from an Islamic perspective) why this should be so (pp. 221, 238). The use of instruction, inculcation and other processes akin to indoctrination in traditional Islamic education is simply used as evidence of the need for a fundamental rethinking of the role of education in Islam. In a similar vein, the author argues in ch. 7 that young Muslims need to interpret Islam ‘in the context of the cultural and religious plurality of their lives’ (p. 210). It is not quite clear what this means but it seems that the author has been strongly influenced by his PhD supervisor, the late Professor John Hull, who opposed all forms of ‘confessional’ religious education and argued that genuine religious education should be pluralist, open, inclusive, neutral and multi-faith (cf. p. 25). Sahin in turn argues that the Qur’ānic principle of al-ta’aruf (getting to know and learning from each other, Q. 49: 13) supports the notion of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and provides an Islamic justification for multicultural and multifaith education. But he does not explore the possible consequences for Muslim children if they are taught religion mainly or wholly from a neutral, interfaith perspective.

It might have been better to exclude the extensive autobiographical content which is found particularly in the Introduction and ch. 8, in order to create space for further exploration of some of the issues that are currently left hanging or not touched on at all. For example, extremism is mentioned a few times in the book, but not explored in the depth it deserves, and the reader is given few clues as to how the proposed new approach to Islamic education would contribute to solving the problem. Practical pedagogical issues (such as teaching by example, learning through the hidden curriculum, the teaching of virtue and the use of technology) are barely mentioned. Even more importantly, the author does not tell us whether he sees any correlation between the development of critical thinking (which he views in wholly positive terms) and the loss of faith. We are left questioning how far in his view the encouragement of religious commitment is a legitimate goal of Islamic education.

This book is a genuine attempt to wrestle with some of the problems facing Islamic education in the contemporary world. As a contribution to an ongoing debate, it has much to offer. But as the final word on the subject, it inevitably falls short.

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_The Daily Lives of Muslims_


In June/Ramadan 2018, the Dutch branch of Pegida, short for ‘Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West’, announced a pork BBQ in front
of a mosque in Rotterdam. In a peaceful protest against the BBQ, the fence surrounding the mosque square was decorated with thousands of flowers by members of the mostly non-Muslim group ‘010 for peace’ (010 is the dialling code for the city of Rotterdam). The planned Pegida BBQ attracted much media attention. Among those interviewed was a young adult Turkish-Dutch male board member of the mosque. With a local Rotterdam accent he declared in fluent Dutch that since the mosque itself was organizing a big meal to break the fast that night, Pegida members would be most welcome to join the iftar should they run out of pork. ‘We would regret it if they were to go home hungry’, he concluded with a big smile. Eventually, Pegida called off the BBQ, claiming that the police had warned them that their safety could not be guaranteed. This claim was later denied by the mayor of Rotterdam Ahmed Aboutaleb, himself a Muslim of Moroccan heritage. Whatever the true reasons behind the cancellation, what is of interest here is that before it could even ignite, the spark that Pegida had hoped would explode at the BBQ and cause public unrest was quenched by the humorous response of the young board member of the mosque and the flowery ‘010 for peace’ protest.

In this Dutch mosque incident, several trends come to the fore that are addressed by sociologist Nilüfer Göle in The Daily Lives of Muslims: the representation of mosques and Muslim dietary practices as opposed to national identity; the suggestion of incompatibility of Muslim lifestyles with the values of freedom of religion and freedom of expression; an influential Muslim public figure (the Rotterdam mayor) and an ‘ordinary’ young Muslim man (the mosque board member) who are well versed in addressing different publics simultaneously. Most importantly, the ‘010 for peace’ protest and the mosque’s invitation to all parties involved to participate in their iftar point to the potential emergence of a new, more inclusive shared public space.

