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Hansjörg Schmid, Noemi Trucco, Federico Biasca

Swiss Muslim Communities in Transnational and Local Interactions

Public Perceptions, State of Research, Case Studies

Authors: Hansjörg Schmid, Noemi Trucco, Federico Biasca, SZIG Universität Freiburg

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Executive Summary

In numerous European countries of immigration, there are controversial discussions about how transnational influences and local dynamics relate to each other within Muslim communities. This study addresses the subject of transnational Muslim networks and their local impact in the Swiss context in a threefold manner: firstly, it analyses media and political perceptions in Switzerland. Secondly, it evaluates the state of research on transnational networks and complements this with comments from experts interviewed on the subject. Thirdly, these perspectives are broadened by an empirical exploration of seven local Muslim communities in Switzerland. The roles played by transnational relations on one hand and local interactions on the other, as well as how these relate to each other, are analysed based on concrete cases. In doing so, the study takes into account both the self-perception of Muslim actors and the perceptions of different stakeholders in society. Overall, more than 40 interviews and expert consultations have been conducted during the research process.

The analysis of political and media debates on transnational networks shows that terms such as "political Islam" are barely defined, while ideological unambiguity is simultaneously asserted. Examining public images of the seven Muslim communities further reveals that ideas of centralised control and strong foreign influence dominate. More informed interpretations and explanations have little place in this dominant framing because the strong polarisation of debates makes even legitimate criticism impossible. These findings contrast with the diversity we encountered in the case studies, suggesting that there is an urgent need for information and clarification.

The state of research on the four transnational networks—the Muslim Brotherhood, Tablighi Jamaat, Al-Ahbash and Wahhabiyyah—shows that they must be understood in the historical conjunctures of their development. They have played an important role in the Western migration context by building up Muslim activities and organisational structures. This has often involved major contextual adaptations and further developments of the original ideologies. In many cases, however, tensions remain between different ideological positions within the networks, which also accounts for the widespread mistrust towards the political claims of these groups. In some cases, the way transnational networks strengthen bonding social capital may also convey delimiting or exclusionary ideas, which can in turn function as elements in individual radicalisation processes, alongside other factors. However, Swiss Muslim communities have diversified far beyond these transnational networks. They are developing their own locally anchored dynamics and structures, into which transnational networks only partially fit.

The communities studied that were originally founded by Arabic-speaking Muslims are multilingual and multicultural. They provide different activities such as prayers, lectures, Qur'an study and language courses. In all cases, there was stronger bonding than bridging social capital, i.e., a specific reciprocity and solidarity in relation to one's own group. An exception is the case of Delémont, which has the particular status of being the only Islamic centre in its canton which acts as an interlocutor for authorities and interfaith dialogue. All cases exhibited some kind of local

interaction, e.g., with authorities such as the integration office or the police, civil protection, and schools. Except for Lausanne, all the organisations studied were either directly involved in a multi-ethnic cantonal or national umbrella organisation. In this way, the organisations participate in the efforts of the umbrella organisations to build constructive relationships within Swiss society.

Only some of the cases were linked to the four transnational networks analysed. There are formal and institutional ties between the Islamic Centre Lausanne and the Ahbash network of Lebanon, and between the Islamic Cultural Foundation of Geneva and the Muslim World League. Equally formal is the relationship of the Islamic Community Foundation Zürich with the United Arab Emirates, which funds the mosque. This is disclosed very transparently, but strict regulations seem to limit local interactions. In the case of the Arrahma Association in Basel, there are more individual and informal relations with the Tablighi Jamaat. In the case of the *Ligue des Musulmans de Suisse,* both formal and institutional ties through membership in a network of Muslim Brotherhood related organisations in Europe are relevant, as are individual and informal ties. A broad spectrum of expression can be noted in these ties, ranging from receiving informal book gifts to rare cases of structured and regular financing in a formalised way. While transnational networks and foreign states were able to fill a vacuum in many places, from the 1960s until the turn of the millennium, and were seen by public authorities as legitimately representing Muslims, a paradigm shift has taken place. Swiss Muslims have developed their own thought and activities in close correspondence with contextual and local needs. In many cases, transnational ideas no longer sufficiently correspond to these. Therefore, transnational networks in Switzerland have not succeeded in bringing together a broader spectrum of Muslim actors beyond their selective local presence. Moreover, the more active and critical attitude of European states and their publics towards political influences has an inhibiting effect on transnational connections and favours a local shaping of Muslim life.

Preface

The recent history of Islam in Switzerland and Europe is characterised by interconnections and interrelationships. The organisational structures and ideas that have emerged in this way are an expression of the processes involved in creating a new cultural home deeply rooted in the Swiss context. Examples include Muslim umbrella organisations that transcend language and culture, the emergence of Muslim chaplaincy in public institutions, and the development of Islamic theology in the context of European universities. In recent decades, Muslim activities and self-reflections, political measures and academic projects have brought about this change of perspective, depicting Europe as a place of Muslim thought and action. The Swiss Center for Islam and Society (SZIG/CSIS) is also committed to this perspective as an institution and through its activities.

In contrast, it seems almost anachronistic to perceive Muslims through the prism of their transnational relations related to languages and cultures of origin. However, media and political debates often focus on these aspects. Sometimes, one can almost get the impression that Muslims in Switzerland and its neighbouring countries are seen as being remote-controlled by actors from the so-called Islamic world. But regardless of one-sided distortions, transnational actors and networks play a central role in a globalised world—Islam does not represent a special case here at all. These relationships shape, among other things, the educational biographies of imams, the ideas and experiences brought to an exchange and in some rare cases also include financial support.

In view of these twofold dynamics, it is important to situate them in a differentiated relationship. The present study documents the state of research on transnational Muslim networks with an Arab focus, critically analyses media and political perceptions, and attempts to arrive at an in-depth and differentiated judgement based on locally anchored case studies in Switzerland, which takes into account the state of academic discussion, the self-perception of Muslim actors, as well as experiences of local dialogue and the perceptions in politics, society and the media.

In this way, the SZIG/CSIS fulfils its task of taking up social debates and deepening them in a critical and constructive manner, taking Islamic self-reflection into account. The result is not however free of tensions that shape both intra-Muslim and societal debates. Considering hybrid identities, which are far more usual than exceptional, these tensions are not necessarily contradictions, but expressions of mixtures, overlaps and networks of relationships in very different constellations. It is therefore not a question of unambiguous pure forms, but of Islam being both Swiss and European, and simultaneously marked by transnational discourses. Wherever incompatibilities arise, however, these will be identified in this study and examined in a differentiated manner.

The three authors of this report, each with their different competences and specialisations, have worked together intensively to provide the readers with new insights and a differentiated picture of the interactions of Swiss Muslim communities. They would like to thank all those who made themselves available as experts and interview partners, and who contributed significantly

1. Introduction

1.1 Starting Point: Our Previous Study on Imams in Switzerland

This study is a follow-up of a previous study on imams in Switzerland (Schmid & Trucco, 2019a). Imams play a central role in the interpretation of Islam. They are key figures in Muslim communities. Their function has evolved to include not only internal tasks such as preaching, teaching and counselling, but they are also in demand as contact persons for the church, schools and authorities. Hence, they represent a central topic in debates on Islam. Efforts in various European countries are underway to contribute to the participation and integration of Muslim communities through educational programmes for imams and the inclusion of imams in civil society networks. Against this background, our study from 2019 can be seen as explorative research on imams in Switzerland.

The study contained three main parts. Firstly, it analysed the field of imams in Switzerland, structured according to the four main language groups: Albanian-, Bosnian-, Turkish- and Arabic-speaking. Secondly, the focus was on the educational pathways of imams, which helped to identify five main institutional contexts of schools and universities: in the Albanian-speaking countries of the Balkans, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in Turkey, Egypt and Saudi-Arabia. Thirdly, the study examined imam politics, study programmes and transnational links in four European countries: France, Germany, Austria and the Netherlands.

The study revealed rich results (Schmid & Trucco, 2019a, pp. 48–52), which can only be summarised here: above all, the diversity among imams became evident. The categorisation by language of origin still corresponds to existing organisational structures and realities in some of the Muslim communities, but it is at odds with the expectations of young Muslims who communicate primarily in the national languages of Switzerland (Schmid & Trucco, 2019a, p. 49). Moreover, it became evident that virtually all imams working in Switzerland have completed significant parts of their education abroad. However, it would be short-sighted to draw clear conclusions about the profiles of specific imams. It became apparent, for example, that despite the problematic content of the relevant courses of study in Saudi Arabia, not every person who has studied there can be regarded as a representative of Wahhabi ideology. Conversely, personal motivations and the individual processing and tailoring of study programs play an important role (Schmid & Trucco, 2019a, p. 50). Finally, a number of imams also attended courses of study and further training in Switzerland. It is clear from this that the educational biographies of many imams in most cases are already transnational, but this can be illustrated even more clearly with examples (Schmid & Trucco, 2019b, pp. 26–30).

Due to more developed organisational structures, Albanian, Bosnian and Turkish-speaking imams could be studied more intensively than Arabic-speaking imams. At the time, the number of primarily Arabic-speaking mosques was estimated at 25, that of imams at 15 to 20 (Schmid & Trucco, 2019a, p. 16). This research gap became the starting point for a follow-up study focusing

on Arabic-speaking Muslim communities and imams. It focuses on communities that associate because they share the same religion and self-identify as Muslim. These communities are often, but not always, bound to Islamic centres and linguistic boundaries play an important role in building their organisation, despite a growing use of national languages of Switzerland.

Meanwhile, our study has also been quoted on several points by the Federal Council report "Professionalisation incentives for religious caregivers" (Bundesrat, 2021, pp. 16, 20, 30–31). This report responds to a 2016 postulate by the deputy Maja Ingold entitled "Moderate imams are key figures against the radicalisation of young Muslims". The report focuses both on the prevention of radicalisation and on the "inclusive potential of Islamic caregivers and Islamic communities" (Bundesrat, 2021, p. 7). It points out that the role of imams is often over-estimated and therefore also considers the wider field of caregivers and especially chaplaincy in public institutions (Bundesrat, 2021, pp. 12, 19–21, 50). The focus is then placed on participatory projects and training programmes, in order to better draw on the potential of imams and caregivers to contribute to living together in a diverse society (Bundesrat, 2021, pp. 48–52). In the sense of this Federal Council report, our present study also broadens its view beyond imams, focusing on aspects of cooperative relations between Muslim communities and public authorities and taking critical aspects into account, without overgeneralising or neglecting community resources.

1.2 Overview of Arabic-speaking Muslims in Switzerland

Knowing from the start that we wanted to include an empirical approach, we began with research on Arabic-speaking Muslim communities in Switzerland. We will first present a brief overview of Arabic-speaking Muslim communities in the whole of Switzerland, which also served as a basis for selecting the case studies, before discussing the principal focus of the study.

Today, more than 35% of Muslims older than 15 are Swiss citizens, so the figures on nationality only give a partial picture of the Muslim population's migration background. Whereas Muslims from the Balkan countries (34.8%) and from Turkey (10.4%) form the largest groups, the portions of Muslims from the Middle East (4.2%), the Maghreb (3.2%) and Subsahara (2.6%) are much smaller. There are however differences between the linguistic regions, e.g. people with nationalities of the Maghreb countries represent nearly 8% of the Muslim population in French-speaking Switzerland (Islam & Society, 2021b).

Arabic-speaking Muslim communities are among the oldest immigrant communities in Switzerland. People from the Maghreb have come to Switzerland since the 1960s, among them political activists, refugees and students (Fibbi et al., 2014, pp. 36–38). This may explain why the level of education of Muslims from the Maghreb is significantly higher than that of Swiss natives (Gianni, Giugni & Michel, 2015, p. 38). The same study shows that the networks Muslims of Maghreb origin have, show significantly greater national and religious diversity compared with those of Muslims of Turkish or Balkan origin (Gianni, Giugni & Michel, 2015, p. 49). Additionally, Muslims of Maghreb origin maintain fewer ties to their country of origin (Gianni, Giugni & Michel,

2015, pp. 31–32). Moreover, they show a particularly high interest in Swiss politics (Gianni, Giugni & Michel, 2015, p. 66). Though not considered in the study by Gianni, Giugni and Michel, the profile of people from Egypt might be partly comparable, many of whom went as students to ETH and EPFL during this early period. Later waves of immigration were strongly characterised by people from Turkey and later still from the Balkan countries. From 2015 onwards, refugees from Arabic-speaking countries such as Syria and Iraq came to Switzerland again, but in much smaller numbers than in previous immigration periods, due to Swiss admission policies (Islam & Society, 2021a).

According to our documentation, the number of (mainly) Arabic-speaking Muslim communities can currently be estimated at around 45 (Experts AC01, AC02, AC03, AC04, AC05, AC06, AC08). This includes communities with a prayer room as well as cultural associations where people may only meet on Fridays to pray in a rather impromptu way. It also includes supra-regional associations such as the *Ligue des Musulmans de Suisse* (LMS), which do not have any physical premises. Arabic-speaking is also broadly defined here: the respective communities may have been originally founded by Arabic-speaking Muslims or have an imam who originally comes from an Arabic-speaking country. They may well attract mixed visitors, but they do not belong to any of the linguistic umbrella organisations[1] (cf. chapter 1.3). Meanwhile, the national languages of Switzerland play a key role in many activities of these communities such as preaching, religious education and social services. This is an additional reason, besides the diversity among visitors, why the Arabic-speaking category is hybrid in character.

These organisations are distributed among the language regions of Switzerland as follows: two of them are located in Ticino, with half the remaining ones in German-speaking Switzerland and half in French-speaking Switzerland. In the latter area, there is a proportionally higher number of Arabic-speaking communities among the Muslim population, perhaps due to their longer presence, level of education and the participation of key figures. Consequently, they are more publicly visible than the younger Turkish- or Albanian-speaking Muslim communities. The canton with by far the most Muslim communities which we classified as Arabic-speaking is Vaud, with about 11 communities. Then come Neuchâtel and Bern, with six communities each, Zürich with five, and Basel, Solothurn and Geneva with three respectively. The total also includes four associations that are exclusively aimed at women. It remains to be noted that the number of communities as well as imams exceeds the estimate from the 2019 study (Schmid & Trucco, 2019a, pp. 14–15). Some of these Muslim communities are known to researchers or quoted in the media. However, the profile and the activities of many remain largely unknown and it is very difficult to find information about them, even when consulting experts. Theoretically, one would have to visit

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[1] These include TISS (*Türkisch Islamische Stiftung Schweiz*), VIKZ (*Verband Islamischer Kulturzentren*) or SIG (*Schweizerische Islamische Gemeinschaft*) for Turkish-speaking Muslim communities, DAIGS (*Dachverband albanisch-islamischer Gemeinschaften in der Schweiz*) for the Albanian-speaking Muslim communities or IGB (*Islamische Gemeinschaft der Bosniaken*) for the Bosnian-speaking Muslim communities in Switzerland (cf. Schmid & Trucco, 2019a, pp. 9–16).

these communities individually to fill in the knowledge gaps. During our research, we were able to do this for seven Muslim communities, because it was important for us to include different perspectives from the communities themselves, as well as from external experts in each case. This corresponds to the profile of the Swiss Center for Islam and Society (SZIG/CSIS), to consider both Islamic self-reflection and the perceptions of different stakeholders in society. A further critical remark can be added here: according to several scholars, research on Muslims also functions as a governmental technique, because its results can be used for policy-making (Amir-Moazami, 2018, p. 100; cf. Johansen & Spielhaus, 2012; Tezcan, 2012). Therefore, in this study we also take politics and media as well as historical developments of transnational networks into consideration in order to at least confront this problem, which research on Muslims in Europe cannot escape (Amir-Moazami, 2018, p. 117)—with as differentiated a perspective as possible. Due to the already described fragmentary state of information and research, the number of Arabic-speaking imams can only be estimated. We estimate that there are around 30 imams in Arabic-speaking Muslim communities in Switzerland who are native speakers of Arabic, work regularly and for a fixed period of time and thus can be identified as the religious experts within their community, essentially responsible for the interpretation of Islam (cf. Schmid & Trucco, 2019a, p. 7). Other communities do not have a stable solution and volunteers take over tasks of the imam or imams perform this function as guests. In terms of media portrayal, at least three of these imams received rather negative media coverage: the Libyan Abu Ramadan, imam of a mosque in Biel, had held instigative speeches and was charged with racial discrimination. In a further indictment, he was accused of the misuse of social welfare (Schneuwly Purdie & Tunger-Zanetti, 2021, p. 646). The second is Hani Ramadan (cf. chapter 4.1.2), imam of the Islamic Centre of Geneva, who made the headlines in 2002 for defending stoning in *Le Monde* (Ramadan, 2002). He has also caused controversy with other statements and was expelled from France in 2017 (*rts*, 2017). The third is a more ambiguous figure: the Ticinese imam Samir Radouan Jelassi, whose citizenship was revoked by the SEM in 2017 because there was reason to believe that his mosque was a hotspot of radicalisation (Schneuwly Purdie & Tunger-Zanetti, 2021, pp. 645–646). On the other hand, he had earlier been described as the best educated imam in Europe (della Pietra, 2009) and was for a time a member of the Federal Commission on Migration. However, the Federal Administrative Court has recently decided that the case must be re-examined (Moles, 2021). These three cases have strongly shaped general perceptions of Arabic-speaking Muslims, but also of Muslim communities as a whole. It also corresponds to the trend of strong personalisation in media debates. However, individual cases do not allow any conclusions to be drawn about other imams. For this reason, while some well-known examples will be given, this study also takes a closer look at lesser-known cases and focuses on Muslim communities in a broader sense, not only on imams.

1.3 Focus of this Study

Based on the aforementioned research gap and the information gathered on Arabic-speaking Muslim communities in Switzerland, the design of the present study was developed. This step initially involved a deeper reflection on the focus: firstly, the question arose as to whether it was appropriate to focus on imams alone. The previous study had also showed that women theologians, for example, play an important role in Muslim communities (Schmid & Trucco, 2019a, p. 49). Other studies have shown that the field of caregivers is much wider than imams (Baumann et al., 2020). Even if the educational pathways of imams reflect transnational relations, such relations cannot be limited to this, as they are a broader phenomenon that affects the activities and contacts of Muslim communities as a whole.

Secondly, the more we engaged with the field, the more we had to question the label given in the focus on Arabic-speaking Muslim communities. Many of these communities are multicultural and multilingual and thus far more diverse. Some may have been founded by Arabic-speaking Muslims but have now evolved into diverse communities. Unlike, for example, the languages of the Balkans, Arabic in the Islamic world has the function of a language of communication that connects a wide range of countries, actors and backgrounds. "Arabic" plays a privileged role for Muslim discourses as language of the revelation in the Qur'an and as liturgical language. As Mohammed Hashas puts it: "Arab Islam will remain a spiritual fountain for European Islam simply because the spiritual origins of this faith and its formative memories are in Arabia" (Hashas, 2018, p. 296). Furthermore, a shift from "heartland" to periphery can be observed through which the latter also becomes a space where Islamic thought and activities evolve (Kersten & Olsson, 2016). In the sense of dynamic interrelations, it could be seen as necessary to examine the repercussions of various interactions in Europe on Arab contexts (Hashas, 2018, pp. 296–298), which is, however, beyond the scope of this study. Language was used in our last study as a feature to structure a complex field (Schmid & Trucco, 2019a, pp. 6–7): the limitations of this focus, already apparent at the time, became even more so in the new study. For this reason, a transnational network that is not primarily Arabic-speaking is also included; the Arabic language is to be understood more as a heuristic category for approaching the field, and in no way does it imply a one-dimensional definition.

Thirdly, some of the networks and cases to be studied are often subsumed under the broad category of "Islamism", which designates a will to establish a social order shaped by Islam. Sometimes, there is still a distinction made between a legalistic Islamism, concerned with the representation of Muslim identity and norms through social and political influence within a given legal order, best embodied by the Muslim Brotherhood; and revivalist groups which are more focused on what they consider a purified practice of Islam, exemplified by the Wahhabiyyah, sometimes identified with Salafism (Boubekeur, 2007; Cesari, 2017). Islamism has been increasingly used during the last decades in the sense of "a label applied broadly to some (and sometimes all) Muslims" (Martin & Barzegar, 2010b, p. 9). Therefore, a critical question may be asked: "Is it even

permissible for us to use concepts about whose meaning there is no consensus? Are we presuming the legitimacy of concepts and labels whose accuracy and validity have yet to be established?" (Martin & Barzegar, 2010b, p. 2). "Political Islam" is yet another category now frequently used, and one that can be similarly challenged (Wyler, 2021). Against this background, we chose to refer to these concepts with care, not theorising them, but focusing instead on single phenomena, rather than bringing them together under a conceptual umbrella.

Figure 01: Focal points of the study
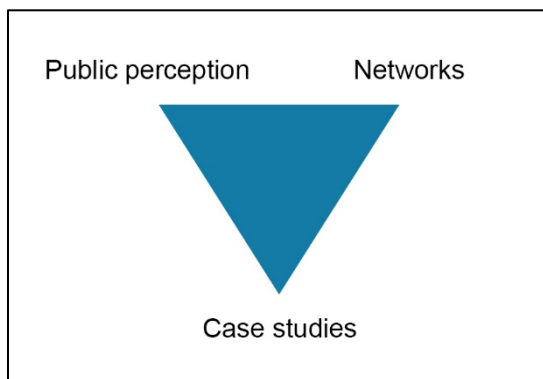
© Own illustration.

This study therefore has three focal points (cf. figure 01): firstly, public perceptions will be analysed, especially their central role in transnational relations. Public perceptions are shaped both by media and by political discourses, which are examined here in the context of political procedural requests. One of the central questions here is how Muslim communities are controlled and financed and what role actors abroad play. This often contrasts with the ideal of an Islam firmly anchored in Switzerland or Europe. Furthermore, public perceptions often reveal a certain framework, which perceives and constructs Muslim communities as a threat.

Secondly, the state of research, especially on various transnational currents and their role in the West, will be evaluated and supplemented through comment from interviewed experts. In this way, the study will contribute to differentiating and supplementing the image that prevails in public perceptions. Its ambition is to bring together a large spectrum of secondary literature across English, French and German languages.

Thirdly, the study includes an empirical section on Muslim communities in Switzerland. The role which transnational relations play on one hand, and local interactions on the other, as well as the relationship between them, can only be analysed on the basis of concrete case studies. It is the case studies which make it possible to look at interactions in sufficient depth and with differentiation. In this way, a spectrum becomes visible into which other cases can also be placed.

These three focal points are intended to cover the topic as comprehensively as possible. In terms of applied research, the aim is to formulate conclusions based on the findings in all three areas, which in turn are relevant to all three fields and which can serve as a starting point for further research, but also for social debate.

2. A Theoretical Perspective: Transnational Ties – Local Interactions

Before discussing specific cases in Switzerland, their local interactions and transnational ties, we first need to offer some reflections on both aspects. What do we mean by the two concepts and why are they deemed important? We provide some analytical considerations and then relate them to Muslim communities in Switzerland to make them more tangible.

2.1 Transnational Relations

Transnationalism can be defined as the "sustained ties of persons, networks and organizations across the borders across multiple nation-states, ranging from little to highly institutionalized forms" (Faist, 2000, p. 189). These ties are not static, but comprise dynamic social processes, meaning that changes are constantly taking place (Faist, 2000, p. 191). Therefore, if a certain state of transnational networks and ties is observed today, this state cannot be equated with a previous period, nor can it be assumed that it will remain so in the future.

Looking at this definition in detail, three important aspects can be identified. The first is that ties between individuals, networks and organisations are considered transnational when they transcend one or multiple territorial borders. A second is that ties are found between individuals, organisations and networks. Organisations are forms of structured cooperation with a specific goal (Gukenbiehl, 2007, p. 154), in our case a Muslim association, for example. Networks are "structures or systems of relationships" (Vertovec, 2009, p. 4) comprising people who share common experiences or a common consciousness (Vertovec, 2009, p. 6). Sociological network analysis focuses on social relations that link actors, groups or organisations. These social relations can take different forms, i.e. they can be communicative, affectual, power- or exchange-based relations (Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994, p. 1417). Networks can differ, among other things, in size, but also in their density and the strength of their ties, such as the intensity and frequency of contacts between people in the network (Vertovec, 2009, p. 34). A third aspect is that these ties can be situated on a scale from informal to formal. Formal ties are recognisable in a written form that can be researched and retraced from an external perspective—for example, in association statutes, on websites or in event programmes. Informal ties, on the other hand, involve a non-binding commitment without further obligations or informal contacts that do not have a fixed form. In between lies a spectrum of mixed forms and graduations. There are also oral contracts or agreements that cannot be verified from an external point of view but can be classified as rather formal. Contacts between organisations in relation to specific occasions can be classified as rather informal.

If we now apply these definitions to a Muslim community in Switzerland, transnational ties can be seen to take many forms (cf. figure 02). We cannot discuss all possible forms, but to give some examples: in relation to the first aspect, transnational ties can extend to different countries:

someone's country of origin, countries of education,[2] any countries in which relatives, friends and acquaintances live (or more broadly speaking: countries of the wider diaspora), as well as Switzerland's neighbouring countries. If the second and third aspects are included in the picture, transnational ties may be informal ties among individual members of the Muslim community to family and relatives, friends, former work colleagues, classmates or teachers. They may take the form of more formal ties among individual members, for example being a member of an international organisation, being an employee of an international company, or, as in the case of some imams, being in a hierarchical relationship to the religious authority which appoints and authorises religious personnel in their country of origin (Schmid & Trucco, 2019a, pp. 23–24, 28; Bruce, 2015, p. 360). Transnational ties can also take the form of informal community ties, for example when a person, group or organisation is invited for festivities, lectures or presentations without any formal rules being applied. A Muslim community may also have more formal transnational links, for example if the community is a member of an international committee, board or organisation. All the types of transnational links described here form elements of networks.

Figure 02: Formal and informal ties
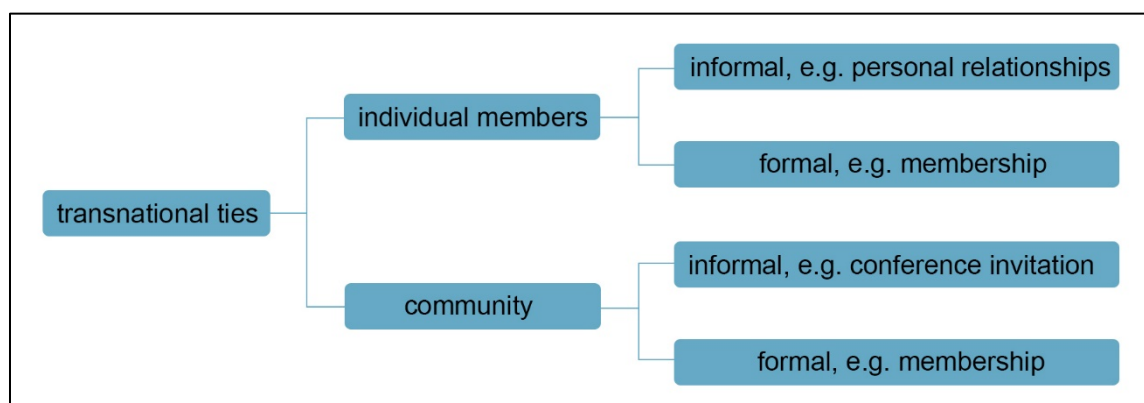
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A specific form of transnational ties, repeatedly addressed in the public sphere (cf. chapter 3), is financial ties. Foreign financial support for Muslim communities and institutions is often viewed critically because it is associated with potential influence exercised by foreign actors. However, it is very difficult to investigate such financial links, as shown by a study carried out in the Netherlands (Hoorens et al., 2015). Financial links can be formal, based on a convention between two institutions, or rather informal. An example of formal financial ties in Switzerland would be the funding of imams' positions in certain communities by the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs *Diyanet,* organised through the TISS foundation (Baumann et al., 2020, p. 56). Donations, however,

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[2]   Imams in Switzerland, for example, have followed very different educational pathways, leading to a wide variety of countries that are not necessarily congruent with a person's country of origin. The internationalisation of education that is often strived for today is already present here (Schmid & Trucco, 2019a, p. 16).

can be understood as an informal financial tie. In many communities, it is common practice to ask for donations for projects or small purchases. In some cases, these may come from people abroad who have a connection to the association in question, but in Switzerland this is the exception rather than the norm (Baumann et al., 2020, p. 64). Further, there may also be more or less transparency regarding financial support. As the Dutch study states, "[f]oreign funding and even influence on Islamic institutions (…) is not *a priori* problematic, undesirable, or illegal" (Hoorens et al., 2015, p. xxix). The authors do, however, strongly recommend encouraging Muslim communities and organisations to improve their financial transparency (Hoorens et al., 2015, p. xxix). This already suggests that financial ties can be an important factor in the public perception of Muslim organisations. While in public debates (cf. chapter 3), transnational relations are often discussed in a simplified form, it is necessary to examine these relations in their complexity, with all backgrounds and possible interpretations, in the context of the in-depth analysis this study provides.

2.2 Local Interactions

Similarly to transnational ties, local interactions can happen in networks between individuals and/or organisations. They can also be situated on a scale from informal to formal, but do not transgress borders, taking place within the nation-state at different levels. With regard to Switzerland, this means at the regional, cantonal or national level. Such interactions can take place with other Muslim communities, with civil society actors, neighbours, and with other religious communities such as churches, authorities or institutions such as schools (cf. Schmid & Leggewie, 2018), to name but a few.

