Islam and Secular Citizenships in the Netherlands, United Kingdom and France, by Carolina Ivanescu. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Pp. v + 239. ISBN: 978-1-137-57608-8.

As a part of Palgrave MacMillan's 'Religion and Global Migrations' series, *Islam and Secular Citizenships in the Netherlands, United Kingdom and France* aims to make sense of the current position of Western European Muslims in light of ideas on citizenship and secularity and the role of nation-states. Touching on these hotly debated themes in Western European societies, the book's central premise is that the liberal state in Western Europe looks at Muslims through two paradigms of subjectivisation. The first concerns the way Muslims are targeted for their otherness in terms of religion, and the second paradigm is that of citizenship, which deals, for example, with various levels of governance and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion.

The author, Carolina Ivanescu, a researcher with a background in sociology and cultural anthropology, offers a refreshing perspective amongst familiar theoretical approaches about secularisation, secularity and the secular. She substantiates her own theoretical position with solid empirical data from ethnographic research in three cities and national contexts: Rotterdam in the Netherlands, Leicester in the United Kingdom and Marseille in France. The book generally offers interesting insight into how 'Muslimness' is constructed in the context of citizenship and secularity, both from a top-down perspective and from the perspective of grass-roots initiatives and representatives from Muslim communities (p. 188).

As the two paradigms of subjectivisation suggest, this book first considers how formations of secularity and citizenship and their articulations into regimes take shape, mostly in their ideological dimension at a nation-state level (p. 4). For this, Ivanescu adopts the term 'regimes of secularity', which functions, on the one hand, as an ideology that feeds on secularisation theory and, on the other, as a method of statecraft and a way of governance (p. 34). The author then demonstrates how these formations of secularity and citizenship are further shaped on a local level concerning Muslims, by exploring the local policies and their implementation in the three European cities indicated above. Finally, the focus of the book shifts to grassroot initiatives by Muslims themselves. Amidst an extensive body of literature about Muslims in a European context, this work addresses a gap in academic literature by engaging with the local conditions of state governance, enriching it with attention to the national and the grassroots levels (p. 6). In terms of approach, the book firmly places itself in the tradition of Talal Asad's influential work on the anthropology of the secular (2003).¹ And the author also engages with Charles Taylor's concept of the modern social imaginary (2004, 2007) by suggesting that each social imaginary is implicitly political in nature and reinforced by power and interest.²

The structure of the book reflects the two dimensions of meaning formation when it comes to 'Muslimness' in the context of citizenship and secularity. In Chapter 1, Ivanescu introduces the subject and situates her work within the body of academic literature, before moving on to two chapters dedicated to the theoretical concepts underlying her empirical research. In Chapter 2, she unwraps the concepts of secularisation, secularity and the secular, which are central in understanding the place and role of religion in contemporary social life. In typical Asadian fashion, Ivanescu builds on the argument that secularisation theory has proven insufficient to understand the role of religion in public life by arguing that its imprints have been taken over in the Western European social imaginary and continue to inform various

¹ Asad, Talal, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2003), pp. 1-280.

² Taylor, Charles, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC : Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 1-297 and *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, pp. 1-888.

regimes of secularity – articulated both as a mobilisation of the collective social imaginary and as a tool for governing religion (p. 37). The second part of the book starts with Chapter 3, which builds further on the concept of regimes of secularity by demonstrating how they are articulated through nation-states, as they inform social imaginaries and symbols such as the nation and religion (p. 41).

The third part is largely dedicated to Ivanescu's fieldwork in Rotterdam, Leicester and Marseille, which mainly consists of examining local policies, and ethnographic interviews with Muslim civil servants, NGO workers and activists. A final chapter ties together the different parts of the book. In each of the chapters that focus on a specific city (and national context), the author does an excellent job of mapping out how each city's specific trajectory concerning citizenship and national debates about Islam and Muslims has influenced the policymaking of these nation-states, but in local context can lead to surprising developments. In the Dutch context, for example, Ivanescu observes that there seems to be a general 'hypersensitivity towards religion' (p. 178), which can be traced back to the Dutch nation-state's social imaginary wherein religion is imagined as a premodern system of thought. Islam in particular is considered backward, and Muslims therefore in need of emancipation and 'modernization' (p. 179). Logically, this has resulted in policy practices in which religion has become politicised, but the local context represents another side of the coin, as local policies are generally more flexible in terms of concessions and more in tune with the needs of the urban population (p. 179).

