Space-making and religious transformation:
Mosque building in the Netherlands

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The realization of mosques and other religious buildings in the Netherlands has been described and analyzed predominantly as a history of integration and emancipation of Muslims into Dutch society. The first post-war wave of labour migrants used temporal makeshift accommodations to serve as mosques. In subsequent decades they further developed and extended the religious infrastructure. The next step was to realize purpose built mosques with various designs. Most of the literature on mosque building focuses on governance, political process and the politics of identity, i.e. on how negotiations about the establishment of religious accommodation evolve, what actors participate and which positions they take in these negotiations. Although such historical accounts are informative as far as the integration trajectories of Muslims are concerned, they often pay hardly any attention to the conceptions and visions that undergird these negotiations. The development of an Islamic religious infrastructure, including all institutional arrangements, is part of the larger process of the rooting of Islam under changing circumstances. This process, which I call 'Islamic space-making', is partly the result indeed of negotiation processes, but it is also the result of a process of religious transformation in which local, national and transnational dimensions intersect. In this article I focus on this transformation process by analyzing a number of cases of the construction of mosques. I argue that these cases indicate that religious transformation and reflections on how Islam evolves are often much more important than just 'identity politics and space-making'. I also argue that this process of religious transformation has historical dimensions that reveal intriguing perceptions with regard to how Muslims position themselves in a religious-historical context.

Key terms: Islam in Europe; Mosques; Integration of Muslims; The Netherlands.

Introduction

The realization of mosques and other religious accommodation in the Nether-lands and elsewhere in Europe has been analyzed predominantly as a history of integration and emancipation of Muslim migrants into society (see e.g. Landman 1992; Metcalf 1996; Sunier 1996; Naylor & Ryan 2002; Shadid & Van Koningsveld 2008). Places of worship, especially when they have been built for this purpose, 'objectify' religious presence (Amiraux 2001; Cesari 2001; Dunn 2001; Eickelman 1989; Landman & Wessels 2005; Lindo 1999; Rath et al. 1996). The appearance of mosques (and *mandirs*, churches, synagogues, temples and *gurdwaras* for that matter) typically reflects the political and social climate at the time of their construction.

The first post-war wave of labour migrants used temporal makeshift accommodation. In subsequent decades they further developed and extended the religious infrastructure. The next step was to realize purpose built mosques in different designs. Places of worship have become increasingly conspicuous, and as such constitute signs of a community's empowerment and integration. Eade (2000, 6) argues that contestation over the construction of places of worship in London shows that public space is not fixed by 'eternal' traditions, but is open to a constant reshaping and renegotiating of the physical environment. Thus beyond community building and architectural appearance, the construction of places of worship also became a matter of public representation. The general picture that emerged from this settlement process is an increasingly diversified and extensive religious landscape, a religious mosaic consisting of mosques, associations, educational institutions, shops and other commercial activities, and later on representative bodies sustained by an extensive transnational network that linked this religious infrastructure to the countries of origin in a complex and multi-faceted way (Nonneman & Niblock 1996).

The point of departure in much of the academic literature in the early stages of the institutionalization process was the legal principle of religious freedom that exists throughout Europe and that provides the opportunities for Muslim communities to establish religious institutions in accordance with Islamic requirements. Migration networks, organizational structures and authoritative frames on which this infrastructure was built, were taken as an important structuring feature of Muslim religious activity in Europe (Gerholm & Lithman 1988; Shadid & Van Koningsveld 1996). The establishment of a religious infrastructure and the integration of migrants were considered two sides of the same process and thus inextricably linked to one another.

In the 1990s two political priorities emerged. The first was the fundamental question whether or not Islam fits Western conceptions of liberal-

secular democracy, or alternatively the 'Judeo-Christian' roots of European civilization (see e.g. Caldwell 2009). The second concern was how to accommodate and govern an increasingly culturally diverse society. This generated a new body of academic literature that perceived the presence of Islam primarily as an identity issue with a focus on the obstacles and confrontations that occurred when new mosques were built (Cesari 2005) or on issues of governance and how to accommodate a new religious presence (Bader 2007; Maussen 2009; Rath et al. 2001). Governance is mostly perceived as a political process in which actors participate in negotiations about the establishment of religious accommodation. In most literature on governance hardly any attention is paid to developments within Islam and among Muslims, thus taking for granted identities, cultural or religious differences and Islamic normativity (Jacobs & Fincher 1998, 6-10), making them seem fixed, given, with an 'appearance of substance' (Butler 1990; see e.g. Bader 2007; Fetzer & Soper 2005; Maussen 2009). Governments are predominantly depicted as neutral referees (McLoughlin 2005). Developments among Muslims themselves, their orientations and religious subjectivities remain remarkably under-researched, except for processes of radicalization.

Mosque building as space-making

In this article I take issue with this omission. The development of an Islamic religious infrastructure is part of the larger and more fundamental process of the rooting of Islam under changing circumstances in which perceptions about the future of society play a crucial constituting role (Sunier 1996). I use the term 'space-making' to denote this process. Space-making is more than the accomplishment of legal and political arrangements about the use of public space and the realization of houses of prayer. It should also be distinguished from 'integration' of Muslims or 'institutionalization' of Islam, because it has highly symbolic underpinnings and is a much broader process. Space-making is symbolic production (see Bourdieu 1991) and refers to ideologies; mental maps of ontological and cultural positioning of people (see Svašek 2002, 498). Ramadan speaks of the related process of entrenchment (1999, 207) which may take place over a longer period, as in the case of the Jews, or more rapidly, as was the case with Catholics in the first half of the nineteenth century and with Muslims after the 1970s. Space-making in the case at hand is the rooting of Islam which takes place in many different domains of religious life. It evolves as a fragmented but active process that is the result of visions, decisions and initiatives by collective actors. Due to the complexity of this process the outcomes are hardly predictable. Collective actors imbue negotiation processes with conceptions and imaginations about envisioned futures. They follow explicit and implicit agendas that pertain to the symbolic place of Islam in society. These

conceptions evolve continuously depending on a wide variety of factors and shifting contexts. Broadly speaking I distinguish two conceptual fields, one predominantly to be found among policy makers and the other among Muslim actors.

