

Amsterdam
School



for Social science Research

ASSR Working paper 05/03

May 2005

MAKING MUSLIM PRESENCE MEANINGFUL

Studies on Islam and Mosques in Western Europe

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ASSR WORKING PAPER SERIES
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ABSTRACT:

The establishment of mosques leads to public discussions on Islam and the presence of Muslim minorities in Western European societies. This article critically reconstructs thirty years of academic studies on Islam and mosque establishment in France, the Netherlands, Germany and Great Britain. Three different research perspectives are distinguished: studies on Muslim religious practice, studies on the institutionalisation of Islam, and studies that focus on negotiations about emblems of Islam and cultural diversity. The article shows how researchers working in different research perspectives have discursively constructed and interpreted transformations of Islam and Islamic practice in Western Europe. Academic researchers have actively contributed to the production and development of vocabularies and interpretations to talk and think about Islam and mosques in the West. By consequence, many overlapping concepts and interpretations prevail in academic, policy and political discourses on Islam in Western Europe. The article concludes by suggesting that academic researchers should constantly try and reflect critically upon their own contributions to the process of making Muslim presence in Western Europe meaningful.

Key words: Islam, Mosques, Policy Discourse, Western Europe, Immigration.

I would like to thank Ingrid Robeyns and the other editors of the ASSR working papers series for their comments on an earlier version of this article. Further comments are welcome.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years critical discourses on Islam and Muslim populations have proliferated in Western Europe. Many public and political commentators have argued that Islam is an obstacle for the integration of migrant populations. Muslim newcomers and their offspring from Turkey, North Africa, Asia and the Arab world, are said to adhere to cultural values that are at odds with central democratic norms, such as tolerance, non-violence and equality. Especially since 2001, Muslims are on the defensive in these discussions. Muslim citizens are called upon to re-invent their religiosity and beliefs in the new environment, and to abandon customary and cultural practices that are perceived as conservative and archaic.

A recurrent issue in public discussions on Islam concerns the role and functioning of mosques in Western Europe. Islamic houses of worship have sometimes been portrayed as parallel societies or as obscure spaces where Muslim extremists can be heard defending anti-Western discourses. In the wake of the brutal murder of the filmmaker Theo van Gogh, the Dutch populist politician Geert Wilders spoke of mosques as ‘palaces of hatred’¹ (*haatpaleizen*)². Policy makers in Rotterdam, Strasbourg and Marseilles tried to encourage Mosque Committees to develop cultural centres that would be opened to a non-Muslim audience. Especially in a polarised society –at least according to some policy makers, public commentators and journalists - it should be avoided that mosques would develop into institutions that would turn their back on Western societies, because this might contribute to feelings of discomfort and fear among native non-Muslim populations³. In the Spring of 2004 the right wing extremist politician Michiel Smit welcomed a municipal policy proposal that intended to ban large Islamic centres in Rotterdam, and he repeatedly declared that Muslims should not be allowed to ‘establish their own little Turkey or Morocco in the Netherlands’⁴. Another major issue in recent public discussion

¹ In this article words or phrases that are clearly related to specific discourses, representations or categorizations are put between single brackets, for instance terms such as ‘guest workers’ or ‘modern mosques’. Quotations are put between double brackets, for instance “this is a citation”.

² See “Bestrijding terrorisme is niet effectief” in *NRC-Handelsblad* February 9 2005.

³ See for instance Renate van der Zee “Kathedralen voor Allah” in *HP/De Tijd* November 28 2003; “Opnieuw commotie rond Essalam moskee” in *Trouw* October 29 2003; “Muslims remaking old France” in *The New York Times* April 10 2003; “Marseille, ville Musulmane? Bruno Mégret dit non!” *Allez Marseille* No 7 June 2000.

⁴ See www.nieuwrechts.nl and “Hoge moskee taboe” *Trouw* June 24 2004. The policy proposal was rejected as discriminatory by most of the municipal council members in Rotterdam. See also “Kamervragen moskeenota” in *Rotterdams Dagblad* July 2 2004.

concerns the architectural style of newly built mosques in Europe. Both in the Netherlands and in France, Muslim organisations are nowadays called upon to develop more modern and contemporary mosque buildings. The ‘modern mosques’ would symbolically embody the willingness of Muslim communities to genuinely integrate in host societies. Critics spoke of traditionally styled mosque buildings in Western Europe as ‘nostalgia mosques’.⁵

Muslim spokesmen have countered these ideas by defending the religious freedoms of Muslim minorities, which includes the right to establish appropriate houses of worship. Representatives of Mosque Committees have suggested seeing the growing number of Islamic centres of learning and worship in Europe not as a worrisome trend, but as an illustration of the emancipation of Muslim newcomers in Western societies. Moreover, several commentators –both Muslim and non-Muslim– argue that purpose-built mosques symbolise Muslim communities’ desire to participate in the social and physical spaces of urban Europe.

Even a superficial glance at recent discussions shows that in Western Europe mosque establishment often is a public issue that is highly contentious and loaded with meaning. Mosque establishment is also an emblematic issue, around which far wider discussions and disagreements on the significance of religion, Islamic practice, public space and immigrant integration are played out. These contentious discussions are not a new phenomenon. Ever since Muslim ‘guest workers’ and migrant newcomers began developing houses of worship to provide for their religious needs and customary practices, their efforts have often been accompanied by public turmoil, political opposition and even acts of violence. Present-day discussions can best be seen as a new phase in a continuous process of contention that has started in the 1970s.

This article analyses the dynamics of these process of public contention around mosque establishment and Islam, by focussing on the academic literature on Islam and mosques in Western Europe.⁶ Academic studies on Islam and mosques did

⁵ “De heimweemoskee” in *Vrij Nederland* January 12 2002; also “Heimweemoskee of poldermoskee” in *NRC-Handelsblad* May 1 2004; “Moderne moskee kan best zonder minaret” in *Trouw* April 7 2003; “L’image des mosquées de France. L’enjeu architectural et urban des lieux de culte musulmans est fondamental” in *Libération* December 22 2004.

⁶ The article tries to give a representative overview of the available studies, without claiming to give an exhaustive review of all publications on mosques and Islam in Western Europe. For recent overviews of studies on Islam in Europe see also Haddan and Querqmaz 2000; Buijs and Rath 2002. See also Moaddel 2003.

not develop in a societal void, but have been intimately linked to wider societal developments and public discourses. This is so, in the first place, because Islam and Muslim presence have continuously been objects of heated public debates and political interventions. It is therefore impossible to understand the development of the academic literature without taking into account wider social and political developments in European societies. In the second place, academics who study Islam have often become actively involved in policy making processes, for instance because they wrote policy reports, participated in expert meetings, gave newspaper interviews, or commented on policy proposals.⁷ Thereby academics have provided many of the vocabularies and ideas to talk and think about Islam and mosques in Europe. Academic research has also been shaped and directed by public concerns, if only because public research grants have been made readily available for specific research topics, for instance those related to immigrant incorporation policies or Islamic radicalism. Instead of presuming the existence of a neutral sphere of social scientific inquiry, I argue that academic studies on Islam have played a key role in processes of meaning production about Islam and mosques in Western Europe.

The aims of this article are twofold: first, to describe the interactions between academic and policy discourses on Islam in Western Europe, showing how overlapping vocabularies, concerns and predictions were developed around the issue of mosque establishment. Second, to analyse the enabling and constraining effects of specific ways of representing and framing the role and functioning of mosques in Western Europe.

