

Cultural Shocks Linked to Religion: Sensitive Areas Affected by Professionals in a "new" Context of the rise of a More Rigorous Islam and Strong Identity Threats

PREPARED BY: CBAI, Judith



Figure 1- Source: Pexels/@Lieven Soete

This text has two objectives:

Name the sensitive zones social workers frequently encounter in religious culture shocks,
To provide a framework for understanding religious practices by :

- Focusing on the currents advocating an all-encompassing Islam often present in the cultural conflicts reported by the professionals
- Showing the identity issues that run across certain religious manifestations.

Thus, this text has a generalist aim, by detailing the sensitive zones speakers, often atheists, might experience when faced with cultural shocks linked to religion, and also by demonstrating the identity challenges that often run through religious manifestations. At the same time, this text has a specific part in the appendix, which details what Salafism is. If we have made this choice, it is not to say that all Muslim religious practices are part of this trend, rather, it is to provide a grid for understanding the ideology that runs through a number of religious practices today. After all, it is often in these practices stakeholders have the most difficulty in achieving a compromise, because they are “absolute” in nature, leaving little room for negotiation.

Finally, in our “toolkit of methodological innovations” we will detail, based on a concrete case, how we, as trainers, have mobilised new criteria for negotiation in the case of behaviours and demands linked to convictional diversity.

1. Sensitive zones affected by professionals during religious culture shocks

Margalit Cohen Emerique has identified many culture shocks in relation to the religious sphere experienced by social workers. We will not repeat in this text the very clear elaborations she provides, rather we invite the readers to read directly the chapter of her book on this subject¹.

¹ It will be interesting to read Cohen-Emerique, (2011): chapter 7 and chapter 11 where there is a paragraph on religion.

Cohen Emerique attributes the cultural shocks linked to religion to a fear of "return to archaisms": The "other" confronts us with behaviours seeming to be opposing the achievements of modernity, in particular the values of social progress, equality between men and women, education of children without corporal punishment and, of course, secularism, an institutional device is "concretised in laws, a political-administrative organisation, and leads to the emancipation of the State and public institutions from all influences of the clerics in order to compose a community of citizens" (Schnapper, 1994).

Marcel Gauchet (1985) is surely one of the sociologists who has explained most precisely how Modernity has come to 'disturb' our relationship with religion, leading today to a highly secularised society. This modernity is first of all the result of a historical process, marked by ruptures, notably with religious power². Let us note a few moments of rupture :

- The secularisation of the sciences and arts starting with the Renaissance in the 15th and 16th centuries (rediscovery of ancient philosophy and arts) and the Age of Enlightenment and the Encyclopaedists (18th century). This secularisation led to questioning the religious knowledge and some of its dogmas due to the spreading of scientific knowledge (physical and natural sciences), the idea of rationality, the expectation of mastering one's destiny, and the notion of "doubt in order to think".
- The social and political rupture with the contestation of the power of the King and the power of the Church (English Revolution, French Revolution of 1789, etc.). In addition to the questioning of the hierarchy and with it the promotion of the values of equality and freedom, it was also at this time that a separation between religion and politics took place with the birth of the 'citizen' within the 'modern' state³.
- And finally, the revolution in morals with "May 1968" in France, the feminist revolution⁴, the adoption of divorce in Italy in 1970 and in 1980 in Spain, etc. Traditional moral principles, very often conveyed by religion, were challenged and new values such as equality between men and women, women's work, individual freedom, autonomy, the contestation of family authority, and the choice to have a child (contraception) emerged.

Thus, we can see here that it is not only religious power being challenged but all the values the majority religion in Europe, the Christian religion, used to convey. This is why religion is a sensitive area: religious behaviour could lead to fears that other values are being challenged. It is, therefore, not only the field of faith being affected, but spheres such as the redefinition of social relations (hierarchy, equality between men and women, etc.), the relation to knowledge and authority. Finally, we can add a stratum of a generation which has not known the weight of religion on daily life (due to the progressive decrease of the influence of the Catholic religion) may consider religious questions invasive and not concern them directly.

² This is based on a text by our training colleague Xavière Remacle, written for the syllabus "Initiation to the intercultural approach", chapter tradition/modernity, CBAI.

³ The idea of separation of the private and public spheres is also put forward

⁴ This revolution actually began after the First World War and the place taken by women, particularly on the labour market

In this text, we will focus on two values promoted by the ideology of Modernity affecting professionals in particular: freedom and equality.

Underneath these two main values, it is often the very identity of the professionals being affected: the image the public reflects back to them⁵, the questioning of the central values of their profession (emancipation, autonomy), and even of their work ethic.

