Secularists, Democratic Islamists and Utopian Dreamers

How Muslim Religious Leaders in Norway fit Islam into the Norwegian Political System

OLAV ELGVIN

Master's thesis
Department of Political Science
Faculty of Social Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Fall 2011

II

Secularists, Democratic Islamists and Utopian Dreamers

How Muslim Religious Leaders in Norway

Fit Islam into the Norwegian Political System

Olav Elgvin

Year: 2011

Title: Secularists, Democratic Islamists and Utopian Dreamers

Author: Olav Elgvin

IV

Summary:

This thesis explores how Muslim religious leaders in Norway fit Islam into the Norwegian political system. I conducted interviews with leaders in eight of the largest mosques in Norway, and asked them about their religious and political world views. Specifically I tried to explore the relationship between what they regard as the ideal Islamic system, and the political changes they want to see in Norway and their Muslim countries of origin.

My main finding is that all the informants regard the Norwegian political system as a good system, and view the current situation in most of the Muslim world as bad. On an ideological level, however, they relate to the Norwegian political system in different ways. I construct a four-fold typology in which all the informants fit: The *secularists* want a secular democratic state in both Norway and their Muslim home country. The *Muslim democrats* want liberal democracy in both Norway and their country of origin. They base this on the view that Islam provides fundamental political values, but not a fixed blueprint for society. The *utopian dreamers* support liberal democracy in both Norway and their country of origin, but claim that an ideal Islamic system would go beyond current liberal democracy. The *democratic Islamists* support liberal democracy in Norway, but want a type of non-liberal Islamist democracy in their country of origin.

In order to understand my findings I rely on the theoretical notions *embeddedness* and *transnationalism*. I introduce the terms *transnational embeddedness* and *multiple commitments*, and claim that these notions can help us understand the twofold political commitments of the democratic Islamists.

In the last chapter I relate my findings to relevant debates in political theory, concerning the proper role of religion in politics, and the debate on communitarianism versus political liberalism.

Acknowledgements:

In working with this thesis I have benefited greatly from invaluable advice, criticism and support from a number of people. My main supervisor Lars Gule jumped on the idea when I mentioned it to him. He has been a stimulating sparring partner throughout the process, finding a good balance between razor-sharp criticism and support. Kjetil Selvik agreed to be co-supervisor at a later stage, and provided insightful comments on both the «political science part» and the «Islam part» of the thesis. In addition, several researchers have generously read all or parts of the manuscript and given comments: Sindre Bangstad, Jacob Høigilt, Hedda Flatø, and the participants at a seminar in the AIK research group at Fafo: Jon Rogstad, Jon Horgen Friberg, Mirjam Latif Sandbæk, Kristian Rose Tronstad and Torgeir Nyen. Needless to say, any remaining errors or weaknesses of judgment are my own.

The research institute Fafo has for the last year generously allowed me to use their facilities for writing this thesis, something which has been of immense help. In addition, the friendly atmosphere and the nice people there made the writing process enjoyable! The Fritt Ord-foundation provided me with a generous grant for writing the thesis.

I am very grateful to the informants who gave me of their time and shared their thoughts with me, in spite of the politicized atmosphere that surrounds these issues. I hope I have been able to do your thoughts at least some justice in the way I am presenting them.

And lastly, a deep thanks to my family and my friends, for support and good times.

(a final shoutout to Stein Arne, the cook at Fafo: you are a gift to humanity! -- at least to everybody at Fafo)

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. General context

Since the terror attack on 9/11 many people have feared that an important line of conflict in the future will be between Muslims and non-Muslims, both globally and in Europe[1]. In an Academic context this concern has often been understood within the framework of the *Clash of Civilizations*-theory that Samuel Huntington made famous (Huntington 1996). A special version of this theory has been concerned with the growing Muslim populations in Europe. The terror bombings in London in 2005 and in Madrid in 2004 made many people believe that Muslims in Europe constitute a security threat. This worry has been underpinned by opinion polls which show that younger European Muslims in general are more radical than the parent generation (Mirza, Senthilkumaran et al. 2007: 5). While this worry is sometimes dismissed as populistic or unscientific, several writers who have been commonly presumed to be serious have voiced this concern. The literature ranges from reasonably rational worries about demographic change (Caldwell 2009), to outright conspiracy theories, often referred to as the *Eurabia-thesis* (Bat Ye'or 2005; Bawer 2006; Bawer 2010).

One of the factors that lead some people to worry about a Muslim presence in Europe is the perceived incompatibility between Islam, the secular state and democracy (Caldwell 2009: 112). The secular state, as it is understood in Europe, is based on the premise that all religions and all individual believers should be treated equally (Bangstad 2009: 20). Even though formal secularism or secularity can easily go hand in hand with authoritarian regimes (as is the case in China, for example), in Europe the concept is often understood to be connected to other values such as democracy, equality between the sexes, freedom of speech and so forth (Bangstad 2009: 22). Within this picture, a lack of secular conviction will lead to other problems - such as suppression of women, dissidents and sexual minorities. Note that «secular»

---

[1] It should be noted that I finished writing this thesis prior to the terror attacks on Norway the 22/7 by a Norwegian anti-Muslim fanatic. This thesis - in as much as it relates to contemporary societal debates - therefore reflects the mood in Norway and/or Europe prior to 22/7.

in this context does not mean non-religious or anti-religious, but merely that one is committed to a state that doesn't discriminate on the basis of religion.

Today is it sometimes assumed in public discourse that Islam as a religion is incompatible with secularity and democracy. In anti-Islamic discourses Christianity is seen as a religion that easily allows for secularism. In Matthew 22:15-22 Jesus utters the famous word: «Give the emperor what belongs to the emperor, give God what belongs to God, and give me what is mine». This is seen as proof that there is no inherent conflict between Christian belief and a commitment to a secular state (even though few - if any - Western states were secular before the onset of modernity). Islam, on the other hand, is construed as a religion that doesn't allow for a separation of «church» and state. This view is partly based on the historical example of the prophet Muhammad, who became the political leader of the community of believers (the Ummah) as well as the supreme religious authority. It is also based on the actual political ideology that can be found in some modern Islamic movements, where Islam is said to be «din wa-dawla» - both religion and state/law. In addition there is the current political arrangements in many Muslim-majority countries, of which a substantial number are non-democratic, and where non-Muslims in some cases don't have the same rights as Muslims or women don't have the same rights as men (Bangstad 2009: 107).

However, many polls have shown that Muslim publics worldwide are supportive of democratic forms of government, favor free speech, don't want the temporal and the religious powers to mix, and that a clear majority of Muslims living in the West don't want religious law to be implemented at state level (Pew Research Center 2005; Pew Reserach Center 2006; Esposito and Mogahed 2007; Pew Research Center 2008; Fish 2011). In addition, it has been claimed that the actual historical experience of Muslim countries is to a large degree secular: There has been a de facto separation of church and state since the first generation after the prophet. Most Muslim political leaders have made laws that only partially adhere to *sharia*, and they have only used the parts of sharia that suited their particular goals (an-Na'im 2008: 45-84).

2

But neither popular opinion among Muslims nor historical political experiences can be equated with religious doctrine - that is, the doctrines that are held by religious authorities and institutions, and that many Muslims perceive to be true Islam (an example could be that many Muslims drink alcohol, but few would say that this is allowed under Islam). It is fair to say that Islamic religious doctrines in many of its traditional interpretations contain opinions about the perfect society that differ from liberal and secular ideals (Gule 2006). A commonly held belief among Muslim scholars is for example that apostasy is forbidden. It is allowed for people to convert to Islam, but is not allowed to convert from Islam to another religion. In several Muslim-majority countries this is today punishable by death: Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Qatar, Yemen, Iran, Sudan, Afghanistan and Mauritania (Goodenough 2009). In other countries, such as Egypt, apostasy is not punishable by death, but might cause legal and economic troubles (Human Rights Watch 2008).

Up until recent times most Islamic scholars have held that a society must be governed by the law of God – sharia. In order to apply as law sharia was made into concrete rulings (*fiqh*) that fit local circumstances by men of Islamic learning. The important thing for most Islamic scholars wasn't *who* should rule, but whether the ruler ruled within the limits set by the sharia (Hefner 2011: 18)

There are Muslim thinkers and theologians who have tried to rethink the relation of Islam, sharia and the state (Sadri 2001; an-Na'im 2008; Ramadan 2009). But in most Muslim majority countries, sharia to varying degrees functions as a source of law (even though some Muslim countries have defined themselves as secular - Turkey, Mali, Bosnia and Albania, and to a certain extent Indonesia).

In popular discourse in the West, these are among the things that are featured in the debates about Muslim immigrant groups. Do «they» want to turn Europe into a theocracy, such as Iran or Saudi-Arabia? Will Muslims one day constitute a majority in Europe, and will they then change the continent into something wholly different?

This is the societal background for my interest in these issues.

1.2. Aims of the thesis

In this thesis my aim is to give a small contribution to this debate. In political theory this debate has often been state- and policy-centered: How should a state, or policy makers, in principle relate to non-liberal or theocratic actors? (Ahdar and Aroney 2010). I want to approach this debate from below, and have interviewed Muslim religious leaders in Norway about their political thinking: *How do they fit Islam into the Norwegian political system?* This is my main research question. There are several sub-questions that will be explored:

- Do they support the Norwegian political system, and in that case - do they do it on pragmatic or principled ideological grounds?

- How do they see the relation between Islam and democracy?

- Do they see any inherent conflict between Islam and secularity?

In order to answer my research question I will have to clarify what I mean by «the Norwegian political system». I do not aim at giving a complete or even satisfactory definition of the political system in Norway here. I will rather highlight some features that are all in the mix that makes up Norwegian society and politics, and that I see as relevant for the discussion about Islam and Muslims in Norway. I will make these claims, that might all be contested (depending on how one understands and defines the terms):

- Norway is democratic. Here I take «democratic» to mean, simply, that people decide through elections who should rule, and that these rulers in a meaningful sense are in charge (this rough definition is somewhat similar to what Jon Rogstad has called a «competition democracy» (Rogstad 2007: 19)).

- Norway is functionally secular. Norway is not formally secular, of course, since it has a state church, and the prime minister, the king and half of all the ministers in the government must be members of this church. Still, if we use Bangstad's definition of minimal procedural secularism (Bangstad 2009: 44),

Norway can be said to be functionally secular: In theory, people are treated equally no matter what religion they belong or don't belong to, and the law is not exclusively based on religious ideas or conceptions. And even though the church is not separated from the state, the influence goes one way only: The government rules the church, not the other way around.

- Norway is politically liberal. By «liberal» I mean that the state doesn't interfere in the private lives of its citizens. This claim can be contested, of course, since the Norwegian state to a large degree attempts to shape the lives of its citizens indirectly - by advocating healthy life styles, egalitarian relationships between men and women, by reducing prejudice (against homosexuals, colored people et cetera), by banning smoking in cafés and restaurants, and so on. Concerning the topic of this thesis it can also be argued that Norway has become less liberal when it comes to some expressions of Islamic faith: Hijab has not been allowed in the police force, and will probably not be allowed in courts. But still: On the whole, Norway allows its citizens to lead a life of their own choosing - what kind of sexual relationships to engage in, what careers to pursue, how to dress, what to believe in, where to travel, et cetera.

This means that when it comes to how religious leaders fit (or don't fit) Islam into the political system in Norway, I am especially interested in finding out how they relate Islam to the concepts of democracy, secularity and political liberalism - even though it can be argued that I am here presenting the political system in Norway in an idealized manner.

1.3. Key definitions

I have already employed some contested notions - secularity, democracy, et cetera, without defining them properly, or providing only partial definitions. Before I proceed I will therefore outline the key concepts I will be using in this thesis, and define how I understand the terms.

Islam: If we use Wikipedia to find a common definition of Islam, we find the following (retrieved 8.06.2011): «Islam is the monotheistic religion articulated by the Qur'an, a text considered by its adherents to be the verbatim word of God, and by the teachings and normative example (called the Sunnah and composed of Hadith) of Muhammad, often considered by them to be the last prophet of God». However, such definitions have come under attack from a number of social scientists, most notably anthropologists. The criticism is often that such definitions entail understanding «Islam» as an acting and thinking agent, a kind of *Mr. Islam* that goes through the centuries and does different things at different times. Obviously, Islam is always expressed and manifested by human beings – and human beings *do Islam* in shifting and various ways.

In response to this problem some researchers have stopped talking of «Islam» as a single concept, and instead speak of «Islams» – a way of speaking that emphasizes the diversity among Muslims when it comes to how they interpret and live the religion of Islam. However, in this thesis I will nevertheless employ a somewhat essentialist vocabulary, and speak of *Islam* and *Islamic* as existing phenomena, that can be distinguished from other phenomena. One theoretical way of justifying this is to use the influential definition of the social anthropologist Talal Asad - to think of Islam as a *discursive tradition* (Asad 1986)**.** He defines a tradition as «discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of given practice that, precisely because it is established, has a history» (Asad 1986: 14). This means that for a discourse to be regarded as Islamic, it must relate to the Islamic past – to claim that something is right because Buddha did it is not Islamic, but to claim that something is right because Muhammad did it, is Islamic.

Muslim: The basic definition of a Muslim is an adherent of the religion Islam. However, this is not a clear-cut definition either. In public debate in Norway one sometimes hears referrals to *Muslim immigrants* - which then means immigrants from Muslim countries, without clarifying whether these immigrants self-identify as Muslims or not. Some people have defined themselves as *cultural Muslims*, which means that they claim affiliation with the civilization of Islam, or Muslim culture - but

without believing in Islamic theological dogma (Hvidsteen 2007). In this thesis I will glide somewhat between these ways of understanding the words Muslim and Muslims. When I speak of Muslim groups in the Norwegian or European context, or Muslim immigrants, I am sociologically referring to groups of people with a background from Muslim countries, only excluding those who explicitly distance themselves from Islam. At other times, however, I will use the word to denote someone who explicitly claims to be an adherent of Islam. I hope this will not create too much confusion on behalf of the reader.

Islamism: Islamism is another contested term. It has been common to distinguish between «ordinary Muslims» and «political Islam», and define *Islamism* as «Islam in a political mode» (International Crisis Group 2005: 1). However, some have claimed that these distinctions are not clear-cut. It can be argued that most traditional ways of interpreting Islamic beliefs have contained political elements. In addition, several of those who have at times been labeled as Islamists have been more concerned with activism that is not overtly political - such as missionizing, social work, et cetera. Therefore some have started to use «Islamic activism» as an umbrella term, and seen political activity as one type of Islamic activism (Hashem 2006). Nevertheless - in this thesis I will employ a narrow definition: To be an Islamist is to wish to implement laws drawn from the traditional Islamic sharia (*fiqh*) into the current legal code of a country. I employ this narrow definition in order to distinguish those of my respondents that I label as Islamists (who want traditional sharia laws in Muslim countries) from those of my respondents who also are Islamic activists in a broader sense, but don't want sharia-laws.

Sharia and fiqh: When I state that Islamists want to implement sharia-laws, I need to clarify what I mean. In public discourse, both among non-Muslims and Muslims, sharia is sometimes equated with certain laws - stoning, flogging, et cetera. However, this is a simplification. According to The Encyclopedia of Islam (2nd ed.), sharia; «often translated as 'Islamic law' the shari'a is better understood as the path of correct conduct that God has revealed through his messengers, particularly the prophet Muhammad» (Martin 2004: 618).

Sharia can be understood as the total will of God for mankind (or Muslims) - that can be interpreted in different ways. For religious Muslims living in the West, to give alms, to pray five times or to strive for becoming a good human being can be what sharia primarily entails. But for most Islamic scholars, the will of God for mankind has also entailed certain ways of regulating society - laws concerning inheritance, a penal code, economic transactions, and more. In traditional Islam, Islamic jurists attempted to interpret the sharia, and the result were concrete rulings - often referred to as *fiqh*. So when I refer to Islamists, what I mean is that they want to implement rulings from *traditional fiqh*. This way they can be distinguished from Islamic reformists, who might also say that they want society to be ruled in accordance with sharia, but possibly understand sharia in a vastly different way.

Secularity: When referring to the concept of a secular state, I am in this thesis employing a somewhat novel term. In the literature about secularism it has been common to distinguish between *procedural secularism,* understood as support for certain political arrangements, and secularism understood as a *secularizing* ideology. The former refers to the normative view that church and state should be separated, that the religious views of the citizens is a private matter, that adherents of different religions should be treated equally, and that the law cannot exclusively be based on religious ideas or conceptions (Bangstad 2009: 44). This version of secularism is not necessarily anti-religious.

The latter understanding of the term refers to an ideology that attempts to minimize the role of religion in society and in people's life. Understood in this way, secularism as an ideology is in conflict with religion.

When I use the term secularity here, I am referring to what others have referred to as procedural secularism. This term has recently been proposed by the Muslim thinker Abudllah Sahin (Sahin 2011). The advantage of using this terminology is that it becomes easier to distinguish between secularism understood as a political arrangement, and secularism understood as a *secularizing* ideology. This terminology reminds of the distinction that is often made between *modernity*, understood as a

sociological and historical phenomenon, and *modernism*, understood as a certain ideology or world view (for example within art).

Democracy: Democracy has been defined in many different ways (Reisinger ; Rogstad 2007: 19-20). Here I will employ the term in a simple and minimalistic way: that people decide through regular and successive elections who should rule, and that these rulers in a meaningful sense are in charge. This definition is procedural: It leaves out questions of laws and political values - whether minorities should be protected, human rights, et cetera. My reason for employing such a narrow definition is that I want to be able to distinguish between liberal and non-liberal versions of democracy. I am not claiming that liberal rights are not part of meaningful definitions of democracy, but for analytical purposes I want the definitions to be as clear as possible. It adds clarity to treat liberal rights as a separate analytical concept.

Liberalism: Liberalism is also a term that can have different meanings, depending on the context. When I use the term here I am referring to a normative political doctrine that claims that the state should hold a neutral stance towards what kind of lives people should live. The doctrine of political liberalism, for example as developed by Rawls (Rawls 1996), contains more than this - but here, when I refer to something as *liberal* or *non-liberal*, the issue at hand will be whether the state interferes by force in the private lives of its citizens, for example in areas such as religion or sexuality.

A note on the transcription of Arabic Islamic terms such as sharia: I employ a non-technical transcription, and leave out Arabic sounds that don't have any equivalents in ordinary Latin letters.

1.4. Norway meets Islam: Liberal and communitarian worries

The bulk of this thesis will be descriptive and interpretative. However, I will also attempt to ground it in the relevant debates in political theory. Within political theory these issues have often been framed as a question of the proper place religious claims

should have in a *liberal state*. The reason for using the term *liberal state* in stead of *secular state* is that many states are relatively liberal, but not explicitly defined as secular – Norway, for example. In addition, it is fully possible for a secular state to be non-liberal.

In the last chapter, after having described and discussed my findings, I will discuss normatively how the positions of my respondents might relate to the worries that have arisen in the Norwegian debates on Islam. In addition to a *liberal worry* - that is concerned with whether Muslims adhere to the democratic rules of the game - I identify what I label as a *communitarian worry* in Norwegian political discourse. The issue at stake in the communitarian worry is *difference*: Do Muslims have other political and cultural values, even if they formally accept the rules of the game?

1.5. Academic context - previous research

There has been much research done on the relation between Islam and politics. Part of this research is quantitative survey research, in which large numbers of Muslims globally are asked on their views on Islam and politics. Others have done case studies on particular Islamic movements, such as The Muslim Brotherhood, Jamaat e-Islami or Hizb ut-Tahrir, or on specific Musim societal groups (workers, politicians, etc.). And others have done textual studies in which theological and political works by Muslim authors are studied in depth.

I will briefly review the previous research I see as most relevant for this project.

