

Report prepared for the project  
A European Approach to Multicultural Citizenship. Legal Political and  
Educational Challenges  
EMILIE

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**WP2 Spanish report on migration and multiculturalism discourses**

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## 1. Introduction

Spain has a relatively short history of immigration, transforming in twenty years from a country of emigration to one of the main immigrant receiving countries of the European Union. Although the country still represents relatively low numbers of immigrants compared to some other European countries (between 6,1% and 9,3% of the population on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2006)<sup>1</sup>, the foreign population has more than doubled in 5 years time. The economic and historical connections with North Africa and South America have mainly triggered immigration flows, but also Europeans represent large group immigrants in Spain. The fast increase of the foreign population since 2000 has resulted in a growing awareness that immigration is a structural phenomena and Spain a multicultural society. It was already multicultural, because of the different nations residing together in the Spanish multinational state (see for example F. Requejo, 2005) and the presence of the gypsy minority (see for example J. Garreta Bochaca, 2003). Immigration adds a new dimension and new challenges.

In the year 2000 political parties started to include immigration in their electoral campaigns (R. Zapata-Barrero, 2003a and 2003b) and immigration became institutionalized after several legislative changes. In the aftermath of 9/11, immigration became increasingly linked to security, resulting in the enhancement of border control, combating irregular immigration flows and restricting the immigration law. The fluctuations in the Spanish immigration law over the last 6 years demonstrate that a political discourse on immigration is still in construction. Overall, the development of immigration policy has been (and to a large extent still is) mainly a matter of controlling immigration flows (prevention), while lacking effective policies for the social integration of immigrants. The pressure of undocumented immigration at the European outer borders has dominated the social and political debate on immigration in Spain. There is an increasing awareness that these irregular immigration flows are not merely a Spanish, but also a European problem and Spain is pressing the European Union (EU) to take responsibility for its borders (R. Zapata-Barrero and N. de Witte, 2007).

In spite of this crisis of “border control”, there are also conflicts of migration related cultural diversity. Spain has a diverse immigrant population, the largest groups coming from Latin American countries (35%), African countries (23%), EU countries (22%) and non-EU European countries (12%). Conflicts of migration related diversity in Spain have mainly been provoked by the cultural and religious demands of those immigrants that are most “visible” within the Spanish society<sup>2</sup>: Muslims. It is within this socially constructed group of immigrants where different diversities are embodied simultaneous: religion, language and skin color. According to estimates there are up to 1

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<sup>1</sup> While the number of foreigners in Spain that held a valid residence card or permit on 31st of December 2005 is 2.738.932 (Informe Estadístico 31-12-2005, Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales), the number of foreigners registered at the local level (*padrón municipal*) on the 1st of January 2006 is 3.884.573 (*padrón municipal*, Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2006). While all foreign residents (independent of their status) can inscribe themselves within the local register, the number of foreigners provided by the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs only refers to foreigners that hold a valid residency permit. The total population is provided by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística.

<sup>2</sup> In spite of not being institutionalized as such, there is an informal acceptance of public authorities and society in general that there exist two categories of immigrants: those “visible” and those “non-visible”, in where the first group is related to potential conflict. The three dimensions by which visibility becomes explicit are: skin color, language and religion.

million Muslims in Spain<sup>3</sup>. The majority of them originate from Morocco, the largest immigrant nationality in Spain, representing 1% of the total population and 18% of the immigrant population<sup>4</sup> (for more information on the Moroccan immigrant community in Spain see for example B. López García & M. Berriane, 2004).

The remaining of this paper will explore how migration related diversity in Spain produces new challenges of cultural diversity, by exploring two recent conflicts: the mosque debate (section 3) and the effects of the Danish Cartoon Affair on the traditional festivals *moros* and *cristianos* (section 4). While the first case study aims to deconstruct discourses justifying resistance to the visibility of Muslims in the public space, the second case study analyses the contested representation of Moors within the traditional festivals Moors and Christians. But before going into these case studies, the next section will first give an overview of different challenges of migration related diversity witnessed recently and contextualize the challenge of Muslim immigrants within the framework of the Spanish secular state. The paper ends with some concluding remarks in where the cases are compared and the foundations of Muslim challenges and conflict in Spain are summarized.

## **2. Contextualizing immigration related diversity in Spain**

### ***2.1 Main conflicts and challenges***

The first social conflict related to immigration took place in 2000, when riots against Moroccan immigrant workers took place in El Ejido, a market-gardening town (*ciudad-cortijo*) in south-eastern Spain. The murder of a young Spanish woman by a (mentally unbalanced) Moroccan immigrant triggered a social explosion in the town that lasted for at least 3 days. When the news spread, riots started collectively, starting with occupations of the streets and burning pictures denoting Moroccan presence. Soon the situation transformed into a real “Moor hunt”, generating a wave of violence against any physical or material manifestation of the presence of Moroccans (see also R. Zapata-Barrero, 2003b). Some Moroccan workers opted for a strike against the racist attacks and claimed the improvements of working and living conditions. Finally ATIME (*Asociación de Trabajadores Inmigrantes Marroquíes en España*) took control of the situation and proposed a meeting with the main social actors involved to end the strikes. After reaching an agreement on labor conditions (but not on regularization), the immigrants went back to work (R. Zapata-Barrero, 2003b; 523-531).

A similar conflict was witnessed four years later in Elche, a long-time shoe-producing town in the coastal province of Alicante, where Spanish workers set fire to two Chinese shoe warehouses in an (unauthorized) manifestation against Chinese shoemaker of near half a thousand people. The demonstrators protested against the presence of Asian businessmen, because Spaniards felt their age-old social customs, employment norms, and labor relations threatened by the new competitors, with racism as effect (see also L. Cachón-Rodríguez, 2005). Both El Ejido (2000) and Elche (2004) reflect the racist sentiments in Spanish society and highlight the precarious working and living conditions of immigrants. After the 09/11/01 terrorist attacks in the United States

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<sup>3</sup> There is little comprehensive statistical information on the Muslim community in Spain. The Observatorio Andalusi (2006) estimates the Muslim population in Spain on 1.080.478 (including both Spanish and foreign Muslims).

<sup>4</sup> Informe Estadístico 31-12-2006, Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales.

and the 11/03/04 bombings in Madrid, an upsurge in hostility against Muslims has been reported in Spanish society (see for example European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2001 and International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 2005; 120-121) and social conflicts have been centered around the Muslim immigrant community. Next to fears for terrorism, the social integration of Muslims is perceived as difficult, because of claims for a religious infrastructure that are unfamiliar to Spaniards.

Based on data in yearbooks of SOS Racism and a newspaper analysis<sup>5</sup>, table 1 presents a list of conflicts and challenges of multiculturalism (limited to migration related diversity) encountered in Spain in 2006/2007. The list could be much longer, but we have chosen to select only those events that had effects beyond the locality: being either the involvement of state actors or similar events taking place with frequency in different localities. Three types of conflicts/ challenges are encountered: racism (R), the management of cultural (and religious) diversity (C) and the politicization of multiculturalism<sup>6</sup> (P).

Table 1. Conflicts and challenges of migration related diversity in Spain 2006/2007.

Date	Description of the conflict	Place	Group	Cat
Jan. 2007	<b>Fights between Spanish and Latin youth in the suburbs of Madrid result in three injured, and seven persons under arrest.</b> The fights have been dramatized in the media, comparing it with the French <i>banlieus</i> and generating debates of the involvement of bands of so-called "Latin Kings" (which is denied by the local authorities). Days after the fights some thousand youths hold a xenophobic protest against Latin immigrants and a week later a new assembly was organized by extreme right wing groups coming from outside the community. This makes the ministry of Interior reinforce security measures.	Alcorcón, Madrid	Latin American	R
Dec. 2006	<b>The president of the Islamic Council prays next to the Cordoba mosque-church, a day after the Bishopric of Cordoba rejects the petition to Pope Benedictus XVI to permit shared prayer in the temple.</b> In February 2006 a similar request was sent to the Alliance of Civilizations. As the renaissance cathedral sits in the centre of an ancient mosque complex, Muslims across Spain are lobbying to make it a symbolic gesture of reconciliation between faiths, by allowing them to pray in the city's cathedral. The petition resulted in a polemic discussion about the objectives of the act: being either a gesture to promote inter-religiosity or a wish to take over the temple and reinstall Al Ándalus and re-Islamize Spain.	Cordoba, Andalusia	Muslims	C
Dec. 2006	<b>The political parties <i>Izquierda Unida (IU)</i> and the <i>Partido Andalucista (PA)</i> support the petition of the president of the Islamic council, Mansur Escudero, to include <i>moriscos</i> within the list of preference groups to obtain Spanish nationality within 2 years<sup>7</sup>.</b> The petition was made to the Andalusian government and political parties with representation in the parliament, with the objective of restoring historical rights. Sephardic Jews, who like <i>moriscos</i> were expelled after the re-conquest of Al Andalus <sup>8</sup> , are a preference group.	Andalusia	<i>Moriscos</i> (Spanish Muslims)	P

<sup>5</sup> News articles on immigration have been collected since September 2006 from the newspapers *El País*, *El Periódico*, *El Mundo*, *ABC* and *La Vanguardia*

<sup>6</sup> The politicization of multiculturalism refers to making challenges of cultural diversity object of political discourse and electoral campaigns.

<sup>7</sup> According to the current legislation on nationality, most foreigners have to reside in Spain for ten years to be able to request Spanish nationality (asylum seekers can apply after 5 years of residence). However, this is reduced to only two years for those with a preferential nationality and, if they can claim some

Date	Description of the conflict	Place	Group	Cat
Oct. 2006	<b>Racist attacks at mosques and religious centers are reported with frequency by anti-racist organizations like SOS Racismo and the NGO Movimiento contra la Intolerancia.</b> Recent examples are the Islamic temple of the Muslim community of Cordoba that was covered by neo-Nazi signs, the religious centre of Muslims in Huesca and the Mosque Medina Monawara of Ontinyent that witnessed several attacks linked with neo-Nazi groups, painting phrases like “Moors out”, “no Moors”. Girona, Salt, Palafrugell, and San Vicente de Castellet, four towns in Catalonia also reported recent attacks on mosques.	Cordoba, Huesca, Ontinyent, Girona, Salt, Palafrugell and Sant Vicente de Castellet	Muslims	R
Sept. / Oct. 2006	<b>Hospitals have seen an increase in complaints from immigrants about the lack of translators, appropriate food and places of worship in hospitals. Rejection of treatments, like blood transfers and caesarean operations are reported as well.</b> In September/October two pregnant women carrying the AIDS virus rejected to have a caesarean operation. While the first women (Sub Saharan) rejected surgery on cultural beliefs, the second one (nationality unknown) rejected because of religious beliefs. A judge in Barcelona twice gave a sentence to the hospital to conduct the caesarean against the women’s will. The main justification was found in the right of the child to prevail over that of the ideology of the mother.	Vall d’Hebron, Barcelona, Catalonia	Sub Saharan African	C
Oct. – Dec. 2006 (and before)	<b>Protests against the building of mosques and opening of oratories in Catalonia have been widespread in the last years.</b> Most well-known is the case of Premiá del Mar. Most recent is the case of Badalona, which starting in October 2006, after the closure of an oratory. Neighbors created a platform “No to the mosque” and collected 3.500 signatures. In both cases political parties get involved in the conflict as well. It should be noted that Catalonia, unlike Madrid, has no principal mosque. As a consequence religious practices take place in provisional oratories in garages or small commercial centers. In December imams from Catalonia gathered in Barcelona to make claims for the dignity of Muslim cult places and the building of a principal mosque in Barcelona.	Badalona, Catalonia	Muslims	C/P
Jan. – Dec. 2006	<b>The government of Vic (22% immigrants) introduces civic courses for people to access municipal social aids, including the functioning of public services and Catalan traditions.</b> The controversial courses form part of an ordinance of public-spiritedness approved in January that oblige the applicants of municipal aid, to study a minimum of 10 school hours on rights and obligations of citizens, public-spirits and know-how of the cultural, social, economic, and legal structure of Catalonia and Vic. In October of 2005, complaints by SOS Racism resulted in a petition from the labor union to suppress the courses, because of discrimination.	Vic, Catalonia	Migrants in general	P

historical link with Spanish nationality, just one year. The preference groups are: Latin Americans, Portuguese, Filipinas, Andorrans, Guineans, and Sephardic Jews. Only these groups can hold a double nationality (Código Civil, articles 17-26, Law no. 36/2002, October 2002).

