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https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-017-0411-9

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Muslim youth and consumerism: a study of Islamic street wear

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Abstract Drawing on a framework that goes beyond the usual securitization lens and that includes other neglected sociological dynamics, namely consumerism and individualization, this article explores an overlooked form of dress in the research on Islamic dress in the West which is Islamic street wear. This analysis interrogates what Islamic street wear reveals, in terms of identity, about the experience of young Muslims living as a minority in secular spaces. Various messages collected from message T-shirts are deconstructed to precisely highlight the effect of these different dynamics on the articulation of identities by young Muslims. A theoretical framework grounded in the notion of hybridity guides a systematic content analysis of the messages. The analysis of these messages reveals the strong individualization of faith deriving from consumerist patterns, the rather limited expression of the controversial "ummatic" loyalty to Muslims worldwide and the assertion of pride in Muslim identity.

Keywords Islam · Consumerism · Hybridity · Identity

Introduction

This article explores an overlooked form of dress in the research on Islamic dress in the West, namely, Islamic street wear, within a framework that goes beyond the usual securitization lens and that includes other neglected sociological dynamics, namely consumerism and individualization. Indeed, Islam in Europe as an object of study is systematically approached though a binary perspective and in antagonistic terms: assimilation versus multiculturalism, secularism versus religion, and Islam versus democracy. This is the conclusion of Dalia Mogahed when she states that: "few

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Published online: 07 December 2017

constructs are more self-evident than the one dividing Islam and the West" and "Muslim minorities in the West are often scrutinized through this paradoxical prism" (Mogahed 2007: 3). Therefore, controversial questions on the compatibility between Islam and democracy have repercussions on analytical grids used to apprehend Muslim communities in Europe and remain determined, or at least, heavily influenced by the lens of integration (Mogahed 2007: 5) and the context of securitization (Ajala 2014).

Consumerism, in conjunction with hyper-mediatization of culture, constitutes a major force of globalization and directly impacts religious practices. Neo-liberal values and consumerism have thus affected all religions, including Islam. This trend can be verified with the increase of marketing strategies mobilizing an Islamic referent (Gauthier and Martikainen 2013a, b: Chaambi et al. 2012).

Though the article does not dismiss the securitized context related to terrorism and Islamic radicalization, it also includes neo-liberal and consumerist dynamics to form the context of the study investigating the way some young Muslims articulate their identities. To this purpose, various messages collected from message T-shirts are deconstructed within this context to highlight the potential effect of these different dynamics on the articulation of identities by young Muslims. The research question is thus framed as follows; what does Islamic street wear reveal, in terms of identity, about the experience of young Muslims living as a minority in secular spaces? How does this contribute to the debate about Muslim youth in Europe in a political and cognitive environment dominated by the lens of securitization?

The empirical data for this research comes from the collection of messages from message T-shirts of various Islamic street wear brands. A theoretical framework grounded in the notion of hybridity guides a systematic content analysis of the messages.

I first start with the context of the study emphasizing two distinct lenses used differently for the consideration of Muslims in the West: securitization, a dominant lens, and neo-liberalism, a less prevalent lens. I then elaborate on the concept of hybridity as it allows me to bring the analytical framework guiding the empirical study. The methodology is finally exposed before detailing the results of the research which can be apprehended via three essential points: the faith individualization, the limited expression of transnational solidarity and the multidimensional hybrid identity tied to domestic scenes.

Context of the study

Securitization

Since the 9/11 attacks, Islam in European contexts is often presented as a threat or an enemy from within (Césari 2009; Ajala 2014). The phenomenon has been aggravated by the recurrence of European fighters joining the so-called Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, and by a series of terrorist attacks in Europe. The emergence of a religion with a transnational nature in secular societies -a majority of Europeans do not consider religion as something important in their lives (The Pew Global Attitudes Project 2008: 19)- provokes tension (Silvestri 200: 169). Beyond the political and security threat, Islam is perceived as a cultural threat (Savage 2004: 44) because of visible

expressions of religiosity such as the veil. Terrorism and the veil are placed at the same level of perception, both being viewed as attacks on European values (Blanc, Loisel & Scherrer 2005: 135). European public opinion is characterized by a negative perception of Muslims (The Pew Global Attitudes Project 2006a: 5). In 2006, 48% of the British, 50% of the French, 78% of the Germans and 83% of the Spanish associated Muslims with fanaticism (The Pew Global Attitudes Project 2006b: 5). As noted by Salvatore, "Islam increasingly represents the internal religious other in Europe, which is caught in the dilemma of being recognised as a legitimate minority culture, while escaping the predicament of being a minority to watch and monitor, continuously needing to prove its loyalty" (Salvatore 2004:1027).

