

## **Good cities, good practices: systematization of a theoretical and methodological framework for local actions designed to combat religious discrimination**

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### **Abstract**

The Muslim population of Western Europe composed of at least 13 million individuals, brings together primarily people resulting from working class immigrants from the second half of the twentieth century. Its roots are found deep in the Turkish countryside, in the Balkans and, of course, in the old colonies: the countries of the Maghreb, the Indo-Pakistani sub-continent, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. There exists moreover, relatively low but growing numbers, of converts of European extraction. This paper presents the theoretical and methodological approach of whole of the project "Faiths and Social cohesion".

**Keywords:** Islam, Europe, religious discrimination, Muslims.

The Muslim population of Western Europe composed of at least 13 million individuals, brings together primarily people resulting from working class immigrants from the second half of the twentieth century. Its roots are found deep in the Turkish countryside, in the Balkans and, of course, in the old colonies: the countries of the Maghreb, the Indo-Pakistani sub-continent, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. There exists moreover, relatively low but growing numbers, of converts of European extraction. From the point of view of its geographical distribution, this population is highly concentrated in industrial areas, like in the North of France and the North of England, the Ruhr, Catalonia, in the region of Rotterdam. A sizeable number of Muslims are also found in the capital cities such as Berlin, London, Paris and Rome; the same situation prevails in Brussels, the capital of Europe, and

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this population represents 17 % of Muslims (Manço U., 2000). Let us point out that about half of the Muslims in Europe live in France. This population shows a constant demographic growth because of the continuous arrival of new immigrants (because of family regrouping) and a high rate of fertility as compared to other populations. Consequently, the European Muslims constitute the youngest demographic element and also the most dynamic in the mosaic that represents the populations on the continent.

The massive arrival of the Muslim population between the end of 1960's and the beginning of the 1970's coincided with the end of the period of economic growth, where full employment was the norm, and the beginning of an unstable period where socio-professional insecurity gained ground (Manço U., 2001). If at the present point in time the socio-economic and political integration of this population, and the acceptance of its various cultural and religious heritages are problematic, one of the determining factors of this situation could be found in the societal changes that occurred in Europe and its consequences were the loss of legitimacy of the presence of non native, unqualified immigrant workers and their descendants who had become *too numerous* in a post-industrial society. A considerable number of Europeans, who, by birth or ancestry, find their origins in a Muslim country, belong to the most underprivileged social categories in our countries and are in a socio-economic situation of marginality. They have a high failure rate or are school drop outs, as well as having low professional qualifications. They face discrimination at the time of recruitment, and have very often to take up precarious and lowly employment. The high rate of unemployment in this group points the difficulties encountered by the people of Muslim culture on the European labour markets.

As Muslims, these immigrants and their children do not enjoy rights similar to those granted to the members of the other faiths traditionally present in Europe nor those rights officially recognized by the various Member States of the EU. At the specifically religious level, the process of institutional recognition of the Islamic faith in Europe proves very different from one country to another. In any case, it is generally speaking, far from being completed (Manço U., 2004). For several years, Islam seems to have become the target of the debates on immigration in Europe in particular because of the fact that European identity, despite its national variations and a long history of secularization, remains anchored in the Christian tradition. Let us examine, for example, the

way in which the school calendar is organised, the festivals and important holidays, the family rituals, toponymy, the organization by the Christian denominational authorities of school services, hospital services, social aid, at the monarchical institutions which concern many countries. The sensational declarations of such or such political tenor about the “*Old continent*” remind us besides, from time to time of this consubstantial Christianity (Zolberg and Woon, 1998). The significant number of Muslims present in Europe, the geographical proximity of the geopolitical centre of gravity of the Muslim world and the complicated and certainly passionate history of the Muslim world and Christian Europe undoubtedly explain this difficulty of representing a European Islam, especially since the end of the Soviet Empire and the new dualisation of the World that one proposes to us as an analytical category: “*The West versus Islam*” (Helly, 2002; Zemni, 2004). “*Islam feeds and maintains the phantasm of a kind of malignant tumour that threatens European unity and integrity from the inside...*” (Zolberg and Woon, 1998, 39).