<sup>8</sup> The first expulsion of *moriscos*, a name given to Muslims who converted to Christianity after the fall of the Granada in 1492, was ordered by the Catholic Kings on February 14, 1502 and ended in 1610. Nowadays the descendants live in diverse north African countries, like Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya Mauritania and Mali (see also R. Zapata-Barrero, 2006; 145).

Date	Description of the conflict	Place	Group	Cat
Oct. – Nov. 2006	<b>In the latest Catalan elections, all parties include immigration in their electoral campaigns and some also incorporate immigrants on their candidate lists.</b> The right wing candidate for the Catalan government ( <i>Generalitat</i> ), Joseph Piqué ( <i>Partido Popular</i> ) warns for the risk of some Catalan neighborhoods to transform into French type <i>banlieus</i> . Artur Mas, the candidate of the nationalist party ( <i>Convergència i Unió</i> ) introduces the idea of a card for immigrants to gain credits of <i>Catalanidad</i> , thereby restricting access to welfare services (beyond education and health care). The Catalan Socialist Party (PSC) includes voting rights for immigrants in their program, but its candidate, José Montilla, argues that Catalonia is at its limits as the reception of immigrants is concerned, and emphasizes the negative effects of immigration on social services.	Catalonia	Migrants in general	P
Oct. 2006	<b>The Danish Cartoon Affair results in self-censorship in the traditional Festivals <i>Moros and Cristianos</i>.</b> The feasts, particularly celebrated in the southeast, commemorate the Christian Re-conquest on the Muslims in 1492, when the Moors were expelled after nearly 800 years of rule in much of the country. Revelers typically dress up costumes and stage mock battles. In the finale, Christians defeat Muslim Moors and in some towns a dummy of the prophet is destroyed. After the Danish Cartoon Affair, organizers of the festival started to soften and in some cases suppressed acts and images that could offend Muslims (like placing some firecrackers in the head of a Mohammed doll).	Valencia, Catalonia	Muslims	C
Oct. 2006 – Jan. 2007	<b>Controversy over the legalization of the armed youngsters gang “Latin Kings” in Madrid, after its legalization in Barcelona.</b> The legalization of the gang “Latin Kings” into a cultural association in Barcelona (with some 250 members, being youngsters from Latin America), under the condition of withdrawing from violent activities, starts a similar debate in Madrid (where the gangs have some 150-170 members). A history of committing crimes and the recognition as organized gangs by the police makes legalization a controversial issue.	Madrid	Latin American	C
June 2006	<b>The book “La España convertida al Islam” (Spain converted to Islam), written by the feminist scholar Rose María Rodríguez Magda, strongly criticizes Spanish converters to Islam,</b> by depicting them as Islamic fundamentalists trying to recover <i>al-Andalus</i> . This results in critiques from converters on <i>webislam</i> , a digital portal of Islam in Spain, where the author is being criticized of being fascist and promoting <i>Islamophobia</i> . The book is only one example of increasing criticism against Spanish converters to Islam coming from right wing politicians and academics critical of (left wing) multiculturalism.	Spain	Spanish citizens converted to Islam (Spanish Muslims)	P
Apr. – Sept. 2006	<b>Racist attacks against black people.</b> In April a black citizen was beaten up by a neo-Nazi group from Castellar del Vallès. In September, a Gambian was beaten up by a group of 15 youths, because he was with a white woman near the stadium of soccer. The three presumed aggressors are still waiting for judgment. According to the police, there are about 500 and 600 neo-Nazis in Catalonia. Other groups are active in Madrid, where racist actions are especially witnessed on important soccer days, inside as well as outside the stadium. A report of the Central Intelligence Unit of the National Police highlights that many of these neo-Nazis aim specifically at immigrants (A. Jiménez Barca, <i>El País</i> , 21/05/2006).	Catalonia, Madrid	Blacks	R

Most challenges and conflicts enlisted in table 1 have to do with the “Muslim community”, but there are also conflicts related to the “Latin community” and “blacks”. Spain though follows the European trend of constructing Muslims as the most problematic immigrant group, with *Islamophobia* as effect (see for example the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2006). “The Muslim presence in Europe is related to one side of the politically constructed Clash of Civilizations, and multiculturalism in Spain is seen as a conflict between models of society (one Western and the other Muslim) which are incompatible” (R. Zapata-Barrero, 2006; 155). Before going into one of the conflicts where this opposition becomes explicit at the local level, the next section will shortly highlight the importance of Islam within the construction of Spanish national identity and address the current place of the Islamic community – narrowly defined as a religious minority - within the political juridical framework of the Spanish secular state.

## **2.2 Islam within the Spanish secular state**

From the perspective of the state and society, the so-called new religious minority of Islam in Spain needs to be conceptualized in the context of the historical experience of the country with Islam. The presence of Muslims in Spain for more than 8 centuries makes the reactions to Islam different from other European countries (J. Moreras, 2006: 5-6). The fact that most conflicts of multiculturalism in Spain are related to the Muslim community can be understood in the context of the Spanish identity construction that is based on a traditional negative perception of the Muslim in general and the Moroccan in particular, considered in pejorative terms as ‘the Moor’ (*el moro*) (R. Zapata-Barrero, 2006; 143). While the word “Moor” historically speaking referred to the Berbers of North Africa and Iberia, it has become a negative stereotype for anyone of Arab or North African descent, especially for Moroccan immigrants in Spain. Moreover it has become to represent the Islamic Other.

The historical collective construction of a negative stereotype of the ‘Moor’ started with the Christian victory over the Muslim invasion in 1492, after 8 centuries of Muslim presence in the peninsula, after which the Spanish Kings (Queen Isabel and King Ferdinand) expelled Muslims, Jews and gypsies from the country. The Muslim presence finished completely in 1609 with the expulsion of the *moriscos* (Muslims converted to Christianity and stayed in Spain after the *Reconquista*) (R. Zapata, 2006; 145). E. Martín Corrales (2002) illustrates how the representation of the Moor in the propaganda of the *Reconquista* disqualified Islamic religion, and created stereotypes of Moors as being impure, treasonous, false, cruel, cowardly etc. The negative image of the Moor (and the bipolarization of the image of Moroccans) in other phases in Spanish history contribute to this construction of *Maurophobia* (phobia of the Moors), like the occupation of Morocco (becoming a Protectorate in 1912) after the African War and the participation of Moorish troops on the pro-Franco side in the Civil War (see also R. Zapata, 2006; 145-146). In opposition to the Moor, Spanish identity has been build on the idea of *Hispanidad*, a political discourse of exclusion based on the idea of a community of people linked together by linguistic and religious criteria (R. Zapata-Barrero, 2006; 143-147). *Hispanidad* is a political term that was created to comprise the whole Spanish area of influence, designating a linguistic (Spanish) and religious (Catholic) community and creating a sense of belonging, with the exclusion of non-Spanish speakers, atheists, Masons, Jews, and Muslims. The Franco regime (1940-1975) reconstructed this term as a symbol of homogeneity and unity, in order to create obtain a sentiment of loyalty and patriotism (L. González Antón, 1997; 613).

After the restoration of democracy, the relations of the state with religion have changed considerably, changing from a one-confessional (Catholic) state to a non-confessional state (which is different from laicism, as it does not guarantee religious equality). Article 16 of the 1987 constitution provides for religious freedom and the freedom of worship by individuals and groups and guarantees that "no faith shall have the character of a state religion"<sup>9</sup>. Islam was declared officially recognized as a "rooted" religion in the Spanish society in 1989, five years later than Protestantism and Judaism. In 1992 a cooperation agreement was signed between the Spanish State and the Islamic Commission of Spain<sup>10</sup>, which started the construction of an institutional position for Muslims as religious minority in Spain (see also Jefatura de Estado, 1992). This agreement grants the Muslim population of Spain several benefits<sup>11</sup> and is regarded as the most extensive legal framework for the recognition of Muslims in the European Union (J. Moreras, 2005a; 125). Nevertheless these principles of religious liberty and cooperation with religious minorities, the Spanish state continues to have an asymmetrical relation with the Catholic Church (J. Moreras, 2006; 31), both legally and practically (as a consequence of incompletion to implement agreements with minority confession).

Regarding the first (the legal power given to the Catholic Church), it should be noted that while the Jewish, Protestant have been granted similar benefits as the Muslims, the Catholic Church enjoys a number of additional privileges. These benefits derive from four accords signed with the Holy See in 1979. They cover economic, religious education, military, and judicial matters. The growth of minority religions like Islam has contested these privileges. The most important issue within this context is the finance the Catholic Church receives through voluntary tax contributions and until recently also through direct payments. In 2004, leaders of the Protestant, Muslim, and Jewish communities sought to claim treatment comparable to that enjoyed by the Catholic Church, by requesting the government to revise the national income tax forms to allow taxpayers the option to donate a percentage of their taxes to non-Catholic entities (US State Department, 2006). Although these negotiations ended without an agreement, a legislative change in September 2006 stopped direct payment, but increased the voluntary contribution to the Catholic Church from 0,52 to 0,7 percent. For voluntary contributions two options are available to taxpayers: the Catholic Church and social work (R. Zapata-Barrero, 2006; 151).

Secondly the asymmetrical relation with the Catholic Church is reflected by the incompletion of the Agreements signed with minority religions. In the case of Islam, one of the most important issues is the incompletion to put in practice the right of places for worship<sup>12</sup>. The Spanish law recognizes the right of confessions and religious communities to establish places of worship, applying to all persons, nationals and foreigners (see also article 3 of LO/2000). In accordance to the Agreement of 1992, mosques and recognized religious places are inviolable and profit from a favorable

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<sup>9</sup> Constitución Española, 1987 (<http://www.congreso.es/funciones/constitucion/indice.htm>).

