Report for the GMFUS seminar
Detroit, March 3rd - 7th
Comparing the integration of Muslims in Brussels and Detroit

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... 3

Abstract ............................................................................................................................. 4

Introduction and aims of the report .................................................................................... 5

I Participant list and the visit to Detroit ............................................................................ 6

II The political environment .............................................................................................. 10

III Can integration be measured? ....................................................................................... 15

IV Socio-economic comparisons between Detroit and Brussels ....................................... 15

V Existing recent studies ................................................................................................... 25

VI Observations on policy aspects of immigrant integration ............................................ 30

   1. Anti-racism and anti-discrimination policy ................................................................. 30
   2. Policing policy ............................................................................................................ 32
   3. Housing and urban space .......................................................................................... 34
   4. Social Services and education .................................................................................. 37
      A. Social security services .......................................................................................... 37
      B. Integration policy in the framework of social services ........................................... 41
      C. Education policy .................................................................................................. 42
   5. Cultural policy .......................................................................................................... 45

VII Some tentative conclusions ........................................................................................ 47

VIII List of practical recommendations ............................................................................ 50

IX Possible follow-up ....................................................................................................... 50

Bibliography ...................................................................................................................... 52
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Abstract

This report was prepared for and financed by the German Marshall Fund of the United States by the Institute for European Studies, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium and the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan USA. It arises out of a seminar that took place from March 3rd to March 7th 2008 in Detroit between a team of experts working in various fields of immigrant (and particularly Muslim) integration both in Brussels and Detroit. There was also a field trip to the Canadian city closest to Detroit, namely Windsor, Ontario. A range of fields was discussed, including anti-racism and anti-discrimination, policing, housing policy, cultural exchange and education. The project succeeded in forming teams of field workers, academics (and to a lesser extent political contacts) on both sides of the Atlantic which aim to continue contacts and continue to work together.

In spite of the clear differences in the history, geography and the socio-economic conditions in the three cities, as well as prevailing political cultures, both sides considered that here was much to be learnt from each other. Recent studies by American research centres have revealed that Muslim-Americans are economically better off and better educated than their European counterparts, including in Brussels where immigrants tend to be from rural areas of North Africa or Turkey rather than from the Middle East as in Detroit. This is partly because their education levels are higher upon arrival in America, but also reflects the more rapid upward mobility of immigrants in the United States.

These encounters revealed that the issues that Muslims face are not very different from those of other immigrants but that they face discrimination and hostility to their religion and culture especially after the events of September 11th 2001 and the London and Madrid bombings. Muslims also have special needs in the practice of their religion which leads to the conclusion that there needs to be more flexibility in the work place to accommodate the fact.

The report highlights that the emphasis should be on education and training of young Muslims to permit their insertion into the work place and remove economic disadvantages. To this end, the private sector, as the economic motor on both sides of the Atlantic needs to become more involved. In addition the report emphasises that there are no policy formulae to be applied for immigrant integration to succeed, but that a bottom-up approach and working at the local level in the local community and neighbourhood stands the best chance of success. The report recommends amongst other things the exchange of integration specialists between Brussels and Detroit.
Introduction and aims of the report

The series of terrorist attacks carried out across the globe in the past years by individuals and groups claiming legitimacy for their actions in the name of Islam have deepened the fear in the Western world that a clash with the Muslim world is inevitable. In the light of the magnitude and the symbolic weight of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, it is often assumed that Americans in particular are increasingly affected by prejudice against Muslims. However, significantly, a recent report of the Pew Research Center however indicates that, on average, Muslims in America are better integrated than their European counterparts; they are more likely to move on to higher education, have less difficulties finding a job and generally speaking seem to be more accepted as part of society.

This striking conclusion calls for an explanation; why do American Muslims seem to do better than Muslims living in Europe? Looking for clues at the local level, we believe that a comparison between the situation of Muslims in Detroit – the American city with the largest Muslim population outside the Middle East – and Brussels, a European city with a similarly high percentage of Muslim inhabitants – might help to throw light on what might be done to improve the integration of Muslims into European societies and bring to the fore some interesting differences between the situation of Muslims in America and Europe.

The starting point of this report is the grant received by the Wayne State University Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies directed by Dr. Frederic Pearson and Richard Lewis, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for European Studies, Vrije Universiteit Brussel from the German Marshall Fund of the United States. The grant was for the sum of $40,000 or at the rate of exchange at the time of drafting this report ($1.55 to €1) approximately €25,800. However, the sum received in euros at the time of the grant in July 2007 was €30,087 This has proved ample for the purposes of the exercise of bringing actors in the social services in Brussels and Detroit together in a dialogue. However, it is clear that this report can in no sense be considered a comparative scientific study of the differences in integration methodology between the Muslim communities in the cities of Brussels and Detroit because that would have required more resources in time and funding and an entirely different approach. Nevertheless, we consider that this report and its recommendations will achieve the aims of the exercise funded and provide useful pointers towards future orientations and research. In summary the objectives were:

- Creating a network of civic leaders
- Engagement at the grass roots
The present report and its recommendations

Internet dissemination of the findings of the dialogue

Post project policy reports

I. Participants List and the Visit to Detroit

The week long meeting of the immigration social services delegation from Brussels and their Detroit counterparts from 3-7 March, 2008 entailed a series of discussion seminars on specific immigration issue topics in Detroit and Brussels coupled with field excursions and visits to immigrant service sites in the Detroit area and Windsor Ontario in Canada. A complete transcript of the week’s proceedings is available upon request.

While Detroit is noted for an abundant history of immigration, largely revolving around the automobile industry, and while diverse groups of new immigrants (e.g., South Asia, Latin America) are well represented in Detroit’s demography, its special place as one of the world’s leading destinations for immigration from the Middle East and Muslim world means that it is highly comparable and policy relevant to European and specifically Belgian social and political concerns. Thus it was an especially pertinent and appropriate location for this dialogue.

In addition the delegations selected for the dialogue represented important policy sectors regarding the integration of immigrants. Policy sectors such as housing, police, social services, education, civic action and culture were included in order to begin to generate detailed analyses about what works to promote positive social relations in varied circumstances.

The meetings initially presented introductions to immigrant experience and statistical and geographic trends in the two cities. In the case of Detroit this consisted of an historical review by Dr. Pearson and a power point database presentation by the Wayne State University Centre for Urban Studies.

Other highlights of the week’s activity included:

- A lecture on “Citizenship and the Media” by journalist Nick Clooney of California;
• Discussion of data based reports on Arab-American integration and elite and public opinion (report of Chicago Council on Global Affairs and Detroit based research which tend to highlight the general economic successes and civic engagement of this community, though with concerns about periodic ethnic “profiling”);

• Presentation of the film “With Wings and Roots” and discussion with the director, Christina Antonakos-Wallace, on second generation immigrant children and their viewpoints in New York and Berlin;

• A day (Wednesday) in Windsor Ontario meeting with civic engagement specialists (see list below) and the mayor, a Lebanese descendent, along with a very informative visit to an exemplary primary school specializing in the integration of immigrant families;

• Dinner in Hamtramck MI with a city counsellor from Bangladesh discussing such issues as the successfully resolved controversy over the Islamic “call to prayer;”

• Tours of the Arab-American National Cultural Museum and the America’s largest mosque in Dearborn, MI and meetings with their staff;

• In depth discussion of Arab and community social services through the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) in Dearborn, Michigan, a suburban area of Detroit;

• In depth discussion of inner city social services at the Franklin Wright Settlement;

• Discussion of Arab-American media with newspaper publisher Osama Siblani, Dearborn;

• Planning for future development of joint Detroit-Brussels short policy papers suggesting best practice reforms in both regions.

The participants from Brussels who each made presentations in their appropriate field and met counterparts from Detroit, were as follows:

- Richard Lewis, Senior Research Fellow, Institute for European Studies, Vrije Universiteit Brussel
- Nadja Boujade of the Centre Omar Khayam, an organization for dialogue and exchange, workshops and training in the community
- Geraldine Bruyneel of Samenlevingsopbouw, a Flemish regional organization for social work and problem solving in the community
- Pascale Charhon, director of the European Network Against Racism
- Anne Dussart of Caritas International, specializing in immigrants and the law
- Laurance Dufay of Solidarité Savoir and Bruxelles en couleur, organizations specializing in assisting citizens in everyday life problems such as finance, housing, education etc.
- Hannelore Goeman, Doctoral Candidate at the Institute for European Studies on integration of migrants
- Stéphanie Lemmens of the research institute Cosmopolis at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, an interdisciplinary group studying city, culture and society.
- Karolien Ory of Jeugd en Stad (Youth ans City), specializing in street corner counselling for young people;
- Frederik Serroen from CityMined, an organization promoting new forms of urban citizenship and re-appropriation of urban space
- Myriam Stoffen from the Zinneke Parade, a multicultural event celebrating cultural diversity in Brussels
- Dr. Corinne Torrekens from the Groupe d’Etudes sur l’Ethnicité, le Racisme, les Migrations et l’Exclusion (GERME), Université Libre de Bruxelles, a specialist on Muslims in Brussels
- Stéphane Van der Cruyssen of the Foyer Saint Gilles, a social housing association
- Theo Van Gasse, Commissaire, Brussels North Police Force

Colleagues from Detroit presenting and discussing sectors of immigration service with the European participants were the following:

- Buck Shomo, Internation Institute, Immigration Attorney
- Suleiman Hamdan, Bilingual/Bicultural Education at Wayne County Regional Educational Authority, Michigan
- Nahla Hamdan, Educator, Wayne State University
- Christina Antonakos-Wallace, film maker
- Senator Martha Scott, Michigan legislature
- Marianne Brown, Office of Congressman John Conyers (Chair, US House Judiciary Committee)
- Brigitte Fawaz-Anouti, Access social service director
- Ralph Valdez, Organizer Annual Detroit Concert of Colours
- Angelita Espino, Director of Race Relations and Collaborative Partnership, Nw Detroit Inc.
- Samra Nasser, WSU Graduate Research Assistant specializing in Arab American generational change
- Amanda Hamlin, WSU Doctoral Candidate on Bosnian immigrant integration
- Wassim Tarraf, WSU Graduate research assistant on Arab-American public opinion
- Ron Amen, County Sherriff’s Dept., cultural understanding and police-community relations
- Hon. Eddie Francis, Mayor of Windsor
- Representative, Detroit Police department
- Representative, Hamtramck City Council
- Angela Reyes, Hispanic Development Corporation
- Anisa Sahoubah, Famil Services, Access
- Staff, Franklin Wright Settlement Centre, inner city social work outreach
- Lt. Carter, Wayne County Sheriffs Department
- Julio Bateau, Detroit Urban Planner
- Dr. Robin Boyle, Chair, Geog. And Urban planning, WSU
- Dr. Thomas Lyke Thompson, Director, WSU Centre for Urban Studies
- Dr. Saeed Kahn, WSU faculty (Near East Studies)
- Eide A. Alawan, Office of Interfaith Outreach of the Islamic Centre of America
- Shahab Ahmed, City Council of Hamtramck

Windsor Delegation Meeting Attendees, Windsor Ontario, Canada., Wednesday March 5, 2008

- Saleem Jaka, general manager, Westmount hospitality group
- Dr. Hakim Abouzahra, oncologist, Windsor Regional Hospital
- Imad Nijjar, Owner, Rocky Motors and Mazaar Restaurant
- Sgt. Jerome Brannagan, Windsor Police Service
- Iderjit Grewal, Children’s Aid Society, Diversity coordinator
- Haifa Maghnih, YMCA
- Michelle Siuchu, YMCA
- Mary Lynn Biggley, Greater Essex Count District School Board, Community development officer
- Mary Ellen Bernard, Manager, Residential Housing Support Services
- Ina Berard, Greater Essex Count District School Board, Newcomer Reception Centre
- Umza Laghari, Women’s Enterprise Skills Training
- Naheed Ahmed Salman, Women’s Enterprise Skills Training
- Nigel Couch, Multicultural Council, Manager Programs and Operations
- Nora Betram-Romero, Mayor’s Office, City of Windsor
- Mary Baruth, Manager of cultural affairs, City of Windsor
- Sumar Jase, Special projects coordinator, City of Windsor
II. The political environment

The public discourse on immigration in general and Muslim integration in particular is, of course, relevant to the outcomes of this project. In essence the issues boil down to a number of often conflicting questions on which neither academics nor politicians have provided definitive answers.

