Euro-Islamic identity?

An example of hybrid identities in contemporary Europe

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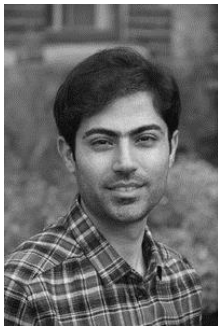University of Gothenburg
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To those who do not escape the burden of change.

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Abstract

In-mass presence of Muslims in Europe dates back several decades ago, after Second World War; a presence which has been intricate since the beginning. After many years, Europe-born generations of Muslim immigrants are yet facing the very same question as their parents: How to identify themselves in Christian/secular European societies; how to be neither submissive nor self-alienated as a Muslim in contemporary Europe. Besides, recent hostile incidents in Europe have once again sharpened public opinion upon Muslims (residing) in Europe. Some scholars have suggested a third path to Muslims, known by some as Euro-Islamic identity, as a route to a constructive and pleasant presence while still connected to their religious thoughts/background. The chief objective in current study was to (i) discuss the theoretical ground for such an hybrid identity (ii) introduce individuals as real examples of that and (iii) characterize the concept by deep interview of the individuals. *Hermeneutic principles in understanding a text*, *nominalism* and *Wittgenstein family resemblance*, *core message of Islam* and *civil rights in Europe* are the main concepts this work appealed to, in order to found its theoretical ground. Two Muslim individuals were deep interviewed; a Swede convert and a second generation Muslim with Pakistani roots. Accordingly, the study concluded six features as discerning characteristics of their Islam - *permissiveness*, *reference to fundamentals*, *societal concerns*, *tolerance*, *art-friendly* and *hybridity* - and delineated how the theoretical ground provided a field for such a reading of Islam to come to life.

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Introduction

Why it is relevant to discuss Euro-Islamic identity?

Interconnectedness has been an intrinsic and prominent aspect of globalization. Goods and merchandises are transported faster and farther. Ideas and thoughts move around the globe from a continent to another and herein, human mobility is not an exception. People are travelling all around the world in a much faster rate and in much greater numbers. In recent decades, the world has faced a great wave of immigration, never experienced before. The spiral of international migration is now discussed in new scales and extents. As declared by the UN's Population Division in 2006 the number of people who live in a country they were not born in is close to 200 million. Comparing to the numbers in 1980, there is a two-fold increase in just 25 years [1].

Herein, there has been a great wave of immigration from Muslim countries towards Europe in the 20th century and in particular after Second World War. This has brought the total number of Muslim inhabitants in European Union up to 15 million in 2009 [2]. In case of Sweden, the range of Muslim population is 250000-450000 [3].

This presence has sometimes led to tense situations. One of the recent incidents was the case of mass massacre in Norway, 2011, where a 32 year-old Norwegian killed 77 people to *defend Norway from multiculturalism* [4]. The killer, in particular, has introduced himself as a *military hero, fighting Muslims* [5]. A number of more cases can be named as indicators of such unrests: gun attacks in Paris [6], concerns of Swedish government on rise of Islamic extremism [7], several mosques being vandalized in Sweden [8], a Muslim woman got attacked in Malmö [9].

Muslim immigrants, like any other immigrant, have faced a very fundamental question/dilemma; How to identify themselves in European secularized societies?

There has been two common paths of response; reactive or subservient. As Ramadan[1] puts it [10]:

"…. a reactive posture creeps into their consciousness and, in order to protect themselves from non-Islamic environment, they finally determine their own identity in contrast with what it is not. Alternatively, they sometimes either forget their origin and religion or they try to erase their specificity in order to dilute themselves in society and, thus, become as invisible as possible, become one of theirs, an authentic European."

Neither of the paths has helped the immigrants to settle down and feel at home. However, there has been some efforts to develop a third path through which Muslim immigrants do feel neither alien nor self-alienated; a path towards Euro-Islamic identity. According to Ramadan [10], this path has been developed as an answer to the following question:

"How to maintain a vivid faith and yet remain faithful to the Quranic and prophetic teachings in new historical, social and political situations?", "How to be a European Muslim?".

Addressing the abovementioned paths and the underlying questions would be a key step towards putting the matter into perspective and exploring new solutions of some contemporary Muslim thinkers to a rather old problem of immigrant Muslims. In a wider perspective, the implications of alternative paths as such will go beyond the European countries and the Muslim communities in the Europe. Euro-Islamic identity could be discussed under a broader topic such as Islam and modernity (in its Western meaning) and any achievable combination of the two will potentially be a milestone for the Muslims all around the world who are in one way or the other facing the waves of Western modernity.

However, the issue of Euro-Islam is pertinent to not only immigrant Muslims but also European converts. Number of Muslim converts reached 100000 in Britain by 2012

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[1] Tariq Ramadan

and according to an appraisal, in recent years, 70000 French citizens converted to Islam [11]. Similarly, Germany has recorded 20000 converts in recent years [11] and the number has reached 5000 in Sweden [12]. Understanding the motivation of these converts, their perception of Islam (as a, historically, non-European religion) and the characteristics of their Islam is of utmost importance.

To whom it matters?

The presence of Muslims in Europe and their growing population has had several social consequences and there might be more to come. Herein, not depicting the situation as the issue of *the others*, either as immigrants or religious people, would be quite effectual if not necessary. The individuals should not be necessarily religious to address or contemplate upon these issues. Societies that are, in one way or the other, engaged with such issues have the capacity to settle the situation if it is faced as a common matter which is not left to *them*.

In all, the *emergence of Euro-Islamic identity* has the potential to be considered as an important research topic in social science which the positive consequences of addressing that, does not only benefit those with religious thoughts but also the entire research field and fellow society members.

Aim

A general concern in this study was to realize how Muslims in Europe, either Muslim immigrants or converts, depict and perceive their surrounding society. This would be a very first step towards penetrating the *world* of a group of Muslims in Europe. In fact, all their pursuant deeds are, in one way or the other, grounded there. Such a perception facilitates interpreting the behaviour of Muslim communities/individuals in Europe.

Not all Muslims come up with a same solution to their common problems therefore another aim pursued in this work was to differentiate between various voices out of Muslim communities and recognize modern readings of Islam. Unlike the dominant image propagated by the media, Muslims have numerous intellectual dissimilarities (beside their common traits) which are widely ignored by public. Muslim scholars have different, and sometimes repugnant, thoughts on different issues and the current study aimed to surface that by discussing the idea of Euro-Islamic identity, as an

example. The purpose was to partly unravel the idea by referring to conceptual discussions and arguments of some contemporary Muslim thinkers and further on testing that with couple of young Muslims to see how the idea of Euro-Islamic identity is known, welcomed and materialized.

Objectives

An important objective was to reflect the inner thoughts of young individual Muslims, immigrant or local convert, who have lived in a European city (i.e. Gothenburg) and have experienced being at the interface of their Islamic beliefs and secular, European surroundings. Hearing their narrations of the situation and the way they identify themselves was the core goal of the study. It was important to bring up and discuss the putative challenging issues which might sound paradoxical in public eye; issues such as Islam and tolerance, Islamic rules and modern Western legal frameworks, spiritual thoughts and demystified/disenchanted climate of European societies. All along the study a chief effort was to realize how the interviewees interpret the term Euro-Islamic identity and eventually determining its characteristics and sort of approaches which can pave the way for emergence of such an identity by comparing the findings with the theoretical discussions around this matter in the literature.

Research questions

According to the above mentioned foreword, this study is after answering the following research questions:

- Has the idea of Euro-Islamic identity been materialized? If yes, how some of the putative contradictions between Islamic thoughts and Western life style are overcome?
- How grassroots young Muslim individuals make sense of the term Euro-Islamic identity? How it is characterized?

Delimitations

The title of thesis comprises the term Euro-Islamic identity which implies *European* Islam while this study was geographically delimited to Sweden as only one country in Europe. Furthermore, the interviewees were individuals from Muslim communities in Gothenburg, Sweden. Therefore, the findings of this study can not be generalized (neither to all Muslims nor to all Western countries). The number of interviewees was

also few (a second-generation migrant and a Swede convert) which made it difficult to draw a conclusion from statistical perspective. Moreover the interviewees' background was limited to two nationalities (Pakistan and Sweden). However, the qualitative nature of the study justifies its findings and methodological structure. Language barrier was another constraint which might have had influenced the study. The communication language was English and it was not mother tongue of either of the sides. The interviewees and interviewer had good acquaintance with Islamic traditions which might have been a privilege since there would be a rather common understanding of the subject but meanwhile some concepts and basics might have been taken as granted. Therefore, potentially, there might be some semantic gaps in the study.

The interviewees were limited to young educated Muslims who were either born or grown up in Sweden. Besides, the interviewee with Pakistani background is counted as a second generation migrant. Thus, the narration/story of first generation migrants and those with lower education is left out in this work. Moreover, both of the interviewees are from same gender (male) and therefore voice of female Muslim individuals is not reflected.

Methodological discussion

Beside the arguments I presented above, there is a personal side to this study as well. The topic of this study can be phrased in various ways; European Islam, Islam and modernity, modern readings of Islam etc. Moreover, me, as an Iranian, come from a country with a Muslim majority which has been through some challenges in these regards since at least hundred years ago; a quarrel which is not settled yet. Thus, before I commence this study I was into it through several books, articles and talks of a number of Iranian intellectuals, chiefly Soroush[2] and Mojtahed Shabestari[3]. Issues discussed by them were highly relevant although not directly addressing Muslims living in Europe; conceptual discussions regarding the process of perceiving a text, alteration/reformation of religious concepts along the time, reformation of religious cognition etc. (their contemplations are discussed in the theory section). Tariq Ramadan is another scholar whose thoughts contributed to the theoretical ground of this study. His thoughts, presented in his book *To Be A European Muslim*, are more on practical level compared to the former scholars named above. He has lived in Europe for long time and is familiar with both regular difficulties of Muslims in Europe and the grounds of Western culture. Ramadan also knows the potentials of European legal structure based on which he presents a number of suggestions to Muslims in Europe in order to develop a Euro-Islamic identity. I also got the chance to have a talk with Fazlhashemi[4], a professor of Islamic thoughts and philosophy at Uppsala University, Sweden. He was among the few scholars in the field within my reach. A few years ago a book of his was published: *Vems Islam? De Kontrastrika Muslimerna* (Whose Islam? The Multifaceted Muslims – Studentlitteratur AB, 2008).

The methodology chosen for this study was structurally grounded on two main approaches; *a priori* and *a posteriori*. In *a priori* approach, the aim is to argue in support of an idea without appealing to experience. Herein, it meant to go through the arguments and reasons brought up by some scholars in favour of a doable synthesis of Islam and modernity; an intellectual endeavour which tries to demonstrate that Islam and modernity are not intrinsically paradoxical. They try to show (mainly through

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[2] Abdolkarim Soroush
[3] Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari
[4] Mohammad Fazlhashemi

conceptual/speculative arguments) that Islam and modernity are not condemned to be contradictory. In short, they believe certain readings of Islam and modernity can get along. The theory section in this study, where the thoughts of some of these scholars are illustrated, concerns *a priori* approach.

A posteriori approach aimed to evaluate the idea of Euro-Islamic identity by looking at actual cases in the society (interviewing Muslim individuals). Thus, beside exploring books and articles, the core of the study was grounded on in-depth interviews with two Muslim individuals in Gothenburg. There are quite many different groups of Muslims in Gothenburg. Individuals of these groups vary in their born country, cultural background, ethnicity, religious sects, age of migration to Sweden (in case of migrants) etc. Therefore choice of interviewees was a critical step since I had to base that upon reasonable criteria which could outweigh other variables. Most of the individuals were from migrant families so both first and second generations of migrant Muslims were potentially among the choices. Besides, along the way, I was introduced to a Swede convert that belongs to a group I was not, at least in the beginning, very much thinking to address.

