CHAPTER ONE

ISLAM IN THE PUBLIC SPACE: SOCIAL NETWORKS, MEDIA AND NEO-COMMUNITIES

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1. *Introduction*

The presence of Muslim populations in Europe has been studied from many points of view using, for example, the instruments of the sociology of migration or of the sociology of religion, not to mention through other disciplinary approaches such as anthropology, theology and comparative religious studies, political studies and social policies. The sociological analysis of Islam in Europe often tends to compare the situation in the different countries of Europe, i.e. to compare the different national cases (France, Great Britain, Germany, sometimes Holland and Belgium and less frequently the Mediterranean countries of Southern Europe and the Scandinavian countries). Often this comparison is not the product of the work of a single researcher or team of researchers, but it is done through juxtaposing occasional papers or essays by different authors.[1] Another frequently used methodology consists of the development of community studies, such as the effects of the presence of Muslim populations in a particular local environment, or in a specific country.[2] A third level of research

[1] Some examples, normally the outcome of a conference or a seminar, are Gerholm and Lithman (1988), Shadid and van Koningsveld (1991, 1996a and 1996b), Lewis and Schnapper (1992), Waardenburg and others (1994), Nonneman, Niblock and Szajkowski (1996), Vertovec and Peach (1997).

[2] This type of literature is too vast, and it is not possible to indicate any reference studies (see, at least for the first decade of interest in the subject, Dassetto and Conrad, 1996; a significant bibliography will also be available in the European research mentioned in note 4): their importance depends on the subject, on the author and, often, on the importance of the country in which the studies are conducted. Some countries are in fact more 'read' than others, due to their intrinsic importance, but also, more often, to the fact that some languages are better known than others by researchers and the scientific community. This factor, among others, explains the diffusion of some theoretical models and interpretations, in particular, of British and French origin, and the common ignorance of German, Latin and

includes the study of a specific ethnic or national group (e.g. the Senegalese in Italy or the Turks in Germany),[3] in some cases with a reference to the dynamics at play in the countries of origin: an option that, at least, starts to observe some 'back-and-forward dynamics', the importance of which we will stress with a certain emphasis in the present study. Only on a few occasions has a synthesis of the ongoing processes been attempted from a broader point of view, by specialists who have shown the different implications of the presence of Islam in Europe.[4]

Most research, however, has studied the Muslim populations/groups/communities, we could say, in themselves, taking for granted the existence of these communities, and focusing mainly on their basic elements and on the consequences of their presence. What I intend to analyse in this contribution is how the Muslim presence 'happens', in other words, how these populations, groups, or communities 'produce' themselves, through which means and logics. I will then focus on some of the effects of this 'production of community'. In particular I would like to pay some attention to the process of construction of transnational and non-ethnic Muslim communities through Islamic networks and through the use of (mass) media. As a consequence of this approach, the emphasis will not be on the sociological and cultural data often underlined in the analysis of Muslim populations, but precisely on what is *not* at the core of these populations/groups/communities. I will not examine what can be considered their 'centre', or their 'heart', in other words what is commonly identified

Northern European production. This is both a theoretical and a policy-making problem, because the better known models are also very specific in many different ways, and are not necessarily the appropriate interpretations (the theoretical frames) and the proposed solutions to social problems (resulting from different socio-cultural conditions) compatible with the situation of other countries on which they tend to be superimposed. Some examples of references on national situations, which from different point of views have opened the debate on the Islamic presence in their respective countries, has been, among others, Dassetto and Bastenier (1984) for Belgium, Kepel (1987) for France, Landmann (1992) for Holland, Allievi and Dassetto (1993) for Italy and Lewis (1994) for Britain.

[3] To quote only two good examples, Schmidt di Friedberg (1994) and Amiraux (2001).

[4] Dassetto and Bastenier (1988), Nielsen (1992), Shadid and van Koningsveld (1995), Dassetto (1996). A more recent and extended attempt has been made in a research report of a certain 'weight' (around 500 pages), commissioned by the Forward Studies Unit of the European Commission, under the direction of F. Dassetto and J. Nielsen, with contributions of S. Allievi, F. Dassetto, S. Ferrari, M.-C. Foblets, B. Maréchal, J. Nielsen (forthcoming in English and Italian).

as their 'identity' (with a term given as self-evident but which needs closer and more careful attention). On the contrary, I will pay here more attention to their 'borders' (the borders of the communities and the borders of the society in which they live), and to what happens when these borders are crossed: how the individuals and groups 'use' them, the function they play, and finally the effect of this passage on the 'centre', i.e. on the identities at play.

What I will try to analyse is not a sort of Islamic *non-lieu* (Augé, 1992). On the contrary, I will try to show how these borders, and what passes across and through them, are part of the social landscape in which the Muslims in Europe live, and contribute to define them in a very significant way. They are, in fact, part of the definition of the *lieu*, even when they are taken into consideration only in order to cross them, impoverishing them of their symbolic and practical significance, or eventually taking advantage of their existence to construct some form of transborder situation (such as in the case of transnational business or communication flows).

The idea of 'crossing the borders' seems promising, although it is not often used in this field. One also has to keep in mind that the concept of border (in Italian *confine*, the same etymology as the English *confined* and *confinement*) is intrinsically polysemic: it signifies what marks the difference, or the frontier, but at the same time what the two (subjects, states, groups . . .) have in common: the Latin *cum-finis* (the end—*finis*—one has in common, 'with'—*cum*—someone or something else) contains both meanings, even if in the daily language the latter one has been lost (Cassano, 1995). As a metaphor, then, it is promising, because it opens up previously unobserved horizons (that is the meaning of *metà-phérein*: to project beyond): a universe comes into being when a space is divided into two, as Maturana and Varela (1980) have written, in a completely different field. I will try to show that this observation is not only a cultural metaphor, but can also have important sociological consequences.

