

Introduction: Islam in the Netherlands

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The articles in this issue of *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies / Revue canadienne des études néerlandaises* deal with aspects of Islam in the Netherlands, a novel phenomenon with continuous developments that keeps politicians, media and academics on their toes. The articles in this special issue provide a variety of topics on Islam in the Netherlands, each representing the latest academic insights on the specific issue. Before I introduce and contextualise these articles, we first need to take a brief look at the background regarding Muslims and their Islam in the Netherlands.¹

Key terms: Islam; The Netherlands; Ethnicity; *Allochtonen*; Islamic education; Radicalism.

Muslims and Islam in the Netherlands

While the Dutch academic tradition of the study of Islam goes as far back as the sixteenth century, the study of Islam in the Netherlands is of recent date, because the significant Muslim presence in the Netherlands has only occurred since the 1970s. The first reference to Muslims residing in the Netherlands – that is the Netherlands proper, excluding its colonies Indonesia and Surinam – dates from the late nineteenth century. The census of 1889 mentions 49 ‘Mohammedans’ who had migrated from the Dutch Indies, and until the Second World War their number rose but would never exceed several hundred (Forum 2012). After that, the origins of Muslim migrants stemmed from three sources: the labour force from Turkey and Morocco, post-colonial migrants from Indonesia and Surinam, and refugees from countries like Afghanistan, Bosnia, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia and Sudan.

Let us therefore briefly review some statistics to get a first impression of our field of interest. In 2012, the Netherlands counted 950,000 Muslims, that is

¹ The following is largely based on earlier overview works in Berger (2010a, 2014).

six per cent of the total population.² This number must be handled with caution however, because the Dutch authorities do not register religion, so that any given number of believers is based on estimates (e.g. Schmeets 2010). The majority of Muslims live in the urban regions of the western parts of the Netherlands, in particular in the large cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, where in some neighbourhoods they constitute a majority of the population.³ Dutch Muslims mainly consist of Moroccans (36 per cent) and Turks (37 per cent), with Surinamese, Afghans and Iraqis coming next with 3-4 per cent each. An estimated 13,000 native Dutch are converts (1 per cent of all Muslims; Forum 2012). In 2012, the Netherlands had an estimated 450 mosques, most of which are existing buildings converted for that purpose (Forum 2012). Almost all mosques were established and are being used by specific ethnic communities so that there are few mosques with mixed ethnic congregations. Their sermons are mostly held in Arabic or the native language of the respective community.⁴

Nationality, ethnicity and religion

Most Muslims in the Netherlands hold Dutch nationality, although many also maintain the nationality of their country of origin (often, as in the case of Turkey and Morocco, because this nationality cannot be abandoned unilaterally by its nationals). Interestingly, Dutch nationality was rarely used in governmental, public and political vocabularies when referring to these Muslims. Until 1996, the general denominator for migrants was their country of origin: one spoke of Moroccans and Turks, sometimes making further distinctions on the basis of ethnicity, so that one spoke of (Turkish) Kurds, (Moroccan) Berber, (Surinamese) Javanese, Creole or Hindu (the latter being Muslims whose ancestors had migrated from India to Surinam and who refer to themselves as “Hindustans”). In 1996, the government concluded that the number of naturalizations had increased to such an extent that nationality as an indicator of ‘foreignness’ had lost its meaning,⁵ and that new terminology was needed. In addition to the

² Statistics on Muslims in the Netherlands are predominantly produced by two semi-governmental institutions, the Socio-Cultural Planning Office (*Sociaal-Cultureel Planbureau*; SCP) and the Central Office for Statistics (*Centraal Bureau Statistiek*; CBS). Both institutions also publish elaborate annual reports as well as thematic studies on all issues related to immigrants.

³ In 2011, non-Western so-called *allochtonen* (see next paragraph for explanation of this term) – a term that includes most Muslims – made up 28 per cent of the Amsterdam population and 37 per cent of Rotterdam (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, communiqué of 25 May 2011).

⁴ An exception is the so-called ‘Polder mosque’, established in 2008 by young Muslims of mixed ethnic background with the express purpose to speak in Dutch and focus on the issues typical to Dutch Muslims. It closed in 2010 due to a lack of financial means.