The Daily Lives of Muslims provides a productive conceptual framework to analyse public controversies regarding the accommodation of Islam’s presence into the European public sphere. The book presents to a wider audience the outcomes of a research project called EuroPublicIslam. The research was funded by the European Council for Research. An accompanying public outreach product is the film EuroPublicIslam, Itinéraires d’une recherche européenne (cf. https://www.canal-u.tv/video/ehess/europublicislam_itineraires_d_une_recherche_europenne.13029). By studying the presence of Muslims in Europe through the lens of public controversies over Islam, the book aims to rethink the interaction between various Muslim and non-Muslim actors in the reshaping of the European public sphere on the one hand, and the ‘Europeanization’ of Islam on the other. The focus on public controversies is based on the idea that such controversies not only divide but also function as an interface between Muslims and non-Muslim citizens in the making of European Islam and can potentially create a more inclusive public sphere. One of the objectives of the book is to deconstruct the binary opposition of the collective categories of ‘Muslims’ and Europeans’ in media coverage of such controversies and present the views and experiences of ‘ordinary Muslims’.
To this end, the research-team visited a total of 21 European countries and had interviews and focus group discussions with more than 400 individuals to analyse local controversies over the headscarf, public prayers, mosques and minarets, *halal* food, expressions of art, and Shari’a regulations. On the basis of the data thus produced the book demonstrates how the views of the research participants are informed first of all by several ‘founding controversies’ that have entered European collective memory, such as the Rushdie Affair and the Danish cartoon controversy, and secondly by the ambient rhetoric of specific national ideologies, such as secularism in France, multiculturalism in the UK, freedom of provocation (*sic*) in the Netherlands and Catholicism in Italy.

The book opens by pointing to the paradox that the same increasing public visibility of Muslims which causes anxiety over their integration, in fact signals their growing participation in the various domains of European daily life. It is argued that as long as Muslims practiced their religion in the periphery of the public sphere, such as headscarf wearing office cleaners or migrant labourers congregating to perform their prayers and attend the Friday sermon in old garages or warehouses in industrial zones, their presence was hardly noticed. In today’s Europe, however, the religion of the migrant subaltern is transformed into a tool to assert personal identity and collective power by post-migratory Muslim citizens who have penetrated the daily life worlds of non-Muslims as colleagues and neighbours. Their proximity and participation as visible Muslims are experienced by many non-Muslims as a spatial transgression and infraction of common consensual norms. This often results in heated debates about the place of Islamic practices in European society.

The fatwa against Salman Rushdie and the 1989 headscarf affair in France are identified as the first significant signs of anxiety about Islam’s visible presence in Europe, and the beginning of current anti-Islam discourses. The author points out that in these discourses, the symbols of the cultural revolt of the 1960s, women’s liberation and the breaking of taboos, are presented as the two pillars of European identity with which Islam clashes; Islamic values of piety are claimed to contradict feminism and sexual rights while sacred laws are conceived of as incompatible with freedom of expression. Also, secularism has lost its meaning as neutral arbiter that guarantees equal rights for all citizens and has come to stand for European or national identity and a condition for integration imposed upon Muslim immigrants.

After a sketch of the broader socio-historical context in the first two chapters, each of the subsequent chapters introduces a specific Islamic view or practice that has caused controversy in one or several European countries, followed by a presentation of the views and experiences of the ‘ordinary’ Muslims involved or affected by such. Each chapter concludes with a reflection on how the focus group discussions functioned as ‘ExperimentalPublicSpaces’; a space in which various actors are invited to examine the preconceived notions they hold about each other as a first step toward finding common ground and developing new views on what Islam in Europe might look like. One of the most fascinating examples of Europeanization of Islam discussed is the architectural innovation of mosques. The author argues, for example, that because of its hybrid,
transparent’ architecture and the services it offers to a wider public, Cologne’s central mosque constitutes a new public space that transcends polarizations between Islam and Europe.

While the argument about the Cologne mosque as such is convincing, by contrasting it with mosques that imitate the architecture of traditional mosques in the countries where most European Muslims originate, The Daily Lives of Muslims unwittingly introduces the suggestion that Muslims who develop a hybrid habitus are more European than those who opt for a more traditional or Salafi lifestyle. This normative element is reinforced in characterizations of so-called ‘ordinary Muslims’. In anthropological vocabulary, ‘ordinary people’ refers to non-specialists in the specific field of study, in this case religion. By and large, the author also seems to understand the term thus. Yet, in several instances in the book, ‘ordinary Muslims’ is used to designate more specifically research participants who steer a middle road between a secularist or a fundamentalist or Salafi lifestyle.

