

8 Transnational practices, social inclusion, and Muslim migrant integration in the West¹

Fethi Mansouri

Introduction

The debate about the perceived permeability of national borders is indicative of the complex set of problems posed by migration at national and global levels. From a simple statistical point of view, the increase in human mobility may be gauged by a review of basic statistics about international migration flows. In 1910 'some thirty-three million of 1.7 billion in the world's population lived in countries as migrants. Figures collated in the year 2000 show that there were about 175 million of six billion people at some distance from their countries of origin' (Benhabib and Resnik 2009: 1). Notably, these figures do not account for internally displaced people and domestic migrants within the same country. Despite this marked increase in the volume of international migration, such figures represent less than 4 per cent of the world's population. This relatively small figure is due to the fact that there are few significant émigré societies around the world that pursue an active immigration programme as the USA, Canada or Australia have done over the past few decades.

The size and pace of human mobility aside, transnational migration poses serious challenges to the Westphalian nation-state model and its classical emphasis on political membership as a process regulated by national citizenship. In recent years, a new debate has arisen about the ethical limitations of citizenship rights in light of the emergence of a more rigorous call for adherence to universal human rights frameworks, in particular, the Human Rights Declaration of 1948 and the Refugee Convention of 1951. Universal human rights paradigms are not without their critics, however. In relation to transnational forced migration involving asylum seekers, for example, human rights norms face an inherent paradox: they recognize an individual's right to emigrate (leave one's country) but not to immigrate (enter a new country). More critically, they remain incapable of invoking signatory states' obligations towards forced migrants.

These conceptual debates are played out against the backdrop of increased transnational migratory movements, both voluntary and forced. Indeed, the perceived rise in transnational migration, especially towards Western countries, is the result of a number of interconnected global forces. Such forces include increased international interconnectedness especially at the levels of transportation and

communication; the proliferation of transnational networks; increased economic integration; and rising political instability around the world. An example of this fluid global context is the so-called Arab Spring that started in early 2011 and led to hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing from Tunisia and Libya and crossing Italy's border through the tiny island of Lampedusa. The bulk of this forced migration occurred in the space of only two weeks. Such a sudden flux of human movement on a relatively large scale, even if on a temporary basis, can pose challenges to the Western state and may be seen to create tensions at the national and transnational levels.

These tensions and pressures engendered by migration do not relate exclusively to international relations. They can also have a profound effect on societies from within. In this context, debates are intensifying about the extent to which multicultural societies could and should accommodate different dimensions of migrants' cultural and religious identities. Such debates have thrown down a significant challenge to the ideas of liberalism and cultural pluralism. The challenge posed by cultural and religious diversity relates to the perception that minority groups may attach stronger loyalties to external communities, networks, and value systems than to those within their local societies. For example, while many Muslim migrants identify themselves via their nationality – as British, American, French, or Australian – some identify themselves first and foremost as Muslim and thus give their allegiance to the global Muslim community before the nation in which they live.

These and other similar debates about the place of Islam and Muslims in the West and the suitability of contemporary models of integration in liberal states, which tend to either support the (culture-blind) liberal citizenship approach at one end of the spectrum or the multiculturalist perspective at the other end, can be traced back historically to the radical tradition of Enlightenment. It was during the eighteenth century Enlightenment period in Europe that public intellectuals began to develop the idea of liberalism and to advocate the importance of the principle of secularism – the separation of religion and state – as a way of achieving equal citizenship and overall social progress. The argument advanced in this context was that religion was an impediment to progress and modernity as it curtailed the potential for applying reason and logic and as such it was essential for society and state to restrict the practice and influence of religion to the private sphere.

Against this historical background, this chapter discusses the social experiences of Muslim migrants in a number of Western (secular) cities. It focuses on the challenges of national belonging and social inclusion as they relate to local and transnational ties, as well as on subjective (personal) indicators of local inclusion and belonging.

The overall argument underpinning this chapter, and the wider research project from which it is extracted, is that a new approach to diversity and migrant integration is needed in culturally pluralist societies. It is argued here that such an approach can best be sustained if it reflects the realities of transnational mobility and is grounded and articulated in a discourse of cosmopolitan ethics

that builds on Benhabib's (2004) 'discourse theory of ethics', with its emphasis on universalist morality. This approach emphasizes the critical recognition of the cultural and religious rights of human beings, not just fellow citizens. In other words, this chapter will illustrate that normative notions of citizenship, premised on primordial attachments and contributory rights with their associated privileges, are insufficient to meet the complex social realities of culturally diverse societies. More specifically, members of cultural and religious minority groups, such as Muslim migrants in non-Muslim majority societies, present a new conceptual and policy challenge: namely how to reconcile demands for a more flexible mode of inclusion and belonging that can reflect the possibilities of multiple attachments.

Thus, it is important to discuss the interrelated themes that underpin this chapter about transnationalism and multiculturalism in the context of Muslim migrants in the West.

