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Public domain and incorporation of religious minorities: Constructing models and designing tendencies of development

In Western European countries the population's profile changed noticeably during the last decades. Immigrants originating from various cultural settings contribute to cultural diversification. While the first immigrants were mostly male workers, the subsequent immigration of family members and waves of refugees demanded a broader infrastructure that should also be suitable to their cultural heritage. At the latest with the foundation of sacral buildings the multi-cultural atmosphere was visibly expressed and found its way into public debate, as can be seen in Switzerland with its current debate on minarets.

Mainly due to England's history of colonialisation and its function as a gateway to the United States, this process appears to have started in Great Britain a few decades earlier than in Switzerland, where cultural and religious diversity is a comparatively new phenomenon. The question this research project raises is, whether there are noticeable patterns in the incorporation of new religious minorities and whether they can be applied to new immigrant communities and perhaps even be used as a tool of prediction.

My field of research are the Jewish communities in Switzerland and Great Britain. My aim is to ascertain typical patterns of religious minorities "becoming publicly visible" and to name the negotiation processes of the reconfiguration of the public domain. Therefore I analyse the history of various Jewish communities by means of historical reconstruction and interviews. The collection of the specified mechanisms will be the basis for the development of a model of incorporation, that displays the interaction between the various actors and conditions, be they social, political, economic or otherwise. Thus the project also contributes to the objectification of public debate.