ethnicities

Public discourses about Muslims and Islam in Europe

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Aims and scope

A consortium of six European research teams based in Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland conducted, between 2009 and 2012, an EU-funded research project titled 'Finding a Place for Islam in Europe: Cultural Interactions between Muslim Immigrants and Receiving Societies' (EURISLAM).[1] What has brought together these research teams is the fact that their own countries stand out as the main European states of Muslims' settlement. The project aimed to advance theory and provide further empirical knowledge on cross-national variations in countries' approaches to the cultural integration of Muslims, to be then linked to cross-national variation in cultural distance and interaction between Muslims and the receiving society's population. The need to engage with this core research question has followed from the fact that, in spite of some crucial convergences across their distinct approaches (Garbaye, 2005; Joppke, 2007), national states have different ways to tackle cultural and religious differences (Cinalli and Giugni, 2011; Koopmans et al., 2005; Laurence and Vaisse, 2006). In addition, national idiosyncrasies within Europe have often been considered to be the main obstacle to the emergence of an EU-wide approach to issues relating to ethnic relations and migrants' integration (Geddes, 2003).

The quest to determine cross-national variations in terms of countries' approaches to cultural and religious differences led us to engage with the more formal aspects of legislation and policy making (Carol et al., 2009). Besides this consideration of formal political arrangements, legislation and policies, however, the research also addressed the more informal understandings that resonate in

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dominant and majority-oriented public discourses in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the different ways of dealing with cultural and religious differences. As national identity, citizenship, church–state relations and the position of Islam are framed and contested in the public space, we thus embarked on systematic comparative analyses of the content of public debates on Islam in the mass media. In fact, many public interventions have certainly developed around the place of Islam in countries of Muslims' settlement. These public interventions have referred to a wide range of issues that often stress the importance of Muslims' demands for cultural group rights (Statham et al., 2005). The analysis of the public space is thus valuable when looking at Muslims as subjects endowed with their own voice as in all European countries they tend to be situated near the bottom end of economic and social rankings. An extensive study of the public space also allows for the evaluation of public controversies, potential rejections of Muslims by the receiving societies, potential identifications across cultural and religious cleavages, and shared norms that are at work in culturally diverse societies.

The articles included in this special issue form a main research output of the EURISLAM project, referring to the analysis of actions and speeches (hitherto, claims) made in the public space. They aim to provide an up-to-date and in-depth analysis of claims making, advancing the comparative literature in the field of ethnic relations by investigating an area of research which has been overlooked in the past. Such limited attention is particularly striking as, throughout the 2000s, one of the main challenges for contemporary European democracies has been in promoting effectively the inclusion of Muslims as one of the most vulnerable minorities, while realigning political dynamics taking place in the field of Islam to the same dynamics that prevail in other fields. This research output can thus fill in an important scholarly gap, particularly when one considers that the abundant literature on claims of Muslims and about Islam has been limitedly interested in providing a systematic cross-national comparative appraisal, more often selecting just the most noticeable controversies (the most typical example being the extensive attention given to the veil ban in France), or alternatively reinstating without conclusive evidence the negative portrayal of Muslims in the public space documented in previous decades (Blommaert and Verschueren, 1998; Saïd, 1981; Van Dijk, 1993).

The contribution of this special issue is threefold. First, by advancing the study of the public space, it deals with the increasing salience of specific Islam issues in countries of large Muslim settlement. An appraisal of what is going on, for example in terms of 'obtrusiveness' of claims, can be a valuable teaching for other countries that are transforming into main hosts for Muslim minorities. Second, the study of the public space can reveal longitudinal country convergences and differences, providing a long-term appraisal of the public debate beyond the punctuated, most dramatic and spectacular happenings in the field of Islam. Third, the contributions in this special issue shed new light on the implications of national policy processes and distinct logics of integration in terms of discursive framing in the field, the behaviour of key actors such as political parties and, more broadly, the

possibility for Muslims to play a key role of political entrepreneurship beyond their own specific cultural concerns. Top-down political factors are also evaluated vis-à-vis bottom-up dynamics that link Muslims to the broader national community. Although the 'national model' has recently lost some of its previous appeal, it is still very important to generate predictions with respect to the capacities of the national state to cope effectively with bottom-up demands for the inclusion of minorities. Therefore, also in this respect, this special issue is greatly innovative as it works on a broader conceptualization of national structures of political opportunities, opening up a new research frontier that will be particularly relevant in the near future owing to the emergence of new countries of migration in Europe.

