

**European *Islams* and Muslim *Europes***  
**Some thoughts about studying Europe's contemporary Islam**

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**1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

Studying Islam in the European context has become a complex task, and as an autonomous academic topic is discussed by a series of different disciplines,<sup>2</sup> mostly in Western Europe. Furthermore it has acquired an increasing interest, not only academic but political and societal, as interest in the topic stems from discussions on integration and segregation patterns. Old or static perceptions about 'what Europe is' crosscuts with new and developing ideas about what 'Europe will be' in numerous domains of confrontation. Studying European Islam could not be a more fascinating

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<sup>1</sup> This article is the fruit of a series of discussions and considerations about Islam in Europe that took place in two conferences in Vienna in 2012 and Elsingør in 2013 gathering correspondents to the Yearbook and other researchers. I want to thank cordially all participants that have contributed to this article. Of course any misunderstanding or unsuccessful use of their ideas should be seen as my fault. I want also to thank Jørgen Nielsen, Samim Akgönül, Riem Spielhaus and my partner Meriç Özgüneş for their valuable comments and suggestions on the present text.

<sup>2</sup> The past decade has seen Islamic studies take on a new prominence in academic circles. Governments are demanding increasing amounts of research to inform foreign policy towards the Islamic world and to improve relations with domestic Muslim communities. In certain cases this interest can be connected to security policies after the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the events that followed 11 September 2001. Also, student interest in Islam also appears to be rising, whether through demand for courses or choice of PhD subjects. But while individual academics are busy researching and teaching about Islam in the European context, it has not yet become a distinct discipline. Islamic studies are offered by a series of universities as a substantial option and specialist programmes such as master's degrees all over the European continent: in Copenhagen, Erlanger, Lund, Uppsala, Helsinki, Tartu, Prague, Oxford, Gloucestershire, London, Edinburgh, Strasbourg, Louvain, Fribourg, Lucerne, Granada, Utrecht, Amsterdam, Malta, Vilnius, Dublin, Baku, Sarajevo, Vienna, Yerevan, Skopje, Istanbul, Kiev, Leiden, and Warsaw among others. Sometimes it is difficult to make a distinction between studies for Muslims and Islamic studies, or studies on historical Islam and contemporary Islam (especially European Islam).

field of research unraveling aspects of both multiple ‘Europes’ and ‘Islams’<sup>3</sup>. Many of these aspects remain invisible to public debate. Islamic studies often see the world as if it is composed of separate social echelons, perpetuates the existence of imaginary places, such as ‘Christendom’ and ‘The Islamic World’, ‘The First World’, ‘The Third World’, and ‘Europe’ which are misrepresented as separate socio-cultural entities, rather than as integral parts of the human world.

It is a very delicate task not to group Muslims and consider them as a collective subject merely because of their religion, which often is taken by the majority European ideology as a negative or incompatible trait. The challenge for Islamic studies would be to enhance its restitution as a scientific field of research as Islam constitutes *per se* a multifaceted factor of otherness, among many others.

In the past 20 years there is an abundance of research on Muslims in Europe, which has been conducted with legal, political, or anthropological methodological tools<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> On the notion of a *multifaceted Europe* or *multiple Europe(s)* see, among others, Strath, Bo, (ed.), *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other*, Multiple Europes, No. 10. (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2000) and Ray Hudson, “One Europe or Many? Reflections on Becoming European”, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, 25/4 (2000), pp. 409-426. *Mutatis mutandis*, Islam(s) in Europe could be considered as unravelling a wide spectrum of cultures, ethnicities and political stances in the Western and Eastern parts of Europe, see Maréchal, Brigitte, “Introduction”, in B. Maréchal S. Allievi, F. Dassetto, J. Nielsen (eds.), *Muslims in the enlarged Europe*, (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003), p. xvii, Bougarel, “Balkan Muslims and Islam in Europe” *Südost Europa* 55 (2007), p. 339, Górak-Sosnowska, Katarzyna, “Muslims in Europe: different communities, one discourse? Adding the Central and Eastern European perspective”, in K. Górak-Sosnowska (ed.), *Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe. Widening the European perspective*, (Warsawa: University of Warsaw, Faculty of Oriental Studies), pp. 12-26.

<sup>4</sup> Among many others see B. Maréchal, S. Allievi, F. Dassetto and Jørgen Nielsen (eds.), *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe – Religion and society*, (Leiden: Brill, 2003); S. Ferrari and A. Bradney (eds.), *Islam and European Legal Systems*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); J. Malik (ed.), *Muslims in Europe: From the Margin to the Centre*, (Münster: LIT Berlin, 2004); B.-P. Aluffi and G. Zincone (eds.), *The Legal Treatment of Islamic Minorities in Europe*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2004); R. Potz and Wieshaider W. (eds.), *Islam and the European Union*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2004) and Nielsen, Jørgen, *Muslims in Western Europe*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004 [3d ed.]).

