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## **Embodied Othering Encounters with Muslim(-Looking) Passengers: Riding across Amsterdam, Tallinn, Leipzig, and Turku<sup>1</sup>**

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*Often framed in the public discourse as Europe's ultimate Other, Muslims have been heatedly debated and vastly problematized as violent, unfaithful suspect citizens, unwanted immigrants, part of a bad diversity, and refusal of modernity. Taking the Muslim Other into consideration, we explore young Muslim(-looking) passengers' everyday Othering encounters within the (im)mobile spaces of public transport that entangle their bodies with different imaginaries, histories, emotions, and affects. Employing qualitative research methods in a cross-national and interurban study in Amsterdam, Tallinn, Leipzig, and Turku, which offer different dimensions of diversity, size, and history, important for understanding European cities in their complexities, we present public transport as a cross-cultural meeting place with socio-spatial negotiations of difference to study everyday travel experiences of 74 young Muslim(-looking) passengers. We highlight how Othering discourses become part of their everyday travel experiences. In so doing, we investigate multiple modes through which the Muslim Other is (re)produced and Othering is lived out in the networks of their everyday embodied, that is, sensorial, corporeal, and affective, experiences of public transport. In this way, we critically position public transport at the intersection of what it means to experience European cities through riding public transport.*

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**KEYWORDS:** embodied encounters; Europe; identity; Muslim; othering; public transportation.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Local urban public transport offers a global stage. It brings together a wide variety of different passengers alongside gender, class, race, ethnicity, age, nationality, language, religion, lifestyle, sexuality, and (dis)ability. Public transport is a key social

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arena of everyday intercultural encounters (Jensen 2009a; Koefoed and Simonsen 2017; Wilson 2011). It is within these (im)mobile urban spaces of public transport that ordinary multiculturalism becomes about intense embodied encounters with others where difference is lived and experienced. However, in spaces of public transit with temporal intimacy with and proximity to random others and intense materiality, riders are forced to coordinate their behaviors even bear witness to events and people outside of their ability to control (Fleetwood 2004; Raudenbush 2012). There are a full range of Othering processes, racial and class tensions, negotiations of difference, symbolic power struggles, and protests over space and rights where passengers and staff are engaged in a complex system of selection, exclusion, and control (Honkatukia and Svyrenko 2019; Jensen 2009a; Purifoye 2015; Salazar 2014).

Mobility scholars have examined how various dimensions of difference and identity such as class (Ohnmacht et al. 2009), gender and sexuality (Gardner et al. 2017; Law 1999; Lubitow et al. 2020), race and ethnicity (Fleetwood 2004; Purifoye 2015; Raudenbush 2012; Rink 2016), and age (Honkatukia and Svyrenko 2019; Lagerqvist 2019) are negotiated within urban spaces of public transport. Some studies have also focused on perceptions, affects, and emotions. By foregrounding and describing different moments of a public transport journey such as catching a bus or taking a seat, mobility scholars have tried to embed travel experiences and bodies of passengers within different imaginaries, histories, emotions, and affects (Bissell 2008, 2010; Budd 2011; Lobo 2014). However, there is little work that considers how religious(-looking) minorities experience mobility. Religion is not only a dimension of identity but also affective; yet, there is a clear lack of research in understanding the interface between religion and transport. Within the framework of the Muslim Other, this paper shows how Muslim(-looking) minorities experience significant challenges while using public transit in different European cities.

We focus on how these mobile places are experienced by Muslim(-looking) passengers and ask: how is Othering made present in their everyday traveling? In what ways is it felt and registered in their sensing bodies? Which emotions and affects do these Othering encounters generate? What and how do social, cultural, and political relations charge these encounters? We demonstrate how the sensorial, corporeal, and affective dimensions of passengering are played out in often small ways in public transit, evidenced through the performances of boarding, ticketing, sitting, moving, and alighting (Rink 2016). We put the bodies of Muslim(-looking) passengers into the analysis of the social organizations of mobility and think how such socio-spatial conditions influence their transport experiences.

We study diverse modes of mobile Othering encounters and different kinds of emotion and meanings generated in these encounters that have come to be taken for granted and contribute to the literature on encountering difference (Valentine 2008). Understanding public transit as a cross-cultural meeting place can also make important contributions to studies of everyday multiculturalism, the daily negotiation of difference, and intercultural relations (Jensen 2009a; Koefoed and Simonsen 2017; Lobo 2014; Swanton 2010; Wilson 2011). Thinking through the relations between bodies, movement, and space, furthermore, the paper contributes to the contemporary cultural understandings of the embodied experiences of mobility (Bissell 2009). Exploring the bodily experience of Muslim(-looking) passengers and various social

interactions in public transportation, moreover, is part of understanding their everyday life, struggles, and possibilities to be mobile and participate in society. The paper, thus, inscribes itself into a gap in empirical evidence on anti-Muslim racism within everyday urban spaces of mobility to extend thinking about the (micro-)politics/practices of Othering and race thinking.

The empirical material on which this research is based was sourced from qualitative research methods in a cross-national and interurban study in Amsterdam, Tallinn, Leipzig, and Turku. Learning from these European cities, the study predominantly uses semi-structured in-depth interviews with 74 young Muslim (-looking) passengers to investigate their rhetoric and discursive experiences of Other encounters as an insider's perspective within their own urban habitat. In the remaining parts of the paper, we first briefly situate the research in the current literature on encounters, mobilities, Othering, and anti-Muslim racism. Thereafter, we describe our methodology and present our empirical findings.

## EMBODIED ENCOUNTERS WITH THE o/OTHER IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Closely related to debates on race, ethnicity, and religion, scholars have been investigating the (micro-social) spaces, politics, practices, and tensions when encountering difference and o/Others in the city (Amin 2002; Askins 2016; Hopkins et al. 2017; Peterson 2017). Within everyday spaces of public transport, people of different ethno-racial, socio-economic, cultural, national, religious, and sexual backgrounds encounter. Studies have approached public transport as a place of the public (dis-) engagement and encounter with difference that can generate sharing and exchange but also tension, friction, even hostility and anger (Koefoed and Simonsen 2017; Purifoye 2015; Wilson 2011).

Passengers are not only the other, a stranger outside the network of family and friends, but also the Other, members of a dominated out-group whose identity is considered different. As a form of intensive being, or in this case riding, with random o/Others (Officer and Kearns 2017), Othering happens as a process through which difference is translated into inferiority drawing a line between "us" and "them" based on a certain self and body (Conti 2018; Jensen 2009b; Modood and Thompson 2021). For Campbell (2001:44), Othering is "a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human."