1.5.1. Quantitative research

There has been several major studies that deal with how Muslim relate to the questions of Islam and politics. Most of these are about publics in Muslim majority countries. The most encompassing is The World Values Survey, a global survey about values and opinions that has been conducted in four waves. In the last wave 62 countries

participated. The data on Islam and politics have been analyzed by several researchers (Inglehart 2003). The most thorough analysis to date is in my opinion the book «Are Muslims Distinctive» by the political scientist M. Steven Fish (Fish 2011). He conducts multiple regressions of the data, and concludes that when you control for other factors, such as education and age, «Islam does not incline its adherents to extraordinary enthusiasm for the fusion of religious and political authority» (Fish 2011: 63), which means that Muslims are no more likely than others to disagree with the statement «Religious leaders should not influence how people vote». On the issue of democracy, the findings are that Muslims in general support democracy as a political system superior to others. But being a Muslim still has a very small - but statistically significant - negative effect on the level of support for democracy (Fish 2011: 245).

However, the survey items in the World Values Survey might not reveal the whole picture. It has been claimed that the dominant way of understanding Islam's relation to politics in normative Islam is as a *nomocracy,* a political system that is governed by specific laws (Gule 2006). The dominant approach in Islamic religious doctrine has historically been that the important aspect is not *who* rules, but *how* he rules - especially whether the ruler adheres to the *sharia*. It is logically and politically possible to favor the separation of clerical and political powers, and to express support for democracy, but still wish for laws taken from the Islamic tradition - such as capital punishment for apostasy or homosexuality, or unequal rights for men and women.

Other major surveys, that ask more detailed questions about sharia and politics, have shown that in many countries this indeed is the case. Gallup has conducted a major poll in many Muslim majority countries, presented in the book *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (Esposito and Mogahed 2007). This survey concludes that Muslims want democracy *and* sharia. They want a democratic system, but they also want sharia be to either «a source» or «the only source» of legislation. As the authors emphasize, this means different things to different people. To some, sharia might simply function as a general signifier for the good, just as a secular democrat could say that «human rights» should be a source for legislation.

Others might have particular laws in mind, and perhaps wish for a system such as in Iran - where there is an elected parliament, but also an «Islamic» guardian council that oversees that the laws passed by parliament is in accordance with their interpretation of sharia.

The interesting issue is what is meant by «sharia». Under traditional interpretations of sharia, people have been treated differently on grounds that many would claim are not morally relevant: Religion (unequal treatment of Muslims and non-Muslims), sex (unequal treatment of men and women) and civil status (slavery was accepted by most Islamic scholars up until the 19th century (Hansen 2001)). It is therefore interesting to note that a clear majority of the respondents in Gallup's survey expressed that men and women should have the same legal rights. Gallup did not ask about slavery, presumably because slavery has been eradicated in most Muslim countries (with a few exceptions such as Mauritania). Gallup's book does not say anything on views concerning apostasy or punishments for adultery, for example.

A recent poll by the Pew Research Institute, however, asked publics in seven Muslim majority countries about these issues - Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Indonesia, Pakistan and Nigeria (Pew Research Center 2010). In Indonesia, Lebanon and Turkey, a clear majority opposed punishment for apostasy or adultery. But in Egypt, Pakistan and Jordan, majorities supported these punishments, with the public in Nigeria divided. In all of these countries, except Turkey, majorities viewed Islam's role in politics as a positive thing. This shows that «Islam in politics» means different things to different people in different times and in different circumstances. In a recent work, Robert Hefner claims that this is not a new phenomenon: Sharia has always been applied and understood in a plurality of different ways, even though this pluralism largely took place «outside the letter of the law» (Hefner 2011: 20).

Polls conducted on Muslims living in Europe and the U.S. have shown a somewhat different picture. Most polls show that only a minority of European Muslims want sharia to be incorporated into the law. In Norway this minority is as small as 13 percent, according to the only survey on Muslims that has been conducted

(TNS Gallup 2006: 9) . In England the number is somewhat higher, while the numbers in continental Europe are often somewhere in between (Hennessy and Kite 2006; AFP 2008).

However, more detailed surveys have revealed that most of the Muslims who constitute the minority who want sharia incorporated into the law, only want this to apply to Muslims, and mostly related to family law (and not, for example, criminal law) (Travis and Bunting 2004).

The general picture that emerges from the quantitative research is thus as follows: Globally, Muslims don't want a theocracy, which means that they don't want religious leaders to be in charge of politics. They also want a democratic system. But they still want a role for Islam in politics, and want to see sharia as a source of legislation. What this implies varies: Some want punishments for apostasy or adultery, while others do not. In Europe, Muslims are in general more secular minded, and the majority doesn't want sharia to be incorporated into state law. The minority that does wish for this doesn't want it to apply to all European citizens, but only to Muslims, and mainly the part of sharia that deals with family law.

1.5.2. Case studies

The quantitative studies outline a very broad picture. Of course there are huge variations - from country to country and between different groups. In the European context, what is particularly relevant for this project are the attitudes of *elite groups*. The Danish political scientist Jytte Klausen conducted interviews with 300 influential Muslims all across Europe - politicians, policy makers, community leaders and activists, and published the results in the book «The Islamic Challenge» (Klausen 2005). Her finding was that the Muslim leaders, in general, supported integration into existing political frameworks. A potential «Islamic» overhauling of the European political systems was not on the agenda at all. When it came to whether Islam as a

religion was compatible with «Western values», Klausen divided the respondents into four groups (Klausen 2005: 87):

- Anti-clericals (the diehard secularists), who see Islam and Western values as inherently incompatible

- Secular integrationists, who want government pressure to «mainstream» Islam

- Voluntarist Euro-Muslims, who don't see any conflict between Islam and Western values, and don't want governmental interference in religious life

- The neo-orthodox, who see potential conflicts between Islam and Western values, and want autonomy for Muslim groups.

The tendency in Klausen's findings have later been confirmed in similar studies - though smaller in scope - conducted by the Canadian political scientist Andrew C. Gould. His general finding was that members of the Muslim elites in Spain and Portugal thought that Islam and Western democracy could and should thrive together (Gould 2009).

I will also mention two other case studies that are relevant for this project, concerning The Muslim Brotherhood's activities in Europe. The Brotherhood doesn't have a broad membership base in Europe. But the movement has still has had a large influence on mosques, religious associations and Islamic umbrella organizations, since individual members of the movement have been holding key positions in many of these organisations (Pargeter 2010: 136-171). The Muslim Brotherhood has - at least up until recently, with the democratic upheavals in many Arab countries - been outlawed in many countries. Individual members have been in danger of being prosecuted. As a result, the activities of the movement have often been cloaked in secrecy. This has also spilled over onto activities in Europe, even though the movement is not banned here. Members of the Brotherhood have often been cautious to reveal their affiliation with the movement in public. This feature of the movement has led many outside observers to view the movement's activities with suspicion. But in 2010 two detailed studies of the movement's activities in Europe were published.

14

One - by Lorenzo Vidino - with a fundamentally sceptical attitude towards the Brotherhood and the movement's true intentions (Vidino 2010). The other - by Allison Pargeter - had a more positive attitude (Pargeter 2010).

Both agree, however, on the nature of the current objectives of the Brotherhood in the West. The Brotherhood wants Muslims in Europe to integrate into the existing political system, and not isolate themselves. For the organization itself, an important goal is to increase its political and societal leverage by becoming a preferred partner for European governments - directly, or by proxy. For the Muslim minorities at large, the Brotherhood envisions a kind of an «integration without assimilation» approach, in which Muslims keep an Islamic identity and lifestyle, but still take fully part in the surrounding non-Muslim society.

According to Pargeter many of the Brothers in Europe claim that they view political and theological issues differently from Brothers in Arab countries, and have become influenced by the norms and political values that prevail in Europe (Pargeter 2010: 175). Vidino remains more skeptical, and suggests that the Brothers in Europe still cling to an ideal of an Islamic state, but don't see this as a possibility in Europe - and accept secular democracy mostly out of pragmatism (Vidino 2010: 94-95).

1.5.3. Textual studies

In addition to the social science studies of the actual behavior of various Muslims, there are numerous hermeneutical or textual studies of theological and political works by Muslim authors. For my project, the most relevant ones are those who deal with the situation of Muslim minorities. Khaled Abou el Fadl was one of the first Western scholars to deal with Islamic theological views on being a Muslim minority, from the 8th to the 17th century (El Fadl 1994). His finding was that most of the Islamic law schools warned against living in non-Muslim countries, and thought of it as a less than optimal condition. However, only one of them - the Maliki law school - claimed that it was forbidden.

Of the law schools that allowed living as a minority, the Hanafi school (predominant in the Ottoman empire) held the view that resembles modern juristic thinking the most: While living in non-Muslim country, a Muslim was not obliged to follow Islamic law, he was obliged to follow the law in his country of residence. The other law schools were somewhat schizophrenic. They claimed that a Muslim was simultaneously subject to both Islamic law *and* the law in the country of residence. A Muslim was obliged to follow the law in the place that he lived, but at the same time could be brought to court in a neighboring Muslim country if he violated Islamic law (if he committed adultery, for example).

The political scientist Andrew F. March has taken up where el Fadl left the field, and has in several articles looked into how modern Islamic theology comes to terms with being Muslim in a non-Muslim society (March 2006; March 2007; March 2009; March 2011). He finds that many contemporary theologians no longer look at the minority situation as something that should be avoided. Quite on the contrary, many look at this as a golden opportunity for *dawa* - evangelizing, or presenting Islam to non-Muslims. In addition, the situation of being a Muslim minority is now something which receives much attention from theologians, and the theological positions are more thoroughly thought out. According to March, the mainstream view today is similar to the view of the Hanafi law school in the past: While living in a non-Muslim country, a Muslim must follow the laws of the state that he lives in. The reasoning behind this is that the Muslim implicitly has accepted a contract with the state of residence. He receives goods such as security and safety and the right to exercise his religion, and in turn he promises to respect the laws of the land. Like in classical philosophical contract theory, this contract is not something that has to be spelled out, but a contract that is thought to be implicit in the very act of living in society (March 2007).

March also identifies another stream of thought that goes further than the mainstream theologians, who merely state that Muslims can *accept* non-Islamic laws. Reformers such as Tariq Ramadan - or the «Religious Integralist Model», as March calls it (March 2011: 31) - have moved towards something which reminds of the

16

political ideology of Christian Democrats. One finds some basic values in religion, but developing politics based on these values is an open-ended process where context has to be taken into account.

1.6. Placing this study in the research context

This study is a qualitative case study of the political thinking of Muslim leaders in Norway*.* As such, it is in line with the previous (and more comprehensive) studies of Jytte Klausen and Andrew C. Gould. The difference is that I focus specifically on *religious* leaders, not politicians, community leaders and so on.

Since the informants are religious leaders, I am interested in not only the actual political opinions they hold, but also their way of legitimizing them theologically. Do they support following Norwegian laws because they think these laws are *right* or *good*, or merely because they think Muslims are obliged to do so? My interest in these questions connects the study to the textual works of Khaled Abou el Fadl and Andrew F. March. In a way, the interviews here is a way of testing whether the theoretical theological-political positions that March identifies in the theological literature also exist in the real life theology of the mosques.

My way of getting beyond the usual «we follow the laws here»-answer, in order to locate their fundamental ideological-political world views, is to ask the respondents about their Muslim country of origin as well, and what they perceive as the ideal system according to Islam. Are there differences between the political system they wish for in Norway, and the political system they wish for in their country of origin? How do their political wishes relate to what they perceive as the ideal Islamic model?

In the next chapter I discuss the theory and methods I rely on. Chapter three outlines the responses of the informants. In chapter four I relate my findings to previous research. Chapter five explores the internal differences among the informants. In the last chapter I summarize my findings, and relate them to debates in political theory.

Chapter 2: Theory and Methods

The research in this thesis is a case study. According to Robert K. Yin, a case study approach is suitable if one wants to know *how* and *why* social phenomena work: «The method is relevant the more your questions require an extensive and 'in-depth' description of some social phenomenon» (Yin 2009: 4).

The kind of knowledge I seek in this study requires a case study. Previously there has been much quantitative research on the opinions of Muslims on religion and politics, in Muslim countries as well as in Europe. But here I am interested in getting behind the numbers, and to find out *how* Muslim religious leaders theologically fit Islam into the Norwegian political system (not merely if they do it or to what extent).

2.1. Theoretical framework

This thesis is in political science, and more specifically political theory. The broad discursive framework I want to place my thesis within is the debate in political theory on the place of religious claims within a liberal state (Rawls 1996; Habermas 2006; Ahdar and Aroney 2010).

My preferred way of doing social science is not to start off with an expressed theoretical viewpoint, and then look at the data through this theory (for example, to state that «I will look at the data through the lenses of queer theory», or «I will use an Habermasian framework of rational discourse to understand the case in question»).

For me the ideal is rather to attempt to collect data in an as unbiased way as possible, and then ask which theories do the best work of explaining the relationships and facts that seem to be there (what is sometimes referred to as *middle range theories*). I am of course aware that data are not innocent, and that preconceptions on behalf of the researcher will influence which questions are being asked, et cetera. But I

still think it is an ideal worth striving for. This view of scientific endeavor is somewhat epistemologically naïve - but is fundamentally based on a post-positivist view of reality, which assumes ontological realism and the possibility and desirability of truth (Trochim 2006).

I take this to be a legitimate approach to scientific enquiry, one that has in recent years been defended by among others the Norwegian sociologist Lars Mjøset as «the contextualist approach to social science methodology» (Mjøset 2006; Mjøset 2009). The contextualist approach doesn´t seek to uncover fundamental social *laws* as in the standard positivist approach to social science. Nor is it fundamentally skeptical of the possibility of social explanations, as in the postmodern/hermeneutical/post-structuralist schools. The contextualist approach is concerned with specific cases, and how they can best be explained. An important concept for Mjøset is the «local research frontier», the scientific discourse that arises when several researchers approach a topic with more or less similar research questions. When a local research frontier exists, the theoretical tool box that is available to the researcher is the explanations that «the community of researchers accept as good explanations of relevant cases» (Mjøset 2009: 60).

This means that my main interest in this thesis is to ask which theories are best equipped to explain my findings, drawn from the local research frontier. Most of the previous research I am using has been done in other disciplines - religious studies, sociology, history and social anthropology. I will thus largely draw on middle range theories from disciplines outside political science.

Mjøset also advocates the construction of *typologies*, as a way of helping us to understand and make sense of reality – but they should not be turned into «essential features of reality» (Mjøset 2009: 63). An important part of this thesis will therefore be to construct a typology that makes sense of my findings.

2.2. Research design - concepts and operationalization

Since the previous case study research that has been conducted on Muslim elites in Europe (by Klausen and Gould) have been done mainly on social and political elites, I thought it would be interesting to look specifically at Muslim religious elites, and look into their thinking.

According to the political scientist John Gerring, in case studies a single unit is selected for intensive study «for the purpose to understand a larger class of (similar) units» (Gerring 2004: 342). Since Islam as a religious and normative system (or a discursive tradition, as in Asad 1986) is often assumed to be of large importance for Muslim immigrants in the West, it is interesting to see how religious leaders reason when it comes to religion and politics. But it remains an open question how much influence these leaders have.

A theoretical note on my fundamental concepts: In deciding to interview the informants in their capacity as religious leaders, I am already imposing upon them certain concepts. I am interviewing them as *Muslims*, as *religious leaders*, and not as, say, migrants, Pakistanis, Moroccans or Iraqis, or as fathers, husbands, cricket enthusiasts or football coaches. Some researchers have pointed out that in the public and academic discourse of the last 10-20 years there has been an increasingly strong emphasis on the *Muslim* or *Islamic* aspect of the identity of immigrants from Muslim countries. Earlier, a person could be identified as an immigrant, or as a Pakistani, whereas he will now be referred to as a Muslim (Døving 2009).

This study continues in this vein, even though I know it is not epistemologically unproblematic. Some have labeled this as a construction of an *Homo Islamicus* - the tendency to understand Muslims as primarily Muslims, and nothing else (Malm 2009: 113). Some researchers have responded to this by trying to desolve the category, and by emphasizing the diversity among those who are referred to as Muslims. Others have accepted the imposed categorization of Muslims into the Muslim-category, and performed research that sees the informants through the lenses of Islam and *Muslimness* - but that nevertheless attempts to show the nuances and diversity within this category. This study attempts to do the latter: To understand my informants

through a religious lens, but to do it in a nuanced way. In addition, in the case of Muslim religious leaders, it is reasonable to believe that being Muslim is an important part of their self-ascribed identity, so their categorization into the category of Muslimness is less problematic that when it is a category that is imposed on people from the outside.

Another concept I am imposing on the informants is *political ideology* - a concept which is often understood to mean a fixed and coherent normative world-view. But some of them told me that they were not particularly interested in politics. Others held a lot of different opinions that were hardly coherent, and that it would be wrong to label as an ideology (while others held positions that were coherent and clearly thought out). A part of my job as an interviewer and researcher was therefore to make sense of opinions that were not fully coherent.

The fundamental concepts I was interested in exploring during the interviews were *political ideology*, *Islam, secularity* and *forms of governance.* In the interview questions I operationalized these concepts in different ways. I use various measures in different questions. I measure *political ideology* by asking the informants about which political changes they would like to see, about what they perceive as an ideal society according to Islam, and by asking them whether they identify with certain political parties or movements. *Islam* is operationalized by asking whether they identify with a certain strand within Islam, whether there are any Islamic thinkers or *ulama'*s that they regard as role models, et cetera.

I have chosen to measure support for secularity indirectly. The reason for this is that *secularism*, for many Muslims, is a term that evokes negative connotations - which they perceive to mean a society without religion or religiosity, and/or Western colonial domination (Esposito 2010: 3). I also think that a question such as «Do you think that religion and politics should be separated?» is a leading question, which could lead the interviewees into answering in a certain way. I am therefore measuring support for secularity through their answers to other questions - such as whether there

are laws given by God that humans are not allowed to change, and whether Islam prescribes any specific form of governance.

Forms of governance is measured directly - through a question about whether Islam prescribes some form of governance rather than others, and what political changes they would like to see (and a follow up-question about the relationship between their wished-for political changes, and their description of the ideal society and form of governance according to Islam).

2.2.1. Selection criteria

The first methodological choice I faced was the selection criteria. How does one measure religious influence? Many influential religious figures, both globally and in Norway, don't have any formally recognized position. One way of determining who had the most influence would be to conduct a survey among Muslims in Norway. But as this would far exceed the time and resources I had, I decided to apply a formal requirement. By using publicly available material from the «fylkesmannen»-offices in Norway, I identified the 10 largest Islamic congregations in Norway. My aim was to interview the leaders in these mosques.

Secondly, which mosque leaders should I talk to? In public debate in Norway one can sometimes hear referrals to «the imams», and that they must take action whenever some or other social problems occur. But in many mosques the imams are less influential than they are perceived to be by the general public. The imams are hired by the council or board of the mosque, and their residence in Norway is at their mercy (as they often are hired from abroad, and get a permit of residency connected to their work). Actual and formal power in the mosques may reside with the chairman of the board, with the «forstander», or with the imam. I decided to interview both the main imam of the mosque, and the chairman of the board of the mosque.

This gave me a pool of 20 respondents. As it turned out, two of the mosques declined. One of these mosques did not provide any reason for doing so, but one

interpretation is that it was connected to a general mistrust of researchers and the media. This mosque is the one I assumed to be the most conservative one prior to my research. Another mosque declined since their main imam was abroad for the whole semester, and they wanted him to have the final word on this. This mosque was among the ones I assumed to be among the most liberal ones prior to my research.

In the remaining mosques, in one instance the imam wanted to talk to me while the chairman of the board declined (he said he «wanted to avoid publicity»), and in another instance the chairman of the board gladly talked to me, while the imam declined (on similar reasons, «to avoid publicity»).

This left me with 14 informants in total, equally divided between imams and board chairmen. All of them were male, they had a diverse ethnic background, and most were born abroad. The interviews were recorded on tape, and conducted in either Norwegian or English, or with the help of a translator. I did a partial transcription of the interviews.

