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*Innovative forms of Islamic higher education in Western Europe. Explaining the rationale of the conference*

The education of the future Islamic religious elite of Western Europe (like imams, religious teachers, theologians) is a concern of many parties, ranging from confessional and non-confessional educators and Muslim communities to governments and transnational movements.

The teaching takes place in formal and non-formal higher educational settings, informed by a variety of theological orientations and/or didactic traditions.

Although in public debate there is a strong tendency of 'dichotomous thinking' which supposes an incompatibility of 'Islamic' and 'Western' approaches, a seemingly 'next phase' is emerging. In this, academic (secular-informed) Islam Studies and (confessional-grounded) Islamic theology increasingly meet with each other and with private Islamic institutions.

In this presentation, Welmoet Boender will explain the rationale of the conference, by elaborating upon Jeremy Henzell-Thomas' concept of 'creative tensions' (2015).