Minority Participation in the Public Sphere

– A Critical Analysis of Claim-Making on Muslim Rights and Islam in Swedish News Media

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Abstract

Through workforce migration and refugee movements Sweden has experienced an influx of immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries in the second half of the 20th century. As Muslim communities have become more permanently established, debates around the public practice of Islam in a Western European context have become more prevalent, while the "global war on terror" has aided the construction of Muslim minorities into "Others" along lines of religious and cultural differences. Based on theories of minority participation in the public sphere as part of the political process of deliberation and contestation over group rights in complex pluralistic political communities, this thesis investigates the debate around Muslim rights and Islam in Sweden during the years 1999 – 2008 as reported by the five largest Swedish daily newspapers. Making use of political claims analysis it looks at the actors, issues, and positions present in the debate and their development over time. It also compares the claim-making of actors with explicit and implicit Muslim identities in order to challenge the category of the "Muslim Other". The analysis shows that there is considerable participation of institutionalised Muslim minority actors, who face changing contexts and discursive opportunity structures in their claim-making depending on external events. The main issues debated are Muslim religious rights and social problems related to Muslims as a minority group, indicating the extent to which the category "Muslim" is not merely a religious one, but applied as a broader socio-cultural categorisation for people coming from a Muslim cultural background. A comparison of claim-making by religious and secular Muslim actors shows considerable differences between the two groups, pointing out the need to be critically aware that a politics of recognition can mean the homogenisation and reification of minority group identities at the cost of acknowledging their actual heterogeneity.

Key words: minority participation, Muslim minority rights, Islam in Europe, public sphere, political claim analysis, politics of recognition

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1. Introduction

"Han knarkar säkert och slår sina barn, tvingar sin fru att ha slöja, så gör de i Islam!"[1]

1.1 Muslim Minorities in Europe

Western European countries have experienced an influx of immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries in the second half of the 20th century, through workforce migration, as a result of de-colonisation, and as part of refugee movements. While migration has always been a contested issue for European societies, Muslim immigration seems to have particularly influenced and challenged socio-political relations within them. First generation immigrants, particularly those coming in search of work, were likely to adopt an approach of quiet assimilation in the attempt to blend in (Kinvall & Nesbitt-Larking 2009), but as Muslim communities have become more permanently established, debates around the public practice of Islam as a religion in a Western European context have become more prevalent. Accelerated by the events of 9/11 and the subsequent "global war on terror", the last years have also seen a shift in discourses around migration. What was formerly mostly a discussion about social and economic issues (Göle 2011) turned into the construction of Muslim minorities into (threatening) "Others" along lines of religious and cultural differences.

In an age of global mass communication, mass travelling, and mass international migration, multiple ways of life increasingly clamour for co-existence and equal treatment (Joppke 2010). The question of minority rights becomes more acute as Western nation-states have attempted to assimilate, then integrate new citizens, and to balance individual rights of civic citizenship against collective rights articulated in terms of groups' ethnic or religious group identities. Discourses of religion, tradition, nation, and culture have been invoked by majority as well as minority actors in attempts to make claims based on distinct identities.

The different citizenship regimes of European states have influenced the conditions as well as the strategies employed for the use of identity by majority and minority actors. But as Kinvall and Nesbitt-Larking have pointed out, the different policies of dealing with immigration have strikingly similar results across European societies: Muslim minorities form an under-class throughout European societies, with unemployment ranging from two-and-a-half times to five times the unemployment rate of the majority population (2009: 313).

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[1]
    "I'm sure he takes drugs and beats his children, forces his wife to wear the veil, that's what they do in Islam!"
    - From the song "Pendelparanoia" ("Paranoia on the commuter train") by Swedish rapper Timbuktu

Additionally, terrorism legislation throughout Europe has predominantly affected Muslims, often resulting in the criminalisation of a wide group of people, including 'fundamentalists', asylum-seekers and refugees, and the more general stigmatisation of community networks and community activists (ibid: 317). The loyalty of many practicing Muslims as well as people from Muslim cultural backgrounds to their European countries of settlement has been placed in question, by governments and publics alike.

At the same time minority identities are employed as parts of migrant and minority agency when groups make claims for rights based on ethnic or religious differences. While a fair amount of attention in academic research has been paid to the representation, stigmatisation and discrimination of Muslims in Europe, as well as to their socio-economically disadvantaged position (cf. Koenig 2005, Kinvall & Nesbitt-Larking 2010, Gardell 2010, Kepel 2004), the agency of Muslims as actors in the political debate on Muslim rights and Islam in European societies is so far less well investigated. This is the starting point of my thesis, which pursues the following purpose:

1.2 Purpose and Research Questions

Based on theoretical considerations around minority participation in the public sphere as part of the political process of deliberation and contestation over the shape of a socio-political community, I want to investigate the extent to which Muslims minority actors are present as claim-makers in the Swedish public debate on Muslim rights and Islam as it is reflected in the reporting by the five largest Swedish daily newspapers. I will analyse what the context looks like that they as actors face in this debate, both with regard to the issues discussed and the positions taken. Being well aware of the dangers of essentialising a heterogeneous minority group, I will also critically engage with the construction of Muslim actors as a coherent, homogeneous group. My research questions therefore are as follows:

1. What were the actors, issues, and positions present in the debate on Muslim rights and Islam in Sweden during the years 1999 – 2008?
2. How did the position taken towards Muslim rights and Islam develop during this period of time?
3. When comparing different groups of actors in the debate, are there discernible differences between both Muslim and Non-Muslim actors; and within the group of Muslim actors between those with an explicit and implicit Muslim identity with regard to the issues discussed and the position taken?

1.3 Previous Research

There is a small number of studies that have previously looked explicitly at Muslim agency in the public debate in Sweden. In her dissertation on public religions in Swedish media, Marta Axner conducted a study of religious actors on the debate pages of three Swedish newspapers (2013). This included an analysis of Muslim religious actors as the biggest minority religion in Sweden. She found that the diverse group of Muslim actors write about a wide range of specific topics, but majority of articles concerns the group itself. Authors employ restrained and balancing discourses. While on the one hand being critical against Islamophobia and negative attitudes towards Muslims, there is at the same time an acceptance among Muslim writers that they need to denounce violence and adjust to majority Swedish society. They therefore risk ending up in the stereotype of the "Good Muslim." (2013: 170). She also identified a meta-debate over the place of religion in the public sphere even when specific issues were discussed, indicating the additional legitimacy problems that religious actors might face when making claims in the public sphere.

Making use of political claims analysis, the same method applied in this thesis, Larsson and Lindekilde (2009) analysed Muslim claim-making in Denmark and Sweden during the Muhammad cartoons controversies in 2005/2006 and 2007, respectively. They looked at why the cartoon controversy in Denmark ended in violent protests and boycotts on a global scale, while the Swedish debate never progressed beyond instances of local protests and a lively debate in Swedish newspapers on the balance between the freedom of speech and the freedom of religion. They found that it was the "process of conflict containment through mutual recognition and certification between Muslim representatives and political authorities in Sweden" (2009: 377) that helped contain contention within the realm of routine politics. This clearly shows that the official recognition and inclusion of minority representatives as actors, rather than object of a debate can help to negotiate conflicts around culture and religion.

There is of course also a lot of more in-depth work done by previous discourse analyses on specific issues related to Muslim representation, Islamophobia, and Islam in Sweden (cf. Larsson 2006, Lövheim & Axner 2011, Hvitfelt 1998, Gardell 2010, Bredström 2003). With this thesis I also to a certain degree intend to complement those studies. My analysis does not aspire to their depth, instead its scale provides an overview of media-reported claim-making over an extended period of time, enabling an analysis of developments with regard to the actors and issues involved, as well as the changes of overall position

towards Muslim rights and Islam. It looks at the Muslim population in Sweden as actors, rather than mere objects of the debate, providing insights into the degree to which they are active participants, shaping the debate (and through such also the political landscape) with their claim-making. It also adds to an understanding of the overall context (positive or negative towards Muslim rights and Islam) which any actor in the debate faces and within which the discussions around more specific issues (the headscarf, so-called "honour-killings", or Islamic schools) take place. It finally compares the claim-making of those who are practicing Muslims with people from a Muslim cultural background, providing a tool for challenging the homogenisation of the Muslim population in Sweden. It is therefore both complementary to previous analyses as well as providing new insights and opening up new fields of research.

1.4 Limitations

There are of course a number of limitations to the work undertaken within the context of a thesis such as this one. Firstly, in order to cover such a large amount of data, the analysis is less detailed then a traditional qualitative discourse analysis, considerably reducing some of the available information during the process of coding. It should therefore not be expected to provide the same in-depth grasp of individual articles or debates, or give an insight into the way arguments are constructed, brought forward and backed-up. Secondly, the reach of my analysis is limited to the extent that it analyses only those discursive interventions reported in five mainstream daily newspapers which constitutes an enormous pre-selection and therefore a narrowing-down of the understanding of "public sphere" to the extent that it only takes place within the mainstream (print) media.

As pointed out in my theory chapter, this does not correspond to my understanding of the concept of a public sphere. I am aware that there are power relations at work in any discourse which will bring some actors to the forefront and exclude others from making their voices heard at all. It is therefore merely one part of claim-making around Muslim rights and Islam that make it into the news media. I do, however, think that an analysis of those statements that actually make it into the news, thus becoming part of the processes of mainstream public debates and deliberation (and eventually policy making), is in itself a worthy endeavour. It can provide insights exactly into the way this particular mainstream public sphere is shaped, what the dominant patterns of news reporting around a certain issue are, and who does and who does not get to have a voice in the debate of Muslim life in

Sweden. As Koopmans et al. write:

> "Even a violent attacks by skinheads on a group of immigrants becomes meaningful as an act of claims making only when it is reported to a wider audience. Without such coverage, it remains a largely private event known only to the attackers and their victims, and perhaps a few occasional bystanders or the police officers who investigate the case." (2005: 25)

While this might seem like a cynical observation, especially in the context of a violent attack against somebody, I would uphold that it contains more than a kernel of truth. A complementary analysis of alternative public spheres (especially social media and other online-based media outlets) could potentially provide for a more level discursive "playing field", but unfortunately goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This study starts with an introductory overview of the Muslim population in Sweden, the historical development of the organisational structure of Islam as a religion, and a discussion of the category "Muslim" as both a religious and a cultural identity. I then go on to lay out the theoretical foundations of my thesis. Based on considerations around deliberation in the public sphere as a way to negotiate conflicts in diverse societies, I discuss minority participation in the public sphere, the politics of recognition and inclusion, and its limitations. In addition, I point out the danger of homogenisation and reification of group identities that can be the flip side of the process of recognition of minority rights. Chapter Four introduces political claim analysis and describes as well as justifies my method of analysis and my newspaper sample in some detail. In the ensuing chapter I present my empirical findings. This includes firstly an extensive mapping of the debate, laying out my findings on actors, forms of claim-making, the issue areas discussed as well as the positioning of claims made. Secondly, I do a comparison of actor groups based on the separation between Muslim and non-Muslim actors, and a differentiation of actors with implicit and explicit Muslim identities. I then discuss the empirical findings in relation to my theoretical foundation, looking at the extent to which Muslim minority actors can be seen as politically empowered participants in the public debate and at the context they face in their claim-making. Based on my comparison, I also critically engage with the conceptualisation of the Swedish Muslim population as a coherent group of actors with regard to the issues discussed and the positions brought forward. Finally, I conclude with some remarks indicating further potential areas of research that could be explored to expand the findings made in this thesis.

2. Islam in Sweden

2.1 History and Overview

Many academic accounts of Muslim life in Sweden start with the anecdotal piece of evidence that at the last census which officially recorded religious belief in 1930, a total of fifteen people were registered as Muslims (Svanberg & Westerlund 1999: 13). It is no exaggeration to say that this has changed profoundly in the last eighty years, despite the fact that there are no exact numbers on how large the Muslim population in Sweden is today. This lack of reliable data is due to two methodological constraints. Firstly, the Swedish Personal Data Act prohibits the collection of data that is considered sensitive for the personal integrity of the individual, including records on religious affiliation or sexual preferences (Larsson 2007: 8). Different from e.g. the United Kingdom, where religious affiliation is a part of the census, there are therefore no official statistics on how many people living in Sweden self-identify as Muslims. Secondly, researchers have struggled with the question of how to define who is considered a Muslim and who is not (cf. Sander & Larsson 2002). Does this include only people who are practicing Muslims, or should the definition be extended to non-religious people from a Muslim cultural background? I will return to this question further on, but the lack of a common definition in any way makes it hard to to count or even estimate the Muslim population of Sweden, a challenge that exists in many European countries with heterogeneous Muslim minorities (Brown 2000).