This is thus the body central to the drama of socio-cultural interactions within public transport where (in)civility inscribes itself onto the body in distinguishing normal from pathologic, proximity from distance, familiar from stranger (Terry and Urla 1995). These mobile embodied Othering encounters involve multiple practices that are sensorially felt, corporeally performed, emotionally charged, and historically-geographically mediated (Ahmed 2000; Koefoed and Simonsen 2017; Simonsen 2013). Encounter as a meeting that involves surprise (Ahmed 2000; Wilson 2017) is played out through intercorporeal meetings and sensorially registering traces of familiarity and strange(r)ness. Imbued with emotions and affects, encounters have temporal and spatial roots in particular historical and geographic contexts of power

relations (Matejskova and Leitner 2011). They include and incorporate images embedded in other direct or mediated encounters in other spaces and in other times within the spatiotemporal ambivalences between the near and the distanced (Ahmed 2000; Koefoed and Simonsen 2012; 2017; Listerborn 2015).

### *Sensorial Encounters*

Drawn on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception (1962), we could argue that intercorporeality of being/riding with o/Others is about the sensorial experiences of haptic, olfactory, auditory, and visual. Like any other form of encounter, mobile encounters include an interpenetrating web of sensory and bodily presence and relationships (Seamon 2018) which Merleau-Ponty (1962) has identified as the perceptual field. It is about what we see, hear, smell, touch, and feel of the world while we are seen, heard, smelled, touched, and felt by the world (Ahmed 2004b; Jensen 2012). Due to its specific spatial and temporal conditions, public transport modifies the sensory experiences and exposing passengers to new sensations (Budd 2011). Hutchinson (2000:108) has argued that riding the bus makes possible "another mode of looking, hearing, seeing, and smelling that 'eludes the discipline of automobility' even as it reproduces it." Spinney (2011:164) also pays attention to "the sensory, emotional, kinaesthetic and symbolic aspects of cycling" vital to our understanding of "those fleeting, ephemeral, and often embodied and sensory aspects of movement."

Experiencing multicultural spaces of public transport, therefore, are closely connected with sensorial aspects of encounters. Through the practico-sensory perception of space, passengers encounter the bodies of their fellow passengers and register familiarity and strange(r)ness through sight, hearing, smell, and touch (Simonsen 2005). Through perceiving and exploring the (im)mobile urban spaces of public transport at the sensorial level, the o/Other passenger is "made" by the bodily appearance (e.g., Othering via visual, auditory, olfactory, and haptic; Haldrup et al. 2006; Shaker et al. 2021) through what Ahmed (2000:21) calls "techniques of reading the bodies of Others" by considering familiar from stranger.

### *Corporeal Encounters*

The intercorporeality of encounters of the move goes beyond the sensuous and perceptive nature of lived experiences. Riding public transport also concerns how the bodies of passengers and their embodied experiences themselves form a basis for social action (Simonsen 2010). Public transport is a space of extraordinary intimacy. There are not many other urban settings with such intense materiality where bodies are pressed up against each other, where the limited and confined onboard space is constantly (re)negotiated and (re)ordered through corporeal encounters, movements, and behaviors (Wilson 2011).

Passengers corporeally encounter their surroundings and o/Other passengers through which bodies are constructed as deviant, outsider, Other, stranger, and/or different as a response to a perceived threat to the socio-spatial order of the privilege (Terry and Urla 1995). The response to the imagined threat can cross the non-verbal

communication and reach the verbal and/or physical domains. In this light, the body and public transport space construct each other in complex ways. It is not possible to discuss Othering and Othered bodies without considering urban spaces of public transport. Bodies are constructed, performed, negotiated, disciplined, resisted, and/or oppressed in/through space via corporeal practices.

### *Affective Encounters*

Embedded within the sensorial and corporeal encounters on the move, another important aspect of the everyday meeting/being/riding with the o/Other passenger is emotion and affect. For Ahmed (2000), the “strange encounter” is played out *on* the body *with* emotions. For Bissell (2010), seeing the social relations while traveling in public transport from the perspective of affect allows us to consider the qualities that emerge between passengers which have the capacity to alter the field of feeling and course of action. Based on the perception of “difference,” some ephemeral emotions such as anger, fear, anxiety, and suspicion can surface from the affective encounters between passengers which might be expressed by the communicative body and its movements (Bissell 2008). Discomfort, irritation, and anger might pop up (Koefoed and Simonsen 2017; Simonsen 2007).

Encountering o/Others and Othering on the move are thus something that is expressed affectively, felt by the individual/collective bodies of passengers through affective intensities which project a particular emotion. Although sometimes used interchangeably, feeling, emotion, and affect carry different meanings. Massumi (2002) conceptualizes feeling as personal and biographical, and while emotions are social, affect is pre-personal. Drawing on Massumi, McCormack (2008:426) defines “affect (as a prepersonal field of intensity), feeling (as that intensity registered in a sensing body), and emotion (as that felt intensity expressed in a socio-culturally recognizable form).”

Focus on feelings, emotions, and affects offers a more expansive and embodied understanding of the experiences of traveling within everyday urban life (Budd 2011; Officer and Kearns 2017). Furthermore, it sheds a distinct light on observing cross-cultural embodied encounters wrapped around an unspoken, un-reflected, non-/more-than-representational “grammar of difference” produced in the intercorporeal encounters through visible signs of identity such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, and clothing (Koefoed and Simonsen 2017; Sheller 2014). As Bissell (2010:272) stresses, “thinking through affect draws attention to the importance of considering some of the nonhuman forces that mobilize and mediate” which “prompts us to think about how different configurations of objects, technologies, and bodies come together to form different experiences of ‘being with’ whilst on the move.”

### *The Muslim Other*

Certain “different” bodies, when denied by the power and privilege of “normal” bodies, are more likely to be Othered. Muslims in Europe are pathologized in which their religion is considered the prime source of political, social, cultural, and security problems. In much of Europe, Islam has become a line dividing “us,” long-established residents of white Christian Europe and “them,” Muslims who are considered inferior.

The Muslim Other brings to the fore concerns regarding racialization, immigration, national identities, patriotism, modernity, secularism, security, extremism, and radicalization.