This dilemma is also apparent in issues of individual identity and self-perception. Since the seventies, religion has facilitated the growth of the concept of self-identity. In the beginning, Muslim immigrants were not perceived as Muslims and were instead identified by their original citizenship or their ethnicities (Silvestri 2007). Immigrant communities have progressively rediscovered Islam as the only viable alternative allowing for collective mobilization and action (Dargent 2003: 6). This was especially the case among British Muslims for whom the Salman Rushdie affair constituted a catalyst and in France, after the 1989 first Islamic veil controversy. Therefore, in the case of France, three phases can be identified when it comes to the 'French Muslim'; the figure of the "Arab immigrant" of the seventies who was mostly concerned with residency rights and visas, the "civic Arab" of the eighties who mobilised in associations against racism and discrimination, and finally, the figure of the "Muslim citizen" claiming for the right to a Muslim identity and expression of this identity (Geisser and Kelfaoui 2001; Laurence and Vaïsse 2006: 6). Common experiences of societal exclusion combined with a greater visibility of Islam since the Iranian Revolution in 1979 have fuelled the feeling of belonging to a religion with legitimacy (Laurence and Vaïsse 2006: 16) in a global context of Islamic revivalism also expressed through material culture (Fischer 2009). While European non-Muslim populations identify as national citizens first rather than as members of their faith, European Muslims tend to identify first as Muslims and then according to their citizenship (The Pew Global Attitudes Project 2006a). The number of Muslims self-identifying as Muslims has increased, particularly in younger generations, especially in France (Lagrange 2013; Roy 2002) and the United Kingdom (Hussain and Bagguley 2005). This takes the form of a strong claim of religious identity (Dargent 2003; Godard & Taussig 2007: 29; Laurence and Vaïsse 2006: 82). It thus becomes particularly relevant to look at the manifestations of this religiosity by European Muslim youth and how it interacts with other forms of belonging.

Islamic fashion

In this heavy context, we have seen how Muslim dress itself is perceived as a threat to European culture, identity, and even, security (Blanc, Loisel & Sherrer 2005: 135; Berg and Lundahl 2016: 264; O'Brien 2016: 125). When the hijab is perceived as a threat, the assumptions underlying its significance for non-Muslim Europeans navigate between viewing it as the symbol of oppression of women, a sign of support for Islamic extremism, an assertion of hatred for Western society or a sign of backwardness (Berg and Lundahl 2016: 265). However, an important body of literature has concluded on

the autonomy of women in their choice of veiling and the plurality of motives behind this choice (Gaspard and Khosrokhavar 1995; Amer 2014; Tarlo 2015). Modest fashion has indeed become an increasing area of research. Alia Khan, the founder of Islamic Fashion Design Council, an organisation established to develop the Islamic fashion industry in Dubai, defines Islamic fashion as clothes "worn primarily by practising Muslims who have committed to the Islamic principles of dressing" (Khaishgi 2014). Consequences of this include, among others, a greater importance of self-representation and the increase of transnational religious communities, real or digital, around which wearers of modest fashion gather (Lewis and; Tarlo 201). This is particularly true in the sphere of modest fashion where the Internet functions as “a taste making mechanism, an ideological category, and a marketing device” (Lewis and Tarlo 2011: 16) dictated by these transnational communities using the social media.

Muslims in the West constitute a sizeable target for the market of Islamic fashion; Muslims in Germany, France, UK, U.S and Canada spent an estimated 22 billion dollars on clothing and footwear in 2012. This makes the western Muslim clothing market second only after Turkey. Muslims in the United States lead this grouping with an estimated 6.7 billion dollars in clothing and footwear expenditure” (Thomson Reuters 2015, 163). Four out of the ten top Muslim e-commerce markets are Western markets with Muslim consumers; the United States (second only to Turkey), Germany (fifth), the United Kingdom (sixth) and France (seventh) (Thomson Reuters 2015: 170). European Muslims are thus major targets of the sector (Thomson Reuters 2015: 169). Events like the Muslim Lifestyle Expo in England or the ‘Rassemblement du Bourget’ in France function as platforms for halal-oriented consumerism.

