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# Beyond the domestication of Islam in Europe: A reflection on past and future research on Islam in European societies

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## Abstract

Within two decades Islam in European societies has developed from an issue of minor academic interest into one of the fastest growing research fields. The main reason for this is no doubt the emergence of new regimes of governmentality in most countries in Europe that emanate from the complex relationship between integration, and political priorities of security and national identity, the 'domestication of Islam'. The narrowing down of research foci in the field of Islam in Europe has caused a serious academic neglect particularly where it concerns the entanglement of Islamic practices with everyday life, the religious engagements, expressions and experiences among young people, and the transformation and reconfiguration of Islamic authority. These three fields are of course closely connected, but also have their specific features and dynamics. The article explores these fields of research beyond the domestication paradigm.

## Keywords

Islam in Europe; domestication of Islam; Islamic youth; local Islam; research on Islam; Islamic leadership and authority

## 1. Introduction

Within two decades Islam in European societies has developed from an issue of minor academic interest into one of the fastest growing research fields in Europe. The main cause for this is no doubt the necessity felt on the part of national and local governments to take account of the presence of some fifteen million Muslims in the European Union today (EUMC 2006, p. 29). As a consequence, the integration of Muslims into European societies has become a highly politicised central research focus. Research agendas on Islam in Europe increasingly follow the political priorities and goals formulated by national and local governments. Integration has developed from a political priority into

a scientific paradigm with its own epistemological assumptions, problem definitions, communicative devices and citation communities, which in turn feeds into policy agendas.

The post 9/11 political climate has invigorated the urge to monitor everything that is done by Muslims. The combination of a deracinated migrant youth and an unpredictable 'globalised Islam', as described by Olivier Roy (2002), is said to form a dangerous and easily inflammable mix (see also Kepel 2006). Muslims are often depicted as proverbial aliens, adherents of a 'border-defying global Islam' (Silverstein, 2005; see also Samad and Sen 2007), with irreconcilable cultural differences with the West. Bernard Lewis has written that after the Crusades and the encroachment of the Ottoman Turks in the seventeenth century, we are now facing Islam's third confrontation with the West (Lewis 2002). The conservative American journalist Caldwell published a book with the ominous title: *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe. Can Europe be the same with different people in it?* Caldwell blames European countries for being too indecisive in the face of a growing 'Muslim problem'. Instead of taking the massive immigration seriously and forcing Muslims to assimilate, European governments look away and ignore the problem (Caldwell 2009). Many more authors express a deep worry about, in their eyes, an uncontrollable force coming from outside. Some arrive at the conclusion that there is an unbridgeable cultural gap between Muslims and the rest of the populations of Europe. Others point to the urgency of a civilising mission in the wake of an 'unmistakable Islamisation of Europe'. An increasing number of politicians consider security, securitisation, containment, and control of Islam crucial dimensions of political decision-making.

The merging of these two political priorities, integration and securitisation, indeed results in new regimes of governmentality. I call the political programmes and modes of governance that emanate from the complex relationship between integration, and political priorities of security and national identity, the 'domestication of Islam'. Domestication is a process of containment and pacification based on national identity politics. It is a process that is in the first place and self-evidently about integration of Islam into European societies. But in fact it is more explicitly about the character of nation-states and the challenges they face. Domestication politics revolve around the question of how national states should deal with the presence of Islam in all its perceived facets. Since domestication involves a good deal of monitoring and control of religion, it also implies an intervention in the very content of Islamic practices and convictions. Different nation-states have historically grown nationally specific modes of dealing with religious difference, sometimes

informed by colonial practices and experiences, so the domestication of Islam takes on nationally specific features and outlooks.<sup>1</sup> Most of the semi-scientific reports on policy development take the Islamic challenge as their point of departure.<sup>2</sup>

One of the effects of the spread of domestication policies across Europe is that research agendas tend to focus almost exclusively on the political priorities of domestication and governance. The governance of Islam is the fastest growing focus of research on Islam in Europe (see e.g. Bader 2007; Fetzer and Soper 2005; Lettinga 2011). Research on Islam in Europe is gradually narrowing down to issues of security, deviant behaviour and culture clash. One of the major consequences of the one-sided emphasis on governance, national identity politics, and integration and security in the study of Islam in Europe is that it conceals and ignores certain issues and trends that might be very important.<sup>3</sup> This has produced a paradoxical situation. Whereas Islam in particular has become the common denominator for a wide range of phenomena, attitudes and developments, as fields of research religious practices and the production of religious knowledge among Muslims have suffered from programmatic concealment and downright neglect.