<sup>10</sup> The Islamic Commission of Spain is composed of two umbrella organizations called the Spanish Federation of Islamic Religious Entities (*la Federación Española de Entidades Religiosas Islámicas*) and the Union of Spanish Islamic Communities in Spain (*la Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España*).

<sup>11</sup> Including the right to receive instruction in Islam in public and private schools, the right to celebrate Muslim holidays and the right to have Muslim marriages recognized under civil law.

<sup>12</sup> Another important area lacking implementation is religious education. In accordance with the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, religious teaching is obliged to be offered in public schools, though free to choose. The agreement between the state and minority religions guarantees the right of other religious education in both public and private schools. In practice however many schools do not provide this opportunity and local governments do not give priority to it either.



fiscal regiment. The only requirements for Islamic communities wishing to open oratorios and/or build mosques is consent from the Islamic Commission of Spain and the commitment to dedicate places of worship only to worship and religious education<sup>13</sup> (Jefatura de Estado, 1992). Local governments are obligated to provide territory for places of worship, but in practice this is often ignored by municipalities. A similar situation appears with the right to create areas within existing cemeteries or to create Islamic cemeteries (see also R. Zapata-Barrero, 2006; 149).

### 3. The mosque debate

#### 3.1 Conflicts around mosques and oratories

Conflicts around mosques and oratories (Muslim places of worship) consist of different elements. First, there is the opposition against the building of mosques and/or opening of religious centers or oratories<sup>14</sup> by both citizens and government, demonstrating a lack of social recognition of Muslims in the public space. Second, there are witnessed racist attacks against mosques and religious centers. Both demonstrate the presence of *Islamophobia* in Spanish society.

Third, there is the question of the access of women to mosques and oratories. To the majority of places of worship the entrance of women is prohibited. In those places (mainly the mosques) where they have access, they use separate rooms and sometimes have to cover themselves completely. The secretary of the *Junta Islámica de Catalunya* (Catalan Islamic Committee) criticizes the discrimination of women to places for worship, as it is not acceptable from the principle of sex equality, neither from the principle of religious freedom, as the Koran does not prohibit the access of women to places of worship (A. Prado, 2006). G. Martín Muñoz (2005) also highlights that the roots of sex discrimination are not to be found within the Islam.

Fourth, mosques are criticized for being linked to terrorism. Especially after the 11-3 bombings in Madrid<sup>15</sup>, the feeling of a necessity to know and control what happens in mosques has been raised (SOS Racismo, 2005; 200). In this context debates started on the finance of mosques, as the money often comes from abroad (mainly Saudi Arabia) and feared to be linked to terrorism. The main concern is that poorly resourced mosques depend on funding from foreign sources, including extremist oriented groups. The idea of granting state funding to mosques though remains controversial (International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 2005; 26, 127).

Fifth, there is critique on radical imams leading mosques. As these religious leaders are either educated abroad or not educated at all - as there is no career for imams in Spain - they are feared to advocate interpretations of Islam that are in conflict with legal and social norms of the Spanish society. In an attempt to prevent imams from spreading hateful and violent ideas, the government proposed the monitoring and

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<sup>13</sup> The Islamic Communities also have the responsibility to appoint imams and select school materials (V. Pérez-Díaz, B. Álvarez-Miranda and E. Chulía, 2004; 224).

<sup>14</sup> While all serve the purpose of providing Muslims places of worship, mosques and religious centers are always public and also provide other services, like education or social services. Moreover mosques, like churches make Islam visible within the public space, as they often have at least one minaret, a tall, slender tower with balconies, used for calling the faithful to prayer.

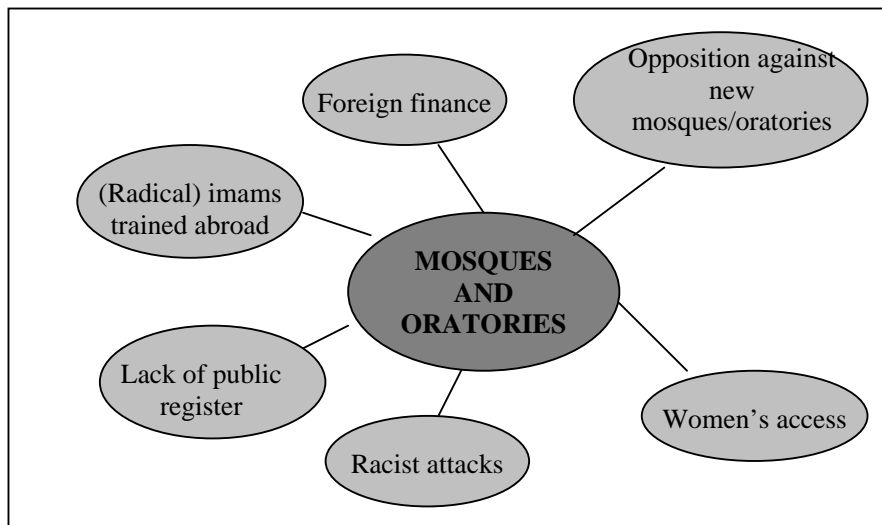
<sup>15</sup> The Madrid mosque is under influence of Saudi Arabia (wahabíes), and like the majority of big mosques financed externally. The center, known like the mosque of the M-30, has been object of an investigation of the Bank of Spain and of the National Audience to determine if its funds were distributed among institutions or people linked with terrorist activities (J.M. Irujo, 2007).

censoring of mosque sermons in May 2004. Protests by Muslim and civil liberty groups made them retract the proposal (International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 2005; 126). Two ways of regulating imams are under discussion nowadays. One is to educate imams in Spain, incorporating Spanish contextual elements, which is proposed by the Muslim community<sup>16</sup>. The other is to finance Muslim communities through associations and support their mobilization (R. Zapata-Barrero, 2006; 152).

Sixth and related to the former is the lack of a register for mosques and oratories. Currently there is no control over mosques. While 70% of the oratories is estimated to be managed by a religious association (that might be, but does not have to be inscribed in the Spanish Islamic Commission), some 30% is not registered at all (G. Martín Muñoz, 2003; 119), thereby lacking the fiscal advantages and legal recognition provided by the 1992 Agreement. Both the lack of a register for mosques and a proper career for imams highlights the lack of accommodation of Islam as a religious minority and has resulted in fear for the development of radical Islam (see also J. Moreras, 2005b; 124-149).

Section 2.2 will go further into the deconstruction of discourses justifying the protests against the building of mosques and opening of religious centers. Opposition to Muslim places of worship represent one of the most important conflict zones between Spanish citizens and Muslim immigrants and highlights the deep rooted resistance towards the visibility of Muslims and their religious infrastructure within the public space. Moreover, conflicts around the building of mosques and oratories indirectly also include the other conflicts enlisted here (see also figure 1).

Figure 1: Conflicts around Mosques and oratories



<sup>16</sup> The main Moroccan immigrant workers organization (ATIME) proposed a system of self-control of mosques led by local and national Muslim councils that should be responsible for the supervision of Mosques and appointment of Imams, in order to stop the radicalization of Islam financed by Saudi Arabia (E. Granda and T. Bárbulo, 2004; 21 and T. Bárbulo, 2004; 14; International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 2005; 126).

### 3.2 Opposition to the building of mosques and opening of oratories

The building of mosques and opening of oratories are probably the most important demands from Muslim communities in Spain for creating a religious infrastructure. Especially mosques can be seen as an important indicator of the consolidation of Muslim immigrants within Spanish society (J. Moreras, 2004; 413 and G. Martín-Muñoz, 2003; 121). However, the protests of neighbors and the reluctance of local governments to facilitate mosques and other places for oration show a major lack of social integration and a source of conflict. Every time members of a Muslim community want to build a mosque or open a religious centre or oratory, neighbors attempt to stop it by collecting signatures and/or organizing protests in the street. Local authorities, instead of managing conflicts impartially, often adopt an ‘understanding’ position towards the local inhabitants, no doubt because of the electoral cost of defending the Muslims’ claims” (R. Zapata-Barrero, 2006; 149). Nevertheless the urban norms to reserve spaces for places of worship, extending planning permits or permits for construction work are the most common way of local authorities to oppose the building of mosques. Lack of safety or the reluctance to change the destination of a building on the other hand are commonly used as arguments to oppose the opening (or claim the closure) of religious centers and oratories.

Based on information provided in the annual reports from SOS Racism and an analysis of newspapers since 2001, there can be identified 24 documented cases of opposition against the construction of the building a mosques or opening of religious centers or oratories in Spain (see also appendix 1). The large majority (18 cases) took place in Catalonia<sup>17</sup>. One of the first and most documented cases is Premià del Mar, a small town north of Barcelona, with an immigrant population of only 6%. The town became the centre of confrontations between immigrants and local citizens in 2002, after the wish of the Muslim community to build a mosque in the centre of the town (SOS Racismo, 2002, 239-240; 2003, 214-219). Textbox 1 gives a reconstruction of the events. The most recent conflict over the building of a mosque took place in Badalona, a municipality with 8% of immigrants located in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, which is outlined in textbox 2.

Premià and Badalona, representing two more extreme cases, are selected as case studies to analyze the opposition towards mosques and oratories, because of the size of the conflict and the involvement of different actors. In both cases the conflict starts with the closure of an oratory, which leaves the Muslims without a place of worship. When the Muslim communities make their wish to build a mosque public, neighbor protests get more radical, other actors become involved and the conflict goes beyond the local context<sup>18</sup>. Both cases moreover are characterized by the direct involvement of political parties, which makes them examples of politicization of multiculturalism<sup>19</sup>. In the case

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<sup>17</sup> It should be noted though that before (between fall 2000 and 2001) opposition has been reported both in Catalonia and Madrid (See G. Martín Muñoz, 2003; 121). Section 3.3 will go into the discussion of why opposition is especially observed in Catalonia.

<sup>18</sup> In Premià the final agreement is signed by the representatives of the City Hall, the Islamic Community (AIAT), the secretary of Religious Matters of the Catalan government (*Generalitat*) and a representative of the *Consell Islàmic i Cultural of Catalonia*. Also in the case of Badalona the Catalan government and the *Junta Islàmica Catalana* get involved, after the building of a mosque becomes an option.

<sup>19</sup> In Premià the politicization of the conflict continues also after a temporal solution is agreed on. While the eco-socialist party ICV (part of the local government at that time with the PSC and ERC) interprets the solution of the government as sign of weakness (giving in to the neighbors protests), the conflict also

of Premià it is worth to mention that it continues to be used as example, when politicians talk about Muslim challenges or conflicts in Catalonia.