General estimates based on data of immigration from predominantly Islamic countries say that the population of people with Muslim cultural background in Sweden in the years 2000 - 2010 lay between 250 000 and 400 000 (Larsson 2009: 56-75; Sander & Larsson 2002: 106–107). Today, the number of first-generation immigrants coming from Muslim-dominated countries is greater than 300,000, the majority are from Iraq (100,000), Turkey (70,000) and Bosnia (70,000) (Fridolfsson & Elander 2013: 322) and about ninety per cent of them have arrived after 1985 (Bevelander & Otterbeck 2012: 72)**.** With the total Swedish population coming to roughly nine million, they thus make up less than five percent of the country's inhabitants. A statistic from the Swedish Commission for Government Support to Faith Communities (*Samarbetsnämnden för statsbidrag till trossamfund: SST*) puts the number of people registered as members of Muslim congregations all over the country at 110 000 in 2010[2], but this does not include members of those mosques that are not registered with the

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2   http://www.sst.a.se/4.59d35f60133a8327d79800011925.html [accessed 14-03-2014]

SST, e.g. the largest mosque in Malmö, the Islamic Center (Roald 2013: 118). Other estimates say that there are between 110,000 and 150,000 practicing Muslims (Bevelander & Otterbeck 2012: 72).

While the earliest group of Muslims coming to Sweden were Turkish-speaking Tartars from Finland and Estonia, it was in the 1960s that Muslim immigration to the country really started. Young men from Turkey, the Balkans, and Pakistan came to Sweden as part of workforce recruitment programs. In the mid-1970s, they were often joined by their families through family reunification programmes, enlarging the Muslim communities in Swedish cities. This early group of workforce migrants was followed by refugee movements from Islamic countries in the 1980s and 1990s, similar to patterns in other European countries. After the 1979 revolution in Iran and the Iran-Iraq war, refugees from both countries, particularly the Kurdish parts, arrived in Sweden in the 1980s, while the ethnic conflicts on the Balkans brought Kosovo-Albanians and Bosnians to Sweden. Other groups arriving in the 1990s were Somalis, Iraqis, and Lebanese refugees (Roald 2002: 101). The majority of people with Muslim cultural background in Sweden live in the three biggest cities, Stockholm, Göteborg, and Malmö, but there are other areas that might also have sizeable Muslim populations based on workforce migration – one example is Trollhättan, stemming from the fact that the local *Saab* factory provided jobs in the 1970s (Larsson 2007: 14)

2.2 Muslim Organisations, Activism and Citizenship

The diverse backgrounds of Muslim immigrants of first and second generation in Sweden make for a very heterogeneous Muslim population, coming from from over forty different countries and various ethnic, linguistic, political and educational backgrounds. They differ also with regard to religious schools and traditions, as well as the degree of religiosity (Borell & Gerdner 2012: 565). Considering for the moment only those who are *practicing* Muslims, this ethnic and religious diversity is to a certain degree reflected in the organisational structure of Islam in Sweden. Particularly early organisations were often founded locally along ethnic lines. Borell and Gerdner's study of Muslim congregations shows that Islam in Sweden is not only "a heterogeneous" but also a "highly local phenomenon" (2012: 563). These local organizations are "meeting places for the faithful with a background in different cultures and varying local Islamic traditions" (ibid.: 566) thus creating opportunities for openness and exchange between groups. Starting from the 1970s, however, there were also attempts to create nationwide representation of Islam in Sweden.

In 1971, the Swedish state began to recognise free churches (Christian churches other than the Swedish Church, which until 2002 was a state church with compulsory membership) as qualified for receiving state grants. This privilege that was also extended to non-Christian religious communities, and enabled Muslim organisations to achieve public funding. As of today, there are six Muslim national bodies eligible for financial support by the SST. United Islamic Communities in Sweden (*Förenade Islamiska Församlingar i Sverige: FIFS)* was founded in 1974, and recognised by SST in 1975, and Sweden's Muslim Association (*Sveriges Muslimska Förbund: SMF*) was founded in 1982 and became eligible for financial support by the state in 1983 (Olsson 2009: 280). Together, they founded the umbrella organisation Muslim Council of Sweden (*Sveriges Muslimska Råd: SMR*) in 1990, tasked with representing the organizations before the authorities, disseminating information, participating in public debate, and setting up mosques and Islamic schools (Cato & Otterbeck 2014: 230). The Union of Islamic Cultural Centres (*Islamiska kulturcenterunionen: IKUS*) was formed in 1984 and recognized in 1987, Swedish Islamic Parishes (*Svenska Islamiska Församlingar: SIF*) was established and recognised in 2002, Islamic Shia Communities in Sweden (*Islamiska Shiasamfunden i Sverige: ISS*) was founded in 1992, but became eligible for financial support only in 2008, and the Bosnian Islamic Community (*Bosniakiska islamiska samfundet: BIS*) was founded in 1995 and was recognized in 2009 (ibid.: 228). All six of these organisations are members of the Islamic Cooperation Council (*Islamiska samarbetsrådet*, founded in 1988), which cooperates with the SST regarding the distribution of state money to its more than 200 congregations with 110 000 members (ibid.).

There is also a nation-wide youth organisation, Young Muslims of Sweden (*Sveriges Unga Muslimer: SUM*), which was founded in 1990, with currently around 2 800 members[3]. It arranges local activities, youth camps, and a national meeting once a year and is often considered by researchers to promote a "Blue-and-Yellow" Islam (blue and yellow being the colours of the Swedish flag), as a part of a wider movement of "Euroislam", encouraging Muslims to find ways to live their faith within the context of European societies (Olsson 2009: 282). Like a lot of the other organisations, it puts considerable effort into distributing information about Islam to non-Muslims in order to counter prejudices and islamophobic sentiment. Additionally, there is the Muslim Adult Education Association Ibn Rushd, founded in 2008 on the premise of the Swedish tradition of adult education (*folkbildning*), one of ten Adult Education Associations to receive public funding (Fridolfsson & Elander 2013: 323**)**.

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3 http://www.ungamuslimer.se/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=173&Itemid=912 [accessed 14-03-2014]

Aside from these organizations, there are also a number of Muslim congregations not registered with any of the nationwide umbrella organisations, including e.g. Malmö´s largest mosque. Considering that the number of practicing Muslims in Sweden is estimated at a maximum 150 000, there is therefore a considerable breadth of organised actors speaking on their behalf.

Cato and Otterbeck identify three stages in the development of active Muslim citizenship in Sweden. Initially, the nation-wide organisations were mainly oriented towards providing the "infrastructure" for practicing Islam in Sweden, and lobbying for particular Muslim minority issues, but increasingly they have taken on a broader active role in Swedish society, cooperating with a number of different actors (Cato & Otterbeck, 2014). FIFS, for example, is represented in the government's council for contacts with faith communities and otherwise engages with other religious communities in dialogue, exchange, and communal events (ibid: 229). There is also cooperation in party politics: In 2011, the Christian Social Democrat organisation, the so-called Brotherhood Movement (*Bröderskapsrörelsen*) changed its name to Social Democrats for Faith and Solidarity (*Socialdemokrater för Tro och Solidaritet*) in order to be more inclusive of non-Christian religions, particularly Islam, and to be able to better represent the collective interests of Swedish Muslims (ibid.: 231). Finally, there are now increasingly Muslims who are active as candidates for established political parties while explicitly and publicly maintaining their Islamic faith and Muslim identity. They are, however, frequently subjected to allegations of "Islamism" and have to constantly prove or re-assert their personal values with regard to democracy, gender equality and human rights, particularly during election campaigns. Their active citizenship is inevitably and intimately linked to their religious identity (ibid.: 236-37), even if there is no ground to assume that Muslim attitudes to citizenship and mobilization in the public sphere are different from other individuals' (Silvestri 2007).

2.3 "Muslim" - A Religious or a Socio-Cultural Identity?

What actually constitutes the "collective interests" of Muslims is of course up for debate, certainly when looking at a Muslim population as diverse as the one in Sweden. The notion that Muslims can be described as a group with certain needs that must be met, simply on the grounds that they are Muslims (cf. Allievi 2003; Maussen 2007) not only homogenises a heterogeneous Muslim population. It also reinforces the stereotype that religion (or alternatively a Muslim cultural background) governs all aspects of the lives of those

considered part of the Muslim population – a generalising assumption that would hardly ever be made about somebody from a Christian cultural background.

It is also common for Muslims to be ethnified in the public discourse, meaning that group characteristics such as cultural features are attributed to the Muslim population, even though it consists of individuals relating to diverse groups with different cultural, theological, national, linguistic and socio- economic traditions and conditions (Roy 2004; for the Swedish case see Otterbeck & Bevelander 2006). Additionally, the overwhelming majority of people with a Muslim cultural background in Sweden are not actually practicing believers, in fact they can be considered just as non-religious as many non-Muslim Scandinavians (Larsson 2005). Many Iranian refugees, e.g., are secular and unlikely to practise Islam – they did, after all, flee from an Islamist regime in their country of origin (Roald 2002). Non-religious people from Muslim cultural backgrounds are, however, to a certain extent subjected to the same process of "othering" as practising Muslims. While they might not carry public signifiers of Islamic religiosity (wearing a headscarf, praying regularly, fasting during Ramadan), they are still differentiated by non-Swedish sounding names, their immigrant status (or that of their parents), and their skin colour, particularly those from Northern Africa and the Middle East. All of these can lead to practicing Muslims and "cultural" Muslims being considered as part of one, homogeneous group.

3. Theory Chapter

3.1 Political Participation and Diverse Societies

Human life is communal life. We are embedded in a complex network of social interactions and institutions that facilitate, steer, and regulate the ways we go about our lives, enabling people to live together in relative peace and security. In Western societies, the most eminent and influential of these institutions is the liberal democratic nation-state. It is often framed as a political community based on the idea that its members share not only a geographical territory, but also a common cultural heritage, a common language, and an identity as a people or a "nation". Nations are, of course, "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991), as such historically and socially constructed, and therefore inherently unstable. Yet, these constructions and the legislation that embodies them exercise enormous influence on people's lives, regulating e.g. entry to territories, the distribution of material resources as well as access to and participation in political communities.

Political communities, in turn, are central to making communal life work. Political philosophers for centuries have been grappling with the question of how to govern societies in order to ensure peace and economic prosperity. The self-governing civic community, the "voluntary associations of free citizens set up to pursue a common interest" (Fennema and Tillie 1999: 705) has become somewhat of the "gold standard" of modern societies. Because political issues are inherently conflictual, with different groups wanting different things (Warren 1999:2), social trust and social cohesion play a central role in democratic societies' ability to solve these conflicts (Larsen 2013). Social cohesion is "the belief held by citizens of a given nation state that they share a moral community, which enables them to trust each other" (Larsen 2013: 6). It is, in other words, the assumption that we play by the same rules, and can therefore afford a certain degree of conflict over political issues, because it will not undermine the foundation of our society.

People find it easier to trust one another and cooperate when the social distance between them is smaller, when "there is a feeling of common identity, closeness, and shared experiences" (Alba & Nee 2003: 32). When social distance is great, we perceive people as belonging to a different category or group, and therefore treat them differently than those closer to us (ibid.). Social distance, in turn, depends on our sense of who we are, our social identity (Putnam 2007: 159), because that sense of who we are influences how we relate to others around us. Identity is socially constructed from experiences, relations, and interactions,

and as such can be de-constructed and re-constructed (Hall 1996). Notions of belonging and identity, however, are also exclusionary; in order for a communal "we" to exist, somebody else must fall outside that community. These exclusions can be latent and implicit, rather than obvious and constantly enforced. They may become more salient, however, "in response to an "other", where we know what we are by virtue of what we are not" (Norris & Inglehart 2009: 180). And it is at this point that the above theories of civic communities and the socio-political reality of contemporary Western democratic states can be seen to be ever more at odds with one another.

In the wake of economic globalisation, large numbers of people from diverse linguistic, ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds are now frequently and increasingly permanently crossing the boundaries of nation-states, challenging the alleged coherence of national identities by simple exposure to "other" ways of life. Migration and ethno-cultural diversity impact central elements that underpin the nation-state: sovereign control over external borders, regulation of access to citizenship, nations' cultural self-understanding – the age of globalisation is therefore also a time of nationalism, ethnic mobilisation, and xenophobia (Koopmans et al. 2005: 3). As stated above, in the Nordic like in other European societies it is frequently Muslim minorities that are most visibly perceived and constructed as Europe's "Other". Their demands for the public practice of their religion challenges the self-understanding of Nordic countries as secular societies (cf. Casanova 2009), and misconceptions about the patriarchal nature of Islam and Muslim cultures clash with emancipatory ideals[4] of gender equality as "perhaps the most publicly celebrated element in Nordic national identities" (Mårtensson 2014: 14). The war-on-terror-rhetoric, finally, adds to diffuse fears of Islam as being undemocratic and violent (Kinvall & Nesbitt-Larking 2009; 2010). Public debates about the integration of Muslims are frequently occupied with the duties of Muslims to become democratic, inclusive and gender equal (Mårtensson 2014). The experience of increasingly open racism by populist right-wing parties as well as the public construction of their "otherness" undermines the ability of Muslim migrants to "feel at home", negatively influencing their capacity to exist and act as citizens (Noble 2005).

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4   For critical engagement with the Nordic/Swedish official doctrine of gender equality, see Rönnblom et al 1998, Holi et al. 2005.