Local interactions between Muslim communities create credibility and enable participation through encounter and exchange (TAK, 2009, p. 16). A study of the so-called "dialogue with Muslims" at local and municipal levels in Germany, based on a case study in the city of Erlangen, shows, among other things,[3] how Muslims involved in dialogue are empowered (Winkler, 2021). Participating Muslims gain social and political capital, can voice their needs and concerns and thus also participate in shaping local political and social conditions (Winkler, 2021, p. 469). They receive support and solidarity through the dialogue projects, which facilitate their presence as local actors and make them more visible (Winkler, 2021, p. 474). At the same time, intercultural or interreligious opening can increase competence in dealing with culture- or religion-related conflicts (Schmid & Leggewie, 2018, p. 617). This can also include (geo-)political tensions which arise supra-locally but can be eased at a local level through dialogue (Winkler, 2021, p. 390). Theoretically, this is underpinned by what Simmel calls the 'intersection of social circles'. Instead of a conflictive

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[3]   Winkler is at the same time very critical and shows how those interactions at the local level also operate as a control mechanism for integration policy (Winkler, 2021, p. 349) and as attempts to make cultural differences controllable (Winkler, 2021, p. 379).

division of society into mutually exclusive social circles, an intersection of social circles, corresponding to people with multiple social identities, can have a conflict-reducing effect in society (Nollert, 2010, p. 161).

Figure 03: Bonding and bridging social capital
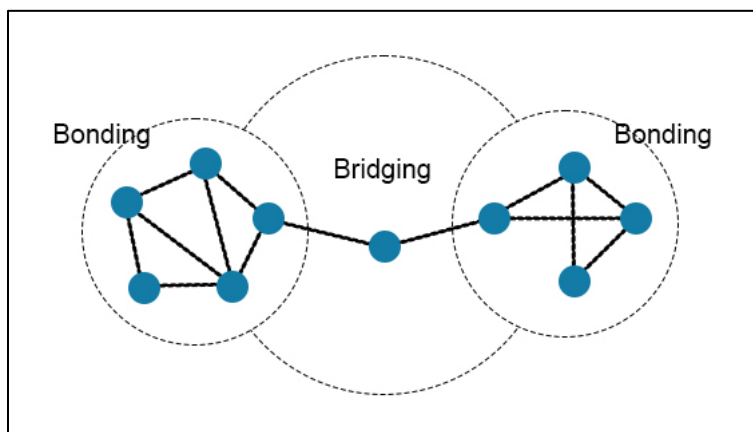
© Own illustration, based on an example from Reynolds (2015).

At this point, the concept of social capital provides a further tool for interpreting and evaluating local interactions (cf. Endres, Tunger-Zanetti, Behloul & Baumann, 2013). Its core idea is that social networks have value because of the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that can arise from them (Putnam, 2000, p. 16). Putnam is able to show that societies that build on generalised reciprocity are more efficient (Putnam, 1994). He distinguishes two forms, *bridging* and *bonding* social capital (cf. figure 03):

> Bonding social capital is good for undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity. Dense networks in ethnic enclaves, for example, provide crucial social and psychological support for less fortunate members of the community, while furnishing start-up financing, markets, and reliable labor for local entrepreneurs. Bridging networks, by contrast, are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion. (Putnam, 2000, p. 20)

However, he also draws attention to the fact that bridging social capital tends to lead to broader identities, while bonding social capital fosters strong in-group loyalty. Both can have positive effects but bonding social capital can also result in negative effects, such as out-group antagonism or social inequalities (Putnam, 2000, pp. 20–21; Putnam, 1994, p. 19). As Putnam points out, one needs to look at "how that 'community' is defined—who is inside and thus benefits from social capital and who is outside and does not" (Putnam, 2000, p. 391). This is what Johannes Saal (2021) calls "dark social capital" in his research on Jihadi networks, because bonding social capital plays an important role in radicalisation processes—e.g., in the form of cliques of like-minded friends and family members—, as many studies show (Saal, 2021, pp. 38–45). On the other hand, social

capital in religious settings also has bridging features. Saal highlights these particularities: religion generally possesses a high degree of generalised trust—i.e. trust in strangers—because beliefs, values etc. are shared. Moreover, "the cooperative behaviour of individuals" does not necessarily require material incentives, "because norms of reciprocity such as *zakat* and *sadaqa* in Islam, valuing altruistic relations are sufficient" (Saal, 2021, p. 48).

The concept of social capital applies of course to both the transnational and the local dimension, but we present it in this sub-chapter because we are particularly interested in whether the communities we studied have bridging social capital that leads them into a more intense exchange with Swiss society.

3. Public debates: Media and Politics

In this chapter, we will take a closer look at public debates on Muslim transnational networks and transnational influences and examine which images and ideas of transnational networks determine these debates. This has far-reaching implications for social interaction and the actors involved. The debates also demonstrate controversial aspects and unresolved questions that will be addressed in the further course of this study. According to Mandaville, public debates after 9/11 tended to generate a rather negative image of transnational Islam:

> Such accounts do much to obscure the complex realities of Muslim transnationalism. It is certainly [a] fact that there exist today Islamic movements (…) with the willingness and capacity to use violence in the name of religion. It is also the case, however, that the vast majority of transnational connections between individuals and groups in the Muslim world have nothing whatsoever to do with militancy and revolution. (Mandaville, 2005, p. 302)

Thereby, Mandaville pleads for a differentiated perception of transnational relations and for Muslim examples not to be considered as a special case on principle. Public debates on Muslim transnational movements and networks often take place under certain key terms, which will be outlined here. Debates concerning individual Muslim communities will be discussed in the chapter on case studies. As we cannot present a comprehensive analysis in this study, we have concentrated on examples of Swiss newspaper coverage from March 2020 to March 2021[4] and political procedural requests (*Vorstösse* in German or *interventions* in French) in the Swiss national parliament. In order to trace debates on Muslim transnational networks and influences, we will take a closer look at the use of the terms "political Islam", as well as "Muslim Brotherhood", as a prominent example of a transnational network. The media and political debates are discussed separately, but connections between the two are indicated in the appropriate places.[5]

3.1 Media debates

As a first step, we looked at how and in what context the term "political Islam" was used in Swiss media debates over the course of the last year. The terms "Islamism" and "political Islam" are often used interchangeably in public debates (cf. Briellmann, 2020; Keller-Messahli, 2020b). We have therefore not conducted our own analysis of the term "Islamism" but will relate our findings to

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4   We searched for the keywords "political Islam" and "Muslim Brotherhood" (both in German and French) in the database *swissdox*. The database contains articles from a large number of Swiss newspapers and online news sites (cf. Annex 1).

5   In communication sciences, there is considerable research examining intertwinements between media and politics from different perspectives (cf. e.g. Hänggli & Kriesi, 2010; Strömbäck, 2008; Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006).

insights from a FINO Talk on the use of this term (Schulze, 2021c). With regard to the term "political Islam", we also draw on a second FINO paper (Wyler, 2021). It is important to point out that there are debates in academic circles about the usefulness, terminological and conceptual vagueness of both terms (cf. e.g. Martin & Barzegar, 2010a). At the same time, many studies in different academic fields use one or the other term, usually providing a specific definition (Mandaville, 2014) and differentiating for example between various types of "Islamism" (Larroque, 2016; Burgat, 2008) and its possible meanings (Seniguer, 2020). However, public debates do not usually take such differentiations into consideration.

The first finding of our analysis was that only relatively few articles reflect on the term "political Islam", by pointing out its ambiguity or vagueness (Jikhareva & Stutz, 2021; Greuter, 2020; Mijnssen, 2020b) or by providing a specific definition (Körtner & Tück, 2021). Thus, most articles use the term without reflecting on it or defining it.

Secondly, there are events which seem to stimulate the use of the term "political Islam" in Swiss media debates.[6] Two of these events are of particular interest in examining the use of the term: the terrorist attack in Vienna on 2 November 2020 and the burqa initiative that was voted on in Switzerland on 7 March 2021. In the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Vienna, the Austrian government embraced the term "political Islam", as Chancellor Kurz declared vigorous action against it (ats, 2020b; Föderl-Schmid, 2020). It was not the first time the Austrian state publicly used the term. In the summer of 2020, it established the so-called Documentation Centre for Political Islam (*Dokumentationsstelle politischer Islam*). The task of this office is to do basic scientific work, but at the same time to critically examine associations and networks; a dual function that was subsequently criticised (Mijnssen, 2020a). In the wake of the terrorist attack and Kurz's statement, Austria considered creating a new criminal offence of "political Islam" (Kahlweit, 2020). In the end, however, Austria formulated its law in a religiously neutral way, by using the description "religiously-motivated extremist association" instead of "political Islam". As one journalist commented, it was apparently not possible to use the relatively vague and controversial term in such a way that it could be cast into a legally impeccable form (Mijnssen, 2020b). Still, the use of the term by the Austrian state has had an influence on Swiss political debates: two political requests in the Swiss national parliament directly refer to the Documentation Centre for Political Islam (Binder-Keller, 2020b; issue no. 20.4706) as well as to the criminal offence of "political Islam" (Quadri, 2020, issue no. 20.4568).

In the debates on the burqa initiative, the face veil was interpreted by certain proponents as a symbol of "political Islam" (Odermatt, 2021, p. 35; Marjanović, 2021; Revello, 2020; cf. Tunger-Zanetti, 2021). This line of argument further stipulated that any manifestation of "political

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[6] This is by no means a new insight, but has long been part of both discourse analysis (cf. Jäger & Jäger, 2007, p. 27) and communication sciences (e.g. Kepplinger & Habermeier, 1995).

Islam" should be banned, including the face veil (Schulze, 2021a). The conservative value advocates of the initiative also usually adopted a certain perspective on Islam in general (Schulze, 2021a): an antagonistic, "we" versus "them" relationship of Islam to the West, with "Islamic values" opposed to "European values" (cf. Ettinger & Udris, 2009, p. 73; Skenderovic, 2007, pp. 169–170). A second discourse, mainly consisting of left-liberal feminist advocates of the initiative, on the other hand, occasionally argued with "political Islam abroad", which poses a problem for women (Waldmeier, 2021), arguing that that was why a ban in Switzerland would be a sign of respect towards women (Amsler, 2021). The attempt to compare actions here and there, although countries differ greatly in terms of their state structure and political culture, is considered by Schneiders (2015, pp. 22–23) to be an argumentation technique typical of criticism of Islam. A third discourse, shaped by laicism and sometimes merging with the feminist position, argues universally and regards "Islamism" as an ideology that fundamentally contradicts the universalism of the Enlightenment (Schulze, 2021a). Here, too, we find an antagonistic juxtaposition. Both events, the terrorist attack in Vienna in 2020 and subsequent Austrian debates as well as the burqa initiative, thus had the effect of increasing the use of the terms "political Islam" and "Islamism" in Swiss media.

Thirdly, most of the FINO Talk observations on the use of the term "Islamism" (Schulze, 2021c) apply equally to the term "political Islam" over the time period studied. As the talk pointed out, the term "Islamism" claims an ideological unambiguity in public debate (Schulze, 2021c, p. 1). This is also visible in the use of the term "political Islam". On the one hand, the term appears in some articles as an entity that acts, i.e., that agitates, orders, suppresses, uses tactics and is responsible (Amsler, 2021; Eigenmann, 2021; Odermatt, 2021; Abdel-Samad, 2020b; Meier, 2020a). On the other hand, when used to designate certain actors or groups of actors, these are usually very heterogeneous, as it is the case for the term "Islamism" (Schulze 2021b, p. 1). "Political Islam" is used for and related to the Muslim Brotherhood and the Turkish Grey Wolves (Mijnssen, 2020a), the state of Turkey (Meier, 2020a), the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia (Neuhaus, 2021), Islamic associations in Switzerland (Keller-Messahli, 2020b) or, specifically, the Islamic Central Council Switzerland (*Islamischer Zentralrat Schweiz;* Häsler Sansano, 2020). As a result, an ideological unambiguity is readily asserted in public debates, although the examples of actors mentioned here differ in various ways. Furthermore, just as the FINO Talk asserts regarding "Islamism", sometimes a controlling entity is assumed (Schulze, 2021c, p. 2), e.g., Turkey, Saudi Arabia or the Gulf states (Neuhaus, 2021; Pelda & Knellwolf, 2020). Turkish President Erdoğan, in particular, has increasingly been described as a promoter of "political Islam" (Abdel-Samad, 2020a, p. 41; Abdel-Samad, 2020b; Belz, 2020; Meier, 2020a). There is also the assumption that "political Islam" is pursuing a cultural or ideological infiltration (Körtner & Tück, 2021; Bibollet, 2020) or the Islamisation of Europe (Lob, 2021). FINO Talk points out that the specific framing of "Islamism" seems to serve certain emotional attitudes and positions and that the term "Islamism" is therefore a cipher for expressing the existing emotional unease (Schulze, 2021c, p. 2; Schulze, 2021b). This can

also be observed for the framing of "political Islam", e.g., when reference is made to an "uneasy feeling" (*"ein ungutes Gefühl"*; Odermatt, 2021, p. 35).

Fourthly, due to its vagueness, its many possible applications and the negative connotations associated with it, the term of "Islamism" is also used to ascribe certain suspicions to a variety of people and institutions in Switzerland. Examples are Islamic associations in general (Keller-Messahli, 2020b), Frislam, an association in Fribourg (Keller-Messahli, Bibollet & Bouberguig, 2020), or individuals such as Montassar BenMrad (Hehli, 2021) or Amira Hafner-Al Jabaji (Scherrer, 2021). However, there are also occasional critical reflections on this use of the term (Hehli, 2021). FINO additionally points out that academic criticism of the term stems from the fact that it does not identify actual problems, such as anti-democratic positions, but runs the risk of criminalising any religiously argued political participation of Muslims (Wyler, 2021, p. 2).

In summary, it can be said that the term "political Islam", for the period studied, has barely been defined in Swiss media, denoting a spectrum of heterogeneous actors and groups of actors, while at the same time asserting an ideological unambiguity and thus in some cases constructing suspicions against individuals and institutions. The FINO Talk's observation that the framing is so dominant that alternative interpretations and explanations, especially from academia, can hardly be integrated (Schulze, 2021c, p. 2), also applies to "political Islam". There are academics who have expressed themselves in the debates (cf. Greuter, 2020), but since they usually do so in a very differentiated way, many of these offers of interpretation are not integrated into the bigger process of framing. The present hegemonic framing of Islam in general, observes the FINO talk (Schulze, 2021c, p. 2), is inadequate to solve existing social, cultural and political problems related in any way to an Islamic field.

As a second step, we looked at how and in what context the term "Muslim Brotherhood", as a prominent example of a transnational network, was used in Swiss media debates during the indicated timeframe (March 2020 to March 2021). Central aspects of the European debates on the Muslim Brotherhood (Meijer & Bakker, 2012) are used here as deductive categories of analysis. In a discussion of the current state of research and the background of the Muslim Brotherhood (cf. chapter 4.1), some of these points will then be taken up in a more differentiated way. Here, however, we examined the media representation and use of the term "Muslim Brotherhood".

The Muslim Brotherhood is depicted as the personification of "political Islam", as one of the main opponents of "Western values and concepts such as democracy, freedom of speech, pluralism and tolerance" (Meijer & Bakker, 2012, p. 5) and thus as a threat. This depiction can be found in Swiss media (Haury, 2021; Körtner & Tück, 2021; Kälin, 2020a; Miauton, 2020). The term "Muslim Brotherhood" seems to function as a kind of cipher, providing a face for the threat evoked, although information on the Brotherhood is hardly ever given. There is usually a lack of both a historical embedding and nuanced background information. Instead, the term is casually interspersed in articles that cover other topics such as the burqa initiative, terrorism or "political Islam".

A related argument, already apparent in the above-mentioned topics, is the association with terrorism (Meijer & Bakker, 2012, p. 7). For instance, the Muslim Brotherhood is presented as a breeding ground ("*Nährboden"*) for terrorism (Keller-Messahli, 2020b; Maassen, 2020), an intermediary step on the way to terrorism (Rebetez, 2020) or even a terrorist organisation itself (Botti, Knellwolf, Pelda, Poletti & Rutishauser, 2020; Orellano, 2020; sda, 2020). However, a handful of articles express a more differentiated view on terrorism, such as when scholars point to ideological differences between the Muslim Brotherhood and jihadists (Ritter, 2020) or attribute the radicalisation of young people to other factors (Botti et al. 2020; Ott, 2020).

 A third argument is the portrayal of the Muslim Brotherhood as "taking advantage of the freedom of organisation and expression in Europe" (Meijer & Bakker, 2012, p. 11). Accordingly, the Muslim Brotherhood is accused of infiltration (Bibollet, 2020), covert action (Burgherr, 2020) or advancement (Abdel Samad, 2020a; Nejad Toulami, 2020). Linked to this is often a description of the organisation as one which presents itself as moderate, while it is actually not (Kälin, 2020b; Meijer & Bakker, 2012, p. 7). According to such depictions, the Muslim Brotherhood sometimes appears as a contact and cooperation partner of the authorities which is not questioned (Orellano, 2020; Rebetez, 2020). This argument often implies deception, which is a strategy that renders the accused incapable of action, because deception can be brought up again with every refutation or response of the accused (cf. Bandle, 2020a).

A further point is that the Muslim Brotherhood's financial links are suspicious: "Often the Muslim Brotherhood is supposed to be financed by the Gulf States, and especially Saudi Arabia" (Meijer & Bakker, 2012, p. 8). This argumentation received renewed impetus in Swiss media (cf. Kälin, 2020b; Meier, 2020c; Rutishauser, 2020), especially through the book *Qatar Papers,* based on the leaking of internal documents and revealing how money flows from Qatar Charity to Europe (Chesnot & Malbrunot, 2019; cf. chapter 5.6). It should be noted that this line of argument in Swiss media has not been limited to financial flows from Qatar. These have been shown to exist by the journalists Chesnot and Malbrunot, but other sources such as Kuwait are also mentioned (Keller-Messahli, 2020a). Such financial flows are associated with anti-democratic tendencies (Kälin, 2020c). In most cases, evidence is not and cannot easily be provided due to the subject matter.

A fifth point is that there are accusations of anti-Semitic tendencies within the Muslim Brotherhood (Meijer & Bakker, 2012, pp. 10–11). This depiction is also found in the Swiss media (Mertins, 2020), particularly in connection with a specific event, namely the support of the charity Islamic Relief through federal development aid funds. Islamic Relief is said to have links to the Muslim Brotherhood and some board members had to resign because of anti-Semitic statements. Articles on the matter link the Muslim Brotherhood to the anti-Semitic statements, but at the same time serve to criticise the Swiss authorities (Forster, 2020; Pelda, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d). While in-depth specialist journalists play an important role, the question arises in reverse as to whether the diversity of voices is not being neglected here.

Finally, various individuals and organisations are marked as suspicious because they are associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. This mechanism has already been described in connection with the term "political Islam" and in some cases both terms are used in the same article. Associated with the Muslim Brotherhood are, for example, the cantonal umbrella organisation of Zürich VIOZ (Scherrer, 2021; Bandle, 2020a; Meier, 2020c) or individuals like the Muslim spokesperson and Green Party politician Pascal Gemperli (Bandle, 2020a), whereupon the Green Party is also brought into connection with the Brotherhood (Bandle, 2020b). Since the already mentioned allegation of deception is often raised at the same time, one of the few critical articles describes that it is hardly possible for those affected to get rid of the shadow of suspicion (Hehli, 2021). And this is despite the fact that in most cases no—or questionable—evidence is presented for alleged links to the Muslim Brotherhood.

An important assumption behind much of this reasoning is the portrayal of the Muslim Brotherhood as a "central organisation, mostly assumed to be located in Egypt, which directs its 'branches'" (Meijer & Bakker, 2012, p. 9). Yet this is expressed only indirectly in the articles studied (e.g. through the description of "well-coordinated work" or the desire to list the Brotherhood as a terror organisation; Keller-Messahli, 2020b; Orellano, 2020). However, there are statements of at least one scholar which explicitly reject this assumption of a controlling and directing entity in the back (Rutishauser, 2020; cf. chapter 4.1.3).

In summary, the Muslim Brotherhood is associated with terrorism, dubious financial connections, anti-Semitism and the infiltration of European societies. The Muslim Brotherhood is presented as a threat to Switzerland, although hardly any background information and contextualisation is provided. The term "Muslim Brotherhood" therefore seems to have become linked with negative associations in relation to Islam, in a general atmosphere of fear, suspicion and unease. It also serves to cast suspicion on people and organisations.

Furthermore, there are references to political procedural requests on the Muslim Brotherhood in the media (Burgherr, 2020). The procedural requests (Binder-Keller, 2020b, issue no. 20.4706; Wobmann, 2020, issue no. 20.5664 as well as two issues from 2016) are mentioned in the corresponding texts in connection with the question of foreign funding (cf. Blumer, 2021).

3.2 Political debates

As a next step, we looked at the four aforementioned parliamentary requests from 2020 in the national parliament. The first procedural request (issue no. 20.4568) is a so-called motion. A motion "instructs the Federal Concil to submit a bill to the Federal Assembly or to take a certain measure" (Lexicon of Parliamentary Terms, 2021b). Request 20.4568 refers to the Austrian draft law and calls for a similar proposal for a criminal offence of "political Islam" in Switzerland. Lega politician Lorenzo Quadri argues that "political Islam" is not terrorism per se but does prepare the ground for it. "Political Islam" poses a threat to Switzerland's internal security and must therefore be banned. All associations and mosques associated with it should be closed and any foreigner

spreading it is to be expelled. In his request, Quadri quotes Saïda Keller-Messahli,[7] who claimed that politicians have deliberately ignored the development of Islamism. However, the proposal does not offer a definition for "political Islam" or "Islamism". In its response, the Federal Council highlights that Austria does not use the term "political Islam" in the new law and that Switzerland could not enact such a ban either, as, it would be discriminatory under the constitution. It then lists all the laws and measures that already apply to cases of extremist organisations, communities or individuals and recommends that the motion be rejected (Quadri, 2020). The request has not yet been discussed in the Parliament.

The second and third procedural requests (issues no. 20.4217 and no. 20.4706) are so-called interpellations. An interpellation is a procedure "to request information from the Federal Council on important domestic or foreign events or on federal matters" (Lexicon of Parliamentary Terms, 2021a). Interpellation 20.4217 on the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood refers to the book *Qatar Papers* and a claim by Saïda Keller-Messahli, previously mentioned. Keller-Messahli states that Switzerland is part of a network of Muslim Brotherhood political Islam that extends across Europe. She is further quoted in the request as saying that all Islamist terrorist organisations are ideologically, financially or personally linked to the Muslim Brotherhood (Binder-Keller, 2020a). Centre politician Marianne Binder-Keller takes up the alleged link of the cantonal umbrella organisation VIOZ to the Brotherhood that has been spread by some media (cf. Scherrer 2021; Bandle, 2020a; Meier, 2020c), The proposal includes some of the arguments mentioned by Meijer and Bakker (2012), such as association with terrorism, infiltration and dubious financial links, and relies on a mixture of fact-based and non-fact-based information about the Muslim Brotherhood. Binder-Keller then asks various questions, for example, whether the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood is considered extremist and whether individuals with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood are monitored. In its response, the Federal Council points out that it does not comment on individual cases. However, it states that an ideology without a violent component and without a violation of criminal provisions is protected by the right to freedom of opinion and expression. The Council further explains under which circumstances the monitoring of an organisation is justified and what other means exist. It currently sees no need for additional measures (Binder-Keller, 2020a). The discussion in the Parliament on this request has been postponed.

In her second interpellation on the subject (issue no. 20.4706), Binder-Keller takes up one of the patterns of interpretation described in the media analysis: the feared infiltration of religious and political institutions by legalistically operating Islamist organisations like the Muslim Brotherhood. This line of argument is considered one of the basic accusations against the Muslim Brotherhood (Meijer & Bakker, 2012, p. 11). Binder-Keller refers to critical voices (*"kritische Stimmen"*)

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[7] Saïda Keller-Messahli has no academic training in Islamic Studies, Theology or social sciences, but is nevertheless considered by the media to be an expert on Islam or Islamism (Bandle, 2020b; Kälin, 2020c; Orellano, 2020; cf. Gonzalez, 2019, pp. 258, 262; Tunger-Zanetti, 2021, p. 114). Scholars criticise her methods, ways of argumentation and the lack of evidence provided (cf. Schulze, 2020; Tunger-Zanetti, 2020; Monnat, 2017).

that warn of infiltration. She states that the authorities are not sufficiently informed, which leads to insecurity in society, implying some kind of threat. She would like the Federal Council to indicate whether it intends to promote research in this area, in an analogy with the Austrian Documentation Centre for Political Islam. Marianne Binder-Keller uses the terms "Islamist" and "Islamism" in her request, except in her reference to the Documentation Centre, which shows how interchangeably the terms are used. In its response, the Federal Council explains how the intelligence service works, who it may and may not monitor. With regard to research funding, the Council refers to the National Action Plan to prevent and counter radicalisation and violent extremism (NAP) and the National Research Programme 58 "Religious Communities, State and Society" (NFP 58) completed in 2010. Its answer highlights that the Confederation has supported some research in this field, but that it advocates a bottom-up strategy of research funding and therefore does not aim for specific measures (Binder-Keller, 2020b). The discussion in the Parliament on this request has been postponed as well.

The last procedural request was raised during question time in the National Council (issue no. 20.5664). Questions are answered by the responsible head of department (Lexicon of Parliamentary Terms, 2021c). Walter Wobmann, politician of the Swiss People's Party, refers to media reports according to which Swiss mosques are financed by Qatar. He states that Qatar Charity is closely linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, which actively promotes the formation of parallel societies. He wants to know how the Federal Council views this dangerous development (Wobmann, 2020). In its response, the Federal Council refers to the revision of the Anti-Money Laundering Act, which was aimed at associations with an increased risk of terrorist financing. It was adopted by both councils in March 2021. The Federal Council also refers to a possible revision of the Intelligence Service Act. It nonetheless makes clear that measures aimed only at Muslim communities are discriminatory and therefore unconstitutional (Wobmann, 2020).

In summary, political requests make use of terms such as "political Islam", "Islamism" and "Muslim Brotherhood", but hardly ever provide a definition. A certain fear of a diffuse threat is expressed in the political procedural requests discussed here. In the responses from the Federal Council, one particular aspect becomes visible: there are already many laws and measures in place, but they are directed against extremism (such as the NAP), for example. Measures aimed against a specific religion are discriminatory and therefore violate the constitution. A second important point in the responses is that no action can be taken against an ideology unless it is violent or violates the law, because it is protected by the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

Both in the media and in political debates, terms are used that are hardly defined, while at the same time an ideological unambiguity is asserted. More informed interpretations and explanations have little place in this dominant framing, presumably because there is a strong element of fear. However, in the eyes of experts, this framing scarcely provides any solutions to existing social, cultural and political problems that relate in any way to an Islamic field (Schulze, 2021c, p. 2).

4. Muslim Transnational Networks: Origins, Developments, Critical Assessment

This study is focused on four transnational networks, namely the Muslim Brotherhood (*Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn)*, the Association of Islamic Charitable Projects (*Jamʿiyyah al-Mashārīʿ al-Khayrīyyah al-Islāmiyyah* also known as Al-Ahbash), the Tablighi Jamaat and the Wahhabiyyah, which are all present in Switzerland to various extents. As we will see, their main features depend on the contexts in which they have originated, the changes they have experienced over time and the diversity of the goals they pursue; with these three elements being intertwined. These networks having made their way to the West has also influenced their views and the way they function. This means that goals and activities of an Islamic network, movement or organisation are generally not the same ones in the Middle East or Asia as they are in Europe or North America. Despite this, it is still possible to define at least one common, general characteristic of these groups: the shared belief in the necessary role of Islam in today's modernity (Seniguer, 2020). One network, the Muslim Brotherhood, is characterised by its ambitions to re-islamise society in the Middle East, to implement sharia and thus oppose the "westernisation" of the state (Larroque, 2016, pp. 38–40). In Europe, the Muslim Brothers have established a large network of organisations in order to become interlocutors of the public authorities (El-Karoui, 2018, pp. 51–52; Cesari, 2017, p. 84; Boubekeur, 2007, p. 21). In contrast, the Tablighi and the Wahhabiyyah belong to the "missionary and predicative" type of networks (Boubekeur, 2007, p. 30), in that they invite people, be they Muslim or not, to embrace a rather rigoristic and literalist practice of Islam which they claim is closer to the one the prophet Mohamed and his companions followed in the early stages of this tradition. The Tablighi and the Wahhabiyyah, at least originally, considered political activism as a potential source of conflict and preferred to focus on individual faith. The Ahbash can be seen as sitting somewhere between the two tendencies already discussed, to the extent that they sometimes claim to represent Muslims (in Lebanon the association is even represented in the national Parliament), and sometimes take on a more neutral stance and withdraw from the political arena to focus on preaching and practice (Abdulghani, 2019, pp. 15–18).

As for their presence in the European context, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Ahbash began their activities through political refugees or students who came to Europe fleeing repression. This has been the case since the 1950s for Muslim Brothers from various countries in the Middle East escaping repressive nationalist governments (Larroque, 2016, pp. 55–60; Boubekeur, 2007, pp. 17–19), or civil war, as in the case of the Lebanese Ahbash since the 1970s (Boubekeur, 2007, p. 29). The Tablighi, originally from India, established their presence in Great Britain, the former colonial power, from the 1950s and then spread to other European countries (Larroque, 2016, p. 73; Boubekeur, 2007, pp. 32–33). The presence of the Wahhabiyyah in Europe is only partially connected to immigration and seems to mostly be the consequence of ideas and propaganda circulating, linked to the ideology promoted by institutions connected to the Wahhabiyyah, which began in the 1960s (El-Karoui, 2018, p. 47).

