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Better together? Multicultural dilemmas and practices in funding of Muslim civil society organisations

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ABSTRACT
Increasing political concern over segregation, extremism, and value conflicts subject Muslim civil society organisations to a great deal of critical attention across Europe, both as problematic and as potential partners for policy interventions. Both national and local authorities seek out organisations that can represent Muslims and other minority groups in policy development and delivery, yet politicians discredit multiculturalism as a political project. This paper uses the implementation of a Norwegian grant scheme as an opportunity to investigate how local implementation of national policy may explain why multiculturalism, while discredited, can continue at different policy levels or under other names, and how local adaptation shapes relations with Muslim civil society organisations. The analysis builds on a review of the grant scheme’s historical transformation, a dataset of applications and grant distributions in each municipality, and interviews with all 20 local administrators who implement the scheme today. It shows how municipalities mainly use the grant to promote a convivial multiculturalism of cross-ethnic individual mixing, but also engage in cooperation with Muslim organisations through a pragmatic form of multicultural governance.

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Introduction
Muslim minorities figure at the heart of the now common allegation that European multicultural policy has failed to integrate new migrants and sustain the social cohesion of Europe. Politicians are concerned over the alleged self-segregation, extremism, and value conflicts associated with Muslim communities. Since the 1990s, European policy approaches to integration and accommodation of minority groups have changed significantly towards a greater emphasis on national identity and ‘civic integration’ of newcomers. Even the European flagship of multiculturalism, the Netherlands, changed their integration policy in the 1990s towards a greater emphasis on cultural integration of individuals through language learning and other policy tools (Korteweg 2006, 148). Scholars suggested that governments were retreating from multiculturalism (see, e.g. Joppke 2004).
This argument appeared strengthened by the many statements made by political leaders against multiculturalism in the following years.

However, other scholars challenge the idea of the retreat from multiculturalism and argue that what occurred was a ‘civic rebalancing’ of multiculturalism through ‘productive critique’ (Jones 2015; Meer and Modood 2009). Theories of multiculturalism call for policies that ‘allow minority groups to root their participation in society within their cultural communities’ (Bloemraad, Korteweg, and Yurdakul 2008, 9). Such policies often extend recognition and rights to cultural minority groups, not only individual citizens, with the aim of enabling equality. Those who see the post-90s shift as a ‘civic rebalancing’ of multiculturalism maintain that integration policies now give greater emphasis to unity as a policy aim, but still start from a recognition of (usually ethnic and religious) difference (Meer and Modood 2009). Others contend that because authorities still address minorities as groups, recognition of minority groups occurs almost as a by-product of how integration policies are implemented (Korteweg and Triadafilopoulos 2015). Therefore, multiculturalism as a form of governing diversity is not ‘dead’.

This paper explores one hypothesis proposed in the debate on multicultural retreat, that divergent evidence on the ‘retreat’ from multiculturalism is a result of dissonance between policy at the national level and its local implementation. The same concerns that have discredited multiculturalism as a philosophy may have created a demand for representatives of minorities through organisations, especially Muslim organisations, that authorities can cooperate with to resolve religious and cultural tensions (Mourão Permoser, Rosenberger, and & Stoeckl 2010) and promote integration and inclusion of immigrated minorities (Korteweg and Triadafilopoulos 2015). It may also be that the civic ideal of unity and belonging is more compatible with multiculturalism at the local rather than the national level.

Studies of multicultural policy and its alleged decline often focus on Britain and the Netherlands as the two European countries that most explicitly defended such policies in the past, and sometimes on Germany for contrast. This paper turns to Norway, which, as the Norwegian state has financially accommodated minority faith communities since the 1960s and immigrant organisations since the 1970s, also offers an interesting empirical ground for testing theories on changes in multicultural policy. This has been quite exceptional in a European context, especially as the funding has come with few strings attached. Both forms of support reflect a Norwegian tradition of strong ties between the state and the majority civil society, including the Protestant church, and extend similar opportunities to new groups (Leirvik 2001, 13–14; Takle 2014, 7).

This paper uses the implementation of a Norwegian grant scheme as an opportunity to investigate how local implementation of national policy may explain why multiculturalism, while discredited, can continue on different policy levels or under other names, and how this mediation shapes relations to Muslim civil society organisations. The grant scheme offers funding for local immigrant organisations and other voluntary organisations, and 20 municipalities around Norway administer it on behalf of the state. Based on comparison of applications and grant distributions in each municipality and on interviews with all 20 local administrators, I examine how municipal decision-makers mediate national policy as they implement the scheme. I discuss the political dilemmas that must be resolved in the implementation phase and whether, based on these cases, local implementation of integration policy may continue in multicultural forms, although
multiculturalism is questioned at the national level. I also ask whether this plays out differently for Muslim civil society organisations compared to other voluntary organisations.

Successive Norwegian governments have stressed the importance of civil society in fostering social cohesion and integration of newcomers. Critical events, such as the Mohammed cartoon affair of 2005/2006, the rise of the Islamic State, and the recruitment of young Norwegians to terrorist organisations abroad, have spurred the government to reach out to Muslim civil society actors in particular in order to combat alienation, extremism, and conflict at home. However, these events have also put a spotlight on concerns related to possible illiberal, extremist or disloyal characteristics of Muslim religious organisations. More generally, concern over segregation as a threat to social cohesion has led politicians to question the integrating effects of multicultural accommodation based on group identities, also in Norway.

