

# What's ethnicity got to do with it?

## Religious and racial politics in Europe

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*Drawing on sociology, anthropology, constitutional law, and political philosophy, this issue explores how the concept of ethnicity functions as a salient category for understanding the experiences of minorities in Europe today. It considers ethnicity as a powerful means of self-identification and the assertion of differences between as well as within ethnic groups. This issue engages the tension between group-based stigmatization on the one hand, and the reality of increasingly fragmented forms of identification under the influences of de-institutionalization and individualization. It also hones in on the ethnicization and racialization of nationhood under the influence of right-wing identity politics, and the exploitation of ethnic differences for political and electoral purposes. In its engagement with socio-legal studies, this issue considers a number of strategies for alleviating the pressure on ethnic minorities, for example through the use of private sector duties as well as potential innovations of anti-discrimination infrastructures.*

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Coexistence, pluralism, and democracy in Europe have long been understood through the lenses of religion and race. At the same time, these issues have been subject to intense politicization and polarization over the last decade (Bonikowski 2017). One of the challenges in socio-legal enquiry is to navigate this polarization, while addressing legitimate concerns over discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion. In contemporary Europe, discrimination is often associated with Muslims and also migration, as made visible by the refugee migration in 2015 and its representation by right-wing movements as a “Muslim” or “migrant” crisis (Lucassen 2018; Pruitt et al. 2018). Driven by the literatures on Critical Race Theory, originating in the United States, and cultural racism, the positionality of Muslims and other minoritized populaces in Europe is also increasingly studied from the perspective of race (Cole 2009; Meer and Modood 2009; Selod and Embrick 2013; Meer 2013; Breen and Meer 2019). This special issue seeks to recover another central axis of othering in Europe, namely ethnicity. Ethnicity is most commonly used to refer to common group culture based on shared myths and histories, indicated through language, food, and traditions (Calhoun 1993). Ethnicity is, however, often

subsumed under the categories of religion or race. Given Europe's longer history of entwined racial, religious, and ethnic othering, especially vis-à-vis Jews as well as Roma and Travelers, it is imperative that European scholarship today explicitly engages with ethnicity alongside of race and religion, and also alongside of class, gender, and the role of the nation-state.

This special issue turns to the concept of ethnicity and its pertinence in politics and society. As Stuart Hall asserts, "there is a perfectly good word for cultural differences between groups, *ethnicity*" (2017:79). However, much like the concept of race, ethnicity is neither a natural nor a stable social construct, and cannot be contained in a singular definition. Ethnicity might pertain to cultural or social differences, common descent or a country of origin, religious cleavages, or shared histories (Calhoun 1993). According to Hall, "ethnicity not only functions within the same discursive chain as race but also operates in similar ways, that is to say, as a sliding signifier" (2017:108). This does not mean that the concept of ethnicity does not have merit, socially or legally. Experiences of ethnic profiling and discrimination are real and carry meaningful social consequences. The concept of ethnicity is thus sociologically useful to signal "a specific form of cultural difference," in particular when employed to enliven social or political aims (Malešević 2004:1). Ethnicity also carries great potential as a fundamental concept for anti-discrimination law, which may be materialized through the assertion of discrimination based on specific ethnic differences, and which may not be adequately captured by the more common legal categories of religion, race, or ethnic origin.

This issue explores the concept of ethnicity from the perspectives of sociology, anthropology, constitutional law, and political philosophy to recover ethnicity as a salient category for understanding the experiences of minorities in Europe today. It studies ethnicity as a powerful means of self-identification, for example by describing or asserting differences between as well as within ethnic groups. It further hones in on the ethnicization and racialization of nationhood under the influence of right-wing identity politics, and the ways in which these movements have exploited ethnic differences for political and electoral purposes (Miller-Idriss 2009; Özyürek 2023; Newth 2023). This issue seeks to constructively engage the tension between group-based stigmatization on the one hand, and the reality of increasingly fragmented forms of personal and communal identification under the influences of de-institutionalization and individualization. Disaggregation of identity strands invites careful consideration of the intersections between ethnicity, religion, and race, as well as gender, class, and nationality (Meer 2008; Norton 2013; Topolski 2018). In its engagement with socio-legal studies, this issue further considers several strategies for alleviating the pressure on ethnic minorities, for example by using private sector duties as well as the inclusion of ethnicity as an independent personal characteristic in anti-discrimination law.