Roughly speaking, three different research perspectives on the study of Islam in Europe can be distinguished, each related to a variety of academic disciplines. Firstly, studies on the dynamics of the religious experiences and the cultural and religious practices of Muslims in Western Europe. Most of these studies are done by anthropologists, sociologists of religion and so-called Islam-experts (*islamologues* (Fr)). Secondly, studies on the accommodation of Islamic practice in European

⁷ See for example the contributions and comments of academics in policy reports. For the Netherlands Waardenburg 1983; Hirsch-Ballin State Committee 1988; Landman 1996; Waardenburg 2001; SCP 2004; for France Haut Conseil à l'Intégration *L'Islam dans la République* (2000), the reports of the Consultation on Islam in France www.interieur.gouv.fr/information/publications/istichara; Boubeker *Les 'lieux communautaires' de l'Islam de France entre discrimination et dynamiques collectives. Synthèse* and Frégosi (ed.) *Les conditions d'exercice du culte musulman en France: étude de cas à partir des lieux de culte et des carrés musulmans. Synthèse* (FASILD 2004); For Germany: Bundesregierung Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage, 'Islam in Deutschland' (2000); For Great Britain: M.Anwar Qadir Bahsh *State Policies towards Muslims in Britain* (2002).

societies and the processes of institutionalisation of Islam. These studies focus on “the process through which, very gradually, a place is made for Islam in the new countries” (Gerholm and Lithman 1988: 3) and are predominantly carried out by sociologists of religion and political scientists. Thirdly, studies effectuated from the angle of political negotiations on cultural diversity or - when relations between Muslim presence and public space are involved - from the angle of political geography. These studies focus on contentious struggles around symbols of Islam, such as the Islamic veil or the establishment of new mosque buildings, and are effectuated by researchers working in different academic disciplines, such as sociologists, anthropologists, urban geographers and discourse analysts. The article focuses on the academic literature on Islam in Great Britain, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

2. ANTHROPOLOGY: RELIGIOUS PRACTICE AND RELIGIOSITY OF MUSLIM MIGRANTS AND THEIR OFFSPRING

2.1 Religious practice of ‘guest workers’ and migrant newcomers

The accommodation of labour migrants who came to Western Europe since the 1950s and 1960s, at first appeared to demand merely the establishment of provisions for elementary needs, such as working contracts, health care, or housing. It was only gradually that other needs - for socio-psychic well being and for cultural or religious practices - also became a cause of concern for welfare organisations, policy makers, employers, or autochthonous caretakers (Theunis 1979). The increasing societal attention for the cultural and religious life and needs of labour migrants - many of whom ‘had Islam as their religion’⁸ - was accompanied by the production of knowledge on Islamic practice. Academic studies and policy reports on Muslim populations and Islamic practice in Western Europe started to appear since the late 1970s⁹. Sociologists of religion and anthropologists who had a familiarity with Islam, pioneered in the production of knowledge on the individual beliefs and the common

⁸ The expression ‘migrants who had Islam as their religion’ is used by Peter van der Veer to avoid privileging the religious identity of newcomers over other aspect of identity, such as ethnicity, gender or profession (Van der Veer 2001).

⁹ Examples of early policy reports on Islamic practice and mosques are (in the Netherlands) Samuels and Gansbergen 1975, or (in France) a brochure of the Secretariat for Immigrant Workers on houses of worship and prayer rooms for labour migrants, which was written to further develop the cultural policies formulated in the *Nouvelle Politique de l’immigration* of 1976 (see Kepel 1991: 141ff., Maussen 2005).

practices of the Muslim newcomers. Studies in the Netherlands, Belgium and France, carried out in the first half of the 1980s, focussed on practices of daily life, such as mosque attendance, prayer, or the observance of the Ramadan and dietary prescriptions (Leveau 1988; Andezian 1983; Waardenburg 1983). It turned out that Islamic religious practice was marked by the fact that in Europe Islam was an ‘immigrant religion’ (Waardenburg 1988: 8) or a ‘transplanted religion’ (Dassetto and Bastenier 1984; Dassetto and Nonneman 1996) practiced in a non-Muslim and secularised context. Research showed that most of the low-skilled ‘guest workers’ “simply brought many customs of their traditional family life with them” (Waardenburg 1988: 19) and used ‘Islam at home’ as a model to reproduce religious practice in the new setting. Moreover, the developing Islamic religiosity and practices were shaped by the prevailing idea that migrant ‘guest workers’ would eventually return to their countries of origin.

The prayer rooms in Europe, that were established in hostels, apartments, private dwellings or abandoned commercial premises, fulfilled two main functions. On the one hand these spaces provided for basic needs for religious practice, notably prayer. On the other hand, for Muslim migrants in Western Europe mosques functioned as places of ‘purity’ and of ‘certainty’ (Étienne 1984). Mosques also allowed communities which had been fragmented due to emigration, to reconstitute themselves socially, and they were places of sociability, mutual support and contact, occurring in a setting where the mother tongue was spoken and cultural traditions were maintained and reproduced. The academic vocabulary that was used to speak of the new houses of worship was illustrative of prevailing interpretations. Mosques and Mosque associations in Western Europe were spoken of as ‘refuges’ or ‘safe havens’ (*veilige havens (NL)*, *refuges (Fr)* *Soziales Refugium (D)*) (cf. Waardenburg 1983; Diop and Michalak 1996; Nederveen-Pietersen 1997; Schmitt 2003), as ‘a part of the country of origin’ (Sunier 1996: 72), as ‘a place of their own’ (Mandel 1996), or as ‘a place of communitarian identity’ (*lieu d’identité communautaire*) (Étienne 1984). Mosques fulfilled these functions primarily for adult men, if only because spaces for women were hardly available in the often deplorable accommodations.

From the second half of the 1970s onwards, Islamic religious practice and the significance of mosques in Europe started to change. The ending of the recruitment of foreign labour in different European countries, combined with the lack of economic perspectives in the countries of origin and the expansion of welfare states in Western

Europe, stimulated a process of family reunification and settlement. In turn, the arrival of spouses and children affected Islamic practice in Europe. In their role of heads of the family many male migrants workers returned to a more religious life, as they were afraid that their spouses and children would neglect their cultural roots and Muslim values in the Western context (Beck 2002: 251ff.). These migrants made efforts to provide for the particular socio-cultural, educational and religious needs of themselves and their families. French researchers had predicted a steady process of secularisation amongst the new Muslim population, because the young ‘believed but did not practice’ (Krieger-Krynicky 1988: 128) or had found ‘ways of socialization that owe more to sports, media or associations than to religion’ (Leveau 1988: 120). However, it seemed that Islamic practice was actually becoming more important for migrants in Europe in the 1980s. Mosques began catering for a whole range of activities: they provided for religious instructions for the children, Arab or Turkish language lessons and they were meeting places, mostly for adult men, many of whom had lost their jobs due to the economic crises.

Academics observed a diversification of the functions and significances of Islamic houses of worship in Europe. Mosques in Western Europe were significantly different when compared to mosques in Muslim countries. In Muslim countries, mosques primarily functioned as houses of prayer, because all kinds of Islamic religious and cultural provisions were readily available in other places. In the West, however, Islamic houses of worship accommodated functions such as tea and coffee houses, or facilities for religious instructions or language lessons. Mosques in the West also had different symbolic meanings, because they were seen as “the symbol of the durable presence of the group” (Leveau 1988: 114). Mosques often also became the centre of networks of migrant organisations and communities, especially when emerging Muslim organisations started to compete with secular ethnic organisations for the representation of interests of migrants. Researchers working in the field of ethnic and migration studies became increasingly interested in the societal role of Muslim organisations and Mosque Committees (Doomernik 1991). A new academic vocabulary tried to capture these new significances by speaking of the ‘mosque in migration’ (Buijs 1998), of ‘Islamic centres of learning and worship’, of ‘Islamic Cultural Centres’ (*Kulturelles Zentrum*) (D) or of ‘bridging places’ (*Brückenortes*) (D) (Schmitt 2003).

Understanding the role and function of mosques in Western Europe was also increasingly important for policy makers, especially when in the 1980s new immigrant incorporation policies were developed which aimed to tackle the growing levels of unemployment and social exclusion of migrant populations. Policy practices in Rotterdam can serve as an example of the interactions between policy discourses and the available knowledge on Muslim organisations and mosques. In the 1970s the Rotterdam municipality had almost exclusively relied on contacts with secular migrants' organisations to develop and implement immigrant incorporation policies. However, in the early 1980s officials of the Migrants Office – a municipal bureau that dealt with immigrant incorporation policies – argued that Mosque Committees were the most important ethnic organisations amongst the Turkish and Moroccan migrants. Moreover, the Mosque Committees did not exclusively organise religious activities, but also social and cultural activities that could contribute to the emancipation of Moroccan and Turkish newcomers. Therefore the municipality should consider attributing a central role to Mosque Committees in the development and implementation of immigrant incorporation policies. Mosque Committees could become 'social partners' for the municipality, and in turn some of their activities and accommodation costs could be subsidised. Before deciding the matter, municipal administrators wanted to have a clear idea about the relations between the activities of Muslim associations and the goals of the municipal policies. Around this time the Dutch researcher Hein de Graaf conducted a study on the functions of secular and religious Turkish ethnic organisations. De Graaf distinguished four different functions of ethnic organisations: 'refuge', 'assistance', 'transformations in the own group' and 'transformations in Dutch society' (De Graaf 1985). Drawing on the conclusions of de Graaf, the officials of the Migrants Office argued that Mosque Committees provided a 'cultural home' for migrants, and that mosques were thereby important places for uprooted migrant newcomers in Rotterdam (Maussen 2005). The alderman for Social Affairs argued that the municipality could make a financial contribution for mosques that functioned as 'refuges', because these spaces contributed to the 'maintenance of spiritual identity' and the 'well being' of newcomers. However, members of the municipal council argued that public authorities should concentrate their efforts on the social integration of migrants, and should only subsidise activities and organisations that contributed directly to emancipation. Mosques that primarily functioned as 'refuges' and 'cultural homes' might well be important spaces for the maintenance

and development of cultural identity, but this was a private responsibility of ethnic organisation that need not be sponsored with public grants. Moreover, municipal policy makers argued that it was preferably if cultural and social activities did not take place in mosques that functioned as ‘refuges’, but in public community centres where migrants and native residents would have opportunities to meet one another. Because of these concerns, the municipal council of Rotterdam voted against proposals to make substantial financial contributions for the activities of Mosque Committees and for their accommodation costs.