Data and methods

The six articles of this special issue are all based on a common dataset built through a systematic collection of claims in each country. The data were gathered following a two-step procedure, combining the advantages of automated search and selection of online media sources with the qualitative detail allowed by human coding. In the first step, several newspapers were selected in each country (available online through sources such as Lexis-Nexis). From the set of articles generated, a representative sample of articles was drawn through relevant keyword searches, which were then coded in the second step. By drawing a representative sample, we included intensely debated, conflict-ridden events. Yet, we have also ensured that our analyses are not just focused on spectacular and perhaps atypical events, but include the everyday debate about the position of Muslims and Islam in Europe.

Following the method of political claims analysis (Koopmans and Statham, 1999), we then looked at several key features of claims. Each intervention is characterized by a typical structure, which can be broken down into six main elements inquiring into the main attributes of a claim. We have thus identified the claimant (Who makes the claim?), the form (By which action is the claim inserted in the public sphere?), the addressee (At whom is the claim directed?), the content (What is to be undertaken?), the object (To whom is the claim directed?) and the framing (Why should this action be undertaken?). Besides these main elements, we collected systematic information on further characteristics such as the presence of other actors (as claimants, objects, etc.), their scope, ethnic affiliations and so on, allowing for both nationally based and cross-national comparative analyses. We also coded crucial information on the position towards the object with the aim of detecting which actors intervene more explicitly in favour or against the interests of Muslims.

Following Koopmans et al. (2005: 24), we define the claim as 'a unit of strategic action in the public sphere that consists of the purposive and public articulation of political demands, calls to action, proposals, criticisms, or physical attacks, which actually or potentially affect the interests or integrity of the claimants and/or other collective actors'. It thus consists of the expression of a political position relating to social problems and solutions, regardless of the form it takes (verbal statement,

violence, repression, decision, demonstration, court ruling, etc.) and the nature of the actor making it (governments, social movements, non-governmental organizations, individuals, anonymous actors, etc.). Of course, by lumping together physical and verbal claims we run the risk of oversimplifying a more variegated picture of actors' interventions in the public space. For example, there is surely a significant difference between, say, issuing a press release and resorting to violence. However, we think that it is important to consider both types of claims in order to avoid another, more serious problem, namely reductionism. Indeed, strategic action in the public domain is done not only by saying things, but also by doing things. Physical interventions, for example in the form of protest activities, are thus part of a broader contentious repertoire (Tilly, 1995) whereby certain forms are not accessible to certain actors and some actors might deliberately privilege physical actions over verbal actions or vice versa. The findings shown below as well as in the articles in this special issue take advantage of this important feature of our data, allowing for both an aggregated treatment of claims and more detailed analyses distinguishing between different forms of intervention.

We coded two categories of claims: (1) claims about Islam in the six countries, regardless of the actor; and (2) claims by Muslims in the six countries, regardless of the issue. In other words, all claims included in our sample refer either to one of the six countries of coding or address an actor or institution in one of these countries. In addition, claims have also been included if made by or addressed at a supranational actor of which the country of coding is a member, on the condition that these claims are relevant for this country. Simple attributions of attitudes or opinions to actors by the media or by other actors do not count as claims making, just as much as 'states of mind' or motivations.

Our sample includes several hundreds of claims for each national case, coded from five newspapers in each country and covering the period from 1999 to 2008. The following newspapers have been used as a source for the coding: *De Volkskrant*, *Trouw*, *NRC Handelsblad*, *De Telegraaf* and *Het Parool* in the Netherlands; *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *Blick*, *Tagesanzeiger*, *Le Matin* and *Le Temps* in Switzerland; *Bild*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Welt* and *Tagesspiegel* in Germany; *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *The Guardian*, *The Sun* and *The Times* in Britain; *Het Laatste Nieuws*, *Le Soir*, *Gazet Van Antwerpen*, *La Dernière Heure* and *De Standaard* in Belgium; *Libération*, *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, *La Croix* and *Le Point* in France. The choice of newspapers has followed from the need to ensure as much as possible a representative and unbiased sample. Therefore, we included both quality newspapers and more tabloid-oriented newspapers. Furthermore, we considered newspapers from different political orientations as well as more neutral newspapers. Sampling was based on the following keywords: Islam, Muslim, Moslem, mosque, imam, Qur'an (Quran, Qur'ān, Koran, Alcoran or Al-Qur'ān), headscarf, burqa (burkha, burka or burqua), minaret. As 13 different researchers were involved in the coding, we ran reliability tests to check for intercoder consistency. These tests yielded a strong consistency with regard to both the selection of claims and their description.[2]

