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## New Multicultural Identities in Europe

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Published by Leuven University Press

Toğuşlu, Erkan & Leman, Johan & Sezgin, Mesut.

New Multicultural Identities in Europe: Religion and Ethnicity in Secular Societies.

Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014.

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CHAPTER 12

## Ethnic-Religious Intersections and New Multiculturalism

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*Johan Leman, Erkan Toğuşlu and İsmail Mesut Sezgin*

### **Which place for religion in ‘new’ multiculturalism?**

What we have learned from the chapters in this book is that in Europe today we have started living in an epoch in which the post-immigrant’s ‘new’ ethnicity expresses itself very often in religious emblems, and the indigenous ethnicity looks for an expression through regional nationalisms and ethnicized and culturally essentialized secular religion. In such situations, indigenous ethnicity may claim a first-born’s right on a particular territory, underpinned by values and standards unlike that of the religiosity on which the post-migrant communities rely. In both cases this leads to all kinds of constructions, and it is here that the globalization has created a new context in the present.

Comparing similarities and differences between indigenous and immigrant ethnogenesis, Leman predicted that “the development of the multi-ethnic (or multicultural) societies that arise from all kinds of immigration movements will, in the long run, be chiefly determined by the way in which structures and sedimentations of different religious institutions, which are imported by these movements, can continue to be used as a mobilisation factor” (1998: 160).

In the three cases, immigrant, post-migrant and even non-migrant ethnic reactivity, “almost anything and everything is possible, as long as no falsehoods are told that are too obviously refuted by common knowledge and as long as the adversary is not too strong” (Roosens 1989: 161). From the 1990s on, global and trans-border embeddedness has had the consequence that there is more

trans-border streamlining, both in the post-migrantism, and in non-migrant identification mobilizations, in thought and in practice. In our book we focussed on post-migrant (Part I) and on anti-migrant, mostly anti-Islam ethnicity (Part II).

### **Post-migrant ethnic creativity**

The chapters in our Part I have shown a variety of answers and constructions among young new generations, nourished by the impact of the internet and social media, online practices which however are not in complete discontinuity with the offline practices of young people. Being Muslim or not-Muslim fundamentally does not make any difference in the application of the practices, but the streamlining that follows from it may promote some emblems more than others related to cultural preferences and to culturally prescribed behaviour. From all the findings in Part I we see how transborderly mainstreamed secular adaptation, loyalty to the practices of parents and grandparents, and genuine neo-fundamentalist glocal creativity can all be met in one locality in today's Europe, in some cases with multiple expressions in one family or even in one person.

Drummond, at the beginning of the 1980s, discussed 'creolization' as a complex identity construction process which was not based solely on 'double identification'. He explained that the staying together of people from a variety of communities could be the beginning of all kinds of mixtures, most clearly though not exclusively, on the basis of mixed marriages. These mixtures gradually lead to an ethno-cultural continuum. As Drummond argued, "The 'elementary structure' of such a cultural system is not an isolated proposition, but an intersystem – the pragmatic residue of persons seeking to define their identity vis-à-vis one another. ... A cultural continuum, like a linguistic continuum, may be identified by inserting arbitrary boundaries within a transformational series" (1980: 370). As we see from our findings, such a new style continuum as proposed by Drummond, be it in a completely different context, is only one pattern in the complex cluster of practices that is made possible in today's Europe. By the end of the 1990s, Aishe Caglar discovered a more general 'European' post-migrant phenomenon when she discovered that "a growing number of people define themselves in terms of multiple national attachments and feel at ease with subjectivities that encompass plural and fluid cultural identities" (Caglar 1997:

169). Such 'hyphenatization' referred to the fact that the prevailing socio-cultural praxis of the host country exerts a clear influence over the immigrants' view of their culture of origin.

What we learned from such authors, and from many other researchers (Leman had already described the phenomenon by ending his research on Sicilian immigrants in Belgium on a similar note: see Leman 1987), was that the processes which find their roots in migration are not unilinear ones and are at the beginning of many variegated creative practices. What has become more impressive nowadays than in earlier years is the impact of the global, the internet, the social media and various forms of more accessible mobility on the creation of current creative practices. That is what the authors in our Part I were able to illustrate perfectly, applying it in most cases (but not all) to post-migrant Muslims.

During the 1990s, faith-based organizations created a strong foundation in most immigrant communities. The second generation young adults changed the dynamics of these organizations which, in former times, focussed on the countries and community cultures of the countries of origin a great deal more. Some new dynamics had begun to take shape which were coupled with a shift in emphasis to the countries of destination. First, these faith-based organizations adopted a clearer profile, profiling those communities which changed from immigrants to citizens as the supporting axes of an internal pluralism inside the post-migrant communities. Secondly, and occurring simultaneously, they began much more intense cross-border relations with similar communities in other countries which adopted similar positions in the interpretation of their religion.