A. The value of equality from different perspectives :

This sensitive area is affected from different angles:

- Refusal of mixing women and men: Some users express the desire to separate spaces and activities between men and women. For social workers, the value of equality (in the sense that each person is worthy of recognition and trust).
- A very negative image of men: Perceived as dominant males who cannot control their sexual urges: Educators tell us about this feeling when faced with parents who do not want their children to be accompanied by male educators (in some cases from the age of 7). Their protective role (we are talking about youth welfare here), their role in helping and supporting the children seems to them to be totally denied.
- Equality between workers: Some team leaders wonder to what extent accepting a religious request will privilege one group of workers over another (for example, by accepting requests for halal meals while others have requested vegetarian meals). This question sometimes arises for certain managers who apply an exclusive (i.e. non-inclusive)⁶ neutrality; in this case they wonder whether they are not disadvantaging workers accepting certain demands for differential treatments and not others (for example refusing the wearing of headscarves).
- Equality of "treatment" (taking into account specific requests for example) with regard to users is also an issue: For example, "are we not putting non-Muslim learners at a disadvantage by not holding classes during Ramadan?"
- The value of equality, based on the fight against privilege, does not sit well with differential treatment, which can be seen as unfair. The notion of equity, which would take into account the particularities of each person (and in particular the initial disadvantages), is still not well integrated as a value in people's minds.
- The principle of neutrality (for Belgium)⁷: The fear of departing from the principle of neutrality is very common among social workers. The principle of neutrality is most often expressed in terms of exclusive neutrality (no religious signs are tolerated), and very few French-speaking operators practice inclusive neutrality (not favouring one view over another, accepting the plurality of clearly visible convictions). It should be noted that tensions between colleagues sometimes arise over respect for this principle of neutrality and its exclusive nature: some workers (particularly those of Muslim

⁵ Some male social workers feel that they are seen as macho men, others fear that they will be seen as discriminating by refusing religious requests from users who are already discriminated against in other places...

⁶ Exclusive neutrality means "absence of any convictional signs", while inclusive neutrality means that all the convictional signs can be carried, with no exception.

⁷ In France, the same type of phenomenon arises around secularism.

origin) want inclusive rather than exclusive neutrality to be applied⁸. And A Ferrari, a French sociologist, goes further: some social workers use "laïcité" in a way that goes far beyond what is mentioned in the law (by confusing political and philosophical laïcité, or even secularism)⁹.

- Discrimination, racism: Workers are sometimes shocked by discriminatory or even racist attitudes of users or workers: their value of equality is strongly affected, without always finding effective responses to this type of behaviour. It should be noted that some are shocked by their management's profound ignorance of cultures from where workers arrive, by their lack of decentration, which leads them to favour one frame of reference over another, or even by the discriminatory attitudes towards certain employees making religious requests. The banner of secularism is sometimes brandished as a standard to counter any religious request, or even against Islam¹⁰. Finally, some professionals fear that they themselves have a stigmatising view of the public: some say they are embarrassed in training to bring only cultural shocks experienced with Muslims, they sometimes fear being discriminatory by refusing a request of a religious nature. Some also wondered "how to bring about a serene discussion without my Muslim interlocutor feeling stigmatised?"
- The religious request could in itself be experienced as a source of authority, perceived by the person receiving it as unquestionable: because of its sacred character, and also because of the "prestige" which the person who made it sometimes enjoys in his community. No doubt, for some social workers, this causes fear of a "return to the archaisms" in which religious power used to be authoritative and unchallenged. There is also a lack of understanding on the side of the professionals, as well as a sizable number of citizens of our countries, of what a country where religion and civil life are closely linked might look like - many immigrant populations arrive on our soil from such countries. The understanding of the separation of the state and religion is not "natural" for these populations, on the contrary, it would require a lot of work of information and education to make this principle understood. Clearly, professionals function as if the separation between religion and public life was universal, and this causes shocks both from them and their audiences.
- Power or abuse of power? The difficulty of the management in deciding on requests of a religious nature. What we observe in the field is very often the difficulty of the management in deciding when faced with religious demands from workers. This difficulty is indicative of a difficulty in assuming their hierarchical position. Bernard Fourez explains, "the value of equality has been established with the deconstruction of privileges. From this struggle against certain abusive powers - a necessary struggle for the installation of equality, a socio-psychological sediment has remained within mentalities which makes it quite easy to think that 'power' is equivalent to 'abuse' and

⁸ For example, tensions over whether or not to hire a worker wearing a headscarf, a youth worker brings halal meat to a party with young people, his colleague tells him that he is breaching the principle of neutrality, a young trainee prays with young people, which raises questions with her manager, These examples show that the principle of neutrality is invoked each time, and that it is "used for all purposes".

⁹ In this regard, see D. Verba (2019, pp 77-90), where he discusses how secularism is "deviated into 6 contradictory statements

¹⁰ Let us also recall in this respect how a country like Switzerland gave up their religious freedom to better hinder Islam (Verba, 2019)

that any unequal situation is equivalent to a situation of abuse of power. In such a cognitive universe, the top can no longer impose anything on the bottom, and this belief seems to have structured some of the most obvious behaviours of our time' (B. Fourez, 2007, p. 22)¹¹.