The study was after answering a core question: If/How Euro-Islamic identity is feasible or in other words what could be the characteristics of European Islam. My surmise was that if there is any positive/compelling answer to this question, it should be with the young generation, e.g. second generation of migrant Muslims. My argument was straightforward. Euro-Islamic identity seems to be concomitant with flexibility, rethought interpretations of Islam, more modern perceptions of religion and its horizons and so forth. These all are more likely to occur in the young generation (either young converts or second generation migrants) which are familiar with the contemporary era and its occasions and also, in case of second generation migrants, not much trapped in their traditional habits which are sometimes mistaken as indispensable elements of religion. Therefore I looked for young individual Muslims who have lived in Sweden for long time or were born in Sweden, regardless of their country of origin, ethnicity, religious sect and gender. However, this was not the only criteria/filter. I was more eager about individuals who were active in public sphere, interactive with their surrounding environment and had a subjective position in society. Young Swedish Muslims (Sverige Unga Muslimer –SUM [13]) and Inter-religious Centre were two organizations which through them I got connected to a

network of young Muslims in Gothenburg. These all ended me up with two individuals; a second generation migrant from a Pakistani family and a Swede convert. Occupation of the former is musical affairs and the latter is a teacher. The initial intention was to interview 4-5 individuals but eventually I just could get hold of two all the way to in-depth interview. However, the stories of the two final interviewees could still be quite informative. The interviewee with Pakistani background could shed light on the concerns and trends of, at least part of, the migrant Muslim communities. On the other hand, the convert interviewee, as a person who enters the world of Islam with an entirely, so to say, non-Islamic background, could narrate his understanding and interpretation of Islam. Finding potential differences and similarities between their stories and elaborating upon them could provide a decent platform to discuss Euro-Islam and analyze its characteristics.

In-depth interview with the selected interviewees was the heart of the a posteriori approach to develop the study. Interviews were semi-structured and issues were discussed in a reciprocal manner. The goal was to reveal different aspects of the topic and trigger the interviewee to delineate his/her thoughts. Thus, I was often a listener except the times I had to dig more into the putative controversial subjects. Individuals who resonate with the idea of Euro-Islamic identity have not been subject of many researches. That is, in-depth interview (even though a few) was an appropriate mean to establish an opening and shed light on these not-well recognized individuals and their attitudes and thereby open a window to their world. By conducting open questions, in-depth interview provided a platform to grasp interviewees' point of view, disclose new layers of meaning and comprehend what supports participants' attitude. Findings of the interviews would not be generalizable however they have the potential to sharpen researchers' opinion and by providing a base attract attention for further studies.

Prior to the actual interviews I always introduced myself with some emphasise on my country of origin, where it is known to be a Muslim country. I believe this helped me to be depicted/perceived as an *insider* and therefore the interviewees felt more open to discuss the topic. Building up *trust*, was a crucial and essential step which was born in mind all along the interviews. It was a gradual achievement which had to begin from the very first contacts.

It is just impossible to attain a comprehensive perception by only doing interviews

thus I chose to hang around with some of the interviewees and meet up their friends, visit them at their work place or attend some of their gatherings. In this way, I could get a better feeling of my interviewees' ambiance, their real and day-to-day living status and their level of interaction with the surrounding society. The purpose was to find signs which could demonstrate if or how the idea of Euro-Islamic identity has materialized. Going to mosque is common among the interviewees and it is a place where they usually meet up their friends. Therefore, on a Friday afternoon I paid a visit to one of the mosques in the city to spend some time with an interviewee and his friends. So both observation and interviewing were among my data collection sources. All the interviews were audiotaped and repeatedly referred in order to review and draw a conclusion.

Prior to the interviews, I asked the interviewees to fill in a short questionnaire. There, interviewees were asked about their personal information, family background, life style etc. Questions were designed to be more at Euro-Islamic interface (see Appendix I).

Two groups of questions were brought up along the interviews. The first group was concerned with how integrated/segregated the interviewees are in the society; questions such as:

Where they feel they belong to / What is their nationality.
How much they have got involved in Swedish or Islamic traditions / If they celebrate any.
How ample their circle of friends are / Is it limited to the inner-community members.
What type of occupation they have / Is it an isolated or a far-reaching type of job.

It was incredibly important to know about the social situation of the interviewees. If they were segregated in the society or did not have the will to reach out/interact with their surrounding then it would have been difficult to imagine any influence from/on either of the sides.

The other group of questions was mainly focused on issues which seemed to be contradictory in public eyes; matters/traditions/mandates which Muslims can not put aside or disobey if they want to keep their religion. Different issues were conversed depending on the interviewees; Hijab, Islamic marriage rules, Islam and democracy,

music (and art in general) and Islam, food diet (Haram/Halal – alcoholic beverages), shaking hand with the opposite sex etc.

Statistiska centralbyrån (SCB), United Nations (UN), Brithish broadcasting company (BBC) and the webpage www.euro-islam.info were the main sources of the statistics reviewed in this study.

Islam: background information

Islam, with more than one billion followers, is known to be the second leading religion in the world. Muslims, as followers of Islam, believe that about 1400 years ago the religion Islam was revealed in Mecca, Arabia. Islam is a monotheistic religion (i.e. belief in oneness of God) and traces back its origin to Abraham. Muslims respect Abraham, Moses and Jesus as God's prophets and believe Muhammad (the prophet of Islam) is the final prophet sent by God. Islam is articulated by the Quran; Muslims' holy book. Islamic laws are based on the Quran and the Sunnah (teachings and practices of the prophet Muhammad). Islam has five basic pillars: assertion of faith, praying, fasting, charity and pilgrimage to Mecca.

Islam in Europe

The fastest growing religion in Europe is thought to be Islam. This is chiefly due to immigration and above average birth rate of Muslim communities. Muslims are widely spread across the European countries. An overview of Muslim populations in Europe is depicted in Figure 1. The country of origin has been the main criterion to distinguish the Muslim population which is not necessarily a decent parameter since coming from a Muslim country does not essentially mean the person has faith in Islam.
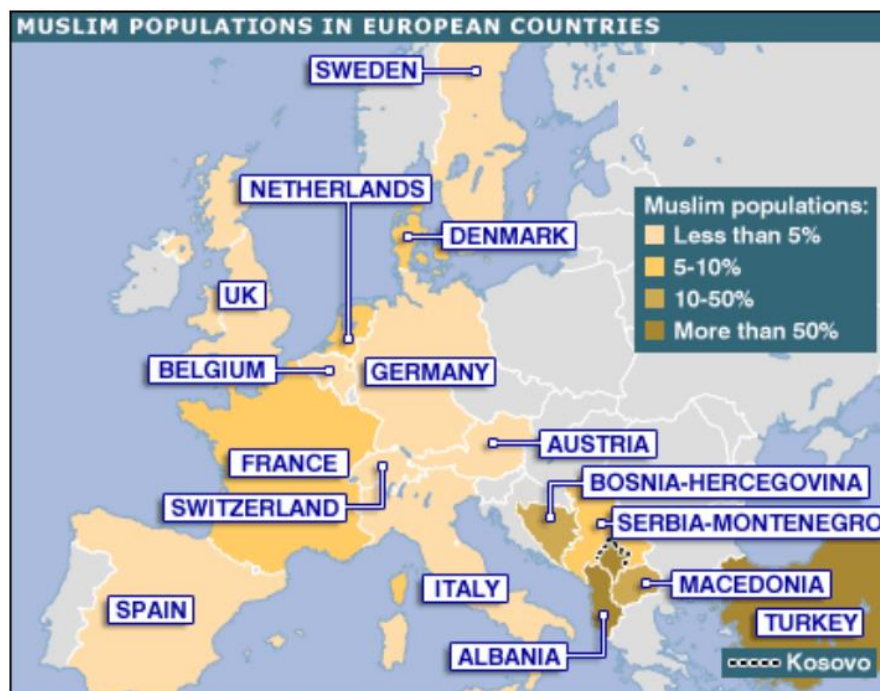

Figure 1. An overview of Muslim populations in Europe [2].

The largest Muslim population in western Europe lives in France; 5-6 million equivalent to almost 10% of the France population (2004) [2]. Two-third of them has their root in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria as former colonies of France [14]. 945000 Muslims live in Netherland; almost 6% of the population (2004) [2]. Many of them came from former colonies, Suriname and Indonesia. There is also a Somali minority [14]. Spain, United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Belgium have a Muslim population of 2-4% [2].

Islam in Scandinavia

Denmark - has a Muslim population of roughly 270000 which corresponds to 5% of the entire population [2]. Denmark has faced three waves of Muslim immigration. Groups of foreign workers moved to Denmark in the 1960s and 1970s, mainly from Turkey, Pakistan and former Yugoslavia. In the late 70s, families of the foreign workers joined them, known as the second wave of immigration. As the third wave, many Muslim asylum seekers approached Denmark in the 1980s (mainly from Iran, Iraq, Gaza and West Bank) and 1990s (Somalia and Bosnia) [14].

Norway - About 160000 Muslims live in Norway (2009), about 3% of the population [2]. The largest communities are respectively from Pakistan, Somalia, Iraq, Bosnia, Iran and Turkey. More than two-third of Iraqi immigrants have moved to Norway during the past 10 years. Bosnians moved to Norway mainly during 1990s [14].

Sweden - Statistics propose a range of 250000-450000 Muslims in Sweden [2, 3]. This is equivalent to 3-4% of the entire population. They are quite diverse from Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Bosnia, Lebanon, Morocco, Somali, Ethiopia etc. In the 1980s, the Turkish population constituted the majority of Muslim population which is now diminished to almost 10%. Islam is the second official religion and there exist at least six built mosques [14].

Theoretical discussion

Transnational identities; messiness of human identity

One of the commonly known sources of political identity in the contemporary era is named to be national identity. Since the Enlightenment the notion of *nation* has prevailed at the cost of weakening religious regimes of thoughts. Thence, as Anderson[5] delineates in *Imagined Communities*, members of a society imagine themselves to be part of a socially constructed frame, *nation*, through which they connect and identify themselves [15]. However, national identity is discussed to be only an element of a bigger identity puzzle which is sometimes overplayed. Ethnicity with its all sub-elements – kinship, customs, religion etc. - is another parameter brought into light which in many cases has contributed to formation of the basis of nations in the modern time [16]. Both national and ethnic identities are also discussed whether they are formed consciously or are appeared naturally as a result of collective experiences [17, 18].

Herein, a number of sub-, supra- and trans-national identities can play a challenging role to the national identities. Although ethnicity can be a cornerstone of a national identity it can also play a challenging role as in case of some ethnic minorities. Regional political bodies (e.g. the European Union) can gradually become a supranational source of identity [19]. Immigrants, by maintaining their ties to their country of origin, form a transnational identity which yet challenges national identities [20, 21]. Religion is also another strong source of identity which can travel beyond the national borders [22]. Civilizational identity, as the highest form of cultural and religious identity, is yet another term used by Huntington[6] [23].

Many of the abovementioned definitions show not much of resilience in term of encompassing several identity elements all in one and therefore tend to prevail a rigid understanding of human identity. In contrast, in view of scholars such as Sen[7] such a notion of identity minimizes the complexity and web-like nature of human characteristics [24].

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[5] Benedict Anderson
[6] Samuel Hantington
[7] Amartya Sen

Muslims in Europe; an intricate presence

Presence of Muslims in Europe has been examined from different perspectives, with integration as a core focus. However, complexities of the Muslim population in Europe have made it a very daunting task to exercise a systematic approach for studying its dynamisms. Scholars have chosen varieties of paths to address the issue; historic struggle of Islam and Christianity, Muslim vs. non-Muslim immigrants, immigration motivations, Muslims' origin, socio-economic parameters, education, integration policies, colonial history etc.

European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) has continuously reported Muslims living in suburban areas and exercising high unemployment rates [25]. A penchant has been to frame this situation as a consecutive outcome of lumping together two intrinsically incompatible and antagonistic cultures; Islamic and Christian (or in some views Islamic and secular). This reading of the situation retrieves the historic confrontation of the Muslim world and the Europe [26]; a reading which very much resonates the "clash of civilizations" theory. Caldwell believes Europe's lenience has over time provided a ground for Muslims to inaugurate a battle against the European society from within. Just in line with this, the term *Eurabia* was introduced [27] to depict Muslims in Europe with high desire to enforce Sharia law which has ultimately turned Europe into a land docile to *Jihad* ideology. Likewise, the term *Londonistan*, coined by Phillips[8], has been applied with the same perception [28].

