

ISLAM DIVERSITY & CONTEXT



THE LOKAHI FOUNDATION

Our work is to progress a more diverse, harmonious society.

We create and deliver effective, practical projects which tackle needs and tensions in our communities. Our action springs from original academic research and thinking on the challenges of faith and culture.

From government agencies through to community groups, our engagement is built on core values of integrity, independence and intellectual rigour.

Lokahi (loh-kah-hee) is a Hawaiian word which embodies our vision. It means harmony, unity and balance which arises from diversity and even opposition.

lokahi.org.uk

Authors and Researchers

Gwen Griffith-Dickson
Dilwar Hussain
Peter Mandaville
Andrew Dickson
Soraya Farrag
Mehmuda Mian
Naved Siddiqi
Jonathan Smith

Mahalo

We received tremendous support from many people on this journey. We extend our warm 'mahalo' and 'aloha' to our new and old friends from many countries. We hope you will remain part of the Lokahi family for many years to come.



Funded by
the European Union

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of The Lokahi Foundation and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

CONTENTS

02 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PART I

05 EXPLORING ISLAM IN CONTEXT

06 INTRODUCTION

05 A CONTEXTUAL, EUROPEAN, ISLAM?

12 RESEARCH METHODS

PART II

16 VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

18 PRACTISING MUSLIM FAITH

20 'IT'S ABOUT WHO *ARE* YOU'

22 'IMAM YOUTUBE'

26 THIS IS NOT YOUR PARENTS' ISLAM

28 ALIENATION AND HOSTILITY: UNCORKING THE BOTTLE

32 'EUROPEAN ISLAM' AND EUROPEAN MUSLIMS

38 FAST RIVERS NEED GOOD SWIMMERS

CASE STUDIES

10 BOSNIA

14 LEBANON

19 SOUTH AFRICA

24 UNITED STATES

31 SOFIA

36 TUNISIA

40 INDONESIA

45 MOROCCO

50 EDUCATION ROUNDTABLE

PART III

42 ISLAM IN A DIVERSE CONTEXT

43 ISLAM: A WAY OF LIFE OR A LIFESTYLE?

46 CONTEXTUALISATION AS RESILIENCE

51 EDUCATION AND EXCHANGE: WAYS FORWARD

53 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

REFERENCES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lokahi Foundation has studied contemporary dynamics within Islam in diverse societies, to understand social divisions, and enhance the way that citizens live together in harmony.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The past two decades have seen multiple attempts by Muslim scholars and intellectuals in Europe to articulate a vision of Islam as shaped by the specific circumstances and experiences in mostly secularised European societies, and this is paralleled by intellectual efforts in certain Muslim-majority countries with high levels of social diversity. At a time when many communities are facing rising hostility and polarisation, this is a useful frame in which to consider the question of religion and social inclusion in diverse societies more broadly, and enhance the capacity of European societies to engage with their diverse past, present, and future.

To better understand these dynamics, the Lokahi Foundation conducted research in a wide range of countries within the European Union, as well as several settings in other world regions. Despite the wide geographic range, there was striking similarity in the experience of Muslims across all the European countries studied; and many of the same themes were echoed in seven countries outside Europe.

At the forefront for the younger generations in particular are pragmatic issues of how to live as a Muslim in a local context, under the impact of modernity and social polarisation. Key themes were religious practice, identity, gender inequality, gaps in communication and world-view between generations and with religious leaders, issues of exclusion, discrimination, hostility, and even violence.

For a sustainable, inclusive, religiously diverse society, what is needed is not an attempt by the state to define Islam, but more attention to the 'context' while supporting those that may feel vulnerable at these polarised times. Government bodies should not try to engineer a 'European Islam' – but rather, work towards making Europe a place Muslims can comfortably integrate their faith and national identities. That is the surest way of allowing a more organic European expression of Islam to emerge in the future.

Meanwhile, other religious and ethnic groups are also currently suffering from hostility towards minorities.¹ To foster inclusion quickly, it is more effective to tackle the wider climate of exclusion that affect many, and allow members of Muslim communities to engage proactively with the questions of identity in a more positive atmosphere.

In this, there is also an important role for introspection within communities, to think about their approach to society, to find shared ground for full participation in society and for the promotion of an agenda of equality and inclusion. For this, we also need safe spaces in which people can be honest about their fears and anxieties for partnerships to become sustainable.

Barriers to equal participation in society from everyday religious practices do not only affect the presence of Muslim citizens in the public space; it affects their fundamental identity. It impacts on economic participation but also damages a deeper sense of belonging. Removing practical obstacles to the exercise of religious rights has a far-reaching positive effect on inclusive citizenship for all citizens, and thereby the resilience of all communities is reinforced.

Active intervention is required to build inclusive communities. This is not the job of the state alone, and civil society has a key role to play here. Day-to-day resentment cannot be removed solely by the creation of policy, but through the active engagement of civil society. Programmes to bring groups together, learn and understand about each other, and forge alliances to work towards the common good have been proven to be effective.

Education has a critical role to play, but there are barriers and gaps between higher educational institutions and religious foundations. Concerns exist about training for religious leaders, but these often ignore religious and spiritual education for other adults.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Finally, when religious education receives attention, it focuses on children but neglects the vital role of continuing education for adults. Yet education and exchange at all these levels are vital to support inclusive approaches to religion and society.

Key actions to support these aims include:

(1) Empower and connect those working on these issues; to enable further training, sharing of ideas and best practice, and the creation of new projects and initiatives. This can address, first, the role religions can play in social inclusion and diversity; second, it can be used to address wider ‘wicked problems’ of society that might not necessarily be religious ones

(2) Support the establishment of a Europe wide network of local civil society actors who are working to address local problems of intergroup hatred, and to galvanise informal work to foster inclusive communities

(3) Create a forum for exchange for those involved in religious education and research, to create a communication flow between academics, those involved in training for religious leadership, and those involved in wider formation of adult believers. This should include humanists and other world-views

(4) Establish a working group to consider how to remove barriers to participation and identity that needlessly affect religious minorities, in ways appropriate to the national culture, and ensure that the legal and policy framework adequately protects religious as well as ethnic minorities from exclusion, discrimination, or persecution.

Religious actors already collaborate for shared goals in social change. Where the European Union is uniquely placed to add value is to upscale this phenomenon at the international level; empowering those striving to tackle ‘wicked problems’ in society to connect, learn from each other, and accelerate success towards important goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals.



Lokahi Global Exchange participant in London

PART I

EXPLORING ISLAM IN CONTEXT



PART I: EXPLORING ISLAM IN CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

From late 2017 to early 2019, the Lokahi Foundation undertook a project to better understand the way in which social divisions are tackled in a range of diverse societies, to enhance the way that citizens live together.

The idea of ‘living well together’ is a broad notion and in order to look at this in more concrete terms the project team decided to start their work by considering the dynamics within European Islam.

European Islam forms a useful frame through which to contemplate the core issues; and thereafter to inform a model for enhancing the capacity of European societies to engage constructively with their diverse past, present, and future. The past two decades have seen multiple attempts by Muslim scholars and intellectuals in Europe to articulate a vision of Islam shaped by the specific circumstances and experiences of life in mostly secularised European societies.

Such projects have thus far not been able to generate the desired level of impact within European Muslim communities for a variety of reasons. Some Muslim communities reject such efforts because they are perceived as entailing the ‘Westernisation’ of Islam.

In other cases the approach adopted is overly intellectual and abstract, all but ensuring that the resulting ideas circulate only in narrow elite circles and provide little in the way of concrete solutions to the daily life problems faced by Europe’s Muslim population at the community level. Those few figures that have enjoyed some success in building a following have tended to attract accusations of communalism—that is, a perception among many in broader society that their work focuses more on what makes them different from other Europeans.

In order to look at contemporary dynamics within Islam in diverse societies, the research activities focused on a number of countries and explored what is needed to successfully develop an understanding of Islam that grows organically from the European Muslim experience; one that speaks to the specific challenges faced by Muslim communities in European societies, while also maintaining a strong connection to Islamic tradition and the wider Muslim world internationally.



Lokahi Global Exchange participant in London



Grand Mufti of Bulgaria, Dr. Mustafa Haji, at the Sofia Symposium.

A CONTEXTUAL, EUROPEAN, ISLAM?

Though the presence of Muslims is not new to the European landscape, the current debates around Islam quite often seem to revolve around the migratory phenomenon of Muslim communities and the dynamics of recent settlement. If one surveys the breadth of geographical areas that Islam has expanded to, starting from the city of Mecca, it is clear to see that the understanding and practice of Islam is varied. From West Africa to Indonesia a wide diversity of expressions, schools of thought, cultures, each with their very specific political and social emphases have emerged. It is obvious to most that when looking at expressions of Islam in India or China, for example, that the two share important similarities and yet look and feel very different. It is therefore no accident that we often hear the question, what does a European Islam look like?

Can we even legitimately talk of different ‘Islams’? That is certainly a theme that respondents in this project have often articulated strong views of (in both directions). At one level, Islam is a (singular) religion followed by just over a billion people and so it is the same tradition everywhere. Yet that belies the complexity that must enter into any detailed analysis of the socio-political realities of Muslim life. Aziz al-Azmeh complexifies the way in which modernity impacts religious traditions, by saying there are multiple ‘modernities.’²² Take for example the very simple difference in the way religion is expressed in public life between Europe and America, let alone the different ways in which modernity has impacted on the near and far east. If one significant current underlying the adaptation of Islam (and indeed all religions) to our time is the influence of ‘modernity’, then multiple modernities must lead to multiple ‘Islams’. Even historically, whether one looks at Islam through the lens of sociology of religion, religious studies or theology, one cannot deny the tremendous diversity in, for example, the Andalusian, Sokoto, Ottoman, Safavid or Moghul practices of Islam.

While Muslim communities have been settling in the European landscape, the context itself has been changing. We are therefore dealing with a very complex dynamic of influences – *inter alia*, migration, settlement, social and economic upheaval post-WWII, as well as globalising influences. In more recent years we have seen the rise of polarisation across Europe that has challenged our notion of how much migration European society could and should sustain. Some of this pointing to Muslims (as well as others) as highly visible manifestations of the ‘Other’, often linked to a perception of being a source of threat (for example, terrorism or social/cultural/political challenge). Clearly the navigation of such a terrain is not easy and if we consider that migrant communities to Europe have often been from the poorest strata of their countries of origin, with low levels of social and educational capital, the enormity of the task begins to dawn upon us.



Participant at the Sofia Symposium.

PART I:

EXPLORING ISLAM IN CONTEXT

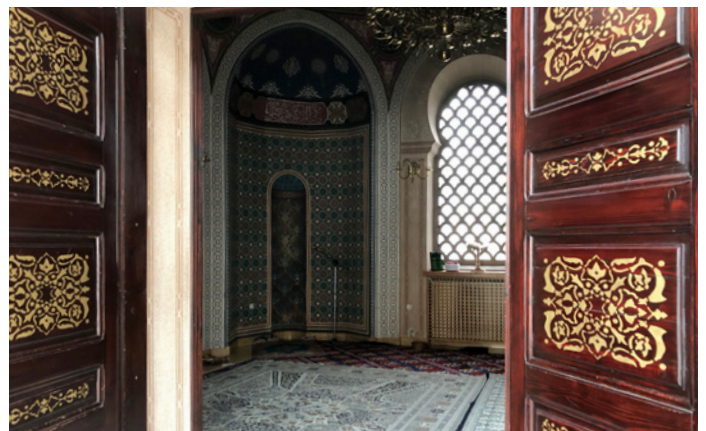
To add to the complexities, the rise of identity politics within Muslim communities, linked to or exacerbated by the perception of being ‘targeted’ by counter terrorism policies or dealing with anti-Muslim sentiment, appears to have led to a sense of victimhood and alienation for some, with an emerging sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’, creating its own polarising dynamic that feeds into the wider social polarisation. In the midst of this another important phenomenon has been the impact of foreign discourses and influence. Some countries have either viewed pockets of the Muslim presence in Europe as their ‘diaspora’ or as potentials for influence and have thus engaged in a ‘hearts and minds’ campaign to influence the way in which Islam settles in Europe by providing educational, financial and human resources. Inevitably this takes the development of Islam in Europe towards a more universalist and trans-continental direction. Such diverse influences have thus pushed and pulled on Muslim communities and it is in such a complex interplay of influence that our research takes place.

Perhaps rightly so, pointed questions are often asked of people who use the language of ‘contextualising Islam’. Is this an attempt to simply adapt Islam to western norms (implying an abandonment of Muslim traditions)? Is it an attempt to domesticate Islam (and rid it of any critique of power structures)? Does it follow a governmental agenda or is it rooted in the desire of Muslims to be authentically Muslim, while being comfortably European?

