THE ESF FORWARD LOOK ON

IMMIGRATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITIES IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPE

Workshop 2:
The recognition and representation of immigrants in Europe
Paris 7-8 March 2003

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Introduction

This meeting was a combined session of the preparatory study groups 'Legality' (chaired by Dr Riva Kastoryano, Paris) and 'Religion' (chaired by Prof. Jørgen S. Nielsen, Birmingham) identified in the original project documents. At the beginning of the meeting it was agreed that the two groups should be merged and work as one, co-chaired workshop. The discussions were organised around a series of presentations using previously submitted papers (most recently published) as starting points:

Tariq Modood (University of Bristol): "Multiculturalism, Muslims and the British state".

Jorgen S. Nielsen (University of Birmingham): "Muslims, the state and the public domain in Britain".

Thijl Sunier (University of Amsterdam): "Islam and political culture: the institutionalization of Islam in Western Europe – the case of the Netherlands compared".

Riva Kastoryano (CERI, Paris): "Transnational participation and citizenship: immigrants in the European Union".

Antoine Pécoud (University of Poitier): "Self-employment and immigrants' incorporation".

Nora Ahlberg (University of Oslo): "Muslim clients in health care and social services in Scandinavia".

Stefano Allievi (Universit of Padova): "Muslim migrations in Italy: religious visibility, cultural and political reactions".

Ekaterina Nikova (University of Sofia): "Economic migration to Greece in the personal and national prospects of Albanians" (report of research project led by Antonina Zheliaskova).

Two other papers were circulated but, unfortunately, their authors had been obliged to cancel their participation at the last moment:

Thomas Faist (University of Bremen): "Transnational spaces and democratic legitimacy".

Marco Mantiniello and Hassan Bousetta (University of Liège): "L'immigration marocaine en Belgique: du travailleur immigré au citoyen transnational".

Discussions

While following the order of the papers, it was agreed that the discussion could generally be structured around three axes:
Topic areas: 1) politics and Muslims; and 2) identities and mental health.
Approaches: 1) Structured by country/region; and 2) structured by theme.
Themes: 1) The constitution of the political; and 2) the constitution of the personal.

In the following, the name of a participant signifies solely that the summary of discussion following was inititiated by that person's paper. The views expressed cannot necessarily be ascribed to any particular individual.

Modood expressed scepticism about social sciences modelling, feeling that quantitative approaches tended to more productive. Against this some other participants suggested that the process of generalisation inherent in social science modelling was indispensible, if done scientifically: without some degree of generalisation, the risk exists of endlessly repeating the same kind of study in different localities and at different times.

The comparison of different countries requires this repetition of local studies for data. Comparison can clarify by posing questions from outside a specific location of study, but it also has led, especially in the political polemics around Muslims in Europe, to the false application of the norms of one location to the situation in another, thus, for example, the criticism of UK practices by French standards. This is, of course, something which EU structures tend to demand.

The appearance of Muslims in the public domain has raised particular questions. Their staking of public claims, especially after the 1989 'affairs' is often regarded as setting them apart, as an indication of their refusal to integrate. But if this process is compared to the process of staking public claims on the basis of gender, class, professions, race or nation, it can easily be argued that Muslims are, in fact, 'integrated' – it seems to be the fact that the claim is based on a religious identity that marks them out. One sign of this 'integration' is that usually the demands are modulated according to an assessment of who the audience is and of what can be realistically achieved. In this context, it was stressed that response to events such as the 1989 'affairs' and to 9/11 are not necessarily

indications of a breakdown but can equally be a part of the process of accommodation: political contestation is both an indicator and a means of integration.

Terms such as integration, assimilation, liberal society, secularism, multiculturalism have been and are easily politicised. This indicates the necessity of clarifying what is meant and being clear also as to whether such terms are being used for purposes of comprehension, for setting norms, or as tools of analysis.

Nielsen asked why it is that in some contexts, religion becomes a politically significant marker, as in relation to Muslims in western Europe and in setting off the various nationalities in former Yugoslavia, but not with regard to Albanians in the Kosovo war or Armenians and Azerbaijanis in their conflict? There are also variations across Europe in terms of the extent to which ethnic minority and race debates are conflated with debates about Islam, depending in part on the extent of religious pluralism among ethnic minorities.