3.2 Minority Participation in the Public Sphere

At the same time, it is exactly within these debates in the public sphere that the negotiation of the place of Muslims and Islam as a part of Nordic national cultures and identities, and therefore their inclusion as citizens and legitimate political actors should and is most likely to take place. While there is a variety of (legal) restrictions impeding other kinds of political participation (e.g. the requirement to have a certain nationality to be entitled to vote), participation in the public sphere is in theory open to all political and civic actors, no matter whether they fulfil all preconditions for legal citizenship of a certain political community. Since there is often considerable overlap between immigrant and Muslim populations, formal access to those other institutions of representative democracy might not be available to all of them for lack of national citizenship. There are of course numerous limitations that influence whether and how one can participate in public debates, and I will discuss these in more detail further on. But theories of the public sphere have always been closely connected to theories of democratic participation and legitimacy, and the public sphere in its various definitions is frequently considered the foremost arena for the peaceful negotiation of differences and competing interests in a democratic society.

Among various models, Jürgen Habermas notion of the public sphere as the realm of social life within which private people come together as a public, independent of state authorities to engage in issues of common concern (1989) is one of the the most well-known. Over the years, however, it has received much criticism, particularly with regard to its requirement of a value-free engagement of the participants. This requirement seems not only somewhat naïve, but also hard to apply to a debate that is centred around issues such as cultural values, identity, and religion. I will therefore use Habermas' notion (also referred to as discursive theory) as a starting point, but incorporate the criticisms by additionally making use of two other theoretical strands: participatory liberal conceptions of the public sphere as used by, among others, Peter Dahlgren and James Curran, and constructionist theories of the public sphere as put forward by Nancy Fraser and Seyla Benhabib. I believe that while there are some differences between these three strands, there is sufficient overlap with regard to questions of inclusion and participation to justify their combined application in this thesis. Habermas' conceptions can be considered to build the basis for all theories of the public sphere. The participatory liberal school particularly stresses the way in which active citizenship is constituted in public debate. The constructionist theorists, finally, add a more critical view on power relations at work in processes of public deliberation, arguing for an

explicit de-centering of dominant speakers and the inclusion and recognition of marginalised voices. All three of these combined in my eyes make for a comprehensive framework for analysing minority participation in the public sphere.

All three strands share the assumption that the ability to judge public issues, as well as preferences on how to do it emerge in the process of public deliberation (Ferree et al. 2002). In the words of Peter Dahlgren, the public sphere should provide the ''sites where popular political will should take form and citizens should be able to constitute themselves as active agents in the political process'' (1991: 2). It is therefore the active participation of the individual in the act of deliberation that makes them a citizen, and the more people from diverse areas of society are included in this process of debate, the better for the democratic system as a whole. Particularly for migrants, equal participation in the national political sphere is often seen as the last phase in a successful integration process, as it requires socioeconomic integration, the acquisition of a new language and knowledge about the political system of the host country (De Rooij 2012: 459). For those who are part of "post-diasporic" generations (those born to immigrant parents), inclusion in the process of public debate means empowerment, which can counter feelings of exclusion, marginalisation, and unwantedness (Kinvall & Nesbitt-Larking 2010: 80).

In large-scale societies, the media system has a central role to play in this process of deliberation. It should be an requirement that it "represents all significant interests in society. It should facilitate their participation in the public domain, enable them to contribute to public debate and have an input in the framing of public policy.'' (Curran, quoted in Feeree et al, 2002: 297). Framing is the process that promotes problem definitions and solutions or causal interpretations to them (Entman 1993), which particularly in the area of migration and minority rights plays a big role in policy-making. Post-9/11 anti-terror legislation and its influence on Muslim communities are a clear example of this. A minorities' ability to be represented in the public debate via the mainstream media, thereby influencing the process of framing is important not only with regard to finding solutions to conflicts about cultural expressions and identities, but also influences legislation and the distribution of material resources. The latter can provide an additional challenge to the interests of the majority population, putting the state in the position of a mediator between the minority and majority stakeholders (Koopman et al. 2005).

3.3 Inclusion and its Limitations

Inclusion is a concept that is of central importance to all of the above theories of the public sphere, which explicitly call for opening up the discussion to actors from outside the centre of the political system. The mere requirement for inclusion, however, does not mean that a) everybody affected by decisions negotiated there are actually a part of the debate and b) that all participants in the public sphere engage in the debate on equal terms. Social inequalities that are reproduced by a variety of social, political, and cultural practices exist in the realm of public deliberation just as much as in other social spheres, and influence and determine participation in as well as outcomes of processes of public debate. This is something that particularly constructionist theorists have pointed out time and again when emphasizing the contingent nature of every aspect of the process of political deliberation, opinion-formation, and decision making.

Following a Foucaultian conception of discourses as practices of power, they point out how all discourses are inevitably power-laden, not only in the process, but also in their outcomes, as they shaped the range of future discourses and decisions (Benhabib, 1996; Fraser, 1995; 1997). This applies especially to debates on issues that affect immigrants and other minority actors, because their access to those resources (material, social, and cultural) that affect participation in the public debate might in general be more limited than that of the majority population. Those who speak or write well, are used to organising and taking part in meeting and in general "possess civic skills should find political activity less daunting and costly, and, therefore, should be more likely to take part" (Verba et al. 1995: 304), therefore not only taking up a greater share of the public debate, but also acting more effectively in their claim-making. With regard to my empirical material, the question of which claims are reported in the mainstream daily newspapers that I analyse give an indication about whose claim-making can be considered more effective than that of other actors.

Civic activity in the public sphere is also always inevitably influenced not only by the actor's own characteristics, but by a country's political opportunity structures, its ideology, varying institutional arrangements and cultural notions of citizenship and identity (Fetzer & Soper 2005; Koopmans et al. 2005). Collective actors never mobilise in a vacuum, but always face those who already are occupying established position in a debate. In order to get access to social and political influence, minority actors are expected to accept and make use of the existing structures (Silvestri 2007). For Muslims in Europe, this means that their symbolic and organisational incorporation in European nation-states is shaped "to a far greater degree […]

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by the societies in which Muslims settle than by the Muslims themselves." (Rath et al. 2001: 287).

Apart from socio-economic inequalities and institutional constraints, they are also affected by discursive mechanisms of "othering" and racialisation, which influences their standing as actors in the public sphere by determining the discursive opportunity structures they face. As Koopmans et al. write: "Discursive opportunities determine which collective identities and substantive demands have high likelihood to gain *visibility* in the mass media, to *resonate* with the claims of other collective actors, and to achieve *legitimacy* in the public discourse" (2005: 19; italics in the original). The Muslim claims and demands that are likely to be heard and achieve legitimacy have to function within a certain understanding of "good" Islam (Bonnefoy 2003), preferably minimise public obtrusiveness (Carol & Koopmans 2013) and stay within the limits of what is deemed acceptable by the majority population, particularly with regard to publicly practised religiosity (Habermas 2006; 2008). In general, claims for rights in public institutions, for non-mainstream Muslim practices and for special rights will have greater conflict potential than claims for private, mainstream and parity rights (Carol & Koopmans, 2013: 167).

Christian Joppke argues that "[t]he national particularisms that immigrants and ethnic minorities are asked to accept across European states are but local versions of the universalistic idiom of liberal democracy" (2010: 137), the expression of a "particular universalism" which is the "main form in which Western states practice exclusion today" (ibid.: 140). He goes on to claim that "[t]he exclusive and thus identity-forging dimension of particular universalism can be formulated as the notion that the liberal state is only for liberal people" (ibid.) – which is in itself a profoundly illiberal idea, of course. European societies tolerate difference to a certain degree, but when "the Other" moves beyond its places, in territory or norms, it will commonly instantly be attacked and accused (Azar 2006: 69, quoted in Olsson 2009: 286). One example of this the way in which Muslim politicians in Sweden have been labelled "Islamists" when bringing up "Muslim issues" publicly. As Islamism is considered political, instead of private religiosity, and therefore "bad" Islam, this has been highly discrediting, effectively putting their political careers at risk (Cato & Otterbeck 2014).

The participation of Muslim minority actors in the public spheres therefore is subjected to a number of institutional and material limitations, external and internal identity constructions, and boundaries. The degree to which they participate, however, can potentially tell us something about their engagement as active citizens in their countries of residence, as well as about the degree to which increasingly diverse societies live up to the demand for

communication between, exchange of, and recognition of different ways of life. When people recognise each other as citizens, they can no longer just barricade themselves off from one another, but must see themselves as members of one and the same political community (Habermas 2009), thus facilitating social cohesion, common political projects and the solidarity necessary for the functioning of the democratic welfare state.

3.4 The Politics of Recognition and the Dangers of Homogenisation

While the explicit and purposeful inclusion of minorities, also called "politics of recognition" (Taylor 1994), is a central aspect of particularly constructionist theories of the public sphere, it bears a danger that has also accompanied me through the process of this thesis: the danger of, through recognition, homogenizing and reifying certain groups by attributing them unitary, fixed identities reflected by the most powerful voices within a group. This silences any heterogeneity or dissent within groups (Ferree et al. 2002: 307) and presents them as coherent unity to be dealt with "en bloc". It is, after all, not only majority populations that make use of identity constructions in the public debate, minority actors employ similar strategies. While Muslim populations are often diverse in their origins, ethnicity and religious traditions, as well as degree of religiosity, self-declared leaders of minority communities can use the state's desire for a clearly identifiable negotiation partner to monopolise the representation of these communities. Alternatively, they can also encourage young Muslims to develop more rigid Islamic identities and separatist tendencies in reaction to majority rejection (Kinvall & Nesbitt-Larking 2010). The acknowledgement of certain group identities as fixed categories for the allocation of rights and resources is dangerous, because it means an institutionalisation of an otherwise fluid conception: "It is one thing if identities pertain to groups, of which individuals may or may not consider themselves to be a part [...]; it is quite another thing if identities are institutionalised at the level of the state, which has the power to force them on people" (Joppke 2010: 122-23).

"Identity" and "culture" are both concepts frequently invoked in the debates on Muslim minorities in Europe, as if they were fixed categories that could be conclusively assessed and consequently used for the categorisation of individuals and groups, both with regard to minority and majority actors. The position of Islam as European Christendom´s primary alter ego pre-dates the middle ages, and as an antagonism Islam has always played a big role in the formation of European identity (Loomba 2005). This means that even today,

Muslims can be seen as being "in Europe, but not of it" (Asad, 2003), they can be accorded tolerance, but never become European. One of the clearest boundary markers between these allegedly so different cultural traditions is sexuality and gender relations, something that has particular relevance with regard to the Nordic countries, who consider gender equality an essential part of their national identities (Razack 2004; Bredström 2003) .

In a narrative that constructs a temporal segregation between the European modernity and the Muslim traditional society, with one being "further on" in the teleological process towards a fully developed society (whatever this final stage might look like) (Butler 2008), sexual freedom and emancipation has come to stand for secularism, for rationality and the free subjectivity of Western liberalism (Mepschen et al. 2010). Notions of gender equality are used as feature in defining boundaries between those who belong to the nation and those who do not (Bredström 2002; de los Reyes & Molina 2002). The sexual liberation of both women and homosexuals is employed to frame Europe as the "avatar of both freedom and modernity" (Butler 2008: 2) while discourses of freedom and liberation are invoked to wage a cultural assault on Islam and Muslim citizen. As Diana Mulinari argues, this does not only mean the criminalisation of racialised migrant man, but also distracts from issues such as migrant poverty, institutional racism and exclusion (Mulinari 2008:170). Cultural differences in the Swedish context specifically are represented as those between rational, secularised, women-friendly values (embodied in the Swedish nation) and traditional, religious and women-oppressing cultural values 'imported' by immigrant groups. (Mulinari & Neergaard 2005: 71).

These alleged differences are used to back up the cultural racism of European right-wing populist parties, who (deviating from earlier racially based anti-immigration arguments) argue that collective cultural differences between European majority populations and are so insurmountable that their integration into European societies is impossible (Morgan & Poynting 2012). Left-wing activists (particularly LGBT and women's rights groups) have at times become equally guilty of culturalist discourses, thus reinforcing the "othering" of European Muslims (Bracke 2012; Haritaworn 2012).

Identities are relational, they develop from "one's core membership and reference groups" and "notably [also] those from whom one distinguishes oneself" (Kinvall & Nesbitt-Larking 2010: 56). The construction of national, religious, or other group-based stereotypes, whether created among the minority or majority population invariably involves a process of "othering", because "[o]nly by identifying the others can we identify ourselves" (ibid.: 59). This does not mean, however, that the boundaries thus created have to be impermeable, coherent, or enduring, because due to their relational nature, identities are also in a constant

process of change. They are, finally, constituted through representation, the question of how we are being represented and how that bears upon how we may represent ourselves in the future (Hall 1996: 4). The public discursive construction of certain identity groups therefore plays a decisive role in their development, and this is what makes homogenising and essentialising identities equally power-laden and dangerous.