Guided by the question, “what’s ethnicity got to do with it?”, our authors bring to the fore how the concept of ethnicity can further develop the intellectual terrain of religious and racial politics in Europe, with specific reference to peaceful coexistence and a cultural politics of difference (Hall 1996). That is, many contemporary debates centered on inclusion and exclusion take seriously racial and religious distinctions, but overlook how ethnic claims – or in the case of Central Europe, nationality – are made to contract or expand boundaries to belonging. Bringing a focus on ethnicity to bear on these debates sheds light on how and when ethnic framings of nationhood lead to violence and exclusion; ethnicity as a potential emancipatory identity that unites across racial and religious lines; and the potentialities and pitfalls of ethnicity as a category in antidiscrimination infrastructures. In short, it expands not only our vocabulary for talking about difference in Europe, but equally sheds light on the gaps in language and law, for articulating and confronting enduring inequities in Europe.

Nested within the question (“what’s ethnicity got to do with it?”) are more specific questions that guide the nine papers that constitute this special issue. These include: how does ethnicity interact with the more prominent terrain of religious and racial identities and classifications, including those made in law? How do (white, “Christian”) majorities invoke ethnicity to draw boundaries to minoritized groups? How has migration reinvigorated or transformed notions of ethnic belonging and exclusion? And how and when do minoritized groups themselves invoke ethnic identities to gain recognition or emancipate themselves from what they deem restrictive categories of difference? This call for a renewed focus on ethnicity as a category of identification, classification, and/or protection in law is relevant not only to the academy, but also to pressing societal questions regarding the rising right wing, political polarization, refugee migration, religious minority representation, and the pressure to decolonize Europe: calls for the return of art and artifacts, the renaming of streets, and the reawakening of marginalized or hidden histories that today reverberate across the continent (Brubaker 2013; Engler 2013; Förster et al. 2016; Hunt 2019).

### **Belonging’s ambivalences: the case of hyphenated identities**

Since the mid-twentieth century, Europe’s cultural boundaries of belonging have been shifting under the influence of migration, globalization, and individualization. In the context of the European nation-state, ethnicity has long been viewed as a group-identity by necessity, however processes of de-institutionalization and individualization have contributed to more granular forms of ethnic identification. This is particularly true for the second, third, and fourth generation in post-migrant populaces, who have largely integrated, but also continue to be identified as ethnic “others” (Beaman 2017; Becker 2021). This is further reflected in legal

practices which afford ethnic minorities communal protections, as well as other mechanisms that might refer to a constellation of categories, including “country of origin” (Magazzini 2024). The latter has historically functioned as a synonym for ethnicity, but it places ethnic otherness primarily within the context of migration, the status of the migrant, or the post-migrant in European societies. This coexists with Etienne Balibar’s concept of the “fictive ethnici[zation]” of the nation, in which historical ethnic homogeneity—and therefore a naturalized rootedness of the ethnic majority—is presumed (1990:349). This fictive ethnicization hides the fact that emerging nation-states negotiated meaningful regional differences, for example in language, culture, or religion, some of which are part of the historic fabric and heritage of Europe (cf. Knippenberg and De Pater 1988). Today, these regional differences have largely been subsumed by national identities, but even so, boundaries of belonging (and independence) are from time to time reasserted, as by the Basques and Catalans in Spain and the Scots in the United Kingdom (Lecours 2022).