As I said above, I will focus my attention precisely on what *crosses* the borders. I will do that, in Part One, by defining the concept of network and giving some examples of Islamic networks that play a role in building up what we could provisionally call the Muslim neo-communities of Europe.[5] It is interesting for our purposes to see that

[5] I call them 'neo-communities', and not simply communities, because in many

these networks, although in most cases 'private' (in the sense that, even if being social and collective, they are originated—and, in the last analysis, they are used—for personal goals), play their role and are perceived in the public sphere as collective or communitarian in a broad sense, as is particularly clear in the case of politics and the media. This also means that one of the major consequences of the Islamic presence is in fact that these populations (groups, associations, ethnic communities) enter the European public sphere as a new social actor, with cultural/religious references which did not previously exist in this same public sphere.

In Part Two I will emphasise the role of the (mass) media in building up these new kinds of communities. In the conclusion I will put forward some considerations as to how these major changes now taking place will (or could) change our image not only of the Muslim communities in Europe, but of European societies. These changes are possibly also going to affect, through a different comprehension of Islam, the relations of European societies with the 'countries of origin' of the Muslim populations, and in some ways, their idea of Islam; but they will particularly affect some aspects of European Islam, including, in the long (and perhaps not so long) term, its religious self-definition, not to mention that they are going to change, in a slow and silent but nonetheless spectacular way, the image and self-image of Europe itself.

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ways they differ from the usual concept of community. Even if the ethnic and religious communities, as well as the nation-state, are often and even always 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1991), they are perceived, even by professional observers, as being real: and in fact, sociologically, they *do* have a reality—or, put in other words, they *are* real—as much as they are real in their consequences, as Thomas teaches. But the Islamic neo-communities of Europe differ from the communities of origin in many ways. Trying to resume a complex process of change in one concept, these neo-communities, particularly from the moment in which the second generation appears and starts to be active at the social level, are religious (Islamic) precisely because they are *no longer* ethnic or national (for instance, they start to be open to different ethnic-national origins). On the other hand, as we will see, they are open to the influence of these same ethnic and national origins, and also *have* an influence over them in a process of reciprocal interaction.

2. *Muslim Networks in Europe*

2.1. *Islam and Europe, Islam in Europe*

As we have learned through the modern/post-modern debate, modernity is in itself globalising (Giddens, 1990). The mechanisms, systems, modes and nodes of connection have multiplied, in a process of intensification of the connections and opportunities of encounter which, at least by and large, is moving towards covering all interrelations on a global scale, including those between different cultural and religious worlds which in the past were very far apart.

The process of globalisation has important consequences on the subject we are dealing with. Most of the time, globalisation is conceived in 'structural' (economical, technological, etc.) terms, but its cultural consequences, on individuals and societies, including religious beliefs, are at least as equally important.[6] They change our idea of the centre-periphery relations; and prior to our ideas on it, they change its reality—not only because, in the Internet era, there is no longer a centre: this is much truer in the virtual world than in the real one. But because, in any case, these relations are much less unidirectional: they become more and more *inter*-relations. In particular, cultural flows, more visibly than others, are multidirectional, and they are also able to connect peripheries between them, without the mediation of a centre.

The cultural flows, more frequently than the economic, political or technological ones, take the periphery-centre direction rather than vice versa, and in some ways can be interpreted as the cultural response of the peripheries to the political and the economical dominance of the centre (Hannerz, 1996). One of the reasons is the process of progressive pluriculturisation of societies, and particularly of those societies which used to define themselves as 'central'. As a consequence of this process, cultures and systems of belief are involved in a process that we could define as de-territorialisation, as a redefinition of what is local and what is global (Robertson, 1992).[7]

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[6] If not more. See at least Tomlinson (1999).

[7] The number of texts produced on these concepts and changes form a library in themselves. To this seminal essay we could add all the literature produced by Robertson, Featherstone, Lash and others, particularly around the journal *Theory, Culture & Society*, and the collective books published by these authors by Sage. The

Particularly in the case of Islam, and between the two actors that are commonly identified as 'Islam' and 'the West', these flows can be interpreted as a "multi-lane super highway with two-way traffic" (Esposito, 2002); but this is true also *inside* the so-called Islamic diaspora,[8] and inside the Islamic *umma*.

European Islam is a good demonstration of this. On the one hand it can be interpreted in the relationship between former colonial powers and former colonised countries, where the flows often come from, as a centre-periphery relationship. On the other, in the Islamic world in general, and in the European part of the *umma* in particular, it produces inter-connections between peripheries. It is no coincidence, moreover, that its borders, if it has them, do not correspond with those of the European Union or even present-day western Europe; they too start off from the Atlantic, but not only do they extend beyond the Urals: they also include the countries bordering the Mediterranean to the South and the East. They also include the countries of origin of the Muslim communities which reside in Europe, which can be very far from Europe, as the British case shows. Having said this, the processes mentioned are not based on a 'static' basis: they presuppose, imply and produce mobility—of information, money and goods but also of men and women. There is therefore a mobility of cultures, which 'export' their products (including symbolic and intangible ones) but there is also the concrete mobility of individuals who carry them and which obviously increases the effectiveness and the stability of the effects. The diffusion of a fashion or cultural or even religious trend is one thing, another thing is when consistent groups of individuals sharing a certain belief move to another place, taking with them this same culture and/or religion, transplanting it, as it were, elsewhere.

Another element of the complication of the relations between Islam and the West, linked to the above, comes from the fact that Islam *was* external: outside and facing (confronting) the West. For fourteen centuries Islam was *perceived* as such, even more than it actually was; but nowadays Islam is an *internal* social actor of the West. From the

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names of Giddens, Bauman, Touraine and Beck are some of the common references in this debate.

[8] I will discuss below the concept of diaspora which, when applied to the Islamic presence in Europe, leaves us deeply unsatisfied.

alternative 'Islam *or* Europe', drawn by a long historical (and of course theological) tradition, to the juxtaposition 'Islam *and* Europe', we are now at the factual situation of 'Islam *in* Europe'.[9] The problem is that we do not have the cultural categories to interpret it as such.