We are confident that the sample of claims retrieved thus reflects the public discourse on Muslims and Islam as it occurred at the national level in the countries covered and in the period under study. Yet, two methodological remarks are in order, regarding the use of newspapers as a basis for the retrieval of claims and the focus on the national level. Concerning the first aspect, we are well aware of the growing importance of other media today, not so much radio and television, which have existed for a long time, but the new social media, which also contribute to forming the public sphere for actors' interventions on a given issue. However, as compared with alternative sources, newspapers today are still the most reliable source to reconstruct public debates in a given political field (Koopmans et al., 2005). Not only do they ensure a systematic treatment, such as that performed in our research, because they exist on an everyday basis, but they also provide a consistent and detailed coverage of the political field at hand. As with any other source, newspapers are not an undistorted mirror of the reality. Quite on the contrary, they present both selection and description biases. However, it is precisely because they select events in a certain way that they form what we call here the public sphere. What matters, in other words, is not so much what happens as what is reported in the media (in the newspapers, in this case) and how. Furthermore, the focus on factual coverage and the choice of several different newspapers should have reduced potential biases as to how newspapers describe events. As to the second aspect, the focus on the national level, of course, wipes out more locally based debates, and should therefore be kept in mind when reading our findings. However, as we are mostly engaging in cross-national comparative analyses, we think that this focus is fully legitimate. Furthermore, in spite of the importance of the local level, for example for policy implementation in this as well as other fields, the national level is still a crucial locus of public discourse on immigration and ethnic relations politics (Koopmans et al., 2005) as well as on Muslims and Islam. With these qualifications in mind, next we provide a comparative overview of some of the key aspects included in the analysis as background knowledge for the articles included in this special issue.

Comparative overview

The analysis of claimants is an obvious starting point of a cross-national comparison. Our data show crucial cross-national variations in terms of the distribution of claims along the distinction between state and civil society actors (Table 1). The latter, however, are more present in all six countries with the exception of Germany, where state actors are more visible in the public domain. Key differences also emerge when looking at the more specific categories. Among state actors, governments are responsible for a substantial share of claims in all six countries: legislative assemblies are especially visible in the Netherlands, the judiciary intervenes especially in Germany, and security agencies (including the police) play an important role in both Britain and Germany. As regards civil society actors, a first relevant finding is that Muslims are responsible for a substantial number of claims,

Table 1. Claims by actor (percentages).

	Belgium	Britain	France	Germany	Netherlands	Switzerland
State actors	**34.6**	**37.6**	**28.8**	**54.5**	**42.5**	**34.2**
Governments	15.2	15.6	16.7	24.2	21.1	15.4
Legislatives	3.8	0.6	3.2	3.8	11.1	4.2
Judiciary	7.9	7.9	2.9	13.0	2.7	6.5
Police and security agencies	5.4	12.8	3.2	10.7	5.8	4.4
State executive agencies specifically dealing with migrants	0.6	0.0	0.3	1.3	0.3	1.5
Other state executive agencies	1.6	0.7	2.5	1.4	1.5	2.2
Political parties	**4.4**	**5.4**	**3.6**	**7.1**	**6.3**	**6.6**
Civil society actors	**51.8**	**55.0**	**64.3**	**35.2**	**46.7**	**45.4**
Unions	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.0
Workers and employees	0.1	0.6	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.0
Employer organizations and firms	0.2	1.6	0.3	1.0	0.9	1.0
Churches	1.7	0.9	2.3	3.7	0.9	2.8
Christians	0.5	1.1	1.3	0.0	0.2	1.4
Media and journalists	4.2	5.0	2.0	7.0	6.0	6.5
Professional organizations and groups – think tanks/intellectuals	8.1	8.2	18.3	4.8	15.8	6.6
Muslim organizations and groups	26.0	32.3	29.6	15.9	16.2	18.6
Other minority organizations and groups	0.5	0.7	2.0	0.4	1.8	1.0
Antiracist organizations and groups	1.1	0.4	1.3	0.1	0.4	0.4
Pro-minority rights and welfare organizations and groups	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.0	0.7	0.7
General solidarity, human rights and welfare organizations	0.7	1.2	1.3	0.6	0.7	0.7
Racist and extreme right organizations and groups	4.7	0.7	2.1	0.4	0.7	1.4
Other civil society organizations and groups	3.4	1.6	2.6	0.4	1.2	4.3
Unknown actors	**9.1**	**2.0**	**3.3**	**3.2**	**4.4**	**13.8**
Total (N)	100 (810)	100 (1171)	100 (750)	100 (784)	100 (890)	100 (787)