Transnational human mobility and the challenge of national belonging

Globalization has produced new trends and patterns of migration where human mobility exhibits more fluidity, circularity and ongoing transnational practices. In contrast, and in resistance to conservative views of immigration – where migrant populations only exert 'a limited influence culturally and politically on the host nation' because of the limiting influence of assimilation – the trend has shifted in favour of an environment in which migrants no longer feel the need to completely forsake their heritage or cultural identities for a mainstream identity based on their new place of residence (O'Sullivan 2003: 26–29).

This shift in the nature of human migration is facilitated by the emergence of mass communications and transportation systems (Castles 2002). Such technological advancements have created a situation in which the settler model of migration (where new immigrants move permanently to another country and are incorporated into the mainstream society by way of assimilationist policies) has been transcended by the temporary migration model (where temporary migrant workers re-locate into a particular country for a period but maintain ties with their country of origin). The consequence of this shift is that 'new modes of migrant belonging' have emerged whereby people are no longer attached to one country, but become a combination of two or more national orientations (Castles 2002: 1143–1153; Vertovec 2004; Lubeck 2002; Sinclair and Cunningham 2000: 2).

Transnational practices which are in many ways linked to globalization and modernity have challenged the primacy of 'clearly demarcated parameters of geography, national identity, and belonging' (Evans Braziel and Mannur 2003: 1). They question traditional assumptions about 'the national boundedness of the ethnic experience' (Sreberny 2000; see also Sinclair and Cunningham 2000: 15). Transnational migration, nowadays, is engendering an environment in which migrants are able simultaneously to maintain ties with their old and new

homelands (Sinclair and Cunningham 2000: 10; Mummery 2005; Jupp 2001: 261). Migrants' identities, therefore, are increasingly embodying a form of transcendence of national borders. Migrants themselves are no longer automatically torn between one national identity over the other (Dunn and Geeraert 2003), but can retain and even pass on a 'sense of pride in their origins' to their children (Jupp 2001: 261). However, while these developments are often perceived as potentially positive for individual migrants and their ethnic communities, mainstream society sometimes views in them as problematic.

On a practical level, the transnational practices of migrants refer to activities that 'cross state boundaries but do not necessarily originate with state agencies or actors' (Sklair and Robbins 2002: 82). While the state still has a role in engaging transnational practices in a more general manner, the existence of such practices which occur outside the sphere of the global system is an indication of the limited influence of state actions on informal transnational practices. This is particularly relevant in examining the processes of both voluntary and forced migration, as well as the overall settlement process. The 'sustained ties of persons, networks and organisations' (Faist 1999: 2) that exist across national borders can have a significant impact on patterns of cultural maintenance, identity formation, and general settlement practices among refugees and migrants.

For all these reasons, transnationalism has often challenged simple theories of assimilation and multiculturalism that portray culture as a zero sum phenomenon. It has confounded the notion that, upon resettlement in another country, the culture of a migrant group is either wholly retained or largely discarded in favour of the culture of the receiving society (as was advocated by the Chicago School (of Anthropology) in the USA in the first half of the twentieth century). With the rise and prominence of transnational practices, nation-states are no longer the predominant containers of cultural, social, economic, and political processes. Rather, migrants and refugees with easier access to 'transnational capabilities' (Al-Ali *et al.* 2001: 581) are able to 'develop subjectivities and identities' embedded in networks and connections that stretch within and beyond the borders of the settlement society (Sherrell and Hyndman, 2004: 3). In this context, transnationalism can lead to a greater mobility of ideas, information, and various forms of cultural capital which engender an increased capacity for people to sustain cultural and national loyalties to interest groups and movements across national borders. For individual migrants these ties can have a significant local influence on the process of acculturation (Kennedy and Roudometof 2002; Faist 1999).

But transnational practices may also be seen to have the potential to alter the culture of both countries of origin and host societies in a number of ways. These include through economic and political activities such as transnational electoral participation and political lobbying, through social and cultural engagements such as cross-border 'marriage alliances, religious activity, media and commodity consumption' (Vertovec 2001: 575), and through networks for maintaining contact with family, friends, and ethnic, political, or religious groups (Al-Ali *et al.* 2001). The following section will explore these issues in the context of Muslim migrants and their various transnational practices and ties.

Transnational ties and Muslim migrant settlement in the West

Reflecting the wider discussion above, the relationship between transnational ties and the integration of Muslim migrants in Australia and other Western émigré societies would appear to be even more complex. Not least because of the problematized perception of Islam and its association with political violence and radicalism (Akbarzadeh and Mansouri 2007). In the Australian context, for example, Muslim migrants find themselves in a society that is not only multicultural in terms of its political policies and social values, but that is also experiencing heightened public anxiety towards Islam and Islamic practices, in line with other Western societies. Some scholars link this phenomenon to a broader anti-religion framework within the context of secularism.

The secular Enlightenment theory that conceives of political community as an abstract collection of equal citizens emerged in response to the inequalities that characterized the absolutist states of medieval Europe, many of which legitimized their authority on religious grounds. Radical Enlightenment public intellectuals such as Baruch Spinoza and Giambattista Vico were influential in challenging the hierarchy imposed by religious authorities, which represented one of the first steps towards a more institutionalized secularization in European history. For Muslims living in the West, their visibility in public spaces and their claims for cultural recognition have been compounded by new approaches to multiculturalism that are more instrumentalist than cosmopolitan.