European Islam is in effect the two things: it is an *internal* social actor, but it is also *externalised*, for two different reasons. The first one is that it is effectively *in a relationship* with the countries of origin and the different kind of 'centres' (centres of production of knowledge, symbolic centres of the prayer and the *ḥajj*, organisational centres of movements and *ṭuruq*) which are situated outside Europe and outside the West. The second one is that, even when it is European Islam which is under discussion, we often think of it, culturally, in terms of externality and extraneousness: as something which should be 'naturally' outside, which for some reason—but as an accident, by chance; this is the implicit and the unsaid—has got in.

2.2. *The role of networks*

Does a transnational Muslim space exist? And how does it affect Europe?[10] Muslims that came to Europe, as other immigrants, are used to crossing borders. We also have to note that the role of borders was de-dramatised in different ways in the second half of the last century, even if in recent years we have observed a recrudescence of their effectiveness, or a (vain?) attempt in this direction, at least as far as migration is concerned. However, national borders are far more permeable than the majority of states and public opinion would like, even for those we are used to calling 'irregular' immigrants. And if this is true for the external borders of the 'fortress Europe', it is evident for its internal frontiers, which are becoming practically and symbolically meaningless, due to the process launched by the treaties of Schengen, Maastricht and Amsterdam. In a world

[9] There are some classic references on the historical relations between Islam and the West, such as Daniel (1960) and more recently, Cardini (1999). For an interdisciplinary analysis from scholars with different disciplinary backgrounds, see also Allievi (1996).

[10] Many of the considerations on the role of networks, as well as on the role of media, are the result of observations by the author on the occasion of a recent report on Islam in Europe (see note 4), where this question has been raised and extensively treated.

of mobility, the immigrants are in many ways the vanguard of globalisation: for them 'being globalised' is not only their job—it is their way of life.

Crossing borders has become (relatively) possible, and this simple fact allows the creation of transnational spaces and circuits, normally but not always starting from a bi-national relationship, typically the country of origin and the country of settlement. In this process, of which in particular the economic implications have been analysed (Portes, 1995), other variables also play a decisive role, such as social networks, politics and religion. The relationship with the country of origin, the engagement for instance in ethnic movements with bipolar roots, is often a process where the cause and the effect, the starting point and the consequence are not that clear, in a relatively new process of 'transnational integration'. These processes have already been studied in classical sociology (Simmel, Sombart, Park for example), particularly with ethnic entrepreneurship in mind. But their importance is not only and not even primarily economic.

The Islamic *umma* can be considered one of these social transnational spaces. In it we can find all the elements that define these spaces (Faist, 1998): a combination of social and symbolic links, the existence of positions between them in a network, the presence of organisations and networks of organisations that can be found in at least two distinct geographical and international places. More in detail, we find the simultaneous presence of capital of an economic type (i.e. financial resources), but also of human capital (skills and know-how), and lastly, of that fundamental resource which is social capital, made up of social links (a continuous series of interpersonal transactions involving shared interests, obligations, expectations and rules) and symbolic links (a continuous series of transactions, both face to face and indirect, to which the participants contribute and in which they find shared meanings, memories, future expectations and symbols).

Consequently, it is not difficult to apply a theory conceived with the importance of social capital in economic exchanges in particular in mind, to that transnational space that we could call the 'migratory *umma*'. This is not the *umma* in its traditional and static sense (the Muslims as a whole, a mere juxtaposition), but in a dynamic sense: all the Muslims 'moving' and which, because of this movement, come into contact with one another, and, on the other hand, also bring the countries and communities they come into contact

with into relationship with one another. This is the qualitative difference which has to be underlined, and which makes these transnational spaces a self-fuelling process, a process that, once it has been launched, 'produces itself' through its own dynamics.

An interesting example of transnational economy which has been well studied is that of the Turks in Germany. Grounded on solid ethnic bases, it can count on a 'community market' large enough to be transformed, from a domestic ethnic business, to business without a connotation. But alongside the Turkish entrepreneurs, the Turkish Islamists also follow the same path. In particular different forms of 'bi-national careers' are already visible, developed through the engagement in the *Milli Görüs* in Germany and the *Refah Partisi* in Turkey (Amiraux, 2001). Some examples are the financial flow of 'Islamodollars' in both directions,[11] or the political careers which have started in social engagement in Berlin or Frankfurt and which have ended in a parliamentary seat in Ankara. With reference to another case, Lewis (1998) quotes Islamic sources complaining that 90% of the funds collected in the United Kingdom for charity goes to the countries of origin, seriously under-estimating local needs and, in short, doing harm to the Muslim presence in the country. The same can be said of the money collected by the Senegalese Murid which goes to enrich Touba, the spiritual—but also political—capital of this confraternity (Schmidt di Friedberg, 1994). Other examples of these flows, not only at the economic level, can be found even more clearly observing the internal dynamics of some political movements, *ṭuruq*, or missionary movements such as the *Tablighi Jamāʿāt*, in which the passage from a bi-national paradigm to a transnational one clearly emerges (it is sufficient to think that the movement, born in India, has experienced some of its more interesting developments in Europe, recruiting particularly amongst the North Africans in the urban peripheries).