The same applies to the concept of culture, which, as stated above, is often invoked to point out group differences which are then applied in the public debate as a point of departure for potential conflicts and the feasible solutions to them. Seyla Benhabib calls this "premature normativism", the "all-to-quick reification of given group identities resulting in hasty policy recommendations running the risk of freezing existing group differences" by recognizing their claims for rights (2002: ix). Culture, as "complex human practices of signification and representation, of organization and attribution" (ibid.), is equally essentially contestable as identity, since it is also always formed in complex dialogues with other cultures, and its boundaries are fragile and always shifting. As Benhabib puts it: "From within, a culture need not appear as a whole; rather, it forms a horizon that recedes each time one approaches it" (2002: 5). This does not make cultural differences unreal, but it shows their shifting boundaries, and the danger of connecting individual identities to cultural conceptions of groups. If a political community wants to avoid this homogenization, it should therefore aim to create impartial institutions in the public sphere and civil society where the struggle for the recognition of cultural differences and the contestation for cultural narratives can take place without domination. Particularly important to this are the right to voluntary self-ascription and the freedom of exit and association, leaving it up to individual actors which group they want to associate themselves with, and when to leave (ibid.). This prevents homogenization and reification of minority groups not only on the part of the majority population, it also makes sure that members of minority groups have the option of disassociating themselves voluntarily.

The balance between the recognition of group rights and the avoidance of homogenizing and reifying said groups is one of the harder puzzles of diverse societies, and even as a researcher it is sometimes difficult to talk about minority groups without falling for the easy categorisations. There is a need for researchers to recognize diverse ethno-national and religious roots of those with Muslim cultural background living in Europe while at the same time acknowledging the highly differentiated nature of European societies, to account for the ways in which identities and cultural groups are constructed, contested, and maintained. I am aware that by explicitly employing the categorisation of people with Muslim

cultural background for my analysis, I run the danger of further reinforcing and stabilising them. I do, however, hope that my critical engagement with the concepts of "culture" and "identity" as well as my analysis will instead add to a more differentiated understanding of the Muslim population in Sweden and their positions as political actors in the public sphere.

Let me quickly revisit the key theoretical concepts that drive this thesis: Firstly, the notion that diverse political communities need to find peaceful ways to negotiate and settle conflicts caused by the presence of differing (in some cases competing) group interests and demands. Secondly, that deliberation about these issues ideally takes place in the public sphere, which in large-scale societies is to a large degree represented in the coverage of the mainstream media. This should happen with a maximum of inclusion, to enable the participation and thus empowerment of marginalised and minority actors. Participation is considered to be the key to fostering feelings of active citizenship, creating a sense of belonging to a shared political community and therefore social cohesion in diverse societies. Finally, as the flip coin of this politics of recognition, there is the danger that through a recognition of group differences, these groups are homogenized and further reified, when in fact they should be considered heterogeneous, and their boundaries permeable.

4. Methodology

4.1 Political Claims Analysis

In order to grasp the development of the debate on Muslim rights and Islam in Sweden, I am interested not in the detailed qualitative analysis of individual newspaper articles or statements made on these issue, but more broadly in the actors, issues, and positions present in this debate. I want to look at the ways in which collective interests around Muslim rights and Islam are represented in the public sphere through discursive interventions, who makes these interventions, and what issues are most prevalent. The method I will employ to achieve this is political claims analysis as developed by Koopmans and Statham (Koopmans & Statham 1999; Koopmans et al., 2005), a combination of discourse analysis and protest event analysis. It aims to unite the advantages of more qualitatively oriented discursive elements with the quantitative method of event analysis (Koopmans & Statham 1999: 203). It combines the "quantitative rigour of protest event analysis with sensitivity to discursive content of political discourse approaches" (Koopmans et al. 2005: 23) For both protest event analysis and political discourse analysis, "the collective mobilization in the public domain functions as key variable for explaining political change" (Koopmans & Statham 1999: 204). Additionally, claims analysis combines the focus of discourse analysis on the frame aspect of the contestation in the political context and the emphasis of protest event analysis on the importance of mobilization and protest as forms of political contestation (ibid.). It focusses on (discursive) interventions in the public sphere more widely, without limiting itself solely to verbal statements, thus potentially covering a far wider scope of interventions than traditional discourse analyses by including also protest acts, court rulings, or repressive measures by state authorities. In my analysis, all of these are considered part of the contestation over the position of Muslims and Islam in Swedish society.

Another strength of claims analysis is that provides me with the option of structuring a large volume of data, as is the case with a large newspaper sample spanning a time frame of more than ten years, while at the same time maintaining the qualitative aspect of human coding. Despite its quantitative elements (the large N and the fairly closed structure), I would uphold the inclusion of this method in the category of qualitative analysis because it relies on analytic choices made by human coders rather than on computer-based content analysis.

With this analysis, I therefore see myself covering somewhat of a middle-ground between qualitative and quantitative studies. I do not, in a strict sense, put forward hypotheses

to be tested against the material, nor do I use a solely inductive approach as many qualitative approaches claim to do. I came to my analysis with certain assumptions and ideas based on theoretical knowledge and previous research in the area which build the foundation of my research objective and my research questions. During the process of data collection and analysis, these were of course also influenced by the initial findings, guiding my interest and the direction of my analysis in what could be called a dialectic research process. Being transparent about this process will hopefully help the reader place my analysis.

The units of analysis for political claims analysis are discursive interventions in the public sphere, so-called "claims". A claim or an instance of claim-making is "a unit of strategic action in the public sphere" (Koopmans et al, 2005: 254). This expression of a political opinion can be both a verbal or physical action, regardless of the form (public statement, act of violence, repressive measure, decision, demonstration, court ruling, policy implementation) and it can be made by a number of actors (state actors, social movements, NGOs, companies, even anonymous actors).

Claims can be broken down into five elements:

1. Claimants: the actor or actors making the claim (Who makes the claim?)
2. Form of the claim (How, by which action is the claim inserted in the public sphere?)
3. Addressee of the claim (At whom is the claim directed?)
4. Substantive content of the claim (What action is to be undertaken?)
5. Object of the claim (To whom is this action directed?)

The ideal-typical claim in the public sphere has all of these fives elements, resulting in grammatical structure of subject – action – indirect object – action – object : an actor (the subject) undertakes some sort of action in the public sphere to get another actor (the addressee/indirect object) to do something regarding a third actor (the object). While ideally, all five of these are present, the minimum condition for a claim to be coded as such is information on how and to whom a claim in the public sphere has been made.

4.2 The Code and the Coding Process

In the code used for the analysis in this thesis, all of the above five elements have numerous further subcategories. "Actor" for example has additional codes for name, type, scope, country, party affiliation, gender, whether the actor is Muslim or not, and a number of ethnic/cultural/religious identity categories. The issue category "Muslim religious right" has

about eighty subcategories, spanning from the right to build (visible) mosques to more controversial rights such as female circumcision. In total, the codebook runs to more than thirty pages. This allows for a very specific coding with regard to all five of the elements listed above. Additionally, the claims are also coded according to whether their position towards muslims is positive, negative, or neutral. The assessment is made based on the question of whether the implementation of said claim would improve or impair the position of the Muslim object with regard to whom it has been made, enabling an assessment of the changing position of general claim-making over time. Finally, there is a variable recording whether a Muslim actors' religious identity is explicit or implicit in their claim-making. An explicit Muslim identity is accorded to those whose religious belief is explicitly referenced or thematised in the article which reports the act of claim-making. An implicit Muslim identity is accorded to those actors who have a background from a predominantly Muslim country but are not explicitly referred to as Muslims or whose religious affiliation is not deductible from the instance of claim-making – I refer to them as "cultural Muslims". This variable enables me to analyse and compare the claim-making of practicing and "cultural" Muslims, thus critically engaging with the potential homogenisation of those roughly 400 000 people in Sweden who have a Muslim cultural background.

The code was initially developed as an open-ended code, meaning that whenever new categories (e.g. new actors or new issue areas) would appear during the coding process, they would be added to the codebook. After the first phase of coding, the codes were compared between researchers and aggregated to the final codebook which I used for my research. The code utilised for my particular analysis of Swedish newspapers was therefore essentially already a closed code. When working with a pre-defined coding scheme one will always come across statements that are difficult to fit into the existing categories. One thus sacrifices the option of finding new categories, and the complexity of any particular statement might therefore be reduced. With this particular code stemming from research conducted on a total of thirty newspapers in six countries, however, I found the code to be already sufficiently extensive to include all cases which I came across and there was therefore no need for me to add additional categories to my codebook.

Above, I have defined a claim as an expression of a political opinion which can be both a verbal or physical action. In order to be coded, a claim has to fulfil a number of requirements, most importantly it must be the result of purposive strategic action and it must be political in nature (EURISLAM Codebook 2010: 4). Survey results or statements by individual citizens e.g. are therefore not coded, unless employed to make demands by other

actors. Claims also need to relate to collective social problems and solutions to them, not individual coping strategies. Instances of claim-making are not the same as individual statement, so an actor making different points will still only be coded as one instant of claim-making, because they constitute one strategic action in the public sphere. Different actors making identical statements on the same day and in the same place are coded as one instance of claim-making, the same actor making the same claim on two different occasions is coded as two instances of claim-making.

Content-wise, two categories of claims were coded for this analysis: claims about Islam and/or Muslims in Sweden, regardless of the actor, and claims by Muslim actors in Sweden, regardless of the issue. This includes claims made by or addressed at supranational actors if the claim substantively affects Muslims in Sweden. Finally, the time frame for claims to be coded is two weeks – anything older than two weeks was not coded based on the assumption that it had already been recorded. Coding was completed during my three-months-long internship at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center.

4.3 The Newspaper Sample

The analysis of this thesis is conducted on articles sampled from five major Swedish daily newspapers, spanning from January 1999 to December 2008. The time period between 1999 and 2008 was chosen because it includes a number of events and conflicts that sparked intense debate both in European and in Islamic countries. Among them are the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the bombings in Madrid and London in 2004 and 2005, the murder of Dutch film-maker Theo van Gogh in 2004 and the Danish cartoon controvery in 2005-2006. With regard to the Swedish context, the killing of Swedish-Kurdish Fadime Sahindal by her father in Uppsala in 2002 could also be considered one such exceptional event, setting off a debate around Islam, women's rights and honour-related violence. While the time frame was set with these developments in mind, the analysis does not discriminate towards these more exceptional events, but aims to display the everyday debate around Islam and Muslims in Europe (including issues such as the building of mosques, the wearing of headscarves, or specific requirements for burial according to Islamic rite). One aim of this thesis is to provide data on whether these exceptional events influence the debate on Islam and Muslims in Sweden, both with regard to quantity and quality.

The newspapers were chosen in an attempt to provide both regional variation as well as to avoid a political bias towards a certain direction. *Sydsvenskan, Göteborgs Posten*, and

Dagens Nyheter cover Malmö, Göteborg and Stockholm, the three largest urban areas in Sweden (with a total of just over two million inhabitants). These are also the parts of the country where the majority of Muslims in Sweden live and where discussions about e.g. the building of visible mosques are therefore assumed to be most salient. Additionally, I chose *Svenska Dagbladet*, a liberal conservative daily newspaper with the third-largest distribution nationwide, and Aftonbladet, a left-leaning tabloid, which is also the daily with the largest overall distribution in Sweden. One could argue that the inclusion of a tabloid among other, more "quality" newspapers is not justified. I was, however, intrigued by the fact that this paper not only has among the largest distributions rates of all daily papers, it also has an openly social democratic agenda. As such, it diverges from the conservative populism (sometimes with openly right-wing tendencies) characterising other European large-scale tabloids such as the German *BILD* or the British *The Sun* and provides a balance to the more conservative *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter*.

An additional criterion for the selection of these five newspapers was their distribution. In 2008, the last year included in the analysis, these five newspapers were among the top six country-wide distributed newspapers (the sixth is the other country-wide tabloid *Expressen*, which has a more centre-right position). Distribution numbers were as follows: Aftonbladet (377 500), Dagens Nyheter (229 800), Göteborgs Posten (243 800), Svenska Dagbladet (194 800), Sydsvenskan (124 500)[5]. In general, Sweden ranks highly in international comparison regarding the consumption of daily newspapers on a regular basis. With 466 copies per 1000 inhabitants in the year 2007, it falls in fourth place worldwide behind Japan, Norway, and Finland – in the UK it is 335 copies, 156 in France (Hadenius et al. 2011: 138, 145–146). This provides a political claims analysis based on newspaper articles with a high analytical value with regard to the overall public debate because it can safely be assumed that those claims that make it into the news will reach a high proportion of the population.

The complete print editions of all five newspapers can be accessed via the online database Retriever Research (previously Mediearkivet), allowing for easy access and precise searchability[6]. The sample was created by searching for the following key words: *"islam* or muslim* or koran or koranen or burka or burkan or imam or imamen or minaret or minareten or huvudduk or huvudduken or moské or moskén"*. These were the same as the ones used for the other country cases of the EURISLAM project, in order to allow for country

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5 http://www.dagspress.se/images/stories/Dokument/Svensk-Dagspress/svenskdagspress_2009.pdf [accessed 11 March 2014]

6 Apart from the 1999 edition of Sydsvenskan, which was sampled locally in their archives in Malmö.

comparability. The only change made (due to grammatical requirements in Swedish) was the addition of the definite (*bestämd*) form of all words in order to enable their inclusion in the sampling process. The resulting sample of overall articles was the reduced by random sampling down to 1000 articles from each newspaper.

5. Empirical Findings

My newspaper sample contains a total of 5000 articles, published between January 1st, 1999 and December 31st, 20008. The total number of claims coded from this sample is N = 505. The number of claims per year increases from 1999 (29 claims) to 2003 (56 claims), then dips down to 35 claims in 2004, before rising again from 2005 (59 claims) to a peak in 2007 (90 claims). 2008, finally, sees a sharp decline down to 35 claims.