For governmental authorities and policy makers, space-making of Islam revolves around the fundamental question how to 'fit' Islam into society and how to bring arrangements in accordance with the principles and characteristics of the nation-state. In the last decade there has been a stronger emphasis in many European countries on national integration as a cultural rather than a political trajectory (Geschiere 2009, 155). Immigrants have to show that they are willing to comply with the dominant national culture. Duyvendak et al. (2008) have referred to this shift as the "culturalization of citizenship". The result is a strengthening of the national state as the dominant frame of governance, with political programs that emanate from the complex relationship between integration, and political priorities of security and national identity with the aim to regulate Islamic practices and to mould outlooks, institutional settings and legal arrangements into the format of the nation-state. This has been referred to as the "domestication of Islam" (Bowen 2004; Humphrey 2009; Sunier 2012a). Domestication as a mode of governance is a broad and complex intervention by national states to develop an organizational form of Islam that fits the national state. The way in which mosques and other organizations of Muslims are organized and managed must be brought in line with the legal requirements of the country of residence. In many instances this is mainly a matter of legal procedures and arrangements, but the involvement of the national or local governments in mosque-building projects is also informed by political goals to develop an Islam that corresponds to imaginaries about the place of religion in society. In many policy documents we often find references to a "liberal Islam", a "moderate Islam", or a "Dutch Islam". The domestication of Islam is about the place of Islam in European societies and the challenges they face, against the backdrop of a particular conception of national identity. Different nation-states have historically grown modes of dealing with religious diversity, sometimes informed by colonial practices, experiences and histories, so the domestication of Islam takes on nationally specific features and outlooks (Sunier 2012a). I consider domestication of Islam a crucial aspect of space-making.

Muslim representatives and leaders enter negotiations also with conceptions about how they envision a future Islamic landscape in the country of settlement. These conceptions are informed by a combination of Islamic normativity and ideas about their position in society. Islam arrived in Europe as a result of large-scale migration. Over the years Muslims built up a religious infrastructure, consisting of organizations and associations, institutional

arrangements, consulting bodies, mosques and educational institutes across the country. This infrastructure was built on networks of migrants who had strong personal ties with the country of origin. Religious affiliation was inextricably linked with personal, familial, and local loyalties. Individual Muslims practiced religious life in familial and communal networks based on ethnic and regional ties. Religious orientations and authoritative relations were transplanted from the countries of origin and reproduced in the countries of residence. Space-making was predominantly a reconstruction of home.

In the 1990s this pattern of orientation gradually changed. These changes were embedded in major demographic, economic and societal transformations taking place among Muslims in Western Europe. Firstly, as in all countries in Europe with a sizable Muslim population, the proportion of Muslims that is born and raised in Europe increased rapidly (Crul & Schneider 2010). Secondly, diversity among Muslims with regard to their societal, educational and legal position in society increased sharply. The proportion of European Muslims with a high level of education has increased sharply in the last decades. In addition to these demographic and societal changes, globalization and the emergence of modern mass media impacted tremendously on the ways in which Muslims perceived their position. They have become full members of society, but at the same time they are connected to events taking place far away. This is not an example of staggering integration but a condition of modern life. It differs fundamentally from the ways in which their parents and grandparents perceived their position. One of the consequences of these developments is that the old migration networks, authoritative relations, and institutional settings which emerged in the early years of migration are still functioning, but their legitimacy is questioned by a growing number of Muslims born and raised in Europe (Peter 2006; Volpi & Turner 2007).

A wide variety of issues of faith that were undisputed were now increasingly questioned. Many (young) Muslims want to build alternative religious communities across and beyond traditional ethnic, regional, doctrinal and national dividing lines. At the same time they engage with society in an unprecedented way. Space-making in this case combines different seemingly opposing sentiments and tendencies and generates new modes of religiosity and religious belonging. These new orientations cannot simply be classified as either local or global, as the dominant domestication paradigm requires. They reflect what has been referred to as 'simultaneity'; migrants become rooted in one place, but at the same time maintain transnational ties (Glick-Schiller & Levitt 2004). This generates new religious orientations and new forms of religious community building in which local, national and transnational dimensions intersect and religious transformation occurs.

In summary, we can observe a general tendency of European governments to domesticate Islam into a shape that fits with the principles of the nation-state. On the other hand we see an ever evolving complex pattern of belonging among Muslims in Europe that is not necessarily bound to the social, cultural and political confines of the nation-state. In actual situations of negotiation these often opposing conceptions of the rooting of Islam shape the process of space-making. I have analyzed this process elsewhere by focussing on how the intimate ritual of the breaking of the fast at the end of the month Ramadan (*iftar*) transformed into a yearly public ritualistic moment of space-making. Already in the 1980s some mosques started to invite non-Muslims who belonged to their local network to attend the *iftar*. By doing so they strengthened their networks in the local community. This initially local low-profile habit in the course of the years developed into a annual public event. But beyond the clearly pragmatic motives behind these initiatives, it also developed into a public statement about the place of Islam in society: we belong here so Ramadan belongs here as well (Sunier 2012b). In other words, space-making transforms conceptions of Islam in mainstream society and among Muslims themselves.

