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A Mosque under the rainbow

Islam, homosexuality and identity in
contemporary Berlin

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1. Introduction

I am standing on a rough, old staircase in East Berlin when a young man with worn blue jeans and a black T-shirt opens an old, brown door. He smiles and welcomes me into the house. Hanz offers me Turkish tea in a glass. It feels like any ordinary family home in Berlin with children's toys lying here and there on the floor.

This is my first interview with Hanz. We are at his place. His kids are off to school and his wife is at work. What differs from an ordinary family man in Berlin is that this what I meet here is only a part of Hanz's life. Here Hanz is an ordinary German Muslim family man. Although what we will talk about is the part of his life that he can not reveal to his family. This means the part of his life that includes the love to another man. When I ask him to explain what he thinks would have happened if he told his family he tells me one thing his father once said when he got suspicious. This was right before Hanz was told that they had found a suitable woman for him.

If I found out that you have been with a man [sexually], I will kill you! [His dad said] We never spoke about it again, and then ... then I got married [to a woman]. That is of course hiding from the truth for the rest of my life. But I can't do anything else. I am literally two persons ... two, and that's just how life is.

(Hanz Interview one)

Although there is widespread agreement that living as a homosexual in Europe is easier than in many non-European Islamic countries, it does not mean that it is in fact easy and that people do not suffer. In Berlin, for example, homosexual Muslims are more delimited than other immigrants due to the fact that on one hand immigrants (as will be shown) especially with a Muslim background are met with prejudice and fear established by, among other things, lack of education and media-created stigma. On the other hand, there is an idea among my informants about homosexuality as forbidden (haram) in Islam. This creates an environment that makes non-heterosexual people live on the edge of their society.

Even though Berlin today has laws that protect homosexuals as well as immigrants, there is more that could be done. As I will show there is a lack of education and even though laws are

necessary the laws and good intentions in themselves does not inevitably create an open environment.

My research equals with what the German association for homo, bi-sexual and transgendered (hereafter called LSVD¹) has discovered is the case for the majority of the immigrants with a Muslim background. Most Muslims can not be outed and they have to follow the ideas that their original family contexts entail. That is a context that either are against homosexuality or do not have a concept of homosexuality as an identity.

My intention with this master thesis is to show how non-heterosexual people with Muslim background adapt, embrace and negotiate their beliefs in God and their religious identity in relation to their sexual identity in contemporary Berlin. The aim is to discuss how the informants are placed in a situation of double alienation.

I base my research in a social constructivist point of view in other words from a viewpoint where humans are seen as constructors of their life's and identities. Thus, I try to explain how my informants negotiate their space and beliefs in God based on how their interact with their given environment and context as well as how the environment interact with them.

My main questions are:

- How do the informants, the Berlin natives, and the Islam community look upon homosexual Muslims in Berlin?
- How much impact does the Berlin state have (with its laws and educational system) on creating a safe space for Homosexual Muslims?
- How important is the religion for the informants as individuals?

Moving on, the thesis is based on interviews and fieldwork with five homosexual Muslims that live in Berlin. They will be called Hanz, Aysha, Cem, Meral and Peter and they will be presented to the reader more closely in the following method chapter. These five peoples thoughts and ideas provide the ground for this thesis. Obviously it is their truth, and it is relevant, timely and important. Because even though the individual negotiations and space can vary among my

¹ Lesben und Schwuleneband in Deutschland. LSVD is the main organization for Lesbian, gay, queer, bisexual, and transsexual persons in Germany.

participants, they have one big thing in common. Due to the cultural religious background they all have to hide a part of them selves in a society that claims to be open, tolerant and forgiving.

The disposition in this thesis is carefully planned. The outline will show how my informants not only by their culture or faith, but also through community design, education, and lack of education is placed in a situation of double alienation. The chapters are disposed like this: After I explained the method and theory and briefly introduced my informants I will introduce you to a chapter about homosexuality. In this chapter I will discuss Homosexuality as an identity concept, homosexuality in the history and laws of Berlin and of course what is taught about sexuality and homosexuality in the Berlin education system. After that follows a similar chapter about Islam in Berlin.

In the chapters about Islam I will first discuss the question of how and when one could be considered a Muslim. Since there is no consensus on Islam as a concept there are of course also several ideas of what a Muslim is supposed to be, or rather who is a “real” Muslim. The ideas can vary from how many rituals you are supposed to follow to be a Muslim or even to state yourself a non-believing Muslim. Then follows a chapter with an introduction to current statistics and current situations for Muslim immigrants in Berlin and how religion is taught in school are also discussed. These chapters will give you a brief idea of how my participants’ alienation is created. The idea is to give the reader an insight into the informants' external world in order to understand their inner world.

Following the two chapters about Islam and homosexuality comes a chapter in which I weave together Islam and homosexuality and by that for instance discuss homosexuality in Islamic scriptures and law. This pursued by a discussion about how my informants negotiate space and identity with themselves, their families and beliefs. I will also deliberate the issue of double discrimination, which is a part of my informants’ everyday life. Then there is a conclusion and a discussion on how we could continue from here in the research area.

Finally, although my thesis is about what happens when an alternative sexual identity collides with the sphere of Islamic religion and tied to a specific European City as Berlin. The focus is mainly laid on what my informants highlighted in the field study and from that point I also discuss how they construct their identity. Focus on religion varied, in the beginning and starting interviews the religion and bound to rituals and scriptures where more highlighted. At the end of

the study, when they got to know me, personal space and social alienation took up more space. No doubt religion is important for my informants, both on personal and wider level. Studying in the field of social theory and working with humans as studied objects it opens up a multifaceted world. There are no easy answers. With this I welcome you into the life of five Muslim, non-heterosexual people in contemporary Berlin. It is my hope that their life stories and my analysis will contribute to wider knowledge and understanding of this complex and multilayered field. I am grateful and honored to have been invited to share their lives and stories.

2. Methodology - consideration and material

In the following chapter my purpose is to give a brief introduction to the data collection methods and a presentation of the material used in this thesis. This thesis is based on material gathered through fieldwork and interviews in Berlin, Germany between January and July 2011. Certainly there are some things in need of consideration.

First qualitative research is by necessity subjective, because of the close personal relationship between the researcher and the people studied². I have tried to give a picture of my informants and their negotiation of religion and space in contemporary Berlin that is as close to the stories they have conveyed to me as possible. Nevertheless it is possible for one person to describe a field or phenomena truthfully so that other people can get a good knowledge of a field or phenomena. By this we also should be aware of the essence of knowledge.

My standpoint as a researcher is that our reality, such as ideas, cultures and identity is constructed by individuals living in the context. Also I do believe that knowledge about humans is created in the space between individuals in conversation and interaction between individuals and analyzes of the society. I believe it is an ongoing process and therefore we should not search for a specific and ‘proper’ answer when it comes to studies of human interactions. This is also not a goal for a researcher in the field of social theory. Ideas and by that culture, religions and knowledge is sensitive to worldly changes and what is true in a society today might differ in a few years with a new generation. The researchers’ goal is to look at the field and try to explain what he sees as truthfully as possible and in a language so that anybody could understand it.

Moving on, in the beginning of my research I expected to be able to follow at least 10 people. I was convinced that Berlin was much more liberal and safer than I discovered. The state of Berlin (Bundes Land) has written laws³ against discrimination on the grounds of race, sexual orientation, gender etc. In addition to that, the state of Berlin has a Mayor (Bürgermeister) by the name of Klaus Wowereit⁴ who came out in public and a president, Christian Wulff, who claims “*Islam is a part of Germany*”⁵. For these and other reasons, as I will explain in my history

² Bryman 2004:424

³ The German Constituion 2011.08.20

⁴ Klaus Wowereit is the first ruling Mayor in the State of Berlin that outed officially in a speech to the Berlin citizens.

⁵ Cristian Wulff. (Germanys current president) tells the audience that Islam is a part of Germany in a speech. In: <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/wulff-islam-gehoert-zu-deutschland/1948760.html>

chapter, I thought the situation in Berlin for homosexual Muslims would be easier and also, because of this, I thought that it would be less difficult to find respondents for my thesis. Unfortunately, as I soon came to realize, I was wrong in this assertion. A new understanding appeared. Along the way, I have gained many new insights. This, I believe, is how we learn to understand our world.

Moving on and as I mentioned previously, at first it seemed impossible to find people to speak with. I contacted over 150 organizations, schools and gay communities. I have put out Google ads and Facebook ads and I put up a website where I searched for informants⁶. I found five willing to share their lives with me. The main part of my work is based on interviews and field notes with my informants, except for Meral that I only had two interviews with. This will be discussed more soon.

When it comes to the fieldwork, it consists of participation in various situations, like for example, hanging out at gay cafes, eating, attend gay parties, sometimes specifically party for homosexuals with an oriental background. I have also participated in some of the informants homes, bowling with their friends, talk over a cup of coffee and also participated in two leisure groups for homo, bi and transsexuals. These observations gave an opportunity to collect a wide range of data. This approach provided an opportunity to observe things that the informants themselves might be unaware of or unwilling to discuss in an interview. This I believe is important for any field study because as Dewalt & Dewalt puts it. Fieldwork is “A method in which a researcher takes part in daily activities, rituals, interactions and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture.”⁷

Given the problems with fear among the people I met in the search for informants my original intention to narrow my research to perhaps one specific group of immigrant Muslims was changed. I had to stick with what I got. Although working in this field I discovered I was not alone with these problems. During my fieldwork I talked to other researchers. And for example, according to material provided by LSVD (Lesben und Schwule Verband Deutschland)⁸ and

⁶ www.iammagdalena.de although the project website moved at the end of the writing process to www.amosqueundertherainbow.com

⁷ Dewalt and Dewalt 2002:1

⁸ The Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany

research made by Michael Bochow the fear to participate is triggered by the wide struggle for Muslims because of the fear of retaliation produced by their families. In other words the same response I got from the organizations and individuals I contacted when I searched for informants.

Previous research in this field

The area of non-heterosexuality and immigrants has been researched in some aspects. I have read research in religious studies, behavioral science and sociology that touches the area of my particular research. The ones I have chosen to present are connected and relevant to my work, therefore I will mention some of the researcher in this field that I feel are especially important for my research. I have chosen to not present the study of their theoretical perspectives in more detail. This, because they are highlighting problems in the same field but not the exact same problem as I do. Hence I believe that the theories used is not relevant in my case. The researchers are chosen by their direct connection to the field in Germany or otherwise important work in the field of immigration, Islam, and sexuality.

First I relate to Professor, **Melanie C. Steffens** work especially by using her studies about immigrants in Germany and creation of in and out-groups. For my work she is specially interesting due to her special interest in this field includes attitudes towards lesbians and gay men and gender stereotyping. She has much impact on the German view of integration. Her work is often used by the official LGBT organization in Germany in particular, guidance leaflets for people who work with gay Muslims, the Governments work on integration and LGBT issues. One of her most important work for this study is her large quantitative study made of 252 queries, she has covered several areas such as the reactions of parents, role-playing, and self-images. That study conveys a stigma and stereotyping, which according to Steffens calls for more qualitative studies.⁹ Since her studies are influential in Germany and she is a well known scholar she is worth mentioning.

Except for the work in the LSVD information material she has published articles relevant for this field such as: *Implicit and explicit attitudes towards lesbians and gay men*. Which covers exactly what the title says attitudes towards homosexuals, this is especially interesting when speaking to people that are seen as different, due to their sexuality, in Berlin. Steffens also published several articles in psychology journals on the topic of in-groups and out-groups how humans construct

⁹ Steffens 2010:21

”the other” like for instance: *Blinded by the accent! The minor role of looks in ethnic categorization* and *when it matters how you pronounce it: The influence of regional accents on job interview outcome*. Unlike her I used a very small study focusing on a very specific group of informants and their experience. Adapting more of what they lifted instead of making general conclusions. When you want to dig deeper among research covering attitudes against non heterosexuals and immigrants it is worth while to look trough Steffens bibliography.

When it comes to the particular area about negotiation of space in contemporary European society. There are two names especially relevant for my research. I have related to the German Sociologist **Michael Boshow** and the English professor **Andrew Yip** in my work.

Michael Bochow has covered the area of homosexuality among immigrants and in particular focus on the impact of HIV/AIDS. Not particularly Muslims rather he is counted as an expert on Men and homosexuality in Germany. He also covered many areas tied to mine, of which I laid special interest on his book, *Das Kürzere Ende des Regenbogens. HIV-Infektionsrisiken und soziale Ungleichheit bei schwulen Männer*, in which he did interviews with HIV/AIDS-infected homosexual immigrant men on how they lived their lives and thought about for example sexual risks and promiscuousity. Even though his findings in particular covers HIV patients’ he touches the area of immigrants, Muslims and homosexuality and negotiation of space. Bochows studies of gay men are very influential in Germany and covers fields like lower-class gay men, elder gay men, Turkish men that have sex with men. Unlike him I focused on healthy young men and woman and in a much more narrow study.

Also in **Boshow** and **Mr. Marbachs** book *Homosexualität und Islam Michael Boshow* published the article *Sex unter Männer oder schwuler Sex. Zur sozialen Konstruktion von Männlichkeit unter türkisch-, kurdisch- und arabischstämmigen Migranten in Deutschland. Einige Anmerkung zur Wahrnehmung des Islam in Deutschland*, about sex between men with Turkish, Kurdish or Arabic background in Germany and it is about space construction among immigrants especially the focus on Turkey is relevant for this particular thesis.

Another very important researcher in the field of identity, sexuality and faith is professor **Andrew Yip**, a sociologist at the University of Nottingham. He became important to my study because he laid emphasis on studies the lived experiences and life circumstances of individuals within sexual, religious, and ethnic minorities. He has conducted similar types of studies in

Britain and for me his article, *Negotiating space with family and kin in identity construction: The narratives of British non-heterosexual Muslims*, is especially important. Yip's focus is within religion and sexualities, in particular Christianity and Islam. In this field, he is currently working within a project about Religion, Youth, and Sexuality: A Multi-faith Exploration, in which they explore the sexual attitudes and practices of young people of various sexual orientations, from six religious traditions. And tied to this he recently published a short information brochure together with Michael Keenan and Sarah-Jane Page about religion youth and Sexuality that is directly relevant to mine since it discusses the matter in a contemporary European context. Yip's research work reaches out to several European countries, this in collaboration with colleagues from Italy, Slovenia, and Hungary. In particular on a EU-funded project entitled *Citizens in Diversity: A Four-Nation Study on Homophobia and Fundamental Rights*. Yip is very influential in this area and therefore a must when you conduct a study in the field of identity, asexuality and Islam as this is. Unlike him I focused on Islam in particular in a very specific town and therefore could provide a very intimate study that adds to his research by the real close relationship I developed to my informants.

When it comes to studies about homosexuality in the Islamic scripture and literature there are also several sources. Among them I would like to mention Dr. **Scott Kugle** as relevant sources. I used his book, *Homosexuality in Islam: Islamic Reflection on Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Muslims*, to discuss what my informants highlighted as relevant for them in the scriptures. Kugle's book covers both Quran interpretations and how Hadiths were interpreted and still are used in the field of sexuality and sexual acts and behavior. Unlike him I do not discuss the scriptures on a deeper level. I touch the surahs that my informants mention whereas Kugle digs deep into how to interpret the scriptures and how to evaluate whether a hadith is likely to be false or not. Since my informants mentioned their relationship to the Quran Kugle is among the most relevant researchers in this field today.

Kugle is currently working on a book that will be released next year. In that upcoming book Kugle will analyze modes of activism among lesbian, transgender and gay Muslim activists who help to organize and run support and advocacy groups.