Muslims in the global North are subject to several Othering discourses. The religio-cultural Other holds to the existing perception that Islam is not compatible with the Western values of modernity, freedom, and secularism. As Said (1978) argues, orientalism represents the Orient, Middle East, Islam, and Muslims as inherently violent, bound to tradition, inferior, and threatening to the Western liberal democracies. Anti-Muslim discourses often frame Muslims as self-segregating, living in parallel cultures; incompatible, divergent, mismatched, and in conflict with us; Muslim men as terrorists and Muslim women as the (passive) victim of their oppressive patriarchal religion, an inherently sexist culture (Bilge 2010; Eid 2014; Gokariksel 2017; Najib and Teeple Hopkins 2020a).

The dangerous Other problematizes Islam and Muslims in terms of security and terrorism. Some terror attacks in the United States and Europe have shifted the public opinion about Islam as a security threat. Muslims are seen as suspect citizens who pose a potential threat to (inter)national security, manifested in Trump's "Muslim Ban" (Ali 2020; Gokariksel 2017; Selod 2018). Such a global geopolitical condition has produced Muslim bodies and objects they carry as risky and fearsome (Pain and Smith 2008; Poynting and Briskman 2020).

Alongside the changing political semiotics in Europe, media outlets and populist discourses represent Muslims as the ethno-national Other which supports an atmosphere of fear and loathing toward bodies that do not represent the figure of an acceptable, loveable citizen (Ahmed 2004a, 2004b; Tolia-Kelly 2006). For Sayyid (2014), hostility toward Muslims rather than being merely religious, cultural, or emotional has political dimensions. In the context of migration, diversity, and economic instability, Muslims have become a metonym for unwanted immigrants, part of a bad diversity, politically unfaithful and disloyal toward their countries of arrival, a universal figure of a non-patriot citizen (Ali 2020).

These Othering discourses work through the homogenization process where an individual Muslim is met as a mass of "them" characterized by the signs on the body, visible expressions of difference (Listerborn 2015; Simonsen 2010). Homogenization constructs the "Muslim prototype" (Chao 2015) which lumps a wide variety of bodies together based on physical and phenotypical features (Karaman and Christian 2020). Hindus, Sikhs, Arabs, Middle Easterners, South Asians, and those with similar skin tones who embody an imagined "Muslim look" are all becoming the same, Muslim (Devadoss 2020; Hopkins et al. 2017; Love 2009, 2020). Muslim(-looking) people become the target of the racialization of Islam based on the idea that a group of (accurate or not) Muslim people are associated with phenotypical and cultural characteristics (Hancock 2020; Kaufman and Niner 2019).

Relatedly, Topolski's (2018) work on "race-religion constellation" posits religious(-looking) as not driven by characterization and stereotyping of religion, but rather the collapsing, conflation, co-constitution of race and religion. For her, race-religion constellation refers to the connection or co-constitution of the categories of race and religion through which people are classified into races according to categories associated with religion. Having shed light on the genealogy of anti-

Semitism and Islamophobia, two European religious-based forms of racism, Topolski (2018) shows how the terms “Semite” and “Oriental” were used from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards to classify people, specifically non-Christians, that is, Jews, Arabs, or Muslims, as non-native non-white European. Meer (2013) also stresses that racialized categories have saturated the European social imaginaries and cultural portrayals of Muslims and Jews. Therefore, it is not merely a religious looking that is constructed as the Other but the co-constitution of racial-religious one.

Othring and anti-Muslim discourses alongside the homogenization, essentialization, and racialization of Islam have brought Muslim(-looking) people a wide variety of social, psychological, and economic problems. They face what Essed (1991) calls “everyday racism,” and Mansson McGinty (2020) dubs “embodied Islamophobia,” the lived and emotional experiences of anti-Muslim assaults and routine marginalization within the structure of everyday life. There is evidence from different Western countries showing that Muslim(-looking) people face higher than average rates of racism and discrimination, various forms of systemic disadvantage and structural inequalities in the workplace, education, health, housing, entertainment, the criminal justice system, and other public domains (Ali and Whitham 2021; Bila 2019; Dunn et al. 2016; Itaoui 2020; Shams 2018).

Literature has little to say about the dynamics of social exclusion within the everyday urban spaces of public transport. Some studies have touched upon the Othring of Muslim(-looking) people that threatens and restricts their movements. For instance, in airport situations, Muslims feel humiliated and experience excessive distrust from authorities (Noble and Poynting 2010; Selod 2018). There are also studies that have named, among other places, public transport as a site of racism (Itaoui 2020; Najib and Hopkins 2020b; Oejo and Tonnelat 2014). There is, however, to the best of our knowledge, no systematic investigation (Shaker 2021 as an exception) on the role of public transport and how such (im)mobile urban spaces become an Othring place for Muslim(-looking) passengers.

We, therefore, address this under-researched dimension of Othring via a cross-national and interurban study in four European cities (Amsterdam, Tallinn, Leipzig, and Turku) through an embodied (sensorial, corporeal, and affective) approach. Within the climate of Islamophobic white supremacy across Europe, such a study is not only important to examine how the Muslim Other is played out on the urban ground, or in this case on the move, but it is also highly relevant to the European politics of the 21st century when so much prominence is given in the media and populist political parties to the dichotomy between Islam and Europe (Wintle 2016). Investigating urban spaces of public transport as a place for anti-Muslim acts, moreover, is fundamental to advance debates on the socio-spatial manifestations, implications, and mechanisms of racism and embodied experiences of (micro-)aggressions, silencing and insecurity on Muslim(-looking) citizens in the urban public arena.

## METHODOLOGY

We have investigated how young Muslim(-looking) passengers sense, feel, experience, and live different modes of embodied Othring encounters on the move.



We have chosen this particular demographic category since debates about the geopolitics of Islamophobia mostly revolve around these young urbanites. They are growing up in a political climate where they are often seen as victims, villains, agitated who cause troubles. Being framed as susceptible to indoctrination or radicalization, media often projects the racialized Muslim youth as the driving force behind the security issues in Europe (Bayat and Herrera 2010). Furthermore, depicted as the source of the conflicts between Islam and the West, their occupation of space, social cohesion, integration, and identity are problematized and questioned (Hopkins et al. 2018; Itaoui 2020). Bayat and Herrera (2010) argue that the feeling of Otherness amongst young Muslims is strong because they are assumed as immigrant outsiders who are tolerated by the nation. Consequently, we have focused on how young Muslim(-looking) passengers experience anti-Muslim racism within the (im)mobile spaces of public transport.

