

## Public spheres, public Islam, and modernities

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**Programme Women in Developing Countries  
And International Graduate School in Sociology**

## **Working Paper N° 347**

**Public spheres, public Islam, and modernities**

Report on Workshop 24th – 25th of October 2002  
Organised by the Gender Working Group of the SDRC,  
Prof. Grudrun Lachenmann,  
together with  
Armando Salvatore  
Humboldt University Berlin  
Institute of Social Sciences  
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## **Public spheres, public Islam and modernities**

This report presents papers and discussions from the workshop “Public spheres, public Islam and modernities”, which took place on October 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> 2002 at the University of Bielefeld. The Workshop was organised by the Sociology of Development Research Centre (SDRC) and was realised in co-operation with the Italian sociologist and expert in Islamic Studies Dr. Armando Salvatore, who was invited by the International Graduate School in Sociology (IGSS) as a special guest and resource person. Armando Salvatore is lecturer at the Institute of Social Science at the Humboldt University in Berlin, and formerly worked at the European University of Florence. The workshop was attended by approximately 25 participants. The presentations given by the guests, staff members, doctoral students and post docs of the Research Centre were based on empirical fieldwork in Muslim societies and raised questions about the specific constitution of the public sphere in these contexts and the importance of political religion in a globalised world. Methodological issues such as comparative sociology and theoretical issues such as the classical concepts of public sphere and social space were re-problematized and discussed from a critical post-colonial perspective, taking into account the historical conditions of processes of knowledge production, which underlie these concepts.

## **Bringing sociology back into development: Public Sphere, Civil Society and Gender - Current Debates at the Sociology of Development Research Centre**

The workshop was opened by **Gudrun Lachenmann**<sup>1</sup> who gave a general introduction to the concepts of public sphere and civil society, in order to discuss their ongoing significance in the research about Muslim societies, but also their shortcomings and contradictions. She focused on the way these concepts are used in the work of Bielefeld researchers and paid special attention to the concept of social space.

Methodologically much of the research done at the Sociology of Development Research Center (SDRC) in Bielefeld is based on the approach of Grounded Theory (Strauss, 1987; Strauss/

Corbin, 1990), whereby theory is developed out of concrete empirical studies. Regarding studies of Muslim societies, especially the Muslim countries in Africa and Asia that belong to the Muslim periphery are brought to the forefront. Hence comparative research on topics as public sphere and civil society are given centrality in a sociology of Islam, as Georg Stauth holds it (Stauth, 1995).

Epistemologically, comparative research is linked to the reflection on the ethnocentricity and eurocentricity of analytical or even political concepts. The problem of transferring these concepts from one context to another is experienced not only in development sociology but also in social anthropology and ethnology. Here what Stauth calls 'comparative sociology of civilisations', has to be overcome as it stresses the possibility of doing comparative sociology by using normative concepts which are supposed to be transferred from the West to other civilisations. A non normative comparative perspective is achieved, Lachenmann argued, through the conscious reflection on processes of knowledge production. This means to take into account from whose point of view this knowledge is produced and pronounced. The political and ethical importance of epistemic communities in a globalised world becomes very clear. This approach is still remarkably different from mainstream globalisation theory, where such reflections are missing and comparisons are made without taking into account the different contexts of the studies. In Bielefeld however, Lachenmann stressed, it is exactly the contextualisation of empirical material and case studies, which allows a fruitful comparative perspective. As one example Lachenmann mentioned the well known debate about modes of production and modes of articulation, which evolved in Marxist economic anthropology out of concrete research about West Africa, and which was clearly followed in Bielefeld and had deeply influenced the research program of the SDRC.

Lachenmann continued extrapolating her notion of public sphere and civil society. She remarked that in the past, researchers at the SDRC would not have dared to use the term public sphere with regard to any of the countries they were studying, because the term that was *en vogue* was civil society. The term civil society was introduced more as a political concept and is still being used in a kind of global jargon for all non-governmental organisations and for a might be public sphere as an actor. Lachenmann criticised this

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<sup>1</sup> Gudrun Lachenmann is professor of Sociology of Development ("Women and Gender in Developing

normative use of the term, stressing rather the notion of civil society as a sociological analytical concept without having to give it a normative connotation as a political concept. She claimed that civil society is a useful concept and the relationship between civil society and the public sphere should be worked out more in detail.

Departing from Habermas' work on the public sphere (Habermas, 1987), which lately has been rediscovered by many scholars, she pleads for a critical re-reading of these texts. While Habermas brings the public sphere and the civil society together, Lachenmann argues for a conceptual separation of these two terms. She maintains that the two terms, public sphere and civil society, are not identical, civil society is rather a constituting force of publicness (Bierschenk/ Elwert/ Kohnert, 1993) producing a public forum or a public sphere. It is this publicness that can be analysed and discussed. The other issue of contestation is the critique of Habermas. This critique holds that the latter's concept of public sphere is profoundly related to and rooted in a special phase of European bourgeois history, that is the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and therefore no valid category of analysis for current social dynamics in a globalised world. She stressed the merits of the feminist scholars who pointed out the shortcomings of a theory that distinguished so clearly between the public and the private sphere and thereafter went on to reduce the women to the private sphere. Although this reduction has done a lot of damage in theoretical thought, it should not lead to a complete rejection of Habermasian theory. Firstly, because Habermas acknowledges his gender and historical blindness, and secondly because for him and his historical analysis, the private sphere included the economy, that is, the entrepreneurs and owners of private property. Under the slogan "the private is political" feminist scholars criticised and tried to deconstruct the dualistic view on the private and the public sphere, showing how closely these two were interrelated and how the so called private sphere had been created and shaped by the state.

Relating to research about social movements, Lachenmann connected the concept of civil society to that of social space as used in Bielefeld research. Social spaces can be elements that constitute a non homogeneous public sphere, one that does not come up with one common public interest, since individuals do not have the same predispositions to participate in this public space. In Bielefeld the term 'space' is applied in the sense of social space, that is in a

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countries") at the Sociology of Development Research Centre at the University Bielefeld (SDRC).

relatively non institutionalised delineation. It goes beyond concepts of community, place or territorial or physical space. The concept of social space is clearly linked to agency, to the production of gender specific and culturally defined meanings. The concept of female spaces is a useful empirical concept with a very special theoretical background, whereby one can analyse agency and not merely actors. Although Lachenmann was not completely sure about her own suggestion to use social space as an operationalisation of life-world she stressed the parallels between the merely theoretical term life world, coming from phenomenological and interpretative sociology dealing with the social construction of reality and the empirical concept of social spaces. Both have the same theoretical and conceptualising frame of agency and deal with producing spaces of social meaning beyond a mere logic of inclusion or exclusion .