2.2.2. Interview design

My aim with the interviews was to locate the political orientation of the interviewees, with special emphasis on the intersection of Islam and politics. I chose to conduct the interviews as semi-structured interviews, with a preplanned interview guide that allowed for deviations and improvisations. When designing the interview guide (see appendix A) I had to keep several things in mind. Firstly, my presence as an interviewer would inevitable shape their responses (a problem known as «socially desirable responding»). I am an ethnic Norwegian, non-Muslim man, and therefore they are likely to talk differently to me than they would to, say, a devout Muslim interviewer who came from Pakistan to conduct research on Islam in Norway. During the interviews I quickly become aware of this, as most of the interviewees at some point during the interview spoke in defense of Islam, and assumed me to be associated with a surrounding non-Muslim society:

«Islam is peace. It is not terrorism. It is peace, and you have to understand that», one of the imams said, repeatedly, even though I hadn't even been close to raising the issue of Muslim terrorism during the interview, and tried not to ask questions that would identify me too closely with what the interviewees could perceive as an hostile secular society.

In addition, the responses to my questions would likely be shaped by the order of the questions, the wording, and so on. Assuming that the interviewees would feel some level of commitment to both the Norwegian political system and the teachings of the various Islamic theological traditions (most of which hold political ideals that differ from Norwegian democracy to some degree), I was concerned that I could tip them too much in either direction: If I focused on Norwegian society and being Muslim *in Norway* at the beginning of the interview, I suspected that I would «Norwegianize» their responses. But if I focused on Islam and Islamic theology in the beginning of the interview, I suspected that it could «Islamicize» their responses, and maybe get answers that were more normatively correct Islamically than the opinions they actually were holding.

Since I assumed that my presence as a Norwegian researcher inevitably would lead them to Norwegianize their responses to a certain degree, I chose to deliberately design the interview in order to maximize the Islamic content of it, and decrease the Norwegianization of the answers as much as possible. I started off by asking about Islam and their personal religiosity, and what they thought was the ideal society according to Islam. Then I moved on to ask about what they would like to change in their Muslim country of origin, or the Muslim country of origin of their parents (for those that were born here). Then I moved on to ask about what they would like to change in Norwegian society. Lastly I confronted them with eventual incoherences in their responses: Were there differences between what they described as the ideal Islamic society, the changes they wished for in the Muslim country of origin, and the changes they wished for in Norway? What were the reasons for these differences?

In this way I hoped to arrive at an understanding of the connection between their Islamic beliefs of how a good society looked like, their political engagement in their home country and their political engagement in Norway.

2.3. Possible pitfalls - reliability

When assessing social research, one of the criteria used is *reliability*. Would the same findings and conclusions be found if the same case study was to be conducted all over again? (Yin 2009: 37). As I said when I discussed the interview design, there is no doubt that my presence as a Norwegian researcher, in a field as politicized as Islam, influenced the responses to my questions. Another interviewer and researcher - Muslim or non-Muslim - would very likely generate different answers.

However, my impression after conducting the interviews was that the interviewees tried to be honest with me. Some of them voiced opinions that are not generally considered socially acceptable in Norway, for example that apostates in a Muslim country should be killed. I also tried to increase reliability and avoid being fooled by cross-asking about Islam, Norwegian politics and politics in their Muslim country of origin, in order to get explanations for any incoherency.

Another way to assess whether findings are reliable is to compare them with findings in previous research. If findings are reasonably in line with what has previously been found, it increases the likelihood that they are reliable. If findings are drastically different from what has previously been found, it could be that this is because of methodical weaknesses in the new research (but it doesn't need to be, of course). I am therefore relating my findings to previous research, in order to see if and to what extent they are different.

2.3.1. Measurement validity

Measurement validity has to do with whether or not the measures and operationalizations that are used meaningfully reflect the concept which is to be studied (Adcock & Collier 2001). For example, assuming that someone tried to measure antisemitism by asking about support for Israel, it could be objected that it is fully possible to be critical of Israel without being antisemitic. Thus, this measure is not valid.

To be sure that my measures reflect the concepts I am studying, I was careful during the interviews to ask follow up-questions. In this way it becomes easier to grasp how the interviewees themselves understand the concepts they are using. When they say that they «support democracy», do they have the same concept of democracy as me in mind?

2.3.2. External validity

External validity has to do with whether findings can be generalized beyond the single case study. Since this a qualitative study, it is obviously not possible to generalize my findings here in statistical terms. Even though my respondents said such and such, it is not possible to say based on my findings that Muslims in Norway - as a generalized, non-defined group - hold similar opinions.

Two important principal points can be made. The first is that it is not clear to what degree Muslims in Norway are religiously committed. The only poll in Norway that specifically targeted «Muslims» found that only about 30 percent of the Norwegian Muslims participated in religious activity every month (TNS Gallup 2006: 29). More reliable data from Statistics Norway shows that among the different ethnic group that comprises most of the Muslims in Norway, the importance of religion varies: Pakistanis and Somalis rate religion as very important in their life, while Iranians and Muslims from the Balkans rate religion as less important (Blom and Henriksen 2008: 67).

The other important point has to do with authority: If we assumed, for the sake of argument, that all Muslims in Norway were highly religious, it is still not clear whether the leaders I interviewed would be the ones with the highest authority. Some influential Islamic organizations such as Islam Net exist outside of the mosque system. It is also possible that some listen more to Islamic preachers or theologians with a global audience such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Zakir Naik or Tariq Ramadan, than to Norwegian imams. This means that one should be cautious when generalizing the opinions of the respondents here to larger Muslim groups.

However, case studies aim at another type of generalization, namely analytical generalization (Yin 2009: 37). They are «generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations of universes» (Yin 2009: 10). In my case I will use this to make a modest claim: The opinions and political positions that I found among the interviewees *are* opinions and positions that also can be found in broader groups. Since these people are leaders, it is likely that their opinions - especially the most common ones - are seen as legitimate by other Muslims as well. I doubt whether my findings here only apply to my interviewees, and not to any other Muslims in Norway. However, it is outside the scope of this thesis to suggest how common their opinions might be. Obviously there might also be several other political positions among Norwegian Muslims that I didn't encounter among my respondents.

The interpretations and possible explanations that I suggest *might* also be relevant for larger groups of Muslims. This, then, is my claim concerning the external validity of my findings here: They can not be statistically generalized. However, they might reveal tendencies that exist among larger groups of religious Muslims in Norway. This is also the reason that I am not detailing the percentage of respondents in each of the categories I have created, for example that «80 percent of the respondents were secularists», etc. The number of respondents is way too small to be statistically significant, so I don't want to create the false impression that they reveal tendencies that can be statistically generalized in a simple way.

2.3.3. Internal validity

Internal validity has to do with whether an observed relationship is causal, and is one of the main methodological concerns in much social science research (Yin 2009: 34). Case studies are usually considered to be a strong method with regard to internal validity. However, my main aim in this thesis is not to provide strong causal explanations. Therefore this is less a threat to the material I present here - which is largely descriptive. What I do provide is rather interpretations - but my data material is not sufficient to establish strong causal relationships. A hypothetical causal relationship in the case of this research could be that «participation in the Norwegian job market makes it more likely that a Muslim immigrant identifies as a secularist». However, because of the small scope of my data I am not able to establish this as a fact. I limit myself to doing *interpretations* of the material.

2.4. Research ethics

As Islam is a heavily politicized field in Norway, conducting this study required an emphasis on informed consent, privacy and confidentiality. Norwegian guidelines on research ethics state that research subjects are entitled to confidential treatment of all information about personal circumstances, and that research data should usually be anonymized (Den Nasjonale forskningsetiske komité for samfunnsvitenskap og humaniora 2006: 17-18).

I ensured consent by telling the informants about my research project before each interview, and made it clear that participation was voluntary and that they could refuse to answer any questions. I also emphasized that they would be anonymized in the thesis.

To ensure this, I have as far as possible tried to leave out information that might give away the identity of the interviewees. I am not going to refer to them by ethnicity (since most of the Norwegian mosques are organized along ethnic lines), and will not refer to identifications with particular Islamic movements (as this could also make

identification easy). For the sake of anonymization it is also very fortunate that two of the mosques declined. This makes it imposssible to know for sure which imams and board chairmen I spoke to.

Chapter 3: The Religious Muslim Leaders: A Typology

In this chapter I will give an outline of the political and religious opinions of my respondents. As mentioned in section 2.1. I will present their opinions through the lens of a constructed typology, in which I classify them into four different categories.

3.1. Context: Who are they?

But first, some basic information on who my informants were. As mentioned, I chose to use a formal requirement for the selection of my interviewees in order to avoid any selection bias: I asked for interviews with the imam and the board chairman in the 10 largest Islamic congregations in Norway - and was able to conduct interviews with leaders in eight of these congregations.

The most thorough treatment of organized and institutional Islam in Norway remains Kari Vogt's book *Islam på norsk* («Islam in Norwegian»), where Vogt details the development of Islamic congregations and organizations in Norway, up until the early 2000s (Vogt 2008). The picture that emerges in Vogt's book is that mosques in Norway are largely ethnically homogenous: They were founded by migrants to Norway from Muslim countries - Pakistan, Turkey, Morocco, Bosnia, etc. With a few exceptions, most of the mosques cater to people from their own ethnic group: The Bosnian mosque caters to immigrants from Bosnia, the various Pakistani mosques cater to immigrants from Pakistan and the Somali mosque cater to immigrants from Somalia. One of the Arab mosques - Det Islamske Forbundet, commonly known as *Rabita* - has also drawn a significant number of Norwegian converts to Islam. Some of the mosques are connected to international Islamic movements - Minhaj ul-Quran and Jamaat-e-Islami are two examples - while others are completely independent.

Since the last revision of Vogt's book some changes have taken place on the «Islamic scene» in Norway. What has garnered the most attention in the media, perhaps, is the emergence of stronger neo-salafi currents among Muslim youth - epitomized in the organization Islam Net (http://www.islamnet.no). This orgnization is generally regarded to be influenced by the so called salafi movement - that breaks with the traditional law schools in Islam, and attempts to model Muslim life today directly after the perceived example of the prophet and his companions. Islam Net organizes large Islamic seminars and conferences, and holds a strong presence on the internet and social networking sites. Islam Net is not connected to any mosque, and is currently the largest Islamic organization in Norway outside of the established mosques.

In addition, something that falls outside the scope of Vogt's book is that many people of Muslim background have entered the public arena in Norway - both religiously conservative Muslims, such as the former head of Muslimsk studentsamfunn (Muslim Student Society) Muhammed Usman Rana, relatively secular politicians such as Abid Raja and Hadia Tajik, and outright anti-religious or anti-establishment «cultural» Muslims who criticize religious traditions, such as Sara Azmeh Rasmussen and Shabana Rehman.

However, when it comes to the institutional world of the mosques in Norway, Vogt's book is authoritative. Most of my informants belong to mosques that feature in her book. The largest mosques are all sunni, which means that I haven't interviewed any shia or Ahmadiyya-Muslims for this thesis. Most of the board chairmen had lived in Norway for 15-30 years, while most of the imams had only been here for three to seven years - with a few notable exceptions. The imams worked full-time in the mosque, while most of board chairmen held a regular job (a few were now retired from the work force, or lived on welfare).

3.1.1. «Heads without a world»

In his novel Auto-da-fé (orig.: *Die Blendung*), the German author and Nobel Prize Laureate Elias Canetti described his protagonist Peter Kien as a «head without a world» – probably referring to the fact that Kien was constantly living within his own thoughts, with few connections to the outside world of material objects, flesh and blood (Canetti 2002). As I stated in the section on research ethics, I have made pains to secure the anonymity of my respondents. When I refer to them, they are merely described as «a man», «an imam», «a board chairman», etc.

The consequence of this is that they in the following sections remind of Canetti's protagonist Peter Kien and appear as «heads without a world». Their thoughts appear pure, divorced from the social and historical reality that they are situated in. This is obviously not the case, since all opinions are influenced by social circumstances. In the subsequent discussion of their positions, however, I hope to be able to piece «the heads» and «the world» back together again, and discuss the significance of their social background.

The anonymization I employ here is rather extreme. That is - I haven't numbered the respondents (for example R1, R2, R3, etc.), or given them individual, fictional names («Khaled», «Mahmood», etc.), that I use consistently throughout the text. In stead I spread their citations throughout the thesis, without clarifying who they belong to. The regrettable consequence for the reader is that it becomes impossible to piece together the various citations of the individual respondents - R1, R2 or R13 - and create a coherent picture of the world view and ideology of this or that person, or piece their opinions together with the type of mosque they belong to.

My reason for employing this thorough anonymization is the politicized environment that surrounds questions concerning Islam and Muslims in Norway. Some of the respondents voiced opinions that could elicit strong negative reactions in Norwegian public debate - such as the claim that apostates from Islam in a Muslim country should be killed. Others voiced opinions that could be seen as controversial

within the mosque, such as the argument that Islam should be separated completely from politics, both in Norway and in Muslim countries.

I have said that my respondents are drawn from the 10 largest Islamic congregations in Norway, based on publicly available data from the Fylkesmannen-offices. In addition, in presenting the opinions of the respondents, I have relied more on citations from *some* of the respondents. The reason is that some of the respondents had given these issues a lot of thought beforehand, and didn't have any problems answering my questions in coherent, fluent sentences. Others didn't have ready-made answers - I had to help them clarify what they meant: «What do you mean by that?», or «When you say that, do you mean that... », et cetera. I assume that the responses of the interviewees in the latter category - those I had to help clarify what they meant - were more shaped by my role as an interviewer than the responses of those who had ready-made answers to my questions. Therefore, if respondent B in the «not so coherent»-category said roughly the same thing as respondent A in the «coherent and fluent»-category, I am relying on citations from the coherent respondent A when I present a certain position. They sound better, and are also likely to be more independent of my role as a researcher and thus more reliable.

But because of this, if I would give the respondents individual labels, it could become possible to identify some of them - given the bulk of their citations in the thesis and that the names of the Islamic congregations I have used are publicly available. I have therefore chosen to go far in anonymizing the informants.

3.2. Basic impressions

When I approached the mosques and asked for interviews, the initial reactions were highly varied. Some met me with enthusiasm, and regarded this as an opportunity to present their views to the world in a manner that would hopefully be more nuanced than what they perceived as biased media representations of Muslims. Others were cautious, and immediately perceived me as a representative of a hostile surrounding

society that was out to get them. Some became defensive even on the phone, trying to explain that Islam was about peace (even though I hadn't mentioned terrorism or anything similar).

Therefore, the first thing I tried to do during the interview situation was to create a friendly atmosphere. In some of the interviews this was greatly facilitated by the fact that I speak basic colloquial Arabic (the Palestinian dialect), something which several of the interviewees appreciated. In addition, at the time of the interviews I had for some time maintained a blog about Muslims in Norway - called *Muslimprosjektet* - that enjoyed high readership and received positive evaluations from many Muslims. This, and the fact that I identified myself as a Christian and thus was not alien to the whole concept of religion, might have increased the level of trust in me as a researcher. As the interviews progressed, my impression was that most of the informants relaxed, and spoke more freely of their opinions and views. As a result, there were less slogans aimed at me as a non-Muslim with a perceived hostile stance against Islam, such as «Islam is peace» or «Islam is about respect». They also realized that I had some prior knowledge of the intricacies of Islamic theology, and became more detailed in the explanations of their theological and political worldviews.

Needless to say, there was much variation in their responses. Some had given these issues a lot of thought, and were able to articulate their responses in a well-spoken manner. Others had barely thought about Islam's relation to politics, and had to think through these issues as we went along.

Concerning what they perceived as the most pressing political challenges, both in Norway and in their Muslim countries of origin, there was much variation. In the Norwegian context, with a few notable exceptions they all expressed support for Arbeiderpartiet (the Social Democrat party) or Sosialistisk Venstreparti (the Socialist party). This is consistent with previous research that has shown that Muslim immigrants, and immigrants of non-Western background in general, largely opt for parties on the left (TNS Gallup 2006). However, in their actual political opinions, some held opinions that are closer to those of the right wing and populist

34

Fremskrittspartiet (The Progress Party). Some complained that taxes were too high and that society was too soft on crime. As one of them framed it:

«Norway has so much money. Why do the taxes have to be so high? And why is there always so much paper work if you want to buy or sell something? There are so many limitations. And then there's all the crime... I don't understand why we're letting the criminals out of jail».

This same man had expressed sympathy with the left side of Norwegian politics. I said that his remarks to my ear actually sounded closer to the politics of Høyre (the right wing party) or Fremskrittspartiet, something which seemed to offend him:

«Fremskrittspartiet? They are racists! And Zionists! But... I have to admit that I like their stance on taxes and crime».

Concerning what they perceived as the major political challenges in their country of origin, there was also much variation. A lot of this has to do with the different political situations in their country of origin, of course. Many named poverty, education and corruption, others named freedom or democracy, and a couple thought that everything was as it should be. Some objected to the whole issue of being asked about their country of origin, and emphasized that they were now fully Norwegian:

«Why do you ask me about that? », one of them said with emphasis.

«Well, I think it is interesting to... », I tried to answer.

He interrupted: «I am Norwegian now. I am concerned with life here. I don't feel any need to speak about Pakistan».

3.3. Common stance: Disaffection with Muslim countries, a liking for Norway

In spite of all this variation, there were some positions that repeatedly came up in all the interviews. All the interviewees - with no exceptions - said that they were happy

that they were living in Norway, that Norway was a good country, and that they thought the political system in Norway was good.

Part of this, of course, might have to do with the fact that I am Norwegian, and they didn't want to offend me by talking negatively about Norway, or tailored their responses to what they thought I wanted to hear. But even when I asked about what they would like to change in Norway, if they could, and pressed them on this issue, the main result were expressions of identification with Norwegian society and the Norwegian political system.

«Life is good here, you know? There's no corruption. They don't throw you in prison for just any reason. We are allowed to worship our religion. Of course, there are some things that could be different. But on the whole, I think this is one of the best countries in the world», one of them said.

Another claimed that Norway was actually a perfect Islamic country, only that Norwegians were not aware of it.

«In the Middle East, I see lots of Muslims but no Islam. I mean, no *real* Islam. No justice. In Norway, I see very few Muslims, but much Islam. I see justice and fairness. That is Islam».

The other position that repeatedly came up in all of the interviews was a strong disaffection with the present state of the Muslim world and most Muslim majority countries. Two respondents thought that their own country of origin was the sole exception - a beacon of light in an otherwise dark Muslim world - but that the rest of the Muslim countries were in deep trouble. The rest of the informants thought that it was all bleak, including their country of origin. When asked whether they thought any of today's Muslim countries reflected the ideals of Islam, nobody answered affirmingly.

«No... I have to answer no. This is a source of great sorrow for me. I look around in the Muslim world, and I just see corruption and vice. It is a great grief for us. We don't see Islam anywhere», one imam said.

36

Another imam, a man of great philosophical and intellectual learning, stressed that the Muslim world was in a state of confusion.

«With colonialism, the old world of Islam was uprooted. The system that was in place suddenly disappeared. Now the Muslim countries are confused. They tried Westernizing, and it didn't work. Some tried to return to a fundamentalist form of Islam, and it became even worse. I don't have any answer. But it doesn't look good».

Most of the interviews were conducted during the spring of 2011, a time when there were democratic uprisings in the Arab world. For some of the informants, this was a sign of hope.

«For the first time in many many years I see something good happening in the Middle East. I hope that this will transform these countries into something better. But I almost don't dare to hope... I have been disappointed so many times before», one man said.

The changes they hoped for in Muslim countries were varied. But the basic stance of all the respondents was that the Muslim world was in a state of distress, and that they couldn't see what they perceived as the ideals of Islam in the Muslim world of today.

3.4. Four models: Model I – The Secularists

But what about the ideological world view of the respondents? To claim that Norway is a good country and that the Muslim world is in bad shape is compatible with several ways of looking at the world. In the responses of the informants I have identified four basic ways of looking at the relation of Islam and politics, and how Muslims should take part in society - in Norway and in Muslim countries. These are broad categories. But with some specifications and nuances, all the interviewees fit these descriptions.

One of the most striking findings in this study is that several of the respondents identified themselves as secularists. They explicitly claimed that religion and politics

should «belong to separate spheres», et cetera. It is not surprising that Muslims as such identify themselves as secularists. But based on my preconceptions I hadn't expected leaders in mosques to embrace secularity as a universal political ideal.

As explained in section 2.2., I chose to measure support for secularity indirectly, through responses to other questions. In addition I designed the interview guide so as to maximize the Islamic content of their answers. The wording of the questions implied that the interviewees would see connections between Islam and politics. Still, a number of the respondents pointed out that they wanted religion and politics to be separated, even though I hadn't asked about that. It should be noted that these were all board chairmen, none of the imams answered in this way.