Some quantitative studies have argued for exceptionalism of Muslim immigrants. *Bisin et al.* used a British survey based on which they conclude that Muslim immigrants in Britain integrate slower and less as compared to their non-Muslim counterparts [29]. They add yet that their finding is education independent. In contrary, others have emphasized the imperative role which political and economic conditions (e.g. democracy potency, poverty) of immigrants' country of origin play. Manning[9] and Roy[10] claim that their scrutinises show that indeed immigrants coming from not democratic and poor countries tend to assume their new identity faster in comparison with immigrants from so to say first world countries [30].

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[8] Melanie Phillips
[9] Alan Manning
[10] Sanchari Roy

Other scholars have yet shed light on another determinative element, socio-economic conditions of Muslim immigrants. Many Muslim communities in Europe suffer from high unemployment rates, sometimes reported as high as four-fold higher than the national average [31-33]. Accordingly, Hargreaves[11] has argued that the key parameter disadvantaging Muslim immigrants in France has been socio-economic status of them rather than their religion [34]. Blanc-Chaleard[12] concluded the same, comparing Algerian and early Italian immigrants [35]. She has also pointed the role which colonial histories might play in this matter.

Integration policies of the host societies have been the focus of some other scholars with a classic reference to multiculturalism versus assimilation. Favell[13] has compared Britain and France in this regard and has linked their policies to their public philosophies [36]. Despite different integration policies across Europe, the outcome does not seem to be very successful [29, 37]. However, all the complexities around Muslim communities in Europe [38] has not hindered them all to achieve successful status in European societies as Klausen[14] has reviewed a number of them in his book [39].

Many of the observations upon Muslims in Europe, suffer from a common problem: conceiving Muslim population as a unified community whereas in reality there is no solid body as Muslims. Among all the varieties in Muslim communities, the main objective in this work was to shed light on a not well-seen fraction rather than making sense of Muslim communities as a whole.

What is meant by Euro-Islamic identity/European Muslim?

A number of thinkers/scholars have addressed this subject although not all of them used the actual term *Euro-Islamic identity/European Muslim.* A key consideration on this subject is to understand it under a broader topic: encounter of Islam and modernity (in its Western meaning). This encounter has begun several decades back probably by the colonization era, when some Muslim countries were colonized. Besides, migration of Muslim individuals to western countries has also provided the

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[11] Alec G. Hargreaves
[12] Marie-Claude Blanc-Chaleard
[13] Adrian Favell
[14] Jytte Klausen

context for such an encounter. The way modernity as a whole is perceived by Muslims shapes their subsequent reaction and this is of course valid for the both involved sides. European's reaction to Muslims and their presence in Europe is also based on their perception of Muslims and their religion, Islam.

Along this encounter, as Ramadan believes, Muslims are under a strong pressure today in European countries [10]:

"... they face the difficulty of regular practice, genuine respect for Islamic rules, the weight of being part of a minority often labelled as foreign, different, if not barbarian, fundamentalist or fanatic."

Under this pressure, two very common reactions can be recognized among Muslims. A group of them defined their identity in contrast to their surroundings. Any influence from the surrounding society is unwelcomed and there is no will to outreach their host society. A desire to defend Islamic identity has led to overstress the importance of some details of Islamic rules (fiqh) such as graveyards, food etc. On the other hand, the European view of Muslims presence in Europe (i.e. problematic presence) was internalized by some Muslims and thus they did right the opposite of the former group. They tried to forget/ignore their background/culture and imitate the culture and traditions of the host society, hoping for a warm welcome as a sign of being accepted as an insider [10]:

"… they try to erase their specificity in order to dilute themselves in society and, thus, become as invisible as possible, become one of theirs, an authentic European."

The latter reaction was what was thought to happen. After some time and over a generation or so the Muslim immigrants would be assimilated and their approach towards religion would be *Europeanised*. But what happened in fact was that all these triggered some Muslims to think about the repercussions of their situation. This was concomitant with rethinking of many concepts such as: identity, core of Islamic thoughts, Islamic rules in modern era etc. Indeed a will was gradually shaped to redefine Islamic identity according to the new situation. Immigrant Muslims, like any other minority group, are after answering the question: *Who are we?* [10]

"...Is there an inherent difficulty in defining what a Muslim is vis-à-vis Western civilization? ... Has the experience of being a minority, and living as such, developed a kind of syndrome within the Muslim-European mind which prevents Muslims from considering themselves except through the mirror of a rejected world?"

The same concern can be recognized in a global scale where many Muslim countries feel the huge cultural, economic and political waves of modernity. Along this contemplation a number of scholars gradually came up with modern readings of Islam through which Muslims can be faithful to the message of Quran and teachings of the prophet Mohammad while they welcome positive elements of modernity and (in case of Muslims living in Europe) respect the legal framework of European countries. This is indeed how the term *European Muslim* is born and it should be interpreted in this context. European Muslims are those who, while having concerns such as those mentioned above, are capable of defining their identity based on their Islamic references and not through the reflections of some aliens. They try to have a subjective position –more recognizable in second and third generations of immigrant Muslims - and little by little go beyond destructive feelings of being foreigners and turn the nature of their presence in Europe to a different and contributing one. Furthermore, they have the will to accomplish and defend their identity, as Ramadan puts it [10], *not as Arabs, Pakistanis or Indians but henceforth as Europeans*.

How is that reachable?

Developing such an Islam will not come true as easy as it might sound. Numerous arguments and compelling reasons are required to demonstrate that such a reading of Islam is viable and assure the religious addressees that it is not against the soul of Quran and Sunnah. Many explicit sayings of Quran and the Prophet Mohammad and also many traditions known to be Islamic (at least in the public eye) might sound contradictory to many of European cultural norms and life styles. Course of social presence of men and women in society, personal relation of men and women, rules of marriage, women's clothing, food diet and many other social rules extracted from Fiqh are among the known-to-be indispensable elements of Islam which might not seem to fit in social ambience of European countries. In more general terms, there is a

need for reconciling *"... the presence of two contradictory tendencies: an initial and intimate culture of duty and community in contrast to an environment promoting freedom and autonomy"* [10].

There have been several approaches towards these contradictions in order to offer a solution. Some of those can be categorized as below:

Process of understanding a text; hermeneutic principles

Some of the scholars in the field, e.g. Shabestari [40] and Soroush [41], exploit the hermeneutic principles to argue in favour of different viable readings of a text. They believe meaning of a text is a hidden fact until it is *interpreted*. Indeed, text talks through interpretation which is done by an interpreter. This is not just valid for texts but also for any interactive behaviour and utterance. If there is no quarrel upon understanding a text it is not because the text is explicit enough or self-explanatory but it is rather due to the fact that all are interpreting that in a same manner. Thus, text perception is not evident by itself. As a result, meaning of a text should be recognized, chosen and thereafter justified, and of course undue interpretations should be disregarded.

Furthermore, any perception is built upon a *pre-knowledge* which is base of any further perceiving process. If there is absolutely no knowledge about an issue then there would be no will to understand it either. In fact, understanding begins with questioning and the latter is undoable without a prior knowledge; a knowledge which pertains to the question, its language and the text [40, 41].

It is also important to note that *interests* and *expectations* of the interpreter can/will guide him/her along the perceiving process. During the interpretation process, the interpreter will only achieve type of answers which he/she expects. Indeed, the determined expectations of the interpreter shape the path of questions and answers. Refining these all is an imperative duty of any interpreter. Furthermore, as an interpreter, it is crucial to consider the interests and expectations of the text creator, the historical situation in which the text is created and the historical circumstances of the addressees. This will be of high importance in cases which the interpreter and the creator are not contemporaries. Here, the meaning of the text should be somehow translated to the historical horizon of the interpreter and clearly this is not a translation from a language to another but rather translation of experiences. In other words, it is a

process of understanding the experiences of the people in the past through the questions of contemporary people. These all are due to the fact that human's life is *historical*.

In all, based on hermeneutic knowledge, understanding texts is utterly dependent on interpreter's pre-knowledge correctness and his/her interests and expectations. Therefore, any interpreter should primarily go through the pre-knowledge and interests of him/her and expose them to others' judgement and criticism [40, 41].

All the abovementioned principles can be applied in the process of understanding Quran as a text, as well. This has been the approach of many interpreters of Quran which helped them to understand it in its historical horizon and come up with new readings; readings which try to go beyond the apparent meaning of the text and search for the underlying issues which text addresses. One of the great consequences of such an approach is to expect guidance of religion in certain type of issues rather than wide and broad range of matters. In this view, Islamic rules (fiqh) do not determine, for instance, the desirable political regime but they are about to answer questions regarding general divine values. Thus, it is up to humans to decide what type of political, economic, social and cultural structures they want. For instance, the teaching of Quran regarding social and political status of a society is to bring justice. Thence, it is duty of humans to find out which kind of political regimes serves this teaching better and brings justice. Therefore, what should not be changed is the principle of justice but what can change along the time are the methods and means through which justice and fairness are accomplished. In other words, Islam does not follow the purpose of ignoring human's culture and findings and founding a new life style and civilization all from zero. Instead, it is about to direct the already existing civilizations. Thus, Islamic rules should have a responsive nature rather than establishing and this is strongly against those who think every single rule of life should be extracted from Quran and Sunnah [41].

Socially constructed concepts and Wittgenstein family resemblance

Scholars such as Dabbagh[15] has appealed to concepts such as *socially constructed notions*, *Wittgenstein family resemblance* and *nominalism* to argue against *semantic*

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[15] Soroush Dabbagh

essentialists and thence pave the path for a viable reading of Islam which reconciles with some readings of Western modern perceptions. The very first step in Dabbagh's line of argument is the discern between concepts that are socially constructed - e.g. war, game, modernity, democracy, religion, liberalism etc. - and those that are not e.g. sea, forest, river, tree, flower etc. Definitions of the former are strongly influenced by people's relations and contacts within human communities whereas the latter is very much independent of that. That is Dabbagh believes the socially constructed concepts and their constituent elements are subjected to constant changes over time and accordingly, it is not possible to determine a pre-set essence for them.

In line with this, he also appeals to the idea of family resemblance by Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein argues that similarities of members of a family do not necessarily mean that a number of elements are in common among all of them. The family members might have different eye colours or voice tones but still they are all known as members of one family. Dabbagh applies the same argument in discussion of socially constructed concepts and hence suggests using concepts such as religion and modernity in plural forms; religions and modernities [42, 43]. This, indeed, opens up to a number of viable readings of these concepts which by itself increases the chance of formation of an accommodating combination of them.

Islam, secular-states, democracy and tolerance

Many European states are known to be secular with a kind of democratic political regime in practice. Many European citizens might assume that Islam as a religion and Muslims as its followers, by definition, can not fit in secular and democratic frame of European political structure. Muslims have firm beliefs in Islamic teachings and are strongly faithful to God while belief in freedom and democracy does not accept any firm and set thought. Likewise, secular-states should not welcome any religious thoughts or practices. On the other hand, some Muslims might think the same and understand Islam as set of thoughts which are incompatible with secular-state and democracy. Development of a Euro-Islamic identity can not come true without a decent explanation regarding these ambiguities.

One of the scholars who has contemplated in this area is Abdolkarim Soroush. In his view, the story of secularism can not be truly narrated without addressing modern scientific thoughts. As nature was incrementally treated by science, the metaphysical-

philosophical mind-set got marginalized and the search for ultimate causes was replaced by the search for material causes: "*the question was shifted from why to how*". Indeed, the contemplations of modern human did not have an interpreting and understanding nature anymore but rather an aggressive and transforming nature. A kind of same approach was applied regarding social and political deliberations and people dared to reform social and political spheres [41]:

"*Thus we may define secularism as a regime in whose polity no values and rules are beyond human appraisal and verification and in which no protocol, status, position or ordinance is above public scrutiny.*"

In this sense, secularism could delimit religion (at least in some European countries) and recognized the right of legislation for *people*. Nonetheless, religion and secular-state should not necessarily oppose each other. It is just about the boundaries and roles of each side. As Soroush puts it [41]:

"*Human beings can remain spiritual and religious while enjoying the benefits of rational administration of their affairs ... [modern world] also allows a different kind of religiosity, a learned and examined religion, to prosper on a higher level. Scientific treatment of political and economical affairs does in no sense preclude a well-defined role for God and religion in political, social and natural affairs. Determining the limits of that role and the exact form of that relationship remain to be worked out by scholars.*"

What is prominent in Soroush's view is that he considers secularism as a sort of reason which is *neither religious nor antireligious* thus there should not be any intrinsic contradictory with religion, necessarily. In respect to Islam and democracy, Soroush declares that democracy does not ask people not to carry any conviction or be ambivalent all the time. He believes democracy and relativistic liberalism are not identical. In fact, democracy is a method by which social, political and economic affairs can be settled. People who accept democratic structures can still believe in various thoughts and have certain judgements and viewpoints. Embracing freedom does not equate incapability in deciding or acting upon certain thoughts. What is not acceptable or contradictory to democracy and freedom is to impose a specific idea or

violate citizens' rights not following a particular line of thinking. Thoughts and ideas can/should be criticized. One might consider a particular thought utterly wrong and erroneous but still respect and tolerate the person who believes in that: "*tolerance concerns believers not beliefs*" [41].

