortations [„be steadfast and beware of evil detractors (Verleumder und Einflüsterer)“] (6802-6851) to summon the audience as a Muslim collective.

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auslassen .. a'uduh bi llāhi .. Hasstiraden ohne Sinn und Verstand .. jeglicher Logik und Grundlage entbehrend mit .. einem klar geprägtenFeindbild.“ (Jibril 5027-6035)

From now on, Jibril will proceed to reintegrate the conveyed experience of social exclusion and discrimination into an Islamic frame of reference by juxtaposing it to Muhammadan pre-hijra episodes from Quran and Sunna. Thus, the excluding experience summoned is qualified as a godly willed probation. Jibril moves from delivering a first-person autobiographical account to a third-person narration:

> „We are truely not the first to be tried in this way .. it is not the first time that a group of Muslims is confronted with such rejection and injust prejudice .. remember our beloved prophet ṣalla allāhu ʻalayhī wa sallam what pain and torment he was exposed to .. when he arrived with the message of Islam .. he was attacked by his own kind by the people of Quraish [...] can you imagine the hate [...] ʻUqba Bin Abi Muʻayid he poured bowels .. blood and camels' dirt over our beloved Prophet ṣalla allāhu ʻalayhī wa sallam .. while he was in the sujūd .. only to amuse the chiefs of the Quraysh .. what did he have to tolerate and what hardships did he suffer."[98] (Jibril 7001-8112)

In the following sequences, Jibril describes physical torments the prophet was exposed to. The narrator summons passages in which the prophet's body is the object of physical and symbolic violence perpetrated by the Meccan environment. The strong image of the „pouring of bowels .. blood and camels' dirt [...] while he [is] in the sujūd" (7883-8005), thus of subjective dissolution, introduces a prophet bereft of social recognition and agency, being denied of his social integrity. Jibril also invokes the episode of Umm Jamil telling lies about the prophet, and placing thorn plants in his way and on his door steps (7471-7780), and recalls the story of Bilal being tormented and faced with his physical extinction by his enemies, still acknowledging for the truth of Islam (8229-8663). Recalling the prophet being beaten consciousless, Jibril starts to cry:

> „It was Abu Bakr that came to support our Prophet ṣalla allāhu ʻalayhī wa sallam when the mushrikūn beat him and hit him on the head until he lost consciousness .. and he Abu Bakr approached them and asked .. you beat a man who says rabbī allāh my lord is allāh and what did the mushrikūn .. they said Abu al majnūn .. Abu Bakr the madman .. and they continued to hit him."[99] (Jibril 8857-9241)

[98] „Wir sind wahrlich nicht die ersten .. die in einer solchen Weise geprüft werden .. es ist nicht das erste Mal .. dass sich eine Gruppe Muslime einer solchen Ablehnung und ungerechtfertigten Meinung gegenüber sieht .. erinnern wir uns an unseren geliebten Propheten ṣalla allāhu ʻalayhī .. welche Erniedrigungen und Peinigungen musste er über sich ergehen lassen .. als er mit der Botschaft des Islams kam .. wurde er aus den eigenen Reihen angegriffen .. von den Leuten der Quraysh [...] könnt ihr euch diesen Hass vorstellen [...]ʻUqba Bin Abi Muʻayid welcher Innereien Blut und Kot von Kamelen über unseren geliebten Propheten (a.s.w.s.) geschüttet hat .. während er im sujūd war .. nur zur Belustigung der Quraysh-Häuptlinge .. was musste er alles ertragen und über sich ergehen lassen." (Jibril 7001-8112)

[99] „Auch war es Abu Bakr welcher unserem Propheten ṣalla allāhu ʻalayhī wa sallam zu Hilfe kam

5.5. „May Allah […] make us & our brothers and sisters strangers .. strangers like our prophet“: Subjectivising the prophet's sufferings

While up until now, Jibril took in the position of a third person narrator in the second half of his recount, he now returns to assume a first person plural narrator's stance, representing the Muslim audience present. The prophet's exposure to physical abuse becomes a metaphor of contemporary Muslims' experience of social exclusion:

> „See my beloved brothers and sisters .. he who beliefs Allah's messenger and follows his word and stands by his side .. he sometimes has to bear a heavy burden .. but how more hardship did the companions suffer than we do today .. allāhu ā'lam […] they too have become strangers in their homeland .. 'Amr Ibn 'Auf radia allāhu 'anhu narrated .. the messenger Allāh .. Allāh's blessings and peace be upon him said .. Islam has began strange and it will become strange as it began […] blessed be those who bring into being [ins Leben rufen] what the people after me have neglected of my sunna sadaqa r-rasul allah ṣalla allāhu 'alayhī wa sallam .. may Allāh subḥān Allāh ta'āla grant us this mercy and make us and our brothers and sisters strangers .. strangers like our Prophet ..ṣallah allāhu 'alayhī wa sallam and his companions radia allāhu 'anhum amīn“[100](Jibril 9245-10392)

In this last passage, quoting a Muhammadan prophecy, Jibril addresses the audience, practicing the Muhammadan sunna, as emulators of the prophetic strangeness, as „the blessed […] who bring into being what the people have neglected of [the] sunna“. With the supplication to become strangers, Jibril's narration comes to an end. The speech is finished by a German invocation (10444-10776). While the major part of the second half of Jibril's speech was structured as a third person account (7001-10146), in the last sequence of his talk, Jibril comes back to assuming a first person plural position (9245-

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als die mushrikūn auf ihn einschlugen .. bis er das Bewusstsein verlor .. er trat ihnen gegenüber und fragte .. Ihr schlagt einen Mann der sagt rabbī allāh.. mein Herr ist allāh und was taten die mushrikūn .. sie sagten .. Abu Bakr al majnūn .. Abu Bakr der Verrückte .. und fuhren fort ihn zu schlagen.“ (Jibril 8857-9241)

[100] „Seht ihr .. liebe Geschwister dass wer an den Gesandten Allahs glaubt und seinem Wort folgt und ihm beisteht unter Umständen schwer daran zu tragen hat .. und wie viel schwerer hatten die Prophetengefährten daran zu tragen als wir heute .. allāhu ā'lam […] auch sie wurden zu Fremden in ihrer Heimat .. 'Amr Ibn 'Auf radia allāhu 'anhu berichtete .. der Gesandte Allāh's.. Allāh's Segen und Friede auf ihm .. sagte .. der Islam hat fremdartig angefangen und er wird wieder fremdartig .. wie er begann .. wohl den Fremdartigen die das wieder ins Leben rufen was die Leute nach mir von meiner sunna vernachlässigt haben .. ṣadaqa r-rasul allah ṣalla allāhu 'alayhī wa sallam .. liebe Geschwister im Islam .. wir sollten uns wahrlich wünschen .. Fremde zu sein .. möge Allāh subḥān Allāh ta'āla .. uns diese Gnade erweisen und uns und unsere Geschwister zu Fremden machen .. Fremde wie unser Prophet ṣallah allāhu 'alayhī wa sallam und die Sahaba radia allāhu 'anhum amīn.“ (Jibril 9245-10392)

10392). Thus, he subjectivises the prophet's and his companions' experience of physical abuse as „hav[ing] become strangers" (9770-9814), juxtaposing it to contemporary Muslims' experiences in the Swiss public. The social exclusion conveyed is reintegrated into an Islamic frame of reference and, thus, qualified as a desirable moral probation. Jibril invokes Allah as the agent that is to render them strangers (10229-10392). To be a stranger is thus introduced into a salvational trajectory, qualifying the contemporary Muslims' experience of social discrimination and marginality as godly willed [„grant us this mercy and make us and our brothers and sisters strangers"] and desirable, as an *imitatio Muhammadi*, embodied religious capital, a preliminary state on the way to final social and legal recognition.

5.6. Summary: Subjectivations of „becoming a Muslim stranger"

Jibril opens his narration as an autobiographical account of his conversion from a diachronic perspective. However, following the very first sequences, the first person narrator parallels the conversion storyline with the account of his „becoming a Stranger" in the synchronic perception of his non-Muslim environment. This second storyline will soon come to replace the religious frame of reference underlying the previous narrative strand. In the course of the speech, Jibril will invoke various episodes in which his visible Muslim habitus becomes the object of the non-Muslim public's observation and objection. Jibril moves from invoking face-to-face scenarios in the private and army context to the wider scope of the public and state security, where the topic of becoming a stranger in the onlookers' perception, the theme of his social and political death, his loss of symbolic capital is iterated. The respective scenarios rehearse Jibril's shift from taking a passive observer's stance to his retroactive assumption of the public and official surroundings' observation.

Jibril's narration thus interweaves the account of his becoming Muslim with becoming perceived as a „stranger" in his Swiss social surrounding which is identified as the total loss of social credibility. While Jibril's change is little specified in the conversion storyline, it is the invocation of the non-Muslim onlookers and the discontinuity of his private and „official" army self that renders his alteration feasible. Thus, the audience is presented a double alteration narrative that revolves around varying stances of constitutive categorial asymmetric differences and effecting imaginary equivalences (nameless former Swiss self *versus* God; Jibril – *IZRS* – the audience – the Muslim population *‚in toto'* versus the Swiss social peer group – the Swiss public – the political-legal Swiss system) as well as shifting attributions of agency accountable for Jibril's alteration. By metaphorical shifts, Jibril's Islamically framed experience of alteration is

transferred successively to the frame of everyday, official and media observation. In both storylines Jibril subsequently subjectivises the radical alteration accounted for. Conversion to Islam is presented as equivalent to social death, becoming a stranger in face-to-face and media scenarios and becoming subject to social discrimination, legal regulation and security measures. While the narrator introduces himself as a convert, taking in a first person singular position, the scope of the subject positions assumed is widened in the course of his speech to a first person plural stance. Reaching the end of his autobiographical account, Jibril has come to adopt the speaker position of „any Muslim". Thus, the convert's own experience of „becoming a Muslim stranger" comes to stand for „any Muslim's" experience, as Jibril appeals to the audience to „become strangers too". Leaving the autobiographic perspective as well as replacing the religious conversion storyline by an everyday perspective, Jibril resorts to a third-person account in the second part of his speech, invoking Muhammadan scenarios drawn from Quran and Sunna to reintegrate his narration into an Islamic frame of reference and qualify his experience of social death as a morally desirable, constitutive momentum of „being Muslim". In the final part of his speech Jibril again resumes a first person plural position. He proceeds to equal the Prophet's sufferings to contemporary Muslims' experiences. The social perception of „being strange" is given an Islamic moral qualification, as it appears as a desirable imitation and reeiteration of the prophetic pre-hijra scenario, the immediate prelude to the turning point setting in with the prophetic hijra which will eventually terminate the social marginality of the early Muslims, as they gather together to constitute the Islamic umma in Medina, and, thus, initiate Islamic time. Thus, in the second half of the speech, by metaphoric transference into a salvational trajectory, Jibril subsequently replaces the current social crisis scenario presented in the first half of the account with a scenario of (preliminary, yet overcomeable) prophetic perpetration, transvaluating his publically observed embodiment of „Muslim strangeness" into embodied religious capital as prophetic emulator.

6. Discussion: From Allah's workings to the Swiss public's observation. Shifting gazes, shifting storylines of „becoming an Other"

In the following, this chapter proceeds to a theoretical discussion, relating Jibril's staged account of „becoming a stranger" to existing approaches on the dramaturgical and thematic characteristics of conversion accounts. To work out the particularities of Jibril's speech, it scrutinises how Jibril's account diverges from standard conversion narratives in terms of time structure, observers's perspective, thematic topic, and

presented locus of (self)transformation. In a further step, it expands existing narratological approaches on conversion narratives with a performative, poststructurally informed concept of subjectivation. Thereby, it will compare Swiss convert Jibril's staged recount of his adoption of an ostentatious Muslim habitus with performative approaches on sexual cross-dressing conceiving it as enabling fantasy" (Garber 1992) of categorial institution. To conclude, working out the particularities of Jibril's speech, it will reintegrate the conceptual framework developed into existing performative approaches on religious conversion, notably by relating it to the ideas developed by symbolic anthropologist Peter S. Stromberg (1985; 1990; 1991; 2003).

6.1. Secular conceptualisations of religious conversion as overcoming a deep inner crisis by religious self-(trans)formation

Secular conceptions of religious conversion first appeared in psychological research in the last part of the 19th Century. In those early phenomenological approaches, originating in a pietist-methodist US context, religious conversion figured as the religious experience par excellence (Hall 1897; Starbuck 1897; 1912; James 1902; Nock 1933). Modeled on the Pauline theme of sudden inner change and radical *metanoia* (turn of senses, change of attitude), conveyed as „the falling of the scales from his eyes" that follow Saul's blinding vision and godly calling (Apg 1-18), William James' seminal definition of religious conversion describes a redemptive process of radical self-alteration, the overcoming of a deep crisis, dividing the converts' biography into a life „before" and a life „after" conversion (James 1989[1902]: 186; Nock 1933: 7; Wiesberger 1990: 9). Thus, the Christian theme of „death" of the sinner and „birth" of new Pauline man (2 Kor 5, 17, Rö 6), opening up a diachronic salvational and moral tension is transferred to a psychological register.

Relegated to the inner sphere of the converting individual, the phenomenon of religious conversion for a long time remained the object of psychological research (Wiesberger 1990: 1, 3, see also 9). James' concept of religious conversion as a process of inner maturing and subjective integration effected by the unconscious workings of the „subliminal self" (James 1989 [1902]: 186) appears as a secular and liberal resumption of the Christian theme of redemption, the biographisation of biblical salvation history rendered in a therapeutic register of „self-realisation" as a quest of one's personal „inner truth", one's „identity" as substantial entity (Luckmann 1991; Foucault 2006; Taylor 1089; h1991). His well-known definition is exemplary for academic conceptualisations as well as common notions of religious conversion up until today. As James and successive scholars have observed, the conversion experience appears as a

both passive procedure effected by external power as well as an agentic volitional act conducted by the convert (see for example ibid.: 186, 198, 207-8; Rambo 1993: 176; Wiesberger 1990: 9; Asad 1996).

6.2. Taking a linguistic turn: the thematic topic & dramaturgical structure of conversion accounts

Ever since the seventies, influenced by structuralism and the linguistic turn, constructivist approaches on religious conversion have taken an interest in conversion narratives, placing their focus on the thematic topic and the dramaturgical structure of conversion accounts (see Wohlrab-Sahr, Krech, Knoblauch 1998: 17). Thus, Luckmann has characterised conversion narratives as distinct „communicative form" [„kommunikative Gattung"] following a specific dramaturgical and thematic pattern (Luckmann 1987). As such, conversion narratives are characterised by biographical reconstruction (Beckford 1978; Berger and Luckmann 1969; Taylor 1976; Snow and Machalek 1983; Sprondel 1985; Staples and Mauss 1987; Luckmann 1987; Ulmer 1988; 1990) conducted according to the converts' new „universe of discourse" (Mead 1962: 88-90). Ulmer (1988; 1990) has worked out a tripartite temporal structuration characteristic of standard conversion narratives. Ulmer suggests that the convert divides his biography into a „before", a „turning point", and an „after" (1988: 21; 1990: 289). In the conversion narratives Ulmer's study is based on, the convert presents his/her conversion as both the result of and the subsequent overcoming of a profound inner crisis and personal search (ibid. 1988: 24; 1990: 290§291; see also James 1902). In the pre-conversion account, the convert gradually introduces a profound personal crisis and the successive adoption of a religious problem solving perspective leading to the actual conversion (ibid. 1990: 291; see also Snow and Machalek 1983 and Wohlrab-Sahr, Krech and Knoblauch 1998). The account of the convert's former life, interpreted in the light of the new religious worldview, is given ample narrative time to plausibilise the „turning point" episode in the middle of the narration. According to Ulmer, the „pre-conversion" account is characterised by a gradual shift from an biographical account of the convert's pre-conversion life to an introspective perspective leading up to the actual „conversion experience" placed in the „inner self" of the convert. The presentation of the momentum of conversion is marked by a complete transposition into the inner world of the narrator. It is marked by the passive stance of the convert in this moment (ibid. 1988: 27f.; 1990: 291). Characteristic to the narrative mode of the „turning point" is the convert's inherent communicative problem to articulate this ineffable momentum of passage (ibid. 1990: 288). Only after this introspective episode, the narrator will present himself as a new convinced self and will further qualify his *metanoia* as a differing worldview actively affirmed. To do

this, the narrator successively externalises his inner transformation and makes it communicable by presenting the positive social effects of his „post-conversion" self (ibid. 1988: 29f.; 1990: 292).

6.2.1. „Becoming a stranger": Jibril's conversion as visible bodily transformation witnessed by the social surrounding, official authorities & media

Compared to the formal and thematic characteristics suggested by Ulmer, Jibril's conversion narrative differs relevantly in its use of time structure, thematic topic, observer's perspective and locus of self-transformation. The assumption of an introspective observation perspective characteristic to conversion narratives is replaced by an external observation perspective. The Christian theme of personal inner redemption relating the „death" of the sinner and „birth" of the Pauline „new man" (2 Kor, 5, 17, and Rö 6) is varied by the theme of the „social death" of Jibril's former self, his loss of „symbolic capital" and of his birth as „strange Muslim man" effected by his adoption of a visible Islamic habitus. Thus, the salvational trajectory of religious conversion is reverted, as it effects a persisting social crisis.

The object of radical self-alteration is his persona, his „social I". His alteration is conveyed from a synchronic perspective as the effect of external public „social" observation, installing his, and, by the synecdochal logic of *pars pro toto*[101], the audience's social marginality qua „Muslim strangers". Whereas standard conversion narratives attribute ample narrative time to plausibilise the „turning point" episode, and grant subjective coherence, Jibril's former self remains nameless and „unrecognizable form" from his present narrative stance, thus conveying an absolute discontinuity between a „former Swiss self" and „present Muslim convert Jibril". Jibril's religious alteration, triggering a social categorial crisis, is thus related as an external, visible difference of his bodily surface effected by the adoption of ostentatious Islamic habitual features (the beard, the prayer, bodily gestures and habits, ritual practices),

[101] Synecdoche is a figure of speech that is closely related to metonymy (the trope in which a term denoting one empirical thing is used to refer to a related thing). Both synecdoche and metonymy are distinguished from metaphor, as they work by the logics of temporal or spatial contiguity (a part for the whole, the whole for a part, a container for its contents, a specific characteristic for an object), while metaphor is based on the principle of similarity, enabling taxonomic transfer. Many linguistics consider synecdoche as a subtype of metonymy (see for example Lakoff and Johnson 2008 [1980]: 36). Yet, there are also linguistic approaches which distinguish synecdoche from metonymy, as they hold that while metonymy is based on real-world relations between entities without taxonomic transfer, synecdoche implies a categorical transfer – similar to metaphor – which implies a semantic inclusion between a more comprehensive and a less comprehensive category. See Seto 1999: 92; 113-114. In my analysis of the interpellative role of convert Jibril, I would suggest to follow Seto's proposal, as he comes to take in a representational role, performing a categorial transvaluation of „being Muslim" from an ascriptive category of public problematisation to a category of self-addressation and moral self-cultivation.

qualified as „strangeness“, the „death“ of his Swiss self.

6.3. Secular models of „becoming an Other“: varying the theme of prophetic interpellation & religious subjectivation

As discussed above, James and successive approaches to religious conversion mostly place their analytical focus on a secularised, liberal therapeutic reading of the theme of redemption and moral self(trans)formation underlying conversion narratives since Paul and Augustine. Meanwhile, other secular approaches, notably from marxist, psychoanalytical, structuralist and subsequent poststructural perspectives, took an interest in the power dimension of Paul's experience of godly calling and radical *metanoia*, related as a both transitive and intransitive process of self-alteration, the „birth“ of a moral and social self. They understood the theme of the Pauline *metanoia* as a variation of the Biblical theme of prophetic calling. Moreover, the Pauline paradigm of conversion as a blinding and calling, induced by an external force and its retroactive constitution of a seeing and confessing „new“ self has come to figure as the prime allegorical model of secularised theories of subjectivation and symbolic integration, of becoming an addressable and intelligible social self. From this perspective, religious conversion – as a variation of the theme of prophetic calling – figures as a paradigmatic form of „becoming a subject“. Transposed to a secular frame of reference, the transcendent godly gaze and prophetic calling initiating the process of subjectivation as „seeing“ has been replaced by secular notions of „ideology“ (Althusser), „symbolic order“ (Lacan), or „discourse/power“ (Foucault, Butler) as ubiquitous ontologising force preceding the constitution of the subject. Judith Butler recapitulates the ambivalent nature of subjectivation as such:

> „‚Subjectivation' signifies the process of becoming subordinated by power as well as the process of becoming a subject [...] the subject is initated through a primary submission to power.“ (Butler 1997a: 2)

Following Rimbaud's well-known dictum that „I is another“, structuralist theorists like Lacan and Althusser shared an inherent suspicion against the liberal idea souvereign self-transparent subject. They have drawn from biblical allegories and their sensory metaphors to avow for the constitutive moment of exteriority and alterity in any process of subject formation. Reinterpreting Freud's notion of the „Schautrieb“ (scopic drive) as the preferred pathway of libidinal arousal (Freud 1999a [1905]: 58-59) with *Gestalt therapy* as well as Hegel's master slave dialectics and theory of desire, Lacan's widely influential account of the mirror stage describes the excentric (specular) and retroactive nature of narcissistic identification (Lacan 2000 [1949]; Pagel 2002: 26-29;

Reckwitz 2008: 57). Furthermore, Lacan emphasises the dominance of visual faculties and their specular projective moment in his idea of „the Other's gaze" as constitutive for subject formation and symbolic integration into the intersubjective, differential realm of culture (see further below). As a structural function it triggers the individual's desire to respond and catch up to his imaginary self-image and thus retroactively assume the external beholder's gaze he is caught and accept the names he is called by. The split between the individual's limited „eye" and the projected all-seeing „gaze" institutes the dual relationship constitutive of the I (je) and the imaginary self (moi) in the subject (Lacan 1978: 78-81), driven by the desire to „see more" and gain (self)recognition. Following Lacan, Althusser draws on the idea of the self-begotten and self-identical Hebrew God (I am that I am) as the burning bush (the blinding eye that sees but is not itself seen) and voice, the subject with a big S, always-already there to „name" all other beings, and thus call them into social existence as addressable and responding „subjects" (ibid.: 178-179; Evans 2002: 197; Butler 2001: 103-105).

Notably, Althussers well-known concept of „interpellation" echoes the religious notion of prophetic „calling" and *metanoia* (Althusser 1971: 180f.) as both passive event and active act. Althusser famously invokes the episode of a policeman shouting „Hey, you there " toward a person walking on the street. The person being appealed turns around to respond and thereby recognises himself as the subject of the calling (ibid.: 174). The allegory of turning around illustrates the speculary and retroactive nature of becoming a subject (Butler 2001: 106). The called turns around to respond and to recognise the gaze he has been caught by without seeing it himself. The symbolic order enabling the individual to assume a subject position and gain an ontological status has always-already been there (Althusser 1971: 176). Following Lacan, Althusser calls the subjects' self-recognition a constitutive „misrecognition" (méconnaissance) because it presents a retroactive fiction, covering the fundamental heterogeneity of the process of subjectivation fuelled by the imaginary Other's gaze (ibid.: 172; Lacan 1978: 81). As Butler puts it:

> „Subjectivity consists precisely in this fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency." (Butler 1997a: 2).

6.4. Taking a performative turn: Jibril's speech as citational practice

Adapting Lacan's concept of imaginary identification and his linguistic model of the symbolic order as the locus of intersubjective intelligibility, signification and social ordering, Althussers concept of „interpellation" has been an important influence for

poststructuralist approaches to subjectivation. Notably, Butler's concept of performativity developed in her gender studies adapts Althussers notion of prophetic hailing. Butler conceptualises (gendered) subjectivation as a social citational practice accomplished by repeated acts of discursive bodily inscription. Following Freud's notion of the Ego as a „bodily ego [...] not merely a surface entity, but in itself a projection of a surface" (Freud 1989 [1923:20]), Butler emphasises the phantasmatic, imaginary moment of subjectivation (Butler 1993: 13). Thereby, she applies a deconstructive reading of both speech act theory and psychoanalysis, understanding subjectivation as realised by repeated citational practices performed by individuals and collectives. The intelligibility of those citational acts depends on preceding discourse (images, both implicit and explicit social practices), yet enables the individual or collective to assume a speaking position itself. According to Butler, these iterative interpellations bring into being the very subjects which they name (Butler 1990: 24f., 1993: 232; see Derrida 1988). Taking this performative, deconstructive stance, following Derrida's idea of différance and his rejection of the ontology of substance and presence underlying representational models of language (see for example Derrida 2004: 110-149), Butler sees the presupposition of a pre-symbolic realm of being (such as the Lacanian register of the real) preceding the act of citation as a mere retroactive effect of preceding speech (on her critique on the substance ontological, [phallogocentric] implications of both Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis see for example Butler 1993: 187-222).

Based on Butlers performative approach, Jibril's conversion narrative can be understood as an reiterative citational practice, a prophetic „live enabling speech" that brings into being the very subjects it summons. In his self-observational speech, we can follow the „interpellation" of his own Muslim self as a *metanoic* „turn around" to preceding speech and public gazes, iterating and subjectivising the constitutive social difference drawn up between „being Swiss" and „being (a strange) Muslim" in the public addressations Jibril summons.

6.5. „Clear bogeyman" Jibril: the convert as the prophetic impersonator instituting „Islamic difference" as a category of moral self-addressation

In the first half of the speech, Jibril stages the Pauline theme of a radical *metanoia*, the redemptive categorial procedure from „death" to „life" in a social register yet in a reverted trajectory, avowing of the external observation of his „Islamic difference" triggering a crisis of his social I. In the second half of his speech, by metaphorically transferring "being a stranger" in a present Swiss social scenario into an Islamic frame of reference, paralleling it to the pariah status of pre-hijra Muhammad, he (re)integrates

it into a salvational trajectory, qualifying „being a Muslim stanger“ as a desirable category of self-addressation and moral self-cultivation. In his citational performance, Jibril reiterates the public imaginary and subjectivises public addressations in the first half of his speech, charging the male convert of stepping beyond the pale of the Swiss legal constitutional state because of his adoption of a Muslim habitus (the beard, the prayer, abstaining from alcohol and pork meat) as a „strict compliance to his religion“ and „unconditioned and unquestioned practice of it“ (see above). Yet, invoking his „being a stranger“ as a prophetic emulation in the second half of the speech, the convert transvaluates, and thus, institutes and subjectivises „Islamic difference“ as a mode of religious and moral self-addressation. Swiss convert Jibril's staged speech, summoning his „becoming a stranger“ in his environments' eyes as an effect of his adoption of an ostentatious Islamic bodily habitus is, as I would argue, comparable to the citational practice of cross-dressing as staged performance. By his staging as „born Swiss“ adopting an ostentatious visible „Muslim“ bodily demeanor, he rehearses and rearticulates the „born“ Muslim's experience of social and legal liminalisation in a religious salvational register, thereby performing a categorial transvaluation. Literary theorist Marjorie Garber, who has written a seminal work on cross-dressing, stresses the constitutive linkage between transvestism and the institution of gender as a social category, as she defines cross-dressing as an „enabling phantasy“ (Garber 1992: 6). Thus, according to her, „there can be no culture without the transvestite, because the transvestite marks the entry into the symbolic“(ibid.: 12), as he/she links desire for ([cross]-gendered) identification to symbolic representation. Garber relegates the position occupied by the transvestite and his ostentatious display as pertaining to the realm of the symbolic, the space of social representation, signification and categorisation (ibid.: 11). Thereby, she follows Jacques Lacan who identifies three dimensions, or orders, in the structure of the human psyche: the real (the realm of which, by virtue of the fact that we are symbolising animals, we have no unmediated, pre-symbolic relation to), the imaginary and the symbolic. The imaginary is a dimension in which the human subject's relation to herself or himself, and to other people, is structured like, and by, his relation to his mirror image: a dyadic, symmetrical complementarity based on the narcissist speculary fiction of a stable identity, a wholeness, which the mirror instates by equating the self with an image (see Lacan 2000 [1949]). As an order, the imaginary is thus related to metonymy and similarity, as it is refers to the specular, excentric nature of narcissistic identification (see further above). While the realm of the imaginary is governed by a dyadic logics of likeness, the third register, the symbolic order is structured by metaphor, a logics of differential signifiers. The symbolic order is the register of culture (language, hierarchy, law, and power), it is the social order to which the human subject is integrated by signification and

categorisation. This symbolic integration allows the individual to become an addressable and speaking subject, enabling him or her to interact and engage in the world as social being with a distinct differential position (Garber 1992: 12). According to Lacan, the realm of the imaginary offers the illusion of coherence, integrity and totality. This „superficial" specular wholeness projected by the image by which a singular or collective ego (in)vests itself is constitutive in the process of signification, of the interpellation into the realm of the symbolic, as it provides a (momentarily) stable nodal point of subjective identification (see Macey 1994: vii f.).

In her argumentation on the interpellative role of transvestism in instituting (gendered) categorisation and subjectivation, Garber departs from Joan Rivière's conceptualisation of womanliness as masquerade (Rivière 1996 [1929]), as well as Lacan's enlargement of the latter's ideas in his essay on the „signification of the phallus"[102] (Lacan 1982 [1958]) in which he argues that (phallic) representation in the human being always seems feminine, as it appears as a visible display, a masquerade, a mimikry. Hence, radicalising the former's approach, Garber holds that, „all human display [representation, S.L.] is […] artificial and displaced, a sign of anxiety and lack" (ibid.: 355).

In the same essay, as Garber continues, Lacan discusses the binary, asymmetric structural relation female/male as governed by three terms: to have the phallus, which is the phantasy of man, to be the phallus – the object of desire –, which is what women do, and the intervening term, „to seem". This intervention of „seeming" (or „appearing"), a mimikry substituting for „having", is, precisely, as Garber holds, the structural place of the transvestite, which she understands as a space of pure mimikry, detached from (the presupposition of) a preceding, pre-symbolic „nature":

> „In psychoanalytic terms, the transvestite represents a „third space", as an artifactual overcompensation" (ibid.: 356).

Moreover, as Garber proceeds, the transvestite's performance opens a space of gendered articulation, at the same time covering over (and revealing) the fundamental knowledge that „no one has the phallus" (ibid.). Thus, Garber holds that it is mimikry, the superficial adoption triggered by the desire for identification with a surface itself which precedes and thus institutes gender as a mere social category. Thus, accordingly, as all processes of (gendered) identification are transvestitive and accomplished by mimikry, the cross-dresser both reveals and covers the structural impossibility of the existence of

[102] Lacan has transposed the fetish from perceiving it as a substitute for the Freudian lacking maternal penis (see Freud 1927) to the symbolic realm of the phallus, thus from the level of nature to that of culture, the unconscious and of symbolic representation (Lacan 1982 [1958]).

any „real“ gendered presence/existence preceding the symbolic. In a similar vein, in her deconstructive reading of psychoanalysis, Butler understands (binary gendered) subject formation as a constitutive citational process of discursive inscription on the bodily surface instituting the idea of a preceding pre-symbolic „real“ or „presence“ (such as the idea of a biological, binary sex) as a retroactive effect of this very process of bodily performance.

I would argue that Garber's emphasis on sexual transvestism as an interpellative practice of categorial (re)institution can be transferred to the phenomenon of the Swiss convert to Islam. Hence, according to a deconstructive reading, the „cross-dressing“ performance of the Swiss convert to Islam as an „enabling phantasy“ is constitutive for the interpellation of „being Muslim“ as a category of Muslim (self)addressation along moral and orthopractic criteria. Thus, by his citational display, his ostentatious Islamic habitus, Swiss convert Jibril invokes public observations. Yet, by metaphorically transferring „being a stranger“ into an Islamic frame of reference in the second half of his speech, he transvaluates it from an in-disposable category of public ascription into a category of religious self-addressation. Comparable to the sexual transvestite, the convert with his ostentatious Islamic habitus (beard, perfume, cap, long gown) is an „enabling phantasy“, as he links individual desire (for the emulation of a foundational prophetic scenario) to Muslim self-articulation. By his citational display, he disposes of the „interpellative“ capital to institute „being a Muslim“ as a desirable category of self-addressation. Moreover, framing himself as prophetic emulator, he transvaluates embodied „Muslim strangeness“ into embodied religious capital to claim leadership in the process of collective Muslim subjectivation in present post-minaret-ban Switzerland.

6.6. From masquerading back to conversion as self-(trans)formation: The convert cross-dresser as „impression point“

Before this chapter proceeds to a concluding discussion, it aims to relate the performative conceptualisation of the convert as interpellator back to existing performative conceptualisations of religious conversion. Thus, influenced by speech act theory, psychoanalysis and symbolic anthropology, it was notably Peter S. Stromberg who has focused on the constitutive role of the conversion narrative as a symbolic means to perform the overcoming of an inner crisis and psychological liminality (Stromberg 1985; 1990; 1991; 1993; see also Staples and Mauss 1987). Rather than understanding the converts' accounts as representations of a preceding inner experience, Stromberg understands them as a constitutive moment of self-transformation themselves (Staples and Mauss 1987: 137; Stromberg 1990; 1991, see

Wohlrab-Sahr, Krech, Knoblauch 1998: 17). Thus, based on the reconstructive analysis of a bulk of qualitative data from protestant conversion narratives, symbolic anthropologist Peter S. Stromberg understands religious conversion, the adoption of a religious symbol system as a therapeutical process which enables the convert to articulate hitherto suppressed, emotionally conflicting, non symbolisable experiences (Stromberg 1985; 1990; 1991; 1993). Stromberg speaks about the so called „impression point", an individual's specific moment of phantasmatic identification with a particular religious content, such as a biblical verse or episode, which takes in a metaphorical function for the convert to translate his or her idiosyncratic, emotionally and affectively liminal inner state into a shared universe of discourse (Stromberg 1985: 65), rendering it intelligible and communicable. Drawing on psychoanalysis, he compares the convert's identification and adoption of a religious symbolic order to the process of transference in the course of the therapy, where the patient unconsciously redirects feelings and desires from earlier (for example) childhood relations onto the therapist (ibid.). Religious symbols have, in this procedure, according to Stromberg, both a „referential" as well as a „constitutive" function (Stromberg 1991: 103-105). Thus, the referential, representational function indicates to the very process of signification, whereby the religious symbol can be, retroactively, read as a symptom, both covering (by metaphoric transference) yet also revealing an inner conflict. The constitutive function of religious symbols, at the other side, according to Stromberg relating to speech act theory (Austin 1988 [1962]), means that they do not only refer to and represent a psychological complex but themselves play a performative role, as they institute the very intelligibility of the complex and thus enable the convert's identificatory self-addressation and self-articulation, allowing a self-transformation to overcome liminality. Thus, biographically motivated, ambivalent emotional stances become, by their symptomatic entry into a intersubjectively shared universe of discourse, retroactively intelligible on the one hand. On the other hand, the adoption of religious categories of self-articulation also serve as a performative means of self-transformation (Stromberg 1991: 114). This enables the convert to both articulate his or her emotional ambivalence in a religious register, yet also to transform his or her very self-reference and mode of relating to the world. Applying a deconstructive reading of Stromberg's performative conceptualisation of conversion as process of metaphoric transference, and shifting the analytical focus from the biographical register to the register of the social, convert Jibril's staging itself can be read as what Stromberg has called an „impression point", an interpellative event of Muslim subjectivation. Thus, I understand Jibril's interpellation as accomplished by mimikry, reiterating preceding speech rather than an instance of primal articulation of something hitherto (ineffable) pre-symbolic as suggested by Stromberg (see above). Jibril's transposition of present public problematisations of „Muslim strangeness" to the

prophetic scenario interpellates a collective religious self by citing preceeding excluding discourse, yet aiming to overcome social and legal liminality by claiming „freedom of religion“ and „minority rights“ as liberal and secular categories. Thus, transferring present Muslims' liminal state as „migrants“ into an Islamic frame of reference, he summons a religious collective subject, deemed to be socially and legally recognised and protected by the Swiss liberal and secular constitution. The *Council*'s claim at overcoming social and legal exclusion by forging a strong, capable „religious community“ socially recognised and legally protected is summoned as variation of emulating the prophetic hijra in a contemporary liberal and secular setting, substituting emigration with identity politics and moral self-formation as a „religious minority“.

7. Conclusions

7.1. Jibril's speech in the context of the dramaturgy of the *IZRS* symposium: interpellating an Islamic umma as religious minority

Convert Jibril's invocation of the contemporary social exclusion and discrimination, the lack of Muslim's symbolic capital in Swiss society he admonishes is juxtaposed to the pre-hijra situation of the Prophet and his adherents. In his opening speech at the first annual symposium, convert president Blancho will equally draw a parallel between the current state of social „discrimination“ of Swiss Muslims, and the pre-hijra Mekkan scenario. Yet, while Jibril's account is brought to a halt with the deploring invocation of the present status quo as a reiteration of the pre-hijra Mekkan stage, interpellating „Muslims“ as „strangers“, Blancho will proceed to sketch out a redemptive trajectory, as he will continue to parallelise the foundational history of the prophetic Medinian umma with the projected (future status) of contemporary Swiss Muslims and the foundation of the *IZRS*. As convert head of the *IZRS,* taking in the prophetic lead, Blancho proposes the project of „forging a strong minority group“ as aimed at by the *Council* – as equivalent to the Prophet's hijra which at that time enabled the foundation of a powerful, recognised prophetic umma in Medina – as a means of overcoming social and legal marginality and reclaiming public space. Blancho presents a redemptive scenario, starting off with social crisis, „becoming strangers“ as status quo (as invoked in Jibril's speech) that yet has to be overcome by the unifying, educative and representational work of the *IZRS*. As Blancho addresses it in our interviews, the *Council's* aim is to constitute an umma of self-assertive (practicing) Muslims capable to fight for social and legal recognition of „being Muslim“ as acceptable habitus form *within* „plural“ Swiss society.

7.2. The transvaluative symbolic capital of the Swiss convert to Islam

In his speech, Jibril places the experience of social exclusion and legal discrimination the majority of the present audience with a so-called „migration“ or „ethnic“ background is well familiar with into an Islamic frame of reference, interpreting their „strangeness“ as a constitutive momentum of „being Muslim“ as a mode of religious self-cultivation. Given the annual conference as the scenario of his talk, the Swiss convert with the telling name figures as the interpellator of the „ethnically dispersed“, „culturally differing“ audience to unite themselves and work on their selves along „Islamic normative and moral criteria“. The salafi Swiss convert performing his social death concomitantly institutes „Muslim Strangeness“ as a desirable category of identification, religious self-addressation and self-cultivation as he metaphorically transfers „being a Muslim stranger“ into the salvational scenario of the Prophetic hijra. As a „born“ Swiss, devoid of the ascribed „cultural difference“/„cultural lack“ of the present audience with an „ethnic/migration/Muslim“ background, the convert subsumes their „cultural difference“ as „traditional“, interpretational diversity under the over-arching umbrella of „Islamic normativity“. Thereby, he transvaluates their „being Muslim“ both from an indisposable ascription of social difference as well as from a false, merely „traditional“ mode of adherence given by birth as deemed to be upheld by the parents' immigrant generation to a subjective category, a self-chosen „all-encompassing way of life”. Thus, the salafi convert actors of the *IZRS* appear as interpellative, transvaluative actors in terms of their construction of „being Muslim“ along moral and orthopractical criteria proper as has been described on a systematical level by Olivier Roy in his studies on the role of „converts“ as „new borns“ in the present construction of „culture“ and „religion“ in present liberal and secular settings of European societies (see Roy 2004; 2010). However, while as an ideal typical „Gesinnungethiker“ the convert as a „new born“ bemoans an inner-Islamic decline in terms of moral demeanor, being a „native Swiss“, he also takes in a (paternalising) pedagogical and leader role vis-à-vis „born“ Muslims in terms of their social location as „immigrants“.

Hence, linking „being Muslim“ to social success and social recognition, president Blancho aims to educate „migrant/ethnic/born“ Muslims to become competent and successful members of society, moreover to show that being socially competent and knowledgeable is even a constitutive momentum of Muslim moral and ethical self-fashioning. Thus, „born Swiss“ Blancho and Illi, „devoid“ of what they have thematised in our interviews as problematic „cultural difference“ which amounts to a lack of creditable „cultural capital“ in terms of their status as „immigrants“, appeal (ex negativo)

to their „being Swiss“ and, thus claim symbolic capital to take leader roles as representing Muslim interests vis-à-vis Swiss society.

Both the symbolic capital of the Swiss converts – qua *religious converts* – in subjectivising „Muslim strangeness“ by their staged performance as a virtuous mimikry of the prophet, as well as their appeal on their „being Swiss“ – qua *„born“ Swiss* – as symbolic capital to claim „minority rights“ and „religious freedom“ gains its intelligibility and credibility by the underlying culturalisation of the social ontology as it is, among others, diagnosed by Yilmaz (2012; see also Soysal 2009) as hegemonic in contemporary European societies. Drawing on the postmarxist approach of Lauclau and Mouffe (1985), Yilmaz defines hegemony as „political project that operates on a social imaginary that establishes one single horizon of intelligibility“ (Yilmaz 2012: 369). Thus, the converts' interpellation of „Muslim strangeness“ in their „before/after“ accounts draws on an ontologisation of social difference along „cultural“/„ethnic“ categorisations, where „Islamic difference“ (both conceived as „culture“ and/or „religion“) as an antagonist force threatening liberal and secular principles is ascribed to exude from Muslim „immigrants“. In this antagonist logics, Switzerland is invoked as a liberal and secular legal state, a bearer of the European cultural heritage of „liberalism“, „secularity“, „Christian values“, „democracy“, „tolerance“, „individualism“, and „feminism“ whose integrity and future guise is threatened by the presence of Muslim (immigrants) and their morally and legally transgressive „culture“. Thereby, both liberal as well as nationalist voices problematise Islam as „pre-modern“, given their endorsement of the shared idea of liberality, democracy, tolerance, female agency as foundation of Europe as a historical, distinct entity Muslims are excluded from as Europe's „primary alter“ (Asad 2003c: 169). As in other European societies, Swiss debates centered mainly on „gender equality“ or „religious freedom“ as presumably lacking in Islam (see chapter 2; Gianni and Clavien 2012; Gianni 2013; see also Yilmaz 2012: 372). In Europe-wide studies, this problematisation of „cultural difference“ along religious and moral criteria has been often analysed as „new racism“ (Barker 1981; Balibar 1991; 2006; Stolcke 1995); „post-racism“ (Tyrer 2011; Tyrer and Sayyid 2012; Lentin and Titley 2011) or „racism without race“ (Hall 2000: 7), as, while having replaced a racial vocabulary by a language of culture and values, this culture talk „[…] produce[s] racial dividends: division, hierarchy, exclusion.“ (Lentin and Titley 2011: 62)

This general Europe-wide observation is backed by existing academic analyses in the Swiss context. Taking in a historical perspective, Skenderovic has observed the appearance of right wing popular parties and the concomitant theme of „foreign infiltration [Überfremdung]“ (ibid.) ever since the 1960ies (Skenderovic 2011: 3; see also

ibid. 2006) which established „culture"/„ethnicity" as a problematised category in public discourse. On a social and policy level, the ontologisation of social difference along cultural criteria is both constituted by and constitutive for an ethnic understanding of Swiss citizenship and, concomitantly, notoriously restrictive procedures of naturalisation (Gianni [forthcoming]; Koopmans et al. 2005: 8; 19; 21) as well as high levels of social discrimination of (Muslim) „migrants" in the educational and work market, as well as in terms of renting living room (compare *OSCE* report on Islamophobia in Switzerland). Hence, regardless of their citizenship status and their time of residency, immigrants and their children born or raised here are addressed (and often address themselves, see chapter 3) as „migrants" or „Ausländer" (compare interview with Qaasim Illi), indicating to their social liminal position (on the colonial, racist implications of the category of the "(im)migrant" in European Muslim debates see Scott 2007: 88). Since the 90ies, in accordance with the growing influence of right wing populism in other European societies, the popular *SVP (Swiss Popular Party)* has emerged as the major Swiss party, backed by nearly 30% of the voters on the national level. As Skenderovic holds, in current problematisations, „Muslims" are framed as „habitually" differing, refering to differing „traditions", „histories", „customs", „religion" and „culture" (ibid.:10), echoing the emerging global semantics of a „clash of civilisations" in the early 90ies (Huntington 1993; see also Stolcke 1995; al-Azmeh 2001) whose intelligibility can be traced back to the colonial encounter between „the West" and „Islam" in the 19th century (Salvatore 2001: 9).

Convert Jibril' s speech traces and reproduces the discovery of Islam as a both publically observable and subjective (subjectivisable) category in Swiss society. As a Swiss who mimics Islam he echoes Switzerland's discovery of its Muslims – and its (neo)racist undertones. However, posited as „religious alteration" and conscious choice, „strangeness" is subjectively adopted by the convert. The convert detaches „strangeness" from „cultural" difference and reframes it as a subjectively adoptable religious „choice" and confessional „decision", a self-chosen „identity". Jibril places the experience of „strangeness" the majority of the present audience with a migration background is well familiar with into a religious frame, and thus interpretes their strangeness as both subjectively disposable and desirable. Jibril's autobiographical account reproduces the shift from „ethnicity" to „islamicity" as a both subjective and public category of governisable „moral" difference of „(migrant) Muslim others".

Following the approval of the minaret initiative in late November 2009, the Swiss convert committee heading the *IZRS* dominated public media coverage on Islam and Muslims in Switzerland (Imhof and Ettinger 2011: 18; 31). The following chapter presents

a reconstruction on the media appearance of the male converts heading the *IZRS* and analyses its interpellative effects on Muslim self-articulations in the public arena.

2 „Mister Blancho, are you the Bin Laden of Biel?“
An Analysis of the Public Entry of the Convert Committee

1 Summary

This chapter focuses on the analysis of the media coverage of the *Islamic Central Council Switzerland (IZRS)* and its male convert committee starting in December 2009, and culminating in the appearance of president Nicholas Blancho in the popular contradictory political TV-format *Arena „Radikale Muslime im Aufwind?“ [„Radical Muslims on the Rise?“]* aired on 23 April 2010. In the latter he was confronted with interlocutor Oskar Freysinger, member of the *Swiss Popular Party (SVP)* and popular supporter of the anti-minaret initiative, as well as Erich Gysling, journalist and middle east expert.

The study presents selected sequences to resume the thematic development and dramaturgical trajectory of the media coverage. Following their organisation of a number of controversial events, the converts were invited to a number of confrontative media forms and discussion formats, where they were faced with charges of supporting domestic violence against women, forcing women to veil, aiming to establish a „parallel society“ beyond the pale of the secular constitutional state, and supporting Islamic terrorism. The converts' statements in interviews and discussions were juxtaposed with identity profiles and biographical portraits that established a nexus between „religious conversion“, „biographical anomaly“ and „religious radicalism“. Additionally, investigative stories uncovered their former involvement with Islamist leaders, and quoted anonymous insider sources that had witnessed religious coercion, Islamist activities and female subordination inside Blancho's close entourage. Blancho, whose refusal to „give evidence“ by claiming his Swiss citizen right of „religious freedom“ delegitimised the converts' claim on representing Switzerland's (practicing) Muslims as „strong minority group“ vis-à-vis the public and authorities. Accordingly, the *Central Council* was thus relegated to the margins of what gained contours as a wider field of Muslim interest groups and organisations.

The public framing of Blancho and the convert committee was accompanied by an implicit, popularised Freudian reading – rehearsing the trope of enlightenment critique of religion as a foundational narrative of secular modernity and its colonialist

undertones (Asad 2003a: 11; 14) – of conversion to Islam as neurotic compensatory act below „subjective choice", iterating a time-spatial dichotomy of „being Swiss" and „being Muslim" along the axis of „backward Islam"/„modern liberality", heteronomy/autonomy, a-historicity/progressivity, collectivity/individuality, Orient/Occident, notably in terms of authorizing religious practice and the question of female agency. Throughout the course of the media coverage, the idiosyncratic pathology of the converts worked out in biographical profiles was intertwined with the imaginary of a social threat exuding from the convert committee as contagious „radical leaders" luring migrant youth into fundamentalist forms of Islam. This led to the addressation of the Muslim population *in toto* along moral and cultural criteria and effected a process of symbolic differentiation and scalation of „being Muslim". Combining dramaturgical considerations with the performative conversion concept developed in the previous chapter, I understand the media coverage on the *IZRS* and its converts as a „crisis event" (Lentin and Titley 2011), a social dramaturgical performance (Turner) in a social crisis scenario. As I will argue, in the public imaginary, the Swiss converts to Islam as „bogeymen" (Jibril) have replaced the „minarets" as *locum tenens* of problematizing a lack of common symbolic ground between the Swiss public and the Muslim minority. This critical symbolic difference had become visible and addressable in confrontative media forms and led to a subjective and moral turn of the public Muslim debate.

During the media coverage, various Muslim actors appeared in the media as competitors of the *Central Council*, notably liberal Muslim Saïda Keller-Messahli, president of the secularly oriented organisation *Forum für einen fortschrittlichen Islam (Forum for a progressive Islam)* as mirror inverted opponent of the male convert committee. Further, the media coverage featured broadcasts of Hisham Maizar, president of the *Föderation Islamischer Dachverbände Schweiz (FIDS)* and interlocutor Farhad Afshar, head of the national umbrella organisation *Koordination islamischer Organisationen Schweiz (KIOS)*, both contesting the *IZRS's* claims on defining religious authority and representing „diverse ethnic" Muslims as „religious minority".

In various media formats, the converts' appearance led to public arbitrations of socially acceptable and legally recognisable ways of defining Muslim authority and thus, of „being Muslim" in Switzerland via the „taking a stand" (Gerhard Pfister, Christian Popular Party) on the question of „female agency". Thereby, the credibility of the respective Muslim actors' claims on „female agency" mainly depended on the Muslim actors' relative closeness to the endorsement of liberal and secular technologies of the self (opinions, values, gendered and sexual practices, liberal rationalities of authorizing religious adherence). Notably, this spelt out in the Freysingerian demand on Muslim

individuals to „integrate“. His appeal to renounce from visible forms of Muslim adherence (the veil, orthodox practice) and to endorse the Swiss „liberal values“ of „women's autonomy“ and „individual choice“ was backed by liberal Muslim voices. Being „invisible“ would qualify Muslim forms and beings as symbolically includable.

Thus, as an outcome, given the persistent reading of Muslim visibilities as morally and legally excessive, Hisham Maizar or Farhad Afshar, representatives of competing Muslim umbrella organisations placed themselves on common symbolic ground with the non-Muslim Swiss majority by affirming the need of the Muslim's to „cooperate“ and „compromise“ with the „local population“ and authorities. They distanced themselves from the „extreme“, „un-compromising“ *IZRS*. In short: The Swiss converts entered the public as „crisis figures“ and effected a subjective (subjectivizing), moral and cultural turn of the Muslim debate. Their media appearance led to the public visiblilisation and scalation of various Muslim actors along moral, orthopractic and cultural criteria in discussions on Muslim „integration“.

1.1. Methodological considerations

The case study presents a selected thematic and dramaturgical resumption and analysis of the converts' media coverage starting in December 2009, leading up to the live appearance of Blancho in the confrontative *SF 1* discussion show *Arena* on „Radikale Muslime im Aufwind?“ [“Radical Muslims on the rise?“] dated from 23 April 2010. The launching and approval of the minaret initiative, the public appearance of the *IZRS* and the subsequent media coverage on the converts and their organisation were singled out as distinct stages of a finished plot.[103] In terms of its dramaturgical units, I analysed it as performance of a Turnerian social drama in four steps. It entails the respective phases of breach (discovery and problematisation of the Muslim population culminating in the minaret initiative and its approval), mounting crisis (the redirection of public problematisations from „minarets“ to „converts“), redressive action (confrontative media forms) and, as an outcome, the concomitant appearance of contending representative Muslim (migrant) actors. The latter aimed to overcome the persisting perception of moral and legal transgression given by the Muslim presence (Turner 1974: 39-43). Comparable to the classical social drama setting of public tribunals as described by Turner (ibid.: 41), the media coverage staged instances of „redressive action“ in various confrontative media forms. Analysis is based on print media as well as the selected transcription of aired programs and discussions available in the online

[103] Yet, it goes without saying, this reconstruction of the „minarets-becoming-converts- scenario“ as a finished plot is an analytical preselection by the researcher. This does not preclude the feasibility of alternative modes of plot reconstruction.

archive of *SF TV*.[104] Quotes are referred to by minute. Selected visual material, such as media photographs, magazine covers and screen shots were included into analysis and accompany the presentation to convey the gestural, spatial and stylistic characteristics of the plot performed. Analysis followed a reconstructive procedure. It combines the analysis of the dramatic structure and thematic content of the discussion with sequential analysis of passages of high dramaturgical density. Sequential analysis was validated by intertextual comparison (Bohnsack 2008: 30; 42f.; see also Flick 2007).

