

NEW YORK AND AMSTERDAM

*Immigration and the New Urban Landscape*

Edited by

Nancy Foner, Jan Rath, Jan Willem Duyvendak,  
and Rogier van Reekum



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS  
*New York and London*

## Governing through Religion in Amsterdam

*The Stigmatization of Ethnic Cultures and the Uses of Islam*

JUSTUS UITERMARK, JAN WILLEM DUVEENDAK, AND JAN RATH

## Introduction

Islam is being transformed in each and every corner of the world, and Europe is definitely no exception.<sup>1</sup> Muslims in Europe—the *dramatis personae* of this religion—have demonstrated a wide and continuously changing variety of affiliations to Islam. As the overwhelming majority of the 13–15 million Muslims living in Western Europe are predominantly first- and second-generation immigrants,<sup>2</sup> the transformation of this religion cannot be understood without also addressing the process of integration in the receiving society. As first- or second-generation immigrants, European Muslims find themselves in an environment in which the expression of their faith is not a matter of course. It has involved and continues to involve discussions and occasionally conflicts with representatives of the receiving society, while the introspections of Muslims themselves about the meaning of their religion and its practices are changing and evolving as well under these conditions. Some try to be faithful to what they see as the true Islam and deepen their connections with major regions of the Muslim world. Others refuse to proclaim their faith any longer, and cherish silent agnosticism or indifference. Still others seek to wrest Islam from ethnic or cultural traditions and rethink religion in relation to liberal democracy. The highly

secularized wider society, to be sure, is scrutinizing these processes with a keen eye, and many people loudly voice their aversion to Muslims.

Amsterdam is an interesting place to reflect on the ongoing reinvention of Islam. If we take the number of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants and their Dutch-born children—the largest immigrant groups in Amsterdam—as a crude proxy for the number of Muslims, then there are about 110,000 Muslims in the city (14 percent of the population).<sup>3</sup> The city represents a highly secularized landscape and many regard it as a capital of vice. But what is more, the local government has assumed an active role in mediating the relationship between Muslim immigrants and others within the city. Especially since 9/11 and the (more or less coinciding) appointment of the social democrat Job Cohen as mayor (2001–10), the city has engaged with Islam and Muslim associations.

This engagement should be understood against the background of fierce disputes over minority integration. Many intellectuals and politicians feel that ethnic minorities are not well integrated. Problems like educational underachievement, unemployment, (youth) delinquency, radicalization, misogyny, homophobia, disrespect for women in the form of harassment, and so forth are all considered to be problems stemming from a lack of civic integration. The lack of integration, in turn, is diagnosed as resulting from a lack of cultural citizenship; immigrants are regarded by many as lacking loyalty to Dutch society, economic independence, and democratic engagement. While a few prominent figures have explicitly called for a “civilizing offensive” to diffuse Dutch norms of citizenship among immigrants (Van den Brink, 2004; Van den Brink and De Ruijter 2003), it has become “common sense” among the Dutch public, policymakers, and politicians that ethnic minorities are not sufficiently integrated and that the government should induce, educate, or enforce them to be better citizens (Schnkel 2007; Van der Berg 2007). We realize the term “civilizing” carries a lot of baggage associated with colonialism and colonial rule. Frantz Fanon (1986), for instance, documented how colonial subjects were targeted by civilizing offenses—they had to show they conformed perfectly to an idealized image of French *citoyennes* to be recognized as rights-bearing subjects. Such baggage is part of the reason why we think the term “civilizing” is applicable here: the central idea informing attempts at civilizing is that the targeted groups are not seen to be fully part of the

nation's civil community and have to be incorporated culturally to protect the nation's integrity (Weber 1976), and that is exactly what Dutch policymakers think and do.

The Dutch government has introduced mandatory civic enculturation courses and tests for non-Western immigrants to teach the Dutch language and also to convey the image of the Netherlands as a place where people work hard, are considerate of their social environment, and have respect for women and homosexuals (Svarierol 2012). The government has also introduced "education courses" to teach immigrant parents how to raise their children, when to take out the trash, and so on (Van der Berg 2007). In areas where many immigrants live, the government has been undertaking so-called house visits where officials (the police, the housing corporation, social workers) enter homes in order to detect illegalities and to offer or force residents to participate in social programs. All these sorts of measures are part of a "civilizing offensive" that uses both persuasion and force to promote the civic integration of target groups. Islam figures into this because many have argued that a commitment to Islam implies a lack of commitment to Dutch society. This is most virulently expressed by Geert Wilders of the Freedom Party, who believes that Islam is a totalitarian ideology akin to National Socialism, but there are many others who have suggested in less ferocious ways that Muslims fail to live up to the norms of citizenship.

Whereas many have blamed Islam for *causing* integration problems, the Amsterdam government has felt that Islam and Muslim institutions might contribute to *solving* these problems. In the government's attempts to promote integration and influence the transformation of Islam, we observe a process we describe as *civilizing through Islam*; Islam has been used to argue for and promote civic integration. The government and its partners used Islam to "civilize" minorities by arguing that certain behaviors and beliefs were not just uncivil but also antithetical to true Islamic teachings (see Ramadan 2004). Beliefs and behaviors deemed problematic were ascribed to "ethnic culture" instead of religion. And while ethnic culture was degraded and blamed, Muslim associations and liberal Muslims claimed that Islam should be valued and embraced.

In this chapter, we analyze how the Amsterdam government has engaged with Islam and Muslim leaders and institutions. As back-

ground to the analysis of local politics, we first elaborate the notion of integration that is central to Dutch discourses of ethnic diversity. Then we explain how religion, and especially Islam, came to be seen as a tool for integration by the Amsterdam government. We show how the Amsterdam government selectively supported some Muslim associations and groups while disciplining others. The concluding section explains why the Amsterdam government's intimate engagement with Islam has come to an end.