As we will try to show, these networks have sometimes come together to form alliances and sometimes taken completely opposite stances, leading to conflicts. The Muslim Brotherhood and the Wahhabiyyah have had a close yet complex relationship since at the least the 1950s, the period during which Egyptian members of the Muslim Brotherhood fleeing the repression of Nasser found refuge in Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia. Since then, the relationship between the two has varied between forms of collaboration and mutual suspicion (Lacroix, 2015).

The Ahbash built itself in the Ethiopian context, upon a philosophical interpretation that tries to discredit the Wahhabiyyah's theological foundation, also present in the Horn of Africa at the time. This conflict actually constitutes one of the main characteristics of the public discourse of the Ahbash today, be it in Lebanon or elsewhere. Tablighi Jamaat and the Wahhabiyyah are often competing actors in trying to shape the views of the Muslim population in Western contexts (Larroque, 2016, pp. 74–75).

In short, these elements remind us that Muslim transnational networks are a highly dynamic field; this is also the case in the Swiss context, which is no exception in this regard. As we will try to demonstrate, transnational networks have adapted to the Swiss context and inspired local protagonists to develop activities and build up organisations. Such a change of context also implies a high degree of fluidity and shifts within the networks. To evaluate these dynamics, a broad approach consisting of several steps is required. We shall firstly discuss and critically assess the historical and ideological foundations of transnational networks and organisations and their establishment in the West (cf. chapters 4.1. to 4.4.). The detail and length of the critical discussion will vary according to the state of research in that area. Subsequently, we shall focus on the question of what role transnational Muslim networks play in the context of Swiss Muslim communities (cf. chapter 5).

4.1 The Muslim Brotherhood

4.1.1 The Founding of the Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood (*Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn;* MB) was founded in 1928 in Egypt by the teacher Hassan al-Banna (1906–1949), "in reaction to the deep social, political, economic and cultural changes" that happened in Egypt during that time (Ortega Rodrigo, 2014, p. 7). The founding period was shaped above all by experiences of colonialism, the abolition of the caliphate in 1924 and a feeling of moral descent (Ortega Rodrigo, 2014, p. 8; Maréchal, 2008, p. 15). Al-Banna's thinking opposed colonisation and "the patterns of administration characteristic of modern secular states, which the Brotherhood considered to be a means of annihilating the Muslim normative system" (Maréchal, 2008, p. 30). At first, the MB focused on preaching (*da'wah*) as a mission, promoting solidarity and transmitting religious knowledge. By advocating that the sacred texts could be consulted without intermediaries, the MB challenged the authority of the scholars (*'ulamā'*) to

a certain extent. They also maintained that Islam should not be considered merely as moral principles, but as a complete way of life. The MB was also active in the social field and tried to provide for the needs of the population (Maréchal, 2008, pp. 20–22).

During the 1940s, the MB spread across the Middle East, mainly through students that had attended schools and Al-Azhar University in Egypt. This was facilitated by the MB's universal character. In Egypt, however, the movement was first declared illegal in 1948. Following the regime change, the MB's relations with the Free Officers movement[8] were initially good (Leiken & Brooke, 2007, p. 109), but as Nasser's power strengthened, he declared the Brotherhood illegal again in 1954. An assassination attempt on Nasser then led to harsh repression: the imprisonment of many members, confiscation of their property, and the execution of some leaders (Ortega Rodrigo, 2014, pp. 9–10). The repression resulted in the MB beginning to conceal its structures and goals. This secrecy is one of the reasons it is difficult to assess the MB (Vidino, 2020, p. 1). Furthermore, the repression led to some radicalisation, most notably of Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), who wrote his most famous work, *Milestones,* in prison and was later executed (Ortega Rodrigo, 2014, p. 10). The ideology of the MB then shifted, to focus more on a Muslim identity that questioned existing oppressive regimes (Maréchal, 2008, p. 30). Qutb is considered to be "one of the most influential articulators of (…) revolutionary Islamist political doctrine and the (…) theology that underpins it" (March, 2010, p. 191). But his ideas were—and are—also contested within the MB.[9] In 1969, for example, the then supreme guide of the MB, Hasan Al-Hudaybi, decided that the MB should favour compromise with regimes, rather than revolution, and focus on progressive change. This led to some more radicalised groups splitting from the MB (Maréchal, 2008, p. 31). The particular pathway that MB travelled from 1928 until the 1960s is well captured by the idea of "two temporalities of Islamism": the first one, based on Al-Banna's teachings, is characterized by the contestation of British colonialism; the second one focused on the fight against Arab nationalist governments, exemplified by the repression suffered by MB under Nasser's presidency (Burgat, 2008, pp. 31–39). The period from the 1960s onwards was characterised by ongoing internal conflicts in the Egyptian MB. Willi (2021, p. 392) even suggests that the MB "had rarely been 'a single Islamic body'" but that its history rather resembled "a series of ongoing internal confrontations over status, authority and leadership, opposing two schools of thought whose representatives had conflicting interests and competing worldviews".[10]

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[8] A group of Egyptian nationalists inside the armed forces which was instrumental for the republican revolution of 1952 (Campanini, 2020, pp. 79–83). Originally, they were linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, but at the end of 1950, Nasser began to assemble a group with different principles, so these relations came to an end (Ortega Rodrigo, 2014, p. 10).

[9] For a thorough analysis of Qutb's thought, see Maréchal (2008, pp. 104–119).

[10] In his study of the Egyptian MB, Willi distinguishes between two school of thoughts: an Islamist intelligentsia around Omar al-Tilmisani, who wanted the MB to engage in politics and hardliners who belonged to the first generation, who wanted to limit the MB to the religious and educational field and believed in a gradually changing society (Willi, 2021, pp. 390–391).

To mention a few more recent developments in Egypt, the MB founded its own political party, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), after the 2011 revolution and the fall of Mubarak. It won the majority of parliamentary seats (Mellor, 2018, pp. 193–194). The FJP's candidate Mohamed Mursi became the first democratically elected president of Egypt, until he was forced to resign in the 2013 coup (al-Anani, 2015, p. 527). As indicated in this very brief outline, the social and political circumstances surrounding the MB in its original context are so different from those in Europe that they would require a separate analysis. In what follows, we will therefore mainly discuss the Muslim Brotherhood in the West.

4.1.2 The Muslim Brotherhood in the West

In addition to radicalising parts of the network that led to changes in the original ideology of the MB, the repression in Egypt after 1954 also resulted in increased migration of members to other countries (Maréchal, 2008, p. 27). This included neighbouring countries as Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria as well as Saudi Arabia, where the MB played an important role in the establishment of the Saudi education system, but also Europe and North America (Maréchal, 2008, p. 29). Members of the Brotherhood often came to Europe either fleeing repression or as students. Most authors point out that this was not the result of a decision or a plot by the network to Islamise the West, as it is sometimes portrayed (e.g. Vidino, 2020, p. 4; Maréchal, 2008, p. 56). Many initially saw their stay in the West as purely temporary. It was only after a while that this slowly changed and they realized "that blindly applying to modern Europe and North America what al-Banna had prescribed in Egypt in the 1930s made little sense" (Vidino, 2020, p. 8). The hitherto more or less isolated groups in the West began to establish more contacts and to form networks at the end of the 1970s (Vidino, 2020, p. 5).

One of the important figures who fled to Europe was Said Ramadan, son-in-law of Hassan al-Banna and his personal secretary. He founded the Islamic Centres of Geneva and Munich. As Maréchal notes, he is not often mentioned by MB members, although he tried to promote the MB from the 1960s onwards. She attributes this to a certain intellectual and organisational independence, but also to the fact that his flight from repression led to his disavowal by certain members (Maréchal, 2008, pp. 135–137). In Geneva in 1961, Said Ramadan created one of the first Islamic centres in Europe, the Islamic Centre of Geneva (*Centre Islamique de Genève*), with financial help coming from the Gulf countries (Vidino, 2013, pp. 10–12). Even though his anti-Western discourse initially raised fears among the Swiss authorities, Said Ramadan seemed to succeed in becoming an ally of the latter because of his anti-communist and anti-Nasserist stance, a position that the Swiss government appreciated at the time, fearing the possible interference of the pro-Soviet Egyptian government in the country (Rickenbacher, 2020). Later, Said Ramadan was marginalised by the MB, becoming a more free-floating actor, but one who saw himself as legitimised by his relationship to Hassan al-Banna (Expert MC14). His sons Hani and Tariq Ramadan are also associated by some, especially by critics, with the ideas of Hassan al-Banna (Schmid, 2012, p. 231). Yet

Tariq Ramadan, as an academic, has developed his own thoughts in his many contributions. These have not only been influenced by MB thinking, but also by his studies of Western philosophy, references to the anti-globalisation movement, as well as social debates and encounters with Muslim communities in countries such as France, the Netherlands or Great Britain, where Tariq Ramadan was primarily active (Schmid, 2012, p. 234). The brothers Tariq and Hani Ramadan represent two different, competing ideas of what the MB should be. Tariq Ramadan's partly reformist views could be called a "Swiss" perspective on the MB, differing from the French or German interpretations (Expert AC10). However, Tariq Ramadan has not been active in Switzerland since legal procedures against him began in 2017, due to alleged rapes.

In Germany, some large and influential Islamic centres, such as those in Munich and Aachen, are considered to be closely linked to the MB. This assumption largely based on "the fact that prominent representatives of the Egyptian and Syrian branches of the MB had been involved in the creation of these associations in the late 1950s and early 1960s" (Kamp & Thielmann, 2014, p. 99). The umbrella organisation *Islamische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland* (Islamic Community in Germany, IGD), which in 2018 changed its name into *Deutsche Muslimische Gemeinschaft* (German Muslim Community, DMG), is seen as part of the MB network. The IGD/DMG itself has repeatedly emphasised that it has no organisational ties to the MB. However, there are obvious personal connections, contacts and ties (Eißler, 2019, pp. 125–137). To describe these ties, Eißler adopts Alison Pargeter's concept of a "school of thought", in which ideas take precedence over the organisation (Eißler, 2019, pp. 129, 143). In France, the *Union des Organisations Islamiques de France* (Union of Islamic Organisations of France, UOIF), *Musulmans de France* (Muslims of France) since 2017, which founded the *Institut Européen des Sciences Humaines* (European Institute of Human Sciences, IESH) and is part of the State-created representative body *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman* (French Council of the Muslim Faith, CFCM), is seen as closely associated with the MB. This ascription relies on its relations with institutions and scholars outside France, some of whom identify with the Brotherhood (Peter, 2014). In Switzerland, the *Ligue des Musulmans de Suisse* (LMS, Swiss Muslim League; cf. chapter 5.6) is regarded as an organisation with links to the MB, in addition to the previously mentioned *Centre Islamique de Genève.* The Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE), founded in 1989, is the overarching European umbrella organisation linking these organisations (Maréchal, 2008, p. 63). It has been renamed as the Council of European Muslims (CEM). Through its headquarters in Brussels and its self-portrayal as the largest Muslim organisation in Europe, it claims to represent European Muslims (Council of European Muslims, 2021). The FIOE underpinned the creation of the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR) in 1997, a body in charge of issuing fatwas that address questions raised by European Muslims, currently presided over by Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, a leading MB member living in Qatar (Elias, 2017, pp. 150–151).

Even though the MB branches are very diverse in their composition, it is still possible to speak of a common goal for all these groups: the promotion of a strong Muslim identity among Western Muslims, by favouring their participation in society, which is sometimes portrayed as a

form of "Islamic citizenship" (Vidino, 2020, p. 9). But as some scholars point out, the MB has failed to attract many Western Muslims and to become a mass movement (Bowen, 2012, p. 126; Meijer & Bakker, 2012, pp. 17–18). The visibility and importance assigned to MB therefore far exceeds its numbers (Expert AC09). The Annual Report of the German Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz,* BfV), a domestic intelligence agency, estimates the number of MB members in Germany in 2019 at 1,450 (BMI, 2020, p. 245). For Switzerland, however, one expert estimates that there are about 150 to 200 people who address and defend the MB's ideas, but in a reformist rather than a Qutbist tradition (Expert AC10). Two experts stress that the MB has never managed to build up a clearly structured organisation in Switzerland, but that there are organisations influenced by its ideas (Expert AC10; Expert AC07).

4.1.3 Assessment and Critical Perspectives

As we have already pointed out in the section on public debates (Chapter 3), various critical points are raised regarding the Muslim Brotherhood. It is important to point out that hardly any aspect of the organisation is uncontested and views on it differ widely (Willi, 2021, pp. 10–11; Eißler, 2019, p. 142). Media and political uses of the term Muslim Brotherhood should also be understood against this background. We will first take up and discuss the critical points that have already been mentioned in regard to public debates, then identify additional aspects to be evaluated.

One question that arises concerns the Muslim Brotherhood's relationship to democracy (Meijer & Bakker, 2012, p. 5). Some scholars, like Bernard Lewis, see the MB's adherence to democracy as tactical and transitory (Leiken & Brooke, 2007, p. 111). Others point out that the MB comprises different national groups with different perspectives, but "all reject global jihad while embracing elections and other features of democracy" (Leiken & Brooke, 2007, p. 108). The latter therefore portray the MB as moderate and a possible ally in the Muslim world (Leiken & Brooke, 2007).

Another issue raised is the MB's association with terrorism. This point cannot be dismissed: "It is undeniable that different branches of the Brotherhood in the Middle East have been involved in violence. It is, likewise, possible that individual members have been involved in terrorism" (Meijer & Bakker, 2012, p. 14). However, a more differentiated view must be advocated at this point, because many of the branches of the MB in the Middle East have undergone development and have set themselves apart from ideas justifying violence or extremism (Meijer, 2012; Zollner, 2012). Meijer and Bakker (2012, p. 15) judge that the MB as a whole cannot be understood as a terrorist organisation, "let alone its European affiliates". They also note that Brotherhood-allied organisations are aware that these perceived links to terrorism are considered problematic. When deciding how to judge the relationship of the MB with other more extremist groups, there are two different positions: the first one, that Vidino qualifies as "pessimistic" (Vidino, 2020, p. 12), considers that ideas and values promoted by the MB could conduce more radical stances (including violent ones), as its ideology describes the world in a very dichotomic fashion ("Muslims" versus

"the rest of the world"). This view has actually been taken up by the German government in the Annual Report of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution of 2019, but pushed even further. The report holds that the MB in Germany is pursuing a strategy of penetrating society, with the aim of prospectively establishing a sharia-based social and political system (BMI, 2019, p. 180). The second position, the "optimistic" one, states that the MB represents a valuable obstacle in the fight against extremist groups. For those who hold this view, the MB is seen as encouraging Muslims to take part in social and political activities but disqualifying violent actions (Vidino, 2020, pp. 11–12; Leiken & Brooke, 2007).

A further issue raised is the allegation that the Muslim Brotherhood's goal is the Islamisation of Europe. This is hard to evaluate, as it depends on the attitudes of the different actors. However, it can be said that there is no central organisation which directs and guides its branches. We assume, in line with Meijer and Bakker, that "the Brotherhood should be regarded as a network of interpersonal relations, where the centres of power are constantly shifting and changing" and "alliances are fluid and are more linked to individual persons than the larger organisations they represent" (Meijer & Bakker, 2012, p. 15; cf. Roald, 2012, pp. 80–81). It can therefore not be assumed that there is a controlling entity abroad. This is supported by the fact that there are many internal disagreements, disputes and conflicts within different MB-associated organisations (cf. Baylocq, 2012, pp. 166–167). As Meijer and Bakker (2012, p. 16) point out: "the different European organisations simply do not agree amongst each other because, within Europe, their national, political, cultural and social circumstances differ". Furthermore, critics often do not distinguish between branches in the Middle East and in Europe, even though there are huge differences (Meijer & Bakker, 2012, p. 18). Vidino (2020, p. 6) suggests distinguishing between "pure Brotherhood, Brotherhood spawns and organisations influenced by the Brotherhood". This is adopted in other studies as "Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated", "Muslim Brotherhood-inspired" and "grey area groups" (GLOBSEC, 2020, pp. 14–15). Other scholars differentiate between "organic", "autonomous" and "dissident" structures, reflecting on the stance that some Muslim representatives have taken towards the MB (Seniguer, 2020, pp. 16–17). These suggestions reflect the difficulty of describing in an exact, evidence-based way the relationship between certain protagonists or organisations and the MB. We prefer to adopt a perception of the MB as a network of relations, discourse, support and solidarity.

One more point of criticism is the allegation of anti-Semitism.[11] This issue can hardly be satisfactorily addressed in a short paragraph, especially not in the current political climate, fuelled by a renewed outbreak of violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in May 2021 and subsequent debates (cf. Moses, 2021). Nevertheless, we will attempt to shed light on some aspects. Gudrun

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[11] Anti-Semitism can be understood as "a persisting latent structure of hostile beliefs toward Jews as a collectivity manifested in individuals as attitudes, and in culture as myth, ideology, folklore, and imagery, and in actions—social or legal discrimination, political mobilization against the Jews, and collective or state violence—which results in and/or is designed to distance, displace or destroy Jews as Jews" (Fein, 1987, p. 67).

Krämer (2006), who attempts to trace anti-Semitism in the Muslim world in her article, highlights the importance of placing statements and occurrences in a wider political context, that is, within colonialism and the Arab-Israeli conflict. She points out that "core features of Christian anti-Judaism and modern anti-Semitism entered the Middle East through contact with Europe" (Krämer, 2006, p. 255). Matthias Küntzel (2019) indicates that Nazi Germany in particular played a major role. Michael Kiefer (2006, p. 306), who studies the spread of anti-Semitism in Muslim societies, therefore speaks of an "Islamised anti-Semitism", which is identical to modern anti-Semitism and a European phenomenon in origin. "Islamised anti-Semitism" is part of a bigger picture that Krämer (2006, p. 270) calls "the axis of evil as seen from an Islamic point of view": western imperialism (understood as a continuation of the crusades), Zionism and atheist communism (until the end of the Cold War). It must therefore be considered that the Middle Eastern and Muslim experience is different from the European, especially the German, perceptions of anti-Semitism, which are "shaped by their own experience and the memories attached to them" (Krämer, 2006, p. 271; cf. Foroutan, 2021, p. 17). With regard to the MB, however, there are definitely indications of anti-Semitic elements at its origin. Hasan al-Banna was apparently "attracted by fascist notions of unity and strong leadership, though he strongly condemned racism (…) as contrary to Islam" (Krämer, 2006, p. 258). The fact is that the Muslim Brotherhood engaged in anti-Jewish propaganda and attacks on Jews in the 1930s and 1940s, and in the 1950s a booklet by Qutb named *Our Struggle with the Jews* was published (Küntzel, 2019, pp. 193–195; Krämer, 2006, pp. 258, 269). In it, Qutb gathered anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic stereotypes from both Islamic and European sources (Kiefer, 2006, p. 299). Nevertheless, until the 1970s, most Islamic movements focused their attention primarily on their own post-colonial state, including the MB. Qutb saw in Nasser's so-called "paganism" a greater threat to Islam than in Jews, whom he looked upon polemically (Kiefer, 2006, pp. 295–296). Anti-Semitic stereotypes entered Muslim discourses more broadly after Egypt's peace agreement with Israel in 1979 and the Islamic revolution in Iran in the same year (Kiefer, 2007, pp. 77–80). MB members argue that their organisation is only anti-Zionist and not anti-Semitic. However, anti-Semitic elements can still be found in recent literature. At the same time, there are also counter-examples, e.g. two authors describe how a preacher belonging to the MB praises a Jew for his Islamic virtues in a sermon (Leiken & Brooke, 2007, pp. 116–117). In summary, we can say that strong anti-Semitic elements found in the historical development of the MB could easily be reactivated and, accordingly, anti-Semitic elements can also be found to some extent in more recent publications. However, if one assumes that these are possibilities of development, it means that not everyone who adheres to MB ideas is necessarily anti-Semitic today.[12]

A further issue that cannot be dispelled is certainly the secrecy, both at an organisational level and regarding the flow of finances (Meijer & Bakker, 2012, p. 21). This is evident internally:

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[12] For a differentiated view on anti-Semitism in Egypt today, cf. Firestone (2007).

one reason former members give for leaving the MB is a perceived lack of transparency and democracy. This can be attributed to fear of surveillance and infiltration, but at the same time allows for authoritarian leadership. Another reason for leaving the MB is a perceived culture of blind obedience, justified by the need to preserve unity when faced with oppressive regimes. As these two points show, there are problems that go back to the context of origin. A generational conflict also seems to be fuelled by these reasons: younger members are often frustrated by a lack of opportunities to participate (Vidino, 2020, pp. 21–22). Accordingly, the MB can today be regarded as a network of the older generation, in which few young people and few women are incorporated (Expert AC10).

A final issue is the ideology, which still poses problems. There are ideological tensions "between those members who believe that the group should be deeply involved in politics and those who maintain that such political participation is a deviation and distraction from the organisation's traditional aim of grassroots Islamisation through dawa" (Vidino, 2020, p. 22). Or, as Meijer and Bakker (2012, p. 22) put it: "the most perplexing aspect of the Brotherhood is the peaceful coexistence of the most contradictory currents of thought". This makes a general assessment of the network, as well as of individual exponents, extremely difficult. Despite ideological development and adaptation in the West, the various points of criticism illustrate that the MB remains an extremely ambivalent entity in the spectrum of Muslim actors.

4.2 Tablighi Jamaat

4.2.1 The Founding of the Tablighi Jamaat

The Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) was founded in 1926 by Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlawi (1885–1944) in the Mewat region of present-day India (Reetz, 2004, p. 296). TJ is one of the largest transnational religious networks in the world with an estimated seventy to eighty million members (Ali & Amin, 2020, p. 82; Pieri, 2015, p. 31). It is worth mentioning that the name was not given to TJ by its founder. *Tablīgh* can be translated as "calling others towards one's religion" and thus Tablighi Jamaat as "society of preaching/propagation" (Pieri, 2015, pp. 41–42).

TJ emerged in a very specific historical context that explains many of its characteristics. As indicated, it was founded in Mewat by Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlawi. He had a Sufi background, belonging to the Chishtiyyah order (Gaborieau, 2006, p. 54), was educated at the Deoband seminary and became an imam in the mosque of Nizamuddin, south of Delhi, where TJ still has its current headquarters (Pieri, 2015, pp. 38, 53). The *Meos*, the people of Mewat, were mostly poor small landholders (Ali & Amin, 2020, p. 81). They were nominally Muslims, but in fact had hybrid identities, mixing Hindu and Islamic elements, and therefore became the target of different revivalist movements (Pieri, 2015, p. 39). TJ emerged as a direct response to the Hindu Arya Sama sect, which at the time enjoyed British colonial support and proselytized heavily in the region (Ali &

Amin, 2020, pp. 81–82). The British Census furthermore politicized religious communities by allocating power based on the size of the community (Pieri, 2005, p. 37; cf. Piketty, 2020, pp. 422–423; cf. Hardy, 1972).

TJ, the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Jamaat Ulema-e-Islam in Pakistan share the same Deobandi-inspired ideological origins (Pieri, 2015, p. 35; Metcalf, 2002, p. 8). However, while formal education was the centre of Deobandi teaching, the TJ put its emphasis on the practice of *daʿwah*, the calling of people to Islam, by traveling and spreading the message of Islam (Pieri, 2015, p. 60;).

The main principles of the Tablighi are the attestation of faith, prayers (*ṣalāt*), acquiring a knowledge of Islam, the remembrance of God, respect for all living beings, sincerity of intention and spending time passing on God's message (Rougier, 2020, p. 22; Pieri, 2015, p. 44; Diop, 1994, p. 149; Interview MC07). TJ focuses very much on reshaping and transforming the life of the individual (Metcalf, 2002, p. 8): "every individual establishes deep ties to the Prophet in his personal spheres of daily life and, thereby, regulates his behavior" (Gugler, 2010, p. 132). Members are often recognizable by their traditional clothing (Khedimellah, 2003, p. 10). However, TJ turns its followers inwards, towards the self, so their primary goal is to become religiously better people (Ali & Amin, 2020, pp. 87–88). Some authors classify TJ as a specifically modern phenomenon because the network implicitly encourages the privatisation of religion (Khedimellah, 2003, p. 213; Metcalf, 2002, p. 17; cf. Roy, 1987).

The network has a very "flat and flexible organisational structure", which is seen as an important factor in TJ's transnational success (Ali & Amin, 2020, p. 88). There is no written agenda, no membership list, no written set of rules or transparent management structure. TJ furthermore promotes a self-image of being wholly based on voluntary work (Gugler, 2010, p. 133; Reetz, 2004, p. 297). This, as Reetz points out, disguises a highly hierarchical leadership structure. TJ is in fact run by two consultative councils (*shūrā*) based in Nizamuddin. A smaller one, consisting of a circle of senior leaders from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, and a slightly larger one with about 15 members. This model is replicated on the national, regional and local levels (Reetz, 2004, pp. 297–298, 301–302). National councils all over the world oversee regional or local councils, while they themselves are accountable to the council in Nizamuddin. At the lowest level of this hierarchical structure are the individual prayer groups, each of which is temporarily made up of 15 or fewer members for the duration of a preaching tour known as *khurūj* (Pieri, 2015, p. 53, 55). There are different types of tours: 3 days, 40 consecutive days, 4, 7 or 12 months (Reetz, 2014, p. 30). The prayer groups are kept very egalitarian, which is one reason for TJ's great success in the South Asian context: it "gives a sense of increased social status for participants from lower classes, who can mix with participants from middle and upper middle class" (Siddiqi, 2018, p. 169). Moreover, TJ emphasises face-to-face learning, which does not require an intermediary (Siddiqi, 2018, p. 170; Metcalf, 2002, p. 10). In addition to its preaching tours, TJ holds local, regional, national and international congregations (*ijtimāʿ*). While local *ijtimāʿ* are usually held weekly at the mosque, national and international meetings are held annually. Those in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan

attract large numbers of people: Tablighis usually "stress that these meetings represent the sec-ond-largest congregation of Muslims after the Hajj" (Reetz, 2004, p. 298).

4.2.2 Tablighi Jamaat in the West

From the 1950s onwards, TJ spread in Muslim countries as well as in the West (Diop, 1994, p. 150). Its European headquarters was established in Dewsbury, England (Mukhopadhyay, 2005, p. 335). While in Britain the majority of its followers are South Asian Muslims, in France, Spain, Belgium and the Netherlands they are mainly Muslims of Maghreb origin (Faust, 2000, p. 438). In France, the network founded an association called *Foi et Pratique* (Faith and Practice) in 1972. It attracts mainly young people from the *banlieues* who feel both alienated from their country of origin and excluded in France (Khedimellah, 2003). In some of these cases, TJ succeeds in socially pacifying neighbourhoods and dissuading young people from delinquent behaviour (Pieri, 2015, p. 24). But these are, as Brodard (2020, p. 51) judges, only indirect and secondary effects caused by the return to Islam and the observance of religious rules. Although there are a small number of Tablighi groups in Germany, in Köln and Frankfurt for example, TJ has had difficulties reaching out to Muslim communities. The reason for this is probably that Muslim communities in Germany consist predominantly of Turkish immigrants who are firmly rooted in their Islamic cultural tradition (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2010, p. 47; Faust, 2000, p. 439). Moreover, after 9/11, mosques that had previously served as overnight accommodation increasingly banned TJ from having people stay there, for security reasons (Expert AC13).

In Switzerland, TJ has been present since 1985 or 1986. Currently, five or six associations in all three language regions of Switzerland belong to TJ, with the associations in German-speaking Switzerland being the most active. It has been reported that TJ has not been very active in French-speaking Switzerland over recent years (Expert MC19). Approximately every second month, a Switzerland-wide exchange takes place, where 30 to 40 people meet. The majority of today's active members have grown up in Switzerland, which is why the exchange often takes place in one or more national languages (Interview MC07).

4.2.3 Assessment and Critical Perspectives

TJ presents itself as apolitical and denies any political aspirations (Ali & Amin, 2020, p. 82). Opinions differ as to whether this is the case. Some point out that the TJ's main activities are formally apolitical preaching tours and congregations that offer meaning to followers (Metcalf, 2002, p. 17). TJ's focus on the private rather than the political sphere has led to several South Asian governments tolerating it, or even actively supporting TJ, using it to counter militant groups (Gugler, 2010, p. 124). Others emphasize that the re-Islamisation of a large number of Muslims envisaged by TJ is bound to have political consequences (Gaborieau, 2006, p. 66; Reetz, 2004, p. 296). It can be seen as a long-term political strategy, which has its origins in the political situation when TJ was founded (Gaborieau, 1999, p. 21).

However, TJ's flexible organisational structure and lack of formal membership has made it vulnerable to exploitation by various militant groups. Several alleged terrorists have attended TJ mosques, e.g., two attackers involved in the 7/7 London bombings (Siddiqi, 2018, p. 169; Pieri, 2015, p. 101; Gugler, 2010, p. 124). Pieri points out that "(d)ocuments published by WikiLeaks suggest that people have been using TJ as a cover for Al-Qaeda operations", but without the knowledge of TJ itself (Pieri, 2015, p. 102). As its structure was able to be instrumentalised by more militant groups, TJ also appears in the 2020 Annual Report of the German Office for the Protection of the Constitution. The report claims that TJ segregates from non-Muslims, which might lead to the formation of parallel societies and at least passively promote individual radicalisation. It estimates the number of members in Germany at 650 (BMI, 2020, p. 248).