⁵ Observation made by the government itself: <http://www.nationaalkompas.nl/bevolking/etniciteit/wat-is-etniciteit>.

distinction between Dutch nationals and aliens, the government introduced a further division among Dutch nationals, between so-called *autochtonen* and *allochtonen*. *Autochtonen* (plural) are defined as Dutch nationals whose parents are both born in the Netherlands, and *allochtonen* as Dutch nationals of whom at least one parent is born outside the Netherlands.⁶ According to these definitions the coming (third) generation of Muslims in the Netherlands will be mostly *autochtonen*. However, it appears that the term *allochtoon* has become equated with being coloured (for instance, most members of the Dutch royal family are *allochtonen*, but are never referred to as such). While it is still politically correct to speak of *autochtonen* and *allochtonen* (although these terms are increasing criticized), with the turn of the millennium it has become common in public and political discourse to also speak of 'Muslims' as a singular ethno-religious category. Muslims themselves also often identify themselves with that terminology.

Muslim identity

There is a clear divide between the first and second generations of Muslims in the Netherlands in their relation to Islam (in the case of the Indonesians, one must add the third generation since they arrived earlier). The first generation identifies mainly with ethnicity and nationality: to them Islam has mostly cultural value. The second generation, on the other hand, identifies less with ethnicity or nationality, but much more with Islam, both as a religion and as an identity marker. Indeed, the second generation generally is more pious, to the point of being strict in their observation of the rules of Islam and their search for an authentic or 'pure' Islam (Koning 2008), that is an Islam based on its theological sources and devoid of cultural practices (e.g., Bartels 2000, Buijs et.al. 2006, Buitelaar 2006, Korf et al. 2007, 2008, Nabben et al. 2008).

However, research shows that the multiple identities of Dutch Muslims – nationality, ethnicity, religion – are being used interchangeably, depending on the circumstances: the Dutch nationality is often used in conflicts with parents, the ethnic and religious identities to differentiate between the in-group and out-group, and the religious identity also in case of real or perceived loyalty conflicts with the *autochtone* society (Phalet & van der Wall 2004).

If we combine these observations with the fact that the second generation is socio-economically much better integrated into Dutch society than the first generation, then this divide is a veritable generation gap (Harchaoui 2006). This may also explain the fact that, in the late 1990s and early twenty-first

⁶ Definitions available on the website of the Central Office for Statistics (CBS): www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/menu/methoden, under 'begrippen'.

century, the second generation visited the mosque less than the first generation (Phalet & van der Wall 2004), because the latter dominate and regulate these mosques, which, as a consequence, do not provide the source of religious and societal answers that the second generation is craving. Gradually, however, the second generation is establishing itself also as a congregation as well as organizing authorities of mosques (Maliepaard & Gijsberts 2012).

Religious authorities

The main problem that the second generation of Dutch Muslims encountered in its search for the aforementioned ‘pure Islam’ was the lack of political as well as religious authorities within their community. This is typical for the Dutch context – as opposed to that in Germany, France or the United Kingdom –, since the overall majority of Dutch Muslims are from a working class background of *gastarbeiders* (temporary foreign workers, literally: ‘guest workers’) who lacked both the need and the capacity to have such authorities. With the exception of a few knowledgeable imams, there are therefore hardly any Islamic scholars or institutions in the Netherlands with sufficient knowledge of Arabic and Islamic theology to serve as sources of authority among the Muslim community to serve as a centre of knowledge (Boender 2007).

Dutch society and government often overrated the authority and influence of imams; although imams are mostly respected within their community, their counsel is limited to religious affairs and does not usually extend to societal or other practical matters. Almost all imams in the Netherlands are from abroad, and most are recruited on a temporary basis: imams from Morocco are approached by individual mosques in the Netherlands, while imams from Turkey are sent by the Turkish Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) under the coordination of the Turkish embassy in the Netherlands (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties 1997-98; Rath et al. 1996; Sunier et al. 2011). Only the Surinamese imams tend to stay longer or even permanently, due to the former colonial relations between the Netherlands and Surinam.