5.1 Mapping the Debate

In order to provide an overview over the debate, I will present empirical findings on the actors, looking at both overall actors and Muslim actors in particular. I will then show the different forms of claim-making, and afterwards move on to the issue areas discussed, looking at the category of "Muslim religious rights" in some detail. I will finally look at the positioning of claims and the development of positions over time in relation to external events.

5.1.2 The Actors

As can be seen in Table 1, the actors that are most present as claim-maker can be divided into three major groups: state actors (24.3 percent of all claims), media and journalists (19.2 percent), and muslim organisations and groups (13.3 percent). State actors include governments, legislative, judiciary, security and police forces, as well as state agencies like the Migration Board *(Migrationsverket)*, the Swedish Public Employment Service *(Arbetsförmedlingen)*, or the Equality Ombudsman *(Diskrimineringsombudsmannen)* and its various predecessors.

Other particularly active actors are political parties (7.9 percent) as well as researchers, think tanks and intellectuals (6.1 percent). Minority organisations and groups make up 3.6 percent of claims. Political parties which are openly racist or right-wing populist have a separate category, which together with other extreme right groups also make up 3.6 percent of the claims[7]. Roughly ten percent of the claims are made by unknown actors, which includes both individual actors that cannot be clearly placed into any of the other categories, as well as

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7   My initial coding did not include the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*) in the category "extreme right political parties" because I wanted to be able to compare the claims made by all political parties represented in the Swedish parliament. Table 1 shows in parentheses the numbers/percentages when claims made by the Sweden Democrats are recoded as belonging to the category "extreme right political parties".

cases of claim-making where the actor is unknown and their affiliation not clearly identifiable from the content claim made. The remaining ten percent of claims are made by a variety of other civil society actors, professional organisation as well as employer organisations and companies. Overall, there is an absolute prevalence in the debate of civil society actors over state actors, with the media being particularly active compared to numbers from six other European countries (EURISLAM 2013: 6).

Table 1: Actors

Actors	Frequency	Percent of total claims
state actors	123	24.3
media and journalists	97	19.2
Muslim organisations and groups	67	13.3
political parties	40 (28)	7.9 (5.6)
researchers/think tanks/intellectuals	31	6.1
extreme right political parties racist/extreme right organisations and groups	18 (30)	3.6 (5.9)
minority organisations and groups	18	3.6
unknown actors	57	11.3
other actors	54	10.8
total	505	100
Out of total number of actors		
Muslim actors	178	35.2
non-Muslim actors	327	64.8

It is important to keep in mind here that "Muslim organisations and groups" is not the only category that contains claims made by Muslim actors; this category merely represents those organisations and groups that are explicitly representing the interests of "organised" or "institutionalised" Islam in Sweden. Examples of such actors would be the Muslim Council of Sweden (*Sveriges Muslimiska Råd*), representatives from local mosque communities, or Ibn Rushd Educational Association (*Ibn Rushd Studieförbundet*).

"Muslim actor" is an additional subcategory that can be applied to all of the above actor categories. Out of the total number of claim-makers, 35.2 percent are Muslim actors, with this category including both "cultural" as well as religious Muslims. As stated above, in order to differentiate between these two groups more accurately, I make use of the variable that codes any Muslim actors' identity as being either "explicit" or "implicit". While the code employs a very wide definition of Muslim as being both someone who is a practising believer

or somebody who has an background from a predominantly Islamic country, the variable explicit/implicit Muslim identity allows for more differentiation between the two. Out of the 178 claims made by Muslim actors, a little less than half (49 percent) are made by actors with an implicit Muslim identity, who should not be assumed to be any more or less religious than any of those actors from the "non-Muslim" category.

When separating Muslim from non-Muslim actors (see Table 2), it becomes clear that almost forty percent of the claims made by Muslim actors are in fact made by Muslim organisations and groups (most frequently by a spokesperson or representative). An additional ten percent of claims are made by minority organisations and groups, who do not have explicitly religious agendas, but frequently have their background in predominantly Muslim countries (e.g. cultural organisations from Iraq, Iran, Somalia or Turkey). The other fifty percent consists of actors from various parts of Swedish society. The category "unknown actors" plays an important role in this part of the analysis, as all individual actors are coded as "unknown actors". Claim-making by individual actors with regard to collective social problems or rights falls within this category, which includes e.g. those cases where people have taken judicial action against discrimination in the labour market or other areas of life based on them wearing a headscarf.

Table 2: Muslim Actors

Muslim Actors	Frequency	Percent of claims by Muslim actors
state actors	5	2.9
media and journalists	14	7.9
Muslim organisations and groups	67	37.6
political parties	12	6.7
researchers/think tanks/intellectuals	13	7.3
minority organisations and groups	17	9.6
unknown actors	35	19.7
other actors	15	8.4
total	178	100

In the second step of this analysis, I will investigate in some more detail in how far Muslim and non-Muslim claim-making differs, thereby putting into question the extent to which such a differentiation based on the wider, "cultural" definition of Muslim actors actually makes sense. First, however, I will present data regarding the different forms of claim-making and the issues that are most prevalent in the debate.

5.1.2 Forms of Claim-making

Claim-making can take a number of different forms, which is a central way in which the analysis of political claim-making in the public sphere differs from discourse analyses that concentrate solely on verbal statements. Verbal statements are only one form of political claim-making. Possible other forms of claim-making are protest actions, judicial action, or petitioning. State actors can also make claims via repressive measures (as when e.g. arresting and sentencing somebody for involvement with terrorist organisations) and political decisions, which is a category that applies to all decisions by executive organs that have actual binding validity. As can be seen in Table 3, the majority of claims in this sample (75.9 percent) are made in verbal form, most prominently within the context of media interviews (28.9 percent), opinion articles (23.2 percent) and other statements to the press (12.1 percent). It is important to note that these are not exclusively claims made by journalists (as e.g. an editorial would be), but they are merely made within the context of media coverage. Compared to six other European countries (cf. EURISLAM Integrated Report On Media), the percentage of protest actions in the Swedish debate is with 7.6 percent among the highest, only France has a higher percentage of protest actions (8.3 percent). In Germany, merely 2.8 percent of all claims are protest actions (ibid: 7).

Table 3: Forms of Claim-making

Form	Frequency	Percent
state intervention	61	12.1
repressive measures	24	4.8
political decision	37	7.3
verbal statements	383	75.9
newspaper/TV interview	146	28.9
opinion article/open letter	117	23.2
editorial	27	5.3
other press statements/declarations	61	12.1
other verbal statements	32	6.4
conventional action	23	4.6
judicial action	21	4.2
petitioning	2	.4
protest action	38	7.6
demonstrative protests	25	5.0
confrontational protests	5	1.0
violent protests	8	1.6
total	505	100

5.1.3 The Issue Areas

After looking at the actors who insert claims in the public sphere, and the forms by which this is done, I will now consider what the main issues addressed by claim-making are. The issues are split up into five main categories: Immigration, asylum, and aliens politics; minority integration politics, Anti-racism and Anti-Islamophobia, Islamophobic claims, and claims that can solely be made by Muslim actors regarding politics of their country of origin or Sweden's relationship to their country of origin. The distribution of claims across these categories is extremely uneven, with the clear majority of claims being made within the category of minority integration politics (77.6 percent, see Table 4). Anti-racist/Anti-Islamophobic claims make up 10.7 percent, while the remaining three categories have less than five percent each. 4.8 percent of overall claims deal with the "stigmatization of minorities/Muslims/Islam in public debate", while Islamophobic claims make up 3.5 percent.

Graph 1: Issue Areas
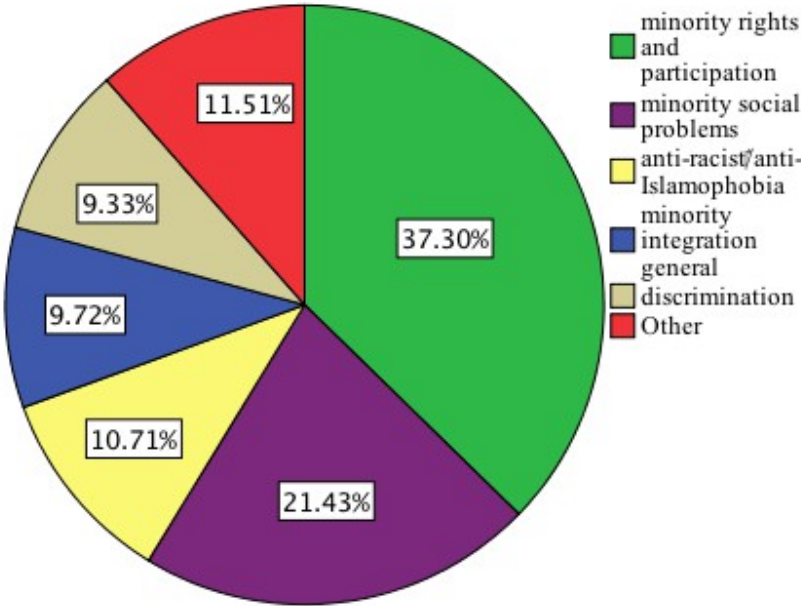
The prevalence of minority integration politics as most-debated issue is not surprising, since it spans a fairly wide field of issues. I will therefore focus my attention on the subcategories and the most frequently debated issues from these subcategories. 37.2 percent of claims (Graph 1) deal with minority rights and participation, almost all of them belonging to the category of cultural rights and participation in relation to religion. These claims will be further defined and analysed in the next step, since they not only are the biggest group of all claims, but also

give an insight into which religious issues are the most prevalent in the Swedish debate.

As can be seen from Table 4, 9.3 percent of overall claims deal with discrimination and unequal treatment of Muslims, with discrimination in the labour market and in the police and judiciary system being the most prevalent among these claims. "Minority social problems" is a category for claims that attribute certain social problems to a particular minority (in this case, Muslims) and their particular cultural background or religion. 21.4 percent of all claims are about minority social problems, with two issues making up the bulk of these claims: Islamic extremism and violence (10.3 percent of all claims) and the position of women in Islam (8.7 percent).

Table 4: Issue Areas

Issue	Frequency	Percent
immigration, asylum, and aliens politics	21	4.2
minority integration politics	392	77.6
minority integration general	49	9.7
minority rights and participation	188	37.2
cultural rights and participation: religion	170	33.7
discrimination and unequal treatment	47	9.3
discrimination in the labour market	11	2.2
discrimination in the police and judiciary system	12	2.4
minority social problems	108	21.4
Islamic extremism and violence	52	10.3
position of women in Islam	44	8.7
inter/intraethnic inter/intraorganisational relations	3	.6
anti-racism/anti-Islamophobia	54	10.7
Institutional racism/Islamophobia	37	7.3
stigmatization of minorities/Muslims/Islam in public debate	24	4.8
Non-institutional racism/Islamophobia	17	3.4
Islamophobic claims	18	3.5
actor claims Muslims	17	3.4
total	505	100

Claims concerning religious rights make up 33.7 percent of all claims. Compared to the six other European countries investigated using the same method, Sweden has the highest share of claims made in the category of religious rights. Belgium reaches a similarly high precentage (30.7 percent), while in the United Kingdom, a mere 11.9 percent of all claims are concerned with religious rights (EURISLAM 2013).

Table 5: Religious Rights

Religious Right	Frequency	Percent out of all claims in category religious rights
right related to wear headscarf (hair-covering headgear)	29	17.1
right related to wear burqa or niqab (hair and face-covering headgear)	8	4.7
balance between religious freedom and freedom of expression, general	22	12.9
banning/legal sanctioning of depictions or descriptions of symbols of Islam that are considered blasphemous	11	6.5
rights regarding the establishment and running of Islamic schools	27	15.9
Muslim rights and participation: other/general	14	8.2
right to build (visible) mosques	13	7.6
laicité/public neutrality general	8	4.7
provision for burial according to the Islamic rite	5	2.9
right to adopt Shariah rules	5	2.9
female circumcision	4	2.4
total	136	85.8

The most frequently discussed issue among religious rights is the question of whether Muslim women should have the right to wear the headscarf. This includes claims concerned with wearing the headscarf at work, in public or private institutions, or as students in Swedish public schools. 17.1 percent of all claims in the category "religious rights" concern rights related to wearing a headscarf, with an additional 4.7 percent of claims being related to wearing burqa or niqab – religious dresses that cover both hair and face of a woman. The balance between religious freedom and the freedom of expression is the third-largest field of claim-making, with 12.9 percent of claims in the religious rights category referring to it as a general claim. The more specific claims for or against the banning or legal sanctioning of depictions or descriptions of symbols of Islam that are considered blasphemous (6.5 percent) can be added to the previous category, together making up almost 20 percent of all claims concerned with religious rights.

The establishment and running of Islamic schools is also a very prevalent issue, with a share of 15.9 percent of all claims relating to religious rights. Here, however, I observed during the coding process that the claims regarding the position of Islamic schools is most frequently voiced within the context of the discussion around religious (or "free") schools more broadly, of which the growing number of Islamic schools in Sweden are merely one part. Other issues include the right to build visible mosques, laicité/public neutrality, provision for burial according to Islamic rite, the right to adopt Shariah law, and female circumcision.