In his thorough treatment of the concept of secularism, Sindre Bangstad separates between what could be labeled as *procedural* and *ideological secularism* (Bangstad 2009). Ideological secularism aims at minimizing the magnitude and influence of religion on society. It is a *secularizing* ideology. Procedural secularism, on the other hand, is not anti-religious. It merely states that the state should hold a neutral stance on religion, and leave this aspect of human life to the civil sphere. Thus, adherents of all religions, as well as non-believers, should be treated equally. In this thesis I am using the term secularity to refer to this type of secularism. It is in this sense of the word that some of the board chairmen adhered to secularism.

«You have asked me what I see as the ideal society according to Islam... I think that is a difficult question to answer. You see, I think that religion and politics should be kept separate. I have opinions on how a good society looks like. But that is *my* opinions, based on my personal opinions and values», one respondent said.

His commitment to secularity was seemingly based on the bad results that he thought had arisen from non-secular forms of government.

«When you mix religion and politics, the result is always bad. It is bad for politics. And it is bad for religion! When people start to think that religion is

responsible for all the bad things that a government does, it gives religion a really bad name».

Another of the respondents couldn't understand conceptually and philosophically how a state could be said to be religious.

«I have never understood how a state can be religious. A person can be religious. Maybe a congregation. But a state? No», he said.

This man had an advanced degree in social science, and had a sophisticated constructivist view on statehood.

«The thing is that there really is no such thing as a 'state'. It is a constructed entity. Germany? There is no Germany *in itself*. Germany is Germany because people in the world believe that it is Germany, and that this entity has certain borders, and so on. It is not something that exists in itself, like stones, or dogs, or persons, or food. Persons exist, and they can be religious. But a state is just an idea. It is impossible for an idea to be 'religious'. It is plainly impossible», he said.

When asked what he wanted to change in Norway, he mentioned that Norway was not sufficiently secular.

«Some say that Norway is a secular country. Hey, it's not! The king and the prime minister have to belong to the Norwegian state church. And, of course, there is the whole notion of the state church, that a particular congregation is tied to the Norwegian state. In my opinion, that is wrong».

A striking feature in the interviews with the secularists was that none of them tried to legitimize secularity as a political principle from *within* the Islamic tradition. The Islamic thinkers who argue for a principal separation of Islam from politics have often done so from within a theoretical Islamic framework - such as Abdullah an-Naim (an-Na'im 2008), Tariq Ramadan in his most recent works (Ramadan 2009; March 2011-b), the Indonesian thinker Nurcholish Madjid (Bakti 2004), or Iranian thinkers such as Abdolkaraim Soroush, Mojtahed Shabestari and Mohsen Kadivar (Sadri 2001). What I mean by this is that they start with what they claim as Islamic theological terms

or values or principles - and go on to say that these values or principles are easiest to defend in a functionally secular state.

But the secularists I interviewed supported secularity on what seemed to be universal grounds that were not specifically Islamic. It might be controversial to frame it in this way, since these persons identified strongly as believing Muslims, and their world-views in that sense can be said to be just as «Islamic» as the world-views of more traditional-minded Muslims. But the terms they were using to defend secularism were universal terms that are equally accessible to all people, irrespective of faith: «When you mix religion and politics, the result is always bad. It is bad for politics. And it is bad for religion», as one of them said (as cited on p. 38). This is something that could just as easily have been said by a Christian, or an Atheist or a Buddhist. They didn't cite any examples from the early Muslim society in medina, and they didn't cite any Islamic theological principles to support their views - they just said that one shouldn't mix religion and politics.

It should be emphasized that not all of the respondents in the secularist category had such an articulated and reflective attitude to these issues. Some of them were what I would label as *pragmatic* or *non-ideological secularists*. They didn't necessarily understand politics through expressedly Islamic concepts, and it felt foreign to them to speak of an Islamic ideal society, et cetera. But this was not something they had thought about in detail.

«Well... I know that some think Islam has a political aspect, that there are laws according to Islam and such. But for me... well. I like the Norwegian system. I like parliamentary democracy, and checks and balances, and everything that functions so well here. And if Islam is what we see in the Muslim countries of today... well, I don't support that», one board chairman said.

This man was not prepared to say straight out that he supported a separation of Islam from politics. As I understood him he didn't feel equipped to go into what he perceived to be a theological debate in Islam, about the relation of Islam and society. But on a personal level, he didn't see any need for more religion in politics.

«I must emphasize that I have given this very little thought before this interview. I am a Muslim. I pray in the mosque, and perform my duties. I am also a Norwegian, and really like the political system here. I... eh.... for me... it has never been important with these issues, Islam and politics. I don't think that way», he added.

3.5. Model II – The Democratic Islamists

As mentioned, none of the imams expressed any support for secularism as a political principle. All of the imams maintained that Islam had a societal or political aspect. While some of the secularists felt somewhat uneasy when they were asked to describe an ideal society according to Islam, none of the imams seemed to find this question strange. However, what this entailed – *what* the ideal Islamic society was, and how it could be achieved - was not something they agreed upon.

The most common position among the Imams was what I would label *democratic Islamism.* A couple of the board chairmen also supported this position. It can be summarized as follows:

An ideal Islamic society is based on solidarity and trust between people. In this society there are some laws that cannot be changed democratically, drawn from sharia or fiqh, the classical Islamic jurisprudence. However, the ruler or rulers must be appointed democratically. But this ruler must govern according to the limits that are drawn by sharia as understood in traditional fiqh.

The democratic Islamists are eager to emphasize that they don't want to implement this Islamic system here in the West. But they want to implement it in Muslim countries. The reason for this has to do with the will of the people: Since people in the West don't want to be ruled by Islamic jurisprudence, it is not right *here*. But since many Muslims want to be ruled by Islamic jurisprudence, it is right *there*.

For the democratic Islamists, this creates a paradox. Shouldn't Muslims be ruled by sharia because it is the will of God? Not because it is the will of man? But since they legitimize the «not here but there»-view by an appeal to the will of the people,

they are in effect saying that divine law should only apply as long as people want it - which means that it is people who have the ultimate authority (are the sovereign), not God.

In the following sections I will explore this position more thoroughly.

3.5.1. The ideal Islamic society

When asked what an ideal Islamic society looked like, the democratic Islamists became poetic.

«In an ideal Islamic society people trust each other. And help each other. If you don't have enough, and I have more than enough, then I share with you. That is the basis», one imam said.

Social solidarity was a recurring and important theme for most of the respondents in this category. In their utopia this was a free flowing and organic feature of society, not something that was imposed by a state.

«In the ideal society, the state doesn't have to force you to be good. You are good because you want to», another imam said.

In a way, this ideal society seems similar to the utopia that is present in the writings of some left-wing anarchists - where selfish desires by a mysterious process have been transformed into altruism and solidarity.

But even though the democratic Islamists envision a kind of free flowing trust and solidarity, they think that this society must be governed by the strict limits of classical Islamic jurisprudence. I didn't go into detail on all the aspects of classical fiqh. But I asked the interviewees whether a Muslim is allowed to convert to another religion, or whether he must then receive capital punishment - as it has been prescribed in traditional fiqh. With a couple of exceptions, almost all the democratic Islamists answered that conversion away from Islam was not allowed in an ideal Islamic society. This is worth noting, since the Islamic Council of Norway in 2007 signed a joined

42

declaration with the Church of Norway about the right of people to convert to whatever religion they like (Islamsk Råd Norge and Mellomkirkelig råd for Den norske kirke 2007).

«When a society is based on Islam, then conversion away from Islam is like treason. And in many countries treason is punishable by death», one respondent said.

This man had been active in this mosque for many years, so I asked him if he knew about the declaration that the Islamic Council of Norway had signed.

«Yes. I know that declaration. I didn't agree with it. Several of the imams didn't agree with it», he said.

However, not all of them wanted capital punishment. Some wanted prison, and some said that a Muslim who wanted to convert should emigrate out of the country. But the main position was that apostasy should not be allowed. I didn't bring up the issue of the other *hudud punishments* - say, cutting off a hand for theft, or flogging for adultery, but several of the imams brought this up by themselves. Some complained that «sharia» had become synonymous with these punishments for some Western observers.

«Sharia is so much more than these punishments. But when people think of sharia, they only think of cutting of hands», one imam said.

But even though he disliked that people equated sharia solely with harsh punishments, he wanted these punishments to be implemented. But - as he and several of the other Islamists emphasized - in due time.

«The Islamic system must be implemented step by step. First, we must bring people education and a decent income. Then, after this is in place, we might think of going further. But it has to be step by step», he said.

3.5.2. Limited democracy

All of the democratic Islamists had a formal commitment to democracy. Many legitimized this in the example of the early caliphs (the successors to the prophet Muhammad who ruled the nascent Muslim community in Mecca and beyond), who they claimed were elected by popular vote.

«In Islam the people have the right to choose who should rule. That was the case with Abu Bakr [*the first Caliph*], and it should be the same way today», one of the imams said.

But the democratic Islamists also thought that the powers of the elected leader should be limited. He is obliged to rule within the limits of the sharia, and cannot change laws that are given by God.

My impression was that many of the democratic Islamists hadn't thought out in detail how such a system would work. They simply wanted both: Rule by the people, and rule by the law of God. But a couple of them proposed what such a system would look like. One proposed something similar to a constitutional democracy. The constitution sets certain limits that are drawn from the sharia. The parliament is allowed to legislate and operate freely within these rules.

In a way this system is similar to the constitutional democracy in Norway, where changes to the constitution require a majority of 2/3. The question is what kind of limits this hypothetical constitution stipulates: Capital punishment for apostasy? Unequal rights for men and women? The informant didn't specify what kind of limits he envisioned. The main thing for him was that the laws of God should set the limits.

Another respondent, who was one of the few who identified himself with an Islamist movement in his country of origin, presented an intricate system that he believed would safeguard both the need to be democratic and the need to rule within the sharia.

«There should be a democratically elected parliament. But then there should also be an extra chamber, made up of ulema [*men of Islamic learning*], that can

oversee whether the laws that the parliament decides upon are in accordance with the sharia».

3.5.3. Not sharia in the West

A striking feature in the interviews with the democratic Islamists was that all of them were very eager to emphasize that they didn't want to implement this system in the West, something they repeatedly brought up. They were apparently well aware of the fear of an Islamic «takeover» that prevails in certain segments in Norwegian society.

«You know, people in the West are so afraid of Islam! They claim that we want to take over and so on. Look at Siv Jensen for example, with her talk of 'snikislamisering'. She doesn't know what she is talking about», one imam said.

He was referring to the leader of the populist and right wing party Fremskrittspartiet, who had claimed that Norway was experiencing «snikislamisering», something that can be translated as *creeping Islamization.*

«We have always emphasized that we follow the laws here. And we don't want to implement sharia here in the West».

In order to understand whether this stance was a genuinely held opinion, I asked several follow-up questions about this issue. Why not sharia in the West as well? The question is not trivial or accusatory. If one truly believes that God has created a perfect system of laws that are better than any man-made laws, then the reasonable position to hold is that these laws should apply everywhere.

There were three main reasons given for why they didn't want sharia (or traditional fiqh) in the West. The first had to do with what Muslims owed to societies in the West. The reasoning in this argument was that since Muslims had been allowed to settle here, and their fundamental rights safeguarded - then it would be unfair and ungrateful to this society to try and implement sharia laws, as long as this was something people here didn't want.

The second reason being given was that Norway was already *sufficiently* Islamic. Without knowing it, Norwegians had implemented large and important parts of the sharia in their society - accountability, transparency, solidarity, et cetera.

«It is only such a small part of the sharia that is not already existent here. When people don't want it, there is no reason to have it. Norway already is one of the countries in the world that is closest to Islam, since people here are treated with respect», one imam said.

The core of this argument - even though none of the informants spelled it out in advanced philosophical or theological terms - seems to be that a society should be Islamic to a certain degree, and that there is no need to Islamize it further once this threshold is reached.

The last and most common argument was about democracy. In Muslim lands, people wanted sharia laws. Here, people didn't want sharia laws. Therefore it was right to implement those laws there but not here.

«I can get a little annoyed when people in the West interfere in Muslim countries, and don't want them to have sharia laws. Isn't it their right to decide for themselves», one board chairman commented.

He had just said that it would be wrong to implement sharia in the West, since people here didn't want it. But that people in his home country wanted sharia. I asked him whether he would accept it if people in his home country changed their mind, and didn't want to be ruled by sharia laws anymore?

«Of course. Of course. It is people who must decide», he answered.

This makes for a curious result. The fundamental right is the right of people to choose for themselves how they should be ruled, and which laws they should be ruled by. But in principle the people's legislation should be limited by God's law, which is superior to man's law.

When I tried to point out this apparent paradox, some of the informants didn't understand what I meant, and couldn't see that there was a paradox at all. Others tried to explain it. As I understood them they solved the paradox by leaning a bit more to one of the sides - either to democracy, or to rule by divine law.

The board chairman mentioned above landed on the side of the democracy.

«Yes. People must decide. If they want sharia, then fine. If not, then not».

Others - if forced to choose - tended towards the side of divine law.

«Well, sharia is the perfect law. So we want a system where people can't change whatever laws they like. But still... if nobody wants it... then it would be wrong to force them into it», one imam said, and came back to the paradox once again.

3.5.4. «Live side by side»

It seems clear from what the democratic Islamists said that they don't have any intentions of enforcing sharia laws on non-Muslims in the West. However, what would happen if Norwegians themselves wanted to be ruled by sharia law? Would they want an Islamic system here then?

When I asked this question, several of the democratic Islamists seemed somewhat uneasy.

«Ehr... no. I think that the system here is good. I don't want to change it», one of them said. He added that all he wanted to do was to present Islam, and then it was up to people here to decide if they accepted Islam or not.

I pressed him on the issue: «Exactly, I understand that. But say that people here accepted Islam in large numbers, and wanted to be ruled by sharia. Wouldn't you see that as a good thing», I asked.

«Yes, if people wanted it themselves. But I don't want to force anything on anyone», he emphasized.

Some of the others were more blunt about this.

«Of course! If people would want to be ruled by sharia here, then I would be very happy», one imam said.

But none of the democratic Islamists seemed to regard this as a realistic scenario. A few of them even pointed that out to me.

«You know... I think you are painting a scenario that is not realistic. The West is diverse, with many groups living side by side. That is what we want to keep on doing here. Just living side by side, in peace».

This was a recurring feature in many of the interviews with the democratic Islamists: They emphasized words like «respect», «respect for all religions» and «live side by side» - important features of what could be characterized as a soft multicultural ideology.

The picture that emerges is that the democratic Islamists, the largest group among the imams, perceive a true Islamic system to be one in which the ruler is democratically elected, but must rule within the limits of traditional sharia. However, since people in the West don't want such a system, they don't want to implement it here. Within Western society they think in multicultural terms, and want all religions and groups to receive equal recognition.

3.6. Model III: The Utopian Dreamers

As mentioned in section 3.5., all of the imams claimed that Islam had a societal or political aspect. But a significant minority of my informants were not supportive of the kind of democratic Islamism that the other imams wanted, even though they thought that Islam had a political aspect that went beyond the current Norwegian political system. I have labeled them *the utopian dreamers*. Their Islamic ideal is a utopia that borrows heavily from Western liberalism and democracy, but goes beyond this -

towards a kind of society that they are unable to describe in detail, but still hope will materialize at some point in the future.

3.6.1. Disillusionment with existing Islamic models

All the informants expressed dissatisfaction with the current state of the Muslim world. But this disillusionment was even more pronounced among the utopian dreamers than among the others.

«If you look at the Muslim world today... that it is not Islam. Not at all. I see greed, and poverty, corruption, harsh punishments for innocents... I don't see Islam», one of the imams said and shook his head.

For the utopian dreamers these problems seemed more complicated than for the secularists and the democratic Islamists. The secularists had an answer: Part of the problem was the mixing of religion and politics. And they also had a solution: Secular democracy. The democratic Islamists also had a solution: More of the traditional sharia. But the utopian dreamers were not prepared to accept any of these solutions.

In their actual political positions, the Utopian Dreamers were close to ideas and values that are commonly held in high regard in Norway: Individual freedom and solidarity.

«I think the greatest gift Western democracy has given mankind is individual freedom. That human beings have the freedom to choose how they want to live their lives. What to believe, what to say, what to do. That is extremely valuable, and must be an integral part of every future Islamic society», one of the imams said.

Thus, the utopian dreamers all emphasized that «there can be no compulsion in religion», as it is stated in Quran, and opposed capital punishment for apostasy.

«Everybody must have a right to choose what to believe and how to act. How can belief be of any value if one is forced to believe», one imam asked.

3.6.2. Beyond secular democracy

But even though they appreciated the individual freedom that secular democracy provided in the West, the utopian dreamers thought that a truly Islamic system required something more.

I asked one of them whether there was any contradiction between Islam and democracy.

«On a very deep and philosophical level: Yes. Islam says that the laws come from God. While democracy says that the laws come from the people. Obviously there is a contradiction here», he answered.

I asked him why he had used the words «on a very deep and philosophical level». He explained:

«Because many of the values in Islam can be achieved through democracy. In the West, many of these values have been fulfilled - individual freedom, respect for other faiths, transparency in government, and in the Nordic countries also social solidarity. So I don't mean that Islam is opposed to democracy, or that democracy is bad for Islam. But Islam cannot be equated with democracy».

Another of the Imams also had reservations about the way democracy functioned today.

«Islam wants to bring about the welfare of all humanity. Today, democracy only exists within individual states. And the power lies in the Western states. All states follow their own interests, and the most powerful states get the most. So 'democracy' today means that large numbers of people don't have a vote and don't have a say. Voters in the Western countries decide for them, in a way. And also within the Western states, it is often the elites who decide. They have money, and they influence politicians. Even if people can vote, it doesn't mean that they have much influence on the way politics is handled», he said.

This rhetoric doesn't seem specifically «Islamic» at first glance. It reminds one more of the criticism of liberal democracy that can come from secular Leftist or Anarchist writers. But his proposed alternative had to do with Islam. He wanted a solution for all mankind that he thought would safeguard the rights of all people.

«I want a democratic world parliament. And this parliament should be guided by Islam, to ensure that everybody is treated with respect and fairness».

I asked what it implied for him that it should be «guided by Islam». His reply mostly had to do with basic human rights, economic development and freedom of speech and belief. But it also included selected aspects of classical fiqh, for example a relatively conservative outlook on family life and relations between the sexes.

«It is best for the woman, for the family and for the whole society that a woman is at home and looks after the kids, and that a husband works. It creates safety and peace. Therefore it is also right, as it has been prescribed in Islam, that a daughter should inherit half as much as her brothers - since they have to care for their families, while she can spend all her money on herself», he said.

But he didn't want this to be implemented in the individual states of today.

«No - I don't believe the world is ready. It has to be on a world level», he said.

I asked how this system could be implemented at a world level, and mentioned that it seemed a pretty daunting task to me.

He smiled and nodded his head: «Inshallah. I don't know. We must just be good Muslims, treat each other with fairness, and one day a better future will come about. Inshallah».

Other utopian dreamers proposed different political solutions - or they didn't have any definite proposal.

«Today, everybody speaks of democracy as the salvation of mankind. But that is a quite recent phenomenon. It is an intellectual fad, where everybody has to be 'democrats'. Go back 100 years and there were other currents of thought in the West,

where people were required to adhere to other systems of thought in order to be regarded as decent people. Well, I think democracy has given great benefits to mankind. No doubt. But maybe there will arise challenges that democracy is unable to handle. So who knows? Perhaps there will be other societal ideals in the future», another of the imams said.

He couldn't say exactly what his own proposed societal model was. The basis of his thinking was the so called *maqasid al-sharia*, or the objectives behind Islamic law. This line of thinking was developed by some of the classical Islamic jurists and thinkers, among them al-Ghazali (1058-1111). They claimed that Islamic law was there in order to fulfill certain objectives - to safeguard life, religion, property, intellect and family. This means that Islamic law can be changed if different circumstances require other laws in order to safeguard these objectives or values.