Ivanescu's fieldwork indicates that this seems to hold true for all three cities: in Rotterdam, religion becomes politicised, but local initiatives targeting the Muslim population also offer space in the public sphere for a religious voice. Unlike the Netherlands, the practical application of citizenship in the United Kingdom have not developed into a tool of governance, which means that Muslims in Leicester are able to use religion at the base of their civic engagement and benefit from group-targeted policies in terms of resources and institutionalisation (p. 130). However, the author rightly points out that there is a shadow side to these policies in the form of the 'Prevent' programme: a national British policy targeting and stigmatising Muslims as 'suspect' communities in terms of terrorism, radicalism and separatism, which is reminiscent of Imran Awan's work on the 'Prevent' strategy (2012).³

Finally, in the context of Marseille, Ivanescu suggests that the concept of *laïcité* is not defined clearly enough, which allows for a 'multiplicity of positions in relation to faith and religion' (p. 165). And continuing from this, she argues that, in combination with local approaches, it encourages the formation of representative bodies, even explicitly religious ones. However, the paradox of *laïcité* is that, on the one hand, it demands that citizens respect the secularity of the public space, while, on the other, it expects religion to institutionalise in a way that allows for dialogue and negotiation with the national and local representatives of the state (p. 187). We see that this paradox inevitably becomes visible in the way *laïcité* is instrumentalised as a tool of governance, creating inequality through its focus on Muslim communities – something scholarly experts on themes of secularity and politics such as Yolande Jansen (2013) have also addressed extensively.⁴

One of the book's strengths certainly lies in both addressing policymaking from a top-down level in terms of citizenship, and studying Muslims' agency in the form of grassroots initiatives. This ties in very well with the work of, for example, political scientist Jonathan Laurence in *The Emancipation of Europe's Muslims* (2012),⁵ who predicted that the current

³ Awan, Imran, "'I Am a Muslim Not an Extremist': How the Prevent Strategy Has Constructed a 'Suspect' Community", *Politics & Policy*, 40 (2012), 1158-1185.

⁴ Jansen, Yolande, *Secularism, Assimilation and the Crisis of Multiculturalism: French Modernist Legacies* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), pp. 1-339.

⁵ Laurence, Jonathan, *The Emancipation of Europe's Muslims. The State's Role in Minority Integration* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 1-366.

and forthcoming generations of Western European Muslims will gamely participate in public and political life, testifying to a new political consciousness that speaks candidly of reconciling faith and national citizenship. In a similar vein, Ivanescu reports on how Muslims in Rotterdam, Leicester and Marseille engage with their different local and national contexts using different strategies, in her case: dialogue, cooperation and representation (p. 196). The book provides an example case-study of Rotterdam city's initiative 'Islam Debates', which was problematic in the sense that its goals created an opposition between 'them' (Muslims) and 'us' (the 'native' Rotterdam citizens). At the same time, however, it allowed Muslims from different communities to make arguments in the political sphere in the name of religion, effectively challenging the normative and hierarchical status of the religious and the secular in the regimes of secularity (p. 181).

The three case studies discussed in this book make it clear that there is an added value in comparing different national contexts and looking into the discrepancy between national and local levels, but it does raise questions on the possible influence of the transregional and international contexts on the local level. It would be interesting to zoom in on the Dutch context and understand how a city like Rotterdam compares with other Dutch cities (and villages perhaps) that, for example, have a significantly lower number of Muslim citizens.

Overall, *Islam and Secular Citizenships in the Netherlands, United Kingdom and France* is an impressive extensive volume that nicely builds on earlier theoretical work and relates to relevant concepts that can be used to understand broader trends in Western Europe, concerning, for example, the culturalisation of citizenship and how this trend may affect Muslim communities both in negative and positive senses. On the one hand, it is illustrative of a kind of nativist uprising in Europe in which the nation-state plays a central role in their typical 'us-versus-them' rhetoric. On the other, we see that there is a resistance to this dominant narrative on who should be seen as 'true' citizens of the nation-state in the form of rising anti-racism/anti-Islamophobia movements, at least in the Dutch context. Therefore, Ivanescu's work, especially with regard to how Muslims themselves have engaged with themes of secularity and citizenship, might be a valuable step towards understanding, for instance, the rise of Dutch political parties with a Muslim-majority base or parties that are explicitly Islam-inspired.

Researchers and students who are broadly interested in the relation between secularity, citizenship and Muslim communities in Western Europe will greatly benefit from this book, but should keep its limited scope in mind. In a practical sense, the book could also be useful for non-academics such as policy makers dealing with integration policies and practices, as it provides useful insight into how such policies affect Muslim communities in urban settings – although the strongly academic style of writing might make it less accessible in terms of readability.

Sakina Loukili

Meertens Institute, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences
sakina.loukili@meertens.knaw.nl