Harakî Salafism in Norway: 'The Saved Sect' Hugs the Infidels

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Abstract

The article is a study of the Norwegian Salafi organization Islam Net, which aims at defining Islam Net in terms of recent research on European Salafism and assessing its capacity for public civic engagement. With reference to de Certeau's concept of discourse, and Habermas' concepts of democratic legitimacy and religion in the public sphere, it is found that Islam Net's capacity for civic engagement is severely restricted by its non-acceptance of human rights-based values, since this non-acceptance justifies for public institutions to deny the organization presence and refuse dialogue with Islam Net. From Habermas' viewpoint this is a potential democratic deficiency, since it may weaken the legitimacy of democracy among Islam Net's members.

From the arrival of Muslims in Norway in the early 1970s until recently, the Norwegian Islamic scene has been dominated by the Pakistani Deobandi and Barelwi schools; Turkish Diyanet-affiliated mosques; Twelver Shiites; Bosnian organizations; Somali organizations; and so on. The 'pan-Islamic' discourse was represented primarily by mosques loosely affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood (see articles by Leirvik and Vongraven Eriksen & Mårtensson in this special issue), and by individuals and mosques related to Jamaʿat-i Islami and the Deobandi-related Tabligh-i Jamaʿat (Linge 2013). Beneath these mosques and organizations there is another mosaic, namely the traditional schools of law. The Turkish Diyanet and the Pakistani Barelwi and Deobandi follow the Hanafite *madhhab*, while the Somalis are Shafiites; Maliki *fiqh* is practised

by the Moroccans. It took until 2008 before the fourth *madhhab*, the Hanbalite, was established, completing the Norwegian Islamic pallet.

The form that Hanbalism has taken in Norway is that of the Salafi organization Islam Net.[1] Its founder and leader is the Norwegian-Pakistani engineering student Fahad Qureshi, whose father was affiliated with Tabligh-i Jama'at (Linge 2013). As of 2013 Islam Net has around 2000 registered members and is represented by student associations at Tromsø University and Bodø University College. Islam Net regularly invites preachers to Norway. They lecture both in members-only arrangements, and at Islam Net's public annual three-day long Peace Conferences. The lectures and conferences constitute meetings between the foreign preachers and *shaykh*s who refer to Salafi teachings and authorities, and a Norwegian audience which in the public conferences includes some non-Muslims. At the meetings I attended the central message was that Muslims should engage with the general public in every possible way, and befriend – even hug! – non-Muslims. This message is not common within Salafism. Consequently, the aim here is to define Islam Net with reference to the latest research on Salafism, and define to what extent it is capable of civic engagement. The analytical framework is provided by Michel de Certeau's concept of discourse and Jürgen Habermas' concept of 'post-secular society'. The data is drawn from my participation in a three-day Peace Conference in Oslo in April 2012; a half-day lecture in Trondheim in June 2012; and observation and participation in October 2012 and March 2013 in two failed attempts by Islam Net to engage with public institutions.

State of the Art

The majority of Islam Net's members are so-called second- and third-generation immigrants in Norway. In this respect they can be seen as representative of the young European Muslims whose constructions of Islam the French sociologist Olivier Roy has

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[1] See Islam Net's bylaws for the organization's identification with the teachings of all the founders of the four law schools, and the Salafi scholars Ibn Baz and al-Albani: http://www.islamnet.no/om-oss/om-oss/2061; accessed 7 October 2013.

termed neo-fundamentalism (Roy 2004). Since Roy includes Salafism under the term neo-fundamentalism, together with Tabligh-i Jama'at and Hizb al-Tahrir, and even such liberal preachers as Tariq Ramadan, it is worth examining the term's relevance for Islam Net.

Neo-fundamentalism signifies a view of Islam as an all-encompassing system of faith and practice, which in its pure form is found in the scriptures, and which is believed to differ in essence from the cultures of Muslim majority countries. While this definition of Islam may appear highly traditional in that it defines Islam in terms of the Qur'an and the *hadith*, this scriptural Islam nevertheless expresses the circumstance that young western Muslims define Islam in the context of their everyday lives in the West. Specifically, Roy defines neo-fundamentalism as a strategy of simultaneous *deculturalization* and *acculturation*, i.e. it strips Islam of the cultures of the Middle East and North Africa at the same time as it accommodates Islam with everyday life in the West. Since this accommodation involves a new and stronger commitment to the notion of pure scriptural Islam, including wearing Islamic dress and other ostensible signs such as full beard and avoidance of sinful things and people, it is also a process of 're-Islamization' of western Muslim youth:

> Re-Islamisation means that Muslim identity, self-evident as long as it belonged to an inherited cultural legacy, has to express itself explicitly in a non-Muslim or Western context. The construction of a 'deculturalised' Islam is a means of experiencing a religious identity that is not linked to a given culture and can therefore fit with every culture, or, more precisely, could be defined beyond the very notion of culture (Roy 2004:23–24; cf. 19–22, 117–47).

From Roy's viewpoint, the fact that re-Islamization involves deculturalizing Islam means that it can be seen as a strategy of shaping western Islam, even though it may mean defining Islam in conscious opposition to what are perceived as western values. Roy emphasizes that such construction of a deculturalized Islam is a public activity, both because it takes place in the media, and because non-Muslims as well as other

Muslims outside the own group serve as simultaneously reference points and stakeholders in the constructions of Islam:

> The issue is one not only of recasting an Islamic identity, but also of formulating it in explicit terms. Resorting to an explicit formulation is important, because it obliges one to make choices and to disentangle the different and often contradictory levels of practices and discourses where a religion is embedded in a given culture. Especially in times of political crisis (such as 9/11:, ordinary Muslims feel compelled (or are explicitly asked: to explain what it means to be a Muslim (by an opinion poll, a neighbor, a news anchorman or spontaneously, because Muslims anticipate the question:. The Western press publishes many opinion pieces and other articles, written by 'moderate' or 'liberal' Muslims, stating what Islam is or is not (usually what it is not: radical, violent, fanatical, and so on:. (Roy 2004:24).[2]

Following Eickelman and Piscatori's theory that the 'objectified' Islam that is the fruit of modern public culture and mass education is largely independent of traditional religious authorities (Eickelman & Piscatori 1996; Roy 2004: 21), Roy argues that these public reconstructions of Islam have become the task of ordinary Muslims, not of learned authorities: 'This task falls on the shoulders of every Muslim, rather than on legitimate religious authorities, simply because, as we shall see, there are so few or no established Muslim authorities in the West' (Roy 2004: 24). The fact that neo-fundamentalist definitions of Islam are independent of traditional authorities, both in terms of defining and enforcing religion, makes them more similar to western Christianity and western new religious movements than to traditional Islam (Roy 2004:26–29, ch. 4–5).