Note: Bold = Used to indicate more general categories.

particularly in Belgium, Britain and France. In other words, they stand out as protagonists in the public space rather than being simple objects of discourses and actions by other actors. Second, the weak presence of antiracist, pro-minority, and solidarity and human rights organizations is quite striking. While one may expect that the situation of Muslims is a main issue of interest to them, these actors are likely to be more orientated to intervening in the public domain on behalf of migrants and minorities more generally rather than focusing on Muslims in particular. A similar explanation could account for the low presence of extreme-right actors, which display some degree of intervention only in Belgium and partly in France. It is also worth noticing the sizable share of claims made by professional organizations and groups, in this case especially in France and the Netherlands.

As we said earlier, actors may intervene in the public domain in different ways. We can therefore focus on variations of forms of actions across our six countries (Table 2). A first finding in this regard is that state intervention is at its highest level in Britain and Germany, at its lowest in France and the Netherlands, and at an intermediate level in Belgium and Switzerland. These differences depend especially upon the use of repressive measures (which, by definition, together with political decisions, only state actors have the option to use), showing that some countries (Britain and Germany) adopt a tougher stance towards Muslims. At the same time, it is noticeable that verbal statements (press conferences, interviews, written statements and declarations) prevail in all the countries. By contrast, conventional actions (indoor meetings, judicial action, direct democratic action, petitioning) and protests (demonstrative, confrontational, violent) are much less frequent.

Protest is a particularly interesting form of intervention in the public domain. Although we observe some cross-national variations, from little less than 3% in Germany to over 8% in France, the degree of contentiousness over Islam is relatively limited everywhere. This is perhaps surprising, particularly when one confronts these findings with comparable data collected in other fields of contentious

Table 2. Forms of claims (percentages).

	Belgium	Britain	France	Germany	Netherlands	Switzerland
State intervention	16.8	21.4	10.0	21.8	9.6	13.7
Repressive measures	8.8	13.5	4.3	16.8	5.8	5.7
Political decision	8.0	7.9	5.7	5.0	3.8	8.0
Verbal statements	65.7	59.3	72.8	62.6	75.1	71.8
Conventional actions	10.1	13.1	9.0	12.8	8.6	8.5
Protest actions	7.4	6.2	8.2	2.8	6.7	6.0
Demonstrative protests	3.8	2.4	4.5	1.3	1.6	2.2
Confrontational protests	1.1	1.2	0.9	0.4	1.1	0.9
Violent protests	2.5	2.6	2.8	1.1	4.0	2.9
Total (N)	100 (810)	100 (1171)	100 (750)	100 (784)	100 (890)	100 (787)

Note: Bold = Used to indicate more general categories.

politics. For example, Giugni and Passy (2006: 109) have shown that the proportion of protests found in France and Switzerland, two of our six countries, amounts to 20% and 10% of all claims respectively,[3] while the percentage of protests over unemployment is between two and three times larger in France, Germany and Switzerland (Cinalli and Giugni, 2010: 29).[4] If we look more specifically at the most radical or contentious form of action, however, the difference between fields is not as large. Indeed, while violent protests here range from little more than 1% in Germany to a maximum of nearly 4% in the Netherlands, they amount to 4% in both France and Switzerland in the field of immigration and ethnic relations politics (Giugni and Passy, 2006: 109).