This paper is based on the collaborative and comparative work of four researchers who have conducted fieldwork on public transport travel experiences of different Muslim, Arab, Middle Eastern, refugee, and asylum seeker populations in Amsterdam, Tallinn, Leipzig, and Turku. This cross-national and interurban comparison is of central importance and contributes to the depth of the research and guides the study to identify relations, convergences, and common patterns of Othering on the move in different European cities that are likely to go unnoticed in non-comparative accounts (Beekers 2020). Unlike qualitative studies in one setting, cross-national and interurban comparative investigations provide an exciting opportunity for an in-depth exploration of research participants' experiences to directly inter-relate and criss-cross findings and reflect upon the structural, underlying factors that explain similarities and differences (Jørgensen 2015), which provides a way to write across contexts even if they are considered widely different (Hilbrandt et al. 2017).

Amsterdam, Tallinn, Leipzig, and Turku provide an interesting collection. These cities are scattered across Europe which is a less examined geographic context as a whole in the field of experiencing public transport. These cities also provide an example of different urban situations where the use of public transport is not regarded as having low social status. It is commonly used throughout larger parts of the social strata of these compared urban societies. Furthermore, our cases are in different trajectories of (becoming) a polyethnic (super)diverse society as a result of the interurban flows of people, capital, and goods brought about by globalization and global conflicts complicating the socio-cultural dynamics of these cities.

This sample of cities offers a unique opportunity to consider urban societies that vary significantly in terms of population, Muslim(-looking) communities, and contact with them. In terms of diversity, Amsterdam houses 350 different religious communities from 180 nationalities (Beck 2013) making it one of the most religiously diverse cities across the globe. Islam and Muslims are highly visible in Amsterdam; more than 120,000 Muslims (~12% of Amsterdammers) populate the city (CBS 2016). It is believed that there are about 4,000 Muslims in Estonia (Lepa 2020). Coming from 53 different nationalities, the majority of Muslims in Estonia lives in Tallinn. They form three main nationality-based groups: "the Tatars" or the Russian-speaking Muslims, "the converts/Estonians," and those so-called "Arabs" or newcomers, often English-speaking immigrants as students, businesspeople, and/or refugees (Lepa 2020).

Of all cities in Saxony, Leipzig had the highest proportion of people who are assumed to have a Muslim background in 2015 (between 9,000 and 10,000 residents) (Hakenberg and Klemm 2016). In a nationwide comparison this percentage (1,5%) is relatively low. Nevertheless, the level of hostility towards (the imagined) Muslims is significantly higher than other parts of the country: Even though Pegida (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamicization of the Occident) was born in Dresden, Leipzig's Legida demonstrations occurred more often (every Monday between 2014 and 2017). Furthermore, in 2019, After Chemnitz (79 cases), Leipzig with 60 cases has the highest record of physical assault against Muslims.

Turku is one of the most multicultural cities in Finland. The city ranks 4<sup>th</sup> after the Helsinki Metropolitan Area cities (Helsinki, Vantaa, and Espoo) and around 5% of the country's foreign-speaking population live in Turku. Finland in 2020 housed slightly over 19,000 Muslims. What makes Turku an interesting case in terms of cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity is segregation. Diversity in Finland is concentrated in a few cities and certain residential areas of these cities. In Turku, two such residential areas are Pansio-Perno and Varissuo. In 2019, the share of the foreign-speaking population in Varissuo was 52% and 28% in the area of Pansio-Perno. The corresponding figure for the whole city was 12%.

The empirical database comes from five different investigations by four researchers. The fieldwork was conducted at different times, both before and during the ongoing pandemic: between January 2019 and March 2021. Therefore, some of the investigations are from pre-COVID-19 times and the others were carried out under the conditions of the pandemic. Multiple recruitment strategies were employed including contacts with gatekeepers at mosques, universities, and educational/public institutions. Networking, distributing flyers and business cards at sports clubs, community centers, public libraries, and public transport stations were also employed. We relied on snowball sampling to find additional respondents. Given the fact that Muslims and Muslim-looking people do not form a homogeneous community in any of the studied cities, we aimed at finding respondents from diverse backgrounds in terms of gender (36 women and 38 men), age (18–36), socio-economic status (from working class to upper-middle class), occupation, education (from high school to PhD), Islamic branches (Sunni and Shia), religious involvement (from orthodoxy to liberal and cultural to non-religious), generation (native, first, and second), and national origin (24 countries including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Cameroon, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kosovo, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Syria, Tanzania, the Netherlands, and Turkey).

We use the term “Muslim-looking” because some of our male participants in Leipzig are not, reticently speaking, religious but have a Middle Eastern background. Therefore, related to the race–religion constellation (Topolski 2018), they have the imagined “Muslim look” because the whole racialization process hinges upon the corporeal identification that might go wrong. One does not need to be an actual Muslim to be treated like a Muslim (Hopkins et al. 2017). In addition, there is a strong gender dimension in the attire of the female participants.

Othering on the move is best experienced qualitatively through corporeal existence. Thus, the semi-structured in-depth interviews with 74 young Muslim

(-looking) passengers (18 in Amsterdam, 19 in Tallinn, 30 in Leipzig, and 7 in Turku) focused on their experiences in public transport, as well as their emotions felt toward a certain situation. The conducted interviews were mostly individual but also some group sedentary conversations. Some participants were either busy or because of their beliefs or discomfort did not want to be interviewed in person. The pandemic also hindered the interviewing. Thus, alternative data collection methods such as phone, Skype, and email interviews were employed.

To uncover passengers' sensorial, corporeal, and affective experiences of traveling, narrated interactions that occurred both between passengers and in meetings between passengers and drivers/crew were audio-recorded. Next to the experiences of verbal or physical abuse, they were asked to recollect any gesture, for example, smile, nod, speech, whisper, sigh, silence, from drivers or passengers revealing how ethnic/religious minorities are made to feel "out of place," rendered Othered. Paying attention to the importance of sensory perception within embodied travel experiences, the questions went beyond seeing and listening to what is happening in a bus/tram/train/metro to include sensing smells and noticing the haptic sensations within the transport carriage. To catch the affective registers such as awe, wonder, and the sublime, we focused on words charged with affects such as hate, disgust, fear, anger, frustration, awkward, weird, unwelcome, and so forth.

All interview transcripts were coded to draw out important themes, patterns, and resemblances regarding the various sensorial, corporeal, and affective ways through which the Muslim Other is (re)constructed. The empirical data were coded deductively based on a priori conceptual categories and inductively according to unanticipated categories that emerged from detailed and repeated readings of the texts. Thereafter, field researchers shared the coded data and compared the emerged themes and patterns to look for commonalities until the themes shaped a coherent interpretative apparatus. Covering the ethical issues, verbal/written informed consent was obtained from participants. For interviewee protection, participants have been given pseudonyms and age bands.