#### **Textbox 1. Premià del Mar**

In 1987 the Muslim community in Premià del Mar *Asociación Islámica At-Tauba* opened an oratory. When the Muslim community in the town increases in the '90s the oratory becomes too small and neighbors start complaining about noise. The lack of security requirements makes the judicial authority order the closure of the oratory in November 2001. The local government promise to find a new place for the community, but this turns out to be difficult. In February 2002 an agreement is reached to provide the Muslim community with a public school for place until June. Meanwhile the Muslim community buys a plot of land in the centre of the town, destined to cultural services and applies for a license to construct a mosque. After the news about the possible construction of a mosque has been spread, the local population starts to mobilize out of fear for the devaluation of property and radical Islamism. First neighbors collect 5.554 signatures to protest against the plan. An agreement is eventually signed to build the mosque in a less centrally located site, an industrial park in the outskirts of the town. Again neighbors mobilize and collect 700 signatures against this plan. The Muslim community neither agrees with the solution, which makes the local government break the negotiations and order them to leave the school. Without a place to worship, the Muslim community uses the obtained plot in the centre to orate on Friday. This results in the first neighbor protests on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2002, continuing in the days afterwards and including not only neighbors united within the *Plataforma per Premià*, but also extreme right wing groups, anti-fascist groups and political parties. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of April the town council approves the authorization to build the mosque, which results in a protest against the major and local authorities on the same day. At this occasion the ultra right leader of the *Plataforma por Cataluña* (advocating the expulsion of immigrants) Josep Anglada enters the conflict, by publicly supporting the manifestation. In reaction to the involvement of the right wing movement a *Coordinadora Premià per la Convivència* is formed, consisting of several entities, among which SOS Racism. In support of the Muslim community, this platform organizes a manifestation on May 12, with some 1.000 participants. At this manifestation, the leader of the green party (ICV) participates. The other two parties forming the local government in Premià, PSC and ERC are absent and criticize the participation of the ICV. On Saturday 18 of May there is a massive demonstration of both neighbours headed by Josep Anglada and a counter demonstration by an Antifascist group. After the manifestation Josep Anglada gives a speech and presents his new party *Platform per Catalonia* for the next municipal elections. There is spoken of 8.000 firms collected against the mosque and a petition of the resignation of the major. Now the conflict is also being mediatized by regionally and nationally media, which triggers several political reactions. The president of the Catalan Socialist Party (PSC) Pasqual Maragall accuses the right wing party of taking advantage of the polemic situation for electoral reasons. The president of the Catalan government, Pujol, argues that while Catalonia is open to newcomers it also wants to conserve its identity and culture. The Catalan government (Generalitat) gets involved to mediate a solution. After several meetings between the different political forces an agreement is reached to request the transfer of the mosque to the industrial lands of *Can Banyeres*, offering the Islamic community in the meantime the possibility of utilizing the school *Voramar*. Also a Council for the *Convivència Ciutadana* (coexistence of citizens) is provisioned and the promotion of knowledge between communities and facilitation of integration. The Islamic Community of Premià accepts to restart negotiations, and an agreement is reached on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September to use the school for a period of 15 years, meanwhile freezing the license for constructing the mosque until a final solutions is found (Gabinet d'Estudis Socials, 2002; SOS Racismo, 2002; 239-240; SOS Racismo, 2003; 214; R. Zapata-Barrero, 2003a; 6; A. Motilla, 2004: 88; ABC, 27-11-2001; M. Pérez, 2002 and J. Vives, 2002).

Next to the fact that both cases represent the more extreme cases of opposition to Muslim places of worship, there are several other comparisons to make. In both cases neighborhood associations started the conflict, by collecting signatures and organizing protests. While the neighbors deny being racists or opposed to Muslims, opposition is

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results in the development of a new political party to run for the local elections: *Veïns Independents de Premià* (independent neighbors of Premià).

based on a fear of the Islamization of their neighborhood or municipality. Joan Xivillé, spokesman of one of the neighbor groups in Premià firmly denies being racist, by arguing that Muslims and Spaniards live peacefully together and that the opposition to the mosque is only based on “urban questions”, or the fear for devaluation of property prices and the movement of “autochthons” (J. Vives, 2002). However, behind this fear for devaluation of property and neighborhood hides a clear negative image of Muslims that is comparable to that of “blacks” (and the accompanying “white flight”) in some neighborhoods of big cities in the United States. The possible building of a mosque would mean the first “real” visible mosque in Catalonia, thereby attracting many Muslims and converting the zone into a Muslim ghetto. This perceived threat of the Islamization of the public space and the invasion of Muslims is believed to result in an increase of civic insecurity and of conflicts between neighbors and Muslims, as it is often believed “Muslims do not want to be integrated” (Gabinet d’Estudis Socials, 2002).

In Badalona the neighbors use a similar discourse to justify their opposition. The explanation of the property owner of the industrial building in Badalona is exemplary here. He explains that the neighborhood has been “invaded by moors [...] and left the Spaniards a minority in their own neighborhood” (R. González, 2006). The construction of a mosque in Badalona would attract Muslims from the nearby communities, thereby worsening the balance between Spaniards and Muslims. The neighbors in Badalona also consider the Moroccan community to be difficult to integrate and synonymous to delinquency (R. González, 2006). In both cases the neighbors therefore justify their opposition to the mosque by the fear of being invaded by the cultural Other (defined in the first case as the Muslim immigrant and in the second as the Moroccan immigrant) that is impossible to integrate within their society.

Lluís Sadurní, spokesman of the Platform for Premià (including different neighbor associations) also introduces laicism as an argument for opposition to public places for worship. Asking him for a solution to the conflict, he states “let them pray in their homes” (M. Pérez, 2002). Also the opposition to the temporal use of the public school in Premià highlights the unwillingness of the neighbors to give Islam a place within the public space of society. A discourse of laicism though is most clearly represented by the local authorities. In both cases, the local authorities initially have reserved plots of land for the possible construction of a mosque, but are reluctant to let the Muslims construct their mosque there due to the protests. Moreover when plots are reserved, this is in periphery zones of the municipality, demonstrating the denial of the visibility of Islam in the public space in the first place. While laicism is not the official discourse of the Spanish State, the attitudes of local authorities in Catalonia towards Muslim residents can be characterized by their recognition of the right to places of worship on private premises (homes, community centers etc.) and their reluctance to recognize the need to give Muslims the public visibility enjoyed by the Catholic Church (see also J. Moreras, 2003). The case studies highlight that the legal right to establish places of worship is only put in practice when these places are rather invisible, as is the case with oratories, which are often located in private garages, offices and apartments.

### Textbox 2. Badalona

The Badalona the conflict starts in February 2005, when the local government closes an oratory in the neighborhood La Pau. The formal justification is found in the lack of security, but the decision should be understood in the context of a campaign started by neighbors and supported by the Popular Party (*Partido Popular*) against the inconvenience of the oratory. After the decision of the town council to close the cult place some 150 Muslims assembled at the municipality square to pray, as form of protest and signal of *convivencia* (co-existence). In the beginning of March the local government and the Muslim community agree to replace the mosque to a factory in the industrial park, located on the border of the municipalities of Badalona and Santa Coloma. The agreements includes that the local government will provide the Muslim community with a provisional oratory, meanwhile the factory can be adapted to its new destination. The neighbor association *Asociación de Vecinos del Congrés*, together with other neighbor associations collected almost 3.000 signatures in opposition to the settlement of the oratory. The imam in charge of the closed oratory complains to be treated as secondary citizen and compares it with leprosy patients that need to be hid away. He also highlights the importance of the lack of voting rights to press the local government. In July 2005 the City Hall of Badalona approves with unanimity to suspend during a year the concession of licenses for the opening of new religious temples. It thereby breaks the commitment to help the Muslim community to find an alternative location. In July 2006 it approves restrictions to the opening of oratories, like a maximum capacity of 70 people. In the summer of 2006 the town Council finally approves (without consent from the Popular Party) the qualification of a green belt for the use of religious worship. The local Popular Party and the constructed platform “No to the Mosque in Public Lands” collect 20.800 firms against the supposed construction of a mosque on these public lands. The Catalan government (*Generalitat*) also becomes involved, because the wish to reserve more than thousand meters of public land for religious use by the local authorities needs modifications in the *Plan General Metropolitano* (the Metropolitan Plan). The Catalan minister of Culture emphasizes that politics set up citizens against each other does not correspond with the rich and diverse Spanish history of cultures and, at present, a plural country because of immigrants. The President of the *Junta Islámica Catalana* argues that the collection of firms by the Popular Party of Barcelona is an intention to demonize and produce fear for Islam. The campaign against the mosque should be understood as a campaign against the fundamental right to have places of worship. He laments the lack of democratic maturity and Islamophobia present in Catalonia (SOS Racismo, 2006; 208-209; F. Sales, 2007; M. de Barros, 2007; *ABC* 13-01-2007; R. González, 2006).

While neighbors start opposition, they are supported by right wing groups and profited from by political parties. In Premià the protests of neighbors are joined by ultra right “skins”, which result in the counter mobilization of anti-fascist groups. In addition to that local right wing parties (in the opposition) take advantage of the neighbor protests to obtain support for coming local elections, leaving the local governments (consisting of coalitions of national and left wing parties) in a difficult situation to deal with the religious demands of the Muslim community. The voting rights of the neighbors give them an advantage over the Muslim community, consisting mainly of immigrants who often don’t have voting rights<sup>20</sup>. In Premià, the spokesman of the right wing *Plataforma por Cataluña* publicly supports the manifestation against the construction of a mosque. Emphasizing the fear for a Muslim invasion he justifies the manifestation by the need to defend their identities, customs and culture (*ABC*, 20-05-2002), thereby highlighting a discourse of *Islamophobia* based on the construction of identity in opposition to Muslims.

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<sup>20</sup> The only way to obtain voting rights is through naturalization (the acquisition of Spanish nationality). Beyond this paradigm, voting rights can be granted by way of Art.13.2 of the Constitution, allowing voting rights at the local level to immigrants by the reciprocity principle. That means that there is only a possibility for foreigners to vote in local elections when their countries of origin provide the same right to Spanish nationals (CE art. 13.2)

In Badalona the Popular Party (PP) is closely involved in the collection of signatures against the building of a mosque on public lands, also here with clear electoral reasons. The president of the PP in Badalona, at that time candidate for the City Hall, affirms that his party will give priority to destine the public lands reserved by the government for pre-school facilities or centers for elderly, instead of for constructing a mosque. The collection of signatures separately from the platform “No to the mosque” according to the president represents “the union of citizens, independent of their ideology” (M. de Barros, 2007), thereby producing the idea that the Muslims residing in the community are not citizens. This idea is even more clearly translated by the Catalan leader of the Republican Left, Josep-Luís Rovira (currently the vice-president of the Catalan government), who criticizes the former Imam of Premià del Mar to be anti-democratic, because he denied talking with the female major. He refers directly to this imam, when he argues for “the expulsion of those imams (like in Premià) that try to defend and spread anti-democratic values” (ABC, 22-05-2002). This speech act highlights the third type of justification for opposition to the mosque, which is not just about the fear for an Islamic invasion or the place of religion within Spanish society and public space, but rather about the values preached within the mosques and represented by the Muslim community. This anti-democracy discourse constructs the Muslims as anti-citizens, because of the incompatibility of Islamic values with liberal democratic values of Spanish citizenship. To sum up, the discourses justifying opposition to the building of mosques in the two cases analyzed here (and represented by neighbors, local governments and political parties) can be found in (1) racism based on *Islamophobia* and *Maurophobia* (2) a discourse of laicism, limiting religion to the private sphere and (3) a discourse that constructs Muslims as anti-citizens, based on the incompatibility of liberal democratic with Islamic values.