The social networks that have developed in Muslim immigration have the important characteristic of being, following a classical definition of the network analysis, multi-stratum (Mitchell, 1969). They have multiple contents, crossing over the national, physical and political boundaries (much less the linguistic ones, which are more

[11] But particularly from Germany. It is estimated that some 6 million DM were collected in Germany and sent to Turkey during the 1991 elections. This is of note as normally we think of these flows going in the inverse direction.

difficult to cross), and including different elements, amongst which must be mentioned parental links, friendship, marriage, and other kinds of interdependence, including what we could call symbolic and 'imaginary relations' (Cesari, 1997). The networks are also an important social innovation in European Islam, and they help to 'produce community' in many ways, at the same time helping to maintain contacts with the countries of origin. Their effects grow with the numerical weight of the immigrant communities, the progressive easiness and lower cost of communications and mobility (of information, goods and people), which allow a growing presence of the media of the countries of origin (satellite TV, radio, videos), more frequent and less costly contacts with the same countries (e-mail and the Internet), easier relations on a personal basis (telephone and mobile, for instance), and easier and cheaper travel to the country of origin (for different purposes and occasions: family and religious celebrations and holidays, rites of passage such as circumcision and marriage, the search for a bride or economic reasons). All these relations contribute to building up forms of identity and of loyalty which are at the same time internal and transnational: one less studied aspect of what contemporary sociology calls reflexivity, which concerns the individuals but also the groups and communities to which they belong or they refer.

Through these links, a sort of 'median space' is created, which does not correspond to a specific territory (Cesari, 1999), and which in the case of religions is a sort of 'reference space of the soul'. This space can also be brought into relation with what Park used to call 'moral regions', even if in his terms they were related to specific urban areas. This is measurable in social practices and channels of communication, through which—in the case of Islam, with reference to and in the name of religion—men and women, goods, ways of thinking, eating and praying, ideas, political and cultural values and religious symbols pass. It is no longer the classical 'migratory chain' (Reyneri, 1979) which is at play, characterised by uni-directionality and the pre-eminent role of the economy, but a 'third' space, characterised by bi-directional and multi-directional flows, in which cultural values play a decisive role.

In the hope of giving a familiar explanation of this situation, some observers have tried to use different concepts, including the concept of diaspora. Taken from the paradigmatic example of the Jews, it would appear to be functional only for some ethno-religious groups,

in which the linguistic factor also plays a distinctive role. In other words, it is probably possible to speak of a Murid diaspora (from the name of the Senegalese brotherhood), of a Turkish diaspora, perhaps of an Iranian or a Shiite diaspora, and possibly of some other national diasporas. But it is not possible to talk of a Muslim diaspora, which lacks many of the basic components of a diaspora, including *one* common origin and a common point of reference (both of a symbolic type, linked to the 'memory', as in historical Israel, and of the national type, linked to a state, as in contemporary Israel), with which it has specific relationships, possibly also imaginary; but also the consciousness of a shared ethnic-cultural identity (there are many ethnicities and many cultures within the religious framework of Islam), and the existence of religious and communitarian organisations for the totality of Muslims. Not to mention that the historic example of the diaspora was a forced event that cannot be compared to present-day 'dispersions'. Lastly, as others have noted (Soysal, 2000), the diaspora category is today an extension of the concept of nation-state which assumes, instead of demonstrating, a congruency between territorial state and national community and, as a consequence (with a *consecutio* which should not be considered automatic) a congruency between territory, culture and identity. In short, it presumptively accepts the existence of close and united community links on the basis of common ethnic and cultural references, between the place of origin and the country of arrival. In a word, the diaspora would be nothing other than the extension of the place that has been left behind, of "home" [*ibid.*].

The concept of network, less characterised, allows a 'broader' perception of the ongoing dynamics, and it is possibly more useful to use terms related to the concept of transnationalism (even if they also place excessive importance on the 'nation' factor), or to transversal solidarities (Soysal, 2000). In any case, what is important is to underline the creation of new landscapes, new "global sacred geographies" (Werbner, 1996), which oblige us to think in terms of a new "georeligion" (Allievi, 1998). We have to note, specifically, that these transnational spaces, through which the networks act, also have important effects on the countries of origin: there are many feedback effects which are not sufficiently observed by the majority of research. These feedback effects also have important consequences on the self-perception and self-interpretation of Islam, both as an orthopraxis and, at a second stage, as an orthodoxy. All this happens as a 'simple'

consequence of movement and of a personal continuous interaction, which is enormously facilitated by the modern 'liquid' and easily permeable transnational space. In simpler terms, a person who comes and goes brings opinions, behaviour, personal choices, family models, relations with the 'other', etc. in his or her 'cultural suitcase'; and when he or she 'goes back', or when some relatives, for example, visit, implicitly there is at least a confrontation and a comparison with those of the people he or she meets. Starting from the same system of religious references and values (beliefs), the different actors can share their differences in the way of deducing acts and behaviour (practices), which are nonetheless interpreted within the same religious context. Sometimes this gives birth to new forms of belief itself, even when it is not openly acknowledged as such, a fact that is easily observable, even if not at all easily measurable, in European Islam, which, inter alia, is obliged to understand itself as a minority, without a theology to refer to, given the fact that the implicit theological Muslim self-comprehension is that of a majority, possibly hosting some religious minorities.[12]

3. *The role of the media*

It is possible to observe the different ways through which new (and old) media, in creating communication and links between populations which have settled in different places but with common references (i.e. countries of origin and countries of immigration, but also transnational networks), play an important role in the construction and in the self-perception of the Muslim neo-communities. This process is both of vertical integration, within specific societies or, in the terms of Habermas (1962), national public spheres, and of horizontal integration, at inter- and trans-national levels. These processes cannot be understood in the media-centric logic on which analysis of the role of media is often based, limited to their social and cultural effects, but needs to be interpreted in the context of a wider social process, of which what we have already said on globalisation and networks is an important part. These new processes of communication not only produce new passive audiences, but also new active groups, new collective actors and new (neo-)communities, which are in interaction with the other social actors.

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[12] I have extensively treated this problem in Allievi (2002).

3.1. *Media and Islamic presence in Europe*

The rapidity and density of communications is an important part of the process of globalisation, and mobility is one of its pre-conditions. Mobility of money, of goods, of men and women; but first of all mobility of information. It is not by chance that the first theorisations of what we now call globalisation can be found in the concept of the 'global village' introduced by McLuhan.