The latter, however, represent only a minimal percentage of the overall number of claims concerned with Muslim religious rights.

5.1.4 Positioning Claims

So far, I have provided an overview over actors, forms, and issues of claim-making, but it is not obvious from any of the categories (apart from the one dealing with Islamophobic claims) whether the content of the claims positive, negative, or neutral in its attitude towards Muslims, Muslim rights, or Islam. For an analysis of the position, it is necessary to look at a separate variable that classifies all claims into three categories: pro-Muslim/anti-xenophobia, neutral, or anti-Muslim/pro-extreme right. The first category applies to all claims that, if implemented, would mean an improvement in the rights and position of Muslims (no matter how minor or major), the last one to those whose implementation would mean a deterioration in the rights and position of Muslims. Neutral claims are those which would neither improve nor impair the rights and positions of Muslims, or whose implications are ambivalent.

As can be seen in Table 6, 54.1 percent of all collected claims are positive, 11.9 percent neutral, and 33.5 percent are negative claims. A mean of the position of all claims gives an idea of the overall discursive context of the debate – is it on the whole positive or negative, open or closed to Muslim rights and positions? The overall mean for the position of claims in the Swedish debate is .2072 (with the minimum being -1 and the maximum being +1), which shows a relatively open and positive context when compared with other European countries. France, the Netherlands, and the UK have means higher than .20, while Switzerland and Belgium are situated below .10, and Germany even has a a negative mean position of -.17, indicating an overall closed and negative context (EURISLAM Integrated Report: 10). The fact that there are relatively few neutral claims in Sweden indicates a fairly high polarisation of positions, however, as stated above, with an overall positive attitude towards Muslim rights.

Table 6: Positions of Claims

Position	Frequency	Percent
positive	273	54.1
neutral	60	11.9
negative	169	33.5
total	502 (3 missing)	99.5

Since this analysis covers an extended period of time it makes sense to not only analyse the overall mean position, but to take a look at the way in which the positions of claims developed over the years. From looking at Graph 2, it can be observed that while there are a number of fluctuations, on the whole, the context of claim-making has in fact become more negative since 1999. After 2001, there is a particularly sharp decline that continues through 2003 and 2004, when the mean position of claims dips below zero, indicating an overall mostly negative attitude towards Muslim rights and positions during that period. One of the major external causes of this decline could be the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 in the United States. As Larsson argues, Muslims all over Sweden personally and directly felt the reaction to these particular events, as they were subjected to verbal and sometimes even physical abuse in the weeks after the attacks (2005). It is therefore feasible to assume that they also have influenced the overall context of the public debate on Muslims and Islam in Sweden, and therefore the positions of claims made within this context.

Graph 2: Development of Position over Time
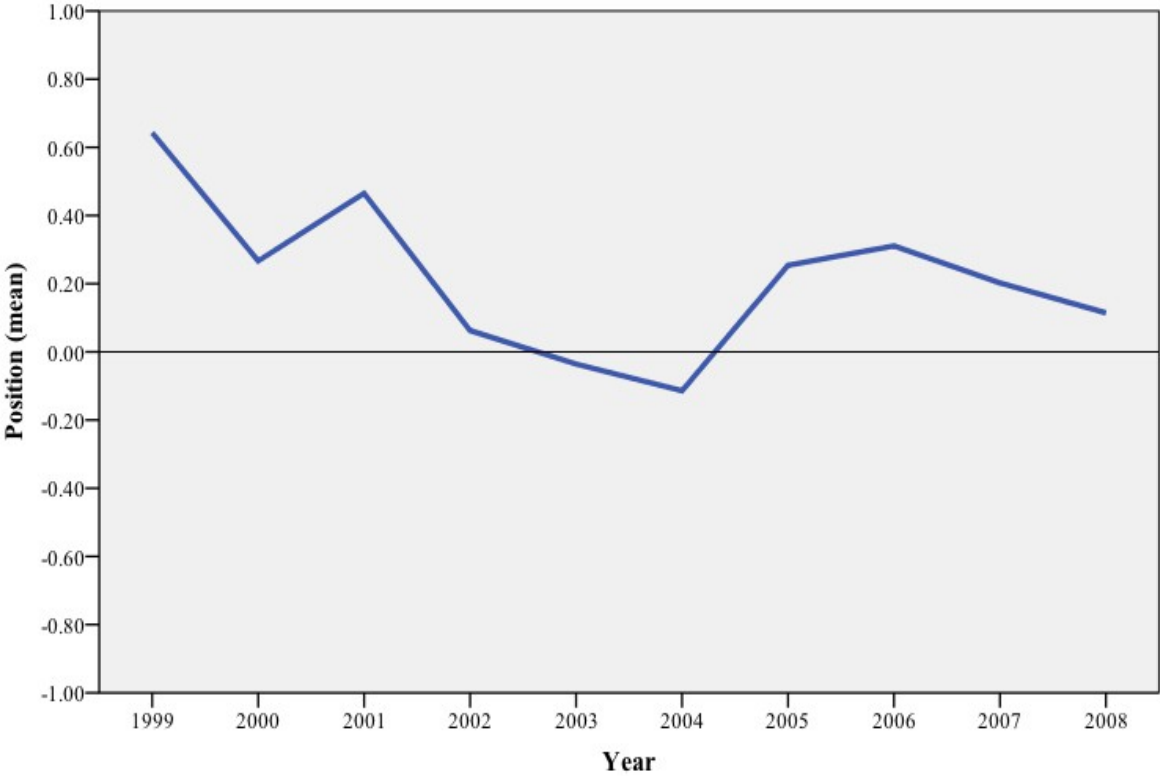
There are other, more local events that can be seen to have had a potentially negative effect on the overall position of claim-making. In 2002, Kurdish-Swedish Fadime Sahindal was

murdered by her father in Uppsala, prompting a debate about so-called "honour-killings". One position taken by commentators in the public debate was that these "honour-killings" are an inherent part of patriarchal Islamic cultures, connected to and caused by understandings of family honour and gender relations in traditional Islamic countries and communities (for analyses of the debate, see Kurkiala 2003; Wikan 2008). Consequently, 22 percent of the claims coded for the year 2002 deal with the "position of women in Islam". As mentioned above, in 2003, SVT broadcasted a documentary called "I skolans våld". Based on interviews, it showed Islamic free schools as places where students were indoctrinated, and at times abused by their teachers. 20 percent of claims from 2003 have "rights regarding the running and establishment of Islamic schools" as their issue. In 2007, when there is another decrease in positive claim-making, 18 percent of all claims in 2007 deal with the balance between the freedom of expression and the freedom of religion as a result of Lars Vilks´ drawings of the prophet Mohammad as a dog, and another 18 percent have Islamic extremism and violence as their issue area, potentially further explaining the turn for the negative that the positioning of claims takes.

The fact that the context of the debate becomes more positive again after 2004 indicates, however, that the influence of events such as 9/11 might not be durable, and that destructive external events might not always have the same negative impact on the national debate. The years 2004 and 2005, after all, saw two more terrorist attacks attributed to Islamist fundamentalist groups, this time in European cities (Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005). These do not seem to have had the same detrimental effect on the Swedish context as the attacks in September 2001.

5. 2 Comparing Groups

5.2.1 Comparing Muslim and Non-Muslim actors

The negative context becomes even more pronounced when comparing the position of claims made by Muslim actors and non-Muslim actors. The mean position for claims made by Muslim actors (implicit and explicit united in one category with n = 175) is .52, while for non-Muslim actors (n = 327), the mean position is .0398, indicating a context that on the whole is barely still positive towards Muslim rights. Looking at the development of positions of claims over time, we can point out the ways Muslim and non-Muslim actors´ positions develop both parallel and in diverging ways. As visible in Graph 3, there is a general tendency towards less positive claim-making after 2001 in both groups, which predates 9/11 for the

Muslim actor group, but is much more pronouncedly negative and much more sustained in the non-Muslim actor group. During the years 2002-2004, when non-Muslim actor claims continue to be predominantly negative, the mean position of Muslim actor claims increases, potentially indicating a reaction to or defence against the increasingly anti-Muslim claim-making by non-Muslim actors. This continues to 2007, before dropping down again in 2008. Non-Muslim actor claim-making becomes more positive between 2005-2006, but declines again in 2007.

Graph 3: Development of Position over Time: Comparison Muslim – Non-Muslim Actors
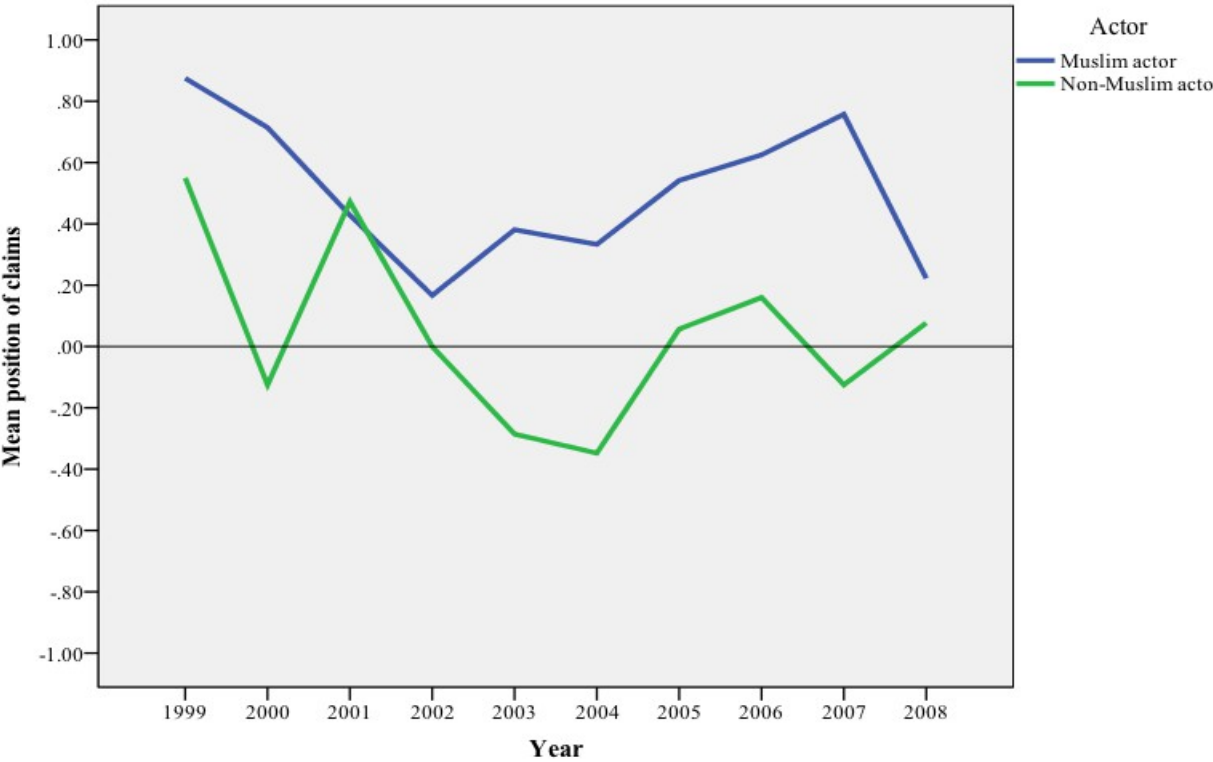
What is important to keep in mind when looking at the mean position over the years is that the number of claims also varies profoundly during that time, which in itself conveys something about political claim-making around Muslim rights and Islam in Sweden in that period. The "margin years" of this study (1999, 2000 and 2008) have a comparably low number of claims, as does the year 2004. With regard to the analysis, this means that especially the positions for 1999, 2000 and 2008 might show fairly large variations based on a comparably limited number of actual claims. In the context of a long-term analysis like this one, however, I would maintain that including an analysis of the change of position over time makes sense in order to

complement the static picture of the overall mean position of claims.

2007 not only has the biggest variation in the mean position of claims between Muslim actors and non-Muslim actors, it is also the year with the highest number of total claims (90 claims, which makes up 18 percent of all claims in the sample). The predominant debate of that year is the Lars-Vilks-controversy around his drawing of the prophet Mohammad as a "rondellhund", a dog with a turban. It centres on the balance between freedom of expression and freedom of religion, but also touches on the area of Islamic extremism and violence, in the wake of the violent protest in Muslim countries in reaction to the Mohammad caricatures published in Danish newspapers two years earlier.

While the positioning of claims varies, at times profoundly, between the two groups, comparing the issues thematised by Muslim and non-Muslim actors indicates a large degree of congruence with regard to what topics are most prevalent. Looking at Table 7, there are some issue areas that vary between the two groups. It lies in the design of the code e.g. that only Muslim actors can make Muslim actor claims, and all Islamophobic claims in this sample are made exclusively by non-Muslim actors, perhaps unsurprisingly. Muslim actors have a higher percentage of claims concerned with minority discrimination (12.4 percent compared to 7.6 percent), while non-Muslim actors have a higher share of anti-racist/anti-Islamophobic claims (11.9 percent compared to 8.4 percent). Muslim actors also are slightly more concerned with immigration (5.1 percent compared to 3.4 percent) and minority integration (10.7 percent compared to 9.2 percent).