In opposition to these discourses, the platform for coexistence in Premià has acted as pressure group for civil rights, defending the right of the Muslim community to build a mosque and thereby putting forward an anti-discrimination discourse. The Muslim communities involved also use this anti-discrimination discourse, by addressing the violation of their civil (here the freedom of religion) and political liberties (voting rights). The imam selected for the would-be mosque in Badalona explicitly argues that the Muslims are being treated as “secondary” citizens, because of their lack of voting rights and possibilities to practice their religion (R. González, 2006). He also blames the political parties for electorization of the mosque debate, resulting in social fracture. “In questions of integration, we are worse of than 5 years ago. [...] we are also citizens. We are neighbors, workers and tax payers, but they are denying our fundamental rights.” (L. Benvenuty, 2007). Next to stressing civil and political individual rights, reference is also made to their group rights established in the 1992 agreement between the Spanish state and the Islamic community. It can be concluded that while discourses opposed to the building of the mosques are based on the idea of the clash between Western and Islamic values and principles (or Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations), it are exactly these Western values that are used by the Muslim community to claim religious rights within the context of the Spanish secular state.

### ***3.3 The case of Catalonia: Why is there no principal mosque?***

Premià del Mar and Badalona are only two examples of the opposition against the building of mosques and opening of oratories and religious centers witnessed in Catalonia (see also table 2). This paragraph will shortly go into the question why the

opposition against the building of mosques and opening of religious centers and oratories is proportionally high in Catalonia<sup>21</sup>.

*Table 2.* Overview of Muslim population, registered Islamic Communities, principal mosques and cases of opposition against the building of mosques or opening of oratories, by autonomous community.

<b>Autonomous Community/ City</b>	<b>Muslims population</b>	<b>Registered Islamic Communities</b>	<b>Cases of opposition to the building of mosques and opening of oratories.</b>	<b>Principal mosque</b>
Andalucía	176.177	54	1	Yes (4)
Aragón	28.454	18	0	No
Asturias	2.149	1	0	No
Baleares	22.585	21	1	No
Canarias	64.682	15	0	No
Cantabria	1.888	1	0	No
Castilla La Mancha	36.002	17	0	No
Castilla y León	12.648	8	1	No
<b>Cataluña</b>	<b>245.222</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>No</b>
Ceuta	30.110	20	0	Yes (2)
Extremadura	29.819	5	1	No
Galicia	5.784	4	1	No
La Rioja	9.307	5	0	No
Madrid	195.254	61	0	Yes (2)
Melilla	32.744	7	0	Yes (2)
Murcia	50.819	19	0	No
Navarra	10.256	7	0	No
Valencia	113.595	10	1	Yes (1)
País Vasco	12.983	28	0	No
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.080.478</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>11</b>

*Sources:* for the Muslim population (foreigners and nationals): Observatorio Andalusí, 2006; for the registered Islamic communities: the register of religious minorities at the ministry of Justice, checked in December 2006 (<http://dgraj.mju.es/EntidadesReligiosas/>); for the cases of opposition to the building of mosques and/or opening of oratories information has been collected from SOS racism yearbooks and newspapers from 2001 onwards; for principal mosques: J. Bastante, 2006.

A first explanation is based on demography. Catalonia is the largest receiver of Muslim immigrants. As a result, demands for places of worship will be higher and therefore also the potential for conflict. The Muslim population in Spain is estimated at 1.080.478, consisting of both immigrants (724.722) and Spanish citizens (355.756)<sup>22</sup>. Most of them

<sup>21</sup> A first question that needs to be verified is whether Catalonia presents similar levels of protest as in the rest of Spain. Here we will assume that Catalonia has similar levels of protest.

<sup>22</sup> The data sources used by the Observatorio Andalusí are: The Municipal Register of Inhabitants (*Padrón municipal*), nationality concession data from the Ministry of Justice, data on prisoners from the



reside in Catalonia (22,7%), Madrid (18,1%), Andalusia (16,3%) and Valencia (10,5%) (Observatorio Andalusí, 2006). The large Muslim population in Catalonia does not explain however why other communities with high percentages of Muslims do not witness as many conflicts, like Andalusia, Madrid and Valencia (see also table 2).

A more specific explanation related to the demographic argument is found in the fact that Catalonia unlike Madrid, Andalusia and Valencia has no principal mosque<sup>23</sup>, which leads to increasing demands for both the opening of oratories and the construction of mosques. Spain has 11 mosques, two in the province of Málaga, two in Ceuta, two in Melilla, one in Valencia, two in Madrid and one in Granada. The claim for the need to have a principal mosque in Barcelona has been raised for a long time and was addressed recently again when the Islamic Cultural Council of Catalonia (*Consejo Islámico Cultural de Cataluña*) diffused a communication, signed by some 50 imams, in which they demanded “dignity for oratories” and a principal mosque in Barcelona (see also D. Casals, 2006 and J. Playà Maset, 2006).

It should be noted though that there are no official data on the number of mosques and oratories in Spain, as there is no register available. Some religious groups choose to register as cultural organizations at the regional level, rather than with the National Registry of Religious Entities of the Ministry of Justice in Madrid, because the national registration process can take up to six months and require quite some paperwork. J. Moreras estimates the number of mosques or oratories in Spain to be between 350 and 500 (J. Moreras, 2004; 413). According to the Islamic Commission the number of mosques or oratories reaches the number of 427 (Bastante, J., 2006). The number of oratories in Catalonia represents one third (140) of the total number of oratories (450) in Spain<sup>24</sup> (J. Moreras, 2004). The map below indicates that opposition to mosques and oratories takes place especially in municipalities with a larger number of registered oratories (and therefore concentration of Muslims).

The Catalan government (*Generalitat*) intends to have good relations with the different religious communities, starting with those who have most followers and that are most rooted in the culture and history of the country<sup>25</sup>. The relations between the Catalan government and the *Consell Islàmic i Cultural de Catalunya* date from an agreement in 2002, with the objective of creating a dialogue and stimulate mutual knowledge between Islam and the Catalan society, including the support for courses of Catalan language and culture to Imams that come to practice in Catalonia. Within the

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Ministry of Internal affairs, numbers on students and professors from the Ministry of Education, completed with data from the *Comisión Islámica de España*.

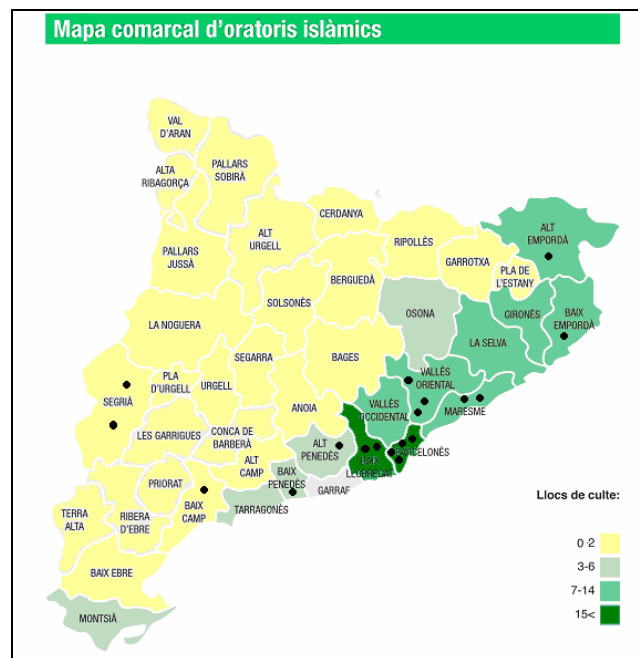
<sup>23</sup> Although the Islamic Centre Tarik Ibn Ziyad in Barcelona and the mosque in Vic or Terrassa can be qualified as minor mosques (*mayid*), there is no principal mosque (*yami`*) in Barcelona and the majority of oratories are located in garages or small commercial buildings (G. Martín Muñoz, 2003; 119).

<sup>24</sup> Most oratories in Catalonia were established in the second half of the 90s. From 2001 onwards the increase has slowed down as a consequence of increased protest. According to J. Moreras (2004; 413) the establishment of oratories should not be understood only as a consequence of the presence of Moroccans in Catalonia, but rather as a product of the evolution of demands. The period in where many oratories opened coincides with the process of family reunification, which supposes new demands. A similar statement is made by A. Mottilla (2004: 80-81) who - referring to Nielsen (1991) - argues that the opening of oratories coincide with a predominance of male immigrant workers that due to temporal labor change their place of residence. When family reunification starts to take place, and families settle down, the cultural and religious demands of the Muslim community change, resulting in increasing demands for the building/opening of mosques.

<sup>25</sup> The recently approved *Estatut* (Catalan Constitution) gives the Catalan government the exclusive power over religious entities that carry out their activities in Catalonia, including the regulation and establishment of collaboration and cooperation mechanisms with religious communities (see art. 161, Parlament de Catalunya, 2006).

Catalan government, the Secretary for Religious Affairs is responsible for the relations between the government and the religious entities in its territory. Its main aim is the normalization of religious pluralism. On their website laicism is defended as starting principle, without denying the need to provide them places of worship in the public space. Nevertheless, the Catalan government (*Generalitat*) has not given any priority to the construction of a mosque in Barcelona or other municipalities of Catalonia. The numerous conflicts around oratories and mosques in its territory though has made the director of Religious Affairs, Josep Lluís Carod-Rovira (ERC) announce that a law is being drafted to set guidelines for giving authorization to the building of mosques and to define the minimal conditions for cult centers and solidarity within municipalities (*La Razón*, 31-12-2006; C. Orduña, 2007).

*Map 1.* Distribution of Islamic cult places in Catalonia, by *comarca* (geographical administrative units) and protests against the opening of cult places detected from 2001-2006.



Source: Elaboration of the Departament de la Presidencia, 2004, “Estudi sobre minories religioses a Catalunya de Investigacions en Sociologia de la Religió (ISOR)”, equip de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona dirigit pel catedràtic de sociologia Joan Estruch.

There are several hypothetical explanations for why there is no principal mosque in Catalonia. A first hypothesis is found in the fractures within the Muslim communities, which are often organized by nationality. While the large majority of Muslim immigrants are Sunnis, division is produced rather by nationality. The largest immigrant group comes from *Magreb* countries, but there are also important groups from Sub Saharan countries and Pakistan (Departament de la Presidencia, 2004). The different Muslim communities established, all have their wishes for places of worship, which might problematize the building of a mosque in Catalonia accessible to all Muslims. A second hypothesis is related to the lack of control over mosques. As the state does not regulate the building of mosques, and finance often comes from abroad, terrorism is feared to develop. As the *Generalitat* is not willing to finance a mosque itself, it might opt for a large number of oratories instead of a principal mosque influenced from

abroad. A third hypothesis starts from the fact that in Catalonia immigrants provide a different challenge than in other parts of Spain, as the presence of immigrants are a risk to the Catalan national identity and self-government, which might lead to more xenophobic behavior. This nationalist hypothesis though is not confirmed by the Bask case, where a major mosque is absent too and conflict has not been witnessed at a large scale. It remains a question why Catalonia – that unlike the rest of Spain was not dominated by Muslims for 8 centuries - adopts a similar discourse of *Islamophobia/Maurophobia*.

