

# **Local and Global Contention: The Radicalisation of Conflicts around Religious Issues. A Comparison of Two Middle-size Cities in Italy**

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Muslim communities, the public authorities, residents' committees, Christian organizations, social movement organizations of different traditions tend to participate in local contentions that often take place over the construction of new mosques or the opening of Muslim centres, cultural institutions and associations. By reconstructing the radicalization of these

conflicts, with the help of process tracing, we want to investigate to which extent during the (public and political) controversies on the use of Islamic symbols in public and the recognition of Muslim community differences in the Western way of life, young Muslims (and other actors) tend to feel a sense of social, cultural, and economic subordinate position in their own community and of distrust of local institutions, especially as they interact with the wider perception of national and international policies and events that create feeling of injustice. Analytically, this research project intends therefore to explore how the complex interactions between the religious, political, and social dimensions contribute to the radicalization of local conflicts. We will in particular focus on preconditions for radicalization, especially at the level of the social construction of the external reality in contested spaces.

We will base our analysis on a longitudinal qualitative research strategy, which will involve semi-structured interviews as well as documentary analysis. As mentioned, we shall anchor our questions around the existing local conflicts, but expand then the analysis to how conflicts at other territorial levels might contribute discursive and political opportunities for radicalization. We plan about fifty interviews, with the main actors involved in the local conflicts, with a particular emphasis on actors with local expertise (e.g. imams, social workers, including teachers), and young Muslims (between 18 and 40 years old). We will also rely on secondary sources, existing literature and official documents from political and institutional authorities.

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Dr. Lorenzo Bosi was trained as a political scientist at the University of Bologna, and at Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland, where he was awarded a PhD at the School of Politics and International Relations in December 2005. His PhD thesis focused on contentious politics and social movement radicalisation in deeply divided societies, drawing on social movements theories. Dr. Bosi has published in international journals on these subjects. In particular, he is participating as an affiliated researcher in an international research project, 'European Protest Movements since the Cold War'. This research is financed by the European Union (see <http://www.protest-research.eu/static/index> for details). In 2007, he was awarded a Jean Monnet fellowship at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies of the European University Institute (EUI), where he carried out research on political violence in Northern Ireland, focusing on the reasons why individuals join underground activities and participate in political violence. His specific focus was on Provisional IRA and Official IRA volunteers who joined underground activities until 1972 (25 interviews with former volunteers).