It is important to follow the up-to-date developments, so as not to get locked into analyses determined by out-of-date circumstances – and out-of-date happens very quickly in this field. So what is going on in European Islam in terms of the reconstruction of Islamic ideas and self-understanding in relation to the traditional theological structures and power-centres? In one sense, each national – even local – situation differs, but it is possible to identify 'family resemblances' on the basis of various elements of analysis. At the same time there are factors encouraging commonality, such as European legislation and external events.

While public and media attention tends to focus on 'crises', it was suggested that critical events (including hostility) could be viewed as steps towards integration – 'constructive conflict'. High-profile Muslim participation in the anti-war movement in some countries over the winter and spring of 2002-3 is a fine example. In Britain, it was suggested, the balance of outcomes of the 'Rushdie affair' was positive for Muslims and moved British society a step forward – and in due course the impact of 9/11 could be the same. On the other hand, this constant change imposes particular pressures on the older generation, especially those of immigrant origin, with consequent psychological impact and challenges to the public health systems.

Sunier recorded how the Dutch political framework had changed with the abandonment of 'pillarisation' in favour of a more 'laïque' approach. But the formal, legal status of equality of all religions is contradicted by institutional, financial and cultural inequalities which tend to favour the long-established religions and their institutions. In the Netherlands, as in a number of other countries, immigration and minority policies can contradict the legal principle, and the debate can shift from one focussed on ethnicity to one focused on Islam. There often comes a point at which related issues in practice become questions of civil rights with dimensions which the traditional cultural minority have not anticipated.

Again the question of being up-to-date was emphasised. It is clear in a number of countries that the local manifestations of movements which have their origins in the Muslim world have evolved and are evolving in response to local needs. It cannot be taken for granted that local groups emanating from, for example, the Turkish Milli Görüs, the Pakistani Jama`at-i-Islami, or the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood are simply clones of the parent movement. In particular, there is evidence of an increasingly confident self-criticism by a number of such groups in the European environment. In adapting to their changed circumstances, such groups are often using textual and traditional resources which had previously been dormant or represented minority views in the mainstream intellectual tradition. So an analysis of trends and possibilities in the European context should take account also of the potentialities implicit in the tradition.

In the field of political participation an interesting area of discussion is the circumstances which encourage the use of 'Muslim' as a public identifying label. This is seen as contrasting with circumstances in which an ethnic label may be chosen or the refusal to accept any label other than that of the political party. An aspect of this is the question of who is doing the labelling? Is a 'Muslim' member of parliament being labelled 'Muslim' by other Muslims, the media or by himself or his party – and why?

Kastoryano asked how immigrant community identity and thence solidarity is first formed and then inserted into the national political space. Is it solely a function of the origins and networks of the community itself or is it a function of the structures and incentives (including financial) offered by the receiving state and its preconceptions? The next step is then for diverse groups to come together and 're-centre' themselves (in an attempt to gain some autonomy from the patronage of the earlier stage?) – what decides the nature of such a new 'centre', e.g. why has Islam become such an attractive option in such a process?

The discussion then focussed on relations between the national and the transnational and asked questions about the mechanisms by which the two dimensions link up. Thus, for example, it was suggested that minorities within minorities can find local political weight and profile by linking up with allies transnationally, as in the growth of Sylheti identity between Britain and Bangladesh.

This process lends a growing significance to the international public space in which, in connection with Islam especially, the connecting role of the English language needs to be investigated much more closely.

[Riva: we need here to have a paragraph summarising the ongoing discussion which took place between you and Tariq Modood.]

Pécoud, starting from research in among Turks in Berlin considered the pros and cons of ethnically specific economic activity in terms of integration. There is again the danger of generalisation which has been identified in earlier discussion. On the whole entrepreneurship has risen in status since the early phases, but it is also evident that the more successful businesses tend to become 'de-ethnicised' as their employees and

markets are found within society as a whole. At the same time there is a significant sector which remains small and local with a mixed record of success or failure, and whole ongoing sustainability can be threatened by the lack of interest of the next generation – cf. 'Indian' restaurants in Britain who are finding it difficult to recruit staff among the younger generation.