Networking geared towards easier and less expensive transport modalities, as well as the internet, has become a very typical characteristic of the current faith-based organizations. The impact on their members' feelings of trans-border identification is obvious, so also is its impact on glocal neo-fundamentalisms (cf. Robertson 1993: 174).

### **Indigenous anti-migrant ethnic re-activity**

The trans-border character of the faith-based communities and the strong visibility of glocal neo-fundamentalisms imply that some segments of the indigenous population perceive this presence to be highly invasive. One can observe the feeling of xenophobia that is latent therein. Some more militant

people attempt to sustain this sentiment by offering it a megaphone. They then present certain historical conflicts with the Muslim world, or conflicts elsewhere in the world, as a threat to a native population's own country today. Islam becomes presented as an invader. This may lead for some, sometimes very secular people, to an aggressive, fundamentalist ethnic-cultural Christianity which not only needs to be protected but which offers the 'moral capital' to pre-empt and cut off the Islamic 'other'. This is what some chapters in Part II developed, with a final reflection in Allen's chapter 11.

In this logic, and in terms of ethnicity, a given society's indigenous side must then be protected and preserved as a mixture of original local emblems and values, and even in terms of the idea of Western Christendom itself. For such militants, it is important therefore to attempt to understand where in other countries similar movements arise. But it is a fact however that the local ethnic colouring is difficult to transfer into other cultural contexts in other countries. Still there remains an ethnic-cultural 'Christian factor' that one can appeal to, although it is mostly used among people who are no longer faithful to Christianity or are of a very secular set. So, such trans-border mobilization may be more difficult than among 'post-migrant faith-based communities' where the religious glue is stronger, and it leads to initiatives of 'lone wolf' militants and a variety of smaller transborderly organized co-operations with an anti-islamization and anti-multiculturalism agenda.

The non-migrant post-secular mobilizations at Europe's surface are occupied mainly by nationally-known charismatic figures. They do not associate easily among themselves in a common, more global transborder European anti-Islam project, but find one another in a militant anti-Europe attitude.

### **Post-secular and border widening processes (and counter-movements)**

The development that seems most striking is the tension between secular and post-secular. It is the ethnic-cultural and religious developments that interested us in our book.

For a description of what constitutes the secular, we look to authors such as Habermas (2008) and Taylor (2007), while accepting the criticism that Asad (2003) expresses in mentioning how the particular power relations which undergird the communities often result in situations where there is no

objective, respectful dialogical space which is conducive to religious exchange. Continental Western Europe (i.e. most of the host countries in this book) has created a tradition of the secular, with gradated differences between the various countries, seen as a neutral, secular public space which remains separated from other areas, namely the pre-eminently private domain. People in public spaces, especially within certain prescribed roles and positions, should consider their private characteristics, which are framed in terms of religion, belief, gender, as something they should hide.

The discussion that may follow on from this is that not everything in the public sphere can be experienced as being equally relevant, or that not everything everywhere is experienced in the same way in either the private or public sphere. In addition, some also defend pluralism and neutrality in a globalizing world which consists of group characteristics which may be expressed in terms of equivalents. These last will claim that if these expressions are not accepted, the secular can be said to constitute itself as an ideology which displaces other ideologies.

Today we see that the Continental Western European concept of the secular is being very heavily criticised by young post-migrant Muslims. In order to try to understand this criticism it is prudent to also take into consideration some processes that are related to the globalization. These general processes may help to frame the processes.

A first consideration is that religion is seen by many post-secular feeling people as a buffer against new anxieties. According to Martin Riesebroth secularization and religious revival go hand in hand. Scientific advancements, especially deriving from medicine, have meant that today human control over its life span has increased. The welfare state has reduced the vulnerability experienced by people from lower class backgrounds. Political power has become closer to common human beings. However, with the rise of scientific power and of human autonomy a new powerlessness has arisen in the form of possible threats of ecological catastrophe or fears of the sudden rise of authoritarian regimes and irrational movements led by charismatic leaders. Many people also feel that their family life has become destabilized by the excessive pressures of social mobility. The “destabilizing effects of Western modernization have ... paved the way for a resurgence of religious modes of crisis prevention and management,” concludes Riesebrodt (2003: 108). After all, “historically, it has mostly been through religions that the chaotic or potential crisis has been culturally transformed into the semblance of cosmos” (Riesebrodt 2003: 106).

This may be one of the elements that explain the omnipresence of religious loyalty, as developed by some authors in Part II.