I first discuss what links we should expect to find between multiculturalism as a national policy and multicultural measures or modes of governance on the ground. I then trace some historical developments in Norwegian policies on civil society and minority organisations, and briefly present the landscape of Muslim civil society organisations in Norway, as they are a particular empirical focus in this paper. Next, I introduce some theoretical perspectives on how conflicting political values can be resolved in the implementation of public policy, before I present the article’s selection of data. The results sections examine and compare local strategies for dealing with unresolved dilemmas in Norwegian funding of immigrant organisations, and finally I discuss how the presented findings speak to the debate on the alleged retreat of multiculturalism.

**Multiculturalism in national policy and at the local level**

In 2017, Christian Joppke conceded that his 2004 claim that multiculturalism has retreated was ‘much exaggerated’ (Joppke 2017, 1154). Interestingly, he maintains his argument that the civic integration turn in European policy represents something new and dominant, but claims that it could not roll back ‘multiculturalist policies that either never existed or that persist at a different level or under a different name’ (Joppke 2017). Here we have three possible explanations to the puzzle that multiculturalism may have lost support at the level of political debate, without necessarily causing a retreat from multiculturalist policy. Either it never existed, it persists at a different policy level, or it has taken on the disguise of a different name – presumably without changing its substance. Let us unpack these potential explanations in turn.

Multiculturalism cannot retreat where it never existed; to identify a civic turn in France, for example, does not convincingly strengthen the multicultural retreat hypothesis because the French did not practice multiculturalism to begin with. To examine the hypothesis empirically, we must first identify where multiculturalism was practised as either policy, philosophy, or as mode of governance. Multicultural policies, narrowly defined, are ‘formal policy orientations that aim to recognise group rights’ (Korteweg and Triadafilopoulos 2015, 664). Some also include policies aimed to ‘reduce fear of cultural difference, as well as the inequality, exclusion and disadvantage that are often experienced by cultural minorities’ (Uberoi and Modood 2013, 130), but recognition at the group level is precisely what distinguishes multicultural policies from other integration policies that promote similar aims. As a philosophy or ideology, multiculturalism argues for group recognition
as a right and moral duty, but also as a political solution to how nations (and national identities) can become more inclusive. Finally, multiculturalist governance occurs when minority community organisations participate in the articulation and implementation of policy through networks involving other political actors in ways that recognise group differences. Norway’s funding of both minority faith communities and civil society organisations appears to be an example of a multiculturalist policy, but it may not meet all the criteria listed above. Therefore, I study how implementation of the funding scheme does offer recognition, and whether the policy is driven by multicultural ideology or allows for multiculturalist modes of governance.

There are several reasons why civic integration and multiculturalism, according to these definitions, could coexist at different levels as Joppke suggests. Evidence from the Netherlands and Germany suggests that multicultural governance, for example, can be built pragmatically ‘on the fact of diversity’ (Korteweg and Triadafilopoulos 2015, 664) without necessarily drawing on normative claims for group recognition that multicultural philosophy offers. National or local authorities can simply end up recognising group differences as they acknowledged minorities’ specific challenges and cultural knowledge in articulation and implementation of policy, and therefore engage them in governance networks. Several case studies have suggested that the intensifying political discourse on Islam has opened up a political room in Europe for Muslim organisations to act as points of contact for political actors, particularly Islamic umbrella organisations (Arkilic 2015; Kortmann and Rosenow-Williams 2013; Mourão Permoser, Rosenberger, and & Stoeckl 2010). This may well be a pragmatic expansion of multiculturalism as a form of governance rather than an expansion of multiculturalism as an ideological project.

Additionally, local integration policy (and policy implementation) may diverge from national policy, especially in countries like Norway that decentralise a lot of decision making in this area. European cities are often considered to be more accommodating towards minorities than national-level politics would prescribe. Because inclusion at the local level is a different political matter than defining the national identity or boundaries of the state (Joppke 2017, 1165), we can sometimes find different integration philosophies at the two levels – or in different cities. Joppke finds that urban identity is often defined as permeable and hyper-inclusive, ‘deliberately indiscriminate with respect to urban residents’ ethnic background and legal status’ (Joppke 2017). However, Maurizio Ambrosini has shown that in Italy, urban policy can also be a battleground where local governments push for more excluding policies towards immigrants than the national government – or even the law – support (Ambrosini 2013).

Stephen H. Jones (2015) argues that in the city of Leicester, new ‘civic’ integration aims have not disrupted the established multicultural governance and deep relationships between the city and Muslim organisations. Instead, these relationships have expanded as the city and the organisations cooperate in the political project of promoting unity and ‘One Leicester’. Leicester thus offers an example of how, at the local level, multiculturalist modes of working together continue under a different name, ‘rebalanced’ towards new policy aims–which may change the promise of these relationships. Jones and others warn that multiculturalism as a mode of political engagement may be waning in favour of a ‘multicultural celebration’ of ethnic and religious difference in the city (Jones 2015; Meer and Modood 2009). ‘One Leicester’ is an example of celebration and promotion of ‘everyday multiculture’ through interactions across ethnic and faith lines. This aim can be political
in that it can make urban and national identities more inclusive, but this form of recognition holds less promise as a platform for claims making and influence.

