Religion, homosexuality, and contested social orders in the Netherlands, the western Balkans, and Sweden

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The emergence and circulation of polarized stances on religion and homosexuality in public discourse has recently become a subject of research in various disciplines, such as theology, sociology of religion, cultural anthropology, law and human rights studies, and gender and queer studies. Large-scale migration, globalization and changes in the formation of gender, kinship and other social identities have each been identified as factors contributing to the establishment and solidification of these tensions (Rodriguez and Ouellette 2000, Gudorf 2001, Schachter 2004, Peek 2005, Schnoor 2006). Postsecular societies consistently show traces of ingrained theological and moral framings of sexuality, religious authority, and belonging (Yip 2002, Starks and Robinson 2009, Henrickson 2009, Pitt 2010, Rohy 2012).

In a variety of contexts throughout Europe, the oppositional pairing of religion and homosexuality figures prominently in contemporary public debates. These oppositional pairings reflect crises within and clashes between religious and national collective identities in how they approach LGBT people and LGBT rights. Traditional religious constructions of homosexuality have repeatedly clashed with individual sexual orientation, which has become more and more publicly visible, and gained social acceptance in Western societies (Korte et al. 1999, Ganzevoort et al. 2011). These clashes between "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991) reflect changing public perceptions of sexualities, while simultaneously indicating shifting boundaries between "the secular" and "the religious" as well as between public and private spheres (Vattimo 1999, Woodhead 2008, Bracke 2008, Habermas 2008). Conservative religious groups have made the struggle against equal acceptance of homosexuality an important identity marker (Bates 2004, Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2004, Cobb 2006, Viefhues-Bailey 2010). Conversely, LGBT rights movements have traditionally critiqued monotheistic religions for the latter's "patriarchal" and "homophobic" attitudes, while positioning themselves as

secular (Braidotti 2008, Göle 2010). This clash between sexual and religious belonging intersects, however, with struggles over cultural and national belonging. For instance, as we will show in more detail in this chapter, right wing nationalists in the Western Balkans claim that acceptance of sexual diversity is not compatible with their nation's identity, while their "counterparts" in the Netherlands call for a "defence of homosexuals" against "religious fundamentalist attacks" and claim the acceptance of sexual diversity to be essential for Dutch citizenship ("homonationalism" – cf. Puar 2007, 2011, Hurenkamp et al. 2012). In these ways, the oppositional pairing of religion and homosexuality is an important discursive strategy in conflicts over collective identity.

This chapter focuses on the strategic and ideological assumptions, interests and effects of present-day constructions of sexual orientation, religion and nationalism in public arenas. Our approach will be an explorative appraisal and critical analysis of the discursive formations of oppositional pairings of religion and homosexuality in contemporary public expressions in three different parts of Europe: the Netherlands, the Western Balkans, and Sweden. These three parts are, of course, in no way representative of Europe as a whole, let alone with respect to the social acceptance of homosexuality. Whereas the overwhelming majority of Dutch and Swedish citizens hold the view that homosexuality is a legitimate way of life, this is minority view in the Balkans. To some extent, then, our findings will be in line with Inglehart and Norris (2003), who conclude from the World Values Survey that the cultural fault line between East and West is not about attitudes to democracy – as Samuel Huntington famously argued – but about attitudes to gender relations and sexuality. Our inquiry, however, is not so much about the private views or convictions of ordinary citizens as about public debate. In this respect, there are also significant differences between the Netherlands and Sweden. Our focus will be on those instances in which debates come to an "eruption." The first two sections provide a more general discussion of public discourse in the Netherlands and the Western Balkans to display the patterns. The third section provides a more in-depth discussion of a particular debate in Sweden.