## **EMBODIED OTHERING ENCOUNTERS WITH MUSLIM(-LOOKING) PASSENGERS**

Participants demonstrated highly attuned awareness of their surroundings, fellow passengers, and their bodies in/through space. Social interactions are handled with bodily signals for the negotiation of space and comfort. Othering on the move is not only extremely diverse, but also experienced in a multitude of ways; it occurs at the intersection of different identity categories. Studies on stereotyping have highlighted how bodies are encountered, read, and judged based on the visual clichés and sensorial and corporeal elements of the stereotypical representation of "foreigners" such as race, ethnicity, beard, hair, veil, dress, having an unusual name, language, and objects they carry (Collins 2009; Conti 2018; Wilson 2011).

Tied to the anxieties associated with encountering the religio-cultural/dangerous/ethno-national Muslim Other, a collection of stories was narrated: feelings such as discomfort, fear, and disgust; symbolic violence and harassment in forms of gesture,

whisper, and “bitter” looks; shunning techniques including standing, sitting, or moving away; verbal abuse and physical aggression; and poor or no service provision by drivers and crew members are some of the repeated narrations. Although the boundary is blurry, we have classified such Othering experiences into three categories: sensorial, corporeal, and affective. Sensorial aspects refer to the phenomenological and lived body experiences of sight, hearing, smell, and touch through which the mobile Othering is sensed. Corporeal Otherings are those representational socio-spatial practices of exclusion, the lived moments that are tangible to bodies. Affective Othering, however, points at micro, subtle, and nonrepresentational experiences, those short-lived feelings, rather than permanent states, that cause tension. These sensorial, corporeal, and affective categories are all embodied encounters and indeed intertwined. Sometimes a look at one’s hijab could be three of them altogether. This classification, however, has both theoretical and empirical benefits. Theoretically, such a trilogy complicates the simple act of riding public transport as a set of intertwined multidimensional embodied (micro-) practices. Empirically, these categories shed a distinct light on the nuances of anti-Muslim racism and how Othering toward Muslims is played out within these everyday (im)mobile urban spaces.

### *Sensorial Othering*

Due to the spatial arrangements of public transport carriages, passengers are involved in the process of perception through exploring the world at the sensorial level. Proximity to o/Others exposes the passengers to new sensations and bodily discomfort associated with different looks, smells, sounds, and touch that highlight the embodiment of fellow passengers. Sensorial encounters move through bodies and become intensified at certain moments: at one moment Othering surfaces in a judgmental look; at another moment through the sound of the spoken language; via the smell of alcohol; or the distance between (un)familiar bodies. Such sensory knowledge(s) and their meanings for participants are often internalized, tacit, taken for granted, or unacknowledged. They are not usually deliberately thought about or explicitly discussed. However, our phenomenological approach toward corporeal sensibility (Seamon 2018) brackets this taken-for-grantedness and surfaces often overlooked “basic experience of the world” (Merleau-Ponty 1962:viii).

### *Visual Othering*

The most repeated sensed Othering by participants is “weird” looks. Interviewees stressed that they perceive frequent long looks which resonate with feelings such as being judged or unwelcome. Edris in his mid-20s in Leipzig delved into how he feels about it:

This is a unique glance. It’s a glance that when you want to exit, two or three people look at you angrily with a weird look and you say [to yourself] you didn’t do anything to them. Why do you look like this? Their gaze tells something. You can differentiate between a glance that is simply stressed or normal or if you look like this intentionally. If intentionally, you want the other to notice it.

Similarly, for Ayaan, a veiled woman in her mid-30s in Turku, these looks are part of her bus travel experience: “passengers are sometimes malicious; they tease and behave in an ugly manner. One woman often gets on the same bus with me. She always looks at me wickedly.” As a form of “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu 1977) that sorts bodies to maintain the social hierarchies, looks can be read as informal negative sanctions, attempts to discipline and regulate the perceived deviant embodiment and behaviors of Muslim(-looking) passengers (Becker 1997). Within the confined and mobile spaces of public transport, passengers mostly interact through the gaze in which the movements of o/Others are policed and regimented (Hutchinson 2000). In a racialized visual regime, however, marked bodies, those that deviate from the somatic norms of society, their very presence, gesture, and movement are submitted to “super-surveillance” (Puwar 2004:11; Swanton 2010). They are under the pressure of the homogenizing gaze to assimilate through minimizing signs of cultural differences.

There is a tone to the visual which informs about the gazer’s attentional state and the agenda behind the gaze (Terry and Urla 1995). Eye contact establishes both intimacy and trust, as well as insincerity and fear, a technique embedded in power and control (Boden and Molotch 1994; Foucault 1977; Simmel 1997 [1908]; Urry 2002). For instance, Fanon (1986) shows how the glancing looks of frightened white passengers make his bodily consciousness a negating activity as if his “body was being dissected under white eyes” (87). In the white world, the Othered encounters difficulties in the development of bodily schema since the Othered bodies are surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty. For Fanon (1986) and many participants, such awareness is made not out of habit but out of implicit knowledge. As Edris, Ayaan, and many other interviewees felt, the gaze is never neutral but charged with judgments, feelings, and condemnation that render some bodies inferior. Here Othering incorporates discourses of stranger danger (Ahmed 2000) through the visual. They are looked at because they are perceived as the origin of trouble who steal “our” pleasant ride.

### *Auditory Othering*

Sound plays a critical role in passengers’ travel experiences. People respond to hearing other languages and words that an o/Other expresses. The response of white people to hearing foreign languages, mostly related to non-white/-European, plays a regular role in Othering on the move. The use of language in the everyday encounter in public transport is one of the central Othering processes between the wider (white) society and Muslim(-looking) passengers. Khadija, a hijabi mother in her early 30s in Tallinn, had a story: “Just a few times like when our kids speak our language on the bus, then everyone is staring but when they start speaking in Estonian, everyone becomes happy.” Latifa, another hijabi mother in her early 30s in Turku, had a very similar account: “Once I saw an acquaintance on the bus; we chatted and it felt really nice. And as soon as you speak Finnish [on the bus], the other [passengers] are also relaxed. People don’t look at you badly [anymore].”

