

Islamic religious education in Finland

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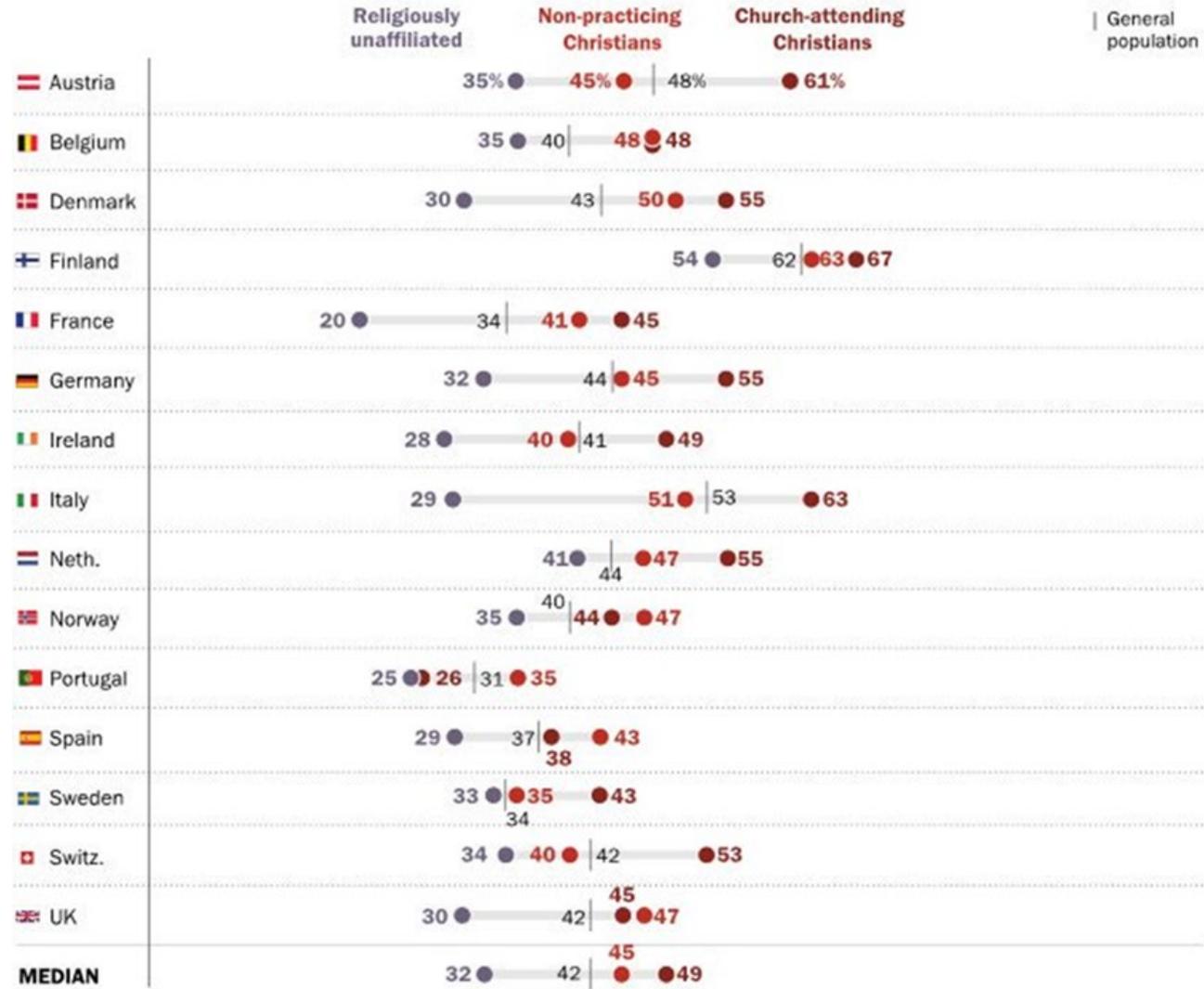
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Muslims, RE & IRE in Finland

- Muslims in Finland
 - < 3% of the Finnish population
 - Ethnically, linguistically & socially heterogeneous group
 - Tatar Muslims from 19th century, 1990 → growing number of Muslim immigrants from Yugoslavia, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia
- Finnish attitudes towards Islam exceptionally negative
- Continuing significance of “civil Lutheranism”
 - Finnish national identity seen as other to Islam also by young Muslims (Pauha 2018)

Christians more likely than 'nones' to say Islam is incompatible with national values

% who say, "Islam is fundamentally incompatible with our country's culture and values"



Note: Church-attending Christians are defined as those who say they attend church at least monthly. Non-practicing Christians are defined as those who attend less often.