### **1. Discrimination against the Islamic faith: how to combat it?**

Islam has been present in the contemporary West for a long time (more than a century in the case of France), It however has become a “political question” only since the 1980’s. The cultural identity of the Muslim newcomers raised very little interest during the period 1960-70, since they were especially regarded as temporary immigrants, destined to play an additional role as temporary labourers with low qualifications. Living a solitary existence in a predominantly male world, some of these immigrants initially put the practice of faith “*on the back burner*”. For those who were among the first to arrive, the stay in European was to be temporary. Religious practices, when they were carried out, were private, individual or done in small groups. Everywhere in Europe at that time, the Islamic faith was practised discreetly almost stealthily.

Islam started to be talked about in second half of the 1970’s after the stopping of organized immigration of workers when the ending of these policies encouraged the regrouping of families. Many Muslim families were reconstituted in the space of a few years and their arrival in the host countries took on a definitive, final turn by the spurring on of the Muslim population to have progress rapidly at the demographic level. At that time, these workmen who appeared indifferent to religion rapidly assumed

their (new) responsibilities as heads of family. They developed a kind of attitude that could be qualified as “*piousness of the father of the family*”, and became concerned with their spiritual wellbeing, the transmission of their culture and the Islamic faith to their children (Zolberg and Woon, 1998; Manço U., 2000; Manço A., 2001). Thus the prescriptions and the practices of Islam made their appearance not only in households, but also in public areas, thus giving rise to problems of cohabitation, which seemed difficult to overcome for the majority of the natives. In those sectors of public life which touch at the heart of cultural identity, like education, health and social services, negotiation related to the integration of foreign groups who even appeared strange, can be a painful experience. Indeed, a great number of controversies exploded in all the host countries starting from the end of the 1970’s particularly concerning the way in which parents could transmit their Islamic heritage to their children (Manço A., 1992, 1993, 2001). One regularly witnessed bitter struggles that could lead to hurtful or humiliating situations for the Muslims, both men and women, concerning questions such as physical education and swimming, sex education, biology courses and religious teaching; school trips, food served in school canteens, the wearing of the head scarf, mixed marriages or marriages known as arranged, etc Insofar as the Muslim immigrants did not always encounter school establishments favourable to their religious or cultural traditions, without referring to all those which are openly hostile towards them, it is not surprising that some of them today would like to have schools, youth centres and student residences which are reserved for them.

Among other areas in which the Muslims could face “*religious stress*”, it is possible to evoke the following: the problems involved in the slaughter of animals, the access to halal food, the indifference or the hostility of employers and public authorities concerning the need for the practice of one’s faith in the workplace, the difficulties related to the inadequacy of Islamic holidays and feast days, etc. Community services like slaughter-houses or cemeteries not being adapted to the needs of Muslim communities adds to the feeling of discrimination of a population that is maltreated during highly sensitive moments, for example, when there is a death or during the festival of sacrifice (Aldeeb, 2002; Dasetto *et al*, 2001). The Muslims in Europe benefit only very little from the available public facilities to practise their religion. The countries where Islam is recognized by the State, the financing of the various aspects of

this religious practice or its teaching suffer from manifest inequalities compared with the financing which other faiths receive - this is the case, for example, in Belgium (Husson, 2000). Thus a multitude of arbitrary attitudes and discriminatory situations exist which hinder the full expression of freedom of conscience and worship for Muslims in Europe, whereas these freedoms have been granted constitutionally and legally in all European countries. These obstacles probably originate from unsound legitimacy, negative roles and minimal visibility that the native authorities and public opinion sometimes want to grant to cultural demonstrations and those pertaining to an expression of faith by the Muslim population (Affes *et al*, 1999; Dassetto *et al*, 2001; David *et al*, 2001; DUMALA, 2000). The Muslims are numerous in thinking that legislation, rules and administrative practices in their country of adoption are not equitably applied to their own community, and that there is an important phenomenon of ignorance or lack of sensitivity concerning the problems of the Muslim minorities in general. They tend to suspect the existence of a policy of discrimination against Islam (Gatugu, Manço and Amoranitis, 2004).

