

## Islamic Studies in Britain: describing interstitial spaces

Islamic education in Britain is comprised of three parallel pathways that rarely meet: Islamic Studies as taught in universities, which often presents Islam as the existential universal problem; Islamic theology, which often presents Islam as the answer to everything and, thirdly, activist grassroots movements that seek to empower British Muslim citizens to achieve what they desire. Within these categories there is a rich cornucopia of varied and some excellent practice, yet few opportunities are taken or created for links between them, by sharing, disseminating or cross-fertilising. A complicating factor in this landscape is the securitisation agenda, which has created a surveillance culture. This discriminatory agenda provides a proxy for secularism - a concept that becomes less clear as more pressure is brought to bear on it. The *British Association for Islamic Studies* (BRAIS), the *Muslims in Britain Research Network* (MBRN) and *Muslim Engagement and Development* (MEND) are three organisations that attempt to bring these different voices together. In their different ways each organisation opens debate that crosses between and within academic, theological and community based debates and their responses to secularism and to the surveillance culture. We will elaborate upon the capacity for growth and cross fertilisation in these three pathways and demonstrate how BRAIS, MBRN and MEND are attempting to provide guidance. We will also consider whether such organisations can provide interstitial spaces between and among their own various parts and how each interstice can be better understood and developed in constructive tension with the others.

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