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Small European Countries Prepare for Globalisation: The Challenge of Diversity and Engagement

Case Study: Slovenia

*Venue:
Municipality of Ljubljana
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Intercultural Practices

Subject of this exchange

Razdeljeni Bog / Divided God - an inter-cultural dialogue project tackling the problem of contemporary organized religions and their influence on everyday social events

A project of KUD Pozitiv: www.pozitiv.si/dividedgod

Background to the project

Problems identified/questions posed by the project

Controversy over the building of a mosque in Ljubljana

Slovenia's Muslim community is rather small - approximately 47.000 people. The vast majority of Muslims in Slovenia stem from Bosnia, some from Kosovo and Macedonia. There are no Muslims from outside Europe.

To this day there is no dedicated mosque in Slovenia, only converted spaces for Friday prayers, although the Muslim community first raised the issue in the 1970s.

In 2001 following the appointment of mufti Osman Đogić, the issue of a mosque in Ljubljana received attention again and became the subject of heated debate. The Slovene Nationalist Party (SLS) and its leader Z. Jelincic voiced strong opposition to a mosque. Archbishop Rode distanced himself from the debate, but at least sent out the message that a mosque is to Muslims what a church is to Christians. Changes of the urban plan for Ljubljana in 2003 foresaw flood land as the ground for a future mosque, and despite the unsuitability of the area, the State Environmental Agency issued its approval for construction. The Municipality of Ljubljana organised several public round tables to handle the controversy, but the debate became very heated - in some instances verging on hate speech. Mihael Jarc, member of the Slovene Nationalist Party (SLS) and president of the municipal list *For clean water*, demanded a referendum on the building of the mosque from Ljubljana's mayor. The Mayor rejected the need and legality of a referendum. Arguments against a mosque have included that a mosque would "spread Al-Kaida and other terrorist organisations" in Slovenia (so Andrej Umek, SLS, ex minister of science).

The SLS also claimed that "terrorist groups are financed by drug-smuggling, therefore building mosque would increase, beyond any doubt, drug abuse in Slovenia". Further arguments were made about "ruining the cultural landscape of Ljubljana and Slovenia".

The SLS gathered signatures (6.200) to support its call for referendum. The mayor of Ljubljana insisted that a referendum on minority rights was unconstitutional - she was confirmed by a ruling of the constitutional court in 2004.

At the same time, the Slovene Democratic Party (SDS) of Janez Janša suggested a different location for the mosque, and in 2005 and 2006 Ljubljana's municipal council discussed the proposals. During this period, the 'Slovene Eagles' threatened to kill supporters of the mosque construction.

The election of Zoran Janković as Mayor of the city in 2006 advanced the issue: Only a few days after his inauguration, Janković met mufti Grabus to talk about a better location for the mosque in the city centre. They went on signed a letter of intent between the Islamic Community of Slovenia and Municipality of Ljubljana: The first concrete step towards assuring land for the construction of a mosque was taken. In 2008, 11.364 m² in between Kurilniska and Parmova street, not far away from city centre, were sold to the community. However, the opposition started a new battle: the minaret should be lower than 40m. A referendum was demanded once more – and even an extraordinary meeting of parliamentary committee on state security. Mayor Janković stood firm against a referendum, and was one of the first to make a donation for the building of the mosque - 1.6 million € were gathered in total.

Activities/methods/targeted participants

A programme of theoretical considerations parallel to discussions amongst people directly concerned with the issue – combining personal story-telling with distance-taking and analysis.

The focus of the project was on young people since they are in the forefront of most contemporary intercultural conflicts. Including older experts in the project also proved crucial. We proceeded from the belief that the special value of an open dialogue, which actually searches for answers, lies precisely in letting the questions and opinions of those who “do not know” and “are not right” be heard.

Aim

To show that with a strong political will, understanding of the needs of communities, dedication to the respect of the rights of minority, and with some very simple acts (changing the urban plan) one can successfully conclude a story that seemed a never ending one.

Solutions/transferable knowledge and learning/assumed impact

Regular open dialogue in which everybody can ask questions and get answers to fill the gaps in their knowledge prevents entrenchments.

Political decision makers can persevere with their political commitments: Mayor Janković, a declared atheist, acted in accordance with his belief that every religious community is entitled to a proper place of worship.

Outputs

The exchanges were carried out in partner cities: Mostar, Novi Sad, Ljubljana, Berlin and Istanbul. **40 short documentary films** were shot. More than 20 lectures, public discussions and panel discussions were organised. The project visited 19 religious communities and other sacred and secular institutions related to religion and intercultural dialogue. The final outcome is a **publication and the accompanying DVD**. The publication is a collection of various views, ranging from the “naïve” and curious explorations of youngsters to expert texts and analyses of particular problems.

Duration/partners/funders

Jan 2007 – July 2008. The project included partners from Istanbul, Novi Sad, Mostar and Berlin. The main funders were the European Cultural Foundation in Amsterdam and the EU Youth Programme. In individual localities, the project was supported by local funds (in Ljubljana, the City of Ljubljana – Youth Department).

Roma Inclusion in Public Life through the media

A project of DZMP (Society of Allies for Soft Landing): www.drustvo-dzmp.si

Problems identified/questions posed by the project

In Slovenia minorities are entitled to their own programme on National radio and television by law. Unfortunately none of the Roma from the region of Doljenska have the necessary skills to work in the field of media so non-Roma still create their programmes. More than 90% of young Roma in Dolenjska don't even finish primary school. Very few finish secondary school.

This was one of the motivations to organise a video training for young participants of the Roma community.

Activities/methods/targeted participants

Youth media-training: Video-making workshops are the central activity; participants also acquire TV production and project management skills and learn about cultural heritage and art forms such as dance.

The training offer is directed at young people, especially those from vulnerable social groups. The uptake is particularly high from young Roma, with a good proportion of Roma women.

A key principle is that those trained go on to train others – other young people and also cultural professionals so that they teach Roma in particular.

Aim

Providing qualifications, enhancing cultural creativity, increasing self-confidence, and strengthening social inclusion.

Solutions/transferable knowledge and learning/assumed impact

Our practice can be easily transferred also to other environments.