2. Switzerland's discovery of its Muslim population & the problematisation of „Islamic difference" between 9/11 and 29 November 2009

According to symbolic anthropologist Victor Turner, the first act of a social drama consists of a breach of regular social relations between individuals or collectives of a social unit, and can be found at all levels of society, irrespective of the power relations between the parties implied in social tension. Such a breach is signaled by the irritation of social interaction between the parties (Turner 1974: 39-43).

If we try to understand and read the media coverage on the converts that was to culminate in the *Arena* show as an instance of „redressive action" in a wider social crisis scenario, the final show took its motivation in the face of a publically observed „breach". The latter was initiated by the discovery and subsequent problematisation of Switzerland's Muslim population as a distinct social group – a perception that solified with the approval of the minaret initiative.

Taking in a comparative perspective it is worth noting that Switzerland's discovery of its Muslim population as a distinct social group and its problematisation via a debate on the „minaret" had had a fast start in respect to other European national contexts. As national conflicts over minarets and/or headscarfs in various European publics reveal (see for example Allievi 2003; Asad 1993c; Berghahn et al. 2009; Göle and Amman 2004; Hüttermann 2006; Rommelspacher 2002; Scott 2005; 2007; Tanner 2009), the social acceptance of Islamic visibilities has become generally precarious in local arenas as well as national contexts with yet differing nodal points of problematisations, chronologies and interpellative key events. Thus, France experienced its first affaire du Foulard in 1989 and it was in that same year that Britain's Rushdie Affair took place (see for France Scott 2005; 2007; for Britain for example Asad 1993c; Runnymede 1997). For the

[104] For example, the *Arena* program is available in the *SF TV* online archive under: http://www.videoportal.sf.tv/video?id=0e4c1c08-0aa8-409fb-49c-92e7f55305fd. (19.04.2012)

German context, Hüttermann remarked that conflicts revolving around the visibility of Islamic architectural forms (mosques, minarets) started to appear in Germany ever since the beginning of the nineties, soon shifting from local problematisations to a topic of national concern after 9/11 (Hüttermann 2006: 10). Sociologist Teczan has read legal conflicts over the construction of Islamic buildings that appear in Germany and other European contexts as the first symptoms of a redirection of perceiving and governing (ethnic) minorities along religious and civilisational dimensions as a governmental pastoral technique (Teczan 2007; see also Rose 2000; on the pastoral power of modern societies see Foucault 1999), a phenomenon which echoes the emerging global semantics of the „clash of civilisations" in the early 90ies (Huntington 1993; see also Stolcke 1995; Balibar 1991; 2006; al-Azmeh 2001) and an Islamic revival among European Muslims.

According to Hüttermann, 9/11 has effected an intensification of public attention that led to the public perception of „Islam" as an antagonist, agentic „subject" that governs the dynamic and direction of debates on integration and inland security (Hüttermann 2006: 12). As existing literature points out to, in the Swiss case, it was only with the key event of 9/11 that „Muslim" came to be a category of public perception of „immigrant" population groups previously addressed and problematised along „ethnic" criteria, such as „Jugos" in the nineties, and, later „Albanians" (see for example Schranz and Imhof 2002; Behloul 2005; Gianni et al. 2010[105]; Ettinger and Imhof 2011). Thus, compared to other national European contexts, Switzerland's discovery of its Muslim population as a distinct „migrant" group and its problematisation took place retarded, it actually coincided with the event of 9/11, and the redirection of both perceiving and problematising migrant minorities along the category „Islam" after 9/11 was, accordingly, somewhat accelerated in the Swiss case (for an attempt to explain this Swiss particularity, see 7.2. of this chapter). Ettinger and Imhof see the attacks in Madrid 2004 and London 2005 as well as the murder of Theo van Gogh in the same year as the initiating key events that have decidedly directed the public focus and medial framing on problematic „Islamic difference", with yet another instance, the Danish Muhammad cartoon affair in 2006, to fuel national problematisations of Muslims as a particular social group (ibid.: 16). Those global instances rendered the launching of the national minaret referendum in spring 2007 intelligible (on the indexical, „hear say", self-

[105]In the second edition of a report on Muslims in Switzerland, published by the Federal Commission for Migration (EKM), president Francis Matthey quotes a friend stating „before I was a Jugo because of my surname, now I am a Muslim because of my first name", [„Früher war ich wegen meines Nachnamens ein Jugo, heute bin ich wegen meines Vornamens ein Muslim."] pointing to the shift from public perception of „ethnic difference" to „Islamic difference" that has taken place between 2005 (the first edition of the report) and 2010. Gianni et al. 2010: 4.

reinforcing logic of mediated „crisis events“ in European „elsewheres“ to fuel and mediated crisis events in national contexts „here“ see Lentin and Titley 2011, especially 123-160 on their discussion of the Swiss minaret affair as „lightning conductor“). Thus, framed by international mediated events, the perception and addressation of Switzerland's Muslim population along the category „Islam“ set in slowly.

As one of the first symptoms of the public perception of Muslims and their differing religious and moral interests, in 2004, the biggest retailers Migros and Coop issued their official headscarf policies.[106] In the same time span, the problematisation of Muslims set in in political debates, as „Islamic difference“ was taken up by right wing political circles in initiatives on the legal recognition of religious minorities in Canton Zürich in 2003 (Behloul 2009), and a nation wide campaign on the facilitation of naturalisation of second generation migrants in 2004. In the latter campaign, backed by the circulation of (false!) statistics of the exponential growth of the Swiss Muslim population due to its high immigration and fertility rate, right wing opponents summoned the imaginary of a threat of a quantitative Islamisation of Switzerland.[107]

In 2006, the federal commission against racism (*EKR*) published a report on the growing perception of difference between the „Swiss majority“ and Switzerland's „Muslim minority“ (Angst, Kreienbühl et al. 2006). In the same year, the question of integration of „Muslims“ and „Islam“ was treated by the *Christian Democratic Party (CVP)* in a special position paper.[108] The discovery of „religion“, (notably „Islam“) as an object of public concern and social governance was also mirrored in the launching of the 10 million Swiss francs national research project *NFP 58* „Religionen in der Schweiz“ [„Religions in Switzerland“] commissioned by the federal council in December 2005. Of the 28, mostly qualitative study projects conducted, 5 were focused on Muslims or the representation of Islam exclusively, while another 11 presented studies of Muslims or the representation of Islam in comparative studies.[109]

Since 2006, a number of controversies over the public visibility of Islam, focusing on the construction of minarets took place on municipal and cantonal levels in the Swiss German *Mittelland*. The problematisation of Switzerland's Muslim population along the category of „Islam“ underwent a condensation with the launching of the national

[106] While Migros chose a pragmatic approach, leaving it to its local branches to allow its employees to wear the headscarf, Coop did not, emphasizing the existence of a standard dress code for all its employees that did not foresee personal expression of religious adherence. See N.N.: „Migros respektiert Religions-Freiheit“, *swissinfo.ch* 18.11.2004.
[107] See N.N.: „Antimuslimisches Inserat“, *NZZ* 04.09.2004.
[108] „Religionsfreiheit und Integration am Beispiel der Musliminnen und Muslime der Schweiz“-Religionsfreiheit-d1.pdf. (27.05.2011)
[109] see the homepage under http://www.nfp58.ch/d_index.cfm. (30.04.2012)

minaret initiative in early summer 2007 and its perpetuation of the threat scenario, and culminated in its approval in late November 2009 (Ettinger and Imhof 2011). As media analyses show, the framing of Islam and Muslims in Switzerland during the anti-minaret campaign between spring 2007 and autumn 2009 was guided by geopolitical events related to Islamic terrorism as well as key events in Europe (see Introduction). Muslims became problematised as they were suspected of supporting a „creeping Islamisation", endorsing „Islamic terrorism" and wishing to establish a „parallel society" (Ettinger 2009:2).[110] In the last weeks running up to the vote, feminist voices such as Julia Onken, Alice Schwarzer, or Mireille Vallette in the Romandie joined the supporters' aim of staking a „clear signal"[111] with the ban on minarets, admonishing missing female agency among the Muslim population (Ettinger and Imhof 2009: 8; Gianni 2009: 15-16). Ettinger and Imhof argue that a stereotypical generalizing framing of Muslims and Islam dominated public and political debates running up to the vote, while media featured hardly any differentiated coverage of the local Muslim population and present Muslim institutions and forms (Ettinger and Imhof 2009: 4). While the supporters deemed the initiative as a „symbolic act" to warn against the danger of a „creeping Islamisation"[112], the opponents questioned the feasibility of this legal measure deemed to be xenophobic and discriminatory (ibid.: 3). It was notable that three quarters of media contributions established a generalised nexus of the Swiss Muslim population to extremist forms of Islam. Mirroring the minaret poster imaginary and its invocation of a disturbing time-spatial difference of Muslim „immigrants", 16% of media coverage addressed Muslims as „culturally strange", namely „pre-modern" and thus „non-integrated", perceiving their presence as „threatening" (ibid: 4; 2011: 31). With the approval of the minaret initiative, the „Muslim population" was thus put in a liminal social position by the majority of Swiss voters. National and international voices, as was admonished by legal experts all along, deemed the approval of the initiative as discriminatory legal act and questioned its compatibility with the legal constitution and liberal values of secular Switzerland and Europe. They argued that the ban to construct minarets was a breach of religious freedom of worship and discriminatory against a religious and/or cultural minority.[113]

[110] As a cursory statistical analysis of the (extended version) arguments' paper of the supporters of the iniative shows, „Islam" was semantically linked to „political/politics" twenty times in the document. See „Argumentarium Minarettgegner", http://www.minarette.ch/pdf/argumentarium_minarettverbot.pdf. (12.04.2011)

[111] See the communiqué of the initiative committee, available online under http://www.minarette.ch/downloads/argumentarium_minarettverbot.pdf, especially pages 3 and 11 mentions the symbolical function of the ban. (05.06.2012)

[112] See „Kurz-Argumentarium zur Minarettverbots-Initiative", http://www.minarette.ch/pdf/kurz-argumentarium_minarettverbot.pdf. (07.04.2011)

[113] See for example Charles Lewinsky, „Ein Gesprenst geht um der Schweiz. Das Gespenst heisst Eidenbenz", *Tagesanzeiger* 03.12.2009, or N.N. "Minarettentscheid stösst auf Unverständnis und

3. The public appearance of the *IZRS* & its male convert leaders

Open crisis, the second critical stage of what Turner analyses as finished plot in four acts, is, as Turner argues, „always one of turning points or moments of danger and suspense". It is characterised by liminality and it presents a threshold between a restabilisation or escalation of social friction (Turner 1974: 40). The convert committee of the *Islamischer Zentralrat Schweiz* first appeared in public arenas in the immediate aftermath of the approval of the minaret initiative in late 2009. Initiated by two venues organised by the *IZRS* in December 2009 and March 2010 respectively, the *Central Council* and its convert protagonists spawned a self-reinforcing media hype. Contradictory discussion formats, interviews, portraits and risk profiles of its committee were to dominate Swiss media coverage on Muslims and Islam in Switzerland in the first half of 2010 (Ettinger and Imhof 2011: 18; 32; 38).

3.1. The demonstration against Islamophobia on Federal Square on 12 December 2010

The first series of media coverage set in with the newly founded *IZRS*'s organisation of a „Kundgebung gegen die Islamhetze" („demonstration against Islamophobia") on December 12, 2009 on Federal Square, in front of the Swiss houses of parliament, as a reaction to 57,5% of the Swiss voters' backing the minaret ban. All through the preparatory phase of the demonstration, the event was accompanied by high media attention due to the announced speech of notorious Pierre Abu Hamza Vogel, a German convert and salafi preacher observed by German authorities. Vogel was denied entry at the Swiss borders for fear of religious agitation and thus did not appear on stage, while equally infamous German preacher Abu Anas took his place as a key speaker.[114] Given their connection to Vogel, public media leveled charges of radicalism against the *IZRS* and its convert committee, soon uncovering that both Nicolas Blancho and spokesperson Abd el Qaasim Illi had been involved in „extremist" activities before (see below).[115]

Bedauern", *NZZ* 30.11.2009.

[114] Raaflaub, Matthias: „Überraschung bei Islam-Demo blieb aus", *Der Bund* 14.12.2009.

[115] On 11 February 2006, Blancho and a group of Muslims from Biel had organised a demonstration against the Mohammad caricatures. Media reported at that time that the protesters carried transparents claiming „Religion before freedom of opinion". In the news coverage at that time, organizer Blancho was not (yet) framed (nor problematised) as convert. See N.N.: „Muslimdemo in Bern", *Blick* 11.02.2006.

Illustration 10: Demo gegen Islamhetze, 12.12. 2009, Federal Square, Berne

3.2. The family retreat weekend in the mountain resort Disentis in March 2010

A second series of media coverage set in in March 2010, when it became known that the *IZRS* was to organise a family retreat weekend in the mountain town of Disentis in canton Grisons. Already during the preparation phase of the event, media had reported on the coming venue, as the *IZRS* had announced German salafi preacher Mohammad Ciftci aka Abu Anas as a referee. Abu Anas had gained notoriety as propagator of the persecution of apostates and had defended physical violence against women in case of marital conflict in speeches available as *you tube* videos. Abu Anas, like convert preacher Abu Hamza Pierre Vogel, who was to hold a speech as a surprise guest, are observed by the Lower Saxon constitutional security agency.[116]

The family event that had attracted 250 Muslim women, men and children from all parts of Switzerland was monitored by Swiss *FED-POL* and national and cantonal security bodies. The controversial speakers played back charges of discrimination in the media, presenting themselves as victims of hate campaigns and Islamophobia, emphasizing that they do not support domestic violence and actions against the legal constitution of European societies.[117] While the speeches held did not touch upon critical topics and the venue proceeded without incidence, free daily *20 Minuten* published a confrontative interview with Pierre Vogel where he did not distance himself explicitly from violence against women, homosexuals and apostates, prioritizing the protection of religion. Basing himself strongly on the authority of the Prophetic Sunna, when asked if

[116] See for example N.N.: „Deutsche Islamisten zieht es in die Berge", *20 Minuten* 07.03.2010.
[117] See for example the 10 minute documentary on the event in official TV-channel SF 1, „Islam Seminar", *Schweiz Aktuell* 29.03.2010, available online under http://www.wissen.sf.tv/Dossiers/Politik/Schweiz/Islam-und-die-Schweiz videos. (28.10.2012)

he would beat his wife, Vogel denied as „[he] follow[ed] the role model of the prophet who did not do this either" [„ich lebe nach dem Vorbild des Propheten Muhammad, der das auch nicht getan hat."].[118] For most journalists and commentators, however, hardly an answer to dispel their fears.

3.3. The Club on „Muslims in Switzerland". Swiss converts at the spearhead of Switzerland's Islamisation?

The week following the controversial seminary saw a series of media features on the convert protagonists of the *IZRS*. Thus, the popular TV-discussion format *Club* on the official Swiss channel *SF 1* on Tuesday, the 30th of March focused on the topic „Muslims in Switzerland", yet, more specifically, aimed to debate on the question of „How dangerous are Fundamentalists?" as the subtitle read [„Muslime in der Schweiz. Wie gefährlich sind Fundamentalisten in der Schweiz?"]. The talk round brought together Saïda Keller-Messahli, president of the liberal Muslim organisation *Forum für einen fortschrittlichen Islam*, Dumeni Columberg, mayor of the mountain town Disentis who had granted the *IZRS* the permission to rent the communal center for their venue, Andreas Wieland, tourism director of Grisons, who critisised the former for this permit, as well as Wilfried Gasser, head of a national umbrella organisation of evangelicals and local politicians of the *Evangelical Popular Party* (*EVP*), an outspoken critic of Islam.

Illustration 11: SF-Club 30.3.2010

Host Christine Maier invited the talk round to debate about the *IZRS* and its goals. As representatives of the *Central Council*, she had invited Qaasim Illi, spokesperson of the organisation and committee member Oscar A. Bergamin, introducing them both as Swiss converts (1'). Middle-aged convert Bergamin had joined the *IZRS* in early 2010. While Meier related that university student Illi had converted after the event of 9/11, she introduced Bergamin as grown up catholic, well-travelled journalist, former member of *Swisscoy* in Kosovo as well as councillor of the *NATO* in Afghanistan who today offered intercultural mediation as a professional (1'). Given his somewhat odd position as

[118] Gabi Schwegler: „Schlagen der Frau manchmal angebracht", *20 Minuten* 28.03.2010.

„invisible“, middle-aged convert within the *IZRS*, whose committee was for the rest made up of converts and new borns with a mostly highly „visible“ and „ostentatious“ salafi habitus (Nora Illi, Nicholas Blancho, Jibril Zwicker, see also the previous chapter), Bergamin was paid relatively little attention in the media coverage. Some of his interlocutors wondered about his engagement within the *Central Council*. Due to his arguably differing social and moral interests, it was little surprising when he finally quit the organisation in late 2011 (see chapter 1).

Given the previous coverage on the Disentis event, the discussion took off with Meier confronting Illi and Bergamin with charges of supporting domestic violence against women (3'-10') by inviting speakers Abu Anas and Pierre Vogel to their venue in the Swiss mountains. In their responses, the converts denied that Islam endorses the beating of women. As Vogel in the interview quoted above, they invoked Muhammad as an important role model for (orthodox) Muslims, living after the normativity and textual evidence of Quran and Sunna who had never hit his women (6'). Both Illi and Bergamin produced a siwāk from their pockets – a small stick used at the time of prophet Muhammad to clean teeth. In an arguably salafi mode of authorization, they refered to a famous hadith where the prophet was reported to recommend his companions and followers to prod women with this tiny stick as a symbolic gesture, an ultima ratio in case of marital conflict (5'; 8'). In the further course of the program, busy to dispel charges of female subordination, supporting Islamic terrorism, and aiming to establish a „parallel society“ with its own legal system in Switzerland, the two converts staked their claim on representing Switzerland's (practicing) Muslims in terms of moral, orthopractic and educational interests vis-à-vis the Swiss public and authorities.

Illustration 12: Qaasim Illi with Siwāk

3.3.1. Convert Bergamin presents himself as a well-read Swiss Islam expert. The „invisible Muslim convert" as „integration agent"

Middle-aged, clean shaven, business suit dressed Bergamin presented himself as a cosmopolitan „diplomat" with *NATO* experience, arguing for the role of Swiss converts as „bridge builders to brothers and sisters in faith" [„Brückenbauer zu Glaubensbrüdern und Glaubensschwestern"] (42'-43') on behalf of their rare double cultural capital of being both „born" Swiss *and* Muslim. Summoning his Swiss habitus, he appealed to the compatibility of „being Swiss" and „being Muslim", as „[he] can wear a tie .. [he] can love Beethoven, [he] can enjoy to read Goethe, [he] can go skiing in the Swiss mountains and be Muslim" (42').[119]

Moreover, as host Christine Meier mentioned him shaking hands with her (23') in opposition to Qaasim Illi, Bergamin stated that he saw no contradictions between the legal secular constitution of Switzerland and its values (such as not to beat women) and the moral and legal norms of the sharī'a (9'), notably in questions of gender equality. Framing himself as „well-read" expert on Islam, he argued for the privileged role of converts in terms of defining Islamic authority, as they were able to distinguish between „what is the essence of Islam" [„was ist die Essenz des Islam"] – and, according to this line of argument, compatible with the legal and cultural frame of Switzerland – and what is merely „imported from Muslim countries" [„aus islamischen Ländern importiert .. kulturell"] as „cultural" (43'). Thus, his votes proposed to redirect Switzerland's perception of a Muslim problem to a „migration" and „integration" problem responsible for a wrong, „culturally" corrupted notion of „being Muslim"; whereas he, being a religious convert, based his Islamic belief and practice on the pristine sources of Quran and Sunna. Yet, given his obviously relaxed endorsement of (problematised) moral precepts and gendered demeanor (shaking a woman's hand), his claim on Muslim leadership somehow seemed more to depend predominantly on his „invisible", liberal, non-traditional and non-salafi mode of Muslim authorisation and his „*not* practicing problematised moral precepts". Moreover, his self-fashioning as Swiss citizen who „wears a tie" and shakes a woman's hands seemed somehow conflictive and irreconcilable with a strict endorsement of what his fellow convert Illi was to define as Islamic authority, namely the emulation of the prophetic Sunna. Framing himself as well-educated, distinguished, middle-aged „Swiss" male, he staked his symbolic capital, in an adapted Spivakian parlance ‚as a white man saving brown men and women from themselves' (compare Spivak 1994: 93), avowing of what he

[119] Interestingly, or, moreover, characteristically, the economic dimension of „class" remained unthematic throughout the debate.

singled out as the problematic „cultural“ lack of Muslim „immigrants“ to be overcome as a means to „integration“.

Illustration 13: Oskar Bergamin: „We Swiss converts can be bridge builders“

3.3.2. Illi claims claims social recognition & legal protection of his differing moral & orthopractic demeanor

While Bergamin appealed to the converts' pedagogical role as „bridge builder to reach migrant Muslims“[120], Illi was questioned by his interlocutors why he, as a Swiss, had taken up this „provoking“ mode of bodily demeanor which was perceived exactly as a departure from Swiss culture, liberal values and habitual bodily practices (21') as invoked by beardless, tie wearing Bergamin as a creditable capital for Muslim leadership. In his response, Illi rejected charges of being an immature „agent provocateur“ eager to gain media attention. He framed his attire as an orthopractic mode of following the prophetic Sunna, thus presented his habitual change as a conscious religious conviction and virtuous realisation of Islamic normativity (23'). Thereby, he claimed Muslim leadership by appealing to his prophetic emulation as creditable embodied religious capital. Hence, while addressed as a „radical“ with a political, „islamist“ agenda, Illi redirected the discussion from a political frame to the personal sphere of subjective moral and ritual practice, as he did affirm to be a „radical“ in a religiously normative sense, if this meant that he believed the Quran as text was God's normative word and not open to reformation ad libitum (30'). Yet, he rejected charges of disrespect of the legal constitutional state and use of force in order to safeguard Muslim interests

[120] Bergamins's catachretical usage of the bridge builder metaphor alludes to the unidirectional form of the „dialogue“ implied.

(31'-33'). Instead, he summoned the guaranteed constitutional rights of liberal and secular Switzerland laid down in article 15 which granted its citizens the individual positive right to „free personal development" [„Recht auf freie Entfaltung"] (22') and the granted protection of religious minorities on the other hand. Thus, Illi appealed to his rare double religious-cultural capital as both following virtuously Islamic normativity as emulator of the prophetic Sunna, thus, disposing of embodied religious capital, as well as being a self-assertive Swiss citizen knowledgeable of the legal constitutional rights of free expression granted to individuals and the granted protection of religious minorities. Hence, in the course of the discussion, both Bergamin and Illi repeatedly compared the Muslim's social and religious interests to those of the Jewish orthodox religious minority community with a comparable bodily habitus and moral interests nobody would dare to find „provoking" (Illi and Bergamin 21'-22'; see also Bergamin 58'). Both *Council* members expressed their wish to establish and expand religious structures (like Islamic schools, a fatwā-Council) in Switzerland in order to offer the Muslim minority in Switzerland the frame to live an Islamic life adapted to the local context as enabled by the legal constitutional structures of secular and liberal Switzerland (32'; 58'; 60'; 70'). Furthermore, Illi saw this also as an „integrative" means, as it would replace the religious authority of „some Turkish hoja somewhere in Turkey" with scholarly expertise of actors knowledgeable of the legal and cultural frame of Switzerland (32').

Expanding on his concept of integration, Illi rejected the notion of „integration" as „assimilation" (22'). Instead, he appealed to the audience to understand integration as a two-way process (56'), meaning for Swiss society to learn to live with and thus recognise Muslims as a religious minority group with differing moral and orthopractic interests, just as it meant for Muslims in Switzerland to adapt to and participate in Swiss society by getting to know the language, becoming familiar with Switzerland's cultural frame and competent in social interactions, yet retaining their particular way of life (23'; 56'). Thus, Illi, appealing to his „being a Swiss citizen" who was „familiar with the liberal basic rights" (22'), claimed the religious rights of Muslims as religious minority to differ in terms of cultic, orthopractic and moral habits. Other than Bergamin, Illi appealed to his virtuous endorsement of Islamic normativity – his embodied religious capital – as symbolic stake in his claim on Muslim leadership. Thereby, he aimed to detach social (and legal) recognition and citizenship from a liberal bodily habitus in terms of dress habits and religious authorisation (see also Blancho and Illi in chapter 1). Illi rejected the public crisis scenario as projected by the minaret campaign, as he reframed Islamic visibilities as a collective mode of religious self-cultivation and self-expression deemed to recognised as a variety of „being Swiss".

3.3.2. Liberal Muslim Saïda Keller-Messahli frames the converts as zealous importers of Saudi Islam opposed to a „reformed", „contextualizing" reading of Islam upheld by the silent majority of „born" Muslims

However, the two convert protagonists who both argued for the compatibility of their Muslim interests with the interests of the Swiss public – (or at least) Switzerland's constitutional framework in terms of the protection of religious minorities – faced critical inquiries by the interlocutors present. Thus, female Muslim Saïda Keller-Messahli, head of the *Forum für einen fortschrittlichen Islam (FFI)* [Forum for a progressive Islam] which was established in 2004, contested both the converts' claim on defining Islamic authority and, concomitantly, their claim on representing Swiss Muslims' religious and social interests. The *FFI* was one of the first attempts made to answer to the growing problematisation of Switzerland's Muslim population and was made up of a committee of likeminded women and men with a „born" Muslim background, as well as non-Muslim sympathizers. The *FFI* understands itself as a network of Swiss citizens of both genders that endorse what they understand as a liberal, contextualised and reformed reading of the Quran. It aims to establish a „modern, humane" Islam, while it rejects both traditional modes of Muslim authorisation as developed in legal traditions (fiqh) as well as the prophetic Sunna[121]. The *FFI* understands itself in line with contemporary Muslim reformist interpretations of Islam, such as advanced by intellectuals like Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Mohammad Arkoun or Abdelwahhab Meddeb. Drawing on the 8th century rationalist school of the mu'taziliyya, the former claim a modernizing momentum inherent in Islamic tradition both against orientalist, colonialist assumptions of a constitutive „irrationality", „a-historicity" or „premodernity" inherent in Islam (Said 1979; see Asad 2003c: 11) and „liberality" and „progressivity" as exclusive cultural capital of the European West, as well as against orthodox, fundamentalist and traditional claims on Muslim authorisation dominant in the contemporary Muslim world.

In their missionary statements, the *FFI* takes a stand against forced marriages, female discrimination (such as limited access to public and work life, genital mutilation, domestic violence), against gender segregation in public schools (sports classes, swimming classes), appealing to the pupil's right of free development in body and mind, for the possibility of bi-religious marriage of female Muslims, and against the persecution of homosexuality. Notably, the *FFI* rejects the wearing of the female

[121] The homepage hosts a reading list which also recommends titles by feminist Muslim Nahed Selim („Nehmt den Männern den Koran Für eine weibliche Interpretation des Islam"),committee member and political scientist Elham Manea („Ich will nicht mehr länger schweigen") as well as texts by German Muslim and author Necla Kelek. For a portrait of the organisation see homepage: http://www.forum-islam.ch/de/index.php. (30.07.2012)

headscarf as normative precept, reading this practice as a sign of female subordination. Accordingly, it votes against Muslim female teachers wearing a headscarf during classes in public schools, as it understands this as a breach with the policy of religious neutrality and a problematic role model for pupils. The *FFI* demands that imams in Swiss mosques are in good command of a Swiss native language, and that they are knowledgeable of the cultural and legal frame of Switzerland. Further, it encourages the establishment of a special training for Imams and Islamic pedagogues in Switzerland in Swiss universities to safeguard the compatibility of their teachings with the liberal and secular frame of Swiss society.[122]

Given the *FFI*'s rejection of orthodox forms of moral authorisation, the association also takes in a critical stand towards other Muslim organisations in Switzerland like the *FIDS* or the *KIOS*.

Illustration 14: Saïda Keller-Messahli: „I am astonished that you Swiss converts chose such a literal, Saudi Islam." (10')

In the *Club,* the president of the *FFI* introduced herself as representing the „silent majority" of (mostly non-organised) Muslims in Switzerland, which, according to Keller-Messahli, espouse what she calls a „reformed", contextualizing interpretation of the Quran based on the secular, liberal and democratic values of human rights, religious freedom and gender equality (27'-28'; 41'). In the course of the media coverage on the converts, Keller-Messahli had repeatedly appeared as a popular critic and opponent of the *Central Council,* admonishing the danger potential of the organization to lure Muslims disappointed by the approval of the minaret campaign into radicalism (27'-28').[123] While council member Bergamin had attempted to establish converts' „Swiss" background as a ressource to adapt Muslim religious forms to the cultural and legal Swiss context, the journalist and teacher of Swiss-Tunisian origin devalued the converts' claim on their embodied „cultural" capital as Swiss, notably in response to Illi. Thus, she

[122] See missionary statements under http://www.forum-islam.ch/de/ueber-uns/positionspapier.php. (30.07.2012)
[123] See for example an interview in *Die Weltwoche* 14/2010, 08.04.2010. In late spring 2010, when Illi's Swiss convert wife Nora Illi appeared in the public, Keller Messahli was arguably the most prominent Muslim female opponent of the female convert in various media forms.

uttered her „astonishment“ [„ich bin erstaunt“] that convert Illi endorsed such a literal, Saudi Islam that encouraged violence against women, and endorsed violent penal law (female stoning, chopping hands off) (10’; 40’-42’). She warned of the danger of their „fundamentalism“ [„Fundamentalismus“], charging the convert protagonists of the *Central Council* of importing an inflexible understanding of the Quran to Switzerland that implied the outright rejection of liberal and secular values (10’; 40’), such as gender equality, democracy and individual freedom. Thus, she criticised Illi’s concept of integration (see above) as „purely mechanical“ [„rein mechanisch“] (63’). According to her, it was not enough to „always bring the garbage out to the correct place at the correct time“ [„immer zur richtigen Zeit am richtigen Ort den Ghüder rausstellen“]. Instead, she defined „integration“ as pertaining to the inner forum and, thus, the loyalty to liberal and secular modes of religious authorization upheld by Muslim individuals, „it is about what goes on in the inside“ [„das was im Inneren stattfindet“] (64’).

Thus, whereas Illi had tried to claim leadership and legitimity to define religious authority by summoning his embodied religious capital as convert to live „strictly after the normativity as laid down in the Quran and Sunna“, Keller-Messahli’s vote exactly denied both the convertability of his „religious capital“ as prophetic emulator, as well as his „being a Swiss citizen“ into „symbolic capital“ to legitimise his claims on representing Switzerland’s Muslims. She invoked his „astonishing“ – thus „contra-intuitive“ – endorsement of a historically backward, strange „Saudi“, „literalist“ reading of Muslim authority. According to Keller-Messahli, this opposed both the very „cultural“ values and legal framework of Switzerland as well as the secularised, individualised, liberal and „open“ „interpretation“ of Islam which, according to her, was endorsed by the majority of Swiss Muslims with a Turkish or Albanian, thus „non-arab“ „ethnic“ background. Thereby, while interpellating Muslims along „ethnic“ criteria, Keller-Messahli also challenged Bergamin’s symbolic stake as convert integration agent, as she rejected the notion of a problematic cultural and moral difference of 90% of Switzerland’s „silent“, „ethnic“ Muslims. Illi, however, when it was his turn, exactly denied that Keller-Messahli’s historisising, non-normative understanding of the Quranic text – in line with Hamid Abu Zaid whom Keller-Messahli had invoked as representing a reformist intellectualist movement in Islam (see 39’) – was upheld by the majority of „ethnic“ Muslims, be they practicing or not (compare interview Illi chapter 2). Moreover, to emphasise the representational nature of his organization and his definition of „being Muslim“ as a mode of moral and orthopractic self-cultivation governed along Islamic normative criteria, he pointed to the multi-ethnic composition of the *Council*, as the bulk of its members had a Turkish or Albanian background (30’).

3.4. Contesting the converts' claim on representating „ethnic" Muslims: „female autonomy" versus „Muslim orthopraxy"

By framing „being Muslim" as a matter of either „literal" or „reformed" reading, the appearance of Saïda Keller-Messahli in the *Club* established it as an object of interpretative contestation. Thereby, the program opened a public field of arbitrating the scope of socially (and legally) acceptable and „integrable" forms of „being Muslim" in Switzerland. Keller-Messahli opposed the converts' import of a „backward", „literal" and „Saudi" reading of Islam both to the principle „values" of liberal and secular societies on the one hand, as well as to the „contextualizing", „reformed" reading of Islam she summoned to be upheld by the majority of Switzerland's Muslims with an „Albanian" or „Turkish" background. Illi, however, exactly rejected that Keller-Messahli's „reformed", historisising reading of „being Muslim" was representative of the interpretation upheld by the majority of the Muslim „ethnic" population.

Both Illi and Keller-Messahli (with yet other implications) emphasised the general need to expand Islamic educational and scholarly structures in Switzerland as a means of „integration" (31'; 55f.'). Yet, Keller-Messahli denied Bergamin and Illi's „being Swiss" as a creditable capital to represent the Muslim interests of „ethnic", „silent" („born") Swiss Muslims. Moreover, she defined „being Swiss" as a matter of defining „being Muslim" along liberal and secular, „progressive" modes of authorisation. By appealing to „gender equality" and „religious freedom" as stakes of symbolic inclusion, she placed herself (and the non-organised, „silent", „ethnic" Muslim population she claimed to represent) on common symbolic ground with the (non-Muslim) audience, while she problematised visible „Arab" Muslim orthodoxy as embodied by convert Illi as conflictive both with the legal constitutional *and* the cultural and ethical frame of liberal and secular Swiss society.

3.5 Linking radicalism to conversion: The convert protagonists in biographical portraits & identity profiles

During the respective program, as well as in media coverage to follow (see below), reinforcing their failure to claim Muslim leadership and gain credibility for their definition of „being a Swiss Muslim", discussion was soon directed to discussing the link between Islamic radicalism and religious conversion, as it especially appeared to be given in the case of Abd el Qaasim Illi's and Nicholas Blancho. Thus, Illi's conversion to Islam – characterised by host Meier as a volitional act, an „absolute decision" [„sie haben sich absolut entschieden"] to endorse a literal interpretation of Islam – was linked to his political engagement with the Palestinian question during the second Intifada, where he

had been a fierce supporter of the *PLO*, supporting suicide attacks and violent action (33'-37'). In the early 2000s, Illi had been legally charged for his outspoken political views at that time. Christine Maier mentioned him burning an Israeli flag during a public protest. Thus, while Illi had beforehand argued from the position of a Swiss citizen entitled of legal protection of his rights of non-discrimination, his own allegiance to the legal state was somehow questioned when Maier unearthed that he had been in conflict with Swiss law, notably charged of racial discrimination. In the program, Illi admitted that he had been very „taken" [„vereinnahmt"] during this early phase, while he had undergone a process of maturation since, having developed a more „differentiated world view" [„differenzierte Weltsicht"] (37'-38').[124] Thus, when asked about his „motivation" to turn to Islam, Illi redirected discussion to a personal everyday frame, as he presented it as a subjective religious choice. Taking in a self-enterpreneurial perspective, he mentioned the „normativity" of Islam, specifying it as a „clear ruling" [„klare Regelung"], an „organising" power for his own conduct of life, and an answer on how to find „God's pleasance" [„Gott wohlgefällig sein"] (34'-35'). The *Club* program, where Illi was prompted to account of his „motivation" to adhere to a fundamentalist reading of Islam himself was followed by a number of biographical portraits and personality profiles by journalists advancing more objectifying readings of the phenomenon of conversion to Islam, linking the social crisis triggered by the public appearance of the converts to biographical anomaly.

On 4 April 2010, *NZZ am Sonntag* published a triple portrait of Nicolas Blancho, Qaasim Illi and Oscar A.M. Bergamin, tracing their discovery of Islam and uncovering their „objective" biographical motives to decide „Pro surrender. Against autonomy. Pro norms. Against freedom"[125]. Nicolas Blancho was portrayed as a teenage kid in adolescent crisis, clubbing, trying to get laid, drinking alcohol and struggling to get the recognition of his mates just like any other adolescent before he met Islamic preachers as a casual interpreter in a mosque. Against Qaasim Illi's conception of conversion as a rational choice in the *SF Club* program (see above), the *NZZ am Sonntag* quotes Blancho as having dedicated himself to „the art of surrender" which he defined as a „state of total

[124] As media had already uncovered in January 2009, Patric Jerome Illi had been, before his conversion to Islam in 2003, a fierce supporter of Hamas leader Ahmad Jassin, running a pro-PLO web site whose contents were repeatedly charged as racist by Swiss authorities. In 2004, charges of illegal possession of explosives leveled against Illi were eventually dropped. Vis-à-vis media, Illi repeatedly conceded that he had undergone a process of maturing since his intense teenage years, that he no longer supported the extremist political views upheld in his early twenties. See Ann Guenter: „Zionisten sauber erlegt. Wie extrem sind Schweizer Islamisten?" *Blick* 29.01.2010.
[125] Carole Koch:„Der Ruf des Muezzins", *NZZ am Sonntag* 04.04.2010. See also Simone Rau: „Der Islam gibt ihm den Halt, den er sucht", *Tagesanzeiger* 12.02.2010.

acceptance. Against one's rational mind." [„Zustand, in dem man alles akzeptiert. Wider den Verstand."]. Bergamin, again, was portrayed as a late convert, meeting his Muslim wife in Albania during a military peace mission in Kosovo. The journalist conveyed how the son of a Dutch politician with Swiss roots had not quite found the recognition he was looking for as a gastronomer and local news journalist in Grisons before he had endeavored to partake in humanitarian military missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan, where he was treated as a „hero" by local populations.

Illi, at last, was pictured as a kid growing up with an alcoholic father, seeing his parents divorce and ending up temporarily in an evangelical foster family where he finally had found the religious orientation he was looking for. He was presented as a rebellious youth, party organizer and political activist who had had his turning experience on 9/11, when he started to take sides for the Muslim population in Palestine, identifying with them as the real victims, as the journalist mused, „he was essentially [a victim] himself" [„war ja im Grunde selber eines"], and finally converted when Bush's army invaded Iraq. The journalist saw his endorsement of the rigid moral values of Islamic societies as a compensatory means for the missing familial security experienced in his childhood. The news paper quoted Illi stating that becoming Muslim is like „learning to drive. After a few months one does not have to think about switching the gear, if one does it or not." [„Autofahren lernen: Nach ein paar Monaten muss man nicht mehr aktiv nachdenken, ob man schaltet oder nicht."]

3.6. From social crisis to biographical crisis & back

The social crisis projected by the public appearance of the *IZRS* and its convert protagonists had effected a range of biographical portraits and identity profiles in the media trying to get to the bottom of the phenomenon of conversion to Islam. Drawing on popularised Freudian compensation theories (see for example Freud 1999 [1907]), the protagonists' conversions were framed as the pathological regressive outcome of narcissistic and/or oedipal crises in adolescence due to the lack of a strong father (Illi), a lack of social success (Blancho) or a biographically rooted lack of recognition given by too strong a father (Bergamin). Their turn to Islam had its roots beneath the realm of conscious rational choice, agency and intersubjective understanding as liberal and secular forms of authorizing religious practice (see Asad 2003a: 11; also Asad 1996). Yet, as in the Pichard interview quoted below which was to appear a couple of days after the biographical studies, the idiosyncratic pathology of the Swiss male individuals and their absolute mode of „surrender" was relinked to the social crisis perceived to exude from the protagonists as leader figures in a general radicalisation and Islamisation of

Switzerland's „ethnic", immigrants' children. Thus, their cultural capital of „being Swiss" – both in terms of sharing the cultural, liberal capital of „free choice" and „individuality" as authorizing stakes of religious practice was further delegitimised. Their religious practice was framed as a pathological, regressive compensatory act in denial of the „reality principle" (Freud 1999 [1924]) that entailed the endorsement of „barbarian", „violent", and „absurd" ideas (see below).

3.7. The *Pichard interview* & the *Weltwoche* article: The Swiss convert as leader figure

On 7 April 2010, *Tagesanzeiger* published an interview with Alain Pichard, teacher and member of the city council of Biel who spoke to the journalist as a father of Blancho's former best friend, as Blancho was, according to *Tagesanzeiger*, not available for interviews at that time.[126] Pichard related that Blancho had grown up in a liberal family, was a mediocre pupil and had always seemed a bit lost and without a goal. Yet, at the age of 16, he had broken off his apprenticeship and had converted to Islam, caught up in higher education, and married a Muslim woman of Yemenite background. As for the motives behind Blancho's conversion, continuing the pathologisation of preceding biographical portraits, he did not want to go into details, yet he suggested that it had to do with his „personality" [„Persönlichkeit"]. He voiced his anxiety about Blancho's ideas he deemed „antidemocratic" [„antidemokratisch"], „barbarian" [„barbarisch"], „violent" [„gewalttätig"] and „absurd". Echoing Keller-Messahli's fear, he uttered his concerns about Blancho seducing migrant youth into his „Saudi fundamentalism", trying to introduce „the Scharia" [„die Scharia"] in Switzerland. He summoned allegations of a young man of Kurdish Alevi background having given up his apprenticeship and disappearing from home to a terrorist camp in Egypt. The youth had frequented the same mosque Blancho was active in. His parents said they had found photographs of Osama Bin Laden on his computer before his disappearance.

Accordingly, a few days later, weekly magazine *Die Weltwoche* published a lead article entitled „Bin Laden in Biel?"[127]. Blanchos soft toned portrait covered the front page, which was undertitled with „The most dangerous Islamist in Switzerland. How Convert Nicolas Blancho forms his Islamic Troops" [„Der gefährlichste Islamist der Schweiz. Wie Konvertit Nicolas „Abdullah" Blancho seine Islamischen Stosstrupps formiert"]. The article took up the line of argument of the Pichard interview. Drawing on the vocabulary of political analyst Olivier Roy, it presented convert Blancho as a

[126] Martin Beglinger: „Man sollte Blancho nicht unterschätzen", *Tagesanzeiger* 07.04.2010.
[127] Philipp Gut: „Bin Laden in Biel?", *Weltwoche* 10.04.2010.

leader figure who lured Albanian, Turkish and other migrant youth into a „deculturalised“ form of radicalised Islam (see Roy 2006; 2010).

Illustration 15: Cover Weltwoche „Nicolas Blancho as Bin Laden in Biel“

Author Gut repeated the rumors about young migrant men disappearing to Islamic countries to terrorist camps, and related the story of a young Swiss girl who had converted to Islam in her early twenties under the influence of Blancho who became her teacher in regular lessons in a local mosque. The anonymous woman recounted how she was fascinated by Blancho's soft guise, had started to fully veil, broke off her apprenticeship and „even locked herself up in the toilet during train rides“ [„schloss sich während Zugfahrten im WC ein“] to avoid the gazes of men. She conveyed how she had been brainwashed by convert Blancho, who had propagated that all non-Muslims were to be avoided as they were all racist. It was only after a year, when she was to be made a match that „her resistance stirred, the last remainder of her autonomy“ [„dagegen regte sich ihr Widerstand, die letzten Reste der Selbstbestimmung“] and she managed to go away on a holiday to get a break. It was there, as the article quoted the young woman that „[her] head came back“ [„{…} ihr Kopf zurückkam“]. Author Gut drew the picture of Blancho as someone who „is a soft, nice person but he can disguise himself“ [„ein sanfter netter Mensch aber er kann sich gut verstellen“], a radical leader and „rabble-rouser“[128] [„Rattenfänger“] (Keller-Messahli) who lured both migrants' children and young women into extremist forms of Islam. Thus, the Pichard interview as well as the *Weltwoche* article framed Blancho as a radical convert and propagator of a „deculturalised“, „absolute“ Islam. While affirming, as proposed by Bergamin, the capacity of the convert to „detach“ „being Muslim“ from

[128] op.cit.

„ethnicity“ and „culture“, the convert was framed as the propagator of a „purist“ and „radicalist“ reading of Islam, outdoing „born ethnic Muslims“ in terms of radicality. Given his framing as seducer, he was presented as a threat to lure Muslim migrant youth into a „new borns'“ adherence to Islam that was accompanied by a loss of individual choice and female agency.

4. An interim balance: From minarets to the convert protagonists of the *IZRS*: „Muslim strangeness“ becomes visible & addressable

After the Pichard interview and the *Weltwoche* article, public irritation about the *IZRS* and its convert protagonists was high, and the media continued to present a number of confrontative forms where the converts were to be put to the test, to decide whether legal or security measures (ban of the organisation, official observation) were to be taken. While the problematisation of Switzerland's Muslim population qua the „minaret“ had up until this instance been fed by international events linked to Islamism, terrorism or incidences such as the Danish cartoon controversy which happened abroad (Ettinger and Imhof 2009; 2011), the *IZRS* and its convert committee were the first national protagonists with an addressable guise to confront with generalised suspicions held against the Swiss Muslim population. The charges leveled against the male convert protagonists of the *IZRS* mirrored the most frequently mediated topoi of a „creeping Islamisation“, „Islamic terror“, the „establishment of a parallel society“ and „female suppression“ as brought up by the supporters of the campaign.

Against the public perception of a critical symbolic difference of the *IZRS*, the convert protagonists claimed their stakes as Swiss citizens to achieve social recognition for Muslims' interests as religious minority, with yet diverging concepts of „symbolic inclusion“. Thus, on the one hand, betraying a hegemonic, pedagogical concept of Muslim „integration“, convert Bergamin staked his claim on Muslim (immigrant) leadership as a middle aged, middle class, tie and suit-wearing male Swiss and well-read expert on Islam able to „integrate“ Muslim forms of being by detaching them from problematic „imported“ aspects (see also Özüyrek [2010] on the racist implications of converts' self-positioning vis-à-vis immigrant Muslims in her study on German converts to Islam). Thus, he ratified the public's perception of a problematic moral and legal difference of the Muslim (immigrant) population that as yet precluded their symbolic inclusion. Betraying his iteration of public problematisations of Islamic visibilities as in need of „integrative“ efforts, clean-shaved, tie-wearing, womens' hand shaking Bergamin claimed leadership by appealing to his Swiss bodily habitus and social status as well-educated middle-class reader of „Goethe“ *exactly through his habitual and cultural*

difference from „born Muslims" and his relaxed endorsement of Islamic authority. Thus, the symbolic capital he claimed accrued exactly from the *absence* of visible forms of Muslim practice and orthodox, normative forms of authorizing Muslim practices.

On the other hand, Illi, given his „provocative" bodily habitus, staked his claim as leader by summoning Quran and Sunna as normative sources of his virtuous moral self-cultivation as embodied religious capital. Framing himself both as a Muslim role model (an emulator of the prophet summoning a Muslim genealogy) as well as a Swiss citizen knowledgeable of his rights, he adapted the liberal legal vocabulary of „freedom of faith and opinion" on the one hand, and raised charges of „Islamophobia" and „minority discrimination" on the other hand to claim social and legal recognition of Muslim moral and ritual interests. Thus, different from Bergamin – who was to quit the committee in early 2012, charging the *IZRS*'s leaders of receiving financial aid from Islamist sources in the Near East (see previous chapter) – Illi, drawing up the imaginary of Swiss society as made up of differing „parallel communities" (Interview Nora Illi 73366-73386) appealed to a scenario of communitarist minoritarian inclusion.

In interviews and discussion formats, Blancho, Illi and Bergamin conceptualised their „being Muslim" as deliberate choice and subjective wish to live an Islamic way of life, understood as a mode of moral and orthopractical self-cultivation along Islamic normative criteria. Yet, their claim on „subjective choice" as liberal and secular modes of authorizing religious practice (see Asad 1996) was met by a number of identity profiles and biographical portraits. Hence, media advanced more objectifying popularised Freudian readings of their turn to Islam, framing their religious conversion as a pathological regressive act below „subjective agency", „rational choice" and „intersubjective understanding". In the *Pichard* interview and the *Weltwoche* article, their idiosyncratic pathology as religious convert „zealots", their absolute mode of „surrender", their giving up their individual agency by following Islamic norms was relinked to the social crisis scenario triggered by the framing of Blancho as dangerous, contagious „rabble rouser" [„Rattenfänger"] (Keller-Messahli), luring migrant youth and female converts into radical forms of Islam marked by religious coercion and female suppression (indoctrination, forced marriage, pressure to veil, contact to Islamic terrorism).

Throughout the media coverage, Muslim Saïda Keller-Messahli figured as a mirror-inverted counterpart of Nicholas Blancho and Qaasim Illi by her „being a liberal, progressive female ‚born' Muslim" whose votes opposed „being an orthodox, literalist, backward male convert to Islam". While she invoked „progressivity", „reformism" and „female agency" as inherent moments in Islamic tradition, „too", she aimed to

deconstruct the public reading of Islam (and Muslims) as essentially „a-historic" and „backward", thereby contesting (Christian) Europe's exclusive (and excluding) claim on enlightenment, female liberation, individualism and secularity as „cultural achievements" alien to „Muslims" and their religious and interpretational tradition (Asad 2003a). However, in her appeals, she reiterated the publics' social crisis imaginary, as she opposed the Swiss converts' „astonishing endorsement" of a „backward", „Saudi", „literalist", „a-historical" interpretation of Islam to „being Swiss", qualified by the endorsement of „female agency" and „religious freedom".[129] „Being female", „Muslim by birth" and rejecting traditional forms of Muslim authorisation and (visible) gendered moral „technologies of the self" (Foucault 1988) like the headscarf, in public debates on Muslim „integration", Keller-Messahli disposed of rare, creditable capital as „critic from within".

5. Convert Nicolas Blancho is put to the test in the *Arena*: „Are you the Bin Laden of Biel?"

According to Victor Turner, the liminal state of crisis is brought to an end in „act three" of the processual unit, as it is met with what he calls redressive action, attempts to redeem the acute tension and resolve liminality and ambiguity, in order to either reintegrate the critical element into the social unit, or to acknowledge social differentiation on a permanent scale, at times triggering further social dramas to negotiate the social locations of the social units in conflict (Turner 1974: 40). As Turner mentions, those measures of redressive action depend on the locus and context of crisis. They can be informal or formal, ad hoc measures, and are brought into operation by representatives of the parties in conflict. They may range from personal advice and informal mediation or arbitration to formal juridical and legal means in official legal tribunals (ibid: 41).

It was on 23 April 2010, that Nicolas Blancho, convert head of the *IZRS* appeared as the lead protagonist in the popular political TV-discussion format *Arena* that was concerned about „Radical Muslims on the rise?" [„Radikale Muslime im Aufwind?"].[130] It

[129] Thus, in the *Club* program analysed, Keller-Messahli took in the subject position of the female „critic from within", in other European debates taken by Germany's Necla Kelek or Dutch ex-Muslim Ayaan Hirsi Ali, whose narratives follow the salvational conversion trajectory from renouncing Muslim authority to embracing European liberalism, secularity and female agency. On the role of feminist Muslim „critics" in German Muslim „dialogue" see Amir Moazami 2009; 2011. Thus, as Keller-Messahli's claim on the existence of an inherent, essential „reformist" element within „Muslim tradition" irritated the cultural claim of the audience on „liberalism" as essentially and exclusively European, it arguably went overheard.

[130] The aired program reached a market quote of 28, 1%, with 29100 viewers. Average market quote

was his first appearance in a live TV-show that was preceded by a number of portraits, interviews and features in both print and visual media (see above).

Taking up the thematic direction of previous media coverage, host Reto Brennwald had invited Nicolas Blancho, president of the *Central Council* to face and answer to the charges leveled against him and his organisation. Confronted by interlocutors Oskar Freysinger, member of the populist *Swiss People's* Party (SVP), Swiss national council and popular supporter of the minaret initiative ban, and Erich Gysling, introduced as journalist and „expert on the middle east" [„Nahostexperte"], he was to take a stand on the perceived danger potential of the newly founded *IZRS* to radicalise Muslim „migrant" youth in Switzerland and lure them into a Muslim „parallel society".

Illustration 16: „Mr. Blancho, are you Bin Laden of Biel?" (1'-2')

In his opening address, Brennwald established a link between the president's religious conversion, his putative radicalism and his leader role. The host introduced Blancho as president of the „controversial" [umstrittenen] *IZRS* who „had converted to Islam with 16" and had founded his organisation as a reaction to the minaret ban. He proceeded to characterise Blancho as „orthodox" [strenggläubig] Muslim that upholds a „literal belief" in the Quran and confronted him with the epithet he had been given by leading weekly news magazine *Weltwoche*, namely as „the most dangerous Islamist in Switzerland", „the Bin Laden of Biel" (1'-2'). In their subsequent statements, interlocutors Gysling (taking in the role of the mediator), Freysinger (taking the role of accusant) and suspect Blancho tried to reorient, deconstruct or reaffirm the established nexus between conversion, Islamic „radicalism" (understood as a literal interpretation of the Quran and Sunna), and transgression of the liberal and secular principles and

of the *Arena* in 2010 was 22,1% (Information given by e-mail request by the *Arena* redaction).

values of Swiss society. Right from the start, discussion was geared up to the question of „female autonomy“ which seemed at stake. In the course of the show, it was coming to stand as a symbolic condensation – a stand-in of the repeated allegations of a lack of common symbolic ground between Swiss society and its Muslim migrant population.