Fundamental principles; core message of Islam

Another approach- chosen by some scholars such as Ramadan- which helps the development of Euro-Islamic identity, is to go after the very principles of Islam and consider its core message in daily life. As Ramadan puts it [10]:

"At a time when all the old parameters are no longer relevant within society, and when it is difficult to find guidance or solutions in the historical works, it seems necessary to return to the original sources and present clearly what, from an Islamic point of view, the priorities are in a Believer's life, both as an individual and within the community. That is, to define Who we are and What, as Muslim, is expected from us by our religion"

The goal is not to be trapped in *"some previously conceived concepts formulated in another time for another context"*. That is, the focus is on components of Muslim identity regardless of the environment. In other words, in whatever environment, a Muslim should find the necessary means by which he/she can act in line with his/her beliefs. This is an endeavour to come up with some elements outside cultural readings of Muslim individuals. The elements are named by Ramadan as bellow [10]:

Faith, Practice and Spirituality
Faith in oneness of God is an important element of Muslim identity (*tawhid*). This is an element beyond time and space and all the religious practices are to remind Muslims this very central element of their religion. Accordingly, spirituality is the way by which the believer fights against forgetting God and his presence.

An understanding of Texts and Context
Understanding is the base of a true faith. Quran and Sunnah should be understood as Islamic texts and the surrounding environment need to be realized as the context in

which Muslims live. Indeed, there should be a continuous effort to figure out the ways by which Muslims can remain faithful to the Islamic teachings in a constantly changing environment:

"As such, Muslim identity is not closed, confined within rigid and fixed principles. On the contrary, it is based on a permanent dynamic and dialectic movement between the sources and the environment in order to find a way to live in harmony."

To Educate and Transmit

Muslims have to transmit and convey what they believe in, just like what their Prophet did. Their identity is not limited within their personal area. They have to share their perception of life based upon faith and spirituality and let others choose how they want to live. In other words, Muslims have to call and invite others to what they have faith in, whether they convert to Islam or not.

To Act and to Participate

A core element of Muslim identity is to act upon beliefs. Indeed, believer's actions should be directed by his/her thoughts and ethics. A Muslim should care about the society, be part of its dynamics and try to direct it towards a better circumstance. A key element of Muslim identity is to participate in social acts, spread spiritual thoughts and promote justice. In fact, *"to be with God is to be with fellow humans"*.

Muslims in the west has the accountability to build up a Europeanized identity, having the four abovementioned elements as its core. This is an approach which can guide Muslims in Europe through a middle path which is neither reactive nor subservient to the host society.

Islam and Art

One of the main languages of the youth in European countries is artistic modes of expression e.g. music, cinema etc. A probable choice for some Muslim families in the West could be to hinder any access to European cultural products since the message they convey is against Islamic moralities. As Ramadan puts it [10]:

"This is tantamount to switching off television sets and radios, throwing away newspapers and magazines, and avoiding cinemas, theatres, and exhibitions."

Instead, a possible choice could be to react realistically and try to be selective towards the cultural products meanwhile using the same expression means to convey a preferred message. There have been quite many diverse Islamic views concerning practices of music, singing, drawing and photography. Artistic practices are not utterly forbidden by all religious leaders. In other words, if the content of these artistic practices is not against Islamic ethics and does not guide people to ignore/forget their duties towards fellow humans and God then they are allowed to be practiced. Thus, Muslims in the West can use the already existing artistic means and generate cultural products by which they can communicate and interact with their surrounding environment.

Fundamental rights in Europe

If the presence of Muslims in Europe is not recognized socially and legally it would be difficult to imagine any room for development of a Euro-Islamic identity. That is, Muslims in Europe should get to know the environment they are living in and embrace the civil rights they have. In Ramadan's view this is a critical step in order to understand the process by which Muslims' presence in Europe can be recognized and benefit from legal rights. Getting familiar with legal civil rights in each country will help the residents to stand for their rights and act upon their thoughts, within legal frames. Ramadan counts four fundamental rights in this regard [10]:

The right to practice Islam

In Europe there is no prohibition against religious practices such as praying, fasting, paying Zakat (practice of altruistic giving) etc. Although there are some controversies about issues such as building mosques and Hijab but the right of freedom of worship is recognized.

The right to knowledge

Islam has encouraged Muslims to seek knowledge. In Europe, the legal rule of obligatory education for all citizens provides a chance for Muslims to act upon the advice of their religion.

The right to found organizations/autonomous representation

No rule bans Muslims from establishing organizations and communities, neither at local nor at national levels. They should acknowledge this situation as some did in countries such as France with more than two thousands associations.

The right to appeal to the law

Muslims, like anyone else, have the right to appeal to the legal structure and judiciary system in Europe. If they find a court decision unfair, they can ask for rehearing and review. The legal potentials in the judiciary systems should not be neglected.

Third space theory

Third space theory is attributed to Bhabha[16] and deals with identity, particularly in a postcolonial era. In his book, The location of culture, he emphasises upon understanding every individual as a hybrid entity which is result of different cultural representations and therefore is unique [44]. By this, he tries to open up space for marginalized individuals and help them to gradually play a subjective role in the society:

"*My purpose in specifying the enunciative present in the articulation of culture is to provide a process by which objectified others may be turned into subjects of their history and experience.*"

He understands culture as an *incomplete* and *uneven* meaning and value generation which is *produced in the act of social survival*. In his view, culture as such is transnational since many of the current postcolonial discourses are built upon particular *histories of cultural displacement*, such as the journey of *the civilizing*

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[16] Homi K. Bhabha

mission and the post World War II migration from Third World to the West. This has led to a *hybrid location of cultural value* from which [44]:

"The postcolonial perspective [...] attempts to revise those nationalist or nativist pedagogies that set up the relation of Third World and First World in a binary structure of opposition. The postcolonial perspective resists the attempt at holistic forms of social explanation. It forces a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres."

This is highly relevant when we discuss Euro-Islamic identity. The third space theory might be quite helpful when we want to delineate the situation of second generation migrants or local converts who are trying to move the cultural boundaries and gain a subjective position while insisting on their hybrid identity.

Case I:

"I hope I can inspire someone with my music."

1. "I am so many things"

The first interviewee was potentially a very decent case for my chosen research topic. He is a second-generation member of a migrant Pakistani family who moved to Sweden some 40 years ago. He was born in Sweden (in 1979), brought up there and went to Swedish school. Firstly, It was of interest to figure out if he was attached more to any of the two countries - his parent's country of origin (Pakistan) and the country he was born in (Sweden) - since the topic of this study is very much interlinked with the issue of migrant's integration in the host society and digging into that field could have provide signs where the interviewee might stand in respect to Euro-Islamic identity. He speaks both languages, Urdu (national language of Pakistan) and Swedish, fluently. He regularly travels to Pakistan and knows the country quite well and is even familiar with its historical sites.

Me: You were born here, right? So what do you have in mind about Pakistan?
The interviewee: I love Pakistan.
Me: You had been there? Do you remember anything?
The interviewee: I have been there many times. I was there just two weeks ago and my older son was born there.
Me: So you lived there for a while.

The interviewee: I have been there many times. I have been there maybe 11-12 times and I have been there about three years if you count how long I stayed there. I know Urdu fluently. I actually learned Urdu before I learn Swedish because at home we were talking [Urdu] and same thing with my kids. I have been also travelling a lot around in Pakistan because we have relatives all over Pakistan.

Couple of years back, he has married a Pakistani girl in Pakistan and travelled back to Sweden. Indeed, I found him very much updated and enthusiastic about Pakistan. He had strong bonds with his parent's country of origin, a situation, which as I describe further on, has not been as such all the time. Meanwhile he was well settled in Sweden, his wife has learned Swedish and his two sons were going to Swedish kindergarten. However, I was not satisfied yet so I decided to dig into it more and ask him directly:

Me: I ask you a quick question and you give me a quick answer! Where are you from?
The interviewee: I am from ... quick answer! ... I am from ...... the hard thing is to give a quick answer on this.

His hesitation assured me I am on the right track so I asked him to take his time and contemplate upon this.

The interviewee: When I was 17 in the gymnasiet [high school] we had a paper: nationella prov. The question was: do you feel Swedish or European. I started thinking. I thought I can not say this because I am Swedish but I am not only Swedish. I am also Pakistani. I was also very influenced by American music and life style so I said I am citizen of this world. I can not really say that I am one thing because I am so many things... I usually say I am 100% Swedish but I am also 100% Pakistani. I am also 100% something else. I think there is a big movement today who feel this especially because of globalization and especially young people. Not everyone of course but lot of people.

This was an appropriate ground to open up the discussion about Euro-Islamic identity. If we understand Euro-Islamic identity as a result of two cultural-historical streams encounter, then it can not be disputed as an isolated topic from immigration and

immigrants; whom this encounter was partly occurred through them. The presence of immigrants, whether Muslim or not, in their new environment and the way they identify themselves is not independent of the country they come from; a place where their traditions and beliefs are rooted in. Therefore discussing national identities was quite relevant.

I am so many things describes best the multi-facet situation of the interviewee. He, further on, tried to elaborate his situation by help of a theory named *third space* (attributed to Homi Bhabha – see theory section). The third space theory is based on the assumption that people who live in presence of variant cultural representations should be understood as *hybrids* (i.e. *being so many things*). Accordingly, hybrids as such feel more comfortable and settled in a sphere other than their familial or public sphere. This third space is neither propagating the so called norm of the society nor advertising the domestic values but rather providing a room to be little bit of everything and, as the interviewee pointed, that is where many second generation youth migrants feel most at home (i.e. comfortable).

2. *"We are not automatically only doing as our parents did"*

When it comes to education, he had his finger in many pies. He had courses in comparative religion and music production and due to the former he was quite familiar with the topic of the study and the discussions around it. Thus his answers were very measured and I had to narrow down my questions and be more specific:

Me: How much you recognize the term Euro-Islamic identity? How do you understand it? What kind of Islam is that? European Islam.
The interviewee: … I recognize the term but I would say it is hard to say Euro-Islamic identity is one thing. Every country in Europe has its own challenges and I think it is very much a question of what generation you are [talking about], first generation, second generation … It is complex. There are so many variables.
Me: Well, let's focus on Sweden and then let's focus on not first generation but second generation of young Muslims. How do you think the Islam of them is different from the first generation or other Muslims in their parent's country of origin?

Initially, his answer had a bit of historical taste. In his view, when the first generation Muslim immigrants entered the non-Muslim European countries an important question occupied their minds for some time, *who are we? what is our identity?* and some of them, as an answer, resorted to their religion as part of their identity so they emphasized on religious practices and traditions in order to revive their identity. However there is something different about second generation:

The interviewee: Lot of second generation Muslims usually go directly to the source, meaning Quran and Sunnah ... When you go to another place where people are from everywhere you start seeing the differences ... We are not automatically only doing as our parents did. We see the differences and the diversity within the community. We go into depth and we can choose actually.

It sounds a huge and crucial milestone in different approach of first and second generation of migrant Muslims toward religion. The second generation Muslims, unlike the first generation, are born/brought up in a society where the vast majority of it is not following Islam. In other words, the momentum of automatically becoming a Muslim is not there. Therefore, in comparison with the first generation, the second generation should *choose* to be a Muslim; a choice which apparently has a selective and thoughtful nature.

The interviewee had a pluralistic view toward different readings and understandings of Islam and that sound to me a result of his own lived experience; living as a migrant exposed to distinct thoughts of the host society and also other migrants.

