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Thematic Report "Religion" (WP6)

Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey

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1. Gender, migration, religion: a new research field[1]

While gender studies from the 1970's focused on women's status in non Western countries, post colonial studies in the last few decades have called the presumed "Western women superiority" into question by proposing new feminist epistemologies (Spivak 1990, 1999; Mohanty 1991, 2003). It has only been since the beginning of the 21st century that scholars have started investigating the religiosity of immigrant women outside of their countries of origin, shifting their focus to Islamic communities. In recent decades, scholars have in fact paid attention only to the effects of religion on women's status, without analyzing women's roles in performing it, neither in their home countries nor in Diaspora. Only of late has academic literature started to study the role of religion in immigrant women's lives. In Europe, this topic has been investigated mainly in countries with a long tradition of immigration, such as France, Belgium, Germany and the United Kingdom, (Cesari, 2004; Jouili, 2008; Fernando 2005; Fadil, 2008). While in Italy, Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey (the four countries involved in WP6) - although public debates lend huge attention to the issue of immigration, religion is still an understudied concept in academic literature, with the exception of very few studies (Salih, 2001, 2002, 2003; Silvestri, 2008; Желязкова, Григоров, Димитрова 2005; Кръстева, 2005, 2010). In those countries, the relationship between gender and religion has not been seriously considered when it comes to Islamic communities and, even more, in other religious contexts. In Europe, in fact, public debates on the question of religion and immigration have primarily focused on the impact of Muslim immigration on European societies, while discussions on other religions have rarely taken place. This situation is justified by claims about the assumed exceptionality of Islam and the "problems" and the "threats" it poses to the "secular" character of Europe[2]. It seems that Islam is more "public" and more "challenging" than other religions. The mass media and most academic research focus only on it, forgetting that the restructuring of the religious sphere is a phenomenon also concerning other religions, as Jenkins well explains in God's Continent (2007). All over Europe, we can observe, in fact, the emergence of different religious revivalisms that are challenging the idea of a secular Europe as well as hegemonic powers. The process of making religious identities visible in public affects all religions but attention, in particular after September 11th, is all centered on Islam. Addtionally, specific themes, such as the issue of the veil (see particularly France, Belgium, UK, Italy) and mosques, (Allievi, 2009) which have become central subjects in public disputes, are obscuring other discussions on immigration in Europe.

Thus, the general aim of the work carried out in WP6 was to contribute research by filling the gap by way of analyzing how women (and men in the Greek case studies) are reconfiguring the interrelationship between religion, gender and immigration in the southeastern European

[1] The present report uses not only summarizing, but also takes long parts from country reports by Hellen Kambouri, Pavlos Hatzopoulos (Greek team); Evgenia Troeva and Mila Macheva (Bulgarian team); Turkish team (Dilek Cindoglu e Saime Ozcurumez). The coordinator is very grateful for their work in such a difficult and new field of research. Moreover, Wp6 coordinator and researchers wish to thank Ruba Salih for her contribution in constructing the theoretical and empirical framework of this research.

[2] It is worth mentioning that the Bulgarian public discourse does not identify Muslim immigrants as a "problem" for their country's identity. However, Islam is considered and approached as a "threat" by many political and public actors who identify it with local Islamic communities, much bigger than those of the immigrants'. Although Muslim immigrants do not appear targets in heated public debates, the public context of suspicion and hostility to visible manifestations of Islam exerts influence over them.

countries of WP6. This relationship was analyzed inside the Islamic, Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant contexts, with the aim of investigating the issue of the exceptional or "presumed" exceptional challenges posed by Islam to Europe. This transnational research calls for not only the analysis of Muslim women's piousness in Diaspora (in Italy, Bulgaria, Greece), but also Christian immigrant women's religiosity in predominantly Christian societies, such as Catholic Italy and Orthodox Greece, in addition to predominantly Muslim societies, like Turkey. By extending earlier works on piousness (Mahmood, 2004) and using the interpretative lens of the category of autonomy of immigration (Mezzadra, 2010) this research looks at the complex ways in which immigrants, specially women, live religiosity in the XXI century; how they construct their subjectivities, their notions of empowerment, their aspirations to participate in the public sphere and resistance to patriarchal traditions; but at the same time, their desire to perform religious duties, their submission or obedience to a transcendent will being seen as the ultimate agent. Instead of reading these seemingly contradictory elements as a sign of a still unachieved emancipation process for women torn between 'progress' and 'tradition', this research proposes to interpret them as the specific articulations of pious individuals who strive to exist as devout women in specific modern European contexts, accepting and refusing power structures as religious istititutions, immigration policies, patriarchal hierarchies. Such a reading challenges some of the basic assumptions of liberal western modernity as well as its dichotomous worldview of modernity versus tradition.

2. Goal of the research

The general aim of this research is to explore the re-positioning of religion in the public and private sphere among immigrant women and to challenge the idea of the exceptionality of Islam as a religion, the supposed only religion, that poses exceptional challenges to European secularism and the majority religion of the receiving country. The transnational dimension of this study intends to help re-examine and re-contextualize some of the debates that keep portraying the tensions between secular and religious spheres in terms of a so-called clash of "civilizations" between Islam and Europe. This task is pursued through an analysis of Islam in Europe (Italian, Bulgarian and Greek case study) and on focusing on what is omitted by the exceptionality thesis: the re-positioning of religion in other faith contexts (Greek, Turkish, Italian case study). Thus, on the one hand, this research investigates the tensions between secularism and religion in European public spheres, and on the other hand, it analyzes the multiple discourses, strategies and activities immigrant women employ in their life, both private and public. It focuses on the process of negotiation of religious and gender identities in the context of immigration, taking into consideration how women engage with classic situations of civil society expressions, religious contexts (mosques, churches, religious associations) and how these spaces are gendered. The role of religions affecting the adaptation of immigrant women in receiving secular (or "presumed" secular) societies is at the centre of an analysis that pays attention to the levels and types of change that occur in the realm of religious beliefs and practices and of gendered cultural norms in the receiving society. Moreover, the research investigates the construction of religious identities as a tool for incorporation/empowerment or seclusion/disempowerment in local contexts and in transnational networks. Such subjects were addressed in different ways in the four countries analyzed. The four researches carried out present, in fact, different case studies with very different respondents' profiles of their countries of origin, faith, relationship to religion, and attendance of places of worship. In Italy, the Islamic and Christian revivalism among Sunni Muslim and Baptist Romanian Christian women in Rome was explored, and in particular, in its south-east periphery in Centocelle. This research carried out among women who attend

places of worship aimed to explore the possibilities of women's emancipation and empowerment through religion and the renegotiation of gender roles in public and religious contexts. Alternatively, in Greece, the diversity of religious identities (Muslim and Christian) and atheism represented within the Bulgarian and Albanian immigrant communities was analyzed, as well as the multiple processes of movement in terms of religious beliefs, cultural practices and social attachments that occur during the lives of individual immigrants. In Bulgaria the study aimed to investigate the process of negotiation of religious and gender identities in the context of Muslim immigration and to analyze the role of religion in the adaptation of Muslim immigrant women in the secular society of Bulgaria, a country with a majority Orthodox Christian population and a historical minority of local Muslims. In Bulgaria, 12% of the country's population is, in fact, Muslim (including Turks, Muslim Bulgarians, Muslim Roma and Tatars)[3]. Finally, in Turkey, the focus of the study was on women within the Christian faith and their experience in a country where the majority of the population is Muslim. The major research question was the ways in which a predominantly Muslim metropolitan city, Istanbul, incorporates non-Muslim and Christian women into its social canvas.

3. Research Methods

This study was mostly based on an examination of the theoretical analysis of the state of immigration and religion in Europe, and on an empirical level, on fieldwork. The fieldwork was entirely based on qualitative rather than quantitative research techniques. It was carried out from October 2008 to December 2009 by means of a combination of semi-standardized in-depth interviews (Bulgaria, Italy, Turkey, and Greece), focus group discussions (Greece, Turkey) and participant observation (Italy, Bulgaria). The qualitative methods were considered much more appropriate than quantitative methods (such as questionnaire surveys or collection of figures from official sources) because they allow respondents to describe in their own words their religious beliefs, experiences and practices and convey their own meanings to religious concepts. The open set of questions in both interview questionnaires and focus groups allowed respondents to "create their own meanings" of gender, religion and immigration. In-depth interviews lasted from 1 hour to 2.5 hours; while focus groups lasted from 2 until 4 hours. During interviews and focus groups the following subjects were deeply explored through interviews in the life history format: respondent's social environment and interactions in receiving country, respondent's religious beliefs and practices in home and receiving countries, gender relations and identities in the context of immigration.

Participant observation was very useful to study religious practices and to better understand the complexities in negotiating religious and gender identities on the part of female immigrants. Largely used in the Italian case, where it has represented the main part of the data collection, it has taken place during prayers, discussion groups, collective meals, religious and cultural meetings and demonstrations, in traditional religious spaces such as mosques, Islamic cultural centers, churches, Christian centers, but also in women's associations, private homes, public squares and streets. For the most part, participant observation among the Muslim community of the mosque of Centocelle took place on Saturday evenings. Every Saturday evening at least 40-50 women of different age, social class, and nationality meet there. They pray, study the Koran and in a nearby secondary school attend Italian language courses, Arabic language courses and Islamic studies classes.

[3] It should be noted that most immigrant respondents of the research did not know of the existence of local Muslim communities and those few who were aware of the fact reported to have no particular contacts with members of these communities.

In the same school, their children attend Arabic classes on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings. Participant observation also took place during specific religious festivities such as Ramadan month or extraordinary activities organized by the mosque (conferences, solidarity dinners, demonstrations ...) and activities supporting the Palestinian cause. In the Romanian Baptists' case, participant observation took place on Sunday afternoons in the church where they pray and on Sunday mornings in a square in the north-west periphery of Rome called Anagnina[4], where the Romanian community in Rome usually meets and the Evangelical churches (Baptists, Methodists, and Pentecostals) organize an open and shared prayer.
It is important to recognize that the topic of religion in this research on immigration and gender was not an easy task in all four case studies. Respondents and potential respondents of the works carried out dealt with this issue very differently. In the Italian research, the respondents quite easily accepted - after the authorization of places of worship's leaders - being involved and readily allowed the performing of participant observation. One consistent motivation that led respondents of both groups (Muslims and Baptists) to participate in this study was the opportunity that many saw for dispelling what they thought to be a distorted image of women in Islam on the one hand, and Romanian people on the other. During the interviews, quite a few specified that they wanted to correct these images. In Italy, discrimination and racism affect relations with the Muslim population and the Romanian community as well. On the contrary, in the Greek case study many potential respondents, particularly Albanians, considered the theme of the research irrelevant to their own experiences. In particular, well-educated Albanian men and women between the ages of 30 and 40 were very critical of the attempt to research this particular topic and declined to give interviews. The vast majority of men who have been contacted replied to the request to interview them with phrases such as "there is nothing to say about this topic", "we, Albanians, are not really religious", "we cannot say much about religion because we do not know anything about it". For this reason, the focus group format proved to be a more appropriate method because potential participants were assured that they did not have to talk during the discussion if they did not have anything to say about religion.
The differences in approaching the subject of the research by respondents could be related to the ways in which respondents were chosen. If in the Italian case, they were reached through the places of worship they attend, and in the Greek case through immigrant associations, in the Turkish cases they were through personal acquaintances of the research team. In Turkey, for example, most of the interviews were held at the houses where the respondents worked as caregivers or maids in suburban Istanbul upper middle class households, while, most of the time, the owner of the house was absent. On the contrary, in Bulgaria respondents were approached through three main channels of access: through immigrant institutions (The Iraqi Club in Sofia and the Council of Refugee Women), doorkeepers as well as researcher's personal contacts. Interviews were conducted at immigrant associations or respondent's private homes.