And yet Riesebrodt follows the reasoning of Robertson (1992; 2003). He observes in these phenomena the origin of contemporary religious fundamentalisms. But the question is whether a reaction to these forces necessarily and invariably leads solely in the direction of local fundamentalism. Can one not imagine that there are people who do not want to rely on any fundamentalism, but prefer support in seeking a wider and more democratic religious and social network? Instead of highly localized smaller communities, of the fundamentalist type, one may also obtain translocal religious networks of such a magnitude that one can assume that they are not on the edge of society, but have the ability to act decisively to reshape the society in which the common people live. They are looking to succeed through their own voices and deeds, to find a form of recognition in a system of meaning that would otherwise be insufficient or unrepresentative of their own social and cultural capital. This variety of processes brings us to some developments that we could read in Part II.

The theoretical reflections, also in Part II, may bring a second field of considerations. Can religion not have become an alternative for economic dominance? Roland Robertson wrote that “there has, in effect, been a detachment of the economic from the other dimensions of globalization. ... Overwhelmingly globalization is now seen as a primarily economic phenomenon” (Robertson 2003: 123). His reasoning is that originally this had been initiated as a corrective to include localized “anti-global” fundamentalisms, not least those of a religious nature, but that “anti-global movements have inexorably become part of the globalization process itself” (Robertson 2003: 114). But Robertson also ended his statement by reinforcing the declarations made previously by Riesebrodt. What we perceive to be a normal attitude among religiously-minded people who find a place in a world that is highly susceptible to processes from science and politics may also be seen as an inevitable behavioural non-science-based reaction of people who are, in fact, anti-global in the first instance. But in the second instance, the trans-border and post-secular reflexes found in these religiously minded people may have become a form of participation from their part in the global arena.

We might think, therefore, that the process of trans-border religions should be seen as a logical consequence of full participation in the global sphere. As Ninian Smart observed, it is “the present state of the world – one of intense globalization – [that] has its effect on religion” (Smart 2003: 124). Religion should not simply

be seen as a reactive agent, but as a co-constitutive one. “One of the great myths is that religion is always the same: that an evangelical from Missouri has the same values as the apostle Paul, for example” (Smart 2003: 124). But religions are constantly changing, and this becomes perhaps clearest in a globalizing world. This puts pressure upon secular values and creates openings to post-secular thought and to post-secular action being taken.

What is already a process that has its sources in the post-migrant processes, mainly among post-migrants of Islamic provenance, may become reinforced by the input nowadays coming from new, even first generation, migrations that support the trends of trans-border mobility and transnational belonging. The mobility, for example, of Indian religions is already quite well demonstrated, of Hinduism (Vertovec 2000), of Sikhs in Europe (Jacobsen and Myrvold 2011) and of global Jain diaspora (Jain 2011). It pushes policy makers to reflect on ‘politics of difference’ (Modood 2007), which may accept some collective and public identities of religious groups and protect them against a too secularist bias towards them, or it opens the door for some ‘multidimensional pluralism’ (Connolly 2005). We can use Fraser’s words: new migrations are transnationalizing the public sphere (Fraser 2007). Such questions were all treated in Part II of our book, where at the same time the question of multiculturalism and its tension between factual and ‘normative’ was treated. We will come back to the theoretical as well as to the practical reflections.

In all this, the WWW space has had more of an impact than any other element associated with globalization. “Web space leads to complex articulations in the possible identification processes of the social selves, but it also creates new opportunities for ‘us-consciousness’, creating new loyalties and borders, and empowering the perceptions of the Self” (Leman 2009: 195). Levy (1995) has pointed out that the three modalities important in this respect are: the de-territorialization of the here and now, the emergence of new spaces and new speeds which become mixed up with preceding ones, and a continuous interplay of the inside and outside. It is clear that the Web has streamlined and helped to foster the everyday lives of immigrant faith communities. It also promotes exchanges between anti-multiculturalist militants and members of such militant Islamophobic trans-border communities of non-immigrants whose contribution would normally be overlooked. The Web can be said to homogenize only in part, and even then mainly within each of their individual trans-border communities, while the antagonisms with the “Other” tend to strengthen, deepen and broaden fault lines rather than diminish them. Within each trans-border community, it

“centralises and structures information and is a tool of empowerment” (Leman 2009: 200).