Here I would merely like to introduce some considerations on the relations between the mobility of individuals and the mobility of information, using Islam in Europe as a case study. When we refer to European Islam we are not talking of a new public space inside the European nation-states, in the Habermasian sense. And we are not only talking of the links between different public spaces (for instance those of the country of origin and of the country of settlement), *via* the immigrant communities. What we are talking about is a process, still at its initial phase, in which we can observe different kind of links and interrelations, which connect countries of origin, European countries, Muslim communities, different cultural actors, and new means of communication.

This process can be observed in different ways:

a) the image of Islam and of European Muslims in the media;
b) the media produced by Muslims and the production of Islamic discourses;
c) the interrelations and feedback internal to the Muslim 'mediasphere'.

I will refer briefly to these processes.

3.1.1. *Islam and Muslims in the media*

The world of information and communication produces one of the important realities involving European Islam, namely 'mediated reality', which plays a decisive role in the perception of the phenomenon. Mediated visibility is the world *in which* and *through which* Islam is perceived. I will not go into detail here on the process of the construction of the image of Islam in the media in general (Said, 1981). I would merely like to introduce some considerations on the mediatisation of Islam in Europe.

One of the ways through which Islam is mediatised is what we could call exceptional cases. This is a well known and ordinary mechanism of making news, and of the definition itself of what is 'news'.

But in the case of Islam it displays some interesting consequences. These exceptional cases can be interpreted as 'hermeneutical incidents', as incidents in the interpretative codes, and in the representation of these codes. It is enough to think of the Rushdie affair in Great Britain (and elsewhere), or to the 'headscarves affair' in France (and elsewhere), to understand what I mean. But we have to note that these incidents do not have consequences only in themselves, as examples of 'clashes of civilisation'. They also have durable consequences on all the subsequent interpretations of related phenomena, and in general on the presence of Islam in Europe. The fact is even more ironic when these 'incidents' happen outside Europe (Islamic fundamentalism,[13] sexual mutilations), or concern specific national cases (Afghanistan, Sudan, Libya, Algeria, etc.), but become the lenses through which we interpret the possible behaviour of Muslims in Europe, even when they come from non-concerned countries. The success of the word *jihād*, probably the best known Muslim word outside Muslim circles, even before 11 September 2001, is in itself a useful explication of this process: the word has now entered the Western collective imagination and vocabulary, and is a common tool for understanding Islam, then Muslims and then also Muslims in Europe.

These examples of *Kulturkampf* have often become 'media events', which play an important role in the production of the social imagination; and as some authors have pointed out (Dayan and Katz, 1992), they become, in the collective memory, the equivalent of the historical monuments of the past, a sort of rhetorical instrument through which the social memory remembers itself. The fact that this memory is often represented by conflict and clashes, and in general extraordinary events, is not without effects also on the perception of the ordinary presence of Muslims in European towns and countries.

It is significant, in this sense, that many European countries discovered that they have an internal Muslim public opinion in the case of an external conflict involving both Western and Muslim countries—a fact that in itself created a cognitive dissonance. It has happened in the occasion of the Gulf War (Allievi, Bastenier, Battegay

[13] On this, with reference to the European situation and the cultural perception of the phenomenon, see Allievi, Bidussa and Naso (2000).

and Boubeker, 1992). And the mechanism has become even clearer since the events of 11 September and afterwards in many European countries and in the United States.[14]

3.1.2. *Islamic media and discourses*

Islamic production in Europe is rather significant, and it has not yet been the object of systematic research. It ranges from newspapers to radio and television, from the Internet to videos, from music and theatre to books and Islamic bookshops. I would just like to draw attention to some mechanisms.[15] One of these, and not the least important, is the prevailing presence of 'written Islam' in its perception by non-Muslims. We often read Islam through the literature it produces, magazines in particular, and from this we deduce Muslims from it; using a procedure that appears 'natural' to us or which is at any rate habitual for us, whilst it is only 'cultural', that is, the result of a certain way of understanding cultural transmission and its methods. This is quite an interesting mechanism, if we think that the opposite is probably true for the Muslim themselves: non-written media are more pervasive and more consumed than others. This is also true for the native populations but even more so for the neo-immigrant Muslims, in the absence, at this stage, of places of cultural, including written, production in the communities that have settled in Europe.

This procedure is also a consequence of a Western cultural heritage, and does not cause any surprise in the academic milieu, where some habits die hard: something written is something that can be quoted in a footnote or put in a bibliography—in a word, it can be included in the academic rituals. This is a more general problem with Muslims, whose current discourse in Europe belongs far more to 'oral culture' than to written production, and can be found more easily in a *khutba* or on a cassette than in a book or in a magazine. As far as the production of culture in the strict meaning of the term

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[14] For an interpretation from this point of view of the 'post-September 11th debate', on the cultural and media level, see Allievi (2001).

[15] An extensive documentation can be found in the chapter I wrote on media in the European research mentioned in note 4 (Allievi, Dassetto, Ferrari, Foblets, Maréchal and Nielsen, forthcoming), where the different aspects are treated in detail, with paragraphs on the written production (Muslim press and books), audio and videocassettes, radio and television, the Internet and the 'cyber Muslims', etc. See also Siggillino (2001).

is concerned, this is equally true. To give but one example, scholars read and quote the books by Tariq Ramadan, but the cassettes with his lectures sell far more. Luckily, he also writes books—but others (many) do not.[16]

Another question concerns the written production of Muslims, the problem of language, when this production is written in the languages of the groups of origin. But even when the language of the host country is used, some problems of interpretation arise: the most important is that we risk deducing too much from it, due to the fact that it is mainly the product of specific elites (political, for instance) and, often, of converts, which in some countries have a quasi-monopolistic presence in the Muslim media (as is the case in Italy and Spain), and in many cases an important part of it (Allievi, 1998).

Having touched on this point, it may be interesting to note that many Islamic newspapers have an important number of readers who are not Muslims at all:[17] we can often presume that for many of these observers (representatives of the Churches, social workers, researchers, journalists, security and intelligence services, etc.) these are an important and sometimes even the main or the only source of information on Islam they have.