One of the important issue is that we don't have separate video workshops for minority youngsters but we always try to integrate them in bigger groups with other young people.

Outputs

In last year young Roma made 10 short films (In total in DZMP we produce approximately 70 short films per year). The authors enter their films into festival competitions. Many of the films made by participants of the project won awards in Slovenia and abroad: The film »Young Ladies« won the first prize at the Plural+ Festival (presentation in New York and monetary award). The documentary movie »On her way« was shown at the opening ceremony of the 3rd festival »Month of Roma Culture« (»Romano Chon«) in Maribor.

Two participants are now involved in producing a TV show in the Roma language »So vakeres?« on Slovene National Television.

Two dance groups emerged out of the project, which perform regularly.

The project also led to the establishment of the Kolo Roma Society, which works to preserve and promote Roma culture and heritage. They organized an event for International Roma Day – the creativity of young people was presented with music, theatre, film, dance, a photo exhibition and culinary art.

Duration/partners/funders

10 year experience with this work; specific project to improve the employment prospects of Roma in the field of culture from May 2011-Oct. 2012.

BITI / Being: environmental care and responsible cohabitation as the factor in overcoming cultural differences and divisions

A project of KUD Pozitiv: www.pozitiv.si/dividedgod

Problems identified/questions posed by the project

At the start of the project, participants documented problems in their environment with videos:

Youth participants from Serbia researched the topic of recycling and exposed the connection between intercultural relationships and the ecology in the case of the Roma: they are both considered polluters and act as cleaners at the same time – a 're-cycle' of its own.

Youth participants from Mostar (video 'Eco guerilla') explored how the cultural divides of their city impact on environmental care: the latter it still a matter of individuals' initiatives rather than a systematic approach. Even a basic consensus of the different national (cultural and religious) entities to solving the elementary ecological questions is lacking.

The project hosting group, youth participants from Ljubljana, work on raising local inhabitants' awareness of the connections between interpersonal, social, and ecological questions. They achieve positive changes in the community through raising participation.

Activities/methods/targeted participants

The project centres on the campus of Ivan Cankar, a boarding school with 600 resident pupils and provides an informal learning programme including practical workshops and discussion events. Topics: healthy eating, keeping the campus clean, recycling and re-using waste, and responsible consumption. New awareness and principles enter the pupils' daily lives. The topics are also explored with artistic means (photography, film and performances). The artistic products help propagate the educational work.

The project reaches out from the Campus into the local community through media work and at festivals. It is considered a good practice example.

In the summer of 2011, a youth exchange took place. 21 young people from Bosnia, Herzegovina and Serbia came to engage in the project with the pupils from Ljubljana. They explored how their cultural differences (due to their different ethnicities and religions) affected their environmental awareness and behaviour, and what role common engagement in environmental concerns plays in dealing with cultural differences.

Work with young people is a subtle 'gardening' which starts with concrete activities that engage their interests (animation and integration). Young people should not be expected to 'save the world' with this kind of project.

Such expectations can discourage them from cooperating or force goals upon them, which are not theirs.

The essence of the project is to expose concrete problems in small communities and to search for solutions based on each individual's contribution. Thereby the project promotes positive values, builds empathy and creates a positive atmosphere in people's environment.

Aim

Environmental awareness building amongst the young; increasing solidarity; enhancing understanding of the connections between environmental protection and human rights; enabling young people to be active agents in their communities and to inspire good practice in others.

Solutions/transferable knowledge and learning/assumed impact

Successful realization of the project and the final outcomes (videos, theatre play, art – sculpture from recycled bicycle etc)

Outputs

The project culminates in a publication and a DVD. All participants receive a copy. All project information is also available on the Internet. www.pozitiv.si/bitl

Duration/partners/funders

2009-2011

Student campus of Ivan Cankar;

Support from the Youth Office of the Municipality of Ljubljana and the EU Youth in Action Programme

Education for Intercultural Relations and Active Citizenship: Professional Bases, Strategies and Theoretical Frameworks

A project of Slovenian Migration Institute SRC SASA:

www.medkulturni-odnosi.si

Problems identified/questions posed by the project

Legislation, policies and school practices are insufficient or unsuitable for the promotion of intercultural relations and active citizenship through education in Europe as a whole and Slovenia in particular.

Intercultural and citizenship education depend mainly on the individual efforts of teachers, NGO workers, and activists in various parts of Slovenia and at different levels of the education system. They know little of each others' work

Multicultural education has to date been neglected in Slovenia (see MIPEX 2011). Intercultural competences are not yet integrated school curricula, and there are no appropriate measure for intercultural competences yet.

Activities/methods/targeted participants

Regional meetings with people active in the field of education, active citizenship and intercultural relations. Creation of e-network. Final conference. Webpage with gathered materials. Interviews with:

- Educational institutions and individuals who work directly with users
- Academic research and teaching institutions

- Advisory and other public institutions
- Civil society, NGOs and associations.

Aim

Analysis of the situation in Slovenia in the field of education for intercultural relations and citizenship, with emphasis on the presentation of examples of good teaching practices through regional and contextual aspects.

Special attention to conceptual and comparative analysis and the development of models and strategies for policy-making in the field of education, active citizenship and intercultural relations.

Solutions/transferable knowledge and learning/assumed impact

Creation of network, workshops, regional meetings, homepage of the project with various free downloads (teaching materials, handbooks, articles, movies).

Outputs

Eleven publications. Webpage "Medkulturni odnosi.si". e-network. Collection of teaching materials (online and print).