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details.

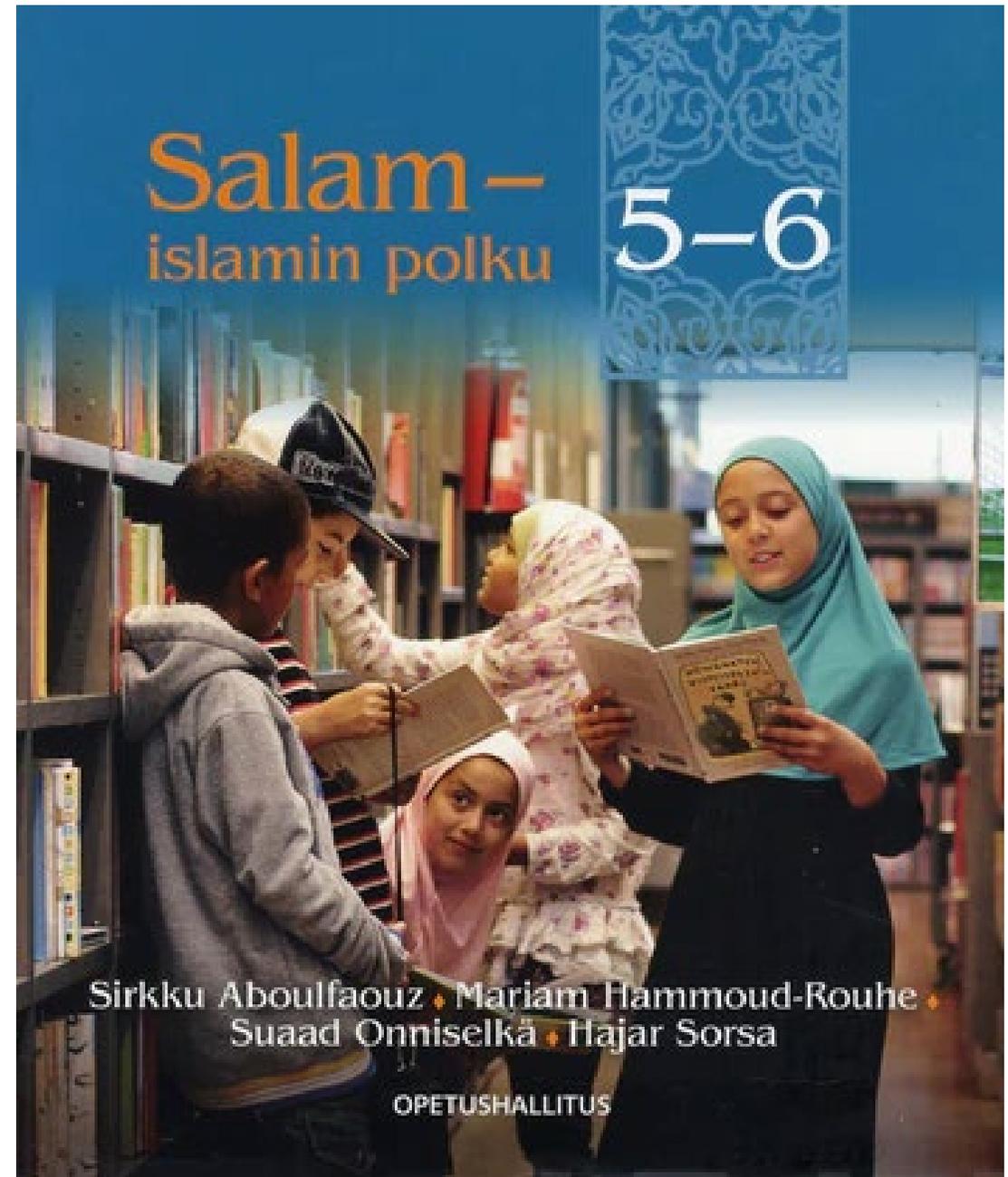
"Being Christian in Western Europe"