## 2. Historical Roots of Domestication

It is tempting to attribute domestication politics, with its emphasis on control, containment and security, predominantly to '9/11', not least because this event is often adduced as legitimisation for fundamental policy changes across Europe in the past decade. The roots of domestication, however, must be sought in the immigration policies of European countries of the early 1980s. In those years a gradual shift took place from an emphasis on the economic absorbing mechanisms of host societies to the cultural characteristics of the migrant populations. In the course of the 1980s 'Islam' became the principal

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<sup>1</sup> Bowen, in discussing the domestication of Islam in French society, argues that the 'dilemma of domestication' revolves around three basic issues: behaviour of Muslims, control of the republic and adaptation of Islamic norms to France (2004: 43). Bowen demonstrates how domestication has also significantly dictated research agendas in France.

<sup>2</sup> A good example is report of the so-called Stasi Commission that advised the government on the headscarf in public places (2003). As a result, the French government issued a law on 'conspicuous religious signs' in schools passed by the National Assembly in February 2004.

<sup>3</sup> As Bowen rightly argues the application of 'governance' as the key concept in the study of Islam in Europe, runs the risk of discarding all kinds of developments that do not fit in the governance analytical format (Bowen 2007).

denominator with which the background of migrants could be understood and explained at the cost of other factors such as economic structure and social context in the host countries. This has been referred to as 'culturalism'.<sup>4</sup> 'Muslim culture' rendered an almost timeless character and turned from a 'category of practice' into a 'category of analysis' (cf. Brubaker and Cooper 2000).

In the early 1990s most governments in Western Europe were becoming increasingly concerned about how to 'integrate' Muslims into their societies, each according to their own political frameworks. It was already clear that most migrants would stay permanently and that Islam would be a constant element in the political and social fabric of society. This was of course not something new,<sup>5</sup> but unmistakably new was the strong emphasis on the juxtaposition of the perceived liberal and secular foundations of West-European nation-states and the religious traditionalism that Muslim immigrants were said to carry with them. The public debates and policy measures that emerged in the 1990s included state neutrality, governance of alterity, but also the perceived roots of European civilization.<sup>6</sup> They all revolve around the same question: how to cope with a new Muslim presence. The terrorist attacks in the past decade and the 'war on terror' have only strengthened anxieties about global events and have led to a further inward turn of European nation-states, a process of 'social closure' (Geschiere and Meyer 1998).

### 3. Beyond the Domestication of Islam

The narrowing down of research foci in the field of Islam in Europe to issues of integration and security has caused a serious academic neglect particularly where it concerns the entanglement of Islamic practices with everyday life, the religious engagements, expressions and experiences among young people, and the transformation and reconfiguration of Islamic authority. These three fields

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<sup>4</sup> For a discussion on culturalism see: Dirlik 1990; Elsadda 2004; Freeman 2000; Vermeulen 1992.

<sup>5</sup> There is a vast body of literature that deals with the politics of nation-states towards religious diversity in all parts of the world (see e.g. Hoeber Rudolph and Piscatori 1997; Piscatori 1986; Van der Veer and Lehmann 1999). There are, however, few studies on Islam in Europe that explicitly analyze the process of domestication.

<sup>6</sup> In that respect Caldwell (2009) is completely wrong when he argues that European governments were lenient towards religious diversity. Quite the contrary, from the early 1990s onwards European politicians expressed their sometimes deep worries about the future of 'our liberal and secular accomplishments'.

are of course closely connected, but also have their specific features and dynamics which allows for a separate discussion.

### 3.1. *Locality and the 'Practice of Everyday Islam'*

Older neighborhoods with a relatively high proportion of Muslim inhabitants in cities like Manchester, Amsterdam, Berlin or Paris are generally portrayed as arenas of contestation and struggle over scarce resources, where violent confrontations between groups of inhabitants are rule rather than exception, and where there is no social cohesion at all. It is this image that stood behind the many analyses and explanations of the riots in some suburbs of Paris in 2005. Such neighborhoods, according to this view, have turned into 'loci of mega identity politics', where excitable speech and violent confrontations inspired by extremist cultural and religious ideologies are the only effective political instruments. The local population is variously portrayed as a numb, poorly integrated and poorly educated majority that cannot integrate and that is still caught up in myriads of transnational ties and obligations, As a consequence they live completely isolated from the rest of society. Also as a rebellious and trouble-making second generation that refuses to integrate into society, and last but not least a minority of 'indigenous' inhabitants that are the real victims of it all.