Against this broader historical background, it is useful to reflect on the social experiences of Muslims in Western (secular) cities and examine their sense (or otherwise) of local integration and transnational connections. Within an increasingly securitized social milieu, Muslim migrants find at their disposal a growing array of communication technologies that enhance continuing links to their homelands, and as such, further the possibilities of a global Muslim *ummah* – a transnational community of fellow Muslims (Hassan 2002). Bowen (2004) outlines three dimensions that transnational Islam may entail:

- a Islamic concepts and ideas of personal conduct being articulated globally through Muslims moving across national borders for cultural, political, or economic reasons;
- b Muslims being increasingly associated with religious movements that promote cross-national exchanges and cross-national communication; and
- c Muslims debating issues pertaining to the nature and role of Islam in Western countries.

In terms of systematic examination and critical appraisal, it is this third dimension of transnational Islam that has been most neglected (Bowen 2004). Yet, debates and discussions among Muslims about the nature and role of Islam in Western countries (Ramadan 2004) are crucial in informing Muslim migrants'

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abilities to negotiate a satisfactory balance between their religious identity and their sense of social integration into a predominantly secular society.

However, it is insufficient to posit that a coalescence of faith-based Muslim values on the one hand and Western-secular ideals on the other could engender a sense of integration or otherwise. Muslims' non-integration into Western societies and their resistance to certain aspects of its value systems may be attributable less to antagonisms between Islamic and Western culture and more to the economic, cultural, and political inequalities frequently experienced by Muslim migrants within their 'new' societies. This is despite host societies' stated ideals of multiculturalism and equal citizenship. In light of this, the following section discusses the concepts of multiculturalism and citizenship and the extent to which they are contestable in the context of collective cultural claims by minority groups.

Critical reflections on 'multiculturalism'

From its genesis as a policy framework aimed at providing settlement services to newly arrived immigrants, in the second half of the twentieth century, multiculturalism has developed into a concept that articulates and characterizes society's growing ethno-cultural diversity. Since its early days in Australia and Canada, multiculturalism has become a contested and controversial policy that has been subject to much scrutiny, especially during the past decade with its political upheavals, perceived global insecurity and widespread socio-economic challenges (Koleth 2010). Thus it is important to distinguish between multiculturalism as a policy, as a moral position, and as the description of a demographic reality. The argument against multiculturalism as a demographic fact is problematic because the majority of nation-states across the globe are multicultural in their composition. To extrapolate criticism of multiculturalism can only lead to one extreme policy outcome, namely a repatriation of migrants and their descendants (Turner 2006).

Australian multiculturalism, while not under immediate threat, over the past decade or so has been challenged and subjected to closer scrutiny. The critiques of multiculturalism are varied but generally relate to three broad themes: its ability to support cultural diversity, the value and relevance of its ideals and its practical implementation if it is to foster genuine intercultural dialogue and understanding.

Australia has one of the most culturally diverse populations among the developed countries, with 20.3 per cent of its population born overseas as opposed to 18.9 per cent for Canada, under 13 per cent for the USA and just over 12 per cent for the UK (UNESCO 2009; Global Commission on International Migration 2006). The existence of such a diverse population in Australia presents novel challenges to policy makers at all levels of government.

Australian multiculturalism was adopted in the 1970s as a cornerstone of the government's strategy to settle newly arrived migrants and in the process manage the country's growing levels of cultural diversity. The advantage of

multicultural policies, it was argued, was that they provided guidelines for reconciling cultural differences and thus facilitate greater social cohesion. The policy was originally meant to supplant the more aggressive paradigms of migrant settlement which expected individuals to assimilate into the overarching Anglo-Saxon population and thereby lose their cultural identity. Multicultural policies, it was argued, would allow minority groups to participate in Australian society while retaining their cultural distinctions. In theory the cultural diversity that this multicultural approach sanctioned was seen as beneficial to society because it fostered a positive form of social belonging for migrants and enriched the mainstream community by opening it up to new ideas.

In recent years, however, the concept of multiculturalism has been questioned as a meaningful concept for informing and shaping debates about managing diversity and framing national identity. It is increasingly being challenged, and in some countries replaced, by a new emphasis on liberal principles of social inclusion and civic citizenship, which encourage a commitment to the core values of each country's mainstream national identity.

Recent studies of multiculturalism in countries such as Canada, Britain, and Australia recognize that the future of multiculturalism as an ideology is deeply intertwined with global geopolitics and the impact of such politics on attitudes towards Islam and the experiences of Muslims everywhere (Abbas 2005; Dunn 2005; Dunn *et al.* 2007; Forrest and Dunn 2006; Jakubowicz 2007; Meer and Modood 2008; Nesbitt-Larking 2008; Poynting 2004; Ramadan 2004; Turner 2006). In Australia, Muslims are confronted with the dual pressure of conforming to dominant essentially Anglo-Saxon 'core values', or risk marginalization and social exclusion (Jakubowicz 2007; Mansouri 2005). At this juncture 'it is important to distinguish between multiculturalism as a social policy, as a moral argument about diversity and as the empirical description of a state of affairs in which a population is heterogeneous' (Turner 2007: 75).