As well as journals and books, all the other media are concerned. The importance of cassettes and videos is well known to all those who do any kind of fieldwork in Muslim communities. Radio and television play an important role in the reproduction of culture. And the Internet is starting to have a certain importance (Bunt, 2000), both as a means of communication and as an 'arena' in which different images of Islam are represented.

All this effervescence shows a new reality, which does not concern the means of communication, but their contents. A new European Islamic discourse is *in fieri*, and it should be observed more carefully (Dassetto, 2000): among other reasons, because it shows the interrelations between the public sphere produced by media and other systems, and the effects they have (Eickelmann and Anderson, 1999).

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[16] On this problem, more details in my foreword to the Italian edition of Ramadan's *To be a European Muslim* (Ramadan, 2002).

[17] This is the case of many religious journals, but even a fortnightly (now monthly)—more a 'paper for Muslims' than a 'Muslim paper', in the words of its director—like the English *Q-News*, which sells half of its fifteen thousand copies *outside* religious circles (F. Nahdi, personal interview, March 2000).

3.1.3. *Feedback in the Islamic mediasphere*

We have mentioned the role played by interrelations. It is now time to turn to the feedback effects which pass through the media.

What we could call, in a problematisation and complication of the concept of "infosphere" introduced by Toffler, the Islamic mediasphere, is extremely articulated. Old and new forms of communication play roles, such as traditional channels (letters, telephone, today the mobile phone), and new media; periodical journeys (as for seasonal workers, but also Muslims who usually return to their home country for the month of Ramadan or for their holidays, and of course for business trips), or for special occasions (holidays, religious festivals and family meetings, rites of passage such as circumcisions, weddings or funerals); and many others, such as international religious meetings, networks of associations, etc.

This set of traditional and non-traditional communications, represents a communicative world, a mediasphere, which is also qualified or can be qualified religiously as almost a sort of de-territorialised *umma*. The concept of *umma* is moreover often understood, in Muslim language, both as a localised community and as a meta-community of a symbolic order. The most differentiated contents can transit through its channels, including all those linked to the cultural construction: even those with a religious content.

In a common perception, religion and culture come from the country of origin, and arrive in Europe, through the Muslim communities and to them. There is a 'from', which is 'there'; and there is a 'to', which is 'here'. In reality things are far more complicated than this, and the movement of news and information resembles far more the trajectory of the balls on a billiard table. Just to give few examples of this feedback, it has been the case on French television, seen via the satellite, that Algerians have been able to listen to the opinions of other Algerians (the members of FIS, who were banned from appearing on national television) on the peace process in their country. At the other extreme, an influential Islamic leader such as the Tunisian Rachid al-Ghannouchi has chosen a European country, Great Britain, for his exile.[18] From there, and maybe also because

[18] Specifically declaring that he, as a Muslim, felt himself freer in a Western non-Muslim country than in many Muslim countries of the world (R. Ghannouchi, personal interview, March 2000).

there he has encountered a different Muslim world and the way of being a Muslim in a non-Islamic country, he writes books in Arabic which are read in Arab countries, in which he explains the evolution of his thought and discusses his ideas of the West with other Muslim intellectuals in the countries of origin. But the examples can be multiplied: from the diffusion of cassettes with the sermons of famous Moroccan or Egyptian preachers in the Islamic centres and bookshops of Belgium or Italy, to the videos of Deedat filmed in Britain and sold in Saudi Arabia; from the 350,000 copies of Turkish newspapers sold daily in Germany, to the Internet website of the Muslim Students' Association of America, used every day by Muslims all over the world to access Islamic websites.

Probably the most impressive example of this billiard game is what is happening in the world of television, and to which it would be interesting to pay a little more attention.

First of all, we have means of communication that start from Europe in the direction of the Muslim (particularly Arab) world. This is a tendency which was inaugurated in the 1930s by Radio Bari in Italy and by the Arabic service of the BBC in Britain, both created essentially for political purposes. Now, more than through their successors (the public TV and radio channels of different countries), we can see this sphere of influence in the pure and simple reception of Western programmes (both public and commercial) in the Muslim world, often preferred at least from the point of view of the credibility of information, but also in terms of entertainment. European and American channels are quite important for example in the Maghreb, followed in particular by the younger generations and they also represent the main vehicle (together with tourism) for learning Western languages, an important pre-requisite of migration.

It is also interesting to note that the information on the Muslim world, and often on the countries of which the listeners are citizens, passes largely through these channels. Even the knowledge and the information on the Bosnian question, for example, which led to the development of a wide campaign of intra-Islamic solidarity, owed a great deal to the role of Western information, and incidentally to Western reporters, who paid a great tribute to their engagement (Ahmed and Donnan, 1994).

As part of this question we can consider the attempts to create common flows of information, that should involve countries bordering the Mediterranean, such as Euromed TV, which is a direct follow-

up of the conference of Barcelona (and which involves televisions from France, Italy, Spain, Malta, Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan). A second group is that of television stations that broadcast from Europe to the Muslim countries, on a transnational basis, but in a completely intra-Islamic logic: these networks are made by Muslims for Muslim audiences.

The satellite revolution is the pre-requisite of this innovation. At least two million satellite dishes in Algeria, 1.2 million in Morocco and a far smaller number in Tunisia but the ban on them has only recently been lifted. The first Arab satellite, Arabsat, called 'the highest muezzin in the world' when it was launched in 1985, now has many 'colleagues'. And even if the suspicions of these 'evil' media have not completely disappeared (the satellite dishes have been called, in some Islamist milieux, *paradiaboliques*—instead of *paraboliques*, the French word for satellite dish—because Western evil penetrates Muslim families through them), there can be no doubt about their diffusion.