5.1. Assembling the level poles of symbolic inclusion: „How much is the autonomy of women warranted?“

Opening the discussion, Erich Gysling stated that he rejected the labeling of Blancho as Bin Laden as „perfect nonsense“ [„echten Unsinn“]. Instead, the journalist pleaded to lead the discussion away from „terrorist“ accusations, suggesting to reorient it to the relevant question of how the *IZRS's* convert leaders enabled its „less powerful“ member's self-articulation, notably how much they granted women's autonomy and agency

> „how much they [the *IZRS*, S.L.] put pressure on groups inside their ranges who are in a less powerful position .. how much is the autonomy of the woman warranted .. those are the questions I would like to know.“[131] (2')

In his opening statement, the political expert established „female agency“ as the level pole therewith Blancho's public credibility and his definition of „being Muslim“ was to be put to the test in differing confrontations during the show. Thus, Gysling saw it important that the organisation recognised the „principle values“ and „fundamental rights“ of Switzerland, such as recognition of „women's autonomy“, „democracy“, „equality“ and „religious freedom“ (2'-3').

Illustration 17: Brennwald: „Mr. Gysling, is Blancho Bin Laden of Biel?“ (1')

[131] „Wie sehr versucht sie nach innen .. innerhalb von ihrer Gruppe Druck auszuüben auf Gruppierungen die eben nicht selber machtvoll sind .. wie sehr ist die Selbstständigkeit der Frau gewahrt .. all das sind Fragen in denen man gerne Bescheid wüsste.“ (2')

Illustration 18: Erich Gysling: „How much is female autonomy warranted?“ (2’-3’)

Given the opportunity to respond to Brennwalds addressation, Blancho, rehearsing Bergamin’s and Illi’s position in their earlier appearence in the *Club* (see above), affirmed the leader position he was attributed with by his opponents, yet rejected the name „Bin Laden“ and „radical“. Emphasizing his claim on representing Switzerland’s (practicing) Muslim individuals and communities *in toto*, thus, widening the scope of leadership strived for from a specific „religious group“ to a „religious minority“, he voiced his aims to establish with his organisation an „Islamic community“ that is „possible“ and „practicable“ *within* the legal boundaries of Swiss constitution:

> „We respect the Swiss legal constitution .. we understand it as the overarching frame under which several communities can exist and live .. we want to establish a strong minority community that is structured .. organised .. to be able to engage in political action.“[132] (18’)

While Blancho ratified addressations as „Muslim leader“, as his organisation was to comprehend and represent both „migrants“ and „women“, he repeatedly tried to deny a momentum of force, affirming his respect for the Swiss legal constitution as an overarching umbrella to articulate distinct Muslim interests in terms of cultic and moral self-cultivation. Instead, he saw the *IZRS* as a basis organisation that would empower and unite the Muslim community made up of individuals and communities of different „ethnic“ backgrounds as well as „women“ under the Islamic umbrella of the *IZRS* as an addressable and efficient agent to negotiate the symbolic contours of an Islamic umma in Switzerland.[133]

[132] „Wir halten uns an das Recht .. das Recht gibt uns das Dach in dem mehrere Gemeinschaften existieren können .. es geht uns darum eine starke Minderheitengemeinschaft zu bilden .. die strukturiert .. organisiert ist .. die politisch agieren kann.“ (18’)
[133] It was on 16 April 2010, just a week before the airing of the *Arena*, that the *Central Council* had created a women’s department headed by female convert Nora Illi.

5.1.1. Freysingers cynical third person version of Pauline radical conversion: Blancho's step beyond the pale of social recognition

It was Oskar Freysinger's opening vote, however, that rejected the compatibility of „Islam" – which he was to define in the further discussion as „totalitarian" (31') collective order – with the legal constitutional frame as cultural achievement of „liberal" Swiss society altogether. In the course of the discussion, Freysinger was to lay out that „there is no moderate Islam, there is only moderate Muslims" (30'):

> „I would say 80% of the Muslims in Switzerland are moderate […] but then there is a part of people that say .. the Quran is up there in heaven .. uncreated .. and this is once and for all dictated .. okay .. just a moment .. the problem with this is this is totalitarian .. this is in confrontation with our secular democracy."[134] (31')

In the quote above, Freysinger metaphorically transferred the acceptance of traditional Muslim authority – alluded to as the adherence to the tenet in the uncreatedness of the Quran – to a notion of Islam as a totalitarian transcendental legal and political system legitimated and/or cultural collective order by the literal, ahistorical reading of a heavenly text. Accordingly, Freysinger rhetorically asked „now how do you want to bring the two [liberal democracy, Islam] into compatibility ?" (31')

Illustration 19/20: How to bring the two [Islam/liberal democracy] into compatibility? (31')

Thus, when it was his first very turn, Freysinger conveyed a version of the theme of Pauline radical change narrated from a cynical third person observation perspective, presenting convert Blancho as a renegade who had taken a „step" beyond the pale of Switzerland's legal constitution, thereby outdoing 80% of „moderate Muslims" in terms of liminality[135]. He introduced Blancho's conversion as legal constitutional transgression,

[134] „Ich würde sagen 80 der Muslime in der Schweiz sind moderat […] aber dann gibt es einen Teil von Leuten die sagen, der Quran ist da oben .. ungeschaffen .. im Himmel .. okay .. und das ist einmal für allemal diktiert .. okay .. Moment .. dann haben wir das Problem denn das ist totalitaristisch .. das ist in Konfrontation mit unserer Demokratie." (31')

[135] This number of 80% of „moderate Muslims" which Freysinger evokes might be drawn from a 2005 report of the federal commission for migration conducted with Muslims, where the GRIS (Group de recherche sur l'Islam en Suisse) worked out „identity profiles" of Muslims in

framing „Islam“ as a legal system opposing secular „liberalism“. While liberal democracy was, as populist Freysinger held, constituted by „public opinion building processes such as here in the Arena“ (31'), he invoked Islam as a „religion of law“ based on an authoritarian, a-historical text that legitimated a repressive order „once and for all dictated“ which precluded individual Muslims as agentic selves (compare Asad on the notion of the „passivity“ of Muslims vis-à-vis the Quran as a „fixed“, „essentialised“ *text* in present anti-Muslim discourse versus the notion of the „modern“ active, progressive (Christian/secular) *reader* in Asad 2003a: 11). Thus, his votes rejected Saïda Keller-Messahli's framing of Islam as an object of inner-Muslim interpretational contestation and her appeal to the existence of rational, intellectualist, individualised and progressive moments inherent in Islamic tradition resurging in contemporary Islamic thought. Freysinger, drawing on an orientalist/colonialist framing (Said 1979), appealed to Islam as a homogenous heterotopic cultural order exempt of historicity, (innerislamic) interpretational contestation, traditional diversity and, thus, void of potential for transformation and, thereby, opposed to as „liberal democracy“ as embodied cultural capital of the Swiss (non-Muslim) majority „grown up in a liberal culture“. Accordingly, in a slapstick manner, the politician gave an account where he related his „surprise“ as an outside observer of convert Blancho taking the step „out“ of a „very liberal culture“ by „taking upon him“ a list of prohibitions – Freysinger was to read out loud from a list he had prepared – that is „damn long“ and left, as a result, third person narrator Freysinger „troubled“ in a last introspective stance:

> „I am surprised .. I have .. a young Swiss who has experienced a very liberal [freiheitliche] culture and civilisation .. who was raised in this culture and now suddenly takes this step and takes it upon him .. this is admirable [bewundernswert] .. how complex must this be .. this goes from prohibition of pork consumption .. prohibition of vaccination if the serum contains pork ingredients .. prohibition of meat not ritually slaughtered .. head scarf .. veiling .. prayer five times a day .. no participation of school girls on class trips .. rejection of sex education and evolution theory in biology .. no mixed gender sports classes of young girls [sic] .. no contact to male medical practitioners .. no bathing in public .. prohibition of alcohol consumption .. no disinfection by female medical practitioners in the genital area because of veiling prohibition [sic] (?) .. code of honor [sic] .. forced marriage ..

Switzerland, stating that 80-85% of Muslims were „secular“ in their general outlook on life. The study was relaunched in 2010 and complemented with a foreword by Stéphane Lathion after the approval of the minaret initiative. The number of 10-15% „orthodox“ Muslims was often summoned in media articles, as their religious outlook was interpreted as potentially conflictive with the secular Swiss legal constitution. While the study does not draw this link, this number 10-15% corresponds to the estimated number of Muslims that regularily visit mosques and are members of Muslim associations. See Gianni et al. 2005; 2010.

> polygamy .. beating women .. rejection of homosexuality .. and so on.. the list is damn long .. gosh [Donnerwetter].. in our society .. practice all this .. and then come and say that this does not conflict with our legal system .. this somehow troubles me.. ."[136] (3' 46 – 4' 50)

In Freysinger's account the Pauline „radical change" of Blancho is only conveyable as visible result to the outside Swiss observer. The narrator summoned the convert's „taking up" of a long list of prohibitions that left sarcastic Freysinger „admiring" and „surprised" [„how complex must that be"] as it assumedly evaded the observer's intersubjective understanding. The Freysingerian version of the Pauline theme relates Blancho's conversion as a trajectory of „cultural" defection that is terminated by the narrator's evaluative expression of uneasiness (it „troubles [him]").

It thereby confounded „cultural upbringing" as an innate embodied capital form with the sphere of the constitutional legal state and citizenship by conveying the story of „cultural" renegade Blancho who had left his „upbringing" as a Swiss by his adoption of his excessive Islamic habitus. Freysinger related the „death" of Blancho's Swiss self by „taking upon him" a seemingly endless „list" of prohibitions – notably precepts precluding gender mixing in social scenarios and practices of gendered repression and female and homosexual inhibition – a regress to a „collective order" [„kollektive Ordnung"] that has not undergone enlightenment, as Freysinger defined Islam elsewhere (17'-18'; 70'). Thus, instead of rehearsing a Jamesian version of personal maturing and integration (see James 1902: 186), Freysinger employed the before-after form of the conversion narrative as a radical *metanoia* (change of attitude, turn around) to convey a story of civilisational regress/defection. Hence, Freysinger's variation of the Pauline theme is more in line with a Freudian enlightenment critique of religious adherence as a regressive compensatory act (see Freud 1999 [1907]), yet he rehearsed it in a social register as Blancho's step *out* of his Swiss „cultural upbringing" *into* „Muslim culture" which, in Freysinger's trajectory, amounted to a step beyond the „legal

[136] „Ich bin erstaunt .. ich habe .. ein junger Schweizer der eine sehr freiheitliche Zivilisation und Kultur erlebt hat .. der nach dieser Kultur erzogen wurde und jetzt plötzlich den Schritt macht und auf sich nimmt .. ich meine das ist bewundernswert .. wie komplex muss das sein .. das geht von Schweinefleischverbot .. Impfungsverbot bei schweinischen Bestandteilen im Serum .. Verbot von nichtgeschächtetem Fleisch .. Kopftuch .. Verhüllung .. fünfmaliges tägliches Beten .. keine Teilnahme von Mädchen an Klassenfahrten .. Ablehnung von Sexualkunde und Evolutionstheorievon Muslimen im Biologieunterricht .. keinen gemeinsamen Sportunterricht von jungen Mädchen .. keinen Kontakt zu männlichen Ärzten .. kein Bad in der Öffentlichkeit .. Alkoholächtung .. keine Desinfektion von weiblichen Ärztinnen im Intimbereich wegen Verhüllungsverbot .. Ehrenkodex .. Zwangsehe .. Polygamie .. Frauen schlagen .. ablehnende Haltung zu Homosexualität .. und so weiter .. die Liste ist verdammt lang .. Donnerwetter .. in unserer Gesellschaft .. das alles .. irgendwie anwenden wollen und dann mir sagen wollen wir seien nicht in Konflikt mit unserer Rechtsordnung .. habe ich irgendwie Mühe.." (3' 46 – 4' 50)

constitutional state“ and, concomitantly, beyond social and legal recognition of his Swiss citizenship.

Thus while Illi, in the *Club* on March, 30, drawing on his cultural capital as Swiss citizen endowed with religious „rights“, summoned Switzerland as a legal constitutional state which protected the religious diversity of religious minorities, Freysinger appealed to Switzerland as a (direct) liberal democracy made up of the (majoritarian) opinion of the public, thus, he confounded the legal state with the national state as representing the majoritarian cultural habitus (in terms of attitudes, experiences, sensibilities, liberal and secular techniques of the self and modes of moral and ethical rationalisation) of the Swiss majority. Thus, in his votes against Blancho, he constructed the public – confounded with the legal state – as a space built up by the majority (given his notion of liberality and democracy as embodied cultural capital) in need to be defended against what he problematised as morally and legally transgressive Muslim demands.

Accordingly, populist Freysinger conditioned the symbolic inclusion of „Muslims“ on their *individual* renunciation of (visible) and embodied modes of Islamic authorisation, and, concomitantly, on their relative closeness to the habitual capital (opinions, values, gendered and sexual practices, liberal rationalities of authorizing religious adherence) of the „Swiss“ majority.

Further, against Blancho's communitarist social imaginary of establishing a „strong Muslim minority“ as a distinct habitus community differing in terms of moral and cultic practices, yet symbolically included and legally protected by the secular and liberal Swiss constitution, Freysinger argued against what he comprehended as communal containment („Parallelgesellschaft“, 51'), as he saw this in opposition to „religious freedom“ and „female autonomy“ as „individual rights“. Thus, he conditioned the social acceptability of Switzerland's Muslim population (of whom he deemed 80% as „moderates“) in terms of their individual subjective readiness and „interpretational“ effort to measure up to the terms of social acceptability – „integration“ –, by renouncing traditional and visible forms of Islam.

5.2. Building up the critical formula of inclusion/exclusion: „Distance yourself from stoning & female circumcision“

When the program was approaching the middle of its running time, taking up Freysinger's suspicion that Blancho's claim on Muslim representation – having become a synecdoche for Muslim strangeness – was way beyond the pale of the Swiss legal constitution, voices from the audience present in the studio appeared who demanded Blancho to „give evidence“ [„bringen Sie den Tatbeweis“] that the population's „fears“

were without foundation. Thus, *Christian Popular Party (CVP)* member Gerhard Pfister chose „the atrocities" of „stoning" and „female circumcision" to address the charges of symbolic transgression brought before Blancho. Pfister's intervention was to culminate in an emotional plea directed at Blancho to distance himself from stoning and female circumcision:

> „[…] You need to give this evidence that this fear we have in the population of you and the sorrows we have that we can discard them .. but give us this evidence .. distance yourself from stoning .. distance yourself from female circumcision .. distance yourself from those atrocities that have lost nothing in a legal constitutional state."[137] (22'30-24'59).

Illustration 21: Gerhard Pfister: „Give us this evidence .. distance yourself from stoning" (24')

In the further course of the discussion, Freysinger was to take up Pfisters demand that Blancho was to „give evidence".

Illustrations 22/23: Take a stand: Distance yourself from stoning women (24')

[137] Pfister: „[…] diesen Tatbeweis müssen sie erbringen dass man diese Angst der Bevölkerung die man vor ihnen hat und die Sorgen die man hat dass man die beseitigt .. erst wenn sie den Tatbeweis erbringen dann sind die Sorgen weg aber bringen sie den Tatbeweis .. distanzieren sie sich von Steinigungen .. distanzieren sie sich von Frauenbeschneidung .. distanzieren sie sich von allen diesen Abscheulichkeiten die in einem Rechtsstaat nichts verloren haben .." (22'30-24'59).

5.2.1. „I don't need to give evidence .. because I have not committed any crime". Stepping beyond the pale of „liberal values" by summoning religious freedom

Yet, while the audience gasped, waiting for Blancho to just „say yes or no .. yes or no .. it's very simple" (Freysinger 25'), host Brennwald requesting „Mister Blancho .. distance yourself please" (25'), Blancho summoned the very principle of positive „religious freedom" guaranteed to Swiss citizens by the secular liberal democratical state that exempted him from „bringing evidence" (25'-26').

Illustration 24: Blancho: „I do not have to give evidence .. because I have not committed any crime." (25')

Thus, as Blancho ultimately refused to distance himself from condemning „the stoning of the women" [„das Steinigen der Frauen"], with a mitigating Brennwald trying to break off Freysingers implorations [„he does not want to say it" („er will es nicht sagen")]. Apprehension rose that the confessional drama would not resolve in common comprehension, and so the dialogue drifted into the absurd and was eventually brought to an end by the audience's redeeming laughter, as the tension would not resolve otherwise:

> „*Blancho*: I don't question the legal constitution .. this is just not true .. this is just what you accuse us of ..

Freysinger: Then say I condemn the stoning of the women just say this sentence..

Brennwald: He does not want to say it *Freysinger*: But it is so easy to say .. I don't stone a woman .. that would be the clear evidence then I would say okay .. respect ..

Blancho: you know this belongs to a part of my freedom of faith

F*reysinger*: stoning of women is freedom of faith

Blancho: there are Muslims who belief this and now you want to banish this

Freysinger: yes [extended, exclamating]

Blancho: if one believes it it does not mean that one practices it

Gysling: also men are stoned [deescalating]

Freysinger: .. and homosexuals too .. I know [laughter in the audience]"[138] (37'-38')

While the *Arena* program had only reached the middle of its running time, the friction between president Blancho and the audience had consolidated.

5.3. The *IZRS* is delegated to the margins of the scope of social & legal acceptability

On the day after the *Arena* show, media related that president Blancho had not succeeded in dispelling the fears and suspicions leveled against the convert and his organisation, as he had not come to prove „the compatibility of a strict interpretation of the Quran with the legal system of Switzerland"[139]. Also political actors reacted after the show. Thus, *Christian Popular Party (CVP)* leader Christophe Darbellay, backing Pfister's and Freysinger's pleas, urged Blancho to distance himself from „methods" that oppose the Swiss legal order, whereas *Liberal Party (FDP)* president Fulvio Pelli admonished that „religious fanatics are dangerous. They are not to be underestimated" [„Religiöse Fanatiker sind gefährlich. Man sollte sie nicht unterschätzen"].[140] Likewise, Blancho's media appearances were followed by an official hearing with Alard du Bois-Reymond, head of the ministry of migration. As media reported, Du Bois-Reymond had

[138] „*Blancho*: Ich stelle die Verfassung nicht in Frage .. das ist nicht wahr .. das ist was ihr uns vorwerft .. *Freysinger*: Dann sagen sie ich verurteile die Steinigung der Frau, sagen sie nur diesen Satz .. *Brennwald*: Er will ihn nicht sagen *Freysinger*: Aber es ist so einfach es zu sagen .. ich steinige keine Frau .. das wäre ein klares Zeichen .. dann würde ich sagen okay .. Respekt .. *Blancho*: wissen sie .. das gehört zur Glaubensfreiheit ..

[139] Thus, *Tagesanzeiger* resumed the core question of the discussion as „lässt sich eine strikte Auslegung des Koran mit der Schweizer Rechtsordnung vereinbaren, oder lässt sie sich das nicht?" [„Is a strict interpretation of the Quran compatible with the Swiss legal order?"], see: N.N., „Ich muss das nicht, weil ich nichts verbrochen habe", *Tagesanzeiger* 24.04.2010.

[140] see Mischa Aebi: „Die Steinigung als Wert einer Religion", *Berner Zeitung* 26.04.2010.

admonished the invited Nicolas Blancho and *IZRS* spokesman Qaasim Illi that the legal constitution was valid for all Muslims residing in Switzerland. He had urged the leaders of the *IZRS* to officially distance themselves from the stoning of women. Further, he emphasised that „gender equality" as liberal and secular principle was non-negotiable. Though affirming their acknowledgement to the legal constitution, Blancho and Illi did not denounce female stoning. Accordingly, du Bois-Reymond expressed his disappointment, refusing to accept the *IZRS* as partners of official „Muslim meetings" held with the Minister of Justice on a regular basis since 2007.[141] The official side thus ratified the *Arena*'s framing of Blancho as leader of a marginal group whose claim on representing Switzerland's Muslims failed to gain public credibility.

6. The outcome: Interpellating a subjective & moral turn of Switzerland's Muslim debate

According to Turner, the liminal state of crisis is brought to an end in „act three", as it is met with what he calls „redressive action". Those symbolic arbitrations are meant to resolve liminality and ambiguity and enable to either reintegrate the critical element into the social unit, or to acknowledge symbolic differentiation on a permanent scale, at times triggering further social dramas to negotiate the social locations of the social units in conflict (Turner 1974: 40).

Along with the preceding and following media appearance of Saïda Keller-Messahli as Illi's and Bergamin's interlocutor, Blancho's performance during the *Arena* opened up a field of Muslim articulations along moral criteria, where other Muslim actors and voices defining their „being Muslim", and staking their claims on Muslim representation and symbolic inclusion, appeared. Placing herself on common symbolic ground with the Swiss majority, notably liberal Muslim Saïda Keller-Messahli (claiming to represent the „silent" majority of non-practicing Muslims with a predominantly south-eastern European Albanian, Turkish or Bosnian background) defined „being Swiss" – both in a legal constitutional *and* cultural register as characterised by the relativation of (orthodox/visible) forms of Muslim authorisation and the endorsement of „religious freedom" and „female agency" as diametrical to Illi's and Blancho's embodiment of what she appealed to as Arab Saudi „fundamentalism".

[141] See N.N.: „BFM-Chef. Blancho hat eine Chance vergeben", *Tagesanzeiger* 04.05.2010. See also „Bundesrat trifft muslimische Organisationen." Medienmitteilung *EJPD* 23.03.2007. No informations were given about the Muslim participants of the Muslim meetings. In an article of the *NZZ* about the first meeting, the journalist quotes Nadia Karmous, president of the *Association Culturelle des Femmes Musulmanes en Suisse*. See N.N.: „Bundesrat Blocher trifft Muslime", *NZZ* 27.03.2007.

Thereby, the „taking a stand“ on the question of „female agency“ served as the level pole of symbolic inclusion. Thereby, the relativation of orthodox and visible forms of Muslim authorisation played a pivotal role in the public's accreditation of the credibility of the respective Muslim actors' claim on „female agency“ and Muslim representation. The media coverage staged the ongoing interpellation of what could be termed a „public Muslim field“ in a Bourdieuan sense, a field triggered by both the publics' and the interpellated Muslims' belief – what Bourdieu calls „illusio“ – in the existence of a „Muslim problem“. Thus, both the public and the Muslims interpellated by the crisis (including the *Central Council*, whose attempts of gaining credibility for their concept of „being a Swiss Muslim“ yet failed) shared the belief in the worth of investing in addressable representative Muslim voices, outing their moral and religious adherence, as it appeared as a matter of both the publics's *and* the Muslims's „integrational“ interest to overcome the social crisis (Bourdieu 2001: 129; 1996: 127f.).

6.1. Liberal Muslim voices reject the addressation of „being Muslim strangers“

Blancho's performance during the *Arena* program interpellated a number of interventions and comments by other actors present in the studio backing his votes, or voicing differing stakes as „Muslims“. Thus, the program saw actors like articulate attorney Semih Cutluca affirming the need of Muslims' organisation and representation as distinct, discriminated social minority. Brennwald introduced him as „.. with Turkish background .. Muslim .. and Swiss passport“ (10') [„mit türkischem Hintergrund .. Muslim .. und Schweizer Pass“]. The member of the *Socialist Party (SP)* of the city of Basel who is engaged in integration work and migrants' associations, wearing a business suit, speaking in a typical Basel accent, outed himself as „believing human“ [„gläubiger Mensch“], „liberal Muslim“ [„liberaler Muslim“] that goes to mosque from time to time, thus ratifying his addressation and social probation along moral criteria.

In his statements, he voiced his general solidarity with the *Central Council*'s wish to „stand up“ [„sich wehren“] against the social and legal discrimination of „Muslims in Switzerland“ [„Muslime in der Schweiz“] that had come to the surface with the approval of the minaret initiative. Admitting that he could not judge the aims of the council as a particular group, yet drawing on an anti-discrimination vocabulary, he saw it important that the „400000 Muslims“ in Switzerland formed organisations of „awareness building“ to „fight prejudice“, using their citizen right to „forge communities“. To emphasise his point, Cutluca also mentioned the Swiss film maker Samir of Swiss-Iraki origin who had appeared in the TV-discussion format *Club* after the vote over the minarets, and, though outing himself as „non-Muslim“ in terms of

religious and moral criteria, solidarised with the Muslim population (11').[142] In a similar vein, Yahya Hassan Bajwa, Swiss-Pakistani son of the Ahmadi iman in Zürich, introduced as member of the national Greens party and expert in intercultural communication, pointed to the discriminatory nature of the minaret initiative and the suspicions against the Muslim population in general, rejecting (yet summoning) the equation of „being (a practicing) Muslim" with political transgression, emphasising that Muslims in Switzerland „are integrated" as „not one Muslim in Switzerland had blown himself up" [„bis jetzt hat sich kein Muslim in der Schweiz in die Luft gejagt"] as yet (56').

6.2. Representants of „ethnic" Muslim communities ratify Muslims' need to „integrate" and „compromise"

However, besides Kutluca and Bajwa, the *Arena* show also opened up a field of contestation and differentiation for Muslim actors and voices to stake claims on representing and negotiating practicing „born" and „ethnic" Muslims' interests as a religious minority. Among others, the program featured the appearance of Farhad Afshar, sociologist of Iranian origin, who was introduced by Brennwald as head of the biggest national Muslim umbrella organisation besides the *FIDS* (20').[143]

Host Brennwald approached the president of the *KIOS* and wanted to know if Afshar felt irritated by the guise of the *IZRS*'s convert committee. Thus, when it was Afshar's turn, he presented himself as a professional sociologist, framing the *IZRS* as „fundamentalists" as they „appear in all religious communities", yet not „radicals". He took in sort of a benign, belittling position vis-à-vis Blancho, as he proceeded to state

> „It is the freedom of this group to interpret Islam as such and dress in any way they like .. personally .. I would be more frightened of carnival masks."[144] (21')

Hence, in his statement, taking up Brennwald's delegitimising framing of the *IZRS* as

[142] Kutluca alludes to the *Club* aired on 8 December 2009, on „Minarettverbot – wieder aufheben?" [„The Ban on Minarets – repeal it?"]. The controversial program confronted the supporters of the minaret ban (Christoph Mörgeli, *SVP*, Walter Wobmann, *SVP*, Martin Somm, editor of the weekly news magazine *Weltwoche*) with opponents (Georg Kreis, president of the *Federal Commission against Racism*, Daniel Vischer, cantonal council member of the *Greens Zürich*, and Samir). The TV-discussion is available under http://www.videoportal.sf.tv/video?id=d457of4d-f35e-46a1-b6c3-b32f6eedfe36. (23.04.2012)

[143] Since 2007, Afshar forms part of the *Rat der Religionen* (*Council of Religions*) founded by the *Schweizerischer Evangelischer Kirchenbund (SEK, Swiss Evangelical Federation)* in 2006 which is composed of representatives of Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities. Besides Afshar, Hisham Maizar, head of the *FIDS*, represents Muslims in the *Council*.

[144] „Es ist die Freiheit dieser Gruppe den Islam so zu interpretieren und sich so anzuziehen wie sie möchten .. persönlich hätte ich mehr Angst vor Fasnachtsmasken."

„irritating“ group, Afshar rejected the *IZRS*'s stake on leading and representing Switzerland's (practicing) Muslim minority. Thereby, he framed them as a „carnevalesque“ troop – rejecting their claim on embodied religious capital by appealing to them as superficial, „unsubstantial“, and thereby relegated them to *the margins* of what gained contours as a wider field of „internally diverse" Muslim communities Afshar himself aimed to represent.[145] In his statements, backing the position of middle east analyst Gysling, Afshar drew on his double cultural capital as sociological secular „expert“ and „born Muslim“ when he conveyed the „plurality“ of Islamic interpretations and religious practice of Swiss Muslims as made up of diverse „ethnic“ groups to delegitimise the literalist convert *IZRS*'s claim on defining Islamic authority as „extreme“. Thus, rejecting the symbolic transferablity of the converts' „carnevalesque“ embodiment of Muslim strangeness onto practicing Muslims *in toto,* Afshar endeavored to place himself on common symbolic ground with the audience, or at least to achieve a scalation of Muslim exclusion.

Afshar's media appearance was preceded and followed by other Muslim actors voicing their claim on Muslim leadership and representation. Thus, in the first week of March 2010, the national information and entertainment TV format *Schweiz Aktuell* aired by *SF 1* featured a two-part sequel on March 4 and March 5, respectively.[146] In the first feature, it presented Hisham Maizar, president of the *FIDS*, as the „competitor“ of president Blancho's *IZRS* for national and official representation of Swiss Muslims as religious minority, which was related by the moderator as a „fight over the right interpretation of Islam“. In the feature „Ein Glaube, zwei Standpunkte“, [„One faith, two positions“], Maizar was introduced by the moderator as a „moderate“ Muslim whose organisation opposed Blancho's „strict interpretation of the Quran“ (1'). Maizar was presented and filmed as a medical practitioner of Palestinian origin who runs his own doctor's office in a small Swiss municipality since more than 30 years in the opening and closing sequences of the feature, discussing x-ray images with his female assistants (however, the gendered power difference between the male surgeon and his female employees remained un-thematic). The program introduced his organisation *FIDS* as a „long time“ umbrella organisation gathering 175 Muslim associations of various „ethnic“ groups, aimed at „Muslim integration“ (1'). It showed Maizar at a board meeting of the

[145] The characterisation of the *IZRS* as „carnevalesque“ group was also taken up by other Muslims to delegimitimze the *Council*'s claim on Muslim representation. See for example a rather sarcastic semi-scientific article of liberal Muslim and Islam expert Amira Hafner-al-Jabaji (2011).
[146] See first feature „Ein Glaube, zwei Standpunkte“ under http://www.videoportal.sf.tv/video?id=70c431a©8866ab-4123-9a01-19b3ac4bc4fa, and the following „Machtkampf unter Schweizer Muslimen“ under http://www.videoportal.sf.tv/video?id=dde9e49d7b12-4951-8ce1-c3131389fb10. (05.02.2012)

organisation (with only male representants, which yet remained un-thematic throughout the program) in its headquarters in an Islamic center in Zürich Regensdorf, and praying in a mosque. The program related that widowed Maizar had been married to a Swiss „believing Catholic", and how that they had raised their children bi-religiously. Further, prompted by the invisible interlocutor to take a stand, Maizar emphasised his allegiance to the value of gender equality in terms of „work", „education" and „all other daily aspects" (3'), understanding (and thus affirming) existing „female discrimination" among a number of Muslims as „more culturally" determined problem. In terms of the role of the *FIDS*, Maizar saw it, in the face of the approval of the minaret initiative, as the predominant task of the (immigrant) „ethnic" Muslims to reduce prejudice vis-à-vis the „local population" [sic] [„einheimischen Bevölkerung"], for example by organizing „open mosque days" and show their readiness to „integrate", „cooperate" with authorities and „contribute" to society (4'-5'). Thus, the *Schweiz Aktuell* feature framed Maizar as a „moderate", „tolerant" and „compromising" „born" Muslim representative vis-à-vis Blancho as „non-compromising" convert leader.

6.3. Muslim orthopraxy versus female autonomy: the scalation of Muslim inclusion/exclusion

During the convert media hype, voices like Hisham Maizar or Farhad Afshar, heads of existing cantonal and national umbrella Muslim organisations positioned themselves as „moderate" representatives of „born", „ethnic" Muslims in relation to the Swiss converts' *IZRS*, claiming official recognition as representing practicing Muslims of various „ethnic" origins. Thereby, they rejected the *IZRS*'s literalist mode of religious authorisation, showing themselves willing to „integrate" and „cooperate" with the authorities and enter into „dialogue" with the public in terms of negotiating Muslim authority pertaining to visibilities (minarets) or (gendered) moral and cultic practices (headscarf, swimming lessons, co-education in public schools, prayer facilities at work and in the army).

Accordingly, as an outcome of the „convert crisis", differing actors like Keller-Messahli or Farhad Afshar and Hisham Maizar, while differing in terms of their definition of „being Muslim", positioned themselves, *for the moment*, „on common symbolic ground" with the (non-Muslim) audience, as they rejected non-comprising normative forms of Muslim authorisation as brought forward by converts Blancho and Illi. Hence, they affirmed the public's reading of a crisis scenario triggered by the public entry of the *Central Council* that, in turn, led to a scalation of „Muslim difference" in terms of modes of religious authorisation. Summoning „liberal", „contextualising", „reformed"

and, notably, „invisible“ and individualised readings of „being Muslim“, characterised by the endorsement of secular and liberal technologies of the self (such as „unveiling“, see for example Fadil 2011), Saïda Keller-Messahli was framed as „integrated“ Swiss-Tunesian Muslim. On the other hand, Farhad Afshar or Hisham Maizar, representatives of an „(immigrant) ethnic Islam“, and „moderate“ in terms of religious authorisation, ready to „integrate“, „compromise“ and „cooperate“ gained credibility against the medial framing of the convert committee of the *IZRS* as non-compromising „Bin Ladens of Biel“ who refused the publics' appeal to „give evidence“ (Pfister). Thereby, they also ratified their marginal position as „immigrants“ in terms of claiming citizenship rights, such as „religious freedom“ and non-discrimination.

7. Conclusion

In the dramaturgical and thematic analysis delivered above I have argued that the discovery and subsequent problematisation of the Swiss Muslim population which culminated in the launching and approval of the minaret initiative, the appearance of the converts of the *Central Council*, and the following media hype which reached its (temporary climax) in the TV-program *Arena* of 23 April 2010 can be understood as a dramaturgical unit in four acts in line with what Victor Turner has worked out and conceptualised as the „diachronic profile“ of the social drama (Turner 1974, 36; 39-44). Criticizing the synchronic, atemporal methods of structuralist approaches in the study of social organisation, ritual theorist Victor Turner suggests to understand the social as processual, rather than static fabric negotiated by symbolic action, „a world in becoming, not a world in being“ (ibid.: 24). Thus, Turner avows for the open, transformatory nature of symbolic acts as diachronic dynamic forms, that also transform the very structure of the social and its symbolic modes in time (see Butler 1988: 526; Turner 1974: 14f.). Proceeding from the idea „that human social life is the producer and product of time, which becomes its measure“ (Turner 1974: 23), Turner has introduced the notion of „social drama“ as a conceptual tool „to look beneath the surface of social regularities into the hidden contradictions and eruptions of conflict“ (Deflem 1991: 2f.). In numberless case studies in diverse social and historical contexts, Turner worked out a universal dramaturgical structure that follows a pattern of four phases, to be found at all levels of scale and complexity, arising in ongoing processes of social ordering (Turner 1957: 91-94, see also Deflem 1991: 3 and Turner 1974: 38-43).

Similar to a Freudian methodological procedure, Turner interprets conflicts as a symptomatic surfacing of fundamental, often unreflected epistemic aspects of society that seem at stake and are to be (re)negotiated and rehearsed by the processual nature

of the social drama, transforming the very structure and symbolic means of the social itself (Turner 1974:35; see also Bräunlein 2012). Applying a deconstructive reading of Stromberg's performative definition of religious conversion as a process of symbolic articulation effected by metaphoric transference (Stromberg 1985; 1990; 1991; 1993; see previous chapter), I would argue that in the public imaginary, the male converts with their ostentatious habitus have replaced the minarets as fetishised nodal point of charges of symbolic transgression leveled against Switzerland's Muslim population. With their self-assertive „non-compromising" claim to represent the religious, moral and orthopractical interests of (what only recently came to be perceived as) Switzerland's Muslim minority *in toto*, transvaluating a problematised statistical fact into a „community of believers", their appearance has triggered a subjective, religious and moral turn of the Swiss Muslim debate, where a number of contesting non-Muslim and Muslim voices appeared, linking the question of Muslim representation to the question of „integration" which condensed in the problematisation of a lack of „female agency" in orthodox and traditional forms of religious authorisation. Thereby, the credibility of the respective Muslim actors' claim on „female agency" to demand symbolic inclusion mainly depended on the Muslim actors' relative closeness to liberal and secular modes of religious authorisation and gendered practices. Hence, the media coverage staged the ongoing interpellation of what could be termed a „public Muslim field" in a Bourdieuan sense triggered by both the publics' and the interpellated Muslims' belief – what Bourdieu calls „illusio" – in the existence of a „Muslim problem" embodied by Blancho and the convert committee. Thus, both the public and the Muslims interpellated by the crisis shared the belief in the worth of investing in addressable representative Muslim voices, outing their moral, religious, and cultural forms of being, as it appeared as a matter of both the publics's *and* the Muslims' „integrational" interest to overcome the social crisis (Bourdieu 2001: 129; 1996: 127f.).

In the course of the media coverage on the convert committee of the *IZRS* the thematic topic and dramaturgy of religious conversion as the overcoming of a deep crisis by religious self-articulation was rehearsed in a social register in a reversed manner, notably as a reiteration of a time-spatial difference between „backward Islam"/ „modern secular liberality" along the axes of heteronomy/autonomy; a-historicity/progressivity; collectivity/individuality; Orient/Occident in terms of religious authorisation and female agency as constitutive dichotomy proper to modern societies' narrative self-conception as liberal and secular (compare Asad 2003b). Hence, the plot of overcoming liminality and achieve subjective moral integration was not set in the inner-world of a converting individual, but in a wider social scenario. As social constructivist approaches on religious conversion have argued, conversion narratives are always molded by the

religious form the narrator is converting to (Peacock 1984; Taylor 1978 and Luckmann 1987). Likewise, I would hold that the public concepts of conversion adapted to frame Blancho and the convert committee as „bogeymen" mirror the imaginary of Islam as it is upheld by the public as an „antagonist" threatening male „renegade/revenant" subject (Hüttermann 2006) suppressing individual (female) agency (as synecdoche for female Helvetia/European achievements of enlightenment, female equality). Thus, Blancho's and Illi's framing of being radical religious zealots reiterated the perception of Muslims as „pre-modern", „non-integrated", and „threatening" as mediated during the minaret campaign in 16% of the news coverage on Muslims and Islam in Switzerland (Ettinger and Imhof 2009: 4).

Different from the reintegrative climax of the Jamesian concept of religious conversion, following a Freudian trajectory undergirded by the enlightenment critique of religion as collective, ritualistic, regressive, neurotic, yet overcome stage of European „modernity" as „secular", no (religious) redemption was being performed, but the symbolic scalation into individual grades of „social integratedness" of Switzerland's Muslim population along moral criteria. Thus, in his considerations on the (self)-formative „powers of the secular modern" (Hirschkind and Scott 2005), Talal Asad holds its objectifying secular hermeneutics as powerful means of molding and regulating religious „others" and secular „selves" in national and European discourses:

> „It is assumed that there is always an unconscious motive to a religious act, a motive that is therefore secular [...] in short, to identify a (religious) motive for violence [or, in our case, religious „extremism"] one must have a theory of motives that deals with concepts of character and dispositions, inwardness and visibility, the thought and the unthought. In modern, secular societies, this also means authoritative theories and practices – as in law courts, or in the hegemonic discourse of the national media, or in parliamentary forms where the intentions of [foreign] friends and enemies are assessed and policies formulated." (Asad 2003a: 11)

In a similar vein, Michel der Certeau describes modern techniques of power as „heterologies" conducted by disciplines like historiography, psychiatry and anthropology as „objectifying" secular hermeneutics that come to represent, replace and shape what he calls the „place of the [religious] other". (De Certeau 1991: 36-40). The media coverage on the convert protagonists has initiated a moral and subjective turn of the Swiss Muslim debate, where the framing of the convert committee as „bogeymen" has aided to shape the constitution of a Swiss Muslim field. Thus, in present debates on Muslims in Switzerland,

> „[r]epresentations of „the secular" and „the religious" in modern and modernizing

states mediate people's identities, help shape sensibilities, and guarantee their experiences." (Asad 2003a: 14)

7.1. An attempt of explaining the prominence of Swiss converts to Islam in the Swiss public Muslim debate

Concluding this case study, I would like to bring forward an explanatory attempt as to the particular salience and performativity of the Swiss converts to Islam in the Swiss Muslim debate. As I would hold, the rather late discovery of Switzerland's Muslim population and its problematisation via „minarets"-turning into-„Swiss converts" is rather particular in European comparison. What characterises the public debate on Muslims and Islam in Switzerland up until the appearance of the Swiss converts to Islam, moreover as I will suggest what made both the „minaret" as *locum tenens* as well as the public entry of the figure of the convert to Islam as „bogeyman" possible as a sufficient precondition was the peculiar *absence* of publically visible and addressable Muslim manifestations up until 29 November 2009. Thus, as Ettinger, Imhof and Udris have showed, 9/11 and subsequent events linked to terrorism and Islamism, giving rise to a global perception of „Islam" as an antagonist „subject" (Hüttermann), translated on the national level into the discovery of the „Muslim population" as a statistical fact between 2001 and 2003. Migrant populations hitherto addressed and problematised along ethnic categories (notably „Albanians") (Ettinger and Imhof 2011:2; Skenderovic 2006; 2011) were subsequently bundled together by their problematisation as „Muslims". However, the public problematisation of Muslims as distinct moral community preceded the existence of representative voices meeting public charges. Following existing studies on Muslims in Switzerland, I would suggest that the invisibility of Muslims up until 2001 is due to the particularly recent presence of a quantitatively considerable part of the Muslim population in Switzerland, especially in the German Swiss *Mittelland*, where the problematisation of Islamic visibilities took its origin around 2005[147] (for a

[147] In terms of Muslim interests, it was only in the 2000s that first claims, such as specific Islamic burial sites, appeared on a municipal level (Leuenberger 2008). Likewise, while in 1996 there was a first Swiss „affaire du Foulard" in a Genevan school, it was well into the second half of the 2000s that it had become known as a precedent for up until today rare cases. A convert primary teacher was ordered by cantonal Genevan authorities to take off her headscarf during teaching classes. The teacher had converted to Islam in 1991 and had worn the headscarf while teaching classes between 1993 and 1996. The convert's appeal against the cantonal decree was turned down by the federal court in 1997. The case was brought before the *European Court of Human Rights* who confirmed the federal decree's legitimacy and proportionality in 2001. The *ECHR* denied any infringement of article 9 (religious freedom) and article 14 (anti-discrimination) of the human rights catalogue. Instead, it backed the federal court's argument of guarding religious neutrality in public space such as schools as a higher value than individual religious expression (which the headscarf was understood to be). Besides, it judged the symbolic content of the headscarf as incompatible with the teacher's role to communicate and mediate democratic values like

portrait of the organisational landscape of Islam in Switzerland, and social and religious profiles of Swiss Muslims see Gianni et al. 2005; 2010[2]; Purdie 2011; Behloul 2005; 2007a; 2007b: 2009; 2010; Bennani Chraïbi 2011).

Additionally, as is the case in Germany or Austria, in terms of its phenotypic and habitual profile, given the predominantly south-eastern European background and a high number of „non-practicing" or „non-visible" Muslims, Switzerland's Muslim population is not „visible". Hence, it does not conform to the geotopical phantasma of Muslims as „dark, bearded men" and „black fully veiled women" which fuelled the imaginary of a threat scenario in both Europe-wide and national contexts (compare poster campaign). The particular Muslim invisibility has, arguably, led to a focus on minarets (for lack of full veiling, compare also Germany's (covert) salafi hype and Austria's focus on „minarets" [Hüttermann 2006] with a comparable social, ethnic and religious profile of its predominantly south-eastern „European" Muslim population), and, arguably, explains the media's fixation on the visible salafi converts with their ostentatious Islamic habitus succeeding the minarets.

In terms of Muslims' organisational and representational profile before November 29, Behloul observed (for the German part of Switzerland) that the Muslims' organisation along national, ethnic or linguistic criteria had until recently protracted the success of both cantonal and national unifying attempts along religious and orthopractical criteria to meet and counter public problematisations and negotiate Muslim interests (Behloul 2005; 2007a; 2007b; 2010; see also Bennani Chraïbi 2011). In his qualitative studies, Behloul explains this by the recent immigration of Muslims to Switzerland as well as their social, ethnic and religious profile. Thus, a bulk of Switzerland's Muslims only immigrated in the nineties as political and economic refugees from the Balkans (Kosovo, Bosnia, Macedonia), mostly settling in the industrial areas of German Swiss *mittelland* (St. Gallen, Zürich, Bern, Argovia; yet also Geneva and Lausanne). At the time of the last census in 2000, the bulk of Muslims did not dispose of higher education and there was an elevated rate of unemployment (Bovay 2004: 40). A majority was employed in the

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equality, tolerance and respect to its minor pupils. See: http://www.ejpd.admin.ch/ejpd/de/home/dokumentation/mi/2001/ref_2001-02-27.html. (23.02.2012) Starting in 2005, an Albanian mosque in Winterthur built a small minaret. In 2006, one Turkish and two Albanian mosque associations submitted building applications for minarets in Wangen bei Olten, Langenthal and Wil, respectively, which were met with public and political opposition in the respective municipalities and, except in the first case, finally rejected per court decision. In 2007, those local cases were taken up by a national, over party committee of right wing and evangelical politicians to formulate the Anti-minaret-initiative. See homepage under: http://www.minarette.ch/ (22.7.2012)

construction sector (ibid.: 40). Today, the social profile of Switzerland's Muslim population has presumably experienced profound transformations, as the immigrants' children, having grown up or having been born here, have recently reached adulthood and are socially mobile. Yet, in 2000, given the ethnic conception of citizenship and notoriously restrictive procedures of naturalisation (Gianni [forthcoming]; see also Koopmans et al. 2005: 8; 19; 21 and Wessendorf 2008), only 11 percent of Switzerland's Muslims had a Swiss passport.

Today, estimates presume that around 33-40% are naturalised or have been born as Swiss (Gianni [forthcoming]). Thus, in terms of facts and figures, Switzerland's Muslim population doubled in the nineties from 150000 to approximately 310000 individuals in 2000, which has also profoundly transformed the ethnic composition of Switzerland's Muslim landscape. Today, Muslims with a south-eastern Europian, Albanian, Bosnian or Macedonian background make up two thirds of the present Muslim population. Up until the nineties, associations with more or less close ties to national Turkish politics (Diyanet, Milli Görüsh, VIKZ) dominated the Muslim landscape in German Switzerland, while minoritarian groups of north African, Arab, Iranian and subsaharan Muslims were mostly living in the French part of Switzerland. Ever since the nineties, the foundation of Albanian and Bosnian associations has transformed the organisational profile of the Muslim landscape. Behloul holds that, just as earlier Turkish associations, those first generation immigrants' communities, mostly founded in the nineties organised themselves as national associations along ethnic and linguistic criteria. He notes, as typical for new immigrants, that those first generation organisations fostered more „ethnic", or „cultural" interests and memory politics than „moral" and „religious" interests proper. Today, a bulk of those associations are organised in national umbrella organisations, such as the „Islamische Gemeinschaft der Bosniaken Schweiz" or the „Albanischer Islamischer Verein" (Behloul 2010: 5). Besides, as Behloul argues, after 9/11, especially the Bosnian communities aimed to play out their particular „cultural" capital as „tolerant", „moderate", „European Muslims" in opposition to the public phantasma of [bad, fanatic, arab] Muslims to gain social credibility (ibid.). Those „particularising" stakes went, as Behloul suggests, both counter the constitution of general and effective representative bodies or „over-ethnic" organisations to claim symbolic inclusion (ibid.) and counter attempts to forge an „over-ethnic" awareness among Muslims of constituting an umma with common religious interests, such as Islamic education projects appealing to Muslims from various cultural and affiliational backgrounds.

Until recently, activist and missionary Muslim organisations close to the arabocentric *Muslim Brothers* or the *Muslim world league* more prone to build national or regional

unions along religious normative criteria, articulating distinct „Muslim interests" linked to specific moral and orthopractical issues and, therefore, liable to engage in „awareness building", such as was the case in other European societies ever since the beginning of the nineties or even earlier (see Maréchal 2008), were mainly to be found in the French part of Switzerland, such as the *Association Culturelle des Femmes Musulmanes en Suisse* (see Bennani Chraïbi 2011: 14). Yet, they hardly reached out to the German part of Switzerland and were invisible in national Muslim debates. Behloul's observation of a characteristic lack of unifying and representative Muslim bodies in German Switzerland is also backed by a report by Bennani Chraïbi et al. (2011) in their portrait of the organisational landscape of Islam in Switzerland. The authors hold that until recently, there were few attempts to forge representational or „overethnic" religious bodies on a national level. It was well after 9/11 that first collective organisations aimed at defining, administrating and representing Muslim interests and communicating with the wider public and authorities gained shape. Interestingly, one of the first organisations with this aim was the secular and liberally oriented *Forum für einen Fortschrittlichen Islam (FFI)* founded by Swiss Tunisian journalist and teacher Saïda Keller-Messahli (see above). It was only in 2006 that the *Föderation Islamischer Dachverbände Schweiz (FIDS)*, a national organisation to represent cantonal Islamic umbrella organisations (of whom most were founded since the late nineties and after 9/11) headed by Palestinian medical practitioner Hisham Maizar was founded.[148] The *KIOS (Koordination Islamischer Organisationen*) founded by Farhad Afshar as early as 1989 did not gain public attention (nor was it known among the Muslim circles I frequented) until recently. Equally, the *FIDS* only gained wider notoriety as competitor of the *IZRS* in representing Muslim communities in Switzerland.

Bennani Chraïbi et al. explain this particular lack as given by a lack of Muslims conceptualizing themselves as distinct religious or cultural „community" (ibid.: 16). Yet, while existing academic research emphasises that the Swiss Muslim landscape is characterised by its ethnic heterogeneity and Muslims's self-conception along „ethnic" criteria, this study holds that the *IZRS* and its convert protagonists was the most visible guise of new forms of Muslim subjectivities in Switzerland articulated by immigrant's children who mostly have only reached adulthood in the last few years, and have only recently started to forge new organisations (compare the member composition of the

[148] In the same year, the *Schweizerischer Evangelischer Kirchenverbund* (SEK) set up the *Schweizerischer Rat der Religionen* (SRR) which was to bring together representatives of bigger religious communities for dialogue, and had two Muslim council members, the above mentioned Hisham Mar and sociologist Farhad Afshar, president of the cantonal Bernese umbrella association *umma*.

IZRS). Thus, while the convert hype and its ensuing debate in the media was framed as a contestation of leadership between „Swiss convert radicals" propagating a „de-culturalised", „radical" Islam (Roy 2004; 2010) and „more moderate immigrant/ethnic Muslims", it also reveals a generational conflict between differing modes of Muslim self-formation and „identity" which surfaced, yet remained mostly un-thematic during the convert hype (compare the interviews with Blancho and Illi on the organisational landscape before the foundation of the *IZRS* and young Muslims' differing religious interests). The *IZRS*'s public entry coincided with the emergence of new forms of „over-ethnic" Muslim community buildings. Not unlike the *IZRS*, they exactly understand „being Muslim" as a subjective matter of both individual and collective moral and orthopractic self-cultivation, such as the *Ummah*, a youth organisation founded in 2008, or the students' organisation *Freitagsclub,* established in 2009, or bigger transnational mosques like the *al-Hidaya* community established in 2005 in Zürich Altstetten. Similar to the convert protagonists of the *IZRS*, they contest the public imaginary of a social crisis scenario triggered by the presence of Islamic visibilities, as they question their adressation as „strangers" in need to „integrate" (see for example Nökel 2000 on young pious female Muslims in Germany). This observation of a generational shift and a concomitant aim to be recognised *qua* Muslims was also made by Swiss politologist Matteo Gianni in a portrait of the transformation of the Swiss Muslim landscape in recent years, which he terms as a procedure from „loyalty to voice" (Gianni [forthcoming]). He argues that:

> „Contrary to the (mostly) silent attitude of previous immigrant groups, the leaders of [new, S.L.] Muslims associations have progressively voiced their willingness to be integrated into Swiss polity and society not *despite*, but *with* their cultural particularities." (ibid.)

In the following chapter, I will proceed to endeavor the symbolic stakes of a female convert to Islam in the current Swiss Muslim field. To do this, I will analyse her conversion account as she delivered it before a mainly Muslim audience of diverse ethnic backgrounds in late autumn 2008 in a small Turkish mosque. Thereby, I will work out her narrative account as a self-interpellative performance that is shaped by public gazes that question the agency of the converting woman and her „being Muslim".

3 „Before, I Never Wanted to Have Anything to Do with Muslims“.

