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CHAPTER 6

Guest workers and Islam in the Netherlands

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter I discuss policy responses to the construction of Islamic prayer facilities in the Netherlands in the 1960s and 1970s. In the literature on the institutionalisation of Islam this period is usually dealt with in an extremely cursory way. Most authors argue that the presence of Islam in the Netherlands only became a policy issue later on, when Muslim organisations began to articulate demands for recognition of their religious needs in the 1980s.[234] It is true that in the 1960s and 1970s the creation of basic facilities for Muslim religious practice and the introduction of subsidy schemes for the creation of Islamic prayer spaces were not hotly debated public issues in the Netherlands. However, in my view, this lack of public discussion and concern was also a result of the specific ways of understanding the presence of Muslims and Islam. More specifically, it was a result of frameworks for dealing with the cultural and religious needs of immigrant workers, and of ways of defining the nature and outer limits of governmental responsibilities with respect to this population.

6.2. Immigrant workers and Islam in the Netherlands

Until the late 19th century there were few immigrant workers in the Netherlands. Some foreigners worked as servants, maids or sailors, and there were also seasonal workers who came to work in agriculture or in infrastructural works such as the construction of dikes, canals and other excavations (Lucassen and Penninx 1997: 49ff). In the early 20th century the mining industry in South Limburg employed German, Polish, Italian and Slovenian workers.

In the 1950s a period of rapid economic expansion began that soon led to structural labour shortages in metal, shipbuilding, mining and textiles industries and in some agricultural sectors. Other European (former) imperial powers, notably France and Great Britain, turned to their colonies and former colonies to fill in some of the labour shortages. This was not the case in the Netherlands. In colonial times the Dutch, unlike the French, had never made use of a labour force of colonial workers. Also in the post-colonial period there was no substantial *labour* immigration from the former colonies. In the 1960s a number of Surinamese teachers, nurses, skilled workers and administrative personnel migrated to the Netherlands, but this was the proverbial exception that proved the rule.[235]

234. See for example Sunier 1996: 4-6; and Rath et al. 2001: 27-31.

235. See Van Niekerk 2000: 66.

Dutch industries began to recruit Italian workers in the 1950s, and later young men from Spain, Portugal, Greece, Yougoslavia, Turkey and Morocco.[236] Between 1960 and 1969 the number of foreign workers in the Netherlands grew from 5,700 to 68,900 (Van Twist 1977: 20). Foreign workers received a temporary residence permit that was delivered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and that had to be renewed every year, supposedly allowing the adjustment of immigration to the demands of the labour market (Lucassen and Penninx 1997: 70).

The government argued that the recruitment of foreign workers was done at the initiative of private companies and consequently those companies were held responsible for providing housing, income, medical insurance and other necessary facilities.[237] The Italians who came to work in the mines, were sometimes housed in barrack villages which had been built during the war for forced labourers. North of Amsterdam, Camp Atatürk was set up in 1966 in a former refugee camp, and it housed 400 to 500 Turkish workers who were recruited by NDSM, a shipbuilding company. Similar barrack villages existed in Rotterdam, Almelo, and Enschede. Other migrant workers were housed in private guest houses (*kosthuizen*). Dutch women would cook at night and came to be known colloquially as "Italian mamas" or "Turkish mothers". Other foreign workers found lodging in hostels (*pensionnen*) or in workmen's houses (*gezellenhuizen*).[238]

One of the first groups to take an interest in the situation of the foreign workers, besides the employers, were priests and other socially active Christians. Missionaries who had worked in the colonies became involved and tried to put their experiences abroad to use (Van Twist 1977: 100). Priests would organise special Catholic masses and celebrations that were often conducted in the native language of the workers (Tinnemans 1994: 21ff.). One motivation for doing this was the fear that the foreign workers would be tempted by alcoholism and prostitution, and that they were prone to "moral disorientation". In 1967 Mr. R.Wentholt, a professor of social psychology at the university of Rotterdam, published a book on foreign workers in the Netherlands that became quite influential.[239] He argued that foreign workers wanted to maintain their personal identity which – according to Wentholt – was "culturally determined" (*cultureel bepaald*). This also implied that migrant workers wished to be left alone, and that wish should be respected by the authorities. The Dutch were called upon to take notice of the difficult living situation of the guest workers and to learn about their culture and understand that the young men should be seen as children. Only "careful guidance" (*zorgvuldige begeleiding*) could help to avoid failure and human suffering (Rath 1991: 150-153).

These ideas did not develop in a void. Since the creation of the Ministry of Social Assistance (*Ministerie van Maatschappelijk Werk*) in 1952 government involvement with the well-being of various social groups had increased. Those working in this field tried to build on new insights of sociologists and psychologists. One idea was that the social, intellectual and

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236. Recruitment agreements were signed with the governments of Italy (1960), Spain (1961), Portugal (1964), Turkey (1964) Greece (1967), Morocco (1969) and Yugoslavia (1970) (Van Amersfoort 1982: 184ff.)