Neighborhoods are increasingly studied top-down, from the perspective of the social engineers of integration and national security. This helicopter view with its superimposed schemes of identity and coherence has profoundly influenced our perceptions of local communities.<sup>7</sup> It dehumanises inhabitants and reduces them to governmental policy categories. At the same time it is a particular manifestation of methodological nationalism, the equation of 'society' with the nation-state.<sup>8</sup> The nation-state is perceived as the only legitimate and 'natural' perspective from which social phenomena are analysed. Sociological categories and concepts are structured on a national format.

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<sup>7</sup> James Scott has referred to this perspective in his seminal study *Seeing like a State* (1998). In the book he discusses the helicopter view of states in trying to impose large scale restructuring programs of all sorts onto society: 'order to improve living conditions'. One of the reasons why such mega-projects fail, according to Scott, is that they ignore the knowledge and competences of the local population.

<sup>8</sup> Methodological nationalism '[...] is the all-pervasive assumption that the nation-state is the natural and necessary form of society in modernity; the nation-state is taken as the organizing principle of modernity' (Chernillo 2006: 6; see also Beck 2000, 2002).

How to go beyond this top-down format? Here Arjun Appadurai offers a promising approach. How should we define locality, he enquires, in a world that is 'dramatically delocalized' because of globalization (1995, p. 204). Locality is a relational and contextual rather than a spatial and scalar concept. The production of locality is about how to make national and global flows and pressures into meaningful local experiences and packages of knowledge. Locality in its relational dimension should not be considered an opposing force vis-à-vis national politics and transnational networks and ideologies but as an integral part of it. What is the relation between locality as an aspect of social life and neighborhood as a substantive social form? In other words: 'what can locality mean in a world where spatial localization, quotidian interaction and social scale are not always isomorphic?' (ibid.).

Locality and social stability is indeed a fragile social condition that must be reproduced and re-established constantly. The common vision of locality, however, is that where local communities were formerly stable social networks, now, under the cumulative effects of modernity, scale enlargement, bureaucratic centralisation, and not least immigration, they have been reduced to isolated plots of population. Ethnic or religious tensions within communities, that are an undeniable aspect of daily life, must be analysed not through an outdated image of who are the 'established' and who are the 'outsiders', but as a constant process of rooting and transformation at the same time.<sup>9</sup> Locality is about producing reliable locals (Appadurai 1995). This has always played a vital role in local communities and Muslims have been an integral part of that process for decades. Much of what has been written on local neighbourhoods could well be reinterpreted along these lines. Once we understand this process, we are able to 'see' how locality, community and everyday culture are produced and how we should assess this in research.

The same holds true for 'Islamic culture'. In much integration literature Islam is taken as a normative system that exerts influence 'from outside' upon Muslims in whatever setting and under whatever circumstances, without taking into consideration the local 'cultural intimacy' (cf. Herzfeld 2005). As Kapferer et al. argue: '[...] the various articulations of religious imagination are thoroughly intimate with the social and political contexts in which they form'

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<sup>9</sup> In 1984 Hartwig Berger and Viktor Augustin published a beautiful historical account of the Forster Street in Berlin, Kreuzberg where immigration has been part of everyday life since the early twentieth century, long before the arrival of Turks in the 1960s. They show how successive inhabitants always 'reinvented' local community under changing circumstances (Berger and Augustin 1984).