Besides *who* intervenes in the public domain on these issues and how, another crucial aspect lies in the issues that are addressed, looking at *what* is conveyed by such intervention (Table 3). We can make distinctions among three main issue fields in this regard: immigration, asylum and alien politics; minority integration politics; and antiracism and Islamophobia (including Islamophobic claims). In addition, we also consider claims made by Muslims addressing other issues (homeland politics, transnational politics). The relative weight of these three issue fields is similar in the six countries: the large majority of claims deal with minority integration politics. Among them, most focus on religious rights and minority social problems. Such a prevalence of issues concerning minority integration is in sharp contrast with the distribution found in the field of immigration and ethnic relations (Koopmans et al., 2005), where the share of claims addressing issues pertaining to immigration, asylum and alien politics is higher than that of claims dealing with minority integration politics.[5]

Again, we observe variations across countries, although they are not very strong. While being important everywhere, claims on minority integration politics play an even greater role in France and the Netherlands. Claims on immigration, asylum and aliens politics are more often made in Germany and Switzerland, two countries that put a particular emphasis on this aspect in policy making. Claims dealing with antiracism and Islamophobia are more frequent (if we include Islamophobic claims) in Belgium and Switzerland. Finally, claims made by Muslims on other issues emerge above all in Britain (most of them dealing with transnational politics). Among the more specific categories of issues, it is worth stressing the much lower share of claims on religious rights in Britain.

The position of claims is a crucial aspect with which many of the articles in this special issue engage. In this case, we created an indicator of the position of claims based on a simple scoring system. All claims whose realization implies deterioration in the rights or position of Muslims receive code 1. The −1 also goes to claims that express a negative attitude with regard to Muslims (both verbal and physical) or a positive attitude with regard to xenophobic and extreme right groups or aims. All claims whose realization implies an improvement in the rights and position of Muslims (minor or major) receive code + 1. This code also goes to claims expressing (verbally or physically) a positive attitude with regard to Muslims, or a negative attitude with regard to xenophobic and extreme right groups or aims. Neutral or

Table 3. Issues of claims (percentages).

	Belgium	Britain	France	Germany	Netherlands	Switzerland
Immigration, asylum and aliens politics	**0.9**	**1.9**	**3.3**	**6.2**	**4.0**	**6.1**
Minority integration politics	**71.0**	**68.5**	**78.0**	**76.9**	**76.5**	**67.6**
Minority integration general	3.3	2.7	12.3	3.8	8.3	7.5
Minority rights and participation						
Citizenship rights	3.5	1.6	3.7	4.0	1.9	2.8
Social rights	2.0	2.3	1.3	1.0	2.7	0.6
Cultural rights	1.4	1.4	2.3	0.5	1.3	0.4
Religious rights	32.0	14.1	24.7	26.8	23.5	25.0
Other rights	0.1	0.6	1.5	0.3	0.1	0.4
Discrimination and unequal treatment	0.9	4.8	2.0	0.8	1.6	2.7
Minority social problems	26.5	37.5	17.6	38.4	28.4	26.0
Interethnic and inter- and intraorganizational relations	1.5	3.7	12.7	1.3	8.7	2.2
Antiracism/Islamophobia	**15.2**	**16.0**	**11.2**	**12.8**	**11.6**	**15.3**
Racism/Islamophobia in institutional contexts	5.8	3.8	7.1	8.0	9.1	9.7
Non-institutional racism/Islamophobia, xenophobia and extreme right in society	9.4	12.2	4.1	4.8	2.5	5.6
Islamophobic claims	**8.3**	**2.5**	**4.3**	**2.0**	**4.4**	**5.3**
Actor claims Muslims	**4.0**	**9.2**	**2.8**	**1.8**	**3.3**	**5.2**
Homeland politics	1.0	0.9	0.3	0.4	0.9	1.5
Transnational politics	3.0	8.3	2.5	1.4	2.4	3.7
Other	**0.6**	**1.9**	**0.4**	**0.1**	**0.2**	**0.5**
Total (N)	100 (810)	100 (1171)	100 (750)	100 (784)	100 (890)	100 (787)

Note: Bold = Used to indicate more general categories.

ambivalent claims that are not necessarily related to any deterioration or improvement in Muslims' position or rights and do not express a clear attitude with regard to migrants and minorities or their opponents receive code 0.