Duration/partners/funders

January 2010 – August 2011;

Support from the Slovenian Ministry of Education and Sport and the European Social Fund;

Partner: Educational Research Institute

Materials in support of the panel discussions

EU Council resolution on Intercultural Competences

C 141/14

Official Journal of the European Union

7.6.2008

IV
(Notices)

NOTICES FROM EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS AND BODIES

COUNCIL

Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on Intercultural Competences (2008/C 141/09)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

- 1.** referring to the provisions of Decision No 1983/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 (1);
- 2.** referring to the Unesco Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions;
- 3.** having regard to the Commission's Communication of 10 May 2007 on a European Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World (2) and to the Council Resolution of 16 November 2007 on a European Agenda for Culture (3);
- 4.** recalling the Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (4);
- 5.** recalling the Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 15 November 2007, on improving the quality of teacher education,

CONSIDERING that:

- intercultural dialogue is a key tool in addressing some of the most important challenges Europe is facing at present and that it constitutes one of the three strategic objectives of the European Agenda for Culture, to be implemented through triennial work plans,
- in order to foster open and inclusive societies established on core European values and to promote active citizenship, European citizens need to be equipped with intercultural competences, which constitute a key factor for strengthening intercultural dialogue,
- the knowledge, skills and attitudes of particular relevance to intercultural competences are those relating to the following key competences: communication in foreign languages, social and civic competences, and cultural awareness and expression (5).

(1) OJ L 412, 30.12.2006, p. 44.

- (2) Doc. 9496/07 and ADD 1.
(3) OJ C 287, 29.11.2007, p. 1.
(4) OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 10.
(5) Key competences as defined in the Recommendation 2006/962/EC.
-

RECOGNIZING that:

With a view to strengthening intercultural competences in society, a sustainable and cross-sectoral approach towards intercultural dialogue needs to be developed. This approach should seek to integrate and support the following relevant initiatives in the fields of:

A. CULTURE, in particular as foreseen in the Work Plan of the Council for the period 2008-2010:

- the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue as a means to foster open and inclusive societies,
- the promotion of everyone's active participation in cultural life and access to culture and heritage in all their diversity, with particular attention to people who have less opportunities for access,
- the improvement of the conditions for mobility of artists and works of art,
- the supporting of cooperation between culture and both formal education and training and informal and non-formal learning in the field of cultural awareness and artistic education, C 141/14 EN Official Journal of the European Union 7.6.2008
- the fostering of linguistic competences and of translation to facilitate access to artistic expressions in different languages.

B. EDUCATION:

- the development of a lifelong learning perspective which includes the acquisition by all citizens of the key competences most relevant to intercultural competences and most likely to foster an appreciation of cultural diversity as a core value, such as linguistic, social and civic competences and cultural awareness and expression,
- the development of policies based on equity principles aimed at integrating children from a diverse range of social and cultural backgrounds into mainstream forms of education and training, without any discrimination,
- within the framework of a coherent policy for multilingualism, the active promotion of language learning by encouraging the provision of a wide variety of opportunities,
- including the use of ICT and distance learning, to learn languages in formal, non-formal and informal environments,
- the encouragement of mobility schemes among learners, teachers and other teaching staff as an effective tool for the promotion of intercultural dialogue,
- the career-long development of skills that will enable teachers to better manage cultural diversity and facilitate the development of intercultural competences, and thereby contribute effectively to the establishment of inclusive learning communities.

C. YOUTH:

- the engagement of young people as a resource for contributing to intercultural dialogue in open and pluralistic societies,
- the promotion, development and recognition of intercultural competences of young people through non-formal and informal learning,

- the development of opportunities for young people for acquiring intercultural competences as early in life as possible through various forms of active participation in society, including voluntary activities, and through greater mobility as a way to experience the diversity of cultures and multilingualism,
- the promotion of access to and the role of culture, arts, music and sport in shaping young people's identities and bringing them together,
- the promotion, development and recognition of intercultural competences of youth workers and youth leaders by facilitating their mobility and their educational and training opportunities,
- the promotion of the role of organised civil society, particularly the involvement of youth organisations.

D. AUDIOVISUAL:

The encouragement of media literacy, in line with the Commission Communication of 20 December 2007 'A European approach to media literacy in the digital environment' and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive of 11 December 2007 (1) which, *inter alia*, promotes cultural diversity, both for linear and non-linear services, so that individuals are better equipped:

- to identify, access and appreciate content relating to or originating within different cultures, and
- to use new technological tools (software and hardware) to create and distribute their own cultural content,
- the promotion of media and audiovisual content that is culturally rich, diverse, and informative for all individuals by means of, *inter alia*:
- encouraging co-productions at European, national and regional levels,
- encouraging non-profit civil society-based media (2) to better take advantage of the opportunities provided by digital technologies,
- fostering the process of digitalisation of cultural materials and content to enable new media — on-line as well as mobile services — to contribute to enhanced accessibility of cultural diversity.

(1) OJ L 332, 18.12.2007, p. 27.

(2) Often referred to in English as 'community media' and in French as 'médias associatifs'.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS OF COMPETENCES, TO:

Promote intercultural competences through the existing instruments and initiatives in the fields of culture, education, youth and audiovisual policy, in particular by exploring how these measures could be further deepened and enhanced in support of intercultural dialogue,

- increase synergies between these fields with a view to developing intercultural competences, for example by envisaging joint initiatives, taking into account the need of citizens to understand and respect their own culture, the culture of others and cultural diversity in general, to communicate in a culturally diverse environment and to identify and actively participate in fostering and developing common values of democracy and fundamental rights, 7.6.2008 EN Official Journal of the European Union C 141/15
- — create opportunities for dialogue at local, regional, national and EU levels by strengthening support for the development of intercultural

- competences through the existing programmes in the fields of culture, education, youth and audiovisual policy,
- foster a favourable environment for creativity and innovation to make their full contribution in shaping intercultural competences and enhancing intercultural dialogue,
- identify and share good practices in the development of intercultural competences, taking account in particular, as a follow-up, of initiatives undertaken at national and EU level as part of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue,
- enhance and promote the concept of intercultural dialogue in all other relevant policy fields, both within the EU and in their external relations.

“Conflicts over Mosques in Europe”: Policy issues and trends - NEF Initiative on Religion and Democracy in Europe

Author: Stefano Allievi © 2009 Network of European Foundations

Extract from introduction: Cultural conflicts and public debates on Islam in Europe

The presence of Islam in Europe’s ‘public space’ could not go unnoticed either socially or culturally. It is, or is perceived to be, too visible or too different not to provoke debates or even tensions, for historical, cultural, religious, political and social reasons.