However, other authors also underline that TJ does not propagate violence (Pieri, 2015, p. 103). Due to its focus on improvement through personal effort, it is compared to Alcoholics Anonymous (Metcalf, 2002, p. 8) or described as therapy through rigorous religiosity that provides security (Khedimellah, 2001, para. 18). Furthermore, the effects on communities whose young members are led away from drug and alcohol addiction, or delinquency, cannot be underestimated (Pieri, 2015, p. 24), even if these are only viewed as "secondary effects", as described above. TJ's focus on religious self-improvement and the fostering of a Tablighi community also leads to TJ being seen as an isolationist movement that does not encourage the integration of its members in society (Siddiqi, 2018, p. 171). Since the *da'wah* work propagated by TJ is very much linked to success in the hereafter, it can contribute to young people not realising their potential by, for example, dropping out of school or university to go on preaching tours (Pieri, 2015, p. 147).

One expert assesses TJ as a generational organisation; someone adheres to TJ for a certain time but then leaves TJ at a later point in life. He sees the possibility of TJ playing a bigger role in Europe in the future, because its form of spirituality is beginning to replace the spirituality of other transnational networks such as the Muslim Brotherhood. The atmosphere of islamicity that TJ creates, he states, is different from the islamicity of the Muslim Brotherhood in being orthodox but apolitical, not striving for any political involvement but creating a rather segregated ground for social identity over a certain time span (Expert AC10).

As can be seen from this brief outline, TJ is characterised in very different ways. As with other transnational networks, it should be noted that TJ is by no means uniform but varies from context to context and can therefore be judged differently (Pieri, 2015, p. 16). Based on what we have observed in Switzerland (cf. chapter 5.2), TJ seems to be rather apolitical and not to propagate violence. This points toward an assessment that TJ is primarily focused on an intense, identity-forming practice of Islam. Their strong *da'wah* practice, however, can be experienced as intrusive and therefore perceived negatively.

4.3 Al-Ahbash

4.3.1 The Founding of Al-Ahbash

The term Al-Ahbash, literally "the people of Ethiopia", refers to the country of origin of its founder Sheikh Abdullah al-Harari (1910–2008) (Avon, 2008, para. 1). The network is also known as the Association of Islamic Charitable Projects (AICP, *Jamʿiyyah al-Mashāriʿ al-Khayrīyyah al-Islāmiyyah*), which was founded in 1983 and has its headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon (Pierret, 2010, p. 35). Sheikh al-Harari and the Ahbash are associated with three Sufi orders (*ṭarīqah*), the Qadiriyyah, Rifaiyyah, and the Naqshibandiyyah. The Ahbash combine Sufi spiritualism with aspects of Sunni and Shii theology into an eclectic belief system. The basis of its belief is the Ashʿarite school of theology, but al-Harari also accepted the Shia doctrine of legitimacy and therefore of Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Hussain (Hamzeh & Dekmejian, 1996, pp. 220–221). The Ahbash strongly oppose the use of violence (Rabil, 2010, p. 322).

However, the Ahbash stand apart from most traditional Sufi orders in their proselytising and activism against Islamist opponents, especially the Wahhabiyyah (Hamzeh & Dekmejian, 1996, p. 222). This conflict goes back to al-Harari's time in Harar, Ethiopia during the first half of the 20th century, where he experienced Islamic-Christian coexistence, but also the rise of Wahhabi-inspired groups that he opposed (Kabha & Erlich, 2006, p. 522). Al-Harari strongly criticized the founder of the Wahhabiyyah, Abd al-Wahhab, as well as Sayyid Qutb, influential thinker of the Muslim Brotherhood. He furthermore rejected the thoughts of Ibn Taymiyya, a 14th century scholar that had a deep influence on Abd al-Wahhab (Hamzeh & Dekmejian, 1996, p. 220). This led to an ongoing conflict between the Wahhabiyyah and Ahbash, which is well exemplified by the issuing of a *fatwā* (a religious opinion) by the scholar and former mufti of Saudia Arabia, Abdallaziz bin Baz, in 1986, with the aim of warning people about what he saw as a dangerous movement (Kabha & Erlich, 2006, pp. 527–528). Issues which cause conflict are, for example, the unity of Islam and how Christians and Jews are perceived (Kabha & Erlich, 2006, p. 530). The approach of the Ahbash is that "Muslims should abide by local laws and take an active part in the politics of the host countries" and therefore "participate in the lives and politics of non-oppressive non-Islamic regimes" (Kabha & Erlich, 2006, pp. 532–533).

This perspective corresponds to the Ahbash's role in Lebanon, where it positioned itself as an alternative to Islamist movements, thus gaining many Sunni middle-class followers (Seddon, 2004, p. 22; Hamzeh & Dekmejian, 1996, p. 224). The relationship between the Ahbash and other Sunni groups in Lebanon, especially the ones inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood and the Wahhabiyyah, have been troubled. The assassination of the Ahbash leader Nizar al-Halabi in 1995, attributed to an extremist Salafi group, contributed to an increase in existing intra-Sunni tensions. During the Lebanese civil war, the Ahbash did not create a militia of its own and was not involved in fighting Israel, and it was only in the early 1990s that it entered Lebanese politics (Abdulghani, 2019, pp. 15–19). Despite this, the Ahbash is sometimes seen as having received the support of the Al-Assad regime in Syria (Abdulghani, 2019, p. 16) or as having been backed by the Syrian

secret services (Rougier, 2021, p. XXX). In Lebanon, the Ahbash has mostly concentrated on religious education, by building mosques and schools (Hamzeh & Dekmeijan, 1996, pp. 220, 224).

4.3.2 Al-Ahbash in the West

In Europe, the Ahbash spread with the help of the Lebanese diaspora during the 1980s. It is active in many countries, such as France, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland and Ukraine (Boubekeur, 2007, p. 29; Kabha & Ehrlich, 2006, pp. 523–524). The Ahbash network is organised at the European level and representatives of each country organise meetings at a continental level (Expert MC12). It has also created centres in Australia and the US.

In Switzerland, the Ahbash gained influence with the Islamic Centre of Lausanne (also known as *Mosquée de Lausanne;* cf chapter 5.5) in 1983 (Expert MC14). Besides Lausanne, there are at least 6 associations in Switzerland today that belong to the Ahbash network, namely the Islamic and Cultural Sunni Centre of Geneva, the Islamic Centre of Neuchâtel, the Islamic Centre of Bienne, the Islamic and Cultural Centre of Yverdon-les-Bains and the Islamic Centre of Zürich. The network also established a national headquarters in Lausanne in 1998, called the Swiss Islamic Council (Expert MC12)[13], where imams and religious teachers for all centres in Switzerland are trained. In 2016, 20 women and 20 men were trained there (Schmid, Schneuwly Purdie & Lang, 2016, p. 62). There is a concentration of Ahbash activities in the French speaking part of Switzerland (*Romandie*), where all centres are located except for the Zürich one.

4.3.3 Assessment and Critical Perspectives

The public discourse of the Ahbash transnational network is currently focused on the fight against violent extremism, which sometimes leads state governments, including those in Europe and North America, to collaborate with it (Boubekeur, 2007, p. 30). Some authors consider this support as potentially problematic, as it may exacerbate inner-Islamic conflicts (Assen, 2017, pp. 121–122). Others emphasise that the Ahbash represent a clear alternative to extremist movements. Hamzeh and Dekmejian, for example, note that within their pluralistic framework, the Ahbash can appeal to conventional Muslims, secularists, as well as "individuals who desire a retreat into spiritualism" (Hamzeh & Dekmejian, 1996, p. 27). Moreover, the approach that Muslims should abide by local laws and participate in the life and politics of non-oppressive regimes (Kabha & Erlich, 2006, pp. 532–533) seems very compatible with life in Western countries. One expert regards the Ahbash as a sect pursuing a specific Muslim identity and reinterpretation of Islam. However, apart from their anti-Wahhabi stance, the Ahbash identity is very difficult to define (Expert AC10). Even

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[13] The entity is mentioned on the website of the CIL (2021b) but is not to be confused with the Swiss Central Islamic Council (*Islamischer Zentralrat Schweiz*).

if they succeed in mobilising their own supporters, the impact in Western countries remains limited. An important factor in this respect is that they are relatively isolated and do not want to cooperate with other Muslim organisations.

4.4 Wahhabiyyah

4.4.1 The Emergence of the Wahhabiyyah

The term Wahhabiyyah refers to the doctrine developed by Mohamed Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab (1703–1792), a theologian born in the Najd region of today's Saudi Arabia. The ideas exposed by the theologian have become the state doctrine of Saudi Arabia, following the alliance made in 1744 with the local leader Muhammad bin Saud, founder of the Saud dynasty. Abd Al-Wahhab received the protection of Emir bin Saud, who in turn committed himself to expanding the credo put forward by Abd Al-Wahhab. The conquest of the Peninsula lasted almost two centuries, but the alliance between the two families has never been called into question (Mouline, 2017, p. 40). This pact led to the foundation of the modern state of Saudia Arabia, created in 1932 by Abdallaziz ibn Saud (Dazi-Héni, 2020, pp. 23–50).

The doctrine defended by Abd Al-Wahhab is inspired by the ideas of the theologian and jurist Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (780–855), founder of the Hanbali school of jurisprudence, one of the most literalist schools within the Muslim world, and which opposed the more rationalist views of the Muʿtazila under Abbassid rule (750–1250). Another source of inspiration for Abd Al-Wahhab was the medieval scholars Ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328) and his student Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya (1292–1350), from whom Abd Al-Wahhab derived his aversion to all popular forms of Islam, particularly in regard to recognizing the importance of saints or intermediary figures between the believer and God (Rougier, 2021, pp. 15–45).

These references were merged into a doctrine defending the absolute and unique divine nature of God (*tawḥīd*) and the rejection of other forms of Islam, especially the ones inspired by Sufism and Shiism, whose tenants were accused of polytheism (*shirk*) because of their practice of venerating other entities besides God (saints for Sufism and the imams descending from Ali for Shiism). Scholars suggest that these ideas were in fact put forward as a criticism of the Ottoman empire, largely based on the Hanafite school of jurisprudence and Sufism and whose presence in the Arabian Peninsula was challenged by the Saoud family (Dazi-Héni, 2020, pp. 40–41). In any case, members of the Wahhabiyyah considered their doctrine the "only and true version of Islam", the one truly inspired by *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* (the pious predecessors), which, in the eyes of Abd Al-Wahhab, had been abandoned by the Muslims of his time (Mouline, 2017, p. 39).

The modern Saudi kingdom of 1932, established after the dissolution of the Ottoman empire in 1923 and the unification of the Arabian Peninsula, has a double structure, following on from the alliance described above between Abd Al-Wahhab and Ibn Saud. The royal family (descendants of Muhammad bin Saoud) have kept the political power and the official religious scholars (descendants of Abd Al-Wahhab, also called the *Āl al-Shaykh*) have engaged in expanding their

interpretation of religion into society (Mouline, 2010, pp. 232–233). The alliance between these two factions initially established a strict separation between politics and religion, which resulted in the idea that official religious scholars have nothing to say in political matters and owe total respect to the ruler (*walī al-ʾamr,* literally the "guardian of the affairs") (Mouline, 2017, p. 43). In the 1960s, two religious institutions were established which had major consequences both internally in Saudi Arabia and externally: the University of Medina, in 1961, and the Muslim World League, in 1962. The founding of the University of Medina as a "missionary venture" (Farquhar, 2017, p. 3) must be seen in the context of the geopolitical rivalries and power struggles in Saudi Arabia at the time. The Saudi royals were confronted with challenges to their legitimacy and stability, both externally in the form of Nasser's socialist, pan-Arab policy in Egypt, which was promoted with some success in the region, and through divisions within their own ranks (Farquhar, 2017, pp. 67–70). By assigning key figures of the loyal Wahhabi establishment an important role in the University of Medina's governance from the beginning, the Saudi royals were able to secure their support, which was crucial during the legitimacy crisis (Farquhar, 2017, p. 73, 79–80). The context of the Cold War plays a role as well, both in the founding of the University of Medina and the Muslim World League,[14] as all developments against leftist policies in the region were backed by Saudi Arabia's ally, the USA (Farquhar, 2017, p. 71). Accordingly, the aim of the MWL's foundation was to create an Islamic bloc as a counterweight to the republican, socialist bloc in the region (Schulze, 2018, p. 2). The MWL is formally a non-governmental organisation, but it is almost exclusively funded by the Saudi royal family and is therefore not recognised internationally as an NGO (Schulze, 2018, p. 1).

The Cold War had further implications: from the beginning of the 1950s, Saudi Arabia welcomed exiled members of the Muslim Brotherhood who were forced to leave Arab countries in which a Muslim Brotherhood presence was not allowed. This was particularly the case of Egyptian Brothers leaving the country after repeated waves of repression under the Nasser government. Integrating members of the Muslim Brotherhood in these institutions was instrumental in trying to make Saudi Arabia the world centre of Islamic power (Mouline, 2017, pp. 60–629). The University of Medina, in particular, largely relied on non-Saudi staff until the 1990s (Farquhar, 2017, p. 105), because there was an awareness that they needed spiritual capital in forms that would be recognized "as valid bases of religious authority by diverse Muslim communities around the world" (Farquhar, 2017, p. 89). However, the incorporation of members of the Muslim Brotherhood into the institutional system began to influence the views of some religious scholars, due to the more political, even revolutionary, attitudes of Muslim Brotherhood members. Their presence inside key institutions such as the universities, the educational system and other important Saudi state institutions, in fact led to what some scholars call the 'hybridisation' between the Wahhabiyyah and the Muslim Brotherhood's worldviews (Mouline, 2017, pp. 60–62; Lacroix, 2011). It is

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[14]   For a thorough analysis of the MWL, cf. Schulze (1990).

nevertheless important to note that the University of Medina included not only Muslim Brotherhood members, but also individuals associated with other social movements such as the Ahl-i Hadith or the Egyptian Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya (Farquhar, 2017, p. 97).

The creation of the Council of Senior Scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) in 1972, which was placed under the direct control of the royal family, has to be seen as an attempt to better control official religious discourse (Mouline, 2010), excluding from power former members of the body of religious scholars, who by then had begun to develop more political stances. The MWL underwent a change in 1973/73 as well: it began to focus more on missions among Muslim communities (Schulze, 2018, p. 5).

The first visible consequence of the growing contestation of the roles of religious scholars was the seizure of Mecca's great mosque in 1979. A group called *Ikhwān*, led by Juhayman Al-Otaybi, a former student of the university of Medina, occupied the great mosque of Mecca (the holiest site of Islam) calling for the royal family to be overthrown and declaring the coming of the Mahdi (the redeemer of the believers), the latter being in fact Al-Otaybi's brother in-law Muhammad Al-Qahtani. This event, together with the Islamic revolution that occurred the same year in Iran, was a shock for the Saudi royal family and showed that a growing contestation front was rising in the country (Campanini, 2020, p. 233). The weakening Wahhabi loyalty to the regime from 1979 to 1995 was reflected in the MWL's positions as well. However, overtly manifest Wahhabi positions were sanctioned by the royals (Schulze, 2018, p. 5).

The fracture between elements of the religious scholars and the establishment was brought to light most tangibly following the decision of Saudi Arabia to host American troops on its soil, to help stop Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait at the beginning of the 1990s (the so-called first Gulf war). This decision led to the contestation of the Saudi royal family for the compromises it had made with what was considered an enemy of Islam, namely the United States. Fearing that Saddam Hussein could eventually threaten Saudi Arabia after the invasion of Kuwait, the country supported the international coalition led by the United States (Dazi-Héni, 2020, pp. 70–73). The amplitude of the contestation, led by what scholars call the *Al-Ṣaḥwah Al-Islāmiyya* movement (Islamic awakening movement), which was inspired by the political ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood, was demonstrated by different public manifestations held at the time in Saudi Arabia (Dazi-Héni, 2020, pp. 119–121; Lacroix, 2011), but was in fact the consequence of a process that began in the 1960s. This event constituted a clear demonstration of the Wahhabiyya's fragmentation into different factions and challenged the peaceful relationship of the religious scholars (especially the non-official ones) with the royal establishment. From the 1990s on, Saudi Arabia has thus experienced a series of political actions taken by sahwist *ʿulamāʾ* and intellectuals in the country (Lacroix, 2011, pp. 151–200) that eventually led to the arrest of some of the most important proponents in subsequent years (Lacroix, 2011, pp. 201–238). In reaction to these developments, the establishment started to criticise the Muslim Brotherhood, which in the eyes of the government was responsible for the fragmentation among religious scholars and the growing contestation of the royal family. The MWL then clearly sided with the royal house (Schulze, 2018, p. 5).

The increased distrust Saudi Arabia showed vis-à-vis the Muslim Brotherhood manifested again during the so-called Arab spring, which saw important political successes of Muslim Brotherhood led political parties, especially in Tunisia and Egypt (Larroque, 2018). Fearing the opportunities created by the Arab spring both inside and outside the country, Saudi Arabia decided to support the 2013 military coup in Egypt that overthrew the Muslim Brotherhood and elected president Mohammed Morsi, in favour of the current president and general Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (Lahoud Tatar, 2017, p. 25). Another interpretation of this event suggests that the Saudi identity narrative, positioning it as the leader of the Sunni world, was threatened by the Muslim Brotherhood's seizure of power in 2012 (Darwich, 2016). In 2014, Saudi Arabia, in line with Egypt's decision of 2013, inscribed the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organisation, provoking strong reactions from the members of the Egyptian transnational organisation and creating tensions with other Gulf countries whose relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood was characterised by compromise (Lahoud Tatar, 2017, pp. 53–54). The current King of Saudi Arabia, Salman, and his son Mohammed have pursued the policy of former King Abdallah towards the Muslim Brotherhood, criminalising the Muslim Brotherhood (Dazi-Héni, 2020, pp. 119–121). At the same time, the royal house was ready to oust the Wahhabi establishment. This was evident in the MWL, with the removal of the then Secretary General and the appointment of a new loyal secretary, Muhammad bin Abdulkarim al-Issa (Schulze, 2018, p. 6).

4.4.2 The Wahhabiyyah in the West

The Wahhabiyyah's internationalisation did not occur before the end of 1950s. It was under the leadership of Kings Saud and Faisal at the beginning of 1960s that it started to be exported to the rest of the world. The two institutions created in this period, as cited, the University of Medina and the Muslim World League, played a pivotal role. These institutions were at the forefront of the panislamistic project of Saudi Arabia to counter the influence of Arab nationalism, led by the Egyptian president Nasser (Mouline, 2020, pp. 44–45). The University of Medina was established with the aim of attracting foreign students from Muslim and non-Muslim countries (Mouline, 2017, p. 59) and served at the time of its establishment as the counterpart of Al-Azhar University, an institution which legitimized Nasser's power in Egypt following nationalisation in 1961 (Schulze, 2002, p. 175). According to Mouline, the University of Medina has trained around 40,000 foreign students from its beginnings in 1961 till 2018, but only an estimated 1.5% of them come from the Western world (Mouline, 2020, p. 54). The students' residency was, and still is today, sponsored by the university. Whereas the intention was to form future leaders who could eventually spread the Wahhabi message in their own country (Lacroix, 2015, p. 46; Farquhar, 2017, p. 114), students arrive at the university with their own religious conceptions in which they had been socialized (Farquhar, 2017, pp. 162–164). Furthermore, while some students embrace the university's Wahhabi stance, others seem to find ways to benefit from the opportunities and material capital "with-

out necessarily assenting to its Wahhabi-influenced message" (Farquhar, 2017, p. 183). In addition, some of the students partly attend private teaching by Sufi-oriented scholars in Saudi Arabia (Schmid & Trucco, 2019a, p. 33). Farquhar therefore draws the conclusion that:

> Saudi religious and political elites may be unable to determine the precise ways in which resources made available in Medina are put to use, or to predict and control the social, cultural and political ramifications of their investment. (Farquhar, 2017, p. 183)

He therefore conceptualises the missionary project of the University of Medina as a transnational religious economy that consists of flows of migrants and social technologies, material and spiritual capital (Farquhar, 2017, p. 185). The Muslim World League (MWL), on the other hand, was initially composed of members of different Islamic tendencies (cf. Schulze, 1990), including the Muslim Brotherhood (Feuer, 2019, pp. 7–10), even if the core of the institution was actually under the leadership of Saudi religious scholars.

As already stated, the League was initially used as an international platform to counter the Arab nationalist vision of Nasser and to establish an "Islamic Internationalism". This policy was successful: in 1969 the organisation now known as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) was founded (Schulze, 2018, p. 2). Therefore, from 1972/73 onwards, the MWL focused on internal missions in Muslim communities and founded a large number of sub-organisations, made possible thanks to petrodollars (Schulze, 2018, p. 3). However, financial contributions to Muslim communities in the international context were hardly secured for the medium or long term and therefore hardly structure-building (Schulze, 2018, p. 4). After the defeat of the Arab countries facing Israel in 1967 and the subsequent loss of influence of panarabism, the MWL became a lever to deal with the increasing expansion of Iranian Khomeinism, whose ideas began circulating in Europe after the 1979 revolution, challenging the will of Saudi Arabia to represent Muslims around the world. The presence of Muslim Brotherhood members inside the MWL was instrumental for Saudi Arabia in countering these ideologies, given their experience in dealing with highly politicised issues and their ability to adapt their discourse against the adversaries targeted by Saudi Arabia (Feuer, 2019, pp. 8–9). However, these members were not allowed to present themselves to the outside world as Muslim Brothers (Schulze, 2018, p. 4).

An important change in the MWL's course took place in 2016, when the secretary general was replaced. In line with Saudi Arabia's new nationalist course, the Muslim Brotherhood and its allies were now considered enemies of Islam, along with the Shiites (Schulze, 2018, p. 6). The MWL has often been accused of having connections with the terrorist network, especially with personalities linked to Al-Qaeda (for further details about this topic cf. Feuer, 2019, pp. 16–18). After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, there was a clear political will in Saudi Arabia to use the League to spread a more peaceful and tolerant Islamic message (Expert AC10), one that did not create divisions between the Islamic and national identities of Western believers, as it seemed to have previously been the case, judging from the MWL's public communications (Feuer, 2019). Accordingly, the

World League is now establishing new approaches, including condemning anti-Semitism and the Holocaust and rejecting the need for women to veil themselves (Schulze, 2018, p. 6). This, of course, does not prevent other, less institutional means being used by Saudi institutions and affiliates to spread their ideas, such as social networks, publishing houses, grants, and other less visible tools (Mouline, 2020, p. 55).

The MWL has its headquarters in Mecca but has branches in more than 120 countries around the world (Feuer, 2019, p. 11). The organisation is active in the western context (Europe and North America) in cities that are internationally relevant. In Europe, where Saudi Arabia, unlike other transnational actors, does not have a diasporic presence, the MWL unsurprisingly decided to establish branches in Brussels and Geneva (Feuer, 2019, p. 13), two cities that can be considered as international capitals. The recent statements of the League, indicating that it might withdraw from its control of the Geneva mosque in Le Petit-Saconnex seems to be a sign of Saudi Arabia's willingness to partially leave control to local actors in Western contexts (Mouline, 2020, p. 55; cf. chapter 5.7.3), a move that follows a similar development in Belgium, where the MWL withdrew from the control of the *Centre Islamique et Culturel de Belgique* (CICB) and its *Grande Mosquée* (Feuer, 2019, p. 32).

4.4.3 Assessment and Critical Perspectives

Some scholars state that by promoting a very exclusivist form of Islam, the Wahhabiyyah is conducive to other more radical stances, including so-called revolutionary ones, like jihadism. These authors argue that the Wahhabiyyah cannot be considered as an apolitical worldview, as some suggest. The very fact that people embracing the doctrine, especially in Western countries, decide to step back from society to live according to the rigid Islamic norms the Wahhabiyya promotes, creates a fertile ground for more extreme attitudes towards the "other" (Rougier, 2020; Mouline, 2017; Conesa, 2016). Elements of religious doctrine, such as a very strict interpretation of belief in the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*), are used for exclusivist identity politics (Schmid & Trucco, 2019a, p. 31). In this view, a rejection of participation in the democratic system, judged as *shirk*; or the strict separation of men and women that its followers defend, are signs of value splitting of the group towards society and of a lack of acceptance of the most basic principles of liberal and democratic states (Rougier, 2020, p. 25).

In contrast, other authors seem to consider that followers of the Wahhabiyyah, sometimes also called quietist Salafis because of their decision to renounce political engagement, do not have the same motivation to use violence as the jihadists. According to Roy, the latter do not have as rigid a practice of Islam as the followers of the Wahhabiyyah; for him, the observation of the European context proves that the jihadis do not show any sign of piety and are mainly motivated by violence, suggesting that an individual can become radicalised without embracing the doctrine promoted by the Wahhabiyyah (Roy, 2019). For Bonnefoy and Lacroix (2016), the Wahhabiyyah cannot be considered as the doctrine inspiring jihadism, because the latter was more influenced,

at least in its early days, by the worldview of radicalised members of the Muslim Brotherhood, including Abdullah Azzam and Ousama Bin Laden. The Saudi establishment has often tried to distance itself from jihadi groups, seen as threats by the monarchy.

The connection between the Wahhabiyyah and currents with an affinity for violence is therefore disputed. Even if the Wahhabiyyah exerts a continuing influence in the West, there are indications of a greater restraint in Saudi politics. At the least, Saudi Arabia has not succeeded in controlling and federating Muslim organisations in the West beyond their own antennae. Even though the ideology of the Wahhabiyyah may hold an appeal for some individuals, it is difficult to reconcile it with the development of Muslim organisations in Western countries.

5. Case Studies of Muslim Communities in Switzerland

The following case studies adopt an exploratory approach, as not much is known about some of the communities. The cases were selected according to the following criteria: firstly, both French-speaking and German-speaking Switzerland should be represented, as the vast majority of Muslims in Switzerland live in these two linguistic regions. Secondly, some cases were chosen due to their being controversially discussed in the media, as overall attention for transnational networks is mainly driven by media and political debates (cf. chapter 3). We felt it was precisely such cases that it was important to investigate in depth and in a differentiated manner. Thirdly, some cases were selected for the contrast they provide, i.e., they differ in terms of their local interactions and transnational ties. Furthermore, it should be noted that in six out of seven cases, communities have a prayer room and are locally based, while one community is national and does not offer a prayer room. In addition, in six out of seven cases, the communities are located in cities (also true for the national community case), with only one situated in a small town (Delémont).

The case studies illustrate different forms of transnational ties, with the transnational networks discussed in the previous chapter also being significant here. However, the selected case studies do not cover the full spectrum of all Swiss Muslim actors. We are aware of other single cases which even extend to financial transfers, but which, given the framework of this study, cannot be considered in depth.[15] We are not therefore providing a complete map, but examining cases, the assessments of which can serve to situate further cases.

Methodologically, both an external and an internal perspective was included. For the external perspective the most important media reports of recent years were compiled, analysed and complemented with secondary literature, where available. In the *swissdox* database, articles from recent years on the cases in question were reviewed and the most important articles downloaded. In this way, we did not seek to analyse all newspaper articles ever published on a case, but rather a pertinent selection. The inside perspective was gained through interviews with key persons from the respective community. The case studies are complemented by expert views, literature and our own assessment. The experts consulted were drawn from Muslim associations and organisations (including imams), from other religious communities, from academia and politics, as well as public authority employees (cf. list in the appendix).

5.1 Stiftung Islamische Gemeinschaft Zürich

The beginnings of the *Stiftung Islamische Gemeinschaft Zürich* (SIGZ, Islamic Community Foundation Zürich) go back to the 1960s, when students of ETH Zürich first met for Friday prayers. As

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[15] Besides Saudia Arabia and the Emirates, Kuwait is also active through the Muslim World Foundation based in Geneva (Rauch, 2018). In one recent case, a community was supported to buy premises and to hire a new imam who was intended to replace the imam in office until then (Expert MC17).

the community grew steadily, an association was founded in 1975. The Sheikh Zayed Islamic Centre on Rötelstrasse in Zürich was acquired by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 1982 and handed over to the community (SIGZ, 2021d; Mahnig, 2002, p. 80). In 1994, the association was converted into a foundation (Handelsregister Kanton Zürich, 2021). The Islamic Centre is frequented by Muslims of various nationalities, such as Turks, Bosnians, Somalis, Pakistanis, Egyptians, Syrians as well as Swiss. It is open for the five daily prayers and also offers a prayer timetable for the city of Zürich on its website (SIGZ, 2021b).

5.1.1 Public Perception

Newspaper articles usually refer to the Islamic Centre, which exists as a physical location, rather than to the foundation behind it. This was illustrated in the 2003 articles about a conflict with neighbours of the Islamic Centre which went all the way to the Federal Court. Neighbours had filed various noise complaints and objections against structural changes to the house to reduce noise (Suter, 2003a, 2003b). The Federal Court nevertheless recommended noise protection measures for the building (Rizzi, 2003). It became clear over the course of the articles that the premises on Rötelstrasse had become too small for the number of Friday worshippers (Suter, 2003a; Rizzi, 2003). Nonetheless, they are still in use today. Spatial issues are a common problem for many communities (cf. chapter 5.3 and 5.4). One of the articles mentions the foundation in more detail: it describes how the house was acquired by the UAE, but that the SIGZ is the responsible body. The article goes on to say that the SIGZ board consists of "Muslims who have lived in Switzerland for decades, speak good German and are naturalised here". The majority of believers, on the other hand, are "simple people, migrants on low incomes" (Suter, 2003b; authors' translation). It is notable that the article draws a remarkable contrast between the board and the ordinary believers.

