CHAPTER THREE

WHO ARE 'WE'? SOCIAL IMAGINARIES

In the introduction I touched upon the ways in which researchers have tried to reconceptualize the spaces and identities that are created in the context of migration and globalization. This poses particular challenges for anthropology because of its tendency to equate a particular locality with a particular community, culture or form of Islam, somehow assuming a given correspondence between them. One attempt at such a reconceptualization is suggested by Werbner (2002a) who employs the term 'imagined diasporas'. Reflecting critically on the growing scholarly literature responding to the current expansion of the concept and discourse of diaspora, Werbner suggests that diasporas should be understood as transnational communities of co-responsibility and embodied performance (Werbner 2002a: 3). Building on her study of Punjabi Pakistani migrant settlers in Manchester, Werbner considers the entanglement of three quite different diasporic orientations that animate the transnational subjectivities of this particular community. One of these orientations represents a 'conventional diaspora' in that the imaginative unity and embodied performances of Manchester Pakistanis are oriented towards a national homeland. At the same time, Werbner argues, Manchester Muslims have also redefined themselves as a 'Muslim diaspora', asserting themselves as members of a transnational moral religious community, the *umma*. Being a Muslim diasporan, she argues, remains in tension with a third diasporic orientation directed towards a South Asian aesthetic diaspora. The South Asian diaspora refers to an 'aesthetic world' embodied by the flow of products of mass popular culture from the subcontinent and the aesthetic inscription of the South Asian in rituals and ceremonies. Manchester Pakistanis thus belong in a taken for granted way not to a single diaspora but to several different diasporas, each with its own aesthetics and ethics. Werbner shows that within these spaces alternative identities and lifestyles are forged as Manchester Pakistanis debate and argue over moral, political and existential issues affecting their group.

Werbner draws on Anderson's seminal work on 'imagined communities', while identifying a need to "elaborate on the fundamentally different senses in which community is imagined and, equally critically, is

enacted and actualised through cultural performance, or incorporated through organisational mobilisation" (Werbner 2002a: 61). Recent work on 'social imaginaries' has attempted to elaborate on the different senses in which community is imagined. Taylor describes 'social imaginary' as the ways in which ordinary people 'imagine' their social surroundings: The social imaginary is that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy (Taylor 2002: 106). Taylor further describes social imaginaries as "the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (Taylor 2004: 23). A conceptualization of 'social imaginaries' that is inspired by the work of Anderson and Taylor is suggested by the Norwegian anthropologist Gullestad who defines social imaginaries as "the way inhabitants imagine the categories, collectivities, and social values that they feel affiliated with or distance themselves from" (2006: 9).

This chapter is, then, inspired by Werbner's concept of 'imagined diasporas' and by the concept of 'social imaginaries'. It investigates how young Muslims imagine the categories, collectivities and social values that they feel affiliated with and distance themselves from, and how the communities imagined are enacted and realized through religious and cultural performance and organizational mobilization. Unlike Werbner's Manchester Pakistanis, the groups of young Muslims that I worked with did not constitute a collectivity based on national origin. As Anthias (1998) has argued, the concept of diaspora, whilst focusing on transnational processes and commonalities, tends to do so by deploying a notion of ethnicity which privileges the point of 'origin' in constructing identity and solidarity. While Werbner clearly moves beyond such an understanding by arguing that the Manchester Pakistanis belong to several different diasporas, her point of departure is nonetheless a 'community' constituted in relation to a 'point of origin'. In contrast to this, I want to avoid making the point of origin the primary site of identification and solidarity in order to open up the focus to include not only diasporic imaginaries, solidarities and performances, but also the trans-ethnic communities that are imagined within, rather than across, the boundaries of the nation state (cf. Anthias 1998).

The spaces constituted in and through processes of transnational migration and globalization are characterized by the existence of social imaginaries that provide sometimes overlapping, sometimes contradictory, visions of how people fit together with others and of social

values more generally. I explore the social imaginaries offered to young Muslims and the different principles of inclusion and exclusion, values and objectives that these entail. Furthermore, I investigate the visions of community that the social imaginaries offer and the ways in which these visions are enacted and performed. Like Taylor and Werbner, I pay attention to the normative and moral underpinnings of social imaginaries, and to how these relate to particular pasts and project particular futures. Furthermore, I discuss how gendered and generational differences structure the ways in which young Muslims position themselves within existing social imaginaries.

More specifically, the chapter explores how young Muslims in Oslo relate to 'the global Muslim community', 'Euro-Norwegian Muslims' and 'family and the ethnic diaspora', how they seek to realize some of the values and objectives associated with these imaginaries and how their social networks and relationships reproduce and cut across the different visions of community that these imaginaries offer. Sometimes uneasily, they seek to combine these imaginaries as points of orientation for social and religious practices. Although my focus is on how young Muslims actively relate to the different imaginaries, I do not mean to suggest by this approach that they are free to do so in any way they like. How people imagine the categories, collectivities and social values that they feel affiliated with or distance themselves from is structured by complex power geometries and principles of inclusion and exclusion and relates to and is energized by larger socio-political events and developments. In the last part of the chapter, I discuss the ways in which different imaginaries are realized as young Muslims go about living their lives and the simultaneous processes of hybridization and boundary-making that are thus energized. The analysis of social imaginaries questions 'naturalized' conceptions of space, locality and identity and allows us to consider the multiple forms of belonging that migration and globalization enable, as well as the importance of power and normativity to how young Muslims orient themselves.

A global community of Muslims

The global imagined umma

The first imaginary that I want to focus on is that of the 'global imagined *umma*'. In many different ways, the young Muslims I worked with, driven by a universalistic, border-crossing interpretation of Islam, asserted themselves as members of a global religious community.

As will be seen, this orientation towards a global Muslim community was manifest in the ways in which they spoke about their religious engagement. Furthermore, they engaged in transnational patterns of solidarity, communication, organization and consumption that were framed within the imaginary of a global Muslim unity. Let me start, however, with some theoretical reflections on how this imaginary could, then, be framed through the concept of a 'global Islamic *umma*'. Through a focus on the transnational spaces that are created by the movement of people and communication and information technologies, research has increasingly drawn attention to processes of collective representation and individual identification through which Muslims come to imagine themselves as belonging to a global community. Taking their cue from the work of Anderson (1991) on the importance of 'print capitalism' to the construction of 'nations' as imagined communities, several researchers (for example, Eickelman and Piscatori 1996; Mandaville 2004; Turner 1994a) have argued that globalizing processes have profoundly contributed to the formation of contemporary imaginaries of a 'global Islamic community'. Mandaville (2004: 145), for instance, argues that we may talk about a "global infrastructure for the maintenance, reproduction and dissemination of Islam" that gives rise to a "transnational public sphere" within which Muslim identities and practices are contemporaneously renegotiated.[1] Within this global infrastructure we may include migration, travel, mass media, the distribution of Islamic literature, CDs, audio and video recordings, the *dawa* activities of international Islamic revitalization movements and the Internet. This infrastructure is embedded in transnational economic flows and structures such as the remittances used by migrants to build mosques in their 'home countries', the investment of rich Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia in *dawa* abroad and the Islamic 'consumer goods' that are increasingly entering popular culture. The increasing global dimension of political conflicts, exemplified by the Rushdie affair, the various hijab affairs and the so called 'War on Terror', attests to the emergence of such a transnational public sphere, one where Muslim identities and the idea of a global *umma* are renegotiated. According to Mandaville (and others), the emergence of a global

[1] The notion of a 'global infrastructure for the maintenance, reproduction and dissemination of Islam' is complicated, however, since complex power geometries (cf. Massey 1994) affect different people, groups and localities differently in respect of how these are situated within such infrastructures.

infrastructure for the maintenance, reproduction and dissemination of Islam and a transnational Muslim public space allows Muslims to create a new form of imagined community or, to put it another way, to reimagine the *umma*.

Anderson ascribes the imagined character of the modern nation to the fact that "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 1991: 6). Anderson suggests that the concept of 'imagined communities' is applicable beyond the nation, since "all communities larger than primordial villages of face to face contact (and perhaps even those) are imagined" (Anderson 1991: 6). Communities are, therefore, not to be distinguished by whether they are imagined or not, but by the style in which they are imagined. The concept of the *umma*, which is usually translated as community, is a complex one within the Islamic discursive tradition. According to Asad, in the classical theological view *umma* was not a community on a par with a nation, waiting to be politically unified, but "a theologically defined space enabling Muslims to practice the discipline of *din*[2] in the world" (Asad 2003: 199). The crucial point about the *umma* is, thus, not that it is imagined, he argues, but that the way in which it is imagined predicates, and is predicated on, particular solidarities and modes of being and acting (Asad 2003). According to Asad, the classical theological vision of the *umma* presupposes individuals who are self-governing but not autonomous and who have the capacity to discover the rules of *sharia* (a system of practical reason morally binding on each 'faithful' individual) and to conform to these. Whereas Asad insists on the way in which this classical notion of the *umma* grammatically differs from that of the modern nation, he also acknowledges the fact that the concept of the *umma* is given different meanings as people interpret and make use of the term in light of the contemporary world. Asad's insistence on the classical theological view of the *umma* is, however, an important reminder that such interpretations may build on a notion of 'community' that is differently imagined, and predicated on different forms of solidarity, than those which dominate contemporary imaginaries of 'community' such as those in the shape of modern nations.

[2] Religion, way of life.

In the Islamic tradition religious practices and imaginaries have a long history of uniting people across boundaries. Anderson (1991) stresses the importance of travel to the 'reality' of the imagined religious community in the pre-print age. Historically, local, regional and transnational pilgrimages, as well as the great learning centres in the Muslim world, were points where people from different places and different social and economic circumstances met, through which ideas and beliefs flowed and where the idea of the Islamic *umma* as a 'community' was given form and substance (Gilsenan 1982). More recently, developments in communication technologies have provided Muslims with new modes of communication and interaction across distance, as well as new 'public spheres' in which the *umma* can be constituted and debated (cf. Mandaville 2004). The way in which the *umma* has been imagined in time and space also relates to broader developments in the political economy of the world order. The concept of the *umma* took on a particular resonance in the discourse of nineteenth and early twentieth-century anti-colonial reformers because the vast majority of the Muslim world was subject to the same Western hegemony. This resonance has continued to be reinforced by what is seen as the continuing dominance of 'the West' over 'the rest' in socio-economic and cultural terms, as well as by the military aggressiveness of the West (the US, in particular) towards the Muslim world.

In contemporary Islamic discourse, the *umma* often appears as a central normative concept encompassing an appeal for unity across the global Muslim community (cf. Mandaville 2004). One might thus argue that both the advent of new communication technologies and developments in the political economy of the world order have made the 'global imagined *umma*' a compelling imaginary for Muslims throughout the world (see Eickelman and Piscatori 1990; Lubeck in AlSayyad and Castells 2002; Vertovec 2004). Importantly, as increasingly more people have access to both traditional meeting places (e.g. pilgrimage sites) and to new meeting places (e.g. the Internet), the global Islamic *umma* has turned into a collective imaginary of joint purpose in the world that ordinary people make use of in their everyday practice and self-identification.

In "The Transnational Umma – Myth or Reality?", Schmidt (2005) argues for the need to distinguish between the transnational *umma* as 'vision' and as 'practice'. The *umma* as vision refers to:

> The conviction to take part in a border-crossing community that includes believers worldwide and raises ambitions for what the believers ought to

> be – unified, innately connected, characterized by profound mutual loyalty and the practice of high moral standards. (Schmidt 2005: 577)

The level of practice, on the other hand, refers to how people go about transforming and vitalizing imagination into transnational community practice. Schmidt's caution is important in order not to conflate the 'imagined' community with actual patterns and networks of transnational practices, as well as to discover the 'power geometries' that structure the direction of flows of ideas, people and patterns of cooperation in broader transnational networks.[3]

While 'the *umma*' was regularly invoked in the Islamic discourses that were transmitted to the young in diverse pedagogical settings (such as Islamic conferences), the concept was less frequently used by the young themselves in everyday conversations and in the interviewes I conducted in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Some were unfamiliar with the concept, others were weary of its association with Islamist radicalism in public discourse. It is my impression that the concept has gained increasing currency among young Muslims more recently, however, not least because of the way in which it is invoked in Islamic popular culture (such as in, for instance, the immensely popular album by Sami Yusuf entitled "My Ummah", released in 2005), something that has come to have a greater impact on Muslim youth in Norway over the course of the last decade. Notwithstanding this variation in the use of the particular concept of 'the *umma*', the young, through a variety of vehicles, identified with and oriented themselves in terms of a universalistic Islamic community, and thereby inscribed themselves into a transnational ethical, aesthetic and sometimes political community of believers. Whereas Schmidt (2005) uses the term 'transnational' to characterize the border-crossing dimension of the vision and practice of 'the *umma*', it should be noted that the cartography of this

[3] Schmidt (2005) shows that whereas transnational religious and community practices, driven by the vision of a global *umma*, were significant among young Swedish Muslims, they were less so for young American Muslims. On the other hand, trails of Muslim-American Islam appeared to have a notable influence on the Muslim communities she studied in Scandinavia. This latter point is confirmed by my own study which shows the important influence of American Islamic scholars (such as Hamza Yusuf and Jamal Badawi) as points of reference for authoritative views on Islam as well as the importance of material produced by American Muslims reprinted in *Ung Muslim* and *Tankevekkende*. As Schmidt also notes, the impact of Muslim-American Islamic discourses is strengthened by the internationally dominant role the US plays as a superpower and the growing use of English as the lingua franca of the world today (this also increasingly among Muslims).

transnational Islamic community goes beyond the meaning of 'transnationalism' as this is often used in anthropology, i.e. as a process linking members of an ethnic or national community across several localities. Rather, as Schmidt argues, young Muslims in Western contexts to some extent rebel against the diasporic transnational practices of the parental generation by instead prioritizing universalistic transnational practices.