Confrontation seems to occur ‘across the board’. Islam is itself questioned, often through essentialist and simplistic interpretations and controversies regarding dogmatic aspects and customs. Some aspects of Islam are also called into question for the way they manifest themselves, particularly in Muslim countries: of these aspects, the most discussed are those related to the condition of women and to gender equality, and to the relationship between religion and violence, fundamentalism and, more generally, politics. Finally, confrontation leads to questions and debate about the host society itself: on its degree of ‘openness’, on its borders, on the possibilities of and limits to integration, on how best to achieve this (in essence, this is the debate on multiculturalism), and on the definition of any possible ‘tolerance thresholds’, at an ethnic or religious level.

All this may happen without there necessarily being any debate or direct dialogue or confrontation *with* Muslims, or between society and the Muslims who live in it. Often these are debates *within* societies *about* Muslims and Islam.

To give some examples, the presence of Islam in Europe raises various kinds of tensions, controversies, debates and conflicts:

Conflicts about principles and ideas: from the Rushdie

-- affair in Britain (and elsewhere) to the cartoons affair in Denmark (and elsewhere). All these are perfect examples of global/local – or ‘glocal’ – issues, showing how easily questions concerning Islam in Europe can become influential and produce a repositioning of public and social actors, both in Europe and in Muslim countries.

-- Conflicts brought about by dramatic events happening in Europe concerning Islam and caused by Islamic actors: terrorism (9/11 and its consequences in European countries – where some of the terrorists, such as Mohamed Atta, came from; the terrorist attacks in London and Madrid) and individual demonstrative acts, such as the assassination of Theo van Gogh.

-- Controversies frequently raised and discussed in public debate relating to gender issues: the *hijab* is symbolic of this, but more generally, there are

questions on the role of women in Islam, how this is perceived in the West and its effects on Muslim families, conflicts between generations, etc.

There are controversies, however, in which not only different opinions regarding relations with Islam are involved but also the Muslim social actors themselves.

The case of mosques is the most significant in this sense, even if it is not the only one, because it relates to a conflict that is not only debated *within* society, but is *about* society itself. This point seems particularly significant, in that it implies the perception of control over the territory and its symbolic imprinting. After all, control of and over the territory is not only a cultural and symbolic fact, it is also (and remains, in spite of everything) a very concrete and material sign of dominion and power.

These disputes are not limited to the establishment of places of worship; they also include the question of their visibility in European cities, which has an evident symbolic value. This issue encompasses related questions regarding the broadcasting of the *adhan*, the call to prayer, from mosques to the areas surrounding

them, as well as the issue of Muslim cemeteries and the right to obtain religiously exclusive areas within existing cemeteries. These questions are important for various reasons. They not only show how the presence of Islam in Europe is debated and confronted; they are also crucial in understanding the broader issues of Europe as a whole: its problems, its values and its identity.

The mosque issue, in itself, may not even exist. On the one hand, there is nothing more obvious and natural than that foreign communities should wish and need to have their own meeting places according to their religious affiliations, and that they should enjoy the same fundamental rights that European constitutions grant to other minorities. On the other hand, these conflicts reflect a malaise and/or a deeper rejection, the reasons for which must be taken into account. Very few of those opposing the presence of mosques or prayer halls would say that they want to prevent anyone from praying. The reason given is always other than this; it goes deeper and is linked to the symbolic appropriation of territory, which has to do with history and its reconstruction, but it is also linked to deep socio-cultural dynamics, and to Islam itself and its presence in Europe. These conflicts cannot

be interpreted only from the perspective of political fearmongers. The building of a mosque or the adaptation of a prayer hall is hardly ever merely an architectural and urban planning issue; it generates in-depth social and cultural discussions and reactions. These conflicts also appear to be semantically over-determined in cultural terms.

The above set of reasons and empirical evidence help to explain why we have conducted this research.

Extract from Chapter 4 “Lessons from the conflicts”: Best practices?

We do not intend to make recommendations here, unlike many international reports on the issues of immigration and racism. We limit ourselves simply to highlighting some of the most interesting data that has emerged from the research.

The cultural, religious and symbolic factor appears increasingly to have emerged as the catalyst of conflicts over mosques. Attempting to conceal conflict by wrapping it in a pragmatic and technical jargon, in the technicalities of urban planning, or simply in politically correct phraseology, does not help to address the problem or resolve it. Therefore, if conflict touches upon cultural topics of a more general nature, these must be addressed and designated as such. If the emotional and visceral character is intense, attempts to address the debate must be

equally intense: viscera and emotions have the role of reaching and bringing out in debate a level that is not reached through rationality but is nonetheless

present.

In this sense this is also a positive function of conflict that needs to be grasped and named as such, with its own language and its own modalities. One cannot resolve a conflict by calling it something else: neither by dismissing its assumptions, nor by exaggerating its stereotypical categorizations (this is typically the manner in which the opponents of a mosque are immediately seen as racists, and the people frequenting the mosque as radicals and fundamentalists). The conflict should therefore be tackled, and if possible guided. The skills needed to do this are very rare, and it is worth taking time to discuss this point, as well as proposals for training.⁸⁶ Often it is only through conflict that positions can change and channels evolve: it is neither useful nor appropriate to ignore or underestimate the conflict, because to do so only puts things off, with the risk of accentuating its destructive rather than its positive content.

The changing nature of the actors taking part in the conflict must also be borne in mind, and with it their ability to modify their own intentions and goals in the context of their strategic positioning. In this regard the 'essentialist' aspect within the vision and definition of stakeholders is particularly negative with respect to the possibility of managing the conflict. In the conflicts examined, some stakeholders adopt the most markedly ideological approaches, which are often not rooted in the local dimension; for these, the initial slogans represent the entirety of the discursive dimension. But these actors apart, stakeholders have often changed their minds and positions on one or other aspect of the question, simply by comparing themselves with other stakeholders, including their opponents. Furthermore, the dynamics of conflict resolution itself create a new dynamic relationship between the actors involved, and new forms of institutionalization, at levels that are ever more marked; and this in itself is a form of assimilation and integration.