Redeeming Islam through a Female Swiss Convert's Gaze

1.Summary

This chapter analyses the conversion account of Mona, a young Swiss female convert to Islam as she was staging it before a mainly Muslim audience in a small Turkish mosque. Her conversion narrative formed part of the festive addresses delivered at a public Iftār during Ramadan 2008. As in the previous chapter, where I have reconstructed the public entry of the *IZRS* as a social drama, I suggest to understand Mona's account as a Turnerian social drama, yet one of „home-coming“ in four steps that takes its beginning in the „liminal“ setting of her stay in the *UK*. It reaches its climax, its „moment of flipping over“ with her return to Switzerland. Back in Switzerland, she decides to become part of the Muslim community in her very own home. Here, „Islam“ is ultimately integrated into the life of the female Swiss convert. The transvaluation of „Islam“ from an *unlivable* rigid and repressive „religion of law“ and/or „patriarchal culture“ to a subjectively endorsed collective „way of life“, as it is performed in Mona's speech stands, so I argue, *pars pro toto* for the construction of „being Muslim“ among Muslims in Switzerland who are both active in ethnic communities as well as in over-ethnic organisations (see following chapter).

In terms of thematic choice, Mona's story of „home-coming“ presents a juxtaposition of the Pauline theme of death of the old sinner, and birth of new man (2 Kor 5, 17 and Rö 6) and Muslim concepts of becoming Muslim and being Muslim. Thus, on the one hand, Mona stages the Damascenian theme of radical „metanoia“ (turn of senses, change of attitude) as a story of overcoming „prejudices“ and shifting allegiances, as she comes to see that „Muslims“ and „Islam“ are „very different“. Subsequently the Swiss convert comes to identify with „Muslims“ and chooses „Islam“ as a „way of life“ for herself.

At the same time, the plot presents her „home-coming“ that comes to an end with her conversion in her Swiss home. The stages before – „being invited“ and „living together“

– can be interpreted as a variation of the Islamic themes of da'wa and fiṭra as a call to return to one's original faith.

As I will show, the object of transformation in Mona's (self)observational speech is the narrator's gaze on „(male) Muslims" and „Islam", as she gradually comes to „see" that Islam is „humane" as it leaves her agency and offers a „livable" way of life. Hence, the objects in need of redemption in Mona's speech are both „Muslims" as a social group as well as her own subjectivity as a Swiss female convert narrator whose autonomy and agency seems at stake when she encounters a Muslim (male) collective. In various social episodes, the narrator presents herself as an autonomous self that has guarded her agency and has neither submitted herself to male (sexual) force nor to „Islam" as a repressive order, as she relates her conversion to Islam as a self-conducted „discovery". In the micro-social setting of the small Turkish mosque, Mona performs the overcoming of the social and legal liminalisation of the Muslim population in Switzerland as it has taken place in the last few years following 9/11 (see previous case studies).

Following Judith Butler's considerations on the productivity of censorship and foreclosure, I understand Mona's conversion narrative as an interpellative speech that is structured by the rules of articulation set by contemporary public observation. It revolves around what qualifies as a socially acceptable and legally recognizable „livable" subject (see Butler 1997b; 2006). As agency is understood as the enabling condition under which a liberal and secular self – a subject of freedom (Rose 1999; Asad 1996) – gains intelligibility and social and legal recognition, Mona delivers an inaugural speech in front of a Muslim audience that gives birth to a „livable" female Muslim self. This female self stays autonomous from male dominance. At the same time it interpellates a subjective notion of Islam as a collective „way of life". As I will argue, it is by presenting herself as a gazing subject in self-control, taking in the narrator's stance of „any Swiss female" that convert Mona can perform the redemption of both her subjective integrity and „Muslims" and „Islam", which is set against the interrogation of her social surrounding and public observation. Accordingly, Mona constructs her conversion as a self-chosen surrender. She presents a subjective notion of „Islam" as an all-encompassing „way of life", a self-chosen endorsement of moral and ethical self-cultivation along „Islamic normativity".

In a concluding step, I will link my performative reading of the converts' media appearances as well as Mona's speech to the wider context of Islamic forms that currently gain contours in Switzerland. While public observation of conversion to Islam tacitly or overtly implies a momentum of force – either social (by their male Muslim

partners), or psychological (religious conversion as a means to overcome psychological crisis or shortcomings in a rather oedipal Freudian sense) – converts to Islam emphasise the deliberate character of their conversion. Thus, they both reject the notion of forced conversion and neurotic (unconscious) compensation as „motives" below subjective choice. However, while I contend that in Muslim arenas, Mona's narrative might serve as a blueprint for collective self-formation, it is exactly the momentum of being included into a collective, a familial and cultural entity that is difficult to reconcile with „individual freedom" and „gender equality" as symbolic stakes to authorise religious practice in liberal and secular societies (see for example Asad 2003a: 180). Mona's invocation of „free choice" to become part of the Muslim umma thus fails to easily gain public credibility – as the interrogating social surrounding as well as the public assumptions on female conversion to Islam point to.

1.1. Methodological considerations

The case study focuses on the analysis of convert Mona's conversion account as the narrator delivered it in an in-depth interview[149] conducted on 19 September 2009, and is complemented with field notes taken from the Iftār venue that took place on 13 September 2008. Mona's account was analysed as a finished plot, as instance of a Turnerian social drama in four steps. Thus, while the *Arena* staged a plot in the form of an interrogation of Blancho and his organization *IZRS* under the Swiss media's gaze, comparable to the classical social drama setting of a public tribunal (see Turner 1974: 41), Mona's social drama scenario is staged in the biographic narrative form of a conversion account in front of a mainly (born) Muslim audience. Additional sequences from the in-depth interview, as well as field notes taken after several informal conversations and a second in-depth interview[150] served to reconstruct the (micro)social setting in which Mona's narrative performance takes place. Besides the interviewer's

[149] Due to the bad acoustic situation at the Iftār venue, the audio recording that was conducted during the event, which covered all addresses delivered, was neither utilisable for transcription nor for analysis. However, field notes taken during Mona's speech give evidence that Mona delivered an identical narrative in terms of dramaturgical structure and topical theme at that time in front of the Muslim audience. Given the fact that Mona, as almost all converts to Islam I have met during my research, is prompted to give a „confessional" account of her conversion to Islam on a regular basis, Mona appears to present a standardised routine narrative she rehearses again and again. Besides, the routinisation of conversion narratives also makes sense from the perspective of ritual theory. Taking in a performative understanding of the conversion narrative as a confessional technique of the self, a converts' speech iterates and thus stabilises her or his self-alteration, thus warding off ambivalence that would threaten the self with a psychotic state of „betwixt and between" (Turner).

[150] A second in-depth interview with Mona was conducted on May 11, 2010, as part of a different research project. It focused on biographical details linked to Mona's family story, see also footnote 152 of this chapter.

impulse to give an account of how she „came to Islam“, the interview covered the themes of Mona's social and biographical background, the reaction of her surrounding to her conversion, how Mona adopted Islamic practices, and her concept of Islam. The interviews with Mona followed the technical propositions of the „problem centered“ qualitative interview (Witzel 2000)[151]. Mona delivered her conversion account after my bid to tell me about „ .. and how did it come with Islam?“ [„und wie ist das mit dem Islam gekommen?“ (Mona 1 14459-14502)]. She delivered a finished plot, opening with the presentation of a „rupture“ between the Swiss female narrator and „Muslims“ (see Turner 1974: 38). The account was initiated with the temporal adverb „before“, indicating the adoption of a retrospective opening stance specific to the narrative form of conversion accounts (see Ulmer 1988; 1990; Luckmann 1987), and was terminated with the presentation of the „turning point“, the actual moment of „flipping around“ that sets her off on her endeavor to know „more and more on Islam“ and become Muslim herself. She thus ended with the „reintegration phase“ of what Turner has worked out as the universal dramaturgical structure of social dramas (see Turner 1974: 41). Only after the presentation of this narrative arc, her narrative flow came to a halt and was succeeded by a longer pause. Her account of the conversion plot was only interrupted at one point by a clarifying intervention of the interviewer. Analysis of Mona's conversion narrative followed a sequential procedure (see for example Flick 2007: 436-450), in order to reconstruct the dramaturgical and thematical aspects of the respective episodes presented.

2. Mona

I have first met Mona, a graphic designer in the middle of her twenties, at a public Iftār during Ramadan 2008 in a small Turkish mosque in the outskirts of Lucerne on a rainy windy autumn evening. Mona is a trained graphic designer and was working as a full time employee in an architectural office in a bigger Swiss German city at the time of our conversations. At that point of time, Mona had been Muslim since about four years, even though she relates that it is difficult to point to a specific moment in time she would describe as her definite conversion, as she recounts in our in-depth interviews. For her, as for most other converts I had spoken to, it was more of a slow process, a longer period of reading books, often also critical literature, of gaining information on Islam, attending Islamic classes and dars (Islamic lesson), and a gradual adoption of

[151] Witzel suggests a dialogical interview procedure that combines narrative-generating impulses and forms of communication („tell me about“) with comprehension-generating strategies (clarifying questions like „why did you“, „how did you know?“, confrontative and reflective impulses).

ritual practices like praying and fasting, dietary rules and (visible) modes of dressing and moral demeanor. Also Mona read a lot of books and looked for information to learn about Islam and later, to learn how to live an Islamic life. Her adoption of Islamic practices was gradual. She tells me how she first abstained from eating pork. Then, later, she stopped drinking alcohol and going out clubbing. After, she began to do prayers. It was only after a while, while on a trip to Turkey to see relatives on her father's side[152], that she first wore a headscarf in public:

> „I cannot really say when I have made the passage [wann ich den Übergang gemacht habe] .. it was more like a process [...] I had just started to accept it .. I realised that it is a better way of life than how I had lived before .. that it is just better for me." [153]

Today, Mona spends her free time mainly with Muslim friends, a lot of them are young female converts like her. Mona has had little Muslim acquaintances at the beginning of her engagement with Islam. Even though she got in touch with her Turkish father and her Turkish relatives in Switzerland, and they sometimes invite her over for Iftār, most of the time, she tried to „learn Islam" by herself at first. She had bought books and booklets to learn about the basics of Islamic faith and practice, such as prayer:

> „When I started with [prayer] .. I went with my aunt that lives in Switzerland .. she took me along to a mosque .. a Turkish one .. and I tried to pray along .. I just prayed along and tried .. and then I bought myself a booklet .. there it is clearly described how you ought to pray .. how you can pray and .. I have tried it out myself .. by myself [laughter] .. I did it wrong altogether at first .. and then I started step by

[152] Mona had grown up in a Swiss foster family as her mother of Polish origin died when she was five years old. It was only in her early twenties, little after her first contact and engagement with Muslims and Islam, that she got to know her biological father of Turkish origin. Today, she visits him and his family every so often. She describes him and his wife of Turkish origin as „non-practicing". In the biographical accounts Mona delivers in our two in-depth interviews, Mona develops two separate story lines. One narrates the event of getting to know her Turkish father and his family, while the other relates how she got to know Muslims and Islam. Only towards the resumptive, „after" stage of her narrative account of becoming Muslim, when she has already started to read books on Islam and practice some of the ritual and dietary precepts of Islam, her Turkish family becomes part of the Muslim story plot, for example when she relates how she visits her relatives in Turkey, or when she accompanies her Turkish aunt in Switzerland to a Mosque. Mona's conversion narrative formed also the basis of a single case study published elsewhere. There, focus was laid on the biographical reconstruction of Mona's way to Islam before the background of her complex family story and her somewhat irresolvable search for familial integration and recognition. Thus, Mona's narration was read as an account that interweaves foster child Mona's idiosyncratic familial crisis of belonging to her integration of her „strange" Turkish ethnic background. From this biographical perspective, Mona's conversion to Islam can be understood as a means to perform her irresolvable problem of being somewhat „homeless" in the familial as well as in the social sense. See Leuenberger (2012).

[153] „Ich kann eigentlich nicht sagen wann ich den Übergang gemacht habe .. das ist so ein Prozess halt [...] habe ich das angefangen zu akzeptieren und das ist eine bessere Lebensweise als ich bis jetzt gelebt habe .. und gemerkt dass es einfach besser ist für mich." (Mona 1 26266-27624)

step to do it correctly."[154] (Mona 1 29273-29663)

Mona relates to me during a train ride, laughing, how she had tried to get in touch with other Muslims, for example by visiting public lectures on Islam, as by the *Zürcher Lehrhaus*, a dialogue institute which offers lectures on Christianity, Judaism and Islam.[155] Mona had hoped to meet other Muslims there. It was only when she was at the lecture on *Islam and the Rights of Women* that she realised she was the only woman wearing a headscarf in the audience, and that she understood that the lecture was aimed at non-Muslim hearers and not a course for practising Muslims. Thus, she was happy when she happened to see a flyer advertising the *Islamologiekurs,* a Muslim educational program in German language.

The *Islamologiekurs* introduces the basics of traditional Muslim disciplines as a monthly week-end seminary over the course of four semesters. It was at the *Islamologiekurs* that she finally met with likeminded converts and young Muslims. Together with some of them, Mona visits a bigger mosque in the outskirts of Zürich that is frequented by young Muslims of various „ethnic" backgrounds. Mona attends the dars there on Saturdays, as it is held in German and suits her interests to learn „more about Islam" and spend time with her Muslim friends. Mona and her friends invite each other for Iftār during Ramadan, and they go to various Islamic events in the German speaking part of Switzerland. In summer 2010, I tried to meet Mona and her group of Muslim friends at the *Züri-Fest*, as they were out there, strolling through the stands and attractions of the big public festival, but we missed each other in the crowd. Mona had been engaged for one and a half years to a young Tunisian whom she had met through a female acquaintance during a holiday in his country, and whom she had visited several times since. They used to communicate via *MSN* to keep in touch during their spatial separation. To communicate, they spoke in French. At the time of the second interview, they were freshly married. Since their marriage, her husband has come to live in Switzerland. He has just moved in to Mona's two-room rented flat. He has started to do a language course to learn German. The mechanic will try to find some work in his trained area. At the time of our last meeting, they were planning a shared

[154] „Wo ich angefangen habe [mit beten] und ich habe dort auch .. bin mit den .. mit der Tante bin ich da in der Schweiz bin ich da in die Moschee mitgegangen .. die türkische .. dort habe ich auch einmal mitgebetet .. ich habe einfach mitgemacht gehabt .. und probiert .. dann habe ich .. habe ich ein Büchlein gekauft .. wo schön beschrieben ist wie du beten sollst .. beten kannst .. und .. habe ich mit dem Büchlein irgendwie probiert .. selber [laughter]für mich habe ich das probiert .. habe es nachher ganz falsch gemacht gehabt .. und dann habe ich es halt Schritt für Schritt gelernt und angefangen richtig zu machen." (Mona 1 29273-29663)

[155] The *Zürcher Lehrhaus* was founded in 1993 as an institute for interreligious dialogue beween Christianity, Judaism and Islam. See http://www.zuercher-lehrhaus.ch/cms/front_content.php?idart=76&idcat=57. (03.04.2012)

future in Switzerland.

Resuming our in-depth interview, I have asked Mona to define or to convey to me her concept of Islam. Mona thus related:

> „Islam is for me a way of life [Lebensweise] and less a religion .. it is a culture for me .. it encompasses not only the ritual but much more..[...] for me it is not a faith as it is linked to my rational understanding .. it is completely intelligible and profoundly humane .. in Islam everything revolves around us humans."[156] (Mona 1 54679-55333)

It was Mona, among other Muslim converts I met at the beginning of my research, who had called my attention to the *Islamologiekurs*. While she had visited the first course offered in Switzerland, held between January 2007 and December 2008 in Zürich Winterthur, I was to attend the classes starting in January 2009 (see previous chapter). In our numerous encounters, when we both visited public Muslim events, or at some of the venues organised by participants of the *Islamologiekurs*, Mona and I engaged in conversations that revolved around her being Muslim and her conversion. Mostly we used to have informal conversations, for example during events we both attended, when waiting for public transports or during train rides. Two times I visited Mona in her flat in the outskirts of a major town in the German part of Switzerland to conduct in-depth interviews. Her home was decorated with carpets with Islamic motives and Islamic calligraphies. During our first interview, she was fasting as it was Ramadan. While she always wears her headscarf when she leaves her home, she took it off when I was at her place.

2.1. Confessions after confessions

Reconstructing and analysing Mona's account of how she became Muslim as she presented it to me during our informal conversations as well as our in-depth interviews, I came to understand that her recount could also be read as a presentation of a subsequent series of confessions Mona delivers in differing social situations vis-à-vis her Muslim and non-Muslim surroundings. While Mona is time and again invited to deliver her conversion narrative in front of a Muslim audience to „give pleasure to them", as Mona puts it, she apprehended that her foster parents would not quite equally rejoice

[156] „Islam .. für mich ist der Islam eigentlich eine Lebensweise .. und ähm .. eigentlich weniger eine Religion .. also .. ist einfach Kultur für mich .. also .. das beinhaltet ja nicht einfach nur das Rituelle also .. sondern vielmehr [...] für mich ist es auch kein Glaube .. weil es ist irgendwie ja .. es ist .. man geht mit dem Verstand dran ran .. mit der Logik und dem Verstand eigentlich .. und es ist für mich total logisch und verständlich .. und auch menschlich .. weil der Mensch ist ja im Zentrum vom Islam .. alles dreht sich um den Menschen." (Mona 1 54679-55333)

in her decision. Thus, fearing the moment of „confession", she had chosen to familiarise them with her having become Muslim *ex negativo*, by no longer eating pork and drinking alcohol when she visited, by fasting on Ramadan and so on, so they could find out themselves, interpreting her hints. Thus, it was her step mother who confronted her daughter and asked her, in a rather „confessional" scenario, if she had become Muslim or would like to. In her account, Mona imitates her reply, lowering her voice in an almost guilty, shameful fashion:

> „I have not told them right from the start because I knew how they thought .. negative .. about Islam .. and they have all the clichés in their heads .. I thought to myself no .. it is better .. better if I .. that I familiarise them with it slowly .. that they realise it by themselves .. and then I started to signal to them that I don't eat pork anymore .. when they [...] and then I told them that I don't drink alcohol anymore .. step by step [...] and then I told them I do Ramadan and then .. the course [...] I informed them that I go to the *Islamologiekurs* [...] and then one day my mother came to me and asked me .. Mona do you want to be Muslim .. or are you already .. yes yes I am [laughter, subdued tone] .. and my stepfather .. I did not have to tell him as she told him."[157] (Mona 1 31350-32598)

Her step parents have, as Mona relates, accepted her decision to become Muslim only reluctantly. She reproduces her mothers reaction:

> „Well .. yes [sigh, pondering pause] they found .. she was not thrilled [begeistert] of course .. but she found that she ought to accept it .. like .. she cannot tell me how I ought to live .. I am old enough .. I am grownup .. like."[158] (Mona 1 32802-33091)

Though having told her parents about her being Muslim, the actual climax of Mona's confessional drama was only reached when she first visited her parents' wearing the

[157] „Ich habe es nicht von Anfang an gesagt gehabt weil ich habe gewusst gehabt wie sie dort eingestellt sind .. weil sie sind recht .. negativ .. denken über den Islam .. und eben all die Klischees im Kopf haben .. habe gefunden nein ist besser .. besser mache ich es so .. dass ich das langsam ihnen beibringe .. dass sie das selber merken .. und dann habe ich angefangen ihnen zu sagen dass ich kein Schweinefleisch mehr esse .. wenn ich eingeladen worden bin zum Essen .. oke ist gut [...] und dann habe ich gefunden .. ja jetzt trinke ich keinen Alkohol mehr .. Schritt für Schritt [...] und dann habe ich gefunden ja ich habe Ramadan gemacht .. der Kurs .. habe ich angefangen den *Islamologiekurs* zu [...] dann ist irgendwann mal meine Mutter zu mir gekommen und hat gemeint ja Mirjam bist jetzt .. willst Du Muslima sein oder bist denn Du schon .. ja .. bin schon [laughter, subdued tone] und dem Stiefvater habe ich es gar nicht sagen müssen weil er hat es durch sie erfahren." (Mona 1 31350-32598)

[158] „Ja [seufzend, abwägend] .. ja sie haben gefunden ja .. sie ist nicht begeistert gewesen natürlich .. aber sie hat gefunden ja sie akzeptiere es halt .. oder .. weil sie kann es mir nicht vorschreiben wie ich zu leben habe .. ich bin jetzt genug alt .. Ich bin erwachsen .. und .. ja." (Mona 1 32802-33091)

headscarf. In order to prevent her parents from „shock", Mona decided to somehow control and mitigate the moment of their confrontation with their headscarf wearing daughter:

> „It was [...] last year that I went there with the headscarf for the first time .. and then I had to first think about how I will do it .. I cannot just pop in with the headscarf .. otherwise they would be in shock .. so I wrote an SMS to my mother .. you know.. I will come to you with headscarf [laughs] and then she answered yes it is okay.. and then I went to her home .. I had put it on .. but I had warned her in advance [habe sie vorgewarnt gehabt] .. same with my stepfather .. I had told him on the phone .. I told him that I would visit him and .. I wear the headscarf .. and he meant no .. must this really be [imitating irritated, moanful exclamation] .. he was not thrilled .. but I answered yes I want this [determined] .. and so .. yes .. he was not amused at all but I said to myself if he goes funny when I am at his place .. then I will just go home .. but he somehow accepted it and behaved like normal."[159] (Mona 1 35180-36380)

Mona relates to me that when she started to adopt Islamic dress practices like wearing the headscarf, and when she stopped drinking alcohol and going out, she had lost most of her friends, especially her best mate from old times. She recounts how she had tried to explain herself over and over again over her reasons of choosing to live according to Islamic precepts. However, her friend „did not get it":

> „I used to have a best mate .. used to .. we have lost touch .. we had known each other since I was seven .. we used to do a lot together .. we always went out together .. I used to sleep at hers .. she at mine .. and then when I started to wear the headscarf .. first in my free time .. or at work .. just had it tied back in the neck .. not like it ought .. tight .. and when I started to go in public like this .. and she asked do you always wear the headscarf .. and are you positive you don't drink alcohol anymore .. you don't come clubbing anymore .. no no .. I don't do this anymore .. she kept asking me this stuff [...] I tried to explain it to her .. but I fear she

[159] „Letztes Jahr bin ich das erstemal mit dem Kopftuch gegangen .. dann habe ich auch zuerst gefunden wie mache ich das .. ich kann jetzt nicht einfach mit dem Kopftuch jetzt kommen .. sonst hätten sie nachher einen Schock .. der Mutter habe ich einfach ein SMS geschrieben .. ja äh .. gäll ich komme dann mit dem Kopftuch [laughter] .. und dann hat sie gefunden ja ist gut .. und dann bin ich einfach .. mit dem Kopftuch .. habe es angezogen .. ich habe sie sozusagen schon vorgewarnt gehabt schon .. Stiefvater auch .. habe es ihm am Telefon gesagt [...] habe gesagt ja ich komme dann am .. ich habe das Kopftuch an gäll .. hat er gemeint ja nein .. muss das sein [imitating irritated, moanful exclamation] .. oder.. also er ist nicht begeistert gewesen .. habe ich gefunden .. ja ich will das [emphazised, determined] .. und so .. ja .. also er ist nicht begeistert gewesen hat das nicht wirklich wollen und .. ja ich bin dann einfach gegangen .. dann habe ich gemerkt habe ich gefunden ja wenn er komisch .. tut wenn ich bei ihm bin .. dann gehe ich wieder heim .. aber er hat das dann trotzdem irgendwie akzeptiert und hat sich dann normal verhalten wie immer." (Mona 1 35180-36380)

somehow did not get it [...] she kept asking [...] I explained over and over [...] and then we kind of drifted apart .. she kept going out drinking alcohol and went dancing .. and I started to abstain [from those things] .. I did not feel like it anymore .. our interests drifted apart .. we were not on the same way anymore."[160] (Mona 1 37707-39180)

Thus, she relates how it was about a year ago that she had informed her boss at work that she is Muslim and that she would like to do her prayers during work time and wear a headscarf at work. She had been working at the architectural office for about five months without telling anybody that she is Muslim before she approached her boss:

„I had applied without the headscarf .. my boss did not know at that time that I am Muslim .. and then I .. when I began to work there .. I had worked there four or five months without the head scarf .. without doing prayers .. and then I found .. now I try .. I have asked the boss .. yes I have explained it to him .. yes I am Muslim I have converted and so .. and normally I wear the headscarf and do the prayer .. if it is possible that I can do it in his office and he found that yes it is okay for him .. and since I wear the headscarf in the office .. and I do the prayer .. and I have written an e-mail to everybody .. informed everybody .. I am Muslim and I wear the headscarf and I do the prayer."[161] (Mona 1 41813-42720)

Some of the colleagues have approached Mona personally to inquire about her

[160] „Ich habe eine beste Kollegin gehabt .. eben gehabt .. ich habe jetzt keinen Kontakt mehr zu ihr ..wir kannten uns seit wir sieben waren .. wir haben viel zusammen gemacht .. wir sind immer zusammen in den Ausgang .. ich habe bei ihr übernachtet und sie bei mir .. und dann habe ich angefangen das Kopftuch tragen .. zuerst in der Freizeit .. oder bei der Arbeit .. ich habe es hinter dem Kopf zusammengebunden .. nicht wie es sein sollte .. und als ich anfing so rauszugehen .. und dann hat sie gefragt trägst du immer Kopftuch .. und bist du sicher dass du keinen Alkohol mehr trinkst .. dass du nicht mehr in den Ausgang kommst .. nein nein .. ich mache das nicht mehr .. hat schon so Sachen gefragt .. habe versucht es ihr zu erklären .. aber irgendwie hat sie es gar nicht so aufgenommen habe ich das Gefühl .. sie hat es wie .. so wie wieder vergessen .. ich habe es ihr tausendmal und immer wieder erklären müssen eigentlich und .. dann hat sie ja gemerkt dass wir langsam gar nicht mehr so viel Kontakt gehabt haben .. es ist wie auseinandergegangen .. sie ist halt immer die gewesen die immer überall in den Ausgang gegangen ist in die Disko .. und Alkohol und so .. und tanzen .. und ich habe auf das langsam angefangen zu verzichten .. nicht mehr gewollt .. dann ja .. sind einfach die Interessen auseinander gegangen .. sind wir nicht mehr auf dem gleichen Weg gewesen." (Mona 1 37707-39180)

[161] „Dann habe ich mich aber zuerst dort beworben ohne Kopftuch .. und der Chef hat auch noch nicht gewusst gehabt dass ich Muslima bin .. und dann habe ich .. zuerst als ich dort angefangen habe zu arbeiten .. so vier fünf Monate habe ich eigentlich ohne Kopftuch dort gearbeitet .. ohne irgendwie zu beten und so .. und dann habe ich gefunden komm jetzt versuche ich es mal .. habe ich mal den Chef gefragt gehabt .. ja habe es ihm erklärt ja ich bin Muslima ich bin konvertiert und so .. und normalerweise habe ich das Kopftuch an und mache das Gebet .. ob ich es das auch machen könne bei ihm im Büro und dann hat er gefunden ja von ihm aus könne ich das .. und seitdem ziehe ich das Kopftuch auch im Büro an .. und mache das Gebet .. und ich habe auch ein e-mail geschrieben an alle .. alle informiert .. eben ich bin Muslima .. und ich ziehe das Kopftuch an .. und mache das Gebet auch." (Mona 1 41813-42720)

conversion. Mona relates how a female team member was surprised when she told her that she had not converted because of her North African Muslim fiancé at that time, but that she had converted to Islam „herself“:

> „One [of my collaegues] had asked me recently [...] because of Ramadan .. if it is difficult .. because of the drinking .. that it is not healthy .. that she could not do it [...] I said it works somehow [...] and then she asked [...] how did you come to Islam [wie bist Du zum Islam gekommen] .. because of your boyfriend .. right [...] I said no .. no .. actually it is not through him [...] I was Muslim before .. and she was really surprised because she had thought that I had accepted Islam because of him [...] and no no it was not like this .. already before .. out of my own interest .. I have converted .. she was surprised and said she would never have thought so .. she found it quite remarkable .. she did not expect this .. they all think so in my office .. my boss also thought so .. that I had converted because of him .. yet it is not the case.“[162] (Mona 1 14505-16858)

3. Giving an account of her conversion before a Muslim audience: Mona's staging of a story of shifting allegiances

While I have reconstructed Mona's conversion by reproducing a series of outings vis-à-vis her non-Muslim familial and work surrounding, occasionally, the convert also gives an account of how she became Muslim before a Muslim audience, such as at a public Iftār during Ramadan 2008 in a small Turkish mosque in the outskirts of Lucerne. This is where I met Mona. I got aware of the event through the biggest German Swiss Muslim internet platform at that time, www.islam.ch which hosts an agenda of upcoming events concerning Islam in Switzerland. The event announced the testimonies of Swiss converts to Islam who were to speak about how they found to Islam as part of the festivities' program. Attending the event, I had witnessed Mona, just like I was to witness Jibril at a later occasion, delivering an account of her conversion to Islam before a mainly Muslim audience as part of the evening's festivities and addresses that preceded the end of fasting at the time of Maghrib prayer (prayer at sunset).

[162] Hat mich die eine mal gefragt [...] wegen Ramadan .. ob das schwierig sei .. ja wegen dem Trinken .. sei doch nicht gesund .. sie könnte das nie..ich so ja .. das geht schon irgendwie und [...]wie bist du eigentlich zum Islam gekommen .. durch deinen Freund oder.. habe ich nein nein eigentlich nicht durch ihn .. ich bin vorher schon Muslima gewesen und dann ist sie total erstaunt gewesen .. weil sie hat gedacht gehabt ich sei eigentlich wegen ihm zum Islam gegangen .. ihm zuliebe hätte ich diese Religion angenommen .. und nein nein sei aber nicht so gewesen .. schon vorher selber eigentlich .. aus eigenem Interesse zum Islam konvertiert .. und die ist total erstaunt gewesen .. hat gemeint das hätte sie nie gedacht .. und so .. recht speziell hat sie das gefunden gehabt .. ja sie hat das gar nicht erwartet gehabt .. die denken das einfach im Büro .. der Chef hat das auch gedacht gehabt .. ich sei wegen ihm eigentlich konvertiert .. auch wenn es eigentlich gar nicht so ist.“ (Mona 1 14505-16858)

3.1. The venue

The Ramadan event that will also feature Monas conversion account is held in a Turkish communities' premises near Lucerne, in the first floor of a two-storey industrial building with a furniture warehouse in the ground floor. The small entrance hall and gangway of the venue is crammed with men, women, children and youth of every age that take off their shoes and place them on shoe shelves. Most of the visitors appear to be regulars, as they seem to know their way round the busy hallways and rooms of the small premise. I hear Turkish and Swiss-German conversations, sometimes also Albanian and Arabic. When the official addresses begin, men move on to the prayer room at the end of the hallway, while women and younger children gather at a room adjacent to the entrance area. The two rooms are connected to each other by loudspeakers. Most, but not all women present at the venue wear a headscarf. Some wear long Jilbab-like gowns, while most wear casual, „western style" everyday clothes. Children and youth have dressed themselves up nicely, wearing bright colors for this festivity. The event has an improvised character. Women and children sit on cushions, chairs and on the floor along the long window front and the two short sides of the rectangular room, while the Iftār buffet is laid out on long tables that are placed against the wall adjacent to the corridor. The smell of various stews and cooked food that waits to be handed out after Maghrib prayer hangs in the air. The atmosphere is cheerful, most women, youth and children seem to know each other, kiss and embrace, exchange news and good wishes for Ramadan. As Mona will tell me when I approach her to introduce myself as a researcher and ask her permission for recording the speech, it was Fetme, a lively woman in the middle of her twenties, member of a canton-wide Muslim women's association that had organised the event and has invited Mona and another convert sister to deliver an account of their conversion to Islam at the venue. It is also Fetme who will announce the evening's addresses. When I address Fetme later that evening she tells me that it is not the first time that she has organised an event of this sort. Her aim, as she tells me, is to bring Muslims and non-Muslims together, to deconstruct prejudice. She is expecting around 100 persons from all over Switzerland. However, judging from their dress modes, their looks, their familiarity with the ritual and practical aspects of the venue, and the ease with which they move in the premises, my impression is that there were not a lot of non-Muslim women present. As Mona will tell me that evening, she met Fetme in the *Islamologiekurs* they both attend. She relates to me that a number of the young women present are colleagues from the course who have come especially to witness Fetme's event. While it is difficult to assess, due to the segregation of men and women during the festive part of the venue, women seem to outdo men by far in terms of numbers. While the lead of prayer is acoustically

transmitted from the mens' room, all other addresses and speeches – Mona's speech, the other convert's account, and Fetme's greeting and concluding addresses – are delivered by women in the women's room. The audience is very moved by the two accounts delivered by the converts, some of them weep. Throughout their staging, the converts' accounts are accompanied by sympathetic or cheerful interjections by the audience. As Mona will tell me in our later conversations, it is not the first time that she has given an account of her conversion before a Muslim audience. She is invited to present her conversion account at Islamic venues every so often.

3.2. Mona's speech

On the evening in the middle of September, when she delivers her speech at the Islamic venue, and nearly a year later, during our in-depth interview, Mona relates how it was in the United Kingdom that she first met with Muslims.[163] She describes her stay in England as sort of a time-out she had chosen to take after she had finished her apprenticeship:

> „I wanted to do a language course .. I wanted to escape from my everyday life .. I had worked for four years the same .. so I wanted to go away from home."[164] (Mona 2 11234-11507).

Mona places the opening of her conversion account in a liminal setting, „away from home", as an experience that takes place in her free leisure time in a country abroad. It was in her English class that she met with Muslims for the first time in her life. This encounter is placed in the centre of the narrative she recounts about her becoming Muslim:

> „Well .. before I never had any contact to Muslims .. and I never wanted to know anything about Islam .. I had always heard so bad things .. prejudices that are spread .. that [Islam] is violent .. women are oppressed .. your hand is chopped off if you don't obey [laughter in her voice] I never wanted to have something to do with Islam .. and then it was only when .. when I came to England .. for the first time .. I was with a class that was from Kuwait .. in a class with Muslims .. it was there that

[163] The conversion narrative that Mona delivers to me when I was conducting the in-depth interview with her is in line with the account in terms of dramaturgical structure, thematic topic and plot she presents at the public venue of the Iftār I had witnessed where we first met, as the fieldnotes taken during her speech provide evidence of. Unfortunately, due to the difficult acoustic situation the digital recording of her speech was not utilisable for transscription and interpretation.

[164] „Ich wollte einen Sprachkurs machen .. habe Englisch lernen wollen .. ich wollte einfach aus dem Alltag ausbrechen .. ich hatte vier Jahre lang dasselbe gemacht und wollte einfach weg .. weg von zuhause." (Mona 2 11234-11507).

I had contact for the first time .. I was rather anxious and I was not so comfortable at the beginning [...] and yes ..

S: So you realised right from the start that [they were Muslim] .. did you meet women in headscarfs ..

M: It was all men .. actually .. they came with the army .. they were sent by the army to do a language course .. and I realised [that they were Muslim] because they spoke Arabic .. I assumed they were Muslim .. and dark and Arabic .. yes .. Arabs were Muslims for me .. like Turks and Albanians .. but not Swiss .. I did not realise at that time that you can have Swiss Muslims .. like .. yes .. then I went at their place .. they had invited me to their place .. very friendly .. hospitable .. and they offered me drinks and food yet I had always thought to myself be careful .. no I don't want to eat anything .. I don't know do they want to poison me or what [laughter in her voice] and then .. they always made sure when I wanted to return home that they ordered a taxi cab or that they walked me home .. that I get home safely .. they really cared about me .. and slowly this fear went away .. I realised they do not do anything to me .. they are friendly .. why am I afraid .. and then I started to feel at ease and comfortable with those people .. and yes .. a year later I returned .. then I met a female friend I had got to know during my first stay .. from Oman .. I have met her again .. we looked for a flat together .. a job together .. then she told me about Islam [...] it was just the time of Ramadan [...] and I have seen how they practice it .. said oh I could never do this and .. seems so difficult and .. she told me a lot my friend .. and I started to have a lot of questions .. how is this and that .. I have heard this .. is this true .. and she says no it is like this .. for this reason .. and then I just understood that what I had heard is just not true .. that this is not Islam .. that this is something completely different .. and I really started to like it .. I realised they are warm welcoming people [...] and that they do not do any harm [...] and when I returned [to Switzerland] I started to .. books [...] I lost my fear .. I started to be really interested .. the opposite happened .. it flipped over [es hat gekippt] .. I have started to buy books and I have read about Islam .. I really had a stor.. thirst for knowledge .. wanted to know more and more and how is this and that."[165] (Mona 1 14505-19188)

[165] „Also früher habe ich eigentlich gar keinen Kontakt gehabt zu Muslimen .. und ich habe nie etwas wissen wollen vom Islam .. ich habe immer so schlechte Sachen gehört .. Gerüchte halt die so rumgehen .. dass das gewalttätig ist .. die Frauen haben keine Rechte .. unterdrückt .. dann wird einem die Hand abgehackt wenn man nicht gleich folgt [laughter in her voice] und weiss nicht was alles was man hört .. und von daher hat es mich gar nie interessiert .. ich habe gar nichts damit zu tun haben wollen .. und es ist dann erst .. als ich nach England bin das erste Mal .. dann bin ich auch in so einer Klasse gewesen die von Kuwait gewesen ist .. in der Klasse zusammen mit Muslimen .. da habe ich das erstemal Kontakt gehabt zu denen dann .. ich bin recht .. vorsichtig gewesen und .. ist mir nicht so wohl gewesen am Anfang .. und dann habe ich .. S: Also hast Du das sofort gemerkt .. hat es Frauen gehabt mit Kopftüchern .. M: Es sind alles Männer gewesen eigentlich .. mit dem Militär sind sie dorthin .. aus dem Militär sind die gewesen .. und die haben einfach den Englischkurs gemacht .. und ich habe es einfach gemerkt

4. Analysis

In the following, I will work out the structure and theme of Mona's speech as subsequent stages of a social drama. To do this, I will apply a sequential analysis.

4.1. „Well .. before .. I never [...]wanted to have something to do with Islam"

Mona opens her account with the introduction of a retrospective stance, stating that „well .. before .. I never had any contact to Muslims" (14505-14576). Thus, she indicates right from the start of her account that from the present perspective as convert Mona, a relevant turning point might set in with her eventual encounter of „Muslims". For the time being, however, in the next passage, Mona goes over to an evaluative remark by stating that she „never wanted to know anything about Islam" (14581-14626). Thus, unlike now, standing in front of the Muslim audience as a convert to Islam, it had not been her desire to get to know Muslims at that stage, nor to know more about Islam. The initial sequence of the narration establishes a nexus between getting to know Muslim individuals and having the desire to know more about Islam.[166] At the same

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gehabt ja .. weil sie arabisch geredet haben .. habe ich angenommen das sind Muslime .. und dunkel sind und arabisch .. ja .. halt .. Araber sind für mich Muslime gewesen ..wie Türken und Albaner .. sind Muslime .. aber Schweizer nicht .. nicht gedacht dass es eigentlich Schweizer Muslime gibt oder .. und .. ja dann bin ich halt zu denen nachhause .. haben sie mich eingeladen .. total freundlich gewesen .. gastfreundlich .. und Essen angeboten und zu Trinken und ich habe immer gedacht Vorsicht .. nein schon gut .. ich will schon nichts essen .. ich weiss nicht wollen die mich vergiften oder ich weiss nicht [laughter in her voice] .. und dann .. und dann die haben immer geschaut wenn ich am Abend heim habe wollen .. dass sie ein Taxi geholt haben oder mich heimgebracht haben .. dass ich zuhause gewesen bin .. also total .. gekümmert und geschaut .. dass es mir gut geht .. und .. dann langsam ist die Angst verloren gegangen .. habe ich gemerkt die machen mir ja gar nichts .. sind total freundlich .. wieso habe ich denn Angst .. und dann habe ich angefangen .. ja .. dann hat sich das gelöst diese Angst .. und dann habe ich begonnen mich wohlfühlen und sicherfühlen mit diesen Leuten .. und ja .. ja von demher.. ein Jahr später bin ich wiedergegangen .. dann habe ich eine Kollegin die ich dort schon (beim ersten Aufenthalt) kennengelernt habe [...] von Oman .. habe ich getroffen .. dann haben wir zusammen eine Wohnung gesucht .. und einen Job zusammen .. dann hat sie mir vom Islam erzählt .. [...] es ist gerade Zeit des *Ramadan* gewesen [...] und habe gesehen wie die da am Fasten sind .. habe ich gesagt ui das könnte ich nie und .. das ist so schwierig und .. und jetzt .. sie hat mir auch viel erzählt die Kollegin .. ich habe viel angefangen zu fragen .. wie ist das .. so ja .. ich habe das und das gehört .. stimmt das .. nein es ist so .. aus dem Grund .. und dann habe ich einfach gehört dass das was ich gehört habe dass das gar nicht stimmt eigentlich .. dass das gar nicht Islam .. dass das total etwas anderes eigentlich ist .. und dann ist es mir sympathisch worden irgendwie auch .. und .. ja .. gemerkt .. dass das total warme Leute sind [...] und .. einem .. gar nichts machen eigentlich und dann .. habe ich angefangen .. Bücher .. wo ich zurück bin [...] und dann habe ich angefangen mich zu interessieren .. die Angst ist weggegangen .. ist das Gegenteil passiert .. es hat dann gekippet .. ich habe mich angefangen zu interessieren .. und .. habe angefangen Bücher zu kaufen .. und habe gelesen über den Islam .. habe richtig so einen Wissensstu ..Wissensdurst bekommen .. mehr wissen wollen und wie ist das und das."(Mona 1 14505-19188).

[166] Summoning the missing desire to gain „knowledge of Islam" at this stage might also be interpreted as a ratification of the listener's request to give an account of her religious

time, Mona presents getting to know Islam (or becoming Muslim) as susceptible to subjective choice of the narrator, when she summons „Islam" as something she might potentially „want" to „have something to do with", to get engaged in. Accordingly, in the following sequence, Mona endeavors to explain her former ignorance of Muslims and lack of desire to be knowledgeable of Islam. As Mona speaks from a present position as Muslim, she takes in a derogative stance concerning the adequacy of her judgments at the time, due to the lack of familiarity to Muslims, supposedly. Thus, as Mona relates, her attitude towards Islam was led by „prejudice" and „hear say", when she invokes Islam as „violent", „oppressive of women", and „chopping hands off" of inobedient individuals (14679-14852). The attributions Mona summons evoke notions of repression, force, (gender) inequality, and domination protruding from „Islam" as an antagonist subject. Thus, she summons the imaginary of sharī'a as a repressive legal order – as a penal law – destroying a human individual's physical integrity („chopping off hands"). This scenario of loss of individual integrity is rehearsed in a gendered register, as she invokes the „suppression of women" and their denial of „equal rights". Mona accompanies the last retrospective passage with laughter which serves to indicate that she no longer upholds the views she has just come to present as her attitude „before". To narratively mark the end of her account of the „before", she resumes that „she never wanted to have something to do with Islam" (14966-15010). Again, in this concluding phrase, „Islam" appears as an agentic force she subjectively could – though would not – engage in a social relationship with, as *this* „choice" would actually mean the *very end* of her individual choice.

4.1.1. „It was only when I was […]in a class from Kuwait .. in a class with Muslims"

Indicated by the conjunction „and then", Mona narratively introduces the entry of an event that will mark a break with the „before" from the present perspective. She relates that „[she] had contact with Muslims for the first time" (15197-15246). Thus, the turning point is marked as her unexpected acquaintance with Muslims she meets in her English class in the UK, a liminal location away from her normal everyday life. Here, Mona moves to taking in an introspective stance, relating how she was „rather anxious" and „not so comfortable at the beginning" (15256-15334). Thus, recounting the actual encounter with Muslims, Mona comes to internalise the negative notions of „Islam"/„Muslims" invoked in the „before" passage. However, indicated by the „in the beginning", Mona characterises the turning point as an event in time, anticipating the eventual transformation of her rational evaluation and affective stance towards „Muslims". At this stage, Mona's account is interrupted by the listener's clarifying

conversion, as „religion" is more associated with asocial, individual transcendent phenomena than as a social phenomenon, such as meeting Muslim individuals.

intervention to understand how Mona had come to realise she was actually dealing with „Muslims". The interviewer proposes the visible asset of the female headscarf as a distinct Islamic marker that would render Muslims recognizable „at first sight". In her explanatory response, Mona first clarifies that „they were all men .. actually" (15487-15525). However, Mona takes up the interviewer's suggestion to define „Muslims" by habitual, aesthetic assets, as Mona summons „Arabic speech" and „dark [skin]" (15706-15800), acoustic and phenotypic features as attributes of „Arabs". She proceeds to further specify that for her, „Arabs were Muslims […] like Turks and Albanians" (15819-15880). Mona thus establishes a nexus between aesthetic, phenotypic (racial) and national/ethnic/cultural features and „being Muslim". „Being Muslim", understood as a category linked to „race" and „ethnicity", is framed as subjectively in-disposable, inborn feature, when Mona adds that at that time she „did not realise […] that you can have Swiss Muslims" (15925-15980).[167] Relating her former ignorance of the fact that "one can change", Mona conceptualizes „being Muslim" as susceptible to subjective choice,

4.1.2. „They offered me food & drinks […]yet I always thought ‚be careful'[…] do they want to poison me or what"

After this interjectional passage, Mona resumes the narrative account of the turning point episode. She relates how she „went to their place" (15997-16035). This move of hers might seem rather unexpected, as she had just come to relate how „uncomfortable" she had felt in their company at first sight. Taken her prior characterization of Islam by features more apt to attribute to (male) agents as „oppressing women" and perpetrating physical violence, her readiness to visit the male Muslim group seems all the more curious. It might be due to her apprehension that following their invitation is somewhat in want of explanation that Mona quickly adds that she went there as „they had invited [her]"(16040-16064). Mona gives no explanation as to why she follows their invitation „to their place". Yet, against her (and, supposedly, the listeners' expectation she has come to build up), she is welcomed „friendly" and „hospitable" (16069-16110), as she recollects from a present perspective. Mona relates how they „offered [her] drinks and food" (16115-16148). However, Mona conveys how she is not yet able to acknowledge and properly trust unexpected experience of Muslim hospitality and familiarity at that moment. To convey her doubts, Mona shifts to an introspective perspective where she

[167] In a subsequent passage, Mona mentions her outright ignorance of the possibility of conversion to Islam at the time of her encounter with Muslims: „I did not know at that time that one can change […] I did not know one can convert .. it was only later that I got to know that one can change."
(„ […] habe ich nicht gewusst gehabt dass man wechseln kann […] ich habe nicht gewusst, dass man konvertieren kann .. erst später erfahren .. dass man eigentlich wechseln kann." (Mona 1 27857-28158). Relating her former ignorance of the fact that „one can change", Mona conceptualises conversion (to Islam) as susceptible to subjective choice.

presents her inner monologue „I had always been .. had thought to myself be careful“ (16150-16184) and imitates her (consequential) outer refusal to accept their friendly offers [„no thank you I don't want to eat anything..“ (16189-16233)] before she will return to imitating her inner monologue [„I don't know do they want to poison me or what“ (16239-16299)]. Thus, Mona, presenting herself somewhat in the lions' den, iterates and dramaturgically escalates the theme of fear of loss of female autonomy introduced in the opening sequence, when she refuses to accept food and drinks offered, suspecting the male Muslim hosts of „poisoning“ her, of losing her agency and being placed defenselessly at their disposal. Again, by accompanying the presentation of the episode by laughter, Mona signals the absurdity of her affective evaluation at that time from her present perspective.

4.1.3. „They always made sure […]that I get home safe […]why am I afraid?“

Mona goes over to convey that the „visit at their place“ was not a singular event but was to become a habit when she relates that „they always made sure when I wanted to return home that they ordered a taxi cab or that they walked me home […]“ (16338-16467). Mona summons how the male Muslim group accepted and supported her wish to leave and return to her own „home“, that they even actively support her autonomy by „ma[king] sure that [she] gets home safely“(16472-16563). Against Monas expectation the Muslims accept and support her wish for leaving and moving between her own „home“ and „theirs“, they grant her spatial agency, she herself decides when to leave. Mona recounts how she consequentially starts to trust her Muslim mates, and „slowly this fear went away“(16580-16618). As in the passage before, Mona shifts to an introspective stance, where she presents her growing doubts about the adequacy of her inhibitions against her colleagues, imitating her inner monologue „why am I afraid“ (16698-16722). While in the preceding passage, the narrator presented her doubt about the trustworthiness of the Muslim hosts, at this instance she conveys how she comes to doubt her own affective attitude. Thus, Mona's account presents repeated events of commensality and visits at „their place“, that lead her to „realise they do not do anything to [her]“ (16623-16668), that she can eat with them and at the same time guard her individual integrity and freely move between „hers“ and „theirs“.

4.2. „I realised they do not do anything to me […]I started to feel at ease & comfortable with those people.“

Mona concludes her narrative presentation of her first encounter with Muslims by stating how she „started to feel at ease and comfortable with those people“ (16810-16882). As Mona conveys, the friendly demeanor of her Muslim hosts has proved her

fear wrong, and thus she comes to realise that she can stay autonomous. What has been the object of alteration in the first half of the presented sequence is Monas's evaluation and affective attitude towards (male) Muslims. Mona stages a story of „coming home" at the most unexpected place exactly because it is her own choice when to visit the male Muslims' home. While Mona recounts how she felt „uncomfortable" at the beginning of her encounter with her Muslim, Arab mates, she ends the narration of her first stay in England and her encounter with the Muslim men with stating how „comfortable" she feels. Her affective shift accompanies the shift of her evaluative attitude towards Muslims, as Muslim males stand, *pars pro toto*, for Muslims as a distinct religious collective. Mona presents how she comes to feel at ease with Muslims exactly because the expectations alluded to in the narrative account of the „before" stage are not met at her eventual encounter with her male Muslim collegues, her inhibiting fears about loss of agency turn out to be „prejudices". The narrator conveys how she can guard her (spatial) agency and stay in control throughout her interaction with Muslim males.

4.3. „I returned […]met with a Muslim friend […] we looked for a flat together"

After concluding the narrative presentation of the „invitation" episode, Mona opens the second encounter episode. Mona relates how she returns to Switzerland only to return to England on a second occasion, again induced by her own wish. In her account, she omits the time gap between her first and the second stay and thus posits the two episodes in a logically consequential trajectory, as she seamlessly merges the presentation of her second stay in the UK to the preceding „Muslim encounter" episode. Back in England, Mona recounts how she meets up with a female Muslim friend she has already got to know during her first stay. Mona presents herself as actively seeking the realization of the joint living project, when she conveys how „[they] looked for a flat together .. a job together" (17102-17171). Presenting their shared living, Mona places herself in an *alter ego* position vis-à-vis her individual female Muslim friend. While the first encounter episode was dominated by Mona's taking in of an outside visitor's observer perspective vis-à-vis the male group as „men" with a „strange" Arab and Muslim background, she opens the following episode by relating how she starts to observe her individual female Muslim friend's Islamic practice during their joint living as „sisters", when she states that „it was just around the time of Ramadan", Mona „[sees] how they practice [Islam]" (17321-17479) and her „friend told [her] a lot about Islam" (17570-17612). Thus, the focus of her observation has shifted from getting familiar with the social collective of „Muslims" as a visitor to getting familiar to „Islam" as a religious „choice" as a cohabitant and *alter ego* of her female single Muslim mate, indicating to the shift from perceiving „being Muslim" as an in-disposable feature of collective,

„inborn“ national/racial/ethnic belonging to a subjectively desirable mode of self-cultivation and religious and social belonging and identity.

4.3.1. „I have seen how they practice […]oh I could never do this“

The second encounter episode is dominated by Mona's recount of how she enters into an ongoing horizontal conversation on „Islam“ with her female cohabitant. Her friend informs her about Islam, and Mona asks back [„she told me a lot my friend .. and I started to have a lot of questions .. how is this and that“ (17570-17676)]. Mona presents herself as developing a desire to learn more, tentatively imagining herself as a Muslim, when she imitates her inner doubts if she could ever practice Ramadan [„oh I could never do this“ (17500-17525)]. She relates how she starts to test the feasibility of „Islam“ as a moral and orthopractic mode of self-cultivation for her own life. Summoning how she „[sees] how they practice it“ (17447-17479), Mona presents herself as endeavoring to try to understand Islam from the inside, as asking her Muslim friend „how is this and that“. Thus, she gradually begins to take in a Muslim perspective.