In particular, Arab broadcasting is in a very modern, but in some way paradoxical, situation. One of these paradoxes is, for example, that Saudi Arabia introduced a prohibition of satellite dishes with a law in 1994, but it is the most powerful Arab producer of satellite programs, through three networks all depending on different branches of the Saudi royal family, and all based in Europe: MBC from London, ART from Avezzano, near Rome, and Orbit TV, again in Rome (Della Ratta, 2000). They are all commercial channels, but have some interesting cultural-religious aspects which can be interesting from our point of view. For example, we can mention the successful programme 'Dialogue with the West', on MBC from 1996. But we can also consider 'religious', in a way, the operations of 'ecology of the image' done by Orbit: this channel, like the others, does not have the objective of the diffusion of some kind of Wahhabi propaganda, but on the contrary imports Western programmes, 'cleans them up' of the scenes of sex and violence, or of unwanted criticism, and broadcasts them to an audience of 170 million Arabs in 23 countries through 28 satellite channels. Another example of these flows are the Turkish channels that broadcast from Germany to Turkey. But we have also interesting examples which, from Europe, connect different specific diasporas, and which play an even more important role among the dispersed minorities than in direction of the places of origin of these minorities, as is the case for the Muslim TV of the Ahmadiyya movement, which broadcasts from Great

Britain, and the Kurdish Med-TV, which broadcasts from Belgium.

The third aspect is the most interesting from our point of view: the communication channels and the informative flows which go from Muslim countries to the Muslim communities in Europe, Arabs in particular. Arabic is the most widely broadcast language in the world, after English. And it has a great presence in the satellites. To quote some specific examples, national televisions as the Moroccan RTM or the Tunisian TV7, thanks to the satellite, have a larger public outside the national borders than inside them. Besides the national TVs, there are many inter-Arab transnational networks, such as the Lebanese LBC, the Egyptian ESC, EDTV from Dubai, or the important Al-Jazeera, after the 'Bin Laden effect' a network with a worldwide reputation. All these televisions also have some religious programmes, that become more frequent at weekends and during the month of Ramadan, and on these occasions presents a 'mainstream Islam', acceptable in the different national milieux. Al-Jazeera, often called the Arab CNN, places greater emphasis on politically sensitive subjects. For this reason it has received criticism and political interference of the governments of Tunisia, Libya, Iraq, Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority; and, after having broadcast the Bin Laden videos, also of the US and some other Western countries.

It is interesting to note that several televisions host religious programmes, like the live responses to questions received through phone calls, that also involve well-known religious authorities such as Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, in which many of the questions come from Europe. Here the feedback effects are more evident than elsewhere: Muslims in Europe, using an Arab network, ask some religious authorities in the countries of origin for answers to questions concerning their situation and religious life in Europe.

4. *Conclusions*

I have focused my attention on the role of Muslim networks and the role of the media in shaping a new form of what I have called Muslim neo-communities. These communities are less rooted in a specific territory, or at least they cannot be understood only through an interpretation in terms of urban ecology. The new situation produced by innovation in technology (the Internet, satellite, mobile telephones, etc.) and the decreasing costs of traditional means of

communication (travel, but also the press, etc.) on the one hand, and the process of integration in the new context of the Muslim minorities on the other (which means, among other things, their wealth, in comparison with their previous situation but also with their countries of origin), has significantly changed the landscape in which these minorities live.

In particular, it seems to be increasingly possible, and even useful and convenient, to maintain significant links with one's own culture, language, religion and country of origin, while a process of insertion and integration is simultaneously at work. This is equally true, in different forms, for the second and third generations, who do not have, in a proper sense, a country (and culture, etc.) of origin which lies somewhere in an unknown 'outside', but at the same time do not belong exclusively to the country (and culture, etc.) in which they have been born—and particularly do not belong to its majority tradition, also in religious terms. It is also true for the younger generations that "without identity, there is no memory, no relation to the past, no platform for a future, no differentiation between self and others and no possible relation to the world" (Mirdal, 2000). But it is also true that identity, in contemporary societies, is articulated and subject to a process of pluralisation and even of creation, through syncretism, inclusion, cognitive contamination and even invention.[19]

The question is also complicated by the fact that Muslims in Europe constitute a minority identity; but it is also true that the majority of groups, in our secularised and pluralised societies, are *de facto* minorities, even those who believe they are majorities, particularly in the religious field.[20] More than this, most of the reflections

[19] The debate on the concept of identity in contemporary sociology clearly shows these evolutions, from Berger to many others. For a reflection on this process related to the presence of Muslims in Europe and to the identity of converts to Islam, see Allievi (2000).

[20] Being a minority has also 'positive' effects, in the sense that this situation can help to find roots in one's identity. As Mirdal points out, from a psychological point of view: Freud was not a practising believer, and his opinions on religion in general are well known; but he used the term identity only once, and it was with a religious connotation, speaking of his own Jewish identity. But "it is doubtful that Freud would have considered his Jewish identity particularly important had he lived in a country with a Jewish majority. Likewise, Turkish immigrants in Europe . . ." (Mirdal, 2000).

on the religious identities of the second generations are put forward with the implicit and sometimes explicit paradigm in mind that the younger generations lose their culture and identity. Less research is conducted with the idea of what they gain or how they re-build their identities, even through processes of *mélanges* and 'cultural *bricolage*', as defined by Lévi-Strauss. A new and rapidly evolving situation is taking place. And it seems to be important not only for Muslim minorities, but also for Europe and, for different reasons, for Islam in itself. This is the very reason why I have stressed the importance of networks and all kinds of feedback effects. As it has been stated, the European case is peripheral towards the Muslim world, but it is innovative towards the historical situation of the Muslim world (Dassetto, 2000).