The foreignness, the geopolitical distance between the heard language, for example, Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Tamil, Bengali, or any other non-white languages that sound “brown” (Devadoss 2020), and the main white spoken language, in this case, Dutch, German, Finnish, and Estonian, leads to the (re)construction of the Other (Dyers and Wankah 2012). The issue lies in the inability to understand the conversation thus portraying anxiety related to the Other. The auditory experience refers to hearing and listening and the ways through which everyday socio-spatial relations are (re)produced through the sensorial perception of sounds and spoken languages (Haldrup et al. 2006). Consequently, within the reduced spaces of public transport, next to the panoptical white Othering gaze, listening to what is said is another method of surveillance toward the racially marked bodies. Linguistic profiling is comparable to visual racial-ethnic profiling where language and how one speaks tells “us” something about “them.” For participants, the sound of their native spoken language becomes associated with something foreign which generates a reaction, subjugating looks.

### *Olfactory Othering*

Smell is another sensorial mode of Othering perceived by our participants. Olfactory refers to both the activity/action and the situation of the individual and/or object which expels a smell. It is a socio-cultural construct and has the potential to reify and (re)produce difference (Rodaway 2002). Going beyond visual and auditory registers of difference, smell is intimately entangled with the experience of space and Othering. Many participants, particularly women, mentioned their discomfort around the smell of alcohol in public transport. Sara in her mid-20s is a working/studying veiled woman in Amsterdam. She expressed her anxiety around the smell of beer: “I hate the smell of beer and I always end up with people sitting next to me on the train drinking beer.” The prohibition of alcohol consumption in Islam may have caused this “self-Othering” practice; however, it taps into the discomfort around potentials of anti-Muslim racism generated by alcohol. For Golam, a man in his mid-20s in Leipzig, alcohol and a drunk man put him into a serious situation:

It was Saturday, early in the morning... there was a guy... annoyed the whole time and he seemed drunk or maybe stupid, he was a very far-right radical racist. He looked at me and said some stupid things and I said ‘What do you want?’ He exited a stop before me and he told me ‘Come if you have the balls, exit here! then I will show you [what I want].’ He was full of hate. It remained in my head.

Participants argued that alcohol is related to drunk people which can result in sexual harassment, racist comments, or even physical aggression. As Sara argued, “there is always alcohol involved and I’m not a fan of it and try to stay away.” Like Valentine’s (1989) work on women’s fear, some participants’ use of public transport and routes are the product of avoiding troubles. Even in the absence of hatred or hostility, some participants argued that their racial, ethnic, or religious markers make them conspicuous (Ocejo and Tonnelat 2014). For them, public transport is the main place of encountering drunkards concerning physical harassment and social discomfort. Whenever they see a drunk person or smell alcohol either aboard or while waiting, they try not to bring attention to themselves.

*Haptic Othering*

Public transport is a sphere of intense encounters with o/Other bodies through the haptic experience of the tactile receptivity of the skin and bodily contacts (Haldrup et al. 2006). The haptic part of the body has not received enough attention or is simply taken for granted but it is thoroughly cultural full of Othering discourses (Rodaway 2002). The social body is created through the relations of contact between friendly and stranger bodies (Simonsen 2013). The Othering through the haptic encounter on the move involves the whole body and refers to locomotion, kinaesthesia, and the movement of the body through the (im)mobile spaces of public transit (Gibson 1966; Rodaway 2002). It points at the sensuous mediation between space, bodies, and the bodies in/through space. Bodily distance is a significant characteristic of the haptic Othering encounters on a transport vehicle mentioned repeatedly by participants. The stories of Hafez, Salma, and Iqbal explain this clearly:

I wore my dishdasha [the ankle-length garments for men] . . . I always sit next to the window which means there is always a place next to me for other people. When I sat there, no one sat next to me and the train was almost full. It was very interesting to see and experience that you are not belonging to somewhere. (Hafez, a bearded working man in his early 30s in Amsterdam)

Once I was sitting in a two-seat space, and one old woman came up to me and asked me to stand up as she wanted to sit. She refused to sit with me. (Salma a veiled woman in her early 30s in Tallinn)

For example, once a young woman sat next to me and the next stop, she changed her seat. (Iqbal in his mid-20s in Leipzig)

These snapshots may be read as the maintenance of the personal space or civil inattention (Goffman 1963), yet interviews suggest that the “haptic space” of Muslim(-looking) passengers tend to be broader than their counterparts. Sitting alone on a busy transport vehicle, changing the seat by fellow passengers, passengers refuse to allow them to sit, asking them to stand up or sit somewhere else are just some of the examples of haptic Othering, shunning, physical avoidance, or social sanctions on mass transit. Public transport is a social space where the boundaries of race, ethnicity, and religion are accentuated, (dis-)comfort becomes about the battle over space and the spatial ordering of bodies and differentiation (Bissell 2008; Koefoed and Simonsen 2017). As Anderson (1990) argues, the presence of particular bodies could (re)frame public interactions in mixed-race, mixed-class settings. The presence of Muslim(-looking) passengers poses an imagined threat that is understood and navigated by their fellow riders. There is an ongoing negotiation between proximity and distance, inclusion and exclusion, likeness and difference through the selection of an appropriate seat. These spatial relationships replicate social relations. These haptic spaces are seen as the space of threshold. This is a space between familiar and stranger. These are liminal zones of uncertainty, suspicion, and danger which turn a Muslim(-looking) passenger into an Other who needs to be approached, if at all, with caution.

### *Corporeal Othering*

Embodied encounters on the move never take place in a vacuum; they are politically, pedagogically, historically, spatially, and emotionally charged (Valentine 2008). Most of the participants, one way or another, have been subjected to verbal Othering from their fellow passengers. Sentences such as “Jesus is going to burn you in hell,” “crappy foreigners,” “go back to your country,” or “Muslims are terrorists” have been heard by both male and female participants in the studied cities. These Othering practices by reproducing the religious Other, the ethno-national Other, and the dangerous Other, respectively, demarcate boundaries and redefine the bodies of Muslim(-looking) passengers as a body out of place.

Within these encounters as Ahmed (2004b:33) argues, particular histories are reopened and “some bodies are already read as more hateful than other(s).” Muslim (-looking) passengers become a terrorist through a particular intersection of skin tone, clothing, and language (Swanton 2010). Furthermore, these verbal Otherings are a kind of “banal terrorism” (Katz 2007), a nationalist claim to solidify the nation which based on the fear for terror frames Muslim(-looking) communities as part of an international terror regime threatening Western idea(l)s (Koefoed and Simonsen 2012; Listerborn 2015; Simonsen 2013). Charged with the fear of the Other, these corporeal encounters connect global and local where geopolitical conflicts and global fears continually become entangled, compressed, and materialized into the intimacies of everyday traveling, incorporated into everyday embodied encounters on the move (Pain 2014; Pain and Smith 2008; Smith 2012).