### **The process character in Europe’s new multiculturalism**

Religion as well as ethnicity creates “imagined communities” (Anderson 1983). Both religion and ethnicity can create and develop a dynamic of an increasing sense of an all-encompassing global community in the context of globalization, but it is a slow process. A multicultural setting is not a ‘be all and end all’ panacea for a stabilized society. In such a complex multi-layered society people continuously have the capacity to be ‘affected’ (cf. Deleuze 1990: 93-95) from inside and outside. One may call it a process of differencing: ‘becoming different’ as ‘deferred in time and space’ (Derrida 1982: 8-9). It may create a lot of new ‘idealities’ (Derrida 1967), relating to always ‘new’ developments stemming from inside and outside one’s own community. Practices may remain partially integrated in a field of former social-cultural practices and become extended to new practices coming from a different proposed ‘ideality’, or even coming from other countries that are part of the trans-border realities. Group changes can lead to new identifications (Iborra 2005), and these changes may take several forms depending on the strength of the bond with the trans-border community. *Vis-à-vis* the processes of change and ‘differencing’ of cultural meanings, we should understand (and that is the sense of Mečiar’s reflections in chapter 4 of Part I) that the challenge for future research will be that we cannot impose our ethno-centric Western categories on an understanding of the ‘emic’ content of immigrants’ narratives. It means that increasing religious diversity each time with its own different internal dynamics brings us into a post-secular society frame. It does not invalidate the secularization theory, but invites us to understand that a tolerant coexistence between different religious communities in a context of growing social inequality will become less obvious, since religion will become more important in shaping identities in some situations.

From Murat Sevencan’s large-scale research (see chapter 9 in Part II), we learned that choices and decisions may be influenced by shifting the salience of a particular identification for a person. In Europe, religion, with its ethnic and identity connotations, is present in most countries, as a culturescape biased by Christendom. Religion in general, not just Christendom, transcends as the first and most solid life-view in Europe geographical and political boundaries, even for Muslims and other religions. We can indeed not conclude from the

data that religion will never have some mobilizing power. But currently, it does not mobilize vis-à-vis others in the sense of relations with other countries as a marker that is more important than nationality. So, we are somewhere in between an 'it is not' situation and an 'it is not ruled out in the future' one. There is another important life-view, namely a modern-political life-view. This life-view formulates the identity categories with respect to the political perception. One can associate this structural life-view with both national and local identity. Local identity is the nearest alternative to a national one. Nowadays in Europe, we see how local identities are the most challenging. Sub-national, nationalistic and regional, identifications are less present 'overall', but where they are they can become significant rivals of national identities. Still different from both former identifications is the very paradoxical situation that personal individualism, i.e. a modern-intellectual life-view constructed from internal reasoning, is also an overall present value. It can be personal as well as supra-national. It is not a challenge for national identity. Moreover, one can safely say that this secular-glocal identity also has a distance from the post-secular religious glocal one as well.

The above, with its three important life views that are all present in citizens' lives, is the context that makes it understandable that in Europe, a territory with multiple identifications for one and the same individual, there may be moments and places where nationalisms, religious transnational fundamentalisms, personal individualisms are present when national identifications also remain very strong. It is the source of a continuous uprising of new social-cultural and ethnic-religious processes that interfere with the already existing ones.

### **Practical political challenges**

The processes as described here above offer some practical challenges for the state. It is the mission of a democratic state not to reduce the sources for the shaping of identities by limiting the diversity of voices and opinions within the public discourse, so some solution should be found to reconcile this need for religious self-expression with respect for the secular. But it is also true that it does not mean that religion should be over-emphasized or over-politicized as a source of identity as if it may be the principal reason for immigrants' actions. What should be found in European societies, in the logic of these reflections, is a new sane balance between ethnic and religious belongings and the secular common space.

In chapter 10 (Part II), we read about a plea for a 'transformative accommodation'. As Nimni writes, whether religious or secular, difference-blind

equality defaults in the dominant practice and excludes and alienates minorities. The exemplary image of a “normal” member of the dominant group may remain blind for acceptable, democratic expressions coming from minority people. Very probably, this can no longer be legitimized. A failure of secular legal systems is to remove from consideration religious motivations and practices of groups in plural societies that do not belong to the dominant cultural-religious, even secular majority. If we want minority people, with a different religious background, to see themselves as recognized in their identity and way of life, there is a step to be taken in the direction of some religious legal pluralism for private matters that do not change the existing secular compromise. The debate that opens with such reflections is about factual versus prescribed multiculturalism.

We presented our book under the title ‘Europe’s New Multicultural Identities’. In the first Part we presented research findings that showed what these new multicultural identities are about in various places at the European Continent. Post-migrant and re-active anti-migrant identifications and belongings had an important place in the second Part. We approached all these phenomena as manifestations of identities in a plural post-secular Europe. In our concluding chapter, we see these manifestations of identities as processes framed by ethnic-religious intersections, and call it Europe’s new multiculturalism. It is not the end of a process; it will also in the future continue to pose a lot of new theoretical and political challenges.

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