Dr. **Samar Habib** has done extensive research about female homosexuality in the medieval Arabic literature. Being an editor of a book called *Islam and Homosexuality* and written a lot of articles in the field, among them I have laid special importance on, *Reading the Familiarity of*

the Past: an Introduction to Medieval Arabic Literature on Female Homosexuality. This since Habib here lays emphasis on the many aspects of when Islam meets a diversity of sexuality. And because of this work she is important for anyone studying in this field. She talks about different aspects of sexuality and also homosexuality in the Arabic and Muslim context and gives a overview of how sexuality has been seen in different contexts. This is relevant in this study due to the fact that my informants claim that their parents has a different (and old fashioned) view based in “their” culture.

When it comes to qualitative work we have two Swedish timely and relevant researchers, **Anna af Burén** who earlier wrote *Queer jihad: HBT-muslimer i väst* and is currently doing her PhD in the project *Religious ambiguities on the urban scene: Strategies of coping with religious diversity around the Baltic Sea*. The other researcher with a qualitative approach on the field of sexual identity and Islam is **Erika Li Lindqvist**. Within her paper *Kring könet råder tystnaden* she spoke about power and sexuality between men in Muslim tradition. Lindqvist is currently in Beirut working on another project in the same field. Her thesis where she investigate, analyze, systematize, categorize and review Beirut's Queer scene. The collected material will result in a master's thesis with the working title, *Queer Jihad - gay and lesbian Struggle for Identity in Muslim Lebanon*. I have not used these researchers as particular sources to make any statements in my thesis, although since both of them did conduct qualitative in-deep field studies in the field of homosexuality in Islam it was important to get an insight into the field with their studies.

To conclude this, much remains to be done in this field. It is not a big field although I have mentioned those researchers that are directly tied to my current study. In my bibliography you will find a list with other books and articles on the topic of religion and sexualities.

Moving on to problems in this project, there was a question of how to protect my informants from getting hurt. What kind of issues did I face? I will go trough them in the following part of the thesis.

Ethical Issues and anonymization of participants

The moral implications of fieldwork can be many but mostly it focuses on guidelines like informal consent, confidentiality and consequences.¹⁰ Since this thesis is about the informants and their personal thoughts about their sexuality and their view of their religion. It is critical not to reveal the identity of the informants.¹¹ It is impossible, for me, to determine what kind of information that would harm them if their identities were to be made public. Things that might strike me as unimportant can be harmful, and vice versa. In order to ensure their anonymity, their names were altered with names that they chose for themselves during the interviews. Other things, like for instance exact number of siblings or children, were left out. I will now give a brief introduction to my informants here.

Short presentation of the participants

This paper is based primarily on my field notes and some formal interviews with five respondents that are called Peter, Aysha, Hanz, Meral and Cem. They are all highly educated and between 25-34 years old. All of them consider themselves Muslim as well as homosexual. All of them currently live in the German state of Berlin. All of my informants are currently living double lives. One with their family in the religious community, and another life where they express their sexual identity. My informants descend from three different countries:

- Hanz is of Turkish decent. He is one out of several children and married (to a woman). They have several kids together. Hanz also have a lover/boyfriend on the side. He is highly educated and has a big family.
- Cem also have Turkish roots. He is born in Germany and has several siblings. He has a boyfriend.
- Peter is also from a Turkish descend. Have several siblings and a boyfriend since several years. He was once engaged (to a woman).

¹⁰ Kvale 1996:153

¹¹ Kvale 1996:114

- Aysha descends from Lebanon. She is the only child. She is also born in Germany and she has a girlfriend.
- Meral calls herself Palestinian but also has Lebanese background and is brought up in German. She is currently single.

During the fieldwork there were of course some difficulties. To get a full understanding of my work I think some of those problems are worth mentioning.

Problems during the fieldwork

For some reason it was easier to approach the men. This can be related to many factors. Perhaps one could be that we have many interests or hobbies in common. Maybe it was something else. The person I had most trouble getting close to was Meral. Outside the interviews I have met four of the informants in various situations, except for Meral. She has a very strong integrity that was hard for me to get close to. Therefore instead of following her in her daily life I had to rely only on the interviews with her. I would not want to push them because as a researcher you are supposed to let your informants lead so that the picture of their life emerges. Therefore, due to the fact that all of them live double lives in some aspect I have never asked to be invited to their homes. Despite of this Hanz, Peter and Cem all eventually invited me to their homes. The girls, on the other hand, never invited me. This can also depend on many things, maybe we just did not connect, maybe it was something else, but it did differ. Maybe it was too risky due to family factors. Another factor could be the fact that I, due to my leisure interests, had easier to approach the men because they happened to like the same things. We all like football, computer games, and music. Also we all had similar experience of study and work, while the girls and I stood more apart from each other interest wise.

Besides parties, interviews and lunches I also got involved in some leisure groups while contacting organizations.¹² Leisure groups are not necessarily a Muslim group. It is more like a group people spending their spare time together. These gave a good feeling for the situation for homosexuals and immigrants in Berlin. There were other problems to

¹² A leisure group can be constructed in almost any shape and meaning from a group that regularly plays Playstation games together to groups that might meet and create political groups. There is no accuracy. In this case, it was all about groups that were initiated by one of Germany's all compounds of non-heterosexual or immigrant associations for gay and bisexual people who want to hang out together. There are several organizations of this kind in Berlin and many organizations for non-heterosexual immigrants to.

I often felt that it was impossible to use a recorder during fieldwork. I sensed that recording that would take away some of the natural atmosphere from the fieldwork. Also sometimes there were more practical problems like loud music and similar. I had to rely on my notes. When a researcher does not use a recording device he has to rely on his memory. But as Kvale puts it, this can make the interviewer include the visual situation of the atmosphere and interaction that is lost in an audiotape recording¹³

To come around the recording problem, I tried to write as soon as possible. Of course I could not write everything down on spot. Sometimes when we talked I sneaked in to the bathroom or wrote when they for example ordered beer. Sometimes I had to wait for an opportunity to pick up my notebook later. I have given my informants a chance to look through my notes. Those who chose to did not seem to have any objections.

Interviewing requires good listening skill as well as a good understanding of the information shared between the interviewer and the informant. But interviews are also about well-formulated questions and creating a good environment to construct meaningful knowledge.¹⁴ To create this environment, I used open conversation with some questions in mind, which I also pushed for if needed during interviews or meet ups. Open questions allow the respondent to be more relaxed and reflective upon his/her own situation in relation to others and give an opportunity for narratives to emerge.¹⁵ Then there is another question when it comes to understanding my informants. Which language should we use?

Language and translation

The language used during both fieldwork and interviews were English and German, sometimes with intertwined words of Arabic or Turkish. I did not use an interpreter. Some confusion and misunderstandings are always a risk when the researcher is in an unfamiliar cultural context using his /her second languages. One must take into account that this may cause misinterpretations. I am aware of that so when I have translated words with different meanings I provide you with the German word used to avoid misunderstanding.

¹³ Kvale 1996: 161

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Kvale 1996: 161

Needless to say such a small number of interviews might raise questions concerning whether it is possible to construct a full portrait of the community. Bear in mind that this is not my intention. No one can possibly claim to have the truth for all homosexual Muslims in Berlin. This thesis only holds a part of the story and it is not a complete one. What I am discussing here is the stories of Hanz, Cem, Peter, Aysha and Meral. This is their life and their truth. As Ragin puts it: “The number is not what matters, “it is the soundness of the portrayal (...)”¹⁶ Saying that it might be good to tell the reader a little about my background and thoughts about research and religion.

The researcher and the field

As a researcher in this type of study I need to say something about myself. This might be important to know to judge my possible bias. I am a Swedish woman that lives in the capital of Sweden. I do not believe in any god. This last part caused some trouble, especially for Aysha and Hanz. Sometimes I got answers similar to: “But you will never understand because you have not found God”¹⁷. This idea took various forms. Sometimes Aysha just tried to convince me about the importance of ‘having God in my life’. Hanz took this a step further the more we got to know each other. When I asked him a question he did not really consider or did not have the answer to he started to tell me that I would not understand what he said anyway because I was not a Muslim.

One might ask oneself if this statement of my informants does point out a true problem? Is it not possible for an agnostic to see the ‘truth’ of one who believes? First off all I do think that it is possible to understand somebody that has a different idea or belief. If I did not think so the whole idea of this thesis would be pointless. What researchers do is interpretation and add their own understanding of the realities they are studying. It should be seen as a mixture of what they told me and what I already think since every human’s understanding of others is determined by my background and determine the whole enterprise. Because of that there are some aspects that is impossible to reach.

¹⁶ Ragin 1994:87.

¹⁷ Lunch with Aysha. 2011.

Every individual carries his or her inner emotional world that nobody else have access to. But this counts for everybody and does not mean that you are incapable of create an understanding the overall idea and cogitation. When it comes to the statement made by Aysha above about my possible lack of understanding since I do not believe it is important to know some things. Even though I have my understanding and my language, and Aysha has hers it does not mean that we cannot create understanding.

When Aysha and Hanz claim I would never understand this is something worth considering. Yet I do not doubt that I am capable of understanding and giving a true picture of my informants' life. We might interpret some things differently or have different worldviews but basically it all comes down to the fact that as a researcher you should be able to listening to the nuances and be open to different people different ways of understanding the world they live in. It is not up to me to judge what they say although subjectivity, due to my own cultural background, of course add some sort of influences that another researcher might have shown differently. My aim is to describe their experience as close as possible.

It is crucial to understand that for any researcher in this field. When it comes to religion as a researcher one should not (and cannot) have an opinion about what is true or false in the world of religion. We can only conclude that all categories and expressions are constructs that correspond to given historical and social situations. Or as Berger states it:

The scientific study of religion must bracket the ultimate truth claims implied by its subjects ... gods are not empirically available, and neither their nature nor their existence can be verified trough the very limited procedures given to the scientist ... they are only available qua contents of human consciousness (Berger 1974)

Nevertheless a researchers background affects his or her research in a way. But with empathy every human is able to understand or at least create an understanding for social phenomena's' with his own experiences. If I did not believe that my method of research would be senseless.

Speaking about method it is important to mention that this study was base on a Qualitative methodology where I, as a researcher, have looks at the whole picture. This means that since a qualitative study is a circular process planning can be changed and allowed to develop during

work.¹⁸ Focus of the work is more on analysis than on planning before. Because it was a study of the informants' experiences it was about finding a balance between participation and interviews and also the material.

All the collected material was read and reread. Meaning-bearing units were identified and grouped into mutually exclusive categories such as how is it to be a Muslim in contemporary Berlin. Why is God important for my informants? Is the religion depending on the scriptures or something else? How important is the surrounding environment in the identity creation process? Is the society and education co-workers in the process? The emphasis in studies like this is usually at the end of the process when I compared the collected data with literature and other studies. Of course I could have missed some things. There is always a risk of falling into the trap of the Halo effect where some details of the material may be highlighted as too important.

This blindness is a fact we can not escape when we study social theoretical field due to the fact that we don't work with measurable things. We can of course not measure interpretation or feelings in another human being. Instead we have to try to be as open and true to the material possible and honest enough not least to ourselves to be able to objectively describe and explain even things that might not fit into the context that was the reason we first started to study a phenomena. Now it is time to meet my participants and take part of their life. Next I will start to talk about homosexuality in laws, schools and contemporary Western Europe.

¹⁸ Flyvbjerg 2006:219-245

3. Being gay in Berlin -to speak the unspeakable

Cem did not hesitate to meet me when he saw my ad at one of the tables in a gay bar. And now I am here at his work, holding a mug of scalding hot coffee. I am watching this young man, with black hair and deep dark brown eyes. He is dressed in typical Berlin street wear, Ed-hardy Shirt, and G-star jeans. Clothes are important to Cem; this becomes clearer the more I get to know him. His smile is contagious and he whistles a little while he pours coffee for himself and sits down on the worn brown desk chair in the shabby office. Underneath the smile he observes my every move. Maybe it is curiosity and maybe he is a little nervous. But he lightens up soon and is very open with his thoughts. In this first meeting we talk about family and that he feels that he cannot tell them that he is gay. Cem stares into the cup of black hot coffee and tells me:

It is hard with homosexuality it doesn't really exist in our community.

I: What do you mean not exist?

C: Its like ...we don't talk about it as people here does it. In Germany a guy can be gay ... because it is in the west and it exist but we have ...for us family is important ...to get kids. So it's more ...we have a family and then we fuck. Maybe. Maybe therefore some scholars say it's forbidden? It's forbidden with sex ... sex the wrong way.

I: The wrong way?

C: Yeah like oral, and anal ... and stuff. Like you can't fuck a woman in the ass either because it means no kids. But that is not religion that is more like ... culture. At least in my mind.

I: So, God did not forbid that?

C: No ...I think it is in the Quran, maybe and ...maybe one hadith. But ... the paradise ...the manly paradise is also filled with young beautiful boys that will seduce (the men). If he (God) rewards us with boys how could he be against it? (Cem interview one)

Cem makes several valuable points. First, which is very interesting, Cem obviously reflected about whether 'how sex is supposed to be acted out' is tied to religion or to culture. And he differs between the concepts. This is something that researchers discuss all the time, whether there is possible to separate religion from culture or not. I will get back to this later in this thesis, but first something briefly about this chapter.

As said in the introduction I have divided my thesis into different parts. This chapter will deal with homosexuality as concepts. Investigate homosexuality in Berlin's history and law and how it looks today. The topic of homosexuality in Islam is a contrast to what you meet during a walk at a street at for instance Mehringsdamm or Nollendorfsplatz in Berlin. Gay Flags, Gay bars. Bruno shop¹⁹, organizations, gay hostels. The topic of homosexuality in the Islamic world is largely unexplored.²⁰ And as Cem says 'homosexuality' does not really exist in his community, he points out the fact that there is no consensus or self-identifying concept of 'homosexual', in the world.

Homosexuality and on the whole sexual identity is a well-debated topic among Islamic scholars. The German sociologist; George Klauda talks about that the concept of sexuality and thus also the concept of homosexuality is a modern, European invention. There was, in the Arabic language, at the time of the Prophet, nothing called homosexuality in the way we know it today. Neither was there a name for same-sex sex between men or women.²¹ Since this is a thesis about people that in some aspect define themselves as homosexuals it should be discussed what homosexuality is. It might seem obvious from a western European perspective. But things are not always as simple as we might see them.

In his thesis Sociologist Marcello Kloss stresses that the description of 'homosexuality' in Islamic-oriental and Arab countries is not about the sex of the partner. Instead it is about whether the man during intercourse is taking on the 'male-penetrating' or 'female-passive' role. This states whether he upholds or is committing betrayal of masculinity.²² Georg Klauda states the concept of sexuality and thus also the concept of homosexuality is a modern, European invention.²³ Many researchers agree with this. In the information folder from LSVD you can read that homosexuality, as an identity marker is relatively new. For example in Turkey the word came in 1923 and was directly translated to 'homoseksüel'. Although this was still nothing that fits into the identity and social role taking in the Turkish community. The word was simply describing an

¹⁹ Brunos is a common store in Germany with gay books, sex toys, videos.

²⁰ Kugle. 2006:202

²¹ Kloss 2005/2006

²² Ibid

²³ Klauda 2008:51

act between men.²⁴ This gets us to the question. Is it possible to “be” something when you do not have a concept of what it is?

I am not gay I just fuck men! - How to consider a concept that does not exist

The question of being raises a lot of questions. When am ‘I’ something? Immanuel Kant talk about how we can not find our way around if we do not know what we are facing.²⁵ Then we face another question: Can we really expect people in different parts of the world to have the same ideas of what something is? Scott Kugle talks about sexual identity as an intimate part of each individual’s personality and an integral component in each person’s appreciation of beauty or apprehension of emotional intensity.²⁶ Also sexual identity consists of many components, such as strength of sex-drive, frequency of sexual contacts. And among others also including orientation, that is whether one is attracted to a partner of the same sex or the opposite sex or both. The sexual identity makes its manifestation in any individual unique.²⁷ This is also what I met during my research. Here we have five people in theory “the same”. They have a Muslim background and define themselves as homosexuals. Still the concept of what they think of what or who they “are” differs.

