

# Home, mobility and translocality: Muslim identities between the post-Soviet space, Europe and Turkey

*24-25 October 2019*

*Institute for Social Policy and School of Sociology, HSE University, Moscow*

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**Location: Myasnitskaya 11 (328a), Myasnitskaya 20 (101, 228)**

## *Thursday*

Location: Myasnitskaya 11, Room 328a

10.00 Welcome words and introduction to the workshop: *Lili Di Puppò & Dmitry Oparin*

10.30 **(Im)materiality, Muslim space and belonging**

- Katarzyna Puzon (Humboldt University): *Muslim heritage on stage in Berlin*

- Dmitry Oparin (HSE University): *Possession and exorcism in the Muslim migrant context*

- Jesko Schmoller (Perm State University / Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin): *A notion of paradise: Manifesting another reality by using fragrance in Muslim-minority Russia*

13.00 Lunch break

**14.30 Everyday observance, Islamic temporality and landscapes**

- Iwona Kaliszewska (University of Warsaw): *Halal landscapes of Daghestani entrepreneurs*

- Marie-Laure Boursin (Aix en Provence University): *From ordinary Muslim to everyday Islam: the prayer time, between practice and experimentation*

16.10 Coffee break

Location: Myasnitskaya 20, Room 228

18.00 Fabio Vicini (Istanbul 29 Mayis University / School of Religious Studies, McGill University): *Muslim life between normative orders and ordinary concerns: A perspective from Turkey* (HSE Seminar Series in Sociology)

20.00 Dinner

***Friday***

Location: Myasnitskaya 20, Room 101

**10.00 Border and boundary crossing and the making of Muslim places and selves**

Eva Rogaar (Illinois University): *"We (re)turn to Islam and revive our country": "New" Muslims and the search for morality, spirituality and community in Post-Soviet Russia*

Manja Stephan-Emmrich (Humboldt University): *Making Dubai a Muslim place: Imagination, work, and piety*

Ahmet Yarlikapov (MGIMO): *The role of domestic and transnational networks in the formation of the Islamic community of Novy Urengoy in Western Siberia*

12.30 Lunch break

14.00 **Memory, presence/absence and (re)creation of Muslim space**

- Jeremy F. Walton (Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity): *Laminated memories at the Ferhadija Mosque*

- Lili Di Puppò (HSE University): *Memory and revival: Rediscovering Sufism in Russia's Volga-Ural region*

15:40 **Final discussion: What is (non) specific about Islam in the post-Soviet space?**

17:10 *Guided excursion to the Moscow Cathedral Mosque*

20:00 Dinner

## Abstracts

### Workshop concept

The workshop aims to bring together post-Soviet, European and Turkish Muslim experiences of home, mobility and translocality to explore commonalities and differences between these regions through the lens of space and belonging. By drawing comparisons, the workshop also seeks to interrogate current theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of Muslim identities. The post-Soviet space, Europe and Turkey represent areas characterised by various trajectories and legacies of modernisation, secularism and state-Muslim relations, which have affected the way in which Islam is lived and viewed in these regions. In all these areas, Muslims live and reflect on their identities in relation to boundaries that are constantly negotiated and redrawn: public/private, secular/religious, local/transnational.

A central concern that the workshop wants to address is the tension between a “lived” Islam and efforts to develop discursive conceptions of a normative Islam. How do Muslims live their religion “in the shadow” of normative discourses about Islam? How does the legacy of rational, secularist ideals influence the way in which Muslims live and practice their religion? How are contemporary theoretical approaches to Islam, in particular the debate about everyday Islam, transposed in the particular post-Soviet context? Do we need new approaches to approach Muslim experiences in this region?

Another key area of exploration and comparison is the question of the local and transnational dimension of Islam. The workshop aims to investigate the formation or recreation of a Muslim space between the post-Soviet space, Europe and Turkey after the end of the Soviet Union in the form of connections and linkages established by networks of Muslim migrants, students and traders and religious organisations. What experiences and conceptions of regional Muslim identities emerge in these networks, for example in relation to the notion of a “Eurasian Islam”? How do post-Soviet Muslims relate to their religion while travelling for knowledge in countries such as Turkey or during migration experiences in European countries? How do Muslim transnational networks challenge or nurture the idea of a locally defined Islam? Finally, we aim to discuss the place of Islam in the current dichotomy between a “liberal West” and a “conservative East” (within the discussion about Russia and the West) and the way Muslims experience, react to and challenge this conceptual boundary.