Some of the research deals with country case-studies, others attempt to discuss specific issues, such as islamophobia, Muslim religiosity, Islamic law and education or the position of Muslim women in the European context. Whatever the content or the approach of the relevant literature, it seems that developing global methodological and comparative approaches would be useful in order to understand similar or different backgrounds that tend to homogenise or divide these multiple and multifaceted ‘Europes’ and ‘Islams’.

This paper aims at putting forward a series of methodological thresholds that could assist readers of the comprehensive reports presented in the *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe* and to debate and present research in an inter-disciplinary, holistic and comparative manner. One of the incentives to attempt such an endeavor is to clarify misunderstandings stemming from the terminology used that often has different connotations in various European institutional, legal and political contexts, in the past and present, East or West. After all, attempting to define ‘Islam’ and ‘Muslims’ is not an easy task<sup>5</sup>, as European Islam is spread in 46 countries with different features and profiles. In most of the cases, it constitutes a small minority (from or less than one per cent to ten per cent, e.g. Ireland, Poland, UK, France, Germany etc.), a strong minority (20 to 45 per cent, like Bosnia-Herzegovina or Macedonia) or exceptionally represent the majority of the population (Albania, Azerbaijan, Kosovo, Turkey/Norther Cyprus).

## **2. A system of variables to be considered**

In order to locate grades of variability that could determine the relation between Islam and Europe, certain questions should be given a set of answers. Does Islam or Muslims have identical characteristics in the countries of ‘origin’ and in the European continent? What makes Islam a *brand*<sup>6</sup> and under which modalities? Which factors render Islam a flexible/inflexible religion or permeable/impermeable culture and what

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<sup>5</sup> Jeldoft, Nadia, “On defining Muslims”, *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe*, vol. 1, (2009), pp. 9-14.

<sup>6</sup> With reference to the presentation by Stefano Allievi “Islam as a brand” at the conference organised by the University of Copenhagen, Helsingør, 20-23 May 2013.

are the grades and characteristics of resistance to osmosis between Muslims and non-Muslims? How does religion affect society and what is the role of Islam in this discussion? How do states manage or accommodate Muslim communities, and how do the latter set up organisational structures? In which ways do the communities voice their claims for rights or for a better position? Do international relations and interference from abroad affect Islam in European societies? How does loyalty to both state and Islam affects the position of Muslim communities, their image and self-perceptions? Does citizenship play a role on the position of Muslims in Europe? In order to discuss these questions and conduct research to find respective answers one would need to consider, on a comparative basis comprising all European countries as continuum, a series of variables such as:

- State institutional organisation/legal tradition
- International politics/ international legal commitments
- Muslim community organisation/leadership/membership
- Grade of religiosity (Muslims/non-Muslims)
- Integration/exclusion
- Old Islam (traditional or historical)/ New Islam (immigrants)/converts
- Islam as minority (most of the cases)/majority
- Citizenship
- Transnationalism/nationalism
- Class position- access to socio-economic rights

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### **3. Legal, political and historical legacies as a background**

Having an overview of Europe as a common space with important contradictions and differences, a common denominator of coexistence puts together these 46 states as a unified canvas for research. In this canvas one could distinguish three major areas,

where Islam is understood, placed, acting or reacting through different ways or patterns. These 'areas' could be defined as post-colonial, post-Ottoman and post-communist (or post-socialist), or the West, the East and the South-East. These 'areas' can be seen also as shaping more or less unified sub-regions within Europe having common legacies that influence policies and societies in present and future. The grade of osmosis among these regions would be also a research question as far as Islam takes part in this process. Thus, there are no clear cut boundaries between the three areas and the divisions as discussed hereinafter should be considered as an analytical facilitator. One could argue that in some cases convergence has shadowed common characteristics. Still the following categorisation could be helpful for a comprehensive appraisal and contextualisation of European Islam taking into account regional legacies that left their mark on political, ideological or legal domains. One could argue also that West-East/South East represent a main divide. Russia could be discussed under the post-colonial area, and Balkan countries with a communist past could be discussed under the East area. However, the divide of the proposed categories could render more visible the trends of convergence between 'Old' and 'New' Islam<sup>7</sup> and the reverse resistances exerted by policies and law. Law still makes a clear division between historical minorities and immigrants that creates a significant differentiating factor between the two categories of Islam, even though recent societal experiences would suggest convergence rather than division.

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<sup>7</sup> I would use the term Old Islam as a reference to those Muslim communities with a long presence in Europe, whose members are citizens of the respective state. New Islam would comprise Muslim immigrants. As 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of immigrants acquire citizenship of the state of residence, there is a gradual tendency of convergence between the two categories. Last, converts could be seen as parts of New Islam, as individuals, or of Old Islam if they adhere a historical community.

a. *Post-colonial: The West* (Austria, France, Belgium, Switzerland, UK, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Germany, Holland, Luxemburg, Ireland, Malta, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland).