The central question relates to European identity or individual national identities and the public perception that, especially in crowded urban areas, these identities are being swamped by alien cultures. One might add that it is alleged that, in practical terms, this means that there is competition for school places and a need to adjust curricula to suit the incoming languages and cultures, competition for public housing, medical resources and other social services.

The debate also turns round whether there is a need for immigration in Europe and, if there is, what kind of immigration. Europe’s population is in gradual decline and is aging and there is an argument that immigration is needed to stem that decline in order to prevent a weakening of Europe’s economic and political weight in the world. The statistical evidence is controversial, but immigration, especially the kind of selective skilled immigration encouraged by countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia, would probably serve Europe well in the medium and long term.

At a political level in Europe, there is a sharp divide between right and left over the benefits compared with the problems, especially the integration problems, of large-scale immigration. In the United States, this kind of controversy is certainly not absent. But for obvious historical reasons it is of a different order, mainly concerned with the control of illegal immigration not whether immigration is good or bad for the nation.

Meantime, the EU Member States largely pursue their own economic migration policies, that is, for employment purposes; efforts to arrive at a common position on this issue since the year 2000 have foundered. There is a common will expressed as early as the Tampere European Council in October 1999 to work towards “managed migration”. The latest manifestation of this was the French-led drive in the run-up to France’s presidency of the EU from July to December 2008 to prepare a “European Immigration Pact” to be discussed at the European Council meeting in October 2008. This has the advantage of putting the topic at the top of the political agenda as desired by France. But

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1. Lutz W., O’Neill B.C. and Scherbov S. Europe’s Population at a Turning Point, Science 28th March 2003
2. Asfrom July 2008 France holds the six monthly rotating presidency.
it will remain to be seen whether the positive aspects of immigration rather than the restrictive questions will come to the fore.

Giuliano Amato, the former Italian Prime Minister, summed up the discourse relating to Muslim immigration in a recent article (Euro’s World Autumn 2007):

“Addressing the challenge is feasible, but it will also be demanding on several fronts. We need to concert our actions with future immigrants’ countries of origin and aim to achieve well-planned and smoothly conducted inflows of migrants in relation to the needs of our labour markets. We also need to equip ourselves with the services to cope with new residents, who will themselves be contributing to our economic growth through their labour and taxes. We need to ensure that our own citizens are not deprived of these services and we must be careful to adopt local policies that promote education (not just schooling) and communication……Yet, even if we manage to do all these things successfully, that will still leave the thorniest issue unresolved: how can we bridge the gap between our own communities and the growing Muslim population? Terrorism concerns have made this issue harder….It is a challenge that depends on us to understand that we do not face a single Muslim diversity problem, but rather several Muslim diversities that if well handled could help nurture pluralism in our societies, while also dealing with unacceptable differences like gender inequality…”

Some Reflections on the European and American Immigration Contexts

It is clear that the historical and political contexts of immigration in the United States and European are very different.

European immigration is a modern phenomenon, which, at least until recently, grew out of the colonial heritage or post-war reconstruction (as in the case of Germany and its Turkish immigrants.) The United States has a much longer historical background to immigration going back to the foundations of the nation and the tradition of virtually open borders until the 20th century. Indeed it was made clear at the meetings that the sorry history of slavery in America ironically represented the first occasions for Islamic immigration (if not integration). By the same token anti-immigrant sentiment, political movements and violence were also well known in American history and characterized the rise of such hate groups as the KuKluxKlan.

The political traditions of both continents are also very different. Especially during the 20th century, European governments have tended to be more statist and interventionist
than American governments. This has spilled over into immigrant integration policy: in the United States there is generally a more localized, laissez-faire, and private sector based approach to the settlement of immigrants as compared to Europe’s more state driven and publicly-funded approach. These are, of course, tendencies, not absolutes, but it is clear from the discussions in Detroit that there is more government angst over integration in Europe than the United States. For example, while some Americans chafe at the lack of a formally prescribed “national language” or state religion, the general libertarian tendency, confirmed in court rulings, runs strong and tends to obviate calls for such laws. Europe’s contrasting traditions, even when conditioned by secular revolutions or “consociational” ethnic bargains, leaves a tendency toward almost universal requirements for language and citizenship classes. In America, the government, apart from growing “homeland security concerns,” only has a tangential role in such training.

In the United States, the immigrant makes good or not, often with the collaboration and assistance of relatives and kinship or “civil society” organizations, and has little in the way of state social support systems, other than the social security program available to all working Americans and their families; in Europe (as in Canada), the welfare state is more pervasive. These differences have a distinct knock-on effect in the way the issue of immigrant integration is addressed and solved.

Indeed the concept of immigrant “integration” as enunciated in Europe has a slightly different nuance than traditional usage in America, where the notion throughout history in regards to immigrants was more often “assimilation.” First generation immigrant families in the 19th and early 20th centuries tended to concentrate on “fitting in” and making sure that their children became “100% American.” With the ethnic pride movements of the 1960s and later, however, emphases turned to recognition of ethnocultural origins and identities and the emergence of a “multi-cultural” society; hence the development of hyphenated nomenclature: African-American; Native-American; Hispanic-American; Arab-American. Integration itself as a concept in American lexicon was heavily influenced by the civil rights struggles of African-Americans, and created controversies about whether it was beneficial to live separately or together even as equal rights were achieved. All of this affects the understanding in the U.S. of the integration concept.

Nevertheless, most of the problems faced by immigrants are largely the same in Brussels and Detroit. They relate to: language, training, citizenship or permanent resident status, finding a job or starting a business that pays enough to live on, finding decent housing, avoiding discrimination and engaging with the culture.

In the United States as well as Canada, at present, despite periodic backlash and persistent signs of racism, there also appears to be a greater cultural and political value placed on “diversity” in education and employment than in Europe, entailing the
acceptance of ethno-cultural and religious difference. For example, the expression of religious and cultural symbols, such as head coverings, is generally not an issue in U.S. schools, as it sometimes is in the pronounced secularism of some European societies. In the American situation, the fact that immigrants are essentially part of the national culture and mythology – the American dream so to speak- has played a role in shaping the way Americans approach all aspects of the immigration phenomenon. Immigration is more in tune with the national psyche in terms of “equal opportunity” and pluralism than in Europe.

Yet, as Dimitri Papademetriou (2003) indicates, as economic and social conditions tighten in the developed world (where much of the economic migration takes place,) immigrants often prove to be the “tangible, visible and convenient proxies and even lightening rods for populist expressions of frustrations”. In other words the immigration and specifically the integration debate is not likely to become simpler. Friction and misunderstanding have at times existed in Detroit, for example, in recent years between disadvantaged black citizens and successful Middle Eastern shop owners, over whether wealth is properly returned to the community from which it derives. Papademetriou continues:

“Newcomers must be encouraged – and assisted – to weave themselves into the host community’s economic fabric as soon as possible after arrival. In that regard, the first objective of integration should be to enable newcomers to get the fairest possible returns on their human capital and thus contribute as early and as fully as possible in community life”

Although often criticised in European terms as “a hire and fire society”, it is the flexibility of the American system of higher education and its labour market that frequently give the immigrant his or her first chance to step on the ladder of economic success. And in the United States especially, it is wealth creation that is encouraged and admired. The fear among certain sectors of the population in Europe is that immigrants and especially illegal immigrants will “steal” jobs at low wages or else find some way of living off the welfare state rather than finding their own way to earn a living. This fear may be unjustified but it exists and hampers the process of belonging in a society. In some parts of the U.S. similar sentiments are expressed, but generally economic dislocations and competition have not yet displaced the tradition of the newcomer finding a place in America.

Papademetriou and other authors are clear that government alone cannot be the sole vector for integration but that a combination of organisations that include government, foundations and the private sector have the experience and resources to aid the process. Although many non-governmental bodies in Europe make an excellent contribution to integration, there is a tendency for them to be state funded rather than to raise the
resources to act independently. In Detroit, there are good examples of the Arab community raising their own funds to help newcomers, a longstanding immigrant tradition that might well be followed to a greater extent in Brussels.

The overwhelming difference between the two cities is that the Arabs and Muslims in Detroit generally arrive better prepared and educated than the Muslims in Brussels. In Detroit, a city hard hit by economic downturn, even lower socio-economic immigrant groups, such as Yemenis, Bosnians, and Bangladeshis, generally put a high premium on seeing their sons and daughters obtain higher education and move on from initial merchant type to professional occupations. In contrast, in spite of Brussels having a gross domestic product per capita second only to the London region in the whole of Europe, there are large pockets of unemployment and deprivation principally amongst the Muslim population.

There is also a major geo-political constraint in Brussels that does not exist in Detroit. Brussels is a bi-lingual region surrounded by Dutch-speaking Flanders. Whilst it is true that there are suburbs of Brussels that are francophone, they are extremely expensive and out of the financial reach of all but the most successful immigrant population, which is itself almost entirely French speaking. Indeed, one of the reasons that Belgium is a target for North African immigrants is simply because French is one of the national languages. Because of Belgium’s inflexible language laws this means that, linguistically, immigrants are “sealed into” the bi-lingual Brussels region unless they learn Dutch. Some indeed make this commendable effort or settle in other Dutch-speaking cities. But the net effect is that, in general, as far as Brussels is concerned, the option of aspiring immigrants to move out into the wealthier environment of outlying (Flemish) suburbs is a reduced option. In Detroit this pattern seems to hold less for immigrants (over the long term) than for disadvantaged black populations of the city centre, who through educational and other obstacles, find it difficult to join their “middle class” counterparts in the suburbs. Nevertheless, some immigrant Middle Eastern groups, especially Arabs owning petrol stations and Chaldeans owning food shops, found property much more affordable in the depressed city centre area and established family run businesses in a tradition for American ethnic immigrants dating back to the early 20th century merchants in New York City.

The layout and conception of Brussels is totally different than Detroit. Brussels is compact and much smaller in population, whereas, Detroit is spread out over a wide area, dependent entirely on mobility by car and without significant public transport. The difference between the two cities will be further elaborated below.

Finally, it must be remembered that immigrants in Europe and especially Muslim newcomers are concentrated in relatively few urban areas, such as Rotterdam, Bradford Leicester and the Ruhr. This is less true in the United States and therefore the integration
issues are more diffused and less likely to cause social dislocation, and to vary somewhat by region of the country and immigrant origins (e.g., Latin vs. Middle Eastern).^4

III. Can Integration be Measured?

An important question that inevitably arises when trying to compare the level of integration of Muslims in America and Belgium is whether integration can in fact be measured. However, as a broader discussion on the measurability of integration would take us beyond the scope of this study, we chose to rely on the research that has already been carried out in this area. More specifically, we took the indicators used in the Migration Policy Integration Index (MIPEX) as a source of inspiration. The Migration Policy Integration Index^5 which has an academic and social services network covering 25 European Union countries and three non-EU countries, one of which is Canada, measures policies to integrate migrants covering six policy areas: labour market access, family reunion, long term residence, political participation, access to nationality and anti-discrimination. Belgium ranks ninth and Canada fifth (equal with Finland) in the overall results.

The difficulty lies in assessing the psychological aspects of immigration, whether an individual feels that they belong in a society, whether they regard it as “home” and how well they fit the culture. These are frequently unknowns or perhaps “unknowables”. This report would not pretend to answer these questions but it may, taken with well constructed tools such as MIPEX, throw some light on them and point to further avenues of research.

IV. Socio-economic comparisons between Detroit and Brussels

Demographic background

The two cities have very different profiles in terms of area and population. The urban area of greater Detroit (city and suburbs) is 3242 square kilometres with a population of 4 million, whereas the Brussels Capital Region is a mere 161 square kilometres with a population of just over a million people. This means that, comparing the two regions, Detroit is 6 times bigger than the Brussels Capital Region with only 4 times more people. However, this does not necessarily mean that Brussels is a substantially more crowded

^4 For more information on this aspect of integration see Fix, Michael (ed) Securing the Future: US Immigration Integration Policy, A Reader

^5 www.integrationindex.eu
city in its central area. It is just that greater Detroit is more spread out and suburban due to the emphasis of the region on car manufacture and the post Second World War removal of population and meaningful public transport. However both city centres share the fact that there is a high degree of racial segregation. Detroit is 80% African American and central Brussels has a high proportion of North African immigrants.