The responsibility for these different types of discrimination from which the Muslim population suffers in the exercise of its freedom of worship and conscience is undoubtedly divided by, on the one hand the opinions and the authorities in the European countries, and on the other, those who profess to be the representatives of the Muslims themselves. Admittedly, the authorities are, in the majority of the cases incapable of imagining solutions which would directly involve the Muslim population and its representative associations, and the Muslims of Europe do not as yet have the organisational capacity to transcend the national, ethnic, linguistic, sociological, political, theological and philosophical differences. This great diversity generates ceaseless internal friction. In addition, the quality of the procedures that allow the requirements of the Muslim faith to be taken into account is extremely variable in Europe. On the whole, certain progress has been noted over these past years, for example in the United Kingdom (Peach, 2004), where the authorities have been granting licences for the slaughter of animals in the religious context, and for Muslim cemeteries and Islamic schools. The British case is similar to what has been observed in this area in North America and particularly in Canada (Isin and Siemiatycki, 2000; Germain, 2000; Cesari, 2004; Helly, 2004). As for Belgium, it is a pioneer as regards official recognition of Islam (since 1974), but very many practical and procedural prob-

lems remain to be solved (Manço and Kanmaz, 2004). The question is even more delicate in a country like France, which traditionally does not recognize the public expression of religious worship (Boyer, 1998; Leveau *et al*, 2001; Cesari, 2004). Despite notable differences in the general principles which govern the relations between the Church and the State, the general observation goes along with the idea that the institutions of Islam are not at all on an equal footing with those of the majority of traditional religions. The principle of recognition such as it is practised in Germany, in Belgium, in Spain or in Italy for example, means that only those religions that satisfy certain bureaucratic criteria will have access to State infrastructures and funding. However, the Islamic authorities in these countries are often far from being able to respond to the criteria in question. The diversity of the Muslim “*umma*” and specificities of this religion, which has no Church or clergy for the great Sunnite majority, are such that negotiations progress very slowly.

One of the basic observations in the research project, (and the book that you are now reading constitutes one of these reports), is that European Muslims are constantly being marginalised, and even suffer cultural or identity stigmatization. Their ways of life, presumably different from European practices, are often misunderstood, seen as worthless and are even rejected. It seems that for many Europeans, it is difficult to look upon the people of the Maghreb and those of Turkish or Pakistani origin, to consider their ritual or cultural activities without anxiety, regardless of their particular relationship with Islam or their degree of piety and religious practice, whatever the precise conception of the world and the morals of these Muslims might be (Manço U., 2004; Zemni, 2004). The situation described here is amplified by what takes place at the international geopolitical level. Events like the Iranian revolution, the Israeli-Arab wars and successive *Intifadahs*, the Gulf wars, the war in Afghanistan, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and March 11 2004 produce tangible effects on the way in which the Muslim populations are received. International news (and the way it is treated by the Western media), together with the presence of movements or radical Islamist actors negatively influence the perception of the Muslim populations and has a negative bearing on the place they occupy in the country in which they are established (EUMC, 2001; Helly, 2002). This situation produces harmful effects on the possibility of relations between individual Muslims and Europeans, and also between the authorities and the representatives of this minority. A kind of “*islamophobia*” (Manço

U., 2000, 2004) indeed creates obstacles everywhere in Europe in the context of dialogue between citizens of different origins, public authorities (in particular local or municipal) and the Muslim communities, as well as between European civil society and the organizations set up by Muslims. Turning a blind eye to this problem which arises from a lack of dialogue is filled with grave danger for our democratic regimes. Certain members of the Muslim communities who feel that they are victims of annoyances and frustrations, can commit or contribute to the perpetration of foolish and violent acts against the institutions and the population in the host country. Without a learning process in place to bring the parties together at the intercommunity level, the risk is that the marginalized Muslim population becomes the target of racist violence, as in the case of the recent events in the Netherlands which unfortunately provided us with an example of this after the assassination in 2004 of the anarchist film producer and writer T. Van Gogh by a radical Islamist militant. The fight against the exclusion of and discrimination against the Muslim population is more than ever presented as a challenge to our institutions to open up and adapt to globalisation, populations flows and the most diverse thoughts which penetrate into the European region. The advent of a Muslim population in the process of "autochtonisation" indeed calls for a wide reaching and new thought process on the relations that exist between the faiths and the authorities, on the role of the secular State as regards religion, on the nature and the respect of the rights of minorities in a modern society, and on the articulation of the local and national levels within this debate.

Two types of social actions make it possible to fight against sociocultural discrimination against the Muslim communities in Europe by supporting the latter in their effort to achieve democratically negotiated negotiation of their spiritual life in the European public area: *a total and extensive level*, and *a local and intensive one*.