**Shifting policy objectives and rationales**

By maintaining economic funding for immigrant organisations, Norway appears still to recognise newcomers as ethnic groups and offer financial support for group inclusion in a manner typical of multicultural accommodation (Takle 2014). The question here is whether this policy measure remains multicultural in its aims and orientation. In a study of Norwegian policy documents on integration and civil society from 1974 to 2006, Bay, Finseraa, and Hagelund (2010) find that Norwegian authorities have marginalised the role of immigrant organisations in public policy since the 1990s while directing their attention more towards immigrants’ inclusion in majority-based organisations.

The first Norwegian integration policies, written in the 1970s, describe immigrant organisations as important partners for policy implementation because of their external political potential and internal and identity-building functions (Bay, Finseraa, and Hagelund 2010, 302). At this early stage, the government adopted a hands-on approach to immigrant organisations, funding them, refurbishing their offices in Oslo, holding frequent meetings, and voicing their expectations that the organisations should be democratic, represent the interests of migrant workers, and assist in policy implementation as ‘welfare organisations’. Comparably, the government’s approach to new Muslim faith communities was much more hands-off, mostly restricted to financial accommodation as regulated by law. However, a 1987 white paper notes that immigrant organisations were unable to live up to the expectations described above. Compared to other parts of civil society, the government saw the immigrant organisations as ‘small and weak’, mostly inwardly oriented cultural organisations, concerned with their group’s ‘social and cultural belonging in a new country’ (Ministry of Local Government and Labour 1987, 66).

In the 1990s, policy documents expressed hopes that immigrants would join other interest-based organisations that could perform a vertical political function and represent their interests across ethnicities (Bay, Finseraa, and Hagelund 2010). The documents tone down expectations that immigrant organisations could serve representative, democratic functions. This coincides with a shift in perspective on integration across Europe, which problematised low levels of immigrant participation in work life, civil society and politics. The scare of ‘parallel societies’ had replaced concerns about forced assimilation. In the integration white papers of the 1990s and 2000s, the government turned to voluntary organisations in general as service providers and tools in implementation of integration policy, and less to immigrant organisations in particular (Bay, Finseraa, and Hagelund 2010; Bråten, Lillevik, and Jahreie 2017). In the 2000s, Norwegian policy emphasised civil society as the welfare state’s grassroots level co-producer, and an important sphere for creation of trust, social capital and integration (Loga 2018, 65). Although the authorities continued to fund immigrant organisations in the 2000s, the rhetoric at the national level had shifted. The government now problematised their inward orientation and described their integrating potential as contingent on whether they were willing and able to partner with the authorities and other voluntary organisations (Bråten, Lillevik, and Jahreie 2017, 43).
The latest white paper on integration ascribes voluntary organisations a key role in ‘creating contact between local communities and inhabitants’ (Ministry of Justice and Public Security 2015). This function is instrumental to the overall aim of the policy, which is to prevent segregation through immigrants’ participation in work life and greater society, while maintaining high levels of trust and achieving a sense of belonging for all inhabitants (Ministry of Justice and Public Security 2015). The grant scheme that targets local immigrant organisations and other voluntary organisations echoes these objectives. It was reorganised in 2015 and is now administered through 20 municipalities around Norway.1 The Directorate of Immigration and Diversity explains that they selected municipalities where large shares of the inhabitants have an immigrant background, with some adjustments to the list to ensure geographical spread across the country. The scheme includes two types of grants: funding of ‘integration activities’, and operational grants. Operational grants are available only for registered immigrant organisations that can document a paying membership base within the municipality, while funding of integration activities is available for all types of voluntary organisations.2

In 2016, the stated objectives of providing funds for immigrant organisations in particular were ‘to contribute to strengthening the participation of the immigrated population in civil society and in social networks’ and to ‘contribute to increasing trust and belonging in the Norwegian society’ (IMDi 2016, author’s translation). Voluntary activities ought to be ‘related to integration and inclusion of persons of immigrant background’ and are funded in order ‘to create meeting places and activities in local communities across groups in the population’ and again ‘to increase[e] trust and belonging in the Norwegian society’ (IMDi 2016, author’s translation).

It is up to the municipalities to make the grant scheme known, to process applications, and to administer the funds (IMDi 2016). The directorate explicitly encourages the municipalities to prioritise the distribution of funds according to local integration objectives, and even prioritise between the two types of grants as the municipalities see fit. On one hand, this grant scheme gives municipalities considerable freedom to interpret and adjust the scheme to their own perceptions of how integration, trust and belonging is best promoted by civil society. On the other, it delegates the resolution of the noted anxieties related to immigrant organisations to the local authorities. It is up to them to figure out how to interfere, through funding, in order to mobilise local voluntary activity, including immigrant organisations, to achieve the national policy objectives.

**Muslim civil society organisations in Norway**

One anxiety that local authorities must confront is how public concern about Islamic radicalisation has re-politicised the role of religious and non-religious Muslim organisations. However, the history of how the Norwegian Muslim civil society developed tells a very interesting story of Muslim diversity, and which organisations Norwegian authorities have been accommodating. Today, Muslims make up an estimated 4% of the Norwegian population, about 200,000 persons (SSB 2017), which is around the average for Europe as a region. They are a highly diverse minority in terms of ethnic background, religious orientation and practice, and organised civil society participation. To speak of a ‘Muslim civil society’ as a unified field would be misleading.
Muslims in Norway have organised themselves since the 1970s, when groups of guest workers from Pakistan, Turkey, and Morocco grew in number. Early welfare organisations catered to the social, cultural, and religious needs of their members, and the first mosque was opened in 1974 (Vogt 2000). Norwegian authorities recognised and supported both kinds of organisations early on. They recognised local or regional organisations based on national, ethnic, or cultural identity (i.e., Moroccan, Kurdish, or African) as ‘immigrant organisations’. A council was established in 1984 to facilitate contact between the public authorities and the newcomers, represented by immigrant organisations (Rogstad 2007). Immigrant organisations were also offered public funding starting in 1987, and the numbers grew quickly, from about 40–50 organisations in 1979 to an estimated 800 in 2001 (Predelli 2008, 937).