The concept of social spaces can be fruitfully related to a whole brunch of sociological concepts: to the term life world, which Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann had introduced long ago in their sociology of everyday life (Schütz/ Luckmann, 1973); to the term milieu, which is used by other phenomenologists like Grathoff; to the new concepts like translocal or transnational linkages, flows, landscapes, processes of community construction and networks as used by social anthropologists like Appadurai (Appadurai, 1996); to works on translocal or transnational public spheres amongst different epistemic communities, showing that here might exist multiple public spheres like there are multiple modernities, and multiple Islams like there are multiple feminisms.

Furthermore, the connection to the sociology of knowledge is very important for the analysis of Muslim societies, as it brings in the dimension of social distribution of knowledge. When analysing gender relations and working conditions in a Muslim country like Bangladesh with the system of purdah it is necessary to take into account the societal context. When analysing development processes it is necessary to look at Western knowledge which is being transferred to Muslim countries. Lachenmann argued that Habermas had not really used the term of knowledge and neglected how knowledge is socially constructed and negotiated in multiple fora and platforms, which can all be part of a heterogeneous public sphere. But one should not reduce public sphere only to the transnational or the translocal, she continued. It is always characterised through difference and diversity. There might be different overlapping

and interconnected spheres. These phenomena can be studied with the analytical and empirical term ‘interface’ (Long/ Villarreal, 1993), where different social actors and systems of meaning interact and processes of negotiation about meaning take place. Research focus at the SDRC lies on analysing how this common knowledge or controversial knowledge is being negotiated and produced in the public sphere itself. It does not come from outside or from any undefined social position.

Lachenmann stressed the importance of the concept of overlapping spheres. This concept can capture very interesting facets of social movements, like peasant organisations in West Africa, which has a large percentage of Islamic population. These peasant organisations are involved in processes of negotiation with the authorities of Islam or of Islamic brotherhoods about different validities of knowledge, in different spaces on different gender orders. Through these negotiations a public space is being constituted. Here the idea of common good (*Gemeinwohl*) comes in. It can be related to systems of social security or, as Salvatore argues, to reformist Islamic movements. Habermas said that in the bureaucratic welfare system the transformation of the public transforms citizens into mere clients of the welfare states. The question is whether the “public Islam” is really fostering sustainable systems of social security or only charity without entitlements and no active producers of welfare. In Sudan or Pakistan the classical Muslim tradition of *zakah* is now being bureaucratised and made practically a state tax or a system of taxation. The discrepancy is however that this is more or less produced in a very authoritarian way as a social tax, what can be criticised according to the ideas of authoritarian modes of governance (Mbembe, 1988). To study and analyse the linkages between state and society is hence important. The connection between wealth and charity in the majority of Muslim countries can give a very interesting insight to the structures of public sphere in these societies. It seems that many Islamic associations which constitute public sphere or civil society do it through charity. But charity has a very authoritarian notion, where poor people and especially women are instrumentalised. Women and poor people are not the subjects in these processes, but seen as categories apart. Women are instrumentalised as markers of Islamic faith in a male society. And those who get charity are not subjects of civil society or public sphere.

### **Stretching the horizon: women’s construction of social space in Sudan**

To understand the process of restructuring in the context of Islamisation, **Salma Nageeb**<sup>2</sup> developed the concept of Neo-harem (Nageeb, 2002; Nageeb, 2004), which explains the gender specific ways in which women experience the process of Islamisation. Neo-harem is the practice of intensifying the confinement of women to an ideologically defined space and is based on specific socialisation of women's body and conduct, and on segregation of spaces according to gender. This practice and segregation of spaces, Nageeb stated, is instrumental to the Islamic credential of the state and the Muslim brotherhoods. Neo-harem is on the one hand restraining women to specific kinds of conduct and space in order to reflect the Islamic image of the nation and on the other hand it restrains women in their translocal visions and hence their ability to enter the field of social restructuring as a cultural force. Instead of following a rather impact oriented approach and interpreting Neo-harem as the end result of Islamisation, Nageeb suggested an approach that emphasises the negotiation processes related to Islamist restructuring and the way women take part in these processes and constitute their agency. This implies to interpret Neo-harem as a dynamic process shaped by change and negotiation. That means as well that Neo-harem is characterised by a peculiar complexity of structure and agency: it entails the instrumentalisation of women and the restriction of their translocal visions, but at the same time women continuously negotiate, change and question this institution while constituting social space.

Nageeb stressed that she was using social space as a methodological orientation and approach, as a means of translating the everyday richness into academic text, but also as a frame, in the sense of orientation and social mapping of the specific location of Khartoum. This mapping works by conceptualising the field of study as arrangement of spaces. Some of them are territorial and physical with physical boundaries; others have situational and symbolic boundaries. But space is not only a methodological tool, Nageeb stressed. From a theoretical perspective it is also important to understand how space is constituted, especially because analysing gendered social spaces can provide the researcher with a pragmatic view of society and on how social change and restructuring are taking place.

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<sup>2</sup> After her doctoral dissertation Salma Nageeb started to work in the Research Project: "Negotiating Development: Translocal gendered spaces in Muslim societies" at the SDRC financed by the VWFoundation.



Nageeb pointed also at the empirical entrances that allowed her to theorise on the issue of space. One of the possible empirical entrances is the analysis of the way how time and space are compared and referred to in the narratives of the actors. Analytically, time and space are closely related to each other, because space is socially shaped and constituted and therefore embedded in time. Furthermore, for the subjects the comparison of their own time and spaces with past time and spaces or different spaces (comparative interaction, as Stauth calls it) is fundamental for positioning themselves in an increasingly globalised and translocalised social world. These kinds of comparisons are present in the everyday talks of the people comparing the present with the past, own habits with other, different ones. They obviously contain information about the past and about other places, but at the same time they express the very present and the very 'here'. This comparative perspective is closely related to the work of Stauth and Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1985; Stauth, 2000b), who worked on subjects' techniques to occupy space and to construct different views of this space. The focus on comparative interaction brings together different levels of cultural forces: local, translocal, past oriented and also future oriented.

A second empirical entrance is the body and the position of the body in space. Nageeb makes clear that she wants to go beyond talking about symbols like the *hijab* or 'beards' when analysing the body. She instead refers to the body, to gestures and socialisation as a kind of practical mastery of the social field and its division. This can be analysed in everyday situations, observing women and their embodied practises in different spaces. For example, when a stranger enters a female defined room, women will immediately cover their heads. This can be analysed as a kind of practical mastery of the social field reflected through orienting the body. This reorientation of the body in everyday practices is very important as it challenges the concept of private and public as separate spheres, by showing the situational character of their borders. Nageeb claims that it is necessary to analyse the dimension of knowledge and how knowledge is activated in positioning a specific cultural signifier.

The comparative perspective brings in the wider social reality, the transcultural dimension, the time dimension of social space, the body, the everyday knowledge and the positioning of the self in the social field. Nageeb approached the social space by grasping on the one hand the nature of the social restructuration as imposed by the project of Islamisation and the way this leads to a gender segmentation of space at the societal level. On the other hand, by

grasping the common sense world, the everyday social and symbolic interaction as shaped by the nature of social order and structure. Both levels, the processes of wider social restructuration and the everyday practices are being connected and brought together in the intermediary concept of social space.