**Marie-Laure Boursin** (Aix en Provence University): *From ordinary Muslim to everyday Islam: the prayer time, between practice and experimentation*

My purpose is to explore the variations in how Muslims in France perform the canonical Islamic prayer, *ṣalât*. I will show how different prayer contexts –individual *versus* collective, at home or in a mosque– affect daily religious observance. The focus will be in particular placed on how prayer is sometimes interrupted or suspended. I will underline how this

approach of ordinary prayer can reveal worshipers' fluctuating beliefs. I will confront this view with the contemporary debate of "everyday Islam" in postcolonial studies *versus* post-soviet context.

**Lili Di Puppo** (HSE University): *Memory and revival: Rediscovering Sufism in Russia's Volga-Ural region*

The work of rediscovering Sufism in the Volga-Ural region in Russia takes various shapes as it involves different ways in which memory and acts of remembrance are mobilised in order to bring the Sufi past into the present. We can distinguish between the representation of Sufism on a more official level and the work of restoring continuity in Sufi lineages in which Sufi brotherhoods are currently engaged. The two levels are also intermingled to the extent that certain Muslim officials are themselves Sufi *murids*. I will analyse the more official work of representing and reviving a past Sufi legacy, for example in the readings that are held every year in the city of Troitsk, at the border with Kazakhstan, in honour of the past Naqshbandi Sufi sheikh Zaynulla Rasulev. I will also discuss the work of revival of Sufi brotherhoods and of Muslim sacred sites that takes place in the region and how it connects, in the case of Bashkir *murids*, with the rediscovery of a local ethnic identity. Different practices of remembering emerge in the various ways in which local Muslims approach a Sufi past. On the official level, acts of remembrance may mean incorporating past Sufi figures in the image of a "traditional Islam", an approved form of Islam. On the level of the revival of Sufi practices among certain Bashkir Sufi *murids*, acts of remembrance also serve to restore not only Sufi lineages, but also Bashkir clan lineages and the connection with ancestors. In this latter case, remembrance is not about immobilising the past in a particular representation, but it is about recreating a vital connection with ancestors in which time is eventually transcended.

**Iwona Kaliszewska** (University of Warsaw): *Halal landscapes of Daghestani entrepreneurs*

Recently, it has become increasingly popular for small entrepreneurs in Daghestan to introduce elements of Islamic economy into their everyday economic practices. In my paper I take a closer look at the everyday life and the ways of conducting business of Daghestani small entrepreneurs in Makhachkala, the capital of the Republic of Daghestan in the Russian Federation. In order to scrutinize the relationship between everyday religious observance, space and economic practices within a broader socio-political context I introduce a term "halal landscape". "Halal landscapes" emerge through the gradual infusion of Islam in the sphere of economic activities, they form "Islam inspired" social spaces where economic and moral dimensions are interwoven with formal and informal norms and regulations, where social life has its own materiality and temporality and where human and non-human actors interact. In my paper I will look into "halal landscapes" of Daghestani entrepreneurs in Makhachkala and demonstrate the analytical potential of the term to study social and cultural

nature of Islam inspired economic activities and spaces. I will show that avoidance of deception and usury, promotion of honesty and observance in the workplace, payment of *zakat* as well as knowledge about these issues make up important elements of *halal* landscapes of Daghestani entrepreneurs. I will also show that “halal landscapes” have their own temporality and materiality. My analysis is based on the results of multi-temporal fieldwork conducted in Makhachkala between 2017-2019 as well as earlier field observations gathered during regular visits between 2004-2016.

**Dmitry Oparin** (HSE University): *Possession and exorcism in the Muslim migrant context*

This presentation is based on fieldwork carried out in Moscow among Muslim migrants. The research is focused on the practices of ritual healing and expelling *djinn* in the context of migration and urban post-secular environment. I am interested in self-reflection and introspection of all the participants of the treatment – a mullah, his patients, their relatives, and even opponents to these Muslim practices. In this study, it is not my intention to delve too deeply into the analysis of what possession is or determine its causes, but rather to look at specific situations from my field work through the lenses of modernity, morality, authority and precarity, in order to attempt to present the experience of possession and my informants’ struggle against it in all its richness and complexity.