Our comparative exploration aims to understand better crucial features of divergent configurations of religion and homosexuality. Which narrative constructs and figures of speech are invoked? How are constructions of both religion and homosexuality embedded in particular national and cultural contexts? What conceptions of not only sexual orientation and religion, but also of citizenship and other social identities, emerge? (Puar 2007, Butler 2008, Haritaworn et al. 2008, Mepschen et al. 2010, Dudink 2011). Our examples demonstrate not only shifts and tensions in changing public perceptions of sexuality, but also new positions around the place, role and rights of religion in the social order.

The Netherlands: "The Tolerants' Intolerance"?

Well into the twentieth century, the social identities of Dutch citizens were primarily marked by their religious or ideological affiliations (segmented pluralism alias "pillarization"), whereas sexual orientation was privatized to the degree of invisibility. The late 1960s, however, saw both the demise of the aforementioned religious regime (Van Rooden 2004, McLeod 2007) and the rise of an increasingly vocal and visible gay and lesbian movement (Keuzenkamp and Bos 2007). While Section 147 part 1 of the Dutch Penal Code, introduced in 1931, which prohibited offending religious feelings by "scornful blasphemy" was removed in 2013 for being obsolete, the prohibition of publicly insulting minority groups (Section 137c, introduced in 1934) was tightened up. Since 1971 it explicitly mentions both religion and race, and since 1992 also disability and sexual orientation (Bos 2007).

In present-day Dutch society the acceptance of sexual diversity has come to serve as a litmus test of "tolerance," hence a criterion of good citizenship (Mepschen et al. 2010, Dudink 2011, Hurenkamp et al. 2012), whereas the expression of religious identity is increasingly relegated to the private sphere – yet without being exempted from public scrutiny. In May 2001 a televised interview with a Moroccan-Dutch imam, who described homosexuality as an infectious disease and a threat to society, sparked a heated debate on Muslims' alleged lack of integration (Hekma 2002). This well-known scandal – months before 9/11 – testifies not only to "Islamophobia," (sexual) nationalism (Butler 2008, Dudink 2011) or the culturalization of citizenship (Mepschen et al. 2010, Hurenkamp et al. 2012) but also to changes in the societal allocation of institutionalized religion.

Besides immigrant religions (notably Islam), "indigenous" denominations have also repeatedly been the object of public indignation about their ways of dealing with homosexuality (cf. Peters and Vellenga 2007). In 2010, for example, public outcry arose against a Roman Catholic parish priest who refused communion to a local Prince Carnival, because of the latter's homosexuality. With the feast of Carnival traditionally blurring the religious/secular distinction, the priest's decision made headlines, and prompted liberal Catholics, secular LGBT activists, and even politicians to protest during mass. Likewise, statements of the Pope on heterosexual marriage and the family repeatedly hit the headlines. Directly after Benedict XVI had announced his retirement, Dutch media focused on whether the future Pope would be more accepting of homosexuality. The heated responses from both LGBT-activists and mainstream politicians and opinion leaders are remarkable in a country where churches are often deemed of marginal importance (cf. Davie 2006).

Public debate on the social acceptance of homosexuality in the Netherlands has tended to highlight religion as stumbling block. To some extent, this is understandable, since surveys show a strong correlation between citizens'

level of religiosity and "homonegativity" (Kuyper et al. 2013). However, it does not acknowledge the important contributions to the social acceptance of homosexuality made by Catholic and mainline Protestant pastors in the 1960s (Bos 2010). Neither does it reflect the divergence of religious positions regarding homosexuality that has grown ever since, with some Christian denominations (notably liberal Protestants) taking pride in being listed as *Coming Out Churches* (Elhorst and Mikkers 2011), and others highlighting their *dis*approval of homosexuality as a religious identity marker. Both for "progressive" and for "conservative" denominations, normative views of sexual diversity have gained an importance that equals the issues of doctrine and church order that divided Western Christianity from the era of confessionalisation until the 1960s (MacCulloch 2003, Woodhead 2004, McLeod 2007).