The first one has already been created or relayed by various official or semi-official national institutions in the fight against racism, by various important associations, by pressure groups, as well as by international organizations (the Council of Europe, 1999; Manço U., 2000; Aldeeb, 2001). In order to intensify the fight against racism in general and islamophobia in particular, some propose, for example, the *introduction of history courses into secondary school education curricula dealing with international migrations and comparative history on civilizations and religions*. These courses

would raise awareness of all students on the question of the unceasing ethnic and cultural intermixing of the populations of Europe, and on the diversity and the historic quality of religious facts, which would make it possible to draw a distinction between cultural facts and those pertaining to religious faiths. Moreover, by reminding people of the contribution made by Muslims to the advancement of knowledge, by describing their role in the preparation of the Renaissance, it could draw the attention of young people and their teachers to the peaceful and beneficial exchanges between civilizations. *A programme of awareness building* could also be drawn up for professionals in the media and executive staff in public administrations, as well as the personnel at the European political, national, regional and municipal levels.

Another proposal which has recently started to make waves in political circles is the *teaching of Islamic theology adapted to the European context* in order to train the teachers of the Islamic religion, the Imams, the Islamic moral counsellors and the executive staff in religious associations who have to serve European Muslims. The same applies to the *granting of an administrative status to professional teachers of religion*, like Imams, moral counsellors, professors of religion (in the countries where courses on religion are exempted from official teaching programme), as well as the *production of pedagogical material and/or very open support adapted to the need for knowledge on Islam meant for children and adult Muslims (or non Muslims) in a democratic, multicultural and multi-religious society*. At the political level, these proposals must be linked to a much older objective but one which has still not been achieved throughout Europe: *the granting of a legal personality to the representative establishments in charge of managing and maintaining the goods and property assigned to the exercise of the Islamic faith, their financing by the authorities and/or their exemption from various taxes* so as to put them on an equal footing with the institutions of other faiths confessions that are recognized and/or present on the territory.

However, setting up such necessary institutions, instruments or policies to help Muslims in Europe will not in itself help to wipe out the incomprehension, the condescension or the rejection towards Muslims by the political community and European public opinion, nor will it help to eradicate the discriminatory or islamophobic behaviour to which the Muslims are subjected whether they practise their faith or not. Increased animosity with regard to the financial means and cultural rights that Muslims have received that some are likely to find unjustified, is perhaps to be feared. In

addition, if the construction of Islam in the form of a religious reality which is publicly recognized in European societies - where, in general, the religious expressions are thought to be residual and limited to places of worship or to private areas - is problematic (Zolberg and Woon, 1998), it should indeed be wondered how and with which support processes, could the Muslims who come from countries where religion is dominant both socially and politically, transform their religious experiences and thus constitute a secularized and negotiated "Islam-religion" (Cesari, 1998). Usually, this question is posed at the national level when it is a question of observing the process of the institutionalization of Islam. The national level has all its relevance of course, but it does not suffice to understand the range of transformations because it is at the *local* level that practices are expressed, as are adaptations and claims of this minority in all their variety and concreteness, and with all their contradictions.

The road that leads to the acceptance of Muslims and their faith within European societies necessarily requires socio-pedagogical work to be done at the grassroots level - it must be intensive in nature and of long duration, undertaken in collaboration with social, political and religious actors at the local level who are invited to meet each other in public areas in towns and in European communes. In fact, *what are the local obstacles that stand in the way of full application of Muslims' rights to freedom of worship and conscience? How can Islam be constructed as a minority faith starting from the multiple Islamic identity forms, be they religious identities or not, that are seen emerging in various local contexts? Under which leadership could this intercultural negotiation be carried out it? What are the principal claims and arguments that are encountered at the level of European municipalities? With what type of strategies, mobilizations and support systems? Finally, towards which negotiated solutions can we move? With what degree of effectiveness and satisfaction?*

The objective of observant participation for the integration of Muslim diversity, which is the basis of this work, is to establish throughout Europe a typology of local problems together with their solutions in order to define and to contribute to the dissemination of effective action systems leading to the local recognition of the Muslim minority. This would mean that there would be, in parallel, a reduction in tensions, responses adapted to the objective needs and democratization of local public decisions. The work of observation and local intervention necessitates the emergence of mutual confidence and practices based on partnership which the