Post-colonialism shaped a certain economic environment that facilitated immigration from former colonies to former metropolises. In this context, Muslims settled already before decolonisation, as early as 19<sup>th</sup> century in Western Europe (in UK, France, the German and Austrian Empires). Nowadays Muslims of Western Europe are partly the offspring of early migrants, so their grand and grand-grand children, residents and citizens of the respective states. Intermarriage and conversion, along with a transmission of Islam through generations created multiple Muslim communities with variable connections to Islam. Through different ways they are interconnected to colonial subjugation and anti- or counter-colonialism narratives. Anti-colonial narrative analyses the identity politics that are the social and cultural perspectives of the subaltern colonial subjects, represented for parts of the society by these Muslims. The way Islam is perceived within post-colonial identity determines the “Us and Them” binary social relation, as a power relation, between the West and the non-West,<sup>8</sup> often imagining non-Western Europe through a ‘local’ orientalism. The postcolonial era has witnessed tremendous transformations in Europe, and European Islam is among the societal material that has been part and parcel of this transformation. Recent Muslim immigration have been connected after 2001 to new reflexes based on notions such as ‘security’ or ‘national interest’, and a new position of Islam has been formed first in the West, and then in the East.

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<sup>8</sup> Sharp, Joanne, *Geographies of Postcolonialism*, (SAGE, 2008), see Chapter 6 “Can the subaltern speak?”.

What we would need to understand is “the displacement of Islam from the margins to the center, from the postcolonial past to the European present, as it follows various historical trajectories and creates new interpenetrations and mixings between different cultural codes, values, and practices”.<sup>9</sup> After all, the interconnected histories of Muslims and Europe raise the issues of what Europe is today through a dominant position of what is Western Europe, and thus post-colonial Europe, within the broader European context. The dichotomy of European–non-European is shaped through collective memory and today’s experiences that are determined throughout Europe - in a latent way - through the mirror of the postcolonial politics of the West.

Scandinavian countries could be seen as forming a subgroup of the West, although they were not important colonial powers –if not at all- in the past, and have not experienced an old Muslim immigration. With the exception of Finland, Scandinavian countries are not home to traditional Islam. However, as countries of highly developed democracy and stable economies, as they attracted considerable numbers of Muslim immigrants and refugees early in the 1970s. Finland, which was under Russian/Soviet influence and which has a historical Muslim minority (Tatars) could be placed together with the countries of the ‘East’. However, the important Muslim immigration of the last two decades makes Finland a country with strong similarities to countries of Western Europe.

On the other hand, “in the literature on Western Europe’s Muslim communities, the question of whether Muslim beliefs and practices are transforming (or not) in a historically new environment and, one hastens to add, in a new global setting, has

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<sup>9</sup> Göle, Nilufer, “Decentering Europe, Recentering Islam”, *New Literary History*, 43/4 (2012), pp. 665-685.

become a central issue in the course of the last decade or so. In an often highly politicised environment where transformation continues to be measured by the criteria of compatibility with supposedly European values, interest in this question has notably stimulated an ongoing debate about the structure of religious life inside Europe's Muslim populations".<sup>10</sup>

*b. Post-communist/post-socialist (post-Soviet): The East* (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia, Ukraina, Belarus, Poland, Check Republic, Moldova, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovakia).

Countries of Central and Eastern Europe which experienced communist regimes, were marked by this period of their political history and therefore could be grouped as belonging to a post-communist group that experienced parallel transitions, more or less successful, to democratic liberalism. This area embeds post-Tsarist or post-Habsburg elements regarding the position of Islam which contributed to the homogenisation of ideology, law and policies. Balkan countries that also shared this history (with the exception of Greece), supplemented by economic reasons also do not attract immigrant Muslims and have a different legacy that stems from their experience as part of the Ottoman Empire. This common Ottoman legacies left strong ideological and political influences on the way that Muslims are perceived, as a

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<sup>10</sup> Frank, Peter, "Individualisation and Religious Authority in Western European Islam", in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 17/1 (2006), pp. 105–118, <http://frankpeter.net/pdfs/authority.pdf>. This article provides a broad survey of the current literature and presents some of the key scholarly contributions aims to explore convergences and divergences with respect to the questions of individualisation and religious authority.

minority or majority. Consequently these countries will be discussed under the ‘post-Ottoman’ area.