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[2] For the same observation developed in the context of a life-story study of two Moroccan-Dutch young women Salafis, see de Koning (2009:; cf. Adraoui (2009: in the context of young French Salafis.

Bernard Haykel has criticized Roy for his indiscriminate grouping of Salafism together with movements and individuals who, in Haykel's view, represent completely different concepts of Islam. Unlike the other movements and individuals, Haykel argues, Salafism is not a modern phenomenon. In fact, Salafism's self-identity as representing the 'pure Islam' of the Prophet's *sunna* and the first generations of Companions and Successors has roots as far back in Islamic history as Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 855) and the theological school *Ahl al-hadith*, with its continuation in the Hanbali school and the famous theologians Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350) and 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792) (Haykel 2009).

According to Haykel three factors define Salafism: theology, law, and criteria for political action. Theology provides the boundary between Salafis and other Muslims. All Salafis agree on a creed (*'aqida*) of absolute *tawhid* ('affirmation of God's Oneness') and belief in the uncreated nature of God's eternal attributes (*sifat*;, including the Qur'an as His eternal speech. On the basis of their creed they reject other Sunni and Shiite doctrines, and the idea that man-made laws could substitute for God's *shari'a*. Legal issues, however, are not significant as markers of identity. Salafis affirm that competent legal scholars should practice *ijtihad* (independent interpretation by applying reason to the Qur'an and *hadith*) and in doing so consult all the law schools, rather than only one, and that non-jurists should follow (*ittaba'a*) the rulings of Salafi scholars. Thus Salafis do not allow non-scholars to make their own interpretations in the way Roy says is typical of neo-fundamentalism.

If the creed defines Salafism towards the exterior, political action divides it internally: whether it is allowed, for what reasons, and by which means (Haykel 2009: 47–51; cf. Wiktorowicz 2006). Using Salafi terminology, Haykel distinguishes between three positions: *jihadi* Salafism, which seeks by violent means to establish God's rule on earth through a legitimate caliphate; *haraki* ('movement') Salafism which is often influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood ideology, as it advocates applying *tawhid* through non-violent politics in order to change and Islamize society

and government; and *'ilmi* ('scholarly') Salafism which denounces political activism unless commanded by the ruler, and focuses on purification of Muslims' knowledge and practice of Islam (Haykel 2009:48–51).

Haykel's categories correspond to Quintan Wiktorowicz's terms 'jihadist', 'politico' and 'purist' (Wiktorowicz 2006). However, Haykel's categories are more flexible, since the distinction between *'ilmi* and *haraki* does not rule out political engagement on the part of the scholars, which Wiktorowicz's distinction between 'purist' and 'politico' does. The following studies of various forms of Salafi politics illustrate this point, showing how Salafi political activism depends on the national institutional context. Bjørn Olav Utvik has studied *haraki* Salafis and their parliamentary politics in Kuwait, finding that within Kuwait's dynamic parliamentary frame they collaborate with other politicians and develop policies on issues beyond traditional *haraki* frames, while maintaining that their politics are truly Islamic (Utvik 2010). Thus, even in a Muslim majority country such as Kuwait, *haraki* Salafi parliamentarians do not necessarily challenge the existing political system.

Naturally, in European contexts Salafi politics are also shaped by each country's institutional order. Regarding French Madkhali Salafis of the *'ilmi* category, Adraoui (2009: shows how they withdraw from the French political system and 'citizenship-integration' programmes such as that represented by Tariq Ramadan and the national umbrella organizations which are in dialogue with the state, and instead develop their own Salafi networks, especially with the Gulf States, where individual entrepreneurship and commerce are what count. Piety leading to individual personal development, prosperity and happiness is the heart of this Salafi political economy, which bypasses the French public institutional system politically, economically and culturally. Hence, even this politically quietist form of Salafism expresses itself as highly socio-economically entrepreneurial, offering networks which enable personal gains which these individuals apparently perceived they could not gain within the French system.

De Koning (2012) shows with reference to Dutch Salafis that Wiktorovicz's distinction between 'purists' and 'politicos' needs to be revised. Dutch Madkhali Salafis, who would fall into Wiktorovicz's category of 'purists', are involved in civic political engagement which differs not only from his concept of 'purism' but also from his definition of the 'politico' agenda. The Dutch case shows Madkhali Salafi politics being about asserting the right of Muslims to practise true Islam within Dutch society, which pushes them to engage actively with the non-Muslim public as well as with non-Salafi Muslims. De Koning's analysis of the Dutch Salafis' public engagement shows them to correspond closely to Roy's concept of neo-fundamentalism as the product of constant negotiations between its propagators, other Muslims and the general non-Muslim public, and as a form of Islam which is shaped according to the particular western context; it also corresponds with what could be called European *haraki* Salafism.

De Koning's results can be applied equally to the Norwegian Islam Net: it draws on teachings and rulings by Saudi scholarly Salafis,[3] yet engages in civic activities and socializes with non-Muslims on recommendation by European *haraki* Salafi scholars and in ways which differ radically from Saudi Salafi norms.[4] In the first academic study of Islam Net, Marius Linge follows de Koning's approach, focusing mainly on the significance of Norwegian public Islamophobia since the 1980s in creating a need for a Salafi discourse on Muslim identity which has the capacity to address public stereotypes about Islam and Muslims. Linge contextualizes Islam Net with reference to the Pakistani-Norwegian milieus of its founder Fahad Qureshi, where

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[3] On Islam Net's website under 'Fatwas' there are numerous *fatwa*s from the former Saudi Chief Mufti Ibn Baz; see Islam Net 2013a.