**Katarzyna Puzon** (Humboldt University): *Muslim heritage on stage in Berlin*

This paper examines ways in which young Muslims negotiate Islam's place in Germany, and how this materialises in Berlin. In doing so, I focus on the practices of two initiatives: i,Slam, a collective of young Muslim artists, and Junge Islam Konferenz, an open forum for dialogue. Both groups consider *Vielfalt* (diversity) to be a guiding motto of their activities that I call ‘re-orienting practices’ with respect to Muslims and Islam as such. This ‘re-orientation’ corresponds with the idea of making a difference understood as leading to changing things, as well as challenging the binary reproduced of marked minority groups and an ‘unmarked We’ – the majority (Amir-Moazami 2019). I reflect on processes and practices that have shaped those young Muslims' understandings of what constitutes their belonging to Germany, and to Europe. What does this belonging entail and what is meant by those who state it? What are other forms of belonging – and non-belonging – that one can see in practice more broadly, those fostered either by the producers or those being represented, especially as part of heritage developments and difference-making? I look at these through the lens of translocality that allows for a compelling examination of the interplay between the local, the national and the global, as well as multiple belongings in relation to space, time, and scale. This primarily includes a multi-scalar take on questions of home, heritage-making and Islam within the city of Berlin.

**Eva Rogaar** (Illinois University): *“We (re)turn to Islam and revive our country”*: *“New” Muslims and the search for morality, spirituality and community in Post-Soviet Russia*

After decades of official “state atheism” during the Soviet period, Perestroika and the collapse of the Soviet Union brought new political and religious freedoms. In the decades that followed, a period when rapid economic, political and social developments increasingly prompted individuals to look to religion for stability and guidance, Islam was presented by the numerous Muslim groups that emerged as a religion and way of life that could spiritually and morally uplift both individuals and Russian society as a whole, and that was uniquely capable of addressing the most acute concerns and needs of the time. The first part of this paper explores how Muslim publications, a popular and widespread genre especially between the 1980s and 2000s, (re)introduced both “ethnic Muslims” and ethnic Russians to Islam, and presented Islam and the example of Muslim countries as an answer to pressing personal and societal questions. The second part of the paper, based on ethnographic work and textual sources, examines similar questions of morality and spirituality, while focusing on the more differentiated position of (Russian) converts to Islam in Russian society and the broader Muslim community in Russia since the 2000s, their transnational outlook, and their position in debates around “traditional” and “non-traditional” Islam.

**Jesko Schmoller** (Perm State University / Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin): *A notion of paradise: Manifesting another reality by using fragrance in Muslim-minority Russia*

This paper is devoted to the study of fragrance (*misk* or *attar*) in Muslim communities in the Russian Federation. It is being professionally sold at booths during festive events or expositions and can constitute a small business for young Muslims offering it to costumers after the Friday prayer. Even during *suhbat* ceremonies with the Sufi master (a mystical technique involving dialogue), small bottles of *misk* might be circulating. Drawing upon empirical material collected in the Urals region of Russia since 2015, the paper is especially informed by Daniel Miller’s idea about the transformative potential of material objects. Curiously, fragrance is at once an invisible substance but, by appealing to our senses, also a forceful tool to shape the physical environment. I wish to engage first and foremost with the concept of translocality, but instead of looking into the production, distribution, sale or advertising of *misk* I will concentrate on its effects on the user. When *misk* and other objects come into play as part of contemplative techniques and pilgrimage practices, they can help to expand the confined limits of a Western understanding of time and space and thus radically rupture local boundaries. Muslims may suddenly realise themselves as suspended in animate space, looking out into a personalised universe, where interactions between humans and not-altogether-humans take place and a clear separation of present and past, of here and now and hereafter becomes impossible to achieve.

**Manja Stephan-Emmrich** (Humboldt University): *Making Dubai a Muslim place: Imagination, work, and piety*

This lecture addresses the dynamic interplay of Muslim mobility, imagination and placemaking in the migratory experience of Tajiks in Dubai. It shows how through different forms of work (trade and tourism business, emotion, and imagination work) Tajik men and women make a place in Dubai's cosmopolitan economic, social and religious urban spaces. Adopting a translocality perspective, the lecture focuses on the role travelling religious ideas and objects play in mobilizing for and experiencing Dubai as part of desirable Islamic lifestyle projects. Following urban narratives of modernity and progress, the lecture also illustrates how Tajik migrants refashion their Muslim selves through constructing, mediating, and marketing the 'idea' of Dubai as an ideal place that serves Muslim middle class dreams and desires.