While Peter tries to find a way to live a quite life with his boyfriend. Both Cem and Hanz act out more when they have the opportunity. On the gay-scene they are living a more promiscuous life, with many sexual partners, although with their family they try to uphold an image of being monogamous and faithful men. As I mentioned before fashion is very important for Cem, the same counts in for Hanz. The right clothing and clubs are important, so is the right people. Aysha lives somewhere in between, she follows the fashion but have a monogamous relationship to her partner. Meral tries to live a quiet life, working, studying and not draw to much attention to herself.

They all try to have one foot in their family’s area and one foot in the rest of the Berlin society. Of course this is a common behavior, every human take on different roles in different areas of her life. And, in every society we have to live according to what is seen as “normal” since every society set up ‘rules’ for acceptable behavior. A society without rules can not survive. The rules

²⁴ LSVD 2007:173-174

²⁵ Kant 1992:367

²⁶ Kugle 2010 45ff

²⁷ Ibid

are written by those with the power in a society for instance the majority. Their norm becomes 'the normal', and if you break these 'rules' you are seen as abnormal. This, sometimes, causes problems since it limits the ways in which the minorities are able to live their lives.²⁸ It is important to fit in for my informants. Cem mention this when we are out shopping for a new party outfit. Cem always use 'today's' fashion and when I ask him about this interest in fashion he answers:

Well, it is important to fit in ...somewhere. I guess ...

In the beginning I was shopping a lot because I was in a crowd where fashion was really a symbol of who you were. Nowadays I actually love it! Also to hang out with the right crowd is important. I need to be around people I can trust and people that never come close to my family area. (in the Muslim community)

(Cem, shopping at the Alexa shopping mall May 2011)

Cem here mention something very important, he started shopping because the people in the crowd he started to hang out with found it important. This goes back to the previous discussed topic about how the majority (sometimes) decides the norm for the group. Individuals are forced to look at what 'others' do (and think) instead of focus on what feels good for them.²⁹ Also the 'norms' change with new times and input from others, and not to forget which groups you want to (or are forced to) be a part of. We could state that Peter, Aysha and Meral live a quiet life in Berlin. Cem and Hans on the other hand are very outgoing and for both acting out sexually is a part of who they are in the part of their life where they identify themselves as homosexuals.

Cem said:

Why I fuck around? Actually I like the sex, I am young and I have the body that guys like so ... why not?

I: Are you ever afraid to get sick?

C: No I always protect myself.

I: Cem, what about your boyfriend? How does he feel about all these partners?

C: Ah well, he knows, we have like...like an understanding. You know he can ...probably... never be fully mine and I can not ask him to wait. It is not fair and ... we both feel as if ...it is just sex. I love him...but I want him to live to.

(Cem, Shopping at Alexa mall May 2011)

²⁸ Bergström 2010

²⁹ ibid

An interesting picture emerges here with Cem. He states that he wants this life. One could question how much influence common (western) stereotypical ideas of homosexual men, provided for instance in TV-show like *Queer as Folks* and newspapers³⁰, or even the church has on his statement. But one could also claim that this picture, provided by my five informants does not differ from the rest of the Berlin society. It just appears so that these individuals are no more sexually active than heterosexuals, and where many, but not all of them, seek long term monogamous relationships.

Promiscuous life is seen as odd because we live in a society where, right now, monogamous relationships are the 'norm'. This could change, and has been different. If we look at it from a historical perspective it would be seen as very strange to imprison a man for having sex with minors at the Greek-Roman time.³¹ What we look upon as normal today might differ in a short period of time.

Still sex is a common topic during my field study. The more the guys get to know me the more is revealed. One night Hanz and I sneak away to a fetish party. It is a dark basement, invitation only, party. The young boy in the door gives me a peculiar grin when I enter the men only area. I get some funny looks, but nobody says anything directly to me, after all I am there so I must have been invited. These reactions in themselves are interesting. My identity here is supposed to be male, maybe they do not really care. Or could it be so that since I am expected to be a guy in this environment people just think I am a cross-dressing guy? Nobody says anything directly, except for one man who tells me that my whoever did my breast did a good job.

At this party the music is loud and you can smell beer, and since it is a hot basement also there is a smell of sweaty bodies. People try to talk, but the focus lies on the dance floor and to meet someone. This is not our usual to meet but after, but Hanz seems to feel calm and 'at home'. Later, when he gets really drunk I try to speak to him about how he identifies himself. He answers,

³⁰ An information site about common myths about male homosexuals 2010-08-10 <http://gaylife.about.com/od/amiga1/a/gaymyths.htm>

³¹ Roos & Geels 2010: 10-23

I never really thought of ... well identifying myself as "homosexual" As a part of what I am. First...it is impossible in my world. I mean I could fuck guys but ... I don't know. Its like I know I am gay in a German point of view but on the other hand I am not ...in a way. I do not live like a gay man. I just ... fuck them. I borrow a part of this world but I can't have it.

I: Would you like to live with *****(boyfriends name)?

H: I am afraid to even think of it. I live day by day instead without thinking. I love him but this will never be a reality for us. (Fetish party Hanz May 2011)

The concept of "being" something is very vague and depends on the individuals situation of living. Schimmel talks about sexual identity as something that for long time was tightly tied to reproduction but now and in this current time of being human reproduction and sexuality have been solved more and more from each other. Also there is in Berlin a concept of homosexuality to consider for people where the concept does not exist.³² Both Cem and Hanz talks about how they can not have this world and are talking about being in an openly homosexual relationship with their partners. They feel that this world only partly belongs to them and the current discourse in their community does not allow them to transgress fully.

Samar Habibs talks about talks about how sexual identities and with this also homosexuality are results of "discursive structures [rather] than [being] properties of individuals."³³ She claims that homosexuality often is demanded to be understood in Western European terms, even though the Western Europeans own past is not that different.³⁴ What is identity then? Identity is not something that is easy to explain. As the reader can see my informants are already in a struggle between identities as they think are acceptable (by society or community) and what they themselves apply as good for them.³⁵ The struggle for who they are would differ if they where somewhere else. Who you "are" is also closely tied to "where " you are as Andrew Yip tells us:

³² Schimmel 2009:149-152

³³ Habib 2007: 16

³⁴ ibid

³⁵ Schimmel 2009:151

It is undeniable that powerful socio-cultural changes in contemporary society do have far-reaching impacts on all aspects of individual and community life. However, such impacts are filtered and mediated through significant social factors such as ethnicity and religion. It is therefore imperative to take into serious consideration socio-cultural and religious specificity while studying how individuals, as late modern social actors, manage their lives. (Yip, A. 2004:2)

I will talk more about my informants' identity construction, but for now let's just state the idea of homosexuality that will be talked about in this thesis. One of the first medical and psychological descriptions of what later would be, the term for "homosexuality" is to be found in *Die Konträre Sexualempfindung: Symptom eines neuropathologischen (psychopathischen) Zustande*³⁶ by the German psychiatrist and neurologist Karl Friedrich Otto Westphal (1833-1890). Therefore one could say that as a word and concept of identity homosexuality is something relatively new even in the western European context. Also, according to Social theorist, and philosopher Michael Foucault, the description in Westphal's essay of two people dealing with "homosexual issues" is what later gave birth to the term.³⁷

This viewpoint is closely tied to what Cem tried to explain that to me on one of our visits to a fake beach in Berlin. We are sitting in the warm sand there are very few people. It is a sunny morning and we are drinking coke. Cem wears worn blue jeans and a t-shirt. We are talking about sexual orientation and identity. After a while of very confusing discussions about when one is hetero, homo or intersexual Cem says:

C: What I am trying to say is that for me homosexuality is who I am not who I fuck.

I: Aha. And why is that?

C: Allah made me this way. He made me love men so I do. That's what I am.

(Ostbeach, day with Cem May 2011)

As the reader can see, Cem and Hanz have different opinions. Still, to make the readers understand the concept of homosexuality, here I will use a western concept to explain what I am referring to when I talk to homosexuality in this thesis; "Homosexuality is a sexual orientation and differs from sexual behavior in that sense that it refers to feelings and self-concept and it is

³⁶ Westphal 1869-70: 73-108.

³⁷ Foucault 1976

not necessary for an individual to express his/her sexual orientation in the behavior.”³⁸ Well known is the fact that through history there were ideas of ‘homosexuality’ as well as same-sex acts without a necessarily of a homosexual identity. It was just how it was. Lets look at it.

Homosexuality in German and Berlin history.

The issue of sexuality and non-normative sex and sexuality is nothing new. I will give brief overview of Berlin’s history dealing with the issues of non-normative ways of having sex and non-normative sexuality. This is to get the reader to understand the current situation in the state of Berlin and how quickly changes can (and have been) be made in this area.

The Third article in the German basic Law states that every person is equal and that nobody should be discriminated on the base of race, language, sex, parentage, origin, faith, religion, disability or political opinion or preference.³⁹ But this has not always been the case.

Male homosexuality has been seen as a criminal offence for a long time. The law called § 175 provided male homosexuality a criminal offense. Also it is important to stress that male homosexuality has been traditionally perceived more as a threat to social order than female homosexuality.⁴⁰

Why could be a theme for a whole other thesis but it has to do to with social norms and orders in societies in general. Where woman have had trouble accessing social sectors such as economy and politics. It could be so that ideas about homosexuality and Islam are mostly concerned with male homosexuality, since it is mostly written by men because: Gays in the public got far more attention than lesbians, both positive and negative. And maybe the impunity enjoyed by the woman's love had nothing to do with tolerance, but with the ignorance about female sexuality? According to LSVD Male homosexuality has been traditionally perceived as a threat to social order when lesbians, however, have to struggle more with the fact that they are hushed up by society in general.⁴¹

³⁸ “Sexual orientation is described at the Apa website <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/sexual-orientation.aspx>

³⁹ Deutsche Grundgesetze. 2011-07-25 http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gg/art_3.html

⁴⁰ LSVD 2007: 18-19

⁴¹ LSVD 2007:19-21

Moving on, between 1871 and 1994 there was a law paragraph 175⁴² that prohibited sex between males as well as between males and animals.⁴³ This law dates back to Wilhelm I⁴⁴ and was created by him based on the Prussian model, which included a law prohibiting sexual contact between members of the same sex and punishable by up to four years in prison. The law led to the arrest and conviction of 1,000 men per year, during the Weimar Republic, which led to a rise of homosexual rights activists whose goal was to eliminate Paragraph 175.⁴⁵ Also during this period (1919-1933), Berlin became known as a homosexual Mecca with a subculture, where homosexuals could live relatively open.⁴⁶

Then in 1935 the Nazis expanded the law in order to punish a broad range of "lewd and lascivious" behavior between men⁴⁷. The new §175 said that any man who engaged in a sexual act with a man between 18-21 should be punished with imprisonment but in the new § 175a the punishment included: the abuse of authority relations, homosexual acts with men under 21 years and male prostitution. A 175 b was created to wish the "unnatural sex with animals" was moved⁴⁸ This was done by removing the German word *widernatürlich*. The word means "against nature" and broadened the meaning of the law since *Unzucht* in combination with *widernatürlich* pointed straight towards anal sex, but the *unzucht* without it could include acts as fondling, kissing, and so on. This law change resulted in the death of between 5,000 and 15,000 homosexual men in concentration camps.⁴⁹ The persecutions did not end with the end of the war in 1945 because the § 175 was still enforced which resulted in the continued marginalization and criminalization of homosexuals for several decades.⁵⁰

⁴² The original 1871 Paragraph 175 was formally known as §175 StGB (Strafgesetzbuch) and reads: „Die widernatürliche Unzucht, welche zwischen Personen männlichen Geschlechts oder von Menschen mit Tieren begangen wird, ist mit Gefängnis zu bestrafen; auch kann auf Verlust der bürgerlichen Ehrenrechte erkannt werden.“

⁴³ Pretzel 2010:189-191

⁴⁴ Wilhelm I was the King of Prussia and was made the Emperor of Germany and united the disparate German states (Reichgründung) into the German empire.

⁴⁵ Gltbg is an encyclopedia of gay, lesbian, transgender and queer culture.

⁴⁶ Encyclopedia of gay, lesbian, transgender and queer culture, http://www.gltbg.com/social-sciences/paragraph_175.html 2011.07.20

⁴⁷ It basically states: "Ein Mann mit einem anderen Mann Unzucht treibt oder sich von ihm zur Unzucht mißbrauchen läßt". But Unzucht treibt means "do something to someone else"

⁴⁸ Nolz 1995

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Steinke 2005

It's noteworthy that the Paragraph 175 did not ban sexual acts between women. Victims of the law came from every social level, but no woman was ever convicted.⁵¹ In 1968 the law was gone in Eastern Germany and in the Western part a reformation of the law was passed on 25 June 1969, although it more or less opened up for same-sex activities, it was more than anything an elaboration with numbers so that only men that had sex with men above 18 and under 21 could be punished, which also lead to that that if men between 18-21 had sex with a man in the same age both could be punished.⁵²

Then in November 1973, the term "indecency between men" (Unzucht) was replaced by homosexual acts (*sexuelle Handlungen*) ". And the chapter of the Criminal Code was renamed to "crimes and offenses against morality" Then after some years of turbulence in the EU and the fall of the wall the German parliament (Bundestag) had to decide if the § 175 should be deleted or extended to the Eastern provinces.⁵³ Finally in 1994 the law was repealed and in May 2002, the German parliament completed legislation to pardon all homosexuals convicted under Paragraph 175 during the Nazi era.⁵⁴

There are currently no laws against same-sex relations and or activity in Berlin /Germany. There is a law that allows registered partnerships since 2001. And although same-sex couples still cannot adopt someone else's child a partner may adopt his/hers partner's child. There are laws against discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity employment protection although it may vary by different regions in Germany.⁵⁵ Closely tied to this is the educational system, to evaluate something you have to know about it. How is non-heterosexual identity then treated in school?

⁵¹ Encyclopedia of gay, lesbian, transgender and queer culture, http://www.glbtc.com/social-sciences/paragraph_175.html

⁵² Pretzel 2010:196-199.

⁵³ In East Germany, since 1957 no one had been convicted of homosexuality. And the last special rule for homosexuals was removed in 1989 from the East German criminal law.

⁵⁴ Pretzel 2010:196-199.

⁵⁵ German politic and homosexuality at <http://lsvd.de/politik.0.h> 2011

A straight school – where non-heterosexuality is not taught

A study conducted by Michael Bochow in 2001 showed that about one-third of the German population is positive towards homosexuality. A third are undecided and a further third rejects homosexuality.⁵⁶ Why is that? Is it lack of knowledge? Maybe. If we look at the Berlin educational system we can state that there is supposed to be education about homosexuality in German primary school.⁵⁷ According to my informants and people that I have met during this study there is nothing about homosexuality taught in school. When I asked randomly people in Berlin answered very similar to Peters answer below when it comes to education about homosexuality in school.

“We learned about the genders (Geschlechter) man and woman and how it (sex) works. But I can’t remember it was anything about homosexuality.”

(Peter interview one)

The same lack of education will be shown late in this coming chapter when I talk about religion and Islam in particular. Is it important then to learn about other sexualities than heterosexuality? Yes, of course, knowledge about our current context is important for creating an environment of acceptance and understanding. We can create laws, but laws without education does not create the changes. It is in fact a problem that there is lack of teaching in Berlin schools. If we teach in a hetero-normative way, heterosexuality will continue to be what we consider being ‘normal’ and acceptable ways of life. This is important to remember when we try to understand the double discrimination situation my informants are tied in. But lets conclude this chapter and move on to Islam.