B. The value of freedom is also a sensitive area affected from different angles:

- **Religious freedom:** cultural shocks linked to religious proselytising (or perceived as such¹²) were often brought back to us, sometimes with questions about whether the behaviour was proselytising or not: is celebrating Christmas or Saint Nicholas with children in institutions, some of whom are Muslim, proselytising? Team leaders also wonder whether their negative response to a religious request does not violate the principle of freedom to practice one's religion?
- **Emancipation:** This value is frequently undermined even though it is at the heart of social work. Managers are shocked by colleagues who have attitudes differing from the mission of the association employing them, i.e. the "emancipation" of young people (for example, a counsellor who does not want to go to summer camp, or who does not want to take the children to the swimming pool because she does not want to wear a bathing suit, etc.). Emancipation is seen here as the critical spirit not to follow any religious prescription to the letter (It would be: I agree to wear a swimming costume with children, especially as this is part of my duties and they are young children) or as the ability to break away from social control, particularly from the will of one's own parents or spouse (I am going on a camp as a youth worker despite my husband's opinion).



Figure 2- Source: Wikimedia/Jean-Pol_Grandmont

Under this word "emancipation" there is thus the notion of autonomy (deciding on my life, making my choices, etc.) but also sexual emancipation (I am free of my body, of what I do with it, of the choice of my partners, etc.). Autonomy is part of the ideology of modernity and in particular, that of distancing from religion. Thus, Bernard Fourez reminds us, "Autonomy: autos nomos – is drawing one's own laws of operation from oneself¹³. The opposite of autonomy is heteronomy (heteros nomos), drawing one's laws of operation from another source than oneself. Heteronomous societies are those that believe that they are governed by invisible forces, societies based on the religious, the divine and the sacred, from where the laws of the world

¹¹ It should also be noted that some managements simply do not want to take a position, for fear of being accused of this or that, for fear of being questioned as a manager and for 'cowardly' fear of touching on burning issues.

¹² Perceived as such because the proselytising character is not always clear: is a leader who makes young girls at a Catholic scout camp pray (a shock that was reported to us) proselytising behaviour?

¹³ In this respect, see the work of Margalit Cohen Emerique on the difference between individualistic and traditional societies. Autonomy, at the heart of the initial training of social workers, is also an obstacle to intercultural relations. The issue of autonomy is always the same: projection of our models as if they were universal and could be applied to all. Not taking into account the models and needs of the other.

would emerge to which the latter is subservient. It is from the hinge between our modern Middle Ages and modernity that the passage from heteronomy to autonomy began. Today the value of autonomy runs through our lives (our way of dancing, education, social relations....), sometimes we could say to excess¹⁴.

- It should be noted that the wearing of the veil¹⁵ is quite frequently perceived as a sensitive area where it is both the values of freedom and equality that are, for some professionals, undermined (according to them, the veil would prevent women from becoming emancipated and would symbolise the domination - in particular the control of sexuality - of men over women). Daniel Verba also notes that 'the veil is often perceived by social workers as a regression and a challenge to their struggle which sometimes resonates with their own history' (D. Verba, 2019, p.145).
- My freedom prevents others from being free. Some workers expressed regret from the pressure put on them by users, for example, "to do Ramadan" or "wear a headscarf". Some religious prescriptions seem radical to them, for example, not eating at the same table as a colleague who drinks alcohol. Sometimes social workers have the impression that it is the believers who decide on the relationship, by imposing their religious rule. The value of coexistence is also called into question here: shocks are reported to us (e.g. the desire of associations not to take part in the neighbourhood festival because other associations offer alcohol at their stands, etc.). They undermine the missions of the organisations working on "coexistence" and neighbourhood cohesion.

C. The value of "coexistence":

As we have already mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the value of coexistence is often affected, whether it is at the level of users who refuse to mix men and women or who apply religious rules that prevent them from "mixing" with others, sometimes leading to the formation of clans. The sacred nature of religion sometimes prevents negotiation and shared common ground. Finally, we sometimes note - even if it is quite rare - the "anti-religious" positions of certain workers, excluding any possibility of negotiation around religious demands.

Conclusion

These values of equality and freedom, and with them values of autonomy, emancipation, equality between men and women, horizontality in decision-making, etc., are all values which, as Bernard Fourez explains, "are authoritative in Western societies", acting as norms that are unlikely to be questioned¹⁶. More than that, they are real beliefs, which run through us without us always realising it.