In her empirical work, Nageeb analysed how two different groups of women, one religious group, called the Mosque Group, and one Gender group, constitute social space and how this process of the constitution of social space is leading to social restructuration within the context of Islamisation.

The Gender Group is a group of educated professional women, lawyers, doctors, etc. who are active in the field of gender equality, development, peace or environment or any of the global development issues. This group started in 1994 trying to get registered as a NGO working on social and development issues. Their request was however refused by the state, because at that time, the state was very strict about registering NGOs. When their request was refused, they decided to come together informally every 2 to 3 weeks to discuss the issues they were interested in. Nowadays, there are three of such groups in Khartoum consisting usually of 15-30 women. They gather in what they consider an important female space of networking, of support, of strategising, of solidarity. Despite the fact that nowadays it is allowed to register groups as NGOs, the women are still keeping this space to contemplate and exchange ideas about certain issues. They meet monthly in one of the houses of the women. Each of them contribute something to eat and they spend 3-4 hours discussing topics like the Convention of Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), how to link with the network 'Women Living under Muslim Laws', or female circumcision. These groups of women perceive the process of Islamisation as a politically dangerous project. They criticise the project as one which is based on an orientation to the past in the Arab Island without adequate consideration to the local Sudanese tradition and that the Islam of the Islamists became a political monopoly that hinders real progress and development. By the state these groups are perceived as Western influenced since they are also discussing topics like human rights.

The Mosque Group is a completely different group of women. They are housewives who meet 2 to 3 times per week in the mosque to study the Qur'an. The teacher who leads the

group is one of them with more knowledge about reading the Qur'an in the correct way. In most cases, these teachers are returnees from Saudi Arabia. These religious groups see the Islamisation process differently from the gender group. They see it as a *sakwa*, i.e. as clean and not dirtied by tradition. Tradition for them is not related to the true Islam. By the Islamist state they are considered as a good example and indicator of the success of the Islamisation process, since people voluntarily take to this kind of grouping and gathering.

Comparing the two groups, Nageeb juxtaposed the vision of the Gender Group which is seen as Western and considers the process of Islamisation as a monopoly of the Islamist state and the vision of the Mosque Group which sees the process of Islamisation as cleaning Islam from the dirt of tradition. She could also identify differences in the ways the women in these two groups constituted their social space as political activists. While the women of the Gender Group could delegate certain domestic tasks to their husbands, e.g. to take care for the children when they are at the meetings, and in this way renegotiate gender relations and widen their own space for political activism, the women from the Mosque Group transferred some of their domestic duties to the mosques e.g. taking the children with them to the mosque and paying the Imam to take care of them. Doing this they transform the mosque through their physical presence.

The women of the Gender Group come to their meetings dressed in colourful national dresses and beautiful tops. This reflects their ambivalent discourse on tradition and modernity. They emphasise the Sudanese tradition of being Muslim and doing this they clearly distance themselves as much from the 'liberal' women of the 60s who were influenced by the wave of Western educated people, mainly men, as from new Islamic practices like the hijab (new hijab) and new Islamic schools related to a translocal Islam of the state. Muslim Sisters have their own political agenda of authenticating discourse: Global issues like human rights are translated into a local Sudanese frame of how to be a Muslim. They reject the trans-local Islam of the state by emphasising the unique features of a traditional Sudanese Islam and of being Muslim. Besides referring to tradition, they still constitute a major modernising force in Islam, as they seek for a way of ending the monopoly of the Islamists through a new way of reading the Qur'an. They themselves are translocally connected with similar groups in other countries which are reading the Qur'an in a feminist way and seeking feminist contextualised interpretations. Through this new ways of reading the Qur'an, they confront the Islamic resources with new global issues of gender, human rights, and peace. They construct a 'new tradition' by using global development

concepts of human and gender rights to explain everyday life of Sudanese women, be it marriage, divorce, or political participation.

On the other hand the women of the Mosque Group form their space in the mosque. Here they do more than study Qur'an. Their space is used for counselling, discussing gender issues or political issues, for example 'September 11<sup>th</sup>'. The process of debating in the mosque transforms the mosque physically. Now most of the newly built mosques include a women's quarter which was not the case in the old Sufi mosques. Nageeb visited 13 such mosques which have women's quarters. They further transform the mosque by transferring the social events to the mosque, e.g. celebrating a woman's return from Egypt. The mosque is thus appropriated by the women and transformed into a public space.

### **Public spheres in Muslim societies: Discussion with Armando Salvatore**

**Armando Salvatore**<sup>3</sup> started his talk by picking up several points from the former discussion. His point of departure was how to deal with religion and especially with Islam from a sociological perspective. Here the issue of ethnocentricity as discussed earlier comes in, because dealing with Islam, he argued, means dealing with Europe and the boundaries of Europe and with the question to what extent European social theory can claim the right to make and to command interpretations of different social worlds. Nevertheless he rejected the dilemma of being eurocentric or not eurocentric because he doubts that there can be a somehow generalised knowledge of what this 'euro' is centred on. He moved from the premise that he is not obsessed with explaining Islam as a religion from an insider's point of view. He commented that the richness of social science lies in networking and interfacing and understanding each other coming from very different epistemological traditions. One way of networking can be the shared passion to re-problematise an issue. The issue he wanted to bring into the central focus is the issue of practical rationality which he saw as a recurrent theme in Lachenmann's and Nageeb's talks. This is a common topic that is also discussed by interesting writers of Western social theory. In several cases this interest in practical reasoning captures the fascination with religion or with something which is constructed as completely alien. Referring to Gramsci, Salvatore argued that one discovers that there are

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<sup>3</sup> Armando Salvatore, Institute of Social Science at the Humboldt University Berlin.

social groups, like, as Gramsci saw, peasants in Southern Italy during the time between the two world wars, who are trapped in some kind of religious primitivism but who at the same time have a kind of latent passion for justice and also the capacity to construct creative collective action despite their very precarious living conditions. Here we see a sense of disgust which complements the sense of respect and which has stirred the interests of social philosophers and theorists while talking about religion and religious movements. This ambivalence can limit the scientific capacity to capture what is really distinctive in the practical rationality of the underprivileged classes. Yet he would distinguish this kind of interest from other approaches, as e.g. Robert Putnam's approach, a quite well-known and very influential scholar in conceptualising and re-defining concepts of social trust and social capital, civil society and civic action (Putnam/ Leonardi/ Nanetti, 1993). What he uses and what is captivating is a kind of North-South cosmology which can be applied in different contexts. Within the scholar's dilemma between disgust and respect for such practical knowledge lies the conflict of several modes of practical reason which most of the times are based on actors' interest. However, practical rationality does go beyond simple interests into an older realm which has been neglected or erased by the civil society approach from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to date. This older approach that fascinated theorists like Bourdieu and Kuhn, is about re-naming and re-framing the horizons of justice and ultimate goal of social action. This by definition is a contested field. In Salvatore's opinion, one cannot speak here of negotiation, but rather of fights, conflicts and strategic withdrawals. These facets should be included into the notion of negotiation, as a specific kind of agency, instead of being collapsed into the idea of a socially responsible and interest-conscious agent like in the civil society approach.