Because national statistics do not include any information on the religious affiliation of the population, it is still extremely difficult to have an accurate idea of the number of Muslims living in Belgium today and, a fortiori, in Brussels. Like Belgium and elsewhere in Europe (in France, for example), American census and national statistics do not track religious affiliation. Consequently, the best we can do is to use orders of magnitude and estimates based on an extrapolation of the number of people who immigrated and their descendents. Many researchers, both in Belgium and in other European countries, have mentioned this problem of being able to evaluate the number of Muslims. In this context, we speak generally of about 15 to 24 million of Muslims in Europe. The most recent estimates put the figure for the number of Muslims in Belgium at between 350,000 and 370,000 persons, corresponding more or less to 4% of the population. These include between 6000 and 30,000 converts from Belgium or other European countries.

The vast majority of this population (more than 90%) stems from immigration. In Brussels specifically, the Muslim population is estimated at approximately 160,000 persons, representing 39% of all Muslims in the country and nearly 17% of the total population of the city. This makes Brussels “one of the most Muslim cities in the Western world” (Manço, Kanmaz, 2004). For the US, estimates vary widely from two to seven million people (however, as the Pew report indicates, it is likely to be at the lower end of this range). Many Muslims have settled in major metropolitan areas along the two coasts and in the Midwest which is home to four of the nine American states with the largest Muslim populations. Michigan is one of these states and Detroit (and more specifically some areas such as Dearborn and Hamtramck) is the city which includes the highest Muslim population; an estimated 300,000 citizens of Arab descent live in the Detroit area, and half the Arabs in the U.S. are estimated to be Muslim. (Psychiatric News January 21, 2005, Volume 40 Number 2, citing data from Arab Community Center.

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6 The available statistics on the demographic situation in Brussels only distinguish between Belgian and foreign inhabitants of the capital without including any further specification as to the nationality of these foreigners. Hence, it is impossible to know exactly how many North African immigrants currently live in Brussels, also because many of them have meanwhile obtained the Belgian nationality. In that sense, it is however telling that, between 1990 and 2005, 181,840 foreigners from the Brussels Capital Region obtained the Belgian nationality, of which 48.9% were Moroccan and 12.8% Turkish. Statistische Indicatoren van het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest, Uitgave 2007, figure 1.1.3.
for Economic and Social Services). Detroit is now better known as the heart of Arab American culture, with the largest concentration of Middle Eastern people outside that region, than for its industry *per se*, although many of these families migrated specifically for these industries.

These estimates have some major disadvantages, however. First, the figures presume that all immigrants from countries where Islam is the dominant religion are Muslim, and so are their descendents, whereas in fact some of them may belong to other religions (certain predominantly Muslim countries have or had large Jewish and/or Christian minorities for example) or be nonreligious. In fact, as for other religions, there are many facets of Muslim affiliation: the consequence of the civilization without religious observance for some, foundation of a code of ethics for others, ritualisation of life, or even the basis of a political ideology. (It should be noted that in this report, we will be using the terms “Muslim” and “Islamic” with reference to Islam as a religious belief.) Secondly, these estimates give a very general and global idea of the Muslim population without referring to its diversity. Finally, it assumes the fact that all Muslims accurately identify with countries of origin. More specifically for the US, there is an ongoing debate as to the true size of the Muslim population, and some trends indicating increased conversions to Islam among non-Muslim populations (see Margot Patterson, “Muslims in America: They Face Many Obstacles but also New Opportunities, *National Catholic Reporter*, NCRonline, June 30, 2006) as well as significant non-immigrant Muslim populations (as with African Americans). Various institutions and organizations have given widely varying estimates about how many Muslims live in the U.S. These estimates have been controversial, with a number of researchers being explicitly critical of the survey methodologies that have led to the higher estimates.

There are 1209 mosques in the United States, 33 of which are in Detroit. Dearborn, Michigan is home to the Islamic Center of America, the largest mosque in North America, along with the Dearborn Mosque. The Islamic Center of America, nominally Shi’a in orientation, was rebuilt in 2005 to accommodate over 3 000 worshippers among the increasing Muslim population of the region. At present, many mosques are still served by imams brought from overseas, as only these imams have diplomas from Muslim seminaries. This sometimes leads to conflict or friction between the congregation and an imam who speaks little English and has little understanding of American culture. Some American Muslims have founded seminaries in the US in an attempt to preclude such problems.

This is also true in Europe and in Belgium. The first Belgian training for imams was set up in 2008 but it is still not compulsory. In Belgium, we generally speak about the existence of approximately 300 mosques. In Brussels, there are 82 prayer rooms but only one “real mosque” with its own architectural characteristics. This mosque is the Centre Islamic et Culturel de Belgique (CICB, Islamic and Cultural Center of Belgium) directed
and financed by Saudi Arabia. The mosque is situated in quarter of the city in which the EU institutions are also to be found. The CICB has a high symbolic importance for Muslims in Brussels but the building was not conceived as a mosque and was part of an exhibition dating from mid 19th century.

In Brussels, five communes or municipalities have a very high concentration both of the Muslim population and of the Muslim associations (this category includes mosques and prayer rooms). Indeed, a simple analysis of the data of the National Statistics Institute on the population living in Brussels whose nationality corresponds to a country where Islam is the dominant religion, confirms that this population is highly concentrated in certain communes and certain neighbourhoods. In fact, nearly 75% of this population lives in only five of the 19 communes in the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR): Anderlecht, Brussels-Centre, Molenbeek, Schaerbeek, Saint-Josse. Although one might have thought that a certain number of elements (like the price of buildings, administrative difficulties, etc.) might have favoured the emergence of a Muslim associative fabric outside of town, this mapping shows us that the Muslim cultural associations we have identified are to a very large extent concentrated in the same communes as the Muslim population. Almost two-thirds of the associations identified are concentrated in only three communes: Schaerbeek, Molenbeek and Brussels-Centre. By adding the communes of Saint-Josse and Anderlecht, we obtain nearly 80% of the associations concentrated in these five districts of the Brussels-Capital Region, which are exactly the same as those that show a concentration of population whose origin stems from a country where Islam is the dominant religion. Thus, both Muslim organisations and the population are to be found in the same areas of the city.

Such patterns are also characteristic of Detroit, with large Islamic and Arab concentrations in Dearborn and its surrounding communities, as well as Hamtramck, parts of Detroit and certain suburbs such as Southfield, West Bloomfield, and Farmington Hills. The latter tend to be the destinations of specific groups, such as Chaldean (Iraqi) Christians, as they climb the socio-economic scale.

Some common patterns

Both in Europe (and a fortiori in Belgium and Brussels) and in the US, fear, suspicion and misunderstandings are linked to common representations and images of Islam. There is a growing “us versus them” mentality about what are considered to be the values of the host society (equality, freedom, democracy, etc.) and those of Islam, which very often are perceived as linked to violence and the submission of women. Both in Europe and in the US, media coverage of Islam is quite negative and globalised. For example, there is a growing public concern in Belgium about the protests made by some students and
teachers against the theory of Darwinian evolution. When describing these claims, media automatically refer to the Muslim faith even if it is well known that other migrant communities and religious groups are also unwilling to accept Darwin (in the U.S. Christian advocates of “intelligent design” get far more coverage). In the same vein, refusing a male nurse is linked to religion without considering the impact of the social norms behind such a refusal.

The debate about values and differences between a host society and Islam often has roots in the question of the separation between church and state and the supposed neutrality of public space. But as we will examine below, the content of these dissensions about the nature of public space is quite different in Europe and the US. The structure of public space is quite different in the US than what is found in Belgium; for example it is very surprising for a European visiting the US to notice the demarcation of the areas in lines and squares and not around an historic centre as we see in Europe. The two cities also share a certain degree of spatial segregation. Of course, the extent and nature of this segregation is not the same due to historical elements: Belgium has never known an official segregation policy by the state even though some Brussels mayors took the decision during the 1980s to forbid the registering of new foreigners (especially Moroccan and Turks) in their communes. In Detroit, this spatial segregation, which has most impacted the African-American community, is the result of workplace discrimination and de-industrialisation combined with residential discrimination, which in past years was quite formalized and applied against immigrant groups. There is also a certain tendency of ethnic communities to congregate among themselves for purposes of comfort, social support and familiarity, a pattern seen in Jewish and other formerly immigrant groups that also suffered from residential and employment discrimination.

In Brussels, the concentration of the Muslim population in the Brussels Region stems first from the history of migration itself: migration for work, meaning that migrants set up in certain neighbourhood. The immigrant workers initially settled in or near their place of work (particularly for the construction industry) or moved to other towns during the economic recession in the 1970s. Muslim immigration was concentrated in the first instance in urban areas, given the types of work offered to people of Muslim origin at the time of arrival of the first migrants. The current breakdown of the Muslim population by locality therefore reflects the economic role of immigration from North Africa and Turkey.

Muslim migrants have moved into affordable, working class urban residential areas. And it so happens that in Brussels these neighbourhoods are in the centre of the city. This

\[7\] In Belgium, as in a number of other European countries, identity cards and registration of the population for voting, tax, driving licence and passport purposes in the locality of residence is compulsory for citizens and non-citizens alike.
spatial structure itself is the consequence of historical factors dividing the city into an "upper" part, that is more affluent, and a "lower" part that it is more working class, thus determining where the social groups were established. Major urban constructions and renewal of the city (such as the construction of the large boulevards in the centre, for example) pushed industry and the working population towards the west and the canal area, whereas the affluent part of the city extended mainly to the east and the South.

It was not surprising to see that the population coming from countries where Islam was the dominant religion concentrated in the poorest communes of the Brussels Region, in other words those places where average incomes per tax declaration were lower than the regional average. These localities were situated in the centre of the city and afforded more available, if often substandard, housing. This is very important to keep in mind in order to understand the debates and the negotiation strategies emerging at the local level described below.

The concentration of Muslim populations in the Brussels region also corresponds to the economic changes that took place in the 1960s and 1970s. Economic growth in the 1960s brought a net improvement in the standard of living of certain social groups. This economic improvement favoured their social improvement and enabled them to move into new areas. To this was added the fact that the Belgian state pursued a policy encouraging home ownership during that same period, and many families left town to build homes in the suburbs where they could afford the cost of building sites. At the time, a very large majority of Muslim families belonged to categories of the population whose more precarious socio-economic conditions prevented any possibility of residential mobility. Consequently they stayed in the same neighbourhoods, even when jobs gradually left the areas where they had initially settled. The oldest neighbourhoods in the centre of Brussels were gradually abandoned by the more affluent and by part of the working class for whom conditions were such that they could aspire to a better environment, and were taken over by immigrant populations and lower working classes that were unable to follow the suburbanization movement. The economic recession in the 70s, and the increasingly precarious economic conditions that followed, further limited the possibilities of social and spatial mobility, thereby consolidating the presence of Muslim families in these neighbourhoods. The growth in the number of homeowners among Muslim families also reinforced this trend. Finally, the districts where Muslim immigrants and their families concentrated also bore witness to the discrimination experienced by these populations on the housing market, as well as to the solidarity networks maintained or created in these areas.

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8 There are signs that this situation may be gradually reversed, for example by the renewal of the Dansaert quarter
What can be considered as a common pattern between Detroit and Brussels is the process of de-industrialisation in the two cities, a process that has especially affected migrants. Detroit also had a record of “abandonment” beginning in the 1950s and 60s as more affluent citizens, assisted by government policies regarding highway construction and housing finance, beat a path to the suburbs. This pattern had relatively little to do with immigration and much more to do with race relations in U.S. cities. The process of economic decline accelerated with the global competition and job losses of the auto industry during the last 25 years.