4. Respondents' profiles

As already mentioned, the four case studies are very different in and among themselves, and the respondents' profiles are also very different. The respondents have diverse religions, age,

[4] Anagnina is a major transportation hub as well as a metropolitan station that also serves as a bus terminal to more than 15 bus lines. Crossed every day by thousands of people and a high percentage of immigrants, it is a central meeting point for the Romanian community in Rome.

educational and professional profiles. Most of them are married with children. The following scheme explains the respondents' profiles in the four countries of WP6 more in detail.

Italy: women of first and second generation attending the mosque (mostly Tunisians, Palestinians, Egyptians, Moroccans, Albanians...) and the Romanian Baptist church in Centocelle (all Romanian and Roma Romanians). Nowadays an increasing number of Muslim women attend the mosque (regularly at least 60-70 gather in the women's section each week), while in the Romanian Baptist church half of the faithful are women (around 50 people). The decision to focus on women who attend places of worship is drawn heavily from the fact that in Italy there is a growing immigrant population that is demanding new rights and visibility, including the right to experience their religiousness openly. According to recent statistics Italy follows only Germany and Spain among European nations in terms of most foreign residents, with 7,2% of the Italian population coming from abroad (Dossier Caritas, 2009). Deep-rooted immigration is already a reality and a second generation of immigrants is well settled in the country. Immigrants and children of immigrants are emerging in the public sphere in Italy, taking with them their cultures and their religions. Consequently, the large immigrant presence and their sophisticated level of organization, together with the awareness of living for a long time, or in some cases, their whole life in Italy, allow immigrants and their descendents to negotiate with local and national governments for the right to practice their religion in public. In this context, places of worship represent a good barometer of the level of organization of the various ethnic and religious communities that are settled in a country. For immigrant communities, they are in many cases the only or the main form of association in a community. Thus, they represent a way for minority religions, and in particular, for Islam, to exit the private sphere and to officially enter the public arena (Allievi, 2009, p. 18). For these reasons, the decision has been made to study religious revivalism among immigrant women in Rome in specific contexts, such as places of worship: the mosque and the Baptist church in Centocelle. Overall, 17 in-depth interviews, and around 40 people were involved in the participant observation. The point of view of male representatives of the religious institutions was also taken into consideration.

Greece: first generation immigrants (women and men) from two former communist states, Albania and Bulgaria, which represent the two largest groups of foreigners residing in Greece. They were a heterogeneous amalgam of people who reflect the diverse religious faiths (Islam, Catholicism, Orthodox Christian), as well as the tradition of atheism that prevailed in the countries of origin. In total , 52 people participated in the interviews and focus group discussions. Of all the Albanians who participated in the research, ten declared to be Christian Orthodox, five Catholic, two Muslim and nine atheists. Among the Bulgarians that participated in the research, twelve were Orthodox Christian and fourteen were atheists. However, it should be noted that the findings of the research proved that religious and civic categorizations are much more fluid than initially assumed. The categories "Christian Orthodox", "Catholic", or "Muslim" acquired in the narratives of both Albanians and Bulgarians a very different meaning to the one commonly assumed in Greek public and academic discourse. In fact, the limits between religious identities were fluid and most practices described crossed religious boundaries. Thus, six of the Christian Orthodox and two of the atheist Albanians, as well as two of the Bulgarian atheists declared that they were of Muslim family background, but believed that "religion was one". Furthermore, the category "atheist" proved to be much more widespread than commonly assumed, since there were elements of atheism in the narratives of almost all the respondents, even those who identified themselves as religious. Conversely, in the narratives of those who identified themselves as "atheist", there were many references to religious beliefs and supernatural superstitions.

Bulgaria: the study was conducted among immigrants from both denominations of Islam (Shia and Sunni) as well as among representatives of local Islamic institutions in Bulgaria. They (almost all women) are representatives of first generation immigrants who entered Bulgaria along the immigration waves of the pre- and post 1989 period. Study respondents originate

from the following countries: Iraq (10); Lebanon (1), Albania (1), Palestine (2). Two of them are male and the rest (12) are female. Although the majority of respondents are Muslim, there are also two who are Christian. There is a total of 18 respondents for the in-depth interview section.
Turkey: Christian and Muslim women immigrants from former Soviet Union countries and Eastern Europe (Moldavia, Romania, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Belarus, Russia). Most of the respondents were employed in care work settings in Istanbul, taking care of the elderly or the children of the household. The study was conducted among Christian domestic workers and Christian wives of Muslim Turkish men, as well as and among Muslim women. In sum, 17 respondents (10 Christians and 7 Muslims). Contrary to the Italian case, in Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey the majority of the respondents does not frequent religious sites regularly.

5. Basic Premises and Concepts

In the European context, religious revivalisms are seen to have put into question the idea of a secular Europe: they have forcefully re-opened the religion versus secularism divide and have raised doubts over the viability of the liberal model of procedural democracy (Al Azmeh, 2007). Especially after September 11th, the growing presence of public religions is increasingly depicted as a source of problems for European societies, putting their cohesiveness to the test and challenging the very political and civic values upon which the European project was based. Immigration , in this perspective, is seen to have accentuated these tensions. Focusing on Islam and particularly on Islam in Europe, immigration is associated with the rise of the number of Muslims inhabiting European societies (either as citizens, would be citizens, legal or undocumented immigrants), but also in contributing to movements of Muslim revivalism in several local contexts, but all located at the heart of European space, giving rise to what has been called European Islam (Ramadan, 1999, 2004; Allievi , 2003; Goody, 2004). It is a declination of Islam that stands for being on the importation of an original model, but the product of newly recomposed identities in favor of a westernization that promotes a new kind of Islam. Its main feature is the idea of universality of Islam that allows for the overcoming of the divisions among the different cultures that look like losers in front of the outcome of the history and the strength of West (Roy, 2003).
The idea of a “global resurgence of religion” ultimately rests upon the belief that “we” all share a common understanding of what religion is. Moreover, this assumption, as Derrida argues, is conditioned upon a Western (Latin) definition of religion that is spread globally through the modern means of communication and transport (Deridda, 1998). Thus, we have the emergence of global media affairs, like the Pope's aphorisms or the Rushdie affair or global terrorism, which cannot be localized in specific geographical contexts. This conviction that we all share a common meaning of religion, however, is simultaneously an admittance of our own insecurity over the multiple meanings that people may attach in different local and transnational contexts to religion. This is particularly significant when we consider the intimate relationship between religious and national identities, as well as the tensions that arise when immigrants attempt to express their own religious beliefs in the public space of receiving societies. As the example of the wearing of the hijab by Muslim women in France indicates, what is usually omitted from the relevant debates is the diversity of practices included in what is termed “wearing the hijab”. Gender, ethnic and class factors play an important role in the ways in which religious practices become meaningful in different contexts. It is with these considerations in mind that this research has tried to approach the theme of WP6. By conceiving religion as an open question (rather than as a term whose meaning we all understand and share) the present study has tried to understand what meanings immigrant

women (and men) attach to religion in general and to religious practices in particular and how these may destabilize, challenge or even subvert established religious practices and meanings.
Thus, the central approach adopted by the four studies analyzed is one that views identities – ethnic, national, cultural or religious - in terms of social interaction rather than content, as multiple and situational in form rather than unified and centered, as the outcome of a continuous process of negotiation among different actors, rather than as natural and self-perpetuating (Barth, 1969; Jenkins, 1996, 1997). In addition, the study treats the issue of immigration as transnational - as a process of being here and there, a social existence combining symbolic and practical strategies that link immigrants' receiving and home countries, rather than requiring one-way processes of assimilation, marginalization and the like. Thus, the identities of female immigrants are perceived as coming into being in the process of transformation of social roles and positions. This complex and multidimensional process is conditioned by the power hierarchies of the receiving society and the respective adaptation strategies on the part of immigrants. The religious identity of immigrant women is approached as one among many facets of a complex personal identity that become reinvented and reconfigured in the process of immigration. The question of the role of religion in the process of identity negotiation by female immigrants is especially relevant in the context of a receiving society with a religion different from that of the immigrants' and with levels and forms of secularization different from those in immigrants' receiving countries. Given this context of negotiation, this research approached religion as a potential tool to gain access to European public spheres and to redefine the idea of citizenship, rather than as a form of "ghetto-ization" and seclusion. According to this approach, turning to religion is not perceived as a turning to the past, but instead an expression of individual and collective re-invention, a strategy of relating to modernity that does not exclude the participation of women to the modern self.

6. Basic questions

The analytical focus of the questions was placed on the investigation of the role of religion in negotiating gender identities and gender relations. The research was based on three interrelated questions that investigate the relationship between gender, immigration and religion. The first question focuses on the role of religion in the construction of identity and identity negotiation in the context of immigration. The second concerns the gendered aspects of religious practices and the role of gender in discovering, maintaining, negotiating profession of faith in so-called dominant secular context. The third question posed by the study concerns the spaces of (religious) dialogue and expression available to (female) immigrants and the relationship between immigrants' faith, receiving country majority religion and secularism. Moreover, the issue of customary dressing was also analyzed broadly during field research because it is considered pivotal to the construction of the (images of the) "self" and the "other" inside the dynamics of interactions between the body politics of the receiving country and the immigrant community.

The main research questions include the following:

- What are the conceptions of religion in the country of origin?

- How do these affect present conceptions of public/private, masculine/ feminine?

- How does religion affect the immigration experience for women and men?

- How does immigration affect religious practices?

-How does gender affect and is affected by every day religious practices?

-How women (and men) engage in religious contexts (mosques, churches, religious centers) and in public spaces?

-How are these spaces gendered?

-Whether, and how, religious identities are a tool for the incorporation of women in local contexts and in transnational networks.