researcher-workers would develop among the various communities and the political leaders. This intervention strategy, which is an essential complement of the work of the political decision makers, constitutes an original line of action. The current analysis of municipal public policies requires the integration of the finalities and modalities of local interventions operated by the social researcher-workers. It is true that henceforth, it is not just simple and durable rules that are sought after, but also objectives for local democracy, namely coordination between private and public actors or, better still, the direct and constructive participation of private actors in public management. The need for increased information from the decision makers and the involvement of civil society in public decisions is thus imperative (Helly, 2000). What is now being said on new political ethics stresses the need to recreate bonds between citizens so that a sense of harmonious living-together materialises, which is much stronger than the diversities that are perceived, and by encouraging and involving each one in the management of collective work, in particular local work. Then there would follow the attempt to achieve broader delegation to manage social problems and cultural tensions in the associative sector, an extension in consultation of civil society organisations and the adoption of programmes seeking the participation of residents in city contracts, within the priority action zones set up to resolve cultural disagreements or blatant social inequalities (Helly, 2000). With these local power relations inscribed within this democratic circle of influence in multicultural and multifait contexts, the research-action would opt mainly for the strategy of investment and close supervision for minority actors in municipal areas to allow for the realization of wider mutual comprehension and co-operation of a better quality.

## **2. Objectives, assumptions and expected results**

The action entitled “*Faiths and Social cohesion*” supports a philosophy that would lead to the construction of an integrative dialogue which develops religious and ethnic diversity. Through the development of otherness in the religious context and intercultural and citizen participation in municipalities, a process of positive identity comes into being and is reinforced within a population that finds itself in the minority, and could fall prey to all kinds of exclusions and discriminations. The intervention “*Faiths and Social cohesion*” has its *operational objective which is to analyse how the*

municipalities deal with religious requests made by the Muslim populations, and the place granted to their representatives at the time of taking and applying public decisions in these matters, and the roles and the positions of these local Muslim actors in these situations. The work of this research-action is focused on municipal cases where there is significant Muslim immigration and precise requests are being made (with high levels of controversy) as regards freedom of worship and conscience. The action aims to achieve the following:

- (1) to note the constraints and obstacles in this work;
- (2) to identify strategies and arguments proposed by the parties (non Muslim residents, Muslim residents and municipal authorities);
- (3) to set up and to support the processes of mediation;
- (4) to clarify the adopted solutions for each party;
- (5) finally, to evaluate their effectiveness.

*The central assumption* of the project stipulates that incomprehension, the non-communication and the divergences among Community or Muslim religious associations and the municipal decision makers, as well as non Muslim residents can be overcome only if formal and informal meetings and places of regular exchanges are organized and hosted for these actors on the subject of local and common challenges. It is a question of building citizen participation for all concerned on a daily basis. This objective will be attained if the exchanges encourage actions and concrete and significant results for all the parties concerned. A dialogue of this quality is often lacking between the local organizers in charge of Muslim religious life ( mosque associations, courses on Islamic catechism, religious dignitaries) and municipal authorities, as well as the representatives (religious or not) of non Muslim residents. The organization of consultations between representatives of different faiths and philosophies, and introduction of co-operation of all kinds between Muslim representatives and local councillors, possibly elected officials of Muslim origin, can play an appreciable role in the dynamization of the relationships between different communities. The persons in charge of Muslim associations and those in charge of municipal authorities would be more effective in their approach for reconciliation if they were supported by information mechanisms, advice, mediation, etc

The action that is suggested relates specifically to identifying and overcoming discriminatory situations, thus raising the question of *islamophobia*. However, the effectiveness of the programme requires flexibility in order to abetter apprehend local specificities present at the different sites, and to see whether it might be necessary to widen the field of intervention to include subjects that are not specifically related to religious worship, but are necessary to fight against discrimination, like the question of education or health, for example. It is understood that sometimes widening the sphere of activity proves to be politically and methodologically useful. Five sets of questions direct the action entitled "*Faiths and Social cohesion*", and the intention is to provide a coherent investigative and operational framework for all the teams concerned while defining the practical priorities of this concerted action:

- *Religious discriminations.* Partners in the programme were asked to try to identify and define the differences of treatment and recognition which specifically affect Muslims in European communes, in their capacity as practitioners with specific religious convictions. Can these differences of treatment and recognition be religious and cultural discriminations which are not compensated for by other mechanisms? Aren't these differences of treatment and recognition due to political, historical, social, local contingencies, etc? Are these differences of treatment and recognition found with regard to communities other than the Muslims? How can there be effective support for the authorities in their task that seeks to eliminate discriminations and the differences in treatment that specifically affect Muslim citizens in their religious practice?