Salvatore argued that there are indeed two conflicting interpretations of rationality. In his interpretation the emphasis lies on traditions. He stressed that when he talks about tradition, he is talking about one type of practical rationality which is linked eminently and passionately to a notion of justice (Salvatore, 2001). He agreed that in everyday life this kind of justice is evident in social work or solidarity associations which might be found in different contexts and maybe sustained by a different kind of ethos of the common good (Eickelman/ Salvatore, 2002) which cannot in his opinion be integrated into the civil society concept. He went on to emphasise that this is just another mode of the civil. He gave the example of Reema Hammami, an anthropologist from Palestine, Birzeit University, who is researching women groups, both

Muslim and non Muslim. She found that because Palestine in the 80s and 90s has been the object of aid and intervention by international donors promoting certain NGOs which correspond to a certain model of civil society, a process of hyper professionalism developed, which at the end created an unbridgeable distance to the needs of the population. Whereas in Islamic networks, where women have played a crucial role, and in social associations run by women, there had always been a practice of sharing information about who is in need of what. Through this practice information is not just transmitted but is discussed and revised. This is a kind of social intelligence coming close to the idea of a collective deliberation. However, it is not a collective deliberation and a public sphere in the sense of Habermas. It does not necessarily produce the type of notion of public good that gets hijacked by the modern state.

At this point, Lachenmann intercepted referring to the idea that Islamic associations are closer to a practical rationality and that through their specific ways of sharing information between different societal levels complex processes of knowledge exchange are promoted. This idea would exactly fit within the framework of development sociology about the construction of knowledge, critical knowledge and the conceptualisation of society from above. Moreover, it points at Habermas' notion of the technocratic state, implicating that the development institutions would make people clients of the social state without taking into account the practical rationality or the life world. At the same time she opposed Salvatore's viewpoint that the non-Islamic networks are part of a civil society whilst Islamic networks are not.

Salvatore emphasised the he shared Lachenmann's concern not to perpetuate this opposition. He gave the example of a current research project in Palestine in which he is involved that analyses what is specific in these processes of sharing knowledge and possessing knowledge by Islamic NGOs, but which is not by necessity only Islamic. What all NGO activists, Islamic or non Islamic, religious or non religious, share is their ability to observe society and their will to claim their rights. Doing this, they might fall into the trap of dependency on the discourses of Western donors and at the same time harbour professionalism in the sense of watching what is en vogue and what they can claim. Meanwhile they are prudent enough not to come into confrontation with the wider projects of the state, for example in the Palestinian case not to confront the military occupation and the Palestinian authority. However at the grassroots level there is the process of sharing these experiences of non Islamic and Islamic

women groups.

From a theoretical position Lachenmann argued against discussing the public sphere or social spaces under the heading of 'grassroots level'. This would not come up to the idea of public sphere. The problem, Lachenmann elaborated, is very often that women groups are taken to be only at the 'grassroots' and separate from the public sphere. In this kind of dichotomisation, women cannot be captured as actors neither of the public sphere nor of a civil society. She mentioned that the Bielefeld approach focuses on agency, i.e. on how social actors bring their everyday life into the public sphere. To use the concept of grassroots in this context immediately erodes the theoretical debate about the interconnectedness of women groups at the basis and the public sphere or civil society.

Salvatore defended his point by saying that he does not see any major contradiction between the kind of networking and activities that women groups do and the concept of public sphere per se. It is rather the Habermasian approach that presupposes a higher level of collective deliberation, what means that it has to be rejected at this level. This partly stems from the debates of the 90s which tried to make the notion of the civil society and the public sphere more ecumenical. In his opinion, Habermas did not capture these different public spheres. He thus agrees with the early Habermas that the latter's notion of the public sphere cannot be applied anywhere else or even have a capacity to be perpetuated in the future of European nation states and bureaucratic democracies as he saw them. There is a sense of puzzlement about how this can be adapted to the different realities. He however agreed with Lachenmann on Habermas' view that civil society should not be related to normative values and that rather the actors' perspective should be taken seriously.

A question from the audience was posed to Salvatore concerning the kinds of rationalities he was talking about. Salvatore clarified that it is only one type of rationality that is the practical rationality in essence. This rationality questions the common good and tries to reframe and rename it or redefine the common good. There is a passage from the individual 'I' to the collective 'we', a passage from the ego to a collective will or the sharing of a common good. Lachenmann mediated against dealing with the common good as a 'goal'. She argued that the common good is a frame of reference of how society should be, a kind of vision which one

cannot name a goal. The concept 'goal' is entailed in Weber's concept of 'Zweckrationalität', which is only one dimensional and not at all holistic. Nageeb interjected by saying that directing practical rationality to the common good misses to account for how everyday practices are linked to civil society. Practical rationality should not conceptually be linked to the discussion about a common good.

Salvatore emphasised that the core of the classic discourse about civil society is about the common good and that a radical change was only introduced when civil society was related to an emerging commercial and industrial society. It is this notion of civil society that is not universal. Therefore the latter and all other discussions can only be understood by reference to some notion of the common good. It is a continuous process, an adaptation and sometimes a clash. Andrea Lang<sup>4</sup> went in to defend the notion of negotiation saying that when actors start to question the status quo, the taken for granted, then there is a clash. This clash can be an open conflict but can also take the form of negotiation.

Georg Stauth came back to the notion of the public sphere and the civil society, pointing out that there is power and state and a kind of institution building and competition for it. He said that there is no concept of civil society if there is no access to rules. Lachenmann interjected here by saying that gender analysis looks at power relations and how one can access these rules. There is an interface to rule, where the analysis lies in trying to see the gendered structuration of spaces and the gendered negotiation of what means political participation. This is how at the centre the public space concept is used. She does not say that the state cannot intervene and break up everything. Stauth thereafter asked why Salvatore and Lachenmann were using the concept of power and power relations. Salvatore explicated his use of power and power relations by giving the example of Palestine and the research being done on Lebanon and the Shi'a networks around Hizbollah and other socio-political groups including militant women networks. These are all contexts where the inner instance of governance had been transformed by how the governance of international organisation complemented the latency or deficits of the state. He further explicated that he does not know whether the relative relaxation of the state that allows for the distinctive autonomy of such Islamic networks especially in south Lebanon will be a continuing or a stable factor. He

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<sup>4</sup> Andrea Lang is a doctoral student at the SDRC.



however agreed that through the relative absence of the state, the networks are now exposed to other instances of global power. These instances are interesting because here it is not the discourse and the funding which is limiting but the unpredictability of how it relates to the oscillating state's determinations and power. What is more or less likely to happen is the encroachment of the state and then the game is over. Either the international organisations go home or they see the consequences of their actions and accommodate to the logic of socio-political action of groups that do not fit the idea of civil society NGOs. But if they do so, they will have to face the reconstructed state, which, again, both their discourse and their funding patterns do not seem to seriously allow.