In the late 1980s, Islam had the second largest number of believers in the Soviet Union, comprising 45 million Muslims. At the time, Soviet law forbade religious activity outside the approximately 500 mosques and Islamic schools through tight government control. As immigration to the Soviet Union was very rare, no migrant Islam was present during this period with the exception of Muslims who migrated from Soviet Socialist Republics of Central Asia to Soviet Russia. In other East European socialist countries, very small and dispersed communities of Muslims were a result of this kind of immigration, inter-marriage or student mobility (like in East Berlin or Prague).

Russia has similarities to the (post)colonial West with regards to the mobility of Muslims from the periphery to the metropolis. However, Russia has inherited from its colonial and soviet past a territorial continuity that comprises important Muslim populations. Today, as a federal state with seven federative republics with ethnic local Muslim majorities or strong minorities - comprising also unresolved conflicts related to a Muslim ethnicity (Chechnya, Daghestan) - Russia constitutes a quite complex case to study.

A sub group of this area comprises countries also with historical Muslim minorities under legal protection –falling under the category of ‘traditional religious community’- (mostly Tatars), such as Poland, Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine, representing though a quite small percentage of the total population. On the contrary,

Azerbaijan is the only country of this area with a majority Muslim population. In the latter, Shi'a Islam is considered as part of the national identity and Sunni Islam represent a minority.

After 1991, all countries with the exception of Belarus, became representative democracies, gradually adhere to the Council of Europe and some of the them joined the European Union. In all former socialist countries, secularism or institutional neutrality towards religion seems to be coupled with state control exerted on Muslim organisations; both features being a legacy borrowed from the pre-1990s regimes. In most of the countries there were strong claims from all religious communities to restore the status quo ante. In this context Muslim communities/minorities were to a certain extent granted collective rights to property (over waqf real estates) and religious leadership (right to select the Mufti)<sup>11</sup>. In addition to traditional Islam, as mentioned above, member states of the EU (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia), after the early 2000s, started attracting immigrant Muslims, so they too are gradually experiencing what is well known to Western Europe. However, it seems rather unlikely that these countries will achieve a similar immigration level to the one of the West in the nearest or even distant future.<sup>12</sup>

It seems that what makes East Europe different (in general terms both post-communist and post-Ottoman) when compared to the West is the economic factor as determinant for the settlement of New Islam. The division between East and West is illustrative in the internal division between Eastern and Western Germany: In the länders of the

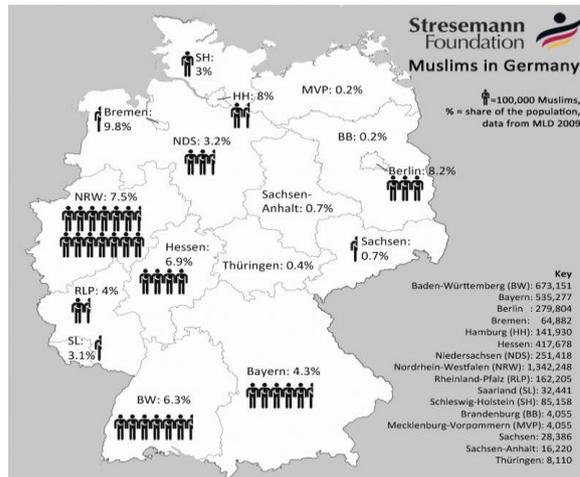
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<sup>11</sup> See Nalborczyk, Agata and Borecki Pawel, "Relations between Islam and the state in Poland: the legal position of Polish Muslims", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 22 (2011), p. 343.

<sup>12</sup> Górak-Sosnowska, Katarzyna, "Muslims in Europe: different communities, one discourse? Adding the Central and Eastern European perspective", in K. Górak-Sosnowska (ed.), *Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe. Widening the European perspective*, (Warsawa: University of Warsaw, Faculty of Oriental Studies), 18.

former East Germany immigrant Islam represent less than 1% of the local population whereas in what was West Germany Muslims represent 3-10%.

**Map 1: Islam in Germany**



One additional remark regards the Western perceptions of traditional Islam of the East. Locally important Muslim populations, like in Russia or the Caucasus are perceived in the eyes of the ‘West’ as not essentially ‘European’. Let alone, when in the eyes of certain researchers even Russia does not belong to European civilisation<sup>13</sup>. The further East in the European context Islam is (e.g. Muslim republics of Russia) the less Europe perceives it as a part of herself, a stance with clear hegemonic resonances. The presence of strong historical Islam in Eastern Russia and the Caucasus is precisely the geographical point where the borders of ‘Europe’ acquire vagueness. In the end, (Western) Islamic studies hardly include in their research these Muslim groups as part of European Islam.

<sup>13</sup> With reference to the notorious “The Clash of Civilisations and the remaking of world’s order”, by Huntington, Samuel, *Foreign Affairs* (1993) 72.

For reasons that have been already said, Balkan post-communist countries are discussed under the following group.

*c. Post-Ottoman: the South-East* (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia, Romania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Turkey, Greece, Cyprus).