### Integration as a Distinct Governmental Logic

To understand the specificity of the Dutch ways of dealing with immigrants and ethnic diversity compared to American ways, it is necessary to consider the concept of *integration*. In the Netherlands, as elsewhere in Europe, the concept of integration is *de rigueur*, and this is evidently related to a widespread discomfort with the international migration that occurred after World War II. Unlike the United States and other classic countries of immigration, the Netherlands has *not* regarded itself as a country of immigration and even resisted the possibility that it could become one. While waves of immigrants have found their way to the Netherlands in the past (see Lucassen's chapter in this book), the arrival of immigrants in the post-World War II era has typically been seen as a disturbance of the nation rather than a condition for continued vitality (Rath 1999, 2009).

Over the last five or six decades, when mass immigration did take place and new and hitherto unfamiliar ethnic and religious diversity proliferated, the long-established Dutch were concerned that the presence of maladjusted groups would undermine the unity, integrity, and good traditions of the nation-state. Minority groups were expected to undergo *rites de passage* and demonstrate their credentials before they could be accepted as full-fledged members of the nation-state (Duyvendak 2011; Rath 1993; Rath et al. 2001, 2004). This implied shedding their ethnic, cultural, and religious particularities. In this light, integration policies were regarded as a condition *sine qua non* for the well-being of the immigrants, but even more so of Dutch society at large.

It would be an oversimplification, however, to assume that the explanation for this reaction can be found within the realm of immigration

and diversity only. In fact, the social engineering project of “controlled integration” of marginal social categories has a long history and is rooted in the late nineteenth century when the Dutch modern nation-state developed, industrialization and urbanization took off, a new proletariat of factory workers emerged, a working-class movement came to the fore, and the contours of the welfare state began to take shape.

The late nineteenth century was (politically) dominated by what was called “the social question” (*de sociale vraagstetie*). This social question referred to the inhumane living and working conditions of the emerging working class, female and child labor, and extreme poverty as a consequence of underpayment and unemployment. In response, well-off liberals and socialist activists mobilized forces to improve these appalling conditions. Some of the enlightened “advocates” were motivated by moral repugnance, others feared revolts by the “dangerous classes,” and still others were driven by the ideal to create a better world. Around the turn of the twentieth century both at the national and municipal levels—especially in municipalities dominated by social democrats—a plethora of measures was taken to improve poverty relief, unemployment relief, education, social housing, and health care (De Regt 1984). The educated, better-paid, and better-organized workers appeared to be more susceptible to the ideals of higher culture and what they saw as civilized conduct, and increasingly felt uncomfortable with the rough, illiterate, unorganized underclass. Their quest for distinction was satisfied by adopting a more cultivated and respectable lifestyle. In order to morally improve the working poor, the elites offered a series of educational activities and established a wide array of institutions for them: evening classes, libraries, outdoor pursuits, theatrical and singing groups, youth organizations, alcohol-free canteens (Derksen and Verplanke 1987). According to Ali de Regt (1984), these moral improvements took on the character of a “civilizing offensive” based around typical middle-class norms and values such as order, neatness, industriousness, thrift, and devotion to duty.

The “moral improvement” soon acquired a less voluntary character. In Amsterdam, for instance, in the beginning of the twentieth century the local government identified “socially weak families” as a problem group and called them “inadmissible” (*ontoeelaatbaar*): they were denied council housing. Instead, they were offered a place in “housing

schools” (*woonscholen*), special residential areas under the supervision of wardens, who educated them into becoming respectable citizens. A set of real or alleged features warranted the label of “inadmissible”: causing nuisance, being troublesome, lacking cleanliness, failing to pay the rent, alcohol abuse, child neglect, delinquency, and mental deficiency (De Regt 1984). The combination of these features was seen as a syndrome dominating the lives of the “socially weak” and damaging an integrated society. The targeting of “antisocial families,” as they came to be known, to redress their lack of integration continued until the late 1950s. During this decade, the government’s approach to antisocial families was further institutionalized and professionalized. Academic researchers studied the problem of antisocial families, new educational institutions were set up to train young people to become professional social workers, and a new ministry—the Ministry of Social Work—was established.

During the 1960s, under the pressure of progressive social movements, the Dutch government shifted gears and reconsidered this approach. It then took the position that the lack of integration of these families was not so much related to their moral or material condition per se, but to their stigmatization as “antisocials.” The professionals and ministerial departments responsible for targeting “antisocial families” subsequently identified new “problem groups” that were in need of well-intended care: immigrants and travelers (Rath 1999). This *path dependency* was fostered by the dramatic expansion of the welfare state in the second half of the twentieth century and—later—the development and implementation of all sorts of urban renewal programs. Until the early 1990s most welfare state provisions were general and unconditional, but in more recent years the state has become more demanding and intrusive. Fewer provisions were available, and as far as individuals in need called upon the state or semiprivate institutions for support, more strings were attached. A dense web of state institutions was developed and concerned with deprived neighborhoods, and the general service providers of the past were refigured as disciplinary institutions aiming to govern the minutiae of clients’ personal lives (Uitermark and Van Beek 2010). Such a project is a contemporary variant of the “civilizing offensive” that was pressed upon the underclass earlier. Then as now, a sense of moral outrage and fear informed

the actions of civil servants and other officials who tried to educate and discipline the “dangerous classes” with language courses, house visits, and education in morals and democracy (Rath 1999; Van den Berg and Duyvendak 2012). The images of contemporary immigrants are in some respects similar to the image that paternalistic elites previously held of urban paupers: they lack the culture to be responsible citizens but they can, in principle, be inculcated with this culture and integrated into bourgeois society; provided they have good and especially stern guidance. The new concerns over immigrant integration thus fit with a long tradition of extensive and occasionally intrusive state intervention.