4.4. „I have heard .. is it true?“ Mona is putting her female friend to the test

In the further course of the episode, Mona proceeds to stage a scenario where she comes to put her former attitudes, as presented in the „before“ passage, to the test, when she brings forward to her female Muslim friend that she „[has] heard this .. is this true“ and her friend informs her better „no it is like this“ (17681-17756). Hence, she puts her outsider's knowledge to the test of a female insider's evaluation. By the invocation of her face-to-face, mirror-like interrogation of her female friend, the narrator presents how she comes to realise that „what [she] had heard is not true“, „that this is not Islam“ (17762-17886), that she had been deluded about „Islam“ before, that „[Islam] is something completely different“ (17891-17934). Her friend explains „Islam“ to her, arguing and offering „reasons“(17444-17756). Mona recounts how she comes to replace her outsider's knowledge and evaluation of Islam and Muslims by an insider's knowledge and evaluation. Again, after recounting how Mona has come to deconstruct and replace her former attitude of „Islam“ through the reasoning efforts and explanations of her female Muslim friend, Mona takes in an introspective stance and relates that she eventually felt how she „started to like it“(17942-17975). Thus, she presents herself adopting her Muslim friend's view as well as her affective stance, exactly as she comes to realise that „Islam is very different“. However, in the next sequence, again, Mona shifts from an evaluation of „Islam“ to an evaluation of „Muslims“ when she concludes the „joint living“ episode by stating that she „realised they are warm and welcoming people“ (18019-18049).

4.5. „I returned home […]then it flipped over“

Mona opens the final episode by relating how she returns home from her stay in England. Thus, she moves from the liminal location of the UK back to her life center in Switzerland. And it is there, by her own in her very home, that she, as she puts it, finally „flipps over“. She recounts how „when [she] returned home .. [she] started .. books“ (18125-18185). Thus, the object in focus of her account has, again, shifted from „Muslims“ as „warm and welcoming people“ (18137-18049) to „Islam“ as a knowledgeable object one can get to know in „books“. Taking in an introspective stance, she relates that „[she] had lost her fear“ (18763-18798), that „the opposite happened“ (18861-18885), that „it flipped over“ (18890-18909). She presents her account in an accelerated and lively mode, in a rushed catch-wordy staccato style, imitating her state of frency when she experienced her moment of „flipping over“, as „her fear went away“, being replaced by the desire to „know more and more“ (19099-19118). Her last invocation of „losing her fear“ again indicates the shift from perceiving „Islam“ as an antagonist (male) subject to understanding „Islam“ as an object of individual self-cultivation knowledgeable through „books“. She describes how she was filled with a „Wissensstur..Wissensdurst“ (19040-19098) [stor.. thirst of knowledge]. Her slip of tongue, broken off during articulation, most likely would have added up to a „storm of knowledge“. The evocation of a tempest metaphor conveys the inner affective turmoil that accompanies her shift of loyalties, as Mona replaces „fear“ by „feeling at ease“, how, by a self-conducted search, she replaces her abjection of „Islam“ as a repressive, unlivable form with „Islam“ as a feasible collective „way of life“ for herself. Concluding the introspective stance, Mona relates how she „really got interested“ and went to buy and started to read „books“. Her return home marks the dramaturgical pitch of her long story of „coming home“ that she has placed in the heterotopic setting of the UK, which takes her to the stages of „first encounter“, „invitation“ and „joint living“ and that finally comes to an end when she „returns home“ and „starts to be interested in Islam“.

5 Discussion: Dramaturgy & theme of Mona’s speech

The following section will further explore the structural and thematic characteristics of Mona’s performance. Thereby, I aim to reconstruct the dramaturgical and thematical aspects of the respective episodes worked out both in terms of Turnerian social dramaturgical considerations as well as in respect of their transvaluative operativity as conversion account.

5.1. The „before“

Mona opens her narration with the „before“ episode as the dramaturgical and thematic departure point of a subsequent plot of „coming home“ in three steps. The young woman starts her account with stating that „before .. I never had any contact to Muslims .. I never wanted to know anything about Islam .. I always heard so bad things“. Indicated by the temporal adverbs „never“, and „always“, the narrator presents the „before“ as an unspecified, extended space of time that covers her whole life up until the onset of an event that will mark an end of her previous state. Mona resorts to present a number of generalizing evaluations of „Muslims“ and „Islam“ in order to convey her former self. Exempt from personal details whatsoever, the narrator introduces herself as a generalised „self“, a „social I“ (Goffman), just like any Swiss female self who „*always* heard bad things“ and „*never* had [nor wanted] contact to Muslims“. Exempt from personal biographical detail, the narrator gains contours in relation to her spatial and social distance to „Muslims“ („Islam“ as „aggressive“ [male] collective/social group „oppressive of women“, and „chopping one's hands off“ in case of „disobedience“). Hence, „male Muslims“ as a synecdoche of „Islam“ figure as an „antagonist (collective) subject“ (Hüttermann 2006) against which the observing narrator as an autonomous female self – both as a personal as well as a generalised (Swiss/non-Muslim) self – gains contours *ex negativo*. Mona's rejection of Islam reiterates the imaginary of Islam as an oppressive and life diminishing agentic force that robs female individuals of their agency and threatens their physical integrity. Her gaze on „Muslims“ and „Islam“ mirrors the public imaginary as presented in the minaret poster campaign, which was to be taken up in the public gaze on male convert Blancho and the convert committee (see previous chapters). Thus, the integrity of her autonomous self – her personal self in a Goffmanian self coincides with her self as any Swiss female self (her social I) imagined as „individualist“ and „autonomous“ – is sketched out as a liberal self whose subjectivity is threatened by the closeness to „(male) Muslims“/„Islam“. As in Jibril's narration (see chapter 2), the „before“ episode lacks of biographical detail and personal intimacy. Yet, while narrator Jibril assumes „any Muslim's“ speaker position, giving an account of how his habitual visible difference is publically observed, Mona's account is rendered from a „Swiss' female“ narrator perspective, relating how she observes (and affectively reevaluates) Muslims. Thereby, narrator Mona takes in, *pars pro toto*, „any Swiss's female gaze“ on Islam. Thus, Mona's self-constitutive speech opens by the delegation of Muslims' to a space beyond her social surrounding, whose spatial/physical/social distance is constitutive in the narrative introduction of her self. Accordingly, what is introduced in the „before“ passage as the object of observation and transformation is autonomous female observer

Mona's gaze on „Muslims" as social group. Indicated by her subsequent evaluation of her former state as „prejudiced", the narrator suggests that the alteration, the *metanoia* (change of attitude) that is to be performed is an affective, emotional and rational reevaluation of „Muslims" as socially critical objects in need of redemption.

5.2. The encounter & invitation episode

The subsequent episode is introduced by Mona's account of her encounter with „Arabs" which was further worked out by the interviewee's interjection in the in-depth interview. Thus, framing the Kuwaity peers as „Muslims", Mona establishes, for the time being, „being Muslim" as an innate, in-disposable feature of race, ethnicity and cultural difference („Arabs were Muslims […] like Turks and Albanians" [15819-15880]) irreconcilable with „being Swiss". Summoning Turks and Albanians, she alludes to the national, familial and social background of the bulk of Switzerland's Muslim population. Thereby, Mona might also allude to „Muslims" as „immigrants", reiterating the current problematisations of Islam in debates on immigration and integration of „culturally differing" ethnic minorities deemed to be orchestrated by „Islam" as collective partiarchal social order (Ettinger and Imhof 2009; 2011; see previous chapters). The presentation of the encounter is followed by the „invitation episode" which is carried by a sexual subtext that unfolds the subsequent dissolution of utmost social alterity in a gendered register. The narrator presents a potential *rape/Frauenraub* scenario when she presents her encounter as a single female with a group of Muslim men „at their home". The protagonist Mona, a young Swiss woman that is presented in the narration as „female individual"[168] is invited by a „collective" of Muslim male peers from the Kuwaity military to their homes. The peers' professional background as military personnel, a profession closely linked to aggressive virility reinforces the imaginary of collective male Arab/Muslim physical dominance versus individual female Swiss physical disadvantage in this scene. Mona conveys that the impulse for contact comes from their side, as they „invite" her. Mona does not quite explain why and how she has come to accept their „invitation". She leaves her motives open to speculation, but her visit appears as somewhat driven by a lust for transgression and subjective dissolution, given the preceding narrative sequences where she had just come to invoke „Muslims" as an antagonist collective whose physical distance seemed vital to uphold her subjective female agency and physical integrity. From the present perspective, she might interpret it as a liberating and authentic act of „disobedience" against her very social surrounding,

[168] In Mona's account of the episode, she presents herself as single woman versus a collective of men, yet it is not sure if she goes on visits on her own. However, irrespective of the factual situation, her self-presentation as „being a single female" is, as will become clear, constitutive for the plot narrated.

as she understands how she had been kept by „prejudice“ and „hear say“ – thus, exhortations and inhibitions of her former non-Muslim surrounding that had made her invoke a „false“ imaginary of Muslims and Islam – from „wanting to have something to do with Muslims“. From her present perspective, she has come to understand the non-Muslim's „prejudices“ as repressive practices themselves, as a delusion to keep her (and others) from Muslims and coming to understand the „truth“, „that Muslims/Islam are/is different“ and embrace Islam as the „way of life“ she subjectively wishes to lead. Thus, following the „invitation“, from the present perspective, Mona is somewhat „disobedient“ to her social surrounding's delusionary practices. At the same time, however, the female hero guards her „freedom“ and „autonomy“ vis-à-vis the seducing Muslim men, as she stays vary of their offers. At first, she refuses commensality, to eat and drink at their places. As commensality – as well as the sexual act which is implied in the meeting of the single Swiss female with the group of Muslim men – denotes a ritual technique to perform social communion, Monas refusal of the food and drink offered equals a signal to refuse to join, to be incorporated into the Muslim (male) community – at least for now, and under the conditions of being a „guest“ at the mercy of her male hosts – as she links being a female Muslim to in-consensual incorporation[169] and loss of female agency.[170] Mona's fear of poisoning appears as a rape metaphor, alluding to her fear of being (physically) overwhelmed and subjectively dissolved by the Muslim men/Islam.

The motive of a female being seduced with „eating“ anticipates the biblical theme of Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit, where the female hero transgresses God's veto to eat from the tree of knowledge, being seduced by satan in a snake's guise. As a consequence, the disobedient woman is striken with God's wrath and punished for her transgressive desire.[171] As she has given in to the snake's lure, she (and subsequent women) are to be subordinated to men (Genesis 3, 1-24). What is at stake in Mona's account of the episode, as in Eve's case, is her female autonomy. Mona presents us with a seduction scenario where she could have ended as a „castrated“ female under a

[169] The phantasma of Islamic in-consensual penetration was dominant in the imaginary of the poster campaign of the supporters of the national initiative to ban the construction on minarets. The campaign logo depicts a half-side view of the relief of Switzerland's topography being penetrated in the middle from below by a missile/phallus shaped minaret (see Introduction chapter)

[170] Interesting is also Mona's „fear of poisoning“ from the perspective of Mauss' theory of gift. If Mona is afraid of accepting drinks and foods offered, she might well anticipate the ambivalent character of a gift, with its compulsory and obliging momentum, as Mauss has worked out in his etymological analysis of the English/Old High German notion of „gift“. See Mauss (1990 [1923/4]). For an overview over the concept of commensality from a sociological and social anthropologic perspective see Barlösius (1999: 165f.).

[171] In Mona's case, it could be her pre-knowledge on Muslims, understood as her non-Muslim surroundings „warnings“, which should teach her to „know better“.

male economy of desire, punished for her disobedience and transgression. Mona, however, presents herself to the audience as a more clever agent than Eve, as she is gaining both „freedom" *and* „Islam", as she liberates herself from both inhibiting prejudice and at the same time guards her autonomy against male Muslims.

5.2.1. The „invitation scenario" as a variation of the theme of da'wa

In regards of the thematic choice, the „invitation" as well as the subsequent „joint living" scenario Mona presents can be interpretated as a variation of the theme of Islamic da'wa. Da'wa (call, invitation) as an Islamic notion means „invitation" and is understood as an appeal to follow Islam. At the same time, the term da'wa is also used to denote an invitation to dinner. Drawing on Quranic sources, every Muslim is appealed to exhort other humans – both Muslims and non-Muslims – to follow Islam and remember their original monotheist faith they have been born into (fiṭra). In contemporary Islamic revival movements, da'wa is often done in Muslim circles as a form of inner revival. In European activist circles, Muslims often subscribe to the idea that the best da'wa to convert (or better to call others back) to their original faith is being a role model, an exemplary Muslim for others on the one hand, as well as informing other Muslims and non-Muslims about Islam so that they get interested and „remember" and thus „return" to Islam themselves.[172] Both the „invitation scenario" and the presentation of how Mona's female friend „informs" the narrator and tells her about Islam in the subsequent „joint living episode" is based, as I would argue, on this theme of da'wa. Thus, the „invitation episode" establishes a concept of becoming Muslim (and da'wa) where the female hero stays in self-control and chooses herself what offer to take on, when to „visit" and when to leave. Thus, she is not „forced" or (physically) overwhelmed by the Muslim males „to eat/to the sexual act/to become Muslim" as she fears, but comes to trust their „friendly invitations". Throughout the „invitation episode", Mona presents herself as an observing actor in self-control who at first refuses and later accepts „to eat and drink", thus to control social incorporation induced by the contagious act of commensality (see Mauss 1990 [1923/4]) beyond her subjective choice. It is through her distant gaze that she puts the „trustworthiness" of the (male) „Muslims" to the test. It is only after they have proved that they „make sure she gets home safe", that they behave in an exemplary manner of hospitality, that she reconsiders her rational evaluation and emotional stance towards them.

[172] See *Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, „Dawah" (2012); Ramadhan (1997). During my research, I was myself presented with the Quran and literature on Islam, and many times I got involved in discussions about religion.

5.3. The joint living episode

While the „invitation episode" has focused on „Muslims" as collective one can enter into a „comfortable" relationship with, the „joint living" episode presents Mona's growing engagement with „Islam" as a distinctive „way of life" disposable for herself. While she has had the position of a „guest" in her previous narration, she now takes in the position of a „cohabitant" of her Muslim friend. Mona presents herself as an active part of enabling the joint project of sharing a flat (and commensality) with her female Muslim friend. Thus, while in the „invitation" episode, her meeting and initial interacting with Muslims was somewhat beyond Mona's control, as she was the „invited", in this „shared living" episode, Mona actively takes the initiative to realise their living together. While in the „invitation" scenario, Mona's presentation stages the theme of subsequent dissolution of alterity by her confrontation as a single „individual" Swiss female with a „collective" of „Arab" Muslims from the opposite male sex – deconstructing the opposition between „being an individual, autonomous, Swiss female" versus „being a male repressive Muslim collective" – in the second episode, Mona and her female friend come to take in symmetrical, mirror-like positions. Mona presents herself as an *alter ego* of her Muslim friend, endeavoring her friend's attitudes and practices. She relates how her friend „informs" her about Islam, how they talk about Islam, and also how she observes her friend as she fasts during Ramadan. Mona's female friend appears as a mentor figure who introduces Mona to an Islamic way of life by „learning on the job"[173]. Mona imitates her inner monologue „oh I could never do this", indicating that she is testing the plausibility of Islamic practice (like fasting) for her own life. Mona thus presents herself as a liberal self with „choice", developing a subjective desire to get to know Islam, and putting it to the test if „she could do it".

5.4. The coming-home episode

The third and final stage of her „home coming" is set in her own living room in Switzerland, all by herself. It is here that her narration present her final *metanoia*, her change of attitude and shift of allegiances as she relates how „it flipped over", how she was overwhelmed by a „storm" of knowledge that would replace her „fear" and would „turn her around" to the opposite. She relates how she actively starts to seek knowledge and finally „become[s] interested in Islam". She ends the episode by invoking how she „started to buy books" and how this stay instilled in her a „thirst of knowledge" to inform herself and „know more and more on Islam".

[173] In a subsequent passage of the in-depth interview, Mona relates to the interviewer how she had first started to abstain from eating pork when she was living with her Muslim friend.

5.4.1. The coming-home scenario as a variation of the theme of fiṭra

The theme of „home-coming", as it is rendered in the subsequent „invitation", „joint living" and „discovering Islam at her very home" in Switzerland points, as described above, to a thematic variation of the theological concept of fiṭra. Fiṭra underlies the Islamic notion of conversion and da'wa as an appeal to return to an original inborn monotheist Islamic faith. As Mona „comes to see" that what she had heard on Islam was „prejudices" upheld by her non-Muslim environment, she presents a variation of the well-known saying in the Hadith:

> „Every infant is born according to this fiṭra; then his parents make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian."[174]

Thus, Mona's *metanoia* is staged as a story of „coming-home", as she comes to deconstruct her „prejudices" on Islam, and remembers her original faith. Her final return to Islam is conceptualised as a self-conducted discovery, thus, as a self-chosen adoption of Islam that does not infringe on her subjective integrity which she has introduced as a Swiss female self in the opening sequences of her talk.

6. Discussion

Taking up existing structural approaches, I would like to continue my deconstructive and performative reading of conversion narratives as developed in chapter 1 („I Have Become a Stranger in My Own Homeland") to discuss Mona's account. Existing social constructivist and narratological literature has described conversion narratives as a specific communicative form restrained in terms of thematic structure by the emic understanding and concept of conversion of the religious community to which the convert testifies his belonging (Luckmann 1987; Peackock 1976; Taylor 1978). Luckmann emphasises that a convert's possibility to speak about his or her conversion is (implicitly) delimited by the canonical view on conversion of the religious community the individual is converting to (ibid.: 39; 41f.).

While, as existing literature holds, and also my own analysis points to, thematic constraints are given by traditional Muslim concepts of „conversion", I would hold that what structures Mona's narrator position is the public gaze interrogating the converts' agency and autonomy in becoming Muslim. Hence, what is at stake is her very intelligibility and social acceptance as a recognizable subject. Thus, differing from Jibril's

[174] In Islamic theology, the concept of fiṭra has spawned various discussions and raised complex problems of theodizee concerning the salvability of infants of unbelievers. In legal matters, it triggered problems linked to inheritance law. See *EI*^{2}, „ Fiṭra (2012); see also Gobillot 2000.

self-observational account, where he adopts the first person stance of the „Muslim Stranger" – coming to take in the observed position of *any Muslim* – which he has, as he invokes, become in the public's gaze after his adoption of a visible Muslim habitus, Mona presents herself as (invisible) observing first person narrator – taking in the observers' stance of *any female Swiss*. While Jibril performs and thus institutes „Muslim strangeness" as a category of self-addressation as he cites the critical gazes of his Swiss environment on his „differing" Muslim self in a number of micro-social, public and official scenarios, Mona's first person account is directed by her gaze as a Swiss female on „Muslim strangers" whose alterity subsequently dissolves in her story of „coming home". In the plots narrated by Jibril and Mona, respectively, the familiar gendered economy of gazing is turned upside down.

Thus, feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey, drawing on Freud's notion of scopophilia as well as Lacan's model of the mirror stage argues that in mainstream Hollywood cinema film plots – which she holds are dominated by phallocentrism – women are defined by their objective, passive status of „to-be-looked-at-ness", while men occupy the agentic position of developing a story plot and thus identify with the spectator:

> „In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female form which is styled accordingly." (see Mulvey 1989: 19)

In our case, given the asymmetric difference between „being Swiss" and „being Muslim" in present social ontologies (see chapters 1 and 2), it is the male protagonist Jibril as „marked body" and excessive corporeality resisting universalization and subjectivation – the symbolic position ascribed to the female in phallocentric gender orders (see Grosz 1994: 14; Irigaray 1979; on physical excess, the role of fetishised embodiment in (post)colonial constructions of self and the „strange" other see Fanon 1980; see also Ahmed 2000) –, who presents himself as the passive object of gazing and social action taken against him, while female narrator Mona is the (invisible) observer of „Muslim strangers" and the hero of the plot in her account. While Jibril narrates, by synecdoche, from the perspective of „any Muslim", Mona takes in the narrator position of „any Swiss". Thus, while „looked-at" Muslim Jibril performs a „differentiation", Mona performs the dissolution of Islamic „difference", as her observational speech directed by a Swiss female gaze deconstructs „Muslim strangeness" – initially imagined exactly as a de-subjectivizing repressive force – and, thereby, transvaluates it into an acceptable mode of subjectivation.

6.1. The „transvaluatory capital" of conversion narratives in Muslim arenas, or: the productivity of censorship

While I have just worked out the thematic and structural particularities of Mona's account, what characterises her performance as a conversion account is her employment of a specific chronological structure that enables a narrative presentation of a „before" and „after", thus to convey the theme of profound radical transformation (Luckmann 1978; see also Ulmer 1988; 1990). In his study on the dramaturgical structure and thematic topic of conversion narratives, Ulmer describes how converts resort to an extended biographical account that often goes back to their early childhood in their presentation of the „before" (Ulmer 1988: 23f.). He suggests that this „biographical account" serves as a dramaturgical formal strategy to convey the religious „turning point" as a life-changing experience that has significance for the narrator's entire personal life. In a similar vein, Luckmann emphasises the transvaluatory function of the „before"/„after" structure of conversion narratives. The conversion account is characterised by a „ban on amnesia" [Amnesieverbot] of the „before" (Luckmann 1987: 44), as it serves as the introductional point of entry of the critical subjective „problem" which is subsequently ritually overcome in the conversion narrative. The diachronic before/after form of the conversion narrative is understood by performative approaches as a speech act which enables the „symbolic transformation of a critical experience" [„symbolische Transformation krisenhafter Erfahrung"] (Wohlrab-Sahr 1999: 123). The „before" stands mirror-inverted to the „after" episode which presents the resolution of the crisis (Luckmann 1978: 43). If we understand conversion narratives in a Butlerian sense as interpellatory practice, it is their diachronic „before"/„after" structure which enables to stage the ritualised „birth" of something „new", „true" and „worthy of life" by „pushing to death" something old, „false" and morally inferior. In her reconsideration of censorship, Judith Butler endeavors to apply a productive notion of censorship. She understands censorship as a form that enables speech and „articulation" as it delimites the scope of acceptable speech (Butler 2006: 200). In opposition to a conventional notion of censorship which is understood as a juridic act that follows a „free" utterance that has infringed on legal or moral restraints, Butler understands censorship, adapting a deconstructive reading of the psychoanalytic concept of „foreclosure" and „abjection", as a productive form of discursive power that precedes „speech" in the sense that it is productive for its articulation (ibid.: 211f.).[175] Those very preceding rules of articulation

[175] Butler combines a Foucauldian productive notion of power and subjectivation with a deconstructive reading of psychoanalysis, in particular the Lacanian notions of „foreclosure" and „abjection". Against the Lacanian notion of the "constitutive outside" as the realm of an a-historical pre-discursive „real" which is opened as a barred area in the process of subjectivation into the symbolic order, she emphasises that those exclusionary „abjective" practices are

also delimit the scope of what qualifies as an acceptable subject as they enable the constitution of subjects according to implicit and explicit rules that are closely related to the regulation of speech (ibid.: 208). Following Judith Butler's considerations on the productivity of censorship, I would argue that Mona stages sort of an exorcism that performs the abjection and „death" of a „wrong" notion of Islam to give „birth" to a Muslim subjectivity deemed to be socially recognizable. Hence, what is at stake, and what becomes the object of redemption in her performance is her very intelligibility as a female/Muslim subject of speech. Applying a Butlerian performative understanding, Mona's address held before the Muslim audience reiterates and is itself structured by the rules of articulation of what qualifies as an acceptable, „intelligible" subject in a Swiss public gaze. What redeems Muslims" and „Islam" in Mona's *metanoic* account is that the self-controlled observing narrator – whose gaze is introduced as „any Swiss female's gaze" in the opening sequences of the „before" stage – subsequently comes to realise that they are not „oppressive" and infringing on (female) individuals' physical/sexual integrity and spatial agency („chopping one's hands off", „oppressing women"). Thus, given the transvaluative capital of the „before"/„after" structure offered by the conversion narrative, the Swiss female converts' narrative performs the shift of „Muslims" and „Islam" from symbolic liminality as a „social group" of specific ethnic/racial adherence to the scope of a socially and legally acceptable forms of religious self-cultivation. Mona performs the life-giving speech act of transforming „Muslims" and „Islam" from a collective whose projected alterity threaten the narrator's integrity as a Swiss female subject, into a desirable collective „way of life" that is accessible to the narrator's intersubjective „understanding", her emotional and affective ratification, as she „comes to see" that „Islam is humane".

Thus, while she performs in the opening „before" sequence the act of abjecting Islam as a repressive form unworthy of social acceptance and recognition, she subsequently redeems „Muslims" and „Islam" of what would qualify them as socially and legally abjective and „unlivable" forms of individual and collective being. In her difference theoretical work, Butler defines what is discursively „abjected" as the

> „unlivable and uninhabitable zones of social life populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the ‚unlivable' is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject." (Butler 1993: 13).

Adapting her notion of the „unlivable", I would define conversion narratives as interpellative, exorcising speeches which perform the abjection of the „unlivable" to give birth to the „livable". Thus, the chronological structure of the conversion

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constantly reproduced on a social, discursive level (see Butler 1993: 187-222).

narrative to stage a „before“ and an „after“ is employed by Mona to perform the „death“ of the old imaginary of Islam which triggers a permanent social crisis (see preceding chapters), and avows of the „birth“ of a new notion of Islam as a subjective category of self-cultivation. What undergirds Mona's narrative is her gaze as a Swiss female observer. Thus, the subject of surrender to Islam is an agent in self-control, as „female agency“ is the symbolic stake enabling her guarding her subjectivity as a female convert to Islam (yet whose „agency“ is questioned in the public gaze on her turn to Islam, as, being a „cultural/moral capital“ supposed to be lacking in Islam, she might have been forced by her husband/the Muslim collective to surrender/veil). Drawing on the Islamic theme of da'wa as a call to return to one's fiṭra conversion to Islam is related as a self-conducted discovery and metanoia, an overcoming of prejudices. Talal Asad argues how a certain notion of agency underlies religious subjectivities and sustains their social and legal recognition in liberal and secular societies:

> „Everyone has agency, everyone is responsible for the life he or she leads **[...]** The doctrine of action has become essential to our recognition of other peoples' humanity.“ (Asad 1996: 272)

To be accepted and addressable as a subject, individuals are deemed to have agency and autonomy. Accordingly, as Asad holds, in secular and liberal (capitalist) societies, religious subjects can only be conceived of as enterpreneurs of themselves as well as consumers of religious offers, as the „resort to the idea of agency renders [religious conversion, religious practice] ‚rational' and ‚freely' chosen.“ (ibid.) Thus, convert Mona posits herself as agentic self as she narrates her inclusion into the Muslim umma. However, while in Muslim arenas, Mona's narrative might serve as a blueprint for individual and collective self-formation, it is exactly her account of being included into a Muslim collective, a religious, familial and cultural tradition which is difficult to reconcile with the secular and liberal regulatives of „individual freedom“ and „gender equality“ as authorizing momentum of religious practice (compare the public debate reconstructed in chapter 2, see for example Asad 2003c: 180). As the *Arena* show as well as the wider discussion on the phenomenon of conversion to Islam has shown (see previous chapter), public readings often draw on a Freudian compensatory model to „explain“ the converts' turn to Islam as a move beneath their „conscious“, rational choice and agency. Thus, their conversion „motives“ imply a momentum of inconscious „compulsion“. On the other hand, public discussions draw on „brain wash“ theories[176]

[176] Sociologist Wiesberger holds that „brain wash“ theories on religious conversion emerged in the USA during the Cold War, starting from the end of the fifties, when the phenomenon of „ideological indoctrinaton“ of war prisoners, for example during the Corean war, appeared (ibid.: 31f.)

or outright coercion (especially in the case of female conversion where it is implied that Western women are „forced“ to convert and veiled by their husbands) to emphasise the problematic momentum of „social“ collective pressure and loss of individual agency in conversion to Islam. Thus, while public perception implies a momentum of inconsensuality/heteronomy (due to biographical crisis, such as bad childhood or „social“ coercion, being forced by a Muslim husband, or a „sect“ lead by converts to Islam [see media coverage on the *IZRS*]), female converts emphasise the desirable (non-neurotic, non-coercive) momentum of Islam, as they frame it as a conscious „choice“, a „way of life“ which „is better for [them]“ (Mona).

To end this case study, I want to return to the gendered imaginary summoned by the anti-minaret poster campaign as I have presented it in the introduction. Mona's speech deconstructs the imaginary of Islam as as a coercive collective social order foreclosing „female agency“, „individuality“ and „religious freedom“. Thus, moreover, just as Nora Illi comments her photograph series posing in front of Lago Maggiore or on top of the Aletsch Glacier, Mona understands „being Muslim“ as an all-encompassing way of life she has chosen herself as a convert to Islam. Thus, Mona's conception of „being Muslim“ is structured by liberal and secular rationalities of what qualifies as an acceptable religious self. However, in the public debate, it is notably „female agency“ and „religious freedom and individuality“ perceived to be lacking in Islam (beating of women, coercion to veil, female circumcision) that figure as the stakes of symbolic exclusion, as they mark the conditions of public acceptability.

In the 19th and early 20th century, Islam, underlaid by an enlightenment critique of religion, was problematised as inherently „irrational“ (compare Renan 1884; see also Asad 2003a: 9; Said 1978), and the orient was imagined as effeminate heterotopia of excessive and transgressive sexuality as opposed to European narrative self-constitutions as virile, sovereign, rational and progressive (Mc Leod 2000: 44). However, in present discussions of Islam in Europe in debates on immigration and integration, Islam is problematised as a virile coercive collective order, characterised by religious/sexual repression and violence embodied by „male Muslim strangeness“. Accordingly, today, the Muslim male (as synecdoche of Islam as a collective culture foreclosing „female agency“ and „individuality“) is problematised as homophobe and patriarchal, irritating the agency and threatening the enjoyment of women and homosexuals (Bracke 2011; Scott 2007; Barskanmaz 2009; Kosnick 2011), whereas European societies are imagined as feminine, (female and gay friendly) spaces which must be protected against the intrusion of Islam (compare the gendered imaginary summoned by the anti-minaret poster campaign as well as the thematic analysis of the media coverage on the *IZRS* in the previous chapter).

In her conversion account, Mona not only narrates her subjective discovery of Islam as a Swiss female and thereby narrates her own conditions of subjective integrity, she presents us also with a version of the theme of coming to understand „Islam“ as susceptible of subjective decision, desirability and agency (a religious „choice“) rehearsed in the register of culture and ethnicity, if we remember how she responds to the elliptic interjection brought forward by the interviewer during the interview [„so you realised it right from the start that [they were Muslim] .. did you meet women in headscarfs..“]. Mona relates how she had at first attributed „being Muslim“ to being „dark skinned“ and „speaking Arabic“, to being of a certain national/racial/ethnic background (Arabs, Turks, Albanians) until she came to realise that „one can have Swiss Muslims“.

Thus, in the course of her narration she shifts „being Muslim“ from an in-disposable, undesirable ascriptive category of racial/ethnic „origin“ linked to „female suppression“ and „physical violence“ (morally inferiority) to a distinct moral and cultural „way of live“ even a Swiss female (like her) can develop the desire to subjectively endorse. Thus, similar to the convert protagonist of the *IZRS* (compare chapter 2), she performs the double transvaluation of both detaching „being Muslim“ from „being an immigrant“ as well as from „being Muslim“ as a „merely“ traditional, culturally „given“ category (compare chapters 2 and 3; see also Olivier Roy's considerations on the convert and his/her role in transforming religion [2004; 2010]). In the following case study conducted in the *Islamologiekurs*, I understand Mona's construction of „being Muslim“ as a subjectively endorsed „way of life“ as paradigmatic for currently emerging educational programs and subject formations in Switzerland that bring together Muslims of diverse ethnic backgrounds to „learn to live with Islam“ (motto of the first annual reunion of the *IZRS* in February 2010) before the background of public problemasation.

4 The Islamologiekurs is „Kicking down open Doors“.

Converts' & Secondas' discovery of Islam as a „way of life“

1 Summary

This concluding chapter is based on a case study conducted in the *Islamologiekurs* (*IK*), an Islamic educational program in German language popular with young „born“ Muslims and converts of both genders that takes place in the industrial area of Zürich Regensdorf. Introduced in 2007, the form and aim of the *IK* presented a novelty in Switzerland. The *IK* was also attended by Mona, the young convert whom we have already met in the smaller Turkish mosque, where she delivered an account of her conversion as part of the festive addresses given at a public Iftār (see previous chapter). The case study is understood to continue the line of argument developed in the previous chapter. It aims to understand convert Mona's *metanoia* (change of attitude), her narrative account performed before a Muslim audience as a paradigm for the emergence of collective forms and projects of self-conducted education. These projects have appeared since about the last third of 2000. What links those initiatives is their aim to forge a common belief, interest and investment in what teacher Amir Zaidan calls „authentic Islam“ as a „way of life“ and mode of moral self-cultivation.

The *Islamologiekurs* understands itself as an offer that educates Muslims as „multiplicators“, as Abdurrahman Reidegeld, himself a German convert and one of the teachers of the course, puts it. The objective of the *IK*, according to founder Amir Zaidan, is to give young Muslims of various ethnic backgrounds an orientation and a reflective knowledge of Islam that goes „beyond what is taught at the mosques“. Thus, he aims to educate young Muslims as self-assertive agents for whom to live an Islamic „way of life“ is a conscious choice. This case study combines the performative approach on religious conversion (see previous chapters) with a Foucauldian concept of subjectivation. Conversion is thus understood as a subjectively endorsed mode of moral self-cultivation (see for example Foucault 1988). Hence, I would like to show how the educational program of the *Islamologiekurs* can be understood to vary the theme of interpellating and subjectifying a community of believers under an over-arching „transcendent truth“ and an all-encompassing „ethos“ as it is worked out in Arnold Darby Nock's seminal socio-historical exploration of the emergence of the concept of religious conversion (1933).

Darby Nock links the concept of religious conversion to a subjective, inner and moral turn which emerges in prophetic religions and Greek philosophy in antiquity. This form of religious adherence, as Nock argues, implies an intense „inner conviction" and a readiness to „turn around" to acknowledge a transcendent truth and endorse moral self-cultivation that differs from former religious form. This new religious form installs a permanent tension between a status quo of being and a vision of how it ought to be. The self-constitutional narrative of such an internalising, salvational movement stages a historical rupture between mere ritualised, local, un-reflected practice „before" and a subjective urge for moral self-cultivation among a comprehensive „community of believers" „now".

As I want to show, the *IK* varies this theme of subjective interpellation and community building before the background of public problematisations of „Muslim strangeness". The *IK* aims to transvaluate the perception of being Muslim as a category of non-disposable, problematic „ethnic" affiliation into perceiving Islam as a subjectively disposable and desirable mode of moral self-cultivation. Secondly, it aims to forge an intellectualised Islam that differs from „unreflected" forms of Islam as they are deemed to be practised at „mosques". Accordingly, the course aims at transforming the perception of „ethnic difference" among the participants into the recognition of Islamic diversity that is seen as a desirable momentum of the „plurality" of the umma as a distinct community. As the *IK* formulates a revived, all-encompassing Islamic ethos, it rejects the public imaginary of Islam as a repressive „religion of law" or patriarchal culture. Instead, it defines sharī'a as a subjective category of moral self-cultivation, as the source to enable an Islamic „way of life". Therefore, the motivation to visit the *IK* for the participants is personal, to „learn to live with Islam" in their everyday lives.

1.1. Methodological considerations

While this study focuses on the *Islamologiekurs*, it is understood to represent what I comprehend as a generalisable trend I have encountered during my visits at various other venues popular with Muslim youth and converts. The *IK* was chosen, along with the analysis of the public entry of the *IZRS* as a focus of my study as it appeared as sort of a novelty in German speaking Switzerland when it was first introduced in 2007, yet „kicked down open doors" as one of my informants put it. The *IK* was the first educational program that was to bring (mainly) young Muslims of both genders together on a regular monthly basis. Among the participants was a high number of converts.

Data from the *IK* are complemented with and juxtaposed to qualitative interviews with converts of both genders that participated in the course, protocols retaining informal

conversations I have led with converts and other Muslims during train and car rides, strolls, or memory protocols, expert interviews, and private invitations. Analysis was conducted by way of a comparative methodological procedure (Bohnsack 2008).

The core data that feed the argumentative structure of this chapter were collected in the weekend block seminaries of semester one and two of the *Islamologiekurs* that I attended on a regular basis between January 2009 and December 2009.[177] Thanks to a friendly participant of the course, digital recordings of semester three and four (January 2010 to December 2010) were available to me.[178] In total, the digital recordings amount to a total of approximately 320 hours, of which selected sequences and lessons were transcribed and analysed.

The selection of sequences of analytical interest was based on protocols, comments and notes taken during the lessons taught in semester one and two where I was present, as well as replaying the digital recordings of both attended lessons and unattended modules of semester three and four. Additionally, analysis draws on written material, such as the *IK*'s website, or the accompanying scripts which could be bought from the organisers. Fieldnotes and memory protocols retaining informal conversations, interactional situations, and general observations as well as photographs[179] taken at the venue served to sketch a portrait of the *IK* and its participants.

The reconstruction and presentation of the *IK*'s history, its structure and general outlook is based on self-presentations found in course materials or as explicitly addressed by the teachers during the course. In addition, I led an interview with Amir Zaidan, founder and head of the *Islamologisches Institut* in Vienna in early November 2009. The qualitative interviews with converts that form part of this case study were sometimes conducted at the interviewees' homes, sometimes in public locations such as restaurants. In terms of interview technique, I followed Witzel who proposes a

[177] The first semester covered the modules *Fiqhu l-'Ibadat. Einführung in die islamischen gottesdienstlichen Handlungen* [sic](Introduction to Islamic practices of worship], *Al-'Aqidah. Einführung in die Iman-Inhalte* [sic](Introduction to the tenets of Islamic creed], and *Einführung in die schari'a* [sic](Introduction to *schari'a*). Semester two introduced *Fiqh 2. Familienrecht, Nahrungs- und Bekleidungsgebote, Kaffara and Waqf* [sic](Family Law, Dietary Norms and Clothing Precepts, Practices of Atonement and Charitable Trusts), *'Ulum ul-Qur'an. Quranwissenschaft* [sic](Quran Studies), and *Fiqh us-Sira. Biographie des Gesandten* [sic](Prophetic Biography).
[178] Semester three covered the modules *'Ulum ul-Hadith. Hadithwissenschaft* [sic](Studies of Prophetic Tradition), *Islamische Kulturgeschichte* [sic](Islamic History), and *Al-Qawa'id ul-Fiqhiyya. Die Fiqh-Wissenschaft* [sic](Studies of Islamic Jurisprudence). Semester four treated *Fiqh 3. Fiqh-Normen des Vertrags und Finanzwesens* [sic](Legal contracts and law of finance), *Usul al-Fiqh. Hermeneutik des Fiqh* [sic](Legal Hermeneutics), and *Ath-Thaqafat ul-Islamiyya* [sic](Islamic Culture).
[179] Due to privacy concerns, the photographs taken at the *IK* are not included into this presentation.

dialogical procedure (see Witzel 2000). One interview was led at the venue of the *IK*, after a festive event. I met a majority of interview partners at the *IK*. All interviewees whose accounts form part of this study attended this educational program. Besides, all converts interviewed for this study were in some way engaged in Muslim associations and organised Islamic forms. Thus, I found some interview partners at other Islamic venues, such as Mona whom I met at a public Iftār organised by a young Muslim female of ethnic background. Mona had, among other converts, informed me about the *IK* (see previous chapter). Others were found during the venues of the women's *Association Culturelle des Femmes Musulmanes en Suisse (ACFMS)* based in La Chaux-de-Fonds, an association close to the *Muslim Brothers* and, hence, close to the general outlook of the *IK* (see further below).

Some of my interviewees and some of the participants of the *IK* were to become active or passive members or are sympathisers of the *IZRS* after its foundation in late autumn 2009, or have visited events of the Muslim youth movement *Ummah* founded in the same year.

2 The Islamologiekurs: Learning „the essence of Islam" in the industrial areas of Regensdorf

Even though it is located next to the railways, the *Islamisches Zentrum* where the monthly weekend-block seminaries of the *Islamologiekurs (IK)* take place is rather awkward to reach by public transport. It takes a foot-march of approximately fifteen minutes from a little frequented train station along dull industrial complexes in the outskirts of Zürich Regensdorf to get there. Accordingly, most participants come here in their private cars.

The marginal location is rather typical of Muslim venues up to date. Locales are mostly found in „non-places" (Augé 2000), uninhabited „unlivable" (Butler 1993) industrial and commercial zones of towns, far off the centers of public life. Accordingly, they are mostly refurbished premises that were originally built as commercial offices, warehouses, or for other industrial purposes (see also Lüddeckens et al. 2011: 4). It is thus here, in the immediate surrounding of garages, a service station and warehouses for frozen food that the *IK* endeavors, as Abdurrahman Reidegeld, one of the convert teachers of the educational program puts it, to educate the participants to become „multiplicators". Students ought to gain a profound knowledge of Islam – a knowledge that goes beyond what is taught at the mosques. The course is meant to enable the participants to spread their knowledge among other Muslims, as well as to communicate their religious interests with teachers, officials and in the public (Scharia 970-1311).

Or, as Hamit Duran, one of the participants of the course explains, he and the other participants come here because the *IK* introduces its participants to „what Islam really is in its essence" (Duran 42070-42114).[180] Duran, an engineer in his forties and father of two children grew up in Switzerland with a Turkish father and a German mother. He was brought up as Muslim. Duran and his wife have been active in Islamic community and association work for more than twenty years. They also engaged in interreligious and intercultural dialogue projects. When I started my research, Hamit Duran was one of my first informants and interviewees. Along with Mona, he drew my attention to the *IK*. Duran characterises the *IK* as an opportunity to get to know Islam „from a competent source" [„aus kompetenter Hand"](Duran 59280-59336). He emphasises how he and many Muslims in his surrounding rejoiced in the offer, as it had

> „been exactly what we had been looking for .. what we have wanted for a long time .. they [the organisers, S.L.] have really kicked down open doors."[181] (Duran 59417-59697)

As he continues, when it started in 2007, the *Islamologiekurs* was the first educational program of this sort in Switzerland, as it offers a scholarly „introduction" to Islam in German language that is

> „tailored for Muslims of the third generation and for converts [...] who want to get to know Islam on a solid basis .. more than what is taught in a mosque .. which means it [offers] basics .. the classic curriculim like 'aqīda .. fiqh.. sharī'a.. and so on .. the classical disciplines actually ...this has a great appeal on many.."[182] (Duran 41012-41857)

2.1. The location

The *IK* is held over four semesters and takes place in the schooling rooms of the spacious, multistorey *Islamic center* of the *Schweizerische Islamische Gemeinschaft (SIG),* a federation of Turkish associations.[183] The *SIG's* premises also serve as the official

[180] „was [...] der Islam überhaupt in seiner Essenz [ist]" (Duran 42070-42114).
[181] „genau das haben wir gesucht .. haben wir schon lange mal gewollt oder .. die haben dann eigentlich wirklich offene Türen eingerannt." (Duran 59417-59697)
[182] „Zugeschnitten auf Muslime aus der Drittgeneration und für Konvertiten .. die den Islam kennen lernen wollen auf einer fundierten Basis .. mehr als Moscheeunterrichtsbasis .. das sind Grundlagen 'aqīda .. fiqh .. sharī 'a und so weiter .. die klassischen Lehreinheiten eigentlich .. und das spricht sehr viele an ..."(Duran 41012-41857)
[183] While the latter three semesters of the *IK* 2009/2010 as well as the present course that has started in early 2011 are conducted in the *SIG*'s premises described above, the first *IK* 2007/2008 as well as the first semester of the course I have attended in the first half of 2009 took place in an Albanian Mosque in the industrial area of Winterthur (ZH). In Summer 2009, the *IK* dislocated to Regensdorf. The main reason was that the Albanian community was to move out of the premises due to the end of their hiring contract. Yet, the premises were judged inadequate by both the

location of the *FIDS* (Swiss Federation of Islamic cantonal umbrella organisations that was established in 2006). The building complex has a very sterile, industrial air to it. The grey-tiled corridors, the schooling rooms and offices with the white walls and the automatic roller blinds don't exactly create a homely feeling. The premises were taken over by the *SIG* in summer 2009 and refurbished. The *Islamic center* occupies three floors of the building. The premises offer gender segregated prayer rooms for men and women. The women's prayer room is connected by loudspeakers to the men's. The basement hosts men's and women's facilities where they can perform wudū'[184] and a spacious cafeteria with a buffet service during lunchtime run by the *SIG*. On the first floor there are several conference and schooling rooms of various size.

2.2. The lessons

Lessons are taught in a spacious schooling room on the first floor. It has room for about eighty persons. The room is furnished with three rows of two-seat desks. Usually gender segregated seating is observed at the desks. Lessons start at about nine o' clock in the morning and are scheduled to last ninety minutes. This adds up to an average total of eight to nine hours of teaching a day. Teaching is interrupted for prayer and eating breaks. The atmosphere among the participants and teachers of the *Islamologiekurs* is relaxed. They call each other and the teachers Amir Zaidan, Abdurrahman Reidegeld and Kerim Edipoglu by their first names, or address each other as „brother" and „sister". As teaching method, frontal instruction prevails. It is supported by power point, black board and overhead projector. Teachers Amir Zaidan, Abdurrahman Reidegeld and Kerim Edipoglu prepare the lessons according to fixed modules. Lessons follow scripts that are available to the students. The course has a school classy air. However, teaching styles of Amir, Abdurrahman and Kerim are friendly and jovial. Often, they intersperse

organizers and the participants for several other reasons, too. Thus, as the Albanian centre was structurally oriented towards its predominantly male clientele, it hosted a spacious room for ritual ablutions, a huge prayer room and a well frequented cafeteria for men, yet lacked equivalent infrastructure and facilities for the women making up more than half of the *IK*'s participants in terms of numbers. Further, the participants of the course repeatedly frowned upon the „unislamic" behaviour of the Albanian regulars, as they mostly used the premises to meet in the cafeteria and drink coffee, smoke and watch television.

[184] Wuḍū' is a mandatory ablution that is done to achieve the individual's state of ṭahāra (ritual purity) necessary to do ṣalāt(prayer) which follows a proscribed procedure which is also the subject of the *IK*'s introductory module on *Fiqhu l-'Ibadat* [sic] which is related in German as „Gottesdienstliche Handlungen" (Acts of Worship). Wuḍū' is legally validated with the individuals' conscious intention (niyya) of performing wuḍū'. It entails the washing of the face from ear to ear, rinsing the inner mouth, sniffing water and blowing it out, washing hands up to the elbows, and washing feet up to the ankle. To do wuḍū', women take off their headscarfs to clean their face from ear to ear. To do this, they have to be sheltered from male gazes, as the female hair, their ears and neck are deemed to be part of their 'awra (shame, lack), a bodily area which must be protected from unallowed gazes.

the rather dry, demanding and abstract scholarly subjects with jokes and anecdotes. Their instructions are repeatedly interrupted by questions of apprehension, interjections and interventions from the audience. Sometimes lively debates evolve. To wind down the long teaching days and to also let the subjects taught settle, daily modules are finished off with a colloquium hour, where the participants are allowed to pose questions concerning the subject matters treated. Often these units are used to discuss wider ranging questions that deal with Islamic practices and moral and ethical considerations that affect the students in their personal or everyday lives. For example, they want to know if it is okay to attend a company party where alcohol is consumed, or if it is allowed to play violent games on their computers. Also, daily news such as the situation in Palestine or the minaret initiative that affect the students as part of the umma are repeatedly touched upon during those question times.

Many of the participants create digital recordings of the lessons so they can listen and memorise the subjects taught. Some of them listen to them when they drive in their car, when they do housework or before they go to sleep. The organizers of the *IK* recommend a daily average of thirty to sixty minutes of follow-up work.

Each weekend module is terminated by a voluntary written test on the subjects taught in the previous module. The students that pass the tests are credited with *ects* points that are listed on a diploma that each student obtains by the end of his completed training. The attended semesters (which are scheduled to amount to 90 semester hours) are credited with 18 points. The credits given are not officially validated. However, Zaidan aims to establish *Islamologie* as an educational program recognized by European state universities in the near future.[185]

In late 2008, Hamit Duran described the *IK* as a unique offer. Meanwhile, similar forms of education and curricula have become popular and are now being distributed on a grass root level. Besides, as I have been told and have noticed during fieldwork, the scripts available at the course are widely used as basis of teaching in smaller mosques and privately organized learning circles.

2.3. What is Islamologie? Its history

The *Islamologiekurs* is an educational program that is developed and organised by the *Islamologisches Institut* in Vienna. The institute was founded in 2000 and is since then headed by Amir Zaidan who has also developed the curriculum taught at the *IK*. Zaidan, in his late forties, is not only the head of the private *Islamologisches Institut*, but also

[185] see information on the homepage of the Islamologisches Institut: http://www.islamologie.info/node/15. (07.02.2012)

director of the *Islamisches Religionspädagogisches Institut (IRPI)* in Vienna (est. 2003), a body of the officially recognized *Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich (IGGiÖ,* est. 1979*)* that is in charge of the continual further training of 350 Islamic pedagogues teaching in public Austrian schools today.[186]

Since 2001, Zaidan offers the training program *Islamologie* together with his co-teachers Ali Barhoum, the German convert Abdurrahman Reidegeld, and Kerim Edipoglu. Syrian born Zaidan came to Germany in the early eighties for his studies of German language, mathematics and synthetic technology. Before he founded his own institute, he was a long year member of the students' association *Muslim Studenten Vereinigung in Deutschland* (MSV) until the early nineties. During the nineties, he got engaged in various interreligious and intercultural projects and absolved a four year correspondence course of sharī'a and uṣūl ad-dīn (principles of Islamic belief) at the *Institut Européen des Sciences Humaines (IESH)* in Château Chinon in France.[187]

In 1997 he was the founding president of the *Islamische Religionsgemeinschaft Hessen (IRH)*. In the early 2000's, the *IHR* aimed to establish Islamic education in public schools, yet the request was turned down by the ministry of culture in Hessen (see below). In 2003, Zaidan and the *Islamologisches Institut* moved to Vienna.

The *Islamologiekurs,* as Amir Zaidan tells me, is sort of a side product of the translational work he took up in the nineties (Amir 6025-10077).[188] Besides their teaching activities, Zaidan and his partners at the *Islamologisches Institute* started to work on an *Islamologische Enzyklopädie* in early 2000. The *Enzyklopädie* will comprehend the revised versions of the scripts that were developed in and used for the course.[189] In the Swiss classes, Amir Zaidan teaches along Reidegeld and Edipoglu.

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[186] Since 1912, the Muslim community is officially recognised in Austria. Since 1982, Islamic education takes place on a voluntary basis in public schools, yet only 45 of pupils with a Muslim background attend the religious classes (see Schmidinger 2007).

[187] The *MSV* as well as the *IESH* are affiliated to the *Muslim Brothers* (*MB*). In Europe, the *MB* or affiliated intellectualist and activist milieus have been predominantly active in establishing students organisations, Muslim unions and educational institutions in the early nineties at the inception of an Islamic revival. They founded organisations like the *IESH*, or the *Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE)*. In Switzerland, associations historically or structurally related to the *MB* are mainly based in the French speaking part of Switzerland, such as the *Association Culturelle des Femmes Musulmanes en Suisse* in La Chaux-de-Fonds, or the Genevan *Centre Islamique* run by Hani Ramadhan. In her comprehensive work on the *MB* in Europe, Maréchal proposes to understand the *MB* more as an intellectualist and activist mileu than an ideologically tight organisation (see Maréchal 2008).

[188] 1994, while he was enrolled at the *IESH*, Zaidan started to translate classical Islamic texts into German. 1996 he published his first work *Fiqhu l-'Ibadat. Einführung in die islamischen gottesdienstlichen Handlungen*, which was followed in 1997 by a book on *Al-'Aqidah.* In the course of his translational work, Zaidan developed, as he relates, the desire to undertake a translation of the Quran.

[189] As the *Islamologisches Institut*, as Amir Zaidan emphasises, does not receive external funding,

Reidegeld and Edipoglu are rather typical exponents of new Islamic forms that aim at education, awareness building and negotiating Muslim's moral and orthopractic interests vis-à-vis the public that have been emerging ever since the nineties in Europe. They have been born and raised in Germany and are intellectuals and academics with graduate or post-graduate degrees obtained from German universities. They have also spent time in Islamic countries. They are competent in classical Arabic, and they have studied or are familiar with scholarly Islamic disciplines. While Edipoglu, around forty, holds a doctorate in Islamic studies from the University of Tübingen[191] and has grown up in Germany with his parents of Macedonian origin, Reidegeld, in his late forties, has studied Islamic sciences, religious sciences and Malaialogie in Cologne and has also extensively studied in Islamic universities, where he had specialized in uṣūl al-fiqh. He has spent a longer period in Oman. Currently, Reidegeld is writing a doctoral thesis on the concept of ruḥ (spirit) as it is used in the Quran and in classical ṣūfī terminology at the University of Cologne. Reidegeld has also published a comprehensive handbook on Islam that is widely distributed (Reidegeld 2005).