Sisters and brothers in Islam

In the NMU magazine *Explore* of January 1999, Yama Wolasmal, who was at the time a long-time member of the NMU, wrote an essay entitled "My journey to Afghanistan" that was illustrative of how young Muslims in Norway imagined the categories, collectivities and social values that they felt affiliated with:

> After fifteen years in exile, I finally got the opportunity to visit my home country. […] I did not know whether I should look forward to or fear the trip. On the one hand, I was frightened by the rumours about the situation in Afghanistan, but on the other hand I was looking forward to going to a so called 'Muslim' country where I would hear *adhan*[4] in the open at prayer times. I saw this as a great thing, and felt that I was lucky to get the opportunity to experience it, since I have spent most of my life in the West. I did *duas*[5] to ensure that my family and I would be OK, since the conditions in Afghanistan were quite precarious. To be honest, I saw the journey as a challenge because I held certain prejudices and wanted to find out if they were right or wrong.
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> The journey first took us to my father's hometown, Jalalabad, where I spent most of the time at home and did nothing apart from complain about the heat. But when I got to the capital, Kabul, everything was pretty much better, thanks to Allah. Before the war started, Kabul was a blooming city with modern residences and industrial areas. The streets were filled with small bazaars where hand-woven carpets, copper and old handicraft could be bought, but there were also new big stores with a large assortment of things. The city had a university where women and men had the right to study.
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> The city bore clear marks of having been the centre of the war. Buildings lay in ruins and people barely managed to provide for themselves because of the high food prices. They had to content themselves with the bare essentials. Anything you'd wish could be bought for money, but people

[4] The call to prayer.
[5] Supplications.

> didn't have any. […] The most fascinating thing about the journey was seeing that there was still life in the people even after two decades of war and misery. War, poverty, economic difficulties and continuous missile strikes had become a part of everyday life for the Afghan people. But this didn't stop them from retaining their faith in Allah and hoping for a good and peaceful life in the future. Another thing I noticed was the lies about the Taliban that we hear in the Western media. The Taliban were not at all sadistic and oppressive towards women, as is usually portrayed. When a country is at war, the most important thing for the population is to maintain peace and quiet, and last but not least, to keep their honour intact, which was very difficult before the Taliban came to power. The previous authorities abused their power by abducting, raping and, worst of all, killing women, while men were imprisoned, tortured and killed without reason.
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> It must remain up to each and every person to decide whether they would prefer to live in permanent fear of being abused and killed or wear a burka or grow a beard. There are of course disadvantages with the Taliban, since many of them do not have any knowledge of the fundamental Islamic laws, and therefore they make mistakes. Take, for instance, the execution of Najbullah, which got a lot of attention in the Western media. He was dragged behind a car, and later hung from a lamp post and made fun of. All were agreed on executing him after the atrocities he had committed against the people, but this should have been done in a humane manner since, according to Islamic law, no damage should be inflicted on the body.
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> In view of this, it may seem as if I support the Taliban. I do not. But I witnessed one thing that I would like to report to those of my sisters and brothers who, regrettably, have gotten a distorted picture of the regime in Afghanistan. My message to you all is the following: If the Afghan people do not complain, who gives the media the right to speak about the situation of the Afghans and at the same time give a distorted picture of the situation in the country?
>
> My journey to Afghanistan was very instructive and made an unforgettable impression on me. I hope this has given you some insight into the lives of our forgotten sisters and brothers. This makes me pray for all people who suffer. All those who are ravaged by war, hunger and misery, whether this be in Palestine, Bosnia or Kashmir; may Allah reward your endurance with Paradise, amin [amen]. (Wolasmal in *Explore* (1) 1999: 14–15; italics added for Islamic terms explained in footnotes)

Because of the way in which he moves between different subject positions, Wolasmal's essay is a particularly interesting point of departure for exploring the spaces for identification and solidarity and the different values and objectives that different imaginaries offer. Wolasmal's essay is plotted around a wish to confront his own and others' 'prejudices'

about Afghanistan, and to asses whether these are 'right or wrong'. By sharing with the reader his own impressions of life in Afghanistan, he wishes to challenge what he sees as the distorted picture of the regime in Afghanistan presented in the media. In the first part of the essay Wolasmal identifies Afghanistan as his 'homeland', this being resonant of the dominant nationalist discourse on migration that attaches migrants to a 'national home'. At the same time he identifies the place he grew up as 'the West', thus inscribing his experiences in a cartography that opposes the West to the Muslim world. As we move along, Wolasmal's 'gaze' assumes the position of an 'outsider' to Afghan society. His description of the economic and cultural vitality of Kabul in the past imitates the tourist guide genre and establishes the author as an external observer to the hardships of war and poverty suffered by the 'Afghan people'. It is also interesting to note how the identification of Afghanistan as a 'Muslim' country is negotiated. The nostalgia for a communal expression of Islam, symbolized by *adhan* in the open, is coupled to a description of Afghanistan as a "so called 'Muslim' country" and a critique of the 'Muslim' rule of the Taliban. The Taliban are not accurately represented in the Western media, Wolasmal holds, but although they provide a certain security for the inhabitants many have insufficient knowledge of Islamic law and therefore fail to uphold this. What is even more interesting, however, is how a trip that is initially conceived of as going to a 'home country' ends up invoking another imaginary in which his (Muslim) 'sisters' and 'brothers' in Norway are constructed as a 'we' and invited not only to identify, feel solidarity with and pray for the Afghan people, but also for "our forgotten sisters and brothers […] who are ravaged by war, hunger and misery, whether it is in Palestine, Bosnia or Kashmir". The 'I' form of narration and the use of the personal pronouns 'you' and 'our' in the textual address collapse the distance between the narrator and the (implied) audience, drawing the latter into a space of internal empathy with 'our sisters and brothers' of the Muslim *umma*. Wolasmal thus invokes an imaginary that goes beyond that of migration from a home country to a new home, uniting Muslims transnationally in a global Muslim community of co-responsibility.

The kinship terminology used by Wolasmal in his invocation of a 'we' of sisters and brothers who should feel solidarity with 'our brother's and sister's' elsewhere serves to establish an ethical community of Muslims. The young Muslims I worked with frequently addressed and referred to each other and other Muslims as 'brothers' and 'sisters'.

By thus observing a social convention supported by various revivalist movements, they recognize each other as people who, as themselves, belong to a global Islamic community (cf. Cesari 2002). The terms sister and brother specifically evoke the global community of believers. In contrast to other kinship terminologies that are broadly used among youth with an immigrant background,[6] the relationship between sisters and brothers in Islam is established independently of nationality, ethnicity, age and social status. Addressing other 'visible Muslims' with the Muslim greeting *asalem aleikum* and showing them hospitality (for instance, by hosting them when they are visiting) similarly underpins the 'emotional fraternity' of the global Islamic community. Wolasmal thus invokes a global community in which Muslims have particular ethical obligations towards their Muslim brothers and sisters in Islam.

Like Wolasmal, many of the young Muslims in my study saw ethical and political engagement against injustice as central to their Muslim identity and practice. In a conversation I had with Ibrahim in 2002 about his religious practice he quickly shifted the focus from my questions about rituals towards the ethical commitment that being a Muslim entailed for him:

> The most important thing for being a Muslim … a Muslim who wakes up in the morning without thinking about what's happening around him concerning other people is not a Muslim.[7] I am glad that I do that. Today when I woke up my first thought was: "What can I do for Palestine?"

It is interesting to note that Ibrahim's formulation suggests that being a Muslim entails an ethical commitment to 'other people' in general, and not just towards fellow Muslims. However, the particular question he

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[6] For instance, those with a Pakistani background generally refer to, for example, women and men in the generation above them as uncles and aunties and to older women and men in their own generation as *bhaji* (older sister) and *bhaijaan* (older brother).

[7] Ibrahim's expression brings to mind a *hadith* that is referred to in several different versions on various (in particular, Shia) English and Arabic Internet pages. A rough translation of this *hadith* (courtesy of Nora S. Eggen on the basis of the version found at <http://www.islam-qa.com/ar/ref/112495>) goes as follows: "On the authority of Hudhayfa the Prophet said: 'Whoever wakes up with this [earthly] life as his only concern has distanced himself from Allah, whoever doesn't fear Allah has distanced himself from Allah, and whoever is not concerned with the Muslims, has distanced himself from them' ". The tradition is reported in several variants and with several chains of transmission, all of which are evaluated as weak by the *hadith* scholars, however. Usually only the last phrase appears when the *hadith* is referred to on English Internet pages.

poses himself about what he can do for Palestine indicates how this commitment often manifests itself as a concern for the Muslim *umma*. The importance of this ethical commitment to the global Muslim community is related to the way in which a variety of social and political issues have come to be constituted as the (problems and) causes of Muslims globally. The Israeli–Palestinian war, the wars in Iraq and the ban on hijab in French schools are examples of such 'causes' around which 'Muslim solidarity' is currently mobilized in different localities around the world. The identification with a global ethical Muslim community also allows conflicts at the local level (e.g. a woman being evicted from her workplace in Oslo because of her hijab) to be inscribed in broader narrative frameworks of injustice and solidarity. As Werbner (2002a: 153) puts it, "diasporas fabulate their local experiences in a global idiom". Contemporary Islamic (and particularly Islamist) discourses thus stress commonalities in the predicament of Muslims, whether this comes in the form of a threatened minority in Israel or in some European country. Identifying with the imagined *umma* as an embattled community, the young Muslims in my study sometimes saw their struggle to promote Islam in Norway and to safeguard a Muslim identity for future generations as analogous to the struggles of Muslim minorities throughout the world, thus asserting their belonging to a global Muslim community. Injustices against Muslims needed to be redressed globally as well as locally and calls for action and mobilization for things as disparate as the exclusion of a worker from her job in the US because of her hijab and the situation of Muslims in Kashmir were regularly posted on the e-mail lists of MSS. Debates were held on the situation of Muslims in Palestine, Chechnya and Kashmir while some people also talked about how they would do *duas* for these situations and for the people in these conflict areas. Bonds of commitment were also established across national borders in the shape of material flows of goods and money raised through, for example, humanitarian projects and support committees.[8] Oppressed groups and geographically

[8] Both the NMU and the MSS have facilitated humanitarian aid to the Muslim world generally (for example, through various Islamic relief organizations) and in relation to natural disasters, such as the big earthquakes in Pakistan in 2005. Interest from the NMU's bank account was also 'washed' (made Islamically legal) by means of donations made to charitable causes. The MSS statutes specified that in the case of the organization ceasing to exist, any remaining funds should be donated to the Swedish branch of Islamic Relief. Cf. Werbner (2002b), who shows how members of the British Pakistani Muslim diaspora mobilize politically to defend or protest against injustices and human rights abuses suffered by co-diasporics elsewhere and how, beyond the imaginary, diasporas come to exist through material flows of goods and money.

distant conflicts were thereby 'given voice' in new localities as ethical responsibility was extended beyond the boundaries of the nation state.

Global imaginaries in religious practice

It is by means of many vehicles that young Muslims gain a sense of commonality and of shared purpose and interests with Muslims 'everywhere'. Electronic media are important in this respect, but not only as a means for communication and interaction or for giving a new virtual reality to the idea of an Islamic *umma*; these media also provide new metaphors through which such a community may be imagined. In an article called "Jihad 2000" in *Tankevekkende* (1998), Tayyab Riaz uses the Internet as a metaphor for the Islamic *umma*:

> Muslims are in the lucky position of having a well-established spiritual Internet, financed by the feelings, meanings and goals of individuals. Such an Internet cannot be run by economic resources, but is run by the spiritual, emotional and faith-committing resources inherent in each and every Muslim. Every Muslim has an integrated node that must be kept in good order and connected to like-minded nodes around the world. […] We must master ourselves before we can manage to connect to this worldwide web. If we haven't done such *jihad* [*jihad-bil-nafs*],[9] negative energy will be released when we come into contact with other nodes (humans). Inside of us, there is a virus that does not allow us to connect to this web. To defeat this virus, we must engage in *jihad-bil-nafs*. My worst enemy is not you, it is Me, myself (Socrates: "Know thyself!"). I have to defeat the evil in me to connect to this 1,400-year-old Internet. Let's hope that you and I, together, may enter the new century with a soul free of malignant viruses. (Riaz 1998: 13–14, 16, italics added for Islamic term explained in footnote)

Riaz's metaphorical conceptualization of the Islamic *umma* as a spiritual Internet is based on the notion of interconnected individuals rather than groups. That every Muslim has an "integrated node" could be understood to refer to the theological idea of the inherent ability of human beings to discover the truth of Islam and to obey the law of God (cf. Chapter Six). Just like the Internet, Riaz argues, the spiritual Internet

[9] The term *jihad* (from the Arabic) means to strive, to struggle. In the Western media *jihad* is most often used to refer to the idea of 'Holy War'. This is not the use intended here, however. The young Muslims I worked with used the term *jihad* in two main senses, *jihad al akhbar* (the great *jihad*) and *jihad al asghar* (the little *jihad*.) The great *jihad* (where *jihad-bil-nafs* is a central concept) is an inner struggle against sin and evil thoughts, whereas the little *jihad* is a struggle to make the society around one just (this might possibly involve the use of weapons or war).

must be "maintained", "developed" and "restructured" as it consists of individuals who are themselves dynamic. Such maintenance needs to be done by the individual through the performance of *salah* and the studying of the Koran, with the key to "development" lying in putting this knowledge into practice. As for "restructuring", Riaz refers to the need for Muslims in the West to adapt to the new context. This requires, he argues, Muslims deciding that they will contribute to a better world for all people and not just for Muslims (thus invoking an imaginary of a global humanity). The ethical engagement that follows from this vision of the *umma* thus promotes solidarity not only with Muslims globally but also more generally in the form of solidarity strived for through a wider engagement in the 'creating of a better world'. This can only be achieved through *jihad-bil-nafs*, 'combating the evil in one's soul', lest this evil spread like a virus into the Islamic *umma*. In this way, Islamic practice is made central not only to the individual but also to the Islamic community as a whole and to 'all people'.