In this article I address space-making by analyzing a number of mosque projects in the Netherlands. Mosque building projects are interesting cases because they not only deal with religious freedom and the right to collective worship, but also with discussions about the historical character and the aesthetics of the built environment, about spatial ownership and visibility, and about the historical attitude of the nation towards the (visible) presence of minority religions. In short the significance of the building of places of worship is threefold: it is a marker of religious institutionalization, it is a test case for the status of that particular religion, and it is the material symbol of the struggle about the character of public space. As such it informs and shapes different modes of religiosity and belonging.

Mosque building and the politics of religious accommodation

There is an intriguing historical aspect to mosque building projects that adds to space-making in a particular way. In some European countries governments have been actively involved in mosque building projects or even financed them despite the publicly proclaimed separation of church and state. In France, the building of places of worship has always been a more public affair related to the secularist republic (in which religious symbolism plays a central role) (see Maussen 2009; Kepel 1991; Cesari 2001; Ternisien 2002). In the UK, the construction of places of worship is tied to debates over racial equality and political empowerment (Eade 2000). In both countries we find large mosques as

a reminder of the countries' colonial past commissioned by the government (Maussen 2009; McLoughlin 2005). In Brussels the government was involved in the realization of a large mosque more or less as the outcome of the recognition of Islam in 1974 (Sunier & Meijer 1997). The Netherlands differs in this respect, for though it once ruled over Indonesia, there has never been any physical reminder of this past in the form of a central mosque (see Landman 1992; Wiegers 1999). The Dutch authorities tend to associate religious infrastructure and associations with decentralized welfare institutions; religious meanings are downplayed, while the building of mosques ideally falls within urban planning.

Although mosques already existed in France, the Netherlands and the UK long before World War II (see Naylor & Ryan 2002; Eade 2000; Kepel 1991; Landman 1992; Shadid & Van Koningsveld 1996), their numbers increased in the early 1960s when thousands of Muslim migrants arrived in Western Europe. As most migrants expected to return to their countries of origin, their activities were directed at temporary solutions, including the use of churches, factory halls and other facilities for special occasions. As return was postponed, greater efforts were channelled into finding more permanent accommodation.

Before 1983 the building of mosques in the Netherlands was sometimes financed by state subsidies that were originally designed to rebuild churches after the damage of World War II (Ireland 1994; Monsma & Soper 1997; Nielsen 1992; Nonneman et al. 1996; Sunier & Meijer 1997; Walzer 1997). All of these cases were examples of purely legal 'openings' in an already existing legal arrangement. In 1983 this law was abolished. It was part of more general constitutional change in the Netherlands with the aim to sever historically grown ties between the church and the state and to reconfirm the separation of church and state. From then on the Dutch state officially ceased to finance religious activities. Mosque communities could only receive subsidy for activities in mosques if they contributed to the integration of migrants. Formally speaking the strict separation of religion and state prevented any intervention in religious affairs. However, the state was involved in mosque projects from the early 1990s onwards on for a variety of motives. In the following section I will address some of these cases because they illustrate my argument about space-making, namely that it exemplifies competing conceptions of how Islam should take shape, and ultimately may transform these conceptions.

Space-making and the construction of mosques: three cases

All mosque projects in the Netherlands are initiated by local communities. State involvement occurred only after the negotiating process had started for a variety of long-term and short-term reasons. Not surprisingly most projects in the Netherlands are located in areas with a relatively high proportion of inhabitants

with low income and a large proportion of rental houses. Residential programs for urban renewal, the equal spreading of inhabitants with different cultural and religious backgrounds, the social policies on youth employment, schooling and crime, but also the development of local democracy and the strengthening of the local social texture of society, have informed negotiation processes.[1]

Negotiations are informed by a complex set of long-term historical, and mid and short-term political factors. These not only structure the way in which projects evolve, but shape the discourses of identity, nationhood and citizenship and the ongoing debates about the place of Islam in society. The ways in which the Dutch government (nationally but particularly locally) interferes in mosque building projects have strong historical underpinnings, invoking historical parallels with practices and attitudes of state and society towards religious minorities in different eras.

I will elaborate on three mosque building projects in the Netherlands, two of which have resulted or will result in an actual new prayer house, while the third one has a more complex trajectory and is linked up with yet another project. The three projects could be treated as the outcome of negotiations between parties involved, but as I have argued, behind these formal negotiations there are implicit (sometimes explicit) processes of symbolic production. The first case, the *Essalam* mosque in the city of Rotterdam, cannot be understood without taking into consideration space-making in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the urban renewal projects in the 1980s and 1990s, and the political shifts that took place between the late 1980s and the early 2000s. The second case, the *Westermosque* in Amsterdam, illustrates the complex relation between competing political agendas based on different perceptions of space-making. The third case marks the fundamental shift in perspective among young Muslims in Europe.

The Essalam *mosque in Rotterdam*

Rotterdam was the first city in the Netherlands with a full-fledged, integrated policy on mosque building as early as 1991 (Gemeente Rotterdam 1994; Sunier 1996). The building of the *Essalam* mosque, a large mosque run by a Moroccan organization, situated at the outskirts of the neighbourhood, was a result of this policy. The mosque was opened 2010 and has become the pivot in an intriguing confrontation between different conceptions of space-making among Muslims and in the municipal government.

As in most large urban centres, Muslims and their institutions in Rotterdam are concentrated in the poorer parts of the city, where housing and

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[1] The information presented in this section is partly based on my ongoing fieldwork about mosque-building projects in the Netherlands over the last fifteen years.

welfare facilities are scarce. These neighbourhoods are conceived of as 'backward neighbourhoods' (*achterstandswijken*), in which populations of different backgrounds lived together (Bovenkerk et al. 1985; Van Niekerk, Sunier & Vermeulen 1989).