Touched in a sensitive area, the risk is then, for the professional to judge, to reject the one who threatened these beliefs, cancelling any relationship of trust. This means passing

¹⁴ It is also interesting to note that this value sometimes leads some professionals to "misunderstand" the objective: some patients/users need a framework of security and not autonomy

¹⁵ I use the word "headscarf" or "veil" indiscriminately in this text, for the more precise use of these two terms, see the following article:

<https://www.cairn.info/le-foulard-et-la-republique--9782707124289-page-34.htm>

¹⁶ I am not saying that these values should be questioned, but that they often act as 'givens', little questioned or reflected upon in concrete contexts. In this respect, read the concrete examples given by Bernard Fourez in his article.

judgement on the public, having a negative image of them, or wanting to save them in order to "bring them back to the right path". The principle of secularism is sometimes misinterpreted or even diverted to the benefit of "anti-religious" convictions, caused among other things by a feeling of invasion of the religious on the public and civil scene. In this case, it is regrettable some professionals cannot decentralise and see the possible contributions of a religious practice, which would be the values of sharing, solidarity, or even faith and, more broadly, spiritual life as a strong support in daily life. By "clinging" to certain principles, professionals are depriving themselves of a dialogue with users and of seeing religion as a resource.



Figure 3- Source: Pexels/Julia M Cameron

When the values of freedom, equality and autonomy are ideologies, they become unquestionable dogmas that prevent social workers from listening very pragmatically to what users experience: for example, for this woman, does wearing the veil limit her freedom in a very concrete way? Did she not choose it? Or to what extent do requests for non-mixed gender for these women in such a context, express not submission on their part - as professionals with a rigid position would think - but on the contrary a prerequisite for them to have more power. It is worth remembering that many feminists have organised their meetings without the presence of men with this very intention¹⁷. When workers are affected by values that are primarily ideologies, they may practically prevent themselves from becoming more familiar with the frame of reference experienced by the user. Of course, this difficulty in decentring can also "quite simply" be an inability to really, concretely "think" about differences, i.e. to have difficulties in accepting there are other value systems, other cultures. Often, these professionals do not always realise they come to assume a position of authority - or even domination - over the public, even though they advocate values of equality. It is important, as Margalit Cohen Emerique reminds us, to never forget the relationships of domination can be established in the relationship, and all the more so when dogmatic positions are present, which is quite often the case for shocks related to religion.

But if social workers also tell us of their discomfort with religious demands, it is because certain practises seem to them to be too divisive and leave little room for negotiation to find common ground acceptable for everyone: the religious principle is applied "to the letter", and it seems that little room for interpretation is possible. Thus, some participants told us about cultural shocks where no compromise could be found (parents who do not want their child to take part in the school festival because dances are organised, prohibition to take part in the music

¹⁷ For Christine Delphy, the practice of non-mixity "is actually part of a process of self-emancipation".¹ It is conceived as a way for people who feel they are subject to systemic discrimination to share common experiences and to express themselves freely in a place where they are less likely to be challenged by people who do not share this characteristic and where their lived experience is less likely to be questioned or delegitimised. Participants should be able to express themselves without feeling the need for self-censorship or justification or the fear of offending ^{4,7,8,9}.

workshop in class, refusal to postpone the midday prayer to the evening, refusal of certain care, refusal of a user to be accompanied by a social worker because she is a woman...).

And once again, it is when the values proclaimed in the name of religion are first and foremost ideologies (in particular, religion as a political project), that the margins for negotiation are difficult to find. Once again, ideological positioning prevents us from reaching out to others and finding very concrete possible solutions.

In an attempt to better understand some of these shocks, I will take the liberty in the following chapter of developing two elements: on the one hand, the rise of rigorist currents leaving little room for manoeuvre to those who are imbued with them, and on the other hand we will see how religious manifestations are sometimes first and foremost identity claims.

2. Cultural shocks linked to a rise in in "rigorist" religious practices or to strong identity claims

Faced with certain shocks which, according to social workers, were not so numerous twenty years ago, has the context changed? The aim here is to focus on cultural shocks that bring into play highly formalised, or literalist religious practices, which leave little room for possible negotiation. Why this choice? As a trainer in the intercultural approach, I have been increasingly 'confronted' with having to analyse cultural shocks of this type. I say "confronted" because I found it difficult both to understand these religious practices (even to understand to which currents they belong to) and to grasp the identity issues that ran through them. It was therefore difficult for me to provide the participants in the training course with useful keys to understanding the frame of reference of people with these religious behaviours and to help them identify possible avenues for negotiation. To help the reader as a trainer, I therefore decided to deal with this issue in three stages:

- A first step in understanding the historical context in which political Islam and Salafism have taken root in Europe (in the appendix there is a more detailed focus on the Salafist movement),
- A second time to understand the identity issues that run through these religious practices,
- In a third step, I will provide useful benchmarks for negotiation (cf "Belief diversity training: training to find negotiated solutions based on explicit criteria" in "Toolkit of methodological innovations")