Whereas Riaz's conceptualization of the *umma* as a spiritual Internet is primarily a vision of 'spiritual' interconnectedness, attributions of similarity and solidarity in social interaction are also important components in young Muslims' identification with a global Islamic community, whether this is conceptualized as between 'like-minded nodes around the world' or in the less futuristic terms of 'sisters' and 'brothers'. One could argue that whereas transnational pilgrimages, as well as the great learning centres in the Muslim world, were once the privileged points where people from different places and different social and economic circumstances met and where the idea of the Islamic *umma* was given form and substance, the interaction between different Muslim groups and Islamic traditions in the transnational spaces of urban and cosmopolitan areas and the emergence of trans-ethnic and transnational organizations today perform a similar role. In a certain sense, the self-conscious 'trans-ethnic' composition of groups such as the NMU and the MSS may be seen as a local embodiment of the global imagined Muslim community.

The way in which Islam increasingly enters popular culture as 'consumer goods' within a globalizing cultural economy is important to how young Muslims imagine themselves as belonging to a global community of Muslims and to how they assume Islam as a 'lifestyle'. In the introduction of the book I quoted from a song that was played during an NMU meeting in which the *shahada* was pronounced in a number of different languages, stressing the universality of Islam, and where Islam was held to be a force with the potential to unite all people. Wharnsby-Ali's

"Sing Children of the World" is an example of Islamically-oriented music that is promoted internationally, together with other cultural products and 'consumer goods', with the promotion of the *umma* also in mind. On the Internet Islamic outlets, some of which also present their goods at Islamic conferences and distribute books and audio-visual materials through local mosques, proliferate. The artefacts they propose include such things as books, audio-visual material (videos, CDs, cassettes), Islamic software, home decoration (prayer rugs, decorated pillows, glass and ceramics, electronic prayer-time clocks and calendars, calligraphic paintings), gifts and accessories (prayer beads, aromatic oils, bookmarks, stickers, Koran holders), Islamic clothing (hijabs, T-shirts with calligraphy from the Koran, hats and caps, footwear and prayer clothing), children's books, toys and games. Typically, such artefacts are presented as '*sunna*' and thus as promoting a proper Islamic lifestyle, with different 'styles' allowing people to identify with different Islamic traditions through consumption.[10] It should be noted here, however, that speaking about these 'goods' in terms of consumption should not be seen to indicate that they are merely 'symbols' or 'styles' by means of which people represent themselves. Rather, as will be discussed in Chapter Six, many of the items mentioned above are also pedagogical means for shaping pious selves or, to use Riaz's vocabulary, to maintain the 'nodes' in the Islamic spiritual Internet.

Unlike other major European cities, Oslo does not have the kind of Islamic (book) stores that sell Islamic music, literature and other consumer goods. The NMU and the MSS have, however, distributed books, music and T-shirts to fill this gap.[11] These, and some of the artefacts distributed at the Islamic conferences and by way of the Internet, may be found in the homes of some young Norwegian Muslims with newly established couples often combining a modern Norwegian style of interior decoration with discreet Islamic decor. At the NMU social events Islamic quiz games were popular as well as music CDs by Yusuf Islam (known as Cat Stevens before his conversion to Islam) and Dawud Wharnsby-Ali. Although the influence has so far remained limited, the impact of actors who market products designed at giving Muslims and Islam a new visibility and dignity should not be underestimated. This is

[10] Such as the '*sunna*' shirts ("designed and tailored in the style which Naqshbandi masters wear") sold online by the Islamic shopping network, the jogging Dawah Wear, a brand founded by three Afro-Americans and diffused widely around the world, or the Ummawear proposed by the Muslimsche Jugend Deutschland.

[11] Notably the CD *The Little Ones* by Yusuf Islam and T-shirts with the slogan 'Muslim by Nature' produced in the UK.

so notably with respect to products such as Mecca-Cola, Arab-Cola and Muslim-Up, launched as alternatives to the 'American-imperialist' Coca-Cola to protest against US policy on the Middle East. By way of these new brands, that have also been promoted on the MSS mailing list, the Islamic lifestyle becomes associated with an ethical and political pattern of consumption – a tendency that is reinforced by more general encouragement for Muslims to boycott Israeli and American goods in order to help bring about a more just world. We can thus see here a phenomenon in which consumption is politicized and promoted as a means of identification with a global Islamic community. This phenomenon also helps to realize the visions of 'engagement' and 'solidarity' that young Muslims see as central to what it means to be a Muslim (cf. Boubekeur 2005).

One should note that the vision of a global Muslim community is not only promoted by this genre of Islamic consumer goods, however. Popular cultural forms, particularly in the counter-culture related to hip-hop and rap music, have increasingly mobilized around an imagined Muslim community in support of a Muslim politics of recognition, this often being combined with a strong anti-racist vocation.[12] Although, to my knowledge, there are no Norwegian artists whose lyrics explicitly convey an Islamic message or identification with an Islamic community,[13] several of the international artists of this type are popular among youth in Norway. These artists, who pick up Muslim themes and often combine them somewhat uneasily with the traditional themes of hip hop and rap music (i.e. sex, drugs and violence),

[12] Well-known artists are Cash Crew, Fun-Da-Mental (Great Britain), IAM, NTM (France), Public Enemy, the American convert Everlast, Ice Cube, Big Daddy Kane, Mos Def, Q-Tip Brand Nubian, and Paris (US). See Banjoko (2004), for an account of the Islamic influence in American hip-hop and rap music. Banjoko argues that no other religion has affected hip-hop like Islam, showing that Muslim references are found in the lyrics of many well-known hip-hop artists. Many different Islamic tendencies are represented in this musical genre. Some hip-hop and rap artists embrace 'mainstream' forms of Islam, whereas many are known to support movements such as the Nation of Islam, which seems to have been particularly important as an Islamic influence in American rap music because of its focus (expressed in a notoriously conflictive way) on the issues of race and racism. Public Enemy, for instance, are known to rap about their respect for the Nation of Islam. Some other rappers (for example, Rakim, Nas and members of the Wu Tang Clan) are known to be followers of the Five Percent Nation of Islam, a sectarian offshoot of the Nation of Islam (Swedenburg 1997).

[13] In recent years, however, some of the Norwegian rap and hip-hop artists who deal more explicitly with themes related to being a minority youth have gained popularity.

nevertheless differ from the different musical genres having a more consciously pious Islamic profile that have lately become more popular among Muslims in the West and among the young Muslims I worked with in Oslo.[14] These can be seen as contributing to a 'Muslim popular culture' that has become increasingly important to young Muslims in Norway (and elsewhere) throughout the last decade. As well as conveying pious messages about the merits of the love of God and the importance of solidarity and unity among Muslims throughout the world, their texts often address social and political issues of importance to the global Muslim community.[15] They can thus be considered pedagogical devices that predicate particular solidarities, modes of being and acting (as when used in the context of the NMU) and not only a form of musical entertainment.

The idea of a global Islamic community is underpinned by globalizing processes that facilitate communication and solidarity between Muslims in distant spaces. The religious identities and practices of young Muslims in Oslo are informed by such global imaginaries and these global imaginaries are underpinned by trans-ethnic spaces for religious practice in the local context. However, the global *umma* is only one of several imaginaries and, as such, must not be understood as replacing or excluding other imaginaries as points of orientation for religious identities and practices since people are situated within

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For instance, the politically engaged rap group Karpe Diem launched their first full album in 2006 with texts dealing with, among other things, identity questions, minority–majority relations, racism and the relationship of minority youth to their parents. This group has become popular among Muslims as well as among other young people in Norway.

[14] This includes artists who mainly perform traditional Islamic hymns (*nashids*) with a 'modern touch' like, for instance, Yusuf Islam, Dawud Wharnsby-Ali, Raihan, Zain Bhikha, 786, SHAAM and Muslim hip-hop groups like Native Deen and Mecca2Medina. Texts often focus on the love for God and include the praising of Allah and encouragement to do good deeds and be pious. The Danish group Outlandish, whose success has extended beyond Muslim communities and into mainstream popular culture, sings about minority–majority relations, racism and other social and political issues, as well as about the spiritual relationship with God and Islamic practice. The hit Aicha, from 2002, was, in particular, immensely popular in Norway.

[15] As in this excerpt from Native Deen's "Busy Bees" that one young woman played for me: "What's with the scarf girl, wrapped up like a mummy. / They all made jokes and they said that you look funny. / You ran into the bathroom and your friends began to scoff. / After that encounter you had planned to take it off. / But then you thought how much Allah likes how your dressin'. / Pleasin' him was top priority to you no question".

different, multiple and antagonistic imagined communities relating, for instance, to place, nation, diaspora and religion. As Stuart Hall (1996: 624) has suggested, "it seems unlikely that globalization will simply destroy national identities. It is more likely to produce, simultaneously, new 'global' and new 'local' identifications". As will be seen in the remaining part of this chapter, belonging to a Muslim community is (re)produced simultaneously within global, regional, national and ethnic imaginaries.

Situating Islam in Europe and Norway

Euro-Islam and European Muslims

The spatial configuration of 'Europe' has become increasingly important to the ways in which Muslims living in European nation states imagine the categories, collectivities and social values that they feel affiliated with or distance themselves from. Asad (2003) has argued that Islam has been, and continues to be, excluded from representations of Europe and the narratives through which such representations are constituted (cf. Goody 2004). The construction of a European identity has meant constructing Muslims as 'external' to the 'essence' of Europe. Today, the 'Muslim Other' is an internal one and its relation to the imaginary of Europe as a non-Muslim (Christian or secular) space is hotly debated. The construction of the European Union, in particular, involves facing the question of how to relate to Islam in Europe, this both in relation to the significant Muslim population within the EU and the enlargement of the Union to include Muslim countries such as Turkey. While the consideration of such issues goes beyond the scope of this book, it is interesting to look, albeit briefly, into the ways in which Islam is currently 'imagined' in relation to 'Europe' and the ways in which such imaginaries influence Oslo's young Muslims' understandings of what it means to be a Muslim.

It is often suggested that Islam is now in the process of finding a European expression as it articulates with the different ways of life

[16] I have chosen to refer to these as one rather than two separate imaginaries because the issues that arise in relation to them are very similar and because they are not clearly distinct as points of orientation and imaginaries.

found in European countries. This was a topic raised at an international Islamic conference in Stockholm arranged by the Muslim Youth of Sweden which I attended together with a group from the Muslim Youth of Norway in 1999. There, one of the speakers suggested that, "Islam in Europe will have a European taste". The concept of 'Euro-Islam' has been introduced to indicate just such a development towards a specifically European expression of Islam. This concept is vague, however, and retains multiple meanings, often being used to refer to an anticipated development (that is, to the kind of Islam that will in the future be the normative foundation for Muslims in Europe). The term used thus projects a particular future, thereby suggesting what is good and desirable. Some authors see Europe as offering a chance for Muslims to develop a more critical and liberal form of Islam (cf., for example, Mandaville 2003; Tibi 2002). It has also been suggested that 'Euro-Islam' may prove to be a major driving force in the reformation and revitalization of the Islamic tradition worldwide as critiques of traditional interpretations of Islam voiced by Muslims in the West influence Muslims in Muslim countries (see Metcalf 1996a). In this sense, the imaginary of Euro-Islam proposes a vision that simultaneously contributes to upholding a vision of 'Islam' and 'Europe' as historically disjunctive spaces and to suggesting a merging of these spaces. It should be noted, however, that this merging is not primarily conceived as a two-way process. Whereas it is suggested that Islam will have a European taste, it is usually not similarly suggested that Europe will have an Islamic taste. The stress is, thus, on the way in which Islam eventually will and needs to be transformed in and through its encounter with 'Europe', while the 'identity' of Europe is not similarly challenged.

Bassam Tibi (2001, 2002), who is often acknowledged as the first to use the concept of Euro-Islam, has argued that only a Europeanized interpretation of Islam which distinguishes between a private and a public sphere can be integrated in Western Europe. To Tibi, the concept of Euro-Islam is intended to provide a liberal variety of Islam acceptable both to Muslim migrants and to European societies and capable of accommodating European ideas of secularity and individual citizenship along the lines of modern secular democracy (Tibi 2002: 37). These and other suggestions as to how Islam should adapt to and be reinterpreted in order to meet the challenges of European secular modernity have been embraced by governments, politicians and public

media throughout Europe. Although the Norwegian government has so far been less directly involved in the development of 'Norwegian Islam' than, for example, the French have been in encouraging 'French Islam',[17] Norwegian politicians, state agents and other public figures have on several occasions encouraged Muslims to develop Islamic interpretations of more 'modern' and 'progressive' kinds. A case that I discuss in more detail in Chapter Five aroused much public debate in Norway when the minister in charge of immigration and integration for the Conservative Party suggested that Islam had to be 'modernized' in Europe.[18] She claimed that "Islam in Europe must function differently than it does in Islamic countries" and encouraged Norwegian Muslims, whom she saw as "lagging far behind", to look to the developments in other European countries in this respect.[19]

Another, and perhaps the most prominent, contemporary promoter of Euro-Islam, Tariq Ramadan (2002, 2004), argues that Muslims in Europe need to redefine the imaginaries that traditionally structure the worldview of Islamic jurisprudence. This implies a critique of the distinction made in Islamic jurisprudence between *Dar-al-Islam* (the Abode or House of Islam) and *Dar-al-Harb* (the Abode or House of War), distinguishing regions or countries which are subject to Islamic law from non-Islamic regions or countries. With this critique, a spectrum of conceptual categories such as *dar-al-ahd*[20], *dar-al-dawa*[21], and

[17] Through, for example, close cooperation with Muslim countries and the state-initiated establishment of successive 'representative' national Islamic councils.