Having said that, it seems that the Islamic fashion for men has still not inspired the same amount of attention: it is true that it is a relatively recent phenomenon and it is an even more confidential sub-market in what already constitutes a niche market (though the market of modest fashion is increasing rapidly). Still, Pink observes that “the relation between (Islamic) religion and consumption has mostly been discussed with a focus on veiling and modern headscarf fashions” (Pink 2009: xiii) and that few in-depth studies of consumer behaviour, advertising strategies or the cultural places of these new products are available.

This article seeks to partially remedy this gap by taking as an entry point the messages of message T-shirt that have known a certain success among young Muslims interested in street wear and street culture. These complex phenomena in the fashion sphere are at the crossroads of different elements and cannot exclusively be apprehended through the Muslimness of consumers (Pink 2009: xii): the concepts of hybridity and its derivate in the field that interests us, ‘Cool Islam’, can help us tame this complexity.

Theoretical apparatus: Hybridity and cool Islam

Contemporary postcolonial theory posits that hybridity permits the escape of a strictly binary pattern of reflection (Prabu 2005: 1). In this perspective, hybridity creates a third space within which the colonized reclaim the colonizer’s tools and undermines colonial authorities. Hybridity thus implies an encounter to be contextualized: it can be experienced positively or negatively, it can constitute a threat or on the contrary, a

revitalization (Werbner 2001: 150). Pieterse notes that hybridity entered the field of social sciences precisely through “the anthropology of religions and the issue of syncretism” (Pieterse 2004: 90). In cultural studies, hybridity is understood as a multiplicity of identities (Pieterse 2004: 87; Kraidy 2012: 316).

Isabel Hoving distinguishes two types of hybridity, one encompassing a modern approach, and the other a post-modern approach (Hoving 2000). Bakhtin favors the modern approach, associating hybridity to the idea of plurality and multiplicity by distinguishing between organic, non-intentional (for instance, linguistic dynamics) and intentional hybridity conceived as a moment of resistance against a dominant culture and embedded in a conflicting logic (Werbner 2001: 135; Young 1995: 22). Bhabha on the other hand represents the post-modern approach which defines hybridity as a process rather than as an identity, turning its political significance into its supreme characteristic: Bhabha transforms Bakhtin’s organic hybridity into an “active moment of challenge and resistance against a dominant culture power” (Young 1995: 23). In this vision, hybridity is also perceived in a positive way because it is carrying an emancipatory dynamic of resistance (Prabu 2005:12).

‘Cool-Islam’ can be considered a third space, an extension of the growing individualization in post-industrial societies at the sociological level and of the global neoliberal environment, embedding Islam in capital markets (Boubekeur 2005: 12). As such, cultural practises understood under this label constitute hybrid outputs. “Cool Islam” or “Pop-Islam” designates a movement of young Muslims abiding by conservative religious practises while adopting the codes of youth and pop culture. This is a movement where traditional forms of Islam coexisting with modern marketing practices are essentially conveyed by the new bourgeoisie in Muslim countries and Muslim communities in the West (Pras and Vaudour-Lagrace 2007). In a Western setting, “Cool Islam” or “Pop-Islam” is thus a way to claim pride in being a westernized Muslim without any contradiction (Boubekeur 2005: 12). Growing individualization in general has brought about growing faith individualization (Roy 2002). Samir Amghar describes this trend as a “social visibility of faith manifestation, its direct testimony, the direct role played by emotion” and, at the same time, of “a process of interiorization and privatization of believing” (Amghar 2003: 78). Concretely speaking, these “dynamic forms of religious and cultural syncretism” are manifested in Islam’s interaction with forms of youth culture expressions such as rap music (Amghar 2003, 80). The encounter at the centre of our analysis is that of street wear and Islam, thus giving birth to Islamic street wear.

Islamic street wear: An analysis of consumerism and religiosity via a study of message T-shirts