An answer might be found in the fourth hypothesis related to the role of religion within Catalan society. Representing an odd case within the revival of *Hispanidad*, in terms of its divergence of language and culture, Catalonia does share the Catholic values with the rest of Spain. The reactions towards the religious expressions and demands of the Muslim community in Catalonia could be understood in the context of the social construction of religion. J. Moreras argues that Catholicism is being redefined in Catalonia from religious belonging to cultural tradition. Although the religious practice of Catholicism has decreased considerably, religious values continue to play an important role in the lives of many people. Also public opinion continues to see Catholicism as the religion of the Catalans (J. Moreras, 2004; 28-29). As a consequence J. Moreras (2006: 31) argues that religious pluralism in Catalonia is more “formal than real”. The conflict is found in the fact that while the majority confession has been replaced to the private sphere, minority confessions like Islam have claimed more public visibility. As a consequence Islam might be conceived as a threat to the (religious) values of Catalan society, consisting of both traditional Catholic and secular values. The opposition to the building of a mosque in Barcelona therefore stands in an ambiguous relation with the question of secularism. On the one hand it challenges the religious and cultural naturalness of the state and violates the principle of religious equality. On the other hand the public visibility of Islam is feared exactly because of these principles of laicism<sup>26</sup>.

#### **4. Reflections on the Danish Cartoon affair in Spain**

##### ***4.1 Reactions to the Danish Cartoon Affair***

*Periodista Digital* is the only Spanish newspaper that publishes the Cartoons online (*Periodista Digital*, 03-02-2006). Unlike other European countries (like Norway, France and Germany) the Danish Cartoons are not published in major daily Spanish newspapers<sup>27</sup>. Nevertheless, *El País* (a liberal daily national newspaper) does publish a drawing of Mohammed by the caricaturist Plantu, of *Le Monde* on their front page, in which the words "I should not draw Mohammed" formed the face of the Muslim prophet (*El País*, 03-02-2006). Unlike the Danish Cartoons, the prophet is not depicted as terrorist and what is represented by the drawing is rather the polemics around the

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<sup>26</sup> According to Moreras, the accommodation of the practice of Islam in Catalan society is probably the best way to normalize the plural religious reality in Catalonia and attribute to the recognition and accommodation of the minority group (see also J. Moreras, 2006: 50). Similarly A. Montilla argues that the building of mosques does not only guarantee religious liberty of immigrants, but also is a necessary means to facility their integration within the host society, as mosques also have a social function and a symbolic meaning (A. Montilla, 2004: 79-83).

<sup>27</sup> The absence of a re-publication of the cartoons in the Spanish press seems quite odd, when taking into account the century old stereotypes and images of Muslims and Moroccans (see for example E. Martín Corrales, 2002).

Cartoons published in other European countries. Nevertheless, the Moroccan Minister of Communication prohibits the newspaper to be distributed in Morocco that day.

Although the issue is extensively reported in the daily press<sup>28</sup>, only two newspapers (*El País* and *El Periódico de Cataluña*) write an editorial about the Cartoons the day after the polemics start in Demark. *El País* gives most importance to the issue, dedicating next to the front page, also an editorial article and an interview with the chief of *Jyllands-Posten* to the issue. In the editorial the position of the newspaper is stated explicitly: “One thing is to offend a specific religious creed and another very different thing is the violent answers to this presumed contempt. The Muslims that are violently protesting in European cities these days should know that in democratic systems offenses are resolved before courts of justice” (*El País*, 03-02-2006). The reason of the newspaper to not publish the cartoons is found in the representation of Mohammed with a turban in the shape of bomb that is going to explode<sup>29</sup>. The conservative Spanish newspaper *ABC* used a photograph of the original Danish newspaper, with its 12 cartoons and in an opinion piece notes that none of the Spanish cartoonists contacted by the newspaper wanted to collaborate on the issue, because they preferred to do other things, like making jokes about the pope (*ABC*, 02-02-2006). *La Vanguardia* dedicates only an opinion piece on the issue, in where the freedom of expression is defended, but also calls for “laicity”, beginning with the right of religious liberty and worship that should be exercised in a spirit of tolerance and respect toward the beliefs of the other (*La Vanguardia*, 03-02-2006).

Opinion pieces appearing in the Spanish newspapers address two basic issues. The first is a discussion about what is exactly the problem with the Cartoons. While the representation of Mohammed is not regarded offensive by most opinion authors<sup>30</sup>, the link that is made with terrorism is often rejected (see for example *Agencia de noticias EFE*, 07-02-2006). In this context, two if the 12 cartoons have been especially polemic: the one with the bomb and the one with the cutlass. Second, the Cartoon Affair raises a conflict between fundamental freedoms in democratic societies: the freedom of speech, press and religion. The main question is to what point it is lawful to hurt religious feelings (to mock religion) for the benefit of the freedom of speech? More than the freedom of religion itself, what is at stake is the role of religion in society and the way in which secularity is perceived and practiced (see for example D. Carrasco, 2006).

The Spanish government does not support the publishing of the cartoons. In an article in the *International Herald Tribune*, the Spanish Prime Minister J.L. Rodríguez

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<sup>28</sup> A search in the database *My news online* (<http://upf.mynewsonline.com/>) for articles including the word Mohammed and Cartoon from the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Februari 2006 to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2006 resulted in 234 articles for *El País*, 163 for *El Mundo*, 181 for *ABC*, 155 for *El Periódico*, 171 for *La Vanguardia* and 166 for *La Razón*. (When only searching in titles and subtitles only 26 articles are found in the newspapers mentioned).

<sup>29</sup> Also a in a column by the *defensor del lector* (Ombudsman of the Reader), Sebastián Serrano, explains the motives of the director of the newspaper (Jesús Ceberio) are to be found in the possibility that the cartoons could be understood as a criminalization of the followers of Mohammed (S. Serrano, 05-02-2006).

<sup>30</sup> The columnist Gustavo Bueno for example argues that the taboo about the representation of Mohammed is unacceptable in a rationalist society. “If Mohammed existed really as a man, he should be able to be represented too”, goes his argument. What moved the newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* to publicize the Cartoons was a response to the complaint by a Danish writer, in the newspaper *Politiken* fifteen days before, about the difficulties to find illustrations for a book that explains the life of Mohammed to children (September 30, 2005). According to Bueno, instead of representing a problem of respect towards Muslim, it rather addresses a pedagogical problem. With an increasing Muslim population in Western societies due to immigration, not representing Mohammed only goes against the integration of Muslim (G. Bueno, 2006).

Zapatero together with the Prime Minister of Turkey, R.T. Erdogan, makes a “call for respect and calmness”. In the article they affirm that the publication of the cartoons “can be perfectly legal, but are rejected from a moral and political point of view” (Erdogan, T. and J.L. Rodríguez Zapatero, 2006). The vice-president of the Government, María Teresa Fernández, takes a similar position. “Today more than ever one must appeal to the responsibility of one to the other, and the key to create this peaceful co-existence (*convivencia*) is respect, as much to the freedom of speech as to the freedom of beliefs” (*Periodista Digital*, 04-02-2006). Finally Moratinos, Minister of Foreign Affairs, argues that the freedom of speech should be accompanied with responsibility and respect for others, but condemns the violence that is witnessed as a consequence of the Cartoons. He also mentions that the Cartoon Affair demonstrates the need and justification for the Alliance of Civilization (M. A. Moratinos and S. Lavrov, 2006). Both the Spanish newspapers and the government have thereby showed “respect” to the Muslim communities within and outside their country.

This lack of mediatization and politicization of the Cartoon Affair in Spain made large scale protests absent. Only a few incidents have been reported. In Barcelona a protest action (consisting of a public prayer at the plaza de Joan Miró) was organized by *La plataforma Fe y Diálogo*<sup>31</sup> the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2006. Next to prayer there were placards with texts like: “Peaceful coexistence, Dialogue, Freedom of Speech” and “Freedom of Speech yes, insults no”, “No to the conflict of civilizations” and “I love my prophet Mohammed”. After the prayers, a manifest was read in Catalan and Spanish in where the Cartoons are regarded as “blasphemies” that “hide hatred and enmity toward the Islam and Muslims, motivated by old historic reasons that are far from cultural lines and scientific objectivity”. The aim of the protest action had been “to make a call to all believers, to give voice to the all prophets, to respect religion and universal ethical values and to produce a constructive dialogue with the Other” (*El Mundo*, 25-02-2006). In Bilbao another manifestation was organized by the *Centro Sociocultural Islámico del País Vasco-Assabil* (N. Junquera, 2006).

From the Muslim Community, only few reactions were heard. The Secretary General of the Islamic Commission of Spain, Riay Tatary, declared its refusal to the “blasphemous desecration” of the image of the prophet Mohammed in European and also Spanish media and notifies the limitations on the freedom of speech, consisting of the respect to other fundamental rights found in article 20 of the Constitution. He also refers to the Penal Code in where the offence of religious feelings is prohibited. In the case of the Danish Cartoons he argues, it is not just a matter of the sacrilegious blaspheming of the image of the prophet, but also includes offensive blasphemes and slander, mainly by translating the image of Islamic terrorism. He also warns for not letting the Cartoon Affair result in a social gap between different believers (*Europa Press*, 2006). Another reaction comes from the imam of the Seville mosque, who considers the reactions to the Cartoons observed in some Muslim countries to be exaggerated. “There are other ways to show your refusal than to burn embassies, like to demonstrate or boycott products” (*ABC*, 07-02-2006).

In sum, the Danish Cartoon Affair did not create a lot of debate or polemics in Spain because of two reasons. First because the Cartoons were not re-published by the main daily Spanish newspapers. Second the government publicly demonstrated its

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<sup>31</sup> The platform consists of more than 30 religious communities and Islamic associations, with people originating from countries as distant as Morocco and Bangladesh, including Shiites as well as Sunnis. While the organization estimates the number of participants to be 3.000, the Police only documents about a 300 people. Remarkably, the act is not supported by the *Consejo Islámico de Cataluña*, the most important political body representing Muslims in Catalonia (*El Mundo*, 25-02-2006).

respect to the Muslim community and condemned the publication of the Cartoons in the *Jyllands-Posten*. The Danish Cartoon Affair though had direct effects on the representation of Muslims (and *Moors* specifically) in Spanish tradition and culture, resulting in calls for self-censorship. In Ceuta for example, associations and political Muslim parties expressed their discomfort with the content of the songs that gained the official contest in the Carnival feasts, traditionally critical of society, in where the killing in name Mohammed because of some Cartoons was being criticized. The president of the Democratic Union of Ceuta (UDCE), Mohamed Alí Lemague, assures that it is not the first time that Muslims are insulted in the carnival, “but this year some lyrics were the last straw that broke the camel's back: references to Hitler, mockeries on the call to prayer from the mosque, insults like mother fucking Moors and insinuation that we should return to Morocco” (J. Camacho Sevilla, 2006). Besides undertaking legal action, Lemague has declared to request the modification of the regulation for the yearly feasts, in order to avoid xenophobic contents in the lyrics of the songs and protect the dignity of collective groups. In the opinion of the *chirigotos* (those performing the act) such kind of self-censorship would mean the end of the essence of the Carnival (J. Camacho Sevilla, 2006). The next section goes further into another example where self-censorship became an important issue after the Cartoon Affair.