References to origin, and by implication ethnicity, race, and religion, pertain to an otherness that is “external”, but external to what? In the study of nationalism, this is often ascribed to the issue of national identification, for example on the basis of ethnic or civic belonging (Bonikowski 2016). In this case, externality would exist vis-à-vis the so-called ethnic or civic nation. But this contrast hides spatialized aspects of othering delineated by the territory of the state, or even the triangulation of space, people, and culture within narratives of nationhood (Smith 1986; Salzborn 2018; Van der Tol 2020). In the case of Hungary, for instance, ethnic minorities, most notably the Roma, are not considered to be part of the ethnically Hungarian nation, and in the constitution are identified as “nationalities that live *with us*” – a phrase that neatly captures the link between ethnicity and space (Van der Tol 2024). This signals the construction of otherness through the speech act of externalizing ethnic minorities. As the case of the Roma in Hungary evidences, this otherness is not limited to those who fled to Europe in recent years. It is rather part of the story of exclusion faced not only by Roma, but also by Travelers, Jews, Balkan Muslims over the course of centuries. Such externalization presumes both geographic and political otherness, creating a category of insider-outsiders, and legitimizing demands for integration, and even assimilation (Simmel 2016; Van der Tol 2021).

Such otherness is largely leveraged over the cultural axis, signifying a boundary between differences that have been negotiated within national models, and those that are considered to be (partially) incompatible with nationhood (Stoler 2011; Feldman 2018). The reality, however, is that these differences need to be contained within the territorial bounds of the state, thus creating what Cathy Cohen terms “citizen outsider[s],” those that we term *citizen-strangers* – building on the notion of the insider-outsider put forth by Georg Simmel (2010:13; 2016). Such a status transcends citizenship, persisting for legally integrated minority groups across Europe,

like Roma, Travelers, and Jews. This legal-cultural divide can further be seen amongst those who more recently migrated. Whereas migrants and their children, grandchildren etc. may successfully gain citizenship, aspects of cultural boundaries persist, even within the second, third, and fourth generations (Castles 2006; Chin 2007; Beaman 2017). That is, while minorities in Europe have largely gained legal citizenship, they have not attained full cultural citizenship, which entails “the right to be different [...] with respect to the norms of the dominant national community, without compromising one’s right to belong” (Rosaldo and Flores 1997:57; Beaman 2016).

The rise of right-wing populism has put the spotlight on the cultural belonging of Muslim citizens, who may be framed as “other” to a (Judeo-)Christian Europe, and even “enemies within the gates” (Schiffauer 2006:94). Examples of these hyphenated identities include German-Turkish, Moroccan-Dutch, or Pakistani-British. Even when attached to European nation-states, Muslim identities have become highly-securitized—a securitization justified by identified Islamist terrorist acts, although high-profile terrorism committed by non-Muslim actors, such as Anders Breivik, has not attracted a similar scrutiny of any other demographic (Fekete 2004; Andersson 2012; Mescher 2012; Liberatore 2017). Moreover, the otherness over the religious axis may be reinforced through the regulation of headscarves, the full-face veil, and the location and architecture of mosques (Fekete 2004; Schiffauer 2006; Allievi 2009; Elver 2012; Jones and Braun 2017; Van der Tol 2020). Whereas such regulations might refer to religion, these references cannot exist without assuming the connection between religious, ethnic, racial, and spatialized (largely vis-à-vis the nation-state) otherness. In fact, although largely coded as a religious symbol, some women might wear the headscarf for cultural rather than religious reasons. Frantz Fanon’s (1994) famous work, *A Dying Colonialism*, showcased how the act of veiling became a symbol for cultural distinction and political resistance among Muslim Algerian women in colonial France. As Khaïtan and Calderwood Norton (2020: 1125) argue, it may be that someone does not actually hold to certain religious tenets, but may be committed on a cultural level, which they term the “committed [...] (non)adherent”.

Jews are another group who have long experienced ascribed otherness across Europe. Jewish communities were historically regarded as resident others and remained ineligible for citizenship well into processes of democratization (Prak 2018). The very emergence of the European nation-state was inseparable from political-theological arguments about Jewishness made throughout modernity, first in relation to Christianity and later in relation to the culturally Christian, or (post) Christian nation. Moreover, the history and memory of the Holocaust have inscribed a sense of (physical) insecurity onto the Jewish experience, which may, however uneasily, coexist with citizenship and a high degree of assimilation. Today, rising antisemitism suggests that Jewish belonging is still not self-evident (Norton 2013). Framing Jews singularly in

terms of religious otherness has long been contested—following racialized projects of Jewish othering, and since some identify as “secular Jews”—signaling the liminality of being Jewish, and yet not religious, a phrase that may again be echoed in Khaitan and Calderwood Norton’s terminology of the “committed (non)adherent” (Topolski 2018). Both have contributed to the now widely accepted notion of Jewish ethnicity (Webber 1997).

