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Introduction

The question of whether Islam and Muslims belong in the West has been the subject of considerable political "debate" well before the events of 9/11. Indeed, subsequent events, though different but connected, have unfolded on the international scene as the "War on Terror".[1] This question has undoubtedly attracted public attention and the answers are more polarised nowadays as we live in the highly mediatised shadow of Al-Qa'eda and its more violent incarnation, the Islamic State (IS). Indeed, the clash of civilisation thesis advanced by Samuel Huntington had at its core a philosophical and practical assumption that Islam and the West are on a collision course because of their divergent cultural and value systems. In other words the cultural fault line that divides the Muslim world from the West is not only about democracy but also about ethics and values. The excessive securitisation of Islam and its public construction as "alien", "foreign", "threatening" and altogether "incompatible" with Western democratic values[2] adds weight to the self-fulfilling prophecy that sees nothing but violent clashes in history that stretch from the Crusades to the War on Terror.

And nothing signals this supposed violent "clash" more than visible practices of Islamic faith within Western social milieus. The epitome of such characterisation emerged in 2004 when France passed a law banning the wearing of headscarves in public education institutions, arguing that this was a way of combating Islamic extremism and a gradual shift towards "communalism".[3] And indeed, since then we witnessed a plethora of similarly regressive legislations across Europe, Australia and North America, all signalling attempts at governing the "ungovernable Muslim Other" with specific aims to contain and counter radical tendencies within Islam and among Muslim Diasporas.[4] It is in this context that arguing for a heuristic dimension within Islamic religiosity is all the more significant because this will contribute to a more nuanced and balanced account of Islamic rituals, practices and spirituality.

Problematizing Religiosity

Beyond the recent securitised debate about Islam and Muslims in the West, there has been a steady increase of scholarly interest in Islamic piety and its connection to political attitudes and social behaviours.[5] The dominant discourse, as exemplified in the various attempts to ban symbols of Islamic religiosity, has been one that problematized religiosity among Western Muslims, in particular among youth often seen as prone to being easily radicalised. What has been missing from such approaches and discursive articulations is an understanding of what religious practice, especially at the level of everyday spirituality and rituals, entail in terms of cosmopolitan tendencies and local political engagement.[6] In other words, the argument advanced by many critics of multiculturalism and "excessive" cultural and religious diversity—namely that Islamic religiosity can become an obstacle towards social integration—is one that is not supported by the literature.[7] To this end,

this special issue will highlight diverse articulations of Islamic religiosity in Western public space in ways that generate meaning, hope and solidarity rather than disharmony, tension and conflict. The so-called "Muslim question" in the West, is therefore treated as a question to be critiqued, deconstructed and debunked rather than accepted at face value as synonymous with an inherently problematic community and its faith tradition.[8]

Regional Focus

This special issue, therefore, addresses this "Muslim question" in contemporary citizenship, social cohesion and multicultural policy debates in Western polities, predominantly focusing on Australian and European contexts. Such a regional focus is particularly important given that the visibility of the Muslim Other has the potential to circulate fear and anxiety in these culturally diverse societies that have a dominant white majority culture. The outcome is that Muslims become "outsiders" rather than valued citizens. This special issue seeks to expand normative frameworks and social understandings of citizenship through explorations of everyday Islamic religiosity as it is practiced and experienced in urban spaces of intercultural encounter.

The collection of papers show that such encounters have the potential to engender and enable new modes of being (and becoming) so that Muslims emerge as active rather than racialised, alienated and excluded citizens. In paying attention to these emergent, spatially located and affective experiences of citizenship, the papers in this special issue go some way towards re-balancing debates which centre on the question of whether Muslims living in the West have the capacity to be fully active and "loyal" citizens without betraying their religious obligations and spiritual traditions. By allowing a new conversation to be had regarding what it means to be a Muslim, and how beliefs and practices shape embodied and ethical orientations towards citizenship, the contributing papers will provide new knowledge bases that value rather than demonise Islam. This new knowledge, which privileges insights from Muslims living in the West, contests dominant discourses and representations of belonging and political engagement and enables more inclusive models of citizenship to be envisioned.

Religiosity and Citizenship in Western Polities

The articles gathered together in the issue are interdisciplinary in approach and methodology and seek to address some of the conceptual limitations which constrain the way Islamic religiosity and citizenship is theorised and actualised. The papers draw inspiration from theoretical innovations in sociology of religion and citizenship as well as cultural geography and cultural studies. The strength of these interdisciplinary approaches lies in their focus on Islamic ethics as well as the performative dimensions of agency and political participation. Such approaches enable the contributors in this issue to expand the grammar with which we are able to address how minority Muslims enact citizenship both as a "lived" experience and as a set of rights and obligations which are "the object of struggle".[9]

Johns, Mansouri, and Lobo's analysis of young Muslims' negotiations of religiosity, citizenship and belonging in Melbourne is framed by the security-driven problematization of Islam since September 11, which has amplified concerns about the capacity of Muslims living in the West to become fully active citizens whilst maintaining their religious beliefs, rituals and practices. Underpinning these anxieties is a "clash of civilisations" logic that characterise Islam as a religion that is incompatible with liberal

citizenship practices and the ethical requirements of the multi-religious, multicultural political community. Contesting these representations, the paper draws upon the findings of surveys, in-depth interviews and focus groups, which show that Islamic conceptions of morality, justice and respect when "grounded" in the multicultural Western environment nourish new religiosities that are dynamic, engaged and which importantly do not require Muslims to betray the sources and the framework of their faith based around *the sharia*.