In the second generation this lack of any centralized form of religious authority in combination with a thirst for knowledge of ‘pure’ Islam has developed into a phenomenon called Muslim ‘Protestantism’ or ‘cut-and-paste Islam’: young Muslims search for answers, mostly on the Internet, while lacking a basic knowledge of the theological framework of Islam that would otherwise guide them through the wealth of information that they encounter (De Koning 2008; Sunier 2010; Vellenga et al. 2009). The role of the Internet seems important to young Muslims. Several Dutch sites, such as www.Maroc.nl, www.Nieuwemoskee.nl (‘new mosque’) and www.Wijblijvenhier.nl (‘We remain

here') are well visited, as they provide information on religious as well as social matters related to Islam. In addition, chat rooms and similar social media provide enclosed spaces where Muslims, in particular those who adhere to *Salafi* Islam, exchange views on theological issues, many of which relate to the problems of living in Dutch society (Becker 2009, 2013). To date, very little research exists into the cyber activity of Dutch Muslims on foreign sites (de Koning 2008), except when pertaining to radicalism (Algemene Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst 2012).

It must be noted that the preference of young Muslims to develop an individual piety and to find their own answers, detached from the mosque or clergy, is a phenomenon that has also been observed within the Dutch religious landscape (Becker & de Hart 2006; Ter Borg & Borgman 2008; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2009; Van de Donk et al. 2006). The question as to whether these two similar developments are coincidental or causal is yet to be answered.

Religious, political and other organizations

The Muslim community encompasses numerous civic organizations that are fragmented on the basis of ethnic, local (municipal), religious and leaders' personality differences. For instance, one will find Moroccan, Surinamese and Turkish organizations, secular as well as religious, in each municipality, some of which are united in larger regional umbrella organizations (Landman 1992; Shadid & Koningsveld 1997). Among the second generation, on the other hand, ethnic differences are gradually being replaced by a single 'Muslim' identity, and the higher level of integration and education of these youngsters makes them more skilful in formulating their needs, finding funds and engaging with society and politics (Bartels & De Jong 2007; Maussen 2006; Rath 2008; Sunier 2009, 2010).

In a similar manner, the government in 2001 invited the Muslim community (as well as the Hindu and Buddhist communities) to form a single and representative body on religious basis that could act as a communication channel with the government. Such consultation platforms for religious communities already existed for the Catholics, Protestants and Jews, and the intention was to create similar bodies for the 'new' religions. The divisions among the Muslim organizations were such that it took three years of intensive internal negotiations to finally establish, in 2004, not one but two Islamic umbrella organizations to participate in this platform.⁷ However, these bodies appear to have relatively little clout in terms of lobbying on a political level or in responding to incidents or media reports. The reason for this weakness may be found in a conjunction of different factors, such as a lack of experience and

⁷ CMO (*Contactorgaan Moslims en Overheid*) and CGI (*Contact Groep Islam*).

funds, as well as lack of representation since they represent mosques rather than Muslim organisations at large.

In contrast to the many and fragmented civic organizations of Muslims, there is little interest among Muslims to organize politically. The few Muslim political parties that have participated in municipal elections in several of the larger cities did so with very little success. At the moment of writing, only one local Islamic party has a seat in The Hague.⁸ At the national level, it is relatively easy for small parties to gain access to parliament, due to proportional representation and the relatively low number of votes required to gain a seat; however, no initiatives in this direction have been taken so far by a political party with an Islamic programme. This does not mean that Muslims are politically inactive. In the parliamentary elections of 2010, 77 per cent of the *autochtonen* voted and 69 per cent of the non-Western *allochtonen* (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2010), with a distinct preference for the Social Democratic party *Partij van de Arbeid* (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2010; Brasse & Huinder 2011; Koenen 2011). With regard to active political participation, all large political parties – Socialists, Social Democrats, Liberals, Greens, Christian-Democrats – have several Muslim candidates in parliament as well as in numerous municipal councils.⁹

Islamic education

Religious education in the Netherlands can be provided by private institutions like mosques or by private religious schools. Little research has been conducted into religious education in mosques, but three case studies indicate that their educational methods are relatively child friendly and related to the Dutch context (Doğan et al. 2006; Lahri & Madkouri 2006; Pels et al. 2006). Private religious schools – primary as well as secondary – are established by private organizations, and are free to determine their own religious upbringing and education, but are required by law to adhere to the national standards of education. In the Dutch educational system all private religious schools receive

⁸ This is the *Islam Democraten* ('Islam Democrats'), established in 2006 with a distinct local (The Hague) programme and constituency.