Turner suggests that 'multiculturalism means the existence within the same society of a diversity of different cultures and communities, but the principal debate about multiculturalism is in reality about the cultural diversity that is produced by migrant communities' (Turner 2007: 76). In the recent history of Australia, this increased diversity triggered the emergence of paranoid versions of Australian nationalism, which were inflamed during the mid-1990s when Pauline Hanson's right wing One Nation party came onto the federal political scene. Hanson's form of paranoid nationalism, which raised concerns about the high level of Asian immigration and the incompatibility of Islam with Australian culture, highlights the potential for an essentialized discourse of identity to degenerate into a blatant racism that calls for the exclusion of certain cultures from the country. It is within this context that multiculturalism in Australia has come under a renewed scrutiny that questions its relevance and utility as a social policy tool.

The status of multiculturalism in other Western émigré societies is even more problematic than is the case in Australia. In 2011, a number of European leaders, including the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the British Prime Minister

David Cameron, declared that multiculturalism has failed in their respective countries. Such comments must be regarded within the post-9/11 context, which is characterized by a rise in security fears compounded by contemporary economic woes; thus these remarks may be seen to reflect mainly populist reactions from a nervous electorate looking for scapegoats. In truth, neither the UK, nor Germany in particular, had anything like a fully-fledged multicultural policy. Germany is a multiethnic country that never really adopted a proactive multiculturalism policy as was the case in Australia. The UK has had a policy of accommodating cultural diversity, yet historically has stopped short of adopting social and settlement policies to support the cultural aspirations of its migrant communities.

Against this background of a retreating multiculturalism, Muslim migrants in the West are engaging with and challenging restrictive notions of social inclusion and national belonging. The empirical findings reported below relate specifically to transnational ties and local inclusion as perceived by Muslim migrants in three culturally pluralist cities, namely Melbourne, Paris and Sheffield. This data enables a useful analysis of the three different policy approaches to cultural diversity that these countries have adopted. The empirical findings will also allow a further examination of the way these approaches impact on notions of belonging and inclusion among Muslim migrants.

Current study

The data used in this chapter has been extracted from a broader study that examined the role of local governments in managing intercultural relations in Australia, France, and the UK between 2008 and 2010. The study investigated whether the local level of governance was effective in managing intercultural relations and whether it represented an optimal conduit for ensuring full and active citizenship for local citizenry. The specific objectives of the larger study were: (a) to assess the level of local support for multiculturalism and cultural diversity in the community; and (b) to examine attitudes towards Muslim migrants as an increasingly visible religious group in multicultural spaces. The chapter draws on data provided by Muslim residents, which has been extracted from a more general data set elicited from a larger pool of participants surveyed randomly in the three case studies. That is, Muslim residents were not the targeted sample per se within the larger study from which the following data emanates.

Data collection

The community sample for this study was collected using a random selection approach whereby every fifth household in a specified local area was approached and asked to complete the survey. No specific communities or individuals were targeted, as the diverse cultural make-up of the target local areas ensured a sufficiently representative sample. The final figures for the community surveys indicate a close reflection of the total demographic profile for the areas in question.

In terms of analysis, the quantitative data was coded, entered, and analysed using frequency counts and general tallying techniques. Raw figures as well as ratios were generated to compare data within the same sample and across the two surveys. The qualitative data was analysed through a systematic thematic content analysis and using NVivo as a data-management program. The chosen themes for analysis reflected the study's key focal areas, namely attitudes towards multiculturalism and cultural diversity, perceptions of Muslim migrants, and views on the role of local governments and grass-root organizations in managing intercultural relations.

This chapter incorporates quantitative data from the broader project's field-work conducted in Australia, France and the United Kingdom. The total number of surveys administered in Australia was 497 for community residents and 194 for council staff; while both for France and the UK the number of surveys was equal reaching 100 for each. The community surveys in the three localities included surveys completed by residents who self-assigned Islam as their religion. These surveys by Muslim migrants which form the basis for the analysis in this chapter amounted to 29 surveys in France, 21 in Australia and 24 in the UK.

Focus on data from Muslim migrants:

- City of St Denis, France – 29 respondents
- City of Whittlesea, Australia – 21 respondents
- City of Sheffield, United Kingdom – 24 respondents

The Muslim participants, like the wider sample for this study, were randomly selected as part of the larger community survey. The figures have been extracted and isolated to facilitate a customized analysis focusing on transnational ties and perceptions of belonging and inclusion among this demographic group.

Data analysis

The overall data set from which this cohort of responses has been taken was collected by way of household surveys in three local council areas in the cities of

Table 8.1 Summary of data

	<i>Australia</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>United Kingdom</i>
	<i>City of Whittlesea (W) and City of Shepparton (S)</i>	<i>City of St Denis</i>	<i>City of Sheffield</i>
Diversity survey (Council staff)	95 (W)+99 (S)=194	–	–
Diversity survey (Residents)	299 (W)+198 (S)=497	100	100
Interviews with community leaders	13	11	18

Paris, Melbourne, and Sheffield. The data sample analysed for this chapter focuses exclusively on respondents who self-identified as being adherents to the Islamic faith. Given that Muslim respondents were not targeted participants but rather came from within the broader sample, the data set focusing on Muslim respondents is smaller than the overall data pool.