Finally, the timescales involved in social conflict, which are often long, should be taken into account (some conflicts that we have examined have gone on for a period of over 20 years);⁸⁷ there is a need for pause and consolidation different from the political timetable, which is dictated primarily by elections and therefore more short-term. The lack of medium- and long-term reflection is one of the problematic elements emerging from the analysis of conflicts. It affects our ability to resolve them, and generally makes it difficult to look beyond the current case of conflict that requires resolution and to reflect on the future of our cities and our society and on their greater pluralist dimensions in terms of culture and values.

Among the positive elements in Muslim behaviour which may help to resolve conflict is the quality of its leadership and its knowledge of the lie of the land in cultural and social terms. From this point of view, 'imported' imams and temporary presences, perhaps lacking even a knowledge of the language of the society in which they operate, are the worst placed to understand the dynamics of a conflict of which they – perhaps even without being aware – are a part. A role involving a relationship with society, consciously taken on by persons who are well placed to fill it, can lead to a deeper understanding of the dynamics and of the expectations to which they must respond, and may enable them to contribute ideas for the planning of mosques, their aesthetic impact, etc.

The leadership can also play a decisive role in relating well to municipal authorities, which have the power to decide (along with other stakeholders, ranging from citizens to political and religious actors) to build alliances rather than to operate under the logic of isolation. Also, decisions concerning architectural choices are important in this respect, as is the ability to understand what is best not to ask for so as not to fuel a conflict that may jeopardize the whole project (insisting, for example, on the *adhan* or an ostentatious and highly distinctive

minaret). Other positive factors in conflict management include the choice of absolute respect for laws and regulations, silence in the face of provocations, and

the ability to explain one's needs in the face not only of criticism but also of the lies of others – and on top of it all, a strong dose of patience, admired as a virtue in Islam, may also be required. Special weeks or the 'open mosque' initiatives which take place in several countries, frequent school visits and the discussions that accompany them, as well as an institutional presence, may be useful ways of involving other social actors and defusing the negative potential built up by other stakeholders.⁸⁸ Such initiatives, however, can achieve nothing in the face of markedly 'ethnic' mosques, closed within their respective communities, which appear alien and which have a cultural, ethnic and linguistic identity that actually contradicts the rules of good integration.

Positive behaviour on the part of local authorities consists primarily of gaining an understanding of the 'real' Muslim stakeholders. Also significant are forms of contact, both institutional and symbolic, such as being present at important times in the Islamic calendar (especially the two major holidays of *aid al-fitr* and *aid al-kabir*). The inauguration of mosques in the presence of important local dignitaries and representatives of government and municipalities (prefect, mayor, etc) and, better still, of the authorities of other religious confessions, especially the majority one(s), can itself be a sign of acceptance and integration, addressed to both the Muslim community and the citizens. During a conflict, on the other hand, there is a need for places to come together and debate and to explain in a reasoned manner the complex factors involved. It is increasingly important for individual and institutional figures to act as mediators and possibly guarantors of an agreement between Islamic communities and their cities; the challenge here is to profile and adequately train individuals who can best do such a job and to put them to work in order to prevent rather than solve conflict. Sometimes there may be a need to take on non-local third parties who are able to get the stakeholders to talk to one another when a conflict has reached a self-referencing impasse, as happened in some of the cases analysed. Employment by the administration of direct methods of dialogue, involving both parties, Muslims and residents, is not only a basic rule of good government; it also has a symbolic meaning of practical importance, in that it may set limits that may not be exceeded, for example in the language used when talking with other interlocutors, the manner of accepting criticism and the rejection of discriminatory practices.

A good practice that would be useful in any governance policy would be to begin, before taking any decision, by mapping out the actors and factors at play.

Unfortunately it is a practice that is hardly ever followed, or takes place only after the event, when conclusions are being drawn about what actually happened. It should be possible for such a procedure to take into consideration the 'broader' origins and multiple loyalties of any transnational or supralocal actors present, in the ranks both of the Islamic actors and of the political entrepreneurs of Islamophobia.

A further step might be to try to reproduce the conflict, so to speak, 'in the laboratory' through methods of discussion among the social actors (focus groups, guided conflictuality groups, role-playing, mutual narratives, etc),⁸⁹ with the aim of bringing out the real content, beyond what has been stated by the actors.

⁸⁵ In many ways this is the product of legitimization of some research on the topic, from the Islamophobia report which introduced the term in European political debate (Runnymede Trust 1997), to the report of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC 2006), which nevertheless provides hardly any data on mosques.

⁹² Conflicts over mosques in Europe

⁸⁶ For example, cultural mediators may have strong secular leanings and be critical of or hostile towards religious themes and proposals from the respective countries of origin, even if they themselves have arrived through immigration. In certain settings, such mediators are found to be singularly incapable of understanding specificities and religious needs, and are therefore systematically bypassed when they go into action and are not considered reliable interlocutors.

⁸⁷ One case among many is that of Neder-over-Heembek (part of Brussels), which began in 1983 and is still ongoing, even though there was no problem of a cupola or minaret and no external sign to make it visible.

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⁸⁸ In the only conflict so far to have manifested itself in Portugal – already 'old' history, back in 1983 – some young people protested violently against the mosque in Odivelas. An invitation by the Muslims to go into the mosque for a discussion, however, solved the problem without further incident.

⁹⁴ Conflicts over mosques in Europe

Conclusions

As we come up to the present day, the problems and conflicts centring on the presence of mosques in Europe appear to be related more to timing and contingencies than to content, more to meta-cultural interpretation than to empirical data. The interpretative framework of overall relations between Islam and the West has certainly had an influence on local circumstances, from the interpretative paradigm of the 'clash of civilizations' to the general politological theme of *nemicus/hostis*.

The 'Huntingtonization' of conflicts, so to speak; the ever-present difficulty in distinguishing between xenophobia and Islamophobia; the ambiguous love-hate relationship with the West, its values and way of life that characterizes some sections of the Islamic presence: all are elements of this relationship as well as a continual reminder of questions and answers surrounding identity and contraposition: *ego versus alter*. The influence of this interpretative frame must be examined without considering it to be inexorable. The interpretative framework itself may change, as shown, for example, in the recent change of policy towards Islam on the part of the Obama administration,⁹⁰ which constitutes a radical interpretative shift, with the explicit and emphasized abandonment of the clash of civilizations paradigm, in favour of a dialogical paradigm that can be assumed to have an effect over time, even on local interpretative paradigms.