[4] See the videos posted on Islam Net's website from the UK-based Shaykh Haitham al-Haddad's lectures on Muslims in the West and Social participation; Islam Net 2013b. On al-Haddad as a Hanbali and Salafi, see Sunniforum 2013. Regarding Islam Net's political activities, see Bangstad and Linge 2013, although these authors do not use the term *haraki*, only 'purist', and they are less interested in the accommodating dimensions of Islam Net.

international preachers who take on Christian or western criticism of Islam, such as the South African Ahmed Deedat and his disciple the Indian televangelist Zakir Naik, blended with Tabligh-i zeal for *da'wa*. Through Zakir Naik, there is also a connection to Pakistani Salafism, in the form of *Ahl-e hadith* (Linge 2013).

This article also contextualizes Islam Net with reference to its members' family backgrounds and their assumed need for Islamic guidance which allows them to challenge certain cultural practices associated with Islam. Thus, the process of deculturalization and acculturation that Roy describes needs to be considered with reference to everyday life situations. This perspective can shed light on why criticism of Sufism resonates with members of Islam Net, beyond the intellectual pleasures of theological polemics: Sufism is closely connected with the Islamic discourses associated with their families' values, and which some young Muslims may find troublesome. While I have not conducted extensive interviews to verify this, I find support for the approach in the observations I have made. Before proceeding to describe the observations, the significance of different institutional contexts for Islam Net will be theorized.

Conceptual Framework

Discourse as institutionalized knowledge and practices

Michel de Certeau (d. 1986) was a French historian who, in line with French sociology of knowledge as represented by Michel Foucault (d. 1984) and Pierre Bourdieu (d. 2002), integrated into his own historical analysis reflections on the problem of institutionalized knowledge production, or discourse. According to de Certeau (1975/1988), discourse is an institutionalized 'mode of intelligibility' with corresponding practices concerning a particular subject-matter. Discourse can be visualized as an interaction between three factors: institution (here: the university); discipline (Islamic studies); and subject (Salafism/Islam Net). Subject refers to the relationship that is formed between the author and his or her subject-matter when s/he defines the specific problem area, theory and method. This relationship is in turn shaped by the specific discipline(s) and institution(s) with which the author is affiliated. Hence,

Salafism/Islam Net as a subject matter is shaped by the author's institutional, disciplinary and subjective knowledge and practices.

In epistemological terms, this concept of discourse does not imply that there is no objective knowledge about a subject-matter: it means that discourse may obstruct us from gaining accurate knowledge about a subject-matter. De Certeau thus encourages a kind of 'resistance' which is simultaneously within and against a discourse. What enables resistance is the subject level. The individual author's subject is always different from the other subject-positions that make up the discourse, which implies that the subject can take a critical distance from discourse even as s/he is part of it. This is why a discourse is continuously changing.

The same approach is reflected also in de Certeau's sociologically oriented work (1980/1984). While individuals necessarily live their lives within social institutions, they do not passively absorb institutionalized knowledge and practices but employ them creatively to express their subjective desires. Thus, the individual's knowledge and actions are simultaneously institutionalized and subjective, and the subjective dimension always has the capacity to take institutionalized knowledge and practices in a new direction.

Applied to Islam Net, de Certeau's concepts imply that it *necessarily* reflects several institutional discourses. Islam Net's members are part of their families' discourses, which include knowledge and practice of Islam; of other Islamic discourses that they encounter; and the discourse associated with Islam Net. Furthermore, the same members have in most cases grown up in Norway within its public institutional system of immigration authorities, schools, universities, health care and welfare authorities, and the public and private labour market. Islam Net's individual members thus simultaneously participate in and resist Islamic as well as several other discourses, and through their subject positions gradually modify all of them.

At the general level de Certeau's concept of discourse implies that Salafism is necessarily something else in the West than in the institutional context of Muslim majority countries, and it is something specific in Norway compared with other European countries. However, it is also necessary to break Salafism down into its different political discourses, as defined by Haykel (2009). Given that Islam Net encourages its members to engage in civic activities, it must be defined as *haraki* Salafism, and one which is shaped by the Norwegian institutional order and public sphere, as well as its members' family backgrounds and daily lives.

Discourse as democratic legitimacy

Concerning Islam Net's capacity for civic engagement, Jürgen Habermas provides the theoretical perspective. Habermas claims that liberal democracy depends for its legitimacy on the ability of public discourse to include as many citizen groups as possible in deliberations about the common good. His concept of public discourse has a normative foundation in his commitment to the liberal democratic and secular social contract, and an epistemological grounding in his dialectical materialist position regarding the forces that drive social and individual development (Habermas 1979). Habermas defines the modern public sphere as the forum where the ethical and political evolution of individuals and society is driven by deliberation and its dialectics between public and private interest (Habermas 1962/1989). The specific problem occupying Habermas is how public and private interests can be deliberated so as to maintain the legitimacy of liberal democracy. By legitimacy he means 'that there are good arguments for a political order's claim to be recognized as right and just; a legitimate order deserves recognition. *Legitimacy means a political order's worthiness to be recognized.*' (Habermas 1979:178; italics in the original). A legitimation problem arises when the political order's claim to be recognized as right and just is contested by significant groups. Liberal democratic legitimacy is created and contested in the public sphere through rational public discourse, defined as 'a process that ensures the inclusion of all those affected and the equal consideration of all the interests at play' (Habermas

1999/2003:105). The implication is that even arguments that challenge the political order's claim to recognition must be included in public discourse.

Religion's public re-emergence in the form of private interest groups and as contested subject matter in public debates illustrates the legitimacy problem (Habermas 2002, 2005a, 2005b, 2008). Religious citizens are not included in public discourse on the same terms as other citizens due to the exclusive nature of their arguments and concepts and the equally exclusive approach towards religion manifested by increasingly vociferous ideological secularists. This exclusion of religious citizens from public deliberation over the common good poses a new challenge to democratic legitimacy. Given that Habermas sees the problem as one of public understanding ('intelligibility', with de Certeau), his proposed solution is a translation process where religious citizens translate religious concepts into secular counterparts and vice versa, so that a civic vocabulary is created which enables religious citizens to communicate to the public the implications of religious arguments for the common good (Habermas 2007:16–19).

Habermas' envisioned translation process is connected with his concept of 'post-secular society', by which he means a society where government and law, and science and public education, are institutionally autonomous from religion but hyper-conscious of religion's significance. If public debates during most of the twentieth century were largely oblivious of religion, post-secular consciousness is aware that modernity has not led to the disappearance of religion and that it plays an important role in global conflicts. There is public awareness, too, that the religious actors who claim authority to interpret relations between religion and society belong to the immigrant communities that embody the challenges that European countries face as they seek to balance cultural diversity and social cohesion (Habermas 2008:19–20). To overcome tensions, both religious and non-religious citizens must be able to see religion as a resource for the common good, hence the need for translation.