From the late 1970s onwards there was a rapid growth of the number of small mosques in these neighbourhoods, which had to do with a growing demand for religious accommodation, but also with activities of Muslim associations (see Canatan 2001; Maussen 2009; Sunier 1996). The majority of those mosques were of poor physical quality. Houses, backyards, garages and other improvised places were turned into small mosques. However, they emerged more or less organically as part of the settling of migrant families in the neighbourhoods and they perfectly met the needs of the migrant population. They were multi-functional community centres, 'little pieces of home' where migrants met with fellow countrymen and performed their religious duties. Over the years, mosques had developed into focal points of local migrant activity, with shops, tea houses and other facilities in the hearts of the neighbourhoods. The location of these make-shift mosques close to peoples' homes, their multifunctional character, and their low-profile presence made them into typical examples of the early stages of the institutionalization of Islam.

This 'mushrooming' of religious infrastructure, and more in particular the reactions it caused among the rest of the population and the sometimes dangerous situations that existed with respect to safety, induced policy makers to actively monitor this process but also to acknowledge Muslim organizations as partners in negotiations (Gemeente Rotterdam 1994). A fundamental reason for this policy shift was the extensive urban renewal program that the municipal government had put on the political agenda. This was not just a matter of some external improvements to the stock of houses. Whole quarters were designed to be broken down and rebuilt. The plans would imply a major shift of populations. Especially the old neighbourhoods where most of the mosques were located were eligible for renewal.

An important side-effect of the new policy was the possibility for the municipal government to interfere in the mosque building process. A key term in those policies was "separation of functions". The municipal government opted for a limited number of large central mosques with a purely religious function, preferably outside the residential areas. The local government was willing to facilitate the building process, at the expense of the small local mosques in residential areas which are not suitable for extended neighbourhood activities, according to the authorities (Gemeente Rotterdam 1994).

Although local mosque organizations, represented by SPIOR (*Stichting Platform Islamitische Organisaties Rijnmond*), a representative body for local

mosque organizations, were glad that the municipal government recognized them as partners, they were against the idea of the separation of functions and the building of large mosques outside the residential areas. A local mosque 'around the corner', between the local bakery and the grocery store, was maybe less representative, but to be preferred as part of the local community texture over representative mosques 'with a statement' at socially undesirable places. The argument put forward here was that the mosque-around-the-corner was much more beneficial for integration (Sunier 2005b).

However, a competing conception of space-making existed among Muslim organizations. The existing religious landscape was dominated by ethnically divided Muslim movements with strong links with counterparts in the countries of origin. These movements dominated the mosque building process in those years and they were in favour of large conspicuous mosques as a sign of their presence and prestige, especially when the municipal government would facilitate this. The municipal government had to find a way to reconcile these two conceptions because they needed both. They needed the movements to realize their mosque plans and they needed the local associations and SPIOR to have a firm support for their urban renewal program (Sunier 1996).

Towards the end of the 1990s and into the early 2000s there were clear changes in the basic parameters of how the municipal government envisioned the presence of Islam in the city. In early 2002 the political party *Leefbaar Rotterdam* 'Liveable Rotterdam', founded by the populist anti-Islam politician Pim Fortuyn (who was assassinated in the same year by an animal rights activist), won an electoral landslide victory during the municipal elections. The party had a program that explicitly embarked on a very restrictive and confrontational relation with the 85,000 Muslims in the city. The assassination of Pim Fortuyn and the 9/11 attacks and successive events caused an almost 180 degree turn in the municipal political agenda. The inclusive and pragmatic administrative attitude towards Islam of the 1980s and 1990s turned into a policy based on the idea that Islam is a burden for society and a source of potential conflict and disruption of the local community (see Gemeente Rotterdam 2004, 10; Maussen 2009).

The *Essalam* mosque, the largest mosque in the Netherlands, was the result of the policies of the 1990s, but the mosque was not finished until 2010, long after the landslide changes in the municipal policies. From a product of the new mosque policies of the early 1990s, it turned into a symbol of foreign influence and the "ever growing Islamic influence in the city" as a local politician of *Leefbaar Rotterdam* would call it. It has been built very close to the football stadium of Rotterdam in a rather unfriendly place where Muslims tend to visit the mosque only for the Friday prayers. At the same time there are still many

small mosques in the neighbourhoods. By explicitly adopting a policy of "critical non-intervention" (Gemeente Rotterdam 2004), the local government has left the development of Islamic accommodation completely in the hands of private initiatives and possible foreign financiers.

The Westermoskee *('Westermosque') in Amsterdam*
The 'Westermosque' (named after one of the famous churches in the city, the *Westerkerk*), slated to be finished in 2015, is an ambitious plan for a huge complex in the western parts of the city. Initiated by the Turkish *Milli Görüş* movement in the mid-1990s, it would consist of a central mosque, conference halls, and sporting and shopping facilities built in the architectural style of the Amsterdam School (Lindo 1999; Sunier 2010).

Due to the extensive urban renewal program, the local municipal government was a partner in the negotiations, but they were much more involved than their role would require. The municipal government was against the initial plan for the mosque because it would interfere with the urban renewal program, but the main reason for the government's involvement was the fear of radicalization among young Muslims following the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004 by a radical Dutch-Moroccan Muslim living in the neighbourhood where the mosque project was to be realized.