Salih Yucel likewise examines increased public anxiety towards visible Muslims in the Australian community since September 11 and in light of subsequent events which have framed Islam as a persistent threat to Australia. In this context, Yucel argues that the loyalty of Muslims to Australia, and the possibility of their social integration, is frequently debated by intellectuals, politicians, media and other Australians with little or no knowledge of the Islamic theological perspective of the "notion of country", which influences Muslim conceptualisations of "home", community and citizenship. The dominant perspective here is that Islam acts as a barrier to integration. Drawing upon the findings of a survey where Australian-Muslims were asked questions about their relationship to the nation as a "homeland", Yucel argues that the notion of the "homeland" (*watan al-asli*) in Islamic theology and jurisprudence, supports rather than negates feelings of belonging and integration with the Australian nation.

Cultural and Social Challenges

Contrasting with these accounts, Yassir Morsi's auto-ethnographic reflection on a visit to the Islamic Museum of Australia, in Melbourne, presents a more critical and highly personal reflection of the way that multiculturalism frames the museum's representation of the Australian-Muslim community as an integrated "Other". His paper challenges the Museum's narrative of a "synthesis" of East and West in the telling of the story of Muslim migration and settlement in Australia, by regarding this image as one that is only achieved by "whitewashing" experiences of racism, struggle, Islamophobia and colonial histories from the picture. Morsi concludes that in its effort to increase mainstream tolerance towards Muslims, the museum addresses a white, Western gaze, ultimately dispossessing Muslims living in Melbourne of their own much more complex histories.

Focusing more on the interaction of Islamic religiosity and everyday sporting activities in the co-educational school setting, Abeer Ahmed Alamri explores how the reality of following Islamic religious ritual, belief and practice for young, female Muslims—that is, meeting modesty requirements, and not interacting with male peers in the sporting context, presents a challenge to their equal participation in school sporting activities. Although Muslim, female students are encouraged by schools to participate in sport, which is viewed as vital to young people's personal health and well-being, social development and civic integration, using interviews and narrative analysis methods, Alamri conveys Muslim female students' belief that their religious requirements are frequently not understood or taken seriously by staff or students, which is experienced by the young women as racist and socially excluding. On the basis of these findings, Alamri concludes that educators need to engage in deeper intercultural training to prepare them to work with young people from Islamic religious background in this instance, but also with other young people who have different needs relating to sport participation based on ethnicity, race, culture, religion and other identity categories.

Lejla Voloder's paper focuses on *halal* consumption activities of Australian-Muslims to think about recognition, empowerment, belonging and political engagement. In particular, the focus is on the sale and consumption of *halal* food that positions Muslims as

valued consumer-citizens. Voloder's paper underlines that it is this concept of consumer-citizenship that offers a prism for challenging dominant stereotypes of Islamic religiosity that marginalise and racialise Muslims. In other words, the Muslim consumer-citizen is a discerning citizen with choices, who is recognised by Muslim retailers, but also large corporations. Rather than focusing merely on expressions of religious piety, the paper offers a refreshing approach by articulating how an Islamic ethics that underpins the sale and consumption of *halal* food in local places stimulates an ethic of responsibility to Muslims in local places and responsibility by Muslims towards distant others who are part of food supply chains. It is this "mainstreaming" of *halal* that broadens understanding of how everyday practices of Islamic religiosity contribute to "everyday" forms of belonging and political engagement.

The European Context

With a longer history of Muslim migration and settlement, European contexts provide similar tensions but also differences. In an insightful article Harun Karcic highlights the historical presence of Islam in the Balkan states, where it has existed since prior to Communist rule. He examines the revival and adaptation of *sharia* practices and law since the fall of communism and now in a context where *sharia* is discussed in relation to a "clash" with European, secular values and legal norms. The analysis centres around a *fatwa* declared by Bosnian Islamic scholars, that Islamic norms are applicable in secular contexts but have no legally binding basis. In reflecting on what this means for the religiosity of Bosnian Muslims, Karcic asserts that the *sharia* is observed as a guide for adhering to Islamic moral and ethical norms on an individual and voluntary basis, rather than as a matter of law. In describing Islam in this way, as a *lived practice*, Karcic draws upon a Pew religious survey of European Muslims to build his case that the highest priority for Bosnian Muslims, in terms of religious practice and adherence, pertains more to following Islamic norms (the five pillars of faith), followed by moral-ethical norms applied largely at an individual level or in the domestic sphere (work ethics, trade, lottery games and inter-personal relations). Islamic legal norms, particularly related to criminal law (*hudud*), had less importance leading Karcic to conclude that the Islamic religious norms and practices enacted by the majority of Bosnian Muslims are easily applied and do not present a clash with European secular legal norms.