At the same time the official interpretation of the 'clash', at present the dominant one, contrasts oddly with the long-term trends of the Islamic presence in Europe: a gradual move towards integration; institutionalization; formalization of what, after all, is not (or is no longer) a single exogenous fact, but an endogenous factor of the European social and cultural panorama of which the new socialized and secularized Muslim generations in Europe are the most obvious sign.

Having said this, today we are still at an intermediate stage in this process: the transition from an Islam in Europe, via an Islam of Europe, to the emergence, still episodic, of a European Islam; the phases and stages of approximation we described at the beginning of this report.

The exceptionalism relating to Islam, which in many cases seems to be more the rule than the exception, therefore appears as a form of uncertainty: not knowing or failing to use the standard categories of interpretation, one has recourse to exceptional instruments. Interference in the internal affairs of Muslims, which we have seen to be a systematic effect, becomes an attraction of *realpolitik* – the effects of which may also be necessary and beneficial at a certain stage – in the absence of shared tools and universal attractions. But both exist, as the progressive institutionalization and judicialization of the conflicts (important indicators) show.

The next step can only be a gradual normalization of the management of religious pluralism, conducted by local, regional and state governments and the European Union itself, with the judiciary and the courts of human rights as a major intervening variable: moving progressively from a perception of the pathology of pluralism, where cultural and religious homogeneity might represent physiology, to a physiological perception of pluralism itself – a phase, however, that will be neither short nor devoid of conflicts and reactions.

In this sense the conflict, which we have measured here in terms of mosques, is broader in its references and its legitimization. It could be more a phase than a destiny: a stage, so to speak, that may not yet have reached its peak; a necessary stage through which we must pass, the painful effects of which can be cushioned by adequate governance policies, but not avoided. We should be conscious that, if the conditions are not favourable and the actors are not directed towards a solution, the conflict may be destructive and lead to a failure of the initiative

and rejection of stakeholders rather than their recognition, as has happened in

different local contexts, especially if the interlocutors are reinforced by strong ideological tenets and specific regulations. If so, the defeat of one of the interlocutors – the weaker and therefore, inevitably, the Muslim minority – becomes a very real possibility.

As a conclusion to our research, we believe we can say that the problem of mosques in Europe is not in itself a problem. There is, however, an Islamic problem, of which mosques have become the symbol and the most visible symptom. But the problem of Islam, in turn, is actually a problem of plurality and of pluralization as a process, which will have an impact on the very concept of the nation-state and its relationship with one or more religions present within its borders. The increase in cultural and religious plurality achieved by European nation-states has now reached a level that will produce a qualitative as well as quantitative change – a situation very different from that imagined by modern constitutions, but also very different from that theorized and analysed by the sociology of religions. In this sense, the situation of religious plurality is *in itself* a strong element of dynamism, which pushes towards its 'visibilization' in the territory, comparisons of narratives, an explosion of symbolic conflicts, but also their resolution.

Here, Islam appears to have become a sort of discursive substitute – psychoanalytically one might speak of a transitional object – that allows for the discussion of profound changes not only *in* but *of* society: changes which Islam has come to symbolize, but of which it is not the origin and in relation to which it is not the 'guilty' party. In this sense the conflict is not between Europe and Islam; it is within Europe itself and its different actors, one of which happens to be Islam or, rather, Muslims. The different means of interpretation in this sense can be considered as forms of an ongoing power struggle *within* Europe, of which Islam is nothing but a pawn, a player or a trigger: the external cause of a chemical reaction that would have occurred in any case.

In this sense, the question of mosques can really be a litmus test for the more general problem of 'Religion and Democracy in Europe', which, appropriately, is the title of the research of which this study is a part.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Usually, however, these methods are the result of academic or social research, disconnected from governance at a local level, which rarely draws direct lessons from it. Several examples in different countries can be found in the research entitled 'Europe's Muslim Communities: Security and Integration post-11 September', promoted by Ethnobarometer and conducted in six European countries (UK, France, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium and Italy). The methodologically more complex cases, as well as the only published literature, can be found in Carpentier de Changy, Dassetto and MareÅLchal 2007 and Allievi 2009.
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⁹¹ The first results of this research are presented in Motzkin and Fischer 2008.

⁹⁰ We refer, as its founding moment, to the event, still sensational, of the speech of US president Barack Obama at the University of Cairo, 4 June 2009.

Interesting facts about Slovenia¹

(mostly for the benefit of the non-Slovenian participants)

History

- The first state established on the territory of today's Slovenia was established by Celtic tribes in the 4th Century BC. It was called Noricum.
- Slav domination of the territory began in the 7th century while part of the Roman Empire.
- In the late 9th century, the Slavs on Slovenian territory became physically separated from other Slavs by an inroad of Magyars.
- Several little countries established on Slovenian territory formed part of the medieval German state.
- From the 14th to the beginning of the 20th century Slovenia was under the rule of the dynasty of Habsburg.
- In the late Middle Ages life in Slovenia was fraught with Turkish raids and several peasant revolts.
- Lutheran reformation in the 16th century underpinned the development of the written Slovene language; compulsory primary education in Slovene started in 1774 parallel to the emergence of Slovene nationhood.
- Contrary to a political movement for Slovene unity, Slovenia fell into three different parts (Austrian, Hungarian, Italian) in 1866/7 when the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was established.
- After the First World War with heavy Slovenian casualties and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was proclaimed in 1918, which later became the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This was divided once more during the Second World War, but re-emerged as the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia in 1945, now including yet more ethnic groups (Bosnians, Macedonians etc). The Communist part, which had played the leading role during the resistance, came to power, but managed to break with the Soviet Union in 1948 and join a Non-Aligned Movement.
- Slovenia experienced rapid industrial development in the 1950s and was a near market economy by 1965.
- Political instability came to the fore after the death of the country's political leader Josip Tito in 1980.
- A first clear demand for Slovene independence was made in 1987; independence was declared in June 1991 leading to a 10-day war with the Yugoslav army.