Conclusion:

We have been talking about homosexuality as a concept and in law, school and Islam. Homosexuality and on the whole sexuality is a well-debated topic. Basically what we can see in this chapter is how the understanding of homosexuality could differ between cultures.

We do know that the existence of same-sex acts without a necessarily of an homosexual identity is very present throughout history although in this thesis I have chosen the definition of homosexuality as made by American psychological where “‘homosexuality’ is a sexual

⁵⁶ Bochow 1996:

⁵⁷ Materialien zur Sexualerziehung für die Grundschule Literatur, Arbeitshilfen, Kooperationspartner/innen*

orientation and differs from sexual behavior in that sense that it refers to feelings and self-concept and it is not necessary for an individual to express his/her sexual orientation in the behavior.”

Still there is a gap of knowledge between different generations about what homosexuality means. Even though I have explained ‘homosexuality’ from one perspective (the Western concept of homosexuality as a sexual identity). The idea of homosexuality is not necessarily the same for my informants, or for their families.

We can conclude that in Berlin, due to the current laws, there should be accepted to consider oneself a non-heterosexual. For example there are currently no laws against same-sex sexual relations and or activity in Berlin /Germany. There is a law that allows registered partnerships since 2001 and there are laws against discrimination and harassment because of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The problem is that even though laws, as we can see, have changed and it is supposed to be easier now than for a century ago there is one thing we must keep in mind.

There is no proper education about homosexuality in the school. With lack of education the increase of bias is not far away. A new law in itself does not create change, for that we must educate and inform about the new references we want a society’s citizens to adapt and carry out in their lives. Stating this it is time to move on to take a look at how the immigrant situation, especially the situation for immigrants with a Muslim background is in Berlin today.

4. I am everything you think of me – the different ideas of Islam

In the search for informants I emailed and posted messages on different gay communities online. One of the first responses I got was this: “Why are you looking here. We don’t have Muslim Gays (Schwule) here and we don’t want them because as we all know they abuse their partners.”⁵⁸ The idea of Muslims and Islam as something strange or even hazardous is not a new. It is important to know about the history of ‘islamophobia’ to get an idea of where these ideas derive from and why they are still here. Old ideas does not automatically disappear with new laws, but a society and individuals can always learn from its past. Lets go back in time since Islam seems to have been regarded as Heresy by the Christian church already in the 700’s. This is the beginning of a tradition where Muhammad is portrayed as a false prophet who corrupts the Christian faith. This idea lived on for several hundred years.⁵⁹ Descriptions of Muslims as different and dangerous where also strengthen during colonialism. According to Göran Larsson Islam was preached as Gods punishment in some sermons in the 1600’s.⁶⁰

According to Edward Said the western idea of Muslims and Islam was shaped by the new economical and military dominance in the world. He writes that by being the dominate people it became possible for the west to create ”the other”, the exotically, extraneous and dangerous other⁶¹ Mattias Gardell on the other hand claims that the foundation of islamophobic thinking is even older and were produced during four major events:

- The medieval Crusades in the Holy Land and the Liberian island.
- Fear of Turks (turkskräck) when the Ottoman Empire was a European superpower.
- The subsequent Turkish disdain (turkförakt) when the balance of power changed and.
- The European colonial expansion.

⁵⁸ Forum search message on www.gay.de

⁵⁹ Gardell 2011:52

⁶⁰ Larsson 2009:463f

⁶¹ Said 1993:42

Furthermore, Gardell claims that islamophobia (which he explains as the unfounded fear of Islam and Muslims) constitutes a system of exclusion which acts as racism without races.⁶² To summarize the basic data; the view of Muslims as something different and strange is very old and not based on any contemporary proven scientific basis. As we know it is crucial (in any discussion about Islam and Muslims) to understand that neither Islam nor Muslim are a homogenous phenomena,⁶³ a Muslim born and raised in Berlin will unconditionally interpret, understand and live his religion differently than a person born and raised in another society.⁶⁴ Interpretations are affected partly by the individual's knowledge about his religion but also by outside circumstances as laws and rules in his society.⁶⁵ Other important aspects are the individuals' social situation and possibilities to work, live and socioeconomically status⁶⁶. My informants that are second-generation immigrants in Berlin have found individual solutions to weave their faith into a non-Muslim society.

All of my participants define themselves as Germans and Muslims. This is something that was not always the case with first generation immigrants.⁶⁷ According to both Larsson and all my informants it is still hard to be associated with Islam in a western European city as Berlin. This fact came live through various expressions among my informants. When I ask Peter, who considers himself a Muslim by birth but not by belief, if he feels that people in Germany thinks of him in a certain way. He answers,

Yes. People will always think of me as a Muslim.

I: What does it mean and how does that feel?

P: I ... I don't like it. Because they just think that just because I have that origin that I am Muslim and it's the same if they would judge me for being Christian. I mean they just judge me for not being the same. (Peter interview one)

⁶² Gardell 2011:18, 45-47

⁶³ Gardell 2011:19, Larsson 2009:467ff

⁶⁴ Larsson 2009:467

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Larsson 2009:468

Apparently the idea of a Muslim is connected to something bad, or that there is a fear of other people perceiving Muslims as something hazardous, is present for my participants. But what, or rather who is a Muslim then? It is a problematic issue. To give an unequivocal answer about who is a Muslim is impossible. One of the problems is because it is hard to decide who is supposed to be highlighted as a spokesperson. Who has the right to decide what truth is true? The Imam, the individual Muslim, scholars, or? Still many people claim to have the answer of what is the 'real' Islam.

According to Mattias Gardell when some talks about Islam there is an idea about of what a 'real Muslim' is " and this idea is tightly woven into the fabric of Islam. And this gets more problematic when someone else have the idea that he/she could give the true picture of Islam to those people that things that Muslims are this way or that way. There is no simple answer. Since religions are social constructions within the overall category of culture they change and adapt new form depending on the individuals in the environment.⁶⁸ There is enormous scope in the concept of Islam and it differs between environments and especially in history. We cannot speak of a unified Islam as well as we cannot speak as a unified Christianity.⁶⁹ Is it then impossible to be a "real" Muslim? If not, when is one a Muslim? I tried to ask my informants and even among these five people the answer differed.

When is one a Muslim?

As said above Islam comes in various forms. Even though there are some basic similarities such as the Quran is their holy scripture. Islam does not look exactly the same in different countries, cultures and between individuals. When I ask Cem what is it to be a Muslim he answers; "It is to be a good man. To live a good life and be kind to others and pay respect to family and Allah."⁷⁰ Hanz have similar idea:

I: What does it mean to be a Muslim to you?

H: Living a good life...

I: What do you mean by that? What is a good life for you?

⁶⁸ Andersson,& Sander. 2009:45

⁶⁹ Gardell 2010:10-12

⁷⁰ Cem Interview one

H: (Laugh) To take care of each other, not to lie, not kill, not to drink, no smoking. Respect for God and his will...

I: But you still hide for some important people in your life. Is that not to lie?

H: That's a different. I ... I told you ... It's not about religion, but their (his families) culture.

I: But...

H: I have to protect myself. I do not think that God wants me to tell my family that I'm gay. No ... I do not think I do not believe that God wishes that I should die. He had no such intention for his creations.

I: But before you also said that there are certain rituals that are important?

H: Yes, Ramadan is of course important, and... To pray and talk to.... him (God). That relation with him (God) is the most important. You know some believe ... yes they believe that... that our religion is evil and cruel. And perhaps it was so ... yes you know at the beginning, because Islam was created in a time of war. But it's about the love of God and to communicate with God.

(Hanz interview one)

To be a good person is very important for all the informants and they seem to have the same idea. But of course, sometimes the people that consider themselves Muslims also considered themselves non-believers. Peter is one of them, his families are strong believers. Peter is not, he stated clearly the first time we met: "Yes I am a Muslim. But I am only a Muslim by birth I don't believe."⁷¹

This is by no means an unusual case. Several people with a Muslim cultural background consider themselves as secularized Muslims and do not want to be seen as religious.⁷² Some count themselves as Muslims by birth but not by faith and this is also shown in the statistic research for the Muslim conference in Germany:

The majority of Muslims are religious. Overall, 36 per cent would describe themselves as very religious. A further 50 per cent claim to be rather religious. Religiosity is particularly evident among Muslims of Turkish descent and Muslims of African origin. The picture is different among Muslims of Iranian descent, almost all of them Shiites, where just 10 per cent regard themselves as very religious but about a third claim to have no religious faith at all. Muslim women tend to be more religious than Muslim men in almost all of the different groups of origin."^(Habil., Haug., Müssig, S& .Stichs,A 2008:13)

⁷¹ This was also common answers when I contacted Turkish non-gay organizations and in gay forums.

⁷² Larsson 2009:470

As I said even when I ask my informants to tell me what a Muslim is the picture is quite divided. Each one of them has their own idea of what a 'real' Muslim is. Even though they all have the idea of being good to others the importance on the relationship with God, how to perform rituals or participate in religious ceremonies differ.

I am sitting in the coach with Meral. She suffers from a stubborn cold and looks as if she really would need to sleep. She draws her fingers through her dark hair. Pours up water and looks out through the window. For Meral she is a true Muslim:

I believe in God. I believe in my religion and ...everything. It is not important for me to go to the Mosque. But for me it's very important to pray, to be a good human, not to hurt [schlagen] anyone or ... not do anything else wrong. (Meral interview one)

When we talk more about this in her second interview she also states:

People think that Muslims are stupid [ganz dum]. That they don't work. That they oppress their wife's and that they swear [schimpfen]. And that is also a picture shown in the media.

When I ask her how she responds to that she answers:

I don't like it ... I try my best to show it is not true that maybe I can show that eh Muslims are not like that and say that I am not like that, I am not a terrorist. Maybe can I change it by showing them a good Muslim? But right now it is as if people think that Muslims are plague-stricken or similar.
(Meral interview two)

All my informants consider themselves Muslims and the individual differences are important to understand. To be somebody or something might express itself in many forms. Than even though you decide that you are being this or that the variations of the expressions of being might differ. Many people explain human behavior with references like "They do what they do because they are Chinese or Muslims, or gay or ...". Therefore it is worth to have in mind that identity is constructed and reconstructed depending on where you live and which social, historical and economical factors that affect you. To be a Muslim in Berlin differs from being a Muslim in Morocco, since the social structure and community culture differ from each other in many ways.

⁷³ Tied to this view of 'How something is' is also depending on the context you live in. In other words, how a Muslim is supposed to be' is not only considerably for the Muslim himself.

During the interview in Hanz's home when we talk about being a Muslim in Berlin Hanz claims that people in general think that Islam is evil [böse]. When I ask which people he refers to he says:

Everybody [Jeder Mensch]...Or well in Berlin everyone that ... when you read the news, you think that it is that way.

I: So what you are saying is that news medias are guilty of creating a bad picture of Muslims?

H: Yes, most of the time ... but it is obvious that there are many people who think that Muslims are evil and make evil things [Böse dingen]. But ...Islam is a good religion. And well since people don't learn about Islam in German school how should they know? (Hanz interview one)

Hanz has a point. Humans form their identity in relation and comparison to others. To fit in you have to consider what you think others think of you. Hanz maybe reconstruct his own Muslim identity and community as good (even though parts of the community would shun him if they knew about his homosexual identity) because he feels that he needs to be a part of it? According to Barth, identity is always constructed and reconstructed in relation to some structural and given social frameworks.⁷⁴ In this case, Hanz needs to fit into his family's community as well as being a part of the community where he has a same sex partner. As any individual Hanz uses 'strategies' to make his life easier by adapting to what the surroundings are made of. Identities are not static and must be seen as an analytical resource and process tool. Not as something essential. Without sinners there would be no saints, without poor there would be no rich⁷⁵

When Peter states that he is a Muslim by birth and seen as a Muslim he states his identity based on his own idea of what it means to be a Muslim in Berlin. As said before, every identity construction happens in relation to something else, both on individual and collective level. This is important to know since identity ideas are the foundation of social and political mobilization. It is also depending on where you are. As Andersson and Sander states it: "It might not be as

⁷³ Andersson & Sander 2009:45-47

⁷⁴ Barth 1969

⁷⁵ Andersson & Sander 2009:48

important to state that you have black hair and are Muslim in Istanbul as it might be in Berlin”⁷⁶
Its now time to look at the immigrant and religion situation in contemporary Berlin.

Islam and Berlin in a historical and current context

The study conducted by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in 2009 puts the number of Muslims living in Germany at between 4.6 and 5.2 per cent that means in about 3.8 and 4.3 million of the total population of around 82 million people⁷⁷ of them 3.45 million people live in Berlin and approximate 8.8% of them are Muslims.⁷⁸

Of all Muslims living in Germany some 45 per cent are German nationals while around 55 per cent are foreign nationals.⁷⁹ The dominant group is the citizens of Turkish descent (around 63 per cent).⁸⁰ The second largest group is (around 14 per cent) descents from the southeastern European countries of Bosnia, Bulgaria and Albania. The third largest group (around 8%) hails from the Middle East.⁸¹

The largest denominational group (with 74%) is the Sunnis. Then the Alevis (13%) and Shias (7%).⁸² In this thesis I have informants from the Sunni and Alevi denomination. Still, as we will see, the level of religiosity⁸³ will differ among them as well as it does in the whole Islamic world. With different religiosity also comes a diversity of religious expressions as follows.

⁷⁶ Andersson & Sander 2009:48ff

⁷⁷ Habil,Haug, Müssig,& Stichs 2008:11-12

⁷⁸ Bevölkerungsentwicklung und Bevölkerungsstand in Berlin 4. Quartal 2010". Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg. January 2011. Retrieved 7 April 2011.

⁷⁹ Habil,Haug, Müssig &Stichs 2008:11-12

⁸⁰ ibid

⁸¹ ibid

⁸² ibid

⁸³ In this case religiosity means how people follow traditional institutionalized rituals like attending the mosque, wearing the hijab, praying, fasting and so on.

Is there a need of rituals to be religious?

Comparisons show that there are only minor differences in terms of religiosity⁸⁴ between Muslims and members of other religious groups. This however, differs depending on region of origin and the levels of membership in a religious association are lower than in other religions. Only 20 per cent of the Muslims are organized into religious associations or communities. The number of Sunnis who are registered members of a religious association is 22 per cent and for the Alevi and Shiites it is only 10 per cent each.⁸⁵ One might ask oneself do you have to be in an association to be religious? A complex picture emerges when you start to discuss the question of the significance of religion when it comes to topics like using the headscarf or participation in certain classes at school. The significance of participating in rituals seems to differ among my informants. Peter describes his family as more open-minded than others:

P: They still believe and they are Alevi, so they are a little bit more open minded, but ...

I: Describe that (Open minded)?

P: Eh well they don't have veil [kopftuch] and they don't want that and they don't go to mosques. They say it is not ours. But they have something like temples where they go. Not temple like a Buddha temple. It is just a place where a holy person is buried and they go there and pray for holidays and so on.

I: Why is it more believing to have a veil?

P: Ehm, they (his parents) told me that them also, that they are from the Turkish Arabic side. So they have also the Arabic.... the Syrian Arabic ideas. They told me that they believe that those who have a veil are more conservative, and stubborn [Sture]! (Peter Interview one)

And when I talk to Aysha about rituals she also feels that the rituals are less important

I do believe in God, and I know the Quran and so but I ... I really don't pray everyday and stuff. I fast but I don't wear a veil and I... I don't think going to the mosque is important for me. God is with me inside and he loves me and I love God. (Interview with Aysha marsh2011)

The four of my informants that claims to be practicing Muslims all have ideas of which kind of rituals are important and when to practice them. For instance in his interview Hanz claims that rituals are very important:

⁸⁴ In this Case religiosity refers to how active you are in for example religious rituals (praying, fasting etcetera) and involved in religious associations

⁸⁵ Habil, Haug, Müssig & Stichs, 2008: 13-14

Uhm I do not I go to the mosque. But I think I am a true and faithful man. I pray five times a day and fasts. I do not lie. I do not drink (alcohol) or ... smoke ... I do not eat pork ... I am a good Muslim, a good man (Hanz interview)

But on our first night out in April when I meet his boyfriend for the first time. It's a loud party with a lot of people. We are just lucky that we found a place to sit. Both Hanz and his boyfriend are happy and in party mood. Hanz starts the night by offering us beer. To my surprise he also takes one for himself. Then on a straightforward question about drinking Hanz's boyfriend says:

Oh yes he always smoke and drinks...he never gets drunk (betrunken) but drinks.