⁹ There is little use in naming these candidates because as politicians they come and go, but two Social-Democrats have become seasoned politicians and administrators: Ahmed Aboutaleb served as alderman in Amsterdam, as under-secretary of social affairs in the 2007 government and became mayor of Rotterdam in 2008; Nebahat Albayrak served as under-secretary of justice in the 2007 government and belongs to the top of the Social Democrat party. Both are children of migrant workers who had moved to the Netherlands, and both were born abroad, respectively in Morocco and Turkey, and their double nationality has led to protests from the aforementioned PVV party against their appointment as under-secretaries.

state funding equal to that of public schools. At the time of writing, there are 41 Islamic primary and two Islamic secondary schools in the Netherlands (e.g., Shadid 2006).

From the moment of their establishment, these Islamic schools have received a lot of public and political criticism on a number of grounds, including the alleged lack of quality of the education they provide, but mostly that the 'Islamic education' would impede the integration of the pupils or even indoctrinate them against Dutch society. This debate was rekindled after 9/11, with the Dutch national security agency BVD reporting in 2002 that the teaching programmes of these schools were not contributing to, and sometimes even advocating against the integration of their pupils in Dutch society (BVD 2002). These allegations were refuted on several occasions by the School Inspection of the Ministry of Education, which judged these schools quite positively in their focus on 'social cohesion' (*Inspectie Onderwijs* 2002, 2003, 2009). However, the Inspection concluded on several occasions that many of these schools indeed had problems related to the overall quality of their education and the poor management by their school boards (*Inspectie Onderwijs* 2008).

Headscarf and burka

The headscarf has been a source of discrimination, such as abusive words in the streets or refusal to be allowed in cafes or restaurants, but also on the labour market: sometimes applicants were rejected because they wore a headscarf, and sometimes employees were fired because they started to wear one (see the annual *Racism Monitor* by Donselaar & Rodrigues, in particular 2008). In the latter situation several women raised their case – with varying success – in court or, more often, with the *Commissie Gelijke Behandeling* ('Commission for Equal Treatment'; CGB 2003-2011).¹⁰

According to a recent quantitative research (Motivaction 2011), six out of ten Dutch Muslim women of Turkish and Moroccan origin (the survey does not distinguish between the two ethnic groups) between 15 and 35 years wear a headscarf; nine out of ten does so out of her own free will; one out of ten experiences pressure from parents or peer groups. Two thirds of the women wearing a headscarf do so because it is a religious obligation, 40 per cent consider it (also) a part of their cultural tradition. But the primary identity of the overall majority of these women (83 per cent) is that of 'Moslima'.

¹⁰ This commission was established in 1994 to uphold the Equal Treatment Act (*Wet Gelijke Behandeling*). Although its rulings are formally 'recommendations' without any legal force, they are often adhered to by the parties.

While the wearing of the headscarf is practiced by an estimated 60 per cent of young Dutch Muslim women, as we saw above, according to another study an estimated 500 women in the Netherlands also wear the full-face veil, known as *niqab*, but in popular parlance as *burqa* (Moors 2009). The study estimated that 100 women wear the *niqab* “full time”, and “no more than 400” wear the *niqab* “part time”, i.e. on certain occasions. The majority (60 per cent) of the interviewed women are Dutch *autochtone* converts, while the remainder is exclusively Moroccan. Most of these women are younger than 30 years of age, and the remainder is not older than 40.

Islam and government policy

From the 1980s onwards, religion in general and Islam in particular became subject of government attention, for a variety of reasons. Already in 1983 the government stated in its *Minderhedennota* (‘Minority Paper’) that religion has a function for the development and strengthening of the self esteem of ethnic minorities and as such can contribute to their empowerment and integration (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties 1983). This position was repeated in consecutive policy papers of the *Minister van Binnenlandse Zaken* (‘Minister of Internal Affairs’) until 1999, sometimes with specific reference to Islam (e.g., Koolen 2010).