- Whether, and how, religious identities are a tool for the empowerment of women

7. Space, migrations and religions: the research frame

The relationship between migrations and religions affect the public space of the four metropolitan cities - Rome, Athens, Sofia and Istanbul - where research was carried out in different ways.
In Italy - the only country of WP6 where the study took place in a specific area - the research was based in Centocelle, a neighborhood of Rome where the migration history (immigration and emigration) is particularly interesting (Portelli, DeAngelis,), determining the choice of this area as a proper setting for fieldwork. Situated in east Rome, Centocelle, with a surface area of 208, 16 ha and 57.000 inhabitants and a relevant presence of migrants (10% of the population) provides a very appealing case study in which to understand the migration process in Italy. In fact, between the '50s and the '70s of the last century it was populated by a massive internal migration from southern and central regions of Italy; since the nineties it has seen a new immigration wave increasingly from foreign countries from Eastern Europe, North Africa, and Asia. Therefore, Centocelle is a place of long-standing immigration and steady root making, which is proved by the massive influx of foreign families. Nowadays, the presence of immigrants noticeably affects the area with "ethnic" stores, call centers, local associations and places of worship. Besides several Catholic churches that are also attended by many immigrants of different nationalities, there is a mosque and a Baptist church[5]. By means of these sites of worship, religion is being re-positioned at the center of the public sphere of the neighborhood. Places of worship such as the mosque al-Huda and the Baptist Church are important religious and social networks for immigrant communities who live inside and outside the neighborhood. It is worth noting that the mosque al-Huda is the second biggest mosque in Rome, and the number of female mosque-goers is increasing; on some Saturdays up to 60-70 women attend. The Romanian Baptist church is hosted by the Baptist Church in Centocelle, which lends hospitality to different national churches – congregations. The Romanian parish being one of the biggest congregations with around 100 devotees, among them, half are women.
The Christian Baptist Church in Centocelle is a huge structure with a main prayer room, and several other rooms for praying and socializing. There are also several apartments in the area

[5] The Baptist church is not situated well in the neighborhood, though just a few meters away. However, it is considered part of the neighborhood and, in fact, it is known as the Baptist church of Centocelle.

and an elderly center. It hosts several national, "ethnic" churches (the Philippines church, the Korean church, the Romanian church, the Latin-American church....); which all use the church rooms in rotation on Sunday and during the week. One of the more important features of the Baptist Churches is their development into 'national' churches that enjoy a great amount of autonomy. Thus, in the Centocelle church we find very different positions among the national church leaders: whereas the Italian church is led by a feminist and progressive female pastor, the Romanian church, on the other hand, is very conservative and does not allow female pastors.

The Romanian community meets each Sunday afternoon at 4pm and usually stays there until 7-8pm. The prayer lasts at least one hour and half to two hours. There is a choir composed of men and women mostly between 20 and 30 years old that sing during the prayer. Men sit on the left side of the aisle and women on the right side. During the prayer there is a Bible course for around 15 children. It is considered important to let children grow up with religious knowledge and Baptist values.

The mosque in Centocelle, called al-Huda is not a proper mosque: it is a prayer room set in the basement of a building which has, in addition to the function of place of worship, a number of social and cultural functions through various forms of gatherings (a Koranic school; courses and meeting opportunities for adults, women and converts, conferences and other educational and cultural activities). Nevertheless, due to the high number of faithful and the narrow spaces, most of these activities are hosted by nearby schools.

The mosque al-Huda is in the center of Centocelle and is very close to the main church of the area, San Felice di Cantalice and to a shopping street. It is located in the basement of a four-storey building in what was once a gym. It has been very well adapted into a prayer hall. In the same building there are a few other rooms devoted to a school of Arabic language for men and a secretary. Built in 1994, it is the second biggest mosque in Rome, after the Great mosque. Close to the mosque there is a Palestinian association linked to the al-Huda mosque, where there are very active Palestinian faithful. The mosque is very active in organizing many religious and social activities. Faithful arrive from all over Rome along with small towns nearby. During Ramadan, on Friday, 500-800 believers pray there. Believers come mainly from North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. There are also Italian converts to Islam, such as the Islamic center al-Huda vice-president, who has been interviewed several times formally and informally throughout this research. In the streets nearby, there are many Islamic stores such as "Stationary's Marrakesh", "pizzeria Chawarma", and food shops, which sell *halal* and other ethnic products. The Islamic center vice-president, who is also the secretary general of UCOII (Union of Islamic Communities and Organizations in Italy), the largest Muslim organization in Italy, which was established in 1990 and nowadays governs 134 mosques, says: "When you arrive in Via dei Frassini (i.e. the street where the mosque is) it is as if you were walking on the streets of Tunis or Marrakesh..." The presence of the mosque has changed the area nearby a lot. In recent years sporadic conflicts with the neighbors have taken place, mostly because there are too many faithful for the size of the prayer room and some pray out in the street during certain holidays like Ramadan. However, the mosque has a good relationship with the municipality and the local schools. They can use several rooms of an adjacent school on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings to teach several classes and courses for women and children, in the hopes that they can one day have their own Islamic center. Furthermore, it is very difficult to build a real mosque or to buy or rent a space large enough to dedicate to the mosque. In Italy, there is a lot of animosity toward the construction of mosques in any part of the country (Allievi, 2009). The building of new mosques has been strongly opposed in Italy despite the fact that the expenses for their construction will be covered by national and international Islamic associations, countries and private backers. Nowadays in Italy there are about 660 prayer halls, mostly located in industrial buildings, warehouses, former shops and apartments. Of these, only three are mosques in the truest sense of the word: that of Catania, the oldest one (1980), now no

longer in use and managed 'privately' by a Sicilian citizen; that of Milan Segrate, built in 1988, which is one of the most influential in the organization of Italian Islam; and the large Italian Islamic Cultural Centre in Rome in the neighborhood of Parioli (Viale della Moschea), known as the Great Mosque. Officially inaugurated in 1995 in the presence of heads of state and senior authorities of the Vatican, and linked (like many other Islamic centers established in European capitals) to the Saudi Muslim World League (Allievi, 2009, p.17). The Great Mosque is considered one of the great monuments of the city and expresses well the numerical, cultural and social importance that the Muslim community has acquired in Italy, even if many Muslims consider it a kind of embassy, quite far from the real world of Muslim immigrant life.

In Greece, public religious spaces in Athens are predominantly associated with the Orthodox Church. Most Athenian neighborhoods are characterized by the presence of a central Orthodox church and several peripheral smaller ones. The Orthodox churches are spaces of socialization and points of spatial reference in each neighborhood for both religious and non-religious inhabitants, since they offer many social as well as strictly religious services, i.e. mass, social support, catechism, customary ceremonies for marriages, baptisms, and Easter and Christmas celebrations. Other Christian religious sites (Catholic, Protestant etc.) are scarce in Athens and they are mostly to be found in official temples built in the centre of the town, where religious communities from different neighborhoods gather on specific occasions. However, the absence of official Islamic mosques constitutes a unique characteristic that distinguishes the religious space of Athens from those of other European cities. With the exception of Western Thrace, where official mosques operate legally due to the official status of the Muslim minority inhabiting the region, there are no other institutionalized Islamic places of worship in Greece. Because of the influx of Muslim immigrants, several informal mosques have been constructed and operate in a semi-official status as "cultural centers" all over the country (Papantoniou, 2009). In the past few decades, Greece has been caught in a huge debate over the proposal of building an official mosque somewhere in the area of metropolitan Athens. According to Greek law, the construction of a religious site by a non Orthodox Christian religious community requires a permit from the Ministry of Education and Religion, which is subject to the approval of the Greek Orthodox Church.[6] Although the Greek Church has approved, in recent years, the construction of a central Islamic mosque in Athens, these plans have not been realized. The continuous postponements of the erection of religious sites devoted to the Islamic faith in Athens cannot be reduced to mere bureaucratic or economic complications, but should be attributed to an ethno-religious conception of space that constructs the capital city of the state and the symbolic centre of Greek nationalism as a space devoid of an Islamic religious influence.[7]

Because of the absence of mosques in public space, the Islamic presence in Athens is mostly private and linked to specific immigrant communities. According to the website islam.gr, there are sixty places of worship operating in Athens, and five of these mosques are run by the Pakistani community and five by the Bangladeshi community, while the vast majority is multinational and run by more than 40 Imams. It is worth noting that in 2007, a Muslim Mosque has been created in the Moschato area near the Pireus port, after a donation of a Saudi Arabian businessman. Islamic religious sites are usually hidden from the public eye

[6] See Law 1363/1938 and Law 1672/1939. Although the Ministry is responsible for the issuing of the permit and in principal, the Orthodox religious authorities have only an advisory role. In practice, however, they exert considerable influence in those decisions.

[7] A symbolic gesture on the part of the Greek state has been the renovation of the Islamic mosque in Monastiraki, which now functions as a tourist attraction. Reconstructing the mosque as a monument, which no longer functions as a religious site, reaffirms the predominance of the Greek Orthodox religion in public space –accepting Islam only as a past influence, which is strictly limited to the cultural sphere and does not threaten the presumed ethno-religious homogeneity of the city.

operating in a semi-illegal mode under the banner "cultural centers".[8] Most mosques are operating in unsuitable private places, such as residential apartments, warehouses, shops or garages, and according to informers, tend to be dominated by specific nationalities of immigrants who run them and finance them through the contributions of their members or donations from abroad. It is also noteworthy that according to islam.gr, in 2009, "the number of mosques has begun to decrease gradually due to the increasing differences with the insistence of some mosques to perform prayers at their campuses, whereas others hold congregational prayers in other areas in Athens"[9]. Although very little research has been conducted on Islamic places of worships by academic researchers, Muslim female informers that participated in the research insisted that the vast majority of these sites are reserved for males only.

Although Islamic religious holidays are not recognized as public in Athens, there is a customary celebration of Eid Al Adha organized each year in a sport stadium of Athens located far from the city centre. Although the participation of Muslim immigrants in this event is massive, the choice of location -secluded and isolated from everyday life of Athens- manifests the deliberate marginalization of Islam from the Athenian public space.[10] Overall, the ethno-religious predominance of Orthodox Christianity is result of the marginalization of other religious faiths and the limited visibility of Islam in the Athenian religious landscape. This limited visibility of Islam in public space is in sharp contrast with its over-representation in public discourse. In other words, while Islam is almost absent from the actual space of the city, it is present everywhere in public debates on migration and religion as an omnipresent threat looming over the city.

Muslim immigrants in Bulgaria enter a country with a long established Islamic institutional framework due to its traditional Islamic minorities. Thus, Muslim immigrants are expected to turn to the existing Islamic institutions and have no official or informal mosques, places of prayer or Koranic schools of their own. Immigrant Muslims, however, make up only 5% of the share of visitors of the central (and only) mosque in Sofia with very few women among them. The mosque functions as predominantly male space, while the religious practices of the women appear centered in the private sphere at home. Most of the interviewed pray at home. One respondent said, "I have my mosque in my house, I don't need to pay visits (to the mosque). When you pray somewhere – in a tram, in a bus, in the subway, in bed you can do the prayer". Muslim immigrant women in Bulgaria allocate particular spaces for prayer in their homes[11].

Social interactions of Muslim immigrant women in Bulgaria appear confined to co-national and co-immigrant networks that usually comprise a limited circle of relatives and friends. In addition, their social routines are centered in the private sphere and they have a very finite presence in the public sphere. Although immigrants' social networks operate within their own co-national or co-immigrant communities, no process of compact immigrant settlements is observed. The dominant accommodation pattern among immigrants of Arab countries

[8] See the mapping of Islamic religious sites operating in the municipality of Athens undertaken by a research project in 2007;
http://www.kspm.gr/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=55&Itemid=93.