**But very different profiles**

As in Belgium, the Muslim American population has been growing rapidly as a result of immigration, a high birth rate and conversions. But even if substantial numbers of Muslims came to the US during the 18th and the 19th centuries through the slave trade (and indeed 10 to 30 percent of the African slaves were Muslims often forced to convert later to Christianity, while a movement in the twentieth century began to convert many more to Islam, Muslim Americans are a relatively new and numerically limited presence in American life. In contrast, Islam has a long tradition (kept hidden and sometimes forgotten) in Europe, which has involved periodic conflict in places such as Bosnia. The presence of Muslims in Belgium, is the result of a relatively recent historical process – the massive call for foreign labour launched in the 1960s by the Belgian authorities at that time as part of a migration policy. As decades went by, the Muslim population has gradually grown significantly due to the effects of several factors: the natural birth rate, family re-unification as stipulated in the various regulations both national and at EU level and encouraged by the Belgian authorities to promote integration, marriage of Belgian Muslims (men and women) with partners from the country of origin, political refugees, conversions, illegal immigration, etc.

In the US, many African Americans embraced Islam because it reconnected them to a history and a cultural identity that had been lost in slavery, teaching racial equality and the need for self-improvement. In addition, there is a small but growing population of White and Hispanic converts, many of whom are women who have married Muslim men. Consequently, the proportion and the importance of Muslim converts are greater in the US than in Belgium and in the US conversions involve some thousands of people. Consequently, in Europe, immigration and Islam are almost synonymous. In the US, instead, the relatively high rate of African-American Muslims converted to Islam makes it more difficult to characterise Islam as a foreign, un-American religion, although it became a point of controversy in the emergence of Barack Hussain Obama, (a Christian of Kenyan-American origins but sometimes perceived as a Muslim by the general public because of his middle name,) as presidential candidate in 2008.
The second difference is the diversity of the Muslim population. In the US, estimates of the African-American Muslim population have ranged from one-fifth to one-third of the total for all Muslim Americans. The other most important ethnic groups are Arabs and South-Asians (Indians, Pakistanis, etc.) but also Turks, Iranians, Bosnians, Indonesians, Nigerians, etc. Images of this diversity were evident when we visited Dearborn and Hamtramck but can also be seen in the very diverse architectural styles of the mosques, which range from storefronts to grand domed structures. These illustrations would tend to demonstrate that Europe’s Muslim communities have more homogeneous ethnic origins than their American counterparts.

In Brussels, more than 70% of Muslims are Moroccan or of Moroccan origin, 20% are Turkish or of Turkish origin, and the remaining 10% represent Albanians, Pakistanis, Egyptians and other North African nationalities or origins (Tunisia, Algeria, etc.). However, it is important to observe that there are divisions in the Brussels Muslim network of associations: three major breaks can be identified. There is first, an ethnic-national division. The first associations of Muslim migrants were constituted on an ethnic-nationality basis, and these differences subsist today. There are Turkish mosques, Moroccan mosques, Pakistani mosques etc. No mosque really has a mixed audience, though all of course remain open to any of the faithful. Secondly, with the arrival of Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Egypt, Tunisia, etc., this ethnic-national breakdown has increasingly taken on a language aspect. A distinction is now made between Arab-speaking mosques and Turkish-speaking mosques. This separation is reinforced by the fact that a large number of Imams come either from countries of origin, or from third countries. Consequently, a very large majority of khutba (sermons) are given either in Arabic or in Turkish. Only large mosques with a broader audience consisting of young people and converts who do not necessarily speak Arabic, also provide for sermons in both languages (French and Arabic, for example) or a translation. It should also be noted that there are many sub-divisions within the same ethnic or linguistic group as well. This is the case for Turkish Islam that is broken down into different doctrines and ideologies (Diyanet, Milli Görüs, Süleymani, etc.). Finally, there is also a religious differentiation corresponding to the distinction between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. These divisions traditionally prevent collaboration between the various trends present within Islam in Brussels and to some extent Detroit. Moreover, they are part of the recent troubles experienced by the Exécutif des Musulmans de Belgique (Executive of Muslims in Belgium - EMB)⁹.

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⁹ EMB is the State's official correspondent for the management of the Muslim faith. The EMB manages that which pertains to the “temporal” aspects of Muslim worship (appointment of teachers of the Muslim religion in schools and Muslim chaplains in prisons, registration of persons authorized to carry out sacrifices during the feast of the sacrifice, etc.) and not the “spiritual” dimension of the faith concerning anything pertaining to doctrine and interpretation of holy texts.
The third most important difference we can identify is a question of socio-economic and citizenship profile of the Muslim migrants. Indeed, after the First World War, the Muslims who entered the US tended to be better educated and more urban than their predecessors. This is not the case in Belgium where first generation Muslim migrants were predominantly rural and much less educated than the Belgian population. Due to poorer socio-economic backgrounds (but also due to illegal discrimination in finding work), the Muslim population have a high rate of unemployment and less promising financial opportunities. But due to modifications of the Belgian nationality code (which has become one of the most liberal in Europe) at least a very large majority of the Belgian Muslim population has obtained Belgian nationality.

The impact of this can be seen in the political representation of the migrant population: in Brussels, there are numerous elected representatives of Muslim origin in executive and legislative bodies (however mainly at the local and regional level). That is not to say that they are effectively going to represent the Muslim population as a specific and targeted group. But having some political representatives of foreign origin gives the opportunity for a say in society. In contrast, according to a 2007 survey by Pew Research Center, 65 percent of the Muslim American population are first-generation immigrants, and 61 percent of the foreign-born arrived recently, that is to say in the nineties. Seventy-seven percent of Muslims living in the US are citizens, with 65 percent of the foreign-born naturalized citizens. Consequently, Muslim Americans lack strong institutions and recognizable public or political voices to gain regular access to government and suffer a lack of elected representatives. The first Muslim to win a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives was only elected in 2006, though there were U.S. Senators of Arab Christian origin, such as James Aborezk of South Dakota, at least two decades earlier. The situation seems to be quite different at the local level, as increasing numbers of Arab and Muslim Americans are running for elective office in cities and towns, though relatively few have been elected outside the locations of greatest Middle Eastern settlement.

**Conclusion: power of the local level?**

In general, the level of religious observance is considerably lower in Europe than in the United States. And a very important difference between the US and Europe has to do with the role of religion and religious group identities in public life and in the organization of civil society. European societies have different institutional and legal structures regarding religious associations, very diverse policies of state recognition and regulation as well as diverse laws ands practice concerning when and where one may publicly express religious beliefs and practices. Europe has experienced centuries of struggle between Church and State. And the actual secularization paradigm is
accompanied by a secularist self-awareness that interprets the decline of church as normal
and progressive, even where a formally “established” religion exists as in Britain. The
consequence is a quasi-normative understanding of what is considered as being modern
and enlightened. Moreover, this decline of the role of church manifests itself in the near
disappearance of religious symbols in the public space. Whether this is well-founded or
not, the consequence is that European societies have much greater difficulty in
recognizing some legitimate role for religion in public life and in the organization of
collective identities or the demonstration of personal beliefs. Consequently, the new
visibility of Islam is interpreted as not being “normal” and as disturbing the way the
public space of the host society functions. At its most intense, this determined
secularisation has led to notable conflicts as in the Danish cartoon controversy regarding
portrayals of Islam and the Prophet Mohammed.

In contrast, in the US, a society notable for a formal church-state constitutional
separation, religious identities have been one of the primary ways of structuring internal
societal pluralism in American history. Indeed one of the strongest institutional forces in
African-American political movements, ranging from Martin Luther King to Malcolm X,
were church or religion based. Today, as in the past, religion and public religious
identities play an important role in the process of incorporation and political expression
of new migrants (as in the frequent consultation of imams in public programs involving
Muslims).

Following its historic development, it is not surprising if in Belgium, public authorities
do not encourage ethnic and of course religious leaders to mediate integration of
migrants\(^\text{10}\). Moreover, integration public policies do not target specific groups. They even
do not formally target migrants but rather areas with certain socio-economic difficulties.
This is achieved by identifying certain criteria leading to a comparable result. In the US,
instead, as we clearly saw it in Detroit, ethnic and religious associations are encouraged
and sometimes financially supported (as in tax immunity) by the state to act in the field of
integration. In other words, cultural and religious diversity is recognized.

Of course, this does not prevent conflicts and apprehensions both in US and Europe.
But it seems that in the two areas some solutions can be found at the local level. For
example, in January 2004, members of the Al-Islah Islamic Center situated in Hamtramck
requested city permits to use loudspeakers for the purpose of broadcasting the Islamic
call to prayer. This request set off a contentious debate in the city, ostensibly about the

\(^{10}\) This is almost true for the French-speaking part of the country. It is important to note that Belgium
is a federal state and that integration policies depend on the decentralized authorities. In the Dutch-
speaking part of the country (and in Brussels for the Dutch-speaking associations), things are quite
different: religious communities have for example different holidays than those of the Catholic
calendar.
noise that would be caused, eventually garnering national attention. Ultimately, Hamtramck amended its noise ordinance in July 2004 regulating the volume level of all religious sounds. The conflict was resolved by negotiation and discussions between interested parties, the Muslim community and the local authorities; numerous Hamtramck civic groups backed the Mosque’s request despite protests from some dissident religious organizations, many from outside the city. In Brussels, debates about establishment of mosques and management of Aid el kebir (adha) were resolved in much the same way. This means that if there are passionate debates on the national level about the possible integration of Islam in Western societies, reasonable and pragmatic agreements exist at the local level.

V. Existing Recent Studies

General background studies

In considering the situation of Muslims in both Detroit and Brussels, the project managers were fortunate in being able to draw upon two existing reports published in the past year in the United States by reputed research bodies (Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Pew Research Center) as well as the second edition of the Handbook on Integration published by the European Commission.

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs report indicates that, after the trauma of September 11th 2001, fear and suspicion of Muslims remain evident in the U.S. The report indicates that “full and equal opportunities for civic and political participation of Muslim Americans is an urgent national need”. The report’s recommendations can be summarized as:

- Expand and recognize the Muslim American contribution to national security
- Improve media coverage and public understanding of Muslim Americans
- Increase civic engagement among Muslim Americans
- Build stronger Muslim American institutions
- Cultivate the next generation of Muslim leaders
- Give ongoing national attention to Muslim American integration

The Pew Research Center report is more concerned with the economic and social situation of Muslims in the United States and draws favourable comparisons between them and their European counterparts:
“The life situations and attitudes of Muslim Americans stand in contrast with those of Muslim minorities in Western Europe. Pew Global Attitudes surveys conducted in 2006 in Great Britain, France, Germany and Spain found Muslims in these countries greatly concerned about unemployment. Unlike Muslims in the U.S, the average annual incomes in these countries lag well behind the average incomes on non-Muslims.

Nearly half of Muslims in the U.S (47%) think of themselves first as Muslim, rather than primarily American. But proportionally far more Muslims in three of the four Western European nations surveyed said they considered themselves first as Muslims, rather than citizens of their countries. In addition, Muslim Americans’ view of the quality of life for Muslim women in the U.S are also relatively positive when compared with Muslims in the Western European countries surveyed.”

The main findings of the Pew report were:

- There are estimated to be 2.35 million Muslims in the U.S (under 1%). In contrast there are estimated to be 15 million Muslims in the European Union or about 3%.

- Overall, Muslim Americans have a generally positive view of the larger society. Most say that they reside in excellent or good places to live.

- A large majority (71%) agree that most people who want to get ahead in America can make it if they are willing to work.

- The survey shows that many Muslims are relative newcomers to America; about 65% were born elsewhere, a large proportion of whom are from Arab countries. Nevertheless, they believe that Muslims in the U.S should adopt American customs; 63% do not see any conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in a modern society. Thus there seems to be an acceptance of an value placed on integration.

- Muslim Americans reject Islamic extremism. But 53% say that America has become a more difficult place to live for them since 9/11. (By comparison one might say that anti-Muslim feelings have been expressed far longer in parts of the EU, as British social intolerance towards Pakistani immigrants has shown.)