**Fabio Vicini** (Istanbul 29 Mayıs University / School of Religious Studies, McGill University): *Muslim life between normative orders and ordinary concerns: A perspective from Turkey*

This paper explores how contemporary members of the *Suffa* community, one of the many that compose the Nur movement in Turkey, think of themselves as committed Muslims as they juggle modern discourses about science, the importance of modern education, and the meaning of human responsibility in society. By illustrating how these people make use of the dichotomy of Muslims by imitation vs true and aware Muslims, it deflects the attention from the opposition between normative discourses and everyday Islam that is at the center of current debates in the anthropology of Islam. In a more straightforward fashion, the paper points to the "productive encounters" between these two levels of analysis. Namely, it focuses on how my interlocutors largely assimilated normative discourses about modernity and embraced a way of living a committed Muslim life that, in their eyes, is at pace with the times. Yet, at the same time, the paper reveals that this encounter has taken place mainly at the discursive level, whereas the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying my interlocutors' reading practices of key religious texts follow long-standing trajectories of the Islamic tradition. The exploration of this case will offer a perspective from which to look at similar dynamics taking place in post-Soviet Russia, as shown by the papers gathered in a special issue recently edited by Di Puppò and Schmoller (2020). For instance, some of the papers demonstrate that Muslims rely on dominant/normative categories such as "traditional Islam" either as a way to define themselves as "moderate" in opposition to what are perceived as more radical currents in Islam, or in order to reject such a label in the name of adhering to a purer way of living a committed religious life in a reformist fashion. In either case, normative discourses are appropriate and re-signified in ways that serve the purposes of Muslim actors.



**Jeremy F. Walton** (Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity):  
*Laminated memories at the Ferhadija Mosque*

Across the former Ottoman territories of southeast Europe, previously neglected structures and sites associated with the Ottoman past have witnessed remarkable forms of revitalization in recent years. Frequently, but not exclusively, spearheaded by Turkish state agencies, the renovation of mosques, caravanserais, bridges, tombs, and other Ottoman-era architecture and infrastructure has toed a fine ideological line between restorative nostalgia for Islamic imperial might and a romanticized myth of Tanzimat-era Ottoman multiculturalism. Moreover, this dynamic pairing of imperialism and multiculturalism is inevitably tempered by nested regional, national, and local imperatives and idiosyncrasies. With this broad context as a backdrop, in this essay I examine one provocative, recently-renovated site of Neo-Ottoman memory: the Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka, the capital of the independent Serb Republic (*Republika Srpska*) in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As the most publicly-visible site of Islam in Banja Luka, the Ferhadija Mosque—is a key anchor for Muslims residing within *Republika Srpska*. My perspective on the mosque in the present focuses on three modes of collective memory that are “laminated” onto one another within its space: memories of the war of the 1990s and the violence that the Muslim community of Banja Luka suffered; memories of Ottoman rule in Bosnia and the Balkans; and, most abstractly, the space of the mosque in general as a site of embodied memory in relationship to the precedents of Islam as a discursive tradition.

**Ahmet Yarlikapov** (MGIMO): *The role of domestic and transnational networks in the formation of the Islamic community of Novy Urengoy in Western Siberia*

I will talk about the integration of the relatively young Muslim community of Novy Urengoy (Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug in Western Siberia) into local and transnational Islamic networks. The structure of the muftiate legitimizes and covers the multi-layered community, which, on the one hand, formally belongs to the organizational structure of the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Talgat Tajutdin, and on the other hand, is the subject of rivalry between two other serious internal players and networks – Kadyrov’s network and the Dagestani network. The Muslims of Novy Urengoy themselves are rather integrated in complex ways into various transnational networks, both purely Islamic (for example, the Salafi networks of supporters of Sheikh Salman al-Aud) and Islamic-ethnic (for example, Nogai networks that unite communities in Russia, Turkey, Norway, the Netherlands and Germany). All these diverse groups are united around the mosque of Novy Urengoy, but at the same time they are grouped around their leaders. On the example of the Islamic community of Novy Urengoy, we see that present realities raise the question of the shift to new approaches and research methods, the need for a transition to integrated research, including cross-border research.