«That is the basis. Society must protect human life. Freedom, dignity, and well-being. But how that should happen - it is an open question. Secular democracy is one way. But I don't believe it is the only way», he said.

What the Utopian Dreamers have in common is that they perceive the ideal Islamic society as something that hasn't yet materialized. This utopia draws inspiration from aspects of contemporary Western societies, and from the Islamic tradition as well. The distinguishing trait of the utopians is that there is no conceivable line of action that will lead from the contemporary state of things to this future society. They don't propose any specific changes that will lead society in this direction, they don't advocate specific causes, and they don't advise Muslims to behave politically in a certain way.

When asked what they would like to change in today's society, both in Norway and in their country of origin, the utopian dreamers didn't have ready-made answers. Or, rather, their proposed changes were adjustments fully within the framework of secular and liberal democracy.

«In my home country - the main problem is that politicians are mainly concerned with themselves and their own gain. We don't have politicians that are concerned with the common good. The political parties need to develop programs that are for the common good», one of them said.

Another - when asked about Norway - couldn't come up with anything at all.

«To be honest? No. I think Norway is an amazing country. You know, there's small things, the garbage collection doesn't always function as it should in my neighborhood. But all in all, Norway is about as good as a society can get».

My interpretation is that since the utopian dreamers divorce their perceived utopia from contemporary reality, they are free to think politically on universal and common grounds in the world as it is. So in their practical politics, they remind very much of the secularists.

3.7. Model IV: The Muslim Democrat

The smallest contingent among the respondents - in fact only one board chairman - held a position that didn't fit easily into any of the other categories. It is still worth detailing this position, since it connects to certain broader streams within Islamic thought today.

This board chairman did not commit himself to the separation of religion and politics, and was no secularist: he claimed that there were fundamental values and «limits» in Islam that should guide society. On the other hand, unlike the democratic Islamists, he didn't think that Islam prescribed any specific laws, and was clearly opposed to large parts of traditional fiqh, such as capital punishment for apostasy, harsh punishments for theft or adultery, etc. He didn't make any separation between Norway and the Muslim world in terms of what kind of society he wanted, either.

And unlike the utopian dreamers, he didn't think that an ideal Islamic utopia had yet to materialize. Islam could and should guide politics here and now.

The label I will assign to him is that of a Muslim Democrat - analogous to the Christian Democrats in European politics, who think that Christianity provides fundamental values that should guide politics, but that religion doesn't provide any fixed blueprint for the ideal society (Lunde 1996).

«Islam doesn't go into details about how a society should be. It sets certain limits you can move within. There are some values that are there, and that one must adhere to. If you follow these values, then you don't have any problem with Islam», he said.

«Which values are that», I asked.

«Basically, it is about respect for persons. Not to kill, not to steal, to allow people to live decent lives», he replied.

Another important value was tolerance and freedom.

«In a dream society according to Islam, everybody tolerates each other. You listen to each other. You respect each other. Tolerance and understanding... If you don't believe in God, that's up to you. I don't need to force you or insult you because of that».

Because of this he was clearly opposed to capital punishment for apostasy.

«No, that is wrong... that is his own choice [*the apostate*]. For me he can do whatever he wants. That is between him and God. If I don't accept that then I am forcing him. To accept that others think differently, that is what tolerance means, right? I must tolerate what you think, and you must tolerate what I think».

Another value that he saw as important in Islam was social solidarity. This led him to view Norway as the country in the world that was closest to the ideals in Islam.

«To be totally honest... the country that is closest to an ideal state according to Islam is Norway, and the other Scandinavian countries. None of the Muslim countries can call themselves Islamic states. They use the name, but in practice they are not. I haven't lived in other countries except Norway and my home country, but I have

visited many countries. All that... the social support people get if they get hardships... that is what Islam says. That the state must be responsible for the welfare of people. That the state should give people the possibility to develop as persons. In Norway we have free education, a free health care system, if you are out of work you get support. That is Islam».

For this man, the role of Islam in politics was to provide values - tolerance, social solidarity, respect for life and persons. That is fairly close to the way religion and politics is understood in current Christian Democratic ideology. The anthropologist Robert Hefner labels this as an «ethicalization» of sharia: «a tendency [...] to view the shari'a not as an inflexible code to be imposed by rulers, but as a general ethical guide to be implemented by communities of believers in a manner informed by the higher objectives of the law» (Hefner 2011: 31). If this man was asked directly whether he wanted «sharia» in Norwegian law, he would likely have answered yes. But his conception of sharia would be very different from the sharia-concept that is employed by the democratic Islamists.

Chapter 4: Placing the findings in context

In this chapter I will place my findings in the context of relevant previous research, especially that of Jytte Klausen and Andrew F. March. One of the reasons for doing this is, as mentioned in section 2.3, that comparison with previous research makes it easier to assess the validity of the findings in question.

4.1. The four models in relation to Klausen's categories

I will begin by discussing my findings in light of Jytte Klausen's research. In her thorough treatment of the Muslim elite in Europe, she employed other categories than the ones I have used here to describe her respondents. They are, and I repeat from the introduction:

- Anti-clericals, who see Islam and Western values as inherently incompatible

- Secular integrationists, who want to «mainstream» Islam

- Voluntarist Euro-Muslims, who don't see any conflict between Islam and Western values, and don't want governmental interference in religious life

- The neo-orthodox, who see potential conflicts between Islam and Western values, and want autonomy for Muslim groups

There are several reasons why I chose to use other terms. One is that Klausen doesn't concern herself in her book specifically with the way her respondents legitimize their political beliefs in Islam. That is, she doesn't delve deeply into Islamic theology - and she didn't ask the respondents whether they wanted a different type of political system in Muslim countries.

Another reason is that Klausen developed her typology based on responses to two specific questions: 1) «Is Islam compatible with Western value systems?», and 2)

«Should Islam be 'mainstreamed'?» (Klausen 2005: 87). This means that Klausen's categorization is specifically concerned with how the Muslim leaders envision the relations between Islamic institutions and the state - a question I didn't touch upon in my interviews. In addition, the question «Is Islam compatible with Western value systems?» is more vague than the detailed questions I asked about politics and religion.

This makes it difficult to make direct comparisons between Klausen's categories and my findings. It gets further complicated by the fact that I only interviewed leaders in mosques, whereas Klausen also interviewed community leaders, politicians, et cetera. Still, some points can be made. Among my respondents none could be labeled as anti-clericals. This group with a nominally Muslim background views Islam with great scepticism, and want the state to provide as little formal recognition and support for organized Islam as possible (Klausen 2005: 93). It is not very surprising that none of my respondents were anti-clericals, considering the fact that they were all leaders in mosques.

The secularists among my respondents fit into several of Klausen's categories. One of them identified himself as «not particularly religious personally», and was primarily engaged in the mosque because he saw it as valuable culturally. This man could fit into the secular integrationist camp, since he himself was both a secularist and secular in a personal, non-religious sense - and that he advocated equal treatment of all religions.

The others - the secularists, the utopian dreamers, the democratic Islamists and the Muslim democrat - don't fit any of Klausen's categories neatly, actually. It would be reasonable to see the democratic Islamists among my respondents as belonging to the neo-orthodox group, for example. However, several of them emphasized that values in Norwegian society - solidarity, transparency, etc. - were also values that were important in Islam. I believe, therefore, that many of them would claim that Islam is compatible with Western value systems. In addition, the neo-orthodox among Klausen's respondents wished for the possibility to amend secular law with sharia,

particularly with regard to family law - «to allow for the codification and and application of religious law in secular courts». Among the democratic Islamists that I interviewed, this was not something that seemed important. This is consistent, however, with Klausen's finding that her Scandinavian respondents - in Denmark and Sweden - were emphatically opposed to legal self-rule for Muslims, whereas the respondents in the UK were largely in favor of this (Klausen 2005: 192). This increases the likelihood that my finding here - that juridical self-rule is not high on the agenda for the democratic Islamists in Norway - can be trusted.

So instead of trying to fit Klausen's and my categorizations together, I will look into whether there are other broad similarities or differences between my findings and the findings in her book.

4.1.2. Similarity: Support for the political system

One of the broad similarities between Klausen's book and my findings is the broad support among the respondents for the political system in European countries, and for a type of soft multiculturalism. The most conservative group among Klausen's respondents were the neo-orthodox. She describes their political goals as follows:

«The neo-orthodox did not argue for turning Europe into a Caliphate but for the right to exist as religious minority and to live, by choice, according to religious law. I did not encounter anyone who argued for the forcible imposition of Islamic law on Western states». (Klausen 2005: 93)

And these are the most conservative ones. The other groups - the anti-clericals, the secular integrationists and the euro-Muslims - were equally supportive of the political systems in their countries, but unlike the neo-orthodox they didn't seek the right to amend secular law with sharia in the area of family law.

4.1.3. Difference: Satisfaction with the situation

58

It is concerning their evaluation of their predicament as Muslims in a non-Muslim society such as Norway that the responses I got differs the most from the findings in Klausen's book. Even though Klausen's respondents were supportive of the political system in their countries, most of them were dissatisfied with the general situation of Muslims. In total, 67.9 percent of Klausen's respondents thought that Muslims had many «special problems», and only 17.6 percent were «generally satisfied» with the treatment of Muslims (Klausen 2005: 54). They felt that there was much discrimination against Muslims based on religion and that politicians on the right exploited Islamophobia.

In many of the interviews I did it was clear that the respondents were aware of a societal fear of Islam, since they made pains to emphasize that they didn't support terror, without being asked about it. But when asked how they felt it was to be a Muslim in Norway, and if there was anything they wanted to change, all of them answered that on the whole, things were good.

This difference is striking. Klausen's respondents on the whole seem somewhat discontent and worried: «A general trend may be discerned. Muslim leaders across Europe believe that the media and xenophobic parties have pushed mainstream parties into policies that are detrimental to Muslims and to the prospects for accomodation, and that the situation is deteriorating» (Klausen 2005: 63).

But most of my respondents said that being a Muslim in Norway was on the whole good and relatively easy, and expressed respect for mainstream parties and politicians. How should we account for this difference? Klausen's material is more expansive in scope and more thorough than mine, so one possibility is that my findings on this area are not valid or reliable - that I didn't go deeply enough into this issue. In the interviews I focused mostly on the normative opinions of my respondents. Their perceptions of the general situation of Muslims was not the main issue.

But two features in Klausen's data seem to support my findings. One is that there was great variation on country level. In Denmark, for example, 43.8 percent of the respondents report «many problems for Muslims», 40.6 report «some problems»,

and 15.6 report «no special problems». While in Germany as many as 84.8 report «many problems», 13.0 report «some problems», and 2.2 report «no special problems». The respondents in Sweden were also more content than the respondents in continental Europe (Klausen 2005: 54). This shows that national context is important. It is therefore not impossible that the situation in Norway is perceived by the Muslim leaders as even better than in Denmark or Sweden. I have seen anecdotal evidence for this: In some Islamic conferences that I have attended, guests from Denmark have expressed envy of the situation of the Norwegian Muslims.

Another feature that could be relevant is that Klausen reports native-born respondents to be more discontent than the first generation, who would often say things like «as bad as it is, this is much better than where I came from» (Klausen 2005: 55). Those who are born in Europe don't compare their situation with the country of their parents, but with the situation of others in their country. With the exception of one board chairman, all my respondents were first generation immigrants. This might explain their relatively positive outlook on life in Norway.

Another explanation could be that relations between Muslim congregations and the state are more formalized in Norway than in many other European countries. The mosques in Norway receive funding from the state based on how many members they have. This has led to a preoccupation with enrolling people as members. In addition, most of the mosques in Norway cooperate in the umbrella organization Islamsk Råd Norge (Islamic Council of Norway), that has been engaged in dialogue with authorities and other religious bodies for many years. To paraphrase Charles Taylor in *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (Taylor and Gutmann 1992): Islamic congregations in Norway have been officially and symbolically recognized as being part of Norway. It is worth mentioning, for example, that the Muhammad cartoon affair had a different outcome in Norway than in Denmark. Islamic leaders in Norway spoke with politicians and Christian leaders during the crisis, which seems to have eased the tempers.

In addition, Norway is wealthy compared to other European countries because of its oil, which means that Muslim immigrants in Norway have easier access to both work and public welfare, even though there is an ethnic penalty (and perhaps even a Muslim penalty) when applying for jobs.

It is not unlikely that these features of Norwegian society - formal and symbolic recognition of Islamic congregations, and favorable economic conditions - lead Muslim religious leaders in Norway to hold a more positive stance towards their predicament as Muslims than their fellow leaders on the continent.

4.2. The positions of the leaders in relation to Islamic minority theology

I will now discuss how the positions of the respondents relate to the theological categories that Andrew F. March has identified concerning how Muslims should relate to the situation of being a minority. As mentioned in the introduction (section 1.5.3), he has examined in several articles how Islamic theologians today come to terms with Muslims being a minority.

One important finding in this thesis is that several of the respondents simply don't fit the theological frameworks that March has identified, for example in the article *Theocrats Living under Secular Law: An External Engagement with Islamic Legal Theory* (March 2011). In his framework, all the types of theologies that he mentions have an expressedly Islamic world view as their starting point. But as mentioned in section 3.4, the secularists among my respondents didn't base their political opinions on exclusively Islamic notions. They based their political opinions on universal political notions that are equally accessible to people of all faiths.

The secularists among my interviewees are not close to being theocrats (the principle group of Muslims that March deals with in this writings) - and thus fall outside the theological typology that March developed.

4.2.1. The Muslim Democrat: A Religious Integralist

The respondent I labeled as a Muslim Democrat, on the other hand, fits neatly into one of March's categories: the «religious integralist». March defines a religious integralist as someone who:

«...moves 'beyond Law' to another form of religious political ethics. Such a religious ethics need not be liberal or fully comfortable with secularism, but is likely to be more open-ended and thus more easily placed into conversation with other ethical doctrines» (March 2011: 31)

According to March, Tariq Ramadan is an example of this trend: In his most recent writings he has moved towards this perspective, in which Islam provides basic values and goals, but not a fixed legal code that must be implemented in society (March 2011-b). This position allows the religious believer to support a functionally secular state for ethical reasons that have their basis in religion.

The respondent I identified as a Muslim Democrat fits perfectly into this category. As cited above, he said: «Islam doesn't go into details about how a society should be. It sets certain limits you can move within. There are some values that are there, and that one must adhere to».

He didn't support classical fiqh, with its detailed rulings about marriage, inheritance, penal code, et cetera. For him, Islam was about basic values: Tolerance, solidarity and respect for life. Even though this man didn't mention Tariq Ramadan as an influence, his way of thinking is close to the reformist theology Ramadan has advocated in recent years.

4.2.2. Thin and thick social contracts: Democratic Islamists and utopian dreamers

The most common stance in mainstream sunni jurisprudence today, according to March, is the stance that he labels as a «thin social contract model»:

«This model posits that when the wider community guarantees it certain rights of security and religious freedom, it will consent to obey laws which it does not necessarily regard as just from its comprehensive theocratic perspective» (March 2011: 29).

March also identifies what he calls a «thicker social contract model»: «It moves beyond the legitimate terms of residence to ask whether the substance of an alien conception of justice might be sufficiently just or legitimate» (March 2011: 31).

In this model, the theocratic actor doesn't see the secular democratic state as fully just according to his theocratic standards, but he still views it as just or good to a certain degree - it is *sufficiently just*, good enough to receive normative support that goes beyond a procedural acceptance of the rules of the game.

The respondents I labeled as democratic Islamists and utopian dreamers fit these two categories. All of them adhere to the thin social contract at the very least - they see it as mandatory for Muslims to follow Norwegian laws, and to adhere to the procedural rules of the democratic game. However, most of the respondents in these categories also seemed to adhere to a thicker social contract. They supported the Norwegian system in part because they saw it as expressions of values inherent in Islam. As one of the imams expressed it, as cited in section 3.5.3:

«It is only such a small part of the sharia that is not already existent here. When people don't want it, there is no reason to have it. Norway already is one of the countries in the world that is closest to Islam, since people here are treated with respect».

This same imam was one of those who unequivocally supported capital punishment for apostasy in Muslim countries - a position most Norwegians would regard as deeply opposed to values in Norwegian society. But still, he thought that Norway was already, to a large degree, «Islamic». The Norwegian state was at least sufficiently Islamic to claim the normative allegiance of Muslims living here.

4.2.3. The categories that didn't match

I will also briefly mention the theological categories that March outlines that didn't fit any of my respondents.

- The Internal Retreat Model: This model accepts a thin social contract, and does not seek to «disrupt the wider politico-legal order» (March 2011: 30). However, such a community «directs all its spiritual and political energies towards its own communal life», and it «exerts great efforts to socialize its members into common norms and to regulate internal matters and disputes informally, without appeal to the wider legal system» (March 2011: 30). Examples could be the Amish in the United States, the ultra-orhodox Haredim in Israel, and some Muslim Salafi groups in Europe. Among my respondents, nobody advocated this model - they all spoke favorably of the larger society, and didn't think that Muslims should isolate themselves.

- The Self-Governance Model: On this model, «the theocratic community not only regulates its own internal affairs as much as possible informally, but seeks certain guarantees of its autonomy from the wider state. Such self-governance seeks to secure a form of legal pluralism, with communal control over as many areas as possible, from family and personal law to criminal law» (March 2011: 30).

According to March, this is a dominant aspiration within Islamic jurisprudence, alongside the thin social contract model. However, I didn't find any support for this model among my respondents. When asked if there was anything they wished to change in Norway, or what kind of political changes Muslims should seek, nobody mentioned anything about self-governance. And when asked how Muslims should relate to living in a non-Muslim society, nobody mentioned self-governance either. However, I didn't press the informants on this issue - whether it would be a good thing for Muslims to rule themselves in matters of family law, et cetera. If I had done so it is possible that that some of them would answered in the affirmative. But it seems clear from the responses I got that none of my respondents regarded this as a pressing issue, or as something that was high on their agenda.

- The Temporary Modus Vivendi Model: In this model «the emphasis is less on stabilizing the theocratic community's relationship to the state than on seeking to bring about conditions more in line with the community's theocratic vision» (March 2011: 30).

Put more bluntly: Under this model, Muslims will seek to transform secular society into a theocratic society whenever they get the chance. But I didn't find any signs of support for this model among my respondents either. As some of the democratic Islamists acknowledged, they would indeed regard it as a good thing if a majority of Norwegians at some point accepted Islam, and then sought to be governed by sharia laws. Others vehemently opposed this scenario, even though they (in my opinion) were unable to articulate fully why God's laws - in principle superior to the laws of man - shouldn't apply here as well. However, none of the respondents seemed to regard this scenario as even remotely realistic. As one of them expressed it, cited above in section 3.5.4.:

«You know... I think you are painting a scenario that is not realistic. The West is diverse, with many groups living side by side. That is what we want to keep on doing here. Just living side by side, in peace».

To transform Norway into an Islamic theocracy was not on the agenda for any of my respondents - either because they didn't want it and thought of it as an undesirable goal, or because they regarded it as completely unrealistic.

Chapter 5: Exploring the internal differences

I have now looked at the similarities and differences between my group of respondents, seen as a whole, and groups that have been studied in previous research. In this chapter I will look at the internal differences among my respondents, and attempt to understand why their opinions differ from each other. In the Norwegian context: What makes a secularist? Or a democratic Islamist, or a utopian dreamer? Are there elements in the personal stories that allow us to understand their positions more deeply?

5.1. The differences: Imams vs. board chairmen, country of origin, 1st and 2nd generation

I will start by outlying what I perceive to be the basic facts about the positioning of the interviewees. My material does not include detailed information about the economic situation or educational achievements of the interviewees, and this is not a statistical analysis. However, there were some striking features that were discernible:

- There was a noticeable difference between imams and board chairmen. Several of the board chairmen supported secularism, while all of the imams thought that Islam in principle had a political aspect.

- Among the imams, all of those who could be labeled as utopian dreamers (as opposed to democratic Islamists) came from relatively liberal or secular Muslim countries. Similarly, all of the board chairmen who had a background in these countries supported secularism, while some of the board chairmen who came from more conservative Muslim countries supported democratic Islamism.