The Handbook on Integration published by the European Commission is not specifically concerned with Muslim immigrants but with all immigrants. While immigration in general is a challenging issue for the EU in light of such factors as traditional impediments, now changing slowly, to naturalized citizenship, the particular

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11 As previously indicated, the estimates vary widely
set of issues raised by Islamic immigration seem uniquely challenging and involve matters such as religious toleration and free speech. The Handbook provides valuable avenues for further exploration and research and highlights aspects of the Common Basic Principles of integration enunciated in the Hague Programme of November 2004 in particular that:

- Integration is not easy to plan; it is a non-linear longer term process which can be derailed by international political events (such as 9/11) or criminal acts which can set back the process significantly.
- It is important to eliminate inequalities (especially inequalities of opportunity) and to encourage the acquisition of skills
- Organisations should learn from each other
- Action should often be at local level because so many practices on housing and integration in cities are local. It is particularly important to establish good mechanisms for the exchange of local experience and ideas

**Local Reports on Integration**

A 2001 study by the European Union Monitoring Centre in Vienna underlines that the EU is a marriage of cultures and ethnicities into which Muslim communities must fit. The report’s recommendations, based on an examination of five European cities (of which Brussels is not one) include the encouragement of greater participation by the Muslim community in institutional matters, creation of public awareness of problems of discrimination and intolerance including better monitoring of this phenomenon and fostering a more open and constructive climate in dealing with Muslim issues. The report highlighted the three key questions based on best practice in the five cities, of employment opportunities, public services and education, all subjects touched upon in the discussions in Detroit.

In the field of employment, the report indicated that respect for Muslim holidays, facilities for prayer and dietary needs in canteens and a complaint procedure all merited consideration. In public service, a sensitive attitude to provision of medical staff of both genders and interviews with parents before placing children in pre-school facilities to ensure that Muslim children’s needs were respected, were all mentioned. And in the education sector, the emphasis was on parent participation and cooperation between religious groups. The group saw practices along these lines well articulated, for example, in its visit to Windsor, Canada. Hamtramck and other Detroit area school districts also have instituted Hallal food offerings in canteens.
The 2006 European Migration Network study *The Impact of Immigration on Europe’s Societies* noted the absence of relevant research, some of it basic on such questions as the use of common terminology in public and even research discourse. The press not infrequently refers to almost all immigrants as “asylum seekers” irrespective of whether they seek this status or not. Similar difficulties have been noted in American media terminology. The study highlights the following areas of concern, all of which also impact the American scene, and apply not only to the Muslim immigrant populations:

- Access to labour markets
- Access to social welfare
- Housing: the need to avoid segregation and rules for social housing that are clear and do not antagonize the local population
- Health care: special provision for the traumatized
- Education and language proficiency: to be enhanced in order to provide employment possibilities
- Civic Rights: voting rights and participation in local and national elections to be encouraged and a clear path to naturalization for new immigrants
- A lack of transparency of immigration law

Sergio Carrera (2006) notes the nexus between immigration, integration and citizenship, which is sometimes lacking in Europe compared with the United States and especially Canada. He indicates that most formal integration programmes share similar elements, in particular, language training, vocational training and (frequently compulsory in many EU states) civic education. As seen earlier, many of these functions are handled through non-governmental organizations in U.S. cities. Examining the case of Belgium and particularly Brussels, one notes the subtleties of the Belgian constitutional system whereby integration matters are dealt with by the two linguistic communities thus ensuring that Dutch or French speakers in the Belgian capital are dealt with differently. In Flanders (Dutch speaking) or among Dutch speakers in Brussels, the Flemish law of April 1st 2004\(^\text{12}\) requires the new immigrant to undergo Dutch language courses, social orientation and career guidance. In Wallonia and the Francophone community in Brussels, there is no compulsory training. Carrera, drawing on Joppke and Morawka (2003), observes that integration programmes presume that the existing populations are well integrated which is far from the case especially in a country like Belgium – not the only example- where national identity is an issue.

\(^{12}\) *Decreet betreffende het Vlaamse inburgeringsbeleid*
Gsir and others (2005) discussing the Brussels region note both positive and negative trends. For example, in the regional elections of June 2004, a significant number of Belgians of foreign extraction were elected (in practice this would mean Muslims since the vast majority are of Islamic origin.) On the other hand, citing a report of the K.U Leuven and the Université Libre de Bruxelles in Spring 2005\textsuperscript{13}, Gsir notes that Moroccans and Turks are often employed at lower wages. Following the KUL/ULB report, the Minister of Employment of the Brussels Region presented a strategic plan of action to fight recruitment discrimination. This included:

- Informing secondary school students of their rights
- Networking of all public vacancies
- Improving training especially of language
- Launching a charter of diversity in private companies
- Creating a sponsorship network between employers and self-employed immigrant workers

From this brief survey of some recent studies, some preliminary observations and key words can be identified. There is little surprise in the recognition of problem areas: anti-discrimination, employment and the language training to which it can be linked, education and facilities to enable immigrants to follow their culture and religion. In the analysis which follows of the discussions in Detroit and the conclusions of the individual who took part in that exercise, attention should be focussed on three essential concepts for the” host society to recognise: sensitivity, access, transparency

\textsuperscript{13} Discrimination against Persons of Foreign Origin in the Brussels Capital Region Labour Market (www.orbem.be/fr/observatoire_publications_Kul_ulb_fr.htm)
VI. Observations on Policy Aspects of Immigrant Integration

1. Anti-Racism and anti-discrimination policy

It is clear that racism and discrimination are a substantial cause of marginalisation in Europe and that Belgium is no exception. EU legislation based on article 13 of the Amsterdam treaty outlawing discrimination on account of race and ethnic origin and disability, age or sexual orientation and on grounds of religion or belief should have been transposed into national law by the end of 2003; however infringement procedures are pending in certain cases. This legislation is in addition to the substantial protection Europeans have under their national constitutional law and the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Thus, theoretically, Belgian citizens and residents should have substantial legal protection enforceable in their own courts and at EU or Council of Europe level. Regrettably, this is far from the case. Legal rights are one thing, effective protection is another. Procedures are often slow or expensive and cases of discrimination are difficult to prove. This is why it is so important to have rapid and easy redress when there is prima facie evidence of discrimination especially regarding housing and employment. The headscarf issue, the Danish cartoon affair and the negative feedback from the international situation in the Middle East give those inclined to discrimination unjustified comfort in their actions and the tendency is for only the most blatant cases of discrimination to see the light of day. Muslims in particular feel themselves under scrutiny after the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, partly due to the practice of racial profiling. Often this translates into a feeling of exclusion and alienation, the idea that they do not belong in Belgian society but are simply tolerated. It should be remembered in this context that the vast majority of immigrants, citizens and non-citizens, in Brussels are Muslims who already feel different by reason of their religion and who are often uncomfortable with their dual identity. This is exacerbated when they return to their countries of origin for visits (a frequent occurrence on account of geographical proximity) and experience the sensation that they do not really belong in either society. For Moroccans and Turks in those countries, they are “Belgian” and for the Belgians, they are “Moroccans” or “Turks”.

In Detroit, as the two reports cited above indicate, there appears to be substantially less discrimination against Muslims than in Brussels and, as a group, they are more successful

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14 These are based on the indicators in MIPEX, the meetings in Detroit and the experience of participants in Brussels. See also attached notes and papers
15 Protection of equality of the sexes dates back to the Treaty Of Rome
economically. Many also travel to or keep family and business connections to previous homelands, with a basic sense of American identity. Again, though, the post 9/11 period has seen some jarring crackdowns on individuals and families, as in a well publicized prosecution of a prominent Detroit area restaurant owner for financial dealings with supposed extremist groups. In Michigan those of Arab extraction are mostly skilled workers, financially and professionally well settled in the area. Twice the number of Arab-Americans have a post-graduate degree as compared to the general population. Their sense of belonging and “becoming American” is quite strong. This is aided by the fact that the US is a much more religious society than Belgium which is, like much of Europe, essentially secular. However, there is variance in wealth levels of immigrants, with some new arrivals and people from certain regions (e.g., Yemen, Bangladesh) in far more difficult economic straits than others. Social issues such as language adaptation for first generation immigrants or domestic violence or abuse, (a well-kept secret among certain groups), constitute issues requiring social intervention and social services, either private or through religious groups, or through public agencies.

It is, of course, a mistake to consider Arab Americans and Muslim Americans as exactly the same group. Detroit is home to approximately 300,000 diverse people from the Middle East and beyond, many of whom are Christians (from Syria, Palestine and Lebanon) or Chaldean Christian from Iraq. Obviously these groups form their own religious communities. They do, however, seem to coalesce in organisations, some of which can rival each other, such as the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) and the Arab American and Chaldean Council (ACC) where all residents are welcome for the secular occupational, legal, social or health services provided (in a country that of course lacks a comprehensive national health care system). This is a good example of how substantial funding is raised in the United States by the community and private agencies for the welfare of the community, so that it is not entirely dependent on public financing. ACCESS has a $27 million budget and provides services free for those who cannot afford to pay, indeed, partly because of the rules of gaining government grants, including any cultural group (it has non-Muslim African American and other client groups). In Brussels, in contrast, the Conseil Musulman de Belgique recently broke up because Muslims of differing country origins could not agree on its functions.

In Belgium, there tends to be an asymmetric power relationship between the host society and minorities. Multiculturalism, the parallel respect for each other’s cultures has been the fashion, as in other European countries and the United States and especially Canada, and has advantages of culture recognition. Its distinct disadvantage, however, is shown up when the comparison is made with American communities. This is that

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16 No less than one third of the inhabitants of Dearborn claim Arab heritage
European immigrant groups tend to live parallel lives, do not become part of the mainstream and hence do not have the sense of social cohesion and belonging that is more prevalent in the United States. Politicians and academics both in Europe and Canada have voiced criticism of the concept of multi-culturalism in recent times.

Building on the EU’s Common Basic Principle of integration\textsuperscript{17}, a number of guidelines on the issue of anti-discrimination can be suggested:

- Integration is a two way process involving all actors. Muslims in Brussels realise this but have not been successful in exploiting it for their benefit.
- Both legal and undocumented migrants need to be taken into account because of the exploitation of the sans papiers.
- Equality mainstreaming (that is incorporating it into all policy tools) is a useful concept but everybody has to agree what it means.
- Specific minorities need to be taken into account. It is important not to generalise about “Muslims”.
- There needs to be a practical dialogue between all sections of the community and different levels of government to ensure that welfare services reach those who need it in the Muslim community and that legal redress is available easily and cheaply for those who suffer discrimination.

2. Policing Policy

The interaction between immigrants and other social minorities and the police is often crucial to civic peace. There is a tendency for European immigrant populations to see the police force as “them” and themselves as “us”; in the U.S. this pattern is seen mostly for African-American urban residents (Detroit’s police force, in contrast to suburban forces, is highly representative of African-Americans but few police forces in the area have significant numbers of Islamic or Middle Eastern officers). Unfortunately, police handling of a situation (such as the police chase that sparked off the French \textit{banlieue} riots) sometimes even worsens the situation. However, to their credit, police forces in both Brussels and Detroit are conscious of the need to build bridges to the immigrant community and work with rather than against them and they are aware that the Muslim population is especially sensitive given the political and social context described elsewhere in this paper. The police know that there is diversity in the population and that

\textsuperscript{17} See the EU’s Europa website or www.enar-eu.org
they have to reflect this fact both internally in their recruitment strategy and in their policing policy and procedures.

In terms of recruitment, efforts on both sides of the Atlantic are made to reflect the diversity of the population. In Brussels, in practice, this means that the police have to offer training to potential recruits, particularly language training because officers in Brussels have to master both the main national languages, and examination skills. Even with this effort it is often difficult to persuade Muslims and other ethnic minorities to put themselves forward as candidates in the first place. Police in the Detroit area are far less proficient in international languages, and must rely on translators or on-line electronic resources.

In addition, the police in Brussels organise outside events, such as sporting contests, with the local community and try to involve local companies and non-governmental organisations. They engage with ngo’s and involve police officers in understanding and interacting with social work and education. They organise neighbourhood meetings on the basis that one criminal act does not necessarily lead to a spate of them and they attempt to win the confidence of the community in reporting crime and interacting in a cooperative way with the police. Of course, this is easier said than done. Recently, a number of gangs have been formed in the Brussels region and conduct “warfare” one against the other which adds to the complications of policing. Some of them are racially based. The philosophy of the Brussels police is that the police by themselves do not prevent crime, but it is by gaining the confidence of the neighbourhood population that they can generate a climate of crime prevention.