Especially after 9/11, there were fierce debates on how integration should be understood and promoted. The role of Islam in particular became a wedge issue in Dutch politics. Politicians like Frits Bolkestein (Liberal Party VVD in the 1990s), Pim Fortuyn (leader of his own *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* [LPF] party, in 2002), Ayaan Hirsi Ali (initially Labor Party PvdA, later Liberal Party VVD), and Geert Wilders (initially Liberal Party VVD, later the Freedom Party PVV) argued that a commitment to Islam inhibits or even prevents integration into Dutch society. These politicians are the most prominent representatives of what could be called a culturalist discourse—emphasizing that Western and Islamic cultures are irreconcilable and successful integration into Dutch society requires Muslims to shed their norms and values, including those regarding gender, family, and sexuality on which the Dutch majority now has a progressive consensus (Duyvendak, Pels, and Rijkschroeff 2009). Shrill anti-Muslim statements are nothing unusual in modern-day Dutch politics. The maverick filmmaker Theo van Gogh, for example, referred to Muslims as “goat fuckers.” In a speech before the Dutch Parliament on September 6, 2007, to give another example, Wilders stated, “Islam is the Trojan Horse in Europe. If we do not stop Islamification now, Eurabia . . . will just be a matter of time . . . We are heading for the end of European . . . civilization as we know it.”

While culturalist criticisms of Islam and Muslims were strongly articulated, other political figures framed integration issues differently. Some politicians, for instance, refused to comment on Islam

as they viewed religious affairs as a personal matter, while others argued that the real problem was rooted not in the cultural or religious identity of minorities, but in their weak class position. Several mayors of Amsterdam, including Ed van Thijn (1983–94), Schelto Patijn (1994–2001), and Job Cohen (2001–10), all Labor Party PvdA, argued that the strong focus on the cultural and religious identity of minorities created an extra obstacle for their integration and undermined social cohesion. It should be noted that these politicians, too, felt that Muslim immigrants were not sufficiently integrated into mainstream Dutch society and that the state should develop policies to achieve integration. But they took a different position from the culturalists in the sense that they did not consider religion, and specifically Islam, as antithetical to integration. Job Cohen in particular gained fame and notoriety as he resisted the tendency to blame immigrants for their lack of integration (cf. Cohen 2002). In direct opposition to Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Pim Fortuyn, and Geert Wilders, he argued that religion, and specifically Islam, could play a role in facilitating integration.

#### Religion as a Tool for Integration

After the turn of the twenty-first century, the government, and especially Amsterdam’s mayor, Job Cohen, developed a discourse that revolved around the idea that all groups within society had an obligation to defend civil unity. It was the task of administrators to stand above and connect the different groups—an approach that developed under the slogan “Keeping things together” (*De boel bij elkaar houden*).

What defined Cohen’s position—and made the apparently mundane ambition to “keep things together” into a highly controversial slogan—was his insistence that Muslims are an integral part of the civil community. On several high-profile occasions, he argued for mutual understanding and expressed his concern over the backlash against Muslims after 9/11 and the murder of Theo van Gogh (2004) by a young Dutch-born Moroccan, who targeted Van Gogh for making a film with Ayaan Hirsi Ali that depicted abused women with passages from the *Quran* written on their skin. Whereas the “culturalist” discourse often portrays

Muslims or radical Muslims as intruders or violators, Cohen argued that Islam and its institutions can in fact help to integrate newcomers and indeed provide cement that can keep together a society threatened by disintegration:

We now deal with an inflow of people for whom religion often is the most important guide in their lives. That raises the question of acceptance by the secularized society that surrounds them and their integration in this society. As far as this last issue is concerned: religion is for them an easy and obvious entry when they try to connect to the Netherlands. Where would they find that connection if not initially with their compatriots? This is why the integration of these migrants in Dutch society may best be achieved via their religion. That is almost the only anchor they have when they enter the Dutch society of the 21st century. (2002: 14)

Cohen's emphasis on religious institutions, like mosques, as vehicles for integration was something new. Previously, Amsterdam political leaders had almost completely ignored mosques and Muslim associations on the grounds that they might serve a large constituency but do not qualify as government partners because they are religious institutions. Cohen's discourse created a sense among administrators and civil servants that minority associations, and especially Muslim associations, should be incorporated into governance networks.

After the violent events of the early 2000s, a discourse developed based on the idea that the commitment of moderate Muslims was necessary to curb the threat posed by extremism. This view informed subsequent institutional reforms and projects carried out under the banner of *Us Amsterdammers* (*Wij Amsterdammers*)—a policy program created by top-level civil servants under the direct supervision of the mayor and deputy mayors, based on the premise that diversity can lead to explosive conflicts that need to be suppressed before they materialize. Whereas before ethnic groups were the policy objects, now the population was divided into different groups according to their putative civil virtues. While the precise articulation of this principle of differentiation has varied among individual administrators and policy documents, the continuum usually runs from ethnic minorities who passionately

defend liberal democracy to those who passionately attack many of its principles.