- There was also a difference among the board chairmen between 1st and 2nd generation: Among the 1st generation board chairmen (who didn't grow up in Norway)

there were some Democratic Islamists, while the one board chairman who grew up in Norway supported secularism. But since this only concerns one person it cannot provide the basis for any hypothesis, so I am not going to devote any space to the issue of 1st and 2nd generation here.

- Another interesting point is that the imam and the board chairman within the same mosque sometimes disagreed.

This leaves me with several cleavages that can be theoretically explored: The difference between imams and board chairmen, the difference between those who come from liberal or secular Muslim states and those whose background is in more traditional countries, and the internal disagreement in the mosques.

5.2. Basic notion: Embeddedness

Within sociology it has been a classic question «how behavior and institutions are affected by social relations» (Granovetter 1985: 485). While sociologists have often emphasized how behavior and opinions are shaped by social circumstances, researchers in some other disciplines - economy, for example - have sometimes assumed actors to make calculated rational decisions that are not constrained by social relations.

When it comes to questions of values or political and religious ideology, a simplified «rational man» account of actors would perhaps depict the religious leader who grapples with these issues in the following way: He sits down, alone, and thinks the issues through. What's the best society according to Islam? And how should this ideal be expressed today? He reads the sacred texts, he looks at society, and behold - he comes up with an Islamic answer, that he believes is the best model for society today.

But if this picture was correct it would be difficult to explain the discernible differences between the respondents concerning occupation - imam vs. non-imam - and country of origin. This means that social circumstances affect their opinions. But

how should this social influence be labeled? In a seminal article Mark Granovetter coined a term that has since gained prominence in sociology: *Embeddedness*. This is the term I will use here.[2] Granovetter outlined the basic idea behind the concept as follows: «The argument that the behavior and institutions to be analyzed are so constrained by ongoing social relations that to construe them as independent is a grievous misunderstanding» (Granovetter 1985: 482). Granovetter used the term primarily with reference to specific social networks. In later research the term has caught a life of its own, and the term has been used with various meanings. Some have claimed that is also possible to be embedded in ideas or intellectual traditions - *ideational embeddedness* (Somers and Block 2005). Here I will use embeddedness in both meanings, and relate to these two features of embeddedness as *relational embeddedness* and *ideational embeddedness.*

5.3. Embeddedness in Islamic discourse: The weight of tradition?

I will start with discussing *ideational embeddedness*. This is an explanation that comes to mind since there were such discernible differences between the imams and the non-imams. Can the lack of principal support for secularism among the imams be due to the fact that they are more influenced by certain ideas than the board chairmen? But *ideational embeddedness* is a tricky term. Somers and Block, who coined it, provide the following definition: To be embedded in «the ideas, public narratives, and explanatory systems by which states, societies, and political cultures construct, transform, explain and normalize [a phenomenon] » (Somers and Block 2005: 264).

This definition is not satisfactory. It can be asked: What analytical work does this term do, that can't be done by a more simple term such as «ideational influence»? And does it make sense to say that one can be «embedded» in a certain idea? I will put it like this: To be *influenced* by an idea means to be in touch with an idea, and that this idea in some way changes the way one thinks, in one direction or other. To be

---

[2] I am indebted to Jon Horgen Friberg for suggesting that this concept and Granovetter's article could be relevant.

embedded is a stronger term, that implies that one is more fully immersed in a certain way of looking at the world.

An example: Assume a group of people who went to socialist summer camps as kids. Some of those kids keep on being socialists as grown-ups: In their case it makes sense to say that they still are embedded in the world-view was common in the summer camps of their childhood. While others grow tired of politics, but still maintain a vague commitment to bettering the world: It is reasonable to say that they still are *influenced* by the things they learnt in these camps – but they are not embedded in the world-view any more.

I am aware that this is not a crystal-clear definition of what it means to be ideationally embedded, but for the purposes of this thesis it will suffice. So in this context, an interpretation of the imam/non-imam divide could be that the imams are embedded in certain Islamic ideas. A simplified version of this view would be that the Imams are «more Islamic» - they know more of Islam, and provide answers that are more in line with true Islam than the board chairmen. This is an explanation that I think a fair amount of Muslims would happily give themselves: The religious leaders are authorized to speak in the name of Islam, while lay men merely give their own opinion. Some of the board chairmen actually said this themselves:

«You know, I am merely giving you my own opinions. If you want to have true answers about Islam, you have to turn to the imam», one of them said.

This is based on the view, common among some Muslims, that religious interpretation is the exclusive domain of the *ulema*, the men of Islamic learning.

However, as discussed in the introduction, many researchers have in recent years become wary of such essentializing ways of understanding Islam. Who is to decide what counts as true Islam? Is it the puritanical wahhabism of Saudi Arabia, or the more reformist approach of the Muslim Brotherhood? Or: Why should we regard the opinions of the ulema as more «Islamic» than the opinions of the ordinary Muslim on the street? At least if one is approaching Islam and Muslims from a sociological or

social anthropological angle, it might seem arbitrary to label one form as more authentic than others. To use the term of Talal Asad, Muslims approach the discursive tradition of Islam in different ways, with highly diverging results. Therefore some have resorted to speaking of *Islams* in stead of Islam - and explained what kind of Islam one is talking about.

But in this thesis I have nevertheless employed the terms *Islam* and *Islamic* as denoting distinct phenomena that can be distinguished from other social phenomena. It is possible to say, though, that the umbrella term «Islam» contains various sub-types of Islams - ways of life and thought that differ from another, but all refer to the discursive tradition of Islam. One demarcation within Islam could be «Islam of the religious institutions». There is obviously a lot of variance both between and within Islamic religious institutions. Still, it should be possible to draw a line between the Islamic teachings that are taught at an institution, and the lived lives of non-specialist Muslims.

The imams that I interviewed had all studied at a religious institution in a Muslim majority country, and were exposed to certain ideas while they were there. They spoke in different ways about both politics and theology. However, a common feature was that they didn't embrace secularism as a political ideal. In principle, they all held the view that Islam had a societal aspect that couldn't be divorced from politics. What this entails was interpreted in different ways. Some advocated traditional fiqh in Muslim countries, with capital punishment for apostasy. While others advocated individual freedom on most aspects of life. But in spite of this variation, for all of the imams that I interviewed a limit seems to have been a principled, formal separation of religion from politics. A way of understanding this can be that it constitutes a discursive limit: Within the theological world of the Islam of the religious institutions, a formal separation of religion from politics is still seen as a transgression of the boundaries of Islam. While the *contents* of the societal aspects of Islam is open to discussion and allows for variation. The tendency of the Imams to oppose secularism might be explained by their embeddedness in particular ideas - the weight of the Islamic tradition that is taught at religious institutions.

70

This, of course, is not a claim that can be generalized to the vast world of Islamic theology today. The state controlled theological institutions in Turkey have been instructed by the Turkish state to teach that secularism is in accordance with Islam. And the social anthropologist Irfan Ahmad has argued in a well-researched monograph that the Jamaat-e-Islami in India, originally a conservative Islamist movement, today supports pluralism and secularism (Ahmad 2009).

But for the imams who were my respondents at least, with their background in diverse teaching institutions in different countries, the formal separation of religion from politics seems to be a discursive limit that they didn't want to cross. This should not be taken to mean that I see them as «programmed» by their embeddedness in the Islamic tradition into saying and thinking certain things. My proposal is rather that the ideas they have been enmeshed in through the religious institutions form some kind of outer, demarcating limits - and that the content, the stuff that fills the space between these limits, is open to interpretation and variation.

The corresponding claim would be that the reason that the board chairmen were more inclined to favor secularism is that they are embedded in ideals that are more common outside the world of the religious institutions.

5.4. Embeddedness in networks: Social pressures

An alternative way of approaching the differences is to emphasize *relational embeddedness*. The imams and the board chairmen often inhabit different social worlds. Most of the imams that I interviewed had been in Norway for a few years only, with some exceptions. Only a few of them spoke Norwegian fluently. The board chairmen, on the other hand, had been in Norway for many years, and most of them spoke good Norwegian. The board chairmen all hold - or held in the past - full time jobs that gives them much exposure to Norwegian society and Norwegians. While some of the imams lead a more secluded life within the mosque.

This embeds the imams and the board chairmen in different social networks. One difference is that the board chairmen have more interaction with people outside of the mosque, Norwegians as well as fellow Muslims. While the imams probably are part of networks that the board chairmen don't participate in: Meetings with other imams, transnational Islamic networks, et cetera.

Ideas matter in this account as well: But the emphasis is not on the individual that intellectually, in an active way, conforms to ideas that he has been socialized into - but rather on the individual that conforms to social pressure from other *people.* It might be the case that certain ideas hold sway in different networks - that there are certain things you can get away with and certain things you can't get away with.

A simplified version of this account would explain the differences as follows: The secularist board chairmen are part of networks where secularism is seen as an accepted, or perhaps even lauded, political solution. While the imams are part of networks where secularism is not seen as acceptable. Therefore they end up with different ideological views.

But rather than seeing these two types of embeddedness as mutually exclusive, I think it can be fruitful to see them as complementing each other. On an individual level it is probably the case that people can be more or less open and adventurous intellectually. Some reproduce what they have been taught, while others engage with it in creative ways. Similarly, some people confirm more easily to social pressures than others. The degree that a person's views can be explained through ideational and relational embeddedness is therefore likely to vary.

In addition, ideas are always carried or presented by people - be it in print or orally. The notion of «confirming to the views of others» might not always imply people that surround you on a daily basis. One of the interviewees, an imam that had got his training in an Islamist movement in his country of origin, still spoke of people in this movement with great regard:

«They [the movement] gave me everything - intellectual traning, support, work. They are wonderful people. In my work I hope to fulfill the values they instilled in me».

Even though this imam was not surrounded by people from the Islamist movement today, it is not unlikely that he still imagined people in this movement as *relevant others* - people whose regard and respect he should strive for, even though they were not around to give him credit for it.

Also in the case of the secularist board chairmen who have been more exposed to Norwegian society, it would be artificial to separate between their exposure to *ideas* and their exposure to *people*. They are exposed to both, in an intertwined process.

5.5. The importance of the country of origin

The other significant difference I found was the importance of the country of origin. My informants had their background in different countries, with the largest contingent coming from Pakistan. Among the imams, those who were utopian dreamers rather than democratic Islamists all came from more liberal Muslim countries. Among the board chairmen, all who had their background in relatively liberal Muslim countries supported secularism, while the board chairmen who had their background in more conservative Muslim countries - Pakistan or the Middle East - were mixed, with some supporting secularism and some democratic Islamism.

As I have emphasized, this thesis is not close to being a quantitative study. The relative importance of the country of origin for the formation of political ideology, compared to other factors, is impossible to assess based on my data. But I do believe it shows that there is an effect. This is also in line with Klausen's research, who found that the country of origin had an effect on the opinions of her interviewees (Klausen 2005: 95-96).

I will propose that the terms of ideational and relational embeddedness can do most of the work of explaining these differences. Through their upbringing in

countries with different political cultures, and for the imams - their education in Islamic institutions with different ways of doing Islamic theology - they were embedded in different ideational and intellectual traditions. They were also embedded in different networks, where different ideals probably were dominant. This was obviously the case before they came to Norway. But it also holds true for their lives in Norway: Most of the respondents inhabit social worlds in which they are surrounded by people with a similar ethnic background, since they spend much of their time in mosques that have a relatively homogenous ethnic make-up.

There are large differences between Bosnia and Pakistan, for example. Bosnia is a relatively secularized country, with an institutionalized Islamic «church» system that has its place within the structure of a secular state. In Pakistan there is no centralized «church», and traditional sharia laws governs selected aspects of life. The theological Islam of Bosnia differs in many ways from the theological Islam of Pakistan (see for example an interview about the future of Islam with Bosnia's grand Mufti Mustafa Ceric (Casciani 2005)). Also, the lived lives of Bosniak Muslims differs from the lived lives of many Pakistani Muslims - in Bosnia it has not been uncommon to drink alcohol, something that in Pakistan has mostly been confined to secularized elites.

These differing worlds - with different lifestyles, different theologies, different politics - have obviously shaped my respondents. They have been embedded in different networks and different ideational traditions, something which also shapes their political and religious world views today.

5.6. Embedded in Norway: «A good place to be Muslim»

But the discussion above of the differences shouldn't overshadow the equally interesting similarities between the respondents. As discussed in section 3.3 all the informants, with no exception, expressed a strong liking for Norway, Norwegian society, and the political system and culture here. Even though their way of

legitimizing this differed, all of the democratic Islamists, the secularists, the utopian dreamers and the Muslim democrat supported taking part in Norwegian society, without any intention of overhauling it according to minoritarian demands.

How should this be understood? I will outline two ways of understanding it. One interpretation is that their commitment to the Norwegian political system, and their liking of Norwegian society, is a result of their becoming embedded in Norwegian society - in social networks, in ideational traditions, et cetera. A version of this account could look like this: A Pakistani man lives in Lahore. He thinks Pakistan is a wonderful society, and looks at Western societies such as Norway as decadent and immoral and un-Islamic. He moves to Norway, with the intention of making some money and then go back to Pakistan. He gets to know other Pakistani Muslims. And - they seem to enjoy living in Norway! They tell him that they are mostly treated with respect, that politicians are held accountable, that poor people are taken care of. And slowly he starts to change his mind: Norway doesn't seem like such a bad country after all. The years go by, he engages in a mosque, and then a master's student comes to interview him about Islam and politics, and he tells the student: You know what? Norway is a great country.

In the case of the imams, the account could go as follows: An imam lives in Pakistan. Then he gets a job offer in a distant country that is inhabited by the *kuffar*. He accepts, but moves to Norway thinking that his main job will be to guard the Muslims in his congregation against the corrupting influence of this country, where the laws of *Allah ta'ala* are not followed and everyone can do as they please. But when he moves to Norway he slowly starts to change his mind about this *kuffar* country: Aren't the poor taken care of, as it is commanded in the Quran, even more than in Pakistan? Aren't the laws respected by most people? And didn't the crown prince once come to the mosque to show his respect for them as Muslims? He realizes that he was too harsh when he previously judged this country as a corrupted and bad society.

On the other hand, one could also interpret this liking for Norway as an expression of pre-existing ideals - the political and Islamic ideals that they held prior

to migrating to Norway. The account could be depicted as follows: A Pakistani man lives in Lahore. He has despaired of the corruption and the poverty that he sees around him. He has a cousin who lives in Norway, and this cousin has told him that in Norway people are treated fairly, democracy functions well, you can get jobs, life is good. Oh, the promised land! So - he decides to move. And he is not disappointed. Norway turns out to be the good country that he hoped it would be.

In case of the imam the account would be somewhat similar: He lives in Pakistan. He is tired of his country - supposed to be Islamic, but all he sees is corruption and vice: Violence, conflicts, crime. Then he gets a proposal to go to Norway. Finally, a chance to see a country where the actual ideals of Islam are in place! Democracy, accountability to law, solidarity with the poor. He happily accepts the position, and looks forward to interacting with Muslims and non-Muslims in this country.

These two depictions are of course constructions. But the main idea should come across quite clearly. In my interviews I didn't go into detail on these issues. And even if I did, I doubt whether the answers would have been very reliable, since memory is tricky and narratives about the past are shaped by the present situation. But I think my material gives some clues. Firstly, in case of the imams, many of them had stayed relatively short in Norway, and my impression was that several of them had little exposure to social circles outside the mosque. Obviously they might still be influenced by Muslims in the mosque who had lived in Norway for a longer time, but the amount of exposure to Norwegian society was still comparatively small. This makes me doubt that they came to Norway with very negative attitudes towards Norwegian society and the Norwegian political system. Or, to phrase it differently, it is likely that at least aspects of Norwegian society resonates with positive ideals they previously held.

Is this a reasonable thing to believe, given what we know of mainstream Islamic theology? My claim is yes - at least when it comes to the procedural commitment to democracy and following the laws. As Andrew F. March has pointed out, the most

common theological answer within both sunni and shia Islam concerning the predicament of Muslims in a minority situation is that they should follow the laws in their country of residence (March 2007). Any claims made should be made within the law, and within the democratic system. It would indeed be more surprising if the interviewees had claimed that Muslims were not obliged to follow Norwegian laws, should strive for an extra-parlamentarian Islamist revolution, et cetera.

However, among my respondents I found a liking for Norwegian society that went beyond this - beyond a pure procedural acceptance of democratic rules. As mentioned in section 3.3, many displayed a liking for Norway and Norwegian society that was genuine and substantial, not something they were «forced» to because Islamic theology told them so.

«Norway is a very good place to be Muslim. Maybe the best country in the world to be Muslim», one of the imams remarked.

In my view it is a reasonable interpretation that this substantial appreciation of Norwegian society can be explained both by embeddedness in Norway - that is, a result of experiences and interactions in Norwegian society - and by pre-existing beliefs and ideals, be they Islamic or secular. Many of the board chairmen had lived in Norway for many years, and one of them grew up here. In the case of the board chairman who grew up here, for example, it wouldn't make much sense to explain his views as a result of the country of origin of his parents, something he emphasized himself.

«You know... I grew up here. I like Norway. Things function so well here. Why should I want to change that? This is the system I am used to», he said.

5.6. The paradox of the Democratic Islamists: Transnational embeddedness and multiple commitments

The most challenging thing to come to grips with is the view and ideology of the Democratic Islamists. As detailed in chapter 3, they hold beliefs that are somewhat

contradictory. Within the Norwegian political context they adhere to a soft multicultural ideology, in which they emphasize respect for groups and other religions. It is an open question whether this respect extends to minorities within Muslim groups - say, homosexuals - but on a macro societal level it is clear that they endorse pluralism and diversity. They support participating in Norwegian democracy, and they seem emotionally committed to Norwegian society in a way that transcends a mere procedural commitment.

At the same time, they want a political system in Muslim countries that cannot be said to be liberal in any meaningful way of understanding the word, since they support punishments for apostasy, and want limitations on democratic decision making that are based on non-liberal interpretations of Islamic law.

There can be several ways of understanding this. One way is to postulate that the Islamist ideology is the most fundamental one: This is what they *really* want. Thus, the reason they don't want to implement it in Norway is purely out of necessity: Since Muslims are not a majority, they can't implement it here, and they adapt. Within this account, the multicultural ideology can be seen as a convenient vehicle for increasing power and leverage within a Norwegian context. It is difficult to be heard in public debate in Norway if one makes claims with reference to religious dogma, for example: «I demand to wear the hijab because it is commanded in Islam!». On the other hand, it is possible to be heard if one phrases the arguments in terms that are perceived to be more universal: «It is my *human right* to wear the hijab». The appeal to multiculturalism and group rights has been seen an acceptable political language in Norway (even though there has been a noticeable «retreat from multiculturalism» in recent years (Joppke 2004)). Therefore, one might argue, the democratic Islamists are making appeals to multiculturalism - but the driving force behind it is to increase their own influence.

In a similar vein, it can be argued that the appeal to democracy and popular will - that the Islamist system is right in Muslim countries because people want it there, but not in the West because people here don't want it here - is merely a way to legitimize it

within political discourse in the West, but not something that reflects authentic ideals or preferences.

This explanatory account can be labeled as the *reductionistic account*. Is it reasonable to understand the issue in this way? Of course, it is not unreasonable to believe that adherence to multicultural group rights in the West to some degree can be understood as a way to advance their own interests. Most people and groups have interests they wish to pursue. However, I doubt if this reductionistic account is sufficient. Many of them seemed deeply committed to Norwegian society, in a non-instrumental way.

«I am proud that I have lived in Norway in all these years, and done my service to society. Norway has been good to me. And in return I want to do what I can for Norway», one of them said - a board chairman that was a democratic Islamist.

I will propose that at least some of the democratic Islamists hold what I will call *multiple commitments*. They are at the same time committed to a liberal, multicultural state in Norway, *and* to a non-liberal Islamic state in Muslim countries. These commitments overlap partially: In both the Islamic model and in Norway they wish for social solidarity, democracy (more or less), transparency, accountability before the law, et cetera. But there are differences that don't seem coherent: Full religious freedom in Norway, but a ban on apostasy in Muslim countries. Full rule by popular will in Norway, limited democracy in Muslim countries. Is it possible to be committed to these two different models at the same time?