2.2. Religious practice of young Muslims

In the second half of the 1980s and in the early 1990s, the studies on the religious and cultural practices of adult first-generation Muslim migrants, were outnumbered and increasingly replaced by research focussing on young Muslims¹⁰. An important factor thereby was the demographic change of the Muslim population due to family reunification, and mainly the arrival of the so-called ‘in-between generation’. This generation consisted of children who were born in the country of origin and came to Europe in the 1970s and 1980s (Böcker 2000: 160ff). More than the adult newcomers, the child migrants were forced to develop and reinvent their cultural identity, sense of belonging and religiosity entirely within a new context. The ‘in-between generation’ was to a great extent socialised in the institutions and social contexts of Western society, for instance in schools or through contacts with autochthonous friends. Anthropologists spoke of the religiosity of younger Muslims as a new ‘Islam of the young’ (*L’Islam des jeunes*) (Khosrokhavar 1997; Lamchichi 1999; Césari 1998). In a study on Turkish Muslim youth in the Netherlands, Sunier spoke of the new generations as having made a ‘cognitive shift’. For the new generations Western Europe was the horizon for religious practices and beliefs, and young and often higher educated Muslims also tended towards a more individualised religiosity (Sunier 1996: 223ff.). According to the French researcher Césari and the British researcher Joly, Muslim adolescents were less inclined to visit mosques, and they increasingly abandoned the more ‘traditional’ elements of religious practice in favour of a conception of Islam as a marker of cultural boundaries and identity in Western

¹⁰ Interestingly there are very few recent studies on the beliefs and practices of older Muslims (i.e. first generation migrants) in Western Europe. Exceptions are the studies of Kemper (1996) and Strijp (1998) on Moroccan Muslims in the Netherlands.

European societies (Joly 1988; 48, Césari 1994; Tribalat 1995). This new religiosity was said to be illustrated by certain figures of speech that young Muslims used when speaking of their religious identity. Academics picked up typical phrases –such as “Islam that is my culture” (*L’Islam c’est ma culture*) – which were supposedly illustrative of the new forms of religiosity (Leveau 1988: 117ff.; Césari 1994, 1998; Babès 1997; Vertovec and Rogers 1999).

It appeared that these developments also led to tensions within Muslim organisations and Mosque Committees. The ‘parents’ often tried to develop Islamic centres which would allow for the young to be socialised into the values and norms of Islam, as well as to learn about the customary norms and practices of countries of origin. According to the anthropologist Khosrokhavar the ‘Islam of the young’ was radically different, because it was ‘essentially a non-ethnic Islam’ which was modern and formed in the setting of the suburbs of Western European cities (Khosrokhavar 1997: 24ff.). Since the late 1980s many younger Muslims also set up their own youth organisations and tried to widen the functions of mosques and Muslim organisations to provide for their specific needs, for instance for remedial teaching, sports or sociability (Sunier 1996). This emancipation of second and third generation Muslims led to all kinds of inter-generational negotiations on the future of Islam, touching upon issues such as gender relations, marriage, the role of religious instructors (*imams*) or the wearing of the Islamic veil.

The interpretation of the dynamics of Islamic practice in Europe, was not merely a matter for social scientists. Policy makers and society at large were also interested in these developments, especially because many people feared that Islam might turn out to be a problem for the processes of immigrant integration. Moreover, since the 1980s policy makers increasingly focussed on the second generation as the “particular objects and agents of cultural mediation and eventual assimilation” (Silverstein 2004: 9). In this wider socio-political context, the idea of some academics that ‘the young’ were increasingly becoming more secular, that they were less strict in abiding to religious prescriptions, and that they saw religion as a private matter, could be framed as implying that a process of transformation was going on, which would make it more easy to accommodate the ‘Islam of the young’ in a plural and democratic society. Fährad Khosrokhavar, for instance, distinguished various forms of Islamic religious experience and practice among young Muslims in France. Although he mentioned that a small minority of young Muslims were attracted to Islamic

radicalism or 'neo-communitarianism', he claimed that young French Muslims more and more started to define their religiosity on the basis of an 'individual selection', and drew on various forms of 'cultural expression' and 'music' to cope with the difficulties of their daily life in the West (Khosrokhavar 1997: 202ff.). Many researchers optimistically argued that the vast majority of younger Muslims in Western Europe developed a religiosity that was both privatised and modernised, and which would result in a secularised and tolerant 'Dutch' or 'French' Islam or towards an 'Islam made in Holland' (Phalet, Van Lotringen *et al.* 2001). The suggestion by several academics that for new generations Islam was increasingly becoming a kind of 'life-style' was rapidly taken up in policy discourses (Cf. also Phalet and Ter Wal (eds.) 2004; Canatan, Oudijk *et al.* 2003).

Against the background of these new academic studies, it was somewhat unclear what the significance was of larger, newly built mosques. In contrast to the 'refuges' for migrant newcomers, the new 'Islamic centres of learning and worship' could be seen as illustrations of the emancipation of Muslims in Europe. However, mosques could also be represented as places that were mostly visited by first generation migrants and as places that provided for Muslims who tried to maintain and develop somewhat 'archaic' Islamic traditions. In the latter case the mosques would not necessarily appeal to the young and some researchers predicted that in a few years time the 'mosques would be deserted', because younger generations would abandon the 'mosques of the fathers' (Ternisien 2004: 234ff.; Canatan, Oudijk *et al.* 2003; Phalet and Ter Wal (eds.) 2004).

More recently, anthropologists have developed different interpretations of the dynamics of religiosity of younger generations (cf. Werbner 2004; Bowen 2004; Salik 2004). The French researcher Olivier Roy, for instance, argues that in North African countries or in Turkey, Islam is firmly embedded in cultural practices and values. For many of the first generation newcomers, North African or Turkish culture has continued to function as a horizon of meaning for religious practice. For the young, however, Islam is increasingly cut off from these kinds of surrounding cultural values. The religiosity of the younger Muslim is potentially more modern, in the sense of being disconnected from the reproduction of traditional cultural practices. According to Olivier Roy this does not necessarily imply, however, that for younger generations Islam has become a private matter, breeding a religiosity which makes it easier for young Muslims to participate in all kinds of secular activities and sub-cultural groups,

and inevitably resulting in support for tolerance and other civic values¹¹. Recently anthropologists have argued that it is actually very difficult to reconstitute a Muslim religious identity without drawing upon available cultural traditions (Khosrokhavar 2003; Roy 2004; De Koning and Bartels 2005). This is all the more so because many young Muslims in Europe find themselves in a marginalised socio-economic position and feel excluded and cut off from cultural resources in the West. In the early 21st century the natural and inevitable development of a secularized, individualised and moderate Islam among young European Muslims –as predicted by many researchers in the 1990s (Phalet, Van Lotringen *et al.* 2001; or Césari 1994, 1998)- is increasingly put into question. Recent developments in the religious beliefs of young Muslims in Europe is also a central issue in studies on Islamic radicalism.

2.3. Islam and radicalism

Islamic radicalism and Islamic fundamentalism have been recurrent themes in the study of Islam in Europe. In his studies on Islam in France, the political scientist Giles Kepel, extensively discussed the missionary fundamentalist movement *Tablighi Jama'at*, a movement founded in British India in 1926, which had established a network of Mosque Committees in Europe (Kepel 1991, 1994). In the Netherlands and in Germany, Turkish groups such as the *Süleymanci*, the *Nurcu* and the *Milli Görüş* movements, were seen as representing Turkish Islamic fundamentalism in the 1980s and early 1990s (Landman 1992; Heitmeyer 1997). It was the growing influence of these Turkish movements among migrant communities in Western Europe, which led the Turkish State to develop a network of Mosque Committees in Europe in the late 1970s, a network that was put under the supervision of the Turkish Directorate for Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) (Landman 1992: 77ff.). The Turkish government claimed that the leaders of fundamentalists movements which were outlawed and repressed in Turkey - especially after the military coup in Turkey in 1981- had taken Western Europe as their new working terrain. According to the Turkish government these movements were ultimately aiming to bring down the secularist regime in Turkey and replace it by an Islamic State. One of the strategies of the Turkish government to put a halt to the influence of these Muslim movements,

¹¹ Roy argues: “What is new in the current wave of globalisation is that the making of Muslim minorities is carried out through a process of deculturation, in which none of the previous cultural markers is retained” (2004: 108). He also point out that “globalisation does not necessarily imply moderation” (2004: 39).

was to provide Mosque Committees in Europe with professional Turkish religious instructors who remained employees of the *Diyanet*.