[18] *Dagladet* (04.11.2003): "Solberg utfordrer norske muslimer [Solberg challenges Norwegian Muslims]".

[19] This construction of 'Europe' as more progressive than Norway may be seen to mirror a more general attitude in the Conservative Party towards the European Union which it sees as something more modern and cosmopolitan than Norway.

[20] 'House of Treaty, Truce or Covenant', used in Islamic jurisprudence to describe the Ottoman empire's relationship with its Christian tributary states. Today, the term refers more broadly to those non-Muslim governments which have armistice or peace agreements with Muslim governments. Muslim scholars in Europe have used the term to indicate that Muslims living in non-Muslim societies have entered an agreement that implies accepting the laws and commonly accepted order of the society they live in.

[21] 'House of Invitation' is a term used to describe a region where Islam has recently been introduced and has been used with reference to the Meccan period during which Muslims considered themselves to be responsible for bearing witness to their faith before their peoples. Recently, the term *dar al-dawa* has been proposed to describe the status of Muslims in the West, notably by Tariq Ramadan, who argues that in the current world order, and in particular in industrialized societies, Muslims are facing the

dar-al-shahada[22] have been employed to reformulate and reassess the relationship of Muslim migrants to the non-Muslim countries in which they live (see, for example, Vogt 1995). This spectrum of conceptual categories offers ways of imagining the commitment and involvement of Muslims to Western European societies alongside their religious commitment. In order to realize this double commitment, Muslims in Europe must, according to Ramadan and others, revisit the Islamic sources so as to (re)interpret these and make them relevant to Muslims living in a European secular context. Whereas Ramadan offers to rethink *sharia* in terms that make sense to modern democratic European life, other Muslim authorities in Europe, such as the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR),[23] headed by Qaradawi, have sought to meet a perceived need on the part of the growing Muslim community in the West for advice and counsel based on *sharia*. In answer to questions put forward by Muslim believers, the ECFR issues non-binding authoritative rulings by qualified Islamic scholars (*fatwas*). It presents itself as not in competition with the established jurisprudence bodies of the Muslim world, however, but rather as a complement "aiming to contribute to a reflection of the *fiqh*[24] of minorities" (Qaradawi quoted in Caeiro 2003).[25]

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same responsibilities: "Assertive and confident, they have to remind the people around them of God, of spirituality and, regarding social affairs, to work for values and ethics, justice and solidarity" (Ramadan 1999: 145).

[22] 'World of Witness'. This term was proposed as an extension of the term *dar-al-dawa* by Tariq Ramadan who argues that the current situation of Muslims in Europe should be seen as one in which the Muslim gives witness, through his behaviour and his participation in the institutions of democracy, to his faith and identity as a Muslim (Cesari 2004; Ramadan 1999).

[23] The ECFR was founded in 1997 and presents itself as an "Islamic, specialised and independent academic entity" aiming to "issue collective *fatwas* that respond to the needs of Muslims in Europe, which resolve their problems in conformity with the rules and the objectives of *Sharia*". Between thirty and forty sages, all of whom must be European residents and have a degree in Islamic jurisprudence, assure the decisions of the Council. Yusuf al-Qaradawi is one of today's most influential Muslim scholars in the world. Like many of those who are prominent Muslims in Europe, his life history and work may be characterized as 'transnational'. He is the chairman of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, established by the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe in 1997, and has published exensively, notably on *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) in the minority context. He is also very active in various different media; he has a weekly programme on the Arab TV-channel Al-Jazeera and his writings and *fatwas* are distributed as books and pamphlets and are easily accessed on the Internet.

[24] Islamic jurisprudence.

[25] This does not necessarily mean that the ECFR is more 'liberal' or more responsive to the requirements of European states, a point that was illustrated when Chirac sought scholarly support for the French ban on wearing the hijab in schools from Al-Azhar

The idea of a European Islam remains largely an 'intellectual' imaginary where the primary issues are how Islam should relate to the political and public arenas of modern European nation states. Young Muslims are not necessarily familiar with the juridical conceptual categories suggested by Muslim scholars and intellectuals to reassess this relationship, although a limited group of them are. The imaginaries offered nevertheless impact, as will be further elaborated in the following chapters, on the way in which young Muslims in Oslo conceive of their role as citizens of a non-Muslim European state, and the way in which they attempt to create a Norwegian Muslim identity. Tariq Ramadan was already familiar to some in the late 1990s and during the last decade he has visited Norway several times, giving talks, among other things, addressing Muslim youth in particular. Although Ramadan is highly controversial among non-Muslims as well as Muslims, his ideas have become increasingly known and mediated in Norway in the last few years and in 2009 his book *Being a European Muslim* was published in Norwegian. Similarly, the ECFR, and notably its leader Qaradawi, were well-respected by many in the MSS and the NMU; *fatwas* from the ECFR relating to particular minority issues were sometimes distributed. The concern with developing ways of being active citizens in their 'at home' countries while 'remaining within Islam' and retaining a 'Muslim identity' is reflected in the ways that the goals and orientations of the NMU and the MSS are formulated in their statutes and in their self-presentations in diverse forums (see the following chapter for a further discussion of ideas about citizenship).

One particular imaginary that resonates with the young is Tariq Ramadan's suggestion that non-Muslim governments in which Muslims are able to participate democratically are more Islamic than authoritarian governments run by Muslims (Ramadan 1999, 2004). This view was largely reflected by the young Muslims I worked with. Looking at Wolasmal's essay, he refers to Afghanistan as a "so called 'Muslim' country" when judged in terms of what he holds to be the universal standards of Islam. It is not uncommon, then, for Norway, when judged according to the same standards, to be viewed as 'more Muslim' than

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in Egypt rather than from the ECFR, which has been opposed to French policies on this issue. Sheikh Tantawi of Al-Azhar defended the right of France to ban headscarves from the public sphere, referring to the fact that France as a non-Islamic country has the right to pass any law and that those Muslim women who did not wear the hijab because of the ban would be considered to be acting under coercion.

some of the countries conventionally categorized as such. In a workshop on the Islamic state in the NMU, for instance, the speaker (a Norwegian convert) was challenged by the public to name the country that in her opinion was closest to the ideal of Islamic governance today. The speaker played the ball back to the public and a young man named Abid immediately suggested Norway. The speaker was somewhat caught by surprise by this response and was reluctant to accept Abid's suggestion. Abid, however, defended his position by arguing that when viewed in terms of the rights prescribed by Islam, Norway was closer to providing these than most Muslim countries today. Zameelah supported Abid's argument by contrasting Norway to Turkey's fervent secularism and to the Iranian suppression of fundamental Islamic human rights. Although the issue remained contested and unresolved, the incident shows how a universalist approach to Islam opens up the possibility of viewing things that are formally Muslim as being (wittingly or, more often, unwittingly) in contradiction with Islam while things that are formally non-Muslim may been seen to embody universal Islamic values.

Many young people nevertheless remained ambivalent towards the idea of Euro-Islam and a 'European taste' to Islam in Europe. This ambivalence reflected a more general ambivalence towards issues of assimilation, adaptation and integration in general (Jacobsen 2002). Some suspected that Muslims would never be fully accepted as a part of Europe unless they were willing to 'give up their identity' and 'become assimilated'. Some invocations of Euro-Islam were, in line with this, suspected of being attempts to construct a form of Islamic religiosity acceptable to Europe, rather than a religiosity true to Islamic principles. While there was a great deal of ambivalence with respect to what 'integration' should entail in terms of a reshaping of Muslim identity and the Islamic tradition, the NMU was a member of the Forum of Muslim Youth and Student Organizations (FEMYSO) with its institutionalization of European cooperation between Muslim youth organizations, its work towards and within the EU and its active promotion of a European Muslim identity.[26] According to the Swedish magazine *Ung Muslim* ((4) 1999):

[26] Since its founding FEMYSO has been working actively with international and EU institutions such as the United Nations, the European Parliament and the Council of Europe as well as with other NGOs and organizations at the European level. (<http://www.femyso.net>; see also Massignon 2007; Silvestri 2007).

> FEMYSO envisages a Europe in which Muslims take pride in their historical contribution to the development of European civilisation and their 800-year presence in Spain; to look to the future to contribute to European Society as European Muslims.

Here the stress is, thus, put on changing the historical imaginaries through which Islam has been constructed as external to European identity. In a speech at the conference "European Muslim Youth – Enrichment of Society?!" (accessed at <http://www.femyso.net/>) held in the European Parliament on Monday, 15 September 2003 the FEMYSO president at the time, Khallad Swaid, said:

> being European and Muslim are not two distinct identities. They mutually enrich each other in the process of building a positive and creative commitment to citizenship. FEMYSO works together with other faith-based as well as secular youth organizations for greater justice and respect. We as young Muslims feel it is our duty to contribute to Europe and its societies.

FEMYSO's vision of a "multicultural, inclusive and tolerant" European future in which "all people can work hand in hand to create a peaceful and prosperous society (*Ung Muslim* (2) 1999) resonate importantly with the stated goals of the NMU and the MSS (with their focus on making Muslim identity a basis for 'positive participation' in society at large) and parallel the engagement of the NMU and the MSS in cooperating with a broad array of other organizations in the Norwegian landscape in order to counter racism and intolerance.

The NMU was involved in the work of FEMYSO for several years and representatives from the working committee attended a number of FEMYSO meetings. Due perhaps to the fact that Norway was not a member of the EU and that the question of 'European citizenship' was less of an issue in Norway than in member countries, the NMU's involvement in FEMYSO seemed to be less oriented towards 'contributing to Europe' than to a particular European country: Norway. While international cooperation between Muslims in different (European) countries may contribute to a common European Muslim identity, it also contributes to the imaginary of a Norwegian Muslim community in that participants are made representatives of their 'at home' countries and in that national stereotypes serve as frames for interpreting differences between them. At FEMYSO meetings, the delegates represented their 'at home' countries. In the meeting that took place in Stockholm in 1999, for instance, flags planted on the table in front of the delegates served to identify their nationality. As I have argued

elsewhere (Jacobsen 2002), these European meetings serve to realize stereotypical national identities. For instance, the Norwegian delegates tended to feel 'small' within the context of the FEMYSO since they represented a small country that had not 'come on as far' as the larger countries in their work as Muslim activists. On a positive note, the Norwegian delegation was seen to be more progressive when it came to the engagement of women in organizational work and with respect to their cooperation with non-Muslim Norwegian (youth) organizations. At the 1999 meeting, the two young women from the NMU were the only female representatives at the FEMYSO gathering. According to the Norwegian women, the other countries envied them this and talked about how they needed to mobilize women in their respective 'at home' countries. The Norwegian women explained their success in mobilizing women with reference to Norway as a land of gender equality, an ideal that is central to the construction of Norwegian national identity. They pointed out to the other delegations that it was traditionally Norwegian for women to be '*frampå*' (active, outspoken, self-confident). The young women thus assumed a position as Norwegian Muslims by identifying positively with ideals of gender equality, in this context conceptualized as Norwegian, as a constituting aspect of their Muslim identity. This positioning importantly differs from the representation of Muslims in the dominant Norwegian public discourse, in which this group is usually portrayed as 'the Other' and as a threat to 'Norwegian gender equality'.

Norwegian Muslims

The discussion of how young Muslims relate to the social imaginaries of 'Islam in Europe' has already pointed to the importance of national imaginaries in the construction of Muslim identities. The future of Muslims in Norway is imagined and contested through imaginaries which envisage a common Norwegian Muslim identity and language and then recast these within Norwegian national imaginaries. Many young Muslims see the 'unification' of Norwegian Muslims and the creation of a common identity as Norwegian Muslims as important in order to transmit Islamic traditions and Muslim identity in the migrant context. During a group interview with members of the NMU, Mohammed, one of the founders, presented Islam as something transcending national and ethnic borders and as something therefore allowing a transition from the ethnic and national identities related to

the countries of emigration to a Norwegian Muslim identity. He pointed to the importance of language in creating such identity:

> That is our main goal: to create a Norwegian Muslim identity, because in the long run the identity [related to where people come from] will die away. I mean, sixty years from now it's not that big of a thing to state over a cup of coffee that "I'm really from Morocco" or that "My grandfather was from Morocco". So then the thing is really to say that I'm a Muslim, because Islam doesn't have any borders. So in order to strengthen the Islamic identity of future generations we need to use the Norwegian language and to create a Norwegian Muslim identity.

Mohammed, like many other young Muslims, invokes a generational temporality of migration and assumes national identity related to the country of emigration to be something that is waning over time, with the 'future generations'. In contrast, being a Muslim is suggested to be a mobile and universal identity that can be passed on to future generations and that can also be combined with Norwegian (or any other) national identity. Mohammed draws on the image of an 'Islam without borders' to negotiate the relationship between being 'Moroccan', 'Norwegian' and 'Muslim'. This image is also invoked as a basis for 'uniting' the heterogeneous and fractioned Muslim population in Norway around a common identity as Muslims, thus strengthening their position within Norwegian society. As Habib put it in the same interview:

> In the long run I think that organizations like the MSS and the NMU will contribute to uniting Muslims, who are now split into ethnic groups, you know. Over a longer period of time, let's say about twenty, thirty, or even forty years, there will be Norwegian Muslims, rather than Pakistani and Moroccan Muslims. And that will make us stronger, I believe, in the long run.