After 1980, the number of mosques grew through fractioning and the arrival of new groups of Muslims (Vogt 2000, 82). By a law introduced in 1969, state and municipal funding was available for all registered faith communities outside the state church on a per-member basis, equal to the public funding provided the Norwegian state church per member per year (Plesner 2016). This has encouraged mosques to recruit formally registered members in what could be called a churchified (Vinding 2018) pattern of religious organisations, which is not common in the Muslim world. Today, 148,000 Muslims are registered members of a mosque in Norway (SSB 2017). This financial support has been significant enough to provide religious organisations the possibility to be self-governing, to extend their activities in order to engage outside of their own group, and to be less dependent on foreign funding (Grung 2017).

After this period of fragmentation, the 1990s became a period where the major mosques and the differentiated communities sought cooperation and unification across the above-mentioned dividing lines. The Islamic Council of Norway was established to this effect in 1993 by five mosques (Vogt 2000, 215–217). The council aimed to be a unifying organisation as well as a representative voice for Muslims in Norway, and position itself as a point of contact with Norwegian authorities on behalf of their growing list of member congregations. New issue-based organisations were also established in the 1990s by Muslim youth, women and/or converts, which recruited from across or beyond the mosque communities.

The 2000s made it clear that the Islamic Council, while representing more than 20 mosques and organisations at this point, did not represent all Muslims in Norway. Public figure Shabana Rehman used her voice as a person of Muslim background to criticise the council for being too conservative and promoting illiberal ideas. The council did not represent all conservative Muslims either, as proven when over 1500 Muslims marched through Oslo during the Mohammad cartoon affair of 2006 and 2010 to demand a more confrontational response than which the Islamic Council, in close cooperation with Norwegian authorities, had adopted. New specialised and issue-oriented organisations appeared after the cartoon controversies to represent the secular Muslim voice. However, economic as well as political incentives had favoured the mosques and the Islamic Council as the corporate channel of representation and contact on politicised issues related to Islam. In the 2000s, the Salafi organisations Islam Net and The Prophet’s Ummah drew considerable attention for their extremist ideology and the latter’s alleged recruitment to terrorist organisations, although it organised only a handful of Norwegian Muslims. The majority of Norway’s Muslim civil society organisations today are small, local or regional organisations of either religious, ethnic, or cultural character.
Dealing with dilemmas in implementation

As noted, the Directorate of Integration and Diversity leaves it to the administrators of 20 municipalities to administrate funds for immigrant organisations, and to resolve two key dilemmas. Firstly, they must decide whether to use the grant scheme to provide immigrant organisations with operational grants, or to provide project funding for any local volunteer organisations based on the integrating potential of their activities. While the first type of funding offers a way to recognise minority groups in a way that empowers them as potential collaborators in multicultural governance, it does not give the municipalities any way to steer the organisations’ activities. Strengthening the participation of the immigrated population is an explicit objective, but the Norwegian government has also problematised the ‘inward orientation’ of immigrant organisations and expressed preference for an integrationist approach to participation, which dissolves minority communities into a larger, diverse public sphere. Secondly, the municipalities must review applications for project funding. Given the grant scheme’s objectives, this requires them to assess and value each project’s integrating potential against some common yardstick, even though the organisations applying, as networks of different ethnic and religious groups, may offer something very different.

It is common that goals or values that cannot be balanced or met simultaneously cause conflicts in public governance, and they are one reason why implementation affects policy outcomes. Thacher and Rein have theorised that public servants cope with such value conflicts by making situated judgements about what is appropriate in particular times, places and contexts (2004, 458). In this case, that means making judgements about what is better for local integration concerns and objectives, as the directorate explicitly encourages the municipalities to do. As the literature on multiculturalism suggests, the city context itself might influence such perceptions both because minorities may constitute a smaller or larger share of the local demographic, and because ‘belonging’ might mean something different in the local context than it does at the national level. The situated judgements can also concern what kinds of organisations or activities best fit the municipality’s mode of recognising and governing diversity.

Thacher and Rein suggest that in making their judgements, public servants apply strategies that let them avoid weighing conflicting values against each other, which allow them to make rational choices even when the conflicting values cannot be balanced. In fact, the directorate invites municipalities to do so when they ask them to adjust the grant scheme to local integration objectives and develop their own priorities. Municipalities may exclude types of applications that they do not wish to fund by establishing some ‘rules of the game’ that organise them out using a bias strategy (Stewart 2006, 190). As a description of this strategy, bias does not mean partiality; it means that the municipality makes a strategic use of a set of norms that can allow them to make judgements, encouraging organisations to send relevant applications. A bias strategy makes policy priorities clear both to those implementing it and benefiting from it, but it also makes it harder for organisations to challenge the municipality’s ordering of values or alternatives.