(Kapferer et al. 2010, p. 3). I propose to introduce here the term ‘everyday Islam’ to denote practices and outlooks that connect quotidian experiences, networks and interactions with Islamic reasoning. Locality in this sense refers to a particular Islamic engagement. It should not be confused with the concept of ‘folk Islam’ that is often applied by scholars of Islam denoting non-orthodox religious practices. ‘Everyday Islam’ is certainly not a theological variant of Islam. It is a concept of practice and it refers to agency and reflexivity of local subjects. ‘The practice of everyday Islam’ as a concept offers a way to explore Islam in European cities whilst avoiding the pitfalls of ‘social engineering’.<sup>10</sup>

It is the bottom-up approach to the reproduction and interpretation of Islam by localised subjects. Such an approach offers an important alley for the study of local Islam in Europe, not least because it helps us to understand such apparent inconsistencies as the non-Muslim neighbour of a Muslim family voting for anti-Islam politicians, yet at the same time getting along well with the neighbours. It offers the possibility of taking everyday living Islam out of the tight schemes of identity politics and integration trajectories, and at the same time frees it from the grip of normative orthodoxy, or political activism. It helps us to really understand how people make sense of the world around them. It provides for us insights into the origins of conflicts and also into forms of cooperation that tend to be overlooked by the present-day fast research projects.

There are a variety of ways to assess practices of everyday Islam as an integral part of local everyday life. One is of course a detailed ethnographic account of daily networks, practices and local rituals in residential areas. It is of vital importance to include everyday resistance of local Muslims not as a sign of unwillingness to integrate into society, but as what De Certeau calls practices to confront the order and discipline of powerful institutions.<sup>11</sup> The so-called ‘Polder mosque’ in Amsterdam offers a nice illustration here.<sup>12</sup> The initiators of

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<sup>10</sup> Marsden (2005) did research in Chitral in Northern Pakistan and introduces the term ‘living Islam’ which is rather close to my understanding of ‘everyday Islam’. According to Marsden, it refers to practices, outlooks, moods, notions of personhood, networks of daily encounter and individual creativity that are overruled by ‘Islamization’ by islamists and governments, and overlooked by scholars of Islam who tend to apply normative understandings of Islam. Marsden provides an intriguing account of the reflexivity of ordinary people. He shows how religion and sociality in Chitral interconnect in daily situations.

<sup>11</sup> De Certeau’s ‘theory of practice’ aims [...] to bring to light the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of ‘discipline’ (1984: xv). Space, according to De Certeau, is ‘practiced place’ (117) with which he refers to the continuous human activity that transforms geographical locality into places of living.

<sup>12</sup> The term refers to the Dutch practices of endless consulting and negotiating.

this mosque, where Dutch is the *lingua franca*, aim at providing a genuine Dutch Islamic institution. The way the project was framed was also a clear message to those who still consider Islam to be an outside intruder that has to be domesticated. There are similar initiatives in other cities in other countries in Europe, notably in the UK. We can also think of the many local initiatives that are called multicultural that can be found in practically all neighbourhoods in European cities. In many of those initiatives Muslims play a crucial role and as such they provide a clue as to how Islam is reproduced and reinterpreted in local circumstances.

Another way to assess everyday Islam is by collecting personal accounts, life histories and 'ego-documents' that relate to everyday life experiences. There are already a considerable number of these documents, published or unpublished. These should be reinterpreted to explore everyday Islam. It is also crucial to set up systematic research that deals with life histories of Muslims in Europe and the history of Islam in Europe at the same time.

A systematic inventory of ego documents and life history accounts of Muslims in Europe would also contribute to a better insight into the multiplicity of attachments Muslims have with Europe. Islam has already been an integral part of Europe for centuries, but as we all know Islam and Europe are currently depicted as opposing worlds. Yet if we take a closer look at several parts of Europe (especially in southern and eastern Europe), we come across accounts and experiences that may well go against the dominant one-dimensional image of Islam as a foe. More generally, we cannot understand the development of Europe as a socio-cultural realm unless we take into account the very diverse encounters with Islam throughout Europe (see e.g. AlSayyad and Castells 2002; Cardini 1999; Djait 1985; Goody 2004; D.L. Lewis 2008).

There is a strange, yet understandable distinction being made between so-called indigenous Muslims in the Balkans and eastern Europe on the one hand, and Muslim immigrants in Western Europe on the other. The daily experiences of thousands of Muslims in western Europe have nothing to do anymore with 'being new', 'not yet integrated'. The recent transformations that have taken place in eastern and south-eastern Europe have had a profound impact on the experiences of Muslims in the region. The epithet 'indigenous' therefore obfuscates rather than informs. History is an arena of contestation. Personal histories, communal narratives, 'lieux de memoire' and other sources of 'small history' provide us with the necessary insight into senses of belonging and the building of local community among Muslims. This is in my view an inherent aspect of the production of locality.