Synthesis

Applying de Certeau's and Habermas' concepts to Islam Net implies that young Norwegian Muslims find something in Islam Net's discourse which enables them to 'resist' and creatively employ family, Islamic and public institutional discourses in order to express their subjects. Their ability to do so is both an individual freedom and a democratic capacity. Public awareness about Salafism as a global religious phenomenon associated with jihad and with serious international conflicts is now part of the public discourse on Islam in Norway, which sets boundaries for individuals who identify with Islam Net. Norwegian public discourse denies all forms of Islam the possibility of *contributing* anything positive to the common good (IMDi 2009), and this is particularly true for Islam Net. Thus, if the public discourse on Islam signifies a general democracy deficit for Muslims, Islam Net's members are even more disadvantaged in that they are identified with what is perceived as an exclusively problematic form of Islam.

Norwegian dialogue discourse and Islam Net

In public discourse, however, Norway strongly identifies with a Habermasian ideal of public dialogue and inclusive deliberation as the source of democratic legitimacy. In his address to the nation the day after Anders Behring Breivik's terrorist attack and mass murder of Labour Party youth in Oslo and on Utøya on 22 July 2011, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg promised the people 'more openness' and more democracy (Vårt Land 2012). So far, this has meant that anti-immigrant and anti-Islam sentiment is tolerated even more openly than before the terrorist deed.[5]

Yet under the radar of public anti-Islam discourse, Norway during the 1990s institutionalized dialogue with Muslims. In 1993 the Contact Group for dialogue between the Church of Norway and the Islamic Council of Norway (IRN) was established, on the Church's initiative. The Church of Norway is still a Lutheran state

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[5] See IMDi 2009 for a survey documenting strong anti-Muslim tendencies in Norwegian media and among the general public in the years before 2011; see Ismail 2013 regarding Muslims' experiences of media debates about Islam post-2011.

church, and IRN is a national Islamic umbrella organization. In 1996 the national Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities (STL) was established as a grassroots dialogue initiative by Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and the secular Humanist Association. Today STL includes nearly all faith groups in the country. It has an international wing, the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief, which is part of a wider national discourse about Norway as upholder and exporter of human rights (Regjeringen 2013). The Muslim-Christian Contact Group shares the national commitment to human rights; for example, it has committed both the Church and IRN to freedom of religion and the freedom to *leave* religion, as expressed in a joint declaration in 2007 (Den Norske Kirke 2007; Leirvik 2012).

When Islam Net was founded in 2008 it set itself apart from the Norwegian system of institutionalized religion in two ways, firstly regarding funding. In Norway all faith- or worldview-based communities are entitled to public funding, provided they register as organizations with membership records. Hence, the IRN consists of a wide range of mosque organizations, all of which receive an annual sum per member. In this funding system a person can only be a registered member of one organization at a time. Islam Net has opted out of this system and chose instead to organize as a voluntary association with an annual membership fee of 100 NOK.[6] In 2013 Islam Net had around 2000 registered members and student associations at Tromsø University and Bodø University College. Its board consists of four members, one of whom is a woman (Islam Net 2013c; 2013d). Remaining outside the public religious funding system also allows Islam Net greater flexibility in recruiting members. It can invite members of the other organizations to join Islam Net because Islam Net does not receive public funding as a faith-based organization (Islam Net 2013d). In this way Islam Net maximizes the reach of its *da'wa*.

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[6] Although Islam Net receives funding from Landsforeningen for Norges Barne- og Ungdomsorganisasjoner (LNU; The National Association for Norway's Child- and Youth Organizations; according to Bangstad and Linge (2013), 280,000 NOK in 2012.

Secondly, Islam Net is not part of the institutionalized national dialogues, neither the Muslim-Christian nor the multi-faith one. This is not because Islam Net rejects dialogue with non-Muslims: it stresses the commitment to dialogue as part of its duty to conduct *da'wa,* 'invitation' to Islam. But at the same time Islam Net self-identifies as representing pure Islam based on the scriptures, and it is correspondingly reluctant to subject Islam to principles such as human rights, which provide the frame for the interfaith dialogues. Remaining outside the national public discourse on human rights even further limits Islam Net's already strongly circumscribed capacity to deliberate over the common good, since the latter is so closely identified with liberal democratic values and human rights. The following sections will illustrate this dilemma.

Islam Net's Aim and Discourse

Islam Net was, as mentioned, founded in 2008 by Fahad Qureshi (b. 1988), a university engineering student of Norwegian-Pakistani background. Like Qureshi, the majority of Islam Net's around 2000 members are young people from Muslim families, many of whom are of Somali and Pakistani origins. There are also a handful of converts, as Islam Net is highly missionary and its members invite people to Islam (*da'wa*) in as many contexts as possible: at conferences, on the web, through street stands, and through personal contacts and friendships.

For the same reason (*da'wa*) Islam Net is a highly public organization. It runs a public website with discussion board, letters from members, and Q&A section. The website www.islamnet.no declares that Islam Net's aim is to clarify misunderstandings about Islam:

> Islam is the most misunderstood religion in the world. Because of the actions of certain individuals the world is under the impression that Islam advocates terrorism. Due to insufficient knowledge and dialogue many still believe that Islam is a religion that oppresses women.

By clarifying these and other misunderstandings about Islam it will be easier to build bridges between Muslims and all other communities, and that is the aim with this website.

We concentrate on explaining the most common misunderstandings among Muslims and non-Muslims. The articles are very detailed and explain several different views on each issue, and we encourage everyone to read them.

The Qur'an verses used in our articles have been translated (to Norwegian; UM: by Islam Net. They have been compared with English translations by, among others, Yusuf Ali and Pickthall, and in addition the two Norwegian [translations; UM] which are available as per today. The verses have been reviewed and approved by persons knowledgeable in Arabic.

Our articles are based on the Qur'an and Hadith. The bulk of them have been written in English by authoritative people, among others Dr. Zakir Naik. The translation is done by us in Islam Net… If you find any incorrect information in our articles we are open for corrections, as long as you can support your claim with authentic sources. We define as authentic sources the Qur'an, Sahih Hadith, scientific facts or rational logic.