By averaging the scores thus attributed across all claims, we obtain a raw yet helpful indicator of the discursive context in this field (Table 4). According to this measure, our six countries can be placed in three groups. First, we have countries overall offering a relatively open and positive context (Britain, France and Netherlands). Second, there are countries that are more closed, but still on the positive side (Belgium and Switzerland). Third, one of the countries has a particularly closed and negative context in this regard (Germany). Thus, Muslims in different countries face very different discursive contexts, which might influence their capability for integration socially, politically and culturally. In addition, positions are more polarized in certain countries than in others, as indicated by the standard errors. Specifically, claims making in this field seems most polarized in Germany and least so in Britain, where a larger consensus seems to emerge towards a positive stance vis-à-vis Muslims.

Beyond such a static picture, however, it is interesting to see to what extent claims making in this field has evolved over time (Figure 1). Without going into the details of the evolution in each country, overall we observe a slight downward trend in all the countries. At the same time, however, there are important fluctuations within the period considered. This holds especially for France, Germany and the Netherlands, while the other three countries display a more stable trend, particularly Britain. In addition, the paths followed in the six countries in the period under study brought them closer to each other towards the end of the period. This holds in particular for 2006, when the discursive context in the six countries was very similar.

The impact that the attacks of September 2001 in New York might have had on the position of claims in this field is a particularly interesting aspect given our subject matter. Our data confirm that, moving from the late 1990s to the early 2000s, the discursive context became much more negative, in particular in France, Germany and the Netherlands, but to some extent also in Switzerland. This

Table 4. Average position of claims.

	Mean	*N*	Standard deviation
Belgium	0.07	778	0.807
Britain	0.22	1064	0.564
France	0.21	729	0.738
Germany	−0.17	769	0.951
Netherlands	0.19	861	0.759
Switzerland	0.01	746	0.888

Note: Bold = Used to indicate more general categories.

downward trend observed in most countries was not durable, suggesting that even the most dramatic events may only temporarily alter the discursive context, but that more structural changes depend on other factors. The data, however, show that the characterization of a given country in terms of discursive context might vary depending on the specific time frame that is considered. Thus, Switzerland and the Netherlands stood at the two opposite poles of the discursive context at the end of the 1990s. Yet, they nearly share an overlapping trajectory between 2002 and 2007.

The object of a claim is the group whose interests, rights or identity are affected (positively or negatively) by the realization of the claim. Ultimately, Muslims are always the object in this field. However, the object can be framed in different ways. Here we distinguish between two main types of objects (Muslims as actors and Islam as a religion) and further differentiate between more specific objects within each type. The distribution of objects of claims (Table 5) shows, first, that Muslims as actors are at centre stage in all six countries. However, the relative weight of this way of framing the object varies strongly across countries, being very high in Germany and to a lesser extent also in Belgium and Switzerland, while it is much lower in Britain, the Netherlands and especially in France. Islam as a religion is much less important as an object in all six countries, but especially so in Britain, while it plays a substantial role in France and to some extent in Switzerland. Second, there also are very different shares of claims that have no Muslim object. This gives us an indication of the saliency of the issue of Islam in the
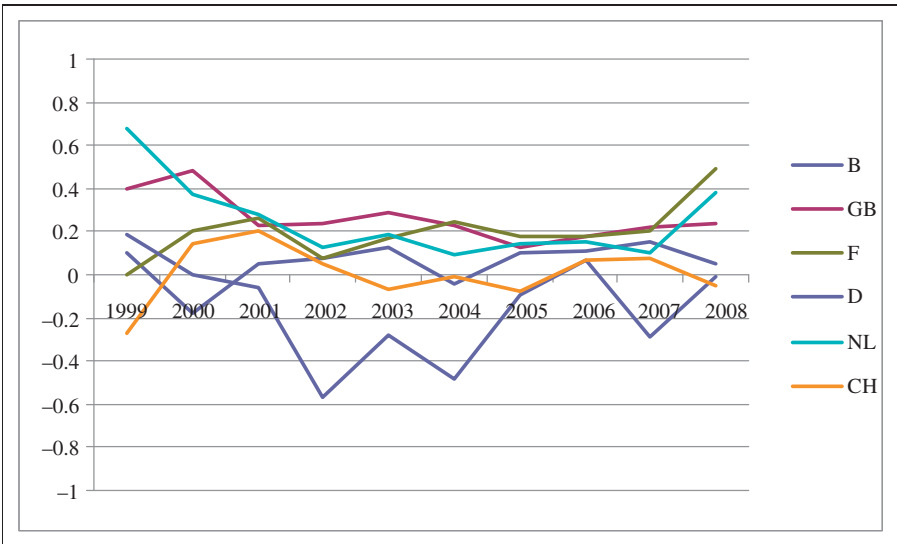