A. Cultural clashes related to religion today: a rise of political Islam and the Salafist current?

Researchers at Cismoc (Centre Interdisciplinaire d'Etudes de l'Islam dans le Monde Contemporain) confirm the hypothesis of a rise in currents promoting an all-inclusive Islam¹⁸. Thus, they explain, "historically, this return to Islam was stimulated by certain militant movements in Muslim societies affected by colonial policy. These movements aimed to revitalise their societies by restoring a dignity which according to them have been violated and by working towards the acquisition of independence for their countries. Due to the activist

¹⁸ Some of these Islamist currents could be called such, if we refer to Bernard Rougier's definition: "Islamism is understood as the refusal to distinguish between Islam as a religion, Islam as a culture, and Islam as an ideology, as well as by the concern to submit the social space, and even the political space, to a specific regime of religious rules promoted and interpreted by specialised groups" (Rougier, op. cit)

current of political Islam, a spirit of (re)vitalisation of the faith in both the private and public spheres spread across the Muslim world, but also later in Europe. Some of its theorists were forced to emigrate or chose to come to study in the West. They have become involved in the Muslim community and have gradually developed a relative interest in the society in which they try to promote their vision of Islam. With their educational background, their strong motivation to reform Muslim mindsets, their solidarity and organisational skills, they quickly took on a leadership role among Muslims who settled in Europe, mainly through labour agreements. Their politico-religious ideas, articulated around an Islam envisaged as an all-embracing way of life, spread more or less rapidly in the 1970s, competing with the rather pietistic conceptions of the (neo)Salafists, who were more involved in the social field, and to whom the politico-religious movements had - sometimes in spite of themselves - opened the way from the mid-1990s onwards” (B. Maréchal, 1912, pp 89-110).

These two currents, which are widely promoted by grassroots activists, have also benefited from significant material support (translations of the Koran, religious programmes broadcast by satellite, and later videos on social networks, etc.). Cismoc researchers note that their “ideas have progressively penetrated the thinking of an ever larger fringe of Muslim populations, often without these being aware of it, while they have ended up exacerbating references to religious identity and voicing a growing demand for respect of religious norms, rites or signs of Islamism” (King Baudoin Foundation, 2014, p.21). Today, however, “their majority representations have also contributed to reducing and freezing the readings of Islam”. Those Muslims who do not recognise themselves in these currents find it difficult to make themselves heard.

Today, these trends are practised in private life as well as in the public space, and bring back old questions, among others "those concerning the status of religion in the public space in society and in a secularised State". In concrete terms, these currents will often govern social life - such as the rapidly expanding Halal economy - which is taking up ¹⁹an increasingly large share of the social (matrimonial companies, clothing shops, mobile phone shops, etc.). More precisely, concerning the rise of the Salafist current, Bernard Rougier takes up the theory of "complex contagions": a norm imposes itself with all the more force as its legitimacy is reaffirmed by a plurality of sources: a family member, the sheikh of the neighbourhood mosque, groups of friends, religious sites on the Internet, the major religious institutions of the Middle East and in particular the great Saudi sheikhs, guarantors of the "Islamic norm". And so, says Bernard Rougier, “a particular interpretation of Islam, influenced by Salafism, is perceived by growing fractions of the population of Muslim descent as the objective incarnation of Islam and its rules of application” (B. Rougier p. 32).

Despite the progression of these currents referred to by Cismoc and Bernard Rougier as political Islam, in particular the Muslim Brotherhood and the (neo)Salafist current, one should not generalise and it is important to recall the following facts:

- Not everyone from the 'Muslim community' respects all religious precepts: Felice Dassetto (2011) estimates that in Belgium only 30-40% of people from a country where Islam is the majority religion 'explicitly claim to be believer and acts accordingly in their ritual behaviour

¹⁹ In [Islam](#), the word ḥalāl (Arabic: حلال) refers to what is 'permitted', 'lawful'. This does not only refer to food, but to the rules of life in general, the 'Muslim morality

and observance of precepts'. The rest are agnostics, 'cultural' Muslims and atheists (Y. Lamghari, 2019). In contrast, only 2% of Belgo-Moroccans stated that they were not religious (Saaf A et al, 2009.) and 5% of Belgo-Turks.

- Although the currents advocating an 'all-embracing' Islam (the *(neo)Salafist current, the Muslim Brotherhood current, etc.*) are more present in Brussels today, they are juxtaposed with other less rigorous currents²⁰. And of course, not all cultural shocks concerning the Muslim religion are crossed by these currents.

- Many individuals 'tinker' with their religious references and frequently do not subscribe to the totality of a single religious current: they 'take what they value', re-translate religious arguments as they see fit (Y. Lamghari, 2014). We are witnessing an 'individualisation of belief' (C. Torrekens and L. Adam, 2019).

- Finally, religious manifestations can also be a sign of strong identity claims, testifying to a desire for recognition, all the more exacerbated when the feeling or the experience of discrimination is strong.