For the Turkish umbrella organization of *Milli Görüş* in the Netherlands the initial plan was part of their long-term policy to build a series of mosques that would reflect the active involvement of the movement in the Dutch religious landscape (Sunier 2005a).[2] It also reflected the fierce competition among Turkish Islamic movements in Europe. In that respect the project was not very different from other projects. However, in this particular case two issues shaped the negotiations. One was the anti-radicalization agenda of the Amsterdam municipal government. This explained their decisions to be actively involved in the negotiations. The other had to do with internal developments in the *Milli Görüş* movement. Already in the 1990s a debate emerged in many mosques about their place in society and the strategy to be pursued in negotiations with local authorities. The branch of the movement in the northern part of the country was led by a charismatic figure, Karacaer, who was able to strike a

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[2] *Milli Görüş* is one of the Turkish Islamic political movements that became active among Turkish migrants in Europe in the late 1970s. The movement was founded in the early 1970s by Necmettin Erbakan, an engineer who developed a political program for Turkey in which he combined a national economic development plan with an Islamic ethic. The movement has founded several political parties in Turkey throughout the years. They have been branded as 'Islamists' because they always criticized the strict secularist policies of the republic, although they never embarked on a program to turn Turkey into an Islamic state. In Europe they represent the mainstream of Turkish Muslims and they are one of the larger organizations.

balance between the predominantly conservative Turkish Muslim population that belonged to the local branch, and the municipal government. He managed to elevate the discussion to a more general level by linking radicalization to neighbourhood issues and integration of Muslims in the local community. The negotiations resulted in the signing of an 'anti-radicalization-agreement' in 2005 by the municipal government, *Milli Görüş* and other parties involved. The agreement stipulated that all parties, each from their own position and capacity, would actively work to prevent radicalization among Muslims. The municipal government was ready to facilitate the project provided there would be a common agenda to fight radicalization (Sunier 2010).

The construction finally began in 2005, but was called off a year later after the German headquarters of *Milli Görüş* dismissed the board of the northern branch of the Dutch organization in April 2006, in order to install a more subservient board. The German branch of *Milli Görüş* has a bad reputation. Due to personal and political reasons Karacaer withdrew from the negotiations in 2006, at the time when the German branch of *Milli Görüş* decided to interfere in the negotiations. This led to the withdrawal of the project's Dutch partners as well as withdrawal of municipal support. After a number of years some of the initial actors resumed the negotiations once again and this resulted in a final agreement in November 2012. Construction finally began in April 2013.

For the local government the *Westermosque* project became a stake in their agenda to fight radicalization, which explains their involvement. But this was also the weakness. *Milli Görüş*, or more precisely the initial negotiators, was charged with a heavy responsibility in accomplishing the goals. The interference of the German branch was perceived as a serious obstacle to reach that goal. This was the ground for the municipal government to distance itself from the project almost completely.

For the local *Milli Görüş* organization, on the other hand, the *Westermosque* became the symbol of a struggle for local recognition. The architectural style of the mosque, a combination of Turkish architecture and the style of the famous 'Amsterdam School' was but one aspect of the statement that Islam was here to stay. Along with the negotiations the organization invested actively in strengthening local networks with all kinds of organizations in the neighbourhoods such as churches, neighbourhood police, political parties, volunteer organizations, community workers etc. In doing so they opted for a strategy that prioritized the local community over the transnational network of *Milli Görüş* including Germany and Turkey.

One of the most fundamental problems surrounding the *Westermosque* project was the assumption that there was a basic consensus between the parties about the significance and implications of the project. Negotiations were

depicted as ritualized moments of communality. But in fact it was the pursuit of the political agenda of the local government with respect to Islam in the Netherlands. From the point of view of the government the *Westermosque* should have become the embodiment of a domesticated Islam that corresponds to the requirements of the ideology of secular liberalism. The ritual public signing of an agreement by the local Muslim representatives, in which they declared they subscribed to the idea of a liberal 'Dutch' Islam and to detect and fight radicalism, was a condition way beyond the formal and legal ones. It implied a far reaching interference of the government in religious affairs and it corresponded with the political aims and priorities of many countries in Europe after 9/11 to mold Islam into a national format. The *Westermosque* as it was envisioned by the municipal government constituted the symbol of a new 'Dutch Islam', cut off from its foreign roots and sustained by a fully integrated local Muslim community. As a consequence one of the most pressing concerns in this respect was the influence of Islamic activists and ideologies 'from abroad' which were seen to interfere with the national rooting of Islam.

From the perspective of *Milli Görüş*, on the other hand, the *Westermosque* project (apart from being an ambitious plan to build a conspicuous mosque and to contribute to the development of the local religious infrastructure) must be understood against the background of the specific characteristics of the contemporary transnational Turkish religious landscape. In most analyses of the *Westermosque* project *Milli Görüş* continues to be depicted as a political religious movement with a fixed political agenda orchestrated and monitored from Turkey via the headquarters in Cologne (see e.g. Lindo 1999). This not only discards the local dynamics of Turkish Islam, it also ignores the fundamental changes that have taken place since the early 1980s when *Milli Görüş* started to operate among Turkish Muslims in Europe (Schiffauer 2010). In the past two decades Turkish Islamic movements have increasingly followed a twofold path. On the one hand they continue to act as platforms for transnational connections with Muslims in Turkey and elsewhere; on the other hand local organizations and branches develop their own agenda based on local circumstances (Sunier & Landman 2011). This is also true for *Milli Görüş*. The complex picture of space-making that arises from this case clearly shows that negotiation processes were much more than an agreement on practical grounds. The negotiations were to a large extent shaped by shifting orientations and shifting visions on how Islam should take root in society.