Nageeb made an observation that she sees the mosques as independent spaces and not necessarily connected with the state. Stauth immediately came in to oppose Nageeb's view. He stated that there is no concept of Islam beyond the state. The state encroaches even in the mosques and more especially when one talks about public policy. Public policy cannot exist without the state. He continued to elaborate that at the moment in Sudan as in Egypt there is no public interest that is not regulated by the state. Even publications for example newspapers have to pass through government inspection. Islam is concomitant with the state. He further supported his views by saying that he was speaking on the conceptual strategies and trying to link these with social theory. He was therefore questioning the whole issue of whether we can even think of a concept of Islam within this theoretical context and on the various levels of research beyond the issue that it has been part of a global track. Meanwhile this global track is vanishing or is being re-oriented or reached its deadlocks. At the same time, we can see that within the society itself we can witness growing poverty and more needs at the grassroots level. There is a threat of tradition or state control through needs. These needs means that notions of being clean, polite, civilising oneself through dressing is being threatened.

Ikhlas Osman<sup>5</sup> agreed that women's activities in the mosques support even indirectly state interests. In the case these activities contradict the state interests they will be confiscated. Though at the moment many groups are acting in private they will be abolished at the same moment they contradict the state interest. Salma Nageeb defended her opinion that the groups will not be abolished, but will rather change their strategies.

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<sup>5</sup> Ikhlas Osman is a doctoral student at the SDRC.

Alexander Horstmann<sup>6</sup> interjected that the early Habermas had been criticised for his concept of the public sphere. This ‘public sphere’ in the perception of Habermas was a kind of an iron cage where nothing could contradict it. However, in his later works he developed the notion of the technology of self, which can be compared to the notion of agency as discussed in Nageeb’s presentation. Horstmann stated that women are not representing an ideological concept of the public sphere but rather they are using the technologies of the self for discipline and order. There is therefore some appropriation.

Salvatore pointed out the necessity to mention the conflict between theorising and conceptualising which in his opinion cannot be reconciled. He commented that there is indeed a separation of what he was trying to say and the technologies of self. He would rather stress the level of interaction which is produced through the motivational prism. He however said that he did not want to discuss this motivational prism. The circulation of power is very much between the self and a higher instance. There is a hierarchical instance which disciplines the self and activates the resources of the self. This higher instance might be Christianity, stoicism, or the modern state. These are the models which the ego-alter interaction is based upon which makes sharing possible in interaction. In other words, this is a plea to focus on technologies of interaction and not of the self, the latter being, if anything, inherent in the former. If we do not do that, we just duplicate a theory or a theology that is only good for the self-understanding of a society or a group, but not for social analysis.

Lachenmann asked Salvatore what he meant by his concept of authority. She pointed out Salvatore’s criticism of Habermas saying that Habermas believes that everybody is knowledgeable in a public sphere. The question however is what the authority in Islamic knowledge is. Salvatore agreed that authority should be re-problematised in social theory. There is so much authority which is disguised when analysing collective deliberation or in situations of communicative interaction. That is probably the sense of “political spirituality,” as Foucault developed it. What makes authority basic in interaction and co-operation is the ambivalence of charismatic authority on the one hand and less charismatic or even pure contractual relationships or pure friendship on the other hand. Authority is mediating

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<sup>6</sup> Alexander Horstmann did his PhD at the SDRC.

relationships in order to do social work. For example in Shi'a women's networks in Lebanon one cannot imagine the working of such networks without the authority vested in such personalities from Shi'a agiography like Sayyida Zeynab, a saint that is a model of action and interaction for social work. Interestingly, however, this type of authority is only mildly mediated by the clerics and is much more directly incorporated in their actions by committed women at various levels of responsibility.

### **Public sphere in Muslim societies**

In his talk, **Georg Stauth**<sup>7</sup> reflected on the shortcomings of traditional modernisation theory and gave an introduction to the writings of Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (Stauth, 1998a). The rigid antagonism that had been built up by modernisation theory between traditional and modern society, locating religion merely in the traditional realm, cannot be maintained. Tradition has rather to be seen as a constitutive element of modernity, as it is one of the major fields in the construction of modernity. This criticism of modernisation theory led to a paradigmatic change in social science developing a new perspective that no longer focused on culture as a framework for modernisation, but would regard modernity itself as the culture of the modern world. This new perspective also includes a strong comparative basis, linking religious traditions in Western and non Western civilisations and perceiving them as competing concepts of sociality, with alternative offers for the relationship of tradition and modernity. Comparative studies of religion and cultures, of multiple modernities, as Eisenstadt put it, are an attempt to continue on the one hand what Weber once started with his sociological analysis of world religions and to promote on the other hand the idea that non Western civilisations develop separate and alternative paths to modernity (Stauth, 1998b; Stauth, 2000a).

The debate about 'public sphere' and 'public religion' is based on a framework of classical sociology of modernity, which divides the social sphere into life world experiences on the one and institutional realms on the other side. Both spheres are linked through the process of rationalisation, as the individual through individual practices rationalises her/his life within the context of institutional and intellectual rationalisation and the enhancement for institutional rights. This divide of classical sociology can be observed in Eisenstadt's writings

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<sup>7</sup> Georg Stauth is private lecturer at the SDRC.

as well, as his major focus lies on the organisation of the social sphere concerning the access to power, that is the access to institutional and governance power.

Stauth further stressed Eisenstadt's critiques on the divide between popular and official Islam. In this argument the great variety and particularity of popular Islamic practices in different regions, due to the continuity of different pre-Islamic cultural traits and different historical contexts of Islamisation, are opposed to a text based 'official Islam' which is conceptualised as promoting universal interpretation in an universal language by a specialised class all over the Islamic world. Eisenstadt claims that this rigid divide is not maintainable, without however going so far to question the autonomy of the *ulama*. Eisenstadt wants to rethink the divide of public and popular Islam in the sense that what was formerly considered to be 'public Islam' comes out of the governance sphere and reaches the public sphere and is linked more to popular practices. But at the same time this type of public religion has only very limited access to central rule. Because of this limited access to formalised central rule and power, there is space for a public sphere within a traditional context of Muslim societies, which can develop a very specific vitality.

Stauth puts forward the concept of an Islamic public sphere, since it is very progressive by creating a linkage between institutions and private life. Within that space movements with transformational character can develop. The specificity of the Islamic public sphere is the articulation of collective improvements, beyond the sphere of the rulers, never through modes of official governance. The sphere of Islamic groups is characterised 1) by an interlinking of private and governance spheres beyond face to face interactions in a Habermasian sense, that is communication and discourse about ideas beyond the face to face interaction, 2) by its reflexivity through debates about the common good, 3) by dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, 4) by the flexibility of its boundaries, 5) by the recognition of the Other and 6) by the stabilisation through independence from the political arena. The point that civil society groups do not have any access to official governance is turned around into the argument that within the realm of the public sphere actors like Muslim groups have the power to create a vibrant civil society that goes beyond the modes of official governance.