The interviewee: ... and I see that [i.e. diversity of Muslim communities] as an advantage but off course there are also some people who see that as a problem.
Me: Why did you say it could be a problem? Because it means diverging from the genuine Islam?
The interviewee: Some people have this in mind that all Muslims should be as one and we all have to think as one. It is a nice, romantic thought but it is not reality. Also during the time of the Prophet there were differences of opinion and practicing. It is part of being human ... It is even shown in researches that if there are different

mosques and mosallahs more people come and attend than if there was only one. And that does not mean there is rivalry.

The fact that the interviewee recognized the diversity of thoughts within Muslim communities is very much close to what I discussed under subtitle of *democracy and tolerance* in theory section. While a Muslim might not agree with someone else's thoughts (a belief), it is still plausible to tolerate the holder of that thoughts (a believer).

3. *"Not drinking alcohol is not what makes you Muslim"*

Thence, I tried to dig into his thoughts further and find out the elements by which he identifies himself as a Muslim. In particular, I was curious to know how unavoidable the common Islamic traditions are to him. In other words, it was of interest to know how far he goes beyond the common practices all the way to the underlying Islamic thoughts and grounds.

Me: How you know yourself as a Muslim? What do you do that makes you a Muslim here in Sweden? Is it certain practices? Is it different attitude that you have toward the whole world or life? …
The interviewee: In general I would say it is the belief in Allah and creation and oneness of Allah. Everything else is, you can say, extra … I have been working a lot with youth. I know some young people say we are Muslim because my father or my mother is Muslim, I do not eat pork, I do not drink alcohol but for me that is not what makes you Muslim.

This is very much in line with what I discussed in the theory section under title of *Fundamental principles; core message of Islam.* It seems when some individuals within Muslim communities do not find any ground/reason for a blind imitation of the Islamic traditions, while still having a will not to entirely detach from their roots, they tend to refer to the source and re-understand the text in a way that is considered helpful and guiding in their new environment. Indeed, it seems their scrutiny leads them to go beyond the surface and perceive the core message of their religion through

which they are in a way re-born and their identity is re-built. However, at least in this case, the interviewee is not unmindful of the practices. He still tries to comply the Islamic rules but knowledgeably and with a different perspective:

Me: How does that belief reverberates in your life? How does it reflect in your every day life?

The interviewee: I try to follow what I believe according to principles. Like, I try to attend Jom'a prayer every Friday, also on Friday evenings I go to a gathering in mosque. We do Zekr … Sufi style. To my children,… we try to eat halal if possible, we celebrate some holidays and Eid, Fetr. We follow Ramadan … I made Haj with my wife couple of years ago… I always had friends from different beliefs, backgrounds. I can sit with them. I can talk with them, I can hang out with them… I just have my way of seeing things… my perspective on things.

4. "I just ate pork to be rebellious"

The story got even more interesting when the interviewee started to talk about a period in his life that he was *rebellious against his parents*, a period which I can refer to as disobedience phase, a reactive behaviour towards blind imitation and the contrast of family traditions and surrounding society.

The interviewee: When I was young I did not actually follow the teachings. I was rebellious against my parents. I actually deliberately ate pork, even if I did not really like it. I just ate pork to be rebellious. I used to drink a lot.

Obviously a way for him to show disagreement to his parent's thoughts (or to differentiate himself from his parents) has been to do right the opposite of some common religious rules which his parents were standing for; not eating pork, not drinking alcohol. Therefore, reference of someone who has been through such a disobedience phase to some of the religious practices can not be due to family traditions or social norms but rather lack of a meaning-creating element in his/her life or as the interviewee put it seeking for doing something *constructive*. This becomes to some extent more understandable when we consider the time period at which all these

are occurring; late teenage years, when youths potentially tend to become philosophical and seek a meaningful explanation for life.

The interviewee: I had issues with my parents and I thought maybe the issues are because of the religion and Islam but when I got a bit older I started thinking about how I was living, routines and people I was hanging with. Some things I was doing at the time were not constructive. They were basically destructive. I also knew many people, non-believers or believers, from different religions and philosophies so I started exploring my own fate. [In addition] I went to Mecca to do Omrah with my family when I was 17. That also affected me a lot. Then when I was about 18-20 I started practicing and follow more teachings.

In line with this transition, it was of interest to know how his return to some religious practices has influenced his social relations. Viability of an identity which tends to have both European and Islamic elements can barely be imagined if it is not interactive with its surrounding (i.e European societies). In other words, it would be self-defeating if being identified as European Muslim leads to social isolation.

The interviewee: Off course it was a big transition, for me and also for my friends because all of the sudden: "I can not. I will not do this…". But I still was out with them …going to club, trying to have good time but cutting out the bad things… I stopped drinking but just to show my friends that I am not extremist in that way or I can meet them half way sometimes I cheer with Champaign but for me I just take one sip. I respect if they have another perspective or belief and I can participate but I also have my limits.
Me: Are you member of any club? Dance, sport …
The interviewee: I used to when I was young; football, boxing… Nowadays on Friday evenings, we get together, read some Quran and discuss. It is not formal and non-Muslims are also welcomed. We also have some Swedes who have converted to Islam.
Me: If you think of your friends, can you categorize them? Like Muslim friends, Swedish friends or it is really mixed?
The interviewee: I have lot of friends that are not Muslims but I do not hang out with them as much as I used to because I work and I have a family and kids so I do not

have the time. Those that I nowadays hang out with more are Muslims but that is because of practical reasons. If you look at my friends on Facebook it is all mixed.

I tried to go beyond personal-level relations and figure out how connected the interviewee is with the traditions of the Swedish society. Therefore I asked if he celebrates any of Swedish traditions.

The interviewee: Yes, for instance we celebrate Christmas but from a Muslim perspective. We also celebrate mid-summer. It is another holiday where people get together. Also sometimes the New Year. It is all more of a way to hang out with my friends and family. For me it is no problem to celebrate a holiday as long as I know where I am standing and what my principles are.

5. "I am always aiming to speak to universal audiences; I want my music to be inclusive."

Along the interview it was revealed that the interviewee has an artistic character. He composes musical pieces and has been singing for quite long time. This was of high interest for me mainly from two perspectives. Firstly, it was very appealing to know how he has lumped together his religious thoughts and Islamic rules from one side and artistic affairs, particularly singing, from another side. Secondly, I was curious to hear about his music, what he sings about and the way his music was received by his surrounding society. I started asking about any contradictions he might see between Islamic thoughts and artistic affairs:

The interviewee: The act of singing is not controversial but [rather] music. It is a grey area and it is not all Muslims and not all Ulama [who oppose music/singing]. In Quran there is no mention of music being Haram. Another thing is the way you talk. To talk in vain or in a way which is not constructive is not good so it is very much about your intention.

Again, what he brought up was about diversity of opinions within Muslim communities upon certain issues which, in view of outsiders, might be ignored or not

recognized. It can easily happen to fall into a reductionist approach, cut *all* to *one* and simply ignore the *grey area*. I proceeded asking about type of his music and the message he tries to convey:

The interviewee: The base of my music is Solo. I used to do rap before, when I was younger. I started singing quite early. I have been doing this for almost 20 years.
Me: Do you play any instrument?
The interviewee: I write but I don't play. I sing.
Me: What do you sing about?
The interviewee: You might find my lyrics interesting ... basically my perspective on life and society.
Me: Can you name some of your songs? You sing in English or Swedish?
The interviewee: There is one song which half of it is in Swedish. It was written for a special project. The song is named "Peace". Another song is "I See" which is very much about [the fact] that I see how people treat each other and what is my view upon that.

I found an element of social concern/care in the theme of his songs. He basically calls for change, happiness, altruistic and just acts, peace and calmness in his lyrics. Indeed I can recognize some of the Islamic fundamental principles, named by Ramadan (see theoretical section), reverberated in his songs; fundamentals such as caring about the society, promoting justice, spiritual life etc.

Parts of his lyrics are revealing:

The Vibe	**I See**
…	…
where there is happiness nothing called stress	i think how some people they just have it all
… embrace the big love the most giving nearby for us to see if we really and honestly	they just have it all cause they make the other fall
wanna feel the presence it will set you free	… ask what is wrong where the justice gone
	…

Fooled	**Nothing**
I wanted you to come and listen for a	…
while	why don't we try to find a way to bring
feel this groove taking you on a ride	some warmth here to stay
free your mind it's cool	our souls, broken, chattered need some
it's time to feel our senses	nursing here today
for a while you know it's time to care	…
about	

However, what I did not find reflected in the songs was the singer's lived experience as a migrant Muslim. There is no sign or footprint in the lyrics that would lead me to conclude the singer is having a salient religious background or is a migrant. That would have been something I expected so I asked him directly:

Me: You did not have any song about your experience as a Muslim here in Sweden, or somehow linked to that? Or the discrimination maybe you felt?

The interviewee: No, not really. Because I have never really seen [i.e. depicted] myself as discriminated but off course I have been through that situations. I just keep it away from me since it does not do me any good.

Me: I do not see any salient religious background in your music. Why is that so? Is this intentional?

The interviewee: I never had the ambition to do religious music. To be honest I have problem with religion, the term religion. I think the word is excluding. In my mind, I always wanted to include. I want my music to be universal. Basically in lot of my lyrics I am actually referring to Allah but I do not make it that openly. For me, it does not matter what religion you are following. You can still agree on lot of things because they are universal. I am always aiming to be able to speak to universal audiences.

Me: Singing is something you want to continue with?

The interviewee: Yes. I love music. It is huge part of my life.

I was also curious to know how widespread these kinds of activities (e.g. artistic affairs) are among Muslim individuals. This would provide not much of insight into

the interviewee's thoughts but rather could depict the situation of individuals such as the interviewee within the Muslim communities.

The interviewee: *Some people are Muslim and they are content with that. Some people go into depth, try to practice and they have an aim and goal. The latter usually try to avoid getting into these kinds of things even if they have done it before because they think it is waste of time. But music for ma has been huge part of my life. When I was a teenager I had problem with my parents and music gave me positive energy so it meant a lot to me and I am quite good at it. I also feel that I will be able to convey my experiences of life through music and hopefully I can inspire someone with my music as the way I was inspired.*

At the end, he brought up a new aspect of the study which had not attracted my attention before; differentiation between Muslims in Europe and those in The States or Canada. To me, this was not the main concern of the study but still important to have in mind and be mindful about it.

<div align="center">

Case II

"Make me into the best that I can be"

</div>

1. "I was a searcher. I had to question everything."

The status of the second interviewee was entirely different, a 36-year old guy with no root/background in Islamic cultures/traditions. He is a Swede born in a small city in south-east of Sweden with strong history in Christian customs, who turned into Islam when he was roughly in his early thirties; such a questionable event. He has been a moral and ethics (named as lif kunskap – life knowledge) teacher in a Muslim school (regular school plus courses on Arabic and Islam) and is trying to learn Arabic. Beside the main research questions of the thesis, Euro-Islamic identity and its elements, there were other case-specific queries which I had to consider first. Primarily, it was of high interest for me to understand why he decided to turn into religion, even though the social Swedish context which he was brought up in is not known to have an explicit religious momentum, at least in eyes of an alien observer. Moreover, I was curious to know why he ultimately turned to Islam and not Christianity. Therefore I started the interview right from there:

Me: How come you turned to Islam?
The interviewee: I started reading the Quran…There are so many answers to that question. I was a searcher but I had rejected the Ibrahamic [religions] monotheistic religions and searched for meaning of life in philosophy. I did not believe in god but I had a belief in the books in some way. I thought there was something special with the

holy books of every religion. Religion was the only subject at school which I scored the highest. So I was really interested but I rejected the idea of God, it was like an ancient thing. I read the bible and I rejected all the three [Christianity, Judaism and Islam – since all fell in the same category]. Then I dared to read the Quran.

As it is said, the starting point for the interviewee's trajectory has been the will of searching for *meaning of life* as a *searcher*. He explained later that his mother has played a considerable role in term of encouraging him to ruminate and find reasonable arguments for his deeds. Although he was born in a region in Sweden named Bible belt, her mother did not baptize her since she wanted to leave it to her son to decide upon that. Along the way he has faced religious thoughts as a kind of answer to his concerns but not a compelling one. His stance towards religious thinking and also the way his position was changed got more revealed along the interview.