- *Links with other types of discrimination.* Partners were also requested to try and define the systemic links between specific religious discriminations and other forms of discriminations, difficulties and exclusions. What are these social, political and economic exclusions, and the psychological tensions which discriminate in religious matters against the immigrant and Muslim communities? Does this situation cause Muslims to turn inwards to their community, and is there a lack of confidence between the Muslim communities and the institutions in the host country, which could damage the integration of immigrants and their children? How to effectively support the local authorities and civil society in their task of combatting exclusions and discriminations other than religious, with regard to Muslims?

- *Endogenous reasons for these difficulties.* Parallel to the sometimes difficult relations that exist between Muslims and local governments (or the other non-Muslim inhabitants), the participants were requested, in the course of the action to consider the relations, competition, confrontations, the divergences, etc even within the Muslim community: between those who were practising their faith and the laity, between men and women, young people and adults, first wave -immigrants and those born of immigrant parents, between people with low qualifications and the Muslim elite, between Muslims of different nationalities or origins, between immigrant and converted European Muslims, between immigrants and asylum seekers or refugees, between Muslims of various political orientations, between Muslims of different religious persuasions and different religious schools, between Muslims of contrasting economic conditions, etc Do these disparities and internal divisions facilitate matters or on the contrary do they make for more complex relations between Muslims and non-Muslims? Are these divisions a source of Community or endogenous deficits standing in the way of recognition of the Muslims in Europe? By taking account of the absence of a higher theological authority in Islam, what can be proposed for an effective representation and a federation of Muslims vis-a-vis local and supra-local administrations? How can these communities be supported in their task of federation leading towards a judicious and efficient representation?

- *Discrimination on the basis of gender.* The question of unequal treatment towards the women is basic and we must deal with it. To ask about the condition of women in Islam or in the cultures that make up the Muslim populations, is to touch at the heart of non-communicability that characterizes the relations between the institutions in Western countries and the representatives of the Muslim communities. Within this difficult framework of ideological confrontation it is a question of seeking to identify what the local mosques and religious associations are doing with and for the women of their community. What are the activities launched, the means provided, the objectives established, which are the groups targeted for these activities? How are these activities identified, recognized, supported or not by the municipalities? How and why is it necessary to support this type of activities for and with women within the framework of the policies that seek to open up to the Muslim populations? Which real possibilities of emancipation do they offer to the women within their community? What type of progress can these activities achieve as regards bring-

ing together Muslim communities and non-Muslim women, Muslim communities and local governments and, finally, different Muslim communities? Is it simpler and more effective to negotiate one's difference when one is a Muslim woman? How to effectively support the local authorities in their task of fair recognition of the cultural, religious and social activities intended for Muslim women?

- *Discrimination as regards age.* The question of discrimination towards young people takes on a particular and strategic importance. It is known that the role of religious and family education and associative inclusion are of primary importance in the development of identity in children and young people who are born of immigrant parents (Manço A., 1999). The malfunctioning created on these grounds by an absence of dialogue between local authorities and immigrants who organise religious activities hinder the development of these young people. The potentially positive role of the organizations and religious personnel to protect young people of immigrant background from delinquency, drug dependence, family conflicts, psychological problems and violent behavior, as well as their positive effects on encouraging schooling and having access to employment is well known. It seems therefore the right moment to pose the question concerning the place of young people in the actions for development and recognition of the cultural and religious life of Muslim populations. It will thus be a question of identifying what the mosques and religious associations are doing with and for the young people in their community. What are the activities, the means, the objectives, and for which target public? How are these activities identified, are they supported or not by the municipalities? How and why is it necessary to support this type of activities with young people? What are the possibilities of real emancipation and psycho-social development that they offer to young people within their community and in the host country? What progress can these activities achieve as regards bringing together Muslim communities and non-Muslim women, Muslim communities and local governments and, finally, different Muslim communities? Is it simpler and more effective to negotiate one's differences when one is a young Muslim? How to effectively support the local authorities in their task of fair recognition of cultural, religious and sports activities, entertainment and educational programmes intended for young Muslims?

The action "*Faiths and Social cohesion*" made it possible to achieve two types of results and products: results and local prod-

ucts, on the one hand, and results and transnational products, on the other.

