

Being Muslim in Europe - Orienting oneself in the context of “good” and “bad” diversity

Conference

Frankfurt: November 17 – November 18, 2023

The concept of “diversity” as a result of globalized and postmodern societies has gained momentum in Europe. When analysing the framework, however, it becomes clear that there is a discrepancy between “good” or legitimized forms of diversity and rather “bad” connoted categories. Against this background the question arises of how rather marginalized categories of diversity such as religious affiliation influence the orientation of concerned subjects inside the society and how this constructions are navigated and negotiated.

The conference is transdisciplinary in structure and offers an insight into the latest research and facilitates a platform for exchange. Looking at discourses on diversity and orientation in the fields of public discourse, education and youth as well as Islamic theology the aim is to discuss the questions of how diversity is constructed in present time, what allocations are attributed from internal and external perspectives and along with this what boundaries and belongings are constructed. In a further step a light is thrown at the emancipation strategies it in the context of a plural and post-secular society as well as the challenges that are faced.

The conference takes place in cooperation with the Academy for Islam in Research and Society (AIWG) at the Goethe-University Frankfurt as part of the project “Islamic-Theological Studies: Diversity and Orientation” of the Swiss Centre for Islam and Society.

Programme

Friday, November 17:

2.00 pm: Welcoming

2.30 pm: Opening speeches

- Bekim Agai, Academy for Islam in Research and Society (AIWG/Goethe-Universität Frankfurt)
- Hansjörg Schmid, Schweizerisches Zentrum für Islam und Gesellschaft (SZIG/CSIS, Universität Freiburg)

2.45 pm: Keynote 1 (*online stream available*)

- Monika Salzbrunn, Institut des Sciences Sociales des Religions, Université de Lausanne

Break

4.00 pm: Keynote 2 (*online stream available*)

- Mohammed Hashas, Department of Political Science, Luiss University of Rome

Break

5.15 pm: Panel 1

Diversity as a normative construction: 'Islam' and 'good' / 'bad' diversity in European social discourses

This panel will discuss how the notion of diversity is socially constructed within European socio-political discourses. By highlighting the normative character of this notion, it will show how Islam is situated within this discursive framework, particularly through the dichotomous construction of 'good' and 'bad' diversity. The panel will also attempt to show, through empirical analysis, the performative strategies developed by Muslim communities to emancipate themselves from essentialising interpretations of their multiple belonging.

- Schirin Amir-Moazami, Institute of Islamic Studies, Freie Universität Berlin
- Sébastien Dupuis, Schweizerisches Zentrum für Islam und Gesellschaft SZIG

7 pm: End of day one

Saturday, November 18:

9 am: Panel 2

Means of orientation: Young Muslims navigating multiple belongings in the context of diverse societies

This panel investigates the resources and challenges that Muslim youth experience within diverse societies, by focusing on mechanisms of boundary and belonging. Societal processes and debates such as narratives around the construction of an “us” and “them” dichotomy do not stop at the lives of young people and the spaces in which they move. Moreover, the panel aims at throwing a light on how the understanding of hybrid affiliations or multiple belongings can provide a way to emancipate oneself from imposed patterns and hence create other ways of self-positioning.

- Betül Karakoç, Institut für Pädagogik der Sekundarstufe, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt
- Zeinab Ahmadi, Schweizerisches Zentrum für Islam und Gesellschaft (SZIG)

Break

11 am: Panel 3

Negotiating and navigating diversity in Islamic knowledge discourses

In this panel we reflect on the conceptualisation and understanding of diversity within contemporary Islamic thought. Discussions will engage with theological, ethical and legal perspectives from various Islamic knowledge discourses. Our aim is to explore how these resources can inform and facilitate the negotiation and navigation of diverse social landscapes and contexts. The aim of this panel is to engage in an in-depth discussion of Islamic knowledge and its potential role in addressing the complexities of contemporary diversity.

- Yaser Ellethy, Head of the Centre for Islamic Theology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
- Dominik Müller, Schweizerisches Zentrum für Islam und Gesellschaft (SZIG)

12.30 pm: Synthesis

1 pm: Lunch

2 pm: End of day two