A little later the same night I ask Hanz and he seems to think it is a weird question:

Of course I smoke, it is a party. Why do you ask?"

I: Well I am confused. You said that to you did not smoke, drink and that you did this to live as a good Muslim live

H: Well, yeah I said that but this is something else. This is not a sin. It is something else.

I: How come?

H: It is just how it is! (Party one with Hanz and boyfriend 2011)

It is worth discussing that Hanz states it is not a sin to smoke and drink when he is outside his Muslim community and context. It is not easy to get answers. Hanz tend to get caught up in the argument that I can never understand because I am not a Muslim when I ask questions he can not (or do not want to) answer. I tried to push this question several times.

On our third meeting over a quiet lunch outside in the sun. I ask him again what he thinks is important for a Muslim he answers "Not to lie, not to kill, not to steal, to respect God, to be true to follow him."⁸⁶ Then, when I ask Hanz about the lying (since he both smoked and drank on our latest two parties, and also lie about his relationship with his boyfriend to his wife he answers: "I told you in Islam we have a right to protect ourselves if we might get killed. Then we

⁸⁶ Lunch with Hanz 2011

can hide like the 12th imam⁸⁷. This is not lying; it is to protect oneself (from getting killed by his family)''⁸⁸

It is interesting that Hanz mention Mahdi since not only because Hanz is referring to an aspect of approved hiding, but also because Hanz is from Sunni denomination and the idea of the Mahdi is a Shia view. Unfortunately Hanz do not have an answer to that. He refers to the need to do everything necessary to protect oneself from a cruel world. He does mention, in the interview, how he do that with the life with his wife when we talk about if homosexuality is a sin in Islam,

No... It is no sin ... to be homosexual, but my culture does not understand that.

My lover (Meinem Freund) ... I love him. But it can never be us ... My wife is.... My wife is my safety net, just.... well lifeline. I do not love her like I should love a wife. But we have a life together. And I can not risk it. God does not want me to die. Why would he have created something that he wants to be killed? (Hanz interview one)

Watching this one might wonder how important ideas of what to do or not (to be a 'real Muslim') really are. Is it possible to question if Hanz is a 'real' Muslim? As I said above Islam and Muslim are not a homogenous phenomena. If Hanz lived in Turkey it would probably be more important to keep the promises not to drink or smoke since he would have to face those ideas in the community more often than here in Berlin where it is possible to "be" something else in a surrounding that is not closely tied to his family. A Muslim born and raised in Berlin will live out his religion differently than a person born and raised in a society dominated by Islamic traditions.⁸⁹

Hanz behavior must be seen in the light of the roles he felt forced to play. Andersson and Sander talks about a person's identity as being a relational concept. This means that the identity is shaped in comparison with others, or in this case also in the space between two people talking.⁹⁰ It is possible that Hanz create an image of himself for to uphold the idea of the self in a specific context? Individuals due take on a diversity of roles or identities in various contexts and also

⁸⁷ The 12th Imam, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Mahdī is believed by Shī'a Muslims to be the definitive savior of humankind and the final Imām. He did not die instead he was hidden by God and will later emerge with Jesus Christ(Isa) in order to fulfill their mission of bringing peace and justice to the world.

⁸⁸ Lunch with Hanz

⁸⁹ Larsson 2009:467

⁹⁰ Andersson,& Sander 2009:47-48.

every role seems to be given different strengths in different situations. For instance in a family one might take on the role/identity of a mother or father. At the business trip the supervisor or CIO, at the soccer pub a supporter and in the church a deeply believing catholic.⁹¹ This does not necessarily mean that Hanz does not consider himself a Muslim in the environment of partying. It could also be that he felt forced to tell me certain things during the interview (when he did know me) in the same way he tells certain things to his family to justify his behavior as a gay man with the religious discourse of occultation that should be the first to condemn his homosexual 'tendencies'. For instance as in the eyes of his family.

The part-identities also vary in strengths in different individuals. While some let all identities imbued with their identity as a Christian, Muslim or communist. Others slip between the roles. And in many religious contexts, there is a pressure on the individual to focus on an identity for example only and always be a Muslim.⁹² As a Muslim Hanz could not drink or smoke, but when he took on his life as an independent gay man he left his family and duties at home and could be just like any young man. Of course some of my informants had different views:

Meral does not wear a headscarf but she thinks that praying is important. When I ask her if she prays five times a day she first says yes, but then admits:

I do pray five times a day but it's not everyday. I have don't have desire or sometimes I do not have the time. But I pray in my heart everyday...everyday ...and I have God in my heart also.

I: Do you feel like guilty if you don't pray?

M: (long pause) ...yes...I feel guilty but... (Lower voice) some things do that you don't have to pray. Some things keep me away from praying. But I don't feel free when I don't pray.

(Meral interview one)

Both the girls think that the veil is a good thing but not necessary in everyday life. It is true that a positive link between piety and the wearing of the headscarf does exist. It is also evident that strong religiousness does not automatically lead to the wearing of the headscarf, praying or participating in specific rituals. For instance one of two women that consider themselves highly religious (In Germany) does not wear a headscarf.⁹³

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Ibid

⁹³ Habil,Haug,Müssig &Stichs 2008:15-16

Queer researcher, Mahruq Fatima Khan gives the same answer. She claims that it is important to understand that not all spiritual activity of religion comes in institutions by focusing on institutional religion the lived experience of many de-institutionalized people are left out. Understanding the lived experience of homosexual Muslims is critical⁹⁴ Focusing on second generation Muslims it is important to find out what it is like to live in the diaspora.

Doubtless it is different to live a Muslim life in Jerusalem than in Berlin. And as Sander & Andersson states it "What you create for new religious and cultural hybrids depends on what is available, the context in which the new constitutions are made and which needs the individual feel that they have."⁹⁵ Islam is very multifaceted around the world. There is also a big difference in what people the world considers important for a righteous life. We could see this diversity of devotedness and rituals in other aspects of life. For example swimming and trips within school in Berlin are issues that often seem to become problematic for Muslim schoolgirls. The study of Muslim life in Germany states that when it comes to on attendance in admixed physical education and swimming lessons and on School trips the vast majority of schoolchildren from predominantly Muslim countries living in the German households take advantage of these opportunities.⁹⁶ Speaking about school we might want to speak about how religion and religious differences is taught in Berlin schools. A brief introduction to how the state of Berlin looks at education about religion follows here.

The Berlin school and the lack of complete education about religion

We are sitting in Peter's apartment, on the floor. He wears a pair of weared jeans and a red T-shirt. It is evening, Peter is tired. It has been a long day but he is happy. Soon it is weekend and soon his boyfriend arrives to Berlin. We talk about school and Peter had ethic class, therefore I ask him:

So tell me what did they teach you in ethic-class? Is it supposed to be about [über alle] all the religions, right?

P: Yes but they didn't teach that. It was like this philosophy and moral and things like that but not about religion.

I: Did you learn about other religions at all?

P: No. I only know what I read about it for myself. Not from school. We did not learn it in school.

⁹⁴ Khan 2008:348

⁹⁵ Andersson,& Sander 2009:119

⁹⁶ Habil,Haug,Müssig &Stichs 2008:15-16

I: How do you feel about that?

P: I feel sad about it. Because I want to learn about this in school I want to get in touch with it. But they just teach about moral. Like what that is and well they just touch [straighten] the subject a little but you never learn about it. In Turkish class you learn about religion. But I was not in A Turkish class I was in a German school and I had etic so I did not learn about it.

I: Is it important to learn religion in school?

P: Of course it is. It is important because you have to know about things before you judge. It (religion) is so wide spread [verbreithet] in the world. Because of this you meet so many people that think about it. People that believe and ...so you have to know about it to understand them. You have to know about their religion. (Peter Interview one)

According to the school curriculum you should learn about all the religions in primary school in the class called ethics.⁹⁷ Still none of the informants, nor the people that I have asked about this recognize such a teaching. Meral claims that if you have a good teacher you will learn a little but that this is very rare. And the other four states that you do not learn about all religions [Über alle Religionen] in ethic class. When I ask her about whether or not etic- class is supposed to be about religion she answers:

In ethic they don't speak about so much religion...they speak more about the human...the human part you know... like Goethe and... and love...I don't know. It is more philosophic.

That is ethic. (Meral Interview two)

And as Peter states it, In Berlin schools you are supposed to learn about religions in primary school.⁹⁸ Religion in this case is about your specified religion. And in general that means teaching about Catholicism or Protestantism. As a Muslim, Jew or non-believer you are able to dismiss those classes and choose ethics [Ethic]⁹⁹. Etic class is supposed to be about etic, moral, and all the religions. But according to my informants and other people I met during my fieldwork this is not the case. The reader might want to ask himself if it is not crucial to teach all inhabitants in a country about all the diversity within it?

⁹⁷ Lehrplan für ethisch, Rahmenlehrungsplan für die Sekundarstufe I, Jahrgangsstufe 7-10. Ethik

⁹⁸ The teaching in religion class is mainly Catholicism or Protestantism. If you are a Muslim or Jew you can refuse to go to this class and take ethics or attend a school that teaches your religion in religion class.

⁹⁹ Rahmenlehrungsplan für die Sekundarstufe I, Jahrgangsstufe 7-10. Ethik

Conclusion:

To conclude this we might state that for Muslim immigrants there is also a problem with lack of education and how Islam is seen in the contemporary context. This is of course not a German problem, nor it is a recent problem. The Christian church tried to condemn early Muslims already in the 700's. There is also another thing that must be considered. As we all know there is no unanimous idea of when someone is a Muslim. Peter considers himself a Muslim, although he does not believe in God. The others consider themselves Muslims although they have different ideas of what a 'real' Muslim shall lay importance on.

Moving on, in the following chapter I will weave Islam and homosexuality together to provide you a picture of how my informants live their everyday life in Berlin, Germany. I will start to talk about sexuality in Islamic law and then about the scriptures and interpretations. After that I will further discuss my informants negotiation of space and religion. But let us start with law and culture.

5. Homosexuality in Islamic law and culture

Aysha is dressed in black, and her long brown hair is set in a ponytail. She smiles and waves when she sees me. The weather is nice outside, sunny, but not too hot. We sit down with our coffees in some dirty brown, wobbly wooden chairs. After a while we start talking about the fact that her family does not know about her girlfriend and she tells me that she could never tell them:

No because to them it would be a sickness a disease. It is forbidden and my relatives... we are a big family you know. Our family they might... They would not like it.

I: Are you afraid to get hurt?

A: In my head I imagine that they would never hurt me. That I am my daddies little princess, but in reality I ... I would not know. Yes, maybe. I do not think my dad could do it himself, but if his brothers or my cousins find out... No, maybe I cannot answer that ... I do not know.

(Aysha Interview one)

Aysha explains that she feels uncertain of her family's reaction. On one hand she wants to believe that the relation as her father's daughter keeps her safe from harm. At least from him harming her. On the other hand this quote indicates that she believes that her family thing homosexuality is haram (forbidden) and could punish her. In the same time we know that there is no such thing as a unanimous idea of whether Islam condemns or accepts homosexuality. Some people claim that homosexuality is accepted, or even promoted in Islamic culture. Some people claim the opposite. What Aysha explains here is her family's possible interpretation. An interpretation, according to Aysha, that her family claims descend from Islam. Therefore we might want to ask ourselves what does Islamic law say about homosexuality?

When it comes to the Islamic law erotic attraction and sexual acts between members of the same sex have always been recognized in Islamic societies.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand attitudes toward the phenomenon have always differed. Actually, Islamic texts and spoke persons in general concentrated on sexual acts, which are explicitly rebuked.¹⁰¹ In many Muslim countries "homosexuality" is considered a crime, but there is no consensus among scholars of Islamic law

¹⁰⁰ Rowson 2004: 316-317

¹⁰¹ Rowson 2004: 316

about the penalty provisions for homosexual conduct.¹⁰² The problem is when there is no unanimity about what something is, it is also difficult to agree on what to punish and how. As said previously, there is no worldly consensus or self-identifying concept of homosexuality in the world. The concept of homosexuality as an identity is a modern, European invention. Both in the Arabic and Turkish language there were, at the time of the prophet Mohammed, no such words that could be referred to as what western countries today refers to as homosexual.¹⁰³ The closest we get in the Arabic language is Liwat, which refers to anal intercourse, although not specifically between two men, rather the act in it self.¹⁰⁴ This will be discussed further below.

Moving on, one might want to ask then if there is no unanimous concept of what homosexuality is. How come you can be punished or even killed for it? There is a strong patriarchal tradition in Islamic countries. As in any society based on a structure that involves a sexual division (no matter of which religion) there are certain things expected from each person based on your gender.¹⁰⁵ Of course Muslims societies are not alone in making differences concerning what is lawful and not. Nor have they been historically exceptional in inflicting consequences on those who break the rules. Therefore the configuration of illegal and legitimate sexual activities developed by Muslim thinkers shares specific rudiments with other cultures and traditions.¹⁰⁶

As stated to punish for “bad” sexual behavior is nothing new although particular configuration of what is lawful and unlawful acts that were formed by pre-modern jurist does not always match the current laws and practice in Muslim majorities societies. For example polygamy has been legally restricted in many places, also there are laws that forbid both slavery and marriages with minors (even though the definition of minor might vary).¹⁰⁷ Then, when it comes to the idea of punishing same-sex acts Rowson tell us that: “Several early caliphs, confronted with cases of sodomy between males, are said to have had both partners executed, by a variety of means.”¹⁰⁸ This is by far the closest we get to punishment for homosexual acts. But it is not ‘homosexuality’

¹⁰² 100 lashes

¹⁰³ Kloss 2005/2006

¹⁰⁴ Kugle 2006:202

¹⁰⁵ Garvia1998:83

¹⁰⁶ Ali 2006:56f

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Rowson 316

as we in Western Europe know it today. In Islamic law and scriptures when you refer to homosexuality it is about sexual acts and it can refer to “bad” acts no matter of which gender.

Marcello Kloss says that the description of ‘homosexuality’ in Islamic-oriental and Arab countries is not about the sex of the partner.¹⁰⁹ Both Kloss and Schiffauer stress that is what, in some cultures, is viewed as negative in the male-male sexuality, is very closely related to the concept of manhood and family. There are two sins in the Islamic law, the Zina (adultery) and Liwat (Having anal intercourse) and it is not tied to gender. This is not specifically tied to what we (in the western Europe) know as a homosexual identity. Or as Kugle puts it, “The topic of homosexuality in the Arab world is largely unexplored, because its mainly hetero normative traditions has determined the sexual morality and silenced the debate about the topic (sic...).”¹¹⁰

Family values are very important. For Hanz it would be impossible to be outed. Not only is he afraid of getting killed but also for dragging shame over his family, especially his children. As any father he wants to protect the kids from harm, from shame and from anything that could hurt them. He reflects a lot about family matters and by the end of my studies he wants to talk about family things. Hanz knows and is concerned about how things will be when the children grow up. On this lunch I ask him if he ever thought about if he thinks that it is important for his kids to know (that he is gay).

I wish I could tell them but my family... My entire family (He counting in his brothers, sisters, cousins, and parents) would be hurt, damaged! Islam is about family you know. It is our culture. It is our everything.