Against the teachers' original expectation, the *IK* proved a huge success. Amir Zaidan estimates that until the date of our interview in Winter 2009, more than 2000 people from Germany, Austria and Switzerland have visited their courses. While the course was first held in Berlin and Frankfurt, it is by now offered in Berlin, Bielefeld, Bremen, Cologne, Munich, Stuttgart, Wiesbaden, as well as Innsbruck, Vienna and Zürich (Amir 9383-10917).

Zaidan's affiliation to the *MSV* and the *IESH*, both associated to the *Muslim Brothers (MB)* was repeatedly critically observed by media. In his function as chair of the *Islamische Religionsgemeinschaft Hessen* he was observed by constitutional protection agencies in Hessen.[192] Likewise, in Austria, both Zaidan as a professional person as well as the *IRPI* as an institution have been in the focus of medias' and experts' critical scrutiny for their arguable endorsement of fundamentalist readings of Islam potentially in conflict with a secular constitution and liberal values, notably gender equality and female agency.[193] However, Zaidan emphasises the ideological, financial and political

editor and printing costs were covered by the prepayment and donations of course participants who thus enabled the realisation of the ambitious project (Amir 10695-10946)

[191] Kerim Edipoglu has written his dissertation on „Islamisierung der Soziologie oder Soziologisierung des Islam? Indigenisierungsansätze in Malaysia, Iran und der arabischen Welt" which was defended in 2006. In the middle of the nineties, he translated Maududi's work „Islam ke Nizam Hayat" [sic] into German. See Maududi 1995.

[192] As Maréchal holds, the *MB* is persistently associated with the image of „troublemakers" (Maréchal 2008:1). As Maréchal continues, both media experts and political reports (as well as right wing actors) use the term *Muslim Brother* as an empty chiffre to insinuate a security and integration threat without yet filling up the label with substantial characteristica (ibid.:5).

[193] Zaidan became notorious in the German media in 2000 as the signer of the so-called „Kamel

independency of himself as a person as well as the *Islamologisches Institut* vis-à-vis the participants of the course, media, and on his homepage (Amir 2678-4120).

2.4. The *Islamologiekurs* in comparison to the *IZRS*

While Zaidan, Reidegeld and Edipoglu are slightly older than the committee of the salafi converts heading the *Islamischer Zentralrat Schweiz (IZRS)*, their social and intellectual profile is to some extent quite similar. In the Muslim field, they all dispose of the double cultural-religious capital of both being recognized intellectuals due to their European academic background, as well as being recognized as Muslim scholars, or, at least, competent mediators of „Islamic scholarly knowledge" by their Muslim students as they have spent longer time at Islamic universities and have a good command of Arabic (which is also a rare competence among Swiss Muslims, as most are of south eastern European background). While the intellectualist outlook of the Muslim Brotherhood has dominated Islamic revivalism in Europe since the early nineties, the arabising outlook of salafism has come to compete with the former since the millennium.

When I started my fieldwork in late 2008, the *Islamologiekurs* was the first project to bring together young Muslims of various ethnic backgrounds and converts together along „purely" Islamic criteria. It was only in autumn 2009 that the salafi *Islamischer Zentralrat Schweiz* was to appear as an additional offer to forge an „over-ethnic" – or, rather, a „de-ethnicised" Muslim identity.

Both the *IK* and the *IZRS* share their desire to construct a form of „being Muslim" that goes „beyond what is taught at the mosque". Both the *IK* and the *IZRS* aim at transcending ethnic particularities in their effort to forge a Muslim umma along religious and moral criteria. Also, both offers define „being Muslim" as a matter of personal choice, a self-conducted search and moral self-cultivation that is somewhat detached from ethnic backgrounds and, thus, from „being a born (migrant)

Fatwa". In 1998, as a member of the *IRH*'s fiqh council, he had signed a fatwā – an Islamic legal opinion – that was written at the request of a number of female Muslim pupils over 18 on behalf of their upcoming participation in a 14-day school trip to Spain. Drawing on a Prophetic hadith, the consultary document argued that Muslim women were not allowed to participate in long distance trips (extending the distance of 81 km which is commonly understood as a camel's daily travel capacity) entailing several overnight stays without the company of a maḥram (Islamic term for unmarriageable, male kin). While the fatwā was presented to the school authorities concerned, it was never published. Yet, in 2000, when the ministry of culture of Hessen was to decide over a request by the *IRH* for official Islamic school education, German daily *Taz* published the fatwā that was said to circulate among Muslim parents. Arguably as a consequence of the negative headlines and subsequent monitoring by the constitutional state agencies of Hessen, the ministy of culture turned down the *IRH*s request for Islamic education in public schools. See Ahmad Senyurt, „Bei Kilometer 82 endet die Freiheit", *Taz* 13.07.2000. See also a reader on „Political Islam" in Austria published by Larise and Schmidinger 2008.

Muslim“. In this respect, both the *IK* and the *IZRS* are thus attractive for „new born“ Muslims and converts of either gender. Existing research on the institutional affiliation of converts to Islam affirms the appeal of Muslim forms that transcend ethnic belonging and that emphasize the self-chosen subjective momentum of „being Muslim“ for converts to Islam (Allievi 1998: 123f., 265f.; Roald 2004: 113ff.).

Secondly, also the need for social distinction from „merely traditional“, „ethnic“ forms and structures of „being Muslim“ is tangible in both offers, as they both critisise the „un-reflected“„low-key“ Islam of small ethnic mosques in Switzerland. They both reject the authority of local imams (as being authoritative, „un-taught“, badly educated and „not knowledgeable of Swiss language, culture and political structures“).

However, while the *Islamologiekurs* proposes in an „integrationist“ position in terms of Muslim politics, the salafi *IZRS* follow „segregational“ aims. This becomes already clear in terms of aesthetics and communication: While the *IK* was not very strong on representing themselves in an aesthetic and communicative manner attractive to young (urban) Muslims eager at distinguishing themselves from their familial and social background, the *IZRS* is very professional in terms of internet representation and the use of social media. The salafi outlook and the „radical chique“ of the salafi aethetics latter is especially attractive for a young audience eager to express utmost contrast to both society and the familial background. At least aesthetically, it does not distance itself from violent and terrorist forms of Islam it takes an ambiguous position – which may also be attractive for young Muslims eager to differ.

Those differing outlooks can therefore most easily be detected in terms of the appearance of the respective protagonists: While Blancho and the Illi couple as well as a number of *IZRS*-members dress in an ostentations salafi manner, Zaidan, Reidegeld and Edipoglu are dressed discreetly and in a „western-style“. According to the *IK*, women ought to dress properly and preferably veil. However, they are very strongly dissuaded from wearing a niqab or burka-style gown.

Also, in their respective efforts to detach „being Muslim“ from a „merely ethnic“ form of belonging to a self-chosen identity, the *IZRS* and the *IK* take quite differing outlooks. Hence, the *IZRS* and its convert protagonists follow a salafi form of Islam that emphasises the „imitatio Muhammadi“ as a means of moral self-cultivation. Here, the break from ethnic forms of Islam is more tangible and quite expressedly asked for. Thus, salafi Muslims focus on proper Muslim orthopraxy in the prophetic tradition; it is more important than rational adaption of existing Muslim forms as propagated by the *IK*. In contrast, the *IK* – being close to the internationalist Muslim brotherhood – emphasises ijtihād, the principles of Muslim theology, and

the need to „adapt“ Islam to the present and the social and cultural surrounding. However, it does not demand the ritual and aesthetic break from cultural particularities as long as they do not oppose to sharī‘a. Thus, while the *IK* follows a „rationalist“ line and does not want to „arabise“ its students, the *IZRS* follows a salafi-hanbali line that orients itself towards the habitual imitation of the prophet which amounts to an „arabisation“ in terms of aesthetics, orthopraxy and its refusal of theology.

Those differing outlooks on „being Muslim“ also spell out in the respective political interests of the *IK* and the *IZRS*. Hence, the *IK* aims at becoming a recognized education program within European higher education. It aims at the social and political inclusion of Muslims and the recognition of Islam as sort of a „Landeskirche“ within civil society and stately institutions. By its emphasis of the „rationality“ of Islam, the *IK* acknowledges modern and secular forms of social, moral and legal authorisation. It wants to be recognized as a conservative value community within civil society. In its understanding of Islam as a religious community within Swiss society, it thus comes close to the Swiss or German model of secularity. This explains also the *IK*s willingness to „compromise“ in certain matters, such as „veiling“ in public institutions. It is thus telling that the *FIDS* (close to the *IK*-program) turned down the request for help of a veiled Muslim pupil in Thurgau in summer 2009. The girl had been ordered to take off her headscarf during lessons by school authorities. The incident took place shortly before the referendum on the minaret. The *FIDS* recommended the girl to comply and take off the headscarf in order not to cause any negative news. However, while the *FIDS* was eager not to irritate the public, the *IZRS* was to take over the case and help the girl. The young woman moved to canton Berne with her mother, where schools allow Muslim girls to wear the headscarf (see in more detail further down in section 7). Thus the *IK* is characterized by its understanding of Islam as a value conservative moral force and religious community as part of civil society and public institutions – similar to other recognized religious confessions.

Different from this model of Islam as a „Landeskirche“, the *IZRS* can be understood to hold a rather „communitarist“ understanding of Islam. It aims to establish a „strong minority“ with its own moral universe, its own institutions, its own „way of life“ protected by the legal frame of freedom of religion. However, preferably, education and everyday-life is organized privately in order not to „compromise“ with public institutions. The *IZRS* is thus more oriented towards establishing a small, close, segregated community, comparable to a free church, sectarian model of religious belonging.

While the *IK* represents the internationalist, „rationalist" understanding of Islam that was spread since the 1970ies by Muslim brothers in European countries, the *IZRS* is a Muslim form that gained popularity only recently. This „communitarist", sect-like salafi form of Islam answers to the (neo)racist seclusion and problematisation of Muslims in European society (see chapter 1). With its contrastive aesthetic program and its (seemingly) „anti-liberal",„anti-secular" demeanor, the *IZRS* takes up identitarian assumptions about a clear symbolic difference between Switzerland and Islam (enlightenment versus tradition, agency versus submission, emancipation versus female subordination). However, given the highly subjective nature of religious belonging, the emphasis on a „being Muslim" as a proper and distinctive „identity", betrays its eminently (post)modern and secular nature.

From an external perspective, given the clear differences between the aims and goals of the *IK* and the *IZRS*, one would expect a rather different clientele. However, during my fieldwork, a lot of interviewees and people I spoke to at one venue or the other, showed their sympathy for both institutions. Often, students of the *IK* also frequented events organised by the *IZRS* or were to become members of the latter. Hence, while many Muslims I spoke to did not necessarily identify with the salafi outlook of the *IZRS*, they supported the councils' call for Muslim empowerment vis-à-vis public discrimination and their demands of equal religious rights.

2.5. What is Islamologie? Its outlook

The *Islamologiekurs* presents a basic introduction to the traditional curriculum of sunni scholarly knowledge (Amir 14482-14961) that it aims, in the long run, to offer as an educational program officially recognized by European higher education systems (see above). Teaching modules comprise *fiqhu l-'ibadat* [sic] (precepts of worship), *al-'aqidah* [sic] (creed), introduction to *schari'a* [sic], *ath-thaqafatu l'islamiyya* [sic] (Islamic culture, world view), *'ulum ul-qur'an* [sic] (quranic sciences), *'ulum al-hadith* [sic] (science of prophetic tradition), *usul al-fiqh* [sic] (basics of legal reasoning), *al-qawa'id al-fiqhiyya* [sic] (rules of legal interpretation), family law, dietary rules and dress norms, economic law, Islamic contracts, insurances, an introduction to Islamic history, and interreligious comparison. In January 2009, when public concerns due to the global financial crisis triggered by the bursting of the U.S. housing bubble in 2007 were high, many of the participants attended an extra module on Islamic finance and banking which explained to the participants how financial capitalism and speculation that caused the financial collapse function. The course discussed possible alternatives of banking and finance based on an Islamic ethics of economics.

In the course, scholarly terms and concepts are mostly not translated into German. Instead, the teachers prefer to present translations of the semantic field of the respective terms that are followed by definitions of their use in Islamic tradition proper. For example, the Islamic term dīn is not translated as faith or belief, as is often done both by Muslims and non-Muslim experts, but is circumscribed as

> „norms and guidelines which have been prescribed by ALLAH (ta'ala) [sic] which offer the frame of reference and agency for a god-pleasing life. Inside the scope of those guiding poles, Muslims are free to act and choose."[194] (Skript *„Al-'Aqidah. Einführung in die Iman-Inhalte",* 16, see also Amir 36534-37362).

Author Zaidan reflects the problem of translation of Islamic terms into German language. As he argues, by translating dīn with „Religion" or „Glaube" [belief/faith] as it is usually done, the proper Islamic meaning of dīn cannot be conveyed adequately. Thus, Amir's own Islamologic methodology provides a definition of the respective terms that starts with a linguistic definition and the semantic context in the Arabic language, which is based on the reknown classic „*Lisanu l-arab*" [sic] by Arab linguist scholar Ibnu –mandhur [sic] (died 1312). Starting from there, he bases the introduction of the specific Islamic notions of the respective terms on the definition given in the classical compendium „*Nuzhat-ul-a'yunin-nawazir fi 'ilmil-wudschuhi wan-nazair*" [sic] by Iman Ibnul-dschauzi [sic] (died 1201) (Script *„Al-'Aqidah. Einführung in die Iman-Inhalte",* especially the opening remarks on page 11-13 and 24). In a further step, he renders them into a language intelligible to the contemporary context and life-worlds of Muslims.

The course espouses a rational approach to Islam.[195] Thus, it emphasizes the need of Islamic traditions and Muslims to be progressive and adapt to the challenges posed by

[194] „Die von ALLAH (ta'ala) [sic] vorgegebenen Normen und Richtlinien, die den Orientierungs- und Handlungsrahmen für ein gottgefälliges Leben vorgeben, innerhalb dessen die Muslime frei entscheiden und agieren." (Skript *„Al-'Aqidah. Einführung in die Iman-Ihalte ",* 16, see also Amir 36534-37362).

[195] The general outlook espoused by the *IK* points to the intellectualist and activist milieu of the *MB* its teachers are close to. Intellectualist milieus are characterized by a modernist and reformist approach to Islam which goes back to Islamic reformism which emerged in the last quarter of the nineteenth century (see Schulze 1990). Appealing to the use of rational thought (fikr), they take in a rationalist position, emphasising the „rational" nature of Islamic dīn, both in terms of creed ('aqīda) and in matters of moral and legal precepts (sharī'a). They take in a critical stance vis-à-vis traditional scholarly authority as developed in the fiqh madhāhib without necessarily rejecting it completely, yet they espouse ijtihād in order to adapt Islamic practice to social circumstance, so as to „make it easy" for believers, instead of taqlīd (following the rulings of an established fiqh madhhab). Since the nineties, MB affiliated milieus in Europe understand Islam as a „religion of the middle", a religion that „makes it easy" for Muslims to practice it, and open to dialogue with European society. Their projects are oriented towards educating young Muslims in Europe and aiding their integration as European citizens (see for example Tareq Ramadhan). For the intellectualist and activist milieu of the Muslim Brothers in Europe see Maréchal 2008.

the present situation. As a means for internal reform, the *IK* proposes the need and possibility for ijtihād, independent legal reasoning based on the sources of Quran and Sunna (Skript Scharia, 91-98).[196] Thus, given this „rational" approach, in the module on „asch-schari'a"[sic], it places its momentum on the maqāṣid ush-sharī'a[197] (aims of the

[196] Ijtihād means literally „(self) exertion". It is a terminus technicus in Islamic law, firstly, until the ninth century, for the use of individual reasoning in general and later, in a restricted meaning, for the use of the method of reasoning by analogy (qiyās). Individual reasoning, both in its arbitrary and its systematically disciplined form, was freely used by the ancient schools of law. It was 9th century legal scholar shāf'ī to reject the use of discretionary reasoning in religious law on principle, and to identify the legitimate function of ijtihād with the use of qiyās the drawing of conclusions by the method of analogy, or systematic reasoning, from the Qur'an and the sunna of the Prophet. This important innovation prevailed in the theory of Islamic law. From about the 9th century the idea rose that only the great scholars of the past, and not the epigones, had the right to ijtihād, and the principle of the infallibility of earlier scholarly decrees was established (ijmā') which came to replace the application of ijtihād. This amounted to the demand for taqlīd, the unquestioning acceptance of the doctrines of established schools and authorities. However, the question of ijtihād and taqlīd continued to be discussed by Muslim scholars. The appeal to reapply ijtihād intensified from the 18th century onwards, among reformist individuals and schools of thought who advocated a return to the pristine purity of Islam upheld by the thirst generation of the Islamic umma, such as the salafiyya, and modernist voices from the last decades of the 19th century onwards which laid the emphasis on adapting Islamic normativity to contemporary rationalism and modernism. Both tendencies reject traditional taqlīd. see *EI*^{2}, „Idjtihād"(2012); Johansen 1999; Hallaq 1997.

[197] The maqāṣid ush-sharī'a („the aims or purposes of the law") is a concept used in legal theory (uṣūl al-fiqh) and refers to the idea that the sharī'a is a system that encompasses aims or purposes. The concept of maqāṣid has its roots in early attempts at rationalising both theology and law, notably mu'tazilī approaches which hold that God's decrees are subject to, rather than the origin of, the ideas of good and evil, which ultimately backs the assertion that God is compelled to act in the interest of humankind. From such a perspective, the sharī'a is not merely a collection of irrational rulings. Claiming that the sharī'a has maqāṣid is, therefore, a statement about the rational nature of the sharī'a. Most sunnī fiqh theorists subscribe to the view that the shar'īa has aims. One of the principal purposes, as formulated by the classical theorist of the concept of maqāṣid ash-sharī'a is 14th centrury scholar ash-Shāṭibī, which is also quoted in the script of the IK (see Skript Einführung in die Schari'a, 41-42) is that „the laws were instituted only for the benefit of the believers in this world and the next" (al-Muwaffaqāt). According to this understanding, the laws are only the means of achieving God's aims and intentions at nurturing human's wellbeing. Thus, if specific particular rulings of the law (aḥkām) compromise what has been worked out as the aims of the sharī'a, a number of theorists of maqāṣid argued that the law can be set aside or modified so that God's intentions might be fulfilled. The maqāṣid are formulated on the underlying principle of supporting the good things (maslaḥa) and rejecting the harmful (mafsada). The maqāṣid are threefold. They aim to protect the aḍ-ḍarūriyāt (the „necessary"), which are religion (ad-dīn); human life (an-nafs); intellect (al-'aql); offspring (an-nasl); wealth (al-māl) and integrity (al-'ird). Secondly, they aim at supporting the al-ḥājiyāt (the "needed"), which are, for example the alleviation of mandatory prayer during travel; the alleviation of mandatory prayer for the sick; the alleviation of fast (ṣawm) for travelers. Thirdly, the maqāṣid aim at supporting the at-taḥsiniyāt (the „embellishing"), which are for example the solidarity and support among the community (see Skript Einführung in die Schari'a, 37-48). While discourses on maqāṣid have been rather marginal until the 19th century, the ethicising and rationalising moment of the maqāṣid and the underlying concepts of maslaḥa (the good things) have appealed to modern reformist and intellectualist movements. Ever since the Islamic revival in the late seventies and up until today the maqāṣid have gained momentum in intellectualist and activist discourse as a means to historise and reformulate sharī'a as a source of ethical normativity adaptable to historical

sharī'a) to introduce the participants to the general and over-arching ethos of Islamic dīn. Accordingly, emphasis is laid on „explaining" and making sense of Islamic practices for both the individual believer's and the wider community's and society's well-being and benefit. As intellectuals and academics, they at times draw on extraneous knowledge forms to authorize moral and legal practices (therapeutic, sociological, biological), especially in practices problematized in the public, such as female veiling.[198]

For example, the course repeatedly touches upon public problematisations of female discrimination, such as in inheritance matters or concerning clothing precepts. To account of gender differing obligations and rights in legal and moral precepts, the course draws on the Islamic concept of „gender equity" which has gained wide currency among Muslim intellectuals, and is widely rehearsed among young Muslims active in Muslim revival movements (see Weibel 2000; Jouili 2011; Nökel 2002; Roald 2006; Amir-Moazami 2007). Gender equity proposes an equivalence of men and women in terms of their moral status, yet authorizes differing rights and responsibilities for men and women by biologistic reasoning. Differing legal precepts in family and inheritance law pertaining to men or women are translated into gender differing „duties" and „responsibilities" towards their families that are said to be in accordance with their biological sex. Further, the *IK* introduces an Islamic concept of gendered work distribution – according to Islamic family law, men are meant to support their families financially – as an antidote against what is problematized as a loss of responsibility and mutual solidarity in contemporary „individualist" and „liberal" society which puts women, especially mothers, in a doubly disadvantaged position ('Awra 3158-4372; Scharia 36440-41894). In a similar vein, advancing a critique of loss of social security in contemporary individualist and capitalist societies faced with unemployment and loss of

changes, such as that intellectuals in the last quarter of the twentieth century have come to include liberal regulatives of „freedom" and „equality" into the catalogue of the protectable goods of the maqāṣid (Rogler 2009). Thus, the discussion of the maqāṣid interacted with global ethical and value debates, such as environmentalism, or a critique on financial capitalism etcetera. (ibid.). Thus, the maslaḥa has been translated to modern universalism and human rights, to come to stand in legal and intellectual debates as an equivalent of a democratic societies' notion of the common good (maslaḥa 'amma) (see Salvatore and Eickelman 2004). The script of the *IK* continues to discuss the characteristics of sharī'a (khaṣṣā'iṣ ash-sharī'a) which are its god-orientation (ar-rabbāniyya); its moral and ethical outlook (al-aḫlāqiyya); its all-encompassing scope (ash-shumūliyya); its realism (al-wāq'iyya); its humanity (al-insāniyya); and its balanced character (al-mutanāsiqa). (ibid.: 49-72).

[198] Yet, the teachers, having differing backgrounds, also had differing preferences in terms of authorising Muslim practices. Thus, while Amir Zaidan, given his religious socialisation in circles affiliated to the *Muslim Brothers* in the seventies and eighties, had a rather rationalist approach, with a preference for „scientific" proof (see Roald 2004 on the „rationalist" approach of the *MB:* 116-117*)*, it was notable that Abdurrahman Reidegeld, given his scholarly knowledge in classical Islamic disciplines, especially classical sufism and ethics ('ilm al-akhlāq) had a more traditionalist outlook, emphasising the virtue ethical dimension of „being Muslim" as a matter of developing inner dispositions.

familial solidarity, the course proposes the consideration of what is introduced as an Islamic concept of wider familial responsibility, legally foreseen by forms like waqf (private foundations) to support a wider net of relatives in their daily lives (also Scharia 36440-41894). The general outlook of the course espouses the principle of talfīq, understood in the sense that individual believers do not have to adhere to and follow the legal and moral judgements of one fiqh madhab exlusively, but can consult and combine any Islamic legal and moral expertise as they are all recognized as authoritative by the ahl as-sunna wa l-jamā'a (Islamologie 31277-34124).[199] As the course introduces and acknowledges the authority of traditional fiqh methodology developed by the madhāhib, its teachers take in a highly critical stance toward what they repeatedly term as „wahhabi" or „salafi" interpretations of Islam.[200] Yet, among the participants this self-positioning as well as the positioning of others along this category was not as clear. When it comes to characterize their Muslim affiliation, the majority of the participants had, if asked, said that they were sunnī, yet for none of them it seemed of specific relevance, at least not in the context of the *IK*. Some of the participants with a Turkish or Balkanian background called themselves „hanefi", in accordance with the eighth century founder of the legal tradition Abu Hanifa. There was also an elderly woman with Iranian shiite background. Two of the convert participants had a sufi-background. One was affiliated to the Naqshbandiyya, another woman with a beautiful turban was a long year member of the Murabitun. And, last but not least, a handful of non-Muslims and not yet Muslims attended the course.

For most of the converts I have spoken to in the course as elsewhere, belonging to a specific fiqh tradition is of little interest, as they understand it as a traditional category dependent on regional, national or ethnic origin which does not apply to them as they are not born Muslims. For many, it was only in the course of the *IK* that they familiarized themselves with the concept of madhāhib.

Most participants were not familiar with or seemed rather confused about the teachers' repeated rebuttal of „wahhabis" and „salafis". Thus, it was very popular among the younger participants to frequently consult internet sites of German convert Pierre Vogel (alias Abu Hamza), such as „Wahre Religion"[201] or „Einladung zum Paradies"[202].

[199] The legal notion talfīq connotes the bringing together of certain elements of two or more legal precepts or rulings of (differing) sunnī fiqh schools. Components of rulings are selected along rational criteria, on the basis of their suitability for changing social conditions. See *EI*^{2}, „Talfīq" (2012).

[200] *MB* affiliated circles tend to be critical of the salafists' outright rejection of madhāhib and their overemphasis on the „literalist" imitation of the prophet in favor of ḥadīth while neglecting the Quran and legal and ethical hermeneutics developed by fiqh scholars of later generations.

[201] The website „Wahre Religion" is taylored for converts and „new borns" as it hosts information of how to „learn Islam" [sic], sermons, converts' testimonies, and videos of mass conversions. See

Likewise, a number of the participants also visited events organized in Switzerland starring salafi preacher Vogel. One of the female convert participants even converted via the help hotline of „Einladung zum Paradies“, recalling how she had repeated the shahāda[203] after the man on the telephone. Yet, in the course of the educational program, as I came to understand, a number of both converts and „secondos“ and „secondas“ gradually came to hold a critical stance towards Vogel and his outlook. Thus, Rebecca, a convert in her early thirties, relates that while she used to consult his websites a lot „in the beginning“, she had more and more come to the conclusion that Vogel's approach was „too harsh“ to her liking, as it did not respect each individuals' own way of becoming and being Muslim. Rebecca mentions for example that the sites are very strict in condemning Muslim women who find it difficult from abstaining from their habit to put on make up, or Muslims who have not quit smoking, while she finds it important to give each Muslim „the time“ and freedom to develop and decide for themselves (Rebecca 25133-25368).

3. The missionary aim: Educate self-assertive Muslims of diverse ethnic origins, affiliations & differing languages to perceive the „plurality of Islam“

> „We show them those traditions .. where they come from .. how they are structured .. how they are practiced .. how are their methods of deriving .. in the end each and everyone has to decide for themselves what I want to do .. yes do I want to follow [...] they learn to differentiate .. this alone that they learn to differentiate and to accept the plurality this is a competence one does not learn in a mosque .. a conventional mosque .. because one is made familiar with one tradition .. one is taught this is how it works and no way other [...] here they see I have a choice.“[204] (Amir 31718-33818)

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under http://diewahrereligion.de/jwplayer/index.html. (20.03.2012)

[202] The website „Einladung zum Paradies“ (its name alludes to the Islamic concept of da'wa, literally „call“, „invitation“, which means to „call“ or „invite“ non-Muslims and Muslims to (re)orient their lives to Islam) represented an association of the same name and was presided by German convert Sven Lau. In late November 2011, the association dissolved, as public and official resistance against the association's request to build a mosque in Mönchengladbach was repeatedly turned down by authorities. Equally, the web site has ceased to operate.

[203] The shahada is the Islamic creed and it forms the first pillar of Islam: Ashhadu an lā ilāha illa 'llahu wa muḥammadun rasulu 'llahi. („I testify that there is no God but God and Muhammad is his messenger“). Spoken with honest intention, it is understood as the act of conversion.

[204] „Wir zeigen ihnen diese Traditionen woher sie kommen .. wie sie aufgebaut sind .. wie sie vertreten werden wie sie ihre Methoden haben mit denen sie ableiten .. so dass am Ende jeder muss für sich selbst entscheiden was mache ich damit .. ja will ich dann diese befolgen .. [...] sie lernen auch zu differenzieren .. diese Sache alleine dass ich lerne zu differenzieren .. die Vielfalt zu akzeptieren ..das ist eine Fähigkeit die man so in einer Moschee .. einer üblichen Moschee nicht lernt weil man nur mit einer Tradition man weiss so geht es anders nicht [...].“(Amir 31718-33818)

It is in the very first lesson of the second Swiss course in January 2009, on a cold winter Saturday morning, after introducing himself as a person and his team, that Amir Zaidan familiarises the participants with the aim, content and procedure of the *Islamologiekurs*. He introduces it as a methodology differing from what is offered in traditional „mosques" in several respects. His aim, as he lays out, is to convey what he calls Islamic studies („Islamwissenschaften") in German language, whereas in mosques, as Amir relates, teaching often takes place in Arabic or Turkish. Yet, as Amir continues, also the content of his teaching is quite different. Thus, while mosques do what the teacher calls „preaching" as a means of „emotional" exhortation (see also Amir 31865-32006), the course takes in a scholarly approach towards Islam, as it presents its participants an introduction to the traditional curriculum of Islamic knowledge (Islamologiekurs 5173-7652). Thus, in an interview with me, Amir sees his program as a complementing offer for the participants to what he calls „traditional" teaching done in mosques. While in mosques and families, Islam is taught „unreflected", in his course, participants are meant to get a reflective knowledge where they learn to „differentiate".

3.1. „Tidy up", or: Educating self-assertive, reflective Muslims …

As Amir holds, his scholarly approach to Islam is meant to foster a „reflective" competence among the participants of diverse ethnic and familial backgrounds. When I asked him to specify what he meant, he explains it as the competence to „differentiate" between what is a contingent „tradition" that is dependent on specific contexts and specific rulings as they are espoused by a particular fiqh madhab or by a specific cultural group of Muslims, and what are the valid sources of normativity and essential „Islamic values" that ought to substantiate those differing customs and practices (Amir 34541-34623). This „differentiating" capacity is, as Amir continues, a valuable competence. Given the course's espousal of the concept of talfīq, Amir emphasizes the individual participants' „choice" to „decide" „each and everyone" what do „I want to do" in terms of following any legal or moral precept of sunnī scholars, instead of following only the legal tradition they happen to know best as it is espoused in their families and close social surrounding.

Thus, Amir tells me, a lot of participants are here to „tidy up" and „find an orientation". He characterizes them as young men and women who have lost touch of their Muslim background, yet who, not unlike converts on a religious „quest", come to question the „meaning of their life" in their adolescence and have thus „rediscovered Islam for themselves" and want to get to know it. Yet, as he puts it, they look around in their Muslim familial and social surrounding, and ask themselves „what do I see", as they are

„not sure if what is practiced is really Islam“ (Amir 28175-29177). Thus, Amir describes the moment of „conversion“ of the young Muslims as a self-conducted search for Islamic „truth“ by summoning their internal interrogation [„what do I see?“], more than a revelatory Pauline moment induced by an external force [„the falling of the scales off the eyes“]. Amir describes their (re-)Islamisation as a conscious (re)examination and reflection of their „cultural“ or „traditional“ background they have become estranged from, and possibly, they also question before the background of public problematisations. While Amir does not discourage anybody from following one's traditional or familial affiliation if one trusts in its scholars' expertise, Amir is clear to define that Islamic authority needs to be subjectively acknowledged by the individual Muslim, instead of being perceived as a matter of familial, cultural or traditional affiliation. He links the understanding of being Muslim as a matter of non-disposable cultural affiliation to the concept of taqlīd, the principle of following the specific rulings of one fiqh tradition exclusively:

> „nobody can come and say I am ḥanafī and I ought to be always ḥanafī.“[205] (Islamologiekurs 32422-32502)

Moreover, Amir emphasizes that „scholars have not replaced Islam“ but that they base their reasoning on the Quran and Sunna. Accordingly, he introduces it as the personal responsibility of each and everyone to

> „be either qualified yourself to derive sharī'a norms from the sources .. and if you cannot do this .. you need to ask the experts.“[206] (ibid. 31400-31555)

In his discussion of the principle of talfīq, Amir constructs the recognition of religious authority as a matter of personal choice and subjective moral and ethical responsibility laid upon each and every Muslim instead of comprehending it as a matter of „traditional“, familial non-disposable affiliation. Being a practicing Muslim is thus a personal responsibility that entails the careful choice and decision of whose scholarly authority to follow. Amir aims to educate the participants to become self- assertive Muslims. Yet, to foster this highly self-reflective and subjective approach, the *IK* first of all needs to enable the participants to recognize and also „accept“ the plurality of Muslim practice, as making Muslims recognize the „plurality“ of Islam is a competence he sees not taught at „normal mosques“ which only familiarize visitors with „one tradition“, „Arab“, „Turkish“, or „Albanian“, and, by way of their „emotional“

[205] „Keiner kann kommen und sagen ich bin Hanafit und ich muss immer hanafitisch sein“. (Islamologiekurs 32422-32502)
[206] „Entweder selbst nachdem Du qualifiziert bist die Scharianormen ableiten und wenn Du das nicht kannst was machst Du die Experten fragen“. (ibid. 31400-31555)

and „exhorting“ mode of preaching do not aid to educate what could be understood, following Amir's reflections, as Muslim with (and by) subjective conviction.

3.2. … to recognise the plurality of Islam

Thus, this low-key mosque-style „preaching“, according to Amir, also keeps them from endorsing an understanding of Islam that goes beyond traditional affiliation and cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The momentum of responsible „choice“ that is to direct the mode of Islamic practice Amir aims to instill in the students depends on the awareness of what Amir repeatedly calls the „plural“ nature of Islam as a category susceptible to subjective „choice“ more than an non-disposable category of cultural or familial belonging. Amir emphasizes the need to encourage the perception and awareness of the „plurality“ of Islam, also in terms of encouraging a sense of constituting one umma, a community of believing and practicing Muslims among differing traditions and Muslim ethnic and cultural groups which does not exist sufficiently yet. This line of argument is also backed by co-teacher Kerim Edipoglu in a later lesson. Kerim presents the *IK*'s aim as to trigger an inner-Islamic process of reunion and revival which is to be achieved by educating self-assertive and knowledgeable Muslims. Kerim will present this objective in a discusssion on the methodological approach of the *IK* not to translate Islamic terms into German. While Amir has explained those translational constraints as a means to forestall mis-interpretations and mis-readings (see above), Kerim explains this procedure also in another sense:

> „Yes .. what is the point in this Islamological methodology .. we don't want to arabise you .. as if we wanted to exorcise you of your culture .. moreover we want a Quranisation so that people refer to common Quranic terms so people can communicate and articulate .. we want to support Islamic languages and traditions as Muslims have drifted apart into differing cultures .. we want to educate them so that they come together again.“[207] (Islamologie 109130-109660)

In his discussion of the courses' methodological approach, Kerim presents the missionary aim of the *IK* as an endeavor to reunite „culturally“ and „ethnically“ different and dispersed Muslim groups by educating them with Quranic terms as an all-embracing, „universalising“ Islamic language and tradition. As Kerim emphasizes,

[207] „Ja was wir wollen in dieser islamologischen Methodik .. dass wir die Sache natürlich nicht arabisieren .. weil wir irgendetwas den Menschen die Kultur austreiben wollen .. wir wollen eben eine Quranisierung .. dass die Menschen auf gemeinsame quranische Begriffe Bezug nehmen .. dass die Menschen sich klar verständigen können und wir wollen islamische Sprachen und Wissenstraditionen fördern .. da sich die Muslime so auseinandergelebt haben in den verschiedenen Kulturen .. wollen wir sie ein bisschen wieder fördern dass sie zusammenkommen .. ja .“ (Islamologie 109130-109660)

teaching Quranic terms is not understood as a means of eradicating the participants' „cultural" background. Thus, possibly, the notion of „Arabisation" also invokes the image of „radicalisation" (see Roy 2006; 2010), as „Arab Islam" is commonly linked with salafi and wahhabi literalist readings (compare previous chapters) of Islam aimed at eradicating legal and moral hermeneutics developed by later generations as well as cultural diversity as bid'a[208]. To avoid this reading, Kerim proposes to appeal to this methodological and educational choice as *Quranisation*. Kerim understands Quranic education as a means of enabling the communication and articulation of Muslims of various cultures and walks of life, thus as a „universalising" and „overarching" means of gathering the dispersed by their revived subjective belief, interest and investment in „Islam" while respecting their idiomatic „cultural" characteristics, exactly *if* the latter are seen as an emanation of the plurality of Islam. Thus, while both Amir and Kerim affirm and positively evaluate the existence of differing legal „traditions" and „cultural diversity", their „subjective" and „rational" approach questions the authority of „traditional" pedagogies of persuasion upheld in „(ethnic) mosques" which Amir negatively terms „preaching", which keep the Muslims from understanding their „being Muslim" as a matter of personal, subjective reflection, and concern.

4. The participants: „Secondos" & „Secondas" & Converts to Islam

The course's appeal to Muslims of various ethnic backgrounds and origins is positively answered by the present audience. The motivation to attend the courses of the participants is a personal and self-determined search to discover and „learn more about Islam" (Maria 7543-7577), to „deepen their knowledge" (Peter Muhammad 42323-42357).

Most participants were born and raised here in Switzerland. About two thirds are so called „secondos" or „secondas", grown up immigrants' children with a Turkish, Albanian or Bosnian family background, yet there are also elderly participants from the migrants' generation. There is also a high number of converts to be found, about a quarter of the participants were not born as Muslim. The *IK* is visited by approximately sixty to seventy students of either gender. Gender balance is almost even, with slightly more women attending the educational program. Most of the students are young, under thirty years old, yet there are also a number of older men and women. Some mothers and fathers are here with their teenage or grownup children. Private conversations among participants during pauses are mostly in Swiss German. Occasionally, participants converse in Turkish or Albanian. Differing national or ethnic

[208] Bid'a is an innovation, a belief and practice for which there is no precedence in the time of the prophet. It is the opposite of sunna. See *EI*^{2}, „Bid'a" (2012).

backgrounds become frequently topical during classes as well as in private conversations and scenarios when participants compare their background knowledge and routines of Islamic practices, or when it comes to differing culinary and aesthetic preferences and customs. Most of the *IK*'s students have intermediate or higher education, they work in social jobs or in the service sector. Some of them are university students or academics. While participants mostly did not know each other before, or only furtively from previous encounters at other Islamic venues, some have enrolled as clique of friends who frequent the same Islamic association. Others visit the course as couple or family. Soon, friendships evolve. During pauses, some of the women offer food they have prepared at home and which they have brought along in Tupperware. Others queue up at the halal buffet run by the *SIG* for a warm lunch. During pauses, when it is not prayer time, the participants often come down to the cafeteria to eat and chat at the long tables. If the weather is nice and warm, they prefer to catch some fresh air in the entrance area of the premises, where they join the smokers, mostly male converts and a woman of Turkish background in her forties. While gender segregation is mostly observed when it comes to the seating order during lessons, it is handled in a loose manner during pauses. Women that have their periods come to the cafeteria during prayer times, chat in the hallways, or get some fresh air in front of the premises. During the course weekends, flyers and advertisements for Islamic events are circulated. Via the *IK* mailing list relevant information and material such as announcements for events, appeals to participate in Islamic, interreligious or intercultural initiatives, press articles, or survey and interview requests from journalists and researchers are distributed.

The participants are mostly active in „ethnic" or „over-ethnic" communities or engaged in association work or dialogue projects. A clique of the younger women, both converts and „second" and „third generation" Muslims all living in the bigger Zürich area frequent a women's association that belongs to the bigger, largely Arab speaking, yet multinational mosque *Al-Hidaya* in Zürich Altstätten that offers educational programs in German language. A number of the women present, especially mothers, have already completed or are just enrolled in a correspondence training for Islamic pedagogy offered by the *Institut für interreligiöse Pädagogik und Didaktik (IPD)* in Cologne.[209] Some of them are active as Islamic teachers for children in local communities.

About a quarter or a third of the participants of the *IK* are converts, men or women with a non-Muslim background who have taken on Islam or are currently converting to Islam as adults, most of them because they have Muslim partners. Yet, as many

[209] Similar to the *IK*, the *IPD* is a independent association founded in 1993. It was established and is run by Muslim women, mainly converts, to develop German curricula for children's Islamic education it aims to introduce as a regular subject for Muslim children in public schools (Kamp 2010: 179-181).

participants with a Muslim background tell me, they feel themselves like converts. Moreover, Peter Muhammad, one of the participants, gives an account of how he became the role model and teacher for born Muslims to be practicing and believing again.

4.1. Peter the convert reintroduces the „born" Muslims to Islam

As many of the participants of the *IK*, Peter Muhammad is engaged in Islamic community and association work. Thus, the Muslim married to an Indonesian woman is secretary and long year committee member of a cantonal Muslim umbrella organisation (Peter Muhammad 38432-39264). Around 2007, he was also shortly engaged in teaching Islamic classes to a dozen of Indonesian women and their Swiss husbands he and his wife had known from regular meetings for festive Indonesian events. He said that it was a time when the Swiss-Indonesian circle of friends was confronted with a number of deaths in their personal surroundings, so that they developed the desire to think about existential and religious questions more seriously. So, while he had up to that point always been laughed at by them as „being fanatical", as he was the only one „who really prayed" [„der wirklich gebetet hat"], and „who really fasted" [„der wirklich gefastet hat"], among the Swiss-Muslim couples, it was, after those decisive incidences, clear that he was the only „competent" [„fähig"], person to teach them at that point of time, as he was knowledgeable of Islam and spoke both Indonesian and German (Peter Muhammad 24598-25509). As he tells me, he used Amir Zaidan's teaching literature to prepare lessons.

Thus, in his account Peter Muhammad summons his Indonesian friends' shifting gaze on Islam via their shifting gaze on him. The convert invokes how he had first been perceived as a rather comical convert zealot, a „fanatic" fulfilling „ritual duties" like prayer or fasting, yet how, caused by their sudden existential confrontation with „death", he came to be perceived as a „competent" role model, teacher and interpreter, as Islamic practice became a plausible option for his surrounding to deal with substantial personal questions concerning the finity of life. Thus, Peter Muhammad describes their turn around from perceiving Islam as a set of mere ritual practices („praying", „fasting") that seemed, given his invocation of how they saw him as a fanatic, rather rigid, incomprehensible and strange to them, to understanding Islam as a religious option that appealed to them, as it offered a religious mode to take „care of their selves" (Foucault 1988; 1993) aimed at dealing with their personal concerns with ultimate questions. The invocation of „death" as what Luckmann, following Schütz calls a „great transcendency" (Luckmann 1991), marks their interest as guided by a specifically subjective and „religious" problem. Thus, Peter Muhammad narrates the Indonesian

womens' shift from perceiving Islam as a mere „ritual matter" to a religious form of self-cultivation appealing to them.

Peter Muhammad has been Muslim now for almost twenty years. Having grown up in a Protestant, yet not particularly religious family, he came into contact with Islam during a journey in his early twenties. In his study years at a Swiss poly-technicum, he made a trip to Indonesia where he stayed at an exchange student friends' home, where he was to meet his future wife. As it was just around Christmas, Peter Muhammad remembers, they had started to discuss about Christianity and Islam with his Indonesian friend and his family. As he relates, he argued with the local family over their respective religions:

> „He [his friend, S.L.] and all the others .. of course pro Islam .. and me pro Christianity .. they have asked me things like trinity or .. ehm .. original sin .. how I would account for this .. and I could not explain as they were dogmas of course .. but as for myself I only knew about Islam through Karl May books .. thus nothing negative I could have returned on their side .. in any case .. I have completely lost those debates.."[210] (Peter Muhammad 7020-7528)

In this rather comical episode, Peter Muhammad describes a battle of arguments he loses as he fails to counter his Muslim interlocutors' critique of „Christian dogmas".[211] In his account, he proceeds to relate how he returned to Switzerland and started to read books on Islam, eager to find a detrimental „argument" to defeat his Muslim counterparts on his part. Arguably, we might guess, he intends to find equally „dogmatic", „inexplicable" aspects in Islam he could have returned on their side. Yet, as he puts it, he did not find counter arguments, but „found something else in those books" [„habe etwas anderes gefunden in diesen Büchern"] (Peter Muhammad 7848-

[210] „Er natürlich und auch alle anderen voll pro Islam .. und ich bin voll pro Christentum .. sie haben mich dann so ein paar Sachen gefragt wie die Dreieinigkeit .. oder äh .. Erbsünde .. wie ich das begründe und so .. ja ich habe es nicht begründen können ja ist .. sind ja Dogmen .. habe aber selber nur Kenntnisse vom Islam gehabt aus den Karl May Büchern .. also nichts Negatives gewusst was ich sie hätte fragen können .. auf alle Fälle .. diese Diskussionen habe ich total verloren." (Peter Muhammad 7020-7528)

[211] In Islamic da'wa literature spread among converts, especially distributed by rationalist *MB* affiliated milieus ever since the seventies and eighties, Christianity is often critized as upholding „irrational" „dogmas" such as trinity or the notion of Jesus as „God's son", whereas Islam is described as „rational", „logical" and „easy" religion adapted to empiric „reality". Equally, this literature emphasizes the „direct", unmediated relationship between Muslims and God, whereas it problematizes the position of Jesus as God's son and Christianities' „mediated", hierarchical and irrational character, as for example given in the institution of sacraments. In the interviews I have led, many converts iterated this critique. However, as I argue in the analysis of Peter Muhammad's account, while he invokes the notion of Christianity as „dogmas", he appeals to Islam less as a rational counterpart, but more as an authentic way of life directed by a comprehensive everyday practice vis-à-vis Christianity as „*distant*", „*abstract*" religion. On rationalist arguments of converts see Roald 2004: 116f., see also Allievi 1999.

7891). Peter Muhammad was eventually convinced, as he put it, that Islam was „more in accordance with [his] belief than Christianity" [„meinem Glauben mehr entspricht als eben das Christentum"] (ibid. 7924-7993), that Islam was „what [he] had actually always believed" [„was ich eigentlich immer geglaubt habe"] (ibid. 8379-8436). What appealed to him was, how he put it, that Islam foresees a „direct relationship" to God, as he had always rejected the idea of Jesus as a mediator and „[he] had always prayed to God" himself (ibid. 8132-8261). Thus, in his account, Peter Muhammad posits the notion of Christianity as a list of abstract, normative „Christian dogmas" against his notion of Islam as a mode of entering into a „direct relationship to God" which is more in line with his subjective mode of worship which he had always already practiced by himself anyway. While he presents himself as having lost touch to Christianity as an institutionalized religion – positing his own subjective way of „praying" against Christian „dogmas" – he endorses Islam as it exactly corresponds to his subjective desire for religious self-cultivation.

Gradually, Peter Muhammad started to fast during Ramadan, and started to pray. He has been on the hajj and has performed the 'umra[212]. A few years ago, the convert first attended a Naqhshbandi meeting. Since then, he occasionally visits dhikrs[213]and he has started to practice Sunna prayers[214] and always wears a small prayer cap. Laughingly, he describes how his wife at times deems him to „practice too much" [„praktiziere zu viel"](ibid. 26999-27041).

While his conversion is related to his marriage with an Indonesian Muslim woman (which implies his conversion to Islam), Peter Muhammad relates his conversion to Islam as a self-chosen discovery and subjective concern as he came to realize that Islam is more adequate to his concept of „belief" than Christianity. Peter Muhammad refers to Islam as differing to what he calls „Christian dogmas" he „cannot explain". For him, it was the close relationship to God and the desire for a comprehensive religion that guides his everyday life which has made him turn to Islam. Thus, when I asked him to further circumscribe his understanding of Islam, Peter Muhammad described it as a

> „guideline which Islam gives .. for life .. a thread .. well .. as believing Muslim I believe in an ākhira [afterlife, S.L.] if this is paradise or hell .. and I try to prepare myself by following Islamic precepts .. and yes .. it is my life [Lebensinhalt] .. even though I do not look like it in regards of my clothing .. except for the cap I wear ..

[212] So called „small" pilgrimage to Mecca, can be done at any time of the year.
[213] Dhikr means literally „remembrance [of God]", ceremonial act performed in sufi communities.
[214] Sunna ṣalāt are optional, additional prayers as they were performed by the prophet Muhammad. The are preceding or following the five mandatory daily prayers.

I feel Muslim."[215] (ibid. 42461-42973)

In his attempt to circumscribe Islam, he describes it as a „guideline for life" which accompanies his actions in everyday life. To emphasize the inner conviction which has directed his turn to Islam, he defines the precepts that guide his life as flowing from his being „a believing Muslim". Peter Muhammad invokes the awareness of the existence of an ākhira, a transcendent realm beyond his present life as the basis of his self-cultivation and his ethical demeanor in everyday life.[216] Peter Muhammad pauses for a moment before he dwells on the holistic nature of his concept of Islam when he defines it as his „life". The all-encompassing, everyday character of his religious practice, is, again, affirmed as he opposes the outer invisibility („even though I do not look like it in terms of my clothing") to his comprehensive understanding of Islam.

4.1.1. Peter Muhammad's discovery of Islam as a „guideline" as the realisation of his „authentic" subjective belief

If we take a closer look at the episode Peter Muhammad presents with his Indonesian-Swiss circle of friends, as well as his account of how he turned to Islam, we can see how both narrations convey the theme of a discovery of „authenticity" which is, unexpectedly, found in Islam as a comprehensive way of life. Following both the normative and analytical moment of secularisation thesis (Weber 1996 [1917]; see Casanova 1994; 17-19; 33; 37-39), religious conversion is located in the individual „inner self", understood as a realm exempt (and in need of protection) from external political and social „power" and „constraints" (Luckmann 1991 [1967]; Taylor 1991). The notion of religious conversion as an inner turn can be genealogically traced back to the Pauline theme of the „birth" of new „inner man" (2 Kor 5, and Rö 6,7). This understanding bases religious adherence on inner conviction, the belief in a transcendent „truth" which is subjectively acknowledged. This concept of „religious belief" and „conversion"

[215] „Eben es ist eine ..Richtlinie .. die mir der Islam gibt fürs Leben ..eine Leitschnur .. äh .. als gläubiger Muslim glaube ich natürlich an ein .. eine ākhira .. ob das nun Paradies oder Hölle ist und versuche mich durch die Befolgung der islamischen Gebote auch auf das vorzubereiten .. und ja .. es ist einfach mein Lebensinhalt.. ja .. auch wenn ich mich vielleicht von der Bekleidung her ..nicht so islamisch gebe .. ausser mit meiner Gebetskappe .. ich fühle mich doch als Muslim." (ibid. 42461-42973)

[216] The belief in an ākhira, and paradise or hell is one of the articles of faith of the Muslim creed ('aqīda), which must be interiorized as „inner conviction" by the mu'min, the believing Muslim. In the weekend seminaries of March 2009 and April 2009, the participants of the Islamologiekurs are made familiar with the basis tenets of Islamic imān known as al-'aqīda. No creedal statement has been accepted by all sunnī Muslims as the standard account of 'aqīda, yet the belief in the last jugdgment and the existance of paradise and hell are repeatedly listed as atricles of faith. See *EI*^{2}„„ 'Aqīda" (2012), Fakhri 1970: 228-243; 1990: 78-90.

appears in antiquity and replaces the notion of religion as allegiance to an „outer" socially or collectively mandated particular law or cult (Nock 1933; see also Jaspers 1949; Foucault 1988). Translated into the contemporary context, secular and liberal therapeutic readings of this process conceive of the object of religious „redemption" as the individual „real, true self", understood as the „liberated" self which appears and „who we really believe we are when all our social roles and self-presentations are stripped away" (Staples and Mauss 1987: 137), as a popular and widely used definition of religious conversion holds. Religious conversion is thus linked to „authenticity" (Taylor 1989: 16-19; see also ibid. 1991 and Sennett 1983), conceived as a self-conducted search for one's individual „inner true self" against social and institutional constraints. If we look at Peter Muhammad's account, we see how he interpellates the liberal notion of „subjective authenticity" and „individual truth", yet how, in the course of his account, he directs it to the orthopractic and morally prescribed aspects of Islam as a „concept of belief" and „thread for life". While Peter Muhammad summons „Christian dogmas", they seem less „pressuring" and „constraining" than „estranged", as he describes himself as a subject that has already established a distance from outer institutional forms, such as Christianity, as he remembers how he had always already „prayed" differently anyway. Hence, what makes him turn to „Islam" is that he understands it as a belief „more in accordance" with his „own practice". Thus, the authorising momentum that Peter Muhammad presents in giving an account of his turn to Islam is its accordance to his wish for a comprehensive „guideline". Thus, convert Peter Muhammad authorizes his turn to Islam by his subjective wish for a moral and orthopractic „way of life" which enables him to take „care of his self" also in terms of his ultimate concerns about afterlife. He places „truth" in Islamic belief and practice as a subjectively endorsed, all-encompassing „way of life" which is in accordance with his individual wish for a fulfilling „direct relationship" to God, and which also guides his life in terms of everyday moral and ethical demeanor. In both the storyline about how the Swiss-Indonesian couples have come to discover their interest in Islam, as well as in his own account of how he got interested in Islam, Peter Muhammad narrates a self-chosen turn around from an „incomprehensible", „outer", „estranged" religious form (praying, fasting understood as mere „ritual practices"/ „trinity", „original sin" as abstract, irrational „Christian Dogmas") to an understanding of Islam as comprehensive „guideline" answering to „ultimate concerns" as well as his everyday life.