By ‘post-Ottoman’ is meant the areas once part of the Ottoman Empire where the legal and political accommodation of ethno-religious difference was known as the *millet* system.<sup>14</sup> The legacy of *millet* determined the institutional position of religious minorities within the Christian states of the Balkans and Turkey that were established gradually from early 19<sup>th</sup> century to the detriment of the Ottoman Empire (which collapsed in 1923). The consolidation of national states by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century found Muslim communities scattered all over the Balkans forming minorities within Christian national states, except for Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia. This legacy of institutional autonomy for Muslims and non-Muslims was kept within post-Ottoman Christian states vis-à-vis Muslim communities, who acquired special protection status as minorities. The perception of non-Muslims in the Empire had been reversed, according to which Muslims were enjoying equality and minority rights but potentially they could be put under a ‘special status’. All these Muslim

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<sup>14</sup> The Ottoman authorities granted ethno-religious communities, a certain institutional autonomy from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Greek-Orthodox, Armenians and Jews were the ‘minority’ communities falling under this special status under the hegemonic position of Islam. On the *millet* system, see Barkey, Karen, *Empire of Difference. The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 13, 152. Karen Barkey illustrates how ‘difference and separation was a value pursued by the Ottoman state and the communities themselves’ and how the Empire instituted boundaries of different degrees of permeability, while organizing communities around and across such classificatory systems. See also, Braude, Benjamin & Bernard. Lewis, “Introduction”, in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The functioning of a plural society*, vol. I, (N. York: Holms and Mayer, 1982), pp. 1-34.

minorities were seen by Christian majorities as a price to be paid for independence. In that context Muslim communities are legally recognised and attributed special status, whereas New Islam is in most of cases institutionally ignored. As Todorova remarks, “ironically, Balkan nationalism, which irrevocably destroyed the imagined community of Orthodox Christianity, managed to preserve a frozen, unchangeable and stultifying uniform of the Muslim community, and consistently dealt with it in terms of *millet*.”<sup>15</sup> According to the mainstream national discourse of the Christian nation states of the Balkans, the Muslim presence still constitutes an alien element to the area. However, Muslims of the Balkans have deep rooted feelings of representing Islam, entitled to historical rights and political powers over the land<sup>16</sup>.

The structural formation of the Islamic communities was able to embed national ideas where appropriate: quite often acquiring Turkish nationalism or (as in Bosnia) to develop a distinct nationalism. Albania constitutes the only case where national identity was not based on religious affiliation. Turkey built its national identity on Islam, despite the legal-theoretical accommodation of secularism. Greece is the only case that did not experience the socialist/communist regime and thus *millet*-like legal status remained unchanged. Cyprus has a unique position in this spectrum, as after the division of the island in 1974, Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots separated on the basis of ethno-religious affiliation. Moreover, as the only post-colony in Europe, Cyprus retains a flow of emigration towards the West (the UK). This pattern is not unknown throughout the Balkans and especially Turkey from where a significant Muslim emigration has settled in the West, representing a

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<sup>15</sup> Todorova, Maria, “The Ottoman legacy in the Balkans”, in *Imperial legacy. The Ottoman imprint and on the Balkans and the Middle East*, (N. York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 68.

<sup>16</sup> For an overview see Popovic, Alexander *L’Islam balkanique* (Berlin: Osteuropa-Institut an der Freien Universität, 1986), Bougarel, Xavier and Natalie Clayer (eds.), *Le nouvel Islam balkanique. Les musulmans, acteurs du post-communisme 1990-2000* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2001).

transposition of Old Islam from the post-Ottoman area into the West as form of New Islam.

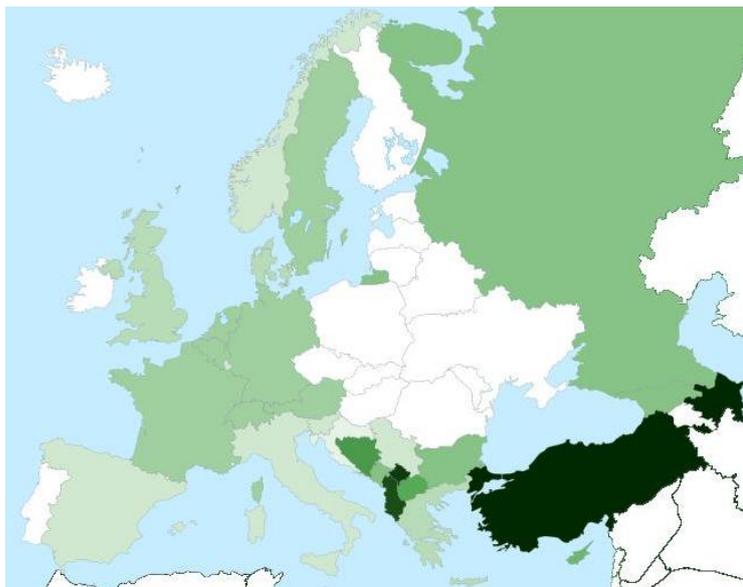
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The above sketched division into three groups can facilitate the overview of European Islam taking into consideration three broad and differing legacies: A. The West, which has been accommodating immigrant Islam for about a century, forms a new indigenous Islam along with incoming immigrant Muslims. High number of population and importance of their presence in all aspects of life make Western European Islam an important component of today's Europe. B. In the East, Islam is present under the form of small communities. With the exception of Azerbaijan and the Muslim populations of the periphery of Russia, historical and immigrant Islam seems to play, up to date, very little role in political, economic and societal transformations. In this generalisation, it could be asserted that Islam in the East lacks particular significance in central politics. C. In the post-Ottoman area, Islam is characterised by a history that to a certain extent plays a crucial role in today's societies. Its national affinities and well established ideological connotations are of key importance for both majorities and minorities in these countries. Muslim majorities in Turkey, Kosovo, Albania and Muslim Bosnia, shape the Muslim profile in the broader area.