[9] http://www.islam.gr/cgi-bin/pages/page3.pl?arlang=English&arcode=100129124049&argenkat=%C1%F1%E8%F1%E1

[10] See, for instance, "Muslims celebrate Hadj" [Μουσουλμάνοι γιορτάζουν το "Χατζ"], Eleftherotypia, 28 November 2009

[11] Usually women pray alone at home. If the husband prays in the same room – the wife does the prayer either before or after him as they share the same prayer carpets. Most of the women have special *sedjadeh* (a long cover, usually white), that covers the whole body when in a squatting position. Sometimes a long skirt is put on for the prayer.

involves dispersed rental living throughout the suburban quarters of the capital within dominant Bulgarian neighborhoods. Moreover, immigrant accommodation is rather unstable and immigrant families appear to change rented apartments and city quarters many times in the course of their residence in the country. The system of landowner-tenant relations in Bulgaria that favors the rights of the owners over these of tenants contributes to a dynamic market of rented accommodation and high level of tenant instability. This affects a rather mobile accommodation pattern of immigrants who change neighborhoods and living surroundings often.[12] None of the study respondents reported having any immigrant neighbors in their immediate surroundings. Three of the respondents, however, reported having a close immigrant friend living in the same quarter. Immigrant women report having rather limited contacts with their Bulgarian neighbors. Only one respondent reported being on good terms with an elderly Bulgarian woman living next door, who gives treats to her children and invites her over occasionally for tea. Another female immigrant from Iraq (who has been in Bulgaria for 5 months only) reported making conscious efforts to communicate with her neighbors (in order to work on her Bulgarian) and every early afternoon goes to the quarter park to communicate with the (mostly old) people there.

According to the Turkish case study, despite the fact that there are several churches in Istanbul and all Christian immigrant women knew where the churches are, they rarely visited churches though they mentioned the fact that they wish they were able to visit the churches more often. They claimed that their family and work responsibilities hold them back from participating in the masses or simple visits to the churches. When they attend or visit churches, they would rather go to far away churches, far from their neighborhoods. They describe these practices as a tourist experience, rather than being part of the social fabric of the church community. A respondent, Carmen says: “Not going to the church does not mean that we do not pray. What is important is what lies inside”. Similarly, the Muslim women of the Bulgarian case study, as well as the Christian respondents, report that they pray every day, on almost all occasions, for example in hard times such as when they miss their children back in their country of origin, when they lose a job, when they are mistreated, and regularly before bed time. Some of them have a special corner in their homes decorated with Virgin Mary statues as a private sanctuary. Most of them choose to pray in private spaces when noneof the family members canobserve them. It is important to note that sometimes the respondents in the Turkish case study confessed that they stay away from the churches and the church community for fear of being apprehended by the police, as most of these women are in a status of irregular immigrant, lacking work permits or overstayers. Indeed, most of the time it is reported that the officers expect the women to have a 20-dollar bill tucked in their passports. Therefore, the ones with overdue passports do not prefer to go out on their own, they would rather go out with the families where they work as housekeepers.

However, on the other hand, it should be added that the church provides help to those immigrants who attend it. Nadya states: “When I first came I immediately contacted the church. I took the address when I came here, because you cannot manage without the church, I mean I need it.” Generally, from the Turkish case study, it appears that there is a significant difference in terms how immigrant women live their religiosity in the public realm vs. the private realm. In the public realm, they do not claim any religious space or performance in public. They do not claim any space evenin the church or any other social group. In the private realm, they are inclined to blend in with their families by observing Islamic life styles, for example not eating pork at all.

[12] A female respondent from Lebanon reported that her family has changed apartments and neighborhoods seven times during the 16 year-long stay in the country.

8. The work carried out:

8.1. XXI century: the repositioning of religion in women's lives

After years of marginalization, religion is once again emerging in the public sphere in the East and in the West as a widespread and diverse phenomenon. This repositioning of religion is one of the elements that most characterizes the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century and it is a phenomenon concerning all religions: it re-appears among both immigrants from Muslim and Christian majority countries and from former communist countries as well. Although there are huge historical, social and religious differences among Muslim communities and Christian communities, religious revivalism does not concern only Islam, but it is very evident also in other contexts. Nowadays an increasing number of people, including many women, are repositioning religion by bringing it into the private sphere and, in some cases, to the forefront of the public's attention. Contrary to widely held mass media stereotypes of women, they, in fact, are not simply passive victims, but indeed are leading actors in religious realignment in the European countries analyzed. From the Greek and the Bulgarian case studies, it clearly appears that religion is mainly a woman's issue, and from the Italian research, it is eveident that women are active agents in the process of the repositioning of religion in private and public domains.
The life stories of many immigrant women point out religion as a newly found objective, something that immigrants discover, rather than know. Mainly for those who come from former communist countries (as is the case of most respondents from the Turkish, Greek, and Italian cases) religion is a tenuous memory from the past in which religion was cast out of the public space in the pre 1990 period. Katia, an Orthodox Christian from Bulgaria, interviewed in the Greek research, recalls: "When I was in school in 1955-6, as a small child, 6-7 years old, I remember that we were told that religion was no longer a lesson. And I was happy because it was a difficult lesson and it was nice to have less to study...We were told not to go inside the Churches otherwise we will be kicked out of school". In addition, Anna, an Albanian Muslim, who later converted to Orthodox Christianity in Greece, tells the Greek research team: "Since 1967, when Albania became atheist and I was 12 years old at the time, we could not say a word about those things. In school, we did not learn anything. Therefore, slowly they waned or faded away. However, my parents are Muslim and my name is Aisha. Later in Greece, I changed it to Anna. Perhaps in the villages they were more religious, but in Tirana it was a difficult thing to do. People would make fun of you if you said anything religious... 'Where is your mind? Where do you see it [religion]?' I could not see it, but I could feel it". Similar memories come out from the Italian case study: Rhadia, a 28-year-old Muslim Albanian woman who arrived in Italy to get her degree, clearly defines the phenomenon of the repositioning of religion in Albania. She recollects, "We had dealt with communism for almost fifty years, it was a dictatorship. Mosques and churches were closed and it was absolutely forbidden to practice any form of religion. Over there, one had to keep their religious practice hidden; it was very difficult to pass religious beliefs down to your own children. My parents grew up practically as atheists, believing in God but not being able to do anything about it, they had to live their lives without religion. Then when, thank God, they opened the borders, communism fell and democracy came in, they reopened the mosques and churches and the people returned to religion. And so, slowly but surely, thanks be to God, *alhamud lillah*, Islam is flourishing and many people understand what it means to be a Muslim." Mihaela, a 40 year-old wife of a Romanian Baptist pastor and herself a leader of a group of women at the Romanian Baptist church in Centocelle, tells the Italian research team: "For us religious freedom is still something new. Living through communism was terrible; people had many

awful experiences that I don't even want to remember. I was young; I was 18 years old when the revolution occurred. As a Christian I suffered a lot, I had to change schools four times because teachers were continually threatening me - it was a frightening time. After the fall of communism freedom was felt everywhere, even in the churches and in our daily life". Similar descriptions on the realignment of religion between the end of XX and the beginning of XXI century come from Muslim women from the Arab world. According to the majority of Muslim Arab women interviewed in Italy, even though Islam had never been banned in their countries, many Muslims lost their religious identity in the last century. However, nowadays an increasing number of people are repositioning religion by bringing it to the forefront of the public's attention by claiming new religious freedoms, such as veiling and building religious organizations and parties. Often in Diaspora, these claims become stronger and belief in God and Islamic practices are empowered. It is data that is confirmed also by the statements of Muslim women from the ex-Soviet Union interviewed in Turkey like Sürreya says: "We pray more. We learned our prayers here, because here they value religion. [...] We forgot a lot. I learned most prayers here". Also from the Greek case study it appears that both those who identify themselves as religious and those who identify themselves as non religious, however, accept that religion is something that they did not "know well" before migrating. In a way, Albanian and Bulgarian immigrants found religion through their migration to Greece and are inclined to discover it, or rather, to re-invent it from scratch. Both Albanian and Bulgarian immigrants re-invent religion through a traditional (often, even more traditional) approach to faith: in fact, religious immigrants from former communist societies tend to take religion to the letter; they have a devout faith in religion's transcendental truth (including miracles). It should be taken into account that for most immigrant women, the "discovery" of religion takes place during "difficult times" (illnesses, deaths, accidents), in private space - rather than in church -, and very often, through the agency of pious Greek people (acquaintances and friends) who help them approach religious issues. Marina, an Orthodox Christian nurse from Bulgaria, explains: "We knew nothing about religion in Bulgaria. I was not concerned about religion. When I arrived in Greece, I slowly started to learn from the ladies, my employers. They took me to church. I asked around and I learned. And, now, on Saturdays and Sundays, I go to church and I believe in it and I feel content. When I go back to Bulgaria I teach my grandson". Constantina, an Orthodox Christian from Albania says: "It [faith] comes slowly and gradually. For me, too, it was difficult to understand initially because in Albania we did not know anything. However, there were always religious people next to me, to guide me likeother Greek ladies and my priest." It is a fact that many pious Greek Christians usually "teach" and "guide" immigrants through everyday religious practices, and in same cases insist on baptizing them, mostly those who come from Albania, who are considered very far away from religion. Thus, adopting a Greek name and/or baptizing themselves became, for many Albanian immigrants, a necessity when they first arrived in Greece in order to get access to the public space and to Greek citizenship. The inability to pronounce names and the questioning of origins on the part of Greeks forced most Albanians to adopt Greek names that they liked or sounded somehow like their own in order to be accepted as members of the Greek minority in Albania. A respondent affirms: "It is very important to say that there were many amongst us, when we arrived here, that were not Christian and we pretended that we were because they would not accept us otherwise. It is true. We have all lived this experience. That is why our names are Greek."

Furthermore, the Turkish case study, also demonstrates the attempt to teach the majority religion of the country (in this case Islam) to immigrant women. It is not uncommon that pious Muslim men and women try to "deliver" (teblig etmek) Islam to those who are unaware of the Islamic faith. Indeed a pious Muslim would receive more virtue (sevap) from this "good deed" in the eyes of God. The Christian women interviewed appreciate those attempts by pious Muslims around them, including, but not limited to family members, co-workers, bosses, neighbors as long as they did not feel any pressure to convert. Natalia notes: "I used to go to

a kindergarten foran hour a week six years ago. The owner wanted to make me a Muslim, (there was) a lot of pressure, he gave me presents all the time. Someone else told me to stay away from him. Then I never went there again". However, even though single immigrant women do not feel significant pressure over their religious beliefs, the cases of conversion are very common or expected to happen by their husbands, particularly for those in mixed marriages.
In synthesis, research findings point out clearly that since the '90s of the last century religious revivalism is a phenomenon concerning all religions and not only Islam. Within this process of the realignment of religion, both in public and private, women - from former communist countries – are the leading actors.