For example, immediately after the assassination of Van Gogh, *Us Amsterdammers* distinguished among five groups of Muslims:

1. Muslims who are completely integrated into Dutch society and experience no tension whatsoever between Islam and modernism. They actively resist radical Islam;
2. Muslims who accept the rules of the game of liberal democracy but feel some tension between Islam and modernism. They resist radical Islam;
3. Muslims who experience strong tension between Islam and modernism but who accept the Dutch constitutional order. They are willing to provide information to the government on Islamic extremism;
4. Muslims for whom political Islam provides a sense of identity and meaning. They approve of the assassination, passively reject the Dutch constitutional order and passively support jihadis;
5. The jihadis who recruit and train extremists, maintain breeding places for them, spread hatred of the West, and want to commit extremist acts. This group consists of about 150 people [an estimate by the Dutch intelligence agency] and strong networks around them. (*Gemeente Amsterdam 2004: 4–5*)

The non-Muslim population, according to *Us Amsterdammers*, also consists of five groups:

1. Those who accept Islam within the context of the Dutch liberal state and actively strive for the recognition of Islam within the Netherlands;
2. Those who accept Islam within the context of the Dutch liberal state;
3. Those who have difficulty with Islam and exclude and stigmatize Muslims;
4. Those who want Islam to disappear from the Netherlands and who exclude and stigmatize Muslims;
5. Those who (want to) undertake violent action against Muslims. (*Gemeente Amsterdam 2004: 5*)

These categorizations give an impression of the ways in which administrators perceived the population of Amsterdam: there is a rough division between Muslims and non-Muslims and both groups are internally differentiated according to their putative civil virtue. Policies thus are based on a certain civil hierarchy: some people are regarded as better citizens than others and it is the government's task to ensure that people move up in the hierarchy.

#### How Islam Is Used in Amsterdam's "Civilizing Offensive"

These categorizations also suggest a line of action: the municipality and its administrators should form coalitions with those who embrace liberal democracy, wish to reduce polarization and fight against extremism, and isolate and prosecute those who seek to undermine liberal democracy. The government therefore designed its institutions by embracing a liberal elite, accommodating Muslims critical of Dutch society, and disciplining deviant or defiant Muslims.

#### *Embracing the Liberal Elite*

The government's "civilizing offensive" involved and was promoted with and by a small but prominent group of Muslims who were also members of the Labor Party. They advocated what came to be seen as a "liberal" interpretation of Islam that is compatible with or even prescribes integration into Dutch society. Ahmed Aboutaleb, Hacı Karacaer, Ahmed Marcouch, and Ahmed Larouz—all members of the Labor Party with a Muslim background—were among the most visible representatives of this particular understanding of Islam after the assassination of Theo van Gogh. Larouz, Marcouch, and Karacaer staged a press conference in De Balie, one of Amsterdam's most prestigious cultural centers. Larouz read a statement on behalf of the government-funded association Islam and Citizenship, asking people to stay calm after this "attack on our society." Karacaer, director of the Muslim Federation Milli Görüş, was "visibly shocked" by the event according to a newspaper report and uttered, "I wish I could undo all this." Ahmed Marcouch declared on behalf of the Union of Moroccan Mosques in Amsterdam and Surroundings (UMMAO) that "this was not a religious

act, even if the assassin committed it in the name of Allah."<sup>4</sup> A day after the assassination, Ahmed Aboutaleb, the deputy mayor for diversity from 2004 till 2006, reprimanded the visitors of the Al Kabir Mosque, where he publicly expressed anger that people close to the assassin had not intervened. He called upon the Moroccan and Muslim community to produce "counter poison" and not allow extremists to "mix their religion." He also said that if Muslims didn't like the Netherlands, they were free to leave—they should "pack their bags" because "there are planes flying to Morocco every day" (Hajer and Uttermark 2008: 7).

These key figures thus argued that incivilities like the assassination are antithetical to Islam. But they also reprimanded rather than represented Turkish and Moroccan Muslims. They became key figures in the "civilizing offensive" that simultaneously sought to bring Islam into the mainstream and marginalize interpretations of Islam antithetical to liberal democracy. Some parts of that "civilizing project" were hardly controversial, such as the Ramadan festival. Consultants for Larouz's firm Mex-It, which advises on diversity, integration, and emancipation, conceived the festival after the assassination of Theo van Gogh in 2004 to improve the image of Islam and involve the Amsterdam population in the celebration of this Muslim feast. The municipal government contributed funds, but the Mex-It organization was also very effective—much more so than any other immigrant or Muslim association had been—in attracting funds from commercial sources, including banks, consultancy agencies, and privatized welfare agencies eager to improve their positions in a market where more and more customers have Muslim backgrounds. Newspapers and television stations widely covered the festival's activities. Although controversial issues were debated, the focus was on mundane topics such as food, fashion, and business.

Other government-sponsored projects in which the liberal elite were involved aroused strong opposition and controversy. One was the plan to establish the so-called Wester Mosque in the Amsterdam neighborhood of De Baarsjes. The media drama began in the early 1990s when conflict arose between the Turkish federation Milli Görüş and the neighborhood council of De Baarsjes over the construction of the mosque (Lindo 1999). The neighborhood council and a group of local residents protested its size and the height of the minaret, but Milli Görüş insisted it had the right to build anyway. The very fact that

Milli Görüş represented an orthodox—some would say fundamentalist—tendency of Islam evidently added to the controversy. After some years of stalemated, Milli Görüş pushed forward a leadership that promised that the center would become a vehicle for emancipation rather than an orthodox bastion. The new and very visible leadership—with Hacı Karacaer as charismatic figurehead—spoke out against fundamentalist tendencies and in favor of integration. Karacaer, representing Milli Görüş, participated in the commemorations of World War II and unequivocally denounced the attacks of 9/11. The apotheosis was perhaps Karacaer's performance at Amsterdam's gay monument where he declared he would struggle for the rights of other minorities even if that brought him into conflict with his own constituency. Milli Görüş had become transformed—in media representations—from a hyperconservative association into a liberal vanguard of Dutch Muslimhood. A housing association now agreed to a joint-venture to construct homes on a plot adjacent to the mosque; the neighborhood council agreed to fully support the project. But all this changed in 2007. According to media sources, “conservative hardliners” sponsored by the German headquarters of Milli Görüş had engineered a “coup” against the “liberals” sponsored by the Amsterdam municipality (e.g., Beusekamp 2006). The downfall of the liberal leaders robbed the proponents of “liberal Islam” of what had been their most widely covered success story (Uitermark and Gielen 2010). Cohen's government suffered a direct blow when it became known that it had covertly given an indirect subsidy of two million euro for the construction of the complex.