I: What do you mean by saying that it is your everything?

H: We are supposed to take care of each other, to get married, to have kids. Kids take care of older. There is no room for anything else.

I: But what if one of them is homosexual then?

H: No I hope they are not. They cannot be for their safety. (Lunch Hanz June 2011)

¹⁰⁹ Kloss 2005/2006: 38

¹¹⁰ Kugle 2006:202

This particular question is hard for Hanz. Normally when he feels stuck he tells me that I will never understand because I do not believe. But this time instead he asks me to let him answer this question another time. Which he does on the fetish party? He brings it up himself:

I am raising them (his kids) to hate me, to lie to me if they find out that they are gay. I do not see another solution Maddie¹¹¹. I think it is hard enough to be a Muslim here (in Berlin). To add gay ... I do not know how to explain for them. (Hanz fetish party)

Family is indeed very important in Islamic culture. Whitaker states that: In Muslim and Christian traditions, the consolidation of family is built upon strong patriarchal structures. The moral and religious values, including marriage, is an ideal for building a society and regulations and rules deciding right from wrong within the matrimonial constitution¹¹² Also Andrew Yip talks about how Islam, ideally, is more than a religion to individual believers. It is a meaning system that permeates all aspects of their life.¹¹³

In terms of sexuality, it emphasizes the complementarity and unity of the sexes (*zawj*), which is creative and procreative. Outside this framework, all sexual activities (e.g. *zina* [adultery] and homosexuality) are considered not only sexual deviation, but also revolt against God. Thus, the Islamic worldview of sexuality accords hegemonic status to heterosexuality within marriage. (Yip: 2004:338)

Marriage (between man and woman) is here seen including sexuality only for the purpose of creating new people. There is no room for other types of sex or relations. According to Yip for Muslims, family is necessary to create social stability. Maintaining family honor (*izzat*) is a task of supreme significance. To take care of your elders, keep your family tie and be loyal is also indissolubly connected to ones manifestations of religious faith. The *Qur'an*, the *Sharia's*, and the *Hadith* highlight the privileges of parents and relatives, and idealize familial duties and hierarchical relations¹¹⁴. Another vital social (and religious) duty for Muslims is marriage. Marriage is a contractual outline involving rights and duties in relation to family and community. And also something through which one's religious faith is deepened. Earlier we heard Cem talking about homosexuality in his community. He said:

¹¹¹ Maddie is short for Magdalena

¹¹² Whitaker 2009:27

¹¹³ Yip 2004:338

¹¹⁴ Yip 2004:338-339

It is hard with homosexuality it doesn't really exist in our community.

I: What do you mean not exist?

C: Its like ...we don't talk about it as people here does it. In Germany a guy can be gay ... because it is in the west and it exist but we have ...for us family is important ...to get kids. So it's more ...we have a family and then we fuck. Maybe. Maybe therefore some scholars say it's forbidden? It's forbidden with sex ... sex the wrong way. (Cem interview one)

Cems words compiles with Yips research in Britain. Yips participants reported that homosexuality is sensed as a 'western disease' within their community. Yip says that:

The dominant discourse of homo- sexuality is inextricably linked to their religious/ethnic minority social position. This constructs homosexuality as an appendage of the permissive and immoral western 'other'. To be homosexual and Muslim, therefore, is being a victim of 'westoxication' (being intoxicated by secular western culture). (Yip: 2004: 339)

Seen as a western disease in some aspect there is still an idea that "Homosexuality" descends from early years and that even the scriptures talk about it. This view is also common among my informants. The four that consider themselves believing all by some point refers to the scriptures. Therefore in the next part I will talk about the scriptures and my informants' perception of it.

The variety of interpretations of the scriptures

Together with Judaism and Christianity, Islam is one of the monotheistic religions. They all have a common belief in one God but each one of them has their own sacred book at the core of it religion. Of course the scriptures are important to the four God believing informants. Hanz, Cem, Meral and Aysha all points out parts that could speak about homosexuality as parts speaking about other things that homosexuality (in the sense that they know homosexuality). Since the Quran was highlighted during the field work and they feel these parts are important I feel that this part of the chapter is necessary to understand my informants idea of a including religion outside the cultural context. The holy book in Islam is the Quran. For those who live by its teachings, the text is considered the actual word of God.¹¹⁵ I have chosen to discuss only the parts that were mentioned by the informants themselves. This because to do a whole

¹¹⁵ Baker 2007:9

investigation of all the parts that can be use to interpret the Islamic view of sexual orientation, specifically same-sex acts is material enough for another thesis. For a more indebt look at homosexuality on the scriptures I suggest the reading of Scott Kugle's book *Homosexuality in Islam* that gives a good introduction to any reader. When I speak to my informants they all (except for Peter that does not believe in God) hold the *Quran* high. Especially the parts that they feel speak directly to or about them. When I ask Aysha what her relationship to the Quran is she says the relationship is:

Very strong. I have read it several times since I struggled to find myself and wanted to know if God really didn't like gay people. But ...I Know the orthodox people claim it (Homosexuality) is wrong. I know what happened with the angels and the prophet (Lot). But I think that's rape, not love and God. The almighty loving God he cannot possibly be against love. (Aysha interview one)

Another time, when we are out bowling at Alexanderplatz, we get back to this subject and I ask Aysha if she has any favorite parts in the Quran:

Do you have any favorite parts of the Quran?

I like the part where he talks about creation of man in different variations and ... I don't know the number but maybe it's in the romans. ¹¹⁶

I: What do you think it means?

A: I think it means that he loves everyone no matter where you come from and who you are and that his intention was to create differences so we can learn from each other. (Aysha bowling June 2011)

The love of God is important for Cem, Hanz, Aysha and Meral. I will talk more about their interpretation of God below. But it is important to understand the differences and multifaceting in Islam and among people to understand how one can believe that something is good (halal) while other people in the same community speaks of it as forbidden (haram).

Speaking of forbidden, the four believing informants all, by some point, mention surah seven when they speak about the Quran. As the other Abrahamic religions within Islam people has traditionally been justifying the condemnation of homosexuality by referring to the story of the prophet Lot (Lût) in genesis.¹¹⁷ Synonymous for male homosexuality is often referred to as "the

¹¹⁶ Later she show me this is surah 30:22 which speaks " And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colors: verily in that are Signs for those who know. "

¹¹⁷ LUT Genesis chapter, and Quran 7,79-84; 26,165-175, 27.55

act of the people of Lot," which is shortened in the etymological borrowing "liwāt". Liwāt, however, is in legal theory not universally homosexuality as a tendency, but the act of anal intercourse (with both man and woman).¹¹⁸

Cem, Hanz, Aysha and Meral all mention the people of Lot. When I ask Meral about how she feels about the Quran she says that she knows about the part where it refer to Lot (Surah 7) but that it is not very important for her.

First of all the Quran never mention love. That part of the Quran (sura7) is about men acting violent towards each other. It's about male rape. That is all what it is. It has its foundation in sex and it is about straight people and not that it is forbidden (haram) to love each other. (Meral interview one)

She later mentions how important it is to understand that the Quran is (for her) a history book. This is (for Meral) not only a historical part of Islam and Muslim history but according to her it has to be considered as a book written in a different time, with different ideas of what is good or bad or even important for humans. This can again be understood as tied to previously mentioned identity construction. Humans construct their world in the time they are living. In a violent world some things are necessary to protect one self or others. What Meral is saying is that her interpretation is that some parts of the Quran are not applicable to the world of 2010 since we live in a different time being. But she also mention that bad things that people (in general) refers to deriving from the Quran is a consequence of peoples interpretations of it.

There is no problem with the Quran. I see the problem with the people who read it. I think that when you are searching for something that is good, you will find it. If you are searching wrong things and I don't know. You will also find them. It is all about what is in your head and what you want to see. Most of the people didn't see that the Quran is also a history book.

They only see forbidden (haram) or not forbidden (halal) and that this is how we should live like Muslims. But they don't see the history. There are so many parts that they forget that are not useful today. They choose what they want to see. (Meral interview one)

Surah seven is though frequently used as a verse that is supposed to condemn homosexuality. As I said it refers to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis. Although the surah does not give

¹¹⁸ Mohr 2007

a clear view of the actual genesis story where Lot is a prophet in Sodom. Rather in the Quran the story of Lot is only visible in small pieces in different chapters (surah). For example

We also (sent) Lut: He said to his people: "Do ye commit lewdness such as no people in creation (ever) committed before you?"

(Yussuf Alis translation Q 7:80-81)

Of all the creatures in the world, will ye approach males,
And leave those whom Allah has created for you to be your mates? Nay, ye are a people
transgressing (all limits)!"

(Q 26:165-166)

In this surah of the Quran it is referred to what happened in the Bible. And all my informants seem to interpret what happened in Sodom as completely alien to their concept of homosexuality". Rather, this part speaks about violence and rape. Aysha mentioned (above) that, for her, 'to love' another person is essential in her concept of 'homosexuality'. For her it is not about the act. And she makes a point about this when she says that this chapter is not about love. As I mentioned before, this is highly debated issue among researchers. According to Adam Waş the passages that in the Quran are a response to homosexuality since God destroyed Sodom for the reason of their homosexual practices.¹¹⁹

Though my informants seem to agree that what happened in the genesis was not by their means homosexuality in their point of view. Keeping in mind that this part of the Quran only refers to the Lot story in the Bible it is also important to know one thing. The only actual act that happens in the story of Lot is the one between Lot and his daughters when they flee the destruction of Sodom into a cave and the daughters decide that they need to get kids get their dad drunk and have sexual intercourse with him. Some people argue that there is implied an intention to act sexually when the man ask to "get to know"¹²⁰ the men but before anything happens the angels blind the people and ask Lot to flee.

¹¹⁹ *Homoseksualizm w islamie*, Radiorecording with Dr Adam Waş SVD.

¹²⁰ The Hebrew word 'jada' can be interpreted as to get to know or to have sex with depending on bible version.

There are several Surahs that are referred to as condemning homosexuality. Yet my informants seem to believe that this is not the case or that since the Quran was written so long ago the meaning of the words has changed. For instance during the interview Cem answers my question about what kind of relationship he has to the Quran with:

I know it (The Quran), I haven't read it all...Its hard to read ...I think it was written in a time when ... for us its different and harder to understand because the language has changed. But it's important it is Gods word and we live by them. (Cem interview one)

Cem has a valuable point here. As stated before: When we talk about homosexuality in Islam it is important to take into consideration the fact that there where no word for 'homosexual' in the classical Arabic language.¹²¹ Also the Hebrew word 'jada' that is used in the bible when the men in Sodom ask for Lot's guests could be interpreted in different way. In some parts it is interpreted "To have sex with" in other "To get to know". And when it comes to the concept of homosexuality, it is good to remember that in Europe it took until the nineteenth century, before we had something similar to the term 'homosexuality' as we know it in Western Europe today.¹²² It is self-obvious that language change with time, and so does the meaning of the words. But without a concept of something it is hard to be against it! It could be interpreted in different ways. For example, one hot day when we are walking around eating ice cream in the sun and preparing for a party Cem and I are talking about the scriptures again. He gives me a huge smile and says:

You know in the scripture it says that one man will have 72 virgins in paradise. It does not state a gender. So I count on 72 male virgins for myself."

I: Yeah but that part is about martyrdom Cem? Do you see yourself as a martyr?

C: yeah...well eh sometimes. I have ...you know I hide and I would like to think that I do this for a cause. To protect my family from shame. So yeah I might need to have some rights.

(Cem walk June)

Cem has a point there are parts that could also could be interpreted the exact opposite way that against homosexuality." He argues that there are Surah's that could be interpreted as speaking about promises made to Muslim men who make it to Heaven. Like the following:

¹²¹ Mohr 2007

¹²² LSVD 2009

And there shall wait on them [the Muslim men] young boys of their own, as fair as virgin pearls.
(Q 52:24)

They shall be attended by boys graced with eternal youth, who will seem like scattered pearls to the beholders. (Q 76:19)

The interpretations vary already among my informants; it is inevitable when dealing with individuals. Also, as Meral states it, we should bear in mind that the Quran is written 1400 years ago and remember that it was written in a time of war and other ideas of how to live your life. It is interpreted and reinterpreted in a constantly ongoing process. If it were not, how would it be possible to feel Gods love when some interpret what you feel is wrong?

To create a loving God when the family shuns you

Aysha is obviously nervous during the interview. It was not easy to get her to talk to me at all. And now she is sitting here, sipping her coffee. Sometimes she throw a watchful eye on the door sometimes looks at me as if I'm going to reveal myself as someone who wants to hurt her. But during the interview she relaxes and tells me passionately about her relationship to God.

I do believe in God, and I know the Quran and so but I ...I really don't pray everyday and stuff. I fast but I don't wear a veil and I... I don't think going to the mosque is important for me. God is with me inside and he loves me and I love God. (Aysha interview one)

One might think it is hard to see how 'God' can be seen as loving and including to some but excluding to others. Although seen in another perspective, as Durkheim says as the communities are growing, people will live in so many ways that no traditions will suit them all¹²³; it is not odd that the individuals create different ways of seeing their God.

¹²³ Durkheim1975

The four of my participants who believe in God all see him as including. Also all differ between their religion and culture. Drinking our third or fourth glass of Turkish tea at Hanz house, he tries to explain it to me.

God ... God ... God is important to me. He has created me. I must appreciate that, of course!

(Laugh) We talk a lot. Can you say that? Yes we are talking....

I: How do you think God views homosexuality?

H: He created me. He loves me. But everything he does has a purpose. Perhaps it is a test of my faith. I do not know. But it is still clear that he loves me. Why would he create something that he later discarded? Then everything would be pointless? (Hanz interview one)

For my four faithful informants the love of God for his creations is unquestionable. Although Hanz has an idea that his homosexuality might be Gods way to try him. Regardless they agree what God creates, God loves. An interesting discussion between Hanz and his lover appears while we are having coffee in Hanz home another time. His boyfriend comes from a Christian family and is open with them. But they turned away from him and according to him referred to homosexuality as a sin. The boyfriend argues with Hanz about the good God. For the boyfriend it is impossible to believe in a God.

Hanz boyfriend (HB): No there is a God. I would not think of a God that made people turn their back on their kids because of who the kids love. That's crazy.

H: That's wrong (Boyfriends name)... I think ... I always had God. He ... without him I would have no guidance. I would be dead.

HB: No love. If your God loved you, would he not protect you against getting killed by your family? But your religion is against you. Your God is against your sexuality.

H: No. God doesn't hate Men... gay men. People do.

HB: (To me): We have talked about this a lot you know for me its not understandable it is ... crazy (Verückt). But well I have learned to live with it although I know his God also is a reason why we can never be. (Lunch with Hanz and his boyfriend)

It might be worth to discuss the boyfriends view. One might think that it would be easier to abandon God than to stay within a religion that (by some) talks about you as a sinner that does not have God's love. First of all, we cannot forget that religion is tightly vowed in to the specific

historical and cultural context, and formulated within the symbols given by the specific culture.

¹²⁴ If you “break up” with God you might find yourself separated from the whole community.

To separate with God is not “just to” separate from an entity. There will be consequences if one leave. If one leaves, not only will the person no longer have God in his heart to help him feel hope when he feels lost in a constantly changing and fast spinning world. He will also probably face the consequence of being shunned by his community and with that all the things that are a part of what he is today. This, I believe, is crucial in any discussion about identity and religion.

Meanwhile the light of a loving God shines through when Cem, Hanz, Aysha and Meral speak. Peter, on the other hand has a hard time finding God good. During our interview in his apartment I ask him to tell me why and when he realized that he did not believe.