The Poldermosque

The previous cases were examples typical of the transitory stage of the religious infrastructure that emanated from the networks and practices of Muslims who

migrated to Europe. The *Poldermosque* initiative[3] is based on a radically different conception of space-making based on changes in the ways Islam is lived, practiced and experienced among an increasing number of young Muslims in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe. Today young Muslims in Europe, more than ever, feel the need to reflect on the origins of their religion and reconcile these origins with their experiences. These experiences differ in many respects from those of earlier generations. Their relation with the countries from which their parents or grandparents migrated changed fundamentally. Familial networks and concrete connections gradually disappear, or become less and less important. Senses of belonging rooted in personal ties are being replaced by more general and more diversified modes of reference and interaction. Young Muslims are more and more rooted in the society of residence, but at the same time the possibilities to connect to other parts of the world have increased tremendously.

These changes are embedded in major demographic, economic and societal transformations taking place among Muslims in Western Europe. Firstly, as in all countries in Europe with a sizable Muslim population, the proportion of Muslims that is born and raised in the Netherlands is increasing rapidly (SCP 2012). Secondly, there is a growing diversity among Muslims with regard to their societal, educational and legal position in society. The proportion of Muslims with a high level of education has increased sharply in the last decade. Contrary to what many observers predicted this has not resulted in a decrease of religiosity (SCP 2012). The ways Muslims experience their contemporary lives in Dutch society and in a world that is profoundly globalized, and how that affects their relation towards Islam, has diversified tremendously.

Modern media have not only caused a 'globalization of Muslim affairs', but have also created *new* publics that could not be reached by traditional leaders and traditional means. The complexities of modern urban life in which the majority of young Muslims live, require specific competences. These new publics ask new questions and challenge traditional production of knowledge by *ulama*, Islamic theologians. Spokespersons legitimatized by conventional means of religious conveyance are complemented and challenged by "rival and alternative articulations of belief and practice" (Eickelman & Anderson 2003, x). Next to the imams and the spokespersons of Muslims organizations, there are new types and new forms and styles of religious leadership that do not fit into the traditional picture of an Islamic leader.

These developments constitute the backdrop of a mosque projects that came into existence in the 2000s. The *Poldermosque* was an initiative of a

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[3] *Polder* in Dutch means reclaimed land from the sea, but it also denotes the typical Dutch consultation democracy.

number of young highly educated Muslims in Amsterdam, almost all of them born and raised in the Netherlands, who wanted to cut across the traditional ethnic dividing lines that dominated the Islamic landscape. They wanted to establish a mosque that not only should be the first 'real Dutch' mosque, irrespective of ethnic background and with Dutch as the main language, but also one that would engage with the typical public debates about Islam as they emerge in Europe. Thus separate praying was optional, and more in general women had a very central position in the organization. The initiator of the project, Ceppih, a young Dutch imam of Moroccan origin, argued that it was time to face the new realities with respect to experiences of young Muslims. Although they do not live in an ethnically divided society anymore, they have to perform their religious duties in mosques dominated by the old established Muslim organizations in which Friday sermons are carried out in languages of the countries of origin which many young Muslims do not speak fluently.
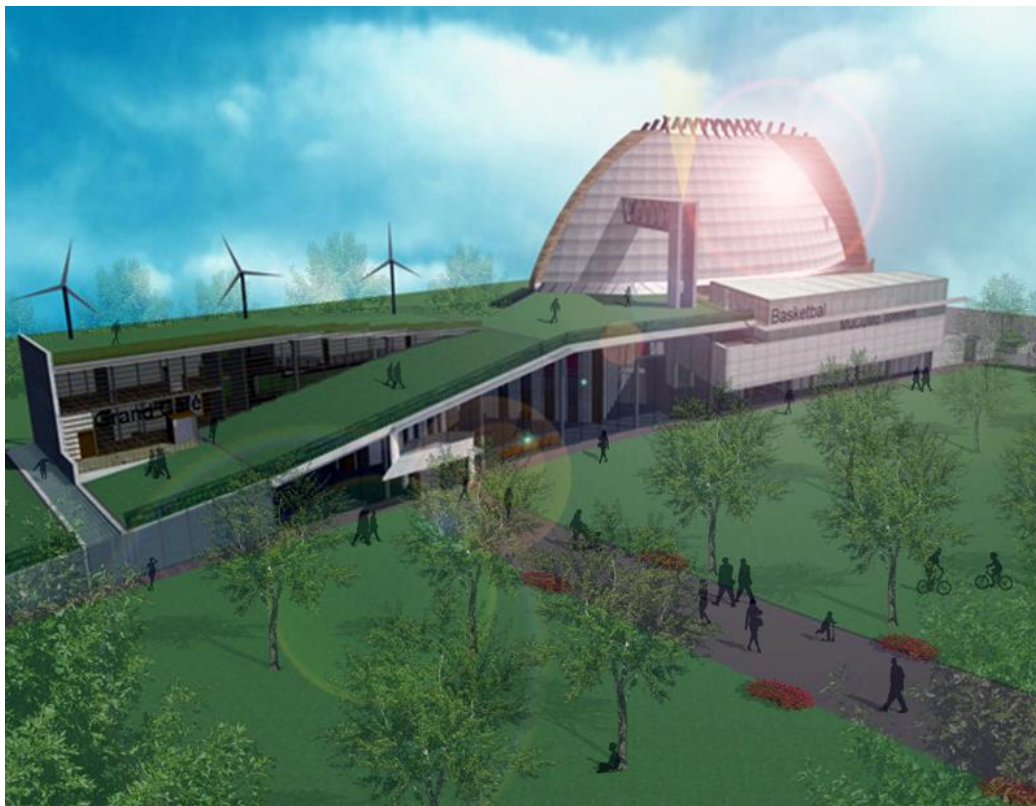

Figure 1. Design of the Poldermosque*. Photo MEMAR DUT©H Architects.*
http://www.stroom.nl/gfx/uploads/webPoldermoskee.jpg.