8.2. Religion in Diaspora between source of strength and hybrid religious practices

The fieldwork results point out that in Diaspora religion appears to be one of the ways of defining a sense of belonging, to reconstruct a social community, in addition to the formation of cultural identities. For many first and second-generation immigrants, religion serves as a means of returning toward one's own roots, offering spiritual support in order to deal with the difficulties of daily life and building social networks far from home. In the context of the 21st century, religion provides a source of 'help' and 'solidarity' for the community and in particular for women. In all four researches carried out, migration is described as a painful, difficult and lonely experience. Many respondents report that migrations affect their social life in the negative, at least in the first years in Diaspora. Mihaela, a Romanian Baptist woman interviewed from the Italian research team, laments: "Circumstances for Romanian women in Italy are much different because in Romania we have family and friends; our home life is a little better. Here (deep sigh) things are much worse, in their hearts and their whispers, women are more sentimental; I think that women don't really feel 'at home', I, for example, have left my parents, my extended family and my relatives, I came with only my eldest daughter. My husband and I didn't know anyone, I couldn't find a job, but my greatest support has always been my faith. I think that for the other women here, faith is very important too because they don't have their husbands or their kids, being apart from their families that they haven't seen for up to five or six years. It's a really tough life, especially for women who work as care-givers always stuck in a house with an old person, with only two or three hours free on Sundays". Similarly, from the Turkish case study, it emerged that living as a single Christian immigrant woman in a predominantly Muslim community is not an easy task. There may not be overt discriminatory practices; however, considering that these women lack their family support, living apart from their families in Istanbul makes them more vulnerable. They do feel like they have to fit in. Therefore, immigrant women with Christian faith emphasized that it is their belief in God and faith that keeps them going in a foreign and sometimes discriminatory environment. They attribute their patience and endurance to their faith. Through religion, they have an opportunity to claim their roots and connections to their homeland and former families. In that regard, it is not the nature of their faith and how they experience it that is significant, rather its instrumentality to provide a source of (private) support to continue their existence in a foreign land and in much disadvantaged positions. In the stories of many respondents from all four case studies we can find echoes of the "suffering of the post-colonial subject" studied by Fanon (1962) and "the double absence" analyzed by Sayad (1999). Some respondents suffered both mentally and physically due to their exile. One Muslim respondent in the Italian case study, tells of when she arrived in Italy, in Sicily, 20 years ago, she never went out, spending all her days at home because the environment

throughout was perceived as adverse. Consequently, her seclusion led to her developing eating problems, and as a result, she started to suffer from a serious case of anorexia. Besides medical assistance and hospitalizations, religion became a great comfort. Similar statements regarding religion's use as a means of support are also seen from other stories of women. For many first generation immigrants the migration experience often results in vast isolation, at least during the first few years. Many of them reported not working and spending most of their time alone at home without the opportunity to learn the language of the receiving country and to get in touch with the rest of society. The respondents of all four case studies report that in Diaspora lively and frequent social interactions within their extended families and friends in the home country are contrasted to rather secluded and "quiet" daily routines spent within severely reduced social circles. Major daily engagements reported by respondents include cooking, cleaning, shopping, care for the children and going to work for those who are employed. Mainly Muslim immigrant women tend to enter into the public sphere only to implement certain engagements: shopping at the local market, taking children to school, visiting a doctor and in some cases going to work. Female immigrants avoid free time activities outside their homes with the exception of languages courses. Research results point out that most of the respondents from the four case studies are not used to participating in any kind of associations. Few exceptions are represented by the Council of Refugee Women in Bulgaria, and mainly by religious associations, particularly in Italy and Bulgaria.

In the context of Diaspora, religion can become an important reassurance, an irreplaceable solace. From the Italian case it seems that religion can serve as an expression of individual and collective re-invention. According to Muslim and Baptist respondents, turning to religion does not mean turning to the past, but instead living wholly in the present and having access to the public sphere. Going to places of worship can become a way to get out of the house, meet people, and discuss religious principles and norms, and creating female associations. Religion can thus allow many women to leave home and encounter a new social atmosphere. An environment composed mainly of women, which can become supportive and even like a new family away from home, even if there is a very strong gender division. In fact, if on the one hand, religious communities represent an important base for social aggregation, on the other, they spread values and well defined guidelines for personal conduct that do not permit great deviations and assert social controls. Both the mosque and the Baptist church see a clear-cut division of the roles between men and women. Both are conservative environments with rigid degrees of separation of the genders (women's section in the mosque and division in the church between male and female seats). However, all the respondents, Baptists and Muslims alike, pointed out that in Diaspora their religiousness gains strength; and thanks to the frequent attendance of places of worship, their ritual system becomes strongly codified under the guide of the leaders (men and women) of the mosque and the Baptist church.

Contrastingly, in the Bulgarian case, where the women interviewed do not regularly attend places of worship and consequentially do not participate in a religious community life. Once migrating, the ritual system of the Muslim immigrant undergoes changes in two major directions: reduction of the number of traditional holidays that are celebrated rather modestly with a simplified cuisine, and incorporation and celebration of local (Christian and secular holidays). The first point is very clear regarding the rites associated with Kurban Bayrami and Ramadan Bayrami (the two major Muslim holidays) that are given less importance by Muslim immigrants in a number of ways in Bulgaria. Severely reduced is the number of ritual offerings, simplified is the traditional cuisine prepared for the holidays and decreased is the number of guests. Immigrant women tend to explain this reaction with two explanations: deteriorated financial situation of their families in the country of immigration and the fact that the traditional Muslim holidays are no longer official holidays in the receiving country, and, therefore family members go to work. Similarly, they explain the simplification with regard to religious rites related to the life-style. For example, in Bulgaria, respondents celebrate the circumcision of their kids very modestly, where in their home countries it is considered an

important event, associated with big festivities and many guests. Nevertheless, while there is a simplification in the Islamic practices, the respondents indicate that in Bulgaria they started to celebrate the central local holidays – Christmas and Easter. A young Muslim woman says: "We follow all that is marked as holiday. Whether Muslim or Christian – we regard it as a holiday and do it". Some of the women adopt Christian rituals such as dying of Easter eggs and visit Church at Easter day. Thus, the research results indicate that religious syncretism characterizes the religion in Diaspora in Bulgaria. It is a relevant fact that in Bulgaria the majority of Muslim female immigrants do not usually to go to mosques,[13] (even in their home countries they do not go to mosque except for holidays, particularly Ramadan). Neverthless they go to churches (mostly the central Churches of "St Alexander Nevski", "St. Nedelya" and the Church located in the central market in Sofia), where they pray and light candles for solving different health problems – such as an eye operation, sterility –. Some of the Iraqi women interviewed related that they also wear icons of Virgin Mary and turn to her with prayers for childbirth. One of the respondents states: "I believe in God but I like to go to Church. And I do it very often. At the same time I have not visited a mosque". The exceptional practice of visiting Christian churches that was reported by the majority of the respondents appears to be a tradition conveyed by their origin countries (this applies especially for the Iraqi women) where they used to visit Christian churches as well. Thus, the observed practice of visiting Christian churches by Muslim female immigrants in Bulgaria cannot be considered an anamoly. What can be considered new with regard to this practice is the fact that in Bulgaria, although rarely, men also visit the church with their wives.

The openness and comfort demonstrated by Muslim female immigrants in approaching local Christian prayer indicate that they become elements that facilitate accommodation in the receiving society and ease practicing immigrants' religiosity. The participation of several Muslim respondents to the Bulgarian branch of the Focolare Movement[14], a Catholic organization founded in 1943 in Northern Italy to maintain dialogue among all religions, is another example of this. The field study identified, in fact, a number of Muslim immigrant women who were partaking in the activities by this movement with the purpose of socializing with members of other religions and finding respect for their own religion. Muslim immigrant women who attend the Focolare's meetings and gatherings appear attracted by the chance to extend and diversify their social contacts in a friendly environment, which facilitates their integration. At Focolare meetings, in fact, Muslim immigrant women and their children mix with Bulgarian families.

Similarly, the Bulgarian and the Turkish research results point out that hybrid religiosities/hybrid practices characterize the process of re-invention of religion in Diaspora. Christian immigrant women usually experience hybrid religiosities through engaging in different Islamic religious practices such as fasting during Ramadan, or celebrating Islamic holidays along with the rest of the society. Fasting[15] in Ramadan seems like something which

[13] It must be mentioned that only the 5% of the believers who attend the mosque in Sofia are immigrants. Among them, women are very few.

[14] At present, the movement has hundreds of thousands of members throughout the world. The Focolare movement was revived in Bulgaria in 1991 and currently is managed by four core Focolare representatives coming from Italy, Germany, Croatia and Slovenia. Focolares' main activities in Bulgaria include: regular gatherings in Sofia at the Catholic church "St. Joseph", the Uniate church near the "Ljulin mountain" street and in the Focolare's headquarters. The major purpose of these meetings is socialization among members. In addition, Focolares organize annual meetings in chosen cities of the country that are called for the occasion "Mariapolis" (Maria's city). Followers of the movement from all over the country gather in this city (women, men and children numbering up to 100 people) and live "as one family" for three days.

[15] It is important to remember that although immigrant women kept saying that nobody is limiting their life-styles overtly, perhaps except for eating pork. They rarely can fast (Christian

most of the respondents tried at least once to fit in with the husband's family or the family where they are working at. Though most of them claimed that it was physically too challenging not to eat or drink all day from sunrise to sun down respecting the Muslim observation of fasting. Moreover, although they all celebrate Christmas and Easter, they do not mind celebrating Muslim religious holidays. They claimed repeatedly that there is only one God and it does not matter if you are born Christian or Muslim, at the end of the day, what counts is your belief in God. The words of Olivia from the Turkish case study are very clear: "Now we have more holidays. We celebrate double holidays"; like those of Carmen: "Yes, we celebrate both Muslim and Christian holidays." The respondents justify this religious hybrid behavior saying that they practice, worship and/or prayer in a transnational manner both in the public and private realm. Clara says: "I pray every minute. Thank God, you gave this, you gave everything. I hold my religion equal to Islam because there is one God".

Also in the Greek case study, hybrid religiosities/hybrid practices eexplain the forms of respondents' religiosity and represent an example of intercultural and interreligious interactions. A clear example comes from the story of a Muslim Albanian woman married to a Christian Catholic Albanian, who has never been baptized despite pressures from her husband's family and her Greek employers, goes to church every week with her Greek employers, who ask her to accompany the child she is babysitting. Whenever she goes to church, she prays and lights candles, but she refuses to accept communion. When she goes to the Greek Orthodox church as a Muslim woman, she manages to renegotiate her own identity, vis-à-vis her Greek wealthy employers - "who come to respect her and accept her for what she is"- but also vis-à-vis the Albanian friends and family who might accuse her of "hypocrisy" and "deceit". The story of this Albanian woman, which is similar to many others collected in the Greek study, complicates the assumption that Greek Orthodox churches are ethnically homogeneous spaces where the same language, attitude and religious faith are practiced. Thus, the research results underline the fact that the attempt of re-construing religion, of re-interpreting the practices and traditions of the Greek Orthodox community by immigrants has a radical potential. It serves as a critique towards existing religious norms. Immigrants do not "know" the established processes of approaching, performing, and understanding religion. Therefore, they participate in a broad process of re-invention of religion that effect immigrants and Greek religious communities alike.

In synthesis, for many women religion is a new object that gains strength during the hardships and loneliness of migration. It gives sense of unity, support and solidarity. In everyday life in Diaspora, immigrant women's religiosity can come across as processes of hybrid ties and syncretism.