And God knows best.

Thus, Islam Net is not primarily an organization for scholars but for Muslims devoted to 'clarifying misunderstandings of Islam' (cf. Linge 2013). Since no other self-declared identity is to be found in its vision statement on the website, it is reasonable to conclude that the aim sums up Islam Net's identity: 'those who clarify misunderstandings of Islam' (through *da'wa*). This aim gives the organization a highly public character, since it seeks to reach the general public, including other Muslims. The related sub-aim 'building bridges with all other communities' places Islam Net within the discourse of *haraki* Salafism, i.e. those who participate in politics and socialize outside of the purified community (see also Islam Net 2013b).

Islam Net's board members are not scholars. Instead they consult and publish what they consider to be scholarly works. Dr Zakir Naik, their main authority regarding misunderstandings of Islam, is a famous Indian preacher and former medical doctor who hosts a TV show called Peace TV, dedicated to clarifying misunderstandings about Islam, often with reference to other religions, especially Hinduism and Christianity. Naik is immensely popular among students at Pakistani Salafi *Ahl-e hadith madrasa*s who appreciate his type of individual scholarship and critique of *taqlid* or 'unthinking reliance on a law school' (Abou Zahab 2009:141). Like the Pakistani *Ahl-e hadith madrasa*s (Abou Zahab 2009:132–3), Naik takes a very positive (if sometimes eclectic) view of science and rationality, which explains why Islam Net ranks science and rational logic as authoritative sources after the Qur'an and *hadith*.

There are direct connections between Saudi Arabia's famous university in Medina, with which leading scholarly Salafis such as Ibn Baz (d. 1999), al-'Uthaymin (d. 2001), al-Fawzan, and al-Madkhali are affiliated, and some of the Pakistani *Ahl-e hadith madrasa*s (Abou Zahab 2009:132–3). However, Zakir Naik himself is vehemently criticized by European scholarly Madkhali Salafis, for wearing western clothing like a shirt and tie; for falsifying the Islamic creed by comparing Allah with deities of other religions, notably the Hindu Brahma; and for being closer to Indian organizations such as Jama'at-i Islami than to Salafism (Salafitalk 2007).[7] The fact that Naik is still the role model for Islam Net provides further support for the definition of Islam Net as *haraki* Salafism, as distinct from the scholarly Madkhalis.

Zakir Naik is also the model for Islam Net's Peace Conferences (cf. Linge 2013). In 2007 Naik held the first of his annual ten-day Peace Conferences in Mumbai, to which he invites both foreign preachers and Indian scholars, mainly those affiliated with Jama'at-i Islami (Times of India 2011). Since 2010 Islam Net has organized annual three-day Peace Conferences in Oslo. These have the same aim as Naik's conferences:

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[7] Concerning Zakir Naik, see also his participation in a debate about religious tolerance arranged by the Oxford Union (The Guardian 2011; YouTube 2011).

to inform about Islam and clarify misunderstandings. The invited preachers are sometimes the same as those invited by Zakir Naik, for example, the converts Abdur Raheem Green (UK) and Khalid Yasin (USA), the former also denounced by Madkhali Salafis as an ignorant fraudster lacking even knowledge of Arabic (Green; Salafitalk 2003), and the latter as a dangerous Qutb-inspired revolutionary and dissenter (*hizbi*: who tries to deceive through his knowledge of Arabic and studies at the University of Medina (Yasin; Salafitalk 2002).

However, at the Peace Conference I attended in April 2012, Green repeatedly referred to the Saudi scholarly *shaykh* al-'Uthaymin. Thus it appears that while Zakir Naik covers the dimension of clarifying misunderstandings about Islam, for matters concerning the creed, legal matters and guidelines for social interactions with other Muslims and non-Muslims, Islam Net relies on a combination of Saudi scholarly Salafis and European *haraki* Salafis, and the latter deliver quite new interpretations. For example, in December 2012 and March 2013 Islam Net invited the British Salafi scholar Haitham al-Haddad to hold a series of workshops on how to practise Islam and interpret Sharia in the West, and on participation in western society and politics (Islam Net 2013e; 2013f). When Islam Net announced the workshop a politician from the Left declared that al-Haddad's views on marriage, homosexuality and apostasy are barbaric, and he asked Islam Net to cancel the workshop, which they did not do (Aftenposten 2013a). Al-Haddad himself argues that while Sharia is the same as Islam and therefore incumbent upon Muslims, they must obey the law of the land – which is not a deviation from Islam since the laws of western countries are in the essential matters in line with Sharia (Islam Net 2013a; see also 2013e; 2013f). However, on issues stated unequivocally in the scriptures, such as the unlawfulness of homosexuality and of leaving Islam, al-Haddad and other scholars invited by Islam Net are firm: it is not permitted by Islam. This does not mean that they advocate breaking the national law by punishing homosexuality and atheism or conversion from Islam among Muslims, but they insist on teaching that these practices are unlawful.

Peace Conference 2012

In April 2012 I attended Islam Net's three-day Peace Conference in Oslo. This was the third such conference in Islam Net's history but the first one after Anders Behring Breivik's terrorist attack and mass murder in Oslo in July 2011, which claimed 77 lives. According to Breivik's testimony, he committed the crimes to punish the governing Labour Party for its 'Marxist policy of multiculturalism' without which Muslims would never have been allowed to enter Norway and threaten its national culture (BBC 2012). Needless to say, it has been extremely difficult for Norwegian Muslims to deal with Breivik's propaganda that the deed was perpetrated to protect the nation against those who show solidarity with Muslims. Fahad Qureshi opened the conference by reminding the audience of this, and he declared that Norwegian Muslims have a duty to explain and practise Islam in such a way that the public understands that Muslims are good people who contribute positively to society. Islam Net's *da'wa* and Peace Conferences are conduits to this end of explaining what true Islam is, and non-Muslims are invited so that they too can learn and have their misunderstandings clarified.

The invited preachers in 2012 were Yusuf Chambers and Abdur-Raheem Green, both British converts and preachers rather than scholars; Shaykh Riad Ouarzazi, a scholar of Moroccan origins and Canadian citizen, working for the al-Maghrib Institute;[8] Ali Mohammed Salah, a scholar of Somali origins and resident of Malaysia; Shaykh Hussain Yee, convert and scholar of Chinese background and citizen of Malaysia; Muhammad Abdul Jabbar, born and raised in the UK and still pursuing his scholarly studies; and Boonaa Mohammed, Canadian lyrical writer and performance artist.