Methodology: An analytical framework grounded in hybridity

Islamic Street Wear can be defined as a style of urban clothing which takes into account Islamic prescriptions in terms of dress and occasionally conveys Islamic messages. It all started during the Danish Cartoons controversy, when a German of Turkish origin, Melih Kesmen created a T-shirt with the slogan “I love my prophet”. After the success of his design, he launched his own brand, StyleIslam, which became an online fashion

label in 2008 (Agnès 2011: Overmeyer 2013). Buyers are generally young Muslims, with university students constituting high shares, from Europe but also from Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and The United Arab Emirates. They are typically between 17 and 35 years old according to the founder of StyleIslam (Lovell 2010). The label even opened up stores in Saudi Arabia though the appropriation of the messages will be different from the case of Muslims in the West: in Saudi Arabia, this is seen as an 'acceptable' tool of contestation to claim a modern lifestyle against the rigorous religious codification of the Saudi society (Overmeyer 2013). Other brands are also present on the market (Al-Kanz 2007). The French brand LSA (Le savoir est une arme, in other words, knowledge is power) was created in 2005 by the rapper Médine. The brand dresses rappers of the Music label DIN (which happens to mean religion in Arabic) records. The website indicates that consumers by buying LSA products contribute to funding humanitarian projects of the association LSA ACT, such as a soccer game event organized in Gaza.[1] Ummah Gear is another example of brand created in Australia in 2007.

Brands are symbols around which communities gather: they give meaning, feelings of belonging and an identity that make consumption not only an act of satisfaction but also, of identification (Gauthier and Martikainen 2013a, b). The paradox between the individualism of the consumer and the holistic aspect of religion is only apparent: consumerism only fulfils its meaning through the collective experience of these communities rallying around a brand. This is exactly what happens here: the message T-shirt is a way to display a sense of belonging. Though the act of buying the T-shirt epitomizes the selfish act of the consumer, the purpose of the act is only completed through the sense of belonging to a larger community (in this case, fellow Muslims who bought the T-Shirt and thus, display a sense of shared values).

So, framed in the context of different security and neo-liberal dynamics, what does this type of Islamic Street wear reveal, in terms of identity, about the experience of young Muslims living as a minority in secular spaces? How does this contribute to the debate about Muslim youth in Europe in a political and cognitive environment dominated by the lens of securitization?

The research was carried out in 2014. The initial informants approached in the framework of this study were consumers of these brands and the data was collected online via the catalogues of collections. The brands were selected based on the availability of this type of the product in the catalogue of the collections: in any case as this is a niche market, and despite its growth, only a few brands are able to sustain themselves. A convenience sample of 73 messages has been considered for this study, collected from the products sold in 2014 by Style Islam, Le Savoir est une Arme, Muslimstreetwear and Ummah Gear.

In order to address the research questions exposed above, I use an analytical framework built on the dimensions that Prabu attaches to hybridity. Prabu states that the study of hybridity implies taking into account globalization, multiculturalism and ethnicity (Prabu 2005: 18). Here, the neoliberalist dimension is apprehended through consumerism. Multiculturalism is evaluated through the minority status of Muslim communities in Europe. An ethnic community can be defined as "a group of people united by inherited culture, racial features, belief systems (religion), or national

[1] http://din-records.com/lsa-act/

sentiments" (Esman 1994: 14). This definition is close to Tony Smith's: "a voluntary organisation of people with a collective identity based on an intellectually formulated and emotionally felt assertion of their distinctiveness from other peoples" (Smith 2000: 21). We single out religion as the marker of distinctiveness in secular European societies.

Three dimensions are explored: the embedding of the message in a transnational and consumerist perspective (contribution to the *ummah*, the global community of the faithful), multiculturalism (message coming from a minority with a particular identity claim and reaffirmation) and ethnicity (religious reference only accessible to believers).

Globalization is reattached to the consumerist environment and assessed through the degree of individualism and self-representation contained in the message. This can be seen through the use of personal pronouns like « I » and the use of the imperative form. A proxy is used for globalization and attached to the street wear component of the subject in question. This dimension is appreciated through references to street culture, especially U.S. street culture. To sum up, globalization is understood as two elements: the individualist dimension and the expression of classic street culture.

The embedding of the message in the transnational logic of the *ummah* is recognized through the issues of mobilization specific to Muslims. The expression of a purely religious reference is also interpreted as revealing the transnational logic, as the message only makes full sense for members of the faith community.

The multiculturalism variable depends on the fact that the message only makes sense in the case of Muslims living as a minority in a non-Muslim context. The hypothesis is that some messages bear a degree of identity claim with regards to others, the non-Muslim majority. Messages questioning the securitization affecting Muslim communities, the equation of Islam with terrorism and the visible expression of religious devotedness can be expected because they reflect points of friction with respect to the expression of Muslim religiosity in European spaces.

Finally, the religious reference is assessed through the proxy of content regarding religious practices themselves.