From this perspective, the structuring of 'the Muslim community' on the basis of ethnic differences is perceived as an obstacle to 'unification' and the realization of a common Norwegian Muslim identity. In the process of constructing a common identity as Norwegian Muslims, individual ethnic attachments are set aside through a conceptualization of Islam as a religion that knows no boundaries (the global Muslim community). This loosening of Islam from ethnic identification allows Muslim identity to be combined with a new identity as Norwegian Muslims.

The contribution of young Muslims to uniting Norwegian Muslims may be exemplified by the engagement of the MSS in the so called 'calendar question'. The celebration of Muslim festivals and particularly the month of Ramadan are important signifiers of Muslim community

throughout the world. However, the religious calendar is also an important site of contestation, manifesting internal divisions and questions of authority. Since their establishment in Norway, Muslim immigrants have tended to rely on authorities outside of Norway in order to determine the exact date of the *eid* marking the end of Ramadan. Some follow the 'back home' countries, others Saudi Arabia and others the Muslim country first announcing the sighting of the moon. *Eid* has thus been celebrated on different days in different communities and mosques, thus accentuating internal divisions (cf. Vogt 2000).

In *Tankevekkende* (1998), one article is devoted to this issue, criticizing the mosques for "splitting into national groups" and for not being able to cooperate. In a later issue (Spring 2001), the fact that "relatives, friends and people in the same home or town have to celebrate *eid* on different days" is deplored and said to split the Muslim community in Norway. Just before the Ramadan of 1997/98, some members of the MSS contacted the Islamic Council of Norway in an initiative to make the mosques agree upon a common starting date for Ramadan. Among the university students who engaged this question were several who believed 'scientific' methods (i.e. astronomic calculations) to be more suitable for modern times than the 'traditional' methods (i.e. moon-sighting) or following Muslim authorities outside of Norway (i.e. the back home countries or Saudi Arabia). Representatives from different mosques were subsequently invited to make a common decision although, in fact, agreement was not reached and different groups thus again started Ramadan at different times. In September 1998 the MSS and the Islamic Council took a new initiative by founding a *hilal*[27] committee, whose task was to collect information from different institutions, talk to imams in different mosques and develop a suggestion for a practical solution that all could agree upon. As a result of these efforts, a *hijri*[28]-calendar agreement was signed by twelve of the larger mosques in Oslo in November 2000. Shortly after, for the first time, at least a majority of the Muslims in Norway started the fast on the same day. The agreement was welcomed by the MSS, which distributed a letter of congratulation to its members by e-mail on the occasion of *eid-al-adha*[29] in 2001. Addressing the 'calendar question', in which he

[27] Crescent, new or half moon.

[28] Lunar calendar starting from Mohammed's migration from Mecca to Medina.

[29] The feast of sacrifice performed on the tenth day of the month of pilgrimage (*Dhu l'Hijja*) imitating Ibrahim's (Abraham's) projected sacrifice of Ismail (Ishmael).

himself had increasingly become engaged, one young man commented to me:

> If Muslims are to be perceived as one group, they have to be able to agree on issues as fundamental as this one. I think most people agree on that. But arriving at a consensus is not a given, it is rather something that leaders have been forced to do. Many young Muslims were fed up with the disagreements between the mosques, so they started phoning the university to find out when there would be a new moon. And I think people realized that if they were to hold on to these young Muslims they would have to come to an agreement. I mean, it is hopeless to get time off from work or school if you are three Muslims in a class and you all want a leave for eid on different days.[30] So I think a change is forcing its way through: young Muslims are tired of the '*gubbevelde*' [dominion ruled by older men].

Despite the *hijri*-calendar agreement, and the fact that the Islamic Council of Norway works out yearly calendars based on the methods defined in the agreement, 'the calendar question' continues to animate debate and Muslims have continued to celebrate *eid-al-fitr* and *eid-al-adha* on different days. During fieldwork in 2002, Yasmina, one of the young women I had come to know, arranged a 'girl's evening' at her house to celebrate *eid-al-adha*. In the days before the event the young women were phoning each other to try to make arrangements for celebrating together. On Wednesday Soroya phoned me to say that the Islamic Council of Norway had announced that *eid* would be on Saturday. We made plans to go shopping for *eid* clothes for Soroya's children on Friday afternoon and then go to Yasmina's party together. On Thursday, however, Nabila called me to ask if I would bring some salad for Yasmina's *eid* party on Friday. We ended up celebrating on Friday but Soroya expressed her disappointment that 'Muslims could not even agree upon when to celebrate *eid*'. Nabila, for her part, was content that we had celebrated with 'the *umma*' since we had followed the rhythm of the pilgrims doing the *hajj* in Mecca.

As can be seen from this example, young Muslims, in cooperation with other organizations, work towards the unification of Norwegian Muslims (in this case through efforts to institute a common ritual temporality). Such cooperation is important not least in terms of pursuing

[30] A law of 13 June 1969 guarantees those who are not members of the Norwegian Church two days leave from work or school per year on the occasion of religious festivals.

collective interests and gaining certain rights from the state. A range of issues from the practical necessities of getting and developing standards for halal meat, to the intense debates about blasphemy following the Rushdie affair, to the *adhan* controversies, to debates on whether a national *sharia* council should be established have all energized cooperation across ethnic, linguistic and denominational boundaries. All these are moments and sites of negotiation between the various Islamic traditions of Muslims in Norway and the context in which these practices are now lived. While agreement is not necessarily reached among Muslims on such issues, one could argue that the efforts at cooperation and unification in themselves contribute to the emergence of a 'public space of discussion and debate' among Norwegian Muslims. While the main forums for such discussion and debate were still the mosques and Islamic organizations when the MSS and the NMU were founded in the mid-1990s, the expansion and use of the Internet in Norway has since then virtually exploded as has the emergence of Norwegian Islamic sites on the Internet. The most important of these is currently <http://www.islam.no>, which provides practical information (on prayer times etc.), information on 'Muslim events', information about a number of Islamic issues and a very active discussion forum. Several other mosques and organizations use the Internet more and more actively while there are also a number of private initiative blogs and info-pages about Islam such as, for instance, <http://www.muhammed.no> and <http://www.islamnorge.cjb.net>. The use of Norwegian language in these forums and their focus on upcoming events in Norway (mainly Oslo) narrow the scope of the community to Muslims who live in Norway and speak the Norwegian language but at the same time these forums point to and make use of references from around 'the global Muslim community'. For instance, <http://www.islamnorge.cjb.net> has a section named 'Ummah' with information about Muslims in conflict zones around the world (Iraq, Palestine, Bosnia, Kashmir and Afghanistan) and links to <http://www.ummahnews.com> – a transnational information site providing "news from around the Muslim world".

The 'vernacularization' of Islam

The nationalization of languages has, of course, been important in constituting national identities in a variety of European countries and in Norway the issue of a national language has continued to energize

debates about national identity right up until the present. That immigrants should 'learn Norwegian' has been unequivocally supported as a measure for their integration into Norwegian society across the political spectrum. Several writers on Muslims in Europe have pointed towards a process of 'vernacularization' of Islam, in which Islam comes to find a 'local' expression through the use of national languages to express and formulate Islamic identities, beliefs and practices (see, for example, Vertovec and Rogers 1998). This development is attested to by numerous publications on, for example, "Islam in Norwegian" (Vogt 2000) and "Islam in Swedish" (Otterbeck 2000). The question nevertheless remains whether the use of vernacular languages, and the ways in which Muslim discourses relate to local and national conditions, can justify claims to the emergence of, for example, 'Norwegian Islam', 'Swedish Islam', or 'French Islam'. While I do not think that the process of vernacularization justifies claims to the emergence of a 'Norwegian Islam', the process of vernacularization is important to the construction of a Norwegian Muslim community. It is the fact of speaking and writing the Islamic tradition in the Norwegian language, and interpreting it with reference to the contemporary Norwegian context, that creates a common discursive space underpinning the construction of a Norwegian Muslim community.

The linguistic practices of young Muslims who were born and/or grew up in Norway – as well as those of Norwegian converts – contribute to the development of 'Islamic Norwegian'. In contrast to most mosques and Islamic organizations at the time, Norwegian was from the beginning the common language spoken by all the young Muslims coming from different backgrounds in the NMU and the MSS. The use of Norwegian in addition to Arabic, in the mosques also, was an explicit goal for many of the young Muslims in these organizations. As Mohammed, a former leader of the NMU, stressed in a group interview:

> A main goal is to have a mosque where we can speak both Arabic and Norwegian, and where the Friday prayer is in Norwegian, in combination with Arabic. When we achieve this, we will have come one step further, and then we will be able to create other long-term goals.

This concern with the vernacularization of the religious language is related not least to the linguistic capabilities of young Muslims and the concern that young Muslims should be able to access and practice Islam through a language they understand. Many youngsters read and

write Norwegian more fluently, and understand it better, than Arabic or the other languages spoken in the mosques.[31] Given the status of Arabic as the language of revelation, the participants in the NMU and the MSS also generally held that every practising Muslim should strive to learn enough Arabic to at least be able to perform the prayers and preferably also to be able to read the Koran in its original form.

In linguistic terms the 'vernacularization' of Islam is a hybridized process in which the different languages involved (Arabic,[32] Norwegian and a diverse set of 'maternal languages') are transformed. While Norwegian is increasingly used in books, *darses*, *khutbas*[33] and discussions, Arabic, as the language of revelation, continues to be a constitutive aspect of religious practice as well as a privileged way of accessing the Islamic sources (as opposed to translations, that are sometimes piously referred to as 'interpretations' of these texts). The 'vernacularization' of Islam thus refers primarily to the area of conversation and debate about Islam, rather than to ritual practice. When speaking and writing the Islamic tradition in the Norwegian language, some central Arabic-Islamic terms are included. Through this process, the Arab Islamic vocabulary is finding a Norwegian form: words are written in the Latin alphabet and adapted to Norwegian grammars and transliteration is simplified so as to fit the sounds and spellings of the Norwegian language. The linguistic practices of the young Muslims I worked with varied with respect to whether they used Arabic terms, terms from their 'mother tongues' or translated Norwegian terms (and how they translated different concepts). Whereas some words acquire an established form in Norwegian (as in the case of 'prayer' which is used interchangeably with *salah*), others remain spoken in Arabic and are incorporated as such into the Norwegian language (this is notably so for words like 'imam' that do not have any obvious equivalent in

[31] For instance, in the Pakistani mosques Urdu is commonly used while the young have probably learned some Punjabi from their parents at home. Similarly the North African mosques tend to use Arabic when the young are likely to have learned to speak some Berber at home. However, this has lately been rapidly changing with increasingly more mosques and organizations now offering Friday prayers and religious lectures in Norwegian.

[32] Arabic, in this context, should not be seen as referring to the language of a particular group of people (Arabs) but as the language of revelation permitting Muslims (regardless of their mother tongue) to access the founding texts of Islam and to perform the Islamic rituals.

[33] Sermons delivered during Friday prayer in the mosque.

Norwegian).[34] In addition to Arabic words, Islamic Norwegian incorporates concepts with a variety of linguistic origins (see, for example, the discussion of 'religious reward' in Chapter Six).

Such a linguistic change is less banal than it may appear as it involves a complex process of cultural translation in which Islamic concepts and traditions are brought into contact not only with the Norwegian language but also with the 'mother tongues' of each of the members. To take but one brief example: during a *dars* in the NMU on the notion of *kadr*,[35] the young man giving the lecture said that he was uncertain whether this concept could in fact be translated with the word '*skjebne*' in Norwegian.[36] A discussion followed in which those present sought to grasp the meaning of this Norwegian word by explaining how they understood it. Several people also evoked the corresponding concepts from their mother tongues and the ways in which these were generally understood. The discussion thus realized a complex form of cultural translation in which the meaning of a theological concept had to be established at the intersection of a variety of different linguistic traditions. The meaning of *kadr* was thus negotiated through the prism of several languages as those attending tried to arrive at a common understanding of what the Islamic teaching of predestination might be said to entail.

Having to choose a particular Norwegian translation means that concepts are thereby related to new systems of meanings and associations. Hijab, for instance, would be referred to as veil, kerchief, scarf, shawl or Muslim headgear by different persons in different contexts. Such translations were contested. Scarf and shawl were acceptable to most, whereas many found 'veil' to be too evocative of an exotic imaginary involving harems and female seclusion. The kerchief alternative was used by some but was often seen as being too evocative of old ladies

[34] New expressions such as '*halal kjøtt*' (meat that is slaughtered according to ritual prescriptions and therefore permitted to Muslims), '*å gjøre nikah*' (performing the Islamic marriage ceremony) and '*å si shahada*' (pronouncing the attestation of faith), '*God eid*' (*Eid mubarak*), '*å ha rett niyyat*' (having the right intention) are established.

[35] *Kadr* (or *Qadar*) is usually translated in English as 'predestination' and more specifically as referring to 'divine predestination' or 'divine determination'.

[36] '*Skjebne*' in Norwegian covers what in English is expressed by the terms destiny, fate, chance and predestination (combined). In current language-use, however, it does not particularly refer to any religious idea of predestination.

and the countryside. Young Muslims were, thus, aware that choosing a particular translation, or choosing not to translate, had important consequences for the resulting associations and the images that were thereby created of Islam and Muslims in public discourse.