ALL THEOLOGY IS CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY

We explored (and encountered) precisely these sorts of questions within our fieldwork. Related to this, one of the areas our research implicitly sought to shed light on was how Islam has historically been contextualised in other locations, such as Bosnia and South Africa. Can European Muslims and society learn anything from such examples where Islam has been present for over 500 and 300 years respectively? What about locations where Islam has had serious encounters with more pluralistic forms of thinking and Muslims have had to manage diverse societies, such as Indonesia, Morocco, Tunisia and Lebanon?

A contextual approach to religion, pioneered in Christian theology by thinkers such as Stephen Bevans, emphasises the importance (and even primacy) of the contexts in which people live as a fundamental aspect of how the *texts* and teachings of the religion are read and approached.³ For Bevans all theology is contextual theology, as there is no such thing as an abstract approach to religion. This can provide important insights for Muslims’ emerging thoughts of how they interpret Islam in ways that are more resonant with the cultural landscape of Europe.



Mosque, Faculty of Islamic Studies, University of Sarajevo.

PART I: EXPLORING ISLAM IN CONTEXT

This is not new, as mentioned above and for some Muslim intellectuals this is an imperative – in order to be able to set down roots and make Europe their home. Imam Shafi (d. 820) the founder of one of the main Sunni schools of law adapted his own teachings when he migrated from central Arabia to Egypt. The schools of law have always considered ‘urf (custom) to be an important consideration in deriving answers for a given local question.

The Prophet Muhammad himself allowed slightly different practices in Madinah from the customs developed in Mecca and when people of that first generation of Muslims migrated to Ethiopia and beyond, they likewise adapted their practice, not least to keep up with changes in environmental factors such as weather, timings of the day or night, or availability of certain foods. It is no accident that the Shafi school (which has quite an embracing approach to consuming ‘anything that is caught from the sea’) is popular in coastal areas, whereas the Hanafi school (which frowns upon the consumption of shellfish) is to be found more inland.

Islam has always been shaped by its context. And we are all individually shaped by our context. The process of reading a tradition afresh will thus always mean taking something of ourselves to that process of reading and seeing it through the lens of our context. Yes, Muslims believe in the same religion of Islam – but the core notions that they believe in, ideas such as ‘justice’, ‘peace’, ‘equality’, and even notions such as ‘heaven’ and ‘hell’, will mean subtly different things to Muslims living in different parts of the world (and at different times).

Themes such as gender equality, individual rights, human rights, democracy and belonging have become ‘totemic’ issues in the journey of contextualising Islam in Europe. Discussions around such issues are now commonplace. For example, the notion of contextualising Islam for a British environment was advanced by two reports from Cambridge University developed and endorsed by over 20 prominent Muslim scholars and activists.⁴ The reports represent an important step, coming amidst the backdrop of a wider series of debates around how Muslims are challenged by and respond to the impact of modernity.

**MUSLIMS BELIEVE
IN THE SAME ISLAM –
BUT THE CORE NOTIONS
MEAN SUBTLY DIFFERENT
THINGS TO MUSLIMS
IN DIFFERENT PARTS
OF THE WORLD.**



Lokahi Global Exchange participant in London

The Muslim presence in Bosnia dates back some centuries to Ottoman times. The legacy of this spread from Constantinople as well as the growth of indigenous institutions has left behind a 'normative code' of Islam adopted from the Ottomans: a Sunni (religious), Hanafi (school of law), Maturidi (theology/creed) identity.

An important element of Bosnian Muslim heritage relates to its turbulent political context – linked to the Ottoman Empire, but seen to be in the borderlands, later administered by the Austro-Hungarian Empire followed by the Communist era and then ethno-religious conflict.

It is an interesting case of one distinct pathway through which Islam has developed in a broadly European landscape: a very distinct form of balance between ethnic, national and religious identity (Bosniak, Bosnian, Muslim). One person we interviewed emphasised that 'we need to understand that Muslims are part of the European story', while another suggested that 'being cut off from the Muslim world post WW1 forced us to think independently'.

EUROPEAN ISLAM / BOSNIAN ISLAM

Those we interviewed were keen to assert the value they saw in the Bosnian Islamic experience, but also emphasised that this could not be simply transferred to other locations, particularly to Western European locations. One subject spoke of how there is no single 'European Islam', but there needs to be different specific local Islams in Germany, France, Britain, etc.

Bosnian law recognises the 'Islamic Community' (a specific religious organisation), alongside other groups such as Catholics, Orthodox Christians and Jews. This gives the institution of the 'Islamic Community' an important role in the life of religious adherents. Membership of the Islamic Community is based on a subscription system going right down to family level and can vary, ranging from very high levels in rural areas, to quite low levels in more urban locations.

Cultural pressures about how one should live are not as strong as in some other Muslim contexts and overall there appears to be a relaxed approach to personal religious practice. As one subject mentioned, 'Bosnian society allows for religion being personal. We don't ask: have you prayed, are you fasting, even when sitting in a café in Ramadan'. But the Islamic Community, being the sole provider of essential services such as Islamic burials, can exert influence and reach.

Subjects were keen to assert that historical relations between different religious groups in the region, and in the former Yugoslavia, were relatively positive and saw the need to build harmony between communities in order to bridge the conflict and tensions of recent years. In fact, they mostly saw this as political tensions, created by nationalist sentiment, rather than a phenomenon that was primarily religious in nature. One of the interviewees talked of how it was common for people to share in major religious celebrations and to respect each other's rituals and places of worship.

Despite the ambivalent feelings towards institutionalised religion, most emphasised the need for institutions that could provide services, maintain ritual religious life and yet remain independent of government. The importance of the secular state, ensuring the rule of law and neutrality of the state, was emphasised.

CASE STUDY

BOSNIA

The subjects were generally sceptical of the influence of Islamic thought from outside of the region, particularly Wahhabism or Salafism. One stated, ‘we were oblivious to “Wahabbism” after 45 years of communism.’

Another felt that the educational ethos was originally more reformist in nature and now there was a greater emphasis on tradition, noting that ‘much of this is our failure to challenge ideologies such as Wahabbism’. One subject mentioned that he is ‘worried by attempts to “purify” Islam, because that always leads to problems’. He saw the growth of small groups of Salafi preachers with some concern. However, these influences were generally seen as minority trends that would struggle to gain mainstream support in Bosnia.

One institution of particular interest was the Faculty of Islamic Studies (FIS) in Sarajevo. Its vision is to educate imams and religious leaders to operate in Bosnia as well as to serve Bosnians in the diaspora (in Western European countries for example). There are approximately 600 students (roughly half female and half male) and there is some emphasis on learning about the contemporary challenges that face Bosnian Muslim communities, as well as preparing leaders to work in a multi-religious environment.

A significant cohort of mosque attendees are female and, according to one interviewee, women are in the majority among mosque goers due to ‘a hangover from Communist times where men would often not show a public attachment to religion’. However, it was also acknowledged that there is a strongly patriarchal culture at work, and women find it difficult to reach positions of leadership within the religious sector. One subject commented, ‘We have no problem training women at all levels, even imams. But the practical side of employment has not been cracked. Women can be a mufti and even imam for female congregations. And definitely be on boards. But very few mosque trustees are women.’

Major points of learning, for future exploration: the experience of indigenous or autochthonous Islam in Europe; the advantages and disadvantages of centralised institutional religious authority; responses to religious influences from outside the region.



Ghazi Husrev-Beg Mosque, Sarajevo.

PART I: EXPLORING ISLAM IN CONTEXT

RESEARCH METHODS

Lokahi research staff conducted interviews, site visits, focus groups, and workshops across twelve European and seven non-European countries (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Spain, United Kingdom; Bosnia and Herzegovina, Indonesia, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, South Africa, United States). Desk-based research was also used to document the history of previous contextualisation efforts, and to produce internal briefings on current social issues regarding Muslims' lived experience in Europe.

Fifteen focus groups were comprised of Muslim religious leaders and grassroots community members, representing a diverse range of ethnic, sectarian, and social class backgrounds, and with a focus on generational and gender differences integrated throughout; these focus groups explored the experience of Muslims living out their faith in Europe, including the challenges they face and their understanding of religion as well as their perceptions of contextualised or European Islam. Five further focus groups involved members of other faiths or none – from a similarly diverse range of backgrounds – discussing their attitudes towards Islam and Muslims in Europe, and views on the current state of social cohesion in Europe between diverse religious, ethnic, class, and other social groupings.

Interviews were conducted during site visits to institutions of Islamic research and higher education, international interfaith exchange activity, and non-governmental organisations embracing or interacting with religion in tackling social problems. The research team analysed how academic institutions incorporate themes of diversity and coexistence into their teaching and public outreach; as well as their participation in international cooperation and capacity for the same.

On visits to non-governmental organisations, Lokahi researchers analysed the ways in which they engage with religion – as a leadership structure, social force, or source of inspiration and guidance for their work – and the lessons to be drawn from their attempts to build strong relationships between diverse groups.



Spirited discussion at the Sofia Symposium.



Participants from four countries around a table at the Sofia Symposium.

PART I: EXPLORING ISLAM IN CONTEXT

In addition, the Lokahi Foundation convened three workshops to further explore the themes and issues arising from this research, addressing local and regional foci. One workshop explored religious education and formation in different European contexts, convened in London and involving senior figures from various academic institutions throughout Europe. A second workshop in Sofia discussed intercommunal tension in Central and Eastern Europe and the role of religious actors and communities in counteracting hate crimes and building interfaith relationships; it involved several research specialists on this topic, members from international organisations, and local community members passionate about developing local capacity within civil society to support positive community relations.

At a midpoint in the work, we identified a key strategy for furthering the aim of fostering social inclusion with respect to religion and belief. A carefully-designed international exchange between people working on similar problems would enable a step change and transform the landscape. After this, two pilot events were designed to test the concept in practice, and a third workshop focused on models of international exchange and practical dimensions of implementing exchange activities.



Debate at the Education Roundtable.



Making a point at the Education Roundtable.

CASE STUDY

LEBANON

Lokahi's research in Lebanon focused on the work of several NGOs whose work explicitly engages issues of religion and social inclusion. They differ in terms of their approaches, the issues and problems that constitute the focus of their activities, and the scale of their work (local vs. national vs. international). All represent examples of organisations doing work that embodies the objectives, themes, and ethos of the EU's proposed platform on religion and social inclusion.

ADYAN

Adyan focuses on pluralism, inclusive citizenship, and spiritual solidarity, working at both the local and international level. Within Lebanon, it runs youth camps and educational programmes across faith groups, and has a network of volunteers it calls ambassadors. Interesting projects at Adyan include research into an Islamic Theology of Disability, and a recently-developed toolkit for Christian and Muslim religious education on inclusive citizenship alongside promoting interfaith collaboration on this topic.

DIALOGUE FOR LIFE AND RECONCILIATION

Dialogue for Life and Reconciliation (DLR) is a local organisation run entirely by volunteers, which carries out projects on interreligious dialogue. Whilst DLR have established several initiatives, such as a two-week summer 'inter-religious academy' for young students, one of the most noteworthy is a sustainable network for interreligious leaders in northern Lebanon. This centres on Tripoli, a city that has suffered from religious and sectarian conflict, and where grassroots religious leaders had no contact with each other before this network, which now meets regularly.

Religious leaders have built up strong personal ties of friendship and are able to not only discuss matters of social concern, but draw on each other for advice and expertise when delivering interreligious education. Significantly, the Orthodox Patriarch, the Mufti of Tripoli and the North, and Maronite Bishop in Tripoli have all supported this project, allowing the network to overcome any resistance from social media or local spoilers.



Members of the DLR in Tripoli hosting a visit from the Lokahi Global Exchange.

CASE STUDY

LEBANON

NABA'A

Naba'a works with Palestinian and Lebanese communities, in particular young people within refugee camps. Naba'a prioritises equal participation, equal treatment and equal rights for all social groups, and works to encourage children and young people to live together in harmony regardless of their religion and nationality. Naba'a runs programmes for young people aged 14-21, including vocational training for school leavers and at-risk youth (barbers, beauticians, and other trades, given the legal limitations regarding careers for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon). Some older young people (above 21) also work as volunteers with Naba'a to gain experience. They also offer workshops on sexual health, gender-based violence and other topics relevant to young people; and have engaged in a major project to rebuild houses in the largest Palestinian refugee camp that have been destroyed by fighting.