How do we recognise a bias strategy in action? Stewart (2006) describes two techniques used in bias strategies for excluding alternatives. One is to make use of a dominant policy paradigm that privileges certain ways of thinking – and those actors who master the dominant discourse. Municipalities are quite likely to reward certain approaches to integration
by providing or increasing funding to those over others, as they are encouraged to do, and this would be the same as using a policy paradigm to pursue a bias strategy. The other technique is technicisation, which happens when we translate values into management regimes and use technical means to deal with conflicting values. For example, a municipality may ask organisations to report how many participants in a certain target group will benefit from grants, a type of performance measures that is common in policy implementation. Such technicisations may drive out other types of assessments that are less quantifiable and require bureaucrats to make judgement calls, but they can also be used to compromise in a pragmatic way between conflicting values.

If the municipalities apply an integrationist policy paradigm to the implementation of the grant scheme, this could favour elites or majority actors. Such a bias would reward organisations that mobilise across identities and activities that address barriers to individual integration, or recognition of universal human rights and human dignity. It would probably also privilege organisations with the capacity to deliver immediate results. This would subject Muslim organisations to harder competition and scrutiny as they would have to propose specific projects with desired outcomes and compete for funding with majority organisations that are likely to be better masters of the dominant discourse. Such bias strategies might ‘pacify’ or crowd out Muslim organisations if conditions for funding slants the table towards competing organisations.

If recognition and group inclusion is the dominant policy paradigm in the municipality, this may privilege minority organisations. Such a bias would prioritise minority groups’ participation, self-organisation, and issue ownership in integration activities. It could reward group-based participation in the public domain, and activities concerned with preservation and public assertions of group identity and dignity. It would perhaps compensate for shortcomings in immigrated minorities’ capacity to self-organise and participate in the public domain, and value the participation itself, not just its output.

**Materials and methods**

This paper uses data that this author, along with Beret Bråten and Josefine Jahreie, originally collected for a research project commissioned by the Directorate for Integration and Diversity (IMDi). Our task was to analyse how the directorate and the municipalities could encourage partnership with immigrant organisations in integration and inclusion efforts through the local implementation of *Grants to local immigrant organisations and voluntary activity in local communities* (see Bråten, Lillevik, and Jahreie 2017). We collected documents from IMDi and each of the 20 municipalities that included national and local criteria for applications, summary lists of applicants and what they have applied for (substantially and in numbers), documentation of which applicants have been rejected or received financial support, and how much each successful application had been granted.

After collecting these documents and making a simple quantitative analysis of how the municipalities distributed the funds (acceptance rates and average grant sums for immigrant organisations and majority organisations respectively), we then conducted interviews with those responsible for the administration of the grant scheme in all 20 municipalities. We mainly conducted interviews by phone, following a semi-structured interview guide to ensure comparability. We asked about each municipality’s organisation of responsibility for integration efforts in general and the grant scheme in particular, how
they decided which organisations and voluntary activities to fund, how they perceive the contributions of immigrant organisations in achieving the aims of the grant scheme, and which other efforts the municipality has made to encourage cooperation with immigrated minorities. This paper uses the same documents and interview data for a new analysis.

IMDi defines immigrant organisations in this grant scheme as the organisations of first-generation immigrants and persons born of parents who immigrated to Norway, but not immigrants from the Nordic countries, Switzerland, U.S.A., Canada, Australia and New Zealand (IMDi 2016). I use the term according to this bureaucratic definition. I have categorised immigrant organisations as Muslim organisations if the organisation’s name or self-description identify them as either (a) organising people of Muslim faith (Islamic) or (b) organising people who have immigrated from or descend from a Muslim-majority country, ethnic group, or geographical area (Muslim cultural background).³

A total of 475 organisations applied for funding in 2016, and 255 of these were immigrant organisations. Of the immigrant organisations, 90 (35%) can be categorised as Muslim civil society organisations. Only eight of these organisations are Islamic, either as Islamic associations (1), registered faith communities (3), organisations associated with mosques (3), or associated with the Islamic Gülen movement (1). Considering that faith-based organisations make up only 8% of the majority-based organisations that applied, Islamic organisations do not appear comparably underrepresented. The remaining 82 Muslim organisations are mostly ethnic associations organising people of Muslim cultural background. The ethnic distribution of these organisations does reflect demographic patterns of the Norwegian Muslim population, which suggests that the grant scheme reaches relevant organisations in Norwegian Muslim civil society. Four ethnic groups dominate: Turkish, Somali, Pakistani and Kurdish organisations make up 62% of the total of ethnic Muslim organisations. These groups are among the most numerous groups of immigrants from Muslim-majority countries in Norway, and top four in terms of descendants (see Statistics Norway 2018). Syrians and Afghans, two other large groups of Muslim immigrants, are as of now underrepresented among the applicants, probably because these groups arrived in the country as refugees more recently.

To see how the implementation of the grant scheme creates opportunities for mobilisation of Muslim civil society organisations, I have first identified the organisations that fit this category and looked at how they have fared as applicants to the grant scheme (eligibility, application rates, acceptance rates and average grant sums). I have compared this category to other immigrant organisations and to majority organisations (see table below), and looked for variations in this pattern across the 20 municipalities (Table 1).