In some articles, the Islamic Centre is briefly mentioned in connection with certain individuals. An article from 2012, for example, portrays Mahmoud El Guindi, then the new president of the cantonal umbrella organisation *Vereinigung Islamischer Organisationen Zürich* (VIOZ, Association of Islamic Organisations Zürich). The article states briefly that he usually prays in the Islamic Centre on Rötelstrasse (Meier, 2012). In 2016, the centre is mentioned in connection with the controversial preacher Youssef Ibram in two articles. Both articles describe that Ibram preached at Rötelstrasse until 2004, but then had to leave (Meier, 2016; Pelda, 2016). The reason stated at the time was that he could not oppose the stoning of adulteresses because this was part of sharia law (Meier, 2016).

Another issue that is taken up now and then is being financed by the UAE. For instance, a boxed text accompanying a 2016 article on a mosque in Basel points out that the UAE owns the building on Rötelstrasse in Zürich and that this ownership was registered in the land register (*Grundbuch*). Then VIOZ-president Mahmoud El Guindi is quoted as saying that SIGZ has the right of use and that the operational costs are financed by the UAE as well (Schmid, 2016). In 2018, a comprehensive article on Swiss mosque finances was published. For this article, the journalist

spoke to the UAE's ambassador in Bern who confirmed that the property belongs to the UAE and that they pay around 200,000 francs annually towards the operating costs of the Islamic Centre. This, the journalist later notes, is confirmed by a public notice in the mosque showing the exact account balance. Rötelstrasse is the only mosque in Switzerland funded by the UAE. According to the ambassador, there are no political objectives behind the funding. Of the nine members of the board, only one is appointed by the Emirates. However, the ambassador emphasises that the imam is selected by the UAE and carefully screened, because "the Emirates would never hire an extremist or someone who disregards the Swiss constitution" (Rauch, 2018; authors' translation).

In summary, the reporting is not very extensive, considering the long existence of the SIGZ or the Islamic Centre on Rötelstrasse respectively. There are reports about the centre on specific occasions such as the noise complaints and subsequent court case in 2003 or in relation to individuals. Furthermore, the centre is often discussed in connection with the topic of foreign financing. However, all the articles on the latter topic disclose the facts, such as the ownership of the building and the payment of the annual costs, indicating great transparency.

5.1.2 Portrayal of the Foundation

The Sheikh Zayed Islamic Centre normally offers a range of activities. In addition to the five daily prayers, there are various classes in Arabic, Somali and Bengali, including Qur'anic and language classes for children and adults. Furthermore, chaplaincy is offered and rituals at birth, death and for weddings are performed (SIGZ, 2021a, 2021c). As the premises are too small for the number of worshippers on Friday, the Friday prayer is normally held twice, once in an additional rented hall and once at Rötelstrasse. For the celebration of festivities such as Eid-al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan, the centre rents a hall for the approximately 2000 to 3000 visitors. The small circle of members which pays an additional membership fee numbers about 150, while pre-Covid-19 a total of about 650 worshippers attended Friday sermons, with up to 3000 at larger festivities (Expert MC10).

The centre's imam is originally from Algeria and came to Switzerland in the mid-90s. He holds a Bachelor's degree, and speaks fluent Arabic, French and decent German (Expert MC10). According to one expert, the imam is popular, also among young people, because he preaches in a way that is close to everyday life, conveys a positive image of God, is very accessible and has a lot of social work experience (Expert MC01).

As already mentioned, the building on Rötelstrasse, run by the foundation, was acquired by the UAE in 1982. This was made possible by the then president of the community, Adil Zulfikarpašić. He was part of a Bosnian Muslim exile network (Kudo, 2016, p. 104), a successful businessman (Đilas & Gaće, 1996, pp. 138–140) and later the vice-president of Bosnia-Herzegovina during the Bosnian War in the 1990s (Filandra & Karić, 2004). Presumably through his business connections, he was able to establish contacts in the Emirates, as a short newspaper article in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* from 1982 indicates:

> The president of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Sayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahayan, who is in Switzerland for a recreational stay, met with the president of the Islamic Community in German-speaking Switzerland, Adil Zulfikar-Pasic, for a lengthy discussion at the Sheikh's private residence on Lake Geneva. (…) Sheikh Sayed has shown great interest in the problems of Muslims living in Switzerland. (sda, 1982; authors' translation)

This is also in line with the statement of an expert who points out that the emirs have a special relationship with Switzerland, especially in terms of travel and economic relations (Expert RC01). A biography of Zulfikarpašić further quotes an Emirati newspaper from 1981, which reported that Zulfikarpašić had visited the UAE and discussed "the activities, aims and affairs of the Islamic Community" with the Minister of Information and Culture (Filandra & Karić, 2004, p. 288).

As it happened, the property was bought by the UAE and the SIGZ was given the right of use (SIGZ, 2021d). The UAE pays the 200,000 Swiss francs a year to cover operating expenses such as the administrator's and the imam's wages, cleaning, electricity, etc. An agreement between the UAE and SIGZ specifies which expenses the money covers. A board member judges the UAE funding as religiously motivated (Interview MC09). Looking at it more closely, it is not the UAE as such, but the Zayed Foundation that provides the funding. The Sheikh Zayed Islamic Centre is mentioned in at least one business publication as one of eleven places the foundation financially supports in Europe, among many other projects around the world (IBP, 2013, pp. 217–218). However, to provide a somewhat more balanced view, we should point out that the UAE in general not only finances Islamic centres and mosques, but also the reconstruction of churches in Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq. Furthermore, land is made available to churches in the UAE (Expert RC01).

5.1.3 Local Interactions and Transnational Networks of the Foundation

At the local level, members of SIGZ played an important role in the founding of the cantonal umbrella organisation VIOZ in 1995. Early on, the SIGZ had expressed the wish for an Islamic cemetery and a central mosque in Zürich, which was brought to the attention of the city authorities in 1994 (SIGZ, 2021d). In their response, the authorities stated that "that they wanted to deal with only one Islamic organisation, which should represent all the Muslims living in Zurich" (Mahnig, 2002, pp. 81–82). This led to the founding of the *Vereinigung Islamischer Organisationen Zürich* (VIOZ, Association of Islamic Organisations Zürich) in 1995. Accordingly, SIGZ is a member of VIOZ (VIOZ, 2021b). If we recall the analytical considerations regarding networks (cf. chapter 2.1), this can be considered a formal tie to a formal organisation. VIOZ is a formal organisation with bylaws, an external presence in the form of a website and public relations. There is a process for the admission of members laid down in the bylaws. VIOZ acts as a coordinating body for its members and as a contact, for authorities for example, and advocates for members' interests (VIOZ, 2021a). Therefore, when an association or foundation becomes a member of VIOZ, it enters a predefined

formal relationship with this umbrella organisation. In addition, SIGZ board members have repeatedly served on the VIOZ board or even as VIOZ presidents.

According to one board member, the founding of the VIOZ in 1995 increased exchanges between Muslim communities in Zürich. For example, the prayer timetable which features on SIGZ's website is a joint effort of the Arabic-speaking communities. The board member also states that SIGZ itself does not run any interreligious cooperation, as interreligious projects tend to run through VIOZ (Interview MC09). In the Canton of Zürich, interreligious dialogue has taken on a somewhat more institutionalized form with the *Zürcher Forum der Religionen* (Zürich Forum for Religions) and the *Interreligiöser Runder Tisch im Kanton Zürich* (Interreligious Round Table in the Canton of Zürich), in which VIOZ takes part. Accordingly, apart from the prayer timetable, SIGZ has little local collaboration, except through VIOZ, which mainly involves board members. Networking and local interactions seem to occur primarily through the board, which is the case with most Muslim associations and foundations. That cantonal umbrella organisations manage external relations in terms of policy or dialogue represents a division of tasks that corresponds to the expectation of cantonal authorities to have an overarching contact partner.

On a transnational level, the main tie has already been mentioned: SIGZ is financially supported by the UAE. This is a formal tie that is made clearly transparent by SIGZ, as demonstrated in chapter 5.1.1. As already pointed out in chapter 2.1 and chapter 3, financial support from abroad is often associated with potential influence by foreign actors. What is less discussed is something that emerges in this case study: through the funding, the community has its premises and operating costs covered, so that low-income believers do not have to pay a membership fee and have a place where they can pray. This is not a special case, as most Islamic centres have paying members and visitors. Concerning SIGZ, it is estimated that less than a quarter of regular visitors are paying members (Expert MC10). The operating costs are covered by the UAE funding and not solely by membership fees, as is the case with many other centres. This represents an advantage for ordinary believers. More limiting is the fact that the expenses follow very strict rules, with no exceptions, so that the degree of freedom is somewhat restricted, regarding, for example, renting another site for the Friday sermon (Interview MC09). Smaller projects in the area of youth work or support for families in need may also not be implemented because no additional sources of funding can be tapped (Expert MC01). Transparent, correct and strictly regulated foreign funding can therefore have a limiting effect on the local work of communities. The rules attached to the funding could be seen as an ideological influence insofar as they maintain the idea that an Islamic centre is first and foremost a place of prayer. The view that Islamic centres are community centres has only developed in Europe over the last few decades (cf. Tezcan, 2008, pp. 122–124). Moreover, the imam is selected by the UAE, as has also been pointed out transparently in the media (cf. chapter 5.1.1).

In addition, the centre has some rather informal transnational ties, for example when books are sent from Saudia Arabia or from al-Azhar University (Interview MC09). As al-Azhar University

is considered one of the oldest centres of Islamic scholarship (Brown, 2011, p. 5), this is unsurprising. It should also be mentioned here that in October and November 2021, a guest preacher, who belongs to the network of the German Salafist preacher Pierre Vogel (Wiedl, 2017, pp. 180–183), twice gave a lecture in the mosque. The events were not organised by SIGZ itself, but by a relatively new Swiss organisation called EZE Team, which can be situated within the Salafist[16] milieu. SIGZ took measures after realising who was involved and banned further events by this group, as well as tightening internal rules for the allocation of its premises (Expert MC01; SIGZ, 2021e). This incident is not specific to SIGZ, as from time to time such groups try to establish themselves in existing Islamic centres. Accordingly, it is all the more important that the Islamic centres concerned take the necessary measures, clearly distance themselves and also communicate this transparently.

5.1.4 Conclusion

In summary, the Islamic Centre and SIGZ behind it have long been a steady feature in Zürich. It is not a strictly Arab but a mixed place of prayer, as is evident from its visitors, who are from a diverse range of backgrounds. Its stability could be ensured, among other things, through funding by the UAE. The SIGZ has thus long offered a place for prayers and Friday sermons, but also language and Qur'an courses. On the other hand, the rules tied to the funding somewhat limit local interactions because the idea of the purpose of an Islamic centre behind it is slightly different from the idea of a community centre that has developed in Europe. The transnational influences that can be observed in this case lie in the idea of the functions of an Islamic centre and, of course, in the selection of the imam.

Local interactions happen mainly through the involvement of board members in the umbrella organisation VIOZ, of which SIGZ is a formal member. Here, one may wonder whether there might not be some truth in the portrayal in one of the newspaper articles of a contrast between the board members and the ordinary believers who visit the centre. The latter are depicted as "simple migrants with a small income" (Suter, 2003b), while the board is portrayed as naturalised Muslims who speak German well. Accordingly, revisiting the concept of social capital here (cf. chapter 2.2), one could judge that the board has a certain bridging capacity that in turn leads to bridging social capital that the believers probably do not possess.

The media image presented in chapter 5.1.1 is relatively balanced, considering that the question of funding can be raised. However, this is probably due to the great transparency with which the funding is disclosed. Otherwise, there is little reporting over the long period of the SIGZ and the centre's existence, which suggests few points of friction with the public.

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[16] We understand the term "salafist" here as a following a literal interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunna, an idealised orientation towards the early Islamic period and a strict rejection of alternative views and ways of life (cf. Lohlker, El Hadad, Holtmann & Prucha, 2016, p. 2; Haykel, 2009).

5.2 Arrahma Verein, Basel

The association Arrahma (*Arrahma Verein*) was founded in 2002 by Muslims who had previously mainly attended the King Faysal Islamic Foundation (*Islamische König Faysal Stiftung*) in Basel. In the beginning, the majority of the members were of North African origin, but today Muslims of various nationalities are involved in the association. The mosque is open to all from the first morning prayer to the evening prayer. Most members are Sunni and followers of the Tablighi Jamaat (TJ; cf. chapter 4.2). In the beginning, the relatively small premises were located near Voltaplatz in Basel. At the end of 2017, the association moved to Kleinhüningen, where it was able to rent a location previously used by a Bosnian association (Inforel, 2021; Interview MC07).

5.2.1 Public Perception

In the early years, two newspaper articles described the Arrahma mosque as a mosque association that was very withdrawn from the outside world and had a strict, rigid view of Islam (Stauffer, 2004, 2006). In 2010, a documentary by Swiss television SRF led to wider coverage (SRF, 2010). In the film, a sermon from Arrahma mosque was reproduced which allegedly insulted non-Muslims. However, there were no audio or visual recordings of the sermon, only a written transcript (Cassidy, 2010; Weber, 2010b). The imam in question, who was said to have given the sermon at the time, has withdrawn somewhat from the mosque over the past three years (Expert PA01). The documentary led to several questions in the cantonal parliament as well as the filing of a criminal complaint by JSVP, the youth wing of the Swiss People's Party (Duong, 2010; Künzle, 2010; Nittnaus, 2010a; Weber, 2010a; Wittenweiler & Schulthess, 2010; Wyss, 2010). The statement in the transcript was evaluated by the public prosecutor regardless of whether it was actually expressed in that way, because no audio recording existed. However, the case against the Arrahma mosque imam was eventually dropped because there was not sufficient evidence for the charge of racial discrimination to be made (Nittnaus, 2010b; Weber, 2010b).

In 2011, three newspaper articles were published after the German Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz,* BfV) mentioned TJ in its annual report (as noted in chapter 4.2.3, TJ is still included in the most recent report of 2020). Two of the articles reproduced the BfV's assessment and linked it to the Arrahma mosque media coverage of 2010 (*Basellandschaftliche Zeitung,* 2011; Eberhard, 2011). The third one also sought to include a Muslim perspective and consulted the president of the Basel Muslim Commission (*Basler Muslim Kommission,* BMK) at the time. He emphasised that TJ is not political, respects the law and is non-violent (Hoffmann, 2011). However, the title of the article—Muslims in Basel are being watched (*Basler Muslime werden beobachtet*)—is highly suggestive, because the Swiss Federal Intelligence Service works under different conditions to the German BfV. Unlike the latter, it does not publish a list of those it monitors. The statement in the headline can therefore not be substantiated, it has only been suggested by the journalist.

In 2012 and 2014, two general newspaper articles on Muslims in Basel were published, briefly mentioning the incidents around the Arrahma mosque in 2010 and 2011 (Hauswirth, 2014; Vogt, 2012). This pattern continues: the allegedly offensive sermon of the Arrahma mosque imam is mentioned again in an article dealing with the King Faysal Islamic Foundation, also considered problematic (Hoffmann, 2016), and in an article dealing with itinerant preachers (Stauffer, 2018). Another article on the King Faysal Islamic Foundation repeated the claim that the Arrahma mosque was under state surveillance (Rosch, 2019). It seems that negative reporting, even if a charge is dropped and many aspects of the negative reporting remain unproven, tends to stick to the associations and are brought up again and again. Compared to the assessment of TJ we described in chapter 4.2.3, it seems that the media generally bring up the more negative perspective.

5.2.2 Portrayal of the Association

Arrahma normally offers different activities. In addition to daily prayers and the Friday sermon, there is a course once a week for children, youth and adults respectively. The lessons are mainly concerned with Arabic and/or reading of the Qur'an or the Tablighi standard work *Faẓāʾil-i-Aʿmāl* (The Virtue of Deeds) (Interview MC07). This book comprises religious texts, mainly *ḥadīth*, and was written by one of TJ's founding fathers, Maulana Muhammad Zakariya (Reetz, 2004, p. 297), The association also offers joint prayers (*ṣalāt*) and *ifṭār* (meal breaking the fast) during Ramadan and celebrates festivities such as Eid al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan. Normally, members of the association also pay visits to sick people. Furthermore, the association attaches great importance to having an open ear for young people, advising them when they have problems and offering them a framework. They hope that they will be able to fully resume these activities after the pandemic has eased (Interview MC07).

The association has about 50 to 100 members who pay membership fees. The fees are not fixed, they depend on how much people are able to pay. Membership fees and donations are the main source of income for the association (Inforel, 2021; Interview MC07). As the mosque is open to all, there are additional visitors, especially during festivities, when sometimes 300–400 people attend. When women hold meetings (mostly once a week), the premises of the association are reserved for them. The majority of the members and visitors are young, i.e., in their twenties (Interview MC07). This confirms the depiction of TJ as a generational network (Expert AC10, cf. chapter 4.2.3). It also points to a generational change within the association which has taken place over the last few years (Expert PA01). German has been the main language in the association for some years now (Inforel, 2021; Interview MC07), which is particularly appealing to young people. The Friday sermon is thus delivered in both Arabic and German. The basic teachings of the Tablighi Jamaat determine the topics of the sermons, such as the six main principles (Interview MC07): the attestation of faith, prayers (*ṣalāt*), the acquisition of the knowledge of Islam and the remembrance of God, respect for all living beings, sincerity of intention and spending time in passing on God's message (Rougier, 2020, p. 22; Pieri, 2015, p. 44; Diop, 1994, p. 149). The association has

house rules with certain general conditions, including that no political speeches are allowed (Interview MC07). This indicates that TJ indeed considers itself apolitical, in the sense of short-term political involvement (Gaborieau, 1999; cf. chapter 4.2.3).

An important concept for the Arrahma association and all Tablighi adherents is *shūrā*. *Shūrā* has been used with various understandings throughout Islamic history, since the election of the third caliph Uthman ibn Affan in 644, and roughly means "consultation" (Bosworth, Marín & Aayalon, 2012). Since all work in the association, including that of the imam, is carried out on a voluntary basis, consultation takes place to determine, among other things, who does what and when. *Shūrā* does therefore take place often. As the board members point out, anyone can participate, even if someone is in the mosque for the first time (Interview MC07). Whether it is really implemented that way remains to be determined. The only condition for *shūrā* is the participation of a board member. Decisions made on an individual basis that affect the association are not permitted (Interview MC07). One could interpret this system as a kind of grassroots decision-making and in this sense, it is also a very 'Swiss' characteristic. Addressing the possibility of TJ being exploited by militant groups, the board members stress that the association does not support individual decisions being made with regard to the association. Everything concerning the association must be agreed upon in *shūrā*. If a mosque member should decide to follow a radical path, the person in question is no longer considered a Tablighi. To people who might doubt and might become radicalised, they preach mercy and try to show them what they consider Islam to really mean. They are critical that a large number of Muslims have no profound knowledge about Islam and see this as problematic (Interview MC07).

According to the board members, everyone who visits the mosque should find tranquillity and leave with a good feeling. They emphasise that everyone is welcome at the mosque (Interview MC07). This corresponds to TJ's practice of *da'wah.* However, since the premises of the association are located in the district of Kleinhüningen and not in the city centre, it is more likely that people from the neighbourhood will find their way to the mosque. The board members state that their goal is for every Muslim to live in peace, integrate into his or her surroundings and thereby be a good member of the community. Especially with regard to youth, they want to show them how Islam can be practised and how this can be reconciled with a life in society that makes other demands on them (Interview MC07). Unlike Pieri (2015, p. 147), who argues that TJ can contribute to young people not realising their potential, the board members emphasise that they want to provide a framework for young people to practise Islam while pursuing an apprenticeship or continuing their education (Interview MC07). Especially in a neighbourhood like Kleinhüningen, an industrial district in Basel with a high proportion of foreigners (Strub, 2015), considered a lower-class neighbourhood these days, an association like Arrahma can provide orientation for young people. This function of TJ is confirmed in literature on the subject (Pieri, 2015, p. 24; Metcalf, 2002, p. 8; Khedimellah, 2001, para. 18).

5.2.3 Local Interactions and Transnational Networks of the Association

As far as local interactions are concerned, the Arrahma association is a member of the umbrella organisation of both half-cantons of Basel, the Basel Muslim Commission (*Basler Muslim Kommission,* BMK; BMK, 2021). Like VIOZ (cf. chapter 5.1.3), BMK is a formal organisation, and a member enters into a formal relationship with the umbrella association. It can therefore be considered a formal tie to a formal organisation. Arrahma also recently attended a meeting organised by the "Community Police" department of the local police on the issue of security, in view of possible far-right extremist attacks (Expert PA01, Expert PA06). This can be assessed as a rather informal tie —as it is not a meeting that takes place on a regular basis—to a formal organisation, in this case an authority. The same applies to sporadic meetings with the cantonal integration office. An expert interprets such meetings with Arrahma as positive because it shows their will to cooperate with the authorities (Expert PA01). Otherwise, there is no direct collaboration at the local level (Inforel, 2021). However, members of Arrahma specifically visit mosques in Basel for prayers and conversation with members of the respective association and the imam. Who makes these visits is determined in *shūrā* (Interview MC07). This can be assessed as an informal way of establishing ties, because it happens sporadically and without any formal rules. Furthermore, members also make home visits to people from Muslim countries to invite them to the mosque and encourage them to practise their faith regularly (Inforel, 2021). This *da'wah* work is very specific to TJ. The authorities have made it clear to the association that although this missionary activity is allowed, it is not necessarily beneficial to their reputation (Expert PA01). There is also an exchange among associations in Switzerland that follow the ideas of TJ, and meetings every other month, where around 30–40 people meet. Women have their own cantonal and national meetings. One board member even spoke of an umbrella organisation of Tablighi Jamaat Switzerland (Interview MC07). This information cannot be verified because there is no official website or entry in the Swiss Commercial Register (*Handelsregister*). These exchanges between associations that consider themselves as belonging to TJ can be seen as a rather informal network of relationships, ideas and support.

On a transnational level, we can see the same kind of rather informal network. The board members describe the Tablighi Jamaat as a faith movement, not as a sect, in which everyone is active in his or her mosque, in their neighbourhood and the main focus is placed on oneself. Tablighi groups from France or Germany visit occasionally, or the Swiss members pay visits themselves, deliberately only visiting mosques abroad that adhere to TJ's philosophy. When questioned about it, however, they do not consider these as close contacts (Interview MC07), which indicates that it is indeed more of an informal network than formalised contact. The interview confirmed what we already knew from literature (cf. Reetz, 2004, pp. 301–302): that there are *shūrā* councils at different levels, e.g., for a country or a continent. For Europe, there is a meeting approximately three times a year, where each country sends a certain number of participants, i.e., there is a kind of quota. From Switzerland, for example, 5 to 10 participants take part each time. However, unlike the UK, there is no centre to the network in Switzerland. The reason for this, according to the

board members, is that although TJ has existed in Switzerland since 1986, it is still in the early stages. The board members we spoke to have also attended international meetings in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. They make sure that someone from Switzerland is there each time so that they know what has been discussed. They describe these huge international meetings with several million participants as very impressive. These events seem to create a sense of community, more precisely, a multicultural community (as the interviewees specified: "I belong to a big family" and "the black and the white, the European and the African and the Asian just sitting together"; authors' translation). This sense of community can be seen as giving an inkling of what it must have been like in the past with the Prophet and his companions ("when you go to places like that, you (...) experience a bit of an impression of how it (...) might have been back then"; authors' translation). Women can travel to international meetings as well, but there are specific meetings for women only during such big events (Interview MC07).

For the above reasons, we consider the Tablighi Jamaat as a more informal network of relations, ideas, support and solidarity.

5.2.4 Conclusion

In summary, the Arrahma association focuses on an intensive practice of Islam, community building and specifically on *da'wah.* The latter can particularly be experienced as intrusive and therefore perceived negatively, even though it may attract people in search of intensive religious experience at a community-level. Community building takes place not only through the five daily prayers, Friday sermons, the collective celebration of festivities and weekly lessons, but also through *shūrā*, i.e., grassroots-decision making. The members of the association tend to be young on average, which is why German is their main language. The Arrahma association additionally assumes a social function in relation to the youth: it wants to offer them orientation and a framework so that they can practise Islam and at the same time participate in broader society.

Locally, the association is involved with the cantonal umbrella organisation BMK. In addition, it also has rather informal, sporadic contacts with authorities such as the integration office or the police. Visits to local mosque associations also take place, but these must mainly be seen in the context of *da'wah.* Transnationally, the informal network of the Tablighi Jamaat is of great importance to the association. It is maintained mainly through meetings with like-minded associations and mutual visits both in Switzerland and abroad, as well as participation in major meetings of the Tablighi Jamaat in India, Pakistan or Bangladesh. We can conclude from this that the activities of the Arrahma association have a bonding rather than bridging character; it is about a specific reciprocity and solidarity and fosters an in-group. However, at this point, reference must again be made to the expert who sees TJ primarily as a network that succeeds in creating a segregated social identity for a certain period of time. According to this point of view, TJ has some significance for a time in a member's life, but he or she will most likely not remain a member all his or her life (Expert AC10).

The media image presented in chapter 5.2.1 is relatively one-sided. It seems as if media reports react primarily to a perceived threat—in this case the example of a controversial sermon as well as the association being mentioned in the BfV annual report—which corresponds to news factors such as the existence of a binary conflict situation or the possibility of scandalisation (Schetsche, 2008, pp. 141–143). Media therefore tend to overlook many aspects of the association. Moreover, since there has been a generational change within the association, media reports no longer reflect the association as it presents itself today. A certain critical perspective in relation to TJ's *daʿwah* practice is certainly justified. However, the media's assessment of the association at one point in time is reproduced again and again in a relatively unreflective manner.

5.3 Islamisches Zentrum Bern

The Islamic Centre Bern (*Islamisches Zentrum Bern*) has existed since 1979, first as an association and since 2003 as a foundation (Handelsregister Kanton Bern, 2021). It is one of the oldest Muslim associations and places of prayer in Switzerland (Sarkar, 2016)[17] and the biggest in the Canton of Bern (Expert PA02). The Centre was founded by Muslims from Arabic-speaking countries (Expert MC16) and South Asian Muslims who fled from Uganda to Switzerland in the 1970s to escape the regime of Idi Amin[18] (Dütschler, 2015). Today, the mosque is attended by people from a wide variety of backgrounds, e.g., Somalia, Eritrea, India, Pakistan, and Lebanon, to name but a few (Dütschler, 2015; Interview MC05).

5.3.1 Public Perception

Since the Islamic Centre Bern has been in existence since 1979, it has appeared in local news reports time and again over the years. One recurring theme is spatial issues. Several articles emphasised that the Islamic Centre Bern was located in a former garage, far too small for the number of worshippers on Friday (Dütschler, 2015; Vonlanthen, 2007; Lüthi, 2006; Däpp, 2004a; von Burg, 2003a). An article from 2006 addresses the lack of construction zones for religious buildings under Switzerland's building regulations. The Islamic Centre of Bern serves as an example: "The mosque in the underground car park at Lindenrain in the city of Bern is bursting at the seams",

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[17] The oldest Muslim communities and places of prayer in Switzerland include: The Islamic Centre of Geneva (1961; cf. chapter 5.7.3), the Mahmud Mosque of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat in Zürich (1963), the Islamic Community Foundation Zürich (1975; cf. chapter 5.1), the Islamic Cultural Foundation Geneva (1975; cf. chapter 5.7) and the Islamic Centre Lausanne (1979; cf. chapter 5.5)

[18] South Asian traders began arriving in Uganda in the mid-1850s, and under British rule they, along with the British, constituted the entrepreneurs in the Ugandan economy, while Ugandans made up the labour force. This racial division of labour led to the expulsion of Asians by Idi Amin in 1972 (cf. Jamal, 1976).

the journalist writes. "Sometimes the worshippers stand right out onto the street, which is unpleasant in bad weather and can lead to complaints from the neighbourhood" (Lüthi, 2006; authors' translation). Unfortunately, in 2021, the situation has not yet changed (cf. chapter 5.3.2).

Other articles are more interested in general perceptions of Muslims in Switzerland. Two articles from 2003 and 2004 focused on the political situation in the Middle East. The journalists wanted to know how Muslims were coping with the war in Iraq, the re-election of George W. Bush or the death of Yassir Arafat and therefore visited the Islamic Centre to talk to Muslims (Däpp, 2004b; von Burg, 2003b). Both articles were therefore less about the centre itself and more about gathering Muslim voices and opinions on particular events. One article in 2004 contained a lengthy conversation with the imam at the time and two Muslims who attend Lindenrain. Besides the topic of being a Muslim in Bern, spatial issues were a recurring theme in the conversation (Däpp, 2004a). In another article from 2006, which dealt with Muslims in Bern in general, the Islamic Centre was only briefly mentioned, among others. "The Islamic Centre, whose imam is financed by the Egyptian state, is mainly frequented by people from the North African, Arab and Asian regions", the journalist writes (Bühler, 2006; authors' translation).

In 2007, an article on the Islamic Centre was published, highlighting its open mosque day. It struck a slightly critical note, as was evident from the subtitle: the Islamic Centre Bern sought contact with the public with an Open Mosque Day—and found it to only a limited extent[19] (Hari, 2007). Apparently, the visit of a dozen members of the municipal and cantonal council and about 60 visitors in total was considered a minor success for an open mosque day by the journalist at the time. Another article in 2007 dealt with an interreligious event on the topic of dying and death, in which the Islamic Centre imam at the time participated (Dütschler, 2007). Surprisingly, the most recent article on the centre that can be found in the database was published back in 2015. It also begins with spatial issues, but then revolves around the establishment, the visitors and activities of the Islamic Centre (Dütschler, 2015). This article focuses entirely on the centre.