IMAM SADR FOUNDATION

The Imam Sadr Foundation, founded by Imam Musa al-Sadr in the 1960s, bases its work on a philosophical foundation that stresses the shared values between all religions and the fundamental dignity and value of all human beings, the importance of dialogue for allowing people to understand each other without proselytising, and the importance of mutual respect. Essential to the Sadr Foundation's work is gender equality and the empowerment of women, whether that is expressed through education, economic participation, or indeed environmental projects. Holding Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Sadr Foundation expresses a commitment to social justice and provides a range of social services including education and healthcare.

Major points of learning, for future exploration: creating religious dialogue on the ground in situations of serious conflict; engaging religious leaders and winning support from high-level religious authorities; putting the empowerment of women as an enabling priority in an Islamic institution.



Young Palestinian refugees in the 'Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp welcome the Lokahi research team.

PART II

VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE



PART II:

VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

Despite the wide geographic range, there was striking similarity in the experience of Muslims across all the European countries studied.

At the forefront for the younger generations in particular are pragmatic issues of how to live as a Muslim in a European context, hence in a Muslim minority context.

For most, these focus on five areas, with gender cutting across all of them:

- (1) difficulties in religious practice where the local way of life is not conducive to it;
- (2) questions of identity and how this is expressed, not just the layering of identity markers or intersectionality, but also with respect to their visibility as Muslims (particularly for women);
- (3) communication and cultural gaps between Muslim Europeans and their religious leadership and scholars,
- (4) generation gaps, and
- (5) experiences of exclusion, marginalisation, discrimination, alienation.

PART II:

VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

PRACTICING MUSLIM FAITH

Difficulties in practicing their faith were frequently cited by focus group participants: the lack of provision for prayer five times a day in workplaces and places of study; dietary requirements; issues of religious dress; or more complex life issues such as marriage and divorce, inheritance, or mortgages and banking. These were the questions that both everyday believers and imams mentioned as being the subjects on which Muslims most often sought guidance from authority figures. Issues of security, terrorism, extremism, and how they were perceived was mentioned as a backdrop to much of their daily life but very few identified it as a major concern or even a focal point.

The biggest problem is praying. We cannot pray during the day. Either we go home at lunch time to pray, or we have to wait until night time.

More and more young men and women find it very difficult to find a partner. My generation did not know this problem. Our society evolved. Social relationships have changed. We are in a more individualistic society where all the traditional social links have disappeared.

Another problem is that of unemployment. We have many young men and women who are highly educated and who cannot find work. Especially women. What is the reason? A lot of the time, it's the headscarf.

A lot of Muslims want an education and want to buy real estate or want to invest in their businesses. So they ask how they can we get real estate and in compliance with Islamic rules? So that's the kind of practical advice that they are seeking.

Terrorism and extremism were not at the forefront of concerns of our focus group participants, despite the undeniable impact of this issue on Muslim communities. When they volunteered their views, respondents consistently expressed anxieties both for religious reasons – that these acts and beliefs are the very opposite of true Islam – and for personal security. The other factor frequently mentioned was the impact of security concerns on Muslim communities: heightening suspicion; making it dangerous to wear Islamic or cultural clothing, state your identity, or pray or otherwise practice openly; and in increasing the alienation, discrimination and the hostility experienced from others.



Lokahi Global Exchange participant

South Africa has had over 350 years of Muslim presence. Muslims first arrived as indentured labourers and slaves as well as political prisoners and exiles from the Malay-Indonesian peninsula under Dutch rule. Some were people of nobility in their country of origin, possessing wealth, influence and high levels of education, for example the rulers of Sumatra. One *hafiz* (memoriser) of the Qur'an who was imprisoned in Cape Town was able to write the Qur'an out from memory, thus introducing it to the country. During Apartheid and after its end, a number of people of black heritage converted to Islam. An important debate in South African public life revolves around Black Muslim Identity. The Muslim population is only 2-3% out of a population of just under 60 million people, but the perception is often of a much higher proportion due to the established position Muslim citizens occupy.

With roots in the harsh realities of slavery and expulsion, many Muslims could relate to the anti-Apartheid movement as it gathered momentum. It is said that Mandela would visit the graves of Muslim exiles buried on Robben Island and take inspiration from their struggle. The anti-Apartheid movement was thus a common struggle from its outset and a number of Muslim activists played a key role in it and continue to feature prominently in ongoing debates about social justice. One of our interviewees, a political figure who was imprisoned for his activities under Apartheid, spoke of how the anti-Apartheid struggle forged a unique alliance between people of different faiths; but also that this was not universally accepted. In fact, he was branded a *kafir* (unbeliever / apostate) for engaging in a 'non-Muslim' political cause by some of the very conservative factions.

South Africa is largely Sunni but there are also Shi'a and Ahmadi groups present. The early presence was largely Sufi and this remains an important phenomenon in the country. The Deobandi and Barelwi schools, the two dominant streams in South Asian Islam, are also prominent, and there are now an increasing number of newer Sufi orders appearing.

There is a small Salafi affiliation.

Cape Town is more cosmopolitan and progressive compared to other areas such as Johannesburg and Durban. There is an LGBTQ Muslim network in Cape Town and two mosques where women have delivered Friday sermons. The International Peace College and Madinah Institute run academic programmes that are designed to embrace a South African way of Islamic practice, as well as focus on the broader challenges faced by society. Other Sufi influences, for example at the Azzavia Mosque are present in Cape Town. Conservative (Deobandi) institutions appear to be more dominant outside Cape Town and are growing in their influence. There is also influence from countries such as Saudi Arabia through the education of imams, funding and literature. One interviewee talked of how the old way of practicing Islam is 'imploding' under such pressures.

The confidence that many South African Muslims have, based on their deep roots and position in the country, with institutions that are over a hundred years old, means that most see themselves as an integral part of society and therefore not outsiders. This has allowed them, despite small numbers, to build alliances and work for common interests of the whole society (rather than look for parochial, community interests). One interviewee mentioned how being involved in the struggle for equality for black people, meant that there were many allies when Muslims needed people to stand by them. One of the Muslim scholars talked of how they were brought up to respect Christmas and celebrate with their neighbours in their festivities. He considered it strange that Muslims in Europe were still debating such issues and was concerned that such debates were beginning to grow within his own country.

Major points of learning, for future exploration:
forming alliances and solidarity around shared causes;
intersection of race and religion as points of strength
not conflict; a custom of interreligious harmony on
festivals and observance.

PART II:

VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

'IT'S ABOUT WHO ARE YOU'

I am German European, so I try to find my Muslim identity in that European context.

For our informants, questions of identity can be even more urgent than questions of religious practice. Second- and third-generations are often encouraged by their parents to see themselves as identified by the countries of their parents' or grandparents' origin.

We see children of families who have been here for 20 to 25 years who are struggling with the concept of identity. And these children are lacking role models, there are none from their perspective. They cannot relate to mom and dad because they come from another country. They were not brought up here. They maybe don't even speak Danish. How can they possibly understand my reality?

The discourse young people meet in school tells them they are Danish, French, German and as such they have rights; but in their experience their fellow citizens do not primarily see them with that European identity, so long as they are Muslim. At the same time, schools (to varying degrees in different European countries) stress their national identity – in some cases, with a potential for conflict with their religious identity:

Of course, they sometimes claim strongly their religious identity. When we teach them that their religion will be regulated, they are shocked. Maybe at this age, it is difficult to understand, and some will struggle to accept it or won't accept it at all. (A non-Muslim teacher explaining laïcité)

I saw kids who did not come to school on the day of Eid. Their absence was justified, I validated it for them. But still the teacher removed two points from their class participation grade to punish them for not respecting laïcité. It's a very violent experience for the child.

If they say that they are Arab, then they get told to assimilate since they were born and raised here. So, for some the subject of identity is so much bigger than the subject of Islam. Theological discussions and so on are not present at all in these homes.

You need to fight to just tell them that you're one of them. You're one in this society. You're one contributing. You're one working. You're one paying taxes. I'm just like one of you, the constant fight trying to convince them. I'm just a normal human being.

There are of course very gendered elements to the discussion around identity. Female Muslims can often find themselves at the forefront of the debates, whether they are visible because of dress or they choose not to adopt dress that makes them stand out. Alongside this, there is a secondary dimension to exploring one's identity in (often) socially and culturally conservative settings where there may be particular framings of the expectations of women and their roles in public life.



Sharing at the Sofia Symposium.

PART II:

VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

In certain European countries, principally Poland and Bulgaria, as in Bosnia, there is a Muslim community which has been present for hundreds of years. Polish Tatar Muslims and ethnic Bulgarian Muslims or Pomacks are not immigrant communities, unlike Muslim communities in Western European communities. Their experience is different from their Western counterparts; and although Tatar and Pomack histories are different, the patterns of their current experience are very similar. The 'autochthonous' Tatar or Pomack communities are in many senses well-integrated; that is not the challenge, as their neighbours recognise them as Poles and Bulgarians without question. Where they meet with hostility or aggression, a specific religious discrimination is the problem. Meanwhile, both countries have received a more recent wave of immigration; 'Arabs' as they tend to be called in Poland, and Muslims of Turkish origin in Bulgaria. In Poland, a specific dynamic can exist where the Polish Tatar is 'our' Muslim and accepted, but the 'Arab' is a dangerous foreigner.

WE ARE EUROPE. AND IF YOU TRANSMIT TO THEM THESE VALUES, THEY FEEL MORE AT PEACE AND THEY ARE MORE OPEN TO SOCIETY. BUT IF THEY DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY COME FROM, THEY DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY ARE GOING.



Grand Mufti of Bulgaria Dr. Mustafa Haji and Dr. Arif Abdulla, Director of the Research Centre at the Higher Islamic Institute.

PART II:

VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

'IMAM YOUTUBE'

Respondents report a distance between imams and the young people born and raised in Europe; 'because they don't see the bridge between the culture and the context that they are living in being used correctly' as one focus group participant put it.

One dimension to this is the simple disconnect between the preoccupations of religious figures and academic scholars, compared to negotiating the terrain faced by people leading their complex lives with everyday problems. It is worth noting that this dynamic is also occurring in other religious traditions and within other ethnic communities, even including majority ones.

Nevertheless, being a second- or third-generation descendent brings challenges that are both different and deeper. Most of the questions that Muslims bring to their religious leadership can be characterised as how to live out the requirements of Muslim faith in a society which at best does not cater for it, in general struggles to accommodate it, or at worst is actively hostile to it. The crucial point, then, is the response that young Muslim Europeans receive from their leaders.

My experience is when young people, for example, go to the Imam and tell them of experiences they had in the society, which mostly are negative experiences, they have been subject to racism, Islamophobia; the understanding on the side of the imam is mostly: 'OK, this is a bad society so we need to separate, isolate our community from the majority and we have to find ways of saving our young people from this German society'.

Thus an immediate reason for alienation between young people and the religious leaders and academic path-breakers is this: that a primary problem for European Muslims is negotiating the space in which they live, both as practicing Muslims and as belonging Europeans. The everyday practice of their faith is an issue that is mundane, but also a fundamental existential question. The issues that trouble them are as commonplace as the use of a room or an item of clothing; not a fascinating question for avant-garde thinkers. But these moments are vital to religious self-conception, their very understanding of their religious identity as a Muslim who is European; thus it strikes at the heart of an individual's identity.

WE'VE HAD COUNTLESS EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE ASKING A QUESTION IN THE WEST AND GETTING AN ANSWER FROM THE EAST.



Conversation at the London Lokahi Global Exchange.

PART II:

VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

And so a 'simple' religious issue of everyday practice is in reality the tip of the iceberg of an existential question – their identity and being:

Because it's not just about what is halal and haram, but it's also about who are you; since there's a discourse in society right now that you have to choose who you are. Are you Danish or Muslim – or the discourse of standing between two cultures, which is actually ridiculous. It's about identity also and about the way you find your own identity. You have to choose how you understand yourself, your identity, your religion.

Unfortunately, it was often reported that their leaders and role models are not up to this sensitive task. Furthermore, participants in some focus groups raised concerns about how the challenges they face in modern European cultures are not understood by more traditional sections of their communities – for example around gender equality issues, or the rights of LGBT people. Meanwhile there is a burgeoning debate about female religious authority, and we found some Muslim organisations in Europe engaging in such themes, and also promoting feminist discourses on Islam. This was mirrored discussions in our site visits.