In the discussions with police officers in Detroit and Windsor, Ontario, they seem to take a similar approach and appear willing to share their experience and methodology with their Brussels counterparts. Gang and criminal syndicate violence is of course known in Detroit, but only tangentially tends to involve international immigrant minorities, as in the economically depressed Latino community. Some school violence has at times pitted Middle Eastern immigrants against other resident youth.

Internally, the Brussels forces make great efforts not only to recruit but also to retain and promote officers of immigrant extraction. They do this in conjunction with training in cultural diversity and operate a policy of zero tolerance of racism. All officers do the same kinds of work whatever their religious or ethnic origins, they are called on to work in all environments. It is not always the Muslim officers who police Muslim areas of Brussels and vice-versa. Finally, provisions for differences of dress, religious holidays, prayer times and dietary laws must be made. Whereas substantial efforts in this regard have already been made in Detroit, the same now seems to be happening in Brussels.
3. Housing and Urban Space

After finding suitable employment or self-employment, housing is the second major obstacle faced by Muslim and other immigrants. In both the cities under discussion, there is a great deal of substandard accommodation and exploitation by private landlords.

It is beyond the scope of this report to analyse the advantages and disadvantages regarding the provision of public housing (called social housing in Belgium and housing projects in the United States). The discourse and policies in public housing philosophy have waxed and waned in both Brussels and Detroit throughout the twentieth century. In both Europe and the United States, policy makers have played with the idea of a voucher system which directly subsidises the accommodation seeker. In some countries in Europe (notably the United Kingdom) opinion has swung away from the construction of public housing, which in some cases carries a stigma. The inhabitants of these developments are seen not to be able to afford anything else and the poor maintenance of the infrastructure has increased the feeling of deprivation and abandonment so evident in the French banlieue situation. Nevertheless, it is probably fair to say that in neither Belgium nor the United States is the prevailing mood in favour of letting the market take the whole strain.

Immigrants in Brussels, that is principally Muslims, have major problems in finding affordable housing; and in Detroit, “white flight” to the outlying affluent suburbs has left an inner city with manifest problems of housing and wasted land. The problems and solutions are different in both places, but the net effect is that people at the bottom of the social ladder struggle to find satisfactory housing. In Detroit, small municipalities such as Hamtramck or districts such as East Dearborn take on importance for both immigrants and non-immigrant groups because of a relatively stable and well-maintained low cost housing stock, the majority of which is on the private market. Indeed the dire economic conditions of the entire area have caused housing prices generally to plummet.

In Brussels, the solution to the low cost housing issue is tackled in two ways: by building and renting mostly flats (apartments) and, in outlying suburbs, houses and by low cost loans. The coordination of this task is fulfilled by a public body called the Société de Logement de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale (SLRB). The management is often organised by housing associations based in the individual municipalities. In order to qualify for a low cost loan, the prospective owner must comply with certain criteria. The housing must either be constructed or sold by the SLRB, it must be only occupied by the buyer who has to own it outright, the purchase price is limited and so on. In spite of past efforts, lobby groups in Brussels call for more social housing to be built. The Rassemblement Bruxellois pour le Droit à l’Habitat has called for a doubling of the number of homes at moderate rents. The official list of those waiting for subsidised housing in Brussels is roughly 25,000 households, but the reality is probably a great deal more.
In Detroit, the problems seem to be solved much more on an ad hoc basis. Public housing was much in vogue in the 1950’s when it was, as in Europe, considered the antidote to urban slums (and, in Europe, war damage). The Brewster-Douglass Housing project, which was considered exemplary in its heyday, was built by the city of Detroit between 1935 and 1938 and, at first, was well maintained and appreciated by its occupants. When the more economically successful people moved out into their own homes, the apartments were not as well kept up and vandalism and petty crime took over. Most of these facilities have been demolished, or turned into subsidized or condominium private housing, leaving considerable numbers of homeless people living on the streets or seeking public shelters. Because of family and other support systems, immigrants do not seem prominent among urban “street people.”

The rise and fall of the Brewster-Douglass project is perhaps a good example of the problems that lie behind public housing. One of the tower blocks run by the Foyer St. Gilles\(^{18}\) (FSG), a housing association, near the South Station in Brussels went through a spate of vandalism and harassment by youngsters living either in it or in the immediate area, making life intolerable for the occupants, many of them immigrants themselves or elderly people. When the police were called, the purported culprits were nowhere to be seen. The FSG took the matter in hand energetically and mobilised residents, police and above all the parents of teenagers living in the neighbourhood. Funds were raised by the parents to clean-up the building who were then motivated to take their offspring in hand. Thus the cycle of threat and damage was thwarted. The lesson in the S. Gilles case is clear, as in private residential areas, security, cleanliness and “liveability” of a neighbourhood are the responsibility of all. In public housing, there is the temptation not to care because the buildings are not private property; The solution must therefore be that there has to be close cooperation between the public authorities running the building and the residents, as well as involvement of the police. Such cooperation implies that the different actors, which in many cases will include immigrant groups, Muslims included, are able to communicate, literally in terms of language, and more generally. Of course, sufficient funds have to be available to ensure that lifts (elevators) are working, graffiti cleaned and so on.

A living environment is not only a question of the provision of adequate housing; it also implies a wider liveable urban space that can accommodate people of different faiths and their practices. As previously noted, the controversy in Hamtramck MI over the call of the muezzin which was claimed to be disturbing the neighbourhood was finally resolved by a conclave of interests and mediation. In Brussels, a less accommodating solution to this issue is a blanket ban on the call to prayer. Once again, there are lessons

\(^{18}\) St. Gilles is one of the nineteen communes or boroughs of Brussels
to be learnt about the need for continual communication between different group interests.

On a wider front, the Brussels origin project, CityMined,\(^\text{19}\) although not strictly an institution aimed at immigrants, indirectly affects their lives in the inner city. It is an urban social movement with one of its objectives being inner city re-generation. CityMined’s philosophy includes connecting different communities with one another and bridging the gap between residents and users of the city. Amongst other things it looks at the question of “ghettoisation” and the effects of “gentrification” (renewal of often deteriorated historical inner city areas), a phenomenon also now seen in Detroit as new loft and upscale downtown housing developments displace low income housing and tenants.

Ghettoisation results in part from newcomers clustering together for security of identity and the comfort of having the familiar around them. It is also fun and sometimes profitable for the longer term resident to be able to visit “Chinatown” or “Greektown”. Nevertheless, like most people, immigrants and especially Muslim women, do not necessarily enjoy being the object of curiosity or an easy target for discrimination or exploitation because they live in a certain area. It is easy to understand that a Muslim arriving in Brussels or Detroit would want to be close to a mosque or a place where he or she can find familiar food products. In the longer term and as the new community gains in wealth, it is probably more desirable to avoid such clustering because it discourages social cohesion and a feeling of belonging so important for the immigrant integration process. Yet in certain circumstances suitable housing might not be available or might not be open outside the initial settlement area.

Gentrification provides another problem. It is certainly desirable to renew dilapidated areas of a city. However, in Europe these are where immigrants tend to live and renewal means expenditure on buildings and therefore higher rents. Thus immigrants are forced out by higher pricing of housing and shops. Organisations such as CityMined aim at influencing city planning to provide the right mix of monumental city space (Grand Place in Brussels, Renaissance Center in Detroit for example), affordable low cost housing and shops and other levels of accommodation. Indeed given the entrepreneurial capabilities of Muslims and immigrants in Detroit, such commercial developments, if carefully conceived, afford opportunity for more positive relations and employment opportunities for non-immigrants. Three strategies appear to be essential:

- Reinforcing social networks
- Ensuring a social mix

\(^{\text{19}}\) CityMined is also active in London and Barcelona
- Diversified housing stock

Likewise the Chicago Council study of Muslims in the U.S. concluded from case studies that conflict and friction is minimized when overlapping networks are formed relating immigrants to their neighbours in a variety of common group and organizational memberships and bonds.

4. Social services and education

Access to social services and education is an essential condition for successful integration; whether people easily find their way to healthcare and employment services, language classes or schools largely determines their ability to participate in society. This reality _a fortiori_ applies to Muslims whose socio-economic integration is often further complicated by cultural prejudice. The following section compares to what extent Muslims in Brussels and Detroit have access to social services; more specifically, the presence of social security measures, the availability of integration services for newcomers and the accessibility of the education system will be examined. Highlighting the differences between the situation in Belgium and America will hopefully yield some clues as to why American Muslims seem better integrated than their European counterparts.

A. Social security services

Looking at Brussels first, it should be noted that Belgium possesses one of the most elaborate social security networks in Western Europe; the system consists of three insurance systems which cover no less than seven social risks: incapacity for work, industrial accident, occupational disease, unemployment, old age, child care and holiday pay. It also includes four assistance systems – subsidies for the handicapped, guaranteed family allowance, minimum income and income guarantee for the elderly – that grant people specific minimum services after checking their subsistence resources. As a result, social services such as health care are relatively cheap and widely available. Considering the importance of good access to services with regard to the integration process, one would thus expect that the existence of a well-developed social security system promotes the integration of Muslims – like other people with a migrant background.

Reality proves less straightforward. First, the integration _problematique_ in Brussels should be put in its historical context. Muslims living in Brussels long have had limited or no access to these state-funded services. In the past, social benefits were exclusively
reserved for Belgian citizens, which implied that a large part of the Muslim community
could not profit from this system. When the first large wave of Muslim immigrants
moved to Belgium in the fifties and sixties to fill the existing labour shortages, it was
considered unnecessary to develop clear regulations concerning their social rights; so-
called guest workers were always expected to leave again. Under the same return
philosophy, (Muslim) immigrants were moreover discouraged from obtaining Belgian
nationality; as a result they remained ineligible for social support long after it became
clear that they would never repatriate. Even though the social status of migrants had
already significantly improved in the late eighties and nineties, it was only in 2003 that
the European Union introduced a Directive on long-term residents which obliged national
governments to guarantee third-country nationals “who have resided legally and
continuously within the territory of the member state for five years” the same social
rights as national citizens. This initiative made an important difference for the many
Moroccan and Turkish nationals who had been living in Belgium since the sixties and
seventies as they now finally had equal access to the social security system.

It is however questionable whether this achievement actually facilitated Muslim
integration. Firstly, it seems that the potentially positive impact of a more open social
security system is largely negated by an increasing welfare backlash on the part of the
‘native’ population. Welfare critics for example argue that the availability of social
subsidies such as unemployment benefits encourages lethargy on the part of second and
third-generation migrants. A lack of economic incentives to study hard and find a good
job in combination with experience of discrimination might indeed result in a form of
s’enfoutisme, which could explains why some young migrants in Brussels – often of
Muslim descent – refuse to apply for jobs expected not to earn them much more than an
unemployment benefit. Secondly, the availability of social services sometimes creates
new problems and misunderstandings. In Brussels, there have been a number of
incidents where Muslim men refused to have their pregnant wives treated by a male
gynaecologist, for example, even though they hence endangered the life of both wife and
child. Picked up by the media, these cases caused massive public indignation and thus
indirectly contributed to the distrust between Muslims and the local population.

The social security system in Detroit and throughout the U.S., which is available to
working resident immigrants and naturalized citizens, tends to be limited to old age
pension supplemental benefits (geared to the number of years worked and amounts of
taxes paid), medical benefits for the poor, disabled or elderly, and survivor benefits.

21 Huysmans, Jef, ‘The European Union and the securitization of migration’ in Journal of Common Market
22 An untranslatable expression meaning ‘a couldn’t care less’ attitude
Some subsistence support (e.g., food stamps) for destitute families with dependent children, housing subsidies and short term job counselling also are available either at the federal or state levels. The system of unemployment benefits, worker disability compensation, and “family medical leave” for emergencies or births also is limited to some weeks’ support through federal, state, and employer payments. This leaves the bulk of social services, especially for the un- or under-employed, falling on local non-governmental agencies, sometimes with government subsidies and often seeking funding through charitable and private corporate or individual subscriptions and endowments.