Me: How old were you [when these encounters occurred]?
The interviewee: 23. A friend of mine told me "Have you read Quran?" And I said "no need for that. If I read it I let you know it is fake. I can see through it." and I started reading that. I wanted to know what is the big thing about it and also to show my friend that "I know better". Then when I came across things in Quran that I did not understand I asked. I asked Ashar [a friend of his], he was really into it. As soon as my question was answered I was back with another one, hoping that "this time I've found it. This one [sentence] should be totally wrong." I asked many people and it definitely helped clearing out my questions. Six to seven years after I read Quran for the first time, I became Muslim. So it was a long struggle. I am like a rational guy. I had to question every thing. After some time I knew it is the truth. My heart knew what the straight path is but rest of my body was like: come on man. Let's watch a movie. Let's drink a beer.

The interviewee described his contemplating period as a *struggle*. Prior to this, he has not been familiar with Islamic thoughts. In other words, he has been a non-muslim by default. Therefore, it is understandable how and why converting to Islam for such an individual can be a challenge; a struggle. Unlike someone who has been brought up in an Islamic culture/context, the interviewee had to be convinced or at least attracted enough in order to take such an uncommon step. As he described, along all the

contemplations and curiosities, he passed an *opposing phase* where he thought the flaws of religious thoughts are all clear to him and he can prove *it is fake*; a phase which did not persist. However, I was still wondering why he did not decide to follow Christianity, a religion which he was culturally/historically closer to.

Me: Did you see a big difference between Islam and Christianity? Why not Christianity? They share many things.
The interviewee: Now I have lot of respect for Christianity, as a Muslim. But before, I was born in part of Sweden named Bible Belt. There, you are either in sport or you are into Christianity. But I was into music so I was out of all these. Still, there were people on the streets asking "Have you thought about Jesus?" and since I was interested I started asking them questions and they could not answer me. For instance I asked them: "If Adam and Eve had two sons how come we are descendants of them?" And they answered me like: "You do not have to believe in that. That part of Christianity is not the truth. You can edit that out". So I thought if you think about your religion like that how you can convince me. So I rejected Christianity and that is why I rejected Islam and Judaism as well.

Clearly, the aspirant soul of the interviewee has not been satisfied by the answers he received for his questions. However, his rejection was not all due to irrelevant/unpersuasive answers. As it was revealed, there has been another aspect very much linked to the temper of those who were bearer of the religious thoughts:

The interviewee: I had really rough time. I understood that part of bible was very special but I had problem with religious people, the way they talked, the way they look upon other people. They thought they were better. I really had a big problem with that.

Furthermore, I tried to dig in more in search of other triggering factors which might had led the interviewee towards Islam. Along the interview I figured out he has married an Eritrean woman so I asked if that has played any role.

The interviewee: I married three years ago [couple of years after he turned to Islam] but I got to know her long time ago. She had a big impact on me in one way, more

into get to Quran and why to read it. But the Quran itself did the work. She had a big part in it but more to understand Muslims.

2. "I tried to peel everything off."

Now that the path and circumstances which gradually directed the interviewee towards Islam was somewhat lucid, I started questioning him about characteristics of his Islam. I was after finding out how/if Islam of a Swede is distinctive from others'.

Me: How do you think your Swedish culture is reflected or reverberated in your type of Islam? Or it is just something beside.
The interviewee: [Silence] … Uhm. I do not know.

I found him somehow uncertain, or maybe better to say in a pending situation. Therefore I tried to elaborate upon that.

Me: For instance if you look at Muslims from Pakistan, Indonesia and The States you see differences although they all count themselves as Muslim. How or if you are different from a Muslim from Pakistan?
The interviewee: Well, I do not know… [Silence]… There are certain things in Islam which are not negotiable. For instance I can not pray five Rak'a since we do it so in Sweden but if I wear a leather jacket when I pray then this is not Islam and I can claim it is my Swedish style.
Me: For you as a person who has not been raised in an Islamic culture…
The interviewee: But that is the thing too. What is Islamic? I have the same problem with saying Swedish. What is Swedish?

That is, indeed, what I was after. I wanted to know if he discerns between cultural traditions and what Ramadan discussed as core message of Islam (go to theory section). Apparently that has been the concern of the interviewee as well. It got more evident when he expressed his doubt by interrupting me, when I was talking about Islamic culture, and asking *What is Islamic?*

Me: That is what I am after. What is Islam about for you? For you as a person who has not been raised with all the cultural surroundings.

The interviewee: When I started 10-12 years ago there were Bosnian mosque, Gambian mosque, Turkish mosque. And Swedish guys had to go to one of them. But I am not a Bosnian. I am not a Gambian. When you go to Gambian mosque they have fishes from their country, their tea etc. So somewhat you had to take someone else's culture and I was not at all interested in that. So the main thing for me in the beginning was to peel everything off and see what Islam is and then I can add my own side. I do not know if I added anything from my side. I most certainly did but I think it is more for other people to see. I tried to get the core of Islam.

Then, the immediate question was, what is *core of Islam* to him and furthermore why and how the *core of Islam* was appealing to him.

Me: Tell me more about this core.

The interviewee: The basic things. For instance you have Ramadan. Ramadan for me is one month of fasting and one month of hopefully praying and contemplation and seeking. But for someone who is raised in a Muslim country Ramadan is spending time with your family, eating at sunset, three days of Eid, kids getting new cloths etc. But Ramadan is fasting for me. I think everything else except praying and fasting and worship is something else. It is not important. That is not why I became Muslim, to eat food.

Me: Do you celebrate any of the Islamic religious days? The Eid after Ramadan. Is it something to you? Or it is just a day.

The interviewee: For me I am quite happy with just having a coffee with a friend.

These all were quite in line with the first fundamental principle in Islam, which Ramadan has discussed under title of *faith, practice and spirituality*. Therefore I tried to figure out how seriously he is following the religious practices.

Me: Do you also do religious practices?

The interviewee: I try to do as much as I can. I pray. I fast. Since I got married it has been much easier. Before, I was off and on … I have been trying. Trying to build up. It

is like working out. You do not go to the heavy things since the beginning. You just go to the gym first and try the small things.

Me: Have you been to Mecca?

The interviewee: Yes. Alhamdolellah [praise be to Allah]. I did Haj actually, three years ago.

Me: How was it?

The interviewee: That was unbelievable. Incredible. That was… that was really … humbling … ah … something else. And since then all the other cities, everything else is pointless. I only want to go back there. It is the most annoying trip if you see it like travel-wise but the experience is something totally different. Incredible … Hopefully I'll get there with my wife soon Insha'Allah [God willing].

I found him highly sentimental and emotional while he was remarking on his trip to Mecca. It has been an experience which was not easy for him to explain it in words.

3. "What am I contributing to?"

If, as he said, everything except *fasting*, *praying* and *worship* was not important to him then I wanted to know how he has confronted some of the plain Islamic rules upon music, men and women relations etc. In the context of a European society such as Sweden, public belief upon the mentioned examples might seem quite inconsistent with Islamic rules and that makes my concern relevant. This became highly important when I realized the interviewee, at least in a period of time, was professionally into musical affairs. He was raised by music since he was a kid and by about 20 years of age he was a DJ at national radio. Therefore I continued asking if he has ever seen a kind of contradiction between his life style and the Islamic rules he had decided to follow.

The interviewee: I have been doing music my whole life and music in Islam is discussed upon. Some say it is good some say it is not. So that is a big question right there. And the culture I was brought up as a DJ, I was playing records at places that they are selling alcohol and my job more or less, even if I didn't want to admit it, was to make people drink and have sex. The bartender sells alcohol and if they have sex

they come back next week. That is embedded in the culture. So of course I had to question that and my first question was that: What am I contributing to? I believed in music before. I believed that force of music could heal people and give people strength. When I understood that I believe in something else the magic disappeared. I had to question that. Am I contributing to a better society? Because I am gonna be hold responsible.

The first appealing point was that he was well aware of the controversy upon music in Islam and therefore he recognizes different readings. However, the main motive which led him to question his musical affair was not the music itself but rather the atmosphere or life style he was contributing to. In other words, he did not find his job constructive, in a positive and useful manner. I think *social accountability* is the keyword here: *I am gonna be hold responsible.*

Me: So, how did you go around that?
The interviewee: For couple of years I just pushed it away. Some where I knew that I have found something that is the truth but I just did not listen to it. And I stopped reading [Quran]. But then again I started reading more. The more I read the more I felt wrong to contribute to that kind of environment. It was a long struggle for 5-6 years. My whole life, twenty four- seven, was music.
Me: But you still do some music. Right?
The interviewee: No. I have not earned a living out of it. I think for 4-5 years.
Me: So as I understand, after all these struggles you decided to put the music away.
The interviewee: The thing was like this. I did not go to the Islamic jurisprudence side to see whether music is Haram or Halal. I was not interested in that. Because I knew what my music was contributing to and I could easily see if it was good or bad. Still today, I am not interested to see what is Islamic. The easiest way to describe this is that: I believed in music since the beginning but when I started believing in God then I knew music does not have any power without God. So I stopped believing in that. So there was no need to spread it. It is easier and better for me to spread Islam.

The story of abandoning music has had another aspect as well. As it was explained, he has not been worried about Islamic jurisprudence and the religious decrees but the

gradual increase of his interest in religious thoughts just discredited music as a source of power for change. He explained further:

Me: But you could still do music as a hobby, or you could choose another type of music which is not necessarily contributing to being drunk or having sex.

The interviewee: Yes, but then again, Why? … When I understood the power of praying, I have been asking God to make me into the best that I can be, take away the bad things and give something better. Now, that is very strange for me, I have not touched the turn table for two years and that has not happened since I was 11… I do not care [about music].

4. "The letting go is important and hard"

Beside being inquisitive about his opinion on the potentially contradictive examples, I was very keen to know how/if his social life is influenced due to being a Muslim. Therefore I tried to come up with more examples/cases:

Me: May I ask if you drink alcohol?

The interviewee: I do not drink and I did not have any problem to stop drinking. When I was not a Muslim I did not drink usually. When I was 11 and started DJing, I did a course and the guy there said if you're gonna work like a DJ, you have to remember not to drink at work. If you are playing 3 or 4 times per week you are gonna become an alcoholic. And that stuck to me somehow. So I did not drink alcohol that much. I loved dancing and music. I did not like the whole other stuff, alcohol and …

Me: You dance as well?

The interviewee: No. I very rarely dance but I love dancing and watching dancing. I love dance as an art but I got stuck behind the turn table.

Me: Don't you see any contradiction between being a Muslim and dancing?

The interviewee: … Uhm …yes, there is … the thing is I grew up on hiphop and break dancing. You do not have, well now you do actually, the whole sexuality of it is not there and it is almost like a martial art. And I do not have problem with that. I think the sexuality and alcohol are big things. In Islam sexuality is something that you contain it. It is something nice but it is not for everyone. It is yours and the one you

are supposed to show it to. And of course that is a big difference with how we live here ... The alcohol thing too. Most of the social connections in Sweden are connected to alcohol ... you meet at an after work or at home. To be social is to be drunk, the same thing with dancing. If you are gonna dance you have to drink. I always hated that. Before I become a Muslim too. You dance for someone else, it is not you and the music. again

Once again, he is not very much worried about what Islamic rules are telling him but rather if music, dancing and activities as such are doing any good/harm to him. This got plain to me when he made it clear he is not against hiphop and break dance - so the act of dance, per se, is not problematic. He indeed *loves dance as an art. -* but meanwhile expressed his concerns about sexual promiscuity and dominance of alcohol over social relations and intimate human connections. His words are quite revealing: *If you are gonna dance you have to drink ... it is not you and the music.* More examples were waiting in line yet:

Me: *The other thing I can think of is the regular men and women relation. Any contradiction there?*
The interviewee: *... I do not know.*
Me: *Do you shake hand?*
The interviewee: *I shake hand with non-Muslim women who want to shake hand with me.*
Me: *So it is OK for you.*
The interviewee: *If a non-Muslim woman approaches me with her hand, I shake her hand ... That is not even something that I have thought about it. Like a big thing ... but most of my old friends I have problem if I am gonna hug them or not. Because lot of people I know from before, we hug each other. That is how we know each other. I do not feel it is so bad to hug them ... I do not know. It depends. I try to avoid it but I do not want to be rude. But the other thing is that how do I present Islam in the best way? If they know I am a Muslim, is the best thing not to hug them and be cold or is the best thing to hug them and be gentle. I do not really have an answer. I every time swing it. It depends how long I have known the person. I do not have a good answer.*

While he is circulating in his *pending thoughts* he is not stuck to a very restricted line. He is not yet settled upon the issue, *I every time swing it*, however, once again, it seemed to me one of his salient concerns was not to damage the image of Islam, at least in eyes of non-Muslims, rather than complying a restrictive rule regardless of the surrounding atmosphere.