8.3. Religion and bodily performances between visibility and invisibility

Concerning bodily performances, the works carried out show very different strategies, because the case studies are quite different,for example, immigrants' religious backgrounds and sites of investigations. What emerges as common data from the comparison of the four case studies is that bodily performances are pivotal to the construction of the (images of the) "self" and the "other" inside the dynamics of

fast) due to their family responsibilities where they may have to cook two different meals, one for themselves without any dairy and meat products respecting Christian way of fasting and one for their families.

interactions between the body politics of the receiving country, the immigrant community and women immigrants' desires.

In Bulgaria, the field research reveals a number of clothing strategies by Muslim female immigrants. The first tendency is related to different degrees of the transformation of the dress code: from mild changes (lighter dress with brighter colors with keeping the kerchief) to full removal of the veiling and appropriation of modern dress with exposed body parts. The transformation in the dress code of immigrant Muslim women (sometimes significant) is a gradual process. One of the respondents reported that at first she took away the kerchief, then she transformed her long black dress into a long skirt. After a time she shortened the skirt to a medium length. At the time of the interview, she had changed the skirt to trousers and reported feeling "safer, more at ease and more protected" dressed this way. Transformations in the dress code are taken with the approval on the part of the respective leading male figure in the family. In some cases, the approval of close relatives in the country of origin is also taken before the change takes place. The second tendency is associated with preservation of the dress code of the home country with minor changes in the direction of liberation of the dress code. A respondent speaks about her experience with the following words: "Upon my arrival I was a bit scared because I did not see many veiled women and I felt like I was the only one veiled and I changed – I put on a hat, took away the kerchief and put on a hat with a turtle-neck blouse. When the weather got warmer I put the kerchief back on and saw that no one makes remarks on me, that there is no problem in the kerchief, which is normal and I remained veiled". The third and most rare tendency is associated with veiling of immigrant women who did not used to veil in their home countries. It is the case of a woman who started to veil her head because of health problems that led her to believe that she was being punished by God. When she returned to Iraq after the political change took place in the country (2003), her relatives made her take off the kerchief again.

Generally, the Bulgarian research results indicate that there is the tendency to become invisible in the public sphere, even at the expense of some Islamic requirements. For example, some respondents state that instead of kerchiefs, they wear hats or hoods, and one was considering buying a wig to wear on the streets. Some respondents seek ways of making their Islamic identities "invisible" in the public sphere even at the expense of some Islamic requirements. Moreover, from the interviews it appears that the decision of women to remain with their kerchief often leads to a greater isolation as they prefer to stay at their home. One of the respondents reported that she does not go out with her husband because of her kerchief – "When I go I will be stared at and will stick out, so I prefer to not go out". "The different look" of veiled Muslim immigrant women contributes to feelings of uncertainty in public places that in turn makes some of them avoid public appearances and enact changes to their traditional clothing. Manifestations of religious belonging of immigrant women (through the clothing) in the public space are the outcome of negotiation between the woman and the man in the family – a negotiation that is the outcome of different accommodation strategies in the receiving country, taken by the family as a whole. The observed changes in the bodily performances of Muslim immigrant women are in fact the outcome of their encounter with new secular social environments in Bulgaria, while the forms and degrees of this change depend on the social environments immigrants, according to the environment of the countries they passed through during their migration paths, and their countries of origin. The relationship between gender and migration in this context leads to diverse forms of manifestation of confessional belonging that are placed along the axis of visible – invisible.

In Turkey, the general tendency is to be invisible. The Christian respondents report that they would rather be invisible than visible in the public sphere. They do not claim any space in public. They want to blend in to the public in order to avoid the critical looks and judgments associated with the sex workers who first came to Turkey. The relatively fair skin, hair tones and slimmer bodies of these women actually make their invisibility impossible. Repeatedly

they talked about the clothing issues in their lives. How they felt uncomfortable when they put on shorter skirts, or low cut blouses outside of their homes. The fact that they have desirable looks on the street does not work in their favor, just the opposite; they experience overt or covert harassments. Alone states: “I started to dress very modestly because I am already blond, obviously I am a foreigner. They are already looking at me, so why should I attract more attention?” The range of harassments extend even to include the harassments of the police forces. Most of these immigrant women have irregular status – overstayers. Because of the mere fact that they have a very distinguished look in public, they can be pinpointed by the law enforcement and, therefore are very easy targets to be “controlled”, which they all fear. Moreover, sometimes the respondents reported that they felt like they had to hide their cross necklaces with a scarf or a turtleneck blouse, which does not show their necks. The strategies of how to deal with their cross necklaces actually, is a very critical sign of their awareness of otherness-foreignness in a Muslim society. The signs of Christianity, which the respondents carry in public, particularly cross necklaces, are very consciously worn and negotiated in different settings. If sometimes they are hidden, in other cases they are openly shown off as a reaction to discriminatory attitudes from locals or because the respondents perceive themselves as in a “tolerant” environment. It could be interesting to pay attention to the following answers to the question “Can you wear your cross comfortably?” given in the focus group with Christian women.

Natalia: “I can’t”; Albina: “I can. When AKP won the elections, I covered it a bit. Then I said, anyway, it doesn’t matter. Carmen: Yes, I never take it off”. Olivia: “I don’t feel the need to hide it”. Carmen: “I don’t wear it to show off”. Olivia: “When people see it, their face changes badly sometimes. I want to wear it but I feel uncomfortable”. Albina: “In Acıbadem we are alright, but in a different district it may be a problem”. Clara: “I live in Kocamustafapaşa. There are covered people there so I don’t show it”. Olivia: “It is not just the cross, sometimes we even hide that we are foreigners. Only in church do women feel free and they usually wear a veil during the mass”.

On the contrary, in the Italian case, the research results of the fieldwork among the women who attend the mosque in Centocelle point out the tendency toward the visibility of religious identity. All Muslim respondents wear the veil; it is a broadly shared idea that it is the duty of a Muslim woman, even if it cannot be imposed. Its use is strongly encouraged in informal conversations and formal talks by women and mosque leaders as well. However, , the use of niqab (head and face covering veil) is discouraged. Concerning niqab, Fatima, who wears hijab (the head covering veil), which is the most common kind of veil used in the al-Huda mosque and generally in Italy, says: "It is not required by the Quran. It isa habit that comes from Gulf countries. It is not in our religion. In Islam, women must cover only the head and the hair". This explanation is very clear in the case of Rhadia who lived by herself when she decided to veil: "I decided to cover myself two years ago, but I've been practicing Islam for five years; by going to the mosque I started understanding Islam better and what it meant to live as a Muslim, I then realized that it was a moral obligation, my duty, a gesture of humility and devotion toward my God. I concluded that I had to cover myself, but to tell the truth, I didn't have the courage, unfortunately living in a country where there's so much discrimination against Muslims, for example if someone sees a covered woman they always put their hands up. For all these reasons I didn't have the guts to wear the veil and because I was alone without my parents I wasn't able to cover myself, but then I found the confidence, thanks to God, I said that's enough! After having made this decision, everything truly became much easier. The first time that I put on the veil I was very emotional. I had decided to put on the veil during Ramadan while attending the mosque. Before Ramadan began I made a promise between myself and God, I told myself that I had to put on the veil before Ramadan was over. It happened in the last few days, we were at the mosque, it was the Night of Destiny, and we call it *Lailatu al-Qadr* in Arabic. During that night lots of Muslims spend the whole night at the mosque praying, they make many appeals to God. I decided that after that night nobody

would ever see me again with my hair uncovered. That night was my night and, in fact, I had told all my Muslim sisters: "today I am putting on the veil" and the following day when I left the mosque covered they were all very joyous. I was so emotional, I had no idea how people would react, and, as a matter of fact, I was living with other Christian girls because, being a student, we were all living in the same house. I was so full of emotion because after that I had to go to university, which was a Catholic university, I was even taking four theology courses so I was afraid of how the professors might react, but instead everything went well. I went there to take my final exam and I got the highest possible grade, no one said anything to me. In the end, I graduated with rather high grades. I, thank God, didn't have any problems, I found a job at a tour agency where we sell package vacations. Although I do know other girls that have had difficulties." It is worth underlining that the majority of those interviewed stated that their wearing of the veil has not really created any problems. As Haiam, a 38 year-old mother with four children who works as a cultural mediator, puts it: "I haven't faced too many problems because of my wearing of a veil. I decided to cover myself at 15 years old as a personal choice. Back then, there weren't many women who wore the veil in Egypt. Some books made an impact on me, to be exact, some written regarding the 'hijab by Zaynab al Ghazali, therefore I made my own decision, nobody had asked me to." Sajida, 20 years old, comments: "For me it was just natural putting on the veil, it has never been a problem. There have been many questions, mostly when I'm at university, such as, why do I wear it and about my religion, but no insults. I wear a veil above all because in Islam it's a woman's duty to do so. It's a covering that protects woman, her intimacy and her virginity. The foremost purpose of the veil is to limit the attracting of attention, it's also a form of modesty, and it serves as an element of equality because it conceals hierarchies. The veil is something simple that decreases the differences among women, it's something that reminds us that the rich and the poor are the same. As a symbol the veil is quite modest."

During the interviews, over and over the respondents express their discomfort with the general assumption that a woman's liberty depends on how she dresses and attacked the objectification of women in a consumerist Western society. They often expressed their criticism against stereotypes on veiled Muslim women as victims of men (fathers, husbands, brothers) stressing the fact that veiling is their own choice. According to the respondents 'modesty' is a key concept in defining the roles and ideal behavior of women in Islam, directly in line with the idea of chastity and with the 'peaceful submission to God's will' that is implicit in the term Islam (Silvestri, 2008, p. 21). Also for Romanian Baptist women, "modesty" is a key concept in determining their roles and ideal behavior of women as well. Claudia, a 32 year-old nurse, in fact states: "Women don't have to be provocative, they can put on whatever they want, but they shouldn't wear clothing that shows their intimate parts. A skirt shouldn't come up past the knees and clothes shouldn't be too tight, there's no need to attract a lot of attention. Then, when one comes to church it's necessary to be even more careful regarding your dress, we have to put on a small veil, or a headband as a sign of respect to God. In some traditional churches, it's even obligatory to put on a long gown. At this one, in Centocelle, it's not compulsory." In the church of Centocelle, all the women wear little veils, often transparent, or a headband that leaves their hair uncovered, yet serves its purpose symbolically.

According to the results of the Greek research, religious dress codes seem to be dictated by the prevailing ethno-religious trends that make public expressions of Christianity dominant in the everyday life of Athens, while Islamic expressions are still considered inappropriate for the public space. All of the women who participated in the focus group discussions and those who gave interviews were against the wearing of the hijab in public. With the exception of the region of Western Thrace, in Greece wearing the hijab is still considered as a "strange" and uncivilized practice. In this context, it is more likely that even immigrant women who would like to wear the hijab in public would be reluctant to do so. Particularly in Athens, the limited visibility of Islamic spaces of worship makes the choice to wear clothing linked to Islamic

religious identities even more difficult to make, although in the Greek law, there are no formal restrictions against wearing religious clothing. On the contrary, none of the respondents-male or female- expressed negative views about people of different nationalities who wore the cross. The wearing of the Christian cross was considered by most women as an acceptable practice –even two of the participants in a focus group who declared themselves as atheist said that they liked wearing the cross and had no problem doing so in public. As Dalia, a Bulgarian, said, "We see the cross as a fashion item, rather than as a religious symbol. We like it, big or small". However, it is interesting to note that many women from Bulgaria and Albania recall how astonished they were when they first realized that -as women- they had to wear skirts in order to enter churches or monasteries. Interestingly, it is not so much the fact that as women they had no access to the Orthodox Church unless they conformed to its rules, but the fact that they did not know the rules that made them feel like strangers.