One can deduce that if immigrants find employment and contribute into the system through payroll taxes for approximately 10 years, they gain access to much of this system; if they lack employment they can be on the fringes of public support as they may not have worked enough years or accumulated sufficient credits to qualify for assistance. Indeed for working immigrants the following finding by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER Working Paper 6478, March 1998) is quite illuminating:

For each year of work under the Social Security System, immigrants realize higher benefits than U.S. born, even when their earnings are identical in all years the immigrant has been in the U.S.. Two features of the social security benefit calculation are responsible: the social security benefit formula transfers benefits toward those with low lifetime covered earnings, and all years an immigrant spends outside the US are treated as years of zero income. Immigrants with high earnings who have worked in the U.S. for only 10-20 years benefit most from these procedures. If instead earnings were averaged only over the years an immigrant resides in the U.S., and benefits prorated, immigrants would receive the same return on their social security taxes as US born who have the same earnings in each year. It is difficult to justify the current procedures determining benefits for immigrants on the basis of income or wealth differences between US and foreign born. Among HHRS respondents, mean total wealth of immigrants is 92% of the mean total wealth of US born, while the mean income of immigrants exceeds the mean income of US born by 3%. But income and wealth are less evenly distributed among foreign born than US born;

A good example of private sector support is the previously mentioned organization Access the Arabic Community Centre for Economic and Social Services. This organization was established in 1971 by a group of volunteers with the specific intention to help the immigrant population of Dearborn to integrate. Today, Access has become a large organization with over 200 employees with its own small campus of buildings which offer an incredible range of services to people from all denominations; from counselling and medical assistance to job training, translation services and youth camps. Interestingly, the centre is almost fully funded by private donations; as was already
pointed out, in 2007 it had a substantial budget of $27 million. Similar if slightly less well funded agencies serve the Latino community. Other social service agencies in the community, such as the Franklin-Wright Settlement, struggle with less substantial support, and cater often to destitute non-immigrant populations.

Similar private initiatives exist in Brussels but have to manage with much more modest means. The different social background of the Muslim population in Brussels and Detroit – as was discussed earlier in this report – can account for this striking difference in resources. Building on the American ‘charity culture’, an organization such as Access can count on the support of wealthy Muslims, whereas the private organizations in Belgium often solely depend on public subsidies; both the Flemish and Walloon government foresee a limited budget for such social projects; getting funding is becoming extremely competitive. Some Belgian practitioners complain that non-governmental organizations nowadays practically require a full-time worker to apply for various funding opportunities. American organizations on the other hand, often employing such grant writing and fund development specialists, suffer from the fact that only institutions with the best PR-machine will attract most donations, which makes it more difficult for smaller organizations to survive.

The net effect is that, in Detroit, immigrants tend to rely on Community organised and financed groups rather than on state or federal government or government financed projects as in Brussels.

Returning to the cultural tensions that can arise in the context of the social services provision, it is important to emphasize that this problem does not seem to be an issue in Detroit. When asking a female representative at the largest mosque in the U.S. in Dearborn about her opinion on the gynaecologist incidents in Brussels, she was surprised to hear that such difficulties occur in Belgium. She argued that, in case of emergency, the death of either wife or child would be a greater sin in the eyes of Allah than having your wife examined by a male doctor. In that sense, the practice of hiring intercultural workers in hospitals should be encouraged so that they can discuss these issues with Muslims and convince them with similar arguments.

The fundamental question that arises in this context is whether either the American or the Belgian approach to social security best serves the integration process of Muslims. Making people feel part of a society in which they can actively participate clearly also depends on other factors. However, it is worth reflecting on what comprises a good balance between making the individual responsible for his/her own acts and creating a

24 The Zakat moreover perfectly fits in with the larger tradition of charity in America
well-developed and democratic social system. Even though social services are more accessible in Brussels, the top-down approach of the Belgian government certainly proves no miracle recipe for integration; instead, it seems to inflame feelings of “anti-welfare chauvinism” which further stigmatizes the migrant (Muslim) community. In contrast, the grassroots approach in Detroit seems to have a positive effect on integration but can leave individuals “falling through the cracks” and certain institutions such as schools without much assured integrative programming. Lacking social support from the government, Muslims had no choice but to seek help from each other. Conspicuously, initiatives like Access not only promote solidarity and cohesion within the Muslim community – regardless of their nationality – but also seem to contribute to a better understanding between Muslims and other local residents who benefit from the services.

Given the prevailing tension in Brussels between the Moroccan and Turkish communities, it is however unlikely that similar ‘pan-Islamic” initiatives could readily emerge there. The example of the Belgian Muslim executive council goes to show that overarching Muslim organizations seem doomed to fail. While various American Muslim groups have their frictions and misunderstandings at times, and can identify with competing groups (e.g., Sunni/Shi’a) abroad, compared to their American counterparts, Muslims in Brussels not only have to put up with the hostile attitude of the ‘native’ population but moreover are seriously internally divided, which retards the emergence of a similar feeling of ‘Muslim solidarity’.

B. Integration policy in the framework of social services

Since good access to social services is a crucial aspect of the integration process, it is especially important that newly arriving immigrants are informed about available services and subsidies. Providing this information requires a well-reasoned integration programme that helps migrants find their way to the appropriate institutions. Both Brussels and Detroit seem to lack such a coherent integration policy, especially as compared to what the group saw in Ontario.

Ironically, the main problem in Brussels today is not that the city has no integration policy but that is has too many. Belgium’s federal structure dictates that integration and education policy are Community competencies which implies that the Flemish government is responsible for drafting measures for the Flemish-speaking inhabitants of Brussels whereas the Walloon government decides on integration and education regulations for the French-speaking Bruxellois. Thus, migrants find themselves confronted with a complex web of governmental services, which often fail to meet their full potential because people do not find their way through the maze. A similar problem can be observed with regard to the wide range of private organizations in Brussels that
aim to help migrants to integrate; it is telling that a French-speaking and Flemish social worker who work just two blocks away from each other only met during the Detroit visit. In addition, there is a striking lack of coordination between the public and private organizations. What Brussels thus needs is better cooperation between all actors involved and one coherent integration policy for the entire city, if not the nation.

Similarly to Brussels, there seems to be no coordinated approach to migrant integration in Detroit. Even more so than in Belgium, migrants seem completely dependent on charitable initiatives to find help settling in. Organizations – such as clubs or schools – and institutions such as the International Institute of Detroit, that provide language and citizenship training, and that set up integration workshops and intercultural projects can apply for state funding but it was unclear which criteria are taken into account during the application process. More often such institutions revert to constant fund-raising appeals, with varying degrees of success and uncertain year-to-year budgets. Similar experience and challenges befell the remarkable refugee asylum centre we visited, Freedom House, which was a stopping point, providing shelter, medical and legal advice for those seeking admission to resident status in either Canada or the United States.

In that sense, Brussels and Detroit can learn much from the Canadian example. The Canadian government actively supports the development of an elaborate integration programme at local levels, and has a well conceived if not trouble free immigration policy setting the status of landed immigrants and guest workers. During the fieldtrip to Windsor, it was clear that a state-funded network of community services offers immigrants help with a range of common problems such as housing issues, schooling, family adjustment, job-hunting and completing paper work. Indeed the primary school we visited adopted a holistic family centred approach to immigrant integration providing a non-threatening multi-cultural environment, a generous teacher-student ratio in the classroom, and employing an Islamic female counsellor for parent involvement. This practical approach should be a source of inspiration for policy-makers in Belgium and the U.S. One might argue that the situation in smaller cities such as Windsor – with around 300,000 inhabitants – cannot be compared to a metropolis such as Brussels and Detroit. However, the same approach is used in such larger Canadian cities such as Toronto, one of the largest immigrant absorption points in the world, where the network of services is organized in various districts.

C. Education policy

Policymakers both in Belgium and America consider education a key vehicle for integration. Schools not only facilitate upward mobility but also offer a platform to
promote intercultural exchange and understanding. In her speech to the GMFUS seminar, Michigan state senator Martha Scott emphasized that young people should be taught the “values which are crucial for change, such as listening, respect and compromise”. She believes that schools should be ‘melting pots’ which “teach tolerance and diversity and demonstrate them every day.” Thus she emphasized both teaching about commonalities and educating about differences.

Although these ideas sound wonderful in theory, the situation in both Detroit and Brussels shows that realizing them in practice is an entirely different story. Both cities are struggling to counter the negative impact of spatial segregation on the education system. Whereas parents in Brussels can theoretically enrol their children in any school, they understandably choose a school situated close to home. Given the social geography of the city, this leads to the creation of ‘concentration schools’; in neighbourhoods such as Molenbeek or Saint Josse, the dominant presence of Muslims is clearly reflected in the classroom.

The problem in Detroit also has a structural dimension; children generally are obliged to attend an elementary schools within the territory of their zip (postal)code. Taking into account the prevailing pattern of residential segregation and uneven tax support, however, Detroit is likewise confronted with the emergence of concentration schools and pockets of disadvantage. The recent “no child left behind”-policy of the Bush Administration only seems to have worsened the situation of unequal opportunity and development, an extremely serious problem in cities such as Detroit. Although the policy aimed at rewarding schools that make an extra effort to help children achieve a good educational level, schools that do not achieve the expected standards are being punished both at the federal and state level; they either have to close or receive less funding. This in turn results in deprivation of inner city schools that attract more socially deprived pupils living in the inner city area. An estimated sixty percent of the children in these inner city schools (including some immigrant groups such as Latinos) do not graduate by the age of 17. In addition such segregation and underachievement negatively affects immigrants and the suburbs as well, by diminishing the economic potential of the region, by increasing crime and by restricting the horizons of students who fail to get to know each other culturally due to their mutual isolation.

Interestingly, these problems mainly seem to affect the predominantly black population in the city centre. In contrast, many, though by no means all Muslims in Detroit successfully make their way through the education system, which greatly benefits their general integration. According to Dr. Nahla Hamdan of Wayne State University’s Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, 45% of Muslims in Detroit have college degrees, an impressive number considering that only 28% of all American adults complete higher education. Wayne State, the largest university in Detroit, certainly deserves credit for this
achievement; the university has always attached great importance to giving migrants the
opportunity to study and work for upward mobility.

In the light of the ‘American dream’, individuals are considered responsible for their
own upward mobility, though Detroit is also home to perhaps America’s strongest
remaining organized labour movement. As we saw at Dearborn’s Arab-American
National Museum, the first generation of Muslim immigrants, even if they worked in auto
plants, laboured long and hard to afford their children a chance to study and move up in
society. Conscious of their parents’ expectations, second and third-generation Muslims in
Detroit seem very aware of the fact that education is key to affording themselves a better
life. It is worth connecting this observation with the point made earlier about the lack of
motivation from which many young Muslims in Brussels seem to suffer. One could argue
that the presence of a social security system through which the state cares for its citizens,
in combination with general cultural if not racial discrimination in the country, has
prevented the emergence of a similar mentality that expects people to take care of
themselves. On the other hand, young American Muslims, African-Americans, and
others who do not succeed in obtaining a degree seem worse off than their Belgian
counterparts as there is no social safety net to help them.

Again, the Canadian government sets an example as to how the education system can
best promote integration. Schools firstly offer bi-lingual education; children of new
immigrants can follow an ‘early years programme’, meaning that they are first taught in
their native language – such as Arabic or Hindi – before gradually switching to English.
After-school language classes not only encourage intercultural exchange but also help
immigrant children not to lose their first language. The underlying idea is that parents
should be able to communicate with their children in their native tongue since their
inability to properly express themselves in English might undermine their authority as
educators. Parents are also encouraged to connect to the school and to participate in the
education of their children; many schools have a cultural worker who functions as a first
point of contact for immigrant parents; they actively seek contact with the parents,
mediate in case of problems and even help translate when parents are having difficulties
communicating with their child’s teacher. In addition, newsletters are published in
various languages to keep parents informed about the newest developments at school and
certain books are offered in two or more languages with the intention to motivate parents
to read to their children. The curriculum also is holistic, involving music and the arts as
well as physical education as forms of constructive expression, teambuilding, and
cohesion.