### 3.2. *Youth, Politics, Religion and Popular Culture*

There is a considerable number of authors on Islam who argue that with the spread of modern mass-media and the continuous process of globalisation, normative religious frameworks have been critically undermined and there is a gradual retreat of religion from the public realm (see e.g. Cesari 2006). This process, it is argued, has been instrumental in the spread of individualised 'copy-paste- Islam', especially among young Muslims. By using all kinds of modern (re)sources young Muslims create their own Islamic self-understanding which has no need for religious guidance. Some have argued that the migration process itself is instrumental in this transformation because it has unsettled the social texture from which Muslims migrated. This has led to a critical attitude among second generation Muslims in Europe towards the 'Islam of the parents' and religious authority (see e.g. Mandaville 2001, 2003, 2007). They break away from the 'Islamic culture' of their parents in search of a 'pure' Islam.<sup>13</sup> Others have argued that it is the engagement, or should we say confrontation, of Islam with democracy and 'Western values' that has caused these transformations (Cesari 2004). Transformations are thus understood in the context of a more general process of modernisation in which religion is retreating into the private sphere (see also Jacobson 1998).

There is also a growing number of studies that arrive at opposite conclusions, namely that because of the unsettling of traditional Islamic authority many young people opt for radical versions of Islamic thinking (see e.g. Kepel 2006). There is enormous interest in why and under what circumstances young people radicalise. This interest has of course to do with security, a prime political goal in Europe at the moment.

When it became evident that perpetrators of the bomb attacks in London were not agents from outside, but 'blokes from the next block' and that a considerable number of young Muslims are willing to use violence, the prevention of radicalism became a prime goal of integration policies.<sup>14</sup> The encounter with Western society has brought many Muslims into disarray. But where the first generation can rely on their traditional networks, for young people it has brought chaos, existential uncertainty and not least identity crisis. They live in a no-man's-land between two irreconcilable cultural environments. Most

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<sup>13</sup> Thus Nederveen Pieterse (1997) has argued that it is not the manifold religious practices that travel, only the Quran is portable.

<sup>14</sup> In many countries of Western Europe so-called 'deradicalisation' programmes are set up to meet that goal.

young Muslims are able to reconcile the opposing requirements, but some cannot. Acts of political violence are perceived to be the result of 'cultural pathology', and 'hybrid misfit'. Despite their thorough socialisation in Western Europe with its long-term democratic traditions, radical Muslims totally reject modern society and are ready to fight that society with violent means out of sheer frustration. This psychological distress is brought about as the result of cultural clashes. This has led to feelings of resentment and envy which make them vulnerable to the influence of radical preachers and radical Islamist ideologies that envision a better future (see Abdel-Samad 2006; Buijs et al. 2006; Eyerman 2008; Gielen 2008; Kepel 2006; Lewis 2002; Tibi 2009). In the 21st century research on radicalisation has become the dominant field in the study of Islam among young people.

A way to overcome the omissions and fallacies of the cultural pathology approach is to bring back the agency of young Muslims into the analysis. By approaching young Muslims as active agents of their own cultural environment and not as victims of a cultural clash and/or trapped in an identity crisis, we get a much brighter picture. Instead of treating Muslims' cultural practices as transitory and dependent phenomena, they should be assessed as (youth) cultural traits in their own right (see Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995). Islamic fashion shows and *salafi* practices are not opposite tendencies, but should instead be treated as practices of self-making and quests for authenticity and truth (De Koning 2008).

Performance and self-styling, commoditisation of religion, and popular culture are thus key concepts in understanding modern forms of religiosity. Religion exists by virtue of its practising, its acting-out, and its performance and the variations in style that can be observed. The interplay between Islam, mass media, popular culture and the commoditisation of religious experience is instrumental in producing new forms of community (Eickelman and Anderson 2003; Schulz 2006). Popular culture and the commoditisation of religious products are essential contemporary practices of religious mediation, and we are only beginning to understand how they work. There are numerous practices and activities, performative and aesthetic articulations that fall outside established definitions of 'mainstream' and thus 'regular' religion. A quick glance at the numerous websites set up by young people of Muslim background—and not just those of radical Muslims—reveals an ever increasing diversity of forms in which Islam is imagined, mediated and performed. Simple dichotomies like radical/non-radical, democratic/non-democratic, but also religious/non-religious fail to capture the wide range of expressive, performative and sensational forms that we witness today.