Notwithstanding their claim to maintaining crucial elements of the nation's or the continent's cultural heritage, conservative Protestants (and even conservative Catholics) in the Netherlands increasingly present themselves as minority groups (Oomen 2011). While the number of Christians has declined, the remaining faithful seem unwilling to accept the "secularist truce" – "the secularist contract that guarantees religious freedom, yet bans religion from the public sphere by relegating it to the private realm" (Achterberg et al. 2009: 696-97). In response to the secularist equation of any disapproval of homosexuality to homophobia, conservative religious groups accuse secular politicians and LGBT activists of "Islamophobia" or "Christianophobia," – and of abandoning their acclaimed tolerance. The latter, in turn, notwithstanding their insistence on keeping church and state apart, often accuse religious conservatives of lacking charity (cf. Cobb 2006, Davie 2006).

Neither of these recriminations is new – in the early nineteenth century, conservative Protestants complained about "the tolerants' intolerance" (Bos 2010) – but their recurrence indicates how much contemporary public debate on homosexuality and religion is propelled by symbolic exchanges. It tends to gravitate around issues whose practical relevance seems doubtful. One such issue is the question whether all marriage registrars should be willing to serve same-sex couples, or – if they themselves have objections of conscience – should be allowed to let a local colleague stand in. A second issue has been an initiative to have sexual diversity education included in the main national learning objectives for secondary schools. Although this affects all schools, national media have primarily focussed on Christian secondary schools, and were quick to attribute the refusal of the then Minister of Education to expand the number of learning objectives to her being a member of the Christian Democratic Party, which tends to protect faith-based schools (cf. Mellink 2013). The present Dutch government, in which confessional parties do not have a voice, has resolutely decided on both issues, but it is unlikely that this will mean their disappearance from the public arena.

Finding one's way in this principles-ridden field calls for in-depth historical research, bringing to light contingencies and discontinuities, and providing

insight into the ways in which oppositional pairings have been transferred from one arena of contestation (e.g., liberal Protestants vs. conservative Protestants) to another (e.g., Enlightenment vs. religion). Instances of public upheaval about religion and/or homosexuality can be clarified by analyzing them from a "dramaturgical" perspective (Gusfield 1984, cf. Hilgartner and Bosk 1988). As Michel Foucault (1976) has argued, nineteenth-century discourse on "homosexuality" fundamentally differed from earlier discourses on "sodomy" by virtue of its creation of "the homosexual" as a distinct character. Since the 1960s, public discourse on homosexuality and religion has given rise to many more, often complex, characters, such as "the gay-friendly pastor," "the homophile neighbor" (and his or her father and/or mother), "the gay pastor." "the anti-gay clergyman," "the anti-religious queer activist." "the ex-gay, born-again believer," "the ex-ex-gay ex-evangelical," or the *weigerambtenaar* (registrar who refuses same-sex couples). Many of these characters, which are frequently "staged" in public debates on homosexuality and religion, embody narratives of sexual and/or religious "conversion" (cf. Erzen 2006). A well-known, often invoked example is the Dutch novelist Gerard van het Reve (1923-2006), who grew up in a Communist family, but – after having come out as gay in the sixties, as one of the first Dutch celebrities – was baptised, and cultivated a form of camp Catholicism that would become widely popular (cf. Bos 2006). Very different conversions were presented by singer-songwriter Robert Long (from gospel pop to queer, fiercely anti-religious cabaret) and nurse Johan van der Sluis (a born-again ex-gay, the show-case of evangelical conversion therapy).

Some of these characters have been frequently invoked in public debate, and recreated in fiction or other expressions of popular culture, whereas others are conspicuous by their absence or have just entered the scene (e.g. the South African gay Muslim cleric who has been dubbed "the pink imam"). Moreover, whereas some of these characters (e.g., "the homophobic pastor") have been easily transferred from one arena of contestation to another, others are not – witness the unfamiliarity of "the understanding Muslim parent." Public debates on religion and homosexuality can then be analyzed by not only identifying which characters are invoked, but also by assessing how they relate to "narrators" – i.e., the extent to which they can speak for themselves (cf. Mooij 1998). Such analyses can bring to light how discourse on religion and homosexuality privileges some voices, while silencing others.

