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The Neoliberal Bureaucratization of Mosques within the Suburbs of Paris and London

While there is an important literature on the process of mosques' building and "infrastructuralization" (Gale 2007, Burchardt 2015) in France and the UK which includes the religious space keeping, making and seeking, studies that focus on the immaterial dimensions of urban Islam in these two countries are scarce. In this thesis, I intend to study the process of "neoliberal bureaucratization" (Hibou 2015) not only as an indirect material outcome of an often-arduous negotiation between the local authorities and the mosque's committee members/imams who aim either to expand the existing mosque or to build a new one, but also as an immaterial conditioning taking place inside mosques. Neoliberal bureaucratization takes place in form of an invasion of the religious sphere, including the everyday life of imams, with norms, procedures, and rules to achieve the objectives of professionalization, calculability, and predictability imported from the managerial enterprise. Based on almost two years of intensive fieldwork in two mosques in Paris and London, my PhD suggests that as part of the enduring process of seeking legitimacy and responding to the urban authorities' requirements and procedures, there is a displacement of executive power from the traditional imams to the legal-rational leadership of the committee members. My work will show how the imam is adapting continuously his role and discourse to adopt the "best practices". In a way, I will show how the process of mosque's building