The empirical findings reported below relate to the local and transnational ties maintained by Muslim migrants in the three local cities. Figure 8.6 also provides data on perceptions among Muslim respondents of the meanings of local inclusion. The three local council areas were St Denis in Paris, the City of Whittlesea in Melbourne, and the City of Sheffield in Yorkshire. These three areas all have Muslim and Arabic-speaking populations that exceed the respective national averages. Because of this demographic characteristic, these three cities represent optimal sites within which to explore local and transnational solidarities and ties among Muslim migrants. Figures 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3 report data for each site and display the quantitative findings that relate to the contacts that Muslim respondents have developed with other Muslim groups both locally and transnationally.

Figures 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3 show the participants' answers to a question about sustained contacts with other Muslim groups both locally and internationally. For the purposes of this study 'Sustained contacts' are defined as contacts that happen more than once and which give a sense of solidarity and support between Muslim respondents and other Muslim groups (be they local or transnational).

The data in Figure 8.1 show that Muslim residents in Whittlesea tend to develop stronger ties with other Muslim individuals and groups at a local level more than on a transnational level, even if the difference is only marginal. This may be seen as indicative of a capacity among these respondents to draw on

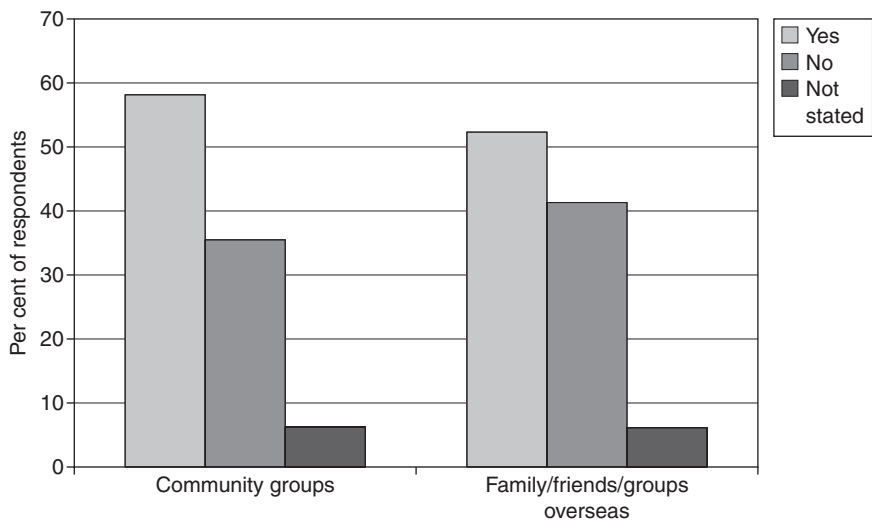


Figure 8.1 Contact with other Muslims: City of Whittlesea, Australia (N=21).

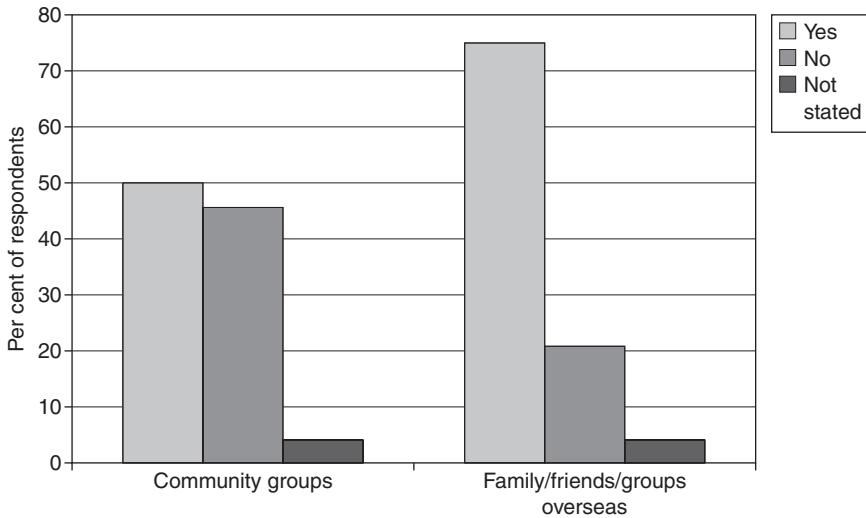


Figure 8.2 Contact with other Muslims: United Kingdom ($N=24$).

local social networks. Such networks provide the respondents with opportunities for social interaction, solidarity, and cultural expression still available to Muslim migrants in Australia.

The data from the UK (Figure 8.2) shows that Muslim migrants in Sheffield tend to develop stronger ties with other Muslims overseas (transnationally) than they do at a local level. This may suggest that the opportunities and spaces for local social networking and cultural expression are more restricted and limited in comparison with Australia.