The idea that the influence of Islamic fundamentalism in Europe was growing in the 1980s and early 1990s, also resulted from an interpretation of the spreading of certain religious and cultural practices which were associated with a conservative Islam. Policy makers, public opinion and academic researchers noted an increase of practices of veiling and the growing influence of conservative discourses on gender relations. Moreover, already in the late 1980s academics argued that some young Muslims in Europe responded to feelings of humiliations and marginalisation with a militant discourse, which sometimes included a strong pro-Palestinian and anti-Zionist political discourse (Leveau 1988: 117-118; Krieger-Krynicky 1988: 120). The meaning of the new Islamic centres in Europe was now also re-interpreted. Instead of seeing the establishment of large Islamic centres of worship and learning as illustrative of processes of emancipation and permanent settlement, some researchers argued that these kinds of mosques were not comparable to the provisions for religious practice that existed in the Muslim world. Instead the Islamic centres were illustrative of the attempts of fundamentalists to create Muslim enclaves within Western societies, where non-Western norms and values were practiced and anti-Western ideologies were promoted. French researchers argued that public authorities should be reluctant to allow for the development of Muslim enclaves and should not give in to “the demands for a multi-cultural society made by the members of the second generation” (Krieger-Krynicky 1988: 129).

In the second half of the 1990s, the main collective representation of the ‘fundamentalist threat’ among Muslims in Europe was being refocused. Due to the arrival of relatively important numbers of economic and political refugees from Bosnia, Somalia, Southeast Asia, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon the ethnic composition of Muslim population had changed in European countries. In most European countries the threatening image of Islamic fundamentalism was increasingly carried over from Turkish Muslim movements, towards Muslim organisations related to countries in the Middle East and North Africa¹². In 1991 the electoral victory of the Islamist party *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) in the national elections in Algeria, and the bombing

¹² An exception is Germany. Due to the fact that the vast majority of Muslims in Germany are Turks and the relatively conservative character of *Milli Görüs* in Germany, this movement continues to be seen as one of the main fundamentalist movement in Germany (Heitmeyer 1997; Tibi 2000; Schiffauer 2000).

of the St.Michel metro station by Algerian extremists in Paris in 1995 and 1996, contributed to the idea that the threat of Islamic extremism in France was primarily coming from North Africa. It seemed as though the Islamic radicals that were chased from Algeria, used Western European societies to develop and spread Islamic radicalism, especially after –what Olivier Roy coined - the ‘failure of Political Islam’ (Roy 1995, 2004). In the 1990s international upheavals and conflicts, such as the Gulf War, the establishment of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the emergence of international Islamic terrorist movements such as Al Qaeda, contributed to the idea that especially Muslim movements related to the Arab world, Asia and North Africa constituted a major threat of Islamic radicalism. Public authorities in the West increasingly became concerned about the activities of Mosque Committees that were affiliated to neo-fundamentalist movements such as the Salafi.¹³ In this socio-political constellation the Mosque Committees in Europe that were affiliated to the secular governments of Turkey or of Algeria (notably the Muslim Institute of the Paris Mosque which is controlled by the Algerian government), positioned themselves as representatives of a moderate Islam, as buffers against the spreading of radicalism, and as institutional guarantees for social stability in the West.

The public concerns about the rise of international radical Muslim movements became linked to studies and interpretations of the religiosity and value-orientations of younger Muslims in Western Europe. The appearance in the streetscapes of European cities of young Muslim men who grew a beard or dressed in traditional clothing, or of young Muslim women who started wearing a veil, could no longer be framed as illustrative of social pressures of conservative and traditional ‘parents’. Many academics abandoned the rather simplistic discursive opposition between a ‘traditional Islam of the fathers’ and a ‘dynamic and secularised Islam of the young’. Researchers now speak of a profoundly modern form of religiosity, which is represented in a catch phrase such as ‘born again Muslims’. They argue that the developing popularity of Islam in Western Europe should not be understood as a return to a traditional Islam, but as an illustration an individualisation of religiosity and of the crisis of the social authority of religion (Roy 2004: 9). Besides the small minority of young Muslims who are tempted by radicalism, other young European Muslims and their intellectual leaders, such as the Swiss theologian Tariq Ramadan,

¹³ See for instance a recent report of the Dutch Ministry of Internal Affairs *Van dawa tot jihad. De diverse dreigingen van de radicale islam tegen de democratische rechtsorde* (2004).

set out to develop a new reformist Islam which is purified from certain cultural traditions. Already in 1988 Rémy Leveau spoke of an ‘imaginary Islam’, meaning that young Muslim tried to return to a largely self-invented pure and true Islam (1988: 120). Contemporary scholars such as Olivier Roy and Fehrad Khosrokhavar argue that some younger Muslims in Europe try simultaneously to return to the original religious texts and use all kinds of resources (the internet, tapes, books) to put together a self-invented ‘true’ Islam. Even though such a mixing of religious elements and individual *bricolage* is as a very modern process, it can also produce a highly explosive mixing of radical discourses. This process takes place in a societal setting in which several young Muslims feel humiliated, misunderstood and excluded by Western societies and are influenced by political discourses of radical movements which frame geopolitical issues - such as the wars in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Iraq and Palestine - as illustrations of a war of the ‘West against Islam’ or a ‘clash of civilisations’.

At the beginning of the 21st century, academic studies and public discourses on Islamic practice in Europe have produced yet another set of interpretations of the role and functions of Islamic houses of worship. Given the high level of political and public concern about Islamic radicalism in Western Europe, these new interpretations of academics are extremely important for developing policy discourses. Present day interactions between academic and policy discourse occur around three major themes¹⁴: the role of religious instructors (imams), the dangers of the development of Muslim ‘enclaves’ in European neighbourhoods, and the need to provide young Muslims with an alternative cultural framework for dialogue in the West.

In the 1970s and early 1980s migrant worshippers often named one amongst them to lead prayer. These individuals became colloquially known as ‘volunteer imams’ or ‘*imams ouvriers*’. However, in later periods most Mosque Committees managed to employ a professional imam, who usually had been educated in one of the Islamic universities in the Muslim world. In the 1990s the continued arrival of so-called ‘import imams’ was framed as one of the causes of –what seemed to be - the popularity of conservative and traditional ideas amongst Muslims in Western Europe. Most of the religious instructors were not familiar with the context of Western societies, did not speak the language of the host society and did not understand the

¹⁴ I focus on recent developments in the Netherlands and France here.

problems and questions that young Muslims in the West had to cope with. In an attempt to tackle these problems policy makers in France and the Netherlands wanted to support the establishment of training centres for imams in Europe (cf. Landman 1996; Frégosi (ed.) 1998; Battui, Nahavandi *et al.* 2004; Hendrickx and de Lange 2005; ICMPD 2005). However, in recent studies academics tend to emphasise that radicalism is not so much promoted by conservative imams who preach a traditional Islam. Instead the young Muslims who radicalise are deeply influenced by ‘internet-imams’, ‘auto-proclaimed imams’ or by travelling Salafites, who claim to be religious experts and true believers through behaviour and faith (Roy 2004: 148ff.).¹⁵ Within the new frame it seems that the establishment of training centres for imams in Europe might unintentionally contribute to the growing number of ‘self-taught preachers’. More established Muslim institutions in Western Europe - such as the Muslim Institute of the Mosque of Paris or the Turkish *Diyanet* - argue that it is better when Mosque Committees continue to employ professionally trained imams who have been educated in universities in the Muslim world. Seen from this perspective, the plans of the Dutch government to refuse new residents’ permits to foreign imams, could in fact contribute to the growing influence of “young educated people who think themselves expert in religion” (Roy 2004: 162).