Finding people they 'can ask' is therefore a highly difficult quest. When we asked focus group members who they went to for guidance on religious matters, they gave the same spread of answers: the imam at their local mosque; scholars outside Europe; parents; the most educated in their social group; or the internet, the so-called 'Sheikh Google' – or, in our updated variant, 'Imam YouTube', as religious material is increasingly being sought and delivered in video form rather than lengthy textual form. There was also concern about the quality of such information. Are the more sophisticated voices present online in sufficient numbers, or are their voices drowned out by more eager voices that offer more black and white answers?

Evolving discussions around religious authority and how it appears online also creates important points to reflect on how men and women, both, feature in such discussions. On the one hand, this can be inclusive for some women, as it becomes easier to find a space to belong online, where religious institutions might not provide access, or adequate services, let alone a pathway to leadership. On the other hand, the online space can provide an atmosphere of debate that can turn misogynistic and alienate many women - even turning into abuse.

WHO CAN I RELATE TO? AND THEN THEY MIGHT FIND SHEIKH GOOGLE, AND IT MIGHT BE A GOOD LESSON – OR NOT.



Finding Imam YouTube

While the approximately 3.5 million Muslims in the United States (US) comprise barely more than 1% of the country's overall population, Islam and Muslim communities have featured disproportionately heavily in contemporary public discourse in the aftermath of 9/11 and—more recently—due to the overt politicisation of Islam in American politics. Unlike Europe, where Muslim communities face enormous challenges with respect to levels of socioeconomic and educational attainment, immigrant Muslims in the United States have household incomes at or even slightly above the national average—leading the Pew Research Center in 2007 to describe American Islam as ‘middle class and mostly mainstream.’

While American Muslim communities are highly diverse—in terms of ethnicity, approaches to religion, and geographic distribution—the generally high levels of economic and educational success found within Muslim families of recent immigrant background often masks a different kind of social inclusion challenge facing American Muslim communities today: the racial divide *within* American Islam. Fully one third of the American Muslim community is of African-American background—most of them descendants of slaves brought to America in the 17th and 18th centuries—and tensions between immigrant Muslims and their African-American co-religionists have been a longstanding feature of the American Muslim landscape. Where some immigrant Muslims of Middle Eastern and South Asian background, particularly those from the first and second generation, view African-American traditions of Islam in the US as somehow inauthentic (if not outright heretical), black American Muslims view themselves as the custodians of the only truly indigenous—and wholly contextualised—American expression of Islam.

Our research in the United States comprised engagement with Muslim communities, organisations, and institutions in several major cities in different regions (Washington DC, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco). Many of the key themes that emerged from this work mirrored issues and questions that emerged from our research with European Muslim communities, albeit in an American vernacular. While American Muslims of immigrant background were noticeably less worried about issues of basic livelihood, economic security, and social mobility (still common among their African-American peers) and perhaps more confident in expressing an American identity, many faced the same kinds of questions about religious authority and ‘fitting in’ with established religious spaces as their European co-religionists.

One such theme is the need to cultivate a distinctively American Muslim religious leadership and approach to religious knowledge, after years of reliance on schools of thought and traditions from the Muslim majority world. This was the impulse that lay behind the foundation of higher education institutions such as the Chicago-based American Islamic College (AIC, est. 1983) and Zaytuna College (est. 1996 as the Zaytuna Institute) in San Francisco. Both take as their mission the cultivation of a new generation of Muslim leaders capable of understanding and teaching Islam in ways that are relevant to the specific context of the United States. But the two institutions also differ in their background and approaches. Zaytuna is deeply rooted in neotraditional Sufism and the idea of fidelity to *madhhab* (school of jurisprudence) while seeking to articulate the relevance and resonance of classical Islamic scholarship in the modern American context. AIC, by contrast, views its roots as lying in a reformist tradition that relies more on individual interpretation of religion for e.g. ethical decision-making.

There have also been efforts to establish open, non-judgmental spaces of religious engagement, deriving from the emergence of a generation of young American Muslims discovering their religious identity later in life, the disorienting experience commonly felt by recent converts to Islam, and those Muslims who feel alienated from established spaces and schools of thought. One example is the Ta'leef Collective, which operates in both San Francisco and Chicago. It caters for mainly younger Muslims and young Muslim families, as well as recent converts, looking for a space where they can find a voice of religious expression without fear of being judged as inconsistent or inauthentic according to a religious leader whose norms and etiquette were shaped by a different context. In this regard there is a clear parallel to be drawn with the emergence of similar spaces in Europe such as New Horizons in British Islam.

Born of the history and experience of urban deprivation found in the socially diverse but impoverished inner city of Chicago, the Inner City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) represents an important organisational expression of faith-based activism and basic service provision for addressing social inequality and exclusion. The issues at the heart of IMAN's work are also present in many socially diverse urban settings in Europe such as the *banlieu* of Paris and the Kreuzberg neighborhood of Berlin.

In the face of rising white nationalism and nativism, we have started to see the formation of cross-racial and intersectional coalitions linking together disparate communities affected by exclusionary politics—for example, advocates for the rights of Latino immigrants joining forces with the Black Lives Matter movement and activists working against anti-Muslim sentiment; or new organisational alliances such as The Majority. Where American Muslims we interviewed expressed awareness of developments surrounding European Muslim communities, it was usually in the context of shared experiences of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim discrimination—which suggests that this could be a particularly relevant area for transnational and transatlantic collaboration.

Major points of learning, for future exploration: that creating a local Islam can be done successfully from different religious bases, both traditional and more progressive; addressing issues of racial division within religion and as a basis for solidarity with other coalitions; using Islamic faith to address areas of social activism.

PART II:

VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

THIS IS NOT YOUR PARENTS' ISLAM

Across all the European countries, many respondents have told us stories sharing the same pattern:

When our parents came from Morocco and from Turkey to Holland, they came with their culture, they came here, worked hard, only working more hours to save more money because they wanted to go back. So they didn't do a lot about their religion. The young people now, we are more exploring Islam and going to learn and what are the rules and what do you have to do.

Generational differences often play out most powerfully when it comes to expectations of women's roles in society. Although other European communities share this issue of differences in expectations, such as women's work within and outside the home or women's leadership and visibility, these tensions can be exacerbated where earlier generations have grown up in a different culture. One complexifying factor therefore is how female Muslims have said they are playing the role of 'connecting the generations'. In some cases, they have had to take on responsibilities of caring for elderly relatives, as well as childcare, and thus maintain a position of mediating between generations.

Because they grew up in a Muslim majority society, they just practiced their religion, they were happy and then they came to Germany and expected their children to grow up the same way they did. But we didn't. I went to Christian schools. For the first years of my life, I didn't even realise I was Muslim. And we as Muslims living in non-Muslim country value our religion much more than our parents do, I guess because we know the other side.

The very question of the overlap between religion and culture problematises the appropriation of Islam for second- and third-generation Muslims, who see more acutely that Islam and 'culture' are not the same. In their view, one is a religious obligation and the other is not, so it becomes of the greatest importance to discern what in their parents' example and teaching is 'religion' and what is 'culture'.

**I SEE MYSELF
AS GERMAN.
AND MY PARENTS
SEE THEMSELVES
AS ARABIC.**



Lokahi Global Exchange participants in London

PART II:

VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

This distinction between religion and culture they experience as a new problem, and one that their parents – or imams from non-European countries – cannot help them with.

It's very important to be able to distinguish between religion and culture, because the issue that I see from my parent's generation is that they mix culture and religion. I think that there is a tendency to do that because you have been raised in a so-called Islamic country where people may be doing something that isn't Islamic but believe it is fine, since they've been doing it for many generations.

A consistent picture is painted of the contrasts between the challenge of integration for first and second-generation Muslim Europeans:

The second generation is completely different. It is more assertive. It claims its place in society. They want to be equal to the other components of society, especially the predominant component of society. This is where tensions arise. Young ladies want to wear the headscarf. Some young men want to have breaks to be able to pray during working hours. Bosses never knew that because our parents never requested this. They found it inappropriate that someone would ask for a 5 minute break to pray. The new generation says 'we are at home. We don't come from Morocco. We were born in Belgium. We are Belgians. We have Muslim values. We want to have our space under the sun just like everybody else.'

In fact, differences in practice are sometimes seen as generational rather than regional. In one focus group, participants moved from saying their parents' practice in Morocco differed from their own in France, to asserting that there is only one Islam and it's the same everywhere. The differences from their parents they then explain are 'more of a cultural difference than a religious one'; but between Moroccan Islam and French Islam, they assert there is 'no difference at all'.

**WE HEARD
A RECURRING
THEME:
'NO-ONE IS
LISTENING
TO US.'**



Lokahi Global Exchange participant in Lebanon

PART II: VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

ALIENATION AND HOSTILITY: UNCORKING THE BOTTLE

In asking participants throughout Europe about a 'Contextualised Islam', we found that a salient concern is not just 'contextualised Islam' but *the context itself*: European societies as a whole, and the interaction with fellow citizens who are not Muslims.

Without exception, participants expressed good will to other communities and expressed their desire to live in harmony with their neighbours; as well as wishing to live their lives as they feel they ought, without interference or suspicion. Nevertheless, the experience of exclusion and rejection and its many consequences was a theme we found in every country.

The experience of exclusion is found in impersonal, chronic issues such as barriers to economic participation and everyday social inequality.

Muslim communities still face a lot of discrimination and social inequalities. So they avoid any contact with society as much as possible. Unfortunately, from the moment someone feels they are being rejected, they become socially and religiously fragile.



Sign at a London demonstration.

However, there is also persistent reporting of a rise in hostility, threat, and endangerment of Muslims, along with other minorities, in the last few years.

20 years ago, it was much easier to be a Muslim in Danish society. It's actually become harder and harder to do that. Last year the Danish Institute for Human Rights issued a report on how the Danish legislation was used to cut the citizens' rights of Muslims in Denmark.

When we visited the first and only purpose-built Islamic Centre in Warsaw, most of whose ground floor is walled in glass, we found that every single window had been shattered.

Academics in our workshops and interviews who have made a rigorous study of this phenomenon indicate that what we are witnessing is not merely an emergence in casual racism; but in some of its manifestations arises from the specific, programmatic inculcation of a constructed ideology. This Muslim-hating ideology has identifiable talking-points, and is imported from the US into certain European countries, and spreading from there into others.



London demonstration.

PART II:

VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

One researcher we interviewed had surveyed Catholic seminarians, asking them whether they thought Islam should be banned in their country: 44% of these clerics said they felt Islam should be banned, against 40% who said they disagree. 'Not that huge a majority, but yet, a majority of them.'

At the other end of the spectrum of exclusion is outright hostility and aggression. This can take more subtle forms:

I had yesterday a talk with a German couple and I was wearing hijab in the turban form and they were like 'Oh, I can accept that, I'm fine with that. That's not hijab, that's like jewellery. And I can come to terms with that, but not when it's so tight,' she said. And I didn't know what to reply. And she was like 'Yeah, we are happy to welcome people like you that are moderate, you know, liberal, they are liberally Muslim'.

It should be noted that hostility and expressions of aggression and hatred can often impact more heavily on women. In our Bulgarian focus group, ethnic Bulgarian Muslim men became increasingly shocked as they listened to the hijab-wearing women open up about their day-to-day experience; how, for example, when they wear hijab they are afraid to go out at night because they will be spat at, have their hijab ripped off, or worse. 'I was listening to their stories and I felt really bad, 'cause they're asking for safety because of something that they decided to wear. We're living in Europe in 2018!'

Muslim women can face a higher rate of abuse and attacks if they are more easily identified as Muslim from their dress. (The same threat can affect men in traditional Muslim clothing, though to a lesser degree.) Muslim women can also be caught in the crossfire between expectations of women in secular society and expectations of Muslim women, whether from Muslims or non-Muslims.

I WAS LISTENING TO THEIR STORIES AND I REALLY FELT BAD, 'CAUSE THEY'RE ASKING FOR SAFETY BECAUSE OF SOMETHING THAT THEY DECIDED TO WEAR. WE'RE LIVING IN EUROPE IN 2018!

Our society lacks respect towards Muslim women who want to practice Islam and still want to be active in this society. If I go on a debate, either on the news or the radio or newspapers, and I represent myself, they will start to attack me. They still see wearing the hijab as a symbol of oppression.



Derived from the poster for 'Against Me', a play promoted by Kafa in Lebanon

PART II:

VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

Last week I was in a debate and I said I'd been fighting for Muslim women's rights most of my adult life, and I consider myself a Muslim feminist but I'm pro-life. I shouldn't have said that. Immediately I was labeled fundamentalist. They told me I can't be a feminist because I'm pro-life. So it's a struggle of power discourse, of authority and legitimacy.