These two examples show that the government intervened directly to strengthen the power of liberal Islam. The government sought to strengthen the position of Muslims who were critical of their own (ethnic and religious) communities and who argued powerfully and passionately for integration. So strong was this desire that the government attempted to rewrite the rules of the game by giving itself the discretion to subsidize religious projects.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Accommodating Critical Muslims*

The “liberal Muslims” we have described distinguished themselves through sharp criticisms of their own communities and a passionate

commitment to integration. A sizable segment of the Muslim population, however, was much more critical of Dutch society than were the liberal Muslim elite. For the sake of convenience, we refer to this segment as “critical Muslims,” though this category lumps together actors as diverse as illiterate first-generation mosque representatives who vaguely sense that politicians are against Islam and second-generation intellectuals who eloquently counter Islamophobia in newspapers and on television. These critical Muslims did not receive nearly as much recognition and resources as the liberal Muslim elite. Nevertheless, there were attempts to incorporate them into governance networks. Through supporting projects that would lead Muslims to enter into public debates, government officials and political leaders hoped to reduce the power of radical discourses.

What kinds of projects received support? One example is Muslim Youth Amsterdam (Moslimjongeren Amsterdam), which has brought together youths from different ethnic backgrounds and mosques. In 2004, the deputy mayor for diversity, Ahmed Aboutaleb, decided that this type of coalition was needed after research reported that mosques, and especially Moroccan mosques, developed few initiatives that were engaged with the wider civil society. The Amsterdam government also supported cultural centers such as Mozaïek and Argan in the staging of public debates. Unlike the prestigious cultural centers in the central Amsterdam canal area (such as De Balie, Rode Hoed, and Felix Meritis), Mozaïek and Argan attracted large numbers of people from groups that have been notoriously difficult for the media and administrators to reach, such as orthodox Muslims and Moroccan youths.

These associations, venues, and events offered entry points for journalists in search of “Muslim youth,” political parties in search of new talent, and companies looking for new hires. The fact that these settings were constantly in the media spotlight affected how they functioned. In one sense, the media coverage was a crucial part of the attraction for Muslim youth. The presence of important politicians and television cameras also added to the prominence of debates that took place in various associations and events. The preference for high-profile debates, however, limited their role as settings for the inculcation of mainstream civic values and encouragement of participation in mainstream institutions. Although volunteers and professionals often intended to engage



in long-term efforts to build institutional networks among Muslim youth, such ambitions were easily forgotten when the next spectacular event took place. Associations in this volatile environment functioned more as portals for political talent than as organizing platforms for the “unintegrated” Muslims and Moroccans who dominated news reports.

### *Disciplining Defiant Muslims*

Precisely because participation in government-supported associations and debates requires a measure of civic engagement, they did not attract the problematic groups that have typically filled media and policy documents: isolated women, dropouts, delinquent youths, and (potential) extremists. To deal with these groups, the Amsterdam government, like other governments, intensified its investments in repressive and disciplinary institutions in the first decade of the new century: more discretion and personnel for the police, more camera surveillance, more state funds and discretion for security personnel, stricter enforcement of the legal requirement to attend school, and so on. But in addition to these repressive measures, the government sought to win over the hearts and minds of potentially dangerous groups and to stimulate “integration” or “participation.”<sup>6</sup>

To discipline the most defiant groups, the government increasingly called upon Islam, Muslim authorities, and Muslim associations. This development, which took place throughout Amsterdam, reached its zenith in Slotervaart, a postwar neighborhood on the city’s western outskirts that became a laboratory for new governance institutions. After it became clear that Van Gogh’s assassin lived in Slotervaart, journalists, academics, policy makers, and politicians flooded the neighborhood. Media scrutiny and political interest further intensified when Labor Party member Ahmed Marcouch ran for and became chair of the neighborhood council in 2006—the first Moroccan to achieve this position in the Netherlands. Marcouch’s discourse was tough on those who exhibited what was seen as uncivil behavior and full of praise for those who exhibited civil qualities. Referring to Marcouch’s background as a police officer, the German weekly *Der Spiegel* called him the “sheriff of Slotervaart” (cited in Jongejan 2007). Indeed, Marcouch had no sympathy whatsoever for youths hanging out on the streets after midnight

or adults forsaking their parental responsibilities. But his policies were disciplinary rather than simply repressive: the goal was to weave a network of surveillance and control around the life worlds of perpetrators and potential perpetrators. The neighborhood government of Slotervaart set up a rapid response unit of “street coaches” (usually martial arts practitioners) to keep watch on the neighborhood and intervene whenever youths were loitering, skipping school, or causing a nuisance. The neighborhood council also financed programs to teach parents about the intricacies of the school system and tried to stimulate them to be actively involved in their children’s educational performance. Such disciplinary interventions have surged in many locations in the Netherlands (Van den Berg 2007) and elsewhere in Europe (Crawford 1997, 2006) in recent years.