Another issue concerns the idea that radical Muslim movements try to establish parallel societies and seek to “re-create a particular social environment with its own mores and pressures” in European suburbs where many migrants live (Roy 2004: 282).¹⁶ Movements such as the Salafites are said to try and establish an alternative infrastructure of religious teaching, worship, housing and socio-cultural institutions, which is aimed at segregating Muslim from non-Muslim populations. In this light the development of large Islamic centres, for instance those established by the *Union des Associations Islamiques de France* (UOIF) or the Milli Görüs, is seen as a worrisome trend. On the other hand, the existing small and invisible houses of worship are also problematised in a new way. In the 1990s the small and invisible houses of worship were often represented as symptomatic for the marginalisation of

¹⁵ See also “Les imams salafistes avaient pris le contrôle des mosquées. Deux lieux de culte fermés dans les Hauts-de-Seine” in *Le Figaro* April 14 2004; “Le plan de Beauveau contre l’islam radical. Le ministre de l’intérieur a mis en place un dispositif de lutte contre les lieux de culte extrémistes et les leaders musulmans qui prêchent l’intolérance” in *Le Figaro* November 25 2004.

¹⁶ See also “La non-mixité est un repli communautaire. Contre les horaires réservés aux femmes musulmanes dans les piscines publiques” in *Le Figaro* December 2 2003 and “La longue dérive de Vénissieux” in *Le Monde* January 13 2005..

Islam and of the discrimination of Muslims in Europe. But nowadays policy makers tend to see them as obscure spaces that provide shelter to foreign extremists. Figures of speech such as ‘shelter mosques’ (*onderduikmoskeeën*)(NL) or ‘the Islam of the basements’ (*l’Islam des caves*) (FR) have been carried over from discourses that questioned the discrimination and non-recognition of Islam by Western society, to discourses suggesting that Muslim radicals intentionally try to keep away from what they see as a perverse Western society. In this new constellation policy makers in cities such as Rotterdam or Marseilles increasingly support the establishment of middle-sized neighbourhood mosques. These mosques should preferably be built in a modern and transparent style, and should function as counterweights to the ‘parallel societies’ and the obscure ‘shelter mosques’ (Maussen 2005).

Finally, many policy makers now think that young Muslims should be able to find cultural resources and a context of dialogue in Western Europe (Cf. Hajer and Maussen 2004). Thus the Dutch government intends to subsidise websites which give information about Islam, in order to halt the popularity of radical Islamic websites. Policy makers in several cities in the Netherlands also try and develop all kinds of debates and cultural activities to stimulate dialogue and interaction with young Muslims. In Marseilles policy makers hope that a cultural centre at the image of the *Institut du Monde Arabe* in Paris, might constitute a cultural resource that can function as a counterweight to conservative or radical movements. Moreover, the fact that many young Muslims turn away from existing mosques and established Muslim organisations is also seen as a worrisome trend. Whereas in the late 1980s and early 1990s the decrease of mosque attendance among young Muslims was seen as illustrative of secularisation, in recent years the interpretation has been turned upside down. The fact that young Muslims turn away from the ‘Islam of the fathers’ is now perceived as another factor in a process of radicalisation. Salafist preachers argue that the Islam of the first generation of migrants has been “mixed with local customs, folklore, superstition and wrong beliefs”, and young radical Muslims reject the compromises their ‘fathers’ have made in dealing with an alien environment (Roy 2004: 165).

This overview of the available academic studies on the dynamics of Islamic practice and religiosity shows important shifts in the development of Islam in Europe, but it also shows changes in the ways Muslims and academic researchers have interpreted the functioning and the significances of mosques in Europe. The varying

and changing conceptualisation of Islamic houses of worship in academic discourse – as ‘refuges’, as ‘symbols of settlement’, as ‘Islamic centres of worship and learning’, as ‘Muslim enclaves’ or ‘parallel societies’- is part of a wider process of meaning production. Researchers working within an anthropological paradigm primarily seek to understand the significance of mosques and Islamic presence from the angle of the dynamics of religiosity and from the analysis of the meaning of mosques *for* Muslims in Europe. In contrast, the two research perspectives that will be discussed in what follows include the host society as a factor in the process of meaning production with regard to mosques and Islam in Europe.

3. POLITICAL SCIENCE: THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF ISLAM IN WESTERN EUROPE

The settlement of Muslim populations in Europe led to the establishment of provisions required to carry out religious obligations and customary practices in the new environment. The two-sided process, in which Muslim organisations and host countries engaged in efforts to establish an infrastructure for Islamic communities, became conceptualised as an object for academic research by speaking of the ‘institutionalisation of Islam’ (Landman 1992; Rath, Penninx *et al.* 2001) or the ‘accommodation of Muslim religious practices in Western Europe’ (Fetzer and Soper 2005). In order to understand the dynamics of these processes of institutionalisation of Islam, and explain differences between different national and ethnic groups (Turks, Moroccans, Algerians, Surinamese, Pakistani) and between different European countries, three theoretical research perspectives were drawn upon: resource mobilisation theory, theories on national regimes of religious accommodation and opportunity structure theories.

3.1. Resource mobilisation

In the study of social movements, resource mobilisation theory focuses on “the capacity of organized groups to acquire politically significant resources for their collective purposes” (Fetzer and Soper 2005: 7). Within this theoretical perspective the attempts and capacity of European Muslim organisations to achieve their goals can be studied by using the conceptual tools developed to study other kinds of interest organisations or social movements. An analysis of the organisational patterns,

resources and leadership, the networks and the varying goals of Muslim organisations, allows for an understanding of why, how and to what extent Muslims are successful in creating an infrastructure for their needs in Western societies.

The earliest Muslim organisations in Europe were usually Mosque Committees, usually relatively weak organisations which lacked professional leadership and financial resources. The organisational and financial strength of local Muslim organisations increased significantly because of the emergence of transnational networks of Muslim organisations, notably those networks which were sponsored by the governments of countries of origin, such as the Algerian or Moroccan *Amicales* and the Turkish *Diyanet*. Despite the relative successes of Muslim organisations, for instance in Great Britain and in the Netherlands, the overall performance of Muslim organisations was relatively poor in comparison to other religious organisations. In the Netherlands the conditions for Islamic practice improved considerably in the 1990s, for instance because of the increase in the number of adequate houses of worship. In France, by contrast, only two purpose-built mosques were established between 1980 and 1994, even though in the same period the Muslim population grew from about 1 million to about 3 million people¹⁷. Resource mobilisation theories could account for some of the remarkable differences in the achievements of different ethnic groups of Muslims in Europe. In the Netherlands, for instance, Turkish Muslim organisations were more successful in accomplishing their goals than Moroccan or Surinamese Muslim associations, because the Turks could rely on a robust organisational structure and network, an economically more well off Mosque congregation and on resources made available by the Turkish government (cf. Sunier 1996; Canatan 2001).

3.2. Regimes of accommodation

The other side of the process of the ‘institutionalisation of Islam’ concerned the different ways European countries regulated Islamic practice and supported the establishment of Muslim institutions¹⁸. The disadvantaged conditions for Islamic practice in most European countries was in part related to the lack of available

¹⁷ Two purpose-built mosques were established in France between 1980 and 1994: the mosques in Évry (1983) and in Lyon (1994).

¹⁸ See for instance Kepel 1991 (first edition 1987); Landman 1992; Shadid and van Koningsveld 1991; Lewis 1994; Joly 1995; Basdevant-Gaudemet 1996; Frégosi 1998; Boyer 1998; Grandguillaume 1998; Krosigk 1999; Tipi 2000; Lemmen and Miehl 2001; Spuler-Stegemann 2001; Werbner 2002; Open Society Institute 2002.

regulations and the reluctance of most governments to give financial support to guarantee the effective religious freedom of Muslim minorities, which often lacked financial means. The significant differences between countries suggested that what states viewed as an equitable treatment of Islam varied widely in Europe. This aspect was studied in a number of cross national studies on the governmental regulation of Islamic practice in Europe.¹⁹ In the Netherlands, Belgium, Great Britain, and to a somewhat lesser extent in Germany, the conditions for Islamic practice steadily improved in the 1980s and early 1990s, in part because of new legalisation and jurisprudence for practices such as veiling or the call to prayer, and because of governmental support for Muslim primarily schools, Muslim councils, mosque buildings or religious personnel. In other countries, such as France, however, the opportunities for Islam remained limited and the *de facto* unequal position of Islam seemed, at least in part, to result from obstructive public policies (Fetzer and Soper 2005).