As far as Muslim (neo-)communities are concerned, it is clear that their reproduction, from the cultural point of view, also from one generation to another, seems easier thanks to the links that they can maintain with their culture and countries of origin. At the same time, these relations are not only bi-national, but transnational, and the influences can touch many other different countries and cultural situations. One interesting example can be given by Muslims from non-Arab countries, or even converts from Europe who, and in different ways thanks to their experience in Europe, decide to go and follow Quranic studies in an Arab institution such as al-Azhar or Zaytouna or another school, anywhere from Morocco to Medina. Another example may be the members of some movements who go for their training to the centres of these movements, unrelated to their ethnic origin (so, an Arab can go to India for a Tablighi course, etc.). The same can be said of the members of several brotherhoods, who go to the country where they have their centre for a certain period; and again what is new is that in Europe it is not unusual for an Asian (or a European) to become a member of a brotherhood that did not even exist in his country of origin. But we also have to mention those Arabs (and others) that come to Europe for a period of training in Islamic studies: and not only in Muslim institutions like the Islamic Foundation in Leicester or the Islamic Institute at Château-Chinon, but also in academic and even Christian institutions, in Birmingham or in Rome.

In many ways, the *umma* is much more visible in Europe than in the countries of origin, where a believer can practically only find other persons like himself, of the same country, language, belief and

interpretation of these beliefs (within a specific juridical school). Only on the occasion of the *ḥajj* (in this case, of course, to a larger extent) can a Muslim experience the *umma* as a concrete and visible reality and not only as a symbolic one, with the same vivid evidence that the common believer can ordinarily find in many mosques and Islamic organizations in Europe. The internal diversity among Muslims, in Europe (as well as in the USA and in other countries of migration), is clear, more than elsewhere, and certainly more than in the countries of origin of these same immigrants. And this internal diversity produces important consequences. To quote a particularly relevant example, we can refer to what happens from the juridical point of view, and particularly to juridical schools, so crucial for the self-interpretation of Islam. All the *madhhab*s are 'living' in Europe, but the major difference from the situation in the countries of origin is that they mix much more easily, and the individuals can find their way through them even more than *in* one of them. To use the words of one of my interviewees, born in Africa but of Yemeni origin and living in London: "I am Shafiʿi, but I have to follow the most diffused *madhhab* here, which is the Hanafi one. Personally, as far as the *ḥajj* is concerned, I am Hanafi, for *jihād* I am Maliki, for the conception of minority I am Hanbali . . .".

The *umma* is in many ways an imagined community, but it exists in the facts. To give just one example: some Turkish mosques in Germany, Switzerland and France have helped the poorer Turks in Italy to buy an apartment for their prayers, which has become the first Turkish mosque of Italy. Examples like this one can be multiplied, and applied to different ethnic groups or religious 'families' (the Shiites, the Murid of Senegal, and many others). Internal solidarity in the event of conflicts, like Bosnia or Chechnya, not to mention Palestine, is another example. The mobilisation of resources, men, discourses and rhetoric clearly shows the depth of these links. They are shown even more clearly in cases like the Rushdie affair, that we can summarise, from this perspective (by the way, an excellent demonstration of the reality of globalisation), as follows: an Anglo-Indian writer, a book published in Great Britain, demonstrations (and deaths) against the same book in Pakistan and elsewhere, a *fatwā* in Iran, demonstrations and book-burnings in Britain and in other countries, especially where there were Muslim minorities facing non-Muslim majorities, global threats to publishers, millions of copies of the book sold all over the world—often for identity reasons specific

to the protest—among non-Muslims, and finally a writer who cannot enter any Muslim country and is obliged to live under police protection. In this globalised situation it is not difficult to foresee, in the long (and perhaps not so long) term, some important consequences in the self-definition of Islam, the emergence of a distinct European Muslim identity (or, more probably, of a set of European Muslim identities), and a simultaneous continuous feedback effect, in all directions.[21]

As far as European societies and their relations with Islam are concerned, the changes will not be any the less important. As a symbol of them I would just like to mention the first presence in history, in 2000, of an official European delegation to the *ḥajj*, led by a Muslim member of the House of Lords, Lord Ahmed of Roehampton. It was an innovation that was not welcomed by everybody and which had to overcome some obstacles, but it had a symbolical importance and in some ways shows a new trend: Islam is no longer supposed to come only from 'traditional' Muslim countries. And even for Muslims this has been, and still is, a surprise.

More generally, we suspect that the question of Islam is going to contribute, and in many ways to challenge, the actual theoretical debate, which is also a social and political issue, on multiculturalism and also some more specific but related debates like the liberal vs. communitarian debate. In the same way, an Islamic debate, which concerns Europe, has been opened concerning the significance of the traditional *dār al-islām/dār al-ḥarb* dichotomy, in which Europe theoretically is or was supposed to be the latter. This debate seems now to be meaningless for the majority of Muslims in Europe. New concepts need to be elaborated, and indeed they are being elaborated. So Europe, supposed *dār al-ḥarb*, has become, according to different Muslim interpretations, *dār al-ahd*, then *dār al-hijra*, then *dār al-daʿwa*, then *dār al-shahāda*,[22] and for many, simply, *dār al-islām*, for the simple reason that Muslims can and do freely practise their faith.[23]

[21] Not only in the direction of 'modernisation', from Europe to Muslim countries, which risks being overemphasised in an over-enthusiastic Western and pro-Western ideological discourse.

[22] The idea of Europe as *dār as-shahāda* is proposed by T. Ramadan (1999).

[23] For a detailed analysis of different positions in this field, and references to the Muslim authors that propose them, see my chapter titled *Europa: dār al-islām?*, in Allievi (2002).

This observation leads us to the last point: the changes regarding Islam as a concept, as a theory, as a system of values, as a theology and as an orthodoxy. This is a debate which has to left to the collective responsibility of Muslim communities. It is sufficient for our purpose here to underline that, from now on, it will not be possible to understand the history and the social evolution of Europe without taking into account its Muslim component. In the same way it will not be possible to understand the history and the social (and even theological) evolution of Islam without taking its European component into account. The history of Europe has become, at least partly, Islamic history, and the history of Islam, European history.

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