B. Religious behaviour, primarily a sign of identity claims

Many sociologists see religious behaviour primarily as an expression of identity issues, rather than a "rise in faith".

a) Religious claim: from stigma to pride.

For Corinne Torrekens, a doctor in social and political sciences and researcher at GERME, Université Libre de Bruxelles, "in Europe, it is in the name of citizenship and equality that the visibility of Islam is asserted. Indeed, it is in the context of generalised discrimination generating at least part of the demands related to Islam. The first mechanism of this process can be analysed with the help of Ervin Goffman's theory of the 'return of stigma': religion is conceived as a refuge and as a marker of identity, a bearer of pride' (Torrekens, 2014, pp 14-16). This theory of 'reactive religiosity'²¹ is supported by the work of Connor (2010) who shows that the 'religiosity of Muslim populations is greater in contexts of less welcoming societies' (C. Torrekens, 2014).

Daniel Verba goes further and explains how for some young people, the practice of Islam is a way to fight against oppression, discrimination, "white domination": "some young people have today invested Islam as the religion of the oppressed and an alternative to Western white domination. In the name of a principle of justice to which adolescents are often very attached, but also of a shared condition, young people from working-class backgrounds choose, out of solidarity, to convert to or to adopt a rigorous practice of their faith, and live their religious commitment in the same way as the hippies of the 1980s were initiated into oriental thought in order to question consumer society and the pressures of economic liberalism' (D. Verba, 2019, p. 100).

Finally, the studies of Voas et al. confirm this hypothesis: a strengthened religious identity would in turn increase the probability of encountering forms of 'orthodox'

²⁰ Younous Lamghari, *ibid*; and also King Baudoin Foundation, p.21.

²¹ That is, the theory that "in a context of high polarisation on issues related to the insertion of Islam into Western societies, the religiosity of Muslims tends to increase" (this concept is an extension of that of reactive ethnicity, developed by C. Diehl and R. Schnell, 2006, pp 786-816)

religiosity that could be understood as forms of resistance (D. Voas and F. Fleischmann, 2012, pp 525-545).

b) Recourse to religious practice in the face of identity insecurity

Religious practice (especially when it 'encompasses' all of social life) and the norms and rules that it lays down can have a 'reassuring' effect for the individual who will know what he or she should and should not do, sometimes down to the smallest detail (what he or she can eat or not eat, how to dress, how to behave as a couple, etc.). Thus, Immerzeel and Van Tubergen show how 'insecurity (whether individual, economic or contextual) is positively correlated with religiosity' (T. Immerzeel and F. Van Tubergen, 2013, pp 359-372). This recourse to religious practice as a reassuring framework could sometimes be experienced in particular by teenagers 'in crisis', individuals experiencing difficulties in their socio-professional integration. Religion provides them the reference points they have lost, and all the more so when it is 'decreed' in a very normative way.

c) The visibility of religious practice as a marker of identity, to exist and avoid any "assimilationist" attempt

Partly linked to the previous argument on identity insecurity, religious practice, especially in its visible forms is 'a way of resisting the pressure of an assimilationist society that wishes to melt cultural differences into a vast republican melting pot where the norm of belonging is first and foremost civic before being religious, professional or social' (D. Verba, 2019, p. 99).

d) Following religious rules as a sign of belonging to the group.

As Émile Durkheim wrote, "religion is a system of beliefs and practices relating to the sacred, that is to say, separate, forbidden, beliefs and practices that unite in a single moral community, called the Church, all those who adhere to it... The sacred dimension integrates the licit and the illicit, the permitted and the forbidden, around which identity markers will be structured". (E. Durkheim, 1912, p. 65). For Daniel Verba, this explains 'the considerable success of halal practices, which, thanks to normative inflation, provide a visible framework for religious difference. Food and clothing rituals have a double social function: on the one hand, they bring together those who respect them, but on the other hand, they distinguish them from those who do not follow them. The rite thus obeys a double logic of aggregation and separation' (D. Verba, 2019, p. 100).

Thus, it is not surprising that it is the religious practices that are most visible to others (e.g., standards of dress) and those carried out collectively (e.g., eating practices, Ramadan) that individuals will mark the most²², and claim: it is by following these practices that one becomes part of the religious community, and this is all the more true for the most normative and prescriptive currents. I will have to show others that I eat halal, do Ramadan or wear this or that garment. But it is also the non-respect of these practices that could exclude me from the group. Religious practice, and in particular the following of rules, could therefore be a vector of strong social control of individuals over each other. One has to show loud and clear that one follows such and such a rule in order to be part of the group, as non-conforming risks rejection.

²² "The existence of religiously motivated dietary practices is a constant universal fact. Even more than clothing, dietary prohibitions are a marker to which societies refer to identify beliefs and distinguish believers" (C. Prudhomme, 2016, p.113).