In summary, relatively few articles have been published about the centre over the period of its existence—compared, for example, to the Islamic Cultural Foundation Geneva (cf. chapter 5.7.1). There are therefore presumably few points of friction that could ignite media coverage. Surprisingly, many of the articles address the centre's spatial problems. By and large, the articles are not very critical compared with the media coverage of other Islamic centres, but rather focus on the centre and the Muslims who visit it as an interesting, unknown area to be explored.

5.3.2 Portrayal of the Foundation

As already mentioned, the Islamic Centre Bern was founded as an association in 1979 by Arabic-speaking Muslims and South Asian Muslims who had fled from Uganda to Switzerland. The family

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[19] The original reads: "Das Islamische Zentrum Bern suchte mit einem 'Tag der offenen Moschee' den Kontakt zur Öffentlichkeit – und fand ihn nur beschränkt" (Hari, 2007).

of one of the co-founders is still actively involved in the foundation's board today. The board members emphasise that they consider the mosque to be multi-national and not an Arab mosque, although the main language in the mosque is Arabic and the current imam has a Palestinian background. Muslims of many different nationalities attend the mosque: from North Africa, Somalia, Eritrea, India, Pakistan, Lebanon and Switzerland. As one of the board members states, it seems to be the mosque that people find first when they arrive in Bern, perhaps because of its central location (Interview MC05). In the past, the Islamic centre also had Shiite and many Turkish-, Bosnian- and Albanian-speaking visitors, but in the mid-1990s they founded their own associations (Expert MC15). On the one hand, this seems to be related to the increase in Muslim numbers in the 1990s. On the other, one expert also describes how the mosque became more conservative from the 1980s onwards, which was particularly evident in the space for women: they originally prayed in the same room at the back, were then separated by curtains and finally pushed into a separate room (Expert MC16).

The mosque is open for the five daily prayers and normally offers a range of activities: Qur'an and Arabic classes for children, daily *iftār* (meal breaking the fast) and *Tarawīḥ*-prayers during Ramadan, celebrations of *Mawlid* (the prophet's birthday) as well as lectures covering different topics. Furthermore, a group of volunteers from the centre takes care of funerals and the washing of the dead. In the past, the centre was also contacted by the hospital when someone wanted to talk to an imam.[20] The weekly Friday prayers at the centre attract up to 700 visitors, for which the premises are actually too small (Interview MC05). The Islamic Centre's spatial problems have been a topic in the media for years (cf. chapter 5.3.1). For big celebrations like Eid al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan, external premises have previously been for the up to 2000 visitors. However, the board members speak of the difficulties of finding premises at all. In addition, the Islamic Centre's rental agreement was terminated in 2021, after 40 years. The centre is now looking for a new location (Interview MC05). While the cantonal authorities are aware of the situation (Expert PA06), there is, however, no official position or office responsible for the spatial issues of non-recognised religious communities. These issues have thus become even more acute for the Islamic Centre.

In the past, Egypt sent and financed the centre's imams over several years (Bühler, 2006; von Burg, 2003a; Interview MC05). Once this practice was abandoned, an imam had to be found elsewhere. The current imam has been in Switzerland for 25 years and has a Palestinian background. Initially he lived in La Chaux-de-Fonds and speaks French, Arabic and English. Everyone at the centre works on a voluntary basis except the imam because the centre's expenses are covered solely by donations to the foundation. According to the board members, the focus of the centre is to enable Muslims to practise their religion. Also important to them is a good relationship

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[20] However, the *Inselspital Bern* (University Hospital of Bern) now has its own Muslim chaplain on a small part-time basis (Inselspital Bern, 2021; Thorax Schweiz, 2021).

with the neighbours and corresponding transparency and openness. Accordingly, they also deliberately invite non-Muslims to their events. At the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic and Ramadan 2020, the centre tried to maintain contact with its visitors through videos in English and Arabic posted on Facebook by the imam (Interview MC05). It has yet to be seen whether such digital offers will continue in the future.

5.3.3 Local Interactions and Transnational Networks of the Foundation

As far as local interactions are concerned, the foundation is a member of the newly founded cantonal umbrella organisation *Islamischer Kantonalverband Bern* (Islamic Cantonal Association of Bern, IKB), which was established on 18 October 2020 (FIDS, 2020; Stam, 2020). This can be considered a formal tie to a formal organisation. Besides its membership in the IKB, the centre maintains rather informal ties on the local level. It has only sporadically taken part in interreligious events, for example when the imam participated in an interfaith opening of an exhibition in 2017 (Expert RC02). The board members see interreligious cooperation more as a task for the umbrella organisations. As stated previously, they try to maintain good relations with their neighbours and invite non-Muslims to events (Interview MC05). These can be considered informal ties. Before Covid-19, the centre also regularly received requests from schools, police or *Zivilschutz* (Civil Protection Organisation, CPO).[21] Schools tend to have general questions about Islam, while police and CPO ask more specific questions. The centre has already advised members of the CPO two or three times on how best to deal with Muslim refugees. The board members emphasise that these are not formal collaborations in the sense of regular sessions, but rather informal ones that have resulted from personal contacts (Interview MC07). Presumably, many of these contacts have to do with the fact that the board members grew up in Switzerland, are Swiss and speak impeccable Swiss German. It can be concluded that bridging social capital emerges mainly from the relationships and related activities of the board members, but that such relationships occur less at the level of ordinary visitors.

On a transnational level, we can see the same kind of rather informal ties. Some of the board members have personal ties to the UK, to families with a similar migration history, i.e. South Asians that migrated to Zanzibar, then to Uganda and finally to Europe. The centre regularly invites a group from the UK to sing religious songs (*Nashīd Naʿat*) for *Mawlid* (the prophet's birthday), as well as two imams to give talks on specific topics and answer questions. In this way, they act as lecturers and scholars, complementing the permanent imam. The board members emphasise that it is an advantage that the two imams, Shaykh Burhaan Khandia and Imam Khalid Hussein, were born and raised in the UK and know the Western context (Interview MC05). Both

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[21] In Switzerland, civil protection is run by the Civil Protection Organisation (CPO) which is subordinate to the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS). Its task includes the protection, care and support of the civilian population in the event of a disaster (FOCP, 2021).

imams acquired their Islamic knowledge through traditional transmission from teacher to student (*ijāzah*; cf. Schmid & Trucco, 2019a, p. 16; Hussain & Tuck, 2014, p. 3), according to online sources. They learned from different teachers in different places, including India, Yemen and Zanzibar. Interestingly in the case of one of them, it is stated that he also learned from his mother and grandmother, whose teachers are then also listed (An Nasiha, 2021a, 2021b). An expert assesses their background as Barelwi Sufi (Expert AC11), which requires a short explanation.

The Muslim presence in the UK is distinct from the rest of Europe and the US in that it is strongly influenced by the Sufi traditions of the countries of origin (Geaves, 2021, p. 453). Particularly prevalent among South Asian Muslims are the Deobandi and Barelwi traditions which emerged during British rule over the Indian subcontinent as a form of protection and a revival of the Muslim way of life. Historically, some of these traditions developed as a result of conflicts with each other, due to doctrinal differences (Ansari, 2018, p. 358). A slight majority of the South Asian Muslim communities in the UK are Barelwis, comprising a variety of Sufi orders (*ṭarīqah*) such as the Chishtiyyah, Qadiriyyah and Naqshibandiyyah (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2010, p. 40). In contrast to the Deobandis, who stress that guidance is to be found in Islamic scriptures and the Sharia, the Barelwis consider the Prophet Mohammed to be almost divine and accord a special status to saints as well. They "provided religious guidance that was much more ritualised than among the Deobandis" (Ansari, 2018, p. 358). Sufism in the UK remains strongly linked to ethnic identity and therefore serves "as a boundary mechanism primarily concerned with the transmission of cultural and religious traditions" (Geaves, 2009, p. 97). These boundaries can be maintained not only against the non-Muslim society, but also against other Muslims, even of the same national background (Geaves, 2009, pp. 99–100). One expert accordingly assesses the Barelwi tradition in the UK as having many positive sides (such as an emphasis on spirituality, compassion or empathy), but attests to a certain detachment when it comes to how Muslims should deal with their realities in the West. He considers the Barelwis' discourse to be rather dated and constrained, yet not as much as that of the Deobandis (Expert AC11). Interestingly, this view contrasts with that of the board members who emphasise that the experience of the two imams of being Muslim and British, along with their accompanying knowledge of the European context are extremely valuable (Interview MC05). It is therefore very difficult to make an assessment without deeper knowledge of the two imams themselves. It may be, though, that the tradition of Islam in which they stand leads to bonding rather than bridging capital, i.e., it is inward-looking and strengthens the in-group. This, however, is probably counterbalanced by the bridging capacity of the board members, due to their Swiss background. It would require more analysis in order to evaluate if the two discourses by the Swiss board and the British imams may create some tensions or contradictions among the members.

5.3.4 Conclusion

In summary, the Islamic Centre Bern is one of the oldest Muslim associations and places of prayer in Switzerland. It mainly focuses on enabling Muslims to practice their religion and, due to its current central location in the city, is the place that new residents in Bern find most quickly. The Islamic Centre Bern is not an Arab but a mixed place of prayer, as is evident from its visitors, who are from a diverse range of backgrounds. However, the centre is currently looking for new premises—a problem that has been looming for some time, judging by media reports, but has now been exacerbated by the termination of the lease for the current location.

Locally, the foundation is a formal member of the newly founded cantonal umbrella organisation IKB. The centre also works with schools, the police, the CPO as well as local hospitals from time to time. These collaborations are probably partly a result of the bridging social capital of the board members, who are Swiss, grew up in Switzerland and speak perfect Swiss German. The relatively gentle public image (cf. chapter 5.3.1) also indicates that communication with the public is going well and there are few points of friction. On the other hand, one could also conclude from the low level of reporting that the centre is not given much attention in the region, despite its long existence, or even that it does not seek to become more visible to the broader society. On a transnational level, there are personal ties of board members to members of the South Asian diaspora with similar backgrounds in the UK. Two imams from there are sporadically invited to Bern to give talks and answer questions, as is a group singing religious songs. The two imams are presumably of the Barelwi tradition, which seems to represent an example of bonding capital. However, it is difficult to accurately assess them from afar.

5.4 Centre Islamique Arrahman du Jura, Delémont

The Islamic Centre Arrahman (*Centre Islamique Arrahman*) in Delémont was founded around 1999 as an association (Ciaj, 2021b; Interview MC06). It is the only Islamic centre in the Canton of Jura and therefore plays an important role for local Muslims. The centre is visited by Muslims of different nationalities, although some Muslims from the Balkans seem to prefer communities outside the canton (Expert PA04).

5.4.1 Public Perception

There is very little newspaper coverage of the Islamic Centre in Delémont. An article in 2016 reported on the long-standing wish of Muslims for a Muslim section in one of the canton's cemeteries. The article featured the centre's imam, who considers this wish to be a sign of integration. He explains that many Muslims choose to be repatriated to their countries of origin after their death for fear of having their graves removed, which is not permissible from a Muslim perspective (Roth, 2016).

Furthermore, there are two articles on interreligious activities. In 2015, the *Quotidien Jurassien* (2015) reported on an interfaith exchange at a common meal, initiated by Christians and the imam of the Islamic Centre. In 2018, another article on an interreligious initiative was published: the group *Amitié en Humanité* (Friendship in Humanity), co-founded by the imam of the centre, received an award from the Migration Office of the Reformed Churches Bern-Jura-Solothurn (*Fachstelle Migration der Reformierten Kirchen Bern-Jura-Solothurn*). According to the article, the group consisting of Protestants, Catholics, Muslims and an agnostic, organises lectures and events and seeks to bring people of different religions together (Mohler, 2018). From the report presented here, we can conclude that the focus lies primarily on the imam. He appears from time to time in articles about causes he is committed to, such as the interfaith initiative *Amitié en Humanité*.

5.4.2 Portrayal of the Association

Normally, the association offers a space for prayer, holds Friday prayers and organises Arabic and Qur'an classes for children and adults. Chaplaincy and the washing of the dead are provided, as well as rituals for weddings and funerals (Interview MC06). The centre's premises are rented, so the association would like to buy a building and is collecting money for this through its website (Ciaj, 2021a). Spatial issues are a common problem for Muslim communities in Switzerland (cf. chapters 5.2, 5.3), and the Islamic centre is no exception. The association is very committed to the integration of migrants; as an interviewed board member says: "They are disoriented, we have to guide them, help them with a lot of things, both materially and morally. (…) In terms of language too" (Interview MC06; authors' translation).

The centre's imam is originally from Morocco and has lived in Switzerland for more than 30 years. He speaks Arabic, French, English and German and has been the imam of the centre almost from the beginning. He has a PhD in a technical field and initially came to Switzerland to work at the EPFL in Lausanne. He has no formal theological training but follows some local sheikhs in Morocco and has attended a class on *tajwīd* (recitation of the Qur'an) at the *Institut Européen des Sciences Humaines* (European Institute of Human Sciences, IESH) in Château Chinon, France (Interview MC06; for IESH, cf. Schmid & Trucco, 2019a, p. 37). The imam was thus mostly trained on the job and additionally works as a (volunteer) chaplain in prisons. The imam sometimes refers to decisions by the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR; cf. chapter 4.1.2), but not in all cases, as he thinks that the decisions need to be adapted to the Swiss context and that decision-making in Switzerland should be independent (Interview MC06). It seems to be a source of inspiration for further reflection to him rather than a general norm to be applied directly.

5.4.3 Local Interactions and Transnational Networks of the Association

At the local level, the association has various interactions with different actors and organisations. Firstly, it works with AJAM (*Association jurassienne d'accueil des migrants*), the association entrusted by the Canton of Jura with the organisation of reception, accommodation, social care and access to health care for people in the asylum system (AJAM, 2021; Interview MC06). The Islamic centre supports migrants, for example, in dealing with everyday bureaucracy (Interview MC06). This can be considered both a formal and informal tie, because there seems to be some kind of formal relationship with AJAM (Expert PA04). However, as an interviewee states, the migrants usually drop by the mosque more informally and ask for help (*"ils viennent ici à la mosquée demander de l'aide"*; Interview MC06). Secondly, the association has some contact with the authorities. It has submitted requests for support to the cantonal authorities, which could not be met for formal reasons (Expert PA04). This can be considered a rather formal tie, as presumably it followed a certain procedure. The imam serves as a chaplain in prisons, which also indicates a formal arrangement—not necessarily of the association, but rather of the individual—with authorities. Thirdly, the imam is very active in the field of interreligious dialogue. He is a member and co-founder of the interfaith initiative *Amitié en Humanité* (Friendship in Humanity) that organises interreligious meetings (Interview MC06; Amitié en Humanité, 2021). Furthermore, the association took part in the project *Dialogue en route* (Dialogue on the Move), which helps school classes or youth groups discover the religious and cultural diversity of Switzerland, e.g., by visiting Islamic centres (Dialogue en route, 2021a, 2021b). This can also be considered a rather formal link between two organisations, the Islamic Centre Arrahman and IRAS COTIS, which organised the project *Dialogue en route*. Fourthly, Muslims in the Jura canton have succeeded in obtaining a Muslim burial ground in Delémont (*Quotidien Jurassien*, 2017). The Islamic Centre Arrahman had been actively advocating on the issue for a long time and, as experts, had provided information on Muslim burials to the authorities (Expert PA07). The establishment of a Muslim burial ground is a formal act by the municipality, while the advocacy by the Islamic Centre possibly included a range of activities of various natures, such as giving interviews to media on the issue, providing expert knowledge etc. The Centre is also close to the national umbrella organisation FIDS/FOIS as a supporter involved in regular exchanges (Interview MC06), but is not a formal member, as only umbrella organisations can obtain a membership and there is no cantonal organisation covering the Canton of Jura. This is considered an informal tie of the association to a formal organisation. As becomes clear from this overview, the association Arrahman is characterised by many local interactions, which is probably also related to the fact that it is the only Islamic centre in the Canton of Jura. The association itself also places great emphasis on its local engagement.

On a transnational level, there are some rather vague, informal ties. These relate mainly to the imam himself, i.e., they can be considered as individual ties, and not of the association. The imam participated in a course at the IESH in France, and also refers to certain decisions of the

ECFR (cf. chapter 4.1.2). Both institutions are known to be ideologically close to the Muslim Brotherhood (Expert AC10). However, attending a course is a relatively fluid (cf. chapter 2.1), not necessarily significant tie. Moreover, it must be pointed out in this case that *tajwīd* is solely about the recitation of the Qur'an, not about interpretation, and the decisions of the ECFR seem to provide the imam more with inspiration than act as binding norms. The imam also seems to have certain connections to unspecified sheikhs in Morocco. Due to a lack of information, these transnational ties cannot be assessed in more detail, but they are certainly to be seen as rather informal ties between individuals, not between the association and individuals or organisations.

5.4.4 Conclusion

As is clear from the portrait of the association, the Islamic Centre Arrahman plays an important role for Muslims in the Canton of Jura because it is the only place of worship in the canton. It seems, though, that some believers prefer other associations even if they have to travel further (Expert PA04). The relationship to the cantonal authorities could be seen as somewhat strained because the requests by the association for support were rejected (Expert PA04; Interview MC06). On the other hand, it succeeded in having a Muslim burial ground in Delémont approved (Expert PA07). At a local level, the association interacts in many ways, be it in interfaith dialogue, integration work or in relation to schools and youth groups: it actively exchanges with parts of civil society, which indicates bridging capital.

However, it is striking that many of these interactions are very strongly linked to the person of the imam. He is very active on the local level, e.g., as a chaplain in prisons or in interreligious dialogue. This pattern is also evident at the transnational level: possible transnational ties are all linked to the person of the imam. This of course indicates that he is an important person within the association's network (a so-called node). It can however be a weak point for the association itself, because if this one person is absent, then the network collapses, at least partially. The focus on the imam is also reflected in the sparse newspaper reporting. The attention is more focused on him and the projects he is involved in than on the association as such. This does not have to be a bad thing, but it does seem to underline the conclusion that the imam plays a pivotal role in the Islamic Centre Arrahman.

5.5 Centre Islamique de Lausanne

The Islamic Centre Lausanne (*Centre islamique de Lausanne,* CIL) was established in 1977 and founded as an association in 1979 (CIL, 2021a). This makes the CIL one of, if not the oldest, Muslim community in the entire canton (Interview MC04). The CIL is located near the railway station in Lausanne, in what the inhabitants of the city call the *"quartier sous-gare"* (district below the station). Its privileged geographical location makes it one of the most popular centres for Muslim believers in Lausanne and in the Canton of Vaud. The centre can accommodate between 500 and

600 worshippers and has separate areas for men and women. It also has a library and a shop. The current premises were inaugurated in 2008.

5.5.1 Public Perception

Our depiction of public perceptions will not start with CIL's founding years, but in 2004, when the imam of the association (both then and now) was attacked and injured by a believer. In the article on the incident, the imam is described by believers as someone who always denounced extremists and has therefore now been attacked by them. The attack, as someone in the article interpreted it, shows that Muslims are the first victims of extremism. In a boxed text, however, the article points out that while the imam has always vehemently opposed the Wahhabiyyah, the mosque is also accused by some of producing extremists itself (Jost, 2004). A second article continues in a similar vein, describing the imam's first public appearance after his injury, during the Centre's 25th anniversary celebrations. His speech against the "enemies of Islam" had hardened, the journalist judged. This time, however, the speech was directed against the Muslim Brotherhood and not the Wahhabiyyah (Verdan, 2004). A third article from 2004 announced that the imam would be replaced as prison chaplain at the end of the year. The article discussed in detail how the CIL had been a long-term privileged partner of the cantonal authorities. The centre, the article says, gives the appearance of being moderate and willing to integrate because it denounces the dangers of extremism and advocates for civic engagement and compliance with local laws. A pastor actively engaged in interreligious dialogue explains that the Ahbash, in which the imam is trained, takes a strong stand against fundamentalism, but that behind it is an equally rigorous and uncompromising discourse. A sole claim to truth is not conducive to social peace and also increases intra-Muslim tensions, he says. This stance is given as one reason for the replacement of the imam (Léderrey, 2004). What becomes visible in these three articles is tension between a stance against extremism and the rigorous discourse with which the centre operates on its own.

In 2006, the media report on the laying of the foundation stone for the new mosque (Antonoff, 2006), which opened in 2008 (Nejad, 2008). For 2014, the Yearbook of Muslims in Europe reported that the Canton of Vaud published the rules of application for obtaining the status of community of public interest (*communauté d'intérêt public*). The cantonal umbrella organisation UVAM (*Union Vaudoise des Associations Musulmanes*), of which the Islamic Centre is not a member, declared its willingness to receive recognition as a body of public interest (Schneuwly Purdie & Tunger-Zanetti, 2016, pp. 572–573). The Islamic Centre is reported to have shown interest in obtaining the same status (Schneuwly Purdie & Tunger-Zanetti, 2016, p. 573; Monnot, 2013, p. 218).

In 2015 and 2016, two articles were published portraying the mosques and imams in the Canton of Vaud (Banerjee-Din, 2016; Audétat, 2015). The Islamic Centre of Lausanne is described as well frequented, but as subscribing to the exclusive doctrine of the Ahbash. According to the article, it has always refused to cooperate with anyone who does not subscribe to its theological

direction. It is said to adhere to a rigorist and pietist spirituality. According to the article, the centre is visited by many converts (Audétat, 2015). The 2016 article describes the mosque as the largest in the canton, but nonetheless not part of UVAM. The imam's discourse is characterised as conservative and the mosque as traditional. Yet the imam's opposition to the Wahhabiyyah is also highlighted in the article (Banerjee-Din, 2016). In these two articles, too, the field of tension described above becomes visible once again. This seems to be one of the main features of the CIL.

However, it must also be mentioned that the mosque as well as the imam appear in articles on other topics in a less ambiguous manner. For example, one article highlights the problems of religious communities during the Covid-19 pandemic and features the imam of the CIL, among others (Cochard, 2020).

5.5.2 Portrayal of the Association

The CIL (sometimes also called *Mosquée de Lausanne*) is one of the most frequented and oldest worship places in Lausanne. It dates back to 1977 and was the result of the active involvement of Arabic- and Turkish-speaking students of the EPFL (*Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne*). The first premises of the CIL were in an apartment on the outskirts of Lausanne, but moved to a new place close to the railway station in 1979. In the first years of its existence the CIL was supported by Saudi Arabia in financing its premises and the imam, who was of Algerian origin. In 1983, protagonists of the Ahbash, at that time students of Lebanese origin at the EPFL, were elected to positions on the board and a new imam came from Lebanon (Expert MC14). Thus, this group took over an existing association. The growing number of worshippers prompted those in charge of the CIL to look for a new place that could meet the needs of the community. New facilities were thus acquired in 2004 and in 2008, after four years of construction, the CIL inaugurated the mosque where believers still meet today. The mosque has premises that are used as gendered spaces for prayer but also as conference rooms. Today, the CIL is home to many nationalities (between 30 and 40). If the first believers mostly came from Arab-speaking countries (Maghreb and Mashrek), today the CIL is also frequented by people from India, Pakistan, Turkey, Albania and Bosnia. The CIL has currently an official, paid imam of Lebanese origin, who is assisted by about ten teachers who function as secondary imams. The imam is responsible for the daily prayers and is also in charge of giving brief lessons to the worshippers. These courses take place every day after the evening prayer at 7pm and are partially disseminated through the association Facebook's page (Interview MC04).

The CIL has a school for children, offering them Arabic and religious training. The school has 40 teachers and organises lessons according to the age of the pupils. They also organise outings to neighbouring countries and invite young people to various sport activities (Interview MC04).

The Islamic Centre is mainly financed through the membership fees of permanent members and donations, as it transparently states on its website (CIL, 2021a). Donations include private

donations of persons coming from the Gulf countries, who visit the mosque while in Switzerland on holiday. Further money is collected on Fridays and income is generated by the sale of products in the mosque's shop (Interview MC04).

5.5.3 Local Interactions and Transnational Networks of the Association

At a local level, the CIL was particularly active during the 1990s. During that decade, it seemed that the mosque, due to its longevity and central location, was recognised as a privileged interlocutor of the authorities in the Canton of Vaud. In 1994, the mosque even began to organise a public event during the month of Ramadan, to which state officials, politicians and teachers were invited. With the establishment of the Muslim canton umbrella organisation UVAM in 2003, the CIL has gradually lost its role as an intermediary between the Muslim community and the State. For essentially dogmatic reasons, the CIL refused to allow the UVAM to represent it and even sought to submit a separate application for recognition (cf. chapter 5.5.1); in 2015, the CIL clearly considered the possibility of submitting such a request, given its lasting presence in the canton (Interview MC13), a project which now seems to have been abandoned (Interview MC04). There was sporadic collaboration between CIL and UVAM in preparative discussions on the establishment of a Muslim burial ground, inaugurated in 2016. This was triggered by the city's indication that it expected such overarching collaboration (Expert MC18; Borcard, 2019). Today, it appears that the mosque has very restricted contacts with local and cantonal authorities (Expert PA05). Regarding society, recent events organised by the CIL for specific Muslim celebrations such as the Ascension of the Prophet are officially open to all (Muslims and non-Muslims), but in reality, the audience is mainly made up of faithful who already attend the mosque (Salzbrunn, 2020, pp. 234–242). Currently, the CIL seems limited to organising events informing the neighbourhood about its activities (Interview MC04), a tie that can be considered informal.

The same pattern applies to interreligious dialogue. Although the CIL was among the founding members of the first interreligious groups in the canton in the 1990s, the inclusion of Muslim actors of other orientations than that of the mosque eventually led them withdrawing from interreligious activities (Interview MC04). Nowadays, they are not part of interreligious activities in the canton (Interview RC03).

The contrasting relationship that CIL has with other Muslim associations and groups also determines collaborations and partnerships with other Muslim actors at the cantonal or national level. The mosque maintains good relations with Islamic centres that are close to it from a dogmatic point of view, namely the Neuchâtel Islamic Centre (*Mosquée de Neuchâtel*), the Islamic Cultural and Sunni Centre of Geneva, the Islamic Cultural Centre of Yverdon-les-Bains (*Mosquée d'Yverdon*), the Islamic Centre of Bienne and the Islamic Centre of Zürich (*Islamisches Zentrum Zürich*) (Interview MC04; Expert MC12). What links these centres seems to be the common affiliation to the Ahbash. The network of Swiss Islamic centres close to the Ahbash has a national body, called the Swiss Islamic Council, founded in 1998 (CIL, 2021b; cf. chapter 4.3.2). The CIL also has

good contacts with a Turkish association in Moudon and another Turkish-Albanian association in Fribourg. This could be due to a gradual opening of the CIL towards followers of Turkish origin, who refer to the Hanafi legal school. This school was named after Imam Abou Hanifa (699–767), its founder. The solidarity CIL expresses towards these organisations is demonstrated by the sending of teachers from Lausanne to ensure the instruction of children in these various structures (Interview MC04). As these collaborations take place weekly and concern a regular activity of these organisations, they can be regarded as rather formal, even if we could not identify a written source.

Regarding the transnational connections of the CIL, it appears that the latter is linked to the Ahbash network of Lebanon (cf. chapter 4.3). Several members of the mosque, including some in leadership positions, were taught by the founder of the Ahbash, Sheikh Abdullah al-Harari, during his lifetime (Interview MC04). Members of the mosque network belonging to this trend were even encouraged to go to Beirut to learn the doctrine of the Ahbash in the course of the 1990s and 2000s (Expert MC12). The link therefore seems to be of a formal nature and between two—or perhaps a network of—organisations. As an interviewee explained to us, the teachings of al-Harari are to be respected as fully aligned with the writings of great imams of the Islamic tradition, which the CIL identifies in al-Ash'ari (874–936) and al-Maturidi (853–944) (Interview MC04).

The position that the CIL seems to hold in relation to other Sunni movements, characterised by a rejection of the theses expounded by groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Wahhabis (Interview MC04), perfectly reflects the position expressed by the Ahbash since its inception (cf. chapter 4.3.1). The reminder by an interviewee of the danger represented by the writings of Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), former representative of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), a Hanbali jurist favoured by the Wahhabis, confirms the ideological proximity to the Ahbash (Interview MC04). As an expert points out, the community has a general tendency to consider all the other Sunni movements as deviant or sectarian (Expert MC12).

5.5.4 Conclusion

While the CIL was the central actor representing Muslims vis-à-vis the public authorities at the local and cantonal level, its ideological proximity to the Ahbash was not an issue. Things changed with the foundation of UVAM, an umbrella organisation which sought to represent the Muslims of the canton but is perceived as an illegitimate body by the CIL. UVAM's strong public presence has led CIL to abandon a range of activities directed towards the state and society (the request for the recognition of public utility, interreligious dialogue and public events). At the same time, it seems that various CIL partners had begun to question the nature of the community's religious discourse. Accordingly, public perceptions in chapter 5.5.1 reveal tension between a stance against extremism and the centre's own rigorous discourse. As a result of all this, the bridging capital developed over time has eroded and CIL has retreated into activities that benefit its community. Today, the mosque focuses primarily on the community's internal needs, as well as maintaining a network of

solidarity and collaboration with other like-minded Ahbash centres. This strong bonding social capital allows members of the network to develop an intense sense of belonging, but this belonging seems to be constructed at the expense of the relationship that its members maintain with society and other Muslim communities. As two experts point out, the Ahbash tend to develop a very exclusivist understanding of what being Muslim means and behave themselves as a "sect" vis-à-vis other movements and groups, that they do not hesitate to judge as unbelievers (Experts AC10, MC08).