Judging by the number of applications, the grant scheme mobilises Muslim civil society in a geographically concentrated area, not nationwide. Of the 90 Muslim organisations that applied for funding, one-third applied in Oslo and a little over one-third in the five

| Table 1. Application numbers and acceptance rates across organisation categories. |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
|                                | MAJORITY-BASED ORGANISATIONS | MUSLIM ORGANISATIONS | OTHER MINORITY ORGANISATIONS | TOTAL |
| APPLICATIONS (N)               | 220             | 90              | 165             | 475              |
| % OF TOTAL                     | 46              | 19              | 35              | 100              |
| ACCEPTANCE RATE (%)            | 73              | 84              | 92              |                   |
cities of Stavanger, Bergen, Sarpsborg, Fredrikstad and Drammen. In Norway, immigrants from Muslim-majority countries have especially settled in Oslo and surrounding urban areas (SSB 2017). The pattern of applications from Muslim organisations seems to overlap with this settlement pattern. The remaining 14 municipalities (Bærum, Skien, Bodø, Skedsmo, Sandnes, Hamar, Kristiansand, Sandefjord, Tromsø, Trondheim, Tønsberg, Gjøvik, Ålesund, Arendal) received between four and zero applications each from Muslim organisations. In fact, the smaller cities failed to attract many applications from immigrant organisations at all. Immigrant and Muslim communities are likely to be more scattered and less organised in many of these municipalities, the low numbers may be coincidental, or they could result from the local administration of the grant scheme.

Next, I have analysed the qualitative interviews with local administrators in the 20 municipalities, where they discuss how they implement the grant scheme according to local priorities. In the analysis, I have identified whether and how the municipalities use bias strategies when they operationalised the policy objectives of the grant scheme and distribute funds, and whether they produce a multicultural form of policy or governance. Finally, I have identified some patterns and relationships between these strategies for dealing with dilemmas in implementation, and the Muslim organisations’ access to funding and cooperation. The next two sections of the paper present the findings from these two stages of the analysis.

**Results: the rules of the game**

In our interview material, the 20 municipal administrators describe and discuss how they decided to distribute the funds, including how they assessed the applications they received and how they tried to communicate their expectations to potential applicants.

All the municipalities seek to prioritise activities that bring people together across ethnic groups when they assess applications for project funding because they interpret the grant scheme’s objective ‘to create meeting places and activities in local communities across groups in the population’ as an instruction to do so. The guidelines set the discursive framework, which the municipalities then translate into technical criteria or boxes that the projects should tick in order to receive (more) funding.

For some municipalities, cross-ethnic participation is an absolute criterion, which organises the eligible from the non-eligible. For others, it is an ideal that the municipality will encourage by upsizing the grant for those who live up to it:

> It’s not like … we don’t reject anyone because of a narrow [target] group. (...) We have granted a little less to narrower activities, such as cabin trips for youths from one country. They are not prioritised. While meeting places across [groups] are those we have given priority to. (Local administrator 1)

To enforce this prioritisation the municipalities operationalise their ideal so that they know which kinds of applications to invite, and can recognise the right activities when they see them. In other terms, they technicise and communicate an explicit bias towards some types of applications. The two most common operationalisations are that activities should include (1) as many people as possible (2) from different (Norwegian and non-Norwegian) ethnic background. This simple technicisation is widely used. For
example, one municipality told us that their city gives priority to ‘multicultural’ activities. Asked to explain how they recognise whether activities are multicultural, the public servant elaborated:

To what degree an activity is multicultural is a judgement call. It can be a little or very much. (…) It’s considered a lot if there are many different ethnic groups that are involved, rather than a few. Or if the organisation thinks that a few [people] from another group might come, then it’s a little. Or one can consider collaboration, something we also prioritise is collaboration between groups. The more they collaborate across all parts of an event. (Local administrator 2)

Multicultural is, in the first half of this quote, simply a synonym for ethnic diversity. However, the administrator also expresses interest in ethnic minorities as groups when he mentions that he prioritises collaborations between different ethnic groups, which is another common operationalisation of what an ideal application looks like. While ethnicity and number of participants may be deal-breakers (if you don’t draw people beyond your ethnic group, you might not qualify for funding at all), collaboration is a booster. Municipalities reward those who are collaborating with other organisations representing other ethnic groups, particularly across the minority-majority divide, with higher funding. The reason for this is that local administrators believe collaboration over time provides better opportunities for getting to know each other and expanding participants’ networks than one-off encounters. Most of the municipalities express interest in boosting these collaborations as vehicles for such everyday encounters across ethnic lines, not because they want to encourage networks of multicultural governance as a path to influence in the city.

A second common booster is openness. Municipalities usually operationalised this quality as being open to the public physically (by choice of event venue, i.e. at the city centre, the public library or other places frequented by a mixed public) and of public interest (not catering to one ethnic group).

We have some guidelines from the [national] circular that we follow. And we have made our own priorities of things we believe in locally, we want activities to be open, to take place in [city name], projects that are collaborations between different actors. If there are closed-off activities in the organisations, we would rather prioritise bigger collaborative projects, meeting places between different groups. (…) We care a lot about how many the activity can reach. (Local administrator 3)

This quote describes one municipality’s use of an explicit bias, operationalised in a handful of technical criteria (openness, collaboration, number of participants, cross-ethnic participation), to fund what they ‘believe in locally’. In this way, municipalities recreate the grant scheme objectives’ orientation towards bridging social capital in local ‘rules of the game’. Most often, these favour applications for projects that are able to mobilise across ethnic identities, host their activities in public places, cater to the interests of the broader public, and deliver immediate results in terms of bringing individuals of mixed ethnic backgrounds together. In doing so, they develop a bias towards organisations that can deliver individual integration results, not group integration.