The expressive and performative modes can be considered as styles of acting out. As Ferguson (1999) has reminded us, style is not simply 'having ideas' and expressing them in public. It is an embodied practice that is durable and assumes cultivation and discipline. It assumes an achieved competence in performing a certain style. Styles, including religious styles, develop in a situation of duress and this resonates well with embodiment and discipline. Style as religious enactment is instrumental in acquiring religious sensibilities and receptiveness (see also Mahmood 2001). The body is trained to acquire moral capacities and sensitivities one does not have beforehand, even if one is convinced believer. Mahmood rightly emphasizes that an analysis of embodiment of ritual should pay ample attention to the pedagogical process by which the embodiment is achieved. This is a conscious training that social actors may or may not embark upon and it should always be looked at within a particular power laden context. The great advantage of this approach is that we are able to overcome the paralysing contradiction between a kind of free floating individuality on the one hand ('the ideal individual religious subject') and a suppressive and normative understanding of religious doctrines that leave no room for reflection, interpretation, self-making and subjectivation (see also Klaver 2011; Roeland 2009).

Religious self-making is not just an individual endeavour. It is inextricably linked up with the quest for authenticity, truth and authority, and not least community building. One of the fallacies of the privatisation and individualisation thesis is that it assumes that religious authority becomes obsolete. Young Muslims do, however, not just construct their own Islam out of nothing, they relate to Islam as a discursive tradition and they relate to other Muslims in a variety of ways. Religious engagement is a process of community building and of subjectivation in that the religious self-develops in a context of regimes of truth (Foucault 1983). The sources of authority and the process of authorisation of religious knowledge among young Muslims is, however, still a rather under-developed field of research. This brings me to the third field.

### *3.3. Styles and Aesthetics of Islamic Leadership and Sources of Religious Authority*

The general observer of the organisational landscape among Muslims in Europe of about two decades ago would probably conclude that the picture was clear and simple. There were Muslims with strong familial ties back home, their religious practices were rooted firmly in the countries of origin, and mosques were run by Muslim organisations that had their origins also in the home countries,

often controlled by headquarters there. Political and doctrinal dividing lines followed a similar pattern and religious authority was firmly in the hands of traditional *ulama*, often sent from home countries. Islamic observance and religious life revolved around the mosque and was practised in familial and communal networks based on common origin. Leadership and sources of religious authority were considered to self-evidently emanate from religious doctrine.

Developments in the last two decades have distorted this well-ordered picture and have unsettled normative and functionalist assumptions about religious life among Muslims in Europe. When we look at the present-day Islamic landscape in Europe, the picture is blurred. Organisations have changed their policies and their activities. The number of mosques and religious associations that are not organised along ethnic lines has increased sharply. A considerable number of young people no longer go to ordinary ethnicity based mosques, or have abandoned Islam altogether, while others opt for more radical variants of Islam, or explore new modes and expressions of religiousness. This has had a tremendous impact on the established ways of conveying religious knowledge and the transformation of religious leadership. Religious leadership is probably the most sensitive issue in the contemporary debate on Islam in Europe. Islamic religious authority is a rapidly extending research field in the study of Islam in Europe. There are a considerable number of studies that address the position of imams in different countries in Europe (for an overview see e.g. Peter 2006; Volpi and Turner 2007). Most studies, however, deal with the discursive dimensions of Islamic authority. They generally lack a thorough assessment of why certain preachers are more popular than others and how the relation between leader and constituency develops. The dynamics of Islamic leadership in Europe and the ways in which religious knowledge is produced and conveyed, is hardly explored, because leadership and authority are conceptually conflated.