5.6 Ligue des Musulmans de Suisse

The *Ligue des Musulmans de Suisse* (LMS, Swiss Muslim League) was founded as an association in 1994 (Lathion, 2011, p. 561) and registered as a private association in Prilly in 1997. The stated aims of the association include serving Muslims in Switzerland, representing their interests as well as the positive integration of Muslims into Swiss society, based on a reconciliation of religious identity and the requirements of citizenship (État de Vaud, 2021b). In the cantons of Geneva and Neuchâtel, the corresponding associations are members of the cantonal umbrella association UOMG (*Union des Organisations Musulmanes de Genève*) and UNOM (*Union Neuchâteloise des Organisations Musulmanes*) respectively (Expert AC02; UOMG, 2021). Accordingly, LMS perceives itself as a Muslim organisation on the national level (Lathion, 2009 p. 345). However, it remains unclear whether the associations at cantonal level are independent associations or whether LMS may simply be a member of both cantonal umbrella associations.[22] Although organisations on a national level usually accept associations as members, LMS also seems to admit individual members (Interview MC10).

5.6.1 Public Perception

In line with its mission to represent the interests of Muslims, the LMS was one of six complainants against the minaret initiative at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg (Lipinski, 2010). Their complaint was, however, declared inadmissible in 2011 as the LMS did not have its own building project and was thus only indirectly concerned (ECHR, 2011). LMS is not mentioned by name in the media reports on the decision, but is referred to as "an association" (e.g. sda, 2011).

In 2017, three articles were published on the annual conference of the LMS. The conference dealt with the topic "Together against extremism" (*Ensemble contre l'extrémisme*), with speakers including Tariq Ramadan and Abdelfattah Mourou, vice-president of the Tunisian Muslim party

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[22] An indication of the latter is given by the entry of LMS on the UOMG website—there the address in Prilly is entered, although the name LMS has the addition Geneva (UOMG, 2021).

Ennahda (Nieto, 2017; *rjb,* 2017). The invitation of Tariq Ramadan was later taken up by the Yearbook of Muslims in Europe (Tunger-Zanetti & Schneuwly Purdie, 2020, p. 618). One of the newspaper articles was particularly critical of the invited speakers and called them "islamists". It pointed out that LMS was founded by the Tunisian Mohamed Karmous and that his wife, Nadia Karmous, was the founder of the Museum of Islamic Civilisations (*Musée des civilisations de l'Islam*)[23] in La-Chaux-de-Fonds, funded through donations from the Gulf States (Keller-Messahli, 2017). Implicitly, the article hints at possible critical interconnections. A different article on the same conference asked the current LMS president about the invitation of Abdelfattah Mourou as a speaker. He replied that it was precisely the fact that many Tunisians had joined the terror organisation IS that had prompted the LMS to invite him. Mourou, as the First Deputy Speaker of the Tunisian National Assembly, could therefore share his country's experience in the fight against extremism, according to Ben Yahya (Nieto, 2017). Later that year, Mansour Ben Yahya spoke out in the press about the financing of mosques. He is in favour of mandatory disclosure of finances (sda, 2017), as called for in a motion in the National Council (cf. Quadri, 2016), later rejected by the Council of States.

In 2018, two articles appeared in *Le Matin Dimanche,* drawing attention to possible links between the Karmous couple and the Muslim Brotherhood (Krafft, 2018a, 2018b). The first article pointed out that it is "more a question of elective affinities and ideological sympathy than of organic links" (Krafft, 2018a; authors' translation). The article also notes that although Mohamed Karmous founded the LMS, he is no longer its president, but is involved in seven other Muslim associations and foundations in Switzerland. Nadia Karmous is characterised as ambiguous. On one hand, she is recognized by the authorities for her willingness to dialogue and is appreciated for her integration work, but on the other, she has publicly taken sides with both Tariq Ramadan and Hani Ramadan[24] in controversies (Krafft, 2018a; Bourquin, 2017). The second article attempted to describe Mohamed Karmous' possible network in more detail by outlining his involvement in various Muslim associations and foundations in Switzerland. In addition to possible links to the Muslim Brotherhood, a proximity to the Tunisian Ennahda party was also suggested (Krafft, 2018b). Both articles only briefly mentioned the LMS and mainly focused on the Karmous couple.

In 2019, the book *Qatar Papers* by French journalists Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot was published, which deals with the financial flows of the NGO Qatar Charity to Europe. It contains an entire chapter on Switzerland (Chesnot & Malbrunot, 2019).[25] The premise of the book

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[23] For coverage of the opening of the museum, see Berset (2016), Jubin (2016) and Klein (2016).

[24] Controversy arose around Hani Ramadan over certain statements on polygamy, while Tariq Ramadan was arrested on rape charges (Krafft, 2018a).

[25] The documents examined by the journalists mainly cover the period from 2011 to 2017. Georges Malbrunot notes in an interview that since then, the blockade of the Gulf states against Qatar has brought about a change, but also that fewer and fewer banks are accepting payments from Qatar Charity (Burnand, 2019a). It is not the case, therefore, that the financial flows they describe continue without constraint.

is that Qatar, through Qatar Charity, supports organisations in Europe that are close to the Muslim Brotherhood. The press in French-speaking Switzerland reported on the book accordingly (cf. Besson, 2019; Burnand, 2019b). The chapter on Switzerland revolves around the Karmous couple. It mentions the various associations and foundations in which the two are involved and, above all, discloses the flow of money from Qatar Charity to Switzerland on the basis of various receipts (Chesnot & Malbrunot, 2019, pp. 183–205). Nadia Karmous even responds in the book, disclosing that she received money from Qatar, but denying that it came from Qatar Charity, saying instead that she was supported by private donors (Chesnot & Malbrunot, 2019, p. 197). Mohamed Karmous is described as the founder and president of the LMS in the book (Chesnot & Malbrunot, 2019, p. 189), although the latter is no longer true (cf. Krafft, 2018a). Chesnot and Malbrunot (2019, p. 189) add that the LMS runs the *Centre socioculturel des musulmans de Lausanne* (CCML, Sociocultural Center of Muslims in Lausanne) in Prilly and is affiliated to the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE) in Brussels, now renamed the Council of European Muslims (CEM). The FIOE links organisations "in sympathy with the message of the founders of the MB" (Maréchal, 2008, p. 63) and also created the European Council for Fatwa and Research (Maréchal, 2008, p. 64; cf. chapter 4.1.2). The Yearbook of Muslims in Europe reports the following on the book:

> The book reveals that in Switzerland, this foundation [Qatar Charity, authors' note] has invested more than 4 million Swiss francs (about €3.8 million) between 2011 and 2014 into five projects for Muslim organisations in Prilly (Vaud), Biel (Bern), La Chaux-de-Fonds (Neuchâtel), and Lugano (Ticino). The authors also highlight the links between the Karmous couple and these various projects receiving financing. (Schneuwly Purdie & Tunger-Zanetti, 2021, p. 650)

The newspaper articles about the book and a subsequent Arte-documentary also focused on the Karmous couple, with the LMS hardly mentioned (Besson, 2019; Burnand, 2019b; Tscherrig, 2019). When the book was translated into German in 2020, the Swiss-German press also reported on it (cf. Meier, 2020b). In 2021, an article appeared on the CCML and their invitations of questionable preachers. A boxed text pointed again to the connections between CCML, LMS and Mohamed Karmous: "In Prilly, three entities share the same address: the CCML, the LMS and the Wakef Foundation. Their common point: Mohamed Karmous" (Din & Krafft, 2021; authors' translation).

As becomes clear from this depiction of public perception, the focus is less on the LMS and more on the Karmous couple. The LMS appears in this coverage mainly because it was founded by Mohamed Karmous. At the same time, the LMS shares similar affiliations (e.g., Tariq Ramadan or members of Ennahda), as can be seen from the coverage of the 2017 annual conference.

5.6.2 Portrayal of the Association

LMS was founded in 1994 by refugees from Tunisia, close to the Ennahda, and from Libya. The headquarters of the organisation were initially established in Le Locle (Canton of Neuchâtel), but moved to Prilly, a municipality located near Lausanne, in 1997. The organisation is still based there today (État de Vaud, 2021b). From 1994 till 2008, LMS was headed by Mohamed Karmous (Rickenbacher, 2019a). The current president, who took up his position in 2014, is Mansour Ben Yahya.

The main activity held by LMS is the Swiss Muslims annual meeting (*Rencontre annuelle des musulmans de Suisse*), an event has existed since the beginning of the organisation and that resembles similar activities by FIOE and by CEM member organisations in other countries, such as the major annual meeting of Muslims in Le Bourget, France (Expert MC14). Each year, the meeting revolves around a topic of interest for Muslim believers in Switzerland, addressed through lectures, round tables and workshops. In 2016, the annual meeting was titled "A mercy for the worlds" (*Une miséricorde pour les mondes*) and in 2017 "Together against extremism" (*Ensemble contre l'extrémisme*). Some of these events were held over several days and required the rental of a specific location. The 23rd annual meeting was supposed to be held in September 2020 but had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 situation. LMS was initially very active in organising youth and women's activities but as these publics have created their own structures, the League has decided to hand over responsibility for these domains (Interview MC02).

LMS is composed of a general assembly, the body responsible for voting on strategic orientations, an advisory board supervising the activities of the League and a president (both elected by the general assembly). The president can select some of the members of the executive committee, according to the current needs of the organisation; these are then validated by the advisory board. Three members of the current Committee are the persons responsible for the domains in which LMS is active, namely the annual activities, education and the youth sector. The activities of LMS are carried out by volunteers (Interview MC02), with the League having around 150 to 200 individual members. These members pay a monthly fee, allowing the organisation a budget for organising its main activities (Interview MC02). LMS has its own website where articles about internal activities or current international affairs appear (Rabeta, 2021). The contents are in three languages, namely Arabic, French and German, with a preponderance of articles and messages written in Arabic. This seems to suggest that the LMS audience is mostly Arabic-speaking.

LMS is mainly active in organising cultural and social activities by gathering together Muslims from across the whole of Switzerland. The League seems to have had some success in the 1990s, when it managed to attract a few hundred people to its flagship events (Expert MC03). In recent years, LMS has left the organisation of a number of important activities it previously organised to actors engaged in specific fields, such as youth education or the defence of Muslim women's rights in Switzerland (Interview MC02).

5.6.3 Local Interactions and Transnational Networks of the Association

Regarding local interactions, it appears that LMS is present in ten Swiss cantons through individual members and also associations in some cases (Expert AC02). In French-speaking Switzerland, the region where the League is most active, it works with local associations in three different cantons, namely Neuchâtel, Vaud and Geneva. In the Canton of Geneva, as indicated in the introduction of this chapter, LMS is mentioned as a member of UOMG, even though it is not clear if it is a regional branch or the main organisation itself. Nevertheless, this indicates a formal tie between these two organisations (Interview MC02). The same applies to Neuchâtel and the cantonal umbrella organisation UNOM. Members of LMS have played and still play an active role in UNOM (Interview MC02). This tie can be qualified as a formal one between two organisations as well, given that personalities belonging to these structures have leadership positions in both of them. In addition, LMS has supported activities of the association *Tasamouh* in Biel/Bienne, which is active in counselling and prevention of radicalisation (SRF, 2019, 09:24–10:40). Regarding the Canton of Vaud, LMS has its headquarters in Prilly, at the same address as the CCML and the organisations actually share the same offices (Interview MC02). The CCML was also founded with the intention of building a centre that would offer believers an alternative to the *Mosquée de Lausanne* (Expert MC19; for *Mosquée de Lausanne* cf. chapter 5.5). For Chesnot and Malbrunot (2019, p. 189), LMS clearly runs the CCML (cf. chapter 5.6.1). If one looks at the 2008 bylaws of the CCML, article 12 indicates that the CCML is a member of LMS and that it works to achieveits objectives (État de Vaud, 2021c; C.C.M.L., 2008). This confirms the formal ties between the two organisations. However, an examination of the activities of the CCML also shows that they have a much broader profile.

At the national level, LMS is represented by the *Föderation islamischer Dachorganisationen Schweiz* (FIDS/FOIS, Federation of Islamic Umbrella Organisations Switzerland)[26]. It appears that LMS was actually a founding member of the national federation and that LMS participates in almost all the meetings organised by FIDS. According to one interviewee, LMS decided to handover the responsibility of representing Muslims to public authorities to FIDS, in order to avoid duplication; this means however that LMS once held this ambition (Interview MC02). It is a tie that can be qualified as formal between the two organisations. In recent years, LMS has also been in contact with the Youth Swiss Muslim Network (YSMN), a coordinative Muslim youth platform, which is active at the federal level. It aimed to invite one of their members for an event, but the link here appears to be sporadic and informal (Interview MC02).

Turning to transnational ties, LMS is often portrayed in academic literature as the Swiss national branch and public organisation inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood (Allievi & Maréchal, 2010, p. 221; Maréchal, 2008, p. 63). In that sense, the League is compared to other national structures such as *Musulmans de France* (formerly *Union des Organisations Islamiques de France*) or

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[26] For further information about the members composing the FIDS, see FIDS (2021).

Deutsche Muslimische Gemeinschaft (formerly *Islamische Gemeinschaft Deutschland).* While it is possible that LMS once had the ambition of embodying such a national umbrella role, close analysis proves that it cannot be considered as such today.

LMS seems to have three different types of connections with Muslim Brotherhood-related networks: ideological, organisational and personal. Regarding the first aspect, the League appears to be inspired by the reflections of Muslim Brotherhood protagonists, but relativises this influence by pointing out that the writings of Muslim Brotherhood followers are just a few of the different ideas put forward by the Islamic tradition in the course of the 20th century; in that sense, an interviewee recalls the importance of the Tablighi Jamaat (cf. chapter 4.2) or the Hizb ut-Tahrir, that together with the Muslim Brotherhood have produced important literature and influenced Muslim communities across Europe (Interview MC02).

If we now turn to the organisational structure, LMS belongs to the Council of European Muslims, CEM (formerly the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe, FIOE), a European structure created by prominent European Muslim Brotherhood inspired members back in 1989, in order to coordinate their activities (Maréchal, 2008, p. 63; cf. chapter 4.1.2). The tie between LMS and the FIOE is indicated in the association's bylaws of 2006, where one also finds that the president of the general assembly is supposed to be a member of the FIOE. As a federation, the FIOE was based on relationships which different protagonists already maintained before they came to Europe and the LMS was conceived as a sister organisation to similar bodies in other European countries (Expert MC14). LMS participates in the regular CEM meeting, to benefit from the experience of other European Muslims and collaborate with them in various areas (Interview MC02). The League also recognises, by means of its bylaws, another organisation linked with the Muslim Brotherhood network in Europe, namely the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR; cf. chapter 4.1.2). On its website, LMS circulates the official documents of both the CEM and the ECFR (Rabeta, 2021). As an interviewee explained, the latter was instrumental in bringing together LMS members who were sometimes in conflict because they based their religious opinions on fatwas from their respective countries of origin, such as Morocco, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia or Syria (Interview MC02). The ties between LMS, the FIOE and the ECFR have to be considered as organisational and formal, as the connections are formalised in official documents. Nonetheless, as an expert points out, the LMS was often split between two tendencies: one inspired by LMS's Tunisian members linked with Ennahda (the Muslim Brotherhood-inspired political party headed by Rachid Ghannouchi) and the second one composed of Libyans. While the former seemed to consider the structures created by the Muslim Brothers in Europe as legitimate organisations for the League to cooperate with, the latter appeared less inclined to do so. The split between members from different countries has not only had consequences on the strategic choices of LMS in Switzerland; when the Arab spring began in 2011, some prominent Tunisian and Libyan members decided to return to their respective countries of origin in order to support the revolts. One former member of LMS, Larbi Guesmi, has even taken up a position of responsibility within the Ennahda party in Tunisia, becoming a member of the party's *shūrā* council (Expert MC03; Rickenbacher, 2019b). This shows

that the internal dynamics of LMS, as well as the personal ties some of its members keep with their respective countries of origin, have to be considered when analysing transnational networks.

At an individual level, it must be stressed that one member of LMS was trained at the European Institute of Human Sciences (*Institut Européen des Sciences Humaines,* IESH; Interview MC02), a structure created by the FIOE and the UOIF in 1992. This structure was founded by Muslim Brotherhood-inspired members in Europe, in order to create an Islamic education institution to train future religious officers and imams (Allievi & Maréchal, 2010, p. 224; Maréchal, 2008, p.64; cf. also chapter 4.1.2). This can be qualified as a rather formal, but nevertheless fluid, tie between an individual and an organisation – fluid because once a study program is completed, the tie with the institution and/or teachers does not necessarily continue.

Ties between LMS and personalities of the Muslim Brotherhood networks can also be found in the programs of the Swiss Muslims annual meeting. Apart from the already mentioned invitations to Tariq Ramadan and Abdelfattah Mourou at the 2017 meeting (cf. chapter 5.6.1), the 2016 program already included Muslim Brotherhood-related individuals. In the 2016 official event brochure, you can find, among others, Hani Ramadan, Hassan Iquioussan, a personality said to be ideologically inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood and particularly active in Lyon (Maréchal, 2008, p. 73), and Khaled Hanafi, a personality linked to the German branch of the IESH and a representative of the ECFR (EIHW, 2021). These ties between the LMS and different individuals can be considered as formal, even though limited to single events.

Regarding the relationship of LMS with other organisations linked to the Muslim Brotherhood network in Switzerland, it appears that there is no organised structure speaking with one voice, as in other countries such as France, Germany or Great Britain. According to two experts, LMS makes up part of a Muslim Brotherhood cluster in the cantons of Neuchâtel and Bern, which is related to the presence of Ennahda supporters. Among these are Mohamed and Nadia Karmous (Expert MC03; AC07). The geographical proximity of organisations which have their headquarters in Prilly (CCML, LMS and the Wakef Foundation) suggests that LMS activities also concern the Canton of Vaud. The boards of these organisations are in fact composed of members involved in at least one other of the three organisations, thus composing a network.[27] Mohamed Karmous seems to have played a key role in keeping these organisations connected.

Regarding other entities related to the Muslim Brotherhood, it appears that the League has only loose connections with other bodies such as the Islamic Centre in Geneva, headed by Hani Ramadan. The exception seems to be the invitation of personalities related to the Centre for certain events (cf. chapter 5.6.1); the same applies to Muslim Brotherhood personalities based in the Italian-speaking region of Switzerland (Expert AC07).

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[27] For more information about the members of the boards of these entities, use the search engine of the commercial register of the Canton of Vaud (État de Vaud, 2021a).

5.6.4 Conclusion

To conclude, it can be said that LMS is an association that once had the ambition of representing the interests of Muslims in Switzerland, even if its presence is stronger in the French-speaking region. While its activities met with a broader echo during the 1990s, it seems that today the association has considerably reduced the number of areas in which it is active, preferring to hand over some of its activities to third party organisations (cf. chapter 5.6.3). Thus, the influence of the LMS can be assessed as being low today.

It is fair to say that whilst the League belongs to a network of Muslim Brotherhood related organisations in Europe, it clearly does not represent all the Muslim Brotherhood inspired structures located in Switzerland. For example, there do not seem to be significant connections between LMS and the Islamic Centre of Geneva, although both organisations are linked in some way to the Muslim Brotherhood and are both geographically located in the French-speaking region of Switzerland. Further research could help to understand whether the relative autonomy shown by each of these two organisations depends on the origin of its founders (partly Tunisian for LMS and Egyptian for the Islamic Centre of Geneva) or if the reasons are to be found elsewhere. These elements help relativise the claim, often put forward by scholars, that LMS is the national Muslim Brotherhood inspired branch of Switzerland: unlike in other countries such as France, Germany or Great Britain, there does not seem to be an organisation capable of gathering together all the Muslim Brotherhood related bodies in Switzerland. We can instead speak of a network of interests, influence and support between persons sharing common ideas and who support each other (Expert AC10). LMS has, for example, a geographical and personal proximity with organisations that have received substantial founding from Qatar Charity, namely the CCML and the Wakef Foundation. The person who links some of these organisations is Mohamed Karmous, founding member of LMS and former president of both the CCML and the Wakef Foundation (cf. chapter 5.6.2 and 5.6.3). This is also reflected in the depiction of public perceptions (chapter 5.6.1): the focus is less on the LMS and more on the Karmous couple.

5.7 Fondation Culturelle Islamique de Genève

The Islamic Cultural Foundation of Geneva (*Fondation Culturelle Islamique de Genève,* FCI) was founded in 1975 by Saudia Arabia to build a mosque in Le Petit-Saconnex area of Geneva. The mosque was the second to be built in Switzerland (Nerfin, 2019, p. 225). It was inaugurated in 1978 in the presence of Pierre Aubert, then federal Councillor of the Swiss Confederation and Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, then king of Saudi Arabia (Nerfin, 2019, p. 242; Pottier, 1978). It has a minaret and was built for 500 believers (Nerfin, 2019, p. 227), but today accommodates up to 2000 people for prayer (Interview MC11). The mosque was originally intended as "a prayer room for Muslims working in international institutions, or for Muslim students" (Banfi, 2018, p. 138).

5.7.1 Public Perception

Since the mosque was established in the late 1970s, there have been many articles about it. As already mentioned, we will only discuss the last few years here. In 2015, there were articles about two young men who joined the Islamic State (IS) in Syria and had been members of a group that met at the mosque of Le Petit-Saconnex (Roselli, 2015a; *rts*, 2015). Accordingly, Johannes Saal, in his empirical study of Jihadi Networks in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, identified the mosque as belonging to one of the four Jihadi clusters in Switzerland.[28] Saal mentions, however, that there were individuals who warned internally and in public about the problems at the mosque (Saal, 2021, pp. 270–271). He concludes that Geneva is one of the examples that show "that more radical groups tried to gain influence against the resistance of other leaders and visitors, but (…) Jihadis banned from mosques either met in private or tried to establish [their] own places of congregating" (Saal, 2021, p. 507).

The two articles from 2015 mentioned above also reported that two of the three imams of the mosque, both of whom were living in France at the time, were registered under a French S-file (*fiche S*), suggesting a potential threat to the security of the state (Roselli, 2015a; *rts*, 2015). In fact, different S-files are instruments of the French intelligence service that do not require a criminal conviction or necessarily indicate surveillance or an increased threat.[29] An S-file means that the intelligence service wishes to be informed when the individual is checked on national territory or at the border. Moreover, the threshold for an S-file in France is lower than for an inclusion in similar files in other European states (Nabat, 2020; cf. Ministère de l'Intérieur, 2021). However, S-files are mainly perceived as an indication of a threat in corresponding articles without providing further background.

Approximately three months later, the mosque issued a press statement. According to this statement, there was no evidence for the S-files of its imams. The mosque further stated that it had met with the authorities of the Canton of Geneva (Roselli, 2015b). A week later, the homes of the two imams in France who were believed to have an S-file were raided by French police (Roselli, 2015c). One of the two imams later gave an interview on the incident, stating that he expected something like this to happen, considering the November 2015 Paris attacks and the way he was presented in the Swiss media. In the interview, he recounted openly how the event unfolded and

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[28] According to Saal, the Jihadi network in Switzerland "consists of four distinct well-connected clusters with around ten to twenty members, many tied through strong ties, each. Remarkably, central brokers, in contrast to the German and Austrian network, are almost absent and, therefore, the clusters are only loosely connected to each other" (Saal, 2021, p. 113), Saal mentions hotspots in Geneva, Lausanne and Winterthur, but concludes that "these clusters were far less interconnected to a national milieu than those in Germany and Austria due to Switzerland's unique multi-lingual network" (Saal, 2021, p. 504).

[29] Accordingly, the French Interior Ministry explains on its website: "This file (…) does not lead to any automatic coercive action against a person. Having a warning role, the fiche S concerns people whom France (or another country, as this file is European) suspects of terrorist aims or of undermining state security (or of complicity), without them having committed any offence or crime" (Ministère de l'Intérieur, 2021; authors' translation).

how the police made him sign a document that nothing suspicious was found (Vormus, 2015). This coverage of events at the mosque is referred to in the literature as the "recent problematic history of the Grand Mosque of Geneva" (Gonzalez, 2019, p. 246).

Matters at the mosque did not settle down in 2016. In June 2016, the press reported that the mosque had received a delegation of the Muslim World League (MWL), its supervisory body. One interviewed expert believed the reason for this was the MWL's desire to restore order in the mosque (Roselli, 2016a). In October 2016, the *Tribune de Genève* reported that believers had signed a petition addressed to the MWL, calling for the director of the foundation to be removed from his post (Roselli, 2016b). In the same month, a new S-file case came to light, this time allegedly involving a security guard (Zugravu, 2016). In November, the third imam of the mosque spoke out in the press because he had been dismissed without reasons being given to him. The article linked the dismissal to a Saudi-influenced organisation he had founded—the European Organisation of Islamic Centres (*Organisation européenne des centres islamiques,* OECI) (Roselli, 2016c). This incident is also mentioned in the Yearbook of Muslims in Europe (Schneuwly Purdie & Tunger-Zanetti, 2018, p. 662).

Things continued in a similar vein in 2017. As the Yearbook of Muslims in Europe states: "Throughout 2017, the largest mosque in Geneva (…) was a topic in the media" (Tunger-Zanetti, 2019, p. 661). In January 2017, the then director of the foundation Ahmed Beyari gave an in-depth interview. He commented on the case of the two young men who had travelled to Syria.[30] He also explained that he had been trying to solve the foundation's debt problem, as 16 million Swiss francs had been borrowed in the foundation's name by Saudi Arabia in 1978 to purchase a property with the aim of supporting the foundation independently. According to the statement, the Saudi King finally settled this debt in 2015. Furthermore, at the time, the foundation was looking for a moderate imam from Switzerland (Roselli, 2017a). By March 2017, it had found one (Zugravu, 2017). In August 2017, *24 heures* reported that the Cantonal Supervisory Authority for Foundations and Pension Funds (*Autorité cantonale de surveillance des fondations et des institutions de prévoyance,* Asfip) had found problems in its audit of the foundation. For example, there were donations that were kept outside of the foundation's accounts. In addition, the director, the deputy director, the secretary and one of the imams were all employees of the foundation and members of the foundation council, in violation of the rules and conditions of the tax exemption granted to the foundation. Asfip therefore hired an audit firm to carry out a more thorough audit (Roselli, 2017b). In November 2017, the Secretary General of the MWL announced the dismissal of four mosque employees, including the two imams who were believed to have an S-file (Roselli, 2017c, 2017d).

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[30]   "Two young people left for Syria out of 2000 to 3000 worshippers who attend the mosque more or less regularly. We cannot know what is in each person's head. (...) After this incident, we became more vigilant in the mosque" (Roselli, 2017a; authors' translation).

In 2018 and 2019, things seemed to calm down. Although it was reported that two of the suspects arrested in the case of the two Scandinavian tourists killed in Morocco had visited the mosque in Le Petit-Saconnex, the new director immediately assured the public that the mosque had taken measures against radicalization (Amos, 2019). Another article confirmed that the police now knew exactly what was going on in the mosque (Citroni, 2019).

Then, in January 2020, it was announced that the MWL wanted to separate from the mosque and the foundation and hand them over to the Muslims of the region (Allemand, 2020a; Faas, 2020; Petite, 2020). Already by February, the Secretary General of the MWL had declared that no buyer met the criteria of openness and security. He spoke of an alternative solution: transforming the foundation and freeing it from the supervision of the MWL (Allemand, 2020b; ats, 2020a). As of July 2021, the situation has not changed. The MWL is still looking for a buyer and hopes for help from the Swiss authorities, as *Le Temps* reports (Koller, 2021).

Overall, the media perception is dominated by problematic situations and persons, as well as the transnational relations of the mosque with Saudi Arabia.

5.7.2 Portrayal of the Foundation

The FCI[31] was created in 1975 with the aim of giving Muslim people living in Geneva a proper mosque. Three years later, in 1978, the prayer space, also known as the Grand Mosque of Geneva (*Grande Mosquée de Genève*) was inaugurated in Le Petit-Saconnex. Since 1961, Geneva has been home to the Islamic Centre of Geneva, founded by Said Ramadan, who was supported by Saudi-Arabia until the beginning of the 1970s (MC14). Nevertheless, the Grand Mosque of Geneva was the first Islamic space to be built in the town (Nerfin, 2019, p. 226). The initial activities of the Foundation were focused on religious services but soon developed into a variety of different areas, including education and culture, a trend that is currently shared by all the Islamic organisations based in Geneva (Banfi, 2018, pp. 129). Three main facilities are located within the mosque, "a school, a library and a cultural centre" (Banfi, 2018, p. 138). Today, the Grand Mosque has one official imam organising and leading the prayers, an activity that was provided by three imams before the dismissal of two in 2017 (cf. chapter 5.7.1). He is sometimes assisted by the director of the Arabic school run by the Foundation, a person said to have theological knowledge. The mosque also provides services such as marriages and funeral rituals for Muslim believers and engages in counselling for couples wishing to solve problems according to Islamic tradition. Another important activity carried out by the mosque is courses taught by the imam in order to prevent youth radicalisation. With respect to activities turned towards society, the mosque is actively engaged in the Geneva platform for interreligious dialogue and offers the possibility for interested groups, especially school classes, to visit the facilities (Interview MC11). Even though a chaplaincy service for Muslim patients has been active inside the public hospital of Geneva (*Hopitaux Universitaires*

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31   For further information about the foundation, see FCI (2021).

Genève) since the end of the 1990s, a service that was further formalised between 2006 and 2007 (Banfi, 2018, pp. 145–146), the current imam of the Grand Mosque is sometimes invited to help solve difficult situations (Interview MC11).