Sometimes, however, the threshold of tolerance is even further crossed and Othering is practiced as physical aggression in public transport. For example, Anna, a convert veiled woman in her early 20s in Leipzig said that “because of the headscarf, I’ve been insulted and spat on many times.” For Riaz, a married Muslim man in his late 20s in Tallinn “nothing [serious] has happened to me but my friend’s wife, she wears the headscarf and someone shouted at her and wanted to punch her and take her hijab off.” Although there are some stories from the interviewed men, physical aggression mostly is targeted toward women mainly because the veiled Muslim women are easily identifiable and, based on orientalism, are considered as passive victims, an easy target of hate. Hate requires evidence for antagonism and the orientalist representation of the veil provides the implications of gender inequality and lack of integration (Listerborn 2015; Said 1978). The veil, as Scott (2007:5) argues, is seen as the “icon of the intolerable difference,” “marks the woman beneath it as dangerous” (Norton 2013:65), and media (re)constructs it as a symbol of refusal of “our” way of life, a sign of rejecting “our” western values. Therefore, through radical Othering, veiled women are constructed as an enemy, abject-Other, beyond the scope of tolerance.

Abject/radical Othering is not limited on board. We recorded several instances of physical Otherings while waiting for the vehicle. Mona, a veiled woman in her late 20s in Tallinn says.



I know a Russian-Estonian lady [who] wears a black abaya and face cover [niqab]. She was going with other sisters who were not wearing the hijab. They were waiting at a bus stop and then a guy punched her in the face.

Some interviewees indicated that their most problematic and challenging experiences have occurred while waiting for the carriage. Some specifically noted anxieties and mentioned their safety. A highly visible nature of waiting for public transit increases vulnerability and visibility which in return demands hyper-vigilance when entering such spaces (Lubitow et al. 2020). Nour, a veiled working/studying woman in her mid-20s in Amsterdam stated that:

When I'm on a train platform, I always take 2-3 steps backwards and I won't wait right before the line because you never know what may happen. The reason I do this is because of the stories you hear from other countries where people have been pushed over the platforms because of their faith.

These anxieties and fears around public transport stations not only limit the mobility of Muslim(-looking) passengers, but also teach them how to perceive and engage with public spaces of urban transit. Based on what Itaoui (2016, 2020) calls the spatial imaginaries of Islamophobia, Muslim(-looking) people move through these spaces with the knowledge that their racialized body is associated with risk and insecurity which challenge their sense of national belonging, cultural citizenship, and access to and movement through their cities (Shaker et al. forthcoming, 2021a, 2021b).

Gender and age dynamics of Othering perpetrators were interesting observations we came across. The majority of participants mentioned that visual, verbal, and, to some extent, physical Otherings come mostly from women and senior passengers. Yasmeen, a hijabi mother in her early 30s in Tallinn, said that "I can say that older people have these suspicious looks." Irfan, in his mid-20s in Leipzig, had a very similar observation: "I can say that the most unfriendly encounters in public transport or beyond are with elderly people." For Amina, a veiled convert woman in her early 30s in Tallinn "the things that have happened to me like someone shows aggression, it always comes from women." Literature has been ambiguous about the effect of gender on attitudes toward the Other (Marfouk 2019). Some studies suggest that women tend to be less open toward immigrants (Citrin et al. 1997; O'Rourke and Sinnott 2006). On the contrary, there are studies that either support the opposite claim or have not found any gender difference in Othering attitudes (Gorodzeisky 2011). Given the fact that previous empirical studies have been inconclusive about it, we do not have any convincing explanation. Yet, we think that the orientalist portrayal of Islam in Europe as a misogynistic religion that oppresses women might trigger some hate speech/practices from some women with low cultural capital. It should be noted that this statement does not reveal whether women more than men relate Islam and Muslims with misogyny. Furthermore, unpleasant looks, verbal abuse, and physical violence from senior passengers are often wrapped up in heavier narratives on nationalism, orientalism, the welfare state, a vague nostalgic sense of "good old days" where "our" country was still ours. Correspondingly, Dempster and Hargrave (2017:11) have indicated that "hostility towards refugees and migrants is less prevalent among younger, politically liberal and more educated people."

The Othering encounters go beyond passenger–passenger interactions. Participants have had several accounts of the discriminatory practices by drivers and public transport staff. Sara, for instance, said: “The driver saw me at the bus station; he looked at me and was like no, I’m not stopping for you. I ended up being late at work.” For Yasmeen:

They [train staff] are usually nice people but I remember during the first months of commuting to a nearby town where I was working, they were like suspicious and talking not very nice to me or checking my ticket not in a polite way.

These accounts are examples of discriminatory practices by public transit crew. These poor or no service provisions are experiences of racial or religious profiling by transport-related staff, forms of discrimination, and the exercise of power. These vignettes are various embodiments of the discourses of xenophobia, migration, and terrorism, forms of social sanctions (Purifoye 2015) through which everyday (anti-Muslim) racism is enacted via avoidance techniques.

### *Affective Othering*

Due to the proximity to a variety of bodies that are affectively marked as different, communication between passengers occurs through affective registers (Bissell 2010; Simonsen 2010). A whole series of emotional registers of a deeper affective transition (Duff 2017; Massumi 2002) comes to the fore which can (re)produce the Other. Encounters on the move involve an assortment of subtle, slow creep transformations that pass between bodies, affect bodily surfaces, simmer and build up to a boil-over point create a cascade of realizations such as shock, anger, dismay, fear, anxiety, frustration, silence, and indifference (Ahmed 2010; Bissell 2014). Within these affective—equivocal, fragile, contextual, and fleeting—moments of tension, the Other is constructed via emotionally charged spatial negotiations (Koefoed and Simonsen 2012). As Bille and Simonsen (2021:2) argue, affect needs to be situated in practices, which “are spatially embedded and felt phenomena.”

One of the narrated affective Othering is the temporary disruption and overridden silence. As Salma revealed, “most of my experiences on trams or buses have been more like I am entering the tram and generally there is silence in public transport.” Silence could be argued as a microshock (Massumi 2009), driven from the perceived “deviant” embodiment of Salam, that circulates through and populates the tram upon her entrance. Furthermore, based on what Ahmed (2014) calls “atmospheric walls,” silence is a way to claim space “available to some more than to others. . . a wall is a technique: a way of stopping something from happening or stopping someone from progressing without appearing to stop this or stop them.” Silence, thus, can be a way to question the legitimacy and claim authority. For Glenn (2004), silence is substantive and meaningful rhetoric employed intentionally as a tool to serve the communicative purpose of protecting the authority and as a means of punishment and rejection. Therefore, the nuances, gestures, and glimpses define attitudes toward fellow riders. Samina, a hijabi mother in her late 20s in Leipzig, stated that:

Sometimes I look, people act like that [angry facial expressions]. On trams, for example, I'm walking by and one woman is looking like that. . . I think that woman, she doesn't want foreigners or maybe she doesn't like foreigners.