In the past decades a shift has taken place from representative religious leadership (based on formal and normative criteria of representation) to a performative style of leadership (based on certain leadership qualities). This shift is closely connected to the fragmentation and pluralisation of religious authority that can be observed throughout the Muslim world, but probably most explicitly in Europe (Mandaville 2007). Not only have traditional migrant structures and networks been undermined, modern mass media have caused a serious challenge to traditional forms of Islamic authority mainly because it has allowed for a tremendous increase in the number of voices in the public sphere. Spokespersons legitimatised by conventional means of religious conveyance

are complemented and challenged by 'rival and alternative articulations of belief and practice' (Eickelman and Anderson 2003, p. x). New technologies of communication circumvent traditional centres of learning and, not least, Muslims in the western world, where they constitute minorities, engage with parts of the public sphere that are considered secularised. Contemporary notions of religiosity and religious belonging are rooted in current experiences of believers rather than in conventional exegesis of religious texts. Traditional forms of religious knowledge and conveyance do not match with life-worlds in Europe anymore, particularly among young people. Today young Muslims in Europe, more than ever, feel the need to reflect on the origins of their religion and reconcile them with their experiences. The complexities of modern urban life in which the majority of young Muslims live, requires specific competences. Modern media have not only caused a 'globalisation of Muslim affairs', but have also created *new* publics that could not be reached by traditional leaders and traditional means. These new publics ask new questions and challenge traditional production of knowledge by *ulama*. This has resulted in an unsettling of religious authority altogether (see Schulz 2006).

New Islamic leaders are important players in the Islamic field, yet they cannot be fixed anymore to particular organisations or movements. They are preachers and at the same time they are opinion leaders, public figures that act upon certain situations and events. Sometimes they emerge from within the ranks of organisations and, while becoming publicly known, they tend to detach from their original organisational bedrock and become free floating public figures. Some are only known in a relatively limited public realm, or they emerge and disappear after a short while. They deliver speeches, appear in the media to comment on events and in some cases they have become the centre of new devotional practices and beliefs. Sometimes they act from a great distance and count more as a source of inspiration than as a tangible figure in situ. Sometimes these figures are genuine celebrities who owe their public role and popularity to modern mass media. They have supporters, fans who attend their lectures and public performances and they dispose of persuasive qualities. The most well known and controversial celebrity at this moment is undoubtedly the Swiss Muslim philosopher Tariq Ramadan, who is at once immensely popular among well-educated young Muslims in Europe, and highly suspected by many European governments.

One obvious but important aspect of the changes in styles of leadership concerns the modes of information management. At the time when most Muslims in Europe were strangers in their host countries, community leaders had a very powerful position because of their strategic position as intermediaries between

Muslims and the host society. They were able to maintain their indispensable position as information manager. Today this intermediary role is scarcely relevant. New leaders do not speak on behalf of preconceived communities anymore. They address a public and must convince rather than represent. Warner (2002, p. 50) reminds us of the crucial difference between *the* public, an audience, and *a* public. The public is a totality; it is all of us together. An audience is a concrete crowd in a definable space bounded by a certain event. A public, according to Warner, exists only by virtue of being addressed. These insights apply to the new types of religious leadership discussed here. Muslims publics are overlapping relatively unstable constituencies that generally have no institutional ties to leaders. Sometimes they are a public when they watch or listen to speeches and lectures, or surf the Internet, and on other occasions they are an audience in a public meeting. In that respect there is no sharp distinction between opinion leaders, entrepreneurs and brokers, priests, stakeholders, celebrities and politicians. Where these roles were formerly separated, increasingly they now merge. The implication is, therefore, that there is also no sharp distinction between Muslim/non-Muslim, religious/non-religious, political/non-political spheres. We can of course distinguish between a formally appointed imam and a political representative, but when it comes to the production of religious discourse in a highly media-sensitive environment, these distinctions become irrelevant.

The increasing number of lecturers with an Islamic message, new religious experts, and cultural brokers that deliver speeches, appear on television, take part in debates and operate websites should be taken seriously as new forms of religious mediation that constitute new audiences.<sup>15</sup> Cultural brokerage is an essential source of power typical for an urban environment with a multiplicity of cultural production and change. To understand the production of cultural and religious authority, we should analyse carefully how brokers utilise and instrumentalise cultural change and how cultural competence is produced precisely in situations of rapid social transformation. It is not only the exotic self-made radicals that attract the attention of the media and intelligence services that are relevant here. They are only a marginal part of a much larger process of transformation.

It is not just the content of the messages that are relevant. It is crucial to take into consideration how messages are put across, how speakers relate to audiences and to circumstances in which they operate. Modern Islamic leadership correlates closely with present-day urban conditions, in which the majority of

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<sup>15</sup> See also Hirschkind 2006.