However, as already said, there are not clear cut boundaries between the above mentioned three areas and patterns of convergence are developed. Overlapping of features and similarities are not rare and subject to change. Through time eventual differences that are visible today will not be in the future. The sharp divide between

Old and New Islam seems to be fading out as Muslim immigrants settle not only in the West but in the East and the Balkans. New patterns of behavior, policies and societal transformations are formed as “Old” and “New” Muslims are getting closer and “New” Islam (in the West) tends to become “Old”. Converts are also part of this trend of convergence. Defining the grade of change would be one of the major research challenges in the future, through the comparison of these three areas. In the future, a new classification and contextualization would be needed in view to understand new patterns of accommodation of Muslim communities within Europe.

**Map 2: Islam in Europe**<sup>17</sup>



Although the legacy of each group of countries that derives from a different historical path, political circumstances, practices and realities counts on today’s law and policies, European Muslims have internal divisions, as any part of society, susceptible to change with new and multiple affiliations. This dichotomy between stability and mobility could be considered through the following research axes.

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<sup>17</sup> The brighter the colour, the less percentage of Muslims in relation to the country’s population. Retrieved from [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Islam\\_in\\_Europe-2.png](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Islam_in_Europe-2.png)

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#### **4. Drawing (three) research axes**

Studying Old and New Islam in Europe in West and the East/South-East could be oriented in three major axes. The position of Islam in these axes is variable. To opt for the one or the other axis and the position at the axis offers a different perspective for the research questions and thus could guide the analysis for more comprehensive results.

*Past* ←-----→ *Future*

Visibility of political, legal, social or demographic changes through the axis of time, from past to present and future, would enrich research data and findings and render them comprehensive. Comparison through history could be applied for any Muslim community in a specific country through time, under different regimes, or socioeconomic conditions (e.g. Muslims in Bulgaria in the 1930s or in 2000s, in France in 1900, in 1980 and in 2010 etc.).

*Majority* ←-----→ *Minority*

Insiders/outside to the Muslim community (minority, majority)<sup>18</sup>. Often research cannot avoid the bias of being member of a community, or being an ‘outsider’ to the community. Such a position of the observer can become a topic for further discussion. Moreover minorities within minorities often becomes a controversial topic for research.

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<sup>18</sup> The term is used in both numerical and power relation terms.

*Historical minority* ←-----→ *Immigrant community*

Old and New Islam, both as a minority phenomenon often provide different perspectives vis-à-vis the relation to the state such as issues of citizenship, residence and ties to the soil.

Traditional minorities have the prerogative to share a common political, legal and symbolic area with the national majority where they can socialize through common citizenry. First generation immigrants do not while their children and grand children can do. In European legal tradition, as formed within the Council of Europe, minorities and migrants are two distinguished groups subject to different categories of norms. However, cultural, political and socio-economic changes that are taking place in Europe due to long-term migration may affect this legal dichotomy. Only in a few European countries Old and New Islam coexist (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Finland, Poland, Russia). In most of the cases, the East has only since the early 1990s experience immigrant Islam. As said before, in the West (France, UK), old Muslim immigration tends to become Old Islam<sup>19</sup> through acquisition of citizenship in a quite different ideological and cultural sphere<sup>20</sup>. Policies and law are unable to define in many cases where a minority would start to exist and where an immigrant group would end: staying in the host-country over two or more generation through acquisition of citizenship, would attribute minority characteristics to groups which formerly would be called 'immigrant'. More than Old Islam, that was related to the notion of 'minority', New Islam in Europe brought up the question under the prospect

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<sup>19</sup> But research also suggests that the offspring of Yemenis who settled in Liverpool after 1869, so creating 'Old Islam', became 'New Islam' when the later migration brings society to merge the two groups (see <http://www.liverpoolarabiccentre.org.uk/>).