Yet it is important to note that our inquiry does not build on the assumption that discourse on religion and homosexuality is a zero-sum game, in which the acknowledgment of sexual diversity cannot but go at the expense of religious freedom – or vice versa. Instead, it is our contention that precisely the idea that religion and homosexuality are commensurable phenomena needs to be critically examined – all the more because both, in very dissimilar and inconsistent ways, have been so often employed in the construction of national identities. The present-day mantra that acceptance of sexual diversity is a prerequisite for Dutch citizenship may be a far cry from the depiction of

homosexuals as a threat to society, which prevailed until the 1950s and continues to dominate in many other parts of the world, but sexual nationalism as such is neither a new, nor an exclusively Western phenomenon. As Dudink (2011) has argued, the present-day rhetorical power of "homosexuality" is partly a result of its conceptualization as a quasi-racial category (see also Cobb 2006, Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2004). We are only beginning to understand how this category discursively intersects with "religion," which has also been conceptualised both as a "given" and as "a matter of choice," both as a private and as a public matter, and both as an individual predisposition and as a social relationship.

The Western Balkans: "The Conspiracy of Faggots and Lesbians"[1]

The Western Balkans show a rather different picture. In recent decades the public perception of both religion and sexual diversity has changed fundamentally. LGBT persons, their freedoms and their rights are still on the margins of social processes in the Western Balkans. Fifteen years after the war, these societies are still functioning as societies of "frozen conflicts." The numerous challenges they are facing in the economic, political and cultural fields are often dealt with by the construction of specific narratives about the threats of "others." Within these narratives, religion and nationalism intermingle and strengthen each other, creating potent expressions of religious nationalism and ethno-religious ideologies. The prominence of religious communities in all this markedly differs from their almost total absence from Yugoslavian public space until the 1980s. As was the case in other countries in Communist Eastern Europe, religion was marginalized and the voice of religious officials on important public topics was not very loud. Sexuality was, like other issues, under the control of the secular state. With the "national revival," which peaked in the 1990s civil war, the Western Balkans witnessed the "comeback" of Orthodoxy in Serbia, Roman Catholicism in Croatia, and Islam in Bosnia (Perica 2002). Although de-secularization of society remains questionable, religion has reappeared as a dominant identification marker (Blagojević 2008, 2009). It signifies the belonging to a religious community and strengthens ethnic difference from other Balkan peoples (which are historically and culturally very close), since the communist regime suppressed their ethnic and religious identities. For the Serbs, Croatians and Bosniaks, religion remains, first and last of all, "the faith of national identity" (Bogdanović [quoted in Vrcan 1995: 362]). The post-communist societies have put religion in the service of the secular "religion" of

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nationalism (Bigović 2009: 13). In such conditions, religious communities emerge as a stabilizing factor of the nation (Cvitković 2013: 19). Many political actions by national communities, including war crimes, have been given religious legitimization. In the context of ethno-nationalism, Croatian Roman Catholicism, Serbian Orthodoxy, and Bosnian Islam contributed to the tensions (Perica and Gavrilović 2011: 117). This relationship continued in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, as privileged holders of the old regime survived by converting from Marxism to nationalism (Kleman 2001: 25) and accepted Orthodoxy, Catholicism, or Islam as their new dominant ideology. From a profoundly secularized society, in which religion and religious institutions had been even more marginalized than in other parts of Eastern Europe, over the course of only two decades the countries in the Western Balkans have become societies with high rates of religious identification, while religious communities have acquired a prominent place in public life (cf. Đorđević 2007: 79-93).