4.2. Islam as a belief in accordance with authentic subjective „belief"

A lot of converts I have spoken to authorize their turn to Islam by recounting it as the

way of believing they had always entertained or desired to entertain by themselves. Their conversion is often conceived of as a „return" to how they always felt to believe. This notion most likely draws on the theological concept of fiṭra (a kind of creating or being created; see previous chapter). Drawing on sources in Quran and Hadith, in Islamic theology, fiṭra is linked to the idea of monotheist belief, Islam in particular, as an innate disposition in humans. Thus, the prophetic saying which has triggered the theological discussion on fiṭra holds that:

> „Every infant is born according to the fiṭra; then his parents make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian."[217]

In a similar vein, the *Islamologiekurs* repeatedly draws on the theological concept of fiṭra to avow for the „self-realising" nature of Islamic dīn (religion) for both the Muslim believer and the community. The notion of fiṭra is also mentioned in the Quran:

> „So set thay face to the religion, a man of pure faith [hanif] .. God's original upon which he created human kind .. there is no changing God's creation .. that is the right religion .. but most men know it not"[218] (Ar-Rum, 30).

Taking up the phrasing of the Quranic text, in a module on the features of Islamic dīn (understood to comprehend both 'aqīda and sharī'a-norms) held in spring 2010, teacher Kerim Edipoglu will present the concept of fiṭra as a human trait which corresponds to an Islamic „way of life", for, as the teacher holds, all human individuals have been created to live „towards Allah", „to practice 'ibāda" and to „surrender thoroughly to Allah", as this is their natural predisposition:

> „it is especially tawḥīd that is predisposed in the human .. this has consequences .. that Allah has prescribed the way of life [...] so it cannot be that Islam .. if it is understood properly contradicts the natural predisposition .. suppresses the natural needs important needs of humans .. no .. because if a human follows his fiṭra then he reaches true fulfillment."[219] (Ath-Thaqafa 5806-7389)

In the sequence quoted above, Kerim develops an understanding where he links the Quranic notion of fiṭra, as a human's innate state of being a monotheist believer to the idea of „true fulfillment" which is to be reached by leading an „Islamic way of life".

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[217] See *EI*^{2}, „ fiṭra" (2012); see also Gobillot 2000.
[218] English Interpretation used is Arberry 1980.
[219] „Vor allem der tawḥīd ist es, der im Menschen angelegt ist, das hat Auswirkungen .. dass also Allah die Lebensweise vorgeschrieben hat [...] es kann also nicht sein dass der Islam richtig verstanden die menschliche Anlage irgendwie der menschlichen Anlage widerspricht .. die wichtigen natürlichen menschlichen Bedürfnisse unterdrückt .. nein .. denn wenn er seiner fiṭra folgt dann erreicht er wahre Erfüllung." (Ath-Thaqafa 5806-7389)

Arguably, while he does not go into it, he draws on the virtue ethical, praxeologic notion of becoming and being a Muslim as developed in the classical ethical discipline 'ilm al-akhlāq (science of disposition) which understands an individuals' Muslim practice as a means of realising his „good" and „true" nature, yet which might also be interpreted as a search for „authenticity" as characteristic for liberal modes of religious authorisation (see above). Thus, he constructs Muslim orthopraxy as a means of reaching a human individual's „true fulfillment", as against a repressive notion of Islam as „suppressing" important needs of humans (Ath-Thaqafa 5806-7389).

5. Teacher Abdurrahman Reidegeld defines sharī'a as the source which enables humans to live a Muslim way of life

Peter Muhammad's, as well as other converts understanding of Islam as a self-chosen „guideline" for their lives is backed by the approach of the *IK*. It is also mirrored in how teacher Abdurrahman Reidegeld introduces the concept of sharī'a in the course of his module on *asch-schari'a* [sic] that formed the topic of two week-end seminaries in May and June 2009[220] according to its understanding from a perspective of the scholars of fiqh. Teacher Abdurrahman begins the lesson with a discussion of the problematique of the term of sharī'a as it is used in contemporary public discourse, where it is misunderstood as a „mere system of rules" [„pures Regelwerk"](Scharia 9373-9400), or, worse, confounded with a repressive political systems' „penalty law" [„Strafrecht"] (ibid. 19590-19808). Against this understanding of sharī'a as a rigid „religion of law" (ibid. 5102-5117) which suppresses, and, given the imaginary of „female stoning", extinguishes human individuals' agency and lives (see previous chapters), Abdurrahman posits the notion of sharī'a as a subjective source of guidance which enables individual human beings to live a good life. Applying the general methodology of the course, Abdurrahman endeavors to render a translation of the term into contemporary language and contexts. Starting from textual evidence in the Quran, Abdurrahman explores the proper linguistic sense of the verbal root of sharī'a:

[220] The course covers the introduction to the concepts of sharī'a Norms (al-aḥkām ash-sharī'a), the sources of sharī'a (maṣādir ash-sharī'a), the aims of sharī'a (maqāṣid ash-sharī'a), and the characteristics of sharī'a (khaṣṣā'iṣ ash-sharī'a). The script includes two additional chapters on the „flexibility and scope of discretion of Schari'a" [Flexibilität und Ermessensspielräume der Schari'a] and the updating of Schari'a-norms in contemporary contexts [Aktualisierung der Schari'a-Normen]. The latter chapters focus on the discussion of fatwas as a means to adapt Islamic precepts to contemporary life worlds and needs of individual Muslims, as well as the need to practice ijtihād, independent reasoning in religious law as opposed to taqlīd. The discussion of ijtihād as an appropriate means of legal hermeneutics gained salience ever since Islamic modernism. See for example Schulze 1990.

„In the sūra al-māi'da in the fifth sūra 48 .. it says in the German translation .. for each of you .. that means for humankind .. we have .. that means the creator .. decreed a shirʿa and a way of life .. Here we find the notion of shirʿa .. and here you must know what is meant with the notion shirʿa .. when we go back to its linguistic meaning .. literally [...] it is the place where you stand .. stand steady .. and from which you reach the water in a watering point .. this is a metaphor .. many wells up until today are not built as nice little huts or they don't have a tap .. instead it is a hole in the earth .. delimited by four wooden sticks and that's it .. somewhere you have the water in the shaft [...] you bring your own rope and a bucket of leather .. you take the bucket of leather and throw it down and stand steady so you don't tumble down the well yourself .. is unpleasant [laughter in the audience] .. you let down the rope .. pull it up again when you feel it has touched ground and bring out the water .. this procedure of pulling water is called sharʿa .. thus is the place I stand on to pull water .. if you take water for source of life or way to lead your life this means sharīʿa is the place where you have to posit yourself in order to do what enables your life [...] literally it means what enables humans to live [...]."[221](Scharia 699-9070)

Thus, Abdurrahman introduces sharīʿa as an object, a life enabling source, which has to be reached at by an agentic individual by its own effort. After introducing the linguistic meaning of sharīʿa, Abdurrahman, again following the usual procedure of the course, proceeds to define sharīʿa as a concept in the proper specific Islamic sense as it was defined by fiqh scholars. Taking up the literal notion of sharīʿa as a person's access to a life enabling source, he takes in a critical position towards the Islamic definition of sharīʿa as delivered in the script. Thus, he defines sharīʿa as an all-encompassing „way of life" in accordance with an inner attitude as it is not „only a matter of following legal

[221] „In der Aya der Sure Al-Maida der fünften Sure Aya 48 heisst es in der deutschen Übertragung für jeden von Euch gemeint die Menschheit haben wir gemeint der Schöpfer eine shirʿa und eine Lebensweise bestimmt .. hier kommt der Begriff shirʿa vor .. und hier müssen sie wissen was man eigentlich mit dem Begriff shirʿa meint .. wenn sie auf arabische Begriffe abgehen .. wortwörtlich [...] sharīʿa ist wörtlich gelesen der Ort auf dem man fest beruht .. fest steht und von dem aus man an das Wasser herankommt .. hier ist eine Vorstellung viele Brunnen auch heute noch bestehen nicht in einem schöngebauten Häuschen oder einem Wasserhahn sondern es ist ein Loch im Boden mit vier Holzstöcken abgegrenzt und das wars .. irgendwo ist dann Wasser im Schacht .. ich habe das auch selbst gesehen auf der arabischen Halbinsel das ist heute immer noch da .. sie selber bringen ein Seil und einen ledernen Eimer .. sie nehmen jetzt den Ledereimer werfen ihn hinunter stehen ganz fest sonst fallen sie runter .. ist unangenehm [Lachen im Schulzimmer] .. fallen also nicht runter .. lassen das Seil runter .. ziehen das Seil wenn sie auf Grund gekommen sind wieder rauf und ziehen das Wasser heraus .. diesen Vorgang des Schöpfens nennt man shirʿa .. sharīʿa [...] ist also der Ort auf dem ich stehe um den Schöpfvorgang vornehmen zu können wenn sie jetzt Wasser mit Quelle des Lebens oder Weg um das Leben durchzuführen heisst das Scharia ist der Ort der Platz wo sie verortet sein müssen damit sie überhaupt das tun können was ihnen das Leben ermöglicht .. wortwörtlich heisst es das was den Menschen das Leben überhaupt möglich macht." (Scharia 699-9070)

rules“. Interestingly, he understands sharī‘a also to comprehend matters of an „inner attitude“, which are classically more understood to be part of ‘ilm al-akhlāq, a discipline pertaining to kalām which does not make part of sharī‘a[222]. Thereby, he emphasizes the subjective and ethical dimension of sharī‘a[223]:

> „[…] here one could get the idea as if it was only a matter of following legal rules, but it is not about that .. sharī‘a is a way of life .. it is not a mere body of rules […] an All-encompassing way of life that Allāh ta’āla has given his servants with the Quran and Sunna .. this means it contains precepts and interdictions .. ethical values but also the inner attitude and the demeanor on a outer bodily level .. general outlooks on life .. so it is about a holistic concept .. if we say [sharī‘a] is precepts and interdictions one might suspect that it only pertains to an outer physical dimension but this is not meant […] the rules are but one part .. in reality it is about internalising a whole concept of life .. let’s stay with this definition.“[224] (Scharia 9205-10560)

5.1. Islam is not ḥaram ḥaram fard fard but leaves the human individual choices

Taking up the „watering place“ metaphor implied in the proper linguistic sense of sharī‘a, Abdurrahman emphasizes the positive, „life enabling“ force that directs a „way of life“. Teacher Reidegeld juxtaposes his notion of sharī‘a as a „holistic concept“ for everyday life with a legal notion of sharī‘a as „only a matter of following legal rules“, and an „outer physical dimension“ as it is upheld by a number of scholars. And, as he will proceed to admonish, many Muslim parents today abuse Islam as an „oppressive system“, as a means of authoritative education, instead of comprehending it as a „way of life“:

> „Muslims themselves often comprehend Islam as an oppressive system [Zwangssystem] and tell their children ḥaram ḥaram yes this you must do .. somewhere between ḥaram and fard[225] […] but the human individual should have

[222] ‘Ilm al-akhlāq (virtue, ethics) traditionally do not form part of sharī‘a.
[223] The sentence begins with: „[Islamic scholars] have defined it as ‘the totality of all prescripts and inhibitions that Allha ta’āla [sic] has given his servants with the Quran and the Sunna […].
[224] „Hier könnte sich der Eindruck auftun als wäre es bloss eine Sache gesetzliche Regelungen zu erfüllen ..es geht aber gar nicht darum .. die sharī‘a ist eine Lebensweise nicht ein blosses Regelwerk […] die ganzheitliche Lebensweise die Allāh Ta’āla seinen Dienern mit Quran und Sunna auferlegt .. und damit sind gemeint Ge- und Verbote, Moralwerte aber auch das Verhalten des Herzens im weiteren Sinne und das Verhalten der körperlichen Ebenen .. Auffassungen und so weiter es geht also um ein ganzheitliches Konzept .. wenn wir sagen Ge- und Verbote bleibt der Verdacht dass es eben eine rein körperliche oder eine äussere Frage ist das ist nicht gemeint […] in Wirklichkeit gibt es ein ganzes Lebenskonzept zu verinnerlichen..bleiben wir bei dieser Definition.“ (Scharia 9205-10560)
[225] The notions of fard, ḥaram and mubīh are part of the terminology of uṣūl al-fiqh, the fiqh discipline that defines and evaluates the legal and ethical status of types of acts. Fard is an evaluative notion of ḥanafī fiqh tradition and defines an action as „duty“. Haram defines an act as

> choices .. this is what many Muslims don't understand [...]the basis that the creator has given us humans is that he made them the things mubīh .. it is only [in matters that] are necessary to enable life in his sense that he defined this is a precept for you and this is prohibited for you .. this sounds completely different .. the first thing [the 14th century uṣūl al-fiqh scholar, S.L.] ash-Shāṭibī defines is mubīh .. he defines mubīh at the beginning to express that free choice is the basis of human behaviour [...] this is a complete different level of sharī'a .. when you say the creator wants to make it easy for you."[226] (Scharia 32633-33904)

Introducing the principles and systematics of sharī'a norms (al-aḥkām ash-sharī'a) as they have been developed and discussed in the fiqh discipline, Abdurrahman dwells on the vast scope of an individuals' human actions deemed as „neutral" in the legal and moral standpoint arrived at by applying fiqh reasoning. Most individual human actions, as Abderrahman relates, are mubīh, freely choosable from an Islamic perspective, thus underlying personal discretion as „the human individual should have choices". Thus, echoing Amir Zaidan's reflections on the Muslim as a responsible subject, he constructs the Muslim as a self-assertive human individual agent confronted with the responsibility of leading a good life, as opposed to the notion of the Muslim as an individual suppressed by a rigid and oppressive religious „system of rules" beyond subjective control. Abdurrahman understands sharī'a as a „live-enabling source" which guides Muslim individuals in everyday matters necessary „to enable life". In the sequences quoted above, Abdurrahman rehearses the publics' rejection of Islam as a repressive, „unlivable" „outer law" as he juxtaposes it to an understanding as a „holistic concept" for moral self-cultivation and everyday life. Thus, opposed to the public perception of sharī'a as a repressive legal system or the synonym for a rigid religion of law or collective culture, often condensed to the imaginary of brutal physical extinction like „female stoning" and „chopping one's hand off" (see chapters before), Abdurrahman constructs sharī'a as a subjective category of moral self-cultivation in everyday life. According to him, it is as an agentic subjects' effort to reach a moral and ethical source of leading (a good) life.

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forbidden, whereas mubīh declares an act as „neutral" from the legal and moral perspective of fiqh, thus the mukallaf, the Muslim who observes sharī'a is free to do or not do an action defined as mubīh.

[226] „Muslime selber machen häufig den Islam zu einem Zwangssystem und sagen ihren Kindern haram haram .. ja das musst du machen .. irgendwo zwischen ḥaram und fard [...]der Mensch soll grundsätzlich Wahlmöglichkeiten haben .. das ist etwas was viele Muslime nicht begreifen [...] die Grundlage die der Schöpfer stellt war dass er den Menschen die Dinge mubīh machte und nur das was zur Aufrechterhaltung des Lebens in seinem Sinne nötig war sagte das ist für Dich ein Gebot und das ist für die ein Verbot .. das hört sich schon ganz anders an .. darum was ash-Shāṭibī auf zehn Seiten definiert ist erstmal mubīh ..er definiert erstmal mubīh weil er sagen will was ist die Grundlage des menschlichen Verhaltens .. hier kommen wir auf eine ganz andere Ebene der Begriffs sharī'a ..wenn sie sagen der Schöpfer will es euch leicht machen." (Scharia 32633-33904)

In the quote above, Abdurrahman furthermore places his definition of sharī'a in the context of a critique against „Muslims themselves" which share non-Muslims misunderstandings (alluded to by the phrasing „Muslims themselves believe"). Abdurrahman attributes this oppressive notion of sharī'a to „parents teaching their children", teaching them only and fard fard in an authoritative fashion that infringes on the children's wish for subjective integrity. He constructs being Muslim as a concept susceptible of subjective choice, when he imitates the inner monologue of an adolescent born into a Muslim family who is faced with choosing „Muslim force" or „non-Muslim choice":

> „what is the impression of this young man who is young and fresh next to them .. well if Islam is always either forbidden or you must .. and out there everything is allowed .. I know where I go."[227] (Scharia 32926-33131)

Thus, as Amir in his statements about the general aim of the course, Abdurrahman rehearses the critique of „un-reflected", authoritative approaches to Islam upheld in „families" and „(ethnic) mosques", also in terms of their concept of Islam as an „oppressive system" which is characterized merely by rules and duties which infringe on a human, instead of perceiving it as a subjectively chosen „way of life" which leaves Muslims as agentic selves and that „makes it easy" for them. In this sequence, Abdurrahman reproduces – and answers – to the trope of the problematic, „non-enlightened", „irrational" and „problematic" (migrant) Islam prevalent in public discourse. However, he rejects this notion of Islam as he delegates it to (migrant) families and (ethnic) mosques and posits his proper understanding of Islam as a matter of choice – and proper education – against it. Thus, it is by educational effort that „wrong" familial and ethnic-traditional understandings of Islam as an „easy", rational religion can be overcome.[228]

6. Tina „on the way": putting on the female headscarf as a practice of modesty

While Peter Muhammad has been Muslim for almost twenty years, Tina and Rebecca, two convert friends in their early thirties whom I have met at the *IK*, only converted a couple of years ago. Since then, they are active in Muslim community life. Recently, they

[227] „Was ist der Eindruck dieses jungen Menschen der jung und unverbraucht danebensteht .. ja wenn der Islam immer nur heisst verboten oder Du musst und da draussen sagt man es ist alles erlaubt .. dann weiss ich wo ich hingehe." (Scharia 32926-33131)

[228] While Abdurrahan does not dwell further on this aspect at this instance, the notion of Islam as an „easy" religion might be derived from the principle of „alleviation" (al-ḥājiyyāt) as formulated in the maqāṣid ash-sharī'a.

started to visit together a „Mosque Guidance course" conducted cooperatively by the *Diyanet* (official Turkish agency providing imams and financial support for Turkish Muslim associations in Europe) and the *VIOZ* (the umbrella associations of Islamic communities in Canton Zürich) which is supported by the cantonal integration agency, where they are trained as „competent" dialogue partners and „multiplicators"[229] for private persons, schools, and authorities (Rebecca 47598-47818). In the run up phase of the vote over the minaret initiative in autumn 2009, Tina had participated in awareness building actions, where she had spoken in front of non-Muslim audiences in communal centers and church parish centers to fight prejudice, as she told me in an informal conversation during the *IK*. Tina is a cheerful young woman working as accountant. When I met her at an Islamic event for an interview she put on a headscarf in a light lilac shade, matching the pastel of her hip-length tunica she wears over black linen trousers. Having a protestant religious upbringing, Tina always used to believe in God and was, what she calls a „practicing Christian". As most converts I have met in my research, Tina's engagement with Islam is closely related to her love relationship. In her case, she got to know her future husband of North African background.[230] She remembers how she started discussing religion with her Muslim fiancée Ahmad, recounting how she began comparing the „Bible" to the „Quran", weighing one „religion" against „another", and finding much in common (Tina 2 3520-3691). The question soon was for Tina if she wanted to live with a Muslim, and raise a family with him:

> „I knew that I had to decide if I am ready .. if I want to live with a believing Muslim and raise a family with him .. I had to find out what it would mean for me .. if I could do it."[231] (Tina 2 2349-2733)

Tina recounts her turn to Islam as a process of personal deliberation and informing herself. While her conversion is closely linked to her relationship with Ahmad, Tina is clear about the fact that she decided to convert to Islam by herself. Thus, just as Mona, she rejects the reading of coercion by her husband as motivation for her conversion. Moreover, she apprehends the public perception of her becoming Muslim:

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[229] See Flyer advertising the course: http://www.diyanet.ch/files/Moscheefuhrung2012.pdf. (03.02.2012)

[230] Also other studies on European converts to Islam relate that a majority of converts, both men and women, become interested in Islam through personal acquaintance (love relationships, close friendships, marriage) with individuals of Muslim background. Existing studies estimate that it is more women (60-70) than men that are liable to convert to Islam in Europe. See for example Allievi 1999; Roald 2004; Wohlrab-Sahr 1998.

[231] „Ich wusste dass ich mich entscheiden muss ob ich bereit dazu bin .. ob ich mit einem gläubigen Muslim leben und eine Familie gründen will .. ich musste herausfinden was das für mich bedeuten würde .. ob ich das könnte." (Tina 2 2349-2733)

> „I did not convert because my husband forced me to .. I went through this process on my own .. I finally did it because I wanted to."[232] (Tina 2 3273-3370)

Tina spoke the shahāda and started to do prayer two and a half years ago, but she defines herself „still on the way" (Tina 1 1648-1685). Her conversion to Islam has led to a major reorientation in her life, also in terms of her working career. Before her conversion to Islam, she used to be co-owner of a popular bar in a minor town in Switzerland. Yet, after some time, she could not reconcile her selling of alcohol and working in nightlife with her religious conviction and life style anymore. So she decided to reorient her working career, even though she makes clear that it was difficult returning to an employed situation after running her own business. Tina emphasises that giving up her career in gastronomy was her own decision, born out of her growing engagement and desire to live an Islamic life. When I last spoke to her, she had just started her training as a hairdresser. She does not wear the headscarf there and her training involves close physical contact to men, such as massaging their scalp she would rather avoid. Yet, she has not told anybody at her work place about her being Muslim; however, her idea is to offer Islamic hair dressing for Muslim women in the future as she sees this as a potential market. In the course of her being Muslim, Tina's demeanor vis-à-vis men has changed. Thus, she tells me that she tries to avoid direct gazes, and aims at keeping physical distance, as she wants to learn a modest behavior. Yet, she tells me that is an arduous process which takes time. As many female converts I have spoken to, given the public problematisation of the Islamic headscarf as a symbol of female discrimination and oppression, putting on the headscarf was the most difficult duty for Tina to fulfill. When asked about how she started putting on the headscarf, Tina put it this way:

> „The first time I have put on the headscarf was when I was going to mosque with my husband .. that was about one and a half years ago .. I only put it on when we were in the car .. I was afraid of the neighbors' talk if they saw me wearing the headscarf .. I was afraid they would say I am suppressed and I cannot explain it to them."[233] (Tina 3978-5108)

Tina presents herself struggling to „out" herself as a Muslim in the car episode. She relates her anticipation of the irritation her wearing the headscarf would incite in her

[232] „Ich bin nicht konvertiert weil mein Mann mich dazu gezwungen hat .. ich habe diesen Prozess selbst durchgemacht .. ich habe es gemacht weil ich es selbst wollte." (Tina 2 3273-3370)
[233] „Das erstemal als ich das Kopftuch anzog war als ich mit meinem Mann in die Moschee fuhr .. das war vor eineinhalb Jahren .. ich habe es erst angezogen als ich im Auto gewesen bin .. ich hatte Angst davor was meine Nachbarn sagen würden wenn sie mich mit Kopftuch sähen .. dass sie sagen würden ich sei unterdrückt und ich kann es ihnen nicht erklären." (Tina 3978-5108)

neighbors, that they would think she had been forced by her husband to wear the headscarf. In the episode, Tina imagines herself being exposed to the gazes of her neighbors without having a voice, being unable to „explain". As she presents the (anticipation of the) neighbor's gazes, Tina introduces the theme of loss of agency, yet she rearranges the expected configuration of veiling, unveiling, autonomy and force by relating that it is exactly her neighbors' prejudices (and not her husband) that render her passive (nor wearing the headscarf), that makes her „only put[ting] it on when [she is] in the car." Thus, she emphasizes how fulfilling the religious duty of putting on the headscarf was her own choice, and how she gradually tried to dress more properly:

> „I started with wearing long sleeves and covering my décolleté and neck but it took a long time of struggling .. trying to find a sense behind this duty to cover oneself .. I realized I cannot do it .. I cannot put on the headscarf just because it is mandatory .. I had to understand it .. to see the sense of it .. and I had to want it for myself."[234] (Tina 618-1177)

Tina emphasizes how her gradual adoption of the duty to cover herself is difficult. She relates how she has gone through a long time of inner struggle since she has started putting on the headscarf. She rejects putting on the headscarf because it is mandatory. Thus, she both rejects the notion of converting because her husband has forced her to as well as surrendering to a rigid, disciplinary „religion of law" with irrational or repressive „rules". Moreover, she is eager to understand it as a practice that „makes sense". As many other female converts I have spoken to, she relates how she did a lot of reading, as she wanted to understand the „sense" behind the duty to cover. Thus, she presents a concept of conversion that equals a reflective process of awareness building.

7. Dealing with gendered Muslim visibilities: the headscarf

As Tina, a lot of the women I encounter in the *IK* describe the venue as a „protected space" (Tina 7497-7531), „shielded from the environment" (Rebecca 47888-47898) where they can practice an Islamic mode of moral demeanor and wear the headscarf without being exposed to critical gazes. While most men present dress in a sportive or casual manner and are clean shaven – none of the present men wear ostentatious salafi

[234] „Ich habe damit angefangen lange Ärmel zu tragen und mein Decollete zu bedecken .. aber es hat lange gedauert .. war ein Kampf .. ich habe versucht einen Sinn hinter dieser Pflicht mich zu bedecken gesucht .. ich habe gemerkt ich kann das Kopftuch nicht anziehen nur weil es eine Pflicht ist .. ich wollte es verstehen .. einen Sinn dahinter sehen .. ich musste es für mich selbst wollen." (Tina 618-1177)

clothes or facial hair –, the bulk of the women present wear a headscarf. Younger women, the „secondas“ and the converts mostly wear turtleneck jumpers under colorful and fashionable tunicas, and jeans, loose linen trousers or lenghty skirts. They cover their hair, neck and ears with artfully draped foulards. Some of them wear make up and jewellery, others don't. Tina and Rebecca, the two convert friends, pay attention to match their headscarfs to the tunikas they wear. As most younger women, they prefer light pastel shades. Maria, my habitual seat-neighbor, does not wear a headscarf and is dressed casually with round neck pullovers and long sleeves, mostly combined with loose fitting jeans. While she at times wears her long hair loose, she usually ties it back. While she would not want to wear it in her everyday life, she is eager to learn how to pray. Thus, one weekend she brings along an illustrated booklet in Albanian, a tutorial for Islamic prayer, asking Albanian speaking peers to help her translate the instructions. As she joins the other women for prayer, she brings along a foulard for this occasion. Other, more experienced women help her to fix it, and show her varieties of how to tie it.

Older women often wear long, dark colored gowns, such as Abayas, ankle-long, loose dresses that hide their contours and are combined with a hijab. From time to time, visitors attend single lessons to find out if they want to join classes. Among them there are often younger women wearing tight clothes, short sleeves and open hair. As I got aware from lively discussions during classes or in private conversations, most of the women who participate in the *IK*, just as in the other venues I have visited during my research, are involved in rather complex personal negotiations in their work, education and sometimes even leisure time environment concerning the headscarf. Many of them don't wear the headscarf at work or in school, as I could gather from conversations. While some do not feel ready to do it for personal reasons (some of them term it as „not being strong enough yet“) and have not (yet) endeavored to put it on, out of fear of not being able to deal properly with the social consequences, others are not allowed to wear a headscarf by decree of their employers or school authorities. Others do not find it an important aspect of their Muslim practice to wear a headscarf. Some of them have successfully negotiated with their employers or school authorities to be allowed to wear the headscarf at work or school. Yet, sometimes conflict could not be resolved on the level of mutual communication. Thus, starting in 2009, one of the convert women attending the course was involved in a legal process. Her minor teenage daughter was kept from attending school classes by the responsible head master, as she did not want to take off her headscarf during classes in a secondary school in Canton Thurgau. Her mother emphasised that it was her daughter's own wish to wear it. The conflict started when the family had moved from the neighboring canton Sankt Gallen and changed

schools. While the old school showed itself generous and allowed the teenager to wear the headscarf, even though it was actually against cantonal guidelines, the administration of her new school was more strict, as it was also against directives to wear head coverings of any sort during classes. It was only after guardianship authorities intervened, that the conflicting parties negotiated. Thus, it was agreed that the Muslim pupil was allowed to wear a wig during classes until a legal agreement was reached.[235] During informal conversations and in colloquium discussions of the *IK*, this case was repeatedly brought up. The mother of the teenager showed herself disappointed of the lack of support from the existing cantonal Muslim umbrella organisation she had contacted. As she had told me in an informal conversation in late 2009, she had been told they did not want to incite public attention with her case as shortly before the vote of the minaret initiative. In early summer 2010, the convert and her family moved to the Bernese town of Biel, as she had compared various options and found out that the cantonal Bernese education authorities advised school boards to allow Muslim pupils to wear the headscarf. She had received advisory and financial support from the newly founded *IZRS*.[236]

7.1. ʿAwra as a Muslim moral practice which differs from „cultural practices *here*"

The female headscarf is also topical in the *IK*, where it is discussed in the module on „Islamic dress norms".[237] It is introduced as a covering practice pertaining to the moral principle of protecting one's ʿawra. ʿAwra, as Amir relates, denotes „shame, lack" in its etymological meaning. In its normative Islamic sense, he continues, ʿawra defines those body parts that form part of the private sphere of an individual, that „must be covered" and must not be shown to and seen by anybody with the exception of the husband or wife, and maḥārim[238]. Those areas of the body that form part of ʿawra, Amir continues, are gender specific (ʿAwra 11336-11576).[239] According to the majority of Muslim scholars, he proceeds, men must cover everything between navel and knees, while women cover the whole body except feet, hands, and face. For both genders, as Amir lays out, covering their respective ʿawra is classified as wājib, as an individual religious obligation not susceptible to autonomous discretion (ibid. 12358-12937). In a wider

[235] See a media article about the case N.N.: „Perücke statt Kopftuch", *Basler Zeitung* 21.01.2010.
[236] See N.N.:„Familie zieht wegen Kopftuch nach Biel", *Tagesanzeiger* 18.05.2010.
[237] „Dress norms" [Bekleidungsnormen] are part of the module „Fiqh 2" (legal reasoning), which also covers the topic area of „family law" and „dietary rules".
[238] ʿAwra 6974-7293. Maḥram (sg.)/maḥārim(pl.) is a legal Islamic term for unmarriageable kin with whom sexual intercourse is ruled out categorically. It comprises blood relatives, in-laws, as well as milk brothers and milk sisters.
[239] ʿAwra 11336-11576.

sense, protecting one's ʿawra also comprises modest moral demeanor like lowering one's gaze when confronting a person of the opposite gender (that is not one's husband/wife or maḥram), not shaking hands with a person of the opposite gender, and staying alone in a private secluded room with a person of the opposite gender except for the husband, wife, or maḥārim (ibid.: 41076-44488; 'Awra 2 7607-7729).

Amir addresses the protection of ʿawra as an individual religious duty of each Muslim, irrespective of their gender, linking the protection of ʿawra to the cultivation of a modest behaviour. He encourages the participants to develop a sense of being ashamed of their nakedness. Thus, drawing on a well-known ḥadīth, he discourages the practice of being naked in their homes, even if they are on their own, lest they get the habit of it ('Awra 9315-10915).

Introducing ʿawra as a practice of modesty, Amir frames it as a moral practice conflictive in everyday social scenarios, such as naked showering both in private sports clubs and public educational contexts. Invoking naked showering as „abominable [abscheuliche]", Amir introduces a „moral tension" between Muslim orthopraxy and what he introduces as common habit „in *this* culture":

> „In this culture [Kulturkreis] we have this abominable [abscheuliche] practice of so called mass showering .. this is abominable .. men and women unclothing themselves when they do sports .. why should we do this and why should we find this normal .. with these problems we have to struggle in our schools and also in sports clubs and wherever we do sports .. this is a big problem."[240] ('Awra 7323-7872).

Thus, Amir introduces the protection of 'awra as a Muslim orthopraxy which triggers conflicts in everyday situations (sports clubs, public schools). In the sequence quoted above, Amir transfers the discussion of 'awra into the contemporary context of problematisations of Muslim orthopractical and moral interests in Europe (Austria, Switzerland) which are mostly negotiated in microsocial everyday contexts (sports clubs, public schools) along civilisational criteria. Thus, he addresses 'awra as a moral concept of „shame" differing from body practices (naked showering) „in this culture". However, taking in the first person plural position of the participants present, Amir addresses those practices as contestable („why should we find this normal?"), and, therefore, negotiable („this is a problem we are faced with"), as he at the same time

[240] „In diesem Kulturkreis haben wir diese abscheuliche Praxis des sogenannten Nacktduschens .. das ist abscheulich .. Männer und Frauen ziehen sich voreinander aus wenn sie Sport treiben .. warum sollen wir das machen und warum sollen wir das normal finden .. mit diesen Problemen haben wir zu kämpfen in unseren Schulen oder in Vereinen oder wenn wir Sport machen .. das ist ein grosses Problem." ('Awra 7323-7872).

frames Muslims as part of civil society and the public („in our schools") with a right of social recognition of their differing moral and orthopractic interests. Thus, with the invocation of the shower scene, Amir sets a public frame of reference that will persist to dominate the topics touched upon in this lesson on „clothing precepts". Amir establishes Islamic clothing norms and the observation of the underlying concept of protecting 'awra as a Muslim practice whose observation renders present Muslims in a liminal status as they differ from majoritarian „cultural habits", ways of „doing bodies" upheld in school education and sports clubs, yet which he encourages the participants to contest by claiming their moral interests as citizens. After discussing the „naked showering" scenario, the remainder of the lesson is dedicated to the topic of female veiling. In subsequent lines of argument, teacher Amir presents the textual evidence from Quran and Sunna for female covering as a mandatory Islamic practice[241], which he yet intersperses with rationalisations of the duty to veil. Amir proceeds to address donning the headscarf under a public frame of reference, again opposing female veiling as a practice of modesty which he opposes to the body cult and narcissism of European cultural practices „here", where „everybody wants to have attention and show his assets and exhibit his beauty" (ibid. 15607-15882), framing the Muslims' position as minority group, upholding differing moral technologies of the self. In the following sequence, the uncovering of '*awra* is linked to sexual arousal. Thus, according to this rationale, covering up '*awra* helps to prevent public irritation and social disorder in mixed gender situations. In the hadithic episode Amir cites, the propensity of sexual arousal is attributed to a male protagonist, who figures as the object of female sexual desire:

> „If there is danger that a man or a woman is so beautiful that the person excites the public then he or she must wear a veil .. man or woman .. we know this story of the young beautiful man in Medina in the time of 'Umar [second caliph of the early Muslim community in Mekka in the 7th century AD, S.L.] .. 'Umar has ordained him to wear a facial cover [laughter in the audience] .. he was so beautiful, and 'Umar raḍia allāhu 'anhu had heard that the girls were curious about him .. they talked about his beauty and this and that .. and so he ordered that he was to wear a veil in public .. and when this was to no avail .. he let him be transferred from Medina to Kufa to exile .. you see .. it is not only about women .. it is about this aspect .. it is about beauty that excites the public .. we don't want that."[242] ('Awra

[241] Thus, he presents the gradual introction of female veiling in the early Muhammadan umma, refering to the Sūrat al-Aḥzāb 33:32-33; 33:59, and Sūrat an-Nūr 24: 31 and 60. ('Awra 23633-39648)
[242] „Wenn die Gefahr besteht dass ein Mann oder eine Frau so schön ist dass die Person die Öffentlichkeit erregt dann muss er oder sie einen Schleier tragen .. Mann oder Frau .. wir kennen diese Geschichte des schönen jungen Mannes in Medina zur Zeit von 'Umar .. 'Umar befahl ihm dass er eine Gesichtsbedeckung tragen musste .. er war so schön, und 'Umar raḍia allāhu 'anhu hatte gehört dass die Mädchen aufmerksam wurden auf ihn .. sie redeten über seine Schönheit

14671-15606)

Amir invokes the episode of the male protagonist whose physical features have to eventually be withdrawn from public sphere, as he has become the object of female gazes. Laughter in the audience reveals the carnevalesque quality of the scene: the invocation of a male individual that must be protected from female gazes in public is rather unexpected, as it turns familiar economies of gazing upside down.[243] Yet, the choice of explaining the principle of withdrawing sexual ambiguity from the public by drawing on the story of the young man might also make sense considering public charges of gender discrimination, as veiling is linked to female subordination when Amir states that „you see .. it is not only about women". Thus, he anticipates the public gaze that problematizes female veiling as patriarchal coercion that discriminates women. Thereby, Amir can argue for a concept of modesty that obliges both men and women to cover their gendered physical assets. Again, reiterating the argumentation of the shower episode, the Islamic norm of protecting one's *'awra* is contrasted with references to modes of exposing the body „here", driven by the desire to be gazed upon and to cause sexual arousal:

> „Well actually the Islamic philosophy behind this ruling is exactly the opposite of what is asked for here. Here, beauty and sexual arousal are public objects.. everybody wants to have attention and show his assets and exhibit his beauty. Islam wants to do the opposite.. no matter whether it exudes from a man or a woman .. okay?"[244] ('Awra 15607-15882)

The episode describing the withdrawal of the beautiful young man's physique from the Medinean public is paralleled with the opposing concept of physical exhibition present in European publics. Thus, Amir addresses the latter as „cultural practice" which is contrasted to Medina as a heterotopic scenario authoritative for the Muslim audience, interpellated as minoritarian moral community, where social interactions are organized by sexual modesty, involving the control of intersexual relations by covering, controlling

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und dies und das .. und so befahl er dass öffentlich einen Schleier tragen musste .. aber als das nichts nützte .. liess er ihn voon Medina nach Kufa ins Exil gehen .. ihr seht .. es geht nicht nur um Frauen .. es geht um diesen Aspekt .. es geht um Schönheit die die Öffentlichkeit erregt ... wir wollen das nicht.." ('Awra 14671-15606)

[243] However, Amirs somewhat surprising invocation of female desiring subjects is stopped short in the further course of the lesson and will be paralleled and subsequently replaced by the problematisation of male voyeurism and female exhibitionism.

[244] „Also .. die islamische Philosophie hinter dieser Vorschrift ist gerade das Gegenteil von dem was hier gefragt ist. Hier sind Schönheit und sexuelle Erregung öffentlich für alle...jeder will Aufmerksamkeit und seine Vorzüge zeigen und seine Schönheit ausstellen. Der Islam will das Gegenteil .. egal ob das vom Mann oder der Frau kommt .. ok?" ('Awra 15607-15882)

gazes and spatial separation. Drawing on the concept of gender equity, Amir emphasizes the moral equality of men and women, yet he proposes that gender differing clothing precepts answer to differences in terms of biological and emotional behavior. Advancing biologist strategies of authorisations which are widely rehearsed among Muslims in Islamic revival movements (see also Weibel 2000; Jouili 2011; Nökel 2002; Roald 2006; Amir-Moazami 2007), Amir plausibilizes and authorizes gender differing dress norms by appealing to differing male and female sexual drives. Drawing on psychological and neuro-scientific arguments, he suggests a female libidinal propensity for exhibitionism, to exhibit her physical charms. Accordingly, covering 'awra is a bodily technique, an Islamically mandated discipline to work on her desire to be gazed upon. As for men, the teacher draws on neuro-scientific studies to back the practice of covering women's 'awra as a means of controlling their voyeurism. Thus, in the power point presentation that accompanies the lesson, Amir cites an US-American study conducted by Princeton university scientists that proposes that the image of a naked woman's torso activates in heterosexual men the brain areas responsible for storing memories about physical action, such as using a hammer or scissors. As Amir explains, men perceive naked women, or women dressed with contoured clothes by an instrumental mode. Thus, accordingly, rehearsing the position of activist and intellectualist Muslim voices, he understands donning the headscarf as a means to protect the women from male gazes and allow them to move freely in public situations without being objectified and reduced to their corporeality ('Awra 39173-39414).

7.2. Tina is reworking her gazes, movements & her way of dressing

Echoing the argumentation in the *IK* on the protection of 'awra, Tina understands putting on a headscarf as a subjective practice to develop a modest behavior, which also protects her from male gazes. She presents her conversion as a self-chosen learning process to become a self who desires to observe Islamic norms. She recounts that it was only when she changed her way of dressing and read and informed herself, also in the *IK* about Islamic moral precepts that she started to reflect on her behavior before and developed an awareness of how „sexualized" society was, and how dependent she had been as a female on male gazes as a means of self-recognition. She recalls how she had gradually developed an awareness and sensibility for her own conduct before her adoption of Islam:

> „For me it took a while until I came to understand how I myself had been dependent on the looks of guys .. it is normal for a girl or a young woman to dress sexy and open to receive attention and feel accepted .. I used to be the same .. when I used to go somewhere and nobody would look at me I would feel irritated and self-

conscious .. what is wrong with me?“[245] (Tina 2637-3102)

Tina reflects on how her study and the change of her dress mode have instilled in her the desire to become somebody else. However, she describes it as a work on her self that takes time:

> „I don't want this anymore .. I want to abstain from this behavior .. but I cannot do it from one day to the next .. I would if I could .. but I can't .. I have been 29 years somebody else .. I cannot change myself from one day to another .. I have to work on my inner attitude .. change the way I used to dress .. the way I used to like to be looked at by men .. it is something I don't hamper around with anymore. .. but I need time .. I want to really want to do it with all my heart.“[246](Tina 2637-3541)

For Tina, to become Muslim is a „work on herself“. Tina understands it as a process of reflection where she comes to look at herself, understanding how she used to, just like any other girl, try to get attention by guys dressing sexy. She frames her putting on the headscarf as a practice that protects and frees her from male gazes. She also accounts how her own way of perceiving and approaching men has changed, which she understands as a way of guarding decency and paying „respect“:

> „When I walk on the street I avoid eye contact with men .. I try to look past them … for me it is like paying respect .. like.“[247] (Tina 5111-5285)

Tina recounts how she and her husband want to keep their sexuality „in private“, as a realm she shares with him exclusively, while she tries to avoid sexualized encounters in everyday situations. As many other converts I have spoken to, Tina accounts of her conversion to Islam as a self-chosen decision to reorient herself to live an „Islamic way of life“. This also entails putting on the headscarf that Tina understands as a practice of modesty both protecting and freeing herself from male gazes. In her recount, Tina invokes on the one hand the liberal notion of an autonomous self that actively chooses

[245] Es dauerte eine Weile bis ich verstanden habe wie abhängig ich von den Blicken der Jungs war .. es ist normal für ein Mädchen oder eine junge Frau dass sie sich sexy und offenherzig anzieht um Aufmerksamkeit zu bekommen und akzeptiert zu sein .. ich war genau gleich .. wenn ich irgendwo hinging und niemand mich angeschaut hat war ich irritiert und unsicher .. was ist falsch mit mir?“ (Tina 2637-3102)

[246] „Ich will das nicht mehr .. ich will dieses Verhalten nicht mehr .. aber ich kann das nicht von einem Tag auf den andern ändern .. ich würde wenn ich könnte .. aber ich kann nicht .. ich war 29 Jahre jemand anders .. ich kann mich nich von einem Tag auf den andern ändern .. ich muss an meiner inneren Einstellung arbeiten .. ich muss meine Art mich zu kleiden ändern .. wie ich es gemocht habe wenn Männer mich angesehen haben .. aber ich brauche Zeit .. ich möchte es wirklich von ganzem Herzen.“ (Tina 2637-3541)

[247] „Wenn ich auf der Strasse gehe versuche ich Blickkontakt mit Männern zu vermeiden .. ich versuche an Ihnen vorbeizuschauen .. für mich hat das mit Respekt zu tun .. so.“ (Tina 5111-5285)

religion as it corresponds both with her rational understanding as well as her emotional stance; thereby, she also counters (implicit) assumptions on the coercive character of female conversion to Islam that dominate public perception (compare chapter 3). On the other hand, Tina also describes a gradual transformation of the very inner self by observing Islamic norms that betrays a praxeological, virtue ethical notion of becoming a Muslim self as has been described in studies on Islamic revival movements (see notably the seminal work of Mahmood 2005).

As has been described by existing studies on pious Muslim women in Europe, liberal and non-liberal concepts and modes of subjectivation intersect also in the converts' self-construction (Fadil 2011; Jakobsen 2011; Jouili 2011; Fernando 2010). As the car episode narrated by Tina shows, public readings of the female Muslim headscarf condensate ongoing debates on „female agency" which seems at stake in how Muslims as a cultural and/or moral minority *in toto* are perceived to lead their lives. Framing their turn to Islam as a self-conducted moral „project of learning", Tina and other converts give an account of their self-chosen endorsement which entails the development of a critical „awareness" and reflection of how they led their lives „before", especially in terms of questions concerning gendered technologies of the self. The convert women I have spoken to account of their conversion as a process which might have been triggered by their encounter with their Muslim husbands and their „cultural" and „ethnic" background which is linked to their inclusion into a Muslim collective, yet which they have eventually chosen to take upon themselves out of their own inner conviction and by „choice". Equally, while Tina invokes how she anticipates that her putting on the headscarf might be interpreted by her neighbours as a practice forced upon (and against) her self, Tina posits against it her own understanding as a subjectively endorsed moral work on her self. As in the episode recounted by Peter Muhammad, Tina's accounts about her self-conducted „project of learning" can be understood as paradigmatic for the approach chosen in the *IK* which frames being Muslim as a self-educational endeavor which both draws upon yet also differs at times from liberal forms of authorising religious practice, as well as from gendered ways of being. Tina's as well as the *IK*'s description of finding a sense in Islamic clothing precepts echoes Foucault's interest in the nexus between self, ascesis and truth appearing in late antiquity as a internalising turn which he poses as a question: „What must one know about oneself in order to be willing to renounce anything?" (Foucault 1988: 19).

8. Conclusions or: Jibril, again

> „We should keep in mind that in Islam .. the beginning of Islam is linked to knowledge .. the prophet .. peace and blessings be upon him .. comes as an

> analphabet to a cove and is being appealed by an angel with one word .. iqra ..read in the name of your lord .. in the beginning there is knowledge .. not only a rough understanding of a Godly reality but a clear statement by Allāh ta'āla himself .. and we say when we have this knowledge, and take this seriously, then this will lead us to peace of mind and inner peace .. yes because I can trust on what I build my life upon .. this is why in imān .. in central crucial aspects that we ought to affirm there is no imitation .. no taqlīd .. we must affirm by knowledge that there is no God except Allāh .. [...] we cannot say I believe that there is no God except Allāh because my parents have thought so but we must be convinced by ourselves [...]."[248] (Ath-Thaqafa 1580-2619)

I have begun the opening chapter of this thesis with – *nomen est omen* – the interpellative performance of Jibril, a Swiss convert who, in his inaugural speech at the first annual reunion of the newly founded *IZRS*, transvaluated „Muslim strangeness", an objective category of public observation of religious „others" into „prophetic strangeness" as a subjective category of self-addressation and self-cultivation. In the concluding remarks of this last case study, I would like to return to Jibril, the prophetic interpellator *par excellence*, once again, as he also makes his appearance in the *IK*. In the episode above, teacher Kerim interweaves the well-known account of the prophet's calling by Archangel Jibril with the interpellation of the Muslim audience as conscious knowledgeable actors who ought to embrace the tenets of Islam, imān as both rational and emotional truth. Echoing preceding lessons on 'al-aqīda[249], teacher Kerim dwells on

[248] „Wir möchten nur festhalten im Islam wird eben der Anfang direkt mit Wissen verbunden .. der Prophet .. Frieden und Segen auf ihm .. kommt als Analphabet erst in eine Höhle und wird angesprochen von einem Engel mit einem Wort .. Iqra.. lies im Namen Deines Herrn .. am Anfang steht das Wissen .. nicht nur ein grobes Verständnis von einer göttlichen Wirklichkeit sondern eine klare Aussage von Allāh ta'āla selber und wir sagen wenn wir dieses Wissen haben und ernst nehmen .. dann führt uns das zur Herzensruhe und innerem Frieden.. ja weil ich dann ganz sicher sein kann woraus ich mein Leben aufbaue [...] deswegen gibt es auch im imān in zentralen Dingen die .. wir bestätigen sollen und müssen auch keine einfache Nachahmung .. kein taqlīd .. Wir müssen es durch Wissen feststellen .. dass es keine Gottheit ausser Allāh gibt [...] [...] wir können nicht sagen ich glaube dass es keinen Gott ausser Allāh gibt weil meine Eltern es auch so glauben sondern hier müssen wir sagen ich bin selber überzeugt [...]."(Ath-Thaqafa 1580-2619)

[249] In the weekend seminaries of March 2009 and April 2009, the participants of the Islamologiekurs were made familiar with the basic tenets of Islamic imān and the theological discipline kalām pertaining to al-'aqīda. 'Aqīda-theology (kalām) as a distinct branch of Islamic scholarship has its origin in the second half of the eight century and developed mainly in the ninth and tenth century, inspired by Greek philosophy and Christian theology. It is concerned with the tenets of imān and forms an Islamic discipline that is distinguished both in terms of its scope and epistemological basis from legal and ethical reasoning as it has developed in fiqh scholarship. While until the middle of the eight century the term fiqh covered legal, ethical and theological norm constructions, especially creeds, in the beginning of the ninth century jurists did not include theologians among fiqh scholars anymore (see Johansen 1999: 1-2). Since then, fiqh scholars discuss the legal and ethical implications of principles to be derived from the revelation and its normative sources (Quran, ḥadīth, consensus and analogical reasoning), while theology, according to Johansen, is the branch of knowledge that

the momentum of conscious individual affirmation of imān as the foundation of Islam as an all-encompassing way of life in a lesson on the characteristica of Islamic dīn in spring 2010.

Traditional hagiographic accounts relate to the first prophetic revelation as an interpellative scene of subjectivation that follows the thematic and dramaturgical structure of the Pauline conversion. It is related as an experience of loss of agency on the side of Muhammad, an exposure to external overwhelming (physical) force and power. Muhammad's first revelation takes place in a dream – a classical biblical locus of Godly revelation and interpellation, indicating to the liminality and transitivity of the process beyond subjective control – and accounts of his physical seizure by angel Jibril who repeatedly appeals on Muhammad to „read". When Muhammad wakes up, he is addressed by a voice from above, emanating from an omnipresent, all-seeing figure in the horizon. Kerim, however, in the sequence just quoted, omits to recount the momentum of physical rapture and loss of control accounted for in the traditional hagiographic account of Muhammad's prophetic interpellation as it was taught in the *IK*'s module on sīra in Winter 2009.[250] Instead, he interweaves the invocation of

provides rational proofs for religious truths. Theologians investigate by the theological ontology and its definition of the human capacity to act, the theodicy as well as the debate on belief as knowledge of God acquired through rational reasoning (ibid.: 32-33). Thus, whereas the fiqh is a discipline which derives norms for human acts from the texts of the revelation, kalām scholars emphasize the authority of rational argument in defining God and the Universe as objects of imān (ibid.: 3). Accordingly, Muslim theology attributes a high authority to rational arguments which do not depend on Islamic revelation. Thus, theologians hold that it is possible to know God's existence by rational means. According to theological argument, every human being is expected to exert her or his individual capacity of reasoning in order to know and acknowledge God. The 'aqīda-school of the 'Ashariyya, from the tenth century onwards the dominant theological branch of sunnī Islam in the middle east, emphasizes the obligation to rationally recognize God as a crucial asset of the sunnī definition of imān. 'Asharite kalām scholars clearly distinguish between belief (imān) and legal norms which form the topic of fiqh scholarship. Hence, they distinguish between external confirmation (shahāda) and inner reality (imān) which is accessible to God alone (ibid.: 22). In the Islamologie-Kurs, this distinction was discussed repeatedly in different contexts. Given this distinction, also the shahāda, the Muslim declaration of belief in the Oneness of God (tawḥīd) and acceptance of Muhammad as God's Prophet, does not, according to fiqh scholars, constitute an object of legal norms. The norms of the fiqh serve exclusively to regulate the exterior aspects of human acts (ibid.: 35f.). Both salafī and modernist Muslims at times reject kalām as a discipline which developed after the first generation of pious Muslims (see Lauzière 2010). See also EI2, „'Aqīda"; Fakhri 1970; 1990.