<sup>20</sup> Felice Dassetto, Silvio Ferrari and Brigitte Marechal, "Islam in the European Union: What's at stake in the future", 23.6.2007, European Parliament, [http://www.euromedalex.org/sites/default/files/Islam\\_in\\_Europe.pdf](http://www.euromedalex.org/sites/default/files/Islam_in_Europe.pdf) [accessed 12 February 2013].

of ‘multiculturalism’. With the increasing mobility of capital and labour force, new economic and political challenges instigated new policies, theories and practices. Traditional cultural otherness and recent immigration represent in effect two sides of the same challenge: to re-determine European citizenship, and accommodate internal ethnic and religious divides. Does the ‘common cultural heritage’ as set by European self-perception encompass Islam as a religion, or as a culture, including Muslims’ ethnicities and languages? Would Islam be part of the European future or will the difference mark out religion as a conflictual field?

Muslim immigrants and minority Muslims often share a distinction from other groups in society in terms of origin, language, culture, and religion. The convergence of the two phenomena under a unified legal framework, religious and linguistic specificities would need to be reconsidered, focusing at social participation factors. Thus, immigrant Islam and historical Islam would have been seen under the scope of equal social inclusion. Both groups may, or may not, preserve the culture and religion of their own, having a strategic option between ‘assimilation’ and ‘integration’. The comparison of two categories of minoritised Islam, as converging political paradigms, would re-determine the comprehension of the process of minoritisation and its ideological justification and de-dramatised the cultural and the ‘ethnic/religious difference’.

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To approach and study Islam in Europe under the above mentioned perspectives a series of guiding questions of both methodological and scientific characteristics could be put forward. The degree of individualisation as an element of Muslim religiosity, the role of Muslim institutions, and the role of leadership and their representation, the

degree of activism in favour of human rights, the degree of secularisation or radicalisation of Islam, are some of such topics that through a comparative analysis could lead to a comprehensive picture of what was and what would be European Islam. Multidisciplinary approaches combining methodological and analytical tools of law, political science, history, sociology, psychology etc., could offer new dynamic and multi-faceted results. The following four topics could be placed under such research questions and methodology facilitating the understanding of European Islam as representing a broad spectrum of different situations in the European canvas.

1. *State-religion affairs* are set in different institutional modalities that go from strict neutrality (France) to hegemony of a religion (Ireland, Greece). The distinct political, ideological and juridical legacies of Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox countries often shape -through different forms- the institutional position of Muslim minority communities. In this variable framework, each European government attempts to regulate its local version of Islam in different ways and for various reasons. In some countries, there is no official institution, but ethnic and religious-based mobilisation is guaranteed within the sphere of civil society (UK). Others attempt to balance a top-down approach, and the state requests the establishment of a representative body by the Muslim communities (Italy). In Greece institutional visibility regards only Old Islam (according to the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923), whereas Russia imposes a strict Islam community system control by the government. In other cases, like France, Belgium, and Spain, Muslims are free to choose, by election or appointment, their own representatives, though governments can retain the right to co-opt additional members.

One more factor should be taken into account. States conduct administrative and organisational changes in accordance to their political planning within the frame of binding international treaties. When domestic law does not correctly implement these obligations, minority-state relations as well as those between ‘host’-state and kin-state <sup>21</sup> are affected. Kin-states, such as Turkey <sup>22</sup>, often intervene over the institutionalisation of the kin-Muslim communities and are not all pursuing a common agenda. Patterns of political involvement through religion are different among post-Ottoman and post-colonial spheres. In the post-communist sphere, there are no kin-state of historical Muslim minorities, and those of immigrant Islam seem to be -to date- quite unwilling to assume such a role. In the West -and to a certain extent in the East- *neo-radicalism* exerts strong influence and politicises Islam. In the East and South East, *neo-sufi* movements, such as the one led by Fethullah Gülen<sup>23</sup> play also an important role in reshaping Islam.

**2. Human rights:** The increasing importance of human rights include safeguarding of freedom of religion, legal mechanisms for protection and supervising. Human rights bodies constitute institutions that could accommodate claims for ‘common’ rights or to resolve disputes interrelated to the preservation of the community. Thus strategic litigation before national or international instances (such as the European Court of Human Rights, or before the supervising organs of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities) by members of Muslim minorities, historical or

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<sup>21</sup> Kin-state is considered to be the ‘homeland’ or ‘fatherland’ for its ‘kin-minority’, so the minority with which there are ties of national, religious or linguistic kinship. For an extended discussion see European Commission for Democracy through Law, *The protection of national minorities by their kin-state*, Science and Technique of Democracy, No 32, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Tsitselikis, Konstantinos, *Old and New Islam in Greece, From historical minorities to immigrant newcomers* (Leiden/Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 2012), pp. 170-175.