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[8] For the al-Maghrib Institute's BA curriculum, see http://almaghrib.org/about/curriculum (accessed 6 October 2013); it contains the typical Salafi teachings but taught in a way that attracts young western Muslims: 'We started up in 2002 with a simple question—how could we teach you Islam in a way that was fun, social, spiritual, and oh yeah, academic? We asked around, and it turned out people wanted teachers who knew their stuff, but didn't turn learning Islam into a snoozefest, and they didn't want endless weeks of lectures'; http://almaghrib.org/about (accessed 6 October 2013).

It was clear from the lecture topics, and confirmed in a conversation with Hussain Yee, that the lecturers prepare together with the organizers before the conference, so that they know what the concerns of the mostly young audience are and can present the appropriate teachings, including jokes showing that the preachers are familiar with the Norwegian Muslim community. Some of the young people in the audience had brought their parents along too.

The venue was an indoor sports arena in a nice villa suburb of Oslo. On the tram to the conference on the third and last day we met three young women dressed up in *niqab* (the full face veil) for the occasion. It was clearly the first time they had worn such a garment, and they had to struggle a bit with it, which made them giggly and up-beat – a sentiment enhanced by disapproving glares from the other tram passengers.

The conference was gender segregated. Men and women entered through separate entrances and sat at different ends of the conference hall, men at the front and women at the back, but without separating walls. The majority of the young women wore *hijab*, only a few *niqab*. There were also those who did not wear Islamic dress at all. On the second day a news team from Norwegian television was at the women's entrance interviewing conference participants about the gender segregated arrangement. Both the young and the older women they asked said that they prefer gender separate seating and entrances, since they do not feel comfortable queuing or sitting next to unknown men.

In common for all the preachers was the message that any problems facing Muslims as individuals and as a group are due to incorrect understanding of Islam. Consequently, to follow the Prophet's true Islam is the solution to all problems. Riad Ouarzazi preached about love and devotion to the Prophet, bringing the female audience to tears. He emphasized that the Prophet never lost his temper and never avenged himself on his opponents, not even on his enemies. Instead the Prophet taught his Companions to lead by example, i.e. rather than punish enemies they should convince them of the truth of Islam by their own righteous behaviour. Ouarzazi used examples from *hadith* and mixed in reference to issues familiar to the audience, such as the cartoons of the Prophet which

were published in Norway, and relations between Muslims and Jews. The cartoons should not be avenged but resisted by manifesting Muslims' respect towards other faiths and people. This message of not paying back to detractors is powerful in Norway, where media coverage of Islam is intense and exclusively negative: by describing the Prophet's suffering from prejudice and hostility and his dignified response Ouarzazi made it easy for the audience to identify with him, and to feel proud about finding peaceful coping strategies.[9] The issue of Muslims and Jews is significant given that many members of Islam Net believe in conspiracy theories about Zionist world dominance and have derogatory views of Jews. The Prophet, Ouarzazi emphasized, treated his Jewish neighbours with the utmost respect and care, as he did with all people. Ouarzazi's approach to these topics also signifies total rejection of the ethos associated with a new militant Norwegian group called The Prophet's Umma. While the group 'came out' in public in September 2012, its leading members are known criminals and some have previous records of threats towards Norwegian Jews. They have also demonstrated against cartoons and films, calling for militant responses. Given that some members have joined al-Qaeda-affiliated fighters in Syria, it cannot be excluded that they have adopted al-Qaeda's view that violence against Norwegian society is in principle lawful.[10]

Theology in the proper sense was dealt with by Abdur-Raheem Green. Referring to al-'Uthaymin, he explained that Islam is only true when it is anchored in the believer's purified heart, which is where knowledge about God is located. The heart's knowledge

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[9] On representations of Islam and Muslims in Norwegian media and indications of discrimination against Muslims, see IMDi (2009).

[10] On The Prophet's Umma, see Morgenbladet 2012; Aftenposten 2013a; on earlier threats against Norwegian Jews by a member of The Prophet's Umma, see Aftenposten 2008; on members of the Prophet's Umma fighting with al-Qaeda in Syria (rather than with other fighters:, see Morgenbladet 2013 (interview with defence researcher Thomas Hegghammer); on different kinds of Salafism with reference to use of violence against western societies, see Hegghammer 2009. Haitham al-Haddad has also given a *fatwa* against joining jihad in Syria; see Islam Net 2013g.

about God is the source of inner peace, tranquility and equanimity, which is required if the believer is to resist temptations and sin. While Green was highly critical of traditional Sufism ('those who go Allahooohohoooo': for its worship of Sufi *shaykh*s as intermediaries between men and God, it is worth noting that al-'Uthaymin's theology of the heart itself is probably inspired by 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani's ascetic Sufism to which al-'Uthaymin's main source of inspiration, the great Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), belonged.

Another important Salafi topic which Green addressed was *al-wala' wa'l-bara'*, 'loyalty and disavowal', which derives from the Qur'an 5:51: 'O believers, take not Jews and Christians as friends; they are friends of each other. Whoso of you makes them his friend is one of them' (Arberry's translation). Here Green again referred to al-'Uthaymin, even though it appears that he constructed a highly independent argument.[11] According to Green (and correctly), the Arabic root *wala* does not signifiy 'friendship' as it is mistakenly translated, but 'political loyalty'. Hence, the verse 5:51 does not refer to or forbid friendship between Muslims and non-Muslims, it merely says that Muslims in that context should not give political loyalty to Jews and Christians over Muslims. However, in the west Muslims should be loyal to non-Muslim states, unless the state forces Muslims to act against Islam. Green's interpretation was directed against both the *jihadi*-Salafi position, which rejects Muslim political loyalty to any but the righteous Muslim ruler, and the conservative Saudi scholarly position which admonishes against friendship with non-Muslims (Wagemakers 2012). Regarding Jews, Green pointed out with reference to Breivik's Crusader symbolism, that the historical crusaders massacred both Jews and Muslims, and that the best way to combat crusader ideology today is for Muslims and Jews to show solidarity with each other. The point about friendship with non-Muslims was picked up also by Riad Ouarzazi, who orchestrated group hugs in the audience, commanding especially those Muslims and non-Muslims who sat next to each other to hug. The significance of this performance becomes clear if compared with the

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[11] For a thorough study of different Salafi definitions of *al-walâ' wa'l-barâ'*, including al-'Uthaymîn, see Wagemakers (2012).

scholarly Salafi approach of keeping distance to non-Muslims on the one hand, and on the other with the expression of solidarity from Muslims to non-Muslims that Fahad Qureshi voiced in the opening of the conference: distances must be bridged.