Current era

- In Dec. 1991 today's Slovenia came into being with the adoption of a new democratic constitution. International recognition followed in 1992.

¹ Mostly extracted from: Slovenia Cultural Profile, Visiting Arts, 2007

- Slovenia joined the EU and NATO in 2004. It joined the Eurozone in 2007.
- 60% of Slovene GDP are generated in the service sector.
- In 2006, Slovenia stood at 82% of the EU-25 average in terms of development and purchasing power.
- Political parties: Social Democrats (SD), For Real-New Politics (Zares), Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS), Democratic Party of Slovenian Pensioners (DeSUS) – the four parties in coalition since November 2008. Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), Slovenian People's Party (SLS), Slovenian National Party (SNS), New Slovenia (NSi) – the current opposition.
- Following a vote of no confidence in the government of Borut Pahor (centre-left, 4-party coalition) in September 2011 in the context of the economic and financial crisis, **general parliamentary elections** will be held **on 4th December** 2011 (one year early).
- Current opinion polls suggest that the elections will result in a stalemate between left and right parties and that the formation of a new coalition government will be protracted and leave the country without effective leadership for several months.
- **Key political issues in recent months:** Pension reform (rejected in June 2011 referendum), public sector (salaries) reform, labour market reform, health care system improvements, energy market reform; capital increase of the biggest, state-owned Slovenian bank (Nova Ljubljanska Banka).

Population

According to its 2002 census, the Slovenian population (total of 1,964,036) is composed of:

- Slovenes 81.1 %

Constitutionally recognised "indigenous" national minorities (representation in the national assembly, bilingualism of public institutions in ethnically mixed areas)

- Italians 0.11 %
- Hungarians 0.32 %

Statutory special rights:

- Romany 0.17 % (=3,246 people)
(The Roma Union of Slovenia, established in 1996, unites about 22 regional and local Roma associations.)

Other ethnic groups (citizens of Slovenia):

- Serbs 1.98 %
- Croats 1.81 %
- Bosnians 1.10 %
- Albanians 0.31 %
- Macedonians 0.20 %
- Montenegrins 0.14 %

Therefore, several of the latter ethnic groups are larger than the others without being afforded special status.

Slovenes make up significant minorities in neighbouring countries. Up to 400,000 Slovenes are estimated to be living outside Slovenia (including in overseas immigration countries).

The use of foreign languages, especially English and German, is widespread in Slovenia and considerably higher than the European average. Croat and Serb are easily understood.

Slovene exhibits a rare linguistic phenomenon: the dual form, i.e. a grammatical number used for two people or things.

According to Slovenia's 2002 census, 58 % of Slovenes are Catholic. 39 other religious communities are registered;

50% of people in Slovenia live in one of five urban areas. Population density at 98.7 % inhabitants per square kilometre is much lower than in the majority of European states.

Slovenia's population increased by 2.5 % between 2002 and 2007, but is showing a slow decline since, with numbers of people per household, numbers of marriages, and numbers of children per family sinking.

Education

The Slovenian population is well educated:

Literacy rate: 99.6 %

Higher education amongst people between the ages of 25 and 64:
12 %

Average years of formal education:
9.6 years

Since 1999, Slovenia has been reforming its university system (four universities) according to the Bologna Process while adopting the Norwegian model. Slovenia has been a driver of the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies.

Culture

- In 2002, the Exercising the Public Interest in Culture Act was passed as a comprehensive basis for the formulation of cultural policy.
- On this basis, a first National Programme for Culture was put in place for 2004-2007. It attempted to strike a balance between the preservation of Slovenian cultural identity and its development. It included the following objectives:
 1. Preservation and development of the Slovene language
 2. Promotion of cultural diversity
 3. Ensuring the accessibility of cultural goods and conditions for creativity (including for ethnic minorities)
 4. Cultural Education as creative education and as education for creativity
 5. Education for professions in culture
 6. Culture as a category of development (economy, human resources, quality of life, social cohesion)
 7. Direct support for creators
 8. Information and culture
 9. Modernising the public sector in culture
 10. Cooperation with NGOs

- A new programme was implemented in 2008-2011.
- Public cultural expenditure in Slovenia was 0.86 % of GDP and 128 EUR per capita in 2006.
- Around a third of public cultural expenditure goes on heritage.
- No established category for socio-culture.
- Sustainable domestic cultural development presents a challenge for the small country.
- To the largest Slovenian national cultural institutions, public funding remains vital.

Slovenia's record of migrant integration²

Before 1991, only students from countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (India, Egypt, Ghana, Indonesia etc)) were considered 'foreigners' or 'immigrants' in Slovenia. After 1991 and Slovenian independence, citizens of the other ex-Yugoslav states (predominantly from Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo) arrived as 'immigrants' in Slovenia.

- Third Country Nationals (TNCs) at 55,359 made up 3.3% of the total Slovenian population in 2009. (Newer estimates put TNCs at 88,000 and approx. 5%.)
- Ljubljana at 3.63% and Maribor at 1.69% are the Slovenian cities with the largest TNC population.
- Migration to Slovenia had been growing since its EU-accession, but measures to control foreign labour in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis have led to a reduction (activation of the "Temporary Decree on restrictions and prohibition of employment and work of aliens" in June 2009).
- Slovenia ranks 18th in the Migrant Integration Index III, which assesses 31 European and North American countries on how favourable their policies are for the integration of migrants.
- Slovenia ranks above all other Central European countries.
- In the seven policies included in the MIPEX assessment, Slovenia ranks as follows (100% representing best policies): labour market mobility (44%), family reunion (75%), education (24%), political participation (28%), long-term-residence (69%), access to citizenship (33%), and anti-discrimination (66%).
- Education: Migrant pupils do not have equal access to non-compulsory and pre-school education as Slovenian pupils. Migrant pupils generally receive special support in learning Slovenian and their own language, but teacher training for this purpose is insufficient. Integration efforts in schools do not have enough effect beyond the classroom because parental involvement is not systematic enough. While intercultural dialogue is an official aim of education policy, curricula are only adapted partly and funding is only ad hoc.