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RE & IRE in Finland

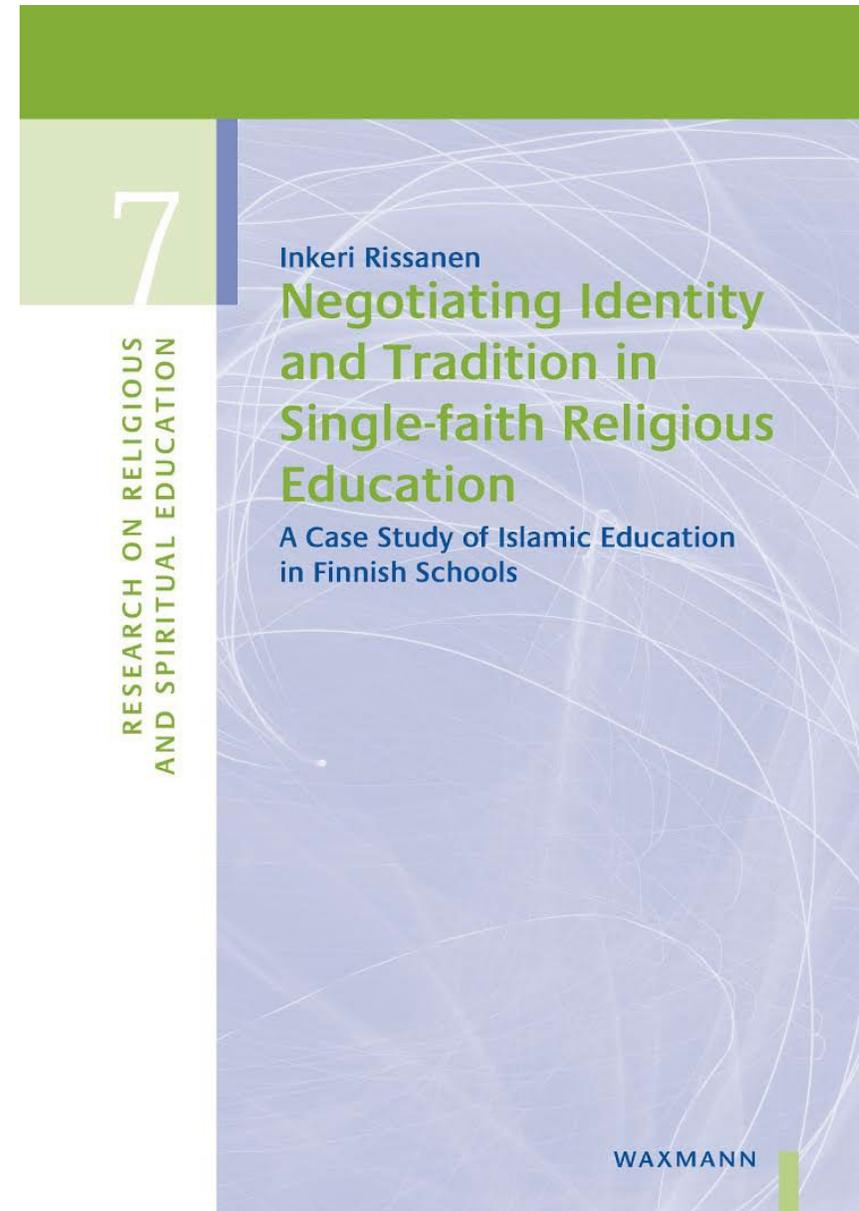
- "One school for all" – egalitarian education system
- Religious education "according to students' own religion"
 - *"Instruction of religion supports the pupil's growth into becoming a responsible member of his or her community and a democratic society as well as becoming a global citizen"*
(NCCBE 2014, 14)
- Lutheran RE predominates, Ethics (6%) and Islam (2.2%)

- Curricula issued by the Finnish National Agency of Education (FNAE) – diminishing role of religious communities in curriculum development
- Several Christian curricula, only one for Islam
- Three content areas: (1) the pupil's relationship with his or her religion, (2) the world of religions, and (3) the good life.