Green also came out strongly against rap and gangster culture and the Muslim attitude found in such circles, that God is the only Judge and that other Muslims should not castigate them but rather show inter-Muslim solidarity and help defend them against non-Muslim law. Referring to the typical Salafi emphasis on the Islamic principle 'commanding the good and combatting the reprehensible', Green explained why it is each believer's duty to uphold the law and denounce crime, whether committed by Muslims or any other person. The same message was also developed by Mohammed Abdul Jabbar. It has particular significance among young Muslims in Oslo, where Norwegian-Pakistanis have formed competing criminal gangs which often figure in the media, and which are part of and pose threats to the life-worlds of some members of the audience (iOslo.no 2006).

Another important conference theme was family law and married life, which touches on a persistent topic in Norwegian media debates about Islam: forced marriage. The government has institutionalized a campaign against the practice, involving schools, social workers, and monitoring bodies at Norwegian embassies in the countries from which some Norwegian Muslim families select marriage partners for their children. Hussain Yee dealt with the legal sides of marriage. He came out strongly against forced marriage, arguing that unless a marriage is voluntary it is not Islamic. He also emphasized that Islam is against all forms of tribalism and nationalism, and that therefore the only relevant criterion for selecting a marriage partner is if the person is a good Muslim. 'Why have you left Pakistan if you continue to bring marriage partners for your children from your home village?' Yee asked rhetorically, 'If you cannot let your children find partners among Norwegian Muslims, why do you live in Norway? Move back to Pakistan!' Yee was careful to point out that children must always pay respect to their parents and as far as possible comply with their wishes, but that if the parents contradict true Islam the children have the right to stand up for those principles,

notably by choosing their preferred marriage partner (who should be Muslim:. Concerning the minimum legal age for marriage, Yee follows Norwegian law: 16 years of age. Forced marriage, sometimes involving being left behind in the parents' country of origin with an unwanted partner, is a serious problem for some young Norwegian Muslims of both sexes. Between 2008 and 2012, 298 young people, the majority of whom are Muslim girls from Pakistan, Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan, were forced to marry against their will, according to government records (excluding non-reported cases). In 2012 the figure was 85 individuals (IMDi 2012a).

Regarding married life, Riad Ouarzazi gave a fantastically humorous performance on the importance of expressing emotion within the family, which involved 'marrying' a member of the male audience. His message was a powerful antidote to traditional gender roles where especially men are taught to restrain expressions of affection, even within the family. Using *hadith*, Ouarzazi showed how the Prophet openly displayed affection for his wives, and how he and Aisha used to joke and laugh a lot, and compete and race together, and that the Prophet never objected when she beat him in running. Instead he fed her so much meat that she became all dull and slow, and he could win. Ouarzazi's message that husbands and wives should play and have fun and express affection for each other resonates with young Norwegian Muslims' views on the good atmosphere in the family. Those who had their parents in the audience were commanded to hug them, to practise overcoming embarrassment about displaying affection in public.

The general atmosphere at the conference was friendly and humorous. There were condemnations, however. Mohammed Abdul Jabbar gave a Doomsday sermon in which he condemned to hell those who claim to know when the end-times are and who invent their own signs of the end, as opposed to the correct approach which is to follow sound *hadith* on the matter and accept that only God knows when it is, even though it is certain to be near. The principal culprit was Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), founder of the Ahmadiyya which has quite a large community in Oslo. Ahmadiyya believes that while the Prophet Muhammad was the last prophet, his message was restored by the

harbinger of the end times, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who is thus a messianic figure, the awaited Mahdi. Harun Yahya, the famous Turkish conspiracy theorist and Creationist author, was also condemned on the same grounds. The Shiites were condemned for rejecting unity with the Sunnis, but in less severe terms than those who claim eschatological knowledge. Some ire was also spared for 'liberal Muslims' in Oslo, who regularly condemn Islam Net in the media.

In spite of Islam Net's efforts the conference did not make a good impression on members of the public. Ellen Reiss, the only public intellectual who attended, wrote critically about the conference, describing it as brainwashing, forcing young people into an intolerant and fundamentalist type of Islam, and as one-way missionary communication, not two-way dialogue.[12] This is true in the sense that there were no members of other faith communities or from the general public there who sought to open a discussion in the Q&A sessions. Thus it is not clear what the responses would have been.[13]

Da'wa Comes to Trondheim

Islam Net is based in Oslo, where the Peace Conferences are held, and it has student associations in Tromsø and Bodø in northern Norway. Trondheim in mid-Norway is the third largest city in the country. Those who carry on Islam Net's *da'wa* here are members of the central *jami'* and the Somali and Indonesian (Shafi'i) mosque Dar El-Iman, where they arrange study circles of the Qur'an and *hadith* for women. The other mosques in town are affiliated with Twelver Shia and the Turkish Diyanet and are not

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[12] See the debate between Ellen Reiss, Ulrika Mårtensson and Marius Linge (PluRel 2012).

[13] It seems it is only the Norwegian Heathen Society (Hedningssamfunnet) which has ever, as another worldview-based group, visited Islam Net's Peace Conference, in 2011. Their leader finds that compared with other Muslims he has met, Islam Net's members are unusually eager to discuss and free of prejudice in their approach, even though he finds their religiosity dangerous because of their firm belief in heaven for the saved and hell for the damned—like American Evangelicals. In spite of their certainty of being the good ones, he finds Fahad Qureshi and his female 'crew' highly sympathetic as persons and surprisingly open-minded (Eckhoff 2011).

involved with Islam Net, although the women's study circle has invited the woman imam from the Turkish mosque to visit their group. Except for one exceptional case, the study group's relations with the Shiite community have been mutually respectful and friendly.