The relationship between ethnicity, spatialized otherness, and race is illuminated through the position and status of ethnic minorities who migrated in the mid-twentieth century from former colonies to Europe. The most poignant example of this nexus is, perhaps, the Windrush Generation in the United Kingdom. The Windrush Generation represents a group of people who were born within the British Caribbean, and who moved to the British Isles before and during the process of decolonization. There they faced extreme and lasting marginalization. This has re-emerged in recent years, as the United Kingdom established stricter legislation concerning migration in the 2010s, which led to the deportation of some individuals from British Caribbean backgrounds (Slaven 2022). Dutch-Surinamese, Dutch-Indian, Dutch-Antillean, and Dutch-Moluccan communities similarly migrated to the Netherlands as so-called “post-colonial migrants.” Although many of them received regular Dutch citizenship, Dutch-Surinamese and Dutch-Antillean men, in particular, experience high levels of ethnic profiling by the border police, while these communities more broadly face discrimination on an everyday basis (cf. Phillips 2011). Whereas Christianity is well-represented within these post-colonial migrant communities in the Netherlands, in the UK, post-colonial migration consisted of both largely Christian migrants from the Caribbean and Africa and Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh migrants from South Asia; and in France, post-colonial migrants have been predominantly Muslim, and to some extent Jewish, hailing from across the Maghreb (Peach 2006; Garbin 2013; Katz 2015).

Much of the social, scientific, and legal literature on pluralism has focused on Western European nation-states and their struggles to include migrant and post-migrant communities since the end of World War II. Central and Eastern European states such as Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria, however, have been home to many ethnic groups, some of whom may have ties to neighboring nations, such as Romanian, Croat, Serbian, or Hungarian minorities. Whereas the Hungarian government invests in Hungarian minorities in Romania, Ukraine, and Croatia, this financial support is explicitly tied to the electoral interests of the incumbent government. Some states have entered into formal agreements to protect “their” minorities across national borders, whereas other minorities do not have similar institutional support. An example is the extreme marginalization of Roma and Travelers, who may be vulnerable to extreme-right violence, but also to state-sponsored marginalization, for example through practices of segregation in schools, such as in Hungary and Slovakia (Pogány 2006; Crețan et al. 2023; Messing 2017). With the accession of numerous Central and Eastern European states to

the European Union, the “Roma question” has increasingly been Europeanized, which has in turn translated into ethnically focused “EU Framework for National Roma Integration Framework Strategies” (Magazzini and Piemontese 2019).

The Russo-Ukrainian war has contributed to shifting political discourses around belonging in Ukraine. Scholars report an increasing salience of civil identification with Ukraine, while people’s personal attachment to ethnic identities may be hybrid, owing to an amalgamation of ethnicities in Ukraine. Volodymyr Kulyk emphasises the absence of clearly distinguished ethnic groups in Ukraine: “Ukraine’s population does not ‘consist’ of clear-cut Ukrainian, Russian, and other ethnic groups, but Ukrainian citizens do differ greatly in their ethnocultural practices and ethnolinguistic identifications” (Kulyk 2022:323). The war has certainly reinvigorated civic identification with Ukraine, and this might be expressed in recent competition between Orthodox Churches looking to either Moscow or Kyiv (Metreveli 2020), in increased usage of the Ukrainian language, and shifting cultural practices, such as celebrating Christmas according to the Gregorian (Catholic and Protestant) instead of the Julian (Eastern Orthodox) calendar. Kulyk observes that ethnic Russians in Ukraine commonly identify with the Ukrainian state and that their identities may be as fluid as other Ukrainians, implying that references to ethnic Russians as a distinct “nationality” – a Soviet category – are inappropriate (Kulyk 2023). His work shows that political attachment cannot be ascribed on the basis on one’s perceived ethnic or linguistic attachments, even in the context and complexity of war.