Empirical research on IRE & Muslims in public education

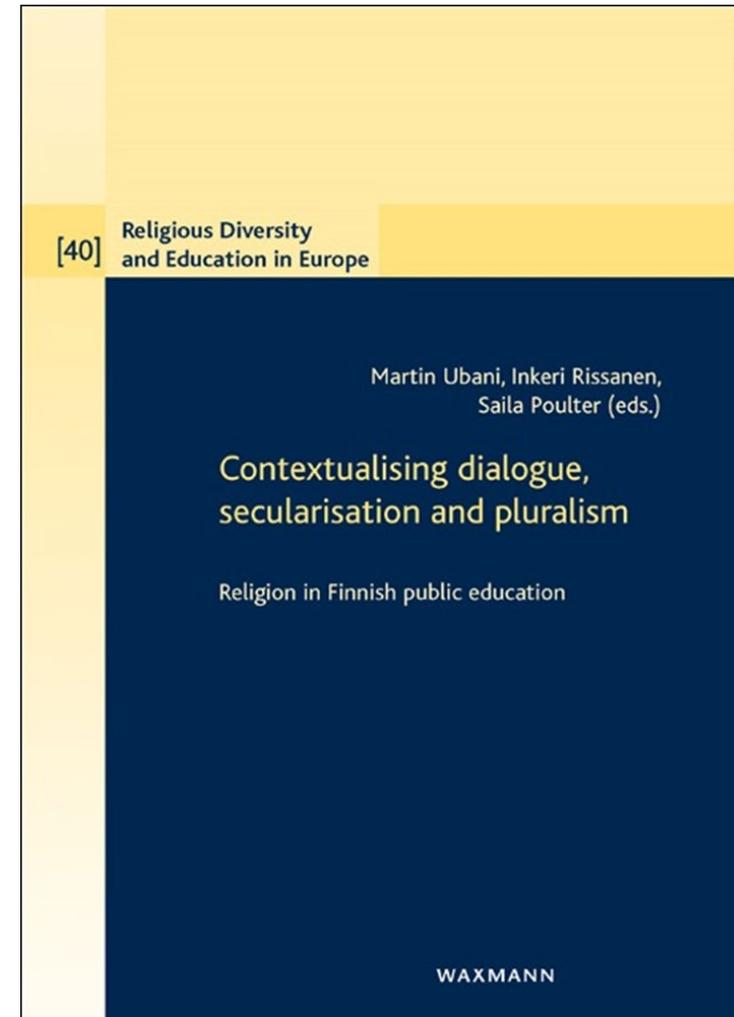
- Qualitative case study: classroom observations, teacher interviews (n=3) student interviews (n=16)
- How common aims given to liberal religious education in contemporary European multicultural societies are pursued and negotiated in a single-faith approach to religious education



Inclusion of Muslims in Finnish & Swedish schools 2015-2018

Interview study with Finnish & Swedish school principals (n=20) and “cultural broker” Muslim teachers (n=16)

Theoretical journeys: Inclusive citizenship, (minority) cultural capital, diversity ideologies (Rissanen 2018, 2020, 2021)



Experiences of and tensions around IRE

- Experienced as an **act of recognition** by the state
- Support for students' **identity development** – based on the role of IRE teachers as cultural brokers
- **Quality varies** - also experienced as too easy, repetitive, exclusive towards some Muslim identities
- IRE as **field of negotiations**: teachers making claims of "true Islam" and pushing commitment to Finnish citizenship "through religion"
- → IRE = teacher sensitive subject

On-going research:

- PhD project of Niina Putkonen: *“Navigating diversity in Islamic religious education. A study of home-school collaboration between teachers of Islamic religious education and Muslim parents in Finnish public schools.”*
- “Letters to researcher” written by 89 parents whose child/ren participate in IRE (in English, Finnish, Arabic, Farsi and Somali)



Muslim teachers as cultural brokers

- Mediating school home collaboration, challenging discrimination & exclusionary norms, supporting students, building collaboration and trust between Muslim communities, raising awareness among school staff
- Gap between official level recognition & every-day level interactions
- Islam & Muslims most often excluded from the multi/interculturalist education discourses (→color-blind approach)
- Also positive developments

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