Content analysis, as a method, provides for both a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the messages in conformity with the dimensions depicted above. It is adapted to an analysis of messages expressed in words. A content analysis carried out by the author ensures the reliability and the consistency of the coding. A basic binary code is used whereby 1 is assigned when the message matched the category and 0 is assigned when it is not the case. Table 1 retraces the grid of analysis used to deconstruct the messages.

Table 1 Grid of analysis

DIMENSION	CATEGORY	PROXYS
Neoliberalism	Consumerism	Personal pronouns and imperative form
	Street culture	References proper to street culture and USA
	Transnationalism (political)	Mobilizing issues (ummah)
	Transnationalism (religious)	Religious reference understood by the ummah
Multiculturalism	Minority	Reference to minority status in European/Western society
Ethnicity	Religious reference	Morality and cult

Table 2 Detailed Results

DIMENSION	CATEGORIE	POURCENTAGE
Globalization	Consumerism	36,9%
	Street culture	6,9%
	Transnationalism (political)	20,5%
	Transnationalism (religious)	61,6%
Multiculturalism	Minority	42,5%
Ethnicity	Religious reference	72,6%

Islamic street wear messages and their references: Findings

Strong claims of renewed religiosity: Confirming faith individualization

The quantitative results of the analysis can be found in Tables 2 and 3.

As expected, the religious reference is the most commonly found category in the messages. However, and in conformity with the hypotheses of the consumerist dimension, the messages leave aside austerity and rigidity by associating 'cool' language with religious references. In that sense, we can identify strong claims of religiosity and religious self-identification but it is renewed as it incorporates distinctively modern elements related to youth and pop culture. This is reflected in messages such as "Keep smiling it's Sunnah, Good Deeds Bad Deeds Al Qiyamah Coming Soon" as if it were a movie trailer, "Super Muslim" mimicking "Superman" or "Ramadan" with a figure throwing 'ego' away: these messages use the methods of advertising with humour and popular references. Other messages convey a range of values with more sobriety: Haqq (meaning truth in Arabic), Hobb (Love), Tawhid (oneness of God), Sabr (enduring capacity). These messages also reflect the ideal ethics of Islam (Pras and Vaudour-Lagrace 2007). Visually speaking, some terms are incorporated in the form of Arabic calligraphy.

Many messages refer equally often to fundamental pillars of Islam: "Shahada" for the profession of faith, "Ramadan" for the month of fasting, "Mecca", "Al Medinah" regarding pilgrimage to Mecca, "Qibla", "Salat keeps together" or "Salat always get connected" for prayer. We notice that one pillar is missing, Zakat, and it does not seem coincidental. Its absence reveals the focus on the individual, and thus, the focus on the consumer, reminding us that everything is embedded again in a branding logic, as analyzed by Gauthier and Martikainen (Gauthier and Martikainen 2013a, b). Besides, the use of personal pronouns is recurrent: "Hijab My Right My Choice", "Everyday I'm Muslim",[2] "Islam my way of life", "I love my prophet", "I'm Muslim Don't panick", "Don't trust media ask me about Islam". The ethic first emphasized here is an individual form of ethic despite transnational references to the *ummah*: some messages refer to the practice of religion as a struggle against the self and the perpetual search for perfection at this level: "Read Quran, change your Iman", "Dunya the more you love

[2] "Everyday I'm Muslim" echoes in a parodic way the lyrics of the popular "Party Rock Anthem", a 2011 song by American music duo LMFAO, featuring British singer Lauren where they sing "Everyday I'm shufflin".

Table 3 Global results

DIMENSION	SHARE
Globalization	93,1%
Multiculturalism	42,5%
Ethnicity	72,6%

the less you live", "Quran challenges you" or "Le plus grand combat est contre soi-même" (The biggest fight is against oneself). The website of LSA adds to a visual of the product an explanation which is meant to make the message more explicit. To the message "the biggest fight is against oneself", the following is added: "In 2005, Médine released his second album "Jihad, the biggest fight against oneself". Here, this expression is illustrated through a picture from the movie "La Haine", realized in 1995 by Mathieu Kassovitz. We recognize the scene where Vince (played by French actor Vincent Cassel) faces a mirror. According to LSA, "this scene perfectly depicts the daily struggle"[3] against one's ego.

These results confirm the findings of previous research highlighting the plurality of identity, experienced by their bearers as non-conflictual (Hussain and Bagguley 2005: 414). It reflects the fact that Muslims in Europe are less inclined than European non-Muslims to perceive a clash of civilizations or a conflict between religion and modernity (The Pew Global Attitudes Project 2006b: 2). Finally, it also directly points to the individualization of religion constituting the base of a specifically European Islam (Salvatore 2004: 1021).