I believed as a teenager, really, really strong. My religion was very important to me. But somehow it um it did not fit into my logical thinking. You know the things they told me could not be. I just thought about a lot of these things and it did not fit with what believe. And I... uhm... I cannot believe in a God who does this and that. You know it developed over time. I could not believe in ideas like God doesn't love those some people or ...I ... (long pause) ... I couldn't handle this and I cannot believe in such a God. (Peter Interview one)

While God is important in the everyday life for Cem, Hanz, Aysha and Meral, they still have a very complex situation to face. They have to resort to a wide range of survival strategies, (such as hiding for instance their same sex partners for the family where they grew up.) to create a safe space to manage their identity. By some time I ask them if they believe in heaven or hell. Cem, Hanz, Aysha and Meral all have similar ideas of the concept as Aysha has when I ask her if she believe in Heaven or hell:

Of course I do that's why I try to live good life. I don't think of hell like the place with fires and eternal flame it's more like not with God and that's even more horrifying because if God doesn't love me anymore ... I don't know? (Aysha Turkish mosque)

This confirms what I mentioned about above of a link between God as accepting and loving linked together with the fear of being abandoned. Cem also mention a life without God as empty when we are shopping at the Alexa mal.

¹²⁴ Andersson & Sander. 2009:45

I: And a life without God?

C: I can not see it. I really can not imagine being without God.

I: Why?

C: God is the reason why I live and the reason why ... the reason for everything we are. Living without him, no ... I can not believe in a life like that. (Cem, shopping at Alexa shopping mal may)

Unambiguously, the management of balance between their religion and sexual identity is complex. Similar to what Yip found out in Britain my informants concealment of their sexuality mainly was motivated by the fear of rejection and of reprisals as well as correspondence to the cultural norm and maintenance of the cultural idea of family.¹²⁵

For Cem it is important to create balance. For him, to be a good Muslim equals being a good human and he states it by saying: “To be a good Muslim is to be a good man. To live a good life and be kind to others and pay respect to family and God.”¹²⁶

Family is a very important word here. Being a Muslim, your sexuality does interfere with your religion a lot. This is because in Islam there is so much stress on the family, and on the rights of and respect for community and parents. To maintain the family honor is important.¹²⁷ While talking about his fathers’ possible response if Peter would be outed Peter explains:

It is hard for them. It is the life of another generation. The new generation is different. My father struggle too. Just think that one of his sons married a German woman something he could never imagine would happened. And his other son is not married. This is new for him. It is not easy. (Peter Interview one)

According to Yip most of the people within Islamic culture think that God created heterosexuality and that that is the morally right thing to do.¹²⁸ Peter and I discuss this, because

¹²⁵ Yip 2004: 341

¹²⁶ Cem interview one

¹²⁷ Yip 2004:342

¹²⁸ Yip 2004:129

he would like to be able to tell the rest of his family (only his sister knows). Although neither Peter, nor his sister thinks that the rest of his family will accept him.

I am convinced that they wouldn't (accept it). I knew I could tell her (his sister) and I know it would be harder to tell the other one. They won't understand.

I: Why do you think that is? Is it Islam?

P: No it's not about Islam its about the culture. Or for my father it will be about Islam but for my brothers and sisters it will get culture. But he will use Islam of course. (Peter interview one)

The fact that several of the informants refer to the rejection from family as a cultural thing and not religious opens up for a well-debated question among scholars. Is it really possible to separate religion and culture?

Is it religion or culture that dismiss non-heterosexuality, if any?

Phenomenon of human such as biological, historical, linguistic, and cultural must be brought into relation with each other. This if we are to understand the human as a whole. Culture could be considered as the entire social heritage of man; specifically, it is the tradition of a particular human group, a way of living learned from, and shared by, the members of that group.¹²⁹

When it comes to religion, like culture itself it consists of systematic patterns of beliefs, values, and behavior, acquired by people as a member of their society. These patterns are systematic because their manifestations are regular in occurrence and expression: member of a group shares them. Within all religions, however, there is not homogeneity; there are differences of interpretation of principles and meanings.

When you discuss whether religion or culture could be or should be separated take the following into consideration. When the Christianization of Europe took place, it did not mean that everyone actually started to believe in one God. Rather it meant that the climate in the country intensified. This because of the idea that it would uphold the gospel light, a light shined from above¹³⁰.

¹²⁹ Geez 1973:362fff

¹³⁰ Gardell 2010:27

Fear and lack of knowledge creates problems. As Peter stated above, his father is from another generation, and Peter points out how he feels that his father is in between two worlds too when I ask Peter to describe his fathers position Peter says:

He (Peters father) is now... well the guy who is somehow a little depressive. He feels that the life he lives does not fit into this world.

It is the life of another generation. The new generation is different and his son married a German woman and ... so he has ... Dad could never imagine that this will happened. And also (he could never imagine) that one of his other sons (Peter) is not married and things like that. (Peter Interview one)

For him, the fact that one son married outside the community (Peters brother married a German woman) is hard enough. To face the concept of one of his children being gay would be even harder (according to Peter). When you live in a surrounding where alternative sexual identities does not exist or stands outside what is given in your context it is hard to know how to handle that.

During my time in Berlin while visiting a mosque with Aysha and having lunch she tells me a little about her family and the possible outcome of an outing:

I do not think my family will really kill me, about my closest family. I cannot imagine that. But it, I would be a problem if we meet the relatives. Mom... she. She might suspect something. Especially since I refuse to get married (to a man). But she would never talk about it. If she knows, as long as I do not show anything she will pretend, as it is not there. (Aysha Turkish mosque May)

According to Yip and Boschow the noticeable sociocultural and religious characteristics have a major influence on the way homosexual Muslims cope with their sexuality. According to Yip:

The dualistic construction of moral purity (i.e. Islamic sexuality) and moral profanity (i.e. western homosexuality) renders non-heterosexual Muslims traitors of not only their religion, but also their collective ethnic and cultural heritage. (Yip 2004:341)

Complying with my research my informants are convinced that their families will pledge to the prevalent Islamic view of sexuality that problematizes homosexuality. Because of this belief the informants underline the significance of carefulness and silence about who they are towards their family.

The way I am- about the struggle between two worlds

Ramadan approaches, Hanz will be fasting although it is hard in Berlin. Long days and employers that lack understanding make it hard. "It will be a month with very few hours of sleep" Hanz jokes when we walking through the isles of the Islamic Art Museum together. Hanz seems to enjoy those walks and while admiring the magnificent art and ruins. He looks forward to Ramadan. It is a celebration with his kids and other family. It is important, even though he claims that it is not the main way to Gods love.

I: Do you believe Ramadan is important?

H: Very important in one sense. But my religion is not mainly about the rituals. My religion is the bond between God and me. (Hanz Pergamon Museum June 2011)

By telling it will be only a few hours of sleep he also shows that he feels that it is a struggle to be a Muslim in everyday life in Berlin, Germany. By raising the significance of the bound to God in rituals, he creates a balance that works in everyday life. All of them also have the opinion that the German media shows a wrong and dishonest picture of Islam and Muslims. That politicians, newspapers and television could be blamed for not showing the truth and diversity in Islam. Cem says that it doesn't matter what he does because he will always be judged as a Muslim because of his Oriental appearance:

I will always be a Muslim in people's eyes. It is not wrong because I am a Muslim but I am not a terrorist. I think I am a good man but people only see the SPD idiot [dumkopf] and news and then ...they think Muslims are bad. (Cem Interview one)

The person in SPD¹³¹ Cem refers to be Thilo Sarrazin, a German central bank board member and center-left Social Democrats politician (SPD). By the time we talk we are in the aftermath of the controversy caused of his book "*Deutschland schafft sich ab*" about integration and Muslim immigration in Germany. As a politician Sarrazin is given much space in the written media and

¹³¹ Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland

he often make statement that causes debate. For example like when Letter International he stated interviewed him:

The Turks are conquering Germany the way the Kosovars conquered Kosovo: with a higher birth rate." He also said that "a large number of Arabs and Turks in (Berlin) ... have no productive function other than in the fruit and vegetable trade. (Letres International sept 2009)

The book sold out very quickly and after this statement Sarrazins publisher had to increase the books initial printing to 250,000 copies.¹³²

Racism and nationalism, political parties are playing on ignorance and fear. This year in September there will be a new election for the mayor of Berlin. The Berlin politician, in some cases, uses the fear of the unknown for their own purposes. Also if we look at the written and spoken media a brief analysis reveals a tendency to standardize and simplify opinions in such ways that they fit into the existing stereotype. Writer Filip Polat in Migazin writes: "The mood in this country is divided, not least because the debate in the last year and the sweeping and indiscriminate terror warnings to the public."¹³³

In the end of 2010 and beginning of 2011 there were a security raise because of fear of terrorist attacks in Europe and of course also in Berlin. Mayor Klaus Wowereit announced it in the Info Radio Berlin-Brandenburg in October 2010. Wowereit said that people should restrictions on daily life and that they should assume that it will be checkpoints set up in the city."¹³⁴

This action was caused by a warning in the western world and according to what the news referred to as: "terrorism experts". Germany was a "possible target" for attacks. (ibid). During my field study the Berlin newspapers reported relatively frequently about fear of terror in Berlin. And when you read the articles it was always a connection between "terror" and Islam (ibid).

Also during my time in Berlin the parliament (Der Bundestag) was sealed off to visitors. And long lines of red and white barricades were set up around the building. A big part of the he riverside walk (der Spree) was closed. Throughout Germany, heavily armed police officers

¹³² Artikel in Speigel.de <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,715876,00.html> 2011-06

¹³³ Filiz Polat. Islamophobie – Die Angst vor dem Islam wächst Migazin. 2011-01-28

¹³⁴ Der Spiegel Angst vor Terror in Deutschland 2010-10-08

patrolling where railway stations, and at the Christmas markets, as well as in front of public buildings.

The previous long row of tourists on their way into parliament was minimized. In December 2010 it was only allowed for registered groups with guides, but in April 2011 the dome was opened again for ¹³⁵ single visitors that had an invitation made on the parliament website minimum three days in advance. ¹³⁶

Every article I came across during this period equaled terrorism with violence descending from Islam. This is troublesome because of what I stated earlier. With lack of nuances of a multifaceted phenomena as Islam. People that read the newspaper and do not have any previous knowledge of the phenomena might do the connection Islam equals terrorist. This is also showed among my informants. Meral said:” People think that Muslims are stupid [ganz dum]. That they don’t work. That they oppress their wife’s and that they swear [schimpfen]. And that is also a picture shown in the media.”¹³⁷

Remember how Peter said:

Yes. People will always think of me as a Muslim.”

I: What does it mean and how does that feel?

P: I ... I don’t like it. Because they just think that just because I have that origin that I am Muslim and it’s the same if they would judge me for being Christian. I mean they just judge me for not being the same. (Peter interview one)

How my informants feel compiles with the current political situation in Berlin. But in the same time none of my informants expressed any fear of being hurt in Berlin by others than family.

When I ask if Peter feels safe in Berlin he answers:

Well maybe I get an uncomfortable feeling sometimes when going out at night. Maybe at night. But this is because I hear so horrible things ... like people being stabbed and such. But if I don’t hear them I feel safe here. (Peter interview one)

¹³⁵ Berliner Morgenpost. Reichstagskuppel öffnet wieder für Einzelbesucher. 2011-04-06

¹³⁶ Entry form at formal website of the Parliament 2011-08-25

¹³⁷ Meral Interview

According to AMT Berlin is the third most violent city in Germany, violence against homosexuals are also high.¹³⁸ Still all of the informants above all refer to family when we talk about fear of violence.

The informants and the future “Ten years from now I will be outed, maybe.”

There has been an emotional journey for some of them to speak to me. Sometimes there were topics that they felt were new. New in the sense that they must consider them.

In the end of this research, while attending an underground party with Hanz. He gets very serious and says.

Before this ...our talks ...I never really thought of ... well identifying myself as “homosexual” As a part of what I am. First...it is impossible in my world. I mean, I could fuck a man or ... I don't know. Its like I know I am gay in a German point of view but on the other hand I am not in a way. I do not live like a gay man. I borrow a part of this world but I can't have it. (Hanz Fetish party may 2011)

By some point I ask all of them about the future. Everyone express a wish to be able to be open with his or her family. Aysha says:

Ten years from now? I ...I don't know. I hope my mom and that ... will accept (Girlfriends name). And that they realize we will not have kids, at least not our own. But I don't know maybe God have other plans for me. (Aysha Interview one)

Meral has another idea. She first states that she can not possible know her life ten years from now but then she gives me another view:

I really I do not know, but if my wish to be mother will be very big so big that I ... I do not know ... now ... so that I can say that now. But maybe in the future I want a relationship to a man, or I want to get married. You know, for me its impossible ... It is ... for my own moral its impossible to say ok I will have child with a woman.

I: Will you please explain what you mean by that?

¹³⁸ AMT 2011-04 statistische centralbyro, Statistik für Berlin Brandenburg April 2011

M: I do not like artificial insemination. For me it is a big No! This is because of Islam. I know that nowhere in the Quran you will find anything about it, but it is my Logic. I just can't. I could say I can adopt a child. That is not a problem but not artificial. That does not fit with my moral.

I: I am not sure I understand. To adopt a child with a woman is ok?

M: Yeah I ... guess I could do that. The only thing that I have to tell the child that I am not the real mother. Or I have to tell them where the parents are. This is important. I have to tell them. It's very important. I cannot lie to my child. That is not ... that is haram. (Meral Interview two)

As the reader can see, there is a constant negotiation and struggle with feelings going on here. The future is unclear and so is also the idea of how they want the future to be. Peter expresses a wish to tell his parents, but not now.

Ehm I ... I don't want to tell them now. Because at this moment ... I think that they can't be so stupid not to know that I am ... (Gay). When I tell them, if I will tell them I have to tell them in some way that they have to ask. Something like "I never want to marry a woman"... hmmm so they will say, "What do you mean?" "In one way I want to tell them because ... I think I mean I am living since several years with a man. How can't they not know?"

I: Is it important for you that they know?

P: I think its ... for some years it wasn't but now it is. It's also ... touching my other life. You know how I am to other people. How I am just ...ehm.

Like I am open in one way but it's always something that says...a.a.'maybe you shouldn't tell that person'. That feeling ... that I don't want it anymore.

Part of me want to be really open and I don't know what to do with this feeling. I think that I have to tell them ... to be completely free. (Peter Interview one)

While Meral could consider marrying a man to have kids, if she wants kids. Peter has a growing feeling that he need to tell his family because he does not want to get married (to a woman) in the future. Also this frustration and negotiation compiles with others. Also for Yip's British informants in the negotiation of space, marriage emerged to be a significant issue.

For his participants the pressure from the parents (to get married) sometimes led to the disclosure of sexuality. In turn, this lead to the increase of parental pressure. Apparently Yips participants' parents saw the marriage as a 'cure' to the perceived transitional phase of non- heterosexuality. For my informants the significance of marriage differs. For Hanz marriage is a safety net. During

our interview he states: " My wife is.... My wife is my safety net, just.... my lifeline. I love do not really love her. But we have a life together." ¹³⁹

But during this period all of them, by some point, express a wish to be open with their family. For Hanz who has kids it is a struggle. He feels as if he teaches his kids to hate him and he things of ways to be open even though he, by time being, does not see "The truth" as a possibility. Peter, on the other hand, has a growing wish to tell. He states that by some point he will. And I ask him about it and connect it to his fear of getting hurt by his father.

I: You tell me you have a wish to tell them by some point. You think that you want that even if it means that you risk your life?

P:(hesitates for several seconds) Yes ... I think so. (Peter Interview one)

As the reader can see in this chapter, the participants all, by some means are forced to live double life. One, as a Muslim (in some sense), within a context where the other part of them (their homosexuality) is not acceptable. This creates problems for individuals and for the communities. Next chapter is a summary of this experience, as well as a suggestion and an invitation to other researchers to continue this work.