The project was initiated without much help from the municipal government, but the support among young Muslims in the city was overwhelming. The

government now argued that the separation of church and state implies non-intervention but also no financial backing. The mosque was opened in September 2008 in a temporary building in the western part of Amsterdam. Tariq Ramadan, the popular preacher and Islamic philosopher from Switzerland, delivered the opening sermon. Immediately afterwards imams in Amsterdam opposed the idea of a mosque for young people only. "It is against the basic rules of Islam", one of them argued in a TV interview in April 2008.[4]

The plans of the initiators perfectly captured the changing perspectives of young Muslims: on the one hand it was an example of rooting in the Netherlands. Dutch was the lingua franca and the aim was to provide a genuine Dutch Islamic institution. The design of the mosque was also a breakaway from traditional architecture. It was a plan designed by the architectural company *MemarDutch* in 2003 for a mosque in Rotterdam (see Roose in this issue). Later on this plan was presented for the *Poldermosque* in Amsterdam.

Figure 2. Actual Poldermosque. *Photo Website CMO.*
http://www.cmo.nl/islam-nl/index.php/dialoog/de-poldermoskee

However, the new building has never been realized due to financial problems. Between 2004 and 2010 the organization, headed by a Muslim woman, used the old business office to organize all kinds of activities related to the position of Muslims in Dutch society. But the project was also a message to the surrounding society that Islam does not stop at the Dutch border. Modern Muslims are connected to the world. They engage with an increasingly globalized Islam public sphere (see Bowen 2004). The organization invited speakers from all over the

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[4] http://www.eenvandaag.nl/binnenland/33340/imams_fel_tegen_poldermoskee.

world, thereby raising suspicion about an alleged radical agenda. The way the project was framed was also a clear message to those who still consider Islam to be an outside intruder that has to be domesticated.

Despite the relative success of the initiative, the municipal government maintained its position not to support the project in any way beyond the formal requirements. In short, since its opening the foundation has had to cope with two opposing forces in society. On the one hand there was the municipal government questioning a project that is out of their control; on the other hand there was a continuous opposition from mainstream Islamic spokespersons who argued that the project lacked doctrinal authorization. The lack of financial resources brought the foundation into a precarious position and although it still functions, its activities are now overshadowed because media attention has shifted to the recently opened *Blauwe Moskee* ('Blue mosque') in the same part of Amsterdam. Since the mosque is located in an area that is thoroughly renewed, the initiators were able to bring their project to the attention of the local authorities. The mosque has an unusual architecture, conveys a similar message as the *Poldermosque*, and the organization consists of people with the same background. Looking at the initiatives and activities the *Blauwe Moskee* can indeed be considered as a follow up of the *Poldermosque*. In both cases there is a continuous discussion about the content of the sermons, the foreign speakers that are invited and the extent to which the organization is willing to comply with the requirements of Dutch society.

The two cases display an intriguing paradox. Both cases are expressions of the conditions in which contemporary Muslims live: an increasing rootedness in society and at the same time an engagement with the world at large. As we saw in the other cases I have analyzed in this article, governments, generally speaking, envision a domesticated Islam which corresponds with the national model of religious organization. Islam should develop into a 'Dutch church', a corporate body completely integrated in the Dutch institutional landscape.

Figure 3. Blauwe Moskee. *Photo website Burgerjournalisten.* http://burgerjournalisten. wordpress.com/uw-provincie/noord-holland/amsterdam-blauwe-moskee/

Conclusion

We might juxtapose each of these cases that I have elaborated on in this article by simply treating them as local examples of governing Islam; Muslims ask for facilities to practice their religion, and governments have to manage the institutionalization process based on existing legal frames and political decision-making. This results in the actual realization of a mosque, or its failure. This is in itself an adequate assessment of mosque building projects. Many of the mosques as we know them today in the Netherlands have been realized almost as a standard administrative procedure (see also Wessels 2003).

However, I have argued that, rather than treating them as isolated instances of negotiation, mosque-building projects should be approached as part of a more general process of space-making. This allows for a more inclusive and contextualized analysis. I have defined space-making as symbolic production, because it reveals implicit scripts about how Islam should take shape by all parties involved in negotiations. Design and aesthetics are part of this process of symbolic production, but they also have their own dynamics (see Roose in this issue). Negotiations about the design, construction and representation of a mosque are embedded in a discussion about the conceptualization of space and the construction of contextualized identities. This is demonstrated most

explicitly in those cases where the negotiations are contentious, complex, long-lasting, and consequently high profile.

Locality and space are contested issues (Dunn 2000, 291-92). Space is a discursive contentious field that is linked up with a particular problem definition, the construction of identities, embedded in specific power and political relations and by definition something that revolves in the public sphere. The cases I have addressed in this article were transformed into public issues that bring about much more than just administrative proceedings.

When we take a closer look at the three cases at hand as instances of space-making, we can observe a very fundamental transformation in the ways Muslims in the Netherlands make sense of their religion. We could assess the cases in their own right and observe how negotiations are underpinned by implicit or explicit political agendas. I consider this too narrow an analysis. Space-making is a contentious field in which different notions about the future of Islam intersect. We can treat the three cases as examples of different stages of rooting in society. In that respect there are roughly three stages to be distinguished.

In the first stage space-making was predominantly a reconstruction of home, a temporal arrangement without any conception about the future in the country of residence. The 'enclavization' of Muslims into pieces of homeland was in line with the government's policy to discourage Muslims from rooting in society. The situation I have described in the city of Rotterdam in the early 1980s is an example of this first stage.