In June 2012 Islam Net, on the initiative of the women's study group, arranged an afternoon lecture in Trondheim, with the Australian-Palestinian Shaykh Shady Alsuleiman. Shady Alsuleiman had also visited Trondheim's central mosque and two of the mosque's imams attended his lecture, which was held at the university campus. There were no participants from the general public, only this author and her colleague Eli-Anne Vongraven Eriksen. Women and men voluntarily sat in different parts of the lecture hall and mingled in different groups, although within full sight of each other.

The lecture's topic was how to practise Islam in a western society under non-Muslim law. Like Haitham al-Haddad, Alsuleiman emphasized the obligation on Muslims to obey the law of the country and interpret Sharia accordingly. Those who want to live under a full system of Islamic law should not campaign to change Norway's laws but must move to a suitable Muslim country. In Norway, however, they should engage actively in society and within the Norwegian legal system to enable Muslims to practise Islam. Thus Alsuleiman encouraged Muslim men and women to be active citizens and members of society, within the framework of *halal*, or permitted activities. Another central message was that Muslims must show tolerance and cooperate with one another, and not get drawn into sectarian animosities and exclusive attitudes.

Failed Attempts at Public Activities

During 2012 Islam Net stepped up its civic activities, in line with the advice from Shady Alsuleiman and Haitham al-Haddad. As mentioned, the Norwegian government conducts a campaign against forced marriages, and each year a number of civil society organizations receive public funding for activities aimed at combatting forced marriages. In October 2012 Islam Net was granted 100,000 NOK from the state Integration department (IMDi) for a workshop on Islam and forced marriage (IMDi

2012), in line with the legal advice on marriage given by Hussain Yee at the Peace Conference 2012. However, IMDi imposed a condition that Islam Net's workshop must not be gender segregated with separate seating for men and women. There was considerable attention in the media to this funding initiative, and many were critical of the decision to grant funding to Islam Net even with the condition of no gender segregation (NRK 2012b). Fahad Qureshi accepted the condition since it was state funding ear-marked for a specific activity, but his members did not accept 'selling out Islam'. Qureshi sought advice from Hussain Yee who recommended they return the money, since disunity within the organization was too high a price to pay and it was not acceptable to sign a contract which required setting aside Islamic principles, i.e. gender segregation (NRK 2012c). Thus, gender segregation is a principle which the majority of Islam Net's members consider constitutive of Islam and which they are not prepared to negotiate, even though their leader was prepared to do so. Rather, gender segregation is something they are prepared to struggle *for* in relation to public authorities and institutions.

In the winter of 2012 Islam Net applied to Oslo University to establish a student association there, similar to those the organization then had in Oslo-Akershus, Tromsø and Bodø. In March 2013 the University Chancellor rejected the application on the grounds that Oslo University identifies with the values of tolerance, inclusion and equality, and therefore it cannot be associated with Islam Net's views on homosexuality, freedom of religion and gender (NRK 2013; Universitas 2013a). Fahad Qureshi responded that if the Chancellor were prepared to have a dialogue, he could explain that Islam Net does not in fact contradict the University's values. The Chancellor declined any dialogue with Islam Net, and in May 2013 the University Board rejected a complaint by Islam Net against the initial decision (Universitas 2013b). It is worth noting that in the rejection document the University highlights gender segregated seating, which it equates with gender discrimination and portrays as enforced, in spite of the fact that I have never experienced that members of Islam Net are forced into gender segregation at public events. On the contrary, it is something they

appreciate and as we have seen, it was the members who forced the leader to back down on allowing gender mixing on a government-funded event. The University's decision should thus be understood as a refusal to accept gender segregation as practice, regardless of its meaning to its practitioners. Islam Net's non-identification with liberal anti-discrimination values has so far shut it out from further discussion with Oslo University Board, which insists that it is not discriminating against Islam Net, only upholding the University's values. Since May 2013, Oslo-Akershus College has refused to renew Islam Net's status as a student association, following the lead of Oslo University.

Concluding Analysis

The article aimed at defining Islam Net with reference to Salafism, and to its capacity for civic engagement. Regarding the first aim, it is found that at the meta-analytical level Islam Net corresponds to Roy's concept of neo-fundamentalism, since it (1) constructs Islam with reference to the scriptures, and in doing so (2) simultaneously de-culturalizes Islam from Muslim majority countries and acculturates Islam in the Norwegian context, and (3) negotiates its construction of Islam with reference to public debates and other Muslims. At the level of Salafi internal discourses, Islam Net corresponds to European *haraki* Salafism. It emphasizes social and political participation and harmonizes Sharia as far as possible with national law, which is recognized as the law that Muslims must comply with, even though they will not (yet: recognize homosexuality as an *Islamically* acceptable sexual practice or the right to leave Islam. This 'resistance' has to do with the fact that commands and prohibitions explicitly stated in the Qur'an are seen as non-negotiable; regarding *hadith* there is more flexibility because there are so many to choose from.

With reference to de Certeau's concept of discourse, Islam Net can be understood as offering a discourse that enables its individual members to express their subjects as Muslims by creatively 'resisting' other discourses associated with their families, other Islamic institutions, and a range of public institutions. While Islam Net is strongly criticized by more liberal Muslims, it cannot be ruled out that, from the viewpoint of its

members, liberal versions of Islam *as religious discourses* are more condoning than Islam Net of gang criminality and the patriarchal cultures associated with tribal honour, forced marriage and related everyday threats. More fieldwork and interviews are required to investigate this possibility.

Regarding Islam Net's capacity for civic engagement, its preachers and scholars advocate engagement with society. However, the organization's capacity is severely limited by its construction of true Islam. With Habermas' terms, Islam Net's clarifications of Islam have not convinced its public institutional interlocutors that they have anything to contribute to the common good, as long as they maintain gender segregation. The fact that the public institutions equate gender segregation with something enforced and discriminatory, and reject members' attempts to explain that they prefer it this way, implies that the communication is actually one-way: the public institutions are not prepared to see Islam Net's view on this issue. While one could argue that 2000 individuals is such a small number that it does not matter whether they are able to explain their view in public debate, the Habermasian perspective implies the opposite: their non-participation on this issue is a democracy deficit on the part of the public institutions. Whatever the outcome of deliberations, representatives from these institutions should ideally accept an invitation to public dialogue, so that both parties can clarify their arguments publicly and 'translate' between the secular and the religious languages. If there remain principal disagreements after such a public discussion and the public institutions stand by their decisions, then at least the process of decision making is democratically legitimate in the eyes of those who lost the debate.

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