Figure 1. Average position of claims by year. B, Belgium; GB, United Kingdom; F, France; D, Germany; NL, Netherlands; CH, Switzerland.

Table 5. Objects of claims (percentages).

	Belgium	Britain	France	Germany	Netherlands	Switzerland
Muslims as actors	**82.5**	**63.9**	**57.4**	**90.4**	**60.4**	**78.4**
All Muslims in general	24.8	26.6	27.6	12.6	32.4	42.4
Majority/most Muslims	3.2	1.4	1.9	1.7	2.6	1.5
Minority/a small group /a particular categorical group of Muslims	37.7	18.4	18.7	50.4	12.6	14.5
Individual Muslims	16.2	15.1	7.5	22.2	11.3	18.4
Unclassifiable Muslims	0.6	2.4	1.7	3.5	1.5	1.6
Islam as religion	**10.5**	**2.8**	**15.7**	**7.6**	**10.5**	**14.6**
Islam in general	9.1	2.0	9.1	2.3	7.1	11.9
Islam mainstream	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.1	0.1	0.3
Minority currents within Islam	0.2	0.0	1.3	0.0	2.0	1.0
Specific religious stream/movement within Islam	1.0	0.8	3.3	5.2	0.9	1.4
Unclassifiable Islam	0.2	0.1	0.8	0.0	0.4	0.0
No Muslim object	**7.0**	**33.3**	**26.9**	**2.0**	**29.1**	**7.0**
Total (N)	100 (810)	100 (1171)	100 (750)	100 (784)	100 (890)	100 (787)

Note: Bold = Used to indicate more general categories.

public domain. It is noteworthy that the higher share of claims not having Muslims as objects are observed in the three countries in which Islam is an issue (Britain, France and Netherlands), suggesting that in these countries this issue is also framed in alternative terms. It should also be emphasized that important cross-national variations exist in the more specific categories as well. In particular, claims making in Switzerland and the Netherlands tends to be framed around Muslims in general, while in Belgium and Germany the focus is above all on a specific minority or group of Muslims. Similarly, claims on Islam in general are more frequent in France and Switzerland.

The articles in this issue

The five articles of this special issue provide varying approaches to and uses of the claims-making data presented in this introductory essay. In line with the EURISLAM project's aim to study cross-national variations in cultural inter-actions between Muslims and receiving societies, the main focus is on the impact that contextual factors, such as institutional opportunities, discursive opportunities and dramatic events, have on public discourse about Muslims and Islam in Europe. The order of the articles follows from this objective, going from the broader to the more specific.

Manlio Cinalli and Marco Giugni assess the impact of the political context on claims making in the field of Islam with the aim of explaining cross-national vari-ations in terms of the visibility of Muslims, the use of collective action, and the salience of cultural issues in five of the six countries included in the study (Britain, France, Germany, Netherlands and Switzerland). Following their previous work in the field of migration and ethnic relations politics, they argue that this political context is made of an institutional and a discursive dimension that can be seized at the country level. Their findings show that both dimensions vary in important ways cross-nationally, with some of the countries offering a more favourable context than others. Most importantly, they show that variations of political opportunities impact upon crucial aspects of claims making. At a more general level, their ana-lysis also suggests that an exhaustive evaluation of the political context requires more research at the intersection of institutions and discourse, thus bringing the study of political provisions, laws and institutional reforms in the policy domain side by side with the study of discursive interventions by policy actors and orga-nized publics in the public domain.