After all these examples and discussions, I asked him whether he still hangs around with his old friends and if his circle of friends is altered, was that because he was somehow excluded from certain networks or it was due to his own will.

The interviewee: I have some childhood friends that I see occasionally but most of my friends are Muslim. That is one of the biggest things that held me back. It is so important who you keep around you and I did not understand that for several years. You need to have someone to remind you.
Me: Have you ever felt excluded due to the fact that you have turned to Islam?
The interviewee: Yes. I had some friends that just disappeared and I had some friends that I tried to stay in contact with but they were you know ... again, give me the best and help me take away the things that are bad for me. I have not lost anything and I think you don't lose anything that is good for you whether it is a car or a friend or you know it does not matter. It is a difficult thing because you are attached to this person because of something. There is something that you like and they like you and then there is something else that pulls you apart. The letting go is important and hard.

Findings and discussions

In this section, the chief purpose is to assess how the main research questions of this study can be addressed according to the two case studies.

The least conclusion which can be drawn is that there exist numbers of Muslim individuals who, in one way or the other, identify themselves as European Muslims. Herein, the terms "European Muslim" and "Muslims living in Europe" should be discerned from each other. In other words, this work is not trying to address all the Muslims living in Europe as European Muslims. The individuals in this study do not represent the entire Muslim communities in Gothenburg/Europe but rather bring into light a not-well-seen genre among Muslim population in Europe. This genre of Islam within European societies is now more than a thought or an abstract idea. Indeed, the well-polished theoretical ground, provided by number of Muslim thinkers, has served as a fertile soil for individuals such as the interviewees in this study to germinate and root. We are facing Muslim individuals who have a subjective position and are productive. The first interviewee is a Muslim individual who sings and spreads his thoughts and beliefs (which are influenced by his religious attitude) through music. The second interviewee is a convert who teaches moral and ethics and actively engages in social matters. The interviewees might not right away fit into the common known frames for Muslims. However, by appealing to *socially constructed notions* posed by Dabbagh (Theory section) and by applying the principle of *Wittgenstein family resemblance*, case studies of this work would still belong to both families of Islam and modernity (in its Western meaning) despite of all inconsistencies which one might find in their behaviour.

Based on the theoretical discussion of this work, the study was developed upon a hypothesis which assumed *possible identification* of Muslim individuals who identify themselves as European Muslims. The interviewees were not deliberately chosen to fulfil the hypothesis, however focusing on young/second generation migrant Muslims could have increased the chance of facing possible positive cases. At first, the theoretical grounds easing the path for development of Euro-Islamic identity were reviewed and elaborated. Further on, the interviews showed the existence of Muslim individuals in Gothenburg who can be counted as lived experiences of the discussed theories. The extent to which such identification is spread, is yet an interesting and

important aspect of this topic which is not discussed in the current study and could be subject of a separate research.

However, a question needs to be answered yet: How the Islam of these European Muslims can be outlined and described? What characteristics paved the way for this genre to be developed? The answers to these questions provide a decent ground to comprehend how these individuals go around putative contradictive situations and make sense of Euro-Islam.

Based on the two case studies, several constituent elements of European Islam can be recognized which are depicted in Figure 2. Each element is described and elaborated upon, according to the aforementioned theoretical discussions. Thence, interviewees in Case I and Case II are regarded as interviewee 1 and interviewee 2 respectively.
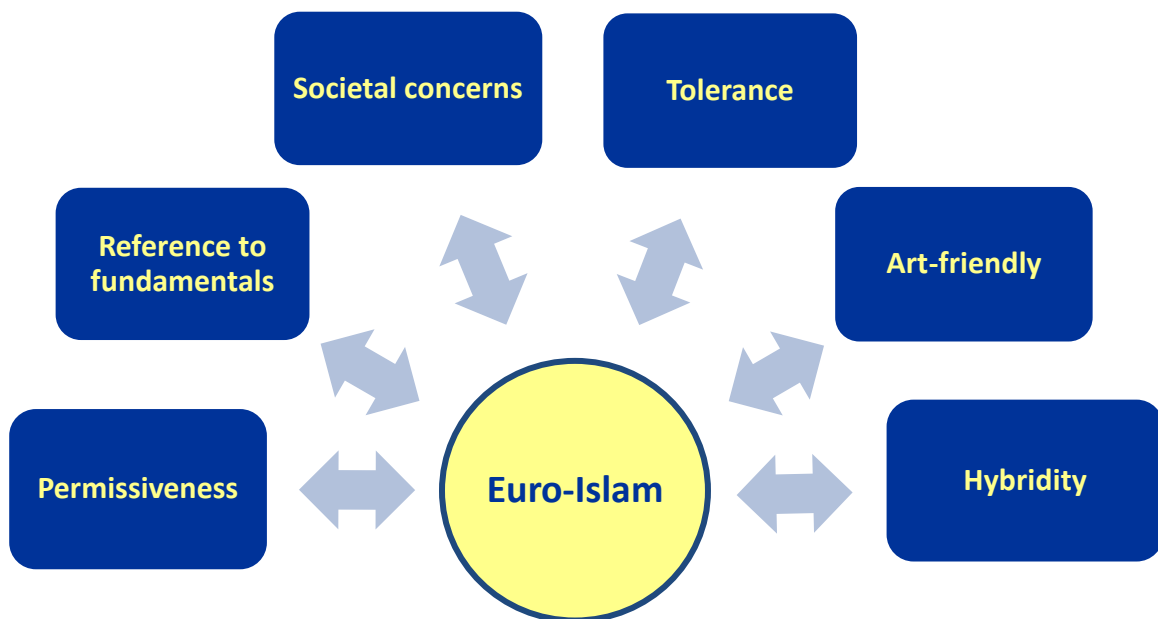

Figure 2. Schematic view of the main elements of European Islam based on the two case studies.

Permissiveness

The Islam of two interviewees is simply permissive. Although they follow certain normative lines their deeds are not restricted. In other words, there is a kind of flexibility in their way of behaviour. This is particularly true in respect of deeds which are commonly known as Islamic e.g. not eating pork or drinking alcohol, not shaking hand with the opposite sex etc. The interviewees were quite clear on this:

Interviewee 1: … I still was out with them [his friends] …going to club, trying to have good time but cutting out the bad things… I stopped drinking but just to show my friends that I am not an extremist in that way or I can meet them half way sometimes I cheer with Champaign but for me I just take one sip.
Interviewee 2: If a non-Muslim woman approaches me with her hand, I shake her hand ... That is not even something that I have thought about it. Like a big thing … but most of my old friends I have problem if I am gonna hug them or not. Because lot of people I know from before, we hug each other. That is how we know each other. I do not feel it is so bad to hug them.

As I understand, the cornerstone of such an approach ought to be either realizing the Islamic text and tradition in its historical context or being aware of the underlying causes which led to such rules/traditions. The former helps to notice that the Islamic rules and traditions could have been developed differently if a different context was applied. The latter, on the other hand, helps to contemplate upon the initial motives and fundamental values which have led to the rules and try to rethink and gradually reestablish the rules in a contemporary context.

This is, indeed, what Shabestari and Soroush discuss as *hermeneutic principles* (see Theory Section). The interviewees did not explicitly refer to the term *hermeneutic* but I think the way they behave is the consequence of practicing such principles. They use their lived experiences, which are very much influenced by their contemporary surroundings and circumstances, as a pre-knowledge and re-understand the traditions. This might have been done consciously or unconsciously but what is important at the end is the kind of flexibility and permissiveness which can be seen in interviewees' behavior.

Reference to fundamentals

All along the interviews, it was revealed for several times that the interviewees were not much thoughtful of the Islamic traditions or cultures as much as they were concerned about the fundamental principles and objectives of Islam:

Interviewee 1: In general I would say it is the belief in Allah and creation and oneness of Allah. Everything else is, you can say, extra ... some young people say we are Muslim because my father or my mother is Muslim, I do not eat pork, I do not drink alcohol but for me that is not what makes you Muslim.
Interviewee 2: ... I think everything else except praying and fasting and worship is something else. It is not important. That is not why I became Muslim, to eat food.

The interviewees, clearly, had a tendency to seek for the ground rules of Islam and, as interviewee 2 once said, *peel everything else off*. We know for certain that Islam was developed elsewhere than Europe and hence a Muslim in Europe, who is living in a different context, might have difficulties finding guidance upon Islamic rules/traditions. Therefore a believer in such circumstances might feel the necessity of returning to the very principles which Islam was based upon at the first place and try to rethink the core message and reestablish new and due norms and set of actions accordingly.

These all are, indeed, decent practices of what Ramadan proposes as *returning to the original sources and* not being locked in *previously conceived concepts formulated in another time for another context* (see theory section). He, further on, names *faith, practice and spirituality* as one of the core messages of Islam which both of the interviewees accentuated upon as well. Couple of other principles are named as well which some of them are addressed further down.

Once again, it seems to me Ramadan's argument and the interviewees' deeds are all exploiting a hermeneutic approach towards Islam as a religion and its all attached norms and traditions; understanding Islam and its history through different contexts while time and space differences are considered.

Art-friendly

Interestingly, both interviewees had a strong background in musical affairs; interviewee 1: currently a singer and interviewee 2: a former DJ. Despite knowing about the controversy upon music in Islam, they both recognized the diversity of opinions in this regard and were quite open to music as an art.

Interviewee 1: The act of singing is not controversial but [rather] music. It is a grey area and it is not all Muslims and not all Ulama [who oppose music/singing]. In Quran there is no mention of music being Haram.
Interviewee 2: I have been doing music my whole life and music in Islam is discussed upon. Some say it is good some say it is not.

Although interviewee 2 has decided not to continue his musical affair, he did not oppose practice of any musical, or in general, artistic affair. He has kept his artistic taste and had no intention to conceal it. For instance, he clearly expressed his interest in dance: *I very rarely dance but I love dancing and watching dancing. I love dance as an art ... .* His decision not to continue his musical affair was rather due to alteration of priorities: *when I started believing in God then I knew music does not have any power.*

Furthermore, interviewees' open approach towards music, as an art, was subject to its content and the message which is conveyed. In their opinion, art by itself does not lead to any harm or indecent consequence but rather its content can potentially direct an artistic act towards a detrimental end.

Interviewee 1, in particular, has decided not to ignore the artistic modes of expression, widely used by youth in European societies, but rather make use of them and try to transmit a preferred message which is in line with his religious thoughts and contributes to the surrounding society in a positive and constructive manner. Likewise, Ramadan proposes the same approach and encourages Muslim families to be permissive towards the artistic activities circumvented them while are simultaneously selective.

Hybridity

Islam of the interviewees has a mixed texture. This was clearly inferable from utterances and life style of the interviewees while it was explicitly mentioned by interviewee 1 as well. Hybridity, in this regard, implies conjunction of cross-cultural (or its like) elements which are not commonly known to be from same contexts/derivations. Interviewee 1 was very clear on that:

Iinterviewee 1: … I am Swedish but I am not only Swedish. I am also Pakistani. I was also very influenced by American music and life style … I can not really say that I am one thing because I am so many things… I usually say I am 100% Swedish but I am also 100% Pakistani. I am also 100% something else. I think there is a big movement today who feel this ...

Clearly, migrating from a place to another (in case of interviewee 1) has played an imperative role in this matter. Interviewee 1 has been exposed to a certain culture at family level and circle of relatives while he was breathing and going to school in the Swedish society with a different culture and norm. Indeed, interviewee 1 has been a cultural junction which each of the cultures has left footsteps in his character: A Muslim who sings rap, a mosque-goer who goes to club.

Similarly, interviewee 2 is going through a sort of comparable experience, although he has not migrated to another country. Interviewee 2, with his Swedish background, has faced a religion which has been evolved elsewhere with certain principles and fundamentals. He is also meeting other Muslims, since he has turned into Islam, from different places with different cultural practices. Therefore we end up with: a Swede who believes in Islam, a Swede who goes to mosque, a Swede who did Hajj, a Muslim who loves dancing.