This may seem to run against the commonly held belief within psychology that people strive for some degree of intellectual coherence, and avoid what is called *cognitive dissonance*: «the theory of cognitive dissonance is based on the principle that people prefer their cognitions, or beliefs, to be consistent with each other and with their own behavior. Inconsistency, or dissonance, among their own ideas makes people uneasy enough to alter these ideas so that they will agree with each other» (Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology 2001).

Most often this theory is used to explain rationalizations concerning discrepancies between actions and ideals. An example: I might start out thinking that I have an obligation to give charity to the poor. But if I stop doing it at some point, because I feel like spending more money on myself, I might feel uncomfortable: Am I doing something bad? A solution to this can be to adjust my original beliefs, and start to think that the poor actually are better off if they don't get charity: «Hey, if I give them money they will just end up being lazy». To change my beliefs about the poor is easier than to change my behavior - so that's what I end up doing.

Related to this is the theory of confirmation bias: People search for or interpret information in a way that confirms one's preconceptions. If I believe that «Muslims are bad», I might take in every instance of the «bad Muslim» that I see, and leave out any «good Muslims» that don't confirm my preconceptions. This theory also assumes that we avoid holding theories or information that contradict each other.

If this psychological theory is correct it should also apply to political beliefs, something that has been demonstrated to be the case when it comes to how people evaluate people they previously have voted for (Mullainathan and Washington 2009). Without being a psychologist I assume this picture of human cognition to be correct. But I think that the theory of cognitive dissonance can be logically and empirically consistent with people holding multiple political commitments that seem inconsistent if juxtaposed.

One reason is that people might not perceive it as inconsistent themselves. An obvious example would be to favor - simultaneously - low taxes and high public spending (Norway is one of the few countries where this would actually be possible at the moment, because of the oil revenues). A person might not perceive this as inconsistent: «Well, they have so much money for everything, and the politicians spend so much on themselves - they can use some of that money instead of taxing us», he might quip.

Similarly, I am not sure whether the democratic Islamists themselves regard their beliefs as inconsistent. As mentioned, when I pointed out to them that it is

somewhat illogical to say at the same time that the law of God should be in place because it is the law of God, *and* that the ultimate reason that the law of God should be put in place is because people want it, not everyone agreed that this was paradoxical.

I will claim that the key to understanding the multiple commitments of the Democratic Islamists is that they are *transnationally embedded*. In the last 20 years the notion of *transnationalism* has gained prominence in many research fields, as a foundational term that can be used to shed light on different phenomena (Vertovec 1999). A basic idea is often that the term «broadly refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states» (Vertovec 1999: 447). For my purposes here, by using the term transnational embeddedness I mean that they are simultaneously embedded in networks and ideas in different countries or cultures. A person can be embedded in a network at her work place in Oslo, but also in the network of her extended family in Pakistan.

My proposal is as follows: The democratic Islamists find themselves embedded in different networks and ideas - in Norway, in their country of origin, in the religious sphere, in the non-religious sphere. This pushes and pulls them in different directions, and creates a complex reality in which they have to navigate. They do this by trying to commit to both the Norwegian political system and the ideal Islamic system they wish for in their country of origin. Their way of solving this inconsistency is by committing to democracy - which functions as an intellectual *bridge*, that allows them to walk back and forth between their commitment to an Islamic system in Muslim countries and a non-Islamic system in Norway, without having to choose between the two - since they assume that people want different things in Norway and in Muslim countries.

I will try to paint this picture more vividly. We can use the board chairman above as an example, the board chairman that said that he was very proud to have lived in Norway for so many years. Let's call him «Hassan» (I am here making an exception to my policy of not giving the respondents fictional names, in order to increase readability). Hassan has lived in Norway for 30 years. In the beginning he

was not very religious, and mainly focused on working. But in recent years he got drawn to Islam.

«You know, I was never away... I never broke away from Islam. But I didn't take it seriously. But when I got health problems and had to stop working I started to think more about Islam, and how I should live my life. So I became engaged in the mosque», he said.

Hassan got many acquaintances in Norwegian society through his job, and for many years he was even engaged in NGOs and a Norwegian political party. Through this he became deeply embedded in Norwegian social structures. He expressed great admiration for many Norwegian politicians.

«I really like Jonas Gahr Støre and Jens Stoltenberg. But also Erna Solberg - I like her as well! She is not a racist. And I think it is important that it should become easier to start new companies».

Through his engagement with Norway and Norwegian society Hassan had become fond of the political system in Norway. But at the same time he felt committed to what he perceived as the eternal and unchangeable Islamic system. He didn't explain whether he always had held his democratic Islamist attitudes, or whether they developed as he got engaged in the mosque. However, there was no doubt that he wanted an Islamic system in his country of origin. And when I asked whether he supported capital punishment for apostasy, he was unequivocal.

«You can't change Islam. Islam is for ever. And punishment for leaving Islam has always been a part of Islam», he emphasized.

I asked whether there should be capital punishment for leaving Islam in Norway as well.

«No... no, absolutely not», he replied, as if the question was strange.

«You know, Norway is not a Muslim country! So it doesn't apply here. Only in Muslim countries», he said.

82

I asked: «Why should the laws be different in Norway and the country you came from?»

«Well... because of democracy. People here are not Muslims, and don't want these laws. But people there are Muslims and want these laws. Therefore it should be different».

My take on this is that the concept of democracy here functions as a *bridge*. Because Hassan can resort to the will of the people - which, undeniably, is different in Norway and his country of origin - he doesn't have to choose between the Norwegian system that he is fond of, and the Islamic system that he wants in his country of origin. He is committed to both at the same time: Here, liberal democracy. There, Islamist democracy. Seemingly inconsistent positions - but he walks back and forth between them, using the concept of democracy as a bridge. He is transnationally embedded, and holds multiple political commitments.

5.7. Internal disagreement: A sign of non-political mosques?

Lastly, I will make a final point in this chapter that I believe to be important. In several instances there were substantial differences between the imam and the board chairman within the same mosque. An example could be the mosque where the board chairman was what I labeled a Muslim democrat. As mentioned in section 3.7. he was strongly opposed to any punishment for leaving Islam:

«No, that is wrong... that is his own choice. For me he can do whatever he wants. That is between him and God. If I don't accept that then I am forcing him. To accept that others think differently, that is what tolerance means, right? I must tolerate what you think, and you must tolerate what I think», he said.

But the imam in this mosque, who I interviewed at a different time, thought otherwise.

«No, that is not allowed in an Islamic state. Think of Norway - in Norway, people are not allowed to go against the Norwegian law. In an Islamic state, if you are

a Muslim and you break out of Islam, you are breaking the fundamental law. Then you have to leave the country», he said.

This was the case in several mosques: The board chairmen advocated other solutions than the imams. Is it likely that this would have been the case if politics - or Islamic political solutions - was an important part of the teachings and communal life of the mosques? I think not. If mosques were very concerned with these issues, it is likely that the answers would have been more uniform, since members of the mosque would have been socialized into common ways of thinking. Of course, there could still have been disagreements. But if the mosques were highly concerned with the issues in this thesis, I doubt that there would be as deep disagreements as I uncovered, for example concerning whether an ideal state was Islamic or secular and whether apostasy should be allowed.

Chapter 6: Islamic ideologies, liberal and communitarian worries

I have now outlined the positions of my respondents, attempted to place them in the context of previous research, and explored how their internal differences might be accounted for. In this last chapter I will briefly change perspective, become somewhat more normative, and address how the positions I have described might fit into the Norwegian political context. While the outline of the positions of my respondents descriptively addresses this debate from «below», the discussion in this chapter approaches it from «above» - from the hypothesized position of the Norwegian state, or an imagined Norwegian political community.

6.1. Religious actors and political theory

Within political theory these issues have often been framed as a question of the proper place religious claims should have in a *liberal state*. The reason for using the term *liberal state* instead of *secular state* is that many states are relatively liberal, but not expressedly defined as secular – Norway, for example. In addition, it is fully possible for a secular state to be non-liberal.

A liberal state – that is, a state based on the principles of political liberalism – is often defined as a state that treats all people as equals before the law, and that holds a neutral stance towards what kind of life citizens should live. It is not up to the state to decide whether a person should be gay or heterosexual, should read Proust or Paulo Coelho, or should smoke or not.

When people are making political claims that aim at reducing the freedom of others in a liberal state, many political theorists have demanded that these claims should be justifiable in reasonable, non-metaphysical terms: «Religious reasons can

play only a limited role in justifying coercive laws, as coercive laws that require a religious rationale lack moral legitimacy» (Eberle and Cuneo 2008). If I claim that smoking should be banned in public places I must provide reasons for this that can be shared by people of other faiths and ideological convictions. A good reason would be to say that smoking is detrimental to people's health. A bad reason would be to say that I don't want smoking in public places because I get really annoyed at smokers, or that smoking is forbidden by God.

Or is this criterion too strong? Should democracy merely be a formal requirement, so that religious actors should be free to make claims and propose legislation based on their religious conscience alone?

In recent years, the philosopher Jürgen Habermas has developed an influential account that lies somewhere in between these positions: His view is that religious actors should be allowed to base political opinions and viewpoints on religious conscience alone. Furthermore, they should be allowed to voice their religiously based opinions in public debate. However, when it comes to actual political decision-making in formal bodies, only secular reasons bear any weight:

«Every citizen must know that only secular reasons count beyond the institutional threshold that divides the informal public sphere from parliaments, courts, ministries and administrations» (Habermas 2006: 10).

When they enter the formal political sphere, religious actors must undertake an act of «translation», according to Habermas: Their religious convictions must be translated into secular reasons that can be acceptable to people who don't share their religious world-view. Habermas' account gives ample room for religion and religious reasons in the public sphere, but reserves the formal political sphere for secularized reason alone.

6.2. Liberalism in Norway

Even though it is seldom framed directly in such philosophical terms, much of the public debate on Islam in Norway revolves around these issues: Are Muslims non-liberal? An example was the debate that erupted in 2008 when the Islamic Council of Norway didn't say in unequivocal and universal terms that they opposed capital punishment for homosexual acts – that is, that they thought it was wrong everywhere and at all times (Lecomte 2008). Instead, they said that they neither wanted nor seeked to implement this in Norway, but that this was a theological debate within Islam and that they wouldn't condemn it in all Muslim countries (even though the secretary general at the time, Shoaib Sultan, made it clear that he personally opposed it). This caused widespread condemnation of Islamsk Råd by Norwegian politicians and commentators in the media.

I will claim that parts of the Norwegian debate on Islam can be labeled as expressing a *liberal worry* - it is a concern about whether Muslims adhere to the rules of the political game in a liberal democracy such as Norway, perhaps also underpinned by violent reactions by some Muslims to the Danish cartoons. In addition it can be claimed that the mere perceived *religiousness* of Muslim immigrants is adding to the liberal worry - as research has shown that Norwegians in general are very skeptical of organized religion (Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet 2010: 30). The liberal worry is not only about the procedural rules of the game - it is also about the place of religion in politics: Do Muslims respect the secular character of political reason?

However, several researchers have claimed that European states have become less and less liberal in recent years (Adamson, Triadafilopoulos et al. 2011). Or: What is said to be liberal principles – individual autonomy, equality between the sexes, sexual tolerance et cetera – are enforced through illiberal means – such as banning of veils and niqabs. This tendency has been labeled in different ways. Liz Fekete calls it «enlightened fundamentalism» (Fekete 2006), Christian Joppke has called it «civic integrationism» (Joppke 2007), Adam Tebble has called it «identity liberalism» (Tebble 2006), and Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos has called it «Schmittian liberalism»

87

(Triadafilopoulos 2011). I will add to this confusion some more, and propose yet another term for this normative position: *communitarian liberalism*. The reason I am proposing a new term is that it can be illuminating to see this debate through the lenses of an older debate in political theory, namely the debate that raged in the 80s and 90s about political liberalism vs. communitarianism.[3]

One of the questions in this debate (for an introduction, see (Mulhall and Swift 1996) was how *thick* or *thin* society should be. Communitarian critics claimed that political liberals advocated a kind of state that was too *thin*: Agreement on fundamental rules of conduct and decision making was not enough to make a society function, or to allow individuals to flourish. A society needed some common values as well, that went beyond procedural rules. The philosopher Charles Taylor, for example, claimed that the state should advocate a «common form of life» (Kymlicka 1990: 224).

My claim here is that certain aspects of the political culture in contemporary Norway can be seen as an amalgam of political liberalism and communitarianism: While the language that is used often borrows heavily from liberalism - with its focus on equality between the sexes, autonomy, and individual rights, et cetera - the underlying assumptions are often that Norway needs more than agreement on procedural rules: Norway also needs to be a value based community with a certain homogeneity - and the values that are invoked as the basis of this community are often those of political liberalism. We can take an op-ed by the foreign minister of Norway, Jonas Gahr Støre, as an example (Støre 2011). Støre headed a political committee in the social democratic party with a mandate to propose new legislation for the integration of immigrants. He wrote in Dagsavisen that «an important task for democratic politics is to decide upon laws and rules. But equally important is the *norm-giving function of politics*» (my italics).

The norms Støre identified in his op-ed were «democracy, rule of law, universal human rights, freedom of expression, equality between the sexes and equal worth». He claimed that these values were the foundation upon which society was built, and that

---

[3] I am indebted to Kristian Rose Tronstad for suggesting that this debate could be relevant.

«the possibilities and commitments in this foundation apply to all, irrespective of ethnicity, religion or political and cultural belonging» (Støre 2011).

Støre is here advocating a kind of communitarianism: It is important that Norwegian citizens *share* the fundamental normative commitments to democracy, equality between the sexes and so forth. But it is a kind of communitarianism that dresses in the clothes of liberalism: It is the liberal values that are said to be the core of a larger Norwegian community. This communitarian liberalism gives rise to an additional worry in the meeting between Islam and Norway: Not only whether Muslims (or immigrants) follow the rules of the game of liberal democracy, but whether they fundamentally hold other values. I will call this a *communitarian worry*. The issue at stake here is *difference*: Do Muslims have other political and cultural values, even if they formally accept the rules of the game? Is their political goal a society that is vastly different from today's Norway, even if they would respect the political rules? It should be emphasized, though, that Støre himself has not expressed any general worries concerning Muslims or Islam - I am merely using his op-ed in order to identify a normative political position.

6.3. The liberal worry: The rules of the game

The liberal worry is as mentioned a concern about whether Muslims adhere to the rules of the political game, and whether they respect the secular character of political reason. In Norway, the political game basically involves to solve disagreement through non-violent means. This can imply, among other things:

- to seek power directly through political parties or parliamentary elections
- to influence politics indirectly, for example through lobbying
- to influence the Norwegian public through the media
- to stage demonstrations
- to engage in NGOs (non-governmental organizations)

Do the respondents in this thesis respect the rules of the political game? The short answer is a resounding *yes*. The secularists, the democratic Islamists, the utopian dreamers and the Muslim democrat - they all emphasized that Muslims were obliged to follow the laws in Norway. Furthermore, they all supported taking part in Norwegian society - voting, working, et cetera. My conclusion is as follows: Procedurally, the religious leaders I interviewed shouldn't give political liberals any worry. Formally, they want to continue doing politics in the same way it is being done today.

Concerning the role of religion in politics we can separate conceptually between different approaches among my informants. If we take the relation between sharia (the will of God for Muslims and/or mankind) and politics as a starting point, we can discern three fundamental strategies among the respondents: *Privatization*, *ethicalization*, and *compartmentalization*.

The secularists employ what I have elsewhere referred to as the «privatization of sharia» (Elgvin 2011). For them, sharia (or the will of God) is something that belongs purely to the private sphere: They make a formal separation between politics and religion. They exceed the requirement from Habermas to translate religious arguments into secular arguments: They simply don't argue religiously when it comes to politics.

In my discussion of the position of the Muslim democrat, I referred to Hefner's term *ethicalization* (Hefner 2011: 31). This way of thinking is different from the privatization approach. When sharia is ethicalized it is still relevant for society - but not in the form of a legal blueprint that should be imposed from above. Sharia is rather understood as fundamental ethical values that should guide society. I will argue that this approach also satisfies the injunction of Habermas that only secular reasons should count in formal political deliberation: The fundamental values that the Muslim democrat identified as Islamic values are values that could just as well have been expressed by a Christian, an atheist or an agnostic. They are not exclusive to Islam -

they are values that are concerned with the common good, and that can be shared by people of different religious or non-religious convictions.

The last approach concerning sharia is *compartmentalization*. Both the democratic Islamists and the utopian dreamers partly employed the strategy of ethicalization: To support Norwegian society normatively because they saw important aspects of the sharia manifest in it. But they also partly *compartmentalized* sharia: They relegated it to a different compartment. In the case of the utopian dreamers, this compartment is an utopian future - which is not connected to status quo. In the case of the democratic Islamists, the compartment in which they place the full implementation of sharia is geographically distinct: The Muslim country they came from. My interpretation is that when sharia is compartmentalized in this way, they are free to engage in Norwegian society with either a privatized or an ethicalized approach to sharia.

6.4. The communitarian worry - a need for «muscular liberalism»?

More difficult questions arise when we approach the communitarian worry. This thesis is not concerned with the opinions of Muslims at large as such, but with the opinions of a limited number of respondents who lead religious congregations. Still, we can ask how the opinions of these respondents relate to the issues involved in the communitarian worry: How much value difference Norway as a political community can tolerate.

If we take Støre's op-ed as a paradigmatic expression of communitarian liberalism, the societal ideal in this line of thinking is a Norwegian society in which all citizens normatively share a commitment to «democracy, rule of law, universal human rights, freedom of expression, equality between the sexes and equal worth». The normative and political question here is whether liberalism needs to be «muscular», as the British prime minister David Cameron expressed it (Kirkup 2011) - whether the

state should enforce values it perceives to be important, possibly through illiberal means.

With regards to these issues, a limitation in my data material immediately emerges: During the interviews I touched very lightly on the issues of gender and sex. That was a deliberate choice on my behalf. The issues of sexuality and gender would open up a whole new field that would expand way beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead I focused on normative questions concerning forms of government, religious law vs. man-made laws, et cetera.

However, when it comes to the communitarian worries concerning Muslims in Norway and other European countries, it has often been the issues of gender and sexuality that have received the most attention:

«Whether the reference is to Iranian theocracy, the punitive behavior of the Taliban, or to 'immigrant' populations in Europe, there is a particular focus on the plight of women in headscarves, veils, and burqas», the historian Joan Scott has claimed (Scott 2009: 1). This observation rings true in the Norwegian context, where diverse political phenomena - the war in Afghanistan and the ban on hijabs in the police force are two examples - have often been legitimized with reference to the situation of women (Berthelsen 2009; Engh Førde 2010).

The issue of homosexuality has also received much attention, and some have claimed that the issue is now being exploited in xenophobic discourse: «In order to criticize Muslims as backwards and as enemies of European culture, gay rights are now heralded as if they have been the foundation of European culture for centuries» (Mepschen, Duyvendak et al. 2010: 965).

In order to discuss the communitarian worry thoroughly, I would have needed data on how my informants view sexuality and gender. But unfortunately, my data don't reveal in depth how the informants relate to these issues. What my data do reveal, however, are broader normative commitments: To secularism or Islamism,

liberal democracy or limited democracy. I will therefore discuss how their positioning in relation to these notions might relate to the communitarian worries.

6.5. The secularists, utopian dreamers and Muslim democrats: Support for the «Norwegian project»

A large part of my respondents, those I labeled as secularists and the Muslim democrat, hold positions that seem fully supportive - on universal grounds - of the Norwegian project Støre outlines. Their ideal society is characterized by democracy, rule of law and universal human rights. And most of them think that Norway is one of the countries in the world where these values have been realized to the highest degree.

Their support for these values does not have qualifications, such as being dependent on Norway not being a Muslim country. Støre's demand - that citizens of Norway must support these values - seems fulfilled in the case of the secularists and the Muslim democrat.

The utopian dreamers also support principally the values Støre identified - rule of law, democracy, universal human rights, individual freedom. And, as explained, they don't have any political action plans, neither in Norway nor in the Muslim world, for changing society into a less liberal or less democratic society. Concerning the Muslim world their main goal was to make Muslim countries *more* democratic and *more* politically liberal.