The ambivalences of hyphenated belonging bring out the persistent othering of not only racial and religious but also ethnic, ethno-religious, as well as linguistic minorities. In grappling with this othering, law and public discourse in Europe are relatively well-equipped to entertain the concepts of religion and race, and how the two are implicated in discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion. In parallel, the scholarship on pluralism and boundary-making in Europe also tends to focus on the categories of religion and race (Fekete 2004; Meer and Modood; Phillips 2011; Topolski 2018). A rich and important body of literature across the social sciences, humanities, and law has thus emerged, which hones in on the ways in which racial and/or religious classification processes shape social inequality in Europe, most notably in the now well-developed subfield field of “cultural racism” (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991; Allen 2005; Meer and Modood 2009; Ben-Eliezer 2021). Yet the concept of ethnicity, as independent from religion and race, has not yet received similar attention. Few social scientific studies have attempted to isolate ethnicity as a constructed and yet also highly consequential category of experience (see, as exceptions, Meer 2008; Modood and Khattab 2016). This negligence may arise from the marginal inclusion of ethnicity in anti-discrimination law, from the relatively incoherent conceptualization of ethnicity across European states, or perhaps from the Western orientation of scholarship on discrimination and structural inequality.

## **Ethnicity and its enduring connection with religion and race**

Hyphenated identities can be greatly illuminated by the concept of ethnicity, not as a replacement or proxy for religion or race, but rather as an acknowledgement of the complexity of identity and identification beyond religion and race. This special issue focuses on three major groups for whom ethnicity can be particularly salient, namely Jews, Muslims, and Roma. Across Europe, Jews have been understood as having an ethnic identity that includes but cannot be reduced to religion, and includes, but cannot be reduced to racialisation vis-à-vis anti-Semitism present and past (Webber 1997). While the Jewish experience is in many respects unique, it can also help us to better understand the complex, layered identities and experiences of other minorities, Muslims and Roma, in particular, who face discrimination in everyday life and in structural distinctions that set them apart from the mainstream (Hellgren and Bereményi 2021; Cortés 2021). It can further help us to understand the current backlash against all these minority groups, together, apart, and even set against one another, as seen in political movements built on platforms of ethnic purity (Özyürek 2023; Newth 2023).

The complex relationship between categories of difference has been grappled with by scholars across the humanities and social sciences, and by those who focus on Muslim and Jewish positionalities, in particular. Nasar Meer explores whether Muslims in the United Kingdom are coded (in law and in public representations, e.g. media) as an ethnic, racial, or religious minority, arguing that the “‘normative grammar’ of race” in which Jews, but not Muslims, are seen as racialized, disadvantages Muslims in both discursive and material ways (2008:61). Anya Topolski describes the contemporary Muslim positionality in Europe as characterized by “the race-religion constellation,” in which the categories of race and religion not only connect but have also come to “co-constitut[e]” one another (59). Stuart Hall invoked the term of “fateful triangle” in reference to the entwinement of race, ethnicity, and the nation in postcolonial Britain (2017). And Anne Norton references the “Jewish question” and the “Muslim question” similarly as “knot[s of distinction] where the politics of class, sex, and sexuality, of culture, race, and ethnicity are entangled” (228). It is impossible, however, to identify “knots of distinction” that all ethnic and ethno-religious minorities share, as these are based on the context-dependent and dynamic interplay of nation and otherness.

The intersection of ethnicity and religion has deeply shaped historical dynamics of toleration and coexistence. The theological distinction of Jews from the Christian story had profound social, economic, and political consequences for Jews, who became a severely persecuted minority in Europe. Still, the relationship between theological anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism remains only marginally explored in contemporary political theory (Carter 2008; Topolski 2018; Lauwers 2019). The racialization of their otherness aimed to make sense of the “delay” or absence of their conversion to Christianity, and was then used to legitimize the use of violence

against what became understood as a sub-category of humanity. The racialization of Jews is further entwined with modernity's most jarring questions about nature, reason, and truth, and coexisted with ascribed otherness to numerous "non-Europeans", such as Native Americans, Arabs, Blacks, and Indians (Carter; Jennings 2010). What began as a religious distinction that set Jews apart thus transformed into a biological distinction, and even after the horrors of the Holocaust, antisemitism continues to proliferate in Europe (Bauer 2019).