Schools in Detroit seem to have picked up some of these ideas; some also offer bi-
lingual education, either in the form of an ‘immersion programme’ or by teaching half of
the courses in native languages and the other half in English. The number of participating
schools however remains limited, not only because it has proved difficult to find bi-
lingual teachers but also because of declining budgets and the influence of conservative politicians’ insistence on pushing English forward instead. In Brussels, the prevailing political climate makes it almost unthinkable that similar projects will emerge any time soon, as public opinion seems to buy right-wing arguments about ‘the creeping Islamization of society’; the introduction of courses in Arabic would most likely cause public outcry. Still these matters should be debated publicly, with presentation of international models; politicians should realize that organizing bi-lingual classes in primary schools might help mitigate the social delay that otherwise continues to hamper young Muslims for the rest of their educational career and that contributes to the potential for alienation, societal conflict, crime and violence to say nothing of chronic unemployment.

5. Cultural policy

Like education, culture offers a tool to transfer a message of tolerance and diversity. Cultural events can bring a city together and thus help to bridge existing divisions between people of different backgrounds. During our seminar, we discussed how cultural projects, such as Detroit’s annual Concert of Colors, can give a new drive to the city by attracting new capital and new people. Manchester (UK) was given as an example of how some European cities try to re-invent themselves by revitalizing the inner city through flag ship projects, urban renewal schemes, cultural and artistic events, cultural industries etc.

The city of Brussels likewise has promoted such initiatives. An outstanding example is the Zinneke parade, a cultural manifestation which was first established in 2000 as part of the festivities around Brussels Cultural Capital of Europe but is now organized every two years. Determined to break through boundaries, the Zinneke organization specifically aims at mixing people from various cultures in the hope of establishing new forms of interaction. The idea is to build on the cultural background of the participants, using the neighbourhood as a starting point in the search for shared references. Zinneke director Myriam Stoffen believes that the experience of working together and realizing something helps people achieve a sense of empowerment. Judging from the parade that was held in May 2008, the organizers clearly manage to involve people from all parts of society; girls with headscarves parade alongside elderly ladies and Congolese dancers. The only point of criticism would be that, in contrast to the colourful mix of people participating in the parade, the public audience seemed predominantly white. For the next

25 The word ‘Zinneke’ derives from the name of mongrel dogs which scavenged near a small tributary of the River Senne (now largely buried beneath the streets of Brussels)
edition, the organizing team might thus want to consider how they can encourage the Turkish, Moroccan, Congolese and other minority communities to attend this event.

Another project (already referred to) that is worth mentioning in this context is CityMined. Apart from promoting free workspaces in vacant premises, this organization also initiates cultural projects such as open-air cinemas or art installations. In the same philosophy as the organizers of the Zinneke parade they hence try to connect the different areas of Brussels. Rather than merely entertain, these projects aim at re-appropriating the urban space, both physically and symbolically.

Detroit likewise hosts a number of cultural events that aim at promoting social cohesion and celebrating cultural diversity, such as the Concert of Colours or the Global Thursdays concert series of the Arab-American museum. The Concert of Colours was first established in 1992 when a number of ethnic organizations decided to organize a joint festival with the support of the city. Ever since, local artists and street vendors each year gather in the city centre to give the public a taste of their talents. By showing cultural similarities through music and food, the organizers hoped to help people discover the interconnectedness of all cultures. Global Thursdays are an initiative of the Arab-American museum, which organizes a weekly concert, intended to introduce people to the rich variety of musical traditions across the community and world. Other “ethnic festivals” featuring diverse foods and music genres bring people together across ethnic lines, and some city spaces have had small scale experiments in flexible use, as in fledgling art galleries and studios along one of the city’s main and economically distressed streets, Michigan Avenue.

However, these initiatives admittedly only reach a very limited part of the Detroit population. Several factors seem to undermine the potential of these events. First, it was said that the cultural scène in Detroit strongly suffers from the city’s economic deprivation; artists leave the city as soon as they become successful and established organizations often struggle to find the necessary funding. The urban sprawl and the lack of public transport was mentioned as a second major disadvantage. As a result of the process of suburbanization, the downtown area does not function as a lively centre. Detroit is incredibly segregated; people from the suburbs will only reluctantly cross the infamous ‘8 Mile Road’ which separates the inner city from the surrounding middle-class neighbourhoods; a deeply-rooted feeling of distrust amongst citizens from these two parts of the metropolis makes it difficult, though certainly not impossible, to motivate either to attend cultural events in the other part.

An important exception to this rule is the Arab American National Museum in Dearborn. For reasons yet to be explored, this museum each year manages to attract thousands of visitors from all over the city, even the country. Ever since it was first opened in 2005, the museum has worked to “document, preserve, celebrate and educate
the public on the history, life, culture and contributions of the Arab Americans.”26 As such, it greatly contributes to the acceptance and integration of Muslims in the Detroit area. Indeed in a sense it has two key cultural counterparts: the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American Culture, and the Holocaust Memorial Centre in Farmington Hills, an area of considerable Jewish settlement. Together these three institutions cooperate on educational programming that takes students on tours of all three as a means of promoting greater mutual understanding and tolerance. The success of this project calls for a similar initiative in Brussels; a museum or a permanent exhibition that emphasize the positive contributions of Muslims to our society could help to overcome the cultural misunderstandings that currently overshadow the relations between Muslim and other residents of Brussels

VII. Some Tentative Conclusions.

Since this report can be considered as a launching pad for further action and cooperation between the two cities, it will not attempt to do what some other comparable ventures have done and offer a ‘pre-cooked’ policy recipe for better integration of Muslims in either location. Indeed more detailed technical reports and talks among the delegations on what specifically works best in what contexts await future meetings and consultations.

We do recognise that the political, historical and cultural difference that exist between Belgium and the United States make comparisons difficult. There is little doubt that the Canadian model of integration, although not without its critics, is closer to European political and social culture than the American. Nevertheless, we believe that collaboration between the two universities and the two cities has provided insights that can be applied in a practical way. In that sense, the project has proved a very useful catalyst. In addition, in accordance with the project’s mandate, a cadre of contacts and expert field workers has been created on both sides of the Atlantic that can be reactivated. The Brussels team has shown its enthusiasm for further meetings and working together

We conclude that there are no set rules for the successful integration of any immigrant group, Muslims included. There are, nevertheless, a number of political pronouncements and academic studies that are extremely helpful in pointing a way forward and a number of them have been referred to in this report. Integration is a process, it is not a mathematical formula; given the social conditions in both cities under discussion, it is of course tempting for politicians to find a ‘quick fix’ solution. We do not

26 web site of the Arab-American Museum; http://www.arabamericanmuseum.org/about-the-museum.id.3.html
believe that political nostrums are the way forward. Rather the aim should be for a bottom-up approach working essentially at the local level.

The question whether the integration of Muslims poses particular questions has been suggested over the course of this project. We believe that, in general, Muslims face exactly the same problems as other newcomers (finding employment, housing etc). Therefore, in making policy in this field it is not helpful to make distinctions on account of religion. However, there are two factors that might make the process that much harder for Muslim immigrants. The first is that Muslim religious practices call for a more flexible working timetable and dietary requirements. This is not insurmountable. The greater use of flexible working hours or tele-working at home would seem an obvious solution. The Detroit and Brussels Jewish community provided a good example of economic integration but at the same time respecting their religious practices.

The second issue is more intractable and concerns public (and sometimes political as in the case of Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands) perceptions that Islam is a backward and conservative religion especially in relation to its attitudes towards women. It is clear that the Islamic community world-wide and locally has to work to overcome these often mistaken views. The media and the political level must be engaged in this process in Europe especially but also in the United States. Islam must be seen as in tune with the local culture and not a threat to it, an enrichment not a cultural takeover bid. Therefore engagement with and participation by the Muslim community in local life is essential in both locations. Note should be taken of the attitudes of young Muslim women and men who see no necessary contradiction between maintaining traditions (sometimes even those their parents’ have given up) such as the hijab or hallal food and a fully modern and high technology lifestyle.

The key to integration is inter-cultural education as well as educational opportunity and upward mobility. Given the fact that the vast majority of immigrants in Brussels are Muslim and that their standard of living is substantially below that of the original population, they must be made targets for educational advancement. Indeed, in general young people are the key element in this process. Recognition of diplomas from countries of origin or upgrading of skills is important in making use of the human capital available and not wasting valuable skills The United States and Canada have been much more successful in this respect. Some observers may put this down to the American liberal economic model, but even if that is partly true, attitudes to the welfare state are not going to changed in Belgium from one day to the next. On the issue of education, we believe that the Canadian model, whilst not transferable wholesale to Brussels, has some useful lessons and deserves further study.

Sectarian communities must learn to work together not only between the religions but also within religions (Shia and Sunni, Turkish and Moroccan for example). In a similar
vein, it makes more economic and practical sense in Brussels for the Flemish and Francophone communities to work more closely together.

Policing in both cities can provide important examples of integrating Muslims and other minorities into the working environment and thus ensuring that the relationship between the forces of law and order and the general public are as harmonious as possible. The police in both Brussels and Detroit appear to make strenuous efforts to recruit minorities and integrate them in a constructive way. Their example could be followed in other walks of life both in the private and public sectors.

The private sector and its collective organisations (trade associations, employers’ federations etc) should become more engaged. The private sector is the key to economic advancement of immigrants. Education, recruitment, training and advancement in the workplace are essential factors. This is, of course, not a new observation and has been applied to other minority groups particularly in the case of African-Americans. But active solicitation for the private sector to become more involved seems to us to be one way forward.

On a very practical level, immigrants should not be obliged to seek assistance from many different government or quasi-governmental bodies. The ‘one-stop shop’ approach (which is applied in a number of EU countries) should be extended. There is a sense of alienation amongst immigrants if they are forced into burdensome bureaucratic procedures with no apparent purpose. Varied housing options must be developed and publicized. In Brussels, this could be done at the level of the Commune.

In summary:

- In spite of clear differences between Belgium and the United States in their approach to immigrant integration, the dialogue among immigration and policy specialists now launched has a certain momentum and should, if possible be maintained.

- There are particular issues relating to the Muslim community but they should not be exaggerated and many of the problems that Muslims face are common to all immigrants in both societies.

- Muslims are not homogeneous. They come from different backgrounds and traditions and those should be identified and respected.

There should more bottom-up thinking and action. Act locally as close to the problems posed as possible and develop ideas with groups of Muslim and non-Muslim immigrants and citizens, rather than impose policies from the civil service and political level.
VIII. List of practical recommendations

1. Work towards more direct consultation of community groups: work with and not for the community

2. Encourage more attention to ‘interculturality’ in the training of teachers and social workers.

3. Recognize and make the most of local expertise on community matters.

4. Make both the economic and cultural contributions of Muslims and their changing attitudes more directly visible (e.g. through a museum and media coverage).

5. Further invest in fully incorporating multicultural realities (not necessarily ‘multiculturalism’ as a doctrine) in the curriculum of schools; provide concrete information on diverse cultures.

6. Invest time and resources in neighbourhoods. Do not allow degradation of the environment (graffiti, broken windows etc) to take over. Instil a sense of pride in what people can do for their community.

7. Establish coherent and responsive resident and guest worker policies for migrants along with systematic multi-lingual support programs for new arrivals and families in public schools.

IX. Possible Follow-up

- Commission papers on a) comparative study of the economic and social success and failure in the two cities and b) the role of cultural events in bringing communities together. These would be published by the two project institutions.

- A colloquium in Brussels but this time closely involving Muslim leaders from both cities

- Exchange of personnel from those organisations participating in the dialogue in March 2008, to study specific functional programs in both cities in depth.

- Through the municipalities in each city, and in collaboration with national authorities involved in immigration policymaking, set up contact points for a Detroit-Brussels policy forum, the objective being to involve local and governments in understanding options for improved social relations.
• Organise three way exchanges between Brussels, Detroit and Windsor which can be either short (one or two weeks) or longer (three to six month ‘stages’ (internships)

• Follow up the contacts with Access to see whether a similar project could not be considered for Brussels
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