However, minority organisations can also apply for operational grants that come without any strings or restrictions on how they can be spent. Applications for operational grants had a high success rate of 89% in 2016, but only about a quarter of the grant scheme went to operational grants for immigrant organisations, while three-quarters went to
project funding. The reason is complex. Firstly, the grant scheme itself invites more applications for project funding. While only immigrant organisations are eligible for operational grants, any voluntary organisation may apply for project funding. Secondly, as reflected by the high success rates of applicants, most municipalities choose to fund as many applicants as possible in both categories, and thus the bulk of the grant goes towards project funding.

At the same time, the municipalities differ much more in their administration of operational grants than project funding. Two municipalities with vital minority organisations have extended their ‘rules of the game’ to direct all funding towards projects that meet the criteria of cross-ethnic mixing, and none for operational grants. One of them actually engages the minority organisation in the process of distributing funds, in full-fledged multicultural governance. Some others, including the largest municipalities, explicitly prioritise operational grants by processing these applications first according to a technical formula, then distributing the remaining funds to project applications. This is a technification (of both process and grant sums) that lets some municipalities strike a balance between what they see as the dual aim of the grant scheme: empowerment of minority organisations, and individual cross-ethnic integration.

The bias developed towards cross-ethnic integration, and away from group identity-based mobilisation, led some municipalities to question whether immigrant organisations contribute towards integration as well as majority organisations do. One local administrator noted that project applications from immigrant organisations are usually about ‘parties, politics or anxieties about alienation’, while applications from majority-based humanitarian organisations exhibit ‘a more general philosophy of inclusion’, i.e. they are more in tune with the municipality’s orientation. Indirectly, the administrators spoke about how an explicit bias serves to organise out activities often suggested by immigrant organisations that they considered inwardly oriented.

We demand that the activities are openly available for everyone. If an immigrant organisation applies for funding for an internal event in their organisations, they will not get a grant. Everything is based on [the principle] that it should be open for everyone, there should be an openness around it so that everyone can participate. No closed parties or meetings.

(Local administrator 3)

If immigrant organisations appear to have a problematic inward orientation, the explicit bias towards individual cross-ethnic mixing allows the municipalities to restrict their access to funds. Most local administrators agreed that in the competition with organisations such as the Red Cross or the local church, the immigrant organisations box above their weight class. They may be relevant partners with attractive platforms, but they are unlikely to qualify for the ‘boosters’ among the operationalised criteria on their own.

Results: multicultural by game but not by name

In local level implementation of the grant scheme, Muslim civil society organisations fare well in terms of accessing either operational grants or project funding. Of the applications from Muslim organisations, 84% were successful. This means that their success rate is a little lower than for the other 165 immigrant organisations, of which 92% were funded, but higher than for the 212 majority-based organisations, of which 73% received
funding. Although most applicants receive much less funds than they apply for, at least the Muslim organisations are relatively successful in comparison to their competitors.

Two-thirds of Muslim organisations applying were found in only six municipalities (Oslo, Stavanger, Bergen, Sarpsborg, Fredrikstad and Drammen), which are among the largest and/or more immigrant-dense cities in Norway. The largest and most diverse cities have political charters that include diversity in the city’s identity building. By their geographical concentration, Muslim organisations may be benefiting from the phenomenon of the accommodating urban space, as some of the other Norwegian cities on the list are neither very urban nor very diverse. In the interviews we did with the immigrant-dense cities, the local administrators demonstrated a heightened awareness towards minority organisations and the potential negative effects that the national requirements of the grant scheme could have for them. These administrators were particularly concerned that immigrant organisations compete for very limited resources with majority-based organisations, some of them professionalised, which could lead to them being ‘crowded out’ of integration work. In addition, they noted that technical requirements alone excluded some immigrant organisations from applying or receiving funds. For example, one Pakistani women’s group could not figure out how to register officially, and a Sudanese association was disqualified because it was too new. To counter this crowding-out threat, many municipalities and especially the larger cities prioritise applications from immigrant organisations that wish to participate in cooperative projects or events, such as multicultural festivals, that can facilitate the kinds of mixing that the municipalities wish organisations to provide. The municipalities often play key roles as initiators and coordinators and provide much of the funding. Some municipalities limit almost all project funding that they grant to immigrant organisations to their participation in these public festivals.

Administrators from the larger, immigrant-dense cities brought up Muslim organisations in the interviews uninvited, and recount that mosques and/or Muslim ethnic or religious organisations in their city have participated in religious dialogue or cooperated with the municipality in counter-radicalisation projects and events. When municipalities bring up Muslim organisations as contributors with valuable resources, it is in relation to concerns over either radicalisation or Islamophobia. This supports the hypothesis that the politicisation of Islam has indeed made organisations that can represent Muslims into relevant actors for local authorities. However, it also seems that some municipalities are ambivalent about this mode of multicultural governance in policy implementation, as the quote below illustrates.