To conclude in line with our theoretical framework, the first neo-liberal, consumerist, young, cool and individualist space meets with the second religious space to form a third hybrid space resulting mostly in the second religious space being stripped of what is perceived by the wearers as its most austere, cultural, and thus, less authentic elements. This conclusion also meets with the results of research on female Muslim dress with a displacement of "discourses about modesty away from traditional religious authority structures" (Lewis and Tarlo 2011: 14). Wearers of these T-shirts thus assert their religiosity in parallel with the adoption of youth and pop culture codes. The assertion of Muslim identity and pride of being part of Western society are claimed together: once can be Muslim and cool (Boubekeur 2005). For instance, a message initially meant to promote a religious reference precisely and ultimately morphs into a reference to street culture (Kassovitz movie, a reference of street culture, follows three friends in the French suburbs). Having said that, the reference to street culture is not as pronounced, and when it is, it is done in reference to African-American civil rights activism. One of the messages of LSA is simply "Rosa Parks", referring to the civil rights activist, and at the same time, making an analogy with the fight against discrimination affecting Muslim communities in Europe, as illustrated in a report of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC 2006). The reference to discrimination is also conveyed through the message "Power to the LSA" depicted with the picture of a clenched fist and the following explanation:

[3] Translation of the author. The original text in French is the following: « En 2005, Médine sortait son second album « Jihad, le plus grand combat contre soi-même ».Ici, nous illustrons cette expression par une image du film « La Haine », réalisé en 1995 par Mathieu Kassovitz. On reconnaît la scène de Vince (Vincent Cassel) où il se retrouve face à son miroir. Selon L.S.A, cette scène illustre parfaitement ce combat quotidien. ».

"Since the twentieth century, the clenched fist symbolizes the struggle, whether national or international, in favour of accession to independence or in favour of the recognition of certain rights. Here, a representation of the Black Panther Party is utilized".[4] These messages can be understood as a form of intentional hybridity to challenge discrimination.

A timid expression of transnational political solidarity

The foreign policy opinions of Muslims in the West and their political impact come under increasing scrutiny (Radcliffe Ross 2009: 1). Silvestri even talks about "almost an obsession with 'Muslim attitudes' to British and American foreign policy" (Silvestri 2007a: 179), especially after the controversies about the link between terrorist attacks in Europe and grievances in terms of foreign policy after the war in Iraq in 2003.[5] Francis Fukuyama for instance put forward the hypothesis that France opposed the 2003 War in Iraq because of its important Muslim community: "The French government's stance against the Iraq war and US foreign policy more generally seeks in part to appease Muslim opinion".[6] Birt talks about "ummatic protest" when analysing the mobilization of the Muslim opposition to the War in Iraq in 2003 (Birt 2005: 104).

The growing Muslim identification has naturally brought about an increasing feeling of belonging to the *ummah*, the "global community of the faithful" which includes all Muslims (Salvatore 2004: 1015; Silvestri 2007a: 169; Césari 2009), regardless of the level of religiosity (Laurence and Vaïsse 2006, 74). It is even more perceptible in younger generations for whom the link to the country of origin is replaced with the feeling of belonging to a more transnational community, with the concept being reinvented to comprise the notion of global victims (Modood, Triandafyllidou and Ricard Zapata-Barrero 2006).

However, contrary to what one may expect based on these observations, this is the least significant element in the results of our research. Some messages act as reminders of the Syrian and Palestinian causes ("Gaza stop the killing now", "Syria stop war on kids") but most of them convey general messages for peace ("Salam Peace", "Stop Wars", "Terrorism has no religion") without directly making reference to the "ummatic" political mobilization. Transnational references which are religious are more numerous than transnational political references because the religious reference is what originally justifies one's belonging to the *ummah*. In this regard, the most explicit message is suggested by Ummah Gear, an acronym for « Uniting as one nation, Muslims everywhere, Making supplication, Asking for success, Holding to their religion, Always striving to succeed, Racing for paradise ». The solidarity is mostly framed in general terms, as if to transcend any political controversies. Though there is no strict evidence pointing in this direction, it is possible that this answers to the

[4] Translation of the author. The original text in French is the following: « Depuis le XXe siècle en particulier, le poing fermé symbolise la lutte, qu'elle soit nationale ou internationale pour l'accession à une indépendance ou pour la reconnaissance de certains droits. Ici, on peut apercevoir dans le poing l'incrustation d'un représentant du Black Panther Party ».