Our focus groups and interviews extended beyond Muslims to include other faith traditions and academics regardless of religious affiliation. This allowed us to observe that throughout Europe, both academics and grass-roots citizens are experiencing a rise in aggression towards religious minorities in general, and not just Islam.⁵ The founder and director of a Jewish cultural centre in Krakow told us:

Psychologically this atmosphere is bad. The costs outside which we are paying right now are enormously high. This is like uncorking a bottle. It's very difficult to put the cork in again. There's something in the air. It's true to say that this is not [only] for the last two months. It has been for eight years, maybe 10 years; and the question is why?

The Director of a Jewish Studies Institute reported:

These right-wing parties are giving an opportunity to people with anti-Semitic views to speak openly about it. I don't know if the anti-Semitic views are higher or not. I rather think it is stable, but the problem is the expression. Yes, the people are not afraid, and they don't have any limits, any barriers.

An observation made by some was that some of the language and tropes formerly used for Jews by the Nazis was now being used for Muslims and especially Muslim migrants: that they are parasites, bringing diseases into the country, destroying or degrading 'our' culture.

This is arguably part of a wider political dynamic that is seizing Europe. Participants frequently highlighted what they thought was the role of media in fomenting this intergroup hostility. In many countries, respondents alleged there was collusion between their nation's politicians and these xenophobic voices. From a Christian participant:

People without conscience, they say whatever they want to win the elections, they will say anything! Against Muslims, against Jews! Before, people would never say something like this because it was a shame! It was a shame to say something like this! But now the most important person in the government says it openly.

So there are some incidents that would never have happened before. For example, we were in a metro station carrying the EU flag and a young man shouts: 'You Jewish servants of Hitler!' But the problem is that this government also started to say these words about the EU!

**IT'S TENSION,
CONFRONTATIONS,
AND THERE IS NO
DIALOGUE OR PROJECT
TO LIVE TOGETHER.
WE WANT A HARMONY,
SOCIAL PEACE.**

Some Central and European countries have seen increased tensions between religious groups. Some of these tensions can be traced back to deep, historical roots. The friction between religions has more recently interacted with differences of ethnicity, made worse by recent controversy over migration and refugees. These social tensions interact with political movements, reflected in the rhetoric of politicians and media. Equally, religious actors and communities have been striving to counter-act hate speech and hate crimes, and building interfaith understanding.

Ordinary citizens and community groups can play a powerful role in educating people and preventing outright violence. However, while many citizens are passionate about creating a more inclusive society, their capacity to do so can vary across these countries, due to multiple historical, economic, and political forces.

On 28-29 November, 2018, Lokahi held a symposium in Sofia, Bulgaria, with the hospitality of the Grand Mufti of Bulgaria, Dr. Mustafa Haji.

We brought together academics and leaders with long experience in dialogue and intercultural engagement, from Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities. A number of local Bulgarians joined to hear the speakers on the first day, and to attend a workshop and training on the second day.

The themes from local people were very familiar, echoing the core themes in this report: the increase in intergroup tension and difficulties for religious practice for Muslims. Similar stories and themes were expressed by Bosnian, Czech, and Polish academics, and by a Jewish Bulgarian speaker. Two Bulgarian academics shared experience and inspiration on how best to further interculturalism as a model of social coexistence and dialogue.

In the workshop we trialled a Lokahi method that rapidly destroys myths between two conflicting groups and builds trust in its place. The group felt that this would be a useful method to use in local settings in Eastern and Central Europe, and given suitable training could be done by local people in their neighbourhoods.

Major points of learning, for future exploration: despite differences, there are important similarities between certain Eastern and Central European countries regarding current intercultural tension; building civil society capacity and uniting their efforts would have a powerful impact; a method exists which can be taught to quickly build cohesion on the ground.



Panellists at a session at the Sofia Symposium, left to right: Dr. Arif Abdullah, Mr. Robert Djerasi, Prof. Mihail Ivanov, Dr. Rositsa Atanasova.

PART II:

VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

'EUROPEAN ISLAM' AND EUROPEAN MUSLIMS

The issues we have just discussed are precisely those which have animated thinkers in the project of 'European Islam' or 'Contextualised Islam'; these issues of identity, interpretation and practice are the very problem on which the thinkers of European Islam focus. And yet we found in many places that Muslim community members were unaware of these intellectual efforts; and when given a brief introduction to the debate, they often did not respond with welcome and positive interest. This reaction represents the same gulf that separates grass-roots Muslim citizens from their local religious leaders and scholars, as we have highlighted with 'Imam YouTube'. Arguably, it is that same disconnect 'squared':

I've been to scores of international conferences on these subjects and have met all these guys talking about these issues. But I always feel kind of detached from what's happening. I'm not a scholar, I'm just a hands-on man down in the street in the ghetto and I feel that we're getting somewhere in the ghetto. But what's happening in those higher levels is kind of out of touch. When it becomes too academic it becomes detached from the real world. Although it's interesting to see these conferences and listen to these endless talks from highly educated and extremely clever people, it's hard to take anything from there back and land it in the ghetto.

One of my main issues with these books is that they are not attractive to mainstream Muslims. Most of us sitting here are probably able to have a discussion but you need to have some form of intellectual basis to have that discussion. So I have never seen some of those discussions amongst mainstream Muslims in the mosques.



Praying in Sarajevo.

PART II: VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

Where participants were aware of such efforts, their reactions were broadly of three kinds – two of them often overlapping.

‘Islam is the same everywhere’

Islam is perceived by most of its adherents as a universal religion, not to be subjected to innovation or temporal or regional variation; as a religion of revelation, it represents the unchanging will of God revealed in the Qur’an. To speak of a regional Islam is thus theologically inappropriate in the view of many respondents.

There is no such thing as Dutch Islam or Moroccan Islam. I don't believe that, I'm just a Muslim. I'm not a Moroccan Muslim or a Dutch Muslim. That's a new term.

Islam is Islam, there is no such thing as a Danish or European Qur'an, the Qur'an is the same around the world.

There are also social reasons for insisting on the unity of Islam; the unity of the faith is a unity of believers, and some felt a ‘European Islam’ would have a negative impact on their solidarity with suffering Muslims elsewhere. Others also felt it would sow division and conflict:

I don't think there should be a division like that because that will only separate the Muslims even more. I would feel like that I'm being excluded from the Islam in the Middle East.

**THEY DON'T HAVE TO
USE NEW ANSWERS.
ISLAM IS ISLAM.
FROM 300 YEARS AGO
AND NOW IS THE SAME.**



Moment of exchange at the Taynal Mosque when the Lokahi Global Exchange visited.

VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

‘Bending Islam to suit European Society’

Others expressing discomfort with the notion of a ‘European Islam’, or a country-specific variant such as ‘British Islam’, ‘French Islam’, felt that such an idea represented an attempt to bend, distort, or dilute faith to accommodate the very different mores and morals of secular European culture.

I read about this Euro Islam plan and how they would spread Islam in Europe; that made me feel uncomfortable to be honest. The concept itself, the way they portrayed it, was that it was Islam but Islam that would perfectly match European society. Personally, I find that thought very wrong because Islam should not be the one to fit in the society. The society should fit around Islam. That’s how I view Islam.

The whole idea of Danish Islam mixes the idea of Danish values and European values with Islamic beliefs. And Middle Eastern Islam mixes this idea of Middle East beliefs. But in reality, Islamic beliefs should be the same on both parts. I feel like the concept of Danish Islam gives the Western people what they want to hear about Islam rather than what Islam really preaches. And I don’t think that is a great intention to follow personally.

In this view, European Islam must be a concession to a secular, or even hostile European society and an attempt at accommodation; denaturing the religion to make it unthreatening to alien secular values. Unsurprisingly, those who understand the project in this way found the idea unattractive or even offensive.

‘Finding our own way’

Others simply viewed ‘European Islam’ as a reflection of reality; that how Muslims live and practice differs in different parts of the world. Some understood it as a project on how to be a Muslim in a European context, in ways that make sense of your identity: your belonging as fully included, entitled citizens and as fully faithful, practicing Muslims.

The aim is how to make it meaningful – as well as possible – to live out your life as a Muslim in Europe. This view understands ‘European Islam’ as an approach that does not denaturise the sources and texts but makes them meaningful for today and speak to current generations. It sees the concept as a frame, one which can articulate European values, human rights, conceptions of human dignity in a way that is fully compatible with authentic interpretations of Islam. As one respondent suggested, if the Islam you practice is not in contradiction with these, it is basically a ‘European Islam.’ Others said:

With European Islam, Islam which takes into consideration the traditions, I think it’s the right way because we have to understand our Islam in the society we live in. It’s a big problem that some imams from Arabic mosques try to connect the national identity with the religious identity as the only way to save Muslim identity. And I think that this is wrong. We need a European identity for Muslims.

PART II:

VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

This is part of the wisdom of Allah. He gave us Islam and he gave it to so many people. Islam has so many expressions out there, Islam does not express itself in the same way in Indonesia as in Afghanistan as in Turkey as in Nigeria and whatever else. So obviously Islam like anything else takes a colouring from wherever it is. But in the same process we also recognise the necessity of being very true to its origin. So we're not talking about a modernist approach or a liberal approach, we're being pretty much orthodox in one way.

As some participants have explained, this theological endeavour is important, as European Muslims are facing questions and challenges that Muslims in other countries are unlikely to have faced. As one participant said, much as one respects the author of a fatwa a hundred years old in another country, that cannot address the problem faced here today.

One example can be found in the role of women, who need economic independence in 21st century European countries to a degree that they were not perceived to need in the Islamic world in the past.

This dynamic, of needing European answers to European problems, makes more poignant the observation that some participants have made: that the natural ecology of schools of thought, denominations, madhahib (schools of Islamic law), is distorted in some European countries by a large influx of Gulf funding which disrupts local people's natural affiliations and attachments which arise from places of origin, family education and shaping, and personal spiritual or religious preferences. This is experienced as destructive or disruptive by many and as leading to a certain religious orientation that makes religious questions as well as social inclusion more problematic. In fact this is not only a cause for concern in European countries.

This was a prominent issue in our site visits to some of the countries outside of the EU, where people heading centres of learning, intellectuals and civil society activists often spoke of how such an influx of 'foreign influences' is impacting on their work, creating a more conservative climate and a more globalised outlook that threatens to replace the more nuanced, textured (and often more relaxed) local approaches to religious practice.

**FINDING OUR OWN
WAY OF UNDERSTANDING
ISLAM IN OUR OWN
CONTEXT.**

**FINDING OUR OWN
SOLUTION TO PROBLEMS
EVEN IF THEY ARE
THE SAME PROBLEMS
AS THERE ARE IN THE
MUSLIM MAJORITY
COUNTRIES.**

**OUR REACTION MIGHT
BE DIFFERENT.**

Tunisia distinguishes itself from other countries in the Arab-Muslim region by the exceptionally homogeneous character of its people. About 98% of the population identifies as Arabs, and barely 1% identifies as Berber, an ethnic group indigenous to North Africa. 99% of the population are Sunni Muslim, and 1% are Jews, Christians, Shi'a Muslims and Baha'i. Nevertheless, Tunisians are proud of their minorities, especially the Jewish community, and all of our interviewees insisted that 'Jews are not a minority, they are real Tunisians!' It is important to note, however, that there are ongoing issues with the regulation of religious education.

Since the Revolution in Tunisia in 2011, the place of religion in public space and politics has been a matter of debate, as Tunisia has seen the rise of a new diversity in expressions of religion and belief. In a country where niqabs have become more visible in the streets, and where atheists are becoming increasingly comfortable displaying their non-belief in public, intellectuals are confronted with a wider spectrum of religious and non-religious expression, and are forced to recognise Tunisian society as a diverse and pluralistic one. Small minorities like the Baha'i community have been more vocal, asking for more recognition and their own schools and cemeteries. Conscious efforts have been made to embrace the diversity of Tunisian society and to encourage coexistence in the context of a newly democratic country. Examples include the abrogation in 2017 of the law that prohibited Tunisian women from marrying non-Muslims, or the July 2018 decision by the Tunisian tribunal to authorise a woman to undergo surgery and change her civil status to become a man.