[250] The literary tradition of prophetic biographies – as sīratu n-nabawiyya – marks the very beginning of the genre of Islamic historiography. It is closely connected both in terms of content as well as formal style to the development of ḥ a d ī t h tradition (prophetic sayings). The best known sīra, that is also used in the course module on Fiqh us- sīra [sic] (december 2009) is the one of Ibn Isḥāq, dating from the first half of the eigth century. While parts of the original work were lost, it was due to ninth century grammarian and genealogist Ibn Hishām that the middle part of Ibn Isḥāq's historical outline, covering the life of prophet Muhammad, were preserved and became the most famous sīra of the prophet. See Rotter 1999: 9-17. The second biography that was used as a basis of the teaching lesson is the widely read sīra by the English writer and scholar

Archangel Jibril's appeal to Muhammad the analphabet to „read" with an interpellation of the individual Muslim's responsibility to subjectively desire and gain knowledge about Islam and its tenets as an affirmation of his or her imān. The concept of Muslim interpellation proposed by Kerim equals more the process of an agentic liberal self seeking „true Islam" than a process of loss of control and intransitive rapture induced by an external Godly force. In the last third of the episode quoted, Kerim opposes the theological concept of imān – understood as a conscious and knowledgeable conviction of the truth of God's oneness (tawḥīd) (and Islamic prophecy – to the notion of the mere following a tradition, taqlīd. Taqlīd, as Kerim relates, is a terminus technicus of Islamic law and is commonly understood and accepted by sunnī Muslims as following the decisions of a specific fiqh madhhab without examining the scriptural basis or reasoning of that decision, such as accepting and following the verdicts of scholars of fiqh without understanding the methods of reasoning that the ruling arrived at implies.[251] From the perspective of Islamic theology, taqlīd of someone regarded as a higher religious authority (such as a qualified fiqh scholar) is acceptable in the details of law of religion, such as matters of worship and personal affairs, but not in the basic tenets of 'aqīda, as Kerim relates, and as has been taught in the lesson on 'aqīda. However, in the third part of the sequence, Kerim goes over from addressing imān and taqlīd in a theological register to metaphorically transferring imān to a notion of „imitation" in a sociological register, understood as an implicit and unreflected adoption of the environment's „cultural" habits and „traditions". The notion of imān – a conscious, self-chosen,

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Martin Lings, himself a Muslim convert. See Lings 2000 [1983]

[251] Taqlīd is a verbal noun from the verb qallada, which translates as „to imitate, follow, obey someone". The view that taqlīd was not acceptable in theological matters was articulated by 'Asharite scholars in the eleventh century and remained the preferred view in sunnī Islam. In juristic matters, however, the unlearned Muslims are subject to the authority of the learned and the appropriate term for that submission is taqlīd More controversy, however, existed throughout Islamic history on the status of taqlīd for the learned in respect of the adherence to existing traditions of law and the submission to the respective principles of jurisprudence as developed by the founders of the juristic traditions. Ijtihād, meaning the direct creative confrontation with the texts of revelation as a means of law making, though not omitted completely (see Johansen 1999), was not characteristic of Muslim jurists after the age of the great founders. Instead, juristic scholars folllowed the basic structure of the law tradition within which they were educated. Thus, the jurists came to distinguish between ijtih¡d mutlaq (meaning the practice of ijtihād, through which the founding fiqh scholars derived from the revealed sources a systematics of law making) and ijtihād fī l-madhhab, creative development of the law within the broad structures of the madhhab). The latter type of ijtihād, was associated with taqlīd, which, in this context, was understood as the willing submission to the authority of the founder and the respective madhhab. In modernist Islamic, as well as in Orientalist discourse, taqlīd became a negative notion, understood as a „blind submission", an unreasonable and thoughtless acceptance of authority. See *EI²*, „Taklid" (2012).

reflective adoption of Islam – is juxtaposed to the „mere blind following" of the parents' religious adherence. By metaphoric shift, the Islamic terminus technicus taqlīd is transposed to the notion of implicit socialisation into a „Muslim family". Thus, imān is addressed as a subjectively acknowledgeable belief to „build one's life on". Jibril's summoning of illiterate Muhammad to „read" is lead over to an appeal to the present Muslims to be knowledgeable, and consciously attest to the truth of Islam as a mode of adherence that differs from a state of mere „illiteracy" and implicit following of Islam „because your parents believe". Instead, the subject of surrender to Islam as an all-encompassing collective „way of life" is a consciously believing, agentic subject.

8.1. The Islamologiekurs varies the historical theme of a subjective & moral turn in religious forms

Alongside William James' seminal definition of religious conversion, it was also religious historian Arthur Darby Nock's conception that has gained wide currency in defining conversion as an inner turning (see Nock 1933). While James approaches the phenomenon from a psychological perspective as an inner psychological therapeutic process of individual maturation, Nock delivers a historical account of the emergence of the concept of religious conversion. His overview is set in antiquity, focusing on the time span between Alexander the Great and Augustine. Nock pinpoints the growing plausibility of the concept of conversion to the advent of prophetic religions on the one hand, and the emergence of Greek philosophy on the other hand. As he defines it, conversion implies

> „the reorientation of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right. It is seen at its fullest in the positive response of a man to the choice set before him by the prophetic religions." (Nock 1933: 7).

Darby Nock links the concept of religious conversion to a subjective and ethical turn of religious forms (ibid:3). Thus, Nock's approach connects religious conversion to the emergence of an internalising and subjectivising move in history in line with socio-historical studies which account of a rationalisation and ethisation of religious forms, such as delivered in Max Weber's seminal studies in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, notably in his characterisation of prophetic movements, his accounts of „exemplary prophethood", „charisma" and „ethics of attitude" (Weber 2005 [1922]). Or, from a philosophical-historical perspective, Karl Jasper's idea of the axial age connects the era – though he focuses on a slightly earlier time span between 800 b.c. until 200 b.c. – with a

self-reflective, metaphysical and universalising turn brought along by the appearance of Jainism, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Talmudic Judaism as well as Zoroastrism and Greek philosophy which he links with the emergence of new comprehensive political bodies (such as the Greek polis) and empires (demanding rationalisation of social interaction) (Jaspers 1983 [1949], see especially 17-25). Focusing on the emergence of monotheistic prophetic religions as religious form that replace polytheistic cults and rituals practices, Assmann has equally pinpointed to what he calls the „Mosaische Unterscheidung" (Assmann 2003) as the historic point of entry of the moral category of „truth" which opens up a diachronic moral and internalising tension between „false" and „true". Approaching the theme from the question of moral subjectivation, following Nietzsche (2005 [1887]), Foucault, focusing on late antiquity and early Christianity (Foucault 1988; 1993; 1989a; 1989b; 2007 [1981]; 2007 [1984]), has placed his interest in the era's intensified occupation with the self and the nexus between subjectivity, truth and ascesis it establishes.

In line with historical accounts of authors cited above, in his study on the emergence of the concept of conversion, Nock describes conversion as a phenomenon that emerges with the idea of transcendent revelation and the subjective interpellation to follow an overarching ethos leading to salvation. It implies an individual's „sincere conviction" in a transcendent „truth". As such, conversion appears as a positive „choice" for salvation by moral self-cultivation. Thus, emerging religious forms like Christianity

> „demanded not merely acceptance of a rite, but the adhesion of the will to [...] a new life in a new people." (ibid.: 14)

As Nock describes it, this concept of prophetic religion – which implies the convert as a subjective believer with an inner „sincere conviction" and the wish to reorient his life towards becoming part of a community of believers – comes to parallel and subsequently replace collective forms of ritual practice based on traditional particular affiliation and local cults, which appear as „wrong" from the perspective of the „new" consciousness. Thus, while the Jamesian paradigm relates the theme of religious conversion as a process of inner healing in a psychological register, Nock's socio-historical account relates the theme of conversion in a social historical register, linking it to the birth of a new form of interiorized religious adherence which involves the individuals' readiness and subjective choice to „turn around" and conduct moral work on their „selves":

> „the situation changes when a prophet emerges. By the term prophet we mean a man who experiences a sudden and profound dissatisfaction with things as they are, is fired with a new idea, and launches out on a new path in sincere conviction

> that he has been led by something external and objective. Whereas in religions of tradition the essential element is the practice and there is no underlying idea other than the sanctity of custom hallowed by preceding generations, in prophetic religions the reason is all-important and the practice flows from it.“ (ibid.: 3)

As I would argue, the educational program of the *Islamologiekurs* varies this historical theme of interpellating and subjectifying a community of believers under a religious „truth“ and formulates an all-encompassing „ethos“ as it is rendered in Arnold Darby Nock's socio-historical definition of religious conversion as the paradigmatic form of religious subjectivation in a contemporary liberal and secular European setting.

Amir's educational endeavor to educate self-assertive Muslims with a „reflective“ knowledge of Islam that goes „beyond what is taught at the mosque“ is in line with the aim of sharpening the perception of „cultural“ and „affiliational“ variety as a desirable momentum *if* it is understood as a matter of subjective endorsement and individual „choice“. Amir's self-reflective and literate concept of and approach to Islam, aimed at working out the „authenticity of Islam“ and thus defining „what Islam really is“ is in line with a process of „objectification of Islam“ (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996) which can be observed since the late seventies in the course of the Islamic revival. It is characterized by a modern concept of religion as a self-contained system that can be described, characterized, and distinguished from other belief systems and cultural entities which accords its believers a both individual and collective cultural and religious „identity“. In its lessons, the *IK* rejects unreflected conceptions of Islam as a „mere tradition“ as upheld by „parents“, or, mirroring public readings of Islam, as a rigid disciplinary „religion of law“ or repressive patriarchal „collective culture“. Problematized Islamic visibilities, notably the female headscarf – standing, *pars pro toto* for the notion of Islam as a patriarchal collective culture and a medieval religion of law foreclosing subjective (female) agency irreconcilable with secular and liberal notions of „religion“ and „self“ – are reframed as subjectively endorsed, both individual and collective moral work on the self. Thus, female veiling is understood as a practice of moral self-cultivation which diverges from liberal or secular ways of doing bodies and doing gender such as „unveiling“ (see for example Fadil 2011), yet which is authorized with often liberal and non-traditional rationalities and conceptualisations of „religion“ and „self“. Thus, in their subjectivation as Muslims and their adoption of religious practice and the endorsement of moral precepts, both liberal and traditional modes of religious authorisation intersect, as has been described by other authors (see for example Bracke 2008; Jakobsen 2001; Jouili 2011). Similar to the convert committee of the *IZRS*, liberal and secular modes of „individual agency“ and „choice“ as well as appeals to „minority rights“ and „non-discrimination“ intersect with traditional forms of religious

authorisation.

My analyses conducted in the *Islamologiekurs*, though differing relevantly in terms of the analytical focus and conceptual framework endorsed, relate to the general observations of Olivier Roy, notably his discussions of the constitution of Muslim minorities in European societies. Mirroring Luckmann's diagnosis of religious de-institutionalisation and the concomitant surge of a religious market in late modern, secular societies (Luckmann 1991), Roy has observed a transformation of the religious as double process of „individualisation" (which I would describe as a specific, liberal form of „subjectivation") and „community building" of European Islamic forms before the epistemic background and the legal framework of secular European societies (Roy 2006: 161; Roy 2010: 20). Roy describes this individualising momentum as a shift from „religion" to „religiosity", thus as a decline of traditional forms of authorisation among immigrant communities given by the disembedding of „religion" from pristine cultural and institutionalized contexts. Thus, religion becomes a subjectively disposable asset of self-addressation and self-cultivation, it amounts to „being Muslim" as one's proper, substantive „identity" which entails self-formation and subjective authorisation of what qualifies as Islamic „truth" (ibid.: 154). Roy describes the necessity to formulate „what Islam is", to „objectivize Islam" (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996) as given by the loss of its socially bound character and its disembedding from surrounding live worlds and publics (Roy 2006: 38; 158).

Hoowever, under the legal and epistemic frame of liberal and secular modern societies and the geopolitical semantics of a „clash of civilisations", „Islam" becomes „being Muslim", a subjective mode of self-cultivation and a marker of social identity both problematized, yet protected and contained by individual and collective secular rights of religious self-expression and non-discrimination. This reformulation of the religious is especially virulent, as Roy holds, for immigrants' children and childrens' children as well as converts who have been socialized and have grown up in European societies, rejecting „traditional" forms of Muslim adherence, or lack of „being Muslim" (ibid.: 167-168). Those forms of new „community building" are based on individual (believers') subjective effort and will to reconstruct Islamic authority and a „community of believers" (ibid.: 20; 48; 52; 153) as one's proper „identity".

As Roy holds, those Muslim activist groups often take in a multiculturalist, identity political stance, aiming at gaining recognition for their particular „Islamic way of life" as a distinct religious and/or (neo)ethnic identity (Roy 2006:51). Thus, while the *Islamologiekurs* and his notion of „being Muslim" as both individual and collective „identity" draws on a modern concept of „religion" as a distinct object proper and conducive to one's own „inner truth" and „identity" (see for example Luckmann 1991),

this mode of self-cultivation is in intricate ways structured by current ontologies of the social that assume a critical moral and civilisational difference between „being Swiss“ and „being Muslim“.

Hence, while the *IK*'s self-constitution is undergirded by modern, liberal and secular notions of „religion“, „self“ and „identity“, in present Swiss society, practicing Muslims remain in a socially liminal position in terms of their social inclusion, as their self-cultivation and their religious „technologies of the self“ (Foucault 1988: 18) intersect with liberal and secular „technologies of power“ (ibid.), discourses and strategies to govern and regulate „religious others“ in current migration and integration dispositives.

5 Outlook

The analyses of the symbolic stakes Swiss converts to Islam taking place in differing arenas, both public and Muslim, end here, with the glimpse into the *Islamologiekurs*. This last chapter turned to the collective religious self-formation endorsed by converts and young Muslims". The case study aimed to show how religious conversion – understood as a subjective turn, a *metanoia* – can also be understood as a paradigm of collective processes of Muslim self-formation in present Swiss society.

In the analyses presented, I have tried to follow the shaping of Muslim selves and Muslim collectives in the Swiss context. My thesis has analysed conversion to Islam as a form of self-formation that gains contours in a social and political setting in which Islam has become a category of public and political concern. Thereby, my aim was to take into account the power dimension of Muslim subjectivation: becoming and „being Muslim" takes place in a specific social scenario and it is deeply dependent on the public gazes on Islam and Muslims.

Before I will proceed with an outlook, I will present a short summary of the case studies conducted in the four chapters of this thesis.

In case study 1, „I Have Become a Stranger in My Own Homeland" I have unfolded the thematic scope and conceptual framework of my thesis. My aim was to work out the specific double symbolic capital of Swiss converts to Islam in both public and Muslim fields. To do this, I have analysed the speech of Swiss convert Jibril Zwicker that he delivered it at the first annual reunion of the *IZRS* in early 2010. I reconstructed his talk as a staged performance instituting „being a Muslim stranger" as a desirable category of religious self-addressation and self-cultivation in front of the present Muslim audience. As I have argued, convert Jibril's speech followed the thematic and dramaturgical structure of conversion narratives as what Luckmann has described as a distinct „communicative form" (Luckmann 1987), delivering a variation of the Pauline theme of death of the old sinner, and birth of new man (2 Kor 5, 17, Rö 6). I have worked out that Jibril's talk deployed the biographical caesura characteristic of conversion accounts to convey the theme of permanent social crisis, relating the death of his Swiss self – both in the register of cultural habits and as a legal constitutional

concept of citizenship – following Jibril's adoption of a „strange" ostentatious Muslim habitus.

Thus, I have showed how in the first half of his talk, convert Jibril cites and subsequently subjectivised present public addressations of „Muslims" as „strangers" as they have become increasingly current in Switzerland ever since 9/11.

In the second part of his talk, however, Jibril juxtaposed contemporary Muslims' experiences of social exclusion to episodes from *Quran* and *Sunna*, identifying the pre-hijra Muhammadan pariah with the present status quo of Switzerland's migrant Muslim population. Hence, paralleling his experience of becoming a stranger in differing scenarios to Muhammad's humiliation suffered from his *Quraish* perpetrators allowed the convert to relocate his narrative under a religious frame of reference. Thereby, the salafi convert qualified „becoming a stranger" in everyday scenarios and media addressations as a constitutive (yet historically overcomable) momentum of being Muslim.

Thus, as I have worked out, salafi convert Jibril embodies utmost „Muslim strangeness" which amounts to his symbolic death as „born Swiss", his loss of his cultural habitual capital as well as his status as loyal citizen in a public arena. On the other hand, in Muslim salafi arenas, given his transvaluation of „Muslim strangeness" into embodied religious capital by transfering it into a Muhammadan scenario, he disposes of symbolic capital to interpellate „being Muslim" as a desirable mode of self-addressation.

I have argued that the convert salafi actors of the *IZRS* appear as interpellative, transvaluative actors in terms of their (re-)construction of „being Muslim" along moral and orthopractical criteria proper. This process has been described on a systematical level by Olivier Roy in his studies on the role of „converts" as „new borns" in the present construction of „culture" and „religion" in present liberal and secular settings of European societies (see Roy 2004; 2010). However, while as „new borns", converts bemoan an inner-Islamic decline in terms of moral demeanor, being „native Swiss", they at the same time assume a pedagogical and leader role vis-à-vis „born" Muslims in terms of the latter's social location as „immigrants". Thus, „born Swiss" Blancho and Illi, „devoid" of what they have pointed to as problematic „cultural difference" which amounts to a lack of creditable cultural symbolic capital in terms of their status as „immigrants", appeal (ex negativo) to their „being Swiss" and, thus claim leadership as representing Muslim interests vis-à-vis Swiss society.

As I have argued, both the religious capital of the Swiss converts – qua salafi *prophetic impersonators* –as well as their appeal on their „being Swiss" – qua „born" Swiss – as symbolic capital to claim „minority rights" and „religious freedom" gains its intelligibility and credibility by the underlying culturalisation of the social ontology as it is, among others, diagnosed by Yilmaz (2012; see also Soysal 2009) as hegemonic in contemporary European societies and current debates on immigration, integration, nationalism and secularism.

To back the analysis in this chapter conceptually, I have combined existing narratological and performative conceptualisations of religious conversion with a deconstructive reading of (gender) transvestism as an interpellative practice of categorial institution. This helped me to show that the figure of the „salafi Swiss convert to Islam" figures as an „enabling fantasy" (Garber 1992) as he transforms „being Muslim" from a category of public ascription and problematisation of Muslims as „strange (immigrants)" into a desirable category of collective religious self-cultivation and self-representation.

Thereby I showed how the Swiss converts of the committee summon their being „Swiss citizens" as symbolic capital to overcome the social crisis triggered by the perception of „Muslim strangeness". Thus, as Swiss converts, claiming their citizenship in both Muslim and public arenas as a symbolic stake, they conceptualise „being Muslim" as a particular collective religious way of life and identity deemed to be socially and legally recognised as a self-chosen variety of „being Swiss", rather than an undisposable, problematic, „non-recognisable" cultural category given by birth as ascribed to Switzerland's migrant Muslim population. However, in public arenas, the Swiss converts of the *IZRS* failed to gain credibility for this scenario of communitarian symbolic inclusion, as the convert committee – framed as embodying utmost Muslim strangeness as „Bin Laden's of Biel" – persisted to be problematised as morally and legally transgressive.

In the following chapter 2, „Mister Blancho, Are You the Bin Laden of Biel?", I have analysed the media coverage on the *Islamic Central Council Switzerland (IZRS)* and its male convert committee which took its origin in December 2009 and culminated in the appearance of president Nicholas Blancho in the popular contradictory political TV-format *Arena* in spring 2010. The latter program *„Radikale Muslime im Aufwind?"* [„Radical Muslims on the Rise?"] was aired on 23 April 2010 on official Swiss channel *SF 1*. In the respective show, Nicholas Blancho had had his first live television appearance. Taking up the themes of preceding media coverage, the program confronted Blancho with Oskar Freysinger, Valisian member of the *Swiss Popular Party (SVP)* and member of the national council, a popular supporter of the minaret initiative, and Erich Gysling,

journalist and expert on the middle east [„Nahostexperte“] to discuss the danger potential of the newly founded organisation *IZRS*, headed by a number of Swiss converts to Islam, to „islamise“ Muslim (migrant) youth in Switzerland and lure them into a Muslim parallel society. The dramaturgical pitch of the program was reached when Blancho was prompted by his interlocutors and the present audience „to take a stand“ against female stoning as a synechdoche – as a stand-in for the Swiss majority/Helvetia/liberalism – of symbolic inclusion. Blancho, summoning the liberal and secular right of freedom of conscience and religion as Swiss citizen refused to „take a stand“ and, thus, failed to gain public credibility for his aim of becoming the leader of Switzerland's practicing Muslims as „strong religious minority group“. However, while Blancho refused to give evidence, the media coverage of the radical converts featured the appearance of a number of Muslim representatives „taking a stand“ instead.

Throughout the media coverage, the public framing of Blancho and the convert committee as „bogeymen“ was accompanied by an implicit, popularised Freudian reading of conversion as neurotic compensatory act below „subjective choice“ – rehearsing the trope of enlightenment critique of religion as a foundational narrative of secular modernity (Asad 2003a: 11; 14; see also de Certeau 1991: 36-40). Thereby, it iterated a time-spatial dichotomy between „being Swiss“ and „being Muslim“ along the axis of „backward Islam“/„modern liberality“, heteronomy/autonomy, a-historicity/progressivity, collectivity/individuality, Orient/Occident, notably in terms of authorizing religious practice and the question of female agency. I have analysed the media coverage on the *IZRS* and its converts as an interpellative event, a distinct dramaturgical stage in a Turnerian social drama that triggered the appearance of hitherto invisible Muslim actors. As I have showed, the salafi convert protagonists with their ostentatious, excessive Islamic habitus and their aim to define Islamic authority and to represent Muslim interests on a national level played a pivotal role in this subjective religious and moral turn of the Swiss Muslim debate. The public stagings of the convert protagonists of the *Zentralrat* have opened up a public space of scaling grades of Muslim symbolic inclusion/exclusion. Thereby, various Muslim actors appeared in the media and affirmed the public's reading of a crisis scenario which, in turn, led to a scalation of „Muslim difference“ into grades of public credibility and „integratedness“.

Summoning „liberal”, „contextualizing“, and, notably, *“invisible”* and individualised readings of „being Muslim“, intellectuals Keller-Messahli, Samir or Cutluca were presented as „integrated“ Swiss-Turkish/Tunesian/Iraki-Muslims and, therefore, as diametrically opposed to the self-assertive „zealous“ convert committee. Whereas in-

between the converts of the *IZRS* and liberal Keller-Messahli, born Farhad Afshar or Hisham Maizar, representatives of a collective of Muslim „ethnic (migrant) communities" were presented as ready to „integrate", „compromise" and „cooperate" with the „local population" (Maizar) on the terms of symbolic inclusion – notably in respect to the construction of religious authority and gendered technologies of the self. Hence, the latter gained credibility against the medial framing of the convert committee of the *IZRS* as non-compromising „Bin Ladens of Biel" who refused the publics' appeal to „give evidence" (Gerhard Pfister, *CVP*) of their allegiance to liberal norms and gendered practices.

In chapter 3, I have returned to Nicholas Blancho's appeals to „learn to live with Islam" as he voiced it in the first annual conference of the *IZRS* held in the Züricher *Volkshaus*. I have understood it as an appeal on Muslim self-education along moral and orthopractic criteria. Therefore, I have redirected my focus away from the analysis of the symbolic stakes of Swiss converts to Islam in public arenas to their symbolic stakes in current community buildings and educational programs which have been formed in the last few years with the aim of connecting together Muslims of various ethnic backgrounds as „religious community". Thus, case study 3, „Before, I Never Wanted to Have Anything to Do with Islam" presents the analysis of the conversion account of Mona, a young Swiss female convert to Islam as she was staging it before a mainly Muslim audience in a small Turkish mosque. Her conversion narrative formed part of the festive addresses delivered at a public Iftār during Ramadan 2008. As in the previous chapter, I have analysed the plot she narrated as a Turnerian social drama. As I have showed, her testimonial reverts the liminalising trajectory of Jibril's account of „becoming a stranger" as reconstructed in chapter 1.

As I have argued, Mona's plot presented an interweaving of the Damascenian theme of radical *metanoia* (turn of senses, change of attitude) with Islamic conceptualisations of fiṭra and da'wa as a call to return to one's orginal faith. As I have tried to show, the object of transformation in Mona's (self)observational speech is the narrator's gaze on „(male)Muslims"/„Islam",, as she gradually comes to „see" that Islam is „humane" as it leaves her agency and offers a „livable" way of life. Hence, the objects in need of redemption in Mona's speech are „male Muslims" as a synecdoche of the Muslim collective. Thereby, the symbolic capital to redeem „male Muslims"/„Islam" is the integrity and autonomy of her very bodily female self which seems at stake with her encounter with the Muslim collective. Framing her turn to Islam as a self-conducted religious discovery, the narrator presents herself as an autonomous self that has guarded her agency and has neither submitted to (male) patriarchal/sexual force nor to „Islam"

as a repressive juridic power while she includes herself into the Muslim collective. As I have argued, Mona's conception of „being Muslim" is structured by liberal and secular rationalities of what qualifies as an acceptable religious and female self.

Hence, in the public Muslim debate, it is notably „female agency" and „religious freedom and individuality" perceived to be lacking in Islam (beating of women, coercion to veil, female circumcision) that figure as the stakes of symbolic exclusion, as they mark the conditions of public acceptability. Thus, in Muslim arenas, the female Swiss convert to Islam, being „native Swiss" and „female" disposes of transvaluative, „redemptive" capital to articulate an agentic (female) Muslim self. Being a convert, she disposes of the biographical capital to interpellate „free choice" for her „being Muslim" and her „veiling". Further, I have discussed in this chapter the gendered and sexualised dimension of present Muslim problematisations. Thus, in present discussions of Islam in Europe, Islam is invoked as coercive collective order, characterised by religious/sexual repression and disciplination embodied by „the Muslim male" as suppressor of women. Hence, Islam is problematised as homophobe and patriarchal, precluding the agency and enjoyment of women and homosexuals (Bracke 2011; Scott 2007; Barskanmaz 2009; Kosnick 2011), whereas European societies imagine themselves as feminine, (female and gay friendly) spaces that must be protected against the intrusion of Islam.

In the concluding chapter, case study 4, I have argued that the transvaluation of „Islam" from an *unlivable* rigid and repressive „religion of law" and/or „patriarchal culture" ascribed to Muslim (migrants) into a desirable, agentic „way of life", as it is performed in convert Mona's speech stands *pars pro toto* for emerging educational Muslim programs, such as the *Islamologiekurs* which aim at social and legal recognition of their Muslim interests as a distinct religious minority. The *Islamologiekurs* is close the understanding of Islam as it is held by the *SIG* (presided at that time by Hisham Maizar, compare chapter 2). Differing from the *IZRS* and its communitarist model of being Muslim as forging an identitarian exclusivist minority, the *SIG* aims to become a *Landeskirche*. However, also the *IK* aims to shape an overarching Muslim umma as a distinct moral community.

Thus, case study 4, „The Islamologiekurs is Kicking Down Open Doors", has continued and further developed this line of argument. I have based the analysis on data gained in the *Islamologiekurs* (*IK*) beween January 2009 and December 2010, an Islamic educational program in German language which is very popular with young Muslims and converts of both genders held in the outskirts of Zürich Regensdorf and which was also attended by Mona (see case study 3). Hence, in this concluding chapter, I have detached „religious conversion" from being a symbolic form allocated to individual

subjects, to explore its thematic and dramaturgical operativity in the current process of uniting Muslims and educating them to live a Muslim „way of life“. To to this, I have based my argument on a deconstructive, performative reading of Arnold Nock's seminal definition of religious conversion (Nock 1933). The historian argues that the concept of religious conversion emerges in antiquity, corresponding to a new religious form characterised by the emergence of the prophet who summons a subjective (and subjectivizing) and ethical turn to a transcendent „truth“.

This new religious form implies „inner conviction“ as a criterium of Muslim adherence, forging a community of believers and practitioners united by their shared belief in an overarching ethos.

As I worked out, the *Islamologiekurs* aims to transvaluate the perception of being Muslim as a category of in-disposable „cultural“ affiliation and merely „familial“ practice into perceiving Islam as a both subjective and collective mode of moral self-cultivation. Formulating a revived, all-encompassing Islamic ethos, it rejects public readings of Islam as a repressive, collectively mandated „religion of law“ or patriarchal collective „culture“. Instead, it defines shar'īa as a subjective category of moral and orthopractic self-cultivation, as the source to enable an Islamic „way of life“. As I argued, the educational program of the *Islamologiekurs* is paradigmatic of currently emerging Muslim bodies in Switzerland that conceptualise their „being Muslim“ as a specific „way of life“.

Drawing on the Foucauldian notion of „technologies of the self“ (1988), I have worked out how in the *IK,* the self-formation as Muslims, thir adoption of religious practice and their endorsement of moral precepts entails the endorsement of both liberal and traditional modes of religious authorisation, as has been described by other authors (see for example Bracke, 2008; Jakobsen 2001; Jouili 2011). Mirroring the self-conceptualisation of the *Islamic Cental Council,* liberal and secular modes of „individual agency“ and „choice“ as well as appeals to „citizen rights“ intersect with traditional forms of religious authorisation, as it has also been observed in other studies of subject formations in European liberal and secular settings among Muslim active in Islamic forms. Thus, while the *Islamologiekurs* and his notion of „being Muslim“ as both individual and collective „identity“ – directed at realising the authenticity of „true“ Islam and (re)constitute an Islamic umma – draws on a modern concept of „religion“ as a distinct asset proper and conducive to one's religious true „identity“ (see for example Luckmann 1991), this mode of self-cultivation is in intricate ways connected to „social truth“ and „social identity“ in current ontologies of the social that assume a critical moral difference between „being Swiss“ and „being Muslim“.

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Focusing on the Swiss convert and his symbolic stakes, this thesis has attempted to understand and analyse the shaping of Muslim selves in both public and Muslim arenas in Switzerland before the background of a social crisis scenario triggered by Islam as a „disruptive event" (Peter 2011).

Differing from existing systematic and empirical studies on European converts as social actors that draw on approaches from the sociology of religion and phenomonological sociology (Allievi 1999; Setta 1999; Roald 2006; Köse 1994; see also Mannson McGinty 2006; Roy 2006; 2010), my aim was to redirect the analytical focus to the complex strategical subject position of the convert as both „being a native Swiss" and „being a convert" in the present ontology of the social. This allowed me to think about the interpellative effects of public discourses on the molding of Muslim selves. Thus, differing from existing approaches on the convert to Islam as social actor, taking in a poststructurally informed perspective on conversion as a paradigmatic form of Muslim subjectivation in present liberal and secular settings, I have tried to take into account the power dimension of public discourses on Muslim interpellations.

Hence, following Talal Asad, the secular can be understood as

> „a concept that brings together certain behaviors, knowledges and sensibilities in modern life" (Asad 2003b: 25)

Thereby, taking this performative approach and scrutinizing the interpellative power of the secular, I have tried to work out how in the Swiss public debate,

> „Representations of „the secular" and „the religious" [...] mediate people's identities, help shape sensibilities, and guarantee their experiences." (Asad 2003a: 14)

As I have tried to work out in this thesis, the pivotal role taken in by Swiss converts to Islam in shaping Muslim subjectivities both in public as well as in Muslim arenas is exceptional in comparison to other European contexts and, as I have argued, is due to the particular immigration history and the specific social, ethnic and religious profile of Switzerland's Muslim population. Thus, to a certain extent, public problematisations of Muslims in Switzerland, taking up geotopical imaginaries and Europe-wide rhetorics of crisis, have preceded the existence of Muslim forms of being ready to answer to the charges leveled against the Muslim population. Hence, the convert committee heading the *IZRS* were the first visible actors aiming to interpellate and represent Switzerland's

Muslims along religious and orthopractic criteria as religious minority, thus, to claim liberal and secular rights of non-discrimination and minority rights for practicing Muslims to live their particular „way of life".

However, what equally characterises the Swiss convert hype is its specifically personalised, affective and populist momentum: arguably, in no other European country, „radical converts" as protagonists appeared more prominently in diverse media such as TV-shows, in-depth interviews, chat rooms, as they have in Switzerland, where they dominated news coverage on Islam and Muslims in Switzerland in the first half of 2010 (Imhof and Ettinger 2011: 28; 31).

However, ever since the approval of the minaret initiative, academic analyses have taken an interest in the particularly successful mobilisation of religious difference in recent political and public discourse in Switzerland, culminating in the ban on minarets. In their analysis, media sociologists Imhof and Ettinger see the interplay between right wing popular campaigns in the direct democratical Swiss system and the growing importance of emotionalised and scandalised „horse race" journalism (Udris, Imhof and Ettinger 2011: 3) related to the recent commercialisation of the Swiss media system as determining factors for the successful mobilisation of religious difference as a category of public perception and migrant minority discrimination in Switzerland, culminating in the minaret initiative and its approval (Ettinger 2008: 10; Udris, Imhof and Ettinger 2011: 1; 29), and, as I would add, in the convert hype which was to follow.

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While this thesis has developed its methodological and conceptual framework in the context of a Swiss case study and with a focus on the convert to Islam, the general performative approach of this work can also be understood to enable the opening up of a comparative perspective on the respective national Muslim debates and the shaping of Muslim selves in other European societies and liberal and secular settings, where Islam has entered as a „disruptive event" (Peter 2011), being imagined as threatening the social fabric in national debates Europe-wide. Arguably, while the converts to Islam so far most prominently entered the public space and public imaginary in the Swiss Muslim debate, her/his appearance as radical zealot, notably in his/her salafi guise, has also triggered debates on integration and inland security in other national contexts and has led to Muslim community building, such as for example in Germany in the context of salafi convert preachers Pierre Vogel and Sven Lau and their former organisation „Einladung

zum Paradies".[252]

In the field of research on Islam in Europe in general, this work can contribute a performative perspective to public debates on Muslims and Islam and Muslim subject formations in present liberal and secular Europe before the mediated epistemic background of a „crisis of multiculturalism" (Lentin and Titley 2011; Modood et al. 2006; Turner 2006).

It was notably sociologist Ron Eyerman who has, in a similar manner, applied a social dramatical, performative approach to analyze the Murder of Theo van Gogh and the social processes and effects triggered by this crisis event in the Netherlands (Eyerman 2008). Exploring the nexus of public problematisations and Muslim subjectivation, my work relates to existing approaches scrutinizing the Europe-wide iterated public imaginaries and „rhetorics of crisis" (van Reekum, Duyvendak and Bertossi 2012: 421) as „symbolic politics" (Lentin and Titley 2011: 132).

In those narratives and imaginaries, Muslims appear as „multiculturalism's impossible subjects" (ibid.) who are supposed to pose

> „[…] politically exceptional, culturally unreasonable or theologically alien demands upon European states." (Modood 2006: 37)

While not employing the term explicitly, the thesis also might relate to ongoing works that employ the concept of Islamophobia, understood as an analytical term for diverse governmental practices in a Foucauldian sense of labeling, regulating and molding Muslim selves and forms in liberal and secular Europe (see Allen 2010; Esposito and Kalin 2011; Shryock 2010; Tyrer 2011; Tyrer and Sayyid 2012). Thus, in his monograph on Islamophobia, British sociologist Chris Allen defines it as an ideological formation, yet presents a reformulation to the seminal Runnymede trust report's conceptualisation of Islamophobia as „false representation" (1997), as he proposes to grasp Islamophobia as a symbolic phenomenon which undergirds a

> „means of thought, deed and action that relates or references Muslims or Islam, whether true or untrue, fact or fiction, real or imaginary." (Allen 2010: 195)

In a similar vein, Shryock, the editor of an anthology on Islamophobia/Islamophilia, defines Islamophobia as

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[252] See for example Arne Leyenberg: „Vom Boxer Pierre Vogel zum Prediger Abu Hamsa", *Faz* 02.02.2010, or Nora Gartenbrink: „Pierre Vogel in Hamburg. Hassprediger, hahaha", *Spiegel Online* 10.07.2011. (03.12.2012).

> „a wide range of contexts in which Muslims and particular forms of Islam are understood, with varying degrees of anxiety and affection, as problems that must be settled, or as solutions to problems." (Shryock 2010: 8)

He further writes:

> „The efflorescence of this agenda after the Rushdie affair, the first Gulf War, the 9/11 attacks, the Madrid and London train bombings, the Danish cartoon affair, and other episodes of violent conflict between antagonists defined as Muslim and non-Muslim suggests that anxieties about Islamophobia – both the social problem and the analytical term – are part of a larger disciplinary regime. The primary subjects of this regime are Muslims in the West (who must be made into good citizens), and the societies that must accommodate them (and must do so efficiently and effectively)." (ibid.: 7)

Thereby, Islamophobia, as these analyses work out, gains its intelligibility by the culturalisation of the social ontology (Yilmaz 2012; see also Soysal 2009) in contemporary European societies. In this shared social crisis imaginary, a transgressive social force is ascribed to „culturally differing" Muslim immigrants (and their children), threatening the social fabric in diverse national contexts imagined as sharing the cultural, „identitarian" capital of „European historical achievements" such as „democracy", „liberality", „female agency", „sexual and religious freedom" in need of defense against immigrant Muslims as the „enemy within" (Asad 2003a: 180; Schiffauer 2006: 94). Thereby, the problematisation of the „cultural difference" of immigrants along civilisational, religious and moral criteria functions along the logics of a „new racism" (Barker 1981; Balibar 1991; 2006; Stolcke 1995; see also Tyrer 2011; Tyrer and Sayyid 2012), a „racism without race" (Hall 2000: 7), or an instance of „post-racism" (Lentin and Titley 2011). Thus, the latter authors hold how

> „[…] the constant reduction and amplification of people, regardless of religiosity, nationality, context, attachments, politics and experiences, to a transnational population, to the ‚idea of the Muslim', performs the work of race, shaping and renaturalizing the ‚groupings it identifies in its own name' […] a language of culture and values has completely supplanted one of race, but the effects of such a language […] produces racial dividends: division, hierarchy, exclusion." (ibid.: 54; 62)

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While works cited above mostly focus on the reconstruction of public discourses and

practices on Muslims, this thesis has focused on the subjectifying, interpellative effects of this current „crisis politics“ (ibid.: 124) in terms of Muslim self-formation in present public and Muslim arenas.

Although differing in its research question, looking at the performativity of the „crisis figure“ of the Swiss convert to Islam in public debates, in the research field on conversion to Islam in Europe, this work most closely relates to anthropologist Esra Özyürek's comparative analysis of public discourses on German converts to Islam and Turkish converts to Christianity before the background of respective national debates of the New Europe (Özyürek 2009). To do this, she departs from her interest in

> „the unprecedented fear of religious converts that makes them a major source of national insecurity at the turn of the twenty-first century“ (ibid.: 93)

and discusses this question in relation to religion, culture, nation and security. In her article „convert alert“, Özyürek writes how in either nation

> „religious converts are [perceived as, S.L.] dangerous hybrids, polluting and challenging the cultural superiority and purity of the dominant group“ (ibid.: 95),

and thus become the mediatised focal point of anxieties and articulations of national unity in Turkey, and European integration in Germany. Thus, similar to Özyürek's approach, this thesis explores the performativity of the figure of the Swiss convert to Islam as a figure of symbolic ambivalence in the (re)staging of a social crisis and the (re/de)constitutions of the public imaginary of social and national integrity. While Özyürek focuses on the interpellative effects in terms of national identity, this work has tried to think together public observation and Muslim subjectivation and self-formation.

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To conclude, I would like to return to the photograph series of fully veiled Nora Illi, posing at the shore of Lago Maggiore or on top of the Aletsch glacier which has stuck to the public imaginary in Spring 2010. As I have shown in diverse analyses, „(female) agency“ and „religious freedom“ as liberal and secular regulatives – standing as a synechdoche of Switzerland, imagined as a female, liberal self (an idea which aligns political actors from a broad range of the political specter) –, have figured as a creditable stake of symbolic inclusion. Thereby, in the public debate, symbolic inclusion, „integration“ was linked to the endorsement of liberal and secular technologies of the

self and forms and ways of working on the body, notably *unveiling* which are yet naturalised as „normal", or „universal" (see Fadil 2011), revealing the exclusive effects of micropolitical, secular „technologies of power" (see Asad 2003e; see also Connolly 2011: 648). Thus, as my analyses of the public debates have shown, this claim on „female agency" as a stake of symbolic inclusion as *exclusive* (and, thereby excluding) embodied national capital renders „visible" Muslim individuals and collective forms in a liminal position in terms of symbolic inclusion into public space.

In a paper called „Protecting Democracy, Misrecognizing Muslims", Swiss politologist Matteo Gianni has analysed the assimilationist, or, as he terms it, „adjustive" integration policies entertained in Swiss society as an act of Muslim misrecognition (Gianni [forthcoming]). Thus, he shows that what he terms an Islamophobian discourse entertained in the public and media debate justifies and reinforces appeals on „integration", understood as the individual willingness of (Muslim) immigrants to „integrate themselves in the host society and do the job to succeed in this task" (ibid.) (compare my analysis of the *Arena* with *Freysinger's* notion of „integration"). Thus, he argues that this conception of integration as *adjustment* – also in terms of body techniques – is problematic in that it leads to the misrecognition of Muslims, notably if they do not comply to the terms of what is naturalised by the majority as „universalist values". According to Gianni, this assimilationist concept leads to a division into „good" and „bad" citizens, as it problematises Muslims that do not comply to majoritarian concepts of religious practice Muslims and what this thesis has analysed as gendered technologies of the self.

Further, he problematises the possibility for integration as specific „group" or „minority" that is almost absent as a means for integration. Hence, he bemoans that such an adjustive concept of integration leads to a de-politisation of citizenship, as Muslims are implicitly compelled to endorse the content and scope of Swiss majoritarian norms and values without participating in the process of negociating and taking part in shaping a shared Swiss identity. Drawing on a wide range of political philosophy, such as liberal theory (Rawls), critical theory (Fraser, Honneth) and multiculturalist ideas (Taylor, Kymlicka), he addresses present politics as act of „misrecognizing" Muslims as citizens, and also underestimating the processual capacities of democracy to shape common norms. Thus, instead of conceiving of the public as a contested space of (antagonist) actors to claim and voice their (predefined) particular identitarian interests, he appeals to the transformative capacity inherent in Swiss democratical systems to shape a common democratic space.

Now how does Giannis analysis relate to this thesis? Read as a symptom of this de-

politisation of citizenship, the public appearance and intelligibility of the figure of „Swiss convert" as a „religious zealot" and „cultural renegade" which was to become the guiding trope in the public Muslim debate after 29 November 2009 and effected the (re)establishment of the social ontology along moral and cultural criteria is both revealing and at the same time covering over the lack of processual policies which would enable to include religious and/or cultural diversity into the respective national polities as well as liberal and secular Europe as what Talal Asad has termed an identitarian project (Asad 2003c: 177S180). Thus, in his explorations in the field of an anthropology of secularism, Talal Asad has written an essay on the question of „Muslims as a ‚Religious Minority' in Europe". He begins his text with the remark that „Muslims are clearly present in a secular Europe and yet in an important sense absent from it" (ibid.: 159). Thus, he explains this as due to Europe's self-conceptualisation which is

> „ideologically constructed in such a way that Muslim migrants cannot satisfactorily be represented in it." (ibid.)

In this essay, he argues that Muslims are both *included within* and *excluded from* Europe at one and the same time, which, according to him, is less due to the excessive religiosity of Muslims living in Europe than with European notions of „culture" and „civilisation", the „secular state", as well as „majority" and „minority". Thus, taken for granted the Muslim misrepresentations in the media, he muses into the extent of anxiety triggered by the presence of Muslim communities and Islamic traditions *within* the borders of Europe (ibid.: 160). To do this, Asad explores the interest in „identity" and „European history" which has risen ever since the ending of World War 2 and the beginning of the process of de-colonalisation. Thereby, he understands identity in the sense of the need to gain recognition of one's proper exclusive „identity" as a matter of recognition by others that, by definition, amounts to their recognition that they do not share part of this identity (ibid.: 161). Accordingly, he argues that while a romantic, nationalistic, ethnic concept of the state is often attributed to be espoused by far right actors,

> „for both liberals and the extreme right the representation of ‚Europe' takes the form of a narrative, one of whose effects is to exclude Islam [...] for liberals no more than for the extreme right, the narrative of Europe points to the idea of an exclusive, proper essence, and the argument between liberals and neoconservative actors concerns the scope of ‚toleration' of Muslims this European essence calls for." (ibid.: 165)

Thus, he follows the common notion of Europe less as a continent, but as an ideological entity connected by their sharing into an „essential" identity with a distinct number of historical memories, „heritages" and influencing experiences it claims as its *exclusive*

property, such as the Roman Empire, Christianity, the Enlightenment as well as industrialisation as crucial, exclusive elements for Europe's narrative construction as civilisational entity (ibid.: 166). As Asad holds, thereby, this imaginary European essence is characterises by its „Western European" focus, which finds it also hard to include its Southern and Eastern margins, as well as „Muslim" manifestations in history and present (Andalusia, Turkey) (ibid.: 167).

Further, following Raymond Williams' threefold definition of civilisation as denoting firstly a single universal development, secondly, the collective character of a people or a period which differs and is thus incommensurable with others, and, thirdly, the culture of a particular population that can be *ranked as higher* or lower than another,he argues that they are, taken together, coextensive to Europe's self-concept (ibid.: 166).

Thus, Asad defines Europe as an identitarian project which relies on the notion of sharing a civilisational history proper of its own which, more than a mere geographical territory, represents the idea of a homogenous space and linear time (ibid.: 167). Asad continues, in this shared historical and topic space, Muslims are inessential, they do not take part in it, they are moreover constitutively excluded, as in the historical memory, they figure as Christendoms „primary alter" (ibid.: 169). Hence, in turn, Islam takes in the shape of a quasi-civilisational opponent. Asad argues that without sharing in this European civilisational essence, individuals or groups *living within* Europe remain symbolically unstable and ambiguous, as they cannot share into the historical imaginary of proper civilisational essence holding Europe together. Thus, as in this shared European civilisational imaginary, Muslims are essentially absent, Asad proceeds to muse about the possibilities of representing Muslim minorities in secular European national states on their own terms. He argues that while „equality" is allocated to each and every citizen, what makes him or her „equal" is not her qualification as a specific individual but her being an abstract numerical entity without characterisation (ibid: 173). From such a perspective, Muslims appear as numerical minority not distinguishable from others (ibid: 173). Whereas „minority rights", they are not derivable from general theories of citizenship, as they are connected to membership in a specific historical group, with particular traditions, memories and narratives. However, as Asad continues, this idea of „minority" as a protectable group with specific histories and sensitivities cannot be easily reconciled with the idea of the numerical majority of the state as body polity. Thus, as he holds, this means that the majoritarian (religious/cultural minorites) making up the (post)Christian European societies claim the state as their national, native state, and, thus, their narratives become coextensive with a national essence (ibid.: 175), which leads in many European societies to assimilationist claims on Muslims pertaining to national inclusion, as their presence

disturbs the linearity and homogeneity of both European and national spaces and narratives. According to Asad, the problem of representing Muslim minorities in Europe is thus exactly their inessentiality in European narratives, their differing traditions, technologies of the selfs, their spatial, heterotopical and historical memories, which both on a European, and a national level cannot easily be represented. Thus, Talal Asad holds that:

> „perhaps [...] the discourse of identity indicates not the rediscovery of ethnic loyalties so much as the undermining of old certainties. [...] it concerns exclusions and the desire that those excluded recognise what is included in the name one has chosen for oneself." (ibid. 161)

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I would like to end this outlook with my own critical remarks on the Swiss Muslim debate, and also on the salience of „converts to Islam" as identity political actors and „crisis figures" therein. While I have no interest in judging the „radicality" of the convert protagonists in the sense of delivering a social profile, I am more concerned about the structural effects of the symbolic stakes of salafi converts in the Swiss Muslim debate. In my analysis, taking in a postructurally informed perspective on the shaping of Muslim selves which takes into account the power dimension of subjectivation, I have worked out the heterogeneous, transitive nature of „becoming a self" and assuming an „identity" as structured by exterior discourse and gazes. Thus, drawing on a deconstructive reading of structuralist and psychoanalytical models of subjectivation that are based on Hegelian models of the subject as dialectically formed by an „Other", and, therefore, never self-sufficient (Mc Nay 2008: 1), I share poststructural critiques of identity politics and multiculturalist politics of recognition which base their claims on authenticity and distinct „identity" (see for example Taylor 1992). Thus, Lois Mc Nay argues that while theorists of recognition usually start from a Hegelian model of the subject as dialogically formed and necessarily situated, identity claims that are crucial for many social movements and political interest groups and their demands of „recognition"

> „rest on a simplified understanding of subject formation, identity and agency in the context of social hierarchies [...]" (Mc Nay 2008: 2)

Thus, poststructuralist, (post)socialist and (post)marxist perspectives admonish that identity politics rest on a mistaken view of the subject which is undergirded by substance ontological assumptions, that is, that a cohesive, self-identical subject

precedes any form of social unjustice (see for example Butler 1997a: 2; 1993; 2001). However, it is argued that this stance misrecognises both the dialectic and processual momentum of identity and underestimates the deeply political nature of subjectivation as such.

As I have worked out in the analysis of the symbolic stakes of the Swiss converts to Islam, his/her transvaluative capital of both „being Swiss" and „being Muslim" gains its intelligibility by an ontologisation of the social along cultural and civilisational criteria which is structured by the geotopical trope of a „clash of civilisations". In present Swiss society, this global rhetoric is deeply entrenched and intertwined with questions of dominance and power currently played out in nationalist debates on immigration and integration. Hence, it is exactly the converts „being (native) Swiss" which accords them specific forms of symbolic power in relation to „born", „immigrant" Muslims in both public and Muslim arenas. Thus, claims on the recognition of one's proper identity as „Muslims" therefore overplay questions of class, ethnicity or race which affect the lives of Muslims in Switzerland, yet remained fairly unthematic as discussion were directed to Muslim extremism.

Hence, Nancy Fraser holds that multiculturalist identity politics are fractionalising and depoliticising in the sense that they naturalise identities that are themselves products of discriminating structures (Fraser 1997: 19). Further, identity political projects have also been critizised for their tendency of essentialising difference. Hence, appeals to „authenticity" and „self-expression" as a „right to differ" have been discussed as a form of „tyranny of intimacy" (Sennett 1983) that is prone to promote a stable concept of self and others precluding more open, processual models of the social, social identity and the political (Mc Nay 2008: 1).

Moreover, the self-assertive reclaim on public space of the convert committee failed to evade and deconstruct the public imaginary of a „creeping Islamisation". Moreover, it reiterated the perception of a critical symbolic difference between „being Swiss" and „being an (immigrant) Muslim".

Hence, in chapters 1 and 2, I have compared the stagings of the male Swiss converts to Islam in both Muslim and public scenarios with cross-dressing as an „enabling fantasy" of Muslim interpellation. While they „appeared" to emulate the prophet by their ostentatious Islamic habitus, their appearance was at the same time accompanied by diachronic accounts, avowing of how they changed from being „native Swiss" *before* to becoming „strange Muslims" *after*. Swiss converts who put on the niqab, grew their beards, put on long gowns both pointed to the artificiality, the „seeming" momentum of

their adoption of „removable parts“. It was recurringly thematic that their transformation was „solely“ on the bodily surface. For example, in the *Arena* program, Farhad Afshar, contestant of Blancho, compared the latter's group to a carneval troupe. Or in a fairly sarcastic semi-scientific article, Muslim and Islamic expert Amira Hafner al-Jabaji, herself prominent guest in media formats during the convert hype where she would herself figure as a mediator between Muslims and the non-Muslim public, ridiculed (without naming them explicitly) the central council's convert committee as „helveto-araboid pseudohybrids“ [„helveto-araboide Pseudohybriden“] whose overtly „folkloristic“ [„folkloristisch“] demeanor revealed a gap between „etiquette and content“ [„Ettikette und Inhalt“] (Hafner al-Jabalji 2011: 25). Yet, it was exactly the perceived artificiality of the converts' staged actings, the assumed superficiality of their salafi prophetic habitus as mimikry, which, concomitantly instituted the idea of „real“, „born“ Muslims, thus reinforced the nexus between „being a culturally differing migrant“ – and „being Muslim“.

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Illustration 21: *Gerhard Pfister: „Give us this evidence .. distance yourself from stoning" (24'),* screenshot, downloaded from http://www.videoportal.sf.tv/video?id=0e4c1c08-0aa8-409f-b49c-92e7f55305fd. (22.11.2011)

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1.4. Interviews (in alphabetical order, according to proper name/pseudonym*)

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DURAN, Hamit, interview conducted on 10 December 2008 (Duran)

ILLI, Abd el Qaasim, interview conducted on 23 February 2011 (Illi)

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MARIA*, interview conducted 9 May 2010 (Maria)

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[Ath-Thaqafa]: Selected transcription *Islamologiekurs*, module on ath-Thaqafa (Muslim culture), held on 6/7 March 2010.

[Jibril]: Transcription speech Jibril Zwicker at the First Reunion of the *IZRS* in Zürich on 12 February 2010.

[Nora Illi Biel]: Transcription speech Nora Illi at the Second Annual Conference of the *IZRS* in Biel on 19 February.