Still, their expressed Islamic ideal was something that went beyond a liberal, secular democracy, even though they didn't define this utopia in detail - or had any idea how this utopia would come about. Should this be worrying for the worried communitarian, who wants a Norwegian society in which all citizens support democracy, human rights and secularism, on universal grounds? I am inclined to answer *no*. As explained in section 3.6.2., the utopian dreamers are not trying to bring about any fundamental changes to society. Quite on the contrary, they express very high regard for Norwegian society. This regard includes the individual freedom to

choose religion or lifestyle, which they regard as an important Islamic value - in contrast to some of the democratic Islamists, who want punishment for apostasy in their ideal Islamic society.

I wrote this in section 3.6.2.: «My interpretation is that since the utopian dreamers divorce their perceived utopia from contemporary reality, they are free to think politically on universal and common grounds in the world as it is. So in their practical politics, they remind very much of the secularists». This is an important point: The utopian dreamers are not advocating any political changes that go against dominant sensibilities in contemporary Norwegian society - individualism, democracy, equality - they merely keep, in the back of their mind, an image of an Islamic utopia that could be even better than the world we have today.

6.6. Democratic Islamists: A clash of values?

The most difficult issue arises when an imagined worried communitarian engages with the democratic Islamists.

Let's paint the following hypothetical scenario: There is a public debate between an imam - a democratic Islamist - and a worried communitarian. The worried communitarian asks the imam whether capital punishment for apostasy is in accordance with Islam. The imam gets a little uneasy, and finally answers: «Yes, Islam prescribes capital punishment if someone leaves Islam, but... ».

He tries to continue, but is interrupted by the worried communitarian:

«What? That is barbaric! What are you saying? That muslims in Norway should be executed if they publicly declare themselves as atheists?»

The imam tries to answer.

«No no no, I don't want that in Norway, here we have to follow Norwegian laws, only in an Islamic state...»

But his qualifying message is not getting through: What people have heard him say is only that Muslims who convert should get killed.

This example is hypothetical - but the content of it resembles encounters that have taken place in Norway, and that probably will take place in the future as well. In this thesis I have argued that the democratic Islamists are transnationally embedded, and that their political opinions are distinguished by what I called *multiple commitments*. I have argued that the democratic Islamists at the same time are committed to a liberal, multicultural and democratic society in Norway, *and* an Islamic society in Muslim countries in which there are limits on democratic decision-making and less individual freedom. This, however, can be difficult to grasp. In the hypothetical scenario I depicted, the worried communitarian and the public are not hearing any commitment to liberalism, all they are hearing is a non-liberal theocrat.

Can, however, a deeply worried communitarian welcome a democratic Islamist into the moral community of Norwegian politics? By *moral community* I mean the broad discourse that demarcates which opinions are seen as morally legitimate in contemporary Norway: Everybody agrees, from left to right, that old fashioned racists are outside legitimate political discourse, while positions on economic policy, such as taxes or welfare benefits, usually don't lead anyone to be ostracized.

My answer to this is a typical academic response: *It depends*. If we for the sake of argument assume the communitarian worry to be valid - that a certain homogeneity concerning values to be beneficial for society - there is no doubt that the democratic Islamists represent a challenge: Even though they support Norwegian procedurally, and also are committed to important values in Norwegian society, it can be difficult to comprehend for an outside observer why they distinguish between Norway and Muslim countries.

My take on this is that the political commitments of the democratic Islamists - and I am now speaking about a hypothetical larger group of democratic Islamists, not only my respondents - can be understood as a continuum that is not black or white. For some persons, the commitment to liberal democracy in Norway might be purely

formal - something they feel obliged to do because they live in Norway, or because they know that they have to in order to be accepted by mainstream society. But their fundamental and *real* commitment remains to the ideal Islamic society they wish for in the country or origin - and possibly also in Norway, if the occasion should arise. But for others the reverse might just as well be the case: Their fundamental commitment is to the liberal democracy in Norway. This is the society they live in and are proud of belonging to, and this is the type of society they support. But at the same time they feel that they «should» support an Islamic system in their country of origin - after all, they are Muslims, and they perceive this kind of system to be what Islam prescribes. But this support for Islamism is mostly lip service: Their heart lies in the type of society they see in Norway, and their commitment to Islamism in Muslim countries is mostly formal.

If we go back to the hypothetical debate between the worried communitarian and the democratic Islamist depicted above: The ideal approach of the worried communitarian could be to attempt to understand if the democratic Islamist he was debating with was genuinely committed to liberal democracy in Norway - or whether this was indeed just lip service. If the democratic Islamist is 90 percent committed to Norwegian-style liberalism, and only 10 percent formally committed to illiberal Islamism - then confrontation could be unnecessary, and perhaps even counterproductive. But if the democratic Islamist seems 90 percent committed to illiberal Islamism, and only 10 percent formally committed to Norwegian-style liberalism, then there exists a genuine clash of values within the Norwegian political system - which could be played out as a confrontation. But of course: These are principled remarks which could be hard to apply in real life, since it is difficult to assess the strength of the commitments of others.

One last point in this section: My explanation for the multiple commitments of the democratic Islamists is that they are *transnationally embedded*. If this is correct, and a reason for their commitment to the Norwegian political system, both procedurally and substantively, is their embeddedness in Norwegian society and institutional structures, then the best way of increasing their commitment to the

96

Norwegian political system even further could very well be to deepen and expand this embeddedness. To severe the economic or formal ties between the authorities and Islamic congregations, as sometimes has been proposed by politicians who are critical of certain Islamic practices and beliefs (Utrop 2007), could very well have the adverse effect - to weaken the commitment Islamic actors hold to the Norwegian political system.

6.7. Concluding remarks

This thesis explores how Muslim religious leaders in Norway fit Islam into the Norwegian political system. An important conclusion is *that* they fit Islam into the existing Norwegian political system, even though they do this is different ways: The *secularists* want a secular democratic state in both Norway and their Muslim home country. The *Muslim democrats* want liberal democracy in both Norway and their country of origin. They base this on the view that Islam provides fundamental political values, but not a fixed blueprint for society. The *utopian dreamers* support liberal democracy in both Norway and their country of origin, but claim that an ideal Islamic system would go beyond current liberal democracy. The *democratic Islamists* support liberal democracy in Norway, but want a type of non-liberal Islamist Democracy in their country of origin.

In this concluding chapter I have discussed my findings from a more normative perspective. My general conclusion is that the opinions of the religious leaders I interviewed shouldn't be too worrying for either liberals or communitarians. Others might reach other normative conclusions, of course – and claim that it is worrying in itself that some religious leaders in Norway are unable to condemn capital punishment for apostasy in unequivocal and universal terms. But no matter how one assesses the opinions of my respondents normatively, I believe that this conclusion remains valid: The best way to secure the commitment to the Norwegian political system from Islamic actors is to strengthen and deepen their embeddedness in Norwegian society.

In the academic context, I hope that the findings in this thesis can be of interest to researchers who work with issues of Islam and Muslims in the West, and researchers who are concerned with how politics play out in increasingly multicultural societies. Further research would be needed to see if my findings are applicable to larger groups of Muslims living in the West.

Bibliography

Adamson, F., T. Triadafilopoulos, et al. (2011). "The Limits of the Liberal State: Migration, Identity and Belonging in Europe." Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies **37**: 843-859.

AFP (2008). L'Islam de France bien intégré (sondage) (French Muslims Well Integrated - poll). Le Figaro. Paris.

Ahdar, R. J. and N. Aroney (2010). Shari'a in the West. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Ahmad, I. (2009). Islamism and democracy in India: the transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.

an-Na'im, ʿ. A. A. (2008). Islam and the secular state: negotiating the future of Shari'a. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.

Asad, T. (1986). The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam. Georgetown University, Washington, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies.

Bakti, A. F. (2004). Nurcholish Madjid and the Paramadina Foundation. IIAS Newsletter. Leiden, International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS).

Bangstad, S. (2009). Sekularismens ansikter. Oslo, Universitetsforl.

Bat Ye'or (2005). Eurabia: the Euro-Arab axis. Madison, N.J., Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Bawer, B. (2006). While Europe slept: how radical Islam is destroying the West from within. New York, Doubleday.

Bawer, B. (2010). Surrender: appeasing Islam, sacrificing freedom. New York, Anchor Books, a division of Random House, Inc.

Berthelsen, O. (2009). - Hijab-forlsag lagt dødt. tv2nyhetene.no. Bergen.

Blom, S. and K. Henriksen (2008). Levekår blant innvandrere i Norge 2005/2006. Oslo, SSB.

Caldwell, C. (2009). <u>Reflections on the revolution in Europe: immigration, Islam, and the West</u>. New York, Doubleday.

Canetti, E. (2002). <u>Forblindelsen (Auto-Da-Fé)</u>. Oslo, Solum.

Casciani, D. (2005). Islamic encounters of the third kind. <u>BBC News</u>. London, BBC.

Den Nasjonale forskningsetiske komité for samfunnsvitenskap og humaniora (2006). <u>Forskningsetiske retningslinjer for samfunnsvitenskap, humaniora, juss og teologi</u>. [Oslo], Forskningsetiske komiteer.

Døving, C. A. (2009). <u>Integrering: teori og empiri</u>. Oslo, Pax.

Eberle, C. and T. Cuneo (2008). Religion and Political Theory. <u>The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</u>. E. N. Zaita.

El Fadl, K. A. (1994). "Islamic Law and Muslim Minorities: the Juristic Discourse On Muslim Minorities From the Second/Eighth To the Eleventh/Seventeenth Centuries." <u>Islamic Law and Society</u> **1**: 141-187.

Elgvin, O. (2011). "Privatiseringen av sharia." <u>Minerva</u> (02/11).

Engh Førde, K. (2010). Når makten taler for de tause. <u>Forskning.no</u>. Oslo.

Esposito, J. L. (2010) Rethinking Islam and Secularism. <u>ARDA Guiding Paper Series</u>

Esposito, J. L. and D. Mogahed (2007). <u>Who speaks for Islam?: what a billion Muslims really think</u>. New York, Gallup Press.

Fekete, L. (2006). "Enlightened fundamentalism? Immigration, feminism and the Right." <u>Race & Class</u> **48**(2): 1-22.

Fish, S. M. (2011). <u>Are Muslims Distinctive? : A Look at the Evidence</u>. New York, Oxford University Press.

Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology (2001). "Cognitive Dissonance". <u>Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology</u>.

Gerring, J. (2004). "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for?" American Political
Science Review **98**(02): 341-354.

Goodenough, P. (2009). Islamic Scholars Wrestle Witch Death-For-Apostasy Issue.
Cnsnews.com.

Gould, A. C. (2009). "Muslim Elites and Ideologies in Portugal and Spain." West European
Politics **32**(1): 55 - 76.

Granovetter, M. (1985). "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of
Embeddedness." American Journal of Sociology **91**(3): 481-510.

Gule, L. (2006). Islam og det moderne. Oslo, Abstrakt forl.

Habermas, J. (2006). "Religion in the Public Sphere." European Journal of Philosophy **14**(1):
1-25.

Hansen, S. (2001). Islam's black slaves. Salon.

Hashem, M. (2006). "Contemporary Islamic Activism: The Shades of Praxis." Sociology of
Religion **67**(1): 23-41.

Hefner, R. W. (2011). Introduction. Shari'a Politics: Islamic Law and Society in the Modern
World. R. W. Hefner. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

Hennessy, P. and M. Kite (2006). Poll reveals 40pc of Muslims sharia law in UK. The
Telegraph. London.

Human Rights Watch (2008). Prohibited Identities: State Interference with Religious
Freedom. New York.

Huntington, S. P. (1996). The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order. New
York, Simon & Schuster.

Hvidsteen, V. (2007). "Hadia, Sara og Ane vil redde verden." Retrieved 13.06.2011, 2011,
from http://www.nrk.no/programmer/tv/migrapolis/1.3562916.

Inglehart, R. (2003). Islam, gender, culture, and democracy: findings from the world values
survey and the European values survey. Willowdale, Ont., de Sitter Publications.

Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet (2010). Integreringsbarometeret 2009. Imdi-rapport. Oslo, Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet.

International Crisis Group (2005). Understanding Islamism. Middle East/North Africa Report. Brussels, International Crisis Group.

Islamsk Råd Norge and Mellomkirkelig råd for Den norske kirke (2007). Felleserklæring om trosfrihet og konvertering. www.kirken.no.

Joppke, C. (2004). "The retreat of multiculturalism in the liberal state: theory and policy." The British Journal of Sociology **55**: 237-257.

Joppke, C. (2007). "Beyond national models: Civic integration policies for immigrants in Western Europe." West European Politics **30**(1): 1 - 22.

Kirkup, J. (2011). Muslims must embrace our British values, David Cameron says. The Telegraph. London.

Klausen, J. (2005). The Islamic challenge: politics and religion in Western Europe. New York, N.Y., Oxford University Press.

Kymlicka, W. (1990). Contemporary political philosophy: an introduction. Oxford, Clarendon Press.

Lecomte, B. (2008). Islamsk Råds nestleder avviser ikke dødsstraff for homofile. Østkantavisa. Oslo.

Lunde, N. T. (1996). Kristendemokratisk tenkning: artikkelsamling om ideologi. [Oslo], KrFs studieforbund.

Malm, A. (2009). Hatet mot muslimer. Stockholm, Atlas.

March, A. F. (2006). "Liberal Citizenship and the Search for an Overlapping Consensus: The Case of Muslim Minorities." Philosophy & Public Affairs **34**(4): 373-421.

March, A. F. (2007). "Islamic Foundations for a Social Contract in non-Muslim Liberal Democracies." American Political Science Review **101**(02): 235-252.

March, A. F. (2009). "Sources of Moral Obligation to non-Muslims in the "Jurisprudence of Muslim Minorities" (Fiqh al-aqalliyyat) Discourse." <u>Islamic Law and Society</u> **16**: 34-94.

March, A. F. (2011). "Theocrats Living under Secular Law: An External Engagement with Islamic Legal Theory*." <u>Journal of Political Philosophy</u> **19**(1): 28-51.

March, A. F. (2011-b). "Law as a vanishing mediator in the theological ethics of Tariq Ramadan." <u>European Journal of Political Theory</u> **10**(2): 177-201.

Martin, R. C. (2004). <u>Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim world</u>. New York, Macmillan Reference USA.

Mepschen, P., J. W. Duyvendak, et al. (2010). "Sexual Politics, Orientalism and Multicultural Citizenship in the Netherlands." <u>Sociology</u> **44**(5): 962-979.

Mirza, M., A. Senthilkumaran, et al. (2007). Living apart together. British Muslims and the paradox of multiculturalism. London, Policy Exchange.

Mjøset, L. (2006). "A Case Study of a Case Study." <u>International Sociology</u> **21**(5): 735-766.

Mjøset, L. (2009). The Contextualist Approach to Social Science Methodology. <u>The SAGE Handbook of Case-Based Methods</u>. D. Byrne and C. C. Ragin. London, SAGE Publications**:** 39-68.

Mulhall, S. and A. Swift (1996). <u>Liberals and communitarians</u>. Cambridge, Mass., Blackwell.

Mullainathan, S. and E. Washington (2009). "Sticking with Your Vote: Cognitive Dissonance and Political Attitudes." <u>American Economic Journal: Applied Economics</u> **1**(1): 86-111.

Pargeter, A. (2010). <u>The Muslim Brotherhood: the burden of tradition</u>. London, Saqi Books.

Pew Research Center (2005). Islamic Extremism: Common Concern for Muslim and Western Publics. Washington, Pew Research Center.

Pew Research Center (2008). Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream. Washington, Pew Research Center.

Pew Research Center (2010). Muslim Publics Divided on Hamas and Hezbollah. Washington, Pew Research Center.

Pew Reserach Center (2006). The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims view Each Other. Washington, Pew Research Center.

Ramadan, T. (2009). Radical reform: Islamic ethics and liberation. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Rawls, J. (1996). Political liberalism. New York, Columbia University Press.

Reisinger, W. M. "Selected Definitions of Democracy." Retrieved 13.06.2011, 2011, from http://www.uiowa.edu/~c030142/DefinitionsOfDemocracy.html.

Rogstad, J. (2007). Demokratisk fellesskap: politisk inkludering og etnisk mobilisering. Oslo, Universitetsforl.

Sadri, M. (2001). "Sacral Defense of Secularism: The Political Theologies of Soroush, Shabestari, and Kadivar." International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society **15**(2): 257-270.

Sahin, A. (2011). Islam, Secularity and the Culture of Critical Openness: A Muslim Theological Reflection. British Secularism and Religion. Y. Birt, D. Hussain and A. Siddiqui. Markfield, Kube Publishing**:** 3-24.

Scott, J. W. (2009). Sexularism. RSCAS Distinguished Lectures, Robert Schumann Centre for Advanced Studies.

Somers, M. R. and F. Block (2005). "From Poverty to Perversity: Ideas, Markets, and Institutions over 200 Years of Welfare Debate." American Sociological Review **70**(2): 260-287.

Støre, J. G. (2011). Integrering 2.0. Dagsavisen. Oslo.

Taylor, C. and A. Gutmann (1992). Multiculturalism and the politics of recognition: an essay. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.

Tebble, A. J. (2006). "Exclusion for Democracy." Political Theory **34**(4): 463-487.

TNS Gallup (2006). Holdninger til integrasjon og internasjonale konflikter blant muslimer i Norge og den norske befolkningen generelt. Oslo, TNS Gallup.

Travis, A. and M. Bunting (2004). British Muslims want Islamic law and prayers at work. The Guardian. London.

Triadafilopoulos, T. (2011). "Illiberal Means to Liberal Ends? Understanding Recent Immigrant Integration Policies in Europe." Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies **37**(6): 861 - 880.

Trochim, W. M. K. (2006) Positivism & Post-Positivism. Research Methods Knowledge Base

Utrop (2007). - Kutt statsstøtten til Islamsk Råd Norge. Utrop. Oslo.

Vertovec, S. (1999). "Conceiving and researching transnationalism." Ethnic and Racial Studies **22**(2): 447 - 462.

Vidino, L. (2010). The new Muslim Brotherhood in the West. New York, Columbia University Press.

Vogt, K. (2008). Islam på norsk: moskeer og islamske organisasjoner i Norge. [Oslo], Cappelen Damm.

Yin, R. K. (2009). Case study research: design and methods. Los Angeles, Sage.

Appendix I: Interview guide

1. Tell me a little about yourself (age, sex, education, job, time and place of birth, where you grew up, family, siblings, when you came to Norway, etc)

2. What does it involve for you to be a believing and practicing Muslim?

3. If you must point to contemporary ulemas or intellectuals whom you consider to be role models for you, who will you then point to?

4. If you should place yourself and the mosque you belong to in a modern theological landscape, what will you say that you represent? Do you identify with any organized islamic movement?

5. The topic of this interview is Islam and society. What would you say characterizes an ideal Islamic society according to your understanding of Islam?

6. Which countries in todays world would you say come closest to the ideals in Islam?

7. What should Muslims do in order to create a society that is more in accordance with Islam?

8. What is the best form of government according to Islam?

9. How should the laws be established?

10. Are there laws given by God that man cannot change?

11. I have a question concerning fiqh. Is a Muslim allowed to convert to another religion?

12. Islamsk Råd i Norge, The Islamic Council of Norway, has signed a declaration that states that it should be allowed to convert to another religion. What do you think of that declaration? (hand it out)

13. Your background is in (country of origin). What do you regard as the major political challenges in this country?

14. Is there a political party or movement in your country of origin that you identify with?

15. If it was up to you, what political changes would you do in the form of governance and the legislation in your country of origin?

16. You have been living in Norway for (...) years. How would you say, in general, that it is to live as a Muslim in Norwegian society?

17. Is there any political party or movement in Norway you identify with?

18. If it was up to you, what political changes would you do in the form of governance and the legislation in Norway?

19. Do you want different forms of governance and different legislation in Norway, and in your country of origin? Why? Why not?

20. There is a lot of talk in Norway about integration, and the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. As you see it, can there arise conflicts between practicing Islam and living in Norwegian society?

21. Is there anything you would like to add before we finish?