In *American Medina,* Schmidt (1998) notes that, as a first move, American Muslims translated religious concepts into English (e.g. *Allah* became 'God' and *Subhanallah* became 'God be Praised'). This, according to Schmidt, expressed a desire for inclusion and to underline familiarity. In the 1990s, however, during Schmidt's fieldwork, she noted a reverse movement as increasingly more Muslims adopted an Islamic American English vocabulary. Schmidt suggests that the large number of particularly African American converts to Islam may have accelerated this linguistic process. To many converts, the wish to signal 'difference' from mainstream Christian or secular American society was central to forging new identities as Muslims: "Difference produces visibility, and visibility challenges, in this case intentionally, that which the majority perceives as obvious" (1998). In the NMU and the MSS, there seems to have been a parallel development towards an increased use of Islamic Norwegian terms instead of translations. One explanation for the widespread use of Islamic Norwegian words may be that this represented an attempt to differentiate themselves from majority society. In Norwegian the term '*God*' will generally be understood within a Christian framework, unless specified otherwise. The use of '*Allah*' thus marks one's identity as a Muslim within a non-Muslim majority context. Following Schmidt's interpretation, this might be seen as a sign that young Muslims have become increasingly assertive in their formulation of a Muslim minority identity and their right to be 'different', something that will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. The increased use of Islamic Norwegian terms might also be due to the fact that a growing number of young Muslims, through their 'search for knowledge' on Islam (discussed in Chapter Five), have become familiar with Islamic Arabic terms as they are employed in, for example, books, pedagogical material, audio-visual material and conferences.[37]

[37] Though mostly used by Norwegian Muslims, non-Muslims, for example, in the media, have started to pick up on certain common Islamic Norwegian words. In August 2003, for instance, the newspaper *Dagbladet* produced some coverage of Islam in which they included a list of Islamic Norwegian terms. The Islamic Norwegian vocabulary is

Islam and national symbols

While language remains important as a primary vehicle for imagining and interacting within a Norwegian Muslim community, Muslims in Norway must also confront national imaginaries in which Islam and Muslim identity are not included. As Gullestad (2006) has pointed out, with the pressure put on the nation state, there has been an ethnification of national identity, this being articulated around notions of blood, kinship, home and family. Within this ethnicized national imaginary, immigrants and their descendants continue to be regarded as 'non-Norwegian' even if they 'assimilate' in linguistic terms and are legally defined as Norwegian citizens. In the next chapter I will discuss how these confrontations are played out in young Muslims' politics of identity. Here, I will consider some ways in which young Muslims' discursive practices performatively connect Islam to Norwegian national symbols and markers of identity. Contemporary challenges to the nation state seem to have reinvigorated a concern not only with blood and kinship, but also with national symbols. The Winter Olympics held at Lillehammer in 1994 epitomized this reinvigoration and popularized a range of national symbols as 'trademarks' representing Norway. During the course of the same decade popular media contests were also held to select and define a national cultural essence, singling out the 'most Norwegian' of a set of supposedly typically Norwegian ideas and artefacts.

The importance of Constitution Day as a ritual construction and display of Norwegianness has been discussed in numerous ethnological and anthropological publications (Blehr 2000; Brottveit, Aagedal and Hovland 2004; Eriksen 1993; Klausen 1984); for our purposes here, an e-mail posted to those on the MSS mailing list on the occasion of the

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thus not only changing the linguistic practices of Muslims in Norway but also those of non-Muslims. Words such as imam, halal, hijab, *sharia*, and ayatollah are increasingly familiar to a non-Muslim public. Lately, the terms *jihad* and *fatwa* have come into use not only in reference to Muslim politics but also as metaphors characterizing non-Muslim Norwegian politics. Here *fatwa* comes to mean something like a strong or dictatorial opinion censoring other opinions and *jihad* an uncompromising struggle against someone or something. In both cases, the words take on a highly negative meaning, as opposed to the meanings they take on within an Islamic framework. Although the Norwegian public is increasingly familiar with a range of Islamic Norwegian terms, considerable contestation arises over the correct meaning of such terms as these are used and misused, adopted and adapted to the local context.

17th of May (Constitution Day) can serve to illustrate the ambivalence of young Muslims' negotiation of national symbols and markers of national identity:

> Dear Muslim Norwegian countrymen! :-)
> wa'salaam o doa
> Three hurrahs for the day today
> hip hip hurrah, hurrah, hurrah… hurrah, hurrah, hurrah… hurrah, hurrah, hurraaaaah
> I wish all brothers and sisters a great celebration of the national day! :-)

The use of smileys in this e-mail was not designed only to convey a 'happy national day' attitude, it was also an ironic acknowledgement of the fact that the way in which readers were being addressed as Muslim Norwegian countrymen could provoke many Muslims as well as the non-Muslim majority. This had been particularly forcefully brought home a couple of years earlier when the appointment of the Norwegian Pakistani labour party politician Rubina Rana to lead the 17th of May Committee in Norway and precede the parade in Oslo was subject to discussion in the national papers after she received a racist threatening letter stating that: "This job is for white Norwegians. Go home to Pakistan" (cf. Gullestad 2001b; Jacobsen 2002).[38] Whereas this particular episode reflected a nationalist imaginary from which non-white, immigrants and Muslims were categorically excluded, the 17th of May has also been central in representing Norway as a 'multicultural' nation. Thus, the threats against Rubina Rana also engendered massive popular support for her. The e-mail thus plays on the ambivalences and dilemmas experienced by young Muslims in their efforts to construct a Norwegian Muslim identity while simultaneously negotiating boundaries and discursive attempts to construct 'Muslim' and 'Norwegian' as mutually exclusive categories of identity.

In an article called "Henrik Wergeland – the first Norwegian Muslim?" posted on <http://www.islamnorge.cjb.net>, links are established between Islam and Norwegian national identity by way of the poet Henrik Wergeland. Based on an interview in *Dagbladet* with

[38] In 2007 a new controversy aroused a great deal of emotion and heated debate around the question of whether children with an immigrant background should be allowed to carry the flags of their (or more often their parents') country of emigration in the 17th of May parade.

Yngvar Ustvedt,[39] the moderator of the Internet site writes that Henrik Wergeland in fact died a Muslim:[40]

> Yes, I believe you know him? Henrik Wergeland, the guy who instituted the day. The 17th of May, I mean, Norway's national day. But that he died a Muslim, you didn't know?

The moderator explains that:

> Wergeland believed in the wonders of nature. Islam became to him a religion that gave God – Allah – the right place within it. It became the religion that he felt closest to, and of which he spoke with the greatest sympathy. He preferred Allah to the Christian God, and considered Mohammed a distinguished prophet.

The moderator further related Wergeland's embracing of Islam to his sympathies for oppressed peoples and his support for their battles for freedom, something which in the text serves to confirm the universality of Islam and the ethical commitment of Muslims towards justice and freedom for the oppressed and embattled. He also suggested that Wergeland's views on Islam had not become common knowledge because many people "do not want to hear about it". The case of Wergeland is used, in conclusion, as an invitation to Islam addressed to Norwegians: "When Henrik Wergeland was inspired by Islam, why shouldn't others also be? Read about Islam yourself! As you can see, good Norwegians have already done so".[41] Here, Wergeland, as an exemplary figure of the 'good Norwegian' is held forth as someone who resolves the distinction between 'Muslims' and 'Norway' through his ethical practices.

In the religious imagination of the young Muslims, nature is integrated as a sign of God's greatness. By linking Wergeland's sympathies for Islam with 'the wonders of nature' a creative link is established

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[39] Salem Aleikum Henrik. *Dagbladet* 16.05.1997. Ustvedt is a writer and journalist who wrote his PhD dissertation on Henrik Wergeland. His suggestion that Wergeland might have been a Muslim was debated after the interview appeared in *Dagbladet* and was countered, among other things, by the suggestion that although Wergeland might have found some fundamental truth in all religions, he valued Christianity most.

[40] The moderator was active in the Muslim community and was one of the young Muslims with whom I worked.

[41] Interestingly, a similar discursive move to localize Islam in Germany has been made by the Muslimische Jugend Deutschland, which has suggested that Göethe and Kant were Muslims. This was pointed out to me by Synnøve Bendixen (personal communication) who has done fieldwork with youth from MJD in Berlin.

between Islam and Norwegian national symbols like the 17th of May and 'nature', which are both important in Norwegians' conceptualization of Norway and Norwegianness. Young Muslims also take their religious practice into 'nature', for example when they go hiking (*å gå på tur*), this being something which is highly valued as recreational and as 'healthy for body and soul' in the Norwegian national imaginary. Islamic rituals such as prayers are highly 'portable' in the sense that they require no 'sacred place' (cf. Metcalf 1996a). It is through the practices performed in a place that an 'Islamic space' comes into being. The way in which nature is transformed into the most beautiful 'mosque' through the performance of the ritual ablutions and the congregational prayer and through the sound of *adhan* is well illustrated in Tulay Gider's description of the NMU's trip to Tryvann found in *Explore*:

> We were finally there. The place was by a lake and it was beautiful. Autumn has its own particular beauty. Even though it was cold outside, we could feel the warmth of the colourful trees. […] It was time for *salah al-dhuhr*.[42] Those who were going to do salah did wudhu down by the lake. Hearing adhan in the middle of the forest sounded so beautiful to me that I cannot put it into words. (*Explore* (1) 1999: 18; italics added for Islamic terms explained in footnotes)

As was seen in Wolasmal's essay about his journey to Afghanistan, '*adhan* in the open' powerfully invokes and serves to constitute a Muslim space. Performing and hearing *adhan* in the middle of the forest thus performatively establishes Islam as a visible and audible aspect of the Norwegian landscape. This is all the more important when we look at the heated debates that have surrounded the question of whether or not Muslims in Norway should be allowed to perform the *adhan* publicly for the Friday prayer in mosques.[43] The *adhan* debate dramatized nationalist imaginaries in a way that excluded Islam and Muslims from a common national 'We' (cf. Jacobsen 2002; Naguib

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[42] Midday prayer (after the sun's noon).

[43] This discussion arose after the World Islamic Mission, at the time the only organization having a purpose-built mosque in Oslo, applied for a permit to perform *adhan* for Friday prayers. The city council in Oslo granted permission on the condition that they did not break health regulations concerning urban noise (maximum 60 decibels). Gressgård (2005a) refers to the political treatment of such issues as *adhan*, halal meat and hijab taken with reference to national law pertaining to 'health and security' rather than as questions of 'religious freedom', as instances of "category mistakes" – the employment of faulty categories of description and ethnocentrism (cf. Chapter Four).

2001). The debates were structured according to a dichotomy in which *adhan* represented 'them / the foreigners', whether or not these were constructed as a legitimate or illegitimate presence in the Norwegian landscape (this dichotomous framework will be further elaborated in the next chapter).

'Europe' and 'Norway' are imaginaries in and through which young Muslims constitute their religious identities and practices. Instead of treating these as 'given' and naturalized spaces that somehow automatically confer upon people who belong there a given 'identity', I have tried to give some glimpses of how these imaginaries shape the ways in which young Muslims reflect on themselves as Muslims, the way they anticipate their future and look to the past, how they organize their religious practices and how these reflections and interventions contribute to problematizing the 'identity' of 'Europe' and 'Norway'. When attempting to forge a Norwegian Muslim identity, young Muslims do not imagine the nation state in terms of ancestry and descent, but more as a community of conversation across overlapping multiplicities of origin and identification. In this process, national symbols are invoked and appropriated in ways that open them up to values and practices associated with Islam and social values are both mapped onto spatialized imaginaries such as 'Norway', 'Europe' and 'the West' and imagined as potentially transcending them in the shape of a universal religion or a universal humanity.

Family, kinship and the 'ethnic diaspora'

So far I have focused on imaginaries that in different ways transcend or challenge belonging created through reference to 'back home'. It would be wrong, however, to ignore this latter dimension as most young Muslims continue to identify and orient themselves towards a 'national homeland'. Such references do not point towards a fixed and bounded community, however, but to a social matrix constituted through a multiplicity of social relations and practices that relate to family relations, kinship and country background. The way in which ethnicity is produced and altered in the context of migration and globalization is not the focus of this book. It is, however, nevertheless necessary to have a look at how young Muslims imagine the categories, collectivities and social values that they feel affiliated with or distance themselves from in relation to emotional ties to family and kin, as well as close social relations with people sharing their background. Although the term

'ethnicity' is problematic in this respect, I will refer to this imaginary as 'the ethnic diaspora'.[44]

Family life is crucial for the transmission and negotiation of identities and social values and crucial as an experiential grounding for imagining the 'ethnic community' (cf. Gullestad 2006a). In her study of youth with an immigrant background in Norway, Prieur stresses the importance of the family for how young people come to identify with an 'ethnic category':

> Through the family the individual gets a name and a language, together with a series of culturally specific practices (food, music, clothes…), and to a certain extent also culturally specific ways of being and structures of feeling (show respect for parents, experience commitment towards them…). (Prieur 2002: 8)

In my study, also, the attachment to family and kin and the identities conferred upon them within this context were important to how the young came to perceive of themselves in terms of where they were 'coming from', their 'background' and their 'roots'. Some, in particular, took an interest in tracing their family history in order to get a fuller picture of 'where they came from'. Many were also concerned with passing on such things as language, musical and literary traditions and family history to their own children. Enduring long-term social relations continue to be importantly shaped within family, kin and ethnic networks of sociality and exchange. The imaginaries that relate to the family, the 'ethnic community' and the 'back home' country are sustained by such long-term and often intimate social relationships. Such relationships continue to impact on identities and senses of self and on how young Muslims act with respect to, for example, marriage and careers.