Referring to Lachenmann's anti-eurocentrism argument Stauth stressed Eisenstadt's demand

to take into account the internal dynamics of non European civilisations and interpret them in their own terms. This methodological approach opens up new perspectives on Islamic societies and questions Western experience's privilege of interpretation.

Following Stauth's reading of Eisenstadt, the relation between the public sphere and the political decision making in Islamic societies would be characterised as one of separation which leads to the internal return of the establishment of pristine regimes through the conjunction of proto-fundamentalist movements and tribal intrusion of leadership. Eisenstadt's main argument is that societal renovation does not come through governance but through the internal return of the establishment of pristine regimes within the society. This permanent reinstallation of autocratic regimes can later on lead to governance building, but in the first instance it is independent from it.

After having developed Eisenstadt's argument, Stauth pointed out his major criticism of Eisenstadt. He firstly criticised the concept of a 'Muslim society' or 'Muslim public sphere' per se, as it ignores the existence of a secularised sphere with secular institutions in all these so called Muslim societies. Secondly Stauth criticised that Sectarianism and sectarian renovation is not understood as an inner source of religion for social change, but as an external intrusion within the tribal context, putting the tribal out of its military context and putting it into a pristine religious sectarian context. Although Eisenstadt has always put so much impetus on taking up the perspective of non Western societies in the analysis, this notion leads to an impingement of Western concepts and any profound cross cultural discourse is systematically eliminated.

Stauth further criticised, that Eisenstadt is outdated because of his clear institutionalist background. The mere rebuilding of the divides of institutionalism does not take into account the power instances within the private sphere itself, as elaborated by Foucault. What Foucault made clear is that power does not have to be channelled through institutions within the rationalisation process. Eisenstadt's research perspective that analyses exclusively the contribution to the reconstruction of power institutions neglects internal dynamics of the construction of power within different social realms.

Salvatore opened the discussion with pleading for Casanova's approach (Casanova, 1994) which he considers more sophisticated in analysing the production of power in micro spaces. This has to be the contribution of a comparative theory as also Stauth suggests it. Salvatore stressed the ambiguous relation between public sphere and government institutions. Pfaff-Czarnecka questioned the equalisation of tribalism and tradition with rural life and of modernity with urban life. From empirical studies in transnational migration one can learn, she argued, that diaspora groups in the cities tend to reconstruct tradition more intensively than the rural population at home, so there is no obvious break between tradition and modernity. Stauth pointed out that Eisenstadt's basic interest was the urban intellectual, the positioning of intellectuals in the modern world and the question of heterodoxy and orthodoxy.

Lachenmann argued against the dichotomisation of micro and macro levels and against an emphasis on cultural and religious boundaries between Western and non-Western societies. She plead for the focus on cultural interfaces, on modes of interaction and contact of Western and non Western societies, and on common knowledge. She furthermore criticised the orientalist tendency of Eisenstadt, which she saw reflected in his idealisation of tribalism.

Stauth argued that the rediscovery of religion as a political force in the global world has to be seen as a critique of an over-secularised society and clearly threatens global peace. He pleaded for putting religion into its proper place, especially in the sociological debate about the public sphere. Religion has to be analysed within the framework of modernity. It has to be recognised as a decisive power, and should not longer be ignored like in classical modernisation theory. The success of religion in the modern world lies thus in the inner construction of modernity and sociology. Both "God" and "theory" served as a black box of transcendence which legitimised the control of a certain class over another class. The transcendence lies in the fact that something which is no longer related to the immediate face to face interaction is used to control the behaviour within the immediate life world. The comparative perspective should focus on how this inner machine of modernisation works in different civilisations, without presupposing and articulating a clash. This should be the task of modern science.

Salvatore criticised the strong impetus on life world, the potentials of the self and the private

sphere of a sociological branch, which he denominated post-Protestant. To think about religion merely as a phenomenon of the private sphere leads to a conceptual reduction of religion and hinders to explain the ongoing success of religious organisations as political actors. This reduction of religion to the sphere of the self however is a relatively late development, which is based on the assumption that social reality is shaped by individual interests and interests again are shaped by individual passions. This reasoning about the common good, which is completely different to his own position, does not take into account the institutional rooting of Protestantism and Calvinism, which was an unique experience of European Protestant countries.

Finally taking the influence of the *ulama* on the public sphere as an example, questions of power, authority and social hierarchies in the public sphere were taken up. Lachenmann defended Salvatore who conceptually connects authority and public sphere. Stauth stressed the changing character of such power relations by taking the example of Egypt. Whereas today the *ulama* have clear formalised and institutionalised authority, in the 60s their authority was much weaker and fatwa did not have as much authority as it has today.

### **Discourses on Islam in the field of transnational migration**

**Petra Dannecker**<sup>8</sup> presented some aspects of her work on Bangladeshi migrant workers in Malaysia. She focused on the role religion plays in the migration process.

The migration of Bangladeshi workers to Malaysia is a relatively new phenomenon, which has to be analysed in the context of the uneven economic development within Asia. The rapid economic development in countries, such as Singapore, Malaysia or South Korea, was accompanied by a shortage of local workers due to demographic and educational changes. Hence these countries developed into very attractive destinations for migrants, especially from Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines. Historically, the main destination for Bangladeshi migrant workers had been the Middle East. In the late 80s however, due to the Gulf War and to the higher salaries paid in the South East Asian newly industrialised countries, the direction of the migration movements changed and more and more Bangladeshi

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<sup>8</sup> Petra Dannecker is lecturer at the SDRC.

workers migrated to Malaysia. At the beginning of the 90s the Malaysian and Bangladeshi governments signed a bilateral contract to regulate and control the numeric transfer of migrants, yearly quotas were negotiated. Although the majority of male Bangladeshi migrants are still migrating to the Middle East countries, Malaysia developed into an important receiving country as well. For Bangladeshi female migrants Malaysia became the most important receiving countries because of the opportunities to get employed in export-oriented industries (Dannecker, 2001). The reason why the number of female migrants decreased lately was discussed by Dannecker in the second half of the presentation after she outlined the motivations of the male migrants.

In Bangladesh in public discourse, in the political arena as well as in newspaper articles Malaysia is portrayed as a preferable destination for Bangladeshi male migrants because of the special brotherhood between the two countries. Recruitment agencies in Bangladesh as well as the Bangladeshi government are emphasising a special relationship between the countries based on religion. This discourse is maintained by the Bangladeshi government despite the fact that the Malaysian government froze the agreement in 1995 already. Dannecker cited newspaper articles to reveal this construction process and gave an example from an observation she made at the airport in Dhaka. There she observed a crowd of young men wearing T-shirts with the slogan “Bangladesh - Malaysian Muslim Brotherhood” on the front and with the name of the agency on the back. All of them were Bangladeshi migrants travelling to Malaysia. The information that Bangladeshi migrants are welcomed in Malaysia because of their religious background is also transported through the social networks of the migrants.