The Holocaust had lasting consequences on European societies, including the triggering of protections for Jews, who have come to occupy a "special," often legally protected place in contemporary Europe (Kahn-Harris and Gidley 2010; Özyürek 2023). At the same time, it triggered internal Jewish conversations about Jewish identity, in which some emphasized religiousness (specifically, vis-à-vis the emergence of ultra-Orthodox communities that made sense of such extreme suffering through the straying of the Jewish people from God), whereas the ethnic, based in cultural traditions and mores, became emphasized by others, with some asserting secular Jewish identities (Katz et al. 2007). Today, Jews in Europe are largely recognized as an ethno-religious group, with the violence of race discourse articulated in policy, law, and scholarship relating to anti-Semitism, albeit avoided in describing solidarities or bonds (Lederhendler 2011; Khan-Harris and Gidley 2010). To make sense of the enduring distinction of Jews from the European mainstream Zygmunt Bauman built on Simmel's notion of "the Stranger" to posit the essentialized "conceptual Jew": the "prototypical" "ethnic-religious-cultural stranger" forged by modern European societies (2001:39; 1991:71, 85; Simmel 2016).

Race, rather than ethnicity, has become the more dominant frame for thinking about the classification of Muslims in Europe, arguably another "ethnic-religious-cultural-stranger" in Europe. The primacy of race in this discourse has been specifically developed in the cultural racism literature noted above. This literature only implicitly recognizes ethnicity – and how this concept functions in forms of othering that lead to discriminatory practices and lived experiences of discrimination (Phillips 2011; Meer 2008; Breen and Meer 2019). Race has also become a means for identification among Muslims in Europe. For instance, Blackness as a political claim emerged in the Political Blackness movement of 1970s Britain and is, as Damani Partridge argues, a framework used by Turkish and Arab people as well as people of African descent in today's Berlin (Modood 1994; Partridge 2023). At the same time, the concept of race is not always recognized in the law. The French National Assembly, for example, attempted to remove the word "race" from the French constitution in 2018 (Eiland 2021). Whereas this was partially an acknowledgement that racial differentiation is a social construct and not of ontological value, it also hindered the recognition that the negative differentiation of Muslims and other minorities entails a racialized process. This must be understood against the backdrop

of the neologism of '*Islamogauchisme*', the assertion that leftist politicians co-opt Islamic identities (Marlière 2023).

Much of the contemporary anthropological and sociological literature on Muslims has, however, focused less on racial classification and more on religious identification, specifically that of the “ethical turn” in anthropology. This field of research was pioneered by Talal Asad, who argued that religious groups should be understood on account of their religious sensibilities, including practices and discourses, rather than superimposed secular norms and discourses (2009). His students — such as Saba Mahmood, Charles Hirschkind, and Mayanthi L. Fernando — continued this tradition, with the latter two examining the experience of Muslims in modern Spain and France, respectively (Mahmood 2012; Hirschkind 2021; Fernando 2014). This “ethical turn” has also spilled over into sociology, with sociologists like Rachel Rinaldo, Jeffrey Guhin, Z. Fareen Parvez, and Elisabeth Becker re-centering theoretical arguments about (European) modernity through qualitative research on Muslim religious identities (Rinaldo 2013; Guhin 2014; Parvez 2017; Becker 2021). In contrast, political philosophers — Cécile Laborde, in particular — advocate for the “disaggregation” of religion for legal purposes, and this coexists within a body of legal scholarship that is uneasy about the assertion of religious freedom by religious majorities (2015). While this scholarship is perhaps animated by concerns about the protection of gender identities and sexual autonomy, thinner conceptions of religion for legal purposes may impact negatively on the protections afforded to ethno-religious minorities under the umbrella of religion (Ravitch 2016).