Transnational links are even more common in the data collected from Muslim migrants in St Denis in Paris (Figure 8.3), showing a similar trend among the respondents to developing stronger transnational links as opposed to local ties to other Muslims. This trend is even more pronounced in St Denis than in Sheffield reflecting a stark reverse 'correlation' between local ties and transnational connections. In other words, the data would seem to suggest that weaker notions of local engagements seem to correlate with stronger transnational ties and vice versa.

A simple comparative analysis of the data from the three groups shows that in St Denis and Sheffield transnational ties with relatives, friends, and community groups are very high (75.9 per cent in St Denis and 75 per cent in Sheffield), compared with the City of Whittlesea (52.5 per cent). This may be indicative of the fact that Muslim migrants in the St Denis and Sheffield are more active in providing financial and social support to their countries of origin, such as Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Pakistan, Somalia, and other Muslim countries. In the case of France, with its close proximity to the North African countries from which the migrants originate, it is perhaps not surprising that such ties are

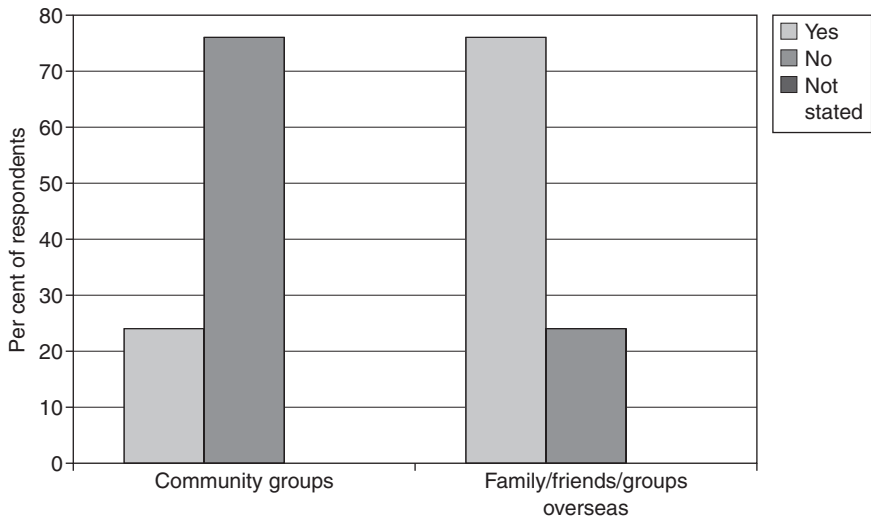


Figure 8.3 Contact with other Muslims: France ($N=29$).

exchanges are possible and sustainable. Many of those surveyed in the France as well as the UK indicated that they kept in touch with members of their extended families and other Muslim friends living in their 'host' countries.

Of course there may be other possible explanations for these divergent transnational practices among Muslim respondents. A closer look at the data collected from Sheffield indicates that there was a higher percentage of young adults in the sample (20.8 per cent under 20 years, 79.1 per cent 35 years and under) which may account for the more frequent transnational connections via social networking sites such as Facebook.

Figure 8.4 shows that contact with local Muslim community groups is relatively high in the City of Whittlesea (58.3 per cent) and the City of Sheffield (50 per cent) but very much lower in the City of St Denis (24.1 per cent). One possible explanation for this is that participation in local ethno-specific groups in Whittlesea and Sheffield allows the respondents to engage with a form of bonding social capital that is not permitted publicly in France's aggressive approach to colour-blind 'integration'. The comparatively more tolerant Australian social policy context may be seen to help Muslim migrants negotiate and resist the complex forms of prejudice and racism they may encounter as members of a minority ethno-religious group.

As the discussion on multiculturalism earlier in this chapter showed, progressive government multicultural policies in Australia and, to a lesser degree, the UK have supported the formation and survival of community groups and their settlement support services. By contrast, in St Denis ties with local Muslim community groups are much lower, as the government emphasizes a more civic

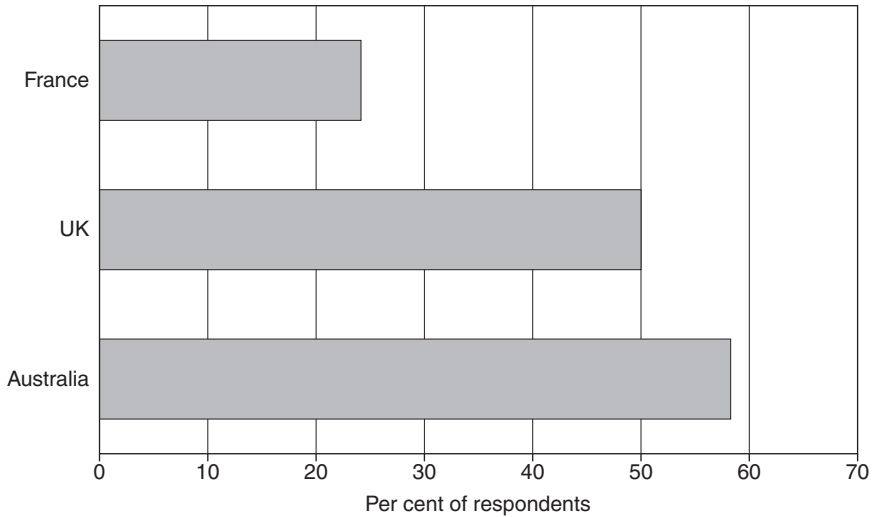


Figure 8.4 Ties with local Muslim community groups.

approach to migrant integration and therefore participation in ethno-specific groups is discouraged by the state.