Samina and some other participants' accounts are thick with affect. They mentioned a feeling of negativity circling in the air manifested in the face. The face is one of the most important sites through which affect and affective judgments are processed (Bissell 2010) communicated through common, involuntary expressions such as disgust, disdain, and repulsion. Latent anxiety, a sense of distress hidden in the background, reaches its tipping point, surfaces through the face. Moreover, passengers do not just perceive another body as an object; they are affected by the meaning that the body carries. The other body-subject, for example, a Muslim(-looking) passenger, through its mobility and occupation of space, communicates and calls for a response. They affect "us" and we reply to "them" (Simonsen, 2007, 2010, 2013). Here the response, for example, anger, frustration, hatred, is communicated facially.

Affects, furthermore, are action-potential (Duff 2010). Hassan, in his early 20s in Leipzig, expressed that "I really don't accept, for example, that old women or young people, when I enter, they grab their bags as if I am a thief." It is the negative affect associated with suspicion, anxiety, and mistrust that primes passengers for action. Here the biological component of affect plays a major role. "Wrong bodies" with "traces of dubious origin" (Ahmed 2007:162) that do not fit and sink into spaces of public transport stand out as the stranger danger (Ahmed 2000). The Other body becomes a site of stress situated within different histories and geopolitics of racialization. Grabbing belongings mentioned by Hassan and some other male interviewees is an Othering practice that renders a male Muslim(-looking) passenger the stereotypical criminal/villain/dangerous Other.

Within the atmospheres of surveillance, stigma, suspicion, and mistrust, not only the body of a (male) Muslim(-looking) passenger, but also the objects that they carry and bring into the vehicle become a site of anxiety. Some male participants in Amsterdam and Tallinn argued that a backpack changes the meaning and experience of travel. For Riaz, "in public transport, they [people] just look at my skin, eyes, and beard, they're black and they are afraid. Sometimes, I have my backpack and they are like 'oh, he has a bomb or something.'" A very similar account was narrated by Ahmad, a Muslim man in his early 20s in Amsterdam:

Sometimes when I'm at train stations and I have a little bit longer beard and leave my bag to a friend or something, everyone is looking at my bag like what is happening here; everyone is scared. Or if I must go to the toilet on the train and leave my bag behind, everyone is like NOOOOO.

Different bodies have different affective capacities (Tolia-Kelly 2006). Some particular bodies through their racialized and gendered markedness have different capacities for affecting the social spaces around them. Here a backpack carried by a male passenger is charged with affect turns into an "affective artefact" (Piredda 2020) that has the capacity to change the affective atmospheric qualities of a transport vehicle. It shows that a brown body of a Muslim(-looking) man is never far removed from the image of a terrorist or as Hooks (2008) avers, it is a fantasy of whiteness that the threatening Other is always a terrorist. Here fear, "people are

afraid”; “everyone is scared” mentioned above by Riaz and Ahmad, creates a border between “us” and “them” (Nayak 2010). As Ahmed (2004a:128) recalls, “fear does not involve the defence of borders that already exist; rather, fear makes those borders, by establishing objects from which the subject, in fearing, can stand apart.” In addition, Riaz and Ahmad’s accounts put emphasis not only on face-to-face interactions, but also pay attention to the materiality of passengering (Wilson 2017). They suggest that materials are significant to the assembling of multicultural and highlight how Othering occurs through encountering materialities, that is, a backpack. Consequently, focusing on how affect, through different configurations of human and non-human bodies, surfaces not on a conscious or interpretative level but through unintentional embodied acts (Bissell 2010; Lobo 2014) unfolds how Othering encounters in everyday passengering have deep roots in other (imaginary) spatiotemporalities that heavily charge and change the travel experiences of public transport.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper through a cross-national and interurban qualitative investigation in Amsterdam, Tallinn, Leipzig, and Turku, we have approached an under-researched segment of everyday life of Muslim(-looking) communities in Europe: public transport. As a public place where people with different socio-economic, ethno-racial, and religious-cultural backgrounds intensely encounter, public transport is a site of the (re)construction and replication of multicultural (in)civility. Processes of racialization are (re)practiced within the (im)mobile urban space of public transport through which the Muslim Other is (re)produced with ongoing negotiation over space, proximity, and distance involving the whole series of embodied registers (sensorial, corporeal, and affective) and processes of inclusion and exclusion, likeness and difference. It is remarkable how similar the experiences of public transport are across these four studied cities despite different history, geopolitical situations, demographic size and composition, Muslim(-looking) communities, and contact with them.

Through sensorial perceptions, that is, how encounters are sensed, corporeal practices, comments, small acts, gestures, and objects borders between “them” and “us” are redrawn, reproduced, and enacted. We have shown how through multicultural encounters and intersections of sensoriality (visual, auditory, olfactory, and haptic), corporeality (bodies, skin tone, beards), affectivity, spatiotemporality, and materiality and the objects that Muslim(-looking) passengers carry within everyday urban spaces of public transport the difference is transformed into inferiority and Otherness is lived. We have thought through the socio-spatial conditions of public transport that influence individual experiences and the dynamics of the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, and religion that challenge us on what a body of a Muslim (-looking) person does and how it interacts with other bodies, human and nonhuman, in the assembling of social life on the move. These (micro-)social conditions of aggression, silencing, insecurity, and tension show what it actually means to be Muslim(-looking) and religious in Europe nowadays. The Other is defined by their bodies and according to the norms of dominant society named as loathsome, fearful, dangerous, and deviant.

The narrated Otherings are also cut through gendered dynamics of Islamophobia. A veiled woman carries additional Othering elements and it could be argued that Othering and (micro-)aggressions within public transport are gendered. The mere fact that passengers perform many different modes of Othering such as all the sensorial dimensions, as well as verbal and physical hostility toward women, may mean that there is a power play reproducing the stereotype of a passive/powerless/victim Muslim woman where her veiled body can receive unwanted looks and comments, while with the stereotypical dangerous/criminal/villain Muslim men, passengers do not frequently seek to engage.

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