¹³⁹ Hanz interview

6.0 A mosque under the rainbow – concluding remarks

It is September in Berlin. I have gone through tons of notes, interview transcriptions and now it is time to summarize it. For several weeks I have had the opportunity to take part in five people's life. It has been an emotional journey for all of us. What I thought was a free and liberal place to some proved to be less welcoming to others. I had forgotten that it is not where you are that matters. It is also where you come from. To understand my informants' situation and negotiations it is important to know that they come from a cultural context where family is viewed in another way than it might be in a western European city as Berlin. In the beginning of this thesis I asked some questions, first I wondered;

How do the informants, the Berlin natives, and the Islam community look upon homosexual Muslims in Berlin?

To answer this we must, as said before, first conclude that 'homosexuality' is not necessarily seen as something that you could be. There is no concept of such an identity in their culture. It does not matter that you are living in a country where there is a concept of 'homosexuality' as an identity if you, or your family, do not carry a concept of it. If you do not have the concept of something you are not capable of identifying yourself or other people with it. Cem talks about this already in the chapter about homosexuality.

It is hard with homosexuality it doesn't really exist in our community.

I: What do you mean not exist?

C: Its like ...we don't talk about it as people here does it. In Germany a guy can be gay ... because it is in the west and it exist but we have ...for us family is important ...to get kids. So it's more ...we have a family and then we fuck. Maybe. Maybe therefore some scholars say it's forbidden? It's forbidden with sex ... sex the wrong way. (Cem, Interview one)

Cem does not have the answer, and it is because there is no uncomplicated solution. It is not easy to consider something that you do not know exists. It is impossible. Identity is a complex matter but you can only identify yourself with things you have a concept of. That you "are" is depending on where you are. I mentioned how Nilsson talks about how important it is to understand analyze humans and their action in a holistic context that includes both the person's

internal characteristics and the social situation that he exists in. This idea has its roots in Gestalt psychology (Gestalt psychology) in which humans are always busy to interpret and understand the world around her, especially their social environment and interaction with other people to form their self. In other words Identity is tied to something that you know. Also we must remember that it is not an unknown or uncommon behavior, and the idea of creating what is good or bad behavior is not tied to Islam. In a society we need rules and standards, at least some, to be able to work with each other. It's hard to imagine a functional rule-less society.

We need structures, and those in power in a society such as the majority provide structures. Those in power also have the power to define what is an acceptable and desirable behavior. We stand arise it and considered as normal. The "normal" is the common and on the other hand of normal stands abnormal.

It is not possible to state something being normal without referring to what is abnormal. But what does it mean that we live by these standards? We may have difficulty understanding each other and accept-out other peoples' choices in life because they do not conform to the world we know as ours. With this individuals are forced to see how others are doing instead of doing what feels good for themselves and their lifestyle. Sometimes the standard is so strong that you can not see that there are other alternatives and that you are able to make different choices. It is problematic.

Then when the world is expanding for instances because you move you suddenly have to face new ways to consider 'being'. For Cem, Hanz, Aysha, Peter and Meral 'homosexuality' as the western European concept differs from their parents' idea of the concept as not acceptable. As stated before, there is no worldly consensus or self-identifying concept of being 'homosexual'. Homosexuality as one might know it in Berlin, in other words as a part of who you are, is a modern European invention. The word did not exist in the Turkish language until 1923. And it still does not exist (as a description for an identity) in the classical Arabic language. So is it possible to be something you do not know exist?

The answer is no, since you have to have an idea of a concept to consider it a part of who you are. For example Cem talked about how it became important to have the right clothes to fit into the 'right' crowd (i.e. the crowd he wanted to be a part of). But you have to have a concrete idea of "what" or "who" you want to be and what it takes to "be" that. Ideas do not show up out of nowhere.

For example if you lived your whole life a housewife in a little town somewhere without many connections outside this. You will define yourself as a housewife. Maybe a mother of some kids, perhaps somebody's wife. The one who is supposed to cook, clean and so on. You might state yourself being a housewife because that is what woman is supposed to be in this town.

Then, one day, you get an idea from a traveler passing by. An educated, single businesswoman comes to your town and tells you about who she is. And what she does. She is a woman, she is different and you start to think: 'What if?' Now you get new ideas that forms the 'new you'. For example you might think: Is that way of 'being possible for me?' 'Could I get a university degree? Could I work outside the house? With the new impressions, new ideas about what or who 'I' am.

My informants, since they are situated second-generation immigrants in Berlin, have to face a concept of being something that does not exist in their parents' background. Nevertheless all of them consider themselves being homosexual in some aspects. They all love or feel attracted to people of the same sex. This is a feeling and coops with what the American psychological association refers to as essential in the concept of 'homosexuality'. "It is not necessary for an individual to express his sexual orientation in the behavior"¹⁴⁰ You might want to ask yourself: If somebody does not ever have sex with anyone in his/her life what is he supposed to 'be' then? asexual?

Identity as knowledge is nothing static. The knowledge of a phenomenon is created in the sphere in-between people in the dialogue and interaction. Also humans form their identity in relation and comparison to others. Every identity negotiation happens in relation to something or someone else. Peter is a good example. He tells me that he is a Muslim by birth but not by belief. This is something that many believing Muslims would question by asking. 'How could he be a Muslim, he does not believe? Still Peter identifies himself as a Muslim, descending from a Muslim family and context. But probably also, not to forget, because of how he is threatened by the surroundings in Germany. Individuals take on different roles in different situations. Hanz is one perfect example.

¹⁴⁰ American psychological association 2011-04 www.apa.org/helpcenter/sexual-orientation.aspx

From the beginning, Hanz mirrors an identity where he is a Muslim man who follows things like not smoking, not lying, and not drinking. After a while, the more we move into his life and on the Berlin gay scene, the more he relaxed and let a little on the role of a Muslim and drinks and smokes while partying. As Andersson and Sanders discuss this is common for all people. You take on different roles in different surroundings.¹⁴¹ But why is it that homosexuality is excluded? Is it Islam, or is it something else?

At some point all of my informants speak about how they think that their parents will refer to Islam when speaking about homosexuality. In the same time they all claim that Islam does not condemn homosexuality and that Islam is important for them. One might ask if the ideas about homosexuality as something bad descend from Islam? Rowson stated that erotic attraction and sexual acts between members of the same sex always have been recognized in Islamic societies.¹⁴² Yet there is no consensus in the Islamic world how to treat 'homosexuality'. As stated before: The concept of being homosexual is a European modern invention. There is no word for homosexuality as an identity in the Arabic language and to Turkish it came as late as 1923. The four believing informants all claim that their religion is important and they use religion to create a safe space for them self. For example they all refer to the chapter seven in the Quran. A chapter that refers directly to the story about the prophet Lot in the genesis in the bible. Although they also think that what God punish is not 'homosexuality' as we know it in Berlin today. They feel that God punish is the intention to molest and violate Lots visitors sexually. Meral states: "It has its foundation in sex and it is about straight people and not that this is forbidden (haram) to love each other".¹⁴³

These sayings in the Quran could be interpreted as prohibiting non-creational sex. As Meral states it could be interpreted as forbidding violence and intention to rape. But it does not speak directly about 'homosexuality' as we know it. How could it? There was not a word for 'homosexuality' (as an identity concept) by the time the bible and the Quran where written. The question about why remains. According to Yip all other sexual activities are not only seen as sexual deviation but also being against God. In frank language this means for example that anal

¹⁴¹ Andersson & Sander. 2009

¹⁴² Rowson 2004

¹⁴³ Meral Interview one

or oral intercourse, between men and women also are considered to be prohibited (haram), since it does not create children.

What is interesting though is that the four believing informants, although they claim to value the Quran highly. They also say that it is important to remember when it was written and that it could be and should be interpreted by today's means. Also Meral states: "There is no problem with the Quran- I see the problem with the people who read it." ¹⁴⁴It is true that the Quran could be interpreted in several ways and Meral makes a point that is shown in this thesis to. As well as there is no worldly consensus of being homosexual there is also a very multifaceted idea of what a Muslim is, and they all have their own way of reflection over and practice their religion. This brings us to my second question that is:

How important is their religion for the informants as individuals?

All of my informants have their own interpretation of God and what to lay emphasis on when it comes to religious practice. While Aysha, Cem, Hanz and Meral tells us that their religion is indispensable and that they are all God's creation and loved by God. Peter thinks that God is not for him First it does not fit into his logic then also partly because he cannot accept such a God (that does not love all his creation). For the others God is a loving creator that accepts every of his creation for who they are. One could ask if the creation of the always-loving God a safety line when life outside is too hard? Peter disagrees. He is not in need of God's love. Even though they refer to the idea of their family being against non-heterosexuality as cultural. They also have an idea that those ideas descend (Within their family) from Islam.

Discussing whether religion or culture we should remember Gardell's words about how the beginning of the Christianization process of Europe did not mean that people suddenly started to actually believe in a God. It was rather so that the climate in the country intensified. This because of the idea that it would uphold the gospel light, a light shined from above. ¹⁴⁵You could draw a parallel to when a judge during the middle Ages, condemned the witch trials. You could argue whether he did suggest the witch to be killed by his own beliefs in God wanting that or maybe caused from a given fear of reprisals if they did not follow the given law?

¹⁴⁴ Meral Interview one

¹⁴⁵ Gardell 2010:27

When it comes to religion, like culture itself it consists of systematic patterns of beliefs, values, and behavior, acquired by people as a member of their society. These patterns are systematic because their manifestations are regular in occurrence and expression: member of a group shares them. Within all religions, however, there is not homogeneity; there are differences of interpretation of principles and meanings. The diversity is not necessarily expressed by distance. A Muslim in Kreuzberg does not necessarily equals a Muslim in Potsdam. We can also conclude the differences just by watching these five people, all Muslims, all in Berlin but with different ideas of what a Muslim is and what the religion demands and gives.

When it comes to the community of Berlin I asked;

How much impact does the Berlin state have (with its laws and educational system) on creating a safe space for Homosexual Muslims??

I have discussed laws and education earlier and can conclude that even though Berlin as a state has done a huge journey in the homosexual history and law there is still much that must be done. For instance today in Berlin you are able to marry a person of the same gender and have laws speaking of equal rights between members of society. This when during the world war two and late 1900 there where still laws that punished 'homosexuality'. The problem is that laws in it self does not create any changes.

When I started this study and tried o find informants I met a lot of bias both in gay communities and in the Muslim community. I believe this is caused by several factors. First in Berlin there is an intention that teaching about homosexuality should be held in school. According to my informants, during their school time no such thing existed. Also Berlin has a divided religious education. Either you can be taught in "your" religion, or you can take an ethics teaching in primary schools.

Ethics education should include information on all religions in all cases according to the curricula. Yet none of the informants experienced that this is what they learned in Ethics class.

When discussing the matter with Peter we find out that no such thing was taught:

I: So tell me what did they teach you in ethic-class? Is it supposed to be about [über alle] all the religions, right?

P: Yes but they didn't teach that. It was like this philosophy and moral and things like that but not about religion.

I: Did you learn about other religions at all?

P: No. I only know what I read about it for myself. Not from school. We did not learn it in school.

(Peter Interview one)

One can also question why not everyone should learn about all religions. Peter himself also questions this when he states that of course it is important to learn about other religions. This because without the knowledge of others becomes the 'other' a concept we do not know what in the long run can turn into something we think is dangerous. This would be a possible area for further research, how the connection between the lack of education (and education) of religion in Berlin creates the alienation of “different believers” (than Christian).

As I discussed in the beginning of this thesis. Islamophobia is nothing new. But there are possibilities to change if you know the way. The problem in Berlin is that fear of the unknown is used for other purposes. In this case, according to my informants there is no proper school teaching about neither Islam nor alternative sexuality. Also when media writes about Islam none of the newspaper problematizes or explains the Islamism. This could create a very dangerous environment.

Moving on, all my informants by some point claim that the climate for Muslims is hard in contemporary Berlin. To be a homosexual Muslim is even worse. Law texts create a possibility to be open minded. For instance you are now able to marry someone from your own sex. You have protective laws and other ways to be protected, in theory. But in reality there is still a lot of violence against homosexuals in Germany. Also the ideas descending from Islam about family, and seeing non-heterosexuality as something bad makes people suppress their sexuality caused mainly by two reasons: Fear of rejection and to pay respect to their family and community.

Although Muslims face a tough reality in Berlin, none of my informants expressed any fear of being hurt in Berlin as such. Rather they refer to family when we talk about fear. There has been an emotional journey for some of them to speak to me. Sometimes there were topics that they felt were new. New in the sense that they must consider them. In the end of this research, while attending an underground party with Hanz he explains that he never really had to identify as homosexual before.

Before this ...our talks ...I never really thought of ... well identifying myself as “homosexual” As a part of what I am. First...it is impossible in my world. I mean, I could fuck a man or ... I don't

know. Its like I know I am gay in a German point of view but on the other hand I am not in a way. I do not live like a gay man. I borrow a part of this world but I can't have it. (Hanz Fetish party may 2011)

Hanz states that in one hand we have a world where being homosexual is impossible. In the same world, but in the other hand, we hold the concept of being homosexual. It is self evident that this is hard to balance in-between. Still, all of my informants by some point tell me about the hope that they could be open in the future.

They all have different solutions for their future. While Meral thinks that she could consider marrying a man (to have kids) because she cannot see Islam as permissive towards artificial pregnancy. Hanz sees marriage as a safety net not to get killed. Cem and Aysha both hope that one day they can be open with their families. And Peter is convinced that it is important by some point to let his father know. Even if it means he gets killed.

Here we have five people, different in age, gender and education. All of them admits 'being' Muslims and 'homosexuals'. Yet they are different. The negotiation of 'who' they are is a constantly ongoing process. So is the negotiation of their religion. It is not an easy ride being a Muslim in Berlin today. Although to be a homosexual Muslim seems to be even worse. It is a double discrimination. On one hand Muslims are seen as dangerous, on the other hand violence against homosexuals is still high. There is also no such alternative as stepping away from once religion. To separate with God is not "just to" separate from an entity. There will be consequences if you leave. First of all if you leave God only you will no longer have God in your heart to help you feel hope when you feels lost in a constantly changing and fast spinning world. You will also probably face the consequence of being shunned by your community and with that all the things that are a part of what you are today.

The last day of writing in Berlin. The sun gently touches my shoulders while I walk down Mollstraße in Berlin. It is early September. Election days are approaching in Berlin. A new mayor will be elected and you can tell that mainly by how poles and walls are filled with posters. Smiling politician from every wall.

The ruling mayor showing himself as a modern cool politician, surrounded by smiling kids and smartphones. It is a perfect day in Berlin an idyllic late summer day. The street is full of happy

people, residents and tourists. Children laughing and teenagers performing street dance. It could be the happiest place on earth. But some election posters tell the attentive about something that push below the surface. Election posters with crossed mosques and woman in burqa and prison bars over their eyes and texts like: "Our woman will remain free". Racism and nationalism is simmering under the surface. Bearing in mind that Berlin is Germany's third most violent city and that hate crimes against both immigrants and homosexuals are common this gives a very divided picture.

Berlin is a place that should have learned from its' history. During my fieldwork here I have met a very divided city. Berlin laws and ideas how teaching is supposed to be held according to the curriculums should be able to provide a liberal city with safety and open mindness. Still my informants are forced to live hidden under the shadow of a community where a part of them does not exist and in a country where they are seen as dangerous and different. Four of them find a safe spot and feel safe within a relation to God, but all five of them claim that other people (in this case their family and extended family) also would use God and religion to shun them for their homosexuality. It seems as to feel whole it takes a lot of creativity and balancing between ideas. But to be able to make the different communities become one, if that is the goal, there is still a lot to do.

I believe I pointed out in this thesis to areas of action where changes could happen or with room for improvement.

I hope some researcher will take me up on this invitation.

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