AL-ZAYTOUNA UNIVERSITY: MORE HISTORICAL PRESTIGE THAN CONTEMPORARY INFLUENCE

In recent years there has been some discussion of 'rehabilitating' Zaytouna University, whose namesake mosque dates back to the eighth century and which for centuries was a major beacon of religious scholarship in the Muslim world. Al-Zaytouna University does not exercise the same symbolic religious authority in Tunisia as Al-Azhar in Egypt or the King in Morocco. Although Al-Zaytouna has historical prestige, it derives from its scholarly character, similar to the Sorbonne University in Paris. Al-Zaytouna was effectively politically neutralised after independence by Bourguiba, who did not want to maintain an institution that could overshadow the symbolic and political authority he wanted to establish for himself. Although 'Zaytounians' are active and participate in public debates around religion, their opinions are no more legitimate or influential than others. One of our interviewees, a prominent scholar of religion, pointed out that Tunisia is noteworthy for its lack of powerful religious institutions. In such a context, where the majority of the population is Sunni Muslim, all opinions are equal and admissible.

TRAINING FOR IMAMS ON DEMOCRATIC VALUES

After the Revolution, the Ahmed Tlili Foundation noted that democratic culture was fragile in Tunisia. One major concern was to ensure that Tunisian citizens accept and take ownership of the foundations of democratic culture: respect for the laws, diversity, freedom of thought. An important place to start was the training of imams, as leaders of opinions. There are 5,800 imams who are allowed to preach on Friday in every mosque in Tunisia, collectively addressing two million Tunisians. There are no regulations in place around imams and no training required. In fact, some of them never advance beyond primary school education. According to the Ahmed Tlili Foundation, only 5% of imams in Tunisia in 2013 have received theological training and a very high 30% of Tunisian imams adopt a radical jihadist speech. The state, after the 2010-11 revolution, lacks funds and has become too weak to control the spread of these radical discourses. Imams have no status and receive a small compensation of about 60€ per month for their work. This makes them vulnerable, and they are easily 'bought' for the purpose of spreading the messages of whoever pays the most.

The training put in place by the Ahmed Tlili Foundation teaches imams the fundamentals of democratic culture. It is not meant to make them democrats or liberals. One key aim is to ensure imams feel part of a global society: by being more aware of the laws and the constitution that govern Tunisia, but also by helping them gain an official status and making them aware of their rights. The help of the National Union of Imams is very important in the process of recruiting imams to participate in the training. The training includes a session on the Constitution, which most imams have not read, and particularly on Article 6, which guarantees freedom of conscience

DECOUPLING EUROPEAN ISLAM FROM MUSLIM MAJORITY SETTINGS – TO REJOIN AS EQUALS

Hela Ouardi, professor at Al-Manar University and associate researcher at the French CNRS (National Centre for Scientific Research), when asked about the idea of creating a 'European Islam' anchored in Muslim traditions, responded that Islam is, in fact, bound to blend with any cultural landscape because, in its very foundation, it is based on the relationship between humanity and God. Ouardi felt that one of the greatest mistakes of Europe was to delegate the management of Islamic affairs in Europe to Muslim countries. This is not to say that there should not be engagement between European and North African Muslims, but rather that it should not assume that the 'correct' Islamic response is from the Muslim-majority setting. In fact, Tunisian intellectuals and decision-makers themselves have been adopting an increasingly inclusive approach, especially in terms of gender equality and religious freedom, arguing that giving more freedom is not a threat to the core of Islam. So instead, exchange could focus on jointly developing new approaches to current challenges; enriched by the diversity of people around the table and the recognition of everyone's culture as equals, not as a role model and imitators.

Main points of learning, for future exploration: creating the right footing for engagement between Europe and the Muslim-majority world; creating a platform to address the question of religion and culture in an intercultural context; finding ways to engage religious leaders on core social-political values while respecting boundaries between religious commitment and political attachment.

PART II:

VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

FAST RIVERS NEED GOOD SWIMMERS

The project of a 'European Islam' can refer to an academic question of interpretation and theological hermeneutics, which is relatively new. However, it can also refer to the day-to-day interpretation of how to adapt your faith, born elsewhere, to the country in which you live – an effort that has gone on 'forever'. Thus understood, as one Danish Muslim saw it, this endeavour is a natural development of any religion which emerges in any new country; thus at one time Christianity took on a particular Danish colouring, for example, which Christianity did not have when it first arrived.

Those who advocate for a religious Islam, on this understanding, are simply accelerating the process and undertaking it more consciously.

God gives us more opportunities, more ways in which we can express this faith. When we get another culture of this religion, it's like a gift. And actually, I see it as a gift to the umma or to the Church or whatever. The more this religion spreads, the more variety there is, and the more you find a Berlin Islam and a Stuttgart Islam and South African Christianity.

The preponderance of views amongst our participants in focus groups and interviews fell on the belief that European Muslims should be able to practice their faith and live their lives without discrimination, suspicion, or unnecessary obstruction.

This shared longing was not exclusive either to 'progressives' or to 'conservatives'; it is not itself an issue that divides traditional from liberal Muslims and it does not in their view entail watering down the requirements of Islam.



Masterminding at the London Lokahi Global Exchange.

PART II:

VOICES FROM EUROPE: A COMMON EXPERIENCE

With the exception of those who do espouse a specific separatist outlook, Muslims who would perceive themselves as more traditional or conservative wanted just as much as progressive Muslims to feel equal citizens of their countries, enjoying the same rights and sense of belonging while being able to practice their faith without hindrance to the same degree that other faiths can.

If so, European Islam as an intellectual project has a communication problem. By analogy with a great business idea for a commercial product, it lacks a 'route to market' – a way to bring the ideas and answers from academic thinkers reflecting on these problems to ordinary Muslims negotiating the everyday living of them.

A few of our interviewees understood this problem, articulating clearly the communication failure that this represents:

Today, with modern communication means, the world is like a city. It's easy to be in contact. Religious Muslim intellectuals are not in a closed space. The partition has disappeared. In my view, the Muslim institutions today really lack good communication: this is a problem that we need to address.

The origin of the problem, some would say, is not that Muslim millennials seek out Imam YouTube and all the dangers that he represents.

I think it's very important to keep in mind that Sheikh Google is not the problem, but it's a symptom of the problem. And the problem itself is the distance between the scholars and the imams we have and the younger generations born and raised in Denmark. That distance is a product of many things: lack of language, lack of connection to the outside community, lack of level of theology. We have a lot of imams in Denmark who are not educated in any way, either theologically or in a university here.

'WE'RE CROSSING THE RIVER RIGHT NOW AND WE'RE IN PERIL – BECAUSE THE RIVER IS FAST, AND WE'RE NOT GOOD SWIMMERS.'

Lokahi carried out research activity in three different locations in Indonesia: Jakarta, at the Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta; Yogyakarta, at the UIN Sunan Kalijaga, and two Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools); and religious sites on Lombok Island.

Indonesia has two main Muslim organisations: the Muhammadiyah, and the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Of the two, NU is seen as being more ‘traditional’, indigenously Indonesian. The Muhammadiyah are inspired by modern Muslim revival movements, and particularly oriented to social action projects, building and running hospitals, schools, orphanages, and other social services. Both organisations carry out substantial charitable activities and other activity in civil society, with private education systems. Both see Islamic teaching and practice as embedded in Indonesian history, culture, and practice. This was contrasted to ‘outside’ Islamic movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafist movements, and extremist influences.

Recent years have seen a significant incursion of these ‘outside’ Islamic movements into Indonesia. Interviewees suggested the local response had been complacent and they were only just waking up to its extent and impact. They are now making a somewhat belated, energetic effort to win back the youth, and to support ulema and preachers with materials to support and improve preaching at Friday services.



Indonesian book urging girls not to have boyfriends.

YOUTH AND MEDIA

Our academic interviewees had carried out extensive study on what religious media and texts the Indonesian youth are consuming across Indonesia, yielding interesting results. ‘Lifestyle’ is the biggest pull factor for young people seeking religious information, guidance, and authority; they are casual about the actual ideology or theology, and far more attracted by the projected way of life apparently offered by the source. Salafi materials are very popular, as their production values, design, messaging and so on are high quality. Salafi messages are put across with the design and appeal of teenage girl magazines; Salafi messages are in videos and films with the appeal of travelogues selling a cosmopolitan glamour (‘being a Muslim in Paris, London, Rome’ – wearing conservative dress but filmed against glamorous international backdrops). The traditional Islam of the scholars feels old-fashioned and boring in comparison. Even when young people prefer the religious teaching of a popular traditional NU scholar, he ‘scores less highly’ on YouTube than the well-produced slick preaching of Salafis whose actual theology they reject. Core Salafi texts and other foundational modernist authors (e.g. Sayyid Qutb and Hassan al-Banna) are not read in the original, but shortened digests and precis are widely consumed. Thus, even in the absence of explicit agreement with the ideology or theology, the message is being widely and successfully transmitted and consumed.

While this was seen as a cause for concern, the shallow nature of the appeal meant our interviewees were cautiously optimistic about the impact of the increased consumption of Salafi media. As the *packaging* of the message was the attraction, there was less of a sense that the religiously conservative message itself was being widely internalised.

RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

Whilst our interviewees spoke positively about the coexistence of different religious groups in Indonesia, both presently and historically, there were clear concerns, particularly when it comes to the treatment of Ahmadiyya groups.

There was concern at the political manipulation of religious identity. Politicians, aided by media and social media, were perceived as highlighting differences and turning the majority against minority groups (mainly Shi'a, Christian, and particularly Ahmadiyya), persecuting them in order to gain electoral support.

INTELLECTUAL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE WEST

Indonesian Muslims are notably outward-looking and there is lively two-way engagement with European academic communities and other projects and initiatives. Academics are well-versed in European hermeneutics, a discipline on interpretation whose insights lie at the foundations of the 'contextualising effort'; and the underlying thinking that informs everything, from academic curricula to the guidance they give to religious preachers, springs from an outlook that is fully in harmony with similar Christian endeavours in the West. As such, the potential for partnership at both the academic level and in social and religious engagement is very rich indeed.

Major points of learning, for future exploration: the powerful impact of youth cultural and 'production values' in communicating religious messages; the potential of intellectual exchange based on the foundation of a shared theological approach to interpretation; positive interaction and support between academics and preachers.



Pesantren in Yogyakarta.



Pesantren in Yogyakarta.

PART III

ISLAM IN A DIVERSE CONTEXT

Intellectual developments in religious thinking are flourishing in Europe and around the world, which have made for a growing academic literature on new approaches to Islamic thought and theology.

But when it comes to gaining the attention and support of ordinary believers, the true test lies in how well these theological reflections help individual Muslims negotiate the practical challenges of **identity** and of **practicing Islam**.



ISLAM IN A DIVERSE CONTEXT

As we have seen, much of the most intellectually exciting work fails to gain traction with communities. The scholars and religious thought-leaders haven't solved the 'route-to-market problem': how to communicate their ideas and solutions in such a way that it captures the interest of Muslim citizens, and thereafter gets their buy-in.

The most successful efforts to get the attention of young people have exploited 'production values', using genre, design, slick uses of technology familiar from the entertainment world to package and promote a religious message which might, ironically, be the most socially conservative form of Islam, the most inimical to modern secular values.

ISLAM: A WAY OF LIFE OR A LIFESTYLE?

It is commonly said that 'Islam is a way of life' (or even that it is 'not a religion, but a way of life'). Many Muslims believe that Islam is not simply a belief system, a set of cognitive propositions of faith, but the revelation of a complete, comprehensive way of life; its principles and teachings cover every aspect of human existence, from the way to pray to the way to invest, and everything in between.

Therefore the question of identity and the 'how' of religious practice are not ultimately separable; aspects of religious practice such as dress, prayer, dietary requirements, financial practices, burial customs and so on are also identity markers in the eyes of both Muslims and their non-Muslim neighbours. As such, policies in European countries that make everyday religious practice more difficult can deeply and painfully affect a Muslim believer's sense of personal identity, an impact which is not always fully understood by policy-makers. Thus the difficult journey of integrating one's faith and one's nationhood revolves around the hardship of living a total way of life as a minority.

But whilst 'Islam is a way of life' might be true for many, for some millennials and Generation Z (Gen Z), Islam is also becoming a *lifestyle*. The Muslim marketers who have best cracked the route to market (whether to sell products, create websites, or promote Islamism) have realised that the way to a Gen Z Muslim's heart is to promote a similarly comprehensive Islam – but one that interprets conservative Islamic dress into fashion, Hajj (pilgrimage) into travel opportunities, even whilst it promotes a religiously and socially conservative message as its payload.

For 'Lifestyle Islam' in a Muslim-majority country, therefore, the tension of identity as a negotiation of continuity and adaptation is not an issue of *minority*. It is an issue of *modernity*. The act of re-interpreting their faith in the face of a challenge is not a reaction to alterity (religious otherness), but rather a response to social change.