In synthesis, it appears that female immigrants' clothing strategy is highly situational. Bodily performances are the product of interactions with at least three factors: the body politics of the receiving country, the immigrant community's values and women's desires. By wearing or not wearing religious symbols, such as veils and crosses, immigrants asserted themselves in the public sphere along the axes of visibility and, or, invisibility.

8.4. Gender and religion: empowerment and disempowerment

The adoption of religious identities by immigrant women constitutes a landscape of possibility that it is very differently treated in the four case studies. If, in Italy and partially in Greece, it can potentially play a role for the integration of immigrant women into society, enable their participation in public life, and allow the contesting of existing gendered practices in the public; in Turkey and Bulgaria it is not a place for the implementation of women's rights and it can rather become a means of reinforcing gender inequalities and asymmetries within immigrant communities and amongst immigrants themselves and the receiving societies. In the Turkish case, religion (Christianity) is not directly a means toward implementing or increasing women's rights in their negotiations with their families or their bosses. However, it could be said that women's religious faith (Christianity) and their performance of religion in the form of daily prayers and occasional church visits, definitely constitute a source of strength for their everyday lives. The ways they narrate their praying, fasting or feasting refers to re-claiming their agency in a different, if not foreign environment.

From the Bulgarian case study, it is apparent that migration appears to effect significant reduction in immigrant women's social networks and contacts both in the private and in the public sphere. The very limited presence of Muslim immigrant women in the public sphere has social and symbolic dimensions that relate to the limited levels of their social interactions on the one hand and to their visible corporal presence of believers, professing Islam, on the other. The absence of formal and informal associations of female immigrants, the abstention from spending free time in public spaces, the limited visits to mosques, are the outcome of a complex set of factors. Immigrants from Arab countries, still a small number in Bulgaria, form communities with weak infrastructures that follow dispersed accommodation models. The deteriorated financial status of post-1989 immigrants' conditions very modest daily routines, focused on covering family's immediate needs and allowing very limited social interactions outside the family. In addition, the uncertainties of immigrants' status – often in process of legalization, temporary or depending on family reunion, determine the uncertain place of immigrant women in the receiving society. All these explain the marked effort on the part of immigrant women for an unobtrusive presence in the receiving society. Life of immigrant women professing Islam is limited within the family, especially in the first years of migration

and is marked by feelings of isolation and loneliness. Moreover, the prevailing tendency of unemployment and financial dependence on male spouses (only the 50% of the respondents are employed[16]) reinforce traditional models of gender divisions within the family. With regard to the issue of gender division of duties at home – domestic activities such as cooking, cleaning, laundering, washing the dishes, the care for the children and the elderly are perceived as typical female work. Even if, in most of the families, decisions appear to be jointly made, in some of the cases, however, this shared responsibility does not appear genuine. One of the respondents said, "He (the husband) pretends to respect my opinion but he is doing what he decides". Even if, in most families, women have the leading role in the decision-making and appeared to perceive themselves as "the boss" in the family, the man is the one to take the final decision on a given matter. From the research results of the Greek case, it appears that although religion can represent a tool to enable female participation in the public and their empowerment in the private, in Greece it is often used to reinforce gender hierarchy in immigrant ethnic communities, as in the official church. As for religious communities, hierarchies of gender, nation and class assign immigrant women inferior positions. Despite religion being defined as a "woman's issue", there are no examples of women either in Christian or in Islamic contexts, who have acquired positions of leadership in religious communities or forms of emancipation that emanate from immigrant women's engagement with religion in public. However, in the realm of everyday life, religious practices can be seen as embodying multiple tactics for integrating into civic and political life and redefining gender roles. In the Greek context, an important question to address, with respect to religion, is how feminine practices and identities traditionally associated with Orthodox Christianity and the Church may be reinforced or challenged by immigrant women.

Antithetical to the other case studies of WP6 in Italy, the fieldwork results strongly point out that immigrant women are not only active players in the process of the repositioning of religion in the public sphere, but that religion and the attendance of places of worship can empower, rather than emancipate them. If on the one hand, religious communities assert strict social controls and spread values and well-defined guidelines for personal conduct that do not permit great deviations from traditional rule, they can represent an important base for social aggregation and participation in the public sphere. By analyzing the results of the research, it emerges that religion can make women visible and empowered in the public sphere. For example, by going to the mosque, Muslim women occupy a traditionally male space. Historically, in fact, women observed their religion at home. Moreover, by attending the mosque, a traditional male space, they get out of the house and break their seclusion; increase their knowledge in Islamic studies and in the Italian language; participate in the social and political realm (organizing social activities such as parties, dinners, conferences and taking part in political demonstrations); and at the same time they take on roles of leadership in the community. Thus, religious practices can become an element that facilitates friendship and the creation of social networks, while becoming a tool for incorporation/empowerment in community contexts and in the public sector. By negotiating their visibility in the public arena and by affirming their minority religions, immigrant women become part of the picture in Italy developing into fully active and visible citizens. However, immigrant women, Muslims and Baptists as well, do not challenge religious orthodoxy and patriarchal interpretations of the sacred texts. For example, Muslim women of the mosque of Centocelle are very far from Islamic feminists, like Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas and Ziba Mir Hosseini and their progressive interpretations of Islam. In addition, Romanian Baptist women disagree about the idea that a pastor can be a woman, as is the case of the pastor of the Italian church in which they practice their Romanian form of Baptism. Thus, both groups of respondents have conservative ideas concerning gender roles (no really mixed spaces, no

[16] They are employed in the following sectors: immigrant support associations, cosmetics, education, and the service sector.

female iman, no female pastor, modesty in dressing, gender roles in the family) and accept the fact that women are often relegated to mainly the discussion of female-based issues. However, they interact with their religion in a new way. Through their reading of the sacred texts and their involvement in religious activities (proselytism, organization of seminars on women's issues, community dinners, volunteering, political and social activism, participation in interreligious dialogue), they assert themselves in the public life of their community and more generally of the town. By embracing religion and taking part in the life of a religious community, women (Muslim and Romanian Baptists) empower themselves and redefine gender roles in the public domain. The Italian case study actually focused on the relation between women and religion in the public sphere rather than in the private. Nevertheless, according to many interviews with respondents from both groups, we could already assume that in the family, the relationships between men and women are characterized by gender role division and they follow more traditional hierarchies, but this point should be better investigated by new research.
In synthesis, religion can be considered a terrain for the implementation of women's rights and particularly for their empowerment in the public sphere, even if in many cases (see mainly Bulgarian, Greek, and Turkish case studies) it can become a means of reinforcing gender inequalities and asymmetries within immigrant communities and amongst immigrants and the receiving societies.

8.5. Migration, Religion and Youth

With the exception of the Greek research teams, the other three groups (Italian, Bulgarian and Turkish) deal with the issue of youth and religion in their studies. The results show that there are different tendencies, but in large part nowadays youth are increasingly turning to "inherited religion" as their primary source of identity, perceiving it, not as a call to violence, but as a channel through which to integrate themselves into the civic and political life of the country where they live (Levitt, Waters, 2006). Youth are leading the way in terms of religious re-positioning. Many young people are on the front line of this push, as the history of the Albanian Rhadia collected from the Italian research team tells: "In Albania, we are children that speak to our parents about Islam, rather than the other way around. The first to begin talking (about Islam) was my brother whom had spoken with me, and then we talked to our mother about it. Our mother began practicing. She fasts, but she doesn't wear the hijab yet, hopefully she soon will, however, it's her choice and conscience that must to tell her whether or not to hold on to her faith. (My) dad is a little bit farther away, but I hope he too moves closer to his faith."
In many stories from children of immigrants, religion emerges as a very personal, free choice and all-encompassing experience. Religious principles and practices are seen not as blind impositions, but rather as a rational source of personal morality that the individual is free to follow. Thus, religion is both a personal and a social matter. In particular young people experience it as a means to strengthen themselves individually and within the society. Hence, religion becomes the key to earthly happiness, pride of self, expression of both new and multiple identities. Looking closer, a liberal-postmodern image of religion emerges in which everyone is free to build their own identity in relation to religious principles and in harmony with modernity, drawing from several assortments of identity. Immigrants and their descendents create hybrid identities and pose new challenges to the societies in which they live.
From the Italian case study, it is evident that all the respondents, Baptists and Muslims alike, pointed out how they felt totally at ease with their faith and had freely chosen to adhere to it.

In many cases, the youth become very active in religious associations. An example of their activism is the association GMI - Giovani Musulmani d'Italia (Young Muslims of Italy), to which many girls and boys (aged 14 to 30 years) of the mosque of Centocelle belong. Founded in 2001, it has a dual objective: for Muslims it serves to guide, promote, and strengthen the ethical practices of the community, and to non-Muslims it serves to rectify the current negative image of Islam in the West. In both cases, its function is to convey values, visions and sometimes-social policies and to establish European Muslims in the public sphere. The young people from the mosque of Centocelle attend the local chapter of this national organization in Rome. Female teenagers and young women are very active in promoting debates and discussions; they help work on national and international problems as well. Therefore, if on one side of the coin, the youth of GMI learn to promote the teachings of the Koran and of the Prophet, along with how to lead a pious and conscientious life of God by actively participating in Italian society, of which they feel, as they say again and again, 100% a part of; on the other side they are able make their voices felt by speaking out against the Israeli occupation. For example, at the beginning of 2009, many young women from the Roman chapter of GMI and the mosque of Centocelle took part in a protest in solidarity with the people of Palestine against the attacks on Gaza (2008/2009) that were occurring at that time, and in the following months participated in the organization of activities and meals as a display of support for the Palestinians.

On the other hand, second-generation Muslim immigrants analyzed in the Bulgarian case study appear not to be as involved in youth activism as in Italy. They have different attitudes toward traditions and religion in comparison to their parents. Some second-generation immigrants use to pray, abstain from eating pork and speak their parents' language well. Others fully accept the secular ways of life in Bulgaria. According to one of the female respondents, her son does not feel Iraqi but Bulgarian.

It is worth to noticing that second-generation migrants often enter mixed marriages with boys getting married to Bulgarian women, which is allowed by Islam. Some mixed marriages of this type involve conversion to Islam on the part of the Bulgarian wives. Registered also, were also opposite cases of conversions to Christianity by Muslim male immigrants. Such conversions appear to be motivated by traumatic experiences on the part of immigrants such as executions of members of the family on religious grounds. Also recorded, were cases of increased interest in Christianity on the part of second-generation immigrants. The 12-year-old son of one of the respondents – a female Shiite from Iraq - is attracted by Christianity, likes going to the church and "does not like the mosque". His mother, though worried, does not discourage his interest – a decision that was eased by the fact that her husband was not used to visiting the mosque in Bulgaria, neither in Turkey nor in his home country. He however, was used to occasionally visiting the Church. The boy does not want to study the Koran or to pray in the Muslim manner, but he is interested in the Bible, having one of his own given to him as a present by a Christian Iraqi immigrant woman. They boy once dreamed that his mother was giving him a cross while he was in the park. His family interpretation of this dream is that someday he might decide to convert to Christianity.