In envisaging both their past and future lives, young Muslims frequently invoked the family, kinship and 'ethnic community'. The young continually stressed their 'social obligations' towards the (extended) family. They envisaged their own lives to a large extent as part of larger family projects. This was particularly important when it came to the issue of marriage (cf. Bredal 2006). Most of the young Muslims in my study came from families where marriages were 'arranged' and, in this sense, seen as 'family affairs'. That marriage is a critical aspect of creating and maintaining collective identities across generations is, of course, at

[44] In Chapter Four, the issue of ethnicity is treated more broadly by paying attention to how processes of Othering impact on young people's identification with 'ethnic categories'.

the heart of much anthropological theorizing. Marriage ensures that communities and collective identities are maintained into the future. Especially with regard to the selection of a life partner, it may indicate how identity and difference are inscribed through contested ideas of endogamy and exogamy (cf. Raj 2003). In this respect it is interesting to look briefly into how my interlocutors reflected on marriage. The young Muslims I worked with contested widespread ideals and practices of ethnic endogamy and instead promoted religious endogamy.[45] Whether a person was Muslim or not (and their degree of piety) was seen as the primary criterion for choosing a spouse. One issue of the magazine published by the NMU (*Ung Muslim* (1) 2000) told the story of a girl who fell in love with someone from a different national background. The article, titled "Think for yourself!", stressed young people's right to fall in love and marry across cultural boundaries, a right that was legitimized in this context with reference to Islam. It should be noted, however, that there was a marked difference between normative statements and practice in this respect.[46] Although ethnicity and nationality were discarded as normative principles for regulating marriage, actual identification in terms of language and 'culture' and practical considerations, as well as loyalty to, expectations and/or pressure from family and kin, still assured that most marriages were endogamous in ethnic and/or national terms. The move from ethnic endogamy towards religious endogamy was, thus, part of the anticipated future of Muslim unity.

Nisha, for instance, told me that for a long time she had only considered Kashmiri suitors since her father would only accept her marrying

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[45] I should hasten to add that this is not an attempt to generalize about marriage practices among young Muslims. It is only meant as an illustration of how young Muslims identify with different communities. For an excellent discussion of marriage practices among South-Asian minority youth in Norway see Bredal (2006). The limits of religious endogamy are contested. Among the young Muslims I worked with, marrying someone who was not a Muslim was generally considered unacceptable. In line with many *ulema*, some argued that Muslim men could also marry "women of the Book". Women could not do the same, as religious identity was seen to be passed on by the father. Why this was so, was debated, and references were somewhat uneasily made to a man's position as the head of the family. More often, however, the young Muslims tended to explain religious endogamy with the practical difficulties living with a person of a different religion would cause, in particular in relation to raising children.

[46] Figures from Statistics Norway (Lie 2002) show that most marriages consist of men and women from the same region, and that there are relatively few marriages across country background. Roy (2000) notes a similar discrepancy in the French context between discourse and practice related to marriage.

within the group he saw them as belonging to. As her parents only communicated with considerable difficulties in Norwegian and English, she also worried that they might be unable to communicate with her future husband, should she marry someone from a different national background. To 'take up that battle' would, she thought, be too problematic in relation to her family, to which she showed affection and commitment, so she had been preparing to find someone who her father could accept. Her mother did not care so much about origins and said that as long as the man in question was a Muslim she would be fine with it. Even so, the mother worried about the example Nisha would set for her younger sisters, these being 'even more Norwegian than her'. Recently, in particular after he had gone on the *hajj*, Nisha got the impression that her father had softened somewhat on the issue. She saw this partly as a result of him having become more pious after the *hajj* and partly as a result of the way she and her siblings had been 'standing up to him' on a number of issues over the years. This resistance had included negotiations on a variety of issues ranging from what clothes to wear to whether or not they could travel on their own. One of her older siblings had already married a non-Kashmiri, this after considerable protest from the parents, however.

On one occasion Nisha and her father discussed a couple of marriage proposals that her father had received. Nisha was reluctant, as on previous occasions, to accept the candidates her father presented to her, however, so her father, seemingly somewhat discouraged and impatient, asked her, "But what is it that you want, my daughter?" Nisha replied, "I don't want to be as you taught me, Kashmiri first and then a Muslim. I want to be a Muslim first and then a Kashmiri". In so replying, Nisha made a powerful statement to her father about whom she wanted to be, a statement that explicitly opposed the priorities that her father attached to belonging. Nisha's statement was not only a powerful statement about belonging, however, but also an effective way of challenging the standards of ethnic endogamy that she saw her father as imposing on her. Being a Muslim first, rather than a Kashmiri, would mean that it would be whether a suitor was a 'good' Muslim or not, and not his ethnic or national background, that would become the most important criterion for determining the pool of potential partners. Indeed, when she spoke to me and to her friends about the candidates she had been presented with it was usually their piety – or lack of such – to which she accorded the highest importance, this along with other issues pertaining to education, economic status and appearance.

When she married a few years later, however, it was to a well-educated pious Kashmiri who met both her own and her father's criteria.

Although most continue, like Nisha, to marry within their own ethnic community despite their normative widening of the pool of potential partners achieved by appealing to religious rather than ethnic endogamy, there are some changes to be noticed. There have been several inter-ethnic marriages in the networks surrounding the NMU and MSS, a few Internet-initiated engagements and marriages and some marriages arranged by friends in the Muslim network instead of by the family. Islamic conferences and multi-ethnic organizations, as well as Muslim marriage bureaus on the Internet, are sites where Muslim spouses may be found outside of the ethnic community. It is interesting to note that those who marry across ethnic boundaries are sometimes referred to as 'really Muslim', since they have apparently managed to let themselves be guided by Islamic principles rather than by cultural traditions or social expectations. In a sense, these couples thus represent an anticipated future in which the Muslim community will no longer be divided by ethnic and national differences.

Whereas this anticipated future thus provides an important imaginary for young Muslims, there are reasons to agree with Naguib (2001: 16) when she says that "at the present time in Norway, we should think in terms of several Muslim diasporas based more on nationality/ethnicity rather than a common religion". To most of the young Muslims I worked with, socialization into Muslim identity and practice was indissolubly linked to the area of family and kinship and the 'ethnic diasporas' imagined in their extension. The transmission of religious traditions and practices such as reading the Koran, prayer, dress codes, food etc. was part of informal socialization taking place within the family and in mosques dominated by different ethnic communities. Although young Muslims made reflexive efforts to distinguish religious from ethnic identities, and culture from religion, these points of identification continued to intertwine in daily life, where references to ethnic and religious communities and to culture and religion were sometimes interchangeable. Muslim identity and practice thus remained tied to the cultural and religious values transmitted within the family, kinship networks and the (ethnically-based) mosques.

Since I did not focus on any particular 'ethnic community' it would be impossible to trace by means of my data the various ways in which particular ethnic imaginaries and patterns of sociability interact with other imaginaries. I will, however, discuss one example of how

belonging to an ethnic community intersects with, and is partly challenged by, global Muslim imaginaries and the emergence of a Norwegian Muslim identity. In doing so, I base my discussion on an ethnographic account of a young woman moving through the city of Oslo. The example draws attention to how the imaginaries discussed above are realized in intersection with, and mutual differentiation from, each other. This, together with crosscutting differences in, for instance, gender, sexuality and age turns them into sites of control and cultural play, consent and resistance and reproduction and change.

Journeying through social imaginaries

It is ten o'clock in the morning and Alesha sits with a group of other students from the MSS registering participants for the second International Islamic Conference in Oslo.[47] The conference is taking place in a part of Oslo Centre (West) where the stream of men and women of different colours dressed in a variety of Islamic dresses attracts the attention of passers by. Alesha, who normally does not cover her head, is wearing black trousers, a wide white shirt and a white hijab (the latter at the request of the conference organizers, who prefer female aids to cover their heads at the conference site). All the MSS young women have followed this recommendation except for one who is just 'attending' rather than 'helping out'. In the school building that has temporarily been converted into a conference hall, numerous activities are taking place. Books, audio and video tapes and some 'Islamic consumer goods' (e.g. hijabs, halal make-up (*khols*), halal perfume (without alcohol), prayer time alarms, calligraphies and Kaaba key rings) are displayed in the entrance hall. The NMU and the MSS are among the organizations represented at the stands where brochures are distributed and people may approach to inquire about the work of the organizations in question. Food is served in the cafeteria during conference breaks. In the toilets and cloakrooms ritual ablutions are performed before *salah*, which takes place in the school's gymnasium. The school site is organized by a gendered division of spaces with separate entrances, separate seating in the conference room, separate prayer

[47] This is a biannual event, staged by the Masjid Bilal in cooperation with other Muslim organizations in Oslo, in which a range of scholars from Muslim as well as European countries and the United States are invited to lecture on and discuss a range of issues, but particularly those relating to the condition of Muslims in Europe.

rooms and separate lines and eating areas in the cafeteria. Well into the first lecture Alesha finishes up the registration and joins the approximately five hundred listeners in the main conference hall. Throughout the day Alesha, who is one of the few Pakistanis attending the otherwise Arab-dominated conference,[48] listens to speeches by internationally renowned scholars from around the world on, among other things, *dawa*, the truth of the Koran, morality and ritual worship.[49]

In the late afternoon I catch up with Alesha on the subway. We are both headed for the 'henna-party' of Haleema,[50] a 22-year-old friend of Alesha who also has a Pakistani background. The henna-party is to be held in a community house in an eastern suburb of Oslo and the journey takes us from the bourgeois Centre (West) area through the city centre and on to the more immigrant-dense areas of the eastern suburbs. Alesha has kept on the hijab she was wearing at the conference and, before I get time to ask her if she has started to wear it generally, she points towards her headgear and explains that she has kept it on as an 'experiment'. As she is considering donning the hijab, she wants to "check out how it feels to wear it". It is the first time she has worn the hijab in a public 'Norwegian' space and she is feeling oddly visible. "It feels like everybody is looking at me", she says somewhat embarrassed. Upon leaving the subway station we meet another Norwegian Pakistani friend of Haleema and Alesha, also headed for the henna-party. Alesha once again rushes to explain why she is wearing Islamic headgear. Seemingly somewhat relieved upon hearing Alesha's explanation, the other young woman admits that she had in fact started wondering

[48] A majority of those who attended the conference were of North African, Middle Eastern or East African, in particular Somali and Sudanese, background. There were also some Norwegian converts and smaller numbers of people from a variety of other national backgrounds.

[49] Among these were a number of internationally renowned 'diasporic' scholars such as Shabir Ally, Abdullah Hakim Quick, Jamal Badawi and Tasneem Zaman. These scholars lectured in English, whereas a number of speakers from different Muslim countries lectured in Arabic.

[50] The *mehnde* ritual is termed the 'henna-party' (*henna-festen*) in Norwegian. Henna is a red colouring traditionally used to beautify the bride during the wedding ceremony. It symbolizes protection and purification from evil. The henna-party is held in connection with the wedding celebration and usually takes place on the night before the actual wedding. Haleema was marrying a man from Pakistan whom she would go and live with for a while before returning to Norway with her new husband. Since she wanted to have a *mehnde* ritual with her family and friends before leaving Norway, the henna-party was held some time before the wedding ceremony, which was to take place in Pakistan.

whether Alesha was really "like that". Just before we arrive at the community house Alesha excuses herself and explains that she needs to drop by her house to change for the wedding party. Half an hour later she arrives in a beautiful green and gold *shalwar kameez*, her long hair hanging loose over the *dupatta* that she has carefully draped around her shoulders.

All the guests, except for a couple of girls with an Indian background and I, are Pakistanis.[51] The women of Haleema's family and her closest friends gather on the floor, playing the drums (*dholak*), singing and clapping their hands. The lyrics of the songs contain challenges and insults to the women on the groom's side. Since the groom's family is not present, Haleema's friends alternately take the role of the groom's side and tease and challenge Haleema's family.[52] Haleema, who I know as a trendy-looking and self-confident young woman, arrives draped in layers of yellow tissue, head lowered, her eyes turned down. Normally the groom and his closest family would be present at this moment; since they are in Pakistan, however, Haleema enters the decorated room accompanied by the closest women and men on her side and is seated on a 'throne' lighted by spotlights and candles. Haleema gracefully enacts the role of a shy and modest bride to be who is sad to leave her family and friends and anxious about meeting her husband to be. Approaching the bride to be one by one, the guests participate in an elaborate ceremony, smearing henna on the bride's hand and oil in her hair and feeding her sweet cakes made from chickpeas, sugar and *ghi*.[53]

Music, dance and masquerade go to make up the main celebration of the *mehnde* party. Alesha and some other friends stage a dance performance imitating the Bollywood genre, this accompanied by dancing and music varying from the more traditional tunes, through Bhangra to hip-hop. Haleema's younger brother and three of his friends appear

[51] I should note that, in this context, people were talked about as 'Norwegians', 'Pakistanis' and 'Indians'. When I arrived, a young boy looked at me in astonishment and asked, "A Norwegian?" This does not mean that those who here construed themselves as 'Pakistanis' do not also, in other contexts, construe themselves as Norwegian Pakistanis or Norwegians, however.

[52] Traditionally these songs are performed as a competition between the bride's and the groom's family.

[53] The young women at the party knew how to perform the central rituals but were unable to give a discursive explanation of the different ritual elements. "It is just the way we do it" was the standard response to my questions.

to perform a dance and a group of girls, masquerading as boys, enact a passionate love drama while miming to a popular Urdu song. The entertainment continues with a performance in which Haleema's brother and some of his friends dance together with three female friends of Haleema. They enact the story of a young couple courting one another, alternately begging for and resisting the advances of the other. Haleema's brother also performs a very emotional song he has composed about how much he will miss his sister when she leaves the house. The public as well as Haleema are moved to tears. To cheer Haleema up again, she is brought out onto the dance floor. To a combination of Asian, Arabic and Western tunes, the dancing gradually gets more energetic and sensual, drawing attention to parts of the body which are normally carefully covered.