Some researchers have suggested that self-employment in ethnic business is a trap which closes off other opportunities and therefore encourages 'ghettoisation', while others suggest that ethnic specificity is not an obstacle to integration. In fact, in some countries the formal requirements for entering a particular trade are such that actors need to become 'hybrid' to be able to function both in the formal public space and within the ethnic business niche selected. The whole field needs a much more differentiated approach and much less generalisation – and also more reluctance to make an uncritical equation between a particular ethnic group and Muslim as labels.

Ahlberg took as her theme "Imagining self and other: migrants and scholars at Europe's multicultural and interdisciplinary crossroads". Projects need to be much more participatory involving minority and wider community groups and should include training of younger researchers and non-specialist users. Media also should be involved at the core to ensure competent and reliable dissemination. With regard specifically to Islam, we should be looking not only at organised, 'official' Islam but also the unorganised and demotic expressions.

To achieve this, there are some important questions which need to be faced. Are minorities a 'problem' or a resource? Do we need to mobilise explanations with reference to race, culture or religion or to a mixture of all of these? How to identify, interrelate and assess local, national and transnational affiliations, whether real or perceived (and then perceived by whom?)? While there is a need for a broadened scope of the research there is also simultaneously a need for methodological refinement, which must include the continued relevance of history, something which neither the social nor the political sciences are especially good at.

This has direct implications for public services. Especially in health and education there are traditional 'pathways' through the systems, which may not be appropriate to individuals or communities who have not shared in the cultural and institutional history lying behind the existing pathways. It is especially in areas of research with possible impacts in these fields where participation and empowerment of the affected communities become important.

Allievi picked up on the issue of perceptions. While they might contrast with realities, in due course they create new realities. So while historically Islam has never been external to Europe, it is perceived as external – the 'other' – and in a new process of internalisation within Europe it becomes identified with immigration and conflict. This has particularly manifested itself in recent years (9/11 is an icon but is far from being the only trigger event) in the 'Muslimisation' of public debates. So the political far-right targets Islam in debates and campaigns which, in reality, have much more to do with

uncertainties about traditional self-perceptions and anxieties linked to rapid economic change and economic globalisation.

Again it is emphasised that conflict is not necessarily pathological. Conflict is not the problem, but how one manages conflict is. In a metaphor drawn from the geology of tectonic plates, the question is whether tensions can be released in a series of minor tremors leading to a steady progression or whether they are suppressed and thus forced to build up to a major destructive quake.

Part of this process is the internal pluralism with which migration has confronted inherited forms of Muslim cultural expression. The internal debates which link different generations and different ethno-cultural circles with the debates of the wider Muslim world create complicated interactions and feed-backs with each other and with the wider non-Muslim environment. Here is an area which needs a more complex mobilisation of research techniques from oral history, anthropology, linguistic and literary analysis as well as more traditional social science, theology and text study.

Nikova indicated that Eastern Europe, with its obviously different recent and long-term history, does provide a different perspective on the issues which have been discussed, but at the same time these issues are not alien. Migration is a major element, although it is for the time being dominated by emigration partly of marginalized social groups and partly a brain drain of the elites. But immigration is also growing, especially in those countries which are anticipating admission to the EU within the foreseeable future. However, religion plays a markedly subordinate role in comparison with socio-economic factors. A major source of pressure for changes in the institutional and legal environment in this regard is the complex of rules and principles being imported to meet the standards of the Council of Europe, the OSCE and, above all, the *acquis* of the EU.

The region, the Balkans especially, raises questions about the predisposition of historically plural communities to be more open towards ethnic difference. Ideals of a Bulgarian 'ethnic model' contrast with the experiences of Bosnia. Here the role of history as mythology is likely to be important. So one can contrast Italian historical perceptions of relations with Arabs/Muslims as one of confrontation with a much more ambivalent Spanish perception where confrontation is in contest with inclusion, ref. the Andalusian tourist industry.

Conclusion: Areas of further research

Out of their discussions, the workshop participants identified a number of areas for further research. These include not only areas which, in the past, have attracted less attention than they ought to have but also areas which we have identified as being of significance in understanding issues and trends which are currently developing and will, we believe, be of growing importance over the coming decade.