Despite of these attempts to construct a common identity on the basis of Muslim brotherhood Bangladeshi migrants experience discrimination and stigmatisation in Malaysia. The interviews with Bangladeshi migrants in Malaysia revealed that they have the feeling not to be very much welcomed in Mosques in Malaysia for example and that the Malay population is not very interested in them.



Since 1995 the rules and regulations governing in-migration are continuously changing. Thus from the estimated 1 million Bangladeshi migrants living in Malaysia, 500.000 are assumed to live there without any documents even though the majority entered the country legally but became “illegal” due to overextension of their stays or the fact that the factories employing them were changing names. In the year 2002 an amnesty for all illegal migrants was issued. At the same time, however, the Malaysian government made efforts to expel all illegal migrants, with especially harsh measures against Bangladeshi migrants.

Nevertheless Bangladeshi male migrants are still attracted to Malaysia by the image of a common Muslim identity, although the policies have changed making it even more difficult for the Bangladeshi migrants to stay and to find employment opportunities. The migrants developed several strategies to cope with the increased discrimination on one hand and the constructed image of brotherhood on the other. They are for example involved in complex processes of distancing themselves from other migrants especially from those coming from non Muslim countries like the Philippines, Myanmar, or India. The migrants try to stabilise their position in Malaysia by constructing boundaries between themselves and the other migrant groups and by emphasising the common religious basis with the Malay population and hence their closeness to the Islamisation process in Malaysia. At the meantime they are also constructing boundaries with regard to other local groups, like the local Indian and local Chinese population. Especially in the case of the local Indian population this leads to very conflictive interactions and negotiations. Not only the fact that the majority of the local Indians are non-Muslims, also the darker skin of the majority of the local Indians coming originally from the South of India is used by the Bangladeshi migrants workers as a means for distinction. To justify their stay in Malaysia Bangladeshi migrants not only use religious but also strong racist arguments to include themselves into the national Muslim-Malay discourse and to exclude the other ethnic groups, especially the local Indians.

Due to the translocal media flows connecting India, Bangladesh and Malaysia these racist arguments become very important in the Malaysian local context. Hindi-Movies are very popular in Malaysia and Bangladeshi male migrants are being perceived as looking like the movie stars and are thus being considered as sexually attractive for local women. Although

this sounds grotesque, the Malaysian government has defined this fact as a social problem: the social problem of local women getting married to foreign, especially unskilled Bangladeshi workers. The Malaysian government for example has announced that Bangladeshi migrants are not allowed to marry local women. They face deportation if they act against this regulation. Malay women who get married to a Bangladeshi migrant have to leave the country if they do not agree to get a divorce.

All these facts stress the very complex and ambivalent situation of Bangladeshi migrants in Malaysia and the contradictory use of religion in the discourse about migration, national identity and integration. Officially it is propagated, that Bangladeshi migrants are welcomed because of the common religious background, on the other hand due to economic problems in 1997 and 2001 the government tries to reduce the number of foreign workers, including the Bangladeshi migrants.

In the second half of her presentation Dannecker focused on female Bangladeshi migration to Malaysia. In Bangladesh the discourse about female migration and Islam is shaped in a totally different way. In this discourse in Bangladesh first of all a clear distinction is made between the migration to the Middle East and the migration to Malaysia (Dannecker, 2002). The perception of women migrating to the Middle East is completely different from that of women migrating to Malaysia. Although the government is generally against the migration of women, it is especially reluctant to female migration to the Middle East. Whenever there is any discussion about Bangladeshi female labour migration to the Middle East there is always the notion of the danger of sexual harassment and of male oppression. Whereas in the case of the migration to the Middle East women are constructed as victims, in the case of Malaysia it is the other way round. Here women are constructed as immoral and sexually active subjects who get involved with men of different ethnic backgrounds and who do not resist Western consumerism. Therefore hardly any woman who returned from Malaysia spoke open about her experiences on the contrary they tried to hide that they had been living and working there.

In the narratives of the Bangladeshi women who migrated to the Middle East, religious affiliation and Islamic practices played a very important role. They often stressed that they have been in the heart of the Muslim world that they even have been to Mecca, which of

course is a great thing for women who have never been abroad. In the narratives of women who have been to Malaysia the issue of religion is taken up differently. They often argue that especially the Malay population knows exactly the rules and regulations of their common religion, but that it does not know how to practice it. They compared their own practices with those of the Malay population, without taking into account the different traditions and the influence that *adat* has on Malay Islam. Furthermore these Bangladeshi women are confronted with stereotypes about their non-Malay Islam. One of these stereotypes is female circumcision. Being confronted with these images by their Malay colleagues, the female Bangladeshi factory workers are getting involved into a translocal discussion about heterogeneity of Islam and Muslim traditions and practices.

Through migration and the process of social change discourses of national identity and Islamic religion are gaining more and more importance. This is especially interesting in a country like Bangladesh where the national identity was never based on Islam or on religion due to the historical fact, that Bangladesh gained its independence from Muslim Pakistan, which was perceived as the last colonial power that occupied Bangladesh. To achieve independence from Pakistan, culture and language were used to construct a national identity. Especially in this context it is interesting how new discussions in the migrant communities but also on the local level in Bangladesh develop and change the discourses about religion. The fact that the majority of the migrants worked and lived primarily in other Muslim countries initiates new negotiations and also a change of perspective.

In the discussion Salvatore highlighted the oppressive character of the Malaysian state, which instrumentalises religion and Islamic traditions for the production of state power, the control of population and the economic development. He also stressed the importance of the new dynamics which migration and the new religious discourses of migrants, e.g. about rules and practices of Islam, have for the creation of new local and translocal aspects of Islam. Pfaff-Czarnecka emphasised the continuous play with symbolic boundaries in the context of migration and the importance of signs for constructing and deconstructing these boundaries again. Referring to these comments Dannecker stressed the constructed and strategic character of the boundaries drawn by the Malaysian government. Despite the historic affinity

with the Philippines for example, these migrants are no longer welcome because of their religious background, instead Bangladeshi migrant workers are favoured. This shift in migration policies is embedded in special features of a process of Islamisation in a multiethnic society. Muslim migrants and other ethnic groups are instrumentalised in an Islamist state project to legitimise and foster Islamisation. But of course the boundaries drawn by the government are not clear cut, as the discussions about the Bangladeshi-Malay marriage showed. On the one hand Muslim migrants are included and used as allies against the non Muslim groups in an Islamist discourse of the state, on the other hand migrants are excluded and stigmatised as enemies in a nationalist discourse.

Other topics which were raised in the discussion were the relationship of processes of nation-building and gender and the influences of migration on the relations between the different ethnic groups in Malaysia. Concerning nation-building, gender, and citizenship, Dannecker stressed the ideological interconnectedness of the three aspects and the instrumentalisation of gender relations for constructing a national identity. Concerning the relations between the different ethnic groups in Malaysia, Dannecker argued, that the immigration to Malaysia was not disturbing the ethnic balance. To the contrary, it seems that migration fosters an interethnic dialogue about what it means to be Malaysian. Migration caused a public discussion where concepts like citizenship are newly negotiated.