In this context, both religion and sexual diversity have gained great public importance. Public debates have shown a high level of negative attitudes toward homosexuality including hate-speech and strongly discriminatory attitudes among leading religious leaders and politicians. For example, Serbian political and religious discourse conspicuously lacks acceptance of the LGBT community. Surveys have shown that 67% of the respondents believe homosexuality is an illness, while 53% think the government should take measures to combat it (GSA and CeSID 2010). Similarly, in recent research conducted by the Centre for Civic Education (CGO) two-thirds of Montenegrins stated that homosexuality is an illness and 80% said it should be kept private. Surveys in other parts of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Southeast-Europe (SEE) also show that the level of negative attitudes toward homosexuality among the general population is much higher than in the rest of Europe (Andreescu 2011, Takács and Szalma 2011).

Civil rights activists in the Western Balkans have been trying to organize gay pride parades since 2001. The first parade in Serbia (2001) was interrupted by violent attacks and ended with dozens of marchers injured by ultranationalist groups and football hooligans. When in 2010 a parade could finally be held, 20,000 opponents clashed with police, and hundreds of right-wing extremists were injured and arrested. At the same time, the strong opposition of the Serbian Orthodox Church toward homosexuals was expressed on numerous occasions through the media, in some cases indirectly providing legitimization for the violence against the LGBT minority (Jovanović 2011). In 2011, stone-throwing nationalists disrupted a gay pride march in Split, one day after Croatia had been given the green light to join the European Union. Thousands of extremists attacked about 200 pride participants with rocks and bottles, chanting '"kill the faggots" ("*ubi pedera"*). The first Montenegro pride parade (2013), held in the seaside resort of Budva, invoked a violent counter demonstration with the local news agency reporting that bottles and glasses were being flung in the direction of the gay parade

participants. One day after the parade a local orthodox priest consecrated the part of the town of Budva where the parade took place in order to prevent "the disease from spreading." The priest was quoted as saying: "We [the church] strongly condemn this parade of shame and disease, and we are praying to God to repeal this disease and the devil's attack on Budva and Montenegro" (*BalkanInsight* 2013). In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH), gay pride parades have not been organized to date. In 2008 an attempt was made to organize a *Sarajevo Queer Festival*, featuring exhibitions, films, and lectures. Although organized as an indoor event, a climate of violent response was created in Sarajevo long before the festival was finalized. On 28 August 2008, the front page of BIH's largest newspaper, *Dnevni Avaz's*, opened with giant letters: *Ko Bošnjacima podvaljuje gay okupljanje u Ramazanu?* ("Who is framing the Bosnian public in relation to gay gathering during the month of Ramadan?"). This connection to Ramadan served to interpret the festival as an attack on religion, even though the festival itself had no religious or anti-religious references. In response, radical Islamic Wahhabis tried to enter the exhibition violently, yelling *Allahu Ekber*. Although the police prevented this from happening, radicals attacked people who returned from the festival, at tram stations and even in front of their apartments. To date, the violence has not been addressed properly in court. The Islamic journal SAFF published several pieces that called for violence against the festival and its participants. Other religious communities hardly condemned this, although they seized the opportunity to criticize radical Islam.

Behind the violent clashes lies an interpretation of homosexuality as a Western threat to the traditional values of national and religious identity. The tone, intensity and ideological saturation of this condemnation clearly positions it within the frame of traditionalist discourse in the present-day Balkans that strongly opposes the processes of modernization, while postulating conservatism as a response to social crisis, uncertainty and the devastating consequences of on-going transitions (Jovanović 2013). Anti-Westernism is propagated and topics like the gay-parade are viewed as "imposed by the decadent West" (Tucić 2011: 45). This is in line with the attitude of some radical nationalist groups toward the European Union and the West for having "dubious and ludicrous moral standards" and being "a true danger to tradition" (Spencer-Dohner 2008). The adoption of sexual minority policies, for example, is sometimes framed as a direct attack of the so-called "international gay lobby" on national identity. In the same vein, after the 2013 Montenegro pride, the Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro stated that the EU gay lobby had no right to "threaten the ethical being of entire nations" (*InSerbia* 2013). In Croatia, Albert Rebić, a prominent Catholic priest and theologian said in an interview for the newspaper *Slobadna Dalmacija* [Free Dalmatia] (2011) that "[t]he conspiracy of faggots and lesbians would destroy Croatia."