The first decade of the 21st century spiked such interest in Islam, that policymakers thought it wise not to focus on religion too much. Instead, they preferred notions of ‘active citizenship’ and ‘social cohesion’, and in 2006 both were mandatory topics to be taught at high school (e.g., Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2005; Hurenkamp & Tonkens 2011). The advantage of these notions was that they circumvented the exclusive focus on ‘*allochtonen*’, ‘Muslims’ or ‘immigrants’, and emphasized the individual responsibility of each citizen to participate in society. Nevertheless, several religious organizations and political parties argued that religion does not oppose such participation but, on the contrary, contributes to good and active citizenship. One of these voices in the context of Islam was the government-funded foundation ‘Islam and Citizenship’ that was established in 1999.

The two major cities, Amsterdam and Rotterdam, both with the largest *allochtone* communities, have put a lot of effort and funds into developing policies regarding social cohesion with particular attention to the role of religion therein, although they did so in very different ways. In Amsterdam, the policy paper *Wij Amsterdammers* (‘Us, Amsterdammers’) made no mention of religion or any other quality that distinguishes people, on the one hand, but in its implementation of that policy strongly favoured ethnic and religious diversity as a means to reach municipal cohesion, on the other hand. Mayor Job Cohen was

a driving force behind this policy and he became a forceful, albeit controversial advocate of religion as a source of social cohesion (Cohen 2009). Rotterdam, on the other hand, in its policy paper *Meedoen of Achterblijven* ('Join in or stay behind') specifically identified Islam as one of the issues of controversy and organized in the period 2003-2004 a city-wide discussion entitled 'Islam and Integration', with the intention to get all the information, concerns and needs out in the open. In 2007, the municipality of Rotterdam hired the Swiss-French Muslim intellectual Tariq Ramadan as the city's 'bridge builder' and paid for his appointment as visiting professor in 'Citizenship and Identity'.

However, the enthusiasm for a religion-oriented policy quickly wore off. In the case of Amsterdam, the city council became entangled in the financing of a mosque building project by a Dutch-Turkish Muslim organization suspected of fundamentalism and embezzlement; and in Rotterdam where Ramadan's role was repeatedly questioned, he was finally fired in 2009 on the grounds of his side-job as a host in a London-based news channel of the Iranian government (see analysis by Zessen 2010). And in 2008, the foundation 'Islam and Citizenship' was dissolved due to discontinuation of government funding. The new governments of 2010, and later in 2012, have also not made religion an issue of government policy anymore.

Radicalism and terrorism

While 9/11 reverberated in the Netherlands as if the attacks had taken place here – for instance, 5 minutes of national mourning were announced – three other events gave the Netherlands prominence on the stage of Islam-related radicalism and terrorism. In 2002, the maverick politician Pim Fortuyn was murdered for his anti-Islam rhetoric, although not by some Muslim immigrant but by a member of a known radical native Dutch veganist movement. In 2004, film producer Theo van Gogh, well-known for his biting satire against all religions and in particular Islam, was murdered by a Muslim radical. In 2006 it became apparent that Van Gogh's assassin belonged to the so-called Hofstad group, a group of young Muslims with allegedly terrorist intentions, who were subsequently arrested. Six members were sentenced for "attempted terrorist crimes", although the Dutch Supreme Court in 2012 overturned two verdicts because the "membership of a terrorist organization" had been insufficiently proven.