Finally, Salvatore compared the Malaysian case with the discussions about migration in the Italian parliament. Here too, religion is applied in a very ambiguous way. On the one hand catholic migrants are preferred and not Muslims. On the other hand it is clear that also racism comes in, because Filipino migrants despite of being Catholic are not welcome at all. Dannecker answered that the situation in Malaysia is even more complex, because the formerly constructed common identity on the basis of religion is now being deconstructed. In the current discourses they don't talk about a common Islam any more, but about an 'Indonesian Islam' and a 'Malay Islam'. So the government tries to politicise differences within the South East Asian Muslim community for political reasons, in order to legitimise their stricter migration policy. And this is once again socially fragmented, as the Bangladeshi scholars teaching at the Islamic University of Kuala Lumpur are not included in this discussion. They are perceived as religious experts.

## Islamic translocality in Eurasia

**Markus Kaiser**<sup>9</sup> gave an overview over concepts used in the Soviet time and in the era of transformation to analyse Islam. In the soviet time Islam was tackled first of all as 'Official Islam'. 'Official Islam' was introduced by the soviet government, to cope with the unpleasant persistence of religiosity among the population of the central Asian republics and to control this potential danger. This was achieved by embedding Islam into Marxism and workers' ideology and by institutionalising this soviet re-reading of Islam with the introduction of four official Mufties. The concepts of 'parallel Islam' or 'folk Islam' were developed to cope with the religious practices on the basis, with religious activists and dissidents. These practices were conceived as parallel structures and were repressed by the state in a Draconian way. In the era of transformation the concept of 'secular Islam' replaced the concept of 'official Islam', which is not used anymore. The concept of 'Arabic Islam', which has also come up in the post soviet era, reflects the activities of Arabic Islamic organisations, e.g. from Saudi Arabia, in the area (mosque building, foundation of madrasas) and is more ore less replacing the concept of a 'parallel structure'. A concept used in the Western literature which deals with these new translocal connections between Russia, Central Asia, the Middle East and also South East Asia is the term 'Trans-Islam'. Kaiser found it somehow tautological, because Islam is always 'trans' in the sense that the umma has no borders.

Kaiser focused on the importance of political Islam for the constitution of the transnational, geo-cultural space 'Eurasia' (Evers/ Kaiser, 2001). Besides ethnicity, pipelines, and trade, Islam and modern Islamic movements are crucial factors that integrate, constitute and shape this transnational space. Yet the architecture of Tashkent, the capital of Usbekistan, where sovietic and Islamic symbols melt together in the urban landscapes, reflects the hybridity of this space.

As a relatively young nation state Usbekistan undergoes deeply conflictive processes of nation building. In the discourse of the political elites three competing visions of the Usbekistan Nation State can be identified. These visions can be approached by broadening Simmel's term 'Vergesellschaftung' to 'Transvergesellschaftung' (Kaiser, 2001). Firstly,

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<sup>9</sup> Markus Kaiser is Lecturer of Development Studies at the SDRC.

there is a vision of a ‘post-soviet translocality’, which is promoted by a group of politicians closely linked to Moscow. The promoters of this vision are bureaucrats, who were educated in the soviet system, trained in Moscow and speak Russian. In this vision Usbekistan should follow the Russian model of social economic and political development and maintain close ties with the powerful neighbour. Secondly, there can be identified a vision of ‘Turkish nationalist translocality’, which is promoted by a group of political elite, which maintains close translocal ties with Turkey. It is their vision to transform Usbekistan into a clearly secular, but Turkish nationalist Nation state, following the Attaturk model. The majority of the activists promoting this vision is living in Turkish exile and is using modern media to create a translocal political arena for their visions. Thirdly, there is the vision of a ‘Trans-Islam’ or an ‘Islamic translocality’ which competes with the other two and which is promoted by translocally acting religious authorities. They want to establish a state following the examples of Pakistan or Saudi Arabia. These different groups and their visions shape the political landscape of the region and the competition between them can adopt very violent features, as the events in Chechnia show.

Salvatore opened the discussion leading the attention to the ambivalent techniques of the Soviet state to dominate the Islamic traditions in the area. He pointed out that the goal of soviet city planing was somehow to empty the social space of Islamic symbols and practices and to fill it with soviet symbols. In the same time some iconic symbols however were maintained and instrumentalised in soviet arquitecture as markers of national identity in order to sustain and create the idea of a union of different nationally defined soviet republics.

Nageeb questioned the validity of the concepts presented by Kaiser and criticised their latent ethnocentrism not reflecting the actors’ perspective. Thus they say more about the Western researcher, than about the subject of interest. Lachenmann as well interfered and challenged the term ‘Trans-Islam’. Translocal connections of Islamic religious experts have a very outstanding history. Therefore she suggested historically contextualised research about transnational or translocal Islam.

To conclude the workshop several doctoral students of the Research Centre (Ruth Klein-Heßling, Rosaline Achieng, Luise Steinwachs, Inez Kipfer, Hanadi A. Thaha, Ikhlas Osman)

presented their work and discussed it with Armando Salvatore.

## Conclusion

The aim of the workshop was to break the classic dichotomies of tradition and modernity, whereby religion and especially Islam had been clearly associated with tradition and pre-modern life. Rather, the growing importance of religious organisations as actors in the public sphere has to be seen as related to the inner dynamics of globalisation, and hence to modernity.

Islam today is clearly shaped by global dynamics and fosters global dynamics itself. Women groups in Sudan create their own re-readings of Islam in reference to global development concepts and transform the social space which the Islamist state assigned to them, as Nageeb showed. Kaiser and Dannecker illustrated how ambivalently Islam is embedded into discourses of nation building in Central and in South East Asia. Both could show that the phenomenon of Islamisation is closely related to processes of social transformation, modernisation, and transnational migration. Furthermore it was highlighted that translocal networks of Islamic organisations have an outstanding history.

Theoretical concepts like Habermas' 'public sphere' were intensely discussed and criticised. Habermas did not take into account any notion of 'knowledge' and the actor's perspective. Furthermore, his approach seems to be restrained to a specific epoch of European history and thus only partly useful for the analysis of current, trans-cultural dynamics. Because of his strict divide between the public and the private, the feminist critique of Habermas is still valid. Despite of these shortcomings the concept was supported, as it makes visible the intersections and interfaces of the state and non-state actors, as Islamic organisations. Salvatore stressed the importance of the 'common good' for all debates about the public sphere or civil society. For this purpose he linked practical rationality or practical knowledge with justice and tradition. The concept of 'social space' was promoted as a methodological and analytical tool to capture processes of social change in Muslim societies from a comparative perspective. This comparative perspective is useful to avoid the traps of ethnocentrism and to reflect on colonial legacies in a post-colonial world.

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