In the next stage space-making was about developing an infrastructure that corresponds with the ambiguities of people inhabiting a new country while at the same time having strong personal ties with the country of origin. The religious infrastructure was predominantly an extension of networks back home. The double bind character of the religious landscape provided the government a clear but complex perspective: the settling of Islam and the integration of migrants with a Muslim background are part and parcel of the same agenda. The *Westermosque* project could be considered as an example of this second stage. However, the design in the style of the Amsterdam architectural school, an idea that emerged within the leadership of *Milli Görüş*, was already foreshadowing the third stage. It was a statement about the increasing rootedness of Islam in society and in the texture of the local neighbourhood.[5] In that respect the distinction between inhabiting (temporarily or permanently) and rooting is very significant.

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[5] In that respect I do not agree with Roose's argument in this issue that the reference to Dutch architectural traditions was enforced upon the organization of *Milli Görüş* by the Dutch authorities. In my conversations with the leadership of the organization it turned out that the idea of a mosque not just *in* Amsterdam but one *of* Amsterdam emerged in their ranks.

The third phase is complex because it reveals a paradox. On the one hand Muslims have become an integral part of, and indeed are rooted in, society, but the globalization of Islam due to the growth of modern mass media has produced new and unprecedented modes of orientation and belonging. The *Poldermosque* initiative serves as an example here.

Although there are still makeshift mosques in many parts of the country and new ones are still being added, we can safely argue that the first stage is now over. With regard to mosque building in the coming years, we will observe a growing tension between the established Islamic networks and associations on the one hand and an increasing number of new initiatives on the other. The outcome is not just a matter of political choices and managerial technicalities – it is a development that corresponds to the changing conditions of Muslims in Europe.

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Création d'espace et transformation religieuse: la construction des mosquées aux Pays-Bas.

La création de mosquées et d'autres édifices religieux aux Pays-Bas a été décrite et analysée surtout comme l'histoire de l'intégration et l'émancipation des musulmans dans la société néerlandaise. Les premiers travailleurs immigrants, après 1945, ont utilisé n'importe quels bâtiments comme mosquées temporaires, mais dans les décennies suivantes ils ont développé et étendu l'infrastructure religieuse, en construisant des édifices fonctionnalisés, selon divers plans. Les études sur la création des mosquées parlent pour la plupart des positions adoptées par les divers acteurs pendant les négociations. De tels récits historiques sont informatifs au sujet des parcours d'intégration des musulmans, mais ils ne prêtent guère attention aux conceptions et visions qui sous-tendent ces négociations. Le développement d'une infrastructure religieuse islamique, y compris tous les arrangements institutionnels, fait pourtant partie d'un processus plus large : l'enracinement de l'islam en des circonstances nouvelles. Ce processus, que j'appelle la création d'un espace islamique, résulte en effet en partie de négociations, mais aussi d'une transformation religieuse où les dimensions locales, nationales et transnationales se croisent. Dans cet article, je me concentre sur ce phénomène en analysant un certain nombre de cas. Je prétends que ces cas indiquent que la transformation religieuse et les réflexions sur l'évolution de l'islam sont souvent beaucoup plus importantes que « la politique identitaire et la création d'un espace. » Je prétends aussi que ce processus a des dimensions historiques qui révèlent des perspectives intrigantes sur la

manière dont les musulmans se placent dans un contexte religieux-historique.

Ruimte-maken en religieuze transformatie: het bouwen van moskeeën in Nederland

De realisatie van moskeeën en andere godsdienstige accomodaties in Nederland wordt vaak beschreven en geanalyseerd binnen het kader van de geschiedenis van integratie en emancipatie van Moslims in de Nederlandse samenleving. De eerste naoorlogse golf van arbeidsmigranten gebuikte tijdelijke geïmproviseerde accomodaties als moskeeën. In de daaropvolgende jaren werd de religieuze infrastructuur verder ontwikkeld en uitgebreid. De volgende stap was het realiseren van voor het doel gebouwde moskeeën met verschillende ontwerpen. Het merendeel van de literatuur over moskeeconstructie richt zich op bestuurlijke aspecten, politieke processen en identiteitspolitiek, dat wil zeggen op hoe de onderhandelingen over de stichting van religieuze accomodatie zich ontwikkelen, welke personen eraan deelnemen en welke standpunten zij innemen in deze onderhandelingen. Hoewel dergelijke historische benaderingen informatief zijn voor zover het de integratietrajecten van Moslims betreft, besteden ze vaak nauwelijks aandacht aan de onderliggende conceptualisaties en visies die aan dit soort onderhandelingen ten grondslag liggen. De ontwikkeling van een Islamitische religieuze infrastructuur, inclusief alle institutionele regelingen die daarbij horen, is deel van het bredere proces van de worteling van de Islam onder veranderende omstandigheden. Dit proces, dat ik 'Islamitisch ruimte-maken' noem, is gedeeltelijk inderdaad het resultaat van onderhandelingsprocessen, maar het is tegelijkertijd ook het resultaat van een intern religieus transformatieprocess waarin lokale, nationale en transnationale dimensies een rol spelen. In dit artikel besteed ik aandacht aan dit transformatieproces door het analyseren van een aantal voorbeelden van de constructie van Nederlandse moskeeën. Ik laat zien dat deze voorbeelden aangeven dat religieuze transformatie en reflecties op hoe de Islam zich ontwikkelt in veel gevallen veel belangrijker zijn dan 'identiteitspolitiek en ruimte-maken'. Ik betoog ook dat dit religieuze transformatieproces historische dimensies heeft die intrigerende percepties onthullen met betrekking tot hoe Moslims zichzelf positioneren in een religieus-historische context.