The character of Muslims as such, if not understood as a being with a hybrid nature, might either lead to confusion or ignorance. Both of the interviewees know themselves as Muslims while insisting on divergences which demarcate them within their surrounding community. The efforts of intellectuals like Shabestari and Soroush to encourage hermeneutic understanding of Islamic texts together with endeavors of Ramadan to convince migrant Muslims in Europe to engage with their societies, open up and embrace the opportunities provided by the society has paved the way for

hybrid personalities to be formed and recognized. Furthermore, Homi Bhabha's third space theory supports the emergence of such cultural identities. The individuals in this study are result of different cultural representations that try to be subject of their experiences and, as Bhabha puts it, force *recognition of a more complex cultural boundary*.

Societal concerns

One of the main shared characteristics of the interviewees is their care and concern about the society they live in. Indeed, it would not be undue to say: seeking a meaning-giving element through social care and constructive contribution to the surrounding society has been a decisive parameter which triggered the interviewees to embrace the non-believer-to-believer paradigm shift. This was lucidly inferable from their line of stories.

Interviewee 1: … when I got a bit older I started thinking about how I was living, routines and people I was hanging with. Some things I was doing at the time were not constructive. They were basically destructive … You might find my lyrics interesting … basically [it is about] my perspective on life and society … There is one song […] named "Peace". Another song is "I See" which is very much about [the fact] that I see how people treat each other and what is my view upon that.
Interviewee 2: … I was playing records at places that they are selling alcohol and my job […] was to make people drink and have sex … So of course I had to question that and my first question was that: What am I contributing to? … Am I contributing to a better society? Because I am gonna be hold responsible… The more I read the more I felt wrong to contribute to that kind of environment.

All these wills of contributing to a better society and being positively constructive, got along with, as Ramadan puts it, a core principle of Islamic teachings: *To Act and to Participate.* Believers (including believers in Islam) should do as they believe therefore deeds of Muslims should follow their ethics and line of thoughts. According to Ramadan, being sensitive and caring about what occurs in the surrounding society has always been a teaching of Islam and Muslims are asked to act accordingly and be part of the change towards a better and healthier society. That has led to a Muslim singer who sings about peace and love (*The Vibe*), social justice (*I See*), equality

(*Fooled*), caring about the other (*Nothing*) etc. The same attitude has resulted in a Swedish convert who relinquished being a DJ (as a career not contributing to a better society - as the interviewee put it) and started delivering ethics and moral courses.

Tolerance

The interviewees as bearers of Islamic thoughts have a lenient treatment with others who do not necessarily believe in the same thoughts and principles. They can keep their friendships, mingle and communicate with others while considering their limits and borders.

Interviewee 1: ... I always had friends from different beliefs, backgrounds. I can sit with them. I can talk with them, I can hang out with them... I just have my way of seeing things... my perspective on things ... Some people have this in mind that all Muslims should be as one and we all have to think as one. It is a nice, romantic thought but it is not reality. Also during the time of the Prophet there were differences of opinion and practicing. It is part of being human.

Interviewee 2 had a kind of similar approach, although not all of his friends treated him back in the same manner.

Interviewee 2: ... I had some friends that just disappeared and I had some friends that I tried to stay in contact with but they were you know ... again, give me the best and help me take away the things that are bad for me ... The letting go is important and hard.

Having certain set of beliefs, whether religious or not, does not unavoidably lead to intolerance and tension. The fact that interviewee 1 has his *way of seeing things* does not make it inevitable to become a hot-headed person. As Soroush explains (see theoretical section), people can carry conviction and consider an opinion incorrect while showing tolerance and respect towards the bearers of that opinion. In other words, seeking tolerance is not automatically tantamount to asking for uncertainty, indecision and doubt. The key point in Soroush's argument is to distinguish between beliefs and believers. One can oppose/disagree a belief and meanwhile tolerate the believer; just like what the interviewees do.

Ups and downs of becoming a European Muslim

Different phases of a lived experience

Identity as a socially constructed concept is developed through varieties of events and encounters over time. Likewise, emergence of Euro-Islamic identity is fruit of a lived experience rather than an abrupt decision.

Listening to stories of the interviewees, a sort of similar trajectory could be recognized along their journey. Three distinct phases could be distinguished which were to high extent shared by the interviewees. It might sound improbable to find similarities in experiences of a second-generation migrant from Pakistan living in Sweden and a Swedish convert but, interestingly, that is the case. The three phases are schematically depicted in Figure 3.

Phase 1 - Disobedience/opposing

Both of the interviewees experienced a phase in which they were relentlessly combating any religious thought. This had been expressed either as deliberately doing right the opposite of certain religious demands (interviewee 1) or depreciating religious principles and mind-sets (interviewee 2).

Interviewee 1: When I was young I did not actually follow the teachings. I was rebellious against my parents. I actually deliberately ate pork, even if I did not really like it. I just ate pork to be rebellious. I used to drink a lot.

Interviewee 2: ... A friend of mine told me "Have you read Quran?" And I said "no need for that. If I read it I let you know it is fake. I can see through it." and I started reading that. I wanted to know what is the big thing about it and also to show my friend that "I know better".

Phase 2 - Contemplation

Gradually, and while getting older, the interviewees began to think deeper about their goals in life, meaning-giving elements and their life style at the moment. There were couple of other parameters which contributed to shaping this phase; the interviewees' questioning-character, certain individuals in their circle of friends and a number of spiritual experiences. The time period of this transition phase had been different for the interviewees but at the end their strict position against religion was mitigated.

Interviewee 1: … Some things I was doing at the time were not constructive. They were basically destructive. I also knew many people, non-believers or believers, from different religions and philosophies so I started exploring my own fate. [In addition] I went to Mecca to do Omrah with my family when I was 17. That also affected me a lot.

Interviewee 2: ... I was a searcher but I had rejected the Ibrahamic [religions] monotheistic religions and searched for meaning of life in philosophy… I was brought up as a DJ ... What am I contributing to? I had to question that. Am I contributing to a better society? ... Then when I came across things in Quran that I did not understand I asked. I asked Ashar [a friend of his], he was really into it ... I asked many people and it definitely helped clearing out my questions ... it was a long struggle.
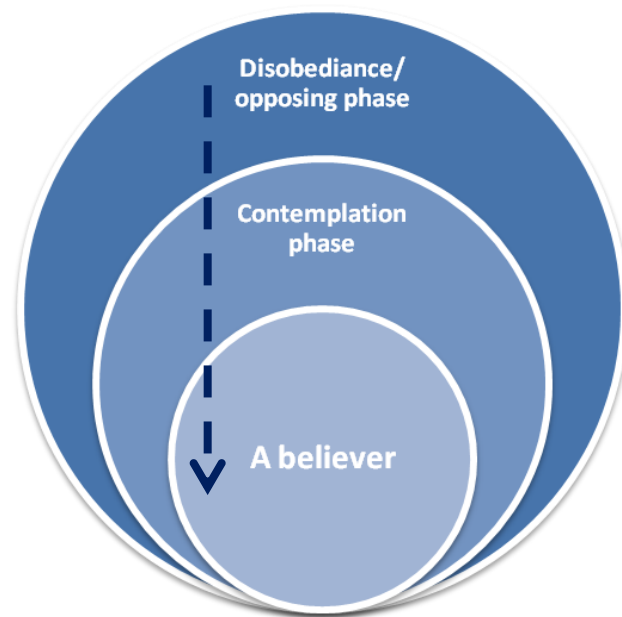

Figure 3. Three phases of the interviewees' trajectory to a European Muslim.

Phase 3 – A practicing believer

The longer they spent in the contemplation phase, the keener they got to practice some of the Islamic teachings. Therefore it was a gradual rather than a sharp shift. As interviewee 2 put it:

Interviewee 2: ... I pray. I fast. Since I got married it has been much easier. Before, I was off and on ... I have been trying. Trying to build up. It is like working out. You do not go to the heavy things since the beginning. You just go to the gym first and try the small things.

Both of the interviewees went to Hajj couple of years ago; a journey which both remember as a turning event in their life. Emotional remark of interviewee 2 regarding his experience is quite revealing.

Interviewee 2: That was unbelievable. Incredible. That was… that was really ... humbling ... ah ... something else. And since then all the other cities, everything else is pointless. I only want to go back there. It is the most annoying trip if you see it like travel-wise but the experience is something totally different. Incredible ... Hopefully I'll get there with my wife soon Insha'Allah [God willing].

Conclusion

Studying Muslim populations in Europe has already been an appealing subject, as partly discussed in Theory section, and yet recent hostile incidents in Europe and rise of anti-immigrant movements have surfaced the issue once again, not solely to the public opinion but also to young researchers in the field. Muslim communities in Europe are studied from many different aspects; socio-economic status, education, country of origin, colonial history etc. However, many studies miss to recognize and consider a rather juvenile and thin genre among Muslim communities; young Muslim individuals who, through their lived-experience, are achieving a hybrid identity. This is of high importance if seen as a third path in front of Muslims which provides them an opportunity to have a pleasant presence in the society while feeling neither self-alienated nor submissive. Comprehending birth of such an identity (Euro-Islamic identity) required a bi-level assessment; intellectual and practical.

On intellectual level, scholars such as Soroush, Shabestari, Ramadan and Dabbagh have paved the path for a modern reading of Islam by appealing to concepts such as *hermeneutic principles*, *core message of Islam* and *Wittgenstein family resemblance*. Here the key argument has been to put things in perspective and understand Islamic text and Sunnah in a historical context. In other words, many events in the history of Islam could basically happen differently and so would have been many Islamic routines and traditions. Accordingly, *core message of Islam* should be credited rather than some traditions which could be totally different upon a different path throughout the history. That is, admitting hermeneutic principles, and its consequences, has been the key road to birth of modern readings of Islam. Main achievement of this line of argument is to unlock the interpretation padlock and seriously challenge interpretation monopoly which ultimately democratizes understanding process of the text. Yet not all the posed readings would be valid but thence it would be matter of picking the one which basically makes more sense, both methodologically and semantically. The immediate outcome of such an approach would be to understand and discuss both Islam and modernity in plural forms; Islams and modernities.

On practical level, identification of real examples of Euro-Islamic identity was necessary to be able to prove the intellectual efforts have had the potential to be concretized and fruit. In other words, in order to consider Euro-Islamic identity as a

viable alternative in front of Muslims, finding those who identify themselves with the term in reality was a must.

Both interviewees in current study identify themselves as European (i.e. Swedish) and meanwhile religious (i.e. Muslim) citizens. In other words neither of them felt they have to drop one in favor of the other to be able to live in peace. Through their lived experience, they've eventually found their way to live a bridging identity by challenging rigid definitions of Swedish and Islamic. Digging further into their everyday life style surfaced discerning characteristics of their Islam:

While identifying themselves as Muslims, they are not stuck in minute and controversial details and rather credit core message of Islam.
While believing in Islam, they both bear societal concerns upon their surrounding.
While bearing different opinions, they are tolerant towards others.
While exercising Islamic practices (e.g. praying, going to Haj etc.), they are both open to use artistic means to convey their thoughts.

Development of such a hybrid identity has been result of subjective position of the interviewees throughout their lived experience. As they explained, in the beginning of their journey they were both anti-religion. Nonetheless, as they faced a number of challenges over time, they subjectively decided to follow a different path. However, upon prevalence of such hybrid identities among Muslim communities, next generations might yet follow the same path without even subjectively thinking about this major paradigm shift. As an expansion to the current study, it would be of high interest to identify more examples of European Muslims (as defined) and try to figure out the size of this rather juvenile genre and furthermore investigate its growth and penetration over time.

A further aspect to this topic would be to study if/how official Islamic organizations and Imams in European cities would receive/respond to such new readings of Islam and further on study their facilitating/impeding role in prevailing the concept of Euro-Islamic identity.

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Appendix I

General information

1. **Age:**

2. **Sex:**

3. **Birth place:**

4. **Parents nationality:**

5. **Occupation:**

6. **How frequently you travel back home?**

7. **Do you celebrate any religious day?**

8. **Do you celebrate any Swedish tradition?**

9. **Do you follow any of the religious practices?**

10. **Do you go to mosque? How often?**

11. **Did you go to Swedish school?**

12. **Are you member of any music/dance … club? Name.**