Comparative insights into the empirical findings

This section discusses briefly some comparative findings for Muslim migrants' contacts with local Muslim groups (Figure 8.4), Muslim contacts with overseas groups (Figure 8.5), and a final set of data on the subjective perceptions of Muslim migrants of local belonging (Figure 8.6).

Local and transnational ties between Muslim migrants are often sustained over a long period of time and can engender solidarity and support, which have the potential to build broader social capital.

The comparative analysis of the data in Figure 8.5 shows that in France and the UK transnational ties between the Muslim respondents and Muslims overseas are higher (75.9 per cent in St Denis and 75 per cent in Sheffield) than in Australia (52.5 per cent in Whittlesea). Whereas, Figure 8.4 shows that ties with local Muslim community groups are relatively high in Australia (58.3 per cent, City of Whittlesea) and the UK (50 per cent, City of Sheffield), but much lower in the City of St Denis in France (24.1 per cent).

This inverse relationship between local and transnational ties points to the existence of a clear link between local policy dynamics and transnational practices. That is, the stronger one's local ties – in terms of bridging the gap between the individual and the wider society as well as bonding within one's own community – the less need one has for systematic and intense transnational connections.

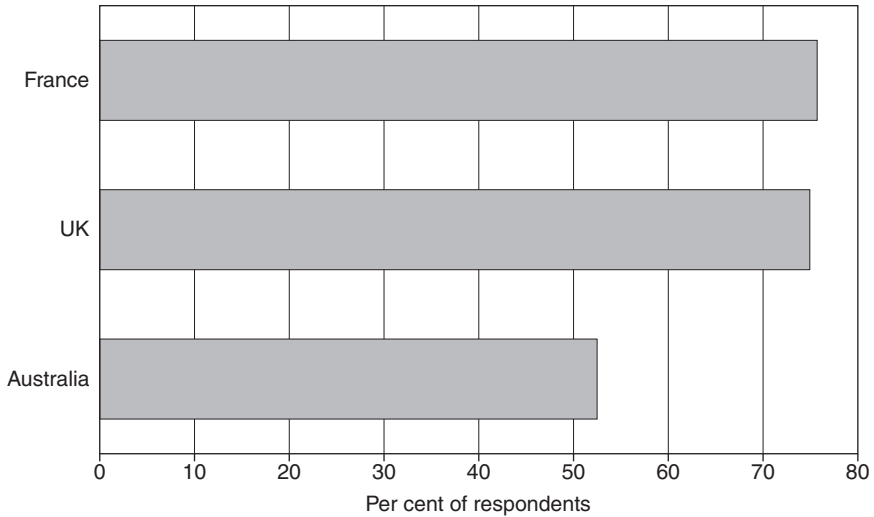


Figure 8.5 Ties with Muslim relatives/friends/groups overseas.

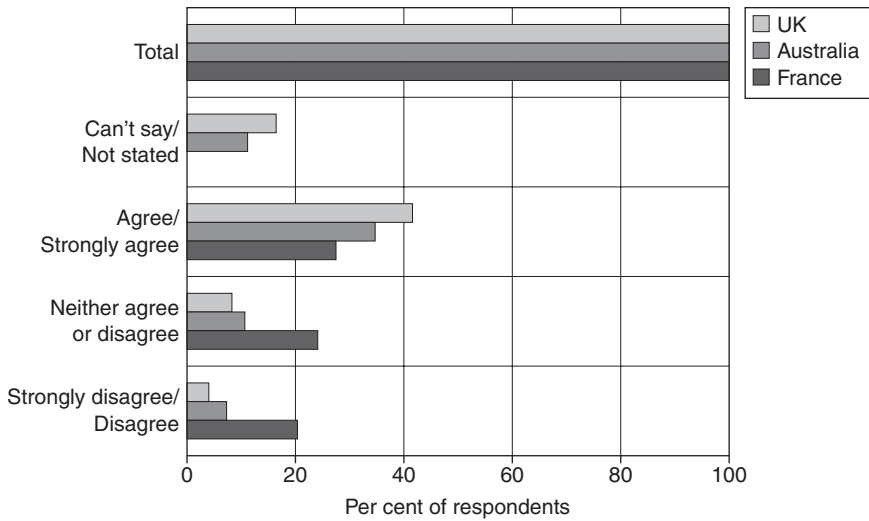


Figure 8.6 As a Muslim I feel I am included in the national community.

These findings may be explained in terms of many factors, for example, age, socio-economic status, gender, and settlement period. However, the data on perceptions of inclusion in the national community contained in Figure 8.6 may provide insights that explicate these findings. The responses in Figure 8.6 reflect

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Muslim respondents' perceptions of a much less inclusive environment in France than perceptions of inclusion in Australia and the UK.