This past year I’ve led an imam-training project, and we have a very close cooperation with the mosques in [the city], with thousands of members. We also work very well with Somali organisations, we have a good and systematic cooperation with different communities. How representative is a Somali organisation for the Somali community? We don’t practice a multicultural approach to integration in [the city], we don’t just relate to each group that has a leader we can relate to, but we see the value in that they have organisations with national communities. The mosque is important to many, we cannot close our eyes to that. (Local administrator 5)

This administrator, working in one of Norway’s largest and most diverse cities, recognises that the mosques are ‘important to many’, and are valued partners to the city. He also recognises ‘the Somali community’ as an ethnic community with distinct organisations,
with which the city works ‘very well’. Still, he argues that the municipality is not interested in a ‘multicultural’ kind of group integration. As the quote above shows, the municipality engages Muslim organisations in multicultural governance as channels for outreach and partners in cooperative projects, but they do not wish to name it multiculturalism – perhaps they do it because of pragmatism and not ideology, and in pursuit of vertical rather than horizontal integration. In another diverse city, the administrator likewise discusses outreach versus preferential modes of integration when comparing minority and majority organisations:

If an immigrant organisation applies for project funding, it is often internal. We have a mosque with 1300–1400 members and Norwegian as their common language, they have a platform. But one reason why we have funded Norwegian organisations more is that they view integration as part of their operations. (Local administrator 4)

This administrator sees potential in the mosque’s ‘platform’, but prefers ‘Norwegian organisations’ as partners in integration work. It appears that the aim is to integrate the ‘1300–1400 members’, but not the organisation itself. Across the municipalities, neither funding practices nor the administrators’ own accounts suggest that the municipalities use the grant scheme to encourage Muslim self-organising – whether religious or ethnic – or expansion of multicultural governance networks, as a local integration strategy.

Discussion and conclusion

This single grant scheme demonstrates three phenomena that the literature on multiculturalism’s life after death is trying to account for. Firstly, the political aims of the scheme have shifted some ways away from early hopes of a communitarian multiculturalism towards a greater emphasis on individual integration and everyday encounters, while the scheme itself remains intact. The rhetorical shift at the national level corresponded with the rhetorical retreat from multiculturalism as a philosophy across Europe. Yet, Norway continues to offer funding for immigrant organisations, which suggests that encouraging and cooperating with immigrant organisations continues to be a mode of governance that is compatible with new policy aims.

Secondly, as suggested by Jones (2015) and Meer and Modood (2009), celebrating everyday multiculture in the city appears to be the new political project, largely replacing the ambition of multiculturalism as a mode of political engagement. My findings on how the municipalities distribute funding show more support for individual interactions in the spirit of ‘everyday multiculture’, than group integration or recognition of cultural minorities as a political project. The municipalities that implement the scheme are encouraged to prioritise among the national aims according to their local strategies for integration. I have argued that this leaves it up to the municipalities to deal with political anxieties related to immigrant organisations, through bias strategies. Similar anxieties, e.g. that immigrant organisations may not exhibit the right ‘philosophy of inclusion’, seem to exist locally. In their strategies, many municipalities apply an explicit and technicised bias towards projects that promote a convivial multiculturalism of cross-ethnic individual mixing. Operational grants sum up to only one-quarter of the awarded grants. The emphasis on convivial multiculturalism restricts immigrant organisations’ terms for engagement as it centres on individual interactions, not group action.
Thirdly, in this study, the larger and more diverse cities appear to be more accommodating towards immigrant organisations, by more actively compensating for the crowding-out effects of the bias strategies that they use to implement the scheme. These cities, therefore, appear more ‘multicultural’. Again, their strategies favour celebration of difference and bringing people together across ethnic groups. Interestingly, some of these diverse cities demonstrate how concerns over radicalisation and Islamophobia, which have contributed towards discrediting multiculturalism as a philosophy, have also led them to cooperate with Muslim organisations. However, these municipalities do not accept this as multiculturalism or endeavour to boost the self-organisation of Muslims specifically. It is therefore hard to conclude from this study that the relationship between Muslim organisations and local authorities is strengthening through multicultural governance, as in Leicester (Jones 2015), but perhaps these examples are closer to the German and Dutch experiences of pragmatic partnerships (Korteweg and Triadafilopoulos 2015).

The implementation of the grant scheme in fact, confirms a general trend in Norwegian public policy towards minority organisations, which is that the policies and incentives used no longer aim to empower the organisations as channels of political representation and influence. Instead, the strategies that municipalities use to assess applications for project funding encourage and boost activities that celebrate diversity, particularly in the shape of public festivals in the name of the city. As such, the implementation of the grant scheme aims at promoting an inclusive local identity that celebrates the ethnic and religious difference of its inhabitants.

Notes

1. The municipalities are Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger, Trondheim, Bærum, Drammen, Kristiansund, Sandnes, Skedsmo, Fredrikstad, Sarpsborg, Tromsø, Skien, Sandefjord, Arendal, Tønsberg, Ålesund, Bodø, Gjøvik and Hamar.
2. Members of immigrant organisations must reside within the municipality the organisation is applying to in order to count towards operational grant funding. All organisations must be registered in a national registry of voluntary associations to be eligible for funding.
3. It is hard to classify some of the minority organisations into binary religious/non-religious categories, however. In example, Turkish immigrants originating from a village called Samlar in Turkey have established their own faith community, Anatolian Alevi-Bektashi Faith Society, and also several related organisations for families, women and children respectively. Their women’s organisation and youth organisation are both among the applicants to the grant scheme under secular names. They are counted here among ethnic organisations, but it is worth noting that they represent overlapping ethnic and religious communities.
4. According to the statutes of the grant scheme, organisations that already receive state funding in their capacity as registered faith communities are not eligible for operational grants, but may apply for funding of integration activities.

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