

Public Debates about Islam in Europe

MARTIN VAN BRUINESSEN

On 22-26 March 2006 in Florence and Montecatini Terme, Italy, Stefano Allievi and Martin van Bruinessen convened a workshop titled "Public Debates about Islam in Europe: Why and How 'Immigrants' became 'Muslims,'" sponsored jointly by ISIM and the Robert Schuman Centre of the European University Institute. The workshop was part of the Seventh Mediterranean Social and Political Research Meeting of the European University Institute.

The workshop focused on current debates on Islam and Muslims in Europe, in which the issue of integration is increasingly defined as one of (in)compatibility between Islamic and European values. In many countries of Europe the relation between the "indigenous" population and immigrants has been marked by cultural conflicts, and it has been especially conflicts over Islamic symbols that gained a high visibility.

The content of discussions on immigration has tended to shift towards the cultural and symbolic level. Political actors, the media, and public intellectuals have increasingly focused on supposedly Islamic specificities. Immigrants have increasingly come to be identified as Muslims first, both in the perception by the host societies and in their self-perception.

The privileging of religious identity in the public debate has tended to marginalize other social aspects, and many questions are more and more frequently debated in religious terms. Immigration has, in an important sense, become "Islamicized." Reactive identities (i.e. identities defined in opposition to others) have become more salient and "act" specifically as such in the cultural, political, and religious fields. Muslims are cast in the role of the ultimate, and essentially different, outsider, and images of Islam are projected against which spokespersons for autochthonous European cultures and values define themselves. The workshop focused on the modalities of these processes, and on the role of various actors (intellectuals, media, politicians, established churches, etc., as well as Muslim actors themselves) therein.

PAPERS PRESENTED

- **Gerassimos Karabelias** (Panteion University, Athens)
"The End of One-Nation One-State? Muslim Immigrants and the Issue of Islam in Post-Cold War Greece"
- **Katrine Romhild Benkaaba** (Université Aix-Marseille III/University of Copenhagen)
"How Islam enters Danish Public Policies of Integration"
- **Zora Hesova** (Freie Universität, Berlin)
"German Turks and 'Parallel Societies': Germany's Fears about Social Cohesion"
- **Rudolph Peters** (University of Amsterdam)
"A Dangerous Book: Dutch Public Intellectuals and the Koran"
- **Stefano Allievi** (University of Padua)
"On Fallaci and other Fallacies: Cultural Conflicts about Islam in the Italian Case"
- **Renate Dieterich** (University of Bonn)
"The Perception of Radical Islam in Germany: A Case Study of the Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami"
- **Mathias Rohe** (Friedrich-Alexander-Universität, Nürnberg)
"The Application of Islamic Norms in Germany and Europe"
- **Corinne Torrekens** (GERME-Université Libre de Bruxelles)
"Local Political Process Discovering Islam in Belgium: Managing Religious Pluralism, Negotiations, and Muslim Ethnicity in Brussels"
- **Anna C. Korteweg and Gökçe Yurdakul** (University of Toronto)
"Gender, Immigrant Integration, and National Identity: The Framing of Honour Killings in the Netherlands and Germany"
- **Göran Larsson** (Göteborg University)
"Islam and Muslims in Swedish Media and Academic Research: The Construction of a Minority"
- **Riem Spielhaus** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)
"Germany Constructing Its Muslims"
- **Maurizio Albahari** (University of California, Irvine)
"Performing 'Religion' and 'Muslim Migrants,' from behind the Charitable Fence to the Public Spotlight: Mechanisms and Stakes at the Edges of the Italian State"
- **Marcel Maussen** (University of Amsterdam)
"Mosque Establishment and the Social Construction of Cultural Differences and Islamic Presence. Public Discussions in Marseilles and Rotterdam"
- **Martin van Bruinessen** (ISIM / Utrecht University)
"After Van Gogh: The Roots of Anti-Muslim Rage"
- **Loïc Le Pape** (IREMAM, Aix-en-Provence)
"The Ambiguous Place of Religion in the Public Sphere: From Islam to Islamism"

NEW FELLOWS

- **Irfan Ahmad (NWO Rubicon Postdoctoral Fellow)**
Contesting Islamism: Immanent Critique of Jamaat e-Islami of India
1 August 2006 – 31 March 2008
- **Maurits van den Boogert (Brill-ISIM Fellow)**
The Western Canon of the Study of Islam
1 September 2006 – 31 August 2007
- **Léon Buskens (Sabbatical Fellow)**
Islamic Law and Society in Morocco, circa 1870-2006: The Genesis of a Modern Legal System
1 September 2006 – 31 January 2007
- **Rémy Delage (ISIM Visiting Fellow)**
Discourses on Muslim Reform in the Indian Public Space: Islamic Education System, Urban Governance and Processes of Assigantion
15 September 2006 – 15 December 2006
- **Omar Farouk Bajunid (IIAS/ISIM Visiting Fellow)**
Islam in Contemporary Cambodia
1 December 2006 – 28 February 2007
- **Jeannette Jouili (ISIM Postdoctoral Fellow)**
The Ethics of Islamic Arts: Normativity, Creativity, and 'Fun' in the Muslim Diaspora in the West
1 October 2006 – 30 September 2007
- **Julie McBrien (Affiliated Fellow)**
Constructing Post-Soviet Muslim Public Space: Everyday Religious Life in a Kyrgyz-Uzbek Town
1 October 2006 – 30 September 2007
- **Joe Stork (ISIM Visiting Fellow)**
In the Shadow of Terror: Political Violence and Human Rights Prospects in the Arab Middle East
1 November 2006 – 28 February 2007