#### **4.2 “Moros and Cristianos”: blurring representations of past and present Moors**

The climate generated after the Cartoon Affair provoked a debate on the traditional Festivals of Moors and Christians (*Moros y Cristianos*) celebrated in almost 400 localities in Spain. The Festivals that can be witnessed mainly in Valencia, Andalusia and Castilla-La Mancha celebrate the Spanish *Reconquist* (Christian victory of Islam) of the peninsula after 8<sup>th</sup> centuries of Muslim presence, by the reenactment of local victories over invading Moorish armies. The celebration basically consists of a symbolic battle for the local territory (often commemorating a specific local battle), by a dramatization of the struggle of Moorish and Christian military units, resulting in the victory of Christians. “In the Festivals, the Moors are defeated in combat and then converted to Christianity, or, in the case of some villages on the coast of Alicante, they are ‘symbolically’ thrown into the sea” (D. Flesler and A. Pérez Melgosa, 2003; 153). M. Harris (2006; 45) highlights that the *fiestas* - that can last between three and five days and nights - combine religious processions and secular parades. Dramatized battles between Muslims and Christians became occasional after the Conquest of Granada in 1492.<sup>32</sup> Tourism has increased the popularity of the festivals over time, including more villages and increasing the size and showiness of the Festivals (D. Flesler and A. Pérez Melgosa, 2003; 151).

In the Festivals, the figure of the Moor has two stereotypes: on the one hand he is represented as “an exotic, sensual being admired for his courage as a warrior and [...] outstanding scientific and artistic creativity and sophistication” and on the other hand as a “treacherous, violent and cruel figure that wants to seize territories away from the Christians. Although the exotic representation of the Moor is dominant, the Festivals also incorporate representations of the “violent” Moor. The costumes of the Moorish army for example are sometimes covered with designs resembling scorpions or skulls clearly representing the violence and cruelty of the Moors, while at the same time they

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<sup>32</sup> The start and incorporation of the Festivals of *Moros y Cristianos* into the annual festive calendar is probably a combination of the *soldadescas* (the formation of local militias that guarded the coasts against Turkish navy and Berber pirates in the late 16th century and where sometimes dressed as Moors or Turks) and the much older *fiesta del patron* (annual procession of the town’s patron saint) (M. Harris, 1994; 46).

have “become aestheticized as part of the spectacle of their past artistry and glamour” (D. Flesler and A. Pérez Melgosa, 2003; 152).

The discursive narrative of the performances in the Festivals is found not only in the mutual exclusiveness of the categories of Moors and Christians, but also in an “essential Christian right to the land, while explaining away the presence of the Moors as something temporary and inconsequential” (D. Flesler and A. Pérez Melgosa, 2003; 154). Flesler and Pérez Melgosa use the terms “guest” and “host” in order to deconstruct the social roles of both categories. While during the Festivals both Moors and Christians take turns in taking the role of host and guest, invaded and invaders<sup>33</sup>, in the end the Christians are the hosts, the “native” owners of the territory of the Peninsula (D. Flesler and A. Pérez Melgosa, 2003; 155). The fact that for the participants it makes no difference whether to participate as Moor or Christian is often explained as a sign of reconciliation, by blurring the categories of Moors and Christians<sup>34</sup>. In this sense neither the Moors nor Christians are presented as “Other”, but celebrated as equal subjects in a mutual encounter. The associations that organize the Festivals in localities in Valencia and Alicante also emphasize that, every time more, immigrants settled in the province take part in the festivals, and not always in the group that “identifies” them (D. Marínez and A. Antolín, 2006). Flesler and Pérez Melgosa (2003; 156) though argue that the indifferent attitude to both categories can also be explained as a way to overcome “the inevitability of being a “guest” in one’s “own” place”.

Flesler and Pérez Melgosa in this context notify the double return of the figure of the “Moor” to the Spanish national imaginary: by the representations of the medieval Moors in culture industry and festivities such as the Festivals of Moors and Christians and by the Moroccan immigrants that are often regarded as “invading” the country. Past and present *Moors* are thus clearly separated. The Moor of the past is admired and regarded an important part of Spanish history. The present Moor is disregarded and despised as intruders. While in the Festival mainly the exotic Moor appears, the treacherous Moor is invoked in conflicts of discrimination and religious intolerance towards Moroccan immigrants. “In the Spanish cultural imaginary, both of these “Moors” coexist in the same symbolic paradigm born out of centuries of confrontations in the same territory” (D. Flesler and A. Pérez Melgosa, 2003; 151). Both the ritualization of the image of the Medieval Moor and the rejection against Moroccan immigrants can be understood as symptoms of the historical trauma of 8<sup>th</sup> centuries of Moorish rule (D. Flesler and A. Pérez Melgosa, 2003; 153). After the Cartoon Affair the representation of the ‘imagined’ past Moor in the Festivals becomes blurred with the present ‘real’ Moors (immigrants), resulting in a debate over the role of tradition in the Spanish multicultural society.

The performances during the Festivals normally represent the battle between Christian and Moorish armies. Its popular character has introduced various humorous additions to the “defeated” Moors, which become the object of debate after the Cartoon Affair, as they have been interpreted as offensive by the growing Muslim immigrant

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<sup>33</sup> In ceremonies that are similar, both Moors and Christians parade their troupes through the village and act as owners of the castle by defending it from attacks of the invading other (D. Flesler and A. Pérez Melgosa, 2003; 155).

<sup>34</sup> The official columnist of the Festival in Alcoi, Alfons Jordá, for example argues that “centuries ago the Alcoi citizens surpassed the differences between Moors and Christians: we present as much the one as the other. Nevertheless, who has more prestige is the Moorish group, because its ostentation is more exotic” (À. Gallardo, 2006). Also the president of the Junta Mayor de Fiestas de *Moros y Cristianos* de Elda, Vicente Amat, explains that the controversial results from “removing things out of their context”. In the Festivals, he argues, “Christians dress like Moors, atheistic represent Christians and white skinned are painted black” (*El Periódico de Cataluña*, 04-10-2006).

population in Spain. The majority of potentially offensive elements in the Festivals had already been removed after a recommendation emanated by the Vatican Council II in 1968. This is especially the case for "the Mohammed", a dummy of cardboard utilized like a banner of the Moorish army and symbolically killed in diverse ways to symbolize the Christian victory, by beheading or burning it<sup>35</sup>. At present, "the Mohammed" and its death are only celebrated in a few places, like Beneixama and Bocairent (D. Marínez and A. Antolín, 2006; L. Gadea, 2006).

After the Cartoon Affair, organizers of the Festivals in Beneixama and Bocairent suppressed the last representations of the death of "the Mohammed" in the Festivals, in order to prevent the offence of feelings of Muslim believers. In these towns the Festivals of Moors and Christians normally conclude with acts in where in a dummy of more than three meters of height, with Arabian clothing and called traditionally "The Mohammed" is burned on the last day, by exploding fireworks in the head, after which the public applauds. The reactions to the Danish Cartoons of Mohammed have frightened them to continue with this tradition (A. Garcia, 2006).

In Beneixama (Alicante) where the Festival are celebrated in September, the figure of Mohammed normally is represented by a body of horseshoes and a carton head that is filled with fireworks that explode when the Christians take over the control of the Castle. In the last celebrations (between 6 and 9 of September) the organization chose to not explode the head of the doll and the major of the municipality explained that "it was not an essential act, and as it could offend the feelings of some people we decided to avoid this". He adds that the reconquest took place without aggression to Mohammed (L. Gadea, 2006). Although the suppression of the act has been voluntary, a member of the association organizing the Festival highlights that the imam from the neighboring village Ontinyent<sup>36</sup> came to watch the Festival this year. In Bocairent (Valencia) a doll of carton and wood representing the prophet is thrown from the castle, after which the public applauds and spectacular firecrackers explode in its head. In the latest editions of February 2006, directly after the Cartoon Affair, the prophet was launched, but did not explode. For the next celebration in February of the 2007, the commission of the festivals discusses to utilize a different dummy with a different name, without any relation to the prophet (J. Ruiz Sierra, 2006). In an article in *El Periódico*, J. Ruiz Sierra (2006) also argues that the people in the towns made clear that "the Mohammed" is just a doll that symbolizes the Moor army group, and that they don't see it as the prophet Mohammed. (J. Ruiz Sierra, 2006). Also the President of the *Unión Nacional de Entidades Festeras* (UNDEF), F. López Pérez affirms that none of the Festivals contains acts or representations of Mohammed or the Muslim community (*ABC* 04-10-2006).

Although "the Mohammed" might be interpreted by the organizers and participants of the festivals as merely an identity sign of the Moorish army rather than a direct representation of the prophet itself, its burning as symbolic closing act of the Festival does refer to the celebration of the victory over the Moors, which includes the vanishing of Islam from Spanish territory after the reconquest. M. Harris in this context emphasizes the juxtaposition of religious and secular elements that gives the *fiestas* significance. "It is the struggle between the sacred and profane world, the one officially encouraged and the other officially suppressed by the Church, that is the vital hidden

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<sup>35</sup> The re-conquest of the castle by the Christians culminates with the destruction of a dark skinned figure with a beard of about three meters, dressed in a turban, carrying an oriental sword in the right hand and who is called "the Mohammed" (J. Ruiz Sierra, 2006).

<sup>36</sup> In Ontinyent, the issue of representation became polemic in 2002, when a group of Moors paraded on a carpet containing Koran texts (L. Gadea, 2006).



transcript of these Spanish fiestas” [...] In the fiestas a temporal festival time is created in where both worlds meet. Mohammed and the Virgin enact their struggle in a manner that accords official victory to the Church while, at the same time, demonstrating their capacity to live together in a festive union sanctioned by the same Church” (M. Harris, 1994; 59). Although the Festivals itself demonstrate a moment of coexistence, the celebration of the victory of the Church and therefore Christianity is challenged by the presence of “new” Muslim immigrants in Spain, Moroccans being most numerous. Similarly the disguises used in the Festivals are not completely innocent in terms of presenting exchangeable categories of “guests” and “hosts”, but rather are part of a constructed social reality embedded in power relations. Changing performances within the Festivals should be understood therefore as an intention to change the social constructed meaning of the festive practices. While normally the organizers use tradition to hide behind the discourses that are performed within the Festivals<sup>37</sup>, the changes made within these performances highlight the sensitive link between the past and present Moor after the Cartoon Affair (which is also addressed by the Muslim representatives).