Conclusion

Depending on the issues at stake in the shocks linked to the religious sphere, different avenues of negotiation are possible in order to try to find, when necessary, a common ground:

- "Negotiation with oneself" where the professional will have to "decentre" from his frame of reference, especially when he is affected by an ideology rejecting everything related to religion. He/she will have to distance himself/herself and return to a more pragmatic terrain: Is the user's request or behaviour problematic? If so, in what way? What are the very concrete facts?
- Pedagogical work, particularly with certain young people, caught up in strong identity issues. The aim is to work on the processes of recognition, self-image, the transition from a "victim" to an "actor" position, but also the development of a critical mind...
- Clarification of what is negotiable and non-negotiable through clear criteria: the legal framework and in particular the anti-discrimination law, the association's missions, the workers' functions, but also the consideration of the whole group (other employees, other users) with the notion of equity. We will come back to these criteria in the text "Belief diversity training: training to find negotiated solutions based on explicit criteria" in the Toolkit of methodological innovations.

Bibliography

- BOUZAR Dounia, DENIES Nathalie (2014) - *Diversité convictionnelle : comment l'appréhender ? Comment la gérer ?*, Académia.
- COHEN-EMERIQUE Margalit (2011, Reed 2015) - *Pour une approche interculturelle en travail social*, Presses de l'EHESP
- DASSETTO Felice (2011) - *The iris and the crescent*, Presses Universitaires de Louvain
- DIEHL C. AND SCHNELL R. (2006) - *Reactive Ethnicity or Assimilation ?*, *International Migration Review*, 40 (4), pp 786-816
- DURKHEIM Emile (1912) - *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, PUF
- King Baudoin Foundation (2014) - *Muslims and non-Muslims in Brussels, between tensions and mutual adjustments*
- FOUREZ Bernard (2007) - *Do we really live in a time without authority*, in *Qu'est-ce qui fait l'autorité dans les institutions médico-sociales. Authorities, powers, decisions, responsibilities*, edited by M. Meynckens-Fourez and C. Vander Borght. Vander Borght, Eres Ed
- GAUCHET Marcel (1985) - *Le désenchantement du monde*, Gallimard
- IMMERZEEL T. AND VAN TUBERGEN F. (2013) - *Religion as Reassurance? Testing the Insecurity Theory in 26 European Countries*, *European Sociological Review*, 29 (2)
- LAMGHARI Younous (2014) - *Can we talk about a Muslim community in Belgium?* in *Agenda Interculturel*, n°320
- MARECHAL Brigitte (1912) - "The European Muslim Brothers. Quest to Become a Social (Cultural) Movement", in R Meijet and E.Bakker, *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe*, Eds. Hurst and Company, London
- PRUDOMME Claude (2016) - *Tell me what you don't eat, I'll tell you what you are? Interdits alimentaires, religions, convivialité*, in *Histoire, monde et cultures religieuses*, 3/39)
- ROUGIER Bernard (2021) - *Les territoires conquis de l'islamisme*, PUF.
- SAAF A ET AL (2009), King Baudoin Foundation, Brussels



ZELDA project is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

Grant agreement no. 2019-1-IT02-KA2014-063370.

- SCHNAPPER Dominique (1994) - *La communauté des citoyens*, Gallimard
- TORREKENS C. and ADAL L. (2019) - Pratiques religieuses des belges de confession musulmane, *La revue Nouvelle*, n°6
- TORREKENS Corinne (2014) - From discretion to the fight against discrimination, *Agenda Interculturel*, n°320
- VERBA Daniel (2019) - *Anthropology of religious facts and social intervention*, coll Le geste social
- VOAS D. and FLEISCHMAN F. (2012) - Islam Moves West: Religious Change in the first and second generations, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 38

Appendix

What is Salafism²³?

For this chapter, we have largely taken the explanations from the book "les territoires conquis de l'Islamisme", edited by Bernard Rougier, and in particular from chapter 1. Ed PUF, 2020.

The term 'Salafism' is formed from the root word 'salaf', the 'pious predecessors'. The emergence of Salafism is very old: at every moment of crisis, when thinkers consider that the Muslim society in which they live is threatened, they plead for a return to the Islam of the "salafs". The first thinker to theorise this was Ibn Hanbal (780-855), the founder of the Hanbalite legal school. According to the Salafists, the origin of the crisis in the Muslim world is to be found in the betrayal of the original message of the Revelation by Muslims. As with the Muslim Brotherhood, Islam is seen as a comprehensive system that governs all areas of life, both sacred and secular. Salafists strictly limit (or even reject) the use of human reason in the process of exegesis and thus avoid the use of reasoning by analogy (qiyas), which is one of the most widely used sources in other legal schools.

One of the arguments that distinguishes Salafism from other currents is the almost obsessive search for the purity of the original Islam. Salafists want to reaffirm the uniqueness (*tawhid*) of the religious doctrine. They therefore deny the legitimacy of all doctrines, schools or movements seeking to assert their own identity or methodology, accused of dividing Muslims.