Similarly, Metropolitan Amfilohije explicitly links homosexuality with modern civilization, defining it as "something imposed by modernity and invoking, in

that way, the myth about a Western conspiracy against Serbia" (Stakić 2011: 56). He utilizes the rhetoric of "brimstone and fire" when condemning LGBT sexualities, calls them a "thorn in the flesh for the Churches" (Hunt 2009: 1), and labels the gay pride parade of 2010 "a parade of shame and embarrassment." One year earlier he had referred to the event as "a parade of Sodom and Gomorrah" (Milićević et al. 2010: 52). This statement, phrased in biblical language – including a reference to "the tree that does not bear fruit" – "represents a rather explicit call for violent intervention" (Stakić 2011: 56). When a Serbian gay pride parade was announced in 2011, Patriarch Irinej interpreted this as an attempt to divert public attention from the precarious situation of Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija. This response exemplifies how discourse about the LGBT community is directly connected with patriotism and religion, economic problems, poverty, the Kosovo crisis, or EU integration. It constructs homosexuals as "constitutive outside" and/or "external enemies" of the nation – as the nation's Other. In this view, "a nationalist rhetoric centered around homosexuality promises to deliver to the nation what is most elusive: identity" (Dudink 2011: 263).

The combination of nationalism, ethnocentrism, religion, and anti-Westernism targets homosexuality as an internally unifying enemy. This is facilitated in part by the demands the European Union and its Western member countries place on acceding countries. The discourse of human rights, clearly addressing the marginalized position of sexual minorities, is essential to the Western values that are at the heart of the European Union. The same discourse, however, is seen as alien to the values of the Balkan countries. Their desire to become part of the European Union and their awareness that they have limited negotiating power in this process evokes a sense of inferiority that is compensated by stronger identity politics. The more acceptance of sexual diversity is defended and promoted by the West, the more resistance may be expected because of these power dynamics.

Sweden: "We must Tolerate Green Just as We Tolerate Islam"

Like the Netherlands and unlike the Western Balkans, Sweden can be characterized as a front-runner in the advocacy of LGBT rights. However, Sweden differs considerably from both the Netherlands and the Western Balkans in its religio-political configurations. In this section a description of these configurations will be given, followed by a case study in order to clarify the way in which cultural and religious differences between the various regions affect the shape of public debates. The method of a case study was chosen to explore how, in addition to the more general approach in the previous sections, religio-political configurations can also be understood through an in-depth study of a media debate where the struggle over representation takes place.

In Post State-Church Sweden, religious affiliation is characterised by the "Swedish paradox": while regular church attendance is extremely low, most Swedes do find church rituals such as baptism and church marriage important (Bäckström et al. 2004). Unlike the pillarised church history of the Netherlands, church history in Sweden shows that the former state church – losing this status only in the year 2000 – has managed to make it through the past few centuries relatively unscathed. Unlike the churches and other religious communities of the Western Balkans, the Church of Sweden hosts conservatives and liberals alike, guaranteeing its diverse character. More conservative religious voices in Sweden often come from the so-called "free churches," minority denominations including the Roman Catholic Church and charismatic churches.

In terms of addressing gender and sexuality, Sweden can be called exceptional when it comes to bridging the gap between queer theory and social acceptance of LGBT's. The term "queer" became widely adopted in all layers of society. This translates into the way emancipation issues are taken up – for example in a law against the discrimination of "persons who exceed gender norms," issued in 2009. It has been suggested that this has just been a "light," institutionalized version of the concept that does not genuinely change the way people think about sexual and gender identities and expressions (Kulick 2005). However, the Swedish Federation for LGBT Rights (RFSL) has recently taken up the concept in its policy program, consciously trying to put queer theory into practice (RFSL 2012). In doing so RFSL can connect to discourses in which concepts such as heteronormativity, gender norms and gender identity are already familiar to a larger audience.