² Statistical data from www.mipex.eu/slovenia; Migrant Integration Policy Index III, February 2011

The Erased

From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Erased, November 2011

The Izbrisani (English: The Erased) is the name used in the media, for **a group of people in Slovenia that remained without a legal status after the declaration of the country's independence in 1991.**

In 1991, immediately after the declaration of independence by Slovenia, the approximately 200,000 residents of Slovenia who had citizenship of other republics of former Yugoslavia (the "citizenship of the Republic" was a purely formal status, which many did not know existed since it did not include any legal consequences) were granted the possibility to obtain, through a simple application, the citizenship of the new independent state. For those who would have chosen not to avail themselves of this possibility, the law required to register as "foreign" (a term denoting legal permanent residents without citizenship).

Approximately 170,000 individuals presented the application, obtaining citizenship before the national elections in 1992. Some thousands chose the second option. The majority of those who, contrary to legal provisions, did not register themselves as "foreigners" were removed from the registry of Permanent Residence in February 1992, losing all social, civil, and political rights. This action was of purely administrative nature (and thus excluded any possibility of appeal) and that without any legal basis, struck, according to unofficial estimates, around 18,000 people, including some who had actually left the country, while others were simply unaware of the existence of the law that required them to confirm their status through a new application.

In 1999, the Constitutional Court declared the act of "erasing" illegal and unconstitutional, and annulled its legal consequences. In the same year, the Slovenian Parliament promulgated a law that offered the "erased" the opportunity to regain the residence, but only to those who lived permanently in Slovenian territory. The Constitutional Court abrogated this law as another attempt in the same direction. In 2003, the Court declared unconstitutional the 1992 Law that required residents with Slovenian citizenship of other Yugoslav republics to explicitly ask to obtain the status of "alien", and ordered the return of the status of residents at all "erased" with retroactive function (regardless of whether they actually did not live in Slovenia after 1992). Many lawyers (among other things some former members of the Constitutional Court and several authors of the Constitution) harshly criticized this decision, since it annulled a legal provision included in the country's constitutional laws and thus, according to them, beyond the Court's jurisdiction.

The decision was followed by a harsh and lasting controversy, in which the LDS-led government gradually accepted the decisions taken by the Constitutional Court, while the opposition (SDS, N.Si, SLS and SNS) continued to criticize it. In February 2004, the parliamentary majority passed a law in accordance with the decision of the Court (which provided for the retroactivity only for those who were already in possession of residence); two months later, however, this law (called "Technical Law on the erased") was annulled by a referendum (supported by the right center

opposition). This referendum was strongly contested by some institutions of the European Union.

In 2007 the number of the "erased" is imprecise, the group is fragmented into different legal categories: some have regained residency and citizenship, some only residence, some were expelled, many of them are living in Slovenia illegally. According to some estimates there are still 6,000 people without legal status, while many of those who managed to get the right to permanent residency had to pay heavily the consequences of years of irregularities. The issue was brought before the European Commission, but said he does not have jurisdiction. Some of the deleted made a collective appeal to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, claiming that "The cancellation is a European problem, because it violates fundamental human rights provided by the EU Convention." In 2011, the Grand Chamber of ECtHR held a hearing on the case (*Kurić and Others v. Slovenia*).

In 2005 and 2007, the SDS-led government proposed the regulation of the status of the "erased" by a Constitutional law that would treat each case individually. On both occasions, this compromise was rejected by the centre-left opposition.

(Update: After the 2008 elections and the entry of a left wing coalition, the situation changed and a decision of the constitutional court was finally implemented.)

The Platform for Intercultural Europe's Practice Exchanges as a Series

Practice Exchanges for Intercultural Capacity-Building are an activity format of the Platform for Intercultural Europe which is based on the policy paper it elaborated through public consultation in the course of 2007/8: "*The Rainbow Paper. Intercultural Dialogue – from Practice to Policy and back*"³. This document contains four chapters of recommendations, which the Platform for Intercultural Europe put forward at the end of the *European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008*. The Practice Exchanges are designed to address the issues of the Rainbow Paper's chapter II on building capacity for intercultural dialogue in (civic) organisations. This chapter makes recommendations on reviewing staff compositions and governance structures, serving constituencies, growing intellectual resources and advancing through comparison in a European perspective.

A number of Practice Exchanges have already taken place⁴:

- In Malmö, southern Sweden on 15/16th July 2009: This brought together professionals from artistic and cultural organisations from across the Nordic region. It was hosted by the Nordic Forum for Interculture.
- In Vienna, Austria on 20/21st November 2009: This brought together representatives from the cultural sector and from minority and migrants' rights organizations. It was hosted by *IG Kultur Österreich*.
- In Rome, Italy on 28/29th May 2010: This brought together representatives from trade unions and other civil society organisations. It was hosted by the Italian Trade Union Confederation CGIL.
- In Sidcup, London, UK on 15/16th December 2010: This brought together theatre practitioners, arts consultants, anti-discrimination activists and academics to discuss the position of ethnic minorities in the arts in the United Kingdom. It was hosted by Border Crossings and the Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance

Basic Concept

The core topic of Practice Exchanges is the intercultural adaptation of civic organisations to growing population diversity, which is a result of migration and/or the existence of indigenous minorities. However, depending on local specificities, intercultural project work, especially if it is conceived as a contribution to systemic change, can also be the subject of Practice Exchanges.

Given the Platform for Intercultural Europe's political role in the EU cultural policy domain, we are particularly interested in relevant practice in the cultural sector, but especially where collaborations with other sectors are evident. The practice of non-cultural sectors can be in focus

³ See <http://rainbowpaper.labforculture.org/signup/>

⁴ For the reports on the Platform's Practice Exchanges please go to the "Past Activities" section of our website: www.intercultural-europe.org

where the host can carry a significant part of the activity cost, or where specific fundraising for the Practice Exchange is undertaken.

The concept of Practice Exchanges recognises the urgent need to enable and facilitate dialogue about how different people and groups make sense of their experiences. This concept builds on the principle that intercultural dialogue is a democratic process that requires and enhances participants' competences for democratic engagement. Furthermore, the Practice Exchanges reflect the obligations and aspirations of the European Union by valuing diversity and by seeking common solutions, which can be also adapted to local situations.