Muslims in Europe live. Urban inhabitants must have mental maps at their disposal in order to find their way in the multiplicity of voices and forms that characterise modern cities.<sup>16</sup> Islamic leaders must have ‘urban charisma’ (Hansen and Verkaaik 2009). The authority of urban leaders which this form of charisma entails is based not on an official position within a bureaucracy, either of the state or of some centre of religious knowledge, but rather on the ways they convince others of their connectedness to various alternative networks and centres of power in the city. They must also be able to ‘translate’ global affairs into meaningful and contextualized information, and they must be able to understand the specific sensory regimes that characterize modern urban conditions. They must have the ability to connect to people’s life-worlds in the turbulence of cityscapes. And they must possess the necessary communicative skills to be able to accomplish this. There is thus no single style of urban religious leadership, but a multiplicity of styles.<sup>17</sup>

Modern media have fundamentally changed the modes by which religious messages are put across and disseminated. The role of modern media such as the Internet have been addressed in studies on radicalisation but mainly as a rival practice to the ‘normal’ traditional means of religious conveyance. Modern mass media are also crucial for explaining the prominence and popularity of all types of contemporary Islamic leadership. The extent to which religious knowledge is appreciated and the ways in which it is received and interpreted by Muslim publics is based less on the content of the message as such, than on the appeal of the messenger.<sup>18</sup> As such modern religious leadership itself transforms religion. Leadership shifts from mere representation to a status where religious message and the representative’s presence merge in a particular and interdependent way. The Islamic leader becomes part of the religious experience (see also De Witte 2008).<sup>19</sup> The speaker at a meeting not only addresses

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<sup>16</sup> See e.g. Orsi (1999) on religion in New York.

<sup>17</sup> As Orsi argues: ‘Urban religion is the site of converging and conflicting visions and voices, practices and orientations, which arise out of the complex desires, needs, and fears of many different people who have come to cities by choice or compulsion (or both), and who find themselves intersecting with unexpected others (and with unexpected experiences of their own subjectivities) on a complex field and in a protean physical landscape that insists on itself with particular intensity’ (1999: 45).

<sup>18</sup> Based on her research in Mali, Schulz arrives at a similar conclusion. The new mass media are instrumental in the rise of prominence of new types of religious leaders and to new understandings of religious normativity (2006: 212).

<sup>19</sup> As Meyer and Moors argue: ‘[new forms of mediation not only create] new styles of self-representation, but also pinpoints new forms of religious experience that cast believers as spectators, spectacles as miracles, and God’s blessing as prosperity’ (2006: 9).

his or her audience, but the meeting and the speaker become a reproductive event in an ongoing religious reproduction. His or her persuasive qualities emanate from a particular style of address and presentation. The event is then a particular sensational form (cf. Meyer 2009).

#### **4. Conclusion**

Islam in European societies is a subject of great academic relevance. This is not because of the problematic nature of some events and actions of Muslims, but simply because Muslims are here to stay. At the moment Muslims and Islam in Europe are in a transitional stage. Muslims arrived in western Europe through migration. Within less than a decade from now the vast majority will have been born and raised here. For a number of them the significance of Islam will wane, but for others it constitutes an integral element of their life-worlds. As a consequence Muslims will leave their mark on European societies. The ways in which this will occur will display an increasingly diversified picture (see also Vertovec 2007). Globalization and other political and social forces in all their specificities and ramifications will exert their influence upon the making of local Muslim communities. I have argued that there are three fields that particularly suffer from too strong an emphasis on integration and domestication: the production of local everyday Islam by ordinary Muslims, the enormous rich and varied ways in which young Muslims create their religious environment, and the making of modern Islamic leadership and the sources of authority. These three fields must be further explored in order to develop a research agenda that starts from the actual fact that Muslims constitute an integral part of European societies. This should, however, not be understood as a process of domestication and assimilation into a perceived national culture but as multi-layered practice of self/making and community building, conditioned by social, political and cultural circumstances. On the one hand Muslims become rooted in their local environments, yet at the same time modern mass media and modern means of communication enable Muslims to build networks and communities across borders. This is very much in evidence. Instead of evaluating these practices as integration issues, as researchers we must develop new ways and new approaches that do justice to new realities.

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