In Slotervaart, religion has been used to try to convince target groups that they need to cooperate. The policy document in which the council laid out its strategy against radicalization states,

The emphasis will be on the opportunities offered by religion and culture in upbringing, strengthening one’s own identity and developing a positive self-image. Next to that, there will be a search for points of contact (*aanknopingspunten*) in religion and culture for creating a bridge to Dutch society. Dichotomous world views will be countered with religious prescriptions. This offers the opportunity to convince parents that their wish to give their children an Islamic identity does not entail a clash with Dutch norms and values. (Stadsdeel Slotervaart 2007: 8–9)

The council’s position was that delinquents and radicals should be confronted by religious authorities to demonstrate that their behavior is not in accordance with proper Islamic conduct. This policy was one manifestation of the reconfiguration of the government’s relationship to both parents and civil society associations. At a time when many secular and neighborhood associations in Amsterdam had lost government subsidies and accommodations, associations catering to groups close to potential radicals or delinquents retained or consolidated their roles as intermediaries. For instance, the Amsterdam government provided assistance for recruiting participants in child-rearing courses through Islamic associations. The government organized

debates within mosques and provided guidance to mosques wishing to represent and explain themselves in the media. The government also supported mosques in organizing dialogues among their constituents and with other religions in an effort to better communicate and explain Islam to members of the wider Dutch society.

One of the goals of government-subsidized programs for Turkish and Moroccan Muslim parents was to bring their religious conceptions in sync with the requirements of educational and other social environments. In her evaluation of a course for Moroccan parents offered as part of the anti-radicalization policy, Amy-Jane Gielen shows that parents and especially mothers were not primarily interested in religion or culture, but in their children's achievements at school and in the labor market; most of all, they did not want their children to drop out of school or fall into the hands of local criminals (Gielen 2008). However, in the course, religious precepts were used to delegitimize cultural beliefs or practices that supposedly inhibited success in Dutch society. For instance, in discussing whether it was permissible to spank a child, some mothers complained that child protection laws were too strict and Dutch society does not allow them to discipline their children the way they think best. Others suggested that Islam requires parents to adopt a gentle approach and expressly forbids hitting children. These mothers felt that their ethnic culture holds women back and that greater knowledge of Islam would lead to a reevaluation of the mother's role. As one mother put it, "I do not find traditions and being Moroccan very important, because I think we mostly have bad traditions. The fact is that a girl is kept down, while a boy is allowed to do anything he likes. Islam is against this" (quoted in Gielen 2008: 15).

Attempts to "civilize" cultural practices through the mobilization of religious discourse were not unique to Slotervaart; throughout the city similar initiatives were taken, with and without government support. For instance, the women's association of Milli Görüş received subsidies from the city for a project on female emancipation. In this particular project, an imam explained to men that much of the behavior they consider as "religious" is, in fact, "cultural," and quite possibly in contradiction to the Quran. The women's association website is full of texts (by men) that argue that the well-being of women is central to Muslim belief. It is worth looking in detail at the minutes of one meeting

published on the Internet since they focus on honor killings, a topic that arouses great concern in the Netherlands. The two panelists—an imam and a chairman—asked what the assembled men thought of when they heard the word "honor." Most of the men thought of women, some more specifically of wives, daughters, or mothers. One also thought of tradition and an old saying: the most important things in a man's life are a horse, a wife, and a weapon. Women, the men agreed, carried honor while the consensus was that men had to defend it. And what if honor was violated? One man had the impression that "she must die," others suggested marriage or prevention, and one stressed that sufficient proof must exist (because the Prophet emphasized this). Then came the question: what would the men do if someone from their family lost their honor? Here we translate some of the discussion provided in the report:

PARTICIPANT 1: The person should question himself first. What is my share in this?

PARTICIPANT 2: We raise the children. If my daughter does that, then I am responsible. But I did not raise my wife. What is my share [of the responsibility] when my wife walks down the wrong path? You should also question yourself to see if you give enough attention to your wife.

PARTICIPANT 3: To give a frightening example, that person could be killed.

PARTICIPANT 4: I would take a weapon and kill.

CHAIRMAN: You say "I will kill my wife or sister"? If it is your little brother, do you kill him too?

PARTICIPANT 4: Why do we discuss? Because the Dutch want it that way?

Our religion is pure and that is why it forbids these kinds of things.

IMAM: I do not know what you are saying; what has this to do with the topic? These are our problems.

CHAIRMAN: We prepare these programs and questions. It has nothing to do with the wish of the Dutch. The Dutch do not have honor and honor killings, but our society does. And such bad things are done on behalf of Islam. We work to prevent these problems. (Report published online by the women's section of Milli Görüş in 2006)

The Turkish men in this meeting tended to regard honor violence as a good or at least a normal part of their ethnic culture. However, the

imam, Osman Paköz, reframed honor violence as a bad thing, finding it especially reprehensible that it is carried out on behalf of Islam. In what followed in the discussion, the chair and the imam used Islam as a way to argue against honor killings.

These are just some examples of a much more general process taking place in the Muslim community in Amsterdam. In interviews, meetings, brochures, and websites, Muslims have routinely mobilized religion to criticize ethnic culture. Religion is seen as God given and making people pure—and differentiated from ethnic culture, which has come to stand for that which is all too human. Islam has been used to argue against arranged marriages, gender inequality, and insolence. This kind of discourse has been in circulation not only among governmental elites and among higher-class Muslims but has also found strong support among, for instance, isolated lower-class Muslim women (Van Tilborgh 2006)—an indication that the “civilizing”-by-Islam was not exclusively a government-instigated process and perhaps not even primarily a process that trickled down from (“highly civilized”) elites to (“less civilized”) lower classes (cf. Elias 1994).

In sum, in the decade of Job Cohen’s mayoral administration, the government, with the help of minority associations, governed through (specific interpretations of) Islam. While Moroccan and Turkish cultures were negatively viewed as being overly traditional and negative for women, Islam was seen by the government as a “civilizing force.” In complete contradiction to the culturalists who had dominated the national debate on integration, local policy makers and their associates mobilized Muslim discourses to argue against misogyny, delinquency, intolerance, and crime. As a side effect of this transformation, secular and critical minority associations and voices were marginalized because they were not as willing to participate in Islam-inspired “civilizing” missions and were more oriented toward struggling against discrimination within Dutch society.