These events were followed by intense and sometimes frantic attempts to understand this new phenomenon of Muslim radicalism. The Dutch intelligence agency AIVD, which had already in 1998 produced an extensive analysis of political Islam in the Netherlands (*Algemene Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst* 1998), after 9/11 quickly dominated the discourse on

radicalism by publishing several studies of considerable quality, setting the definitions of several terms, such as radicalism, *da'wa*, *jihad* and the like (Algemene Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst 2004; 2006; 2007). In addition to these first AIVD reports, academic research produced in-depth studies on radicalism of young Dutch Muslims (Bos 2009; Buijs et al. 2006; Pligt & Koomen 2009; Tillie & Sloodman 2006), whereby some studies paid particular attention to the issue of *Salafism* (Koning 2008, Roex et al. 2010, Sloodman 2009). In addition, investigative journalism also produced several books that gave a good insight into these young Muslim radicals at a time that such information was lacking (Groen & Kranenberg 2006, 2008; Kleijwegt 2005). Within a relatively short time, a comprehensive picture emerged of the young Dutch Muslims – mostly Moroccans and several Dutch converts – who had adopted radical notions of Islam. A combination of social factors was identified as contributing to this development: experiences of discrimination, a sense of alienation, identity crisis, international politics, and criticism of Islam. These factors coincided with a general tendency among the second generation to turn to Islam as their new identity. However, while all these factors explained the resentment and anger among young Muslims and their identification with Islam, researchers could not explain why one Muslim would become a radical while the other turned to politics or merely to orthodoxy. Indeed, most young Muslims who fitted the profile of anger and Islamic orthodoxy did not turn to radicalism, and researchers have pointed out that Islamic orthodoxy is not a necessary prelude to radicalism, so that a clear distinction therefore needed to be made between Islamic orthodoxy, on the one hand, and Islamic radicalism, on the other (e.g., Roex et al. 2010).

The intelligence service AIVD as well as the newly established Netherlands Coordinator for Combatting Terrorism (NCTb) found that the best prevention strategy against radicalization was integration: a Muslim who was successfully integrated, both culturally and socio-economically, was deemed less prone to radical ideas. Indeed, the newly developed government policy of ‘de-radicalization and de-polarization’ was nothing less than a renewed effort at integration (Berger 2010b). However, while the net effect might be the same, there was a distinct difference in the motivation: integration as promoted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and municipalities served a mixed social, cultural and economical cause, while the integration promoted by the AIVD served the cause of national security.

The contributions to this special issue

Many more details could be added to this bird’s eye view of ‘Islam in the Netherlands’ to expound the complexities of Dutch Muslims, their identities and

religiosity. The following articles are therefore a welcome contribution to this panorama since not only do they highlight particular aspects of Muslims and Islam in the Netherlands, but they also reflect the latest insights and research. All articles are set in the present, which means that they mostly deal with the second generation of Muslims who, as we have seen, are mostly well integrated, relatively highly educated, and often quite religious. The contributions cover very different aspects of Islam in the Netherlands – *Salafi* thought, burial, *sharia*, mosque building, Islamophobia – as well as several disciplinary approaches; but two themes recur in all articles: issues of what I propose to call the locality of an Islamic identity, and the confrontation with the particularities of Dutch society.

The search for an Islamic identity is apparent in the recurring question among Dutch Muslims as to where this identity is localized: is it embedded in Dutch society, in the country of origin, or in a global Islamic community (*ummah*). While a typical second and third generation immigrant would strike root in his or her new home country, the critical and even hostile Dutch environment (discussed by Jan Jaap de Ruiter in his contribution) has been the cause for many young Dutch Muslims to re-orient their sense of belonging. The so-called *Salafis*, ultra-orthodox Dutch Muslim youth, discussed by Martijn de Koning in the first article, are an example of well-integrated Muslims who try to maintain a strict adherence to their Islamic ethics, with little allegiance to their Dutch country of residence.

Thijl Sunier, in his discussion of Islamic ‘space-making’ through mosque building, shows how Dutch Muslims first mainly reconstructed a sense of home without any conception of a future in the Netherlands, then made their own ‘enclaves’ in their new Dutch homeland and devised mosques accordingly, and at present, while they are very much integrated in the Netherlands, produce new and unprecedented forms of orientation and belonging due to forms of a globalizing Islam entering from abroad. Eric Roose’s article shows that such globalization had already taken place in the architecture of mosques. Many stand-alone mosques in the Netherlands have raised criticism for being representatives of the ‘home-sick mosque’ (*heimwee-moskee*), that is a mosque that exclusively reflects the imaginary mosque from the country of origin without containing any elements of its Dutch environment. Roose demonstrates that this criticism is based on faulty assumptions, arguing that the individuals who commission the mosque have very particular (although not always coherent) religious and mystical concepts regarding the forms and elements of their mosque, so that these mosques contain elements and forms from mosques as far as Mecca and India.