In October the debate on the Festivals is reopened when the Christians of Alcoi (the largest and most publicized Festivals of Moors and Christians) proudly head the traditional parade of *Hispanidad* on Fifth Avenue in New York<sup>38</sup> (À. Gallardo, 2006). It is at this moment that from the Muslim community a call for the suppression of the Festivals in general is heard (D. Martínez, 2006). The most important criticism came from the imam of a mosque in Malaga and president of the *Federación Española de Entidades Religiosas Islámicas* (FEERI), F. Herrero, who petitioned the elimination of the Festivals (*Las Provincias*, 05-10-2006), because they should not fit and be acceptable within a democratic society. He also criticizes the image given of Muslim people in Festivals (Marínez, D. and A. Antolín, 2006) thereby explicitly relating the representation of the past Moors to the image of present Moors.

Interestingly, the four entities that are part of FEERI in Valencia (where the large share of Festivals takes place) oppose themselves to the proposal of the president to abolish the Festivals. The *Centro Religioso Islámico de Valencia* considers that to criticize the parades means “to take them out of their context”, thereby pleading for the separation of past and present representation of Moors. A similar interpretation comes from the *Consejo Islámico de Valencia* that also disqualifies Herrero’s statements because they start an “artificial” debate based on a “lack of knowledge” of the Festivals. “The parades of Moors and Christians are a Festival that developed without any offensive spirit towards Islam” (*Las Provincias*, 05-10-2006). Also the president of the Islamic Community of Alicante, Majed Kadem, claims that the Festival does not represent any attack to Islamic religion or the prophet. “We see it as a feast and it should be understood like that”, explains Majed Kadem. Nevertheless, he thinks it a “wise” decision of the municipalities of Bocarent and Beneixama to suppress the explosion of

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<sup>37</sup> See for example D. Flesler and A. Pérez Melgosa (2003) who analyze the changes made in the traditional festivals of Alcoi. While the Association organizing the Festivals in Alcoi reject to change the rule that prevents women to perform the central roles in the Festivals and to change routes for the parades, it did permit to cover the base of the processional sculpture of San Jorge that is paraded through the city on the last day of the celebrations by flowers, in order to cover the fallen Moors and hide the violence of the saint throwing arrows (D. Flesler and A. Pérez Melgosa, 2003; 164). Interviews with the people in the town demonstrates that the flowers are added in order to prevent criticism about the lack of sensibility for the victimized Moors (D. Flesler and A. Pérez Melgosa, 2003; 165).

<sup>38</sup> The absence of Moors in New York is therefore not linked to the Cartoon Affair. To send only the Christians to parade through the streets of New York had been decided out of practical reasons by the municipality of Alcoi in 2003.

the Mohammed doll, in order to prevent conflict (*El Periodico de Cataluña*, 04-10-2006). Imad Al Naddaf, leader of a mosque and president of the *Consejo Islámico Valenciano*, argues that the Festivals should be maintained, because it is a demonstration of *convivencia* (coexistence). “We have to stick to the hug that the captains of both sides give each other” (*Las Provincias*, 06-10-2006). By stressing the equality of the categories of Moors and Christians in their mutual encounters during the Festivals, this Muslim leader sees the Festivals as an example for current problems of social interactions between Spanish and immigrants, rather than increasing conflict.

While the representatives of Muslim communities in the region do not seem to have many problems with the Festival, the local participants and organizers of the Festivals do change the protocols because they are afraid of violent reactions from the Muslim community. Their fear for violent reactions reproduces the image of the present Moor to present a new threat. Several opinion articles address this fear for a new threat, by criticizing that the burning of “the Mohammed” disappears from the Festivals only for reasons of fear of radical Islam (see for example J.A. Gundín, 2006). This threat is also translated within the political sphere, when the Popular Party (PP) presents a proposal of “No to the law” (*No de ley*), in order to press the government to present the Festivals of Moors and Christians to be protected by the UNESCO. The objective to present the Festivals to the UNESCO is to avoid the risk that the Festivals fall into “self-censorship”, as a consequence of current politics of the government and Alliance of Civilizations and criticism from the Islamic community in Spain (D. Martínez, 2006).

To sum up, the Danish Cartoon Affair has resulted in a sensitive climate towards the representation of Muslims in general and the prophet in particular. The hidden transcript behind the traditional Festivals of Moors and Christians is problematized by the immigration population that by being “real guests” in Spanish territory present a new threat to Spanish Christian identity in the context of a dramatic historical conscience of Moors and Christians being “guests” and “hosts” in the Spanish peninsula. The withdrawal of “The Mohammed” from the Festivals should be understood as an act out of fear for a new conflict between Moors and Christians.

## **5. Concluding remarks**

This paper has analyzed challenges of migration related diversity in Spain. It has been observed that most social conflicts involve a specific category of immigrants, the ones who are most “visible” in terms of differences in skin color, language and religion: Muslims. The cultural and religious demands of this community have witnessed opposition from both citizens and public authorities. As a consequence the public recognition of Islam as minority religion remains unaccomplished after 15 years of non-application of the 1992 agreement between the Islamic Community of Spain and the Spanish state. From a religious perspective, the contradiction is found in the relative secularized life of Spanish people (rather than being a direct conflict with Christianity). Both the mosque debate and the Cartoon Affair demonstrate that it is the role of religion in society, and especially the representation of religion in the public space that creates conflict. In spite of secularization, a serious debate on laicism has not started in Spain, due to the salient importance of the Catholic Church. The case studies analyzed in this paper demonstrate that next to the contested role of religion in Spanish society, the opposition to Muslim claims for religious infrastructure is based on a deeply rooted fear for the re-Islamization of Spain.

The first case study on the mosque debate in Catalonia has analyzed the resistance to the visibility of Muslims and Islam in the public space, by deconstructing discourses on the opposition to the building of mosques and opening of oratories. Opposition by citizens is fed by a discourse of *Islamophobia* or *Maurophobia*. The mosque debate also highlights the ambiguous practice of a discourse of laicism within the Spanish State, which becomes manifest at the local level, where religious demands are managed. The local authorities in this respect use two logics. From a legal perspective, they respect individual freedom of religion and the cultural group right to practice religion in cult places in the public space. In practice though, local authorities are reluctant to guarantee these rights to Muslim communities, due to a strong social discourse of *Islamophobia*. To deal with the claims from the Muslim community on the one hand, and opposition of citizens on the other, they accommodate Islam in private spaces (oratories) or in the periphery of the public space, using a secular ideology to oppose the public recognition and visibility of Islam.

The second case study on the effects of the Danish Cartoon Affair analyses the ambiguous representation of the past Moors in the celebration of the traditional Festivals *Moros y Cristianos*. In opposite to the wish to keep the present Moor (Muslim immigrant) invisible, the Moor of the past is made extremely visible (both as exotic and barbaric figure). Nevertheless, the celebration of the victory on past Moorish influence in Spain reproduces the idea of Christians being the “native” heirs of the territory. It is exactly this discourse that is used also as justification for the opposition against the building of mosques and opening of oratories. The fear for a new “invasion” of Muslims and the “re-Islamization” of Spain therefore should be understood within the historical experience of Muslim rule in the peninsula for more than 8 centuries. It is especially in the effects of the Cartoon Affair where the problematics of the interaction between present “real” present Moors (Moroccan immigrants) and past “imagined” Moors becomes explicit; as changing the representation of the past Moors in the Festivals are justified by the presence (and fear) of the new Moors.

Other recent conflicts of migration related diversity can also be understood from this perspective of Spanish tradition, like the racist attacks on mosques and oratories, the disapproval of the claim for shared prayer in the mosque-temple of Cordoba, the petition from the president of the Islamic council to include *moriscos* within the list of preference groups to obtain Spanish nationality within 2 years and critique towards Spanish converters of Islam (see also table 1). These conflicts all highlight the importance of the Spanish tradition to shape discourses on migration related cultural diversity presented by “new” Muslim immigrants. Different from Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations thesis though, in Spain the Moor (instead of the Muslim) is traditionally opposed to the Hispanic (rather than to the Western) identity. While the Hispanic Self has transformed from being a strong religious to a more cultural identity, the category of the Moor, traditionally referring to the Berbers from North Africa, has become used to point out the religious (Muslims) and cultural (Moroccans) Other. The binary logic of *Maurophobia* versus *Hispanidad* is being reproduced today, as can be seen in both the mosque debate and the effects of the Danish Cartoon Affair, in where Islam is depicted as backwards and barbaric, and Moroccan immigrants are linked to criminality and terrorism<sup>39</sup> and opposed to democracy. Muslims in Spain therefore not only present a

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<sup>39</sup> At the moment of writing (February 2007) this hypothesis is confirmed again by the comment of a Moroccan immigrant in Spain about the trials of the terrorist accused of the Madrid bombings (of Moroccan nationality): "The judgment will not change anything. Because if justice is done they will condemn Moroccans, and the Spanish people will continue to think that Moroccans are terrorists" (L. Benvenuty, 2007).

challenge of religious diversity, but also of social constructed cultural and political difference.

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## Appendix 1. The Catalonia case study: social opposition and political quiescence

Period	Place	Region	Opposition by
January 2000 – November 2006	Barcelona (claim for a principal mosque)	Catalonia	The Catalan government and government of Barcelona
March-May 2001	Mataró	Catalonia	Neighbor association and employers organization
March 2001	Granollers	Catalonia	Neighbors and merchants
April 2001	Alcarràs	Catalonia	Local government
March 2001-September 2002	Premià de Mar	Catalonia	Local government, political parties, neighbors organized in a platform, extremists
June 2001 – March-October 2004	Reus (re-opening of a mosques)	Catalonia	Local government, neighbor association, political parties
July 2001 – July 2005	Lleida	Catalonia	Neighbor association and the local government
August-October 2001	Torroella de Montgrí	Catalonia	Neighbors
March 2002	Baix Llobregat	Catalonia	Local government and neighbors
May 2002	Vendrell	Catalonia	Local government
July 2002-November 2006	Badalona	Catalonia	Neighbor association
September 2002	Figueres	Catalonia	Neighbors
February 2003	Franqueses del Vallès	Catalonia	Neighbors
March 2004	Vilafranca del Penedès	Catalonia	Neighbors
March 2003 – October 2004	Viladecans	Catalonia	Neighbors
July 2004 – June 2005	Barcelona (Raval)	Catalonia	Neighbors
October 2004	Santa Coloma	Catalonia	Neighbors
November 2004	Lliria	Valencia	Neighbors
November 2004 – April 2006	Sevilla	Andalucia	Neighbors
October 2004	Mollet del Vallés	Catalonia	Neighbors
November 2004	Las Navas del Marqués	Castille y Leon	Neighbors
October 2005	Mallorca	Balleares	Racist group
September 2006	Talayuela	Extremadura	Neighbors and extremists
Febrero - December 2006	Vilaboa	Galicia	Neighbors

Source: Own elaboration of the yearbooks of SOS Racismo, [www.webislam](http://www.webislam) and press releases of a large amount of newspapers available within the database “my news online” from 1-1-2000 to 31-12-2006