In 2002, sexual orientation was added to the Swedish "hate speech" law which was issued in 1948 in order to criminalize expressions that incite violence against an individual or group. In 2004 Åke Green, pastor in a Pentecostal congregation, decided to put the law to the test. Green was of the opinion that the law should not apply to religious expressions rejecting homosexuality (*Dagen* 2004). He wrote a sermon in which he opposed homosexuality, referring to it as a "cancerous tumour" in Swedish society. After the local newspaper *Ölandsbladet* published the sermon, Green was reported to the police by a local RFSL representative and charged with hate speech. In 2005 he was found guilty by the district court, but was acquitted later that same year by both the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court. Green's charge gave rise to a heated debate in Swedish media. As for the content of his sermon, Green was supported publicly only by Ulf Ekman, pastor in the charismatic *Livets Ord* (Word of the Life) movement (*Dagen* 2004). Surprisingly, a considerable number of journalists from secular media sided with Green as well, demanding that he be acquitted immediately (Ekdal 2005, *Expressen* 2005, Brinck 2005, Nycander 2005, *Frihetsfronten* 2005). Their position was the outcome of weighing several constitutional rights: protection from discrimination, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion. Apparently, the latter two outweighed the first. Journalist Cecilia Brinck's reference to

Voltaire's well-known principle that "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it" (2005) characterizes the tendency of many articles concerning Green. The pastor's freedom of religion was to be respected, just as the freedom of Muslims to observe their religion in their own way was to be protected (Ekdal 2005).

The overwhelming support for Green's release might give the impression that the Green case indicates a high level of tolerance for religious conservatism in Sweden, but a closer look at the newspaper articles concerning Green complicates that conclusion. While defending Green's freedom of speech and religion, many journalists felt they needed to make it very clear that they *themselves* did not approve of his opinions. Green was thus described as "crazy" (*Expressen* 2005) and a "narrow-minded madcap" (*Frihetsfronten* 2005), who would surely "end up in hell for his statements on homosexuality" (*Svenska Dagbladet* 2005). He was accused of taking the Bible literally to a ridiculous point (Ljung 2005) and of trying to obtain the status of a martyr (Nycander 2005, Ekdal 2005). Green was thus described as a mentally incompetent man, isolated from mainstream Christianity. The construction of Green as a fundamentalist lunatic whose constitutional rights nevertheless deserved to be protected has several notable discursive effects. First, the portrayal of Green as a religious freak constructed simultaneously a more sane, composed and broad-minded "we." In fact, the more Green was denigrated, the nobler the liberal "we" became. Tolerating Green became a burden, ever so heavy, but tolerating him was a sacrifice that needed to be made in order to preserve basic human rights in Sweden. Second, by isolating Green in this manner, he was constructed as a marginalized Christian at best or a non-Christian at the worst. Journalists wondered how he had come to twist Jesus' message to love one's neighbour so perversely. The effect of placing Green outside of Christianity was that no one felt the need to discuss his sermon and his views with respect to content. Moreover, an image of "true" Christianity as basically tolerant was thus constructed or maintained. Third, the comparison of Green's views to Islam adds to the presumed "otherness" of both Green and Swedish Muslims. In stating that "we need to tolerate Green just as we tolerate Islam" both are constructed as deviations from Swedish society and identity.