Despite the small size of the data pool reported in this chapter, there appear to be links as well as an inverse relationship between local and national inclusion outcomes and migrants' tendencies to develop and maintain transnational ties. Such an analysis of the quantitative data has been corroborated by insights elicited in the in-depth qualitative interviews. The three sites in which the study took place have varying degrees of local tensions, where racial targeting has prompted differential outcomes at the level of social exclusion. In the following excerpts, members of the Muslim migrant communities across the various sites reflect on these tensions and dilemmas as they engage on a daily basis with local authorities and the citizenry at large. For one member of the Muslim community in Sheffield, it was a question of not only achieving belonging but, more critically, being able to survive:

The community don't understand what we're trying to do and what we're fighting. They don't understand how hard it is [for us]. We're fighting the [local] council and the community are fighting us.

In the following excerpt, a Muslim migrant in France challenges the racialization of Islam and its incompatibility with the secular values of the French Republic:

When one is born here, you are a Muslim from this country, and not a Muslim from Morocco, North Africa, etcetera, and actually it only takes some travelling to shed any illusions about this. Now once that is settled, it is all about how to read the values we hold, and this can be applied to all religions, and social justice can be read in the Koran as well as the Bible, or in secular literature. [But in France it is] as if Islam were an alien thing, and we say, but Islam comes from here, and we are the living proof of it, Islam is part of this society.

Such perceptions and a more pronounced sense of being targeted (through Islamophobia) are also underlined by a French Muslim who works closely with inter-faith networks, migrant groups, and women's groups:

Islamophobia has been linked to immigration, to a physical appearance. If you have dark hair and are of North African type, you are a Muslim, a fundamentalist, a terrorist, and insecurity is your fault. So we have felt this very strongly, even among NGOs with whom we work and who also want to promote diversity, people are starting to be afraid of this context.

This testimony suggests that the assertion of a French identity by Muslims may be seen as threatening to the wider secular tradition which privileges the *Français de souche* or 'Real French'. It is these types of racialized exclusions that may result in Muslim migrants relying on transnational connections as a sustainable

means of achieving a sense of solidarity and support. This is something that can be seen in real terms at the level of spiritual leadership, economic support, and overall welfare of individuals and their communities.

Conclusion

Transnational ties and their consequent configurations for social inclusion are shaping the way new political relationships are being constructed within the nation-state. This chapter has examined the interrelationship between transnational practices on the one hand and subjective perceptions of local integration of Muslim migrants on the other. Transnational ties among Muslim migrants in the West exhibit complex manifestations in relation to local policies. Perceived transnational ties have often been problematized, especially when these take place within a context of heightened international tensions, ethnic segregation, and societal anxieties regarding religious activism and religiosity. This chapter explored in a limited empirical capacity whether an upholding of transnational ties can, in some cases, confound migrants' development of a sense of connection to their local milieu. The empirical data reflect on the complex relationship between transnational practices and issues pertaining to national belonging and social inclusion.

Today, with the 'retreat' of progressive social policies in many Western states (Benhabib 2004), there is an increased scrutiny of multiculturalism driven, in particular, by state policies that act in the name of the nation. The findings reported in this chapter suggest that multiculturalism – and the associated cultural recognition of religious minorities – in most cases does not pose a threat to Western values, nor will it lead to the possibility of separatist disintegration (Taylor 1994; Kymlicka 1997). As the discussion outlined in this chapter shows, it is important that religious and cultural minorities are recognized and supported through local government as a way of achieving social inclusion, equal citizenship and full participation in society.

In a national and global context, where demographic boundaries are continually redrawn and where racialized inequalities are increasingly challenged, grassroots action at the local level may be the optimal conduit through which to generate appropriate policies and initiatives aimed at supporting migrant integration. Migration has historically served Australia and other Western nations well. It is to be expected that migrants be empowered to gain access to full and active citizenship rather than be pushed towards social dislocation and economic marginalization.

Émigré societies in the twenty-first century are still struggling to come to grips with the notion that national identity and active citizenship can no longer be the exclusive domain of primordial attachment (Benhabib 2004; Benhabib, Shapiro and Petranović 2007). What is needed now is a more grassroots approach to moral universalism and cosmopolitanism. Within such an approach, classical understandings and applications of normative citizenship can be augmented by a new emphasis on a discourse of human rights that transcends the

particularities of nation-state polity with its increasingly out-dated emphasis on political membership and tributary rights (Turner 2007). This chapter and the larger study from which is extracted show that government policies, citizenship approaches, and national discourses on identity and belonging do often shape in a significant manner migrants' subjective sense of belonging and their social connectedness practices.

Note

- 1 This chapter is based on a large research project, *Local Governance, Multiculturalism and Active Citizenship: The Case of Arab-Muslim Diaspora in the West*, funded by an Australian Research Council discovery grant (2007–10). The research team was led by Professor Fethi Mansouri and included Professors Sue Kenny and David Walker. The author would like to acknowledge the significant contribution of Dr Michele Lobo as the research fellow on the project, Professor Gary Craig and Dr Hannah Lewis who collaborated on the case study in Sheffield and Dr Rim Latrache who assisted with the French part. The author would like to acknowledge the crucial input of the local councils and all the participants in Australia, France and the UK.

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