## Conclusions

Between 2001 and 2010, the Amsterdam government developed alternative discourses and institutions to promote minority integration. While many national politicians and opinion makers vocally argued that Islam itself was a problem or that Islam contributed to integration problems,

Job Cohen’s government adopted the opposite view and attempted to use Islam to promote integration. Cohen and his government feared that the intense and often negative focus on Islam would further marginalize Muslims and lead to social disintegration. But this fear triggered counterforces: as integration politics heated up at the national level, more time, energy, and resources were devoted to the discursive and institutional incorporation of Turkish and Moroccan migrants, who were increasingly represented as Muslims. The controversies over Islam were divisive in some ways, but also brought together groups and individuals that were previously apart. The commitment to use Islam to encourage integration bound together a coalition stretching from progressive politicians like Cohen to orthodox Muslims opposing radicalism. Islam thus fused into governance and was mobilized to extend the influence of the government. The government even created new civil society associations: it invested heavily in those promoting liberal Islam, sponsored individuals and organizations providing critical or orthodox alternatives to radical Islam, and created disciplinary institutions to “civilize” groups that supposedly were not integrated enough. In short, we can observe the emergence of a governance configuration that differentiated among groups according to their civil virtue and in which Islam was used, both by the government and by Muslims, to integrate minority groups who were seen as being too stuck in their ethnic cultures.

These attempts at “civilizing” minorities represent a reinvention of the civilizing projects developed in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. Now, as in the past, elites, and especially elites from social-democratic circles, embarked on civilizing projects for a variety of reasons: out of fear that the groups seen as uncivilized would rebel, to promote cultural emancipation, and ensure that lower-class groups would engage in work instead of crime. And in both the present and earlier periods, elites used extensive and intrusive state institutions to penetrate the grassroots, create a web of surveillance, and diffuse certain discourses. While the motivations and means were roughly the same in both eras, the discursive content was quite different in that, in the contemporary period, religion was used to incorporate lower-class and ethnic groups that were otherwise believed to be out of the government’s reach.

While the intention to use Islam to “civilize” minority groups bound together a large variety of groups, there were also contradictions. Political opponents severely criticized the Amsterdam government for favoritism and breaching the division between church and state. Job Cohen especially was routinely portrayed as a weakling who was more interested in appeasing Muslims—notably in “drinking tea” with them than in enforcing the law and supporting native Dutch. His successor, Eberhard van der Laan (Labor Party, as of 2010), appears determined not to walk down the same path—he discontinued attempts to create a cultural center for debating Islam, spoke out against Muslim civil servants who refused to shake hands with members of the opposite sex, and generally refrained from articulating a broad vision of integration. The role of Amsterdam as a prime milieu where the relations between Islam and governance were refigured appears to have ended for the time being.

However, as we noted, the strategy to use Islam to argue against stigmatized cultural practices and beliefs is not simply imposed from above. Many Muslims in the trenches of civil society appear to have adopted the idea that their pure religion should take precedence over, and negate, their ethnic cultures. While obviously they do not *en masse* renounce their ethnic cultures, it has been common to use Islam to criticize and reconsider those elements of their ethnic culture that they have come to reject and question, including patriarchal familial relations and overly strict practices of child rearing. It has also become common to appeal to Islam to advocate commitment to school, open debate, and work. The transformations of Islam appear not to depend on direct government intervention and will thus proceed long after the government's attempts to govern through using Islam have discontinued.

## NOTES

1. This chapter is based in part on Uitermark (2012), Uitermark and Duwendak (2008); Rath (1999); and Rath, Penninx, Groenendijk, and Meyer (2004).
2. This is a very rough estimate; see EUMC (2006) and OSI (2010).
3. See <http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/label/7221/>, accessed May 15, 2012. Such a “guilt estimate” however, is quite problematic (Demant, Maussen, and Rath 2007).
4. Cited in the daily newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*, “Zondaar doden is een zonde,” November 3, 2004.

5. The philosophical legitimation for this is the principle of “compensating neutrality” which stipulates that some forms of religion can be stimulated to increase choice. If one accepts the idea that fundamentalist or radical Islam is much more powerful than liberal Islam, it is justified, according to the principle of compensating neutrality, to support the latter. It is an interesting paradox that the very same administrators who have argued that most Muslims are not fundamentalist or radical also argue that fundamentalist or radical Islam is so strong that the government needs to compensate for the weakness of liberal Islam.
6. On one of the municipality's poster campaigns, the slogan was “Civil enculturation, that means participation” (*Inburgeren, dat betekent meedoen*). Participation is defined as participation in those institutions where native Dutch or native Dutch ways of doing things dominate. So participation in an ethnic association, in a household, or in a network of friends is not, according to the conception of government policy, participation.