For many Muslims living in a minority context, the teaching and authority of parents is not enough; neither to serve as a source of religious guidance and authority nor to stabilise their intersectional sense of personal identity. As we have seen, this triggers a quest for role models, sources for who and how to be as well as how to practice in an inhospitable society. All too often, both religious scholars in Muslim countries and local imams have not enabled this complex and sensitive quest.

To be accepted as a leader, credibility is needed. For European Muslims, credibility is variously conferred by scholarly credentials, personal character, an impression of sincerity – and increasingly an understanding of the European context. For some young Muslims, particularly those feeling keenly a sense of alienation, social exclusion and disadvantage, we can add 'street credibility' to the list.

ISLAM IN A DIVERSE CONTEXT

For these young Muslims, religious leaders have to have **authority**, and if they are accepted, one **shadows** them: accepting what they say and putting it into practice faithfully. But in some of the locations we studied a new attitude is emerging in Lifestyle Islam. To have credibility now, a leader has to have **appeal** and the Gen Z Muslim **shops** for them. The consequences for Islam in this shift in the sociology of knowledge from authority-shadowing to appeal-shopping may be far-reaching.

European governments have also become involved in the support or even promotion of individual religious leaders, to achieve policy goals for social cohesion or (more often) countering violent extremism. This intervention can take the form of providing platforms for approved figures, or training programmes, for example. By selecting specific Muslim groups to work, communicate, and coordinate with, national and local authorities in Europe have expressed preference for a way of being Muslim that fits within certain parameters. In some cases, governments have funded or even effectively created Muslim organisations that correspond to their preferences or policy agenda, regardless of whether such groups have any legitimacy or standing in the eyes of wider Muslim communities.

Government intervention in supporting (sometimes thereby undermining) religious leaders has had mixed results at best. The emerging model of Lifestyle Islam, **shopping**, not **shadowing**, a leader with **appeal** more than **authority**, presents a new challenge for this approach. If there was a struggle for credibility before, it is even greater now that production values are the success criterion: no government initiative will be able to spot the presence of an Imam YouTube X Factor, let alone know what the appeal consists in. Moreover, as Muslim Gen Z goes shopping for religious sources of information and authority, they are fickle. A preacher gets a million hits on their YouTube video, but is replaced and forgotten within a month, as our young interviewees have told us.

Finding an effective religious leader for a government to promote is an even more risky investment decision than before; as ever, investments can go down as well as up and Gen Z's quest for attractive religious sources is a very volatile market. It is true then that, 'answers from the East' will increasingly fall short as solutions to the challenges young Muslims face. But replacing it with 'obedience in the West' is not going to work for Gen Z.

There is a complex reception dynamic now for religious information and persuasion. Production values, branding, marketing have great impact; sometimes more than *ideas*. However, hot branding might not have 'stickability', especially if the ideas beneath the brand fail to penetrate very deeply and are so easily replaced. As this trend is only just emerging, it is not clear yet what gives stickability to a religious leader; it is simply too early to tell.

However this is an area where introducing an international dimension could be effective in creating ongoing and iterating conversations between Muslims and people from other faith backgrounds about how they see the role of religion as a resource in addressing everyday challenges and the imperatives of social inclusion.



Shopping for Lifestyle Islam.

Traditions and Modernity
Islamic Ethical Business
Muslim Travellers Style
Social Media Literacy
Populism in Politics
Demography Bonus
Millennial Muslim
Halal Tourism

ICONIS 2018 Conference themes, 'Being Muslim in a Disrupted Millennial Age.'

CASE STUDY

MOROCCO

Morocco has had a long-standing engagement with Southern Europe. The Moors of Spain originated from the area and more recently Morocco was subject to French rule. Being on the western tip of Africa and almost reaching into Europe, it has been a conduit for not only the flow of goods but also ideas.

Morocco has a dominant Sunni, Maliki, Sufi tradition of Islam and has historically also received significant Jewish migration, some of whom were fleeing the collapse of Andalusia and the *Reconquista*.

A number of important observations emerged from our fieldwork and interviews in Morocco:

⇒ In the context of some other Arab and Muslim countries, there is a much greater sense of pride in providing for the rights of Jewish people, even if today they are relatively small in number.

⇒ There have been important initiatives to bring about legal reforms and provide for the rights of women, particularly in the field of education, employment, marriage and inheritance. Some have argued that this has not gone far enough and this remains an important public debate.

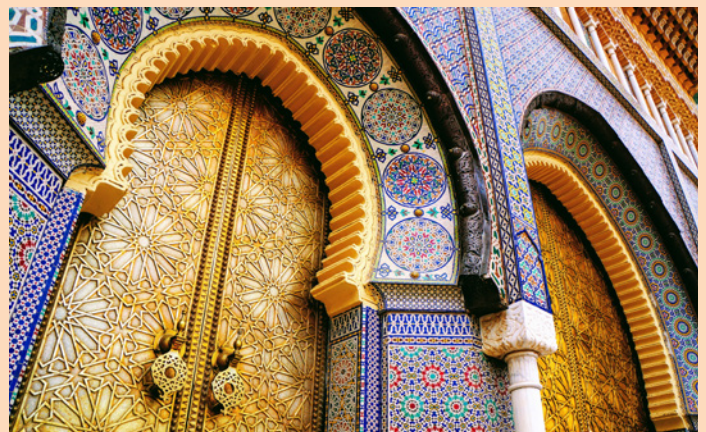
⇒ There is work on a new 'Moroccan tradition of Islam'. With the new monarch, this has implicitly meant attempts at defending the country from conservative 'outside influence'. There have been initiatives to educate male and female religious leaders and Qur'an reciters (often deployed as religious teachers). Following the terror attacks in Casablanca such initiatives have been escalated and there are attempts to integrate the educational system, bringing more traditional institutions into partnership with universities.

⇒ The rights of Christians from outside of Morocco are seen to fare better than those that are more indigenous Christian communities. And there is a perception that Shi'a groups (a small minority) are disadvantaged.

There has been an interesting experiment in how the state has dealt with Islamist and Salafi groups. It has decided to hit the more extreme end of such phenomena with quite hard measures (banning, imprisonment), while allowing the softer end to enter into the parliament and become legitimate political voices. We heard mixed reviews of this approach but some felt this accommodation was (thus far) a successful one and the most stable example in the region.

Finally, between parliament, state and monarchy there is an important question of who really holds power and this sensitive issue often intersects with such discussions. Any discussions about 'democratisation' thus operate in the context of that dynamic. While the civic space has some elements of freedom, there is a sense that security and stability trump free speech. People are thus able to mobilise, but in very limited forms. While some were critical of the lack of a true democratic culture, other respondents felt that this is the only way that Morocco could be managed, as an open society would be a more chaotic and turbulent one.

Major points of learning, for future exploration: the rights of religious minorities construed as a source of national pride, not conflict; partnership between universities and traditional religious institutions of learning; legal reform for human rights seen as compatible with Islam.



Royal Palace in Rabat, Morocco.

ISLAM IN A DIVERSE CONTEXT

These are the challenges, and also the opportunities, for twenty-first century Islam in its many contexts.

How shall we understand Islam, as a faith or way of life that grows organically from the European Muslim experience; speaks to the specific challenges faced by Muslim communities in European societies; maintains a strong connection to Islamic tradition and the wider Muslim world internationally; relates with empathy to other faiths and understands secular norms and the rule of law?



Lokahi Global Exchange visiting Tripoli.

CONTEXTUALISATION AS RESILIENCE

Our starting point was to explore ‘Contextualised Islam’, as it takes root in diverse societies, and to investigate how far and how deeply it is absorbed and welcomed by local Muslim communities. But in many ways, the most significant learning has not only been about Islam, but about the wider landscape, and how European Islam is affected by its environment – not just Contextualised Islam, but Islam and its Context.

For this approach is most rich when theological reflection truly happens in *interaction with its context*. Much of the contemporary discourse in European Islam is mainly self-reflective and self-referential; rightly engaged with its own sources, traditions, and methods and pre-occupied by its struggle, it treats the European context as a mere backdrop against which contemporary Islam interprets itself and defines itself.

This could be one reason for the failure of traction with Muslim community members: the scholars and thought-leaders are trapped in a kind of self-dialogue, and are not in a true engagement with the voices that Muslim community members hear every day. Gen Z meanwhile is engrossed in a very different conversation. Even for some European Muslim scholars and religious leaders, alterity and modernity are threats to be rejected and shunned, or acknowledged and accommodated, and first- and second-generation Muslims have usually made their choices and complied.

Meanwhile, Gen Z has embraced a different way of speaking with modernity and alterity; encountering a wider and more diverse range of voices and engaging them more openly. This brings them new problems, but also new solutions; solutions they are devising and constructing while the scholars are not.

For Gen Z, social conformity to the non-Muslim, secular and cultural voices that surround them is not always attractive; but many young people show the ability to dismantle what fails their ethics-tests, sifting between what they will embrace and what they will critique. The forbidding and warning of the ‘answers from the East’ are burning out; and the credibility of those voices with it. Instead, for many young Muslims the challenge of the Other and the challenge of rapid social change springboards them into a new way of synthesising their religious fidelity, their consciously-constructed identity, and their carefully curated way of life.

Many of the empathetic middle-aged religious leaders we interviewed called our attention to the familiar need for imams to understand the European context if they want to understand and minister to young Muslims. We think things have moved on; anyone who aspires to be a voice worth listening to, to find a route to market of young Muslims, needs to be a ‘good swimmer’. Understanding European society as a family of stable cultural traditions, often with a secular character, is not enough. They need to understand how the construction of religious, social and national identity and a distinctive embodiment of Islamic practice are intentionally curated by young European Muslims.

Insofar as these trends for Gen Z are true internationally, and the voices we hear at Cambridge Muslim College in the UK and the National Islamic University in Yogyakarta tell us the same story, there is clearly the potential for a broader transnational discussion between young Muslims living in socially diverse societies.

Meanwhile, the experience of difference, exclusion, rejection, suspicion, and outright hostility, tragically, is a salient aspect of European Muslim experience. It is an experience they share with other minorities; there may be different tropes and less securitisation but intergroup hatred follows the same pattern, uses the same methods of propagation and instigation, and often has the very same perpetrators. Our research showed us the extent to which this situation is mirrored in Muslim-majority countries. Sadly, exclusion and aggression towards minorities is actually or potentially present in these countries as well.

Muslim and Jewish communities told us that they felt hostility and hatred to their group was on the rise, a perception confirmed by the recent report from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.⁶

From Poland to Indonesia, our respondents told a similar story of how this occurs. It begins with manipulation by politicians, and in certain countries was deliberately imported by transnational extremist movements. As Zora Hesova told us, Islamophobia is not a random xenophobia but a familiar set of talking-points imported from the USA into Germany and thereafter into the Czech Republic. Konrad Pedzwiatr and Agata Nalborczyk described the manner in which Islamophobia in Poland mimics an earlier anti-Semitism, using the same slurs and imagery as in the Nazi era. Respondents from the Low Countries to Indonesia frequently mentioned the use of the media to disseminate the tropes and triggers of hatred.

It is well-known that hostility and attacks on minorities are a frequent response to stressors on society, e.g. migration above normal levels - or the perception of increased migration. Even societies which consider themselves to be comparatively resilient to intergroup hatred, historically having high levels of ethnic and other forms of diversity, or other protective factors, are vulnerable to deliberate manipulation.

Intergroup hatred can be triggered quickly and spiral into mass violence with alarming speed. In our Central and Eastern European workshop, we heard Bulgarian speakers articulate their characteristically Bulgarian concept of neighbourliness, and express confidence that this spirit would prevail in their country. Bosnian Muslim speaker Dermana Seta responded: 'We had that same concept in Bosnia. Don't think it can't happen here.'

Happily, examples abound of an acceptance of religious diversity in European Muslim communities, and it is not limited to the young or the progressive. Apart from the reflection of the scholars, Muslim community members have engaged with their 'context' by finding common ground with other believers. This occurs in everyday interfaith dialogue (even of the most casual kind), with acknowledgement for example of a shared faith in one God.

Our focus groups and interviews also highlighted how often Muslims and citizens of other faiths forge alliances for a common cause; examples include Muslims and Jews joining forces to express concern about sex education in schools, Sikhs building bridges with Catholics to oppose abortion.



Spontaneous interfaith Lokahi-dance in Saida, Lebanon.

ISLAM IN A DIVERSE CONTEXT

The encounter with a wider social context can as easily support traditional values and enable conservative goals as progressive ones. Tolerance for difference, inclusion for the sake of safety and the more effective achievement of shared goals and social change are hallmarks of what we might call ‘inclusive traditionalism’ or ‘inclusive conservatism’.