In contrast to Muslims, ethnicity is the most salient category of identification and classification for Roma in Europe. Roma identities pertain to racial, ethno-religious, and ethno-national categories of distinction, as the Roma are a highly racialized ethnic group with no singular cultural identity, and who live across Europe (Van Baar and Kóczé 2020; Mirga-Kruszelnicka 2022). The boundary-crossing nature of Roma migration, which has tended to move westwards from Eastern Europe, eludes the categorization strategies of many European nation-states. European institutions have recognized the Roma (as an umbrella term) as Europe’s largest ethnic group, albeit an “ethnicity” comprised by a broad internal diversity in terms of ethno-cultural identity as well as citizenship and legal status. Regardless of their citizenship or legal status, Roma have been continuously imagined and regarded as “foreigners” inside of Europe (Fekete 2014). In many ways, Roma are made invisible, as they are at once externalized from national self-understandings and in Western Europe almost entirely excluded from debates on minority protections and rights, residing in what has been dubbed “the fringes of citizenship”: “a space where marginalised minorities are manifestly included as a special group but yet latently marginalised as citizens” (Sardelić 2021:7). They have arguably been left out of dominant public and scholarly debates on pluralism in Europe because of their nested, double

marginality: within Eastern European societies, which are themselves marginalized in intra-European discourses and policies.

As notions of “Europe” are often overly focused on Western European societies, it is ultimately unsurprising that EU institutions adopted a developmentalist approach to Roma inclusion, an approach that remains conditioned by the divides between Western and Eastern European countries as well as between color-blind and identity-policy traditions (Piemontese and Magazzini 2019). In recent years, there have been attempts at challenging the framework of “Roma exceptionalism” and bridging scholarship on Roma inclusion with broader issues of inclusion and exclusion in Europe (Magazzini 2017; Yıldız and de Genova 2018; Hellgren and Bereményi 2021). Nested within this bridging literature, some scholars have suggested that the “language of race and racism” provides emancipatory potential for the Roma, more than the framework of ethnicity (Miskovi 2009:201). And yet contextual differences in racial identification have emerged in studies of Roma migration from Eastern to Western Europe, where their otherness is differently coded, illuminating the entwinement and context-dependence of Hall’s “fateful triangle”: ethnicity, race, and nation (2017; Grill 2018).

While Europe is an organizing imaginary and geography in the othering of Jews, Muslims, and Roma, the nation-state is the backdrop against which these identifications, classifications, and protections play out today. The nation-state remains central as the dominant legal arbiter and provisioner of rights; and while in reality highly dynamic, the nation-state is often imagined in static terms, which has contributed to ethnicized politics (Balibar 1990). Under such conditions, Jews, Muslims, and Roma have been perceived as “transgressing” the borders of the nation-state, whether physically (through migration), culturally (through the preservation of communal identities), or politically (through supposed allegiance to other political entities or nationalities). As such they have been consistently portrayed as others, national outsiders, foreigners, strangers, or even “enemies with the gates” (Schiffauer 2006; Caliskan 2014; Fekete 2014; Gerlach 2016).

### **Ethnicity beyond religion and race**

Although ethnicity is often entwined with religion and race, it also moves beyond its confines, capturing specific aspects of the lived experiences of social, linguistic, and cultural differences within European societies. Insofar as ethnicity is not covered by religion or race, relevant differences may or may not trigger mechanisms of protection, such as those afforded through anti-discrimination law. This reality is not aided by the ambiguity of how ethnicity is recognized in some states, but not in others, while aspects of ethnicity may be implicitly covered by other protected characteristics, such as country of origin, gender, religion, and race, as is discussed in this issue by Tina Magazzini and Van der Tol. The increasing ethnicization of nationhood in

right-wing movements has left ethnic minorities at times in a socio-legal void, in which discrimination becomes relatively normalized while anti-discrimination law may or may not sanction discriminatory behavior. This special issue centers on those individuals and groups alternatively categorized as religious, ethnic, and/or racialized (e.g. Jews, Muslims, and Roma, in particular), calling at once for the clarification of these classifications as well as a better understanding of their intersections with one another, and also with the categories of gender, class, and the nation-state.