Multiple imaginaries: heterogeneous spaces

Alesha's journey through the city disrupts assumptions about a homogeneous national space and allows us to explore the complex cityscape of Oslo and the ways in which Muslim identities are constituted and reconfigured within this locality. The Islamic conference temporarily transforms an ordinary Oslo school into an enactment of the global Islamic community. The contrast of this vision, and the spatio-temporal imaginaries that orient the event taking place in the school building, to the imaginaries that orient young Muslims' everyday practices in this and other school buildings as pupils is worth noting. Schools are, as we know, prime arenas for the formation of people as citizens of the nation state, with the particular imaginative unity and embodied performances that this implies. The 'imagined community' of the Islamic conference is defined primarily by adherence to Islam and its *umma* of believers. Islamic symbols and performances, such as the hijab, *salah* and the gendered organization of space, define a common Muslim space that transcends national and ethnic boundaries. The ritual of *salah* brings the *umma* into being through its separation of the sacred from the profane (ablutions, the pronunciation of *niyyat*[54]), its transcendence of national differences by means of prostration before God carried out in unison, and through its iconographic rendition of a gender system guaranteeing social order.

[54] The declaration made by the believer before the five daily prayers of the meaning and the purpose of the act.

The performance of *salah* as a communal ritual is particularly forceful as an embodied performance enacting belonging to a global Islamic community. Although *salah* brings out the range of differences existing between various Islamic traditions and the ways in which praying has been institutionalized within them, it simultaneously suspends such differences through the act of praying together. Nerina's account of an incident that occurred when she went to pray at the conference aptly brings this out. Together with Alesha, Nerina was one of the few attendees of Pakistani background and when she went to pray, a little late, a group of women with a Somali background were already gathered. Nerina recounted how at first she felt awkward because she did not know how to pray "like the Somalis do" and because one of the women rearranged her hijab and skirt. While this made her reflect on different national variations in religious practice, she nevertheless stressed a feeling of mutuality, solidarity and unity in their joint prostration before God: "I liked the solidarity! I enjoyed the brotherhood and the sisterhood. People felt welcome wherever they came from. I felt that I fitted in".

The vision of solidarity, sisterhood and brotherhood and of 'fitting in' is nevertheless negotiated in several ways and the 'deterritorialized' imaginary of the Islamic *umma* is tempered against concerns of locally lived lives. Alesha and Nerina, in particular, deplored the fact that, while they had learned a lot about 'their religion', some of the scholars from abroad had addressed issues that were not relevant to Muslims in Norway and had no understanding of the situation young Muslims in Europe are in. With the speeches being given in English and Arabic as well as Somali, they felt that they were 'in another country'. Some of the scholars were also characterized as 'very conservative' and as adopting oversimplistic divisions between Islam and the West. This type of criticism forms part of a broader trend among European Muslims, and in particular the young, towards refiguring traditional structures of authority in favour of alternative interpretations of religious knowledge perceived as more relevant to contemporary diasporic life in the West.

The young women also positioned themselves ambivalently with respect to the particular gendered moral standards that the Islamic conference enacted. While Alesha chose to wear a hijab at the request of the conference organizers, Nerina abstained from so doing. Nerina reflected on the ways in which not wearing a hijab made her stand out at the conference:

> In principle, I'm against donning the hijab to be one of them. I'm against wearing it in order not to stand out from the others, if you don't usually wear it. But it was also a somewhat amusing experience. Usually when you walk around Oslo it is completely different. If you wear a headscarf, you are the one that stands out. So it was like the total opposite of what it is usually like.

It is, of course, precisely this reversal that takes place in the subway, linking west to east, when Alesha's hijab turns into a marker of ethnic and religious difference between the non-Muslim majority and their Muslim 'Others' (cf. Chapter Four). The hijab accentuates her 'visibility' as a 'stranger' to majority non-Muslim Norwegians. The henna-party is located in a community house, used by different local organizations and communities, in an eastern suburb that defines itself as 'multicultural' and offers a range of activities for young people that are framed in the language of a 'colourful community' and 'integration'. Alesha and Hameeda both grew up in this self-proclaimed multicultural neighbourhood and their networks of friends and acquaintances, as well as their linguistic and cultural competencies, reflect the heterogeneity of the place where they spent their childhoods. The imaginaries of the henna-party transform the community house from its inscription as a 'local' meeting place for different cultures into a space where the 'Pakistani community' comes into being through social relationships and particular ritual and sanctioned practices. The social imaginaries that the henna-party is constituted through, and constitutes, also differ from the ones realized at the Islamic conference. Here, being a Muslim is a feature of the collective identity defining the event, but this as an aspect of what constitutes the ethnic community and their 'common culture' rather than with reference to a global Muslim community. The ritual and sanctioned practices of the henna-party are not authorized by reference to Islam but largely derive their authority by reference to 'cultural traditions', formulated as 'how we do things', and in terms of loyalty to family, kin and the wider 'ethnic group' (or *biraderi*, cast etc.). Whereas the henna-party relates to Islam as a dimension of an ethnic collectivity (but a dimension that is both integrative and potentially transgressive), the Islamic conference relates to Islam precisely as a means of transcending ethnicity by way of belonging to a global Muslim community.

Despite the reproduction of ethnic borders in marriage, the henna-party in itself is a truly hybridized event, mixing, as it does, languages, music genres and food traditions. At the party, the young mix Norwegian

with Urdu and Punjabi when speaking to each other with education and future careers being discussed in terms of the Norwegian school system and labour market. A 'global' or Americanized consumer culture is also realized through the pizza and Coca-Cola served at the wedding. A hip-hop beat and dance style is introduced as an element in the musical performances and performed as an element of the hybridized henna-ritual. The henna-party also draws importantly on a common South Asian popular culture consisting of film, poetry, dance and music, a culture that includes Indians as well as Pakistanis, Hindus and Sikhs as well as Muslims. In the opinion of the young Muslims present at the henna-party, its intertwining of different cultural traditions makes it into an arena for the performance of 'culture' as a contrast to 'Islam' (even though it is sometimes simply taken to be Islamic). Haleema, the bride to be, thematizes this with respect to the rituals of the henna-party:

> Most of our traditions are adopted from Hinduism, especially those involved in weddings. Clothing, dancing, music, language and even looks are so similar. We have even adopted their rituals into Islam. Like the *qawwali*[55], for instance – the religious songs. Hindus sing religious songs to their gods, you know. And it is almost like a competition; if they have religious songs we should have them too. (italics added for term explained in footnote)

Like Haleema, many young Muslims are concerned about this intertwining of religion and cultural traditions and the ways in which this continues to inform the practices of Muslim migrant communities. The Islamic conferences in which Muslims from different parts of the world come together, as well as trans-ethnic organizations like the NMU and the MSS, are experienced as privileged sites in which Islam and cultural traditions can be untwined. As Alesha's friend Rabab recounts, the Islamic conference gave her new perspectives on things because the other participants were not Pakistanis. This allowed her to compare, to see what was the same and what was different and to separate out the practices that are "just cultural traditions" and "not really Islam", as she puts it.

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[55] *Qawwali* is the traditional form of Islamic song found in India and Pakistan. The development of the *qawwali* historically closely parallels that of the Hindu devotional songs know as *bahjan*. The Chisti school of Sufism has been important in propagating the *qawwali* in Pakistan and India, and its adepts brought this devotional practice with them to Norway.

Some of those of Pakistani background particularly worry about the influence of South Asian popular culture on the Norwegian Pakistani Muslim community. This concern was also the subject of a discussion between people on the MSS e-mailing list with regard to the celebration of *eid*. Hamdan wrote that:

> In a previous eid, I remember that quite a few Muslims went to the Soria Moria movie theatre to watch an Indian movie screened as a special eid arrangement! When the eid of Muslims is celebrated with Indian film at Soria Moria, I feel a deep twinge in my heart. I feel that something very pure, very beautiful, is soiled and bereft of its beauty.

It would be tempting to interpret such concerns as illustrations of Eriksen's suggestion that the young of the so called second generation are "tempted by pure identities" that "define clear-cut boundaries, define rules for behaviour and prohibit negotiation of values and morals" (Eriksen 1999: 19). The metaphors of defilement and of being soiled, as contrasted with purity and beauty, certainly convey a particular set of values and morals related to being a Muslim that opposes Islam to 'Indian movies'.[56] However, there are several further points to be made here. Firstly, such concerns with purity and impurity were usually highly contextual. Most, not least the young women, continued to watch, listen to and enjoy South Asian music, Pakistani soaps and Indian movies. An alternative reading would suggest that in the criticism quoted above it is not Indian movies as such that are 'impure' and 'defiling', but the fact that a religious holiday is turned into an event of entertainment and popular culture instead of being centred on its own religious significance. If this is so, it is not the upholding of boundaries and the construction of 'pure' identities that are the primary concerns when young Muslims decry the influence of South Asian popular culture on the Pakistani community. Rather, it is the values and ethical orientations that this popular culture is seen to involve, and the kinds of subjectivities it shapes, that are questioned. For instance, in another debate among some MSS members, it was discussed whether the fact that young people spent their time watching Bollywood movies and soaps was a hindrance to a more active engagement in society and for

[56] The 'South Asian' is also fragmented by the conflict between India and Pakistan, in Kashmir and Gujarat in particular, a conflict that spills over in the young Pakistanis' attitude to the dominance of India in South Asian popular culture. Members of the PSS and MSS have made appeals to other Pakistanis to boycott Indian cultural events. This shows that conflict lines from 'back home' still play an active part in the identity projects of young Muslims in Norway.

being active in ameliorating the condition of Muslims in Norway as well as elsewhere. In this respect, one could argue that rather than "prohibiting negotiation of values and morals" such criticism actually opens a space for debating what kinds of values and morals should guide people's lives through trying to convince and persuade others to live more piously.

Werbner (2002a) has argued that the aesthetic community constituted on the basis of a shared South Asian popular culture, in contrast to the one built around the notion of an 'authentic Islam', is characterized by 'fun' and 'pleasure'. She identifies a tension between "the puritanical intellectual sobriety of Islam" and "the sheer pleasure of South Asian food and dress, films and poetry, comedy and parody, music and dance" (2002: 12) and argues that South Asian popular culture constitutes an aesthetics that transgressively interrupts pure narratives of origin and faith or over-policed boundaries (Werbner 2002b: 130). It is the source of powerful counter-narrative in the struggles of marginalized groups, in particular women and youth, to challenge the agendas and diasporic consciousness of British Muslim South Asians as predominantly defined by Muslim male elders (Werbner 1996b, 2002b, 1999). Comparatively, one could argue that, in so far as young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS tend to enforce a boundary between 'Islam' and 'culture' and to see South Asian popular culture as 'polluting' Islam, they undermine the legitimacy of an imaginary that might otherwise be transgressive and contribute to destabilizing hierarchies involving elders and youth, women and men and experts and lay people. This does not mean that such hierarchies – and hegemonies defining what a Norwegian (Pakistani) Muslim community should be like – are not challenged, however. As Werbner (1996a) also acknowledges, young people also find support for a legitimate challenge to hierarchies involving elders and youth and women and men through the discourse distinguishing 'cultural tradition' from Islam. I have already touched on this with respect to the debates about ethnic versus religious endogamy and will show in later chapters how young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS challenge established hierarchies from a position 'within Islam' rather than by drawing on a popular culture that challenges religious norms of puritanism and sobriety.

(Re)imagining Muslim identity

Inspired by Werbner's concept of 'imagined diasporas' and by the concept of 'social imaginaries' this chapter has explored the way young

Muslims imagine the categories, collectivities and social values that they feel affiliated with and distance themselves from and how the communities imagined are enacted and realized through religious and cultural performance and through organizational mobilization. It has highlighted processes of boundary-making and hybridization, continuity and change and normative suggestions as to what is good, just and desirable. The chapter attests to the importance of developing analytical concepts that do not essentialize communities, cultures and identities. Rather than discussing the realities of young Muslims' lives in Norway as exemplifying an existential suspension between two 'communities' or 'cultures', I have tried to paint a more complex picture of the social imaginaries in terms of which young Muslims orient themselves and to show how the subjectivities of young Muslims are constituted in relation to the different visions of community, the normative suggestions as to what is good, just and desirable and to the different visions of the future and the past that these imaginaries offer. Processes of globalization engender 'global imaginaries' of the Islamic *umma* but such global belonging does not replace imaginaries related to other spatial configurations such as Europe, Norway or 'back home'. The imaginaries in terms of which young Muslims orient their lives and create solidarities and linkages to the past and the future are multiple, internally differentiated, heterogeneous and contested. I have tried to show how this multiplicity articulates in the discussions and performances of young Muslims in Oslo and how this simultaneously energizes processes of hybridization and boundary-making. The social imaginaries that young Muslims in Oslo interpret their belonging in terms of provide sometimes overlapping, sometimes contradictory visions of the world and scripts for how people should live and act. Far from being simple acts of bricolage or hybridization, the identity constructions taking place within these imaginaries are sometimes painful and conflictive. The contemporary mobilization of Muslim identity in the political space of European nation states, as well as the apparent increase in (cultural) racism and discriminatory practices towards 'immigrants' and 'Muslims', demonstrates that migration and globalization also energize a focus on identity and borders. This 'reactive' moment of globalizing processes, expressed within the dynamics of a so called identity politics and 'politics of recognition', is the subject of the next chapter.