3.3. Political opportunity structures and institutionalisation processes

Political opportunity structure theory tries to analyse the “direct and indirect ways in which state officials and institutions influence the capacity of groups to engage in collective action, and examines the policy outcomes that follow from that political mobilisation” (Fetzer and Soper 2005: 10). Instead of analysing *either* the internal processes of mobilisation of resources by Muslim organisations, *or* the legal framework and the regulation of Islam in different countries, this theory advocates the analysis of the *interactions* between the two, in order to explain the process of institutionalisation of Islam. The opportunity structure for Muslim organisations in Western Europe consists of various aspect of the political and institutional context, including the specific national regime of state church relations (Fetzer and Soper 2005: 20; Krosigk 1999; Salvatore 2004; also Monsma and Soper 1997). Instead of conceptualising the opportunity structure as an unchangeable context for organisations, most researchers use a dynamic model, which includes an analysis of ideological processes and policy framings in which meaningful opportunities for

¹⁹ See for instance Gerholm and Lithman (eds.) 1988; Bastenier 1991; Shadid and van Koningsveld (eds.) 1995, 1996, 2002; Dassetto and Nonneman 1996; Vertovec and Peach (eds.) 1997; Rath, Penninx *et al.* 2001 (Dutch edition 1996), Waardenburg 2001; Ferrari and Bradney 2000; Dassetto 2000; Ferrari 2002; Yazbeck-Haddad and Smith (eds.) 2002; König 2003; Nielsen 1992, 1999; Bader 2003, 2005; Fetzer and Soper 2005. Also Bowen 2001.

Muslim organisations are made available. The political opportunities can vary between different institutional levels, and comparative studies have shown remarkable different outcomes between institutionalisation processes in different cities within the same country. The study of Rath, Penninx *et. al.* on local policies towards Muslim organisations in the Netherlands, for instance, showed that in the 1980s the local government of Utrecht was reluctant to support Muslim organisations, because policy makers perceived Muslim organisations primarily as religious organisations and held on to a strict interpretation of the separation of state and church. In Rotterdam, by contrast, policy makers were willing to sponsor a Muslim platform that could function as an interlocutor for the municipality. Moreover, policy makers in Rotterdam framed mosques as a normal ‘neighbourhood provisions’ which could be improved and renovated because of municipal urban renewal policies (Maussen 2004, 2005). In a comparative study on public policies on Islam in the French cities Mulhouse and Strasbourg, Franck Frégosi showed how local governments framed the establishment of Islamic houses of worship in radically different terms in the 1990s. Whereas policy makers and politicians in Strasbourg favoured the establishment of a single large Islamic centre in the city which would stand as a symbol of a ‘French Islam’, policy makers in Mulhouse opted for an approach in which the conditions for Islamic practice were improved through the establishment and renovation of several ‘neighbourhood mosques’ (*mosquées de quartier*) (Frégosi 2001).

The academic studies on the ‘institutionalisation of Islam’ also produced their own set of meanings concerning the issues of ‘mosques’ and ‘mosque establishment’. An important element thereby was that mosques obtained the symbolic meaning of being a kind of mirrors of the societal position of Muslim communities. The small scale and poor houses of worship were usually represented as illustrations of Muslim communities that lacked resources, of the inability of Muslims to mobilise effectively, or as symptomatic for the marginalisation of Muslims by public authorities and host societies. A whole vocabulary was invented to describe these kinds of houses of worship in Western Europe as ‘front-room mosques’, as ‘mosques in basements and garages’ (*mosquées dans des caves et des garages*) (Fr), as ‘shelter-mosques’ (*onderduikmoskeeën*) (NL) (Maussen 2005) or as ‘mosques of the backyards’ (*Hinterhofenmoscheen*) (D) (Mandel 1996; Schmitt 2003). By contrast, the establishment of larger Islamic centres of worship and learning was usually represented as a sign of the emancipation of Muslims in Western Europe and of the

recognition of their demands by host society. This representation of the meanings of mosque establishment was also produced in catch phrases in the academic literature. Researchers spoke of ‘mosques without minarets’ as symbolising the powerlessness of Muslim communities in Europe (Nederveen-Pietersen 1997, also Étienne 1989: 67ff.). In turn, policy reports and journalists argued that the absence of adequate and visible houses of worship contributed to feelings of rejection and marginalization among Muslim populations²⁰. Moreover, mosques started figuring as symbolic landmarks in narratives of a linear process of emancipation and institutionalisation, in which Muslims in Europe had moved from ‘prayer rugs to minarets’ (Landman 1992). By consequence, purpose-built mosques became labelled as ‘real mosques’ (*vraies mosquées* (F), *èchte moskeeën* (NL)), or as ‘representative mosques’ (*Repräsentative Moscheebauten*) (D) (Schmitt 2003).

Illustrative for the interactions between, on the one hand, political and policy discourse and, on the other hand, academic discourse, was the figure of speech ‘Cathedral Mosques’ (*mosquées cathédrales*) which dominated public discussions on mosque establishment in France in the 1990s (Ternisien 2004, Maussen 2005). Already in the late 1980s, influential academics such as Giles Kepel or Bruno Étienne had emphasised the need for the development of a ‘French Islam’ (*un Islam de France*). Étienne insisted, for instance, that French public authorities should stimulate the development of university departments teaching Islamic theology, and he hoped that a ‘*consistoire musulman*’ would be established in France, at the image of existing Jewish and Protestant institutions (1989: 67ff.). In the late 1980s a number of ideas about the future of Islam in France came together around the idea that in each French city a central Grand Mosque should be established. In institutional terms this central mosque would function as the seat of the main representatives of Muslims in the city. Moreover, the Grand Mosque would symbolically represent a ‘French Islam’, i.e. an Islam that was compatible with core French values, such as secularism and intellectual critique (cf. also Bowen 2002). Finally, the Grand Mosque would be a purpose-built construction with a minaret and a dome, which would illustrate the recognition of Islamic presence by French society. The idea of each city having a single Grand Mosque could hook into Islamic religious discourses on the unity of the

²⁰ See for example Haut Conseil à l’Intégration 2000 : 36ff ; «L’attitude des municipalités envers l’islam commence à évoluer » *Le Monde* February 21 1996 ; « L’islam en France en quête de mosquées » *L’Express* June 1 2000.

Ummah, but it could also hook into Catholic discourses of religious authority symbolised in the Cathedral, being the seat of the episcopate. The figure of speech ‘Cathedral Mosque’ (*mosquée cathédrale*) could serve as a communicative vehicle for all these different meanings, allowing representatives of Muslim associations, anti-racist associations, politicians, policy makers and academics to make a case in favour of the establishment of Grand Mosques in France (Ternisien 2004: 75ff.). When the Mayors of Lyon and Marseilles spoke out in favour of the establishment of a ‘Cathedral Mosque’ in 1989, the figure of speech emerged full blown in local discussions on mosque establishment in France (Maussen 2005)²¹. However, at the beginning of the 21st century the ideas about the development of a ‘French Islam’ and the need for adequate spaces for worship –which had come together around the idea of Central Mosques- became separated again. Much like in other European cities, policy makers and representatives of Muslim organisations in France increasingly supported the idea that each French city would have a multiplicity of small and middle sized mosques (‘neighbourhood mosques’).²²

Researchers drawing upon opportunity structure theories are able to explain many aspects of the dynamics and outcomes of the processes of the institutionalisation of Islam in Europe. Still, most researchers who set out to study the accommodation of Muslim religious practices in Western Europe tend to treat mosques as univocal objects. Despite the obvious differences in architecture and functions, researchers have primarily represented mosques as provisions for Islamic practice. By consequence, the political processes and the struggles over mosque establishment are essentially seen as confrontations between Muslim organisations that demand to establish a provision for Islamic worship, versus other actors - such as public authorities or residents’ associations - who can accommodate or resist this demand. Thus Joel Fetzer and Christopher Soper write: “It is apparent that Muslim citizens and permanent residents in these three countries [Great Britain, France and Germany, M.M.] have *identical goals*; they want to build mosques for public worship and establish religious schools to transmit the faith, and they want the state to make the concessions necessary so that they can practice their religion.” (2005: 12, my emphasis, M.M.). This representation of the process of institutionalisation of Islam -

²¹ The term Cathedral Mosque itself is much older. It is used for instance in the English edition of G.H. Bousquet book on *La Politique Musulmane et Coloniale des Pays Bas* published in 1940 (Bousquet 1940: 15) (the French edition was published in 1939).