In this volume each local action is described in a specific chapter and this makes it possible to examine a practice and its final evaluation. These actions allowed municipal decision makers, Muslim actors and the local population to meet and to better to know everyone in order to construct mutual understanding. These actions invited people or groups to reflect on the Muslim presence and its diversity, its local integration and understand how its requests were being dealt with by the authorities. These local experiments encouraged the politicians, Muslim actors and ordinary inhabitants to get along and act together on the subject of intentional discrimination. Support systems that are other than relations of local researchers, which gave rise to the present book, in particular journalistic and multimedia support, were produced within the framework of this vast project. They are intended for various publics who must become aware of certain aspects, such as decision makers and local government staff, Muslim communities and their non Muslim neighbours. Meetings that are open to the public in the localities concerned are useful to popularize the methods and the positive effects of the practices of mediation and negotiation between communities and administrations, as well as for constructing social cohesion and setting the conditions for equality that transcend the differences.

The results and the *transnational* products of the action will be recounted in comparison to the local actions. They are of major importance. The transnational action is based on the teams responsible for the national and local projects who met on several occasions and in different contexts, as well as on the validation of their specific experiments through comparison and the cross analysis of local actions. Experts were associated with this work. It is a question, initially, of attaining a deeper level of general knowledge on the subject of religious discrimination against Muslims in European municipalities. At the *second level*, the transnational action makes way for the deployment of European know-how on the interventions as regards fighting against religious discrimination at the local level. It makes it possible to precisely define the steps, the conditions and the means necessary for such positive initiatives. After verification and validation in various municipal contexts in Europe, the relevant practices in intercommunity mediation and collaboration could then be transposed to other communes in Europe. The parameters of the transnational experiment are also

obvious in the present publication; we took great care to build a comparative dimension into our project.

This work will thus allow the representative public authorities and, on a wider level, all European citizens to better acquaint themselves with the following:

(1) the sociological and religious diversity of the Muslim minority in Europe, as well as its principal elements for organization and authority, presented particularly as a typology of the local and supra-local leaders and federations;

(2) forms of participation in local citizenship requested by Muslim organizations and granted to them by the municipalities, like their impact in terms of combatting discrimination and for social cohesion, to prevent tensions or conflicts, etc;

(3) the list of claims made by the Muslim communities: mosque, Muslim burial plots, organization of a halal meat industry, wearing the headscarf in schools, combatting racism, civic rights, etc;

(4) the list of modes and strategies for action and mobilization of Muslims in the context of their claims;

(5) types of local resistance, whether public or private, official or semi-official, encountered during the negotiations and mediations within local institutions, and the solutions adopted to deal with them;

(6) social conditions (possibly discriminating ones) arising from the decisions or municipal practices, and their effects on making tensions linger, on highlighting them or reducing them, resistances and pressures exerted by the actors involved;

(7) finally, *ad hoc* responses or democratic and mutually satisfactory political changes that have been found to respond or not to the various requests made by the Muslim citizens, solutions put forward within their local socio-historical framework and the twists and turns leading up to their concrete application. Thus the action that is presented allows European decision makers and social actors to understand and take ownership of the various methods that have been tested out in order to prevent cases of discrimination, tension and conflict in religious matters.

### **3. Making the project operational: actions undertaken and structure of the work**

The local action project was launched in four European countries that have undergone massive immigration flows coming from Muslim countries. Local partnerships bring together associations: residents and/or local associations of Muslim immigrants active in the field of the practice, animation and religious education; local councillors and municipal administrations; professional organizations specialized in intervention work, of hosting and intercultural mediation; as well as researchers in social sciences. It should be noted that the willingness to work in France and in Belgium much more than being just a pragmatic choice, is also connected to the desire to point out the realities that are present in a context of ancient Muslim immigration which to a great extent has already commenced its process of *autochtonisation*. Belgium is a country that is in advance when compared to France in the context of the formal recognition of Islam. This data offers the possibility of comparison that could reveal the possible democratic progress obtained thanks to the constitutional recognition of Islam by a European State. Moreover, the relatively new Muslim presence in the south of Europe and raises questions related to discrimination in a new form: recently installed groups of first wave immigrants with a low level of community structuring within an indigenous population little accustomed to immigration. This is the result of investigations realised in Italy, in contrast to the generalization of the Muslim immigration which is a fact in the north of Europe. *A contrario*, Spain has, just like Belgium, a constitutional base to accommodate Islam which is a historical fact on the territory of this State. The choice of these four countries thus gives the observer a variety of four cross situations: a context of immigration which is either ancient or recent with or without constitutional recognition. In addition to these four intervention countries, two other cases have been associated with the action, the observations, and the analyses, by inviting experts to present research-action projects as regards integration of the Muslim faith in their respective countries. They are Great Britain (the case of Birmingham) and Canada (the town of Montreal). The comparison with Canada and its model of multiculturalism makes it possible to compare European specificity in its openness towards the Muslim faith.