Khadija Kadrouch-Outmany sheds yet another light on the locality of identity by examining the preferences of Dutch Muslims for their place of burial.

The general assumption is that the longer Muslims live in the Netherlands, the more they will opt for burial there. Indeed, Dutch cemeteries are preparing for this coming situation by arranging more Islamic burial grounds. But Kadroush shows that the overall majority of Muslims still prefer to be repatriated to their countries of origin for burial; for the first generation this sentiment is part of the 'the myth of return' and while this myth has little relevance to the next generation, the feeling of being unwanted in the Netherlands has given this myth new meaning.

The second recurring theme in all articles concerns the particularities of Dutch society that are confrontational for Muslims. There are many, of course, but if we were to name the main ones we may mention three: secularism, anti-Islamic sentiments, and the political-legal system. Dutch secularism is peculiar in that it is allowed to manifest one's religion in the political and public domain, but that it is 'not done' to do so. The Christian political parties, for instance, which have a longstanding reputation in Dutch politics, will refrain from publicly referring to Scripture or religious tenets. This particular form of Dutch secularism is quite problematic for those Dutch Muslims who publicly manifest their religion, whether by means of Islamic attire (beards, *jalaba*, headscarf, *niqab*, *chador*) or Islamic behaviour (prayer at work, refusal to shake hands with the opposite sex). Martijn de Koning describes the dogmatic struggles of Dutch *Salafis* who try to maintain a strict adherence to their Islamic ethics, but by doing so are confronted with a Dutch society that either rejects such notions, or provides obstacles in practicing these beliefs. Another aspect of Dutch secularism is the rapidly decreasing popularity of church attendance known in Dutch as *ontkerkelijkking* (lit. 'de-churching'), resulting in churches losing their functions and, consequently, being used for other purposes. This stands in stark contrast with the increasing popularity of mosques and the resulting activities in mosque building, as discussed by Thijl Sunier and Eric Roose.

The second particularity of Dutch society, anti-Islamic sentiments, shows in public and political debates that since the late 1990s have been very critical of or even hostile towards Islam. This hostility has been given a political voice by the political party PVV (*Partij Voor de Vrijheid*, 'Party for Freedom') which was established in 2005 and rose to prominence with its resounding election victory in 2010 that made it the third largest party in the Netherlands. The PVV-discourse and its effects are discussed by Jan Jaap de Ruiter. He presents a detailed analysis of the arguments of several prominent PVV-politicians, demonstrating how criticism against Islam is interwoven with and justified by an amalgam of issues ranging from pro-Israel to anti-multiculturalism and anti-socialism. The effect of these sentiments shows in Muslims' behaviour and choices, as becomes apparent in most contributions: some might opt for

mosques that are open and transparent in order to accommodate the fears of non-Muslims, others retreat in their own *Salafi* or architectural versions of Islam, and again others waver between burial in the Netherlands or their parents' country of origin.

The third particularity of Dutch society that Muslims will have to deal with when asserting their space and identity is the political and legal system. This system is not always accommodating to the needs of Muslims, but more often it is. Kadroush shows that an Islamic burial can be conducted without any legal hindrance, and Sunier demonstrates how the political-legal system provides a negotiating space to construct a mosque. The mirror side to a system that allows for religious freedoms is that it also allows for the freedom of opinion that provides the platform for virulent criticism of Islam. The position in-between is taken by the *sharia* which, as described by Maurits Berger, is, in the forms in which it is currently practiced by Dutch Muslims, mostly congruent with the Dutch political and legal system. However, there are also many arguments – several quite justifiable – that oppose such practices taking place in the Netherlands. Berger analyses the main issues in this debate, showing the complex interaction of a position of liberal freedoms versus a need for state intervention to protect the weaker members of society. While some objections to *sharia* are pertinent and justifiable, Berger argues, they are not typical of an exceptional position of Muslims in the Netherlands, but rather illustrative of how Dutch society regards religious orthodoxy as such.

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