Sweden is commonly pictured as a country which is highly secularized and liberal, with a front-runner position in advocating LGBT rights (like the Netherlands but unlike the Western Balkans). Public debates on religion and homosexuality, however, seem to take slightly different forms in the various countries. First, in Sweden, pastor Åke Green could quickly be isolated and rendered harmless because he was a member of a religious minority (the Free Churches). Rejecting Green had no consequences for the religious convictions and practices of the majority of the Swedes who turn to the Church of Sweden for their baptisms and weddings. In the Netherlands, where a stricter separation of state and church has facilitated a smorgasbord of denominations, it is harder to define mainstream Christianity and to decide

whether conservative statements on homosexuality represent conventional beliefs. This might make these statements feel more "threatening", because it is harder to define the size of the group that agrees with them. In the Western Balkans, as we have seen, statements such as Green's would probably be considered fully in line with the church's view on homosexuality. Secondly, the division between institutional religion and secularism seems to be more defined in the Netherlands than it is in Sweden. In the Netherlands one is either "within" the church, attending services as well as turning to the church for life rituals, or "outside," living life completely apart from institutionalized religion. Unlike secularized Swedes belonging to the Church of Sweden, the latter group has less urgent needs to defend a form of Christianity with which everyone is comfortable. While both differences may account for a more activist protest against conservative statements on homosexuality in the Netherlands, this does not mean that Sweden is necessarily the more "tolerant" country. This analysis of the Åke Green case shows that tolerance may also be a disguise for eliminating views from the public debate, instead of engaging with them.

Conclusion

The three European cases explored in this chapter have demonstrated how the social allocation of religion matters to the public, discursive pairing of religion and homosexuality. In conclusion we may note some elements emerging from these explorations that merit further attention. Central to our analysis is the interpretation that the shifts and tensions observed reflect not only changing public perceptions of sexual diversity, but also new positions toward the place, role and rights of religion in society. The key difference between these three contexts is whether either religion or sexuality is the more accepted or contested social identity.

As we have discussed, positions vis-à-vis religion and homosexuality are not only defined by specific moral, philosophical, or spiritual presuppositions. These positions emerge from discursive negotiations in a wider field, in which cultural and national identities play a central role. Cultural identity conceptions that are considered desirable in the Netherlands and Sweden are defined by notions of tolerance and rationality, but these play out differently between the two contexts. In the post state-church context of Sweden, secularism does not exclude a moderate form of cultural Lutheranism, which in turn serves to exclude as "extremist" minority religions. In the Netherlands, with their long history of religious plurality, there is no "standard religion". A variety of liberal and conservative religious as well as secular voices claim public space. In a sense, only tolerance and respect can create some common ground in this diversity, but this is inevitably experienced as a secular attack on more exclusivist religious positions. In both cases, the debates about religion and homosexuality serve to define the nation's cultural identity, including some groups and excluding others. In the Western Balkans similar

dynamics can be observed. In these post-communist countries religion serves to bolster national and cultural identities, drawing on masculinity and purity rather than on tolerance and diversity. The negotiation here builds on the notion of a Western threat to the nations' identities, and religion is embraced as a means to unite the country and counter the threat. In this negotiation, the LGBT community is the object of the debate and the excluded other. Again we find that the debates about religion and homosexuality are emanations of much more complex discursive negotiations on culture, nation, and gender.

Further research, therefore, requires an integrative approach that acknowledges the interrelatedness of the religion-homosexuality conflict with constructs of gender and nationalism. This research should incorporate the power dynamics inherent to these "culture wars" or struggles over public representation. In this struggle, homosexuality and religion easily function as "identity markers," articulated at the intersection of identity and alterity, marginality and dominance, privilege and exclusion, connection and alienation (Cobb 2006, Kuntsman 2009, Viefhues-Bailey 2010). In effect, they lead to the rhetorical creation of "imagined others/intruders" and to the formation of collective national, cultural, and religious identities (Ahmed 2006).

This chapter thus suggests that even fierce conflicts of religion and the social order, like the ones about homosexuality, are heavily dependent on the ways in which religion and its "opponents" are socially constructed in relation to other cultural constructs like nationality and gender. Analysing these processes and identity strategies may deepen our understanding of the multi-layered complexities of religion in times of crisis.

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