In another insightful article on the domain of sport and sporting organisations as civic associations which encourage greater civic participation and social inclusion, but which also require adjustments to meet the requirements of Islamic faith, particularly for Muslim women, Petra Kuppinger's paper focuses on the vibrant space of the Muslim Women's Sports Club in Stuttgart, Germany. She illustrates how a subsidiary public or a niche is carved out through swimming sessions, a form of faith-based civic participation that is in accordance with Islamic beliefs and values. Rather than being invisible, the Sports Club emerges as an integral part of the urban public sphere in ways that are attentive to the modesty requirements of Muslim women. The paper shows that Islamic piety is a point of entry for members and provides the opportunity for Muslims, pious women of diverse ethnicities, class, age groups and educational backgrounds, to come together and make an important contribution to the Muslim public sphere, where leadership and organisational positions are often held by men. By rooting itself within the German tradition of civic participation, the club provides the opportunity for Muslim women to contribute to the broader urban public sphere.

The Potential for Social Disengagement

Despite the positive role of Islam in shaping ethics and values that orient Muslims towards deeper social integration and engagement in Western, multicultural societies, these articles also highlight the potential for disengagement arising from young Muslims' experiences of racism and social exclusion. This is illustrated in the final two papers in the collection. Firstly, Youssef Azghari considers the extent to which Morrocan-Dutch youth in the Netherlands identify with their ethnic and religious community or with the broader Dutch community. Through a comparative study involving in-depth interviews with Moroccan-Dutch youth and Dutch peers from the majority culture, Youssef Azghari found that Moroccan-Dutch youth felt stronger identification with their Muslim identity than their ethnic identity, and had stronger social ties with co-ethnic and Muslim peers, feeling weak attachment to a Dutch identity and Dutch community. Apart from this finding indicating a closeness on the basis of having more of a communal identity than the individualist identity of Dutch peers, Youssef Azghari also stresses the influence of racial prejudice which presents a barrier to social integration, orienting Morrocan-Dutch Muslims to form greater solidarity with their own ethnic communities.

The final article by Andre, Mansouri and Lobo draws attention to the role of religious leadership in France, stressing the pedagogical function of Imams, in particular, in guiding young French Muslims to develop religious, moral and ethical attributes but also civic skills. The alternative, as highlighted in the article, is a retreat from solidarity with the societies in which Muslims live. The impact of *laïcité* is significant in this context, with French secularism leading many French youth to experience feelings of social dislocation, marginalisation and identity crisis; leading in some instances to withdrawal from French society. The analysis draws upon interviews conducted with Imams in Grenoble and Lyon to highlight the importance of religious leadership to a highly diverse Muslim religious landscape where competing religious discourses shape different attitudes towards the majority culture. The article argues that a fragmented religious leadership is contributing to this social malaise, with conservative, sometimes radical interpretations of Islamic sources by a minority of Imams fostering an environment in which retreat from mainstream French society and even youth radicalisation are potential outcomes. On the other hand, the greater number of religious leaders interviewed for the study provided an insight into the possibility of combining faith with deeper civic and political engagement, highlighting the way in which religious leaders are able to act as a conduit towards social inclusion and intercultural understanding.

Conclusion

This special issue contributes to strengthening understandings of citizenship and belonging by unsettling Euro-centric models of liberal citizenship which subject Muslims to mistrust and surveillance, and demonise Islam as a religion that is underpinned by fundamentalist beliefs and values. By listening to a diversity of Muslim voices it is possible to argue that attention to Islamic rituals, practices, ethics and everyday life has the potential to play an important role in moving thinking beyond current public debates on Islamophbhia that dominate the cultural imaginary in Western societies. Through a focus on the European and Australian context, the papers show that alternative narratives of Islam are central to exploring modes of political engagement, civic participation and belonging that often escape attention. These narratives are crucial to an affirmative poli-

tics that offers hope when anxiety, fear, despair and frustration circulate in the atmosphere and is contagious in multicultural Western societies. Indeed, the so-called "Muslim question" in the West, is to be critiqued, deconstructed and debunked rather than accepted at face value as synonymous with an inherently problematic community and its faith tradition. In examining the diverse articulations of Islamic religiosity in Western public space as presented by the insightful contributions to this Special Issue, we discern meaning, hope and solidarity rather than disharmony, tension and conflict.

NOTES

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