



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## Editorial

Stremmelaar, A.

### Citation

Stremmelaar, A. (2008). Editorial. *Isim Review*, 21(1), 4-4. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/17214>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/17214>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

ANNEMARIKE STREMMELAAR

Day by day Moroccan men and women cross the border to Ceuta, a city on Spanish territory, from which they bring back merchandise to sell at home (see back cover). Such images of border crossing reflect only one small instance of a ceaseless process, a massive movement of people traversing borders for the sake of trade, employment, education, or marriage. Notwithstanding governments' increasing restriction on migration, the fact remains that such migrants have been the foundation of much economic gain, from the United Arab Emirates to Europe.

Whereas the presence of foreigners is creating anxieties in many parts of the world, in Europe the focus is mainly on their Muslim populations. Here, the "problem" is not migration per se, but is especially Islam which is believed to prevent Muslims from integrating fully into European societies. Images of Islam as a religion aspiring to world domination reflect the fear of Western citizens who are increasingly concerned about the presence of Muslim migrants in their midst. Thus, Muslim communities may, for example, experience great difficulties in finding spaces for worship (Kuppinger, p. 48).

Muslim migrants and minorities in Europe are expected to adjust themselves to the majority culture and prove that they are worthy citizens. Imams are to instill in them liberal and democratic values and promote their integration into the host society (Boender, p. 22), while mosque designs are to demonstrate their willingness to adapt to the surrounding communities (Roose, p. 50). Behind these concerns lies the implicit fear that Muslims may adhere to beliefs and views that subvert their integration into society or that may even undermine its core values.

The anxiety over a Muslim threat stands in sharp contrast with the reality of the life most Muslim immigrants experience in Europe. Like other migrant groups, they are struggling to survive and strive to turn their adopted environs into places where they feel at home. In trying to cope with the unknown, different people develop different strategies which have often been shaped both by their personal histories and the societies they inhabit. Thus, Sudanese migrants trying to avoid the "stigma" of being seen as 'black' emphasize different aspects of their identity according to their place of habitat, whether Egypt

or the UK (Fabos, p. 24). Such changes in self-definition are not predictable, as the Moussaoui family illustrates—despite a shared history, one family member turned to Salafism while the others made different choices (Donahue, p.18). Dominant views of migrants and Muslims also have an impact on how they adapt. Salafi beliefs hold an attraction for young Muslims living in Europe as they offer ways of overcoming feelings of exclusion. After all, a major Salafi ideologue, Al-Albani, was himself a migrant in Saudi Arabia, which might well have contributed to his popularity among Salafi youth who feel equally marginalized (Lacroix, p. 6).

Not everyone stays on. Some migrants may eventually undertake a journey back home, where the demands of integration seem less daunting. Indeed, some Arab families living in Germany, who find their way of life at odds with their environment and the authorities, opt for remigration, settling not necessarily in their country of origin, but in those which offer better economic prospects and more suitable cultural setting (e.g. the United Arab Emirates (Al-Hamarneh, p. 26)). Some Salafi youth in France also think of adopting a new home to suit their convictions (Adraoui, p. 12). Yet people opting for remigration represent a very small, though possibly growing, number. The overwhelming majority wish nothing less than to be part of their adopted societies.

## ISIM

The International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) develops, supervises, and engages in innovative, high quality research on social, political, cultural, and intellectual trends and movements in contemporary Muslim communities and societies. Its research and research network comprise ISIM's societal capital: ISIM provides insights gained in its research programmes to the benefit of society at large.

ISIM's research approaches are interdisciplinary and comparative, covering a large geographic range that includes North Africa, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, South and Southeast Asia, and Muslim communities in Europe. Broad in scope, ISIM brings together the various areas of disciplinary expertise in anthropology, sociology, religious studies, political science, and cultural studies.

## ORGANIZATION

### Board

Paul van der Heijden (Chair)  
*Rector Magnificus & President of Leiden University*  
Karel van der Toorn  
*President of the University of Amsterdam*

### Advisory Council

Nicolaas Biegman  
*Photographer, former Netherlands Ambassador and Representative to NATO*  
Job Cohen  
*Mayor of Amsterdam*  
Sadik Harchaoui  
*Director of Forum Institute for Multicultural Development*  
Farah Karimi  
*Director Oxfam Novib*  
Els van der Plas  
*Director of the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development*  
Paul Scheffer  
*Wibaut Chair at the University of Amsterdam, writer*

### Staff

Asef Bayat  
*Academic Director and ISIM Chair at Leiden University*  
Martin van Bruinessen  
*ISIM Chair and professor at Utrecht University*  
Annelies Moors  
*ISIM Chair at the University of Amsterdam*  
Marlous Willemsen  
*Deputy Director*  
Nathal Dessing  
*Researcher & Educational Coordinator*  
Annemarike Stremmelaar  
*Managing Editor*  
Dennis Janssen  
*Publications & Projects Officer*  
Sandra van der Horst  
*Office Manager*  
Yvonne van Domburg  
Maaike Kuperus  
Soumia Middelburg-Ait Hida  
*Secretariat*

See the ISIM website for the details of all ISIM fellows.