The areas fall into eight general categories:

1. <u>The relationship of ethnicity and religion</u>

As communities and their environments change and adapt to each other with the passage of time and generations, how will the perceptions of ethnic belonging be affected and what is the impact of such changes likely to be, both on the individuals and communities themselves and on their wider social, political and cultural environments? What are the reference points of such ethnic de- and reconstruction likely to be and where are their resources, real and imagined, likely to be found – and how will they be interpreted and mobilised?

What role is played by religion, both as ideational content and as institution and organisation, in such re-stating or mobility of ethnicity? What are the factors which influence whether an ethnic or a religious identity is preferred?

What function is played in this process by economic, cultural and educational factors?

2. <u>Perceptions of 'private' and 'public' space and the borders between them</u>

How are different countries dealing with changes in private expectations of the public space? What are the sources of current challenges to hitherto accepted boundaries between the two, and how is the response expressed in public debate, political processes, legal development, religious and cultural expression, and organisational developments?

When, where and why does an ethnic or religious label become a binding factor in political participation, and how does this impact on the nature of the public space and the political process?

3. <u>Power and management of change</u>

What constitutes a conflict in this field, what are the conditions for such a conflict, and how is a conflict triggered? Why does a common 'triggering event' (e.g. Rushdie affair, 11 September, 2nd Iraq war) have substantially different responses in different countries? Can the outcomes of such conflicts be constructive, and how might they be managed to become constructive?

How is access to political, economic and cultural power achieved, controlled and mediated?

How do individuals or organisations become key players in these processes, and how do they use their positions? What is the relationship between integration and political, economic and cultural participation?

4. <u>The construction of Islam in Europe</u>

How are Muslims mobilising Islamic resources and discourses in the European environment? Who are the players, individuals and movements, in this process? How does the cultural pluralism of Muslim communities impact on the development of Islamic thought and expression? What is the function and impact of the growing role of English as a main international means of communication among Muslims?

How are Muslim organisations changing in terms of support, structures, purposes, leadership? What are their perceptions of their role in relation to their communities and to their environment? Who are the Muslim communities in relation to the totality of people of Muslim 'ethno-cultural' background?

How are Islam and Muslims perceived by the wider society and what factors contribute to reinforcing or changing perceptions? What kind of place do the power structures in the public space see them filling? How and why do such perceptions change, and what impact do they have on the political and cultural processes?

How is Muslim participation in the public space expressed locally, nationally and Europe-wide? How is this related to Europe's historical experiences of minorities (e.g. Jews in Germany, Catholics in England or Protestants in France?)?

5. Economic participation

What are the different experiences of economic participation in the various European countries? How are variations in economic integration accounted for among the various countries and among various groups within the ethnic and religious communities (differences related to e.g. ethnicity, gender, age, education, class).

What role do ethnic and religious communities and/or identities play in economic participation, in access to and limitations within employment and commerce?

In what ways does entrepreneurial or professional success advance integration or reinforce separation?

6. Individual, local, national and transnational

How do individuals and families deal with traumas of migration, settlement and social exclusion? What networks of perceptions and people are referred to in such response?

What are the interests and relationships which link an individual to a social collective in an ethnic minority context, and how does the individual respond to a failure to so link?

What are the mechanisms and resources exploited to link the local, national and transnational into networks with shared self-perceptions? How do such networks contest

territorially and other traditionally defined (e.g. language, extended kin/clan/tribe) communities?

7. <u>Legal issues</u>

How have the courts responded to the pluralism of culture and religion and to minority concerns? In what ways do courts take account of references beyond those of the domestic tradition?

How have legal tradition and legislation influenced debate and practice, and how have they themselves changed in response? What is the relationship between Shari'a and European laws and what legal and practical implications are there?

What is the nature of minority participation in the legal system, as professionals or as clients?

8. <u>Methods and ethics of research</u>

What is the responsibility of the researcher in the public debate and in the formation of policy?

To what extent and in what ways are the individuals and communities being researched partners in the research, and how far is the researcher accountable to them?

What is the role of the researcher in mediating the interests of the funder and those of the communities being researched?