The overall pattern of claim-making does not differ profoundly between the two groups, particularly when looking at those issues that are most prevalent in claim-making. The distribution of claims across the issues in both groups is fairly similar, with the most frequently discussed issues being religious rights (as a subcategory of minority rights and participation more generally) and minority social problems. Roughly a third of the claims made by both groups are concerned with religious rights, with the share being slightly higher in the non-Muslim actor group (35.8 percent compared to 29.8 percent). The second-largest share of claims in both groups is concerned with minority social problems, yet again with a slightly higher share among non-Muslim actors (23.5 percent compared to 17.4 percent), The most prevalent among these being claims about the position of women in Islam, and Islamic extremism and violence. 12.5 percent of non-Muslim actor claims deal with the position of women in Islam, 8 percent with Islamic extremism and violence, while among Muslim actors the distribution is 10.1 and 6.2 percent.

Table 7: Issue Areas - Comparison Muslim – Non-Muslim Actors

Issue	Muslim Actors		Non-Muslim Actors	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
immigration	9	5.1	11	3.4
minority integration general	19	10.7	30	9.2
minority rights and participation	63	35.4	125	38.2
religious rights	53	29.8	117	35.8
discrimination	22	12.4	25	7.6
minority social problems	31	17.4	77	23.5
position of women in Islam	18	10.1	41	12.5
Islamic extremism and violence	11	6.2	26	8.0
inter-/intraethnic relations	1	.6	2	0.6
anti-racist-/anti-Islamophobia	15	8.4	39	11.9
Muslim actor claims	17	9.6	-	-
Islamophobic claims	-	-	18	5.5
total	177 (1 missing)	99.4	327	100

Taking a closer look at the category of religious rights (see Table 8), which is the largest single-issue area of claims in both groups, confirms the above pattern. The two groups make claims related to the same, fairly limited number of religious rights, with only slight variations. Muslim actors are most concerned with the banning or legal sanctioning of depictions and descriptions of symbols of Islam that are considered blasphemous (6.3 percent), an issue that plays almost no role in claim-making by non-Muslim actors. Non-Muslim actors, on the other hand, are concerned much more with rights regarding the establishment and running of Islamic schools (6.7 percent) than Muslim actors (2.8 percent), and also make more claims concerning the right to build (visible) mosques. The right to build visible mosques makes up 3.1 percent of non-Muslim actor claims, but plays no big role for Muslim actors. Religious rights that matter to both groups are the balance between religious freedom and freedom of expression, and rights related to wearing headscarf, burqa or niqab. In both cases, they make up a slightly higher share of non-Muslim actor claims (4.6 percent and 8.4 percent compared to 3.9 percent and 6.3 percent).

Table 8: Religious Rights - Comparison Muslim – Non-Muslim Actors

Religious Rights	Muslim Actors		Non-Muslim Actors	
	Frequency	Percent of claims	Frequency	Percent of claims
rights regarding the establishment and running of Islamic schools	5	2.8	22	6.7
banning/legal sanctioning of depictions or descriptions of symbols of Islam that are considered blasphemous / extension of blasphemy laws	11	6.2	2	0.6
balance between religious freedom and freedom of expression	7	3.9	15	4.6
rights related to wear headscarf (hair-covering headgear) / burqa or niqab (hair and face-covering headgear)	11	6.3	28	8.4
right to build (visible) mosques	3	1.7	10	3.1
laïcité/public neutrality general	1	0.6	7	2.1
other	19	10.6	33	10.3
total	53	29.8	117	35.8

So while the positioning of claims at times varies profoundly between the two groups, I find roughly the same distribution of claims with regard to which issues claim-makers are concerned with among Muslim and non-Muslim actors, both when comparing the wider issue categories and looking at the category "religious rights" in some more detail.

5.2.2 Disentangling the "Muslim Actor" Category

As pointed out above, "Muslim actor" is a rather broad category that includes both people whose Muslim identity is considered "explicit", (e.g. when they are speaking on behalf of a Muslim organisation, as a believer, or in their function as the imam of a mosque community, or when their believe is thematised in the context of the claim-making) and those whose Muslim identity is "implicit", coded on the basis of their country of origin being predominantly Muslim but without any information about their religious affiliation or believes. I have referred to this group as "cultural" Muslims throughout this paper, and indicated in my theory section the problems attached to including Muslims who actively practise their faith and "cultural" Muslims in a single undifferentiated category. I will now take a closer look at the Muslim actor category in order to evaluate in how far practising and "cultural" Muslims can be considered to act similarly or differently in their claims-making, and therefore to what extent it actually makes sense to include "cultural" Muslims in the Muslim actor category when undertaking further research.

Out of the 178 claims made by Muslim actors, 91 (51 percent) were made by people whose Muslim identity was explicit, 87 (49 percent) were made by actors with an implicit Muslim identity. People with Muslim cultural backgrounds therefore make up roughly half of those claims accorded to Muslim actors, which is a fairly large share should there be indications towards noticeable differences in the claim-making of these two groups.

Table 9: Actors - Comparison Implicit and Explicit Muslim Actors

Actor	Implicit		Explicit	
	Frequency	Percent of claims	Frequency	Percent of claims
state actors	4	4.5	1	1.1
political parties	10	11.5	2	2.2
media and journalists	11	12.6	3	3.3
professional organisations and groups/employers/firms	5	5.7	1	1.1
researchers/think tanks/intellectuals	11	12.6	2	2.2
Muslim organisations and groups	3	3.4	63	70.4
other minority organisations and groups	17	19.5	-	-
other civil society organisations and groups	9	10.3	-	-
unknown actors	17	19.5	18	19.8
total	87	100.0	91	100

While the absolute majority of actors with an explicit Muslim background make claims as part of or on behalf of Muslim organisations and groups (70.4 percent of all their claims, with unknown actors making up 19.8 percent, and various other actor categories the remaining ten percent), the actors from the "cultural" Muslim category are more diverse. Minority organisations and groups are most prevalent, with 19.5 percent of the claims, but claim-making by actors with an implicit Muslim identity is otherwise fairly equally distributed between political parties, the media, researchers and intellectuals, and other civil society organisations, all of whom make between ten and thirteen percent of claims.

Looking at the issues brought up in the claim-making, the pattern is very similar to the analyses carried out above, with religious rights making up the largest coherent block of issues, followed by minority social problems. There is a marked difference between explicit and implicit Muslim actors, the latter make ten percent less claims concerning religious rights (24.1 percent compared to 35.5 percent). Explicit Muslim actors are more concerned with minority integration general (13.2 percent compared to 8 percent), and issues of discrimination (13.2 percent compared to 11 percent). This might be due to the fact that

practising Muslims might potentially be subjected to more restrictions, limitations, and discrimination based on the public exercise of their religion. Another major difference is to be found in the category of minority social problems: "cultural" Muslim actors have a far higher percentage of claims dealing with the position of women in Islam (16 percent) than explicit Muslim actors (4.4 percent), while explicit Muslim actors have a higher share of claims referring to Islamic extremism and violence (10 percent compared to 2.3 percent). Finally, almost all "Muslim actor claims" (those regarding homeland politics or politics of the new country of living with regard to homelands) are made by implicit Muslim actors.

When comparing both categories of Muslim actors to non-Muslim actors (see Table 10), it is difficult to identify a clear pattern. Implicit Muslim actors have a noticeably smaller share of claims referring to religious rights than both other groups, are positioned closer to non-Muslim actors in claim-making regarding minority integration and closer to explicit Muslim actors in claim-making concerning discrimination, minority social problems, immigration, and anti-racist/anti-Islamophobic claims.

Table 10: Issue Areas - Comparison Implicit and Explicit Muslim Actors

Issue	Implicit		Explicit		Non-Muslim Actors	
	Frequency	Percent of claims	Frequency	Percent of claims	Frequency	Percent of claims
immigration	5	5.7	4	4.4	11	3.4
minority integration general	7	8.0	12	13.2	30	9.2
minority rights and participation	28	32.2	35	38.5	125	38.2
religious rights	21	24.1	32	35.5	117	35.8
discrimination	10	11.5	12	13.2	25	7.6
minority social problems	16	18.4	15	16.5	77	23.5
Islamic extremism and violence	2	2.3	9	10	26	8
position of women in Islam	14	16.1	4	4.4	41	12.5
inter/intraethnic relations	-	-	1	1.1	2	0.6
anti-racist/anti-Islamophobia	7	8.0	8	8.8	39	11.9
Muslim actor claims	14	16.1	3	3.3	-	-
total	87	100	90	98.9	327	100

Comparing the positioning of claims shows a noticeable difference between Muslim actors with implicit and explicit Muslim identity. The mean position for explicit Muslim actors is .

6889, 79 percent of their claims are positive. Muslim actors with an implicit identity have a clearly more negative overall mean position of .3412 (61 percent positive, 12 percent neutral and 26 percent negative claims). The limited number of claims per year compared to the Muslim actor/non-Muslim actor groups unfortunately makes it difficult to analysis the development over the years of the study, but the overall mean already indicates that there is a marked difference between the two groups. While it is nowhere near the mean position for non-Muslim actors (.0398), the mean position of Muslim actors with implicit Muslim identity is distinctly closer to the mean position of all claims (.2072) than to explicit Muslim actors.

6. Discussion

The empirical data presented in the previous section of this thesis provides an overview of the actors, issues, and positions present in the debate on Muslim rights and Islam in Sweden as reported in five large daily newspapers. In this section, I now want to analyse the data with regard to the theoretical assumptions underlying this paper, starting with a closer look at the participation of Muslim minority actors in the debate, the issues put forward and the context they face. I will then move on to critically engage with the concept of the "Muslim actor" as a coherent category by looking at the data that compares the different actor categories.

6.1 Muslim Actors and their Participation in the Public Sphere

An initial look at the forms of claim-making shows a high degree of institutionalisation of the debate on Islam and Muslim rights in Sweden (see Table 3). While, compared to six other European countries (cf. EURISLAM 2013), the percentage of protest actions in the Swedish debate is with 7.6 percent among the highest, it is still a relatively low share of the total number of claims. This indicates that issues relating to Muslim rights and Islam are in fact for the most part discussed in the more institutionalised and less confrontational settings of the political institutions and the media[8], which validates my analysis based on the theoretical assumptions of deliberation and debate within the context of the public sphere

Looking more closely at Muslim minority participation in this debate, I find that a little more than one third of all claims in this field are made by Muslim minority actors (35.2 percent). Roughly forty percent of these Muslim actor claims are made by Muslim organisations and groups, who overall constitute the third-largest group of claim-makers after state actors and the media (see Table 1). This group includes the six nation-wide umbrella organisations, but also smaller local organisations, as well as representatives of individual congregations. Their share of 13.3. percent of all claim-making is clearly an indication that representatives of "official" or "institutionalized" Islam in Sweden, and its organisations have access to the debate, and participate in it as actors, rather than as mere objects of discussion.

Their claim-making can be considered successful to the degree that it is reported on in the mainstream media, and while they are not equally as a active in making claims as the condensed category of state actors, or media actors, they still reach a higher degree of

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8 An interesting reference point here would be a comparison with claim-making around issues of immigration and ethnic relations more widely, where extreme right wing protest actions and their counter-manifestations might potentially be more frequent (Koopmans et al., 2005).

participation than all other actor groups. As Larsson and Lindekilde argue, the high degree of institutionalisation of Islam in Sweden into large, centralized associations gives these actors a privileged position for Muslim claim-making in the debate, as they offer representation of the majority of organized Muslims in Sweden (2009: 376). They are a convenient point of contact and reference for both the media and political authorities, which provides them with a certain interpretative authority with regard to what it means to practice Islam in Sweden. It can be assumed that their position as the official representatives of Islam in Sweden will be continuously reinforced through this process of recognition, thus further strengthening the established organisations in the public debate.

Those Muslim actors who are not part of the category of Muslim organisations and groups, but belong to other actor categories, are almost exclusively actors with an implicit Muslim identity, or "cultural" Muslims. They come from a variety of backgrounds, and together have an equally high share of the claims made by Muslim actors – the group of Muslim actors in total can therefore be seen as a diverse one with regard to whether people are making claims explicitly stating their position as Muslims, or being accorded this position based on their background. I will come back to this point further on in my analysis when looking at the differences within the Muslim actor category.

Another indicator that Muslim actors are political actors in their own right in the public debate on Islam and Muslim rights can be found when looking at the development of the overall position of claims made and then the comparison between the position taken by Muslim and Non-Muslim actors in the debate (see Graph 2, Graph 3). While for the majority of years, the position of claims is positive and directed at an improvement in the rights and position of Muslims in Sweden, there is an overall tendency to the mean position of claims becoming increasingly more negative. In 2003 and 2004, the mean position of claim-makers is below zero, indicating most claims are aimed towards an impairment in the rights and position of Muslims.

I have argued above that the positions of claims is influenced by current events on both the global, regional, and local level. At the same time, however, it also very clearly indicates the context that all actors face and interact with when making their claims. Muslim actors during the immediate years after 9/11 faced a context that was increasingly negative towards their rights and positions, and which potentially made claim-making in the public sphere more difficult, and claims and issues more contested. The fact that the position of claims varies most between Muslim and non-Muslim actors during those periods where non-Muslim actors make predominantly negative or anti-Muslim claims (2001 – 2004 and 2007) shows that

Muslim minority actors in Sweden even in the face of a generally negative, anti-Muslim context have sufficient confidence to make political claims that aim towards an enlargement of their rights and an improvement of their situation. They are not merely objects of the debate or confined to reacting to claims made by the non-Muslim majority actors.