²² See “Le temps des mosquées Cathédrales semble révolu” in *Le Monde* June 17 2004.

and the representation of social conflict it entails - is misleading. We cannot simply presume that the goals of Muslim organisations are apparent or identical. As we saw, the significances of mosques and the reasons for their establishment in Europe in part depend on the transformations and dynamics of Islamic practice and religiosity. It is also a mistake to limit the available interpretations of conflicts on mosque establishment to the dichotomous opposition between the acknowledgement of legitimate demands of Muslim minorities versus the obstruction of Muslims' rights to the religious freedom. This representation makes it appear as if opposition against any kind of mosque, or against any kind of demand of Muslim organisations, almost inevitably is a sign of discrimination and unequal treatment. The representations and meanings which are attributed to mosques by Muslim communities and by host societies, are an important aspect of discussions, negotiations and conflicts on mosque establishment. This dimension is more adequately framed by researchers who conceptualise mosque establishment in terms of negotiations on cultural diversity or political geography.

4. NEGOTIATIONS ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY: CONTESTATION AROUND MOSQUES AS EMBLEMS OF ISLAMIC PRESENCE

In the past 30 years or so the establishment of provisions for Islamic practice has been a highly contentious public issue in Western European societies. Often public contestation occurs over incidents and emblematic issues, which somehow make general processes of settlement or relatively abstract issues such as cultural difference, equal treatment or recognition, into concrete and almost tangible public issues. Ritual slaughtering, the establishment of Islamic schools, the appearance of traditional clothing in the streetscapes of Western European cities, female circumcision or the sermons and discourses of imams, have led to public discussions about Islam and Muslim presence. Public contestation around Islam in European societies has arguably been most intense around two emblems of Muslim presence: the Islamic veil and mosque establishment. Researchers who conceptualise these public discussions in terms of negotiations on cultural difference seek to understand both why discussions on Muslim presence occur around these symbols and why they cause so much public turmoil.

Ruth Mandel's 1989 article "Turkish Headscarves and the 'Foreigner Problem': Constructing Difference through Emblems of Identity" was one of the first attempts to analyse the dynamics of public contention around the Islamic veil. Focussing on discussions on Turkish Muslims in West Germany, Mandel argued that the headscarf was essentially a polysemic symbol. It was a piece of cloth that carried several meanings which were constructed dialectically between Muslim women and all kinds of other people who interpreted its symbolic meanings. The Islamic veil had become "a locus for many levels of differentiations within the Turkish community and within German society, pointing as well to the more obvious conflicts between Turks and Germans" (Mandel 1989: 29). The headscarf had come to symbolize Islamic practices of 'sexism', the 'backward and primitive patriarchal domination of women', and 'repression' (Mandel 1989: 38). It had also come to stand for the unwillingness of foreigners or Turks to assimilate to German societal standards, or for the alleged growing influence of Islamic fundamentalism. Judgements and evaluations about Muslim minorities also became attributed to the symbol. Thus the headscarf itself was talked about as 'ugly', 'un-German', 'alien' or 'offensive'. In the 1990s the veil had also become a symbol of resistance for young Muslim citizens in the West who protested against enforced assimilation. In research-analytical terms discussions on the veil could be seen as a focus to study how wider issues related to nationhood, identity, cultural diversity or integration and assimilation, were being played out in specific power configurations. Several recent studies try to analyse the public discussions on mosque establishment in similar terms.

4.1. Prejudice, 'islamophobia' and protest against mosques

Studies on the accommodation of Muslim practice in Europe came across many incidences of public discussions on mosque establishment. Often the establishment of Islamic houses of worship was accompanied by protest of host society actors, such as public authorities, residents' committees, Christian organisations or politicians. The protests and discussions were usually interpreted as illustrative of the obstacles Muslim minorities encountered in their efforts to create a community infrastructure. Opposition against mosque establishment seemed to be inspired by concealed or overt forms of rejection of Islam or protests against the presence of migrant communities. Public authorities discriminated against the demands of Muslim organisations, by refusing to grant building permits for mosque buildings or by objecting against

architectural designs which were represented as incommensurate with the built environment or simply as inappropriate. Representatives of conservative Christian organisations and extreme right parties drew upon a normative image of urban space in Europe as marked by a Judeo-Christian culture, in order to protest against the establishment of minarets (Schmitt 2003: 118-120, Maussen 2005). Especially in France, public authorities had a poor record in this respect: Mayors refused building permits on false grounds, and they obstructed demands of Muslim minorities to establish adequate provisions for Islamic practice (Kepel 1991, 1994, Boyer 1998). But also in the Netherlands, Germany or Belgium, public authorities repeatedly obstructed mosque establishment (Shadid and van Koningsveld 1992, Beck 2002, Schmitt 2003, Hohmann 2003). In most Western European cities, residents' associations and individual autochthonous citizens drew upon all kinds of *ad hoc* argumentations to protest against mosque establishment. The argumentations of protesting residents usually included more practical concerns about noise pollution or about parking problems, but they also referred to issues related to cultural difference. It seems plausible to understand some of the protest against mosques as related to more widespread anti-Muslim and anti-foreigner discourses (see Poole 2002; Geisser 2003). Kevin Dunn concludes in a study on public discussions on mosques in Sydney: "Islamophobia (*sic!*) may circulate globally but it impacts locally as opposition to Islamic places of worship" (Dunn 2001: 305; also Dunn 2005). In the discourses of opposition against mosques, images of Islam as a violent and anti-Western religion, images of migrant minorities as problematic, intolerant or threatening, are weaved together with argumentations that focus on practical issues. One of the explanations for the emphasis that residents put on practical concerns in justifying their protests, is that prevailing democratic norms and anti-racist legislation prevent the expression of all too overt racist, anti-Muslim discourses. Protesters therefore dress up their hatred as pragmatic objections that, as Herman Beck argues, serve primarily to 'hide their prejudices' (Beck 2002)²³.

There are ample examples of anti-Muslim prejudice in protests against mosques. Nevertheless, explaining discussions and protest mainly in terms of islamophobia is too narrow a perspective to understand the dynamics of discussions and conflicts on mosque development. Usually these kinds of studies also start off by

²³ See also Isin and Siemiatycki 1999 for discussions in Toronto, Naguib 2001, 2002 for discussions in Norway.

representing a conflict over mosque establishment as a one-dimensional confrontation between on the one hand Muslim minorities trying to establish a basic provision for religious practice, and on the other hand protesters who want to prevent minority communities to effectively enjoy their fundamental rights (Shadid and van Koningsveld 1992: 89 ff; Beck 2002; Dunn 2001, 2005). This representation is an unacceptable simplification of the demands of Muslim communities *and* of the protest and concerns of host society actors. The dynamics of Muslim religious and cultural practice, and the implications thereof for the functions and symbolic meanings of mosques, lead to numerous discussions within mosque congregations. Therefore the wish to establish a mosque cannot be seen as a univocal demand. Also the protests of host society actors cannot be reduced to hidden or overt forms of prejudice and islamophobia. Sometimes there are real stakes for neighbouring residents, and the concerns that are expressed by host society actors need not be merely a result of racism. Once again, academic discourse directly fed into public discourse. Especially the idea that protest against mosques was inspired by deep feelings of distrust and intolerance of Muslims - which were not warranted by empirical evidence - could be interpreted as meaning that protesters were either irrational or prejudiced. In either case there was no need to take complaints or protests seriously. Many researchers who work in this domain base their work on a neo-Marxist conceptual framework, in which social scientists should contribute to the unmasking of false ideologies. This is illustrated by the vocabulary that these academics use to frame anti-Muslim protests, for instance as 'irrational fears' (*Islamophobia*) (Geisser 2003; Dunn 2001, 2005; Werbner 2005), or as consisting of 'myths' that should be countered with realistic accounts and obvious facts (Shadid and Van Koningsveld 1992; Werbner 2005).

4.2. Mosque establishment and the production of meaning

In recent years a number of elaborate case studies have been written that primarily focus on the production of meaning in discussions on mosque establishment and which try to move beyond an explanation of these protests and conflicts in terms of islamofobia and prejudice (cf. Abdoun, Chevre *et al* (eds.) 2004). In a detailed study of 30 years of discussions on a Turkish mosque in a city district in Southern Rotterdam, the political scientist Frank Buijs analysed negotiations on the role and function of the mosque occurring *within* the Mosque Committee and the Turkish mosque congregation (Buijs 1998; also Buijs and Schuster 2002). Drawing on

theories on ethnic competition, Buijs argued that the establishment of the new mosque was also an emblematic issue, around which a wider struggle about scarce resources, about the future of the neighbourhood, and about the sharing of public space by different groups, were played out. Similarly, Flip Lindo analysed public discussions around the establishment of a Turkish mosque in a city district in the West of Amsterdam. The administrators of the sub-district saw the establishment of a large ethno-religious centre – represented by a city district administrator as a ‘Turkish fortress’ - as a threat to public policies intended to develop an integrated multicultural district society. Policy makers favoured the establishment of a smaller house of worship and wanted Turkish residents to participate in the public welfare provisions that were available in the neighbourhoods. The Mosque Committee, however, argued that Turkish residents preferred welfare provisions of their own, and said that it was a fundamental right of Turkish-Dutch Muslim citizens to develop an Islamic centre as they thought appropriate (Lindo 1999).