<sup>23</sup> Solberg, Anne Ross, “The role of Turkish Islamic Networks in the Western Balkans”, *Südost Europa* 55 (2007), p. 429.

migrant, could instigate new legal status and alteration of socio-economic position. The right to be recognised as a religious or ethnic group and most of all the right to equal participation to the socio-economic sphere are important topics for research. Research on economic rights and their interrelation to class position and mobility of Muslims, in a comparative perspective of vertical and horizontal relations within the Muslim community and within the society general, could also reveal previously less explored aspects of European Islam.

**3. Ideology/Ethnicity:** National or religious ideologies shaping minority and majority identities, form communities beyond borders. Muslim communities are subject to a complex ethnicisation process stemming from the national origins of the community or the national identity fostered by the state. Contemporary globalisation entailed a series of socio-economic, political, legal and symbolic changes for states, and both for majorities and minorities. Hybrid identities accommodating both state national ideology and Islam cannot be excluded from a spectrum of identities encompassing different forms of European Islam. On the other hand, monolithic interpretations of religion, either stemming from majorities or minorities, could hamper integration processes. Some cultural and normative aspects of Islam which reinforce self-referential schemes putting forward community values at times lead to social exclusion<sup>24</sup>. On the contrary, there are cases of Muslims who opt for membership to the majority's identity/ culture/religion. Hence, transnationalism<sup>25</sup>, or the trend

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<sup>24</sup> It should be noted that having "Muslim descent" does not necessarily mean that that individual is a practicing Muslim.

<sup>25</sup> See Grillo, Ralph, "Islam and transnationalism", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 30/5 (2004), pp. 861-878; Merdjanova, Ina, *Rediscovering the Umma. Muslims in the Balkans between Nationalism and Transnationalism*, (N. York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 55.

towards ethnicities' change through out generations, counters and interacts with trends towards religious fundamentalism which radicalises the role of Islam as a strong and visible entity in Europe. Converts and reverts act as a bridge or a buffer between Muslims-non-Muslims as a symbolic and pragmatic border area. Transposition of Islam among Muslims, such as *salafisation* of individuals or communities, the *sunniification* of Bektashis etc, illustrate how these borders are ever shifting.

**4. Citizenship** (legal, political, social): Muslims in European are divided into those who are citizens of a European state and those who are not. Possessing citizenship in the state of one's residence unquestionably constitutes a fundamental factor for social integration, while not being a citizen likely becomes a potential factor for social marginalisation. Thus, acquisition or loss of citizenship, dual citizenship or statelessness, take on major importance for social inclusion. The choice by the state to permit or to prevent dual (or multiple) citizenship is essentially political in nature, regulated by law and conditioned by historical factors reflecting the state's view of its national character. This choice affects the position of 'old' and 'new minorities', Muslims included. In this context, *ius sanguinis* and *ius soli* offer European legislators a series of options embedding ideological stances. The divide on the basis of citizenship is not static and affects the institutional visibility of individuals and communities.

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## **5. Conclusions**

Europe embraces old and new evolving cultural, ethnic, religious and societal realities. Scientific research on Islam in Europe seeks to comprehend different legacies and a patchwork of dynamic and changing legal, political, and socio-economic realities which determine the status of persons and groups by virtue of their nationality, or religion. If Old and New Islam indicate two distinct standing points, one cannot ignore the process of convergence between the two that is ongoing in many cases. One of the major challenges for scientific research is to approach the trend holistically, degree and characteristics of what consists of ‘assimilation’, ‘coexistence’ and ‘integration’.

Political and institutional legacies affect the differing political and societal importance of Islam in the West and the East/South-East Europe. This dichotomy is reflected in the literature on Islam: in the West, it focuses on immigration, whereas in the East/South East, it focuses on history and ethnicity. Moreover, hegemonic scientific narratives from the West were overwhelmingly exported to and reproduced by the East.

Studying Islam should not adopt an approach which segregates the area of study but rather aim at explaining the different overlapping realities of worlds that coexist as variable faces of a fluid and palpitating society, with inner contradictions, constraints and limitations.

Research on Islam in Europe has to confront all above mentioned questions, in addition to others not discussed here, through interdisciplinary approaches and synergies. Rapid transformation patterns that characterised Europe in the past decades through new political ideologies, nationalisms, and economic neo-liberalism complicate further the picture and require more rigorous classification and analysis. In

this changing context, on the one hand religion becomes an ambivalent marker for ethnicity and national belonging. On the other, however, it also for many communities constitutes a factor of solidarity, with cultural, social and political connotations in the frame of each European state. That makes *European Islams* and *Muslim Europes* a complex, challenging and charming topic for research.