However, a more radical alterity is found when one encounters not common ground, but uncomfortably different social norms and values. Where earlier generations often shrank from it, Millennials and Gen Z have had little choice but to confront it. Young Muslims have their modes of rejection of radical alterity, and the flight into separatism and even extremism can be interpreted in this light. But there is a common theme among younger Muslims

We can frame these as two forms of resilience.

One conception of resilience sees it as the ability to recover after a challenge or a shock. To use the cheerful British term, it is ‘Bouncebackability’. Traditional believers unbalanced by an encounter with the Other or with rapid social change can eventually come to find a familiar common ground in the Other, recover their footing, adopt a form of pleasant tolerance and create an alliance for shared goals – conservative inclusivism. This we can call **resilience as preservation**.

Radical alterity can also be met with progressive inclusivism, yielding an evolutionary form of resilience; when faced with a threat or stress or challenge, it is able to adapt, change, preserve core aspects of its identity or practice while evolving. There is always a challenge for progressive forms of faith: how to change while remaining the same, how to adapt while preserving what is essential; and it is open to easy challenge from traditional voices. But this form of **resilience as evolution** brings a new resourcefulness and sustainability to a faith community; for ultimately it is part of the strategy of survival in a sometimes-hostile environment.

Contextualisation, then, can ultimately be seen as a form of Islamic resilience. In its quest for engaging with its environment, in both conservative and progressive ways it can create strategies of inclusion that ensure its survival and flourishing in new contexts.

When Islam becomes inclusive in Europe, it becomes resilient; when Islam is resilient, European societies in turn become more resilient, more inclusive, and more sustainable.



Shop window in Southall, London.

EDUCATION ROUNDTABLE

What can education do to challenge sectarian and inter-communal conflicts and build a more harmonious society? Interesting and innovative experiences have emerged in different religious communities across Europe; we brought together academics and heads of religious education establishments to look at how religious institutions prepare their communities for life in a modern, diverse Europe. Participants' nations of residence and ethnic backgrounds included British, Indian, American, Irish, Bulgarian, Bosnian, German, Polish, Iranian, French, Belgian, Bangladeshi; with religious backgrounds including Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh, and no religious adherence.

Religious groups have long held traditions of nurturing communities of religious practice, developing a moral and spiritual centred focus for living together. These communities have also now begun to think about how the changing world impacts on spiritual and moral education, for example how online learning may impact on pedagogical methods and approaches.

Meanwhile, in Europe universities hold an unrivalled place not just as transmitters but as preservers of knowledge and intellectual culture. The way that they further scholarship in different religious traditions, their intellectual, cultural and historical heritage, no longer reflects the profile and the needs of European communities today.

Participants further explored how universities can engage more effectively with traditional religious establishments; how universities can support the intellectual engagement with minority religions more successfully, and how different religious traditions can collaborate more effectively in adult education of believers as well as non-believers.

Major points of learning, for future exploration: governments often overlook higher education in religion, but it has a critical role to play in building social cohesion and should be part of the conversation; adult education of communities should include a focus on inclusion; we should encourage religious communities to join forces in adult education.



Education Roundtable, November 2018.

EDUCATION AND EXCHANGE: WAYS FORWARD

Europe has a unique role as an intellectual centre: more diverse than other competing regions, such as North America, but still possessing a broader cultural unity and a shared vision of what outstanding intellectual culture and higher education must be. Europe enjoys a strong, shared, public higher educational system that is the envy of the world; at the same time, it is home to multiple religious minorities who possess a strong intellectual heritage and, in many cases, their own educational establishments. Most European countries have a good track record of interfaith dialogue at intellectual levels as well as at the level of individual believers, that is, an appreciation for comparative theology and comparative philosophy in departments of study of diverse intellectual and material cultures. Finally Europe is blessed with strong and robust institutions, active civil society to varying degrees, well-governed resources, funding streams, and cultures of philanthropy.

Europe is therefore in a unique position to foster forward-looking intellectual developments of Islam that embrace both a form of rigorous traditional scholarship, and more avant-garde trends in intellectual innovation. In our vision, it should be the home of a new, distinctive approach to Islamic Studies; one that is proud of its intellectual heritage and the riches of its tradition while open to intellectual cultures and ways of life that are radically different.

In this environment, Islamic scholars and faith communities should continue to articulate an understanding of Islam that is genuinely faithful and genuinely European. Scholars and thinkers can work from within traditional and authentic sources, while engaging openly with other traditions, including non-religious philosophical, social-sciences, and scientific disciplines. This should be done in interaction with international thinkers; to demonstrate that contextualising thinking is not 'Westernisation' but a form of engagement that Eastern Islamic communities perform as well.

Both religious leaders and community members can create an inclusive traditionalism, a contextualising conservatism: it engages empathetically with its European context without having to understand itself as 'progressive' in changing key 'markers' of identity or practice (dress, social conservative values); it can meet difference, even radical alterity in social values with respect without conformity.

We have spoken of a communication gap, and a desirable connection we labelled as 'a route to market'. The attention to production values can be a form of cynical manipulation; but the attention to the styles and aesthetics of communication can also foster creative and artistic production in a way that is neither shallow nor exploitative.



Mustafa Cerić, Grand Mufti Emeritus of Bosnia-Herzegovina & President, World Bosniak Conference, with Lokahi's Naveed Siddiqi (l) and Dilwar Hussain (r).

PART III: ISLAM IN A DIVERSE CONTEXT

Those who aspire to be leaders, thinkers and scholars need to address the communication gap that exists between thought-leaders and community members; between generations; between international communities but also between the world of Islam and the wider world that is its context. This can in part be done with better attention to the aesthetics of communication, which is one part of the route to market. The other part is perceptive awareness of what the real concerns of the market are: in this case, the questions of identity, ways of life or lifestyle, acceptance and inclusion rather than rejection and alienation; and diligent efforts to think through and create twenty-first century answers and ideas.

However, the path of communication that we have dubbed ‘the route to market’ is in the end not a one-way street. It is ultimately reciprocal, a question of relationship. As such, it should be characterised by the hallmarks of every good relationship: attention, openness, listening, honesty, acceptance, and a willingness to evolve.

The concept at the heart of this project is interaction and the building of relationships. It is through the endeavour of fostering conversations between Muslims and peoples of varying belief systems in socially diverse societies—in Europe and around the world—that the challenges and triumphs of everyday life can be transformed into tangible resources that can be shared and developed together.



Dr. Jajang Jahroni and Dr. Dadi Darmadi from UIN, Jakarta, Indonesia



Lokahi & Dr. Z. Fahed, Fr. A. Gebrael, Sheikh F. Ballout, & Fr. I. Dourbally of DLR.



Lokahi Global Exchange visit to the Sadr Foundation, with Nijad Charafeddine.

CONCLUSION

For a sustainable, inclusive, religiously diverse society, what is needed is not an attempt by the state to define Islam, but more attention to the 'context' while supporting citizens and groups that may feel vulnerable at these polarised times. Government bodies should not try to engineer a 'European Islam' – but rather, work towards making Europe a place Muslims can live in without excessive conflicts for their religious practice and identity. That is the surest way of allowing a more organic European expression of Islam to emerge in the future.

Many of the people we encountered weren't interested in a 'European Islam' *per se* but most wanted to find a way to integrate their faith and national identities. Meanwhile, other religious and ethnic groups are currently suffering from the same hostility towards minorities. To foster inclusion quickly, it is more effective to tackle the wider climate of exclusion that affects many, and allow members of Muslim communities to engage proactively with the questions of identity in a more positive atmosphere.

There is also an important role for introspection within communities, to think about their approach to society, to find shared ground for full participation in society and for the promotion of an agenda of equality and inclusion. We also need safe spaces in which people can be honest about their fears and anxieties for partnerships to become sustainable.

Barriers to equal participation in society from everyday religious practices do not only affect the presence of Muslim citizens in the public space; it affects their fundamental identity. As much as it impacts on economic participation, it also damages a deeper sense of belonging.

Barriers and stigma make communities turn inward and increase alienation. By driving visible Muslim practice out of public everyday life, it also increases the perception of 'otherness' in the eyes of others.

Removing practical obstacles to the exercise of religious rights has a far-reaching positive effect on inclusive citizenship. Once again, this affects not only Muslim citizens, but other religious minorities. By making minorities welcome and creating the fertile ground in which they can grow roots into broader society, the resilience of all communities is reinforced.

Active intervention is required to build inclusive communities. This is not the job of the state alone, and civil society has a key role to play here. Day-to-day resentment cannot be removed by the creation of policy alone. Instead, we should actively create methods of engaging communities, and bringing them together in shared activities. Programmes to bring communities together, learn and understand, and forge alliances to work towards the common good have been proven to be effective. Lokahi has a particular method for building bridges in situations of social division, which we also trialled successfully in our workshop, which can be implemented by grass roots individuals at little or no cost.

For we do not only need to build bridges, we need to cross them; we do not only need cordiality and good will towards others, we need different groups to collaborate actively in order to build social inclusion. A highly effective way to do so is to encourage the efforts already undertaken by religious communities to unite in social action aimed towards furthering the common good.

Where the European Union is uniquely placed to do this is by creating this phenomenon at the international scale; empowering those striving to tackle 'wicked problems' in society to connect, learn from each other, and accelerate success towards important goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

Education has a critical role to play, but there are barriers and gaps between higher educational institutions and religious foundations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Concerns have frequently been raised about training for religious leaders, but these often ignore religious and spiritual education for other adults. And when 'religious education' receives attention as an issue, it focuses on children but neglects the vital role that can be played by continuing education for adults. Yet education and exchange at all these levels are vital to support inclusive approaches to religion and society.

Therefore we should resource intellectual development at the vanguard, enabling theological, philosophical, spiritual thinking to flourish and meet the demands of modernity and current global conflicts. Facilitating communication between universities and centres of traditional learning, such as religious foundations and establishments for the training of religious leaders, would ensure that the depth, rigour, understanding of traditions, originality and innovation, can coalesce in a way that will benefit society and not merely its students. Both the universities and the religious establishments should recognise their responsibilities to a wider public of students; and understand them to be not merely listeners and receivers, but instigators, informers and champions. Such religious endeavour should be given full support from government and philanthropic bodies, but they will only be seen as legitimate and authentic if they are led by practitioners of their respective traditions.

All these observations and aspirations are as true of the countries we studied outside the European Union: Bosnia, Indonesia, Lebanon, Morocco, South Africa, Tunisia, and the United States. These are all socially diverse countries equally affected by the interaction of religion with modernity, and searing contemporary problems. Countries not visited are similarly affected, and their citizens joined us in our project's various events and contributed their perspectives. All these are countries we can learn from. Thus in any future action taken, there would be a powerful impact from joining forces with countries outside the European Union, and a mechanism should be found to enable this.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For the sake of focus, we identify four specific recommendations for action at a policy level. Lokahi will explore the civil society opportunities for action in other forums.

- (1) Empower and connect those working on these issues; to enable further training, sharing of ideas and best practice, and the creation of new projects and initiatives. This can address, first, the role religious actors can play with secular colleagues to foster social inclusion and diversity; second, it can be used to address wider 'wicked problems' of society that might not necessarily be religious ones
- (2) Support the establishment of a Europe wide network of local civil society actors who are working to address local problems of intergroup hatred, and to galvanise informal work to foster inclusive communities
- (3) Create a forum for exchange for those involved in religious education and research, to create a communication flow between academics, those involved in training for religious leadership, and those involved in wider formation of adult believers. This should include humanists and other world-views.
- (4) Establish a working group to consider how to remove barriers to participation and identity that needlessly affect religious minorities, in ways appropriate to the national culture, and ensure that the legal and policy framework adequately protects religious as well as ethnic minorities from exclusion, discrimination, or persecution.

REFERENCES

¹ The December 2018 report from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism: Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU* makes for disturbing reading. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/2nd-survey-discrimination-hate-crime-against-jews>

² See Aziz al-Azmeh (1993), *Islams and Modernities*, London, Verso.

³ See for example: Stephen Bevans (1992), *Models of Contextual Theology*, New York: Orbis Books.

⁴ The *Contextualising Islam in Britain* report was a result of deliberations of over 20 Muslim scholars and activists around contemporary issues and challenges facing Muslims, specifically focused on how Muslims could meet these modern challenges and what Islamic teachings mean in the modern context in light of such challenges. The project was funded by the UK Department for Communities and Local Government and run by the Cambridge Centre of Islamic Studies from 2008-2011. Two reports have been published.

⁵ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism: Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU*, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/2nd-survey-discrimination-hate-crime-against-jews>

⁶ *Ibid.*