Recent studies have also shown how the dynamics of conflicts on mosque establishment depend on the various ways in which mosque establishment and the role and functions of mosques and Mosque Committees, are represented and framed in policy and public debate. In a study of nearly 15 years of debate on the establishment of a mosque in Lyon, Alain Battegay analysed the ways the symbolic meaning of the new mosque was discursively constructed by Muslim organisations, local and national politicians and representatives of a residents’ association. The establishment of a mosque was initially represented as a local matter, involving a balancing of the interests of the Muslim and non-Muslim residents. In 1991 however, the Mayor of Lyon - Michel Noir - reframed the issue in terms of the fundamental rights of Muslims in France to have decent houses of worship. Moreover he argued that the establishment of a Grand Mosque was needed for the development of a ‘French Islam’, and suggested to make the future president of the Mosque Committee into the main municipal spokesman for the Muslim community of Lyon. Thus the Mayor created the political momentum for the establishment of the mosque in 1994 (Battegay 1993, 1995).

Whereas in France policy makers have often emphasised the symbolic meaning of mosque establishment and have spoken of the necessity of establishing a single Grand Mosque in all larger French cities (see above), policy makers in Great Britain, the Netherlands and Germany have tended to embed mosque establishment in

policies of urban renewal and urban development. In a study on discussions on mosques in Birmingham, Richard Gale analyses how urban planning policy discourses constituted a framework for discussions on mosque establishment in the city. Gale shows how the City Council's stance in relation to the construction of mosques changed over time from an attitude of ambivalence and hostility towards such buildings, to a more recent endorsement of mosques as signifiers of Birmingham as a 'multicultural city' (Gale 2004: 31). My own comparative research on more than thirty years of discussions on mosque establishment in Rotterdam and Marseilles showed that whilst policy makers in Rotterdam framed mosque establishment in the 1980s as about creating a multiplicity of adequate 'neighbourhood provisions', in Marseilles local debate focussed on the need to establish a single Grand Mosque and an Islamic Cultural Centre as symbols of a 'French Islam' (Maussen 2004, 2005).

An important advantage of these kinds of research approaches is that they start from the idea that the goals of the actors and the dimensions of the conflict are not univocal and given. Instead the researcher tries to analyse the various ways in which the establishment of a mosque is made into a meaningful event and a public issue, in order to understand the dynamics of these conflicts and discussions. Of course, this research perspective also creates its own set of meanings. Thus mosque establishment is framed as a societal process that is not merely about the establishment of provisions for religious practice, but as an illustrative incident of wider negotiations on the meanings of cultural diversity.

4.3. Political geography and the spatial dimension: purpose built mosques, urban landscapes and cultural diversity

More recently, a number of studies have analysed public discussion on houses of worship of religious minorities in terms of negotiations over cultural diversity, urban landscapes and the societal position of migrant-origin communities (Eade 1996; Gebhardt 1999; Quadeer and Chaudhry 2000; Césari (ed.) 2001; Gale and Naylor 2002, Naylor and Ryan 2002, Peach 2002; Altília 2003; Germain and Gagnon 2003; Schmitt 2003, Nasser 2003; McLoughlin 2003; Maussen 2004). John Eade analysed discussions on mosques in London as discussions about the ways of belonging of Muslim minorities, arguing that: "The appearance of mosques and community centres has visibly reminded non-Muslims of the expansion of Muslim settlers in certain neighbourhoods. The construction and use of these buildings has been part of a

process of making new demands upon public space, a process that has become embroiled with non-Muslim concerns over a visible and audible Muslim presence” (Eade 1996: 217). Purpose-built mosques (and other material objects that symbolize cultural and religious diversity), are perceived by Muslim and non-Muslim residents as illustrations of the claims of minority communities to participate in the social and physical spaces of urban Europe. At the intersection of changes of the cityscape and discourses on cultural diversity, the establishment of houses of worship are analysed as negotiations over the “ethnic and religious expression of rights to belong in the city” (Gale and Naylor 2002: 389).

Finally, a new literature exists that analyses the meanings attributed to mosque establishment in European cities during colonial times (Morton 1998, Bayoumi 2002, McMaster 2002), sometimes in a comparative perspective with contemporary discussions (Naylor and Ryan 2003, Ansari 2004, Davidson 2004, Maussen 2005). The establishment of mosques and other Islamic symbols in Europe in colonial times also involved negotiations on cultural diversity, Islamic presence and urban space. In a study on the trajectories of meanings of the Fazl Mosque in London since its inauguration in 1926, Naylor and Ryan analyse the changes and transformations in the ‘appreciation of cultures of empire’ in Great Britain in colonial and post-colonial times (Naylor and Ryan 2002). In my own research I analysed colonial and postcolonial discourses on Islam and mosques in the Netherlands and France (Maussen 2005). Between 1922 and 1926, for instance, the mosque of Paris was established by the French State to stand as a symbol of ‘France as a Muslim Great Power’ and as a monument for the colonial soldiers who had died during the First World War. Similar projects for monumental mosques existed in other French cities, such as Marseilles, Lille and Bordeaux in the 1920s and 1930s. However, the establishment of a mosque in the centre of Paris should also be understood in the light of the replica mosques that could be admired at the colonial exhibitions in Paris in 1900 and 1931, or in Marseilles in 1906 and 1922 (see also Simpson-Fletcher 1999). Interestingly the introduction of a symbol of Islam in the centre of Paris was not seen as a threatening event in the 1920s, nor did the establishment of a building that was clearly out of line with its direct built environment cause any protest of neighbouring residents. In fact, the mosque primarily served to objectify Islam in order to display Islamic culture for a non-Muslim audience. Whilst the Parisian bourgeoisie visited the Moorish café and the Turkish bathhouse, the Algerian colonial workers who lived in

the French capital worshipped in grungy prayer rooms at the edge of town (Bayoumi 2002). Besides the monumental mosque in Paris, the French also established prayer rooms that should provide for the religious needs of the colonial subjects sojourning in Europe. For instance, in 1916 the Chamber of Commerce of Marseilles developed elaborate plans to establish a Kabyle village in the city, which included a traditional North African mosque and which would provide for Algerian colonial workers living in Marseilles. Similar ideas about the obligation of European colonial administrators to provide provisions for the religious needs of colonial subjects existed in postcolonial times. Thus the Dutch state financed and established two mosques for postcolonial Moluccan Muslims in the late 1980s (Maussen 2005). The historical perspective not only contributes to our understanding of colonial discourses on cultural diversity, it also sheds a different light on contemporary discussions on mosque establishment and cultural difference in Europe.

5. CONCLUSION

This article has argued that academic researchers have played a key role in providing interpretations and vocabularies to talk and think about Islam and mosques in Western Europe. By focussing on the issue of mosque establishment we were able to analyse important shifts in the scientific interpretations of the meaning of Islam and Islamic practice in Europe. Islam, Islamic religiosity and Islamic practice in Western Europe are subject to important transformations and changes, and those changes are also reflected in academic discourse. The three research perspectives that have been discussed –studies on Islamic religious practice and religiosity, studies on the institutionalisation of Islam and studies on negotiations on cultural diversity - have each produced distinctive sets of meaning that have been both constraining and enabling. Their constraining and enabling features have been relevant both for the development of research questions and scientific knowledge, and for public and policy discourses about mosques and about Islam in Western Europe.

The literature review suggests that objects such as mosque buildings, or processes such social and political conflicts and negotiations about mosque establishment, do not have a self-evident, clear and constant meaning. In specific practices of representation –including academic discourse - the establishment of Islamic houses of worship becomes an issue that deserves to be talked about publicly,

something that involves stakes and interests of various societal actors, and something that calls for collective decision making and interventions by public authorities. The development of vocabularies, concepts and frames to think and talk about mosques are therefore political processes that involve power relations between various actors who try to attribute sets of meanings to objects, interests, or to other actors and their respective interests and societal positions. Over time remarkable shifts occur in these processes of meaning production. These kinds of shifts illustrate that discussions on mosque establishment are also contentious struggles between advocates of varying and sometimes competing representations about the place of Islam and Muslims in Western Europe. Those who have made their profession of studying Islam should thereby constantly try to reflect critically upon their own role in these processes of the production of meaning.

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