Sarah Carol and Ruud Koopmans look at claims dealing with Islamic religious rights. They advance a challenging argument about the 'obtrusiveness' of claims. They define obtrusive claims as those which imply a greater potential for conflict with the institutions and the dominant culture of the host society. Their analysis shows that, across Europe, there are striking differences in the kind of rights for Muslims around which public conflicts centre. They explain these differences by looking at national path dependencies resulting from existing church–state arrangements and immigrant integration policy traditions. Specifically, they find

strong support for their three main hypotheses: that in countries where Muslims have been able to obtain more rights, public controversies tend to focus on more obtrusive rights; that in all countries there is an increase in obtrusiveness over time, as controversies over basic rights become settled and political entrepreneurs on both the proponent and the opponent side of Muslim rights shift attention to more controversial issues; and, hence, that this trend of claims' shift towards more obtrusive issues is strongest in countries that have granted Muslims more rights.

The article by Maarten Koomen, Jean Tillie, Anja van Heelsum and Sjef van Stiphout discusses cross-national variation in the discursive framing of political claims on Muslims and Islam in four of the countries covered in the study, namely Britain, France, Germany and the Netherlands. The authors have the merit to broaden an approach stressing the impact of national citizenship models and integration regimes, relating these cross-national differences to a diverging logic in the different integration debates. They argue that persistent variations in discursive framing can be understood by looking at the unique conceptualization of group categorization and distinction used in the national integration debates. These conceptions shape a specific logic overarching these debates within which a strategic ambiguity allows for the polysemic attribution of meaning. The logic of integration therefore provides a more or less singular discursive arena in which social actors publicly contest for symbolic power. As a result, these discursive and symbolic trends do not relate directly to structural and institutional issues in the governance of diversity, but emanate rather from the internal logic of public discourse.

The contribution by Nathalie Vanparys, Dirk Jacobs and Corinne Torrekens looks at the claims making over time. They examine the impact of dramatic events such as September 2011, the bombings in Madrid and London, the murder of Theo Van Gogh in Amsterdam and the Cartoon affair on the public debate about multiculturalism in the countries of the study. Using time-series analysis techniques, they show that, contrary to what is commonly thought, dramatic violent events involving Muslim extremists do not influence the number of claims discussing the accommodation of Islam in Europe. In other words, the debate on religious rights for Muslims and accommodation of Islam in Europe is constantly present and has remained relatively unaffected in amplitude by the dramatic terrorist events of the start of the new millennium. Their analysis stresses the importance of distinguishing public debates concerning religious rights from other issues when the impact of dramatic and violent events is analysed. These events have triggered media coverage, but they do not push the debate about accommodation of Islam and granting of religious rights to Muslims off the public agenda.

Finally, the article by Marta Bolognani and Paul Statham is also geared towards analysing shifts over time, but with a specific focus on the Britain case and making use also of interviews with activists within the Muslim organizational field. Specifically, they apply a political opportunity perspective to address the degree to which organizations' aims and activities have been shaped by the contextual factors confronting them, or, more independently, by 'bottom-up' beliefs and

commitments drawn from their relationships to the community. Their analysis suggests a shift towards using broader ascriptive general identities that serve as an umbrella for pulling together constituencies of Muslims from different faiths and national ethnic origins. In other words, the identification label 'Muslim' increasingly serves as a catch-all for stimulating interaction between different faith, ethnic and national groups of Muslims, within the framework of an organization. As a result, the organizations have constructed an associational infrastructure that looks towards the society of settlement in an acculturative way. In addition, this has led to a transformation of the organizational field so that larger organizations broadly representing 'Muslims' succeed, while smaller organizations that represent a single faith or a specific national ethnic group, either wither away, or become marginalized.

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Notes

1. The EURISLAM consortium was coordinated by the University of Amsterdam (Jean Tillie) and was formed, additionally, by the Social Science Center Berlin (Ruud Koopmans), the University of Geneva (Marco Giugni), the University of Bristol (Paul Statham), the Free University of Brussels (Dirk Jacobs) and the CEVIPOF-Sciences Po Paris (Manlio Cinalli).
2. The Chronbach alpha for selection bias (computed on a sample of 15 articles) was 0.905. The Chronbach alphas for description bias (computed on a sample of four articles) were 0.973, 0.976, 0.975 and 9.983, with an average of 0.979.
3. Figures refer to the 1990–1998 period and do not include repressive actions.
4. Figures refer to the 1995–2002 period.
5. Figures refer to the 1992–1998 period.

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