Initially, the researcher-field workers in the project entitled "*Faiths and Social cohesion*" sought to discover solutions through intercultural and intercommunity negotiation, which would be

deemed satisfactory by all the protagonists and which would be transferable elsewhere, through specific and contentious elements contained in the case study (establishment of mosques, dealing with the noise levels connected to the practice of the faith, dealing with the question of the ritual slaughter and the festival of the *Aid Al-Adha sacrifice*, wearing of the Islamic headscarf at the school or at work, allotting space for Muslim burials in the cemeteries, etc). Hosting, mediation and consultation work that went on during intercommunity meetings was to allow for reciprocal comprehension between communities in order to prevent discrimination and tensions that grew out of religious, community and ethnic matters. The principle of the intervention is precisely to bring to the negotiating table representatives of local authorities who are competent in the field of organization the cultural and religious life of immigrant communities, together with representatives of the local Muslim communities, persons in charge of associations, organizers, religious personalities, etc. Thus, the representatives of the Muslim communities are associated, from start to finish, with the whole action process. Non Muslim groups of inhabitants and researchers specialised in questions of integration are also invited in order to take the role of counsellor and regulator.

In the *second stage*, it was necessary to analyze the conduct of the negotiations and other local, official or informal exchanges that came about because of the project itself. Then, comparison of these elements and the results produced on the various intervention sites had to be made in order to define “*good practices*” as regards management of the disagreements related to the coexistence of several religious and philosophical options in municipalities. It is clear that the local socio-historical analyses of the Muslim presence at each point of the project, as well as the analysis of the scientific literature available on the subject matter, are also necessary for the correct interpretation of the observations (Crawford *et Al*, 1998; Wiener, 1998).

A grid for a common system to analyse the actions was drawn up by the partners. The reader will find this plan in the later chapters of this book which show the changes that occurred and the results of the actions carried out in each city that took part in the project. The grid aims to homogenize and make it possible to compare the presentation of the local actions. This is done on the basis of four points:

(1) Description of the local context in which the intervention takes place: context of employment, housing and schooling of the Muslim populations in the city concerned. What is the sociological and historical profile of the target public?

(2) The inventory of places where discrimination was detected and the action that followed: what are the types of religious discrimination identified? How is this measured? Who are the associative actors, the political and administrative ones, and the media which seem to be most important? What are their respective relationships as regards the implementation and/or the identification of the difficulties uncovered? What are the principles and legal provisions? Is there a difference between the practices and the theories of the local actors? What are the position and the precise claims of the Muslim populations? What is the position adopted by third party organizations? Which concrete actions have already been carried out to combat a particular type of religious discrimination against the Muslim community? Which objectives do these actions respond to? How can these objectives identify and point up to an exaggerated level of discrimination against the Muslims? Which actors seem to be relevant as agents in favour of dialogue and change in comparison to the nature of the action itself? What are the contributions of these persons or institutions, and their expectations with respect to the project? What are the objectives of identified changes and the means made available for the intervention?

(3) Description and evaluation of the impact of the intervention: to what degree were the objectives matched by the actions? What were the effects on the awareness process of the discrimination mechanisms and on the resorption capacity of these mechanisms? How can we explain this? What kinds of measurement and observation systems were developed for this task? Which factors/actors made it possible to move towards the objectives for change? Which factors/actors slowed down the achievement of these objectives? What are the more general lessons that can be drawn in terms of political and practical recommendations? What is new in the field on participation and recognition of the Muslim organizations as social actors?

(4) Definition of future prospects: what still remains to be done in the locality? How can we design these actions? Change of strategy? Partners? Method? Deepening and consolidating what was done during the project? How to ensure the ongoing quality of

the progress? How to effect the transfer of the know-how and products to other contexts? What about the dissemination of the results and the products?

The chapters which are connected to the descriptions per intervention site were designed to be comparative and transnational in order to identify and illustrate, through all the cases described in detail here, the concept of religious discrimination against the Muslim population in Europe, and to contribute to the construction of a typology of indicators of a specific type of discrimination. It goes without saying that detailed attention was paid to the identification, illustration and evaluation of local initiatives meant to combat religious discrimination, in order to systematize the knowledge and the know-how acquired at the time of the realization of the project entitled "*Faiths and Social cohesion*". Policy recommendations in the form of "*good practices*" complete this volume.

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