[5] In 2002, in a *Times* article entitled "Ministers keen to counter perceived 'war on Islam'" Ashuman Mondal, presented in the report as "a multiculturalism expert from Leicester University" reckoned that "Islam was now seen to mean solidarity with Muslims in Palestine and Iraq" (*The Times*, December 24, 2002).

[6] *Wall Street Journal*, January 31, 2004.

capitalist logic of avoiding political controversies to reach as much consumers as possible. However, another much more plausible hypothesis relates to the communities' priority: Muslims in the West seem to be first and foremost interested in domestic issues as they relate to their social and economic status and more generally, their place in society, as demonstrated in the following paragraph.

Assertion of identity in local contexts: Confirming multidimensional hybridization

The messages highlighting the minority status and referring to the local context represent almost half of the messages (42,5%). They often affirm the individual identity, emphasizing the pride attached to religious conviction. Phrases such as "Muslim by nature", "Muslim forever", "Ummah be proud of it", "Islam my way of life", or "Everyday I'm Muslim" emphasize self-identification. "Hijab my Choice, My right, My life" is even more interesting as it appeals to an individualist rhetoric: if hijab in this sentence is replaced by any other product, one can perceive an emphasis on the representation of the self (Gauthier and Martikainen 2013a, b). Thus, the explanation does not refer to the idea of religious obligation but on the contrary, to the idea of a conscious and individual choice as claimed by the wearer of the T-shirt.

Other messages go even further in the identity claim and flirt with controversy: "Espana Islamica" can reflect pride relating to an era recognized as a golden age for the Arab and Islamic civilization but can also, in a context of tensions, be interpreted as conversion rhetoric and a will to "Islamize Europe". This is even more striking in the "I want you to convert to Islam", with an Uncle Sam-like figure. The inscription "Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, 2 prophets, one message, Islam" is also embedded in this ambiguous approach. Though these messages do not constitute a majority, they clearly confirm one of the factors identified by Patrick Haenni in relation to Islamic consumerism, the idea that a plurality of lifestyles do not necessarily come with a plurality of discourses, with a confrontational rather than accommodating discourse being claimed (Haenni 2008). We can identify again here a form of intentional hybridity claiming a form of resistance in a securitized context. "Don't trust media ask me about Islam" is very explicit: it clearly accuses media of being responsible for this negative perception. The most powerful slogan putting the security context in perspective is: "I'm Muslim, don't panic". LSA explains that this slogan: "directly refers to the piece 'Don't panic' by Médine. In the current climate of Islamophobia, our wish is to engage with people in order to reassure them of Islam, first religion in the world, and on its practice".[7] LSA's position is clear: by choosing the controversial term of Islamophobia and designating Islam as "the first religion in the world" (without specifying according to which criteria), LSA is giving its own scale of analysis regarding the situation of Muslim communities in Europe and the discrimination they undergo.

This perspective should be nuanced though. In addition to these militant messages, one can also find messages referring to an ideal of cohesion such as "Jesus and Muhammad brothers in faith". Other messages seem more inscribed in a pedagogical perspective. They aim at fighting stereotypes and confusions resulting from

[7] Translation of the author. The original text in French is the following: « (le slogan) renvoie directement au morceau « Don't Panik » de Médine. Face au climat actuel d'islamophobie, notre souhait est. d'interpeller les gens pour les rassurer sur l'islam, première religion au monde, et sur la pratique de celle-ci ».

securitization. "Islam, Faith, Guidance, Devotion, Peace", "Know Islam Know Peace" or "Islam is Peace" aim to associate positive attributes with the religion, whereas Islam is popularly perceived by the West as fanatic, intolerant, and feeding violent terrorism (The Pew Global Attitudes Project 2006b: 5).

Some messages stay within the bounds of the local context. In fact, "religion and culture are important influences on consumption habits; but their significance can only be understood when specific local circumstances are taken into account" (Pink 2009: xiv).