This comes to the fore most clearly in the chapter on ‘halâl life styles’. The author discusses the trend among young Muslims to distinguish themselves from what she calls their ‘parents’ Islam’ by substituting an ethical focus on what is harâm or forbidden by a more positive ethics concerning what is halâl or permitted. This opens up the development of eclectic, individualistic ‘halâl lifestyles’ that intersect with, for example, New Age or hedonistic consumerist lifestyles. Notably absent is a discussion of another trend that can be discerned among young European Muslims; a response to consumerism and strongly sexualized bodies by developing a lifestyle that aims at avoiding the forbidden. No less informed by European experiences, in my view, such trends are as much part of the landscape of European Islam as ‘halâl lifestyles’. In this sense, a slippage can be noted in the book from Muslims’ ordinary lives to normative conceptions about ‘ordinary Muslims’.

Moreover, the ‘ordinary’ or daily lives of Muslims are discussed much less than the main title of the book suggests. While the research project aimed to deconstruct monolithic conceptions of ‘the Muslim’ and present the singularity of individuals in their daily lives, the organization of group discussions around public controversies over Islam makes it difficult to avoid the prevailing discourse in which Muslims are being forced to state where they stand ‘as Muslims’. Since ‘Islam’ and ‘the West’ are pitted against each other in public controversies about Islam, commonalities in how citizens of Muslim and other backgrounds tackle everyday life concerns are easily obscured. Inviting individuals of various backgrounds in the protected environment of ExperimentalPublicSpace to open up to each other’s perspectives is, indeed, a prerequisite for developing common ground. I would argue, however, that the goal of comparing notes can be more productively achieved by focusing not only on situations in which Islam is foregrounded, but also on circumstances in which it is only a background presence. An exploration, in other words, of situations where the daily life worlds of citizens of different backgrounds overlap and where they share similar concerns.
As it is, a tension can be noted in the book between the focus, on the one hand, on controversies, and the wish, on the other, to allow Muslims whose voices are underrepresented in the media to express themselves freely. While the research team emphatically wished to avoid the kind of ‘forced speech’ that results from constantly being asked to state one’s position on issues like homosexuality, jihadism, etc., it hardly moves beyond such forced speech by asking a specific research participant ‘what she thinks of the application of shari’a law in cases of adultery’ (p. 58).

Stereotyped views on Islam that underlie the questions that European Muslims are repeatedly asked by non-Muslim fellow citizens resonate most strongly in the book where shari’a is discussed. In the introductory section to the chapter on the subject, the concept shari’a is adequately explained in terms of a hierarchy of norms to which Muslims must submit themselves. In the same section, however, the view is forwarded that the Sufi tradition ‘favors sincerity in piety and criticizes the literalism of shari’a’ (p.186). This formulation erroneously suggests that Sufis categorically do not submit to shari’a, and vice versa, that those who submit to shari’a do not equally value sincerity in piety. In general the manuscript of the book would have benefitted from critical proof reading by an islamicist. Concerning the sources for shari’a, for example, besides the Qur’an and the hadith, Muslim law (fiqh) is mentioned rather than consensus (ijma’) and analogy (qiyas) (p. 185). In my understanding, fiqh is the concretization of the understanding of shari’a. A few pages further on, ‘ibadat is translated as ‘cultural practices’ instead of acts of worship (p. 188). Furthermore, while it is maintained that in the view of the majority of Europe’s ‘ordinary Muslims’ shari’a should not be reduced to law and even less to a penal code, the author does not comment on the fact that participants in the focus group discussions fail to avoid discussing shari’a almost exclusively in terms of codified penal law. The misconception that shari’a pertains first and foremost to a penal code is thus implicitly reconfirmed. Referring to ‘the archaic forces of shari’a law’ as the author does in the introduction to the book (p. 21), does not help much to nuance this view. (It might be, however, that the sometimes inadequate translation of the original French edition of the book here inadvertently allows the statement about shari’a quoted to be read as the view of the author herself, rather than a stereotype in the dominant European discourse on Islam.)

Despite the reservations just mentioned, The Daily Lives of Muslims is a very valuable contribution to socio-political analysis of debates about Islam in European public space if judged in terms of the promise of its subtitle (Islam and Public Confrontation in Contemporary Europe), rather than that of its main title.

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