"There are several key concepts in Salafist thought.

- Concept of *Hakimiyya*. Sovereignty belongs only to God. By virtue of this concept, some Salafists living in Western societies today refuse to vote and consider society as 'kurf', disbelief.
- The concept of *Al-Wala al-bara* (covenant and disavowal), which is to be loyal to God and his allies and to reject those who deviate from Islamic law. They also tend to anathematise those among the Muslim population who do not share their views. This principle is now used to denounce all forms of membership or allegiance to modern society and its value system, advocating strict and literalist observance of the injunctions contained in the sacred scriptures. These markers of religiosity set multiple symbolic and physical boundaries in the public space against all those non-Muslims or 'non-conforming' Muslims, who do not share their conception of an exclusive and totalising Islam. In the name of the sacred, Salafism redraws the roles of women and men, controls women's bodies, consecrates forms of cultural and linguistic expression, and prescribes clothing and dietary habits".²⁴
- Salafists reject popular traditions or innovations such as birthdays.
- They develop the idea that they are the chosen ones of God and the only ones who are on the right path and have a good understanding of the texts.
- They develop a millenarian vision: the end of time is near and will be preceded by a holy war against the unbelievers.

However, Salafism is not a univocal trend. Three main currents can be distinguished:

²³ For this chapter, we will take up some of the explanations in the book "les territoires conquis de l'Islamisme", edited by Bernard Rougier, and in particular in chapter 1. Ed PUF, 2020.

²⁴ Rougier, *ibid*, p24.

- The pietistic, so-called pietistic, quietist, apolitical current
- The political stream: politics is seen as a necessary but intermediate means to achieve the implementation of an Islamic stream
- The extremely minority but ultra-violent current: the jihadist current.

French sociologist Bernard Rougier explains the expansion of Salafism in the 1980s and 1990s in the following way :

- The simplification of Islam

It can be explained first of all by the consequences of the formation of the nation state and of economic modernity in the twentieth century, or even much earlier: some authors (Dasseto) situate this entry into modernity at the expedition of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1768 and European colonisation, to which is added the breakdown of traditional social structures (Benslama, 2014). "In tune with the tribal world, maraboutic Islam could not survive the emergence of a mass, bureaucratic and impersonal society. The states that emerged from independence then nationalised Islam, and religious personnel became functionalised and dependent on political power. Interpretative communities, formerly rooted in the diversity of local traditions, disappeared in favour of an abstract, uniform and normative vision of Islam, better adapted, because of its generalising scope, to the urban and economic transformations of modern societies.

- The role of the Saudi religious body

The Saudi oil bonanza provided money for the Salafi movement to develop. In addition, the diplomatic prestige gained by King Fayçal after the 1973 war provided Wahhabi Islam with considerable influence throughout the world. Saudi Arabia has made the promotion of Salafi orthodoxy a major axis of foreign policy by creating charitable and humanitarian structures that distribute money and build mosques and universities, all coupled with a large acquisition of media, printing, and book distribution²⁵.

- Controlling the immigrant population in Europe

The enculturation of 'neighbourhoods' with Islamist ideology also accelerated after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Invented in the south of the Mediterranean, Islamist themes circulated in the north of the Mediterranean, with an increasingly short delay as globalisation progressed. Islamists, religious conservatives and authoritarian governments had an interest in preventing the successful 'integration' of people of Muslim culture or descent into Western societies. The emergence of a critical mass of European Arabs with a distanced and individual relationship to their religious affiliation would not fail to produce a 'rebound', a deep questioning in Southern societies. This would have provided secular intellectuals with considerable material and intellectual resources to support a loosening of the religious in the social, cultural and political space of these societies. The 'danger of secularisation' from the North to the South, diagnosed as early as the 1970s, would have threatened actors - representatives of institutional

²⁵ Created under the Royal Agreement of 1969, the Islamic and Cultural Centre of Belgium (CICB) has been one of the vectors for the dissemination of this ultra-conservative Islam in Europe. The CICB also served as the headquarters of the World Islamic League, whose mission is the diffusion of Wahhabism in the world. Dozens of Brussels immans trained at the Islamic University of Medina have contributed to the spread of this interpretation of Islam in Belgium and northern France.



ZELDA project is co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

Grant agreement no. 2019-1-IT02-KA2014-063370.

Islam as well as Islamic dissidents - who claim to express the religious norm by insisting on its collective, public, authoritarian and compulsory dimension.

Bernard Rougier adds two more to these main causes:

- The Algerian social pact to get out of the civil war: at the end of the 1990s, President Bouteflika made a pact with the Saudi religious institution to get the country out of the civil war. At the end of the pact, the abandonment of jihadist violence was offset by the promotion of an Islamist Salafist orientation in the cultural and social life of the country
- The fabrication of "Islamist causes" with, in particular, the affair of the caricatures of the prophet.