## REFERENCES

- Alba, Richard, and Victor Nee. 1997. “Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration.” *International Migration Review* 31 (Winter): 826–74.
- . 2003. *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bagley, Christopher. 1973. *The Dutch Plural Society: A Comparative Study in Race Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Beusekamp, Willem. 2006. “Milli Görüs is om de tuin geleid.” *De Volkskrant*, November 15.
- Bovenkerk, Frank (ed.). 1978. *Omdat zij anders zijn. Patronen van rasdiscriminatie in Nederland*. Meppel: Boom.
- Cohen, Job. 2002. *Vreemden*. Leiden: Cleveringa-lesing.
- Crawford, Adam. 1997. *The Local Governance of Crime: Appeals to Community and Partnerships*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- . 2006. “Networked Governance and the Post-Regulatory State?” *Theoretical Criminology* 10 (4): 449–79.
- Demant, Froukje, Marcel Maussen, and Jan Rath. 2007. *The Netherlands: Preliminary Research Report and Literature Survey*. London: Open Society Institute.
- Dercksen, Adriane, and Loes Verplanke. 1987. *Geschiedenis van de ornataatschappelijkeheidsstrijding in Nederland, 1914–1970*. Meppel: Boom.
- De Regt, Ali. 1984. *Arbeidersgezinnen en beschavingsarbeid. Ontwikkelingen in Nederland 1870–1940. Een historisch-sociologische studie*. Meppel: Boom.
- Duwendak, Jan Willem. 2011. *The Politics of Home: Belonging and Nostalgia in Western Europe and the United States*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Duwendak, Jan Willem, Rally Rijkshroeff, and Tees Pel. 2009. “A Multicultural Paradise? The Cultural Factor in Dutch Integration Policy,” in Jennifer L.

- Hochschild and John H. Mollenkopf (eds.), *Bringing Outsiders In: Transatlantic Perspectives on Immigrant Political Incorporation*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Elias, Norbert. 1994. *The Civilizing Process*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- EUMC. 2006. *Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia*. Vienna: European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1986. *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press.
- Gemeente Amsterdam. 1999. *De kracht van een diverse stad. Uitgangspunten van het diversiteitsbeleid van de gemeente Amsterdam*. Amsterdam: Gemeente Amsterdam.
- Gemeente Amsterdam. 2004. *Analyse conflictpotentieel*. Amsterdam: Gemeente Amsterdam.
- Gielen, Amy-Jane. 2008. *Een kwestie van identiteit*. Amsterdam: A.G. Advies.
- Hajer, Maarten, and Justus Uitermark. 2008. "Performing Authority: Discursive Politics after the Assassination of Theo van Gogh." *Public Administration* 86 (1): 5-19.
- Jongejan, Bettie. 2007. "Marocouh: de sheriff van Klein Marokko." *Trouw*, July 31.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1975 [1968]. *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lindo, Filip. 1999. *Heiligwijsheld in Amsterdam. Ayasofya, staatsdeel de Baarsjes en de strijd om het Riva-terrein*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
- OSI (Open Society Institute). 2010. *Muslims in Europe: A Report on 11 EU Cities*. London: Open Society Institute.
- Ramadan, Tariq. 2004. *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rath, Jan. 1993. "La construction sociale des minorités ethniques aux Pays-Bas et ses effets pervers," in Marco Martinello and Marc Poncellet (eds.), *Migrations et minorités ethniques dans l'espace Européen*. Bruxelles: De Boeck.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1999. "The Netherlands: A Dutch Treat for Anti-Social Families and Immigrant Ethnic Minorities," in Mike Cole and Gareth Dale (eds.), *The European Union and Migrant Labour*. Oxford: Berg.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2009. "The Netherlands: A Reluctant Country of Immigration." *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 100 (5): 665-72.
- Rath, Jan, Rinus Penninx, Kees Groenendijk, and Astrid Meyer. 2001. *Western Europe and its Islam*. Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2004. "Making Space for Islam in the Netherlands," in Roberta Aluffi Beck-Percoz and Giovanna Zincone (eds.), *The Legal Treatment of Islamic Minorities in Europe*. Leuven: Peeters.
- Schinkel, Willem. 2007. *Denken in een tijd van sociale hypochondrie: aanzet tot een theorie voorbij de maatschappij*. Kampen: Klement.
- Stadsdeel Slotervaart. 2007. *Actieplan Slotervaart. Het tegengaan van radicalisering*. Amsterdam: Stadsdeel Slotervaart.

- Uitermark, Justus. 2012. *The Dynamics of Power in Dutch Integration Politics: From Accommodation to Confrontation*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press.
- Uitermark, Justus, and Krijn van Beek. 2010. "Gesmoorde participatie: Over de schaduwkanten van 'meedoer' als staatsproject," in Imrat Verhoeven and Marcel Ham (eds.), *Brave burgers gezocht. De grenzen van de activerende overheid*. Amsterdam: Van Gennep.
- Uitermark, Justus, and Jan Willem Duyvendak. 2008. "Civilizing the City: Populism and Revanchist Urbanism in Rotterdam." *Urban Studies* 45 (7): 1485-03.
- Uitermark, Justus, and Amy Jane Gielen. 2010. "Islam in the Spotlight: Discursive Politics in an Amsterdam Neighborhood after 9/11 and the Assassination of Theo van Gogh." *Urban Studies* 47 (6): 1325-42.
- Van den Berg, Marguerite. 2007. "Dat is bij jullie toch ook zo?" *Gender, etniciteit en klasse in het sociaal kapitaal van Marokkaanse vrouwen*. Amsterdam: Aksant.
- Van den Berg, Marguerite, and Jan Willem Duyvendak. 2012. "Paternalizing Mothers: Feminist Repertoires in Contemporary Dutch Civilizing Offensives?" *Critical Social Policy* 32: 556-76.
- Van den Brink, Gabriel. 2004. *Schets van een beschavingsgeschiedenis. Over normen, normaliteit en normalisatie in Nederland*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Van den Brink, Gabriel, and Dick de Ruijter. 2003. *Marginaal of modern? Bestuurlijk advies inzake burgerschap onder migranten in Rotterdam*. Utrecht: Nederlands Instituut voor Zorg en Welzijn.
- Van Tilborgh, Yolanda. 2006. *Wij zijn Nederland. Moslims over AyaanHirsi Ali*. Amsterdam: Van Gennep.
- Weber, Eugen. 1976. *Peasants into Frenchmen. The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.