Moreover, female immigrants report worrying that their children in Bulgaria see a different way of life (mostly along the gender issue: freedom of communication with the other gender, no strict rules and discipline with regard to clothing and class behavior), especially when they study in Bulgarian schools. They worry that if some day their children have to return to their home countries they will not be able to adapt to the way of life there. One of the strategies to avoid the potential conflict between traditional values and ways of behavior of the home country and these of the secular receiving country is to send their children to the private Arab schools in Sofia. Besides the basic subjects, taught in Arabic, these schools provide also training on the Koran. As these schools are private, only immigrants who can afford to pay the tuition send their children there.

From the Turkish case study, it becomes clear that immigrant women's children who stay in their home country are almost always baptized and keep their Christian faith. Considering that most of time the grandparents are taking care of these children in the home country of the respondents, and the elderly have a tendency to be more religious, it is to be expected that these children grow up in a more Christian environment and remain in the Christian faith. While children who are born in Turkey to a Muslim-Turkish husband usually become Muslim. This situation is the result of the confirmation of the father's authority in the family from one side, and of the confirmation of Muslim religious identities, which serve as a tool for facilitating the integration of children into Turkish society from the other side. The women married with Turkish men interviewed claim that if the children are raised as Muslims, they would feel more comfortable and fit into Turkish society where they may continue to live, and that this is good for their future social prospects.

In synthesis, nowadays youth turn to religion as a source of individual and collective identity, to which they feel free to adhere to or not. They consider it a tool to integrate themselves into the public sphere, rather than a form of "ghetto-ization".

9. Conclusion. Polyphony of voices

Results of the four researches of WP6 point out that national historical political context affect the relationship between gender, religion and migration. Despite globalization, we cannot talk about a unique European model reproduced everywhere in Europe and particularly in the four southeastern countries analyzed. Secularism, dominant majority religions of the receiving countries (such as Catholicism, Islam and Orthodox Christianity), and migration history affect the way in which women (and men) live their religiosity in the public and in the private sphere. The relationship between gender, religion and liberal secularism is particularly diverse and depends on the local context. The same notions of secularism, as well as religion, should also be contextualized. For one thing, there is no secularism or religion in general, but French laicite or Italian fragments of secularism[17][18], as interpretations of Islam and Christianity. For another, the exclusive association of religion with Islam obscures the analysis of the possible transformations that entrench different religions in Europe, and, in particular, the different sects of Christianity, which are currently undergoing multiple transformations influenced by immigrant movements in specific contexts (Jenkins, 2007). In Europe, the debate on the incompatibility, or the presumed incompatibility, between women's rights, European identity/culture and Islamic values obscures other themes regarding migrantion and religion. This transnational study attempted to redefine the terms of debate by observing similarities and differences in the process of the public transformation of minorities' religions, and to challenge the idea that Islam is more "public", or more "challenging" than other religions. Even though the mass media and some academic research, in particular after September 11th, focus on Islam as if it were the only religion repositioning itself in the public sphere, there are other religions, minor religions as well as major ones that are involved in this process. Particularly, the results of the Italian and the Greek case studies point out that the repositioning of religion within the weak secular context of Italian and Greek society is not

17 For the notion of "fragments of secularism", see Rubah Salih, "Muslim women, fragmented secularism and the construction of interconnected 'publics' in Italy" *Social Anthropology* 17, no. 4 (2009): 409-423.

18 See the discussion in Ole Weaver and Carsten Bagge Laustsen, "In Defence of Religion: Sacred Referent Objects for Securitisation", in *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile*, eds. Pavlos Hatzopoulos and Fabio Petito (New York: Palgrave, 2003).

occurring just among Muslims. Catholicism and the Greek Orthodox Church have never ceased to play an open role in the public and political spheres and continue to shape people's political culture. It is well known that nowadays the Vatican is particularly active in influencing people's daily behavior, and further, holding sway among political parties' agendas manifesting as a strong opposition to abortion, reproductive technologies and civil unions (Salih, 2009). On the other hand, the Bulgarian, Turkish and Greek case studies show that immigrant people (Muslims and Christians as well) are open to communicating the with local majority religions. Visits to local religious places of worship and incorporation of some local (Christian or Muslim) holidays, are practices that serve to confirm and reinforce immigrants' religiosity in a receiving society where the official and dominant religion is different from their own. Immigrants' participation in practices, rites of the majority religion of the receiving country appears to be serving as a strategy of negotiating one's accommodation into the receiving society.

On another hand, the Turkish research indicates that the story of Christian immigrant women in Turkey does not pose challenges similar to the challenges identified for Muslims in Europe as posing challenges to the liberal/secular societies in Europe. The story of Christian immigrants in Turkey is substantially different than the story of Muslim immigrants in Europe. Christian immigrants in Turkey, in a predominantly pious Muslim society with a secular state tradition, are not presented as posing a threat to Turkish identity or society. To the contrary, in the recent years the rising piousness in Turkey indeed tries to justify the Islamic religiosity by claiming rights for all kinds of religious beliefs denominations (Christianity, Judaism etc), including, but not limited to Islam. A respondent, Nadya, tells: "For example, when I search for a job, I immediately say that I am a Christian, a Protestant. They employ me more easily. I ask them why this is so. They say, whoever is afraid of God, will not do bad, either Christian or Muslim. This is a good thing."

Finally, although several differences emerge from the results of the different case studies, it emerges that in today's big picture, by turning to religion, women of different faiths claim a voice in a fragmented and multi-vocal post-modern and post-colonial era. Religious revivalisms across Europe epitomize this new era and have come to engender new competitive demands for redefining moral projects and the idea of the common good (Levitt, 2002, 2004).

10. Main results

The main results of the fieldwork are the following:

First, in XXI century we can observe that immigrant women are leading actors in the repositioning of religion (Islam and Christianity as well). When confronting the difficulties of Diaspora (loneliness, lack of money, difficult access to the public sphere of the receiving country that is very often religious in nature even in secular environment), many women discover religion as a source of strength and new individual and collective identity. Their religiosity and their practices show that religion is a fluid and contested conceptual milieu, a result of the multiple meanings that people bestow on religious beliefs and practices. Thus, religiosity appears to be a dynamic social practice determined by collective and personal experiences rather than a static identity determined by specific ethnic, racial, national and cultural traits.

Second, Islam does not pose exceptional challenges to Europe. Nowadays, all religions are going through a process of realignment in the private and public realm, which is producing a process of reinvention of the religion determined at least by 3 factors: immigrants' desires and backgrounds; receiving country's majority religion and religious and immigrant policies; power relations inside immigrant communities, families and receiving society.

Third, the concept of religious syncretism epitomizes the actual everyday experiences of many immigrant women (Muslims and Christians) in Greece, Turkey, and in Bulgaria. In Diaspora, they usually experience religious syncretism through engaging in different Islamic and Christian religious practices, such as celebrating holidays or visiting the places of worship of the receiving country. Through this process, immigrant women emphasize similarities between their belief systems and those of the receiving society as opposed to emphasizing the differences. This phenomenon of adopting and accommodating can be interpreted as resulting from immigrant women's backgrounds on the one hand, and as their desire/need to have easier access to the public life of the receiving country on the other. Obviously the respondents of the Greek and Turkish case studies are come from predominantly non-religious backgrounds, therefore their acceptance and adaptation to different forms of religiosities can be interpreted in that respect: as a result of their backgrounds and their current relationships with religion. The phenomenon of hybrid religiosities and practices is justified by many immigrant women selves with the statement that they do not differentiate among monotheistic religions as they practice, worship and/or pray in a transnational manner.
Fourth, despite the fact that religious communities are often highly genderdized, reproducing clear cut gender divisions and gender hierarchy, religion (particularly as the Italian case study points out) can be a space of empowerment and a way to enter the public sphere of the receiving country. Religion and attendance of places of worship are not necessarily a tool of exclusion, but can be a tool toward gaining citizenship.

11. Potential impact and use of the research

The importance of such a study for European policies is related to the lack of studies on the relationship between gender, migration and religion in countries, such as Italy, Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey that, located on the transit routes between Asia, Africa and the rest of Europe, have become entry gates to the European Union. Thus, the present research could have a major impact on European policies and national policies because it deals with a new field- migration, gender and religion- that is vulnerable to political manipulation.
By challenging the notion of the exceptionality of Islam, this work might be useful in showing a way forward and as background material to those researchers and policy makers who will strive to approach the dynamics among religion, migration, and gender in Europe without silencing the multidimensionality and diversity of religions. This research complicates the mono-dimensionality of the debates on religion and migration from one side, and shows that religions are also what immigrants make of them, from the other side. Thus, religion has to be treated as fluid and as a contested conceptual environment, seeking multiple meanings that immigrants bestow on religious beliefs and practices. Research results suggest, in fact, that religion should not to be thrown into pre-fixed conceptual and political categories and that there is a real need to re-think the relationship between religion and society, religion and gender, religion and migration; and also to challenge most of the conventional findings of mainstream literature. Moreover, it should be taken into account that the presence of places of worship can support immigrant women participation in the public sphere, empowering them through the providing of language courses, involvement in social activities, building of social networks and friendships. Therefore, the strong aversion to the construction of mosques in Europe should be rethought also in light of the present study results. Moreover, more broadl work carried out demonstrates that Islam cannot be stigmatized as an enemy religion coming from abroad, but should be considered part of the European social, cultural and religious identity from the past as in the present. It is a fact that after an important Islamic presence in the Middle Ages, and since the end of the 1980's, Europe, in the beginning of the 1990's is

again experiencing the presence of Islam. Moreover, as Stefano Allievi emphasized it, in the current years we are facing to an important transformation from an Islam in Europe to an Islam of Europe that is rapidly becoming a 'European Islam' with its own characteristics of transnationalism and rooting in the UE societies. This Islam of Europe is not similar to the interrelation with the European context, neither does it deny a dialogue with the other minority and majority religions of the continent. Nowadays Islam, in fact, develops itself in Europe through processes of affirmation of its values, but also through an integration and syncretism with the local and persistent reality. The current Islamophobia that affects many western countries is not at all justified by the approach of most Muslim men and women towards Europe. Many Muslims of Europe feel loyal and a belonging to the place where they live, raise their children, and where, more and more, they are born. In everyday life, European Muslims experience multiple identities and belongings to Europe, to Islam, and to the local contexts in which they actually live.
Briefly, the research carried out suggests approaching the topic of religion in migration through the lens of the following perspective:

- taking religious identities seriously in the analysis of migration and in the orientation of immigration policies;
- not considering Islam as an exceptional challenge to the European context;
- paying attention to the role that religion can play in immigrant women's lives for the effective social participation of themselves, their families and their communities in the public sphere.

Finally, the findings of the four studies carried out indicate that the topic of gender, migration and religion requires further investigation as the results of the research open new grounds of debate and understanding of migrations for both academic literature and policy decisions.

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