LSA message "Prière de ne pas stationner" (roughly meaning "We pray you do not park here") with a pun on the word prayer can only be understood in the French context and the issue of prayers in the streets, which was brought into political debates. LSA notes that: "'Prière de ne pas stationner' is a model of T-shirt mixing self-ridicule and reality. It is a pun between the national Police car and the common prayer of the Muslim community. This model is mainly meant to remind the French state of the chronic lack of worship places in our country".[8] LSA is thus not only situated in a classical business model oriented toward profit but also engages in a militant dimension, reflecting the ethical approach described by (Haenni 2008) Muslimstreetwear message "Street Dawa is not a crime" only makes sense in a non-Muslim context and thus evades the global perception of the *ummah*. It is inscribed in the experience of Muslim minorities in the West.

To conclude on this third trend, one can notice a certain heterogeneity revealing the different dimensions of being Muslim in a secular space: some being aligned with global dynamics characteristic of this specular space (consumerism, individualization, pop culture) and others less at ease with this secular space (contestation of excessive securitization, contestation of media's conveyed perceptions about Islam, contestation of discrimination and claims to religious rights). It is important to emphasize though that one cannot comprehend the diversity of such dimensions by ignoring the global dynamics, namely neoliberalism and individualization, reshaping all structures of beliefs (Gauthier and Martikainen 2013a, b).

The association of religion and consumerism is also an answer to an identity challenge. It extends the plurality of identities detailed by Hussein and Bagguley in a hybridization process creating a new space (Hussain and Bagguley 2005). Here, according to Patrick Haenni, hybridity takes the form of "an ethical behaviour" which consists in restituting the "Islamic reference in a secularized reasoning, but not contradictory with the precepts of the Muslim morality" (Haenni 2008: 8).

Conclusion

Fischer warns that "hybrid products elude categorization" (Fischer 2009: 11). The measurement and assessment of identities is not easy to determine. This is particularly true in a multicultural setting and the question of minorities' expressions as they relate to their minority status. What does Muslim Streetwear reveal, in terms of identity, about

[8] Translation of the author. The original text in French is the following: « 'Prière de ne pas stationner' est. un modèle de T-shirt mêlant autodérision et réalité. Il s'agit d'un jeu de mot entre la voiture de la Police nationale et la prière commune faite par la communauté musulmane. Ce modèle permet surtout de rappeler à l'Etat français le manque chronique de lieux de prière dans le pays. »

the experience of young Muslims living as a minority in secular spaces? How does this contribute to the debate about Muslim youth in Europe in a political and cognitive environment dominated by the lens of securitization? Street wear brands and the messages they convey act as symbols around which Muslim youth living in the West can claim their Islamic identity without negating the plurality of their other national and ethnic identities though we have seen, through some messages, that this process is not without tension, reflecting the potential instances of negative hybridity. Islamic street wear stands as a concrete projection of self-identification and can thus help us situate the experiences of a part of young Muslims in the European space, with the reasonable hypothesis that wearing the products is a voluntary act. Three trends clearly stand out: first, the messages reveal an individualization of religion with a very explicit focus on the individual deriving from consumerist patters. This layer of identity is thus completely in line with the secular space and there is no discordance here: this is again reinforced by the fact that Islam street wear claims elements of other cultures which are linked to this individualized or neo-liberal spaces (pop culture, street culture, a certain conception of modernity and youth). The second dimension that is noticeable is the vagueness related to the political mobilization as it relates to the transnational feeling of belonging: solidarity is expressed in broad ways. Though one can only speculate about the reasons for the timid expression of the controversial "ummatic" loyalty, the third dimension partially provides an explanation: what counts for French and British Muslims is the issues that directly affect them as Muslim minorities in non-Muslim countries. This translates into claims of pride in identity, attempts at dismissing what is perceived as distortions of their faith (criticism of the Media) and denunciations of discriminations. In other words, very concrete issues affecting Muslim communities in the domestic scene of Western - in this case, European - countries.

To conclude, the interactions between the economic and religious spheres can be interpreted as a hybridization process resulting in a third space creating a new experience related to religiousness. In the case of Islamic street wear, this third space is, on the one hand, secularized through its form of cultural expression and the centrality of the consumer-individual and on the other hand, balanced in a dialectic movement toward solidarity stemming from religious ethics. Similarly to female Islamic fashion, Islamic street wear derives from the global neoliberal, increasingly individualized environment leading to "the growing commodification of religious experience within modern consumer culture" (Lewis and Tarlo 2011: 16).

Though the sample constituting the empirical ground of this analysis is too limited to make any broad conclusions, it can be a useful first step towards promising areas of research, including on how Muslim youth in Muslim countries make use of Islamic street wear as these brands are not limited to Muslims in the West.

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