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the mosque usually hosted between 2000 to 2200 believers for Friday prayers. They mostly come from the Geneva region or neighbouring France. The fees related to the permanent employees of the mosque (imam, teachers and staff) are financed through the revenues generated by a property owned by the Foundation and acquired during the construction of the building (Interview MC11). Saudi officials wanted this property to be acquired in Riyadh, but after negotiation, it was finally decided that it was better to have it close to Geneva (Interview MC08). The mosque does not receive any direct public subsidy but "has the recognised juridical status of being an association of public utility" which "does permit fiscal exemptions for certain activities" (Banfi, 2018, p. 127).

Different groups around the mosque have been created over time to respond to specific needs (Banfi, 2018, pp. 139–140). They are allowed to use the premises and infrastructure of the mosque for free (Marzi, 2017, p. 238). Today, a group of women is active inside the Mosque and their members take part in conferences organised for them. Two other groups, one of young boys and another of young girls, address the specific needs of teenagers (Interview MC11). The Dar Essalam Girls club brings together 200 girls every Saturday afternoon at the mosque. This female religious space offers a wide range of activities, from Qur'an memorisation competitions and religious courses to sports, cooking sessions and outdoor games (Marzi, 2017, pp. 239–240). Regarding its formal structure, the FCI has a foundation council composed of 12 members, which nominates a director who works within an executive committee; the latter is responsible for the decisions regarding the personnel of the mosque, except for the Arabic school, which has its own director (Interview MC11).

5.7.3 Local Interactions and Transnational Networks of the Foundation

In the case of FCI, local and transnational networks seem to be so intertwined, and have been from the beginning, that is difficult to analyse them separately. As an interviewee explained us, "the mosque receives every week visits from important personalities or organisations from all around the world", an idea that summarises the kind of environment in which the FCI works (Interview MC11; authors' translation). Even though the influence of Saudi Arabia on the FCI, through the MWL, is undisputable, the negotiations between the monarchy and the personnel established in Geneva has been a constant feature in its history. It's a relationship that can be divided into two phases: one ranging from 1974 to 1990, characterised by mutual trust; and another, more troubled, that goes from 1990 until 2017 (Interview MC08). In recent years, there have been developments in MWL policy that suggest possible new scenarios (cf. chapter 4.4.2).

The construction of the mosque, which went on from 1974 to 1978, is a good example of the existing connection between transnational and local networks. The negotiations with Saudi authorities were mediated by a group of persons headed by the then ambassador of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations in Geneva, Medhat Sheikh El Ard, and family physician to the first King of Saudi Arabia, Abdulaziz Al Saud (Center for Research on Religion, 2015). His personal relationship with King Faysal (r. 1964–1975) and the talks he held with the latter and his brother and successor King Khaled (r. 1975–1982), seemed to have been key in the acceptance of the mosque building project (Interview MC08). The tie here is between a person representing the FCI and the Saudi monarchy. While the money used for the construction of the facilities came from Saudi Arabia, a group of people established in Geneva took care of the discussions about the architectural elements of the mosque, designed by architects Jean-Pierre Limongelli and Osman Gürdogan. The mosque was intended to be sympathetic with the environment and respect the history of the Colladon family, whose house, located in the middle of the property, has been restored by the new owners (Interview MC08).

The first official imam for the place of worship was Mahmoud Bouzouzou, an Algerian teacher and journalist (Cordoba Peace Institute, 2021) who came to Geneva in 1958 and was a co-founder of the Islamic Center of Geneva in 1961. In 1978, he quit the centre to join the Grand Mosque (Interview MC11). As an intellectual, he was active in Algeria's struggle for independence from France, but also a teacher of Arabic at the School of Translation and Interpreting of the University of Geneva. He was a person that had, according to an interviewee, "the attitude and the competence to be in contact with the community and with society" (Interview MC08; authors' translation). This brief description of Bouzouzou makes it clear that he was both linked to a political movement in Algeria and locally connected to the academic sphere. These ties are both of a formal nature between a person and an organisation.

While the construction of the mosque and the selection of its personnel were the result of interplay between transnational and local dynamics, there were important decisions at the time which seem to have exclusively depended on the local engagement of their members. One of these is the establishment of a Muslim cemetery in which believers could be buried in an Islamic fashion. An agreement was reached between 1978 and 1979 by a representative of the FCI in Geneva with then state counsellor Guy Olivier Segond (Interview MC08). Discussions with the local authorities on the question of Muslim burials have continued over time, due to the growing number of Muslims in the canton. While the decisions are to be considered formal, the negotiations between local members of the FCI and the state counsellor signal an informal tie between individuals. The decision to participate in the activities of the interreligious platform created at the cantonal level in 1992, in which the FCI is still active today by means of its spokesman, Mohamed Levrak, also seem to have been taken by resident members in Geneva (Interview MC08). The tie here can be considered formal and between two organisations.

If the relationship between local actors established in Geneva and official Saudi representatives proved to be peaceful during the first stages of FCI's existence, the year 1990 marked a clear

change. According to an interviewee, the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein in that year and the subsequent war with a United States-led coalition against Iraq constituted a turning point in the relationship between residents and Saudi Arabia. It was a period was accompanied by significant disputes inside the mosque. Some members of staff in fact defended Saddam Hussein and therefore opposed the decision of Saudi Arabia to host international troops on its soil in order to stop him. The contestation of this political decision pushed Saudi Arabia to tighten the control of the FCI by means of the MWL, replacing some of the members of the foundation council established in Geneva with Saudi representatives. This shifted the balance in favour of Saudi-linked representatives within the council (Interview MC08). From then on, the link between the FCI and Saudi Arabia, through the MWL, was institutionally strengthened. It is to be considered as a formal tie between two organisations, one of which is a transnational NGO (Schulze, 2018).

After Kuwait's invasion in 1990, other geopolitical events seemed to have created tensions between local staff and Saudi representatives, namely the situation in Algeria (the so-called black decade; *"décennie noire"*) and the Mohammed cartoon crisis of 2005 (Interview MC08). These elements suggest that from 1990, international developments have sometimes overtaken local and national issues; as one of the interviewees puts it, "the imams were confused about which speeches they should give, should they be local (…) cantonal (…), federal, or should they be international?" (Interview MC08; authors' translation). According to the same expert, these developments have prompted the Saudi authorities to ensure that the secretary-general of the League is also the president of the FCI foundation council; a measure that is still in force: the current president of the foundation council, Muhammad bin Abdulkarim al-Issa, is also the secretary general of the MWL[32]. Another measure signalling the tighter control operated by the monarchy was the sending of Saudi sheikhs to Geneva to ensure that values and ideas of the mosque staff were compatible with the official Saudi line (Interview MC08).

The contrasting visions of local actors in Geneva and Saudi representatives have often translated into changes in the mosque's staff during recent decades. The situation reached its climax between 2015 and 2017, when two young men supposedly belonging to a group created within the Grand Mosque joined IS and two of the imams, together with two employees of the mosque, were allegedly registered as Fichés-S (cf. chapter 5.7.1). These events and problems, related to FCI management difficulties, pushed the MWL to intervene by nominating a new executive director in 2018 (Lugon, 2018). The same measure had already been taken in 2008 and 2012; in each case, the new director was of Saudi origin. These measures confirm and even strengthen the already formal tie between the FCI and MWL. Additionally, two former imams of the mosque were both trained at the Islamic University of Medina (Hamel, 2017).

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[32]   For the actual bylaws of the Foundation, use the search engine of the commercial register of the Canton of Geneva (État de Genève, 2021).

In 2017, the FCI hired the only imam of Tunisian origin still in office today. A graduate in law from the University of Neuchâtel (Roselli, 2017e), the imam started his work at the mosque in a troubled context. The educational path followed by Ferjani is different from that one of other imams of the Grand Mosque.

In recent years, the FCI has also been active in the Geneva context, independently from the MWL. The Foundation is a cofounder of the *Union des Organisations Musulmanes de Genève* (UOMG, Union of Muslim Organisations of Geneva), a federation of Muslim associations active at the cantonal level since 2006 "to reconcile religion and citizenship" (Banfi, 2018, p. 146). This tie can be considered a formal one between two formal organisations. The FCI has very little contact with the canton and the city of Geneva, except for very specific issues such as burials and events (Interview MC08). The fact that the canton presents a strongly secularist separation regime, reaffirmed by the adoption of a new law in 2019 (Becci, 2021), and that it does not finance any specific worship place (Expert PA03) has strongly influenced this relationship.

Recent developments surrounding the mosque, that is, the wish expressed by MWL Secretary General al-Issa to hand over the prayer space to a locally based administration in Geneva, should firstly be analysed in the context of the shift in the MWL's public discourse. Starting in 2016, the general stance of the MWL began to change, firmly denouncing terrorism and inviting Muslims around the world to embrace the national identities of the countries in which they reside (Feuer, 2019, pp. 22–32). This move, together with the pressure that media and governments have put on Saudi Arabia, seemed to have led the MWL to withdraw from the control of some organisations in Europe, starting in 2018 with the Grand Mosque of Brussels (Feuer, 2019, p. 32). On the other hand, this wish or the possibility of transforming the Grand Mosque of Geneva into a forum for civilizational dialogue (Interview MC08; Koller, 2021), also need to be read within the larger context of League decisions in Europe. Similar measures were in fact taken in Brussels, Vienna and Copenhagen. It seems that Saudi Arabia considers the League's activities to be too expensive, especially in relation to the results that it produced in Europe. These developments can also be seen as the continuation of a more lasting move started by the MWL at least ten years ago, aimed at progressively delinking the MWL discourse from Muslim Brotherhood-inspired ideology, which strongly focuses on an encompassing idea of Islamic identity and is more political in essence (Expert AC10). Similar political measures seem to have been taken domestically, with King Salman pursuing the strategy of denouncing the MB-inspired ideology, largely associated with extremism, of his predecessor King Abdallah (Farouk & Brown, 2021, pp. 23–26). According to another expert, this choice could also serve the strategy conducted by the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed Bin Salman, of improving the monarchy's image abroad (Expert AC12). If these developments prove to be lasting, this could imply that the official discourse of the League will no longer be based on a panislamistic vision, as has been the case for decades. It remains to be seen whether these measures will lead the Geneva mosque to become more locally administered.

5.7.4 Conclusion

In summary, the FCI seems to be at the centre of a complex relationship between resident staff members, the Muslim World League and the Saudi monarchy. The influence of the MWL has tended to grow over the years and reached its peak during the 2010s. Yet, it cannot be said that the MWL gained broader impact on Muslim organisations in the Canton of Geneva, or the whole of Switzerland, through the gateway of the FCI (Expert MC14). The year 2017, characterised by the hiring of a new imam, represented a break from the previous policy. It seemed to coincide with a change in the League's philosophy following the election of the new Secretary General, Muhammad bin Abdulkarim al-Issa in 2016. The new approach envisaged is to give local actors more space in the management of the FCI, a phenomenon already observed in other centres run by the MWL in Europe. However, although the FCI is frequented in a pragmatic way by many Muslims as a prayer place, it never succeeded in being accepted as a federating authority by a wider community, least of all by Albanian and Turkish Muslims. Further concrete steps towards more local anchorage have not occurred either since 2017 (Expert MC19).

Beyond the institutional aspects, it seems that several of the mosque's activities have created strong community ties between believers. This is true for the Dar Essalam women's club, a group that meets on a regular basis and has seen the development of significant bonding social capital (cf. chapter 5.7.2). The scarcity of contacts established between the FCI, society and cantonal authorities shows, on the contrary, a relative absence of bridging social capital.

The media image presented in chapter 5.7.1 is mainly dominated by the FCI's problems in the last couple of years, as well as the transnational relations of the mosque with Saudi Arabia. It is therefore rather critical.

6. Conclusions

With its focus on Arabic-speaking Muslim communities, this study has analysed part of the Muslim sphere that is often perceived as highly controversial, both politically and in the media. On the basis of seven case studies, we have examined how transnational Islamic networks in Switzerland materialise and how local actors are connected to them (cf. table 01).

Table 01: Transnational and local ties of the case study communities

Case Study Community	Transnational Ties	Local Ties[33]
Stiftung Islamische Gemeinschaft Zürich	Financing from UAE; book gifts from Saudi-Arabia and Egypt	Membership of VIOZ
Arrahma Verein, Basel	Network of Tablighi Jamaat	Membership of BMK
Islamisches Zentrum Bern	Invitation of music group and imams of Barelwi tradition from the UK	Membership of IKB
Centre Islamique, Delémont	Informal ties through the imam	Interactions on a local and cantonal level
Centre Islamique de Lausanne	Network of Al-Ahbash	Collaboration with Islamic centres of similar orientation
Ligue des Musulmans de Suisse	Membership of Council of European Muslims (CEM)[34]	Membership of FIDS
Fondation Culturelle Islamique, Geneva	Financing and administration by the Muslim World League	Membership of UOMG

We have situated the cases on a spectrum: all show transnational ties of varying intensity, with the case which displayed the fewest being that of Delémont, whose ties were mostly situated at an individual and informal level. Local ties are present in all organisations, particularly on a formal level through membership and participation in umbrella associations. The case of Lausanne demonstrated the local ties with the most limited reach beyond the organisation's internal framework. These aspects will be discussed in more depth in the conclusions below (cf. especially conclusions 2, 5 and 7), but we will first reflect on the overall study framework and how the findings from the case studies can be dealt with.

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[33] Cf. the respective sections of chapter 5 for more details about the different umbrella organisations and their full names.

[34] This Brussels-based umbrella organisation was formerly called FIOE and is widely seen as being part of a transnational Muslim Brotherhood network (cf. chapter 4.1.2).

Through the analysis of political and media debates, as well as an examination of the public images of the seven communities, it became clear that the question of the ties Swiss Muslim organisations have to transnational networks is perceived as very controversial. This indicates that there is an urgent need for further information and clarification. Moreover, the strong polarisation of the media and political debates even makes justified criticism impossible because no shades of grey are allowed. On one side, there is general criticism, on the other apologies and an experience of powerlessness. This assessment can also be confirmed from the perspective of conflict theory: the assumption of complete opposition between the concerns of Muslim actors and the majority of society, combined with an accumulation of conflict dimensions, ultimately make constructive transformation of the conflict impossible. A general meta-conflict is ultimately unsolvable; only individual cases and individual issues can be dealt with constructively, hence the differentiated approach of this study. This has resulted in reinterpretations of widespread perceptions, which create a basis for critically addressing various aspects of the conflict. A conflict that is dealt with productively brings with it the chance that the actors involved, as well as society as a whole, will benefit and grow closer. However, this requires both a stable framework and a capacity for constructive conflict on behalf of all those involved.

An attempt is made in this conclusion to examine, in a differentiated, critical way, Swiss Muslim associations in their transnational and local interactions, with aspects such as transnational influence, ideological demarcations, local networks, financing or political approaches. The various findings of the study have shown:

1. Public perceptions, media and politics: In the media and political debates, ideas about centralised control mechanisms and strong foreign influence dominate. This common framing often excludes alternative interpretations and explanations. Actors in the case studies do not see themselves as being in a position to adequately counter the attacks of the media. However, the images presented in the media and political debates contrast with the diversity we found in the case studies. Local perceptions are often more differentiated than the view of transnational flows as a whole. Nonetheless, it also became clear that media labels and attributions can stick to associations and be uncritically reproduced, as was the case in Basel. In turn, this can slow down developments and interactions at the local level. Today, public perceptions are more sensitive and critical than before, which requires Swiss Muslim organisations to develop a capacity to respond to critiques, communicate proactively and build up trust from a local level. Notwithstanding, there is a danger that selective phenomena become generalised, overestimated and ascribed to a broad spectrum of Muslim communities, meaning that a constructive approach to communication becomes even more challenging.

2. Transnational networks: As is the case in other migration contexts, transnational networks have historically played an important role in building Muslim activities and organisational structures

in the West and in Switzerland. This has often involved contextual adaptations and further developments of the original ideologies. In many cases, however, tensions remain between different ideological positions, also the reason for widespread mistrust of the political claims of these groups. In some cases, the transnational networks which strengthen bonding social capital may also convey delimiting or exclusionary ideas, which can in turn function as elements in individual radicalisation processes, alongside other factors. In addition, the fact that Muslim communities have diversified far beyond these transnational networks, beginning processes of cultural indigenisation in fields such as spiritual care, social work, religious education or youth work. They are developing their own dynamics and structures, in which transnational networks only partially fit. In addition, the interest of Muslim communities is increasingly focused on social debates in Switzerland and less on politics in the countries of origin.

3. Languages: Of the communities studied, those which were originally founded by Arabic-speaking Muslims are multilingual and multicultural. The enduringly strong anchor of the Arabic language nonetheless gives them a pronounced international character. Communities such as these are important points of reference for tourists, migrants and new refugees, because of the common language and the often central location of their centres. People not only attend prayers there but also receive help and an orientation to Switzerland. It can be observed, however, that Swiss national languages have generally gained in importance as languages for preaching, internal community communication and educational programmes, as insight into the necessity of this step grew. As a result, distinctions between languages of origin are gradually fading into the background. This development is also linked to the second and third generations of Muslims to already be born and raised in Switzerland. The increased use of national languages therefore not only corresponds to the needs of the younger generations, but also increases transparency and accessibility for the external public.

4. Activities: The activities of the communities analysed in the case studies consist mainly of prayers and lectures, but also include language and Qur'an courses, the latter especially for children. Beyond this, counselling services are provided in some cases. In all cases, there was stronger bonding than bridging social capital—except in the case of Delémont, which has the particular status of being the only Islamic centre in its canton acting as an interlocutor for authorities and interfaith dialogue. We also observed that there had been a shift regarding some activities: interfaith programmes, social services or chaplaincy in public institutions characterised by a strong bridging dimension are increasingly carried out by specialised organisations or by overarching umbrella organisations.

5. Transnational ties: Only some of the cases are linked to the four transnational networks we analysed. While in the cases of Ahbash and the Wahhabiyya, as well as the Emirati-backed community, the links are formal and institutional, in the case of the Tablighi Jamaat relationships are more

individual and informal. In the case of the *Ligue des Musulmans de Suisse,* both its formal and institutional ties, such as membership of its European organisational structure, as well as its individual and informal ties, are relevant. We noted a broad spectrum of expression in these ties, ranging from receiving informal book gifts to rare cases of structured and regular financing in a formalised way. While transnational networks and foreign states were able to fill a vacuum in many places, from the 1960s until the turn of the millennium, and were seen by public authorities as legitimately representing Muslims, a paradigm shift has taken place. We see two main reasons for this: firstly, Swiss Muslims have developed their own thought and activities in close correspondence with contextual and local needs. In many cases, transnational ideas no longer correspond sufficiently to these. Secondly, the more active and critical attitude of European states and the public towards political influences has a restraining effect on transnational ties and favours a local shaping of Muslim life.

6. Relationship between local and transnational interactions: All cases exhibited some kind of local interactions, e.g., with authorities such as the integration office or the police, civil protection, and schools, even if these are sometimes rather limited. In contrast to more locally networked actors, at least in some cases, transnational relations prove to be a brake on stronger cooperation beyond the communities in the Swiss context. This may also be related to a reluctance on the part of state or society actors—especially in cases where transnational networks strongly shape the public image of an organisation. The field of social services is also becoming more locally anchored, meaning that new structures emerge which are more independent from transnational networks. With one exception (Lausanne), all the organisations analysed were either directly involved in multi-ethnic cantonal or national umbrella organisations or had a positive attitude towards them. We also see this as recognising internal Muslim diversity, represented both in these Swiss umbrella organisations and experienced in interactions within them. In general, for the cases analysed, participating in umbrella organisations on a cantonal or national level is of greater significance than direct local interactions.

7. Shift of power: Some of the communities in the case studies were pioneers of Islam in Switzerland and have the oldest mosques and associations. More recently, however, the field has become more differentiated, so that the actors associated with the case studies can hardly claim a representative role beyond their own association: new associations have emerged, making the religious landscape more diverse.In Switzerland, transnational networks have not succeeded in federating a broader spectrum of Muslim actors beyond their selective local presence. Additionally, as we have seen in Zürich or Vaud, cantonal umbrella associations have been established and the FIDS has strengthened its role as a national umbrella organisation. It is true that in some cases, as seen in Zürich, there were overlaps between members active both in their community and in the cantonal umbrella organisation. Generally speaking, we saw that Swiss umbrella organisations take care of external relations for Muslim communities and in some cases also gradually establish

structured chaplaincy services. Through their formal ties to the umbrella organisation structures the organisations in the case studies (with the exception already mentioned in conclusion 6) participate at least indirectly in these activities and are continuously informed about them. In this way, the organisations are involved in the umbrella organisation's efforts to build constructive relationships within Swiss society.

8. Finances: It appears that only a small number of mosques in Switzerland are financed from abroad.[35] The mosque studied in Zürich receives regular funding from the Emirates. In Geneva, income from buildings once purchased by Saudi Arabia guarantee the functioning of the centre. The foundation in Zürich was transparent about its funding source from the Emirates. Transparency is a factor which strongly contributes to a positive public image; communities can strengthen this aspect by publishing annual reports with clear information, for example. However, the Zürich case illustrates that foreign financing can also slow down development opportunities. This highlights how important it is to deal with the issue how religious communities are financed under private law in Switzerland. Increased domestic funding opportunities may act as an alternative to foreign funding and increase local interactions with public agencies, foundations and other civil society organisations. Such funding would also provide greater possibilities for paying indemnities to people who take responsibility for certain activities. This could have the effect of strengthening local interactions in which benevolent structures are often a limiting factor.

9. Imams and community leadership: In some of the case study communities, the imam plays an important role, whereas in others the board seems to have a key role. Generational change is particularly evident in the boards of directors who, in some cases, belong to the second or third generation. This sometimes leads to detachment between them and new migrants, as in Bern and Zürich. Conversely, Geneva was an example of the targeted recruitment of an imam who is strongly anchored in Switzerland. Due to the wide reach of the Arabic language, the educational pathways of imams proved to be particularly diverse, especially among the original Arabic-speaking communities. We see this as a further indication of the fragmentation and diversity of these communities. Particularly among Arabic-speaking imams in Switzerland, there are still some who have mainly studied through the personal transmission of knowledge from teacher to student (*ijāza*). However, several imams have acquired university degrees and further education certificates in Switzerland, an expression of local anchoring. Their public visibility is nonetheless still

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[35]   The funding of imams in 34 local associations by the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs *Diyanet* is well known (cf. Schmid & Trucco, 2019, p. 11). However, this does not exclude the fact that the local associations have their own dynamics, which are strongly related to the Swiss context. Moreover, as Chesnot and Malbrunot (2019, pp. 183–205) have shown, there have been money flows from Qatar Charity to Switzerland, although these have been subject to change since their data collection (Burnand, 2019a).

rather limited. However, other key figures often considered as problematic are also less promi-nent in current public debate. Finally, we would like to highlight the significance of a case which demonstrated how self-regulation could work: that of the touring Salafist preacher who led to an organisation altering its policy.

10. Women: Both in terms of premises and in terms of participation on the board, the space for women is rather limited in many Islamic centres. In contrast to the umbrella organisations in Western Switzerland, UVAM and UOMG, both currently presided over by a woman, female actors do not play a leading role in the organisations represented in the case studies. In contrast to Turk-ish-speaking communities, we did not observe here that women were employed as theologians. However, women partly find a place within the framework of women's sections and women-spe-cific activities, which remain less publicly visible than those of their male counterparts but which, as in Geneva, develop important activities in the fields of pedagogy and youth work. Some female community members also criticise the imams for not sufficiently taking into account women's specific concerns. The existence of several separate women's associations within Arabic-speaking communities is also an indicator that women are claiming their own agency. Another option, be-sides limited participation in the Islamic centre activities and the creation of their own structures, is withdrawal. This seems to be increasingly favoured by young women, who are in search of spaces where Muslim dimensions are brought together with other elements of their identity.

All in all, it is evident that the Swiss Muslim communities we studied are highly diverse and dy-namic. Against this background, it is not helpful to categorise certain phenomena under general terms such as "Islamism" or "political Islam", which do not do justice to the complexity and dy-namics of both transnational networks and local cases. Our research was able to address a selected range of examples, yet it remains desirable to deepen these dynamics through further research, in order to contribute to a more differentiated media and political perception as well. The extent to which transnational relations are developed and how this relates to local interactions is not predetermined by a centralist organisational structure. On the contrary, this can be shaped by various actors. On one hand, it is Muslim actors themselves who have built up and continuously developed the Muslim organisational landscape in Switzerland. They can further intensify local ties and make their activities even more transparent. On the other hand, Swiss political actors can also contribute to strengthening the relationship and local involvement of Muslim communities. An intensified exchange and a greater awareness of their needs would already be a first step to-wards social recognition. Increased funding opportunities in Switzerland, for example in the field of social services, would further boost their integration in the Swiss context. This would reinforce tendencies that are already in progress. However, even if there is a strong development towards more local anchoring, transnational relations will continue to exist and be formative in the future, as they are in other global religions.

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Experts and Interviews

Academia

Expert consultation AC01; academia (10.06.2020)
Expert consultation AC02; academia (30.06.2020)
Expert consultation AC03; academia (16.07.2020)
Expert consultation AC04; academia (11.08.2020)
Expert consultation AC05; academia (24.08.2020)
Expert consultation AC06; academia (09.11.2020)
Expert consultation AC07; academia (01.02.2021)
Expert consultation AC08; academia (09.02.2021)
Expert consultation AC09; academia (16.02.2021)
Expert consultation AC10; academia (01.03.2021)
Expert consultation AC11; academia (06.05.2021)
Expert consultation AC12; academia (26.05.2021)
Expert consultation AC13; academia (13.12.2021)

Muslim Communities

Expert consultation MC01; Muslim communities (15.10.2020 / 08.12.2021)
Interview MC02; Muslim communities (15.03.2021)
Expert consultation MC03: Muslim communities (16.03.2021)
Interview MC04; Muslim communities (23.03.2021)
Interview MC05; Muslim communities (25.03.2021)
Interview MC06; Muslim communities (29.03.2021)
Interview MC07; Muslim communities (30.03.2021)
Interview MC08; Muslim communities (20.04.2021)
Interview MC09; Muslim communities (27.04.2021)
Expert consultation MC10; Muslim communities (09.05.2021)
Interview MC11; Muslim Communities (10.05.2021)
Expert consultation MC12; Muslim communities (27.05.2021)
Interview MC13; Muslim communities (04.09.2015)
Expert consultation MC14; Muslim communities (10.11.2021 / 07.12.2021)
Expert consultation MC15; Muslim communities (12.04.2021)
Expert consultation MC16; Muslim communities (16.12.2021)
Expert consultation MC17; Muslim communities (09.12.2021)
Expert consultation MC18; Muslim communities (02.02.2022)
Expert consultation MC19; Muslim communities (18.02.2022)

Public Authorities

Expert consultation PA01; public authorities (04.11.2020)
Expert consultation PA02; public authorities (09.02.2021)
Expert consultation PA03; public authorities (22.04.2021)
Expert consultation PA04; public authorities (27.04.2021)
Expert consultation PA05; public authorities (18.05.2021)

Expert consultation PA06; public authorities (17.07.2021)
Expert consultation PA07; public authorities (09.11.2021)

Other Religious Communities

Expert consultation RC01; other religious communities (08.02.2021)
Expert consultation RC02; other religious communities (09.02.2021)
Interview RC03; other religious communities (26.06.2019)

Appendix 1: Media Surveyed by *Swissdox*

In 2021, the following media (in French and German) relevant to our case study were surveyed by *swissdox*:

20 Minuten	Freiburger Nachrichten	Seetaler Bote
20 Minuten online	Furttaler	Solothurner Zeitung
20 minutes	Glattaler	solothurnerzeitung.ch
20 minutes online	Grenchner Tagblatt	Sonntagsblick
24 heures	grenchnertagblatt.ch	Sonntagszeitung
24heures.ch	Journal du Jura	srf.ch
Aargauer Zeitung	kath.ch	St. Galler Tagblatt
aargauerzeitung.ch	lagruyere.ch	Südostschweiz
Appenzeller Zeitung	Der Landbote	swissinfo.ch
BZ	langenthalertagblatt.ch	Tagblatt der Stadt Zürich
BZ am Sonntag	lecourrier.ch	tagblatt.ch
Badener Tagblatt	lematin.ch	Tages-Anzeiger
Basler Zeitung	letemps.ch	tagesanzeiger.ch
bazonline.ch	La Liberté	tdg.ch
Berner Oberländer	Limmattaler Zeitung	Le Temps
berneroberlaender.ch	limmattalerzeitung.ch	Thuner Tagblatt
Berner Zeitung	Luzerner Zeitung	thunertagblatt.ch
bernerzeitung.ch	luzernerzeitung.ch	Thurgauer Zeitung
Bieler Tagblatt	Le Matin Dimanche	Toggenburger Tagblatt
Blick	nau.ch	Tribune de Genève
blick.ch	NZZ	Volketswiler
bluewin.ch	Le Nouvelliste	Walliser Bote
Bote der Urschweiz	NZZ am Sonntag	watson.ch
bote.ch	nzz.ch	Die Weltwoche
La Broye	Oltener Tagblatt	Werdenberger & Obertoggenburger
Der Bund	oltenertagblatt.ch	zentralplus
Bündner Tagblatt	ref.ch	Zürcher Oberländer
bz	reformiert	Zürcher Unterländer
bzbasel.ch	Der Rheintaler	
derbund.ch	rts.ch	
dieostschweiz.ch	Schaffhauser Nachrichten	

The different media archived vary by year due to changes in the Swiss media landscape (swissdox, 2021).