6.2 Shaping the Debate?

As discussed in my theory section, not all claims are equally likely to reach visibility and achieve legitimacy in the public discourse, depending on the discursive opportunities present within a debate (Koopmans et al. 2005). A closer look at the issues discussed will therefore give insights into which claims reach visibility in the Swedish media debate specifically. Compared to the six other European countries investigated using the same method, Sweden has the highest share of claims made in the category of religious rights. A third of all claims in the Swedish debate is explicitly concerned with participation and rights in the sphere of religion.

The majority of these claims occur within discourses related to either of three issues: Firstly, the headscarf, which can be seen very much within the context of the Swedish discourse of gender equality and the alleged patriarchal oppression of Muslim women, of which the headscarf is considered to be a symbol. As an issue of claim-making, the right to wear a headscarf reappears continuously over the ten-year period of the analysis. Secondly, the debate on the balance between freedom of expression and freedom of religion, which is strongly related to the events of the "Danish cartoon crisis" and the controversy around Lars Vilks' drawings of the prophet Muhammad as a "rondellhund" in 2005/2006 and 2007 respectively. With the exception of three claims, all of the claims in this category are made in the years 2006 and 2007, with the majority of them being made in 2007, when the controversy around the Swedish artist Lars Vilks reached its peak.

Finally, there is the question whether religious communities should or should not have the right to have their own schools, as well as how these schools should be run. This ties in with debates about the neutrality of public institutions (like schools) versus the multiculturalist understanding that it is important for children to be able to maintain their (or their parents') cultural roots. The last debate reaches its peak in 2003, after the documentary "I skolans våld" was broadcasted by the Swedish Public Service Broadcaster SVT, but claims regarding Islamic schools continue to be made all the way through to 2008. All three of these areas are clearly related to the public practice and therefore public visibility of Islam. Claims

for rights in public institutions generally have greater conflict potential than claims for private rights (Carol & Koopmans 2013), which is to a certain extent visible also in the fact that non-Muslim actors are slightly more concerned with religious rights regarding the visibility of Islam in public (see Table 7). In general, however, there is a fairly high degree of congruence between both groups with regard to the issues discussed (see Table 7, Table 8), indicating that the debate is characterised by an engagement of actors with each other over these issues, rather than unrelated claim-making by actor groups.

While thirty percent of all claims concerned with religious rights may look like a relatively big share compared to all other categories of claims and other countries, it also means that only a third of the instances of claim-making are actually explicitly debating the role Islam as a *religion* should be playing in Sweden, and the rights and obligations that should be accorded to its Muslims as a community of faith within Swedish society. The majority of claim-making in the public debate on Islam and Muslims in Sweden is therefore concerned with issues other than religious rights, further indicating that "Muslim" is always also be perceived as a *cultural* category rather than merely a religious one. Muslims, as member of a minority group, are according to this analysis subject to discrimination and Islamophobia, affected by social problems, but also supported by anti-racist and anti-Islamophobic claims. The fact that "minority social problems" is the second-largest category claims after those concerning religious rights also points in this direction.

"Minority social problems" is a category for claims that attribute certain social problems to a particular minority (in this case, Muslims) and their particular cultural background or religion. 21.4 percent of all claims are about minority social problems, with two issues making up the bulk of these claims: Islamic extremism and violence (10.3 percent of all claims) and the position of women in Islam (8.7 percent). This mirrors findings of other analyses showing a construction of the Muslim "other" based on the claim that "their" understanding of gender relations differs fundamentally from the Western one (Bhattacharyya 2008, Bracke, 2012, Haritaworn, 2012). The portrayal of Islam as a fundamentalist and violent religion has equally been pointed out by previous studies (cf. Kinvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2010, Kepel 2004). Muslim minority actors therefore face a debate that includes a distinct amount of negative stereotypical misconceptions about Islam as a religion and Muslims as a socio-cultural group, which they try to counter by making balancing and explaining statements (Axner 2011) and which can negatively influence their capacity and effectivity as political actors (Cato & Otterbeck 2014) .

6.3 De-Homogenising the Muslim Actor Category

One of the aims of this thesis is to critically engage with the way in which "Muslim" is frequently framed as an overarching group identity in the public debate, thus homogenising what is actually a diverse population with a variety of social, cultural and religious backgrounds. Most importantly, it can reify the religious identity of "Muslim believer" as applicable to everybody with a Muslim cultural background, even when people are secular non-believers. To challenge this, I compare the claim-making of actors with implicit and explicit Muslim identity. The coding that I employed for this analysis to distinguish between explicit and implicit Muslim identity of course only allows for a very crude differentiation between those Muslim actors that can be categorised as active, practising believers (based on reference to their belief in the article that reports their act of claim-making) and those actors who are accorded an implicit Muslim identity based on their Muslim cultural background. Other differences (age, gender, migrant status, socio-economic status, religious traditions) are not at all accounted for. My analysis shows, however, that there are noticeable differences already between these two categories with regard to who the main actors are and what position the claims of these actors take, thus backing up my theoretically-based caution with regard to homogenisation and reification of group identities.

As pointed out above, about half of the claims made by Muslim actors are made by "cultural" Muslims, actors whose Muslim identity is considered to be implicit. The fact that the actors in the implicit category are spread out across various actor categories (see Table 9) indicates that "cultural" Muslims engage in the debate around Muslims and Islam from a different position than those actors with an explicit Muslim identity. This category is far more diverse. While one group is the official "face" of Islam in Sweden, it can be assumed that those with implicit Muslim identity make claims not necessarily in their capacity as somebody from a Muslim background, or actively refrain from making their Muslim identity a part of their claim-making. With regard to this, however, a more thorough analysis of instances of claim-making would be necessary to provide detailed information about each claimant and the context of their claim-making.

The biggest group of claim-makers among implicit Muslim actors are minority organisations and groups. They include cultural associations (*kulturföreningar)* related to a number of countries (Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Kurdish organisations), but also women´s and human rights organisations such as the Iraqi Women´s association *(Irakiska kvinnoföreningen)*, National Organisation of Iranian Refugees (*Iranska flyktingars*

riskorganisation), or the Committee for the Defence of Iranian Women´s Rights (*Kommittén för försvaret av iranska kvinnors rättigheter*). They are not explicitly organisations by Muslims, for Muslims, or have any kind of Islamic or religious purpose or agenda. Their clear links to predominantly Muslim countries (as evident from their names), however, means they can potentially be accorded the position of the secular counter-part to the official Muslim organisations in the public debate. This would make them primary addressees for media interest regarding "cultural" issues related to Islam and to a certain extent explain their prevalence in the debate. It might also make it necessary for them to take stances on Muslim cultural issues otherwise not related to their organisations. Their role should not be overestimated, however, as claim-making is otherwise fairly equally distributed between political parties, the media, researchers and intellectuals, and other civil society organisations, showing a far wider diversity than in the explicit Muslim actor category.

This focus of implicit Muslim actor claim-making on the more cultural aspects of Muslim identity is reinforced when looking at the issue areas discussed by the two different Muslim actor categories (see Table 10). One of the major difference is that implicit Muslim actors make ten percent less claims concerning religious rights than both explicit and non-Muslim actors. Their claim-making therefore deals considerably less with the actual practice of Islam as a religion, reinforcing the assumption that religiosity plays less of a role among the group of actors with an implicit Muslim identity. They also have a far higher percentage of claims dealing with the position of women in Islam than explicit Muslim actor. This, as elaborated above, is one of the most prevalent topics used in the process of "othering" Muslim populations in European societies, particularly the Nordic countries. It seems therefore reasonable that implicit Muslim actors feel the need to take a stance on this issue in order to counter stereotypes or to challenge the established Muslim actors in the debate. Finally, claims regarding homeland politics or politics of the new country of living with regard to homelands are almost exclusively made by implicit Muslim actors, indicating that these are frequently political claims made based on nationality or ethnic background rather than religious affiliation. These differences are all the more noticeable considering the fact that there were very few differences regarding the issues addressed by explicit and non-Muslim actors. It has to be said though that in the majority of other categories, differences were not particularly large.

Differences between the two categories of Muslim actors finally become pronounced when looking at the position of claims made. The considerable variation of the positioning of Muslim actor claims in general and over time already makes clear that not everybody

classified as a Muslim actor automatically makes claims in support of Muslims or Islam, or does in fact argue in favour of an improvement of Muslim rights and positions (see Graph 3). Muslim actors with an implicit identity have a considerably higher number of claims that are not aimed at an improvement in the rights and position of Muslims. The overall mean position of claims made by implicit Muslim actors is .3412. The mean position for explicit Muslim actors is .6889 - almost eighty percent of their claims are positive. As Seyla Benhabib points out, "any minority group in human society may adopt any number of political positions" (2002: 18), and my findings indicate that the group of Muslim actors with an explicit identity can be seen as being fairly coherent in their claim-making, while an implicit Muslim identity does not seem to predict any kind of particular position to the same extent.

7. Conclusion

The recent influx of Muslim immigrants has posed a challenge to Western European societies in a number of ways. It has thrown up questions about the public visibility of (non-Christian) religions in supposedly secular societies, about perceptions of what it means to be European, and it has been the cause of much debate, heated controversy and at times violent protests. Based on theoretical considerations around minority participation in the public sphere as part of the political process of deliberation and contestation over the shape of diverse socio-political communities, this thesis has investigated in some detail the debate around Muslim rights and Islam in Sweden during the years 1999 – 2008 as reported by the five largest Swedish daily newspapers. Making use of political claims analysis, I have looked at the actors, issues, and positions present in the debate and their development over time. I have also tried to challenge the construction of all actors from a Muslim cultural background as a coherent group of distinct "others" by comparing the claim-making of actors with implicit and explicit Muslim identity, a distinction that I have broadly translated into the difference between practicing Muslims and non-believers from Muslim cultural backgrounds.

My findings show that Muslim actors are the third-largest group of actors making claims relating to Muslim rights and Islam in the Swedish debate, with by far the most prevalent among them being those organizations and groups that can be considered to represent the "official" face of Islam in Sweden. In accordance with previous analyses, I therefore argue that this indicates a considerable degree of institutionalisation and recognition of those Muslim actors in the public debate, even though the overwhelming majority of claims are still made by non-Muslim actors. The context that these actors face in the debate changes quite noticeably over the investigation period, both with regard to the issues discussed and the positions taken by the actors. Current events influence whether the overall discussion is predominantly positive or negative towards an improvement of Muslim rights as well as what the most prevalent topics are, as can be seen e.g. with regard to events such as the cartoon controversies. This context makes up the discursive opportunity structure within which Muslim minority actors make their claims. The fact that the positioning of Muslim actors varies most strongly from that of non-Muslim actors in periods were non-Muslim actors makes predominantly negative claims shows, however, that Muslim actors have sufficient standing as political actors to opt for advocating an improvement of their rights and positions even when facing a negative public mainstream.

The debate is centred around two issues in particular, Muslim religious rights and

minority social problems. This shows that the debate on Muslim minorities is not only one about religious, but also about socio-economic and cultural integration. It further points out the extent to which the category "Muslim" is always not merely a religious one, but also applied as a wider socio-cultural categorisation for people coming from a Muslim cultural background, no matter their religious inclination, making them equal part object and actors of the public debate. Comparing those two groups has shown that there are indeed discernible differences with regard to the issues discussed and positions taken by Muslim actors between those with an explicit and implicit Muslim identity. This emphasizes once more the need to be careful about the ascription of group identities and to avoid the indiscriminate blending of socio-cultural background, ethnicity and religious affiliation into one big "Muslim other".

The reach of a master thesis is of course rather limited. I therefore want to conclude by pointing out two aspects that could be expanded upon in order to complement the findings of this thesis and to further enlarge the understanding of Muslim minority participation in the public debate on Muslim rights and Islam in Sweden. Firstly, I see benefits in connecting my media analysis to an investigation of how Swedish policies on immigration, integration, and multiculturalism have developed and changed over time. This would enable a better grasp of the institutional opportunity structures which, in combination with discursive opportunities, determine the form and extent of participation of minority actors in the debate. Secondly, my theoretical framework around questions of homogenising and reifying group identities does not exclusively apply to minority groups. This makes it necessary to not only look at the differences between minority and majority groups, but to also analytically de-homogenise the majority population (e.g. along lines of political attitude) and to look at those characteristics and dividing lines that can play a role across both minority and majority populations. People's lives are shaped by rights and obligations in various political communities, local, ethnic, religious, national, even transnational. And any individual's capacity for action within these communities is influenced by age, education, gender, socio-economic status, and other categories. The intersection of these categories frequently puts minority actors at an disadvantaged position, but focussing solely on identity categories entails the danger of homogenisation and reification of group differences. My analysis has hopefully contributed to a better understanding of these processes. If cultural identities in complex, diverse democratic societies seek public recognition of their specificity, this needs to be balanced with an understanding of their fluidity and the porosity of the boundaries of these identities, as well as with core liberal democratic principles of individual freedoms and rights.

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