Papers by A. Sophie Lauwers, Timo Koch, and Tina Magazzini speak to nationalist invocations of ethnic purity, and the enduring, albeit still ambivalent place of minorities within European nations. In “Who belongs to the ‘historic nation’? Fictive ethnicity and (il)liberal uses of religious heritage”, Lauwers argues that not only illiberal, but also liberal understandings of nationhood can be exclusive, driving the privilege of some citizens over others (Lauwers 2024). Reinforcing the notion of the national, including what Etienne Balibar terms its “fictive ethnicization,” Lauwers argues, effectively subordinates ethnic and religious minorities in both ideational and material ways (Balibar 1990, 350). In “Unity and exclusion: how collective action frames are shaping far-right movements in Europe”, Timo Koch discusses the relationship between ethnic belonging and the assertion of traditional family values on the far-right. While traditionalists, religionists, and far-right movements may coalesce around a seemingly positive vision of the family, its undercurrent is a commitment to ethnopluralism, or preserving unmixed ethnicities (or even races) in ethno-nationalist projects (Koch 2024). Tina Magazzini, in “When ethnicity is ‘national’: mapping ethnic minorities in Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities”, discusses how ethnicity is operationalised in different European context, with reference to religion, race, and language (Magazzini 2024). She argues that ethnicity is not synonymous with nationhood or country of origin, but may be perceived as form of thick cultural difference.

Gülay Türkmen and Elisabeth Becker discuss the complexity of classification that transcends the nation, specifically the intersections of ethnicity, race, religion, and class. Employing Bourdieu’s “classification struggles” as a theoretical framework, Gülay Türkmen discusses migrants and minorities from Turkey and Syria in contemporary Europe in “Categorical Astigmatism in the study of migrants in Europe”. In what she terms “categorical astigmatism”, Türkmen demonstrates how a turn towards identity politics has resulted in the collapsing of religion, ethnicity and nationality (Türkmen 2024). In her analysis, she calls for categorical clarification, including engagement with class, and draws on the concept of intersectionality to move beyond boundaries of classification. Becker turns towards the potentiality of ethnicity as an emancipatory concept. In “Theorizing ‘New Ethnicities’ in Diasporic Europe: Jews, Muslims, and Stuart Hall,” she conceptualizes the unique positionality of diasporic populaces in Europe,

drawing on Hall's notion of "new ethnicities". She illuminates the potentiality of new ethnicities as a means of understanding and giving voice to the dynamic and hyphenated experiences of diasporic minorities in Europe (Hall 1996). In so doing, Becker calls for a closer exploration of Black, Jewish, and Muslim minority experiences together (Becker 2024).

In "Ethnic identity as a challenge to constitutional law", Marietta van der Tol observes that the racialization as well as religionization of ethnicity may contribute to the legal entrenchment of ethnic othering in religion and race (Van der Tol 2024). Whereas ethnicity has long been understood to be communal, she suggests that processes of de-institutionalization, individualization, and social fragmentation warrant a more granular and flexible understanding of ethnic self-identification. Continuing this focus on the law, Ashley Terlouw and Kris van der Pas illuminate the gap between legal classifications and everyday experiences of discrimination in "The Battle Against Ethnic Discrimination: Is the Law of Any Use?" (Terlouw and Van der Pas 2024). With reference to the Netherlands, they signal changing attitudes to ethnicity and ethnic profiling, but also warn that legal classifications may not resolve the structural inequalities to which ethnic minorities are subject. They explore the potentiality of private sector duties, which come with an expectation that corporations monitor and improve on ethnic inclusion. This paper is mirrored by an analysis of ethnic inequality in Hungary, written by Vera Messing and András Pap, "A Case Study in Conceptualizing and Operationalizing Ethnicity: Social Inclusion of Roma in Hungary." Messing and Pap discuss the consequences of the confused and overlapping conceptualization of Roma as an ethno-racial group, a national minority, and as a socially disadvantaged group. They demonstrate how this shapes inequality across the fields of politics, education, and employment, and the interrelated politico-legal paralysis that results from a climate of data-processing phobia (Messing and Pap 2024).

Together, these papers shed light on the most recent dynamics of ethnicity in Europe, offering conceptual tools for a more nuanced and granular understanding of pluralism, tolerance, and the rights of minorities in Europe.

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