237. The involvement of public authorities with guest workers focussed on the signing of recruitment agreements, and on the application of the Aliens Law (*Vreemdelingenwet*) and a new Law on Working Permits for Aliens (*Wet Arbeidsvergunningen Vreemdelingen*), which had been issued in 1969 (Schuster 1999: 169-173).

238. See: Tinnemans 1994; Vogel 2005; and Alexander 2006.

239. Wentholt (ed.) (1967*) Buitenlandse arbeiders in Nederland. Een veelzijdige benadering van een complex probleem.*

moral qualities of members of the lower classes could be improved via community organisation and the improvement of their social environment (cf. Van der Haar 2007).

In 1965 the policy responsibilities of the former Ministry of Social Assistance were allocated to a new Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work (CRM). This Ministry was responsible for the more general societal consequences of the presence of foreign workers, including the coordination of welfare and social work (*welzijnswerk*) for immigrant groups (Penninx 1979: 147ff.). Thus a close institutional linkage was created between social work and the accommodation of guest workers. In the late 1960s a new department was established within the Ministry of CRM to deal with migrant groups. That policy category included "problematic groups" such as the caravan dwellers and different groups of immigrants: guest workers, Moluccans, Surinamese and Antilleans. For these groups there existed specific "categorical social work" (*categoriaal opbouwwerk*) (Rath 1991: 160). A "categorical approach" was considered appropriate because each group needed specific social services such as specialised care and guidance. In the case of immigrants social work included tasks such as providing information, contributing to "environment construction" (*milieu opbouw*), i.e. encouraging the organisation of social, cultural and recreational activities, and establishing relations with the wider Dutch society (Penninx 1979: 148ff.).

The conceptual, policy and institutional framework for the accommodation of guest workers was developed in close relation with social work, a sector that was rapidly expanding. This did not mean, however, that the government now intended to take full responsibility to provide and care for the foreign workers. Preferably this would remain a task of employers and semi-voluntary associations. In the mid 1960s local organisations of support for foreign workers had been further institutionalised into a system of regional Foundations for Foreign Workers (*Stichtingen Welzijn Buitenlandse Werknemers*). Since 1964 subsidies were made available for these Foundations, which were progressively extended so that by 1975 the government was subsidising all the costs of these associations (Rath 1991: 157). They were the main social instruments to implement policies in the domains of social welfare and culture.

In this particular institutional and ideational context the religious needs of guest workers from Turkey and Morocco came to be an issue. In the 1960s the Muslim immigrant workers who had decided to continue to practice Islam would mostly perform their daily prayers in their own rooms or they would roll out their prayer rug in a discrete corner of the factory. Muslim migrant workers had also created makeshift prayer rooms in factories, dwellings and hostels. When the religious needs of Turkish and North African workers came to be noticed most of the Foundations for Foreign Workers also made a provision for the Muslim Friday Prayer. At the occasion of the Ramadan or the Sacrifice Feast, Dutch volunteers and some of the Muslim workers organised larger gatherings that brought together Muslims from all over the Netherlands.[240] Turks and Moroccans were also helped out by Christian supporters, who would sometimes make a church building available on Fridays or during the month of Ramadan.[241]

There were no Islamic houses of worship in the Netherlands at the time however, with the exception of the small Mobarak Mosque in the Hague. This mosque was primarily used by

240. See Rath et al 2001; Landman 1992; and Theunis 1979: 379ff.

241. See Reedijk 1977; Theunis 1979; Buijs 1998; and Strijp 1998.

Ahmadiyya Muslims.[242] The fact that the only already existing mosque in the Netherlands was not used by the newly arrived groups of Muslims was but a small illustration of the historical fact that the Dutch colonial past did not play a role in these early forms of accommodating the religious needs of guest workers.[243] This may seem puzzling, given that the Netherlands took so much pride in its Islam policy and the perceived wisdom with which Islam had been approached in the East Indies, based on the insights of the renowned Islam expert Snouck Hurgronje.

A number of historical factors have to be taken into account to explain this *dis*continuity. First, in the Netherlands the guest workers "who had Islam as their religion" did not come from the former Dutch colonies, but from countries such as Turkey, Morocco and Tunisia, which had no previous relationships with Dutch society. Second, there had been a period of almost 20 years between the independence of Indonesia and the arrival of important numbers of guest workers from Muslim countries. This time gap constituted an obstacle for the possible diffusion of representations and institutional arrangements. Moreover, it should be remembered that the post-colonial immigration from Indonesia had hardly led to the formation of Islamic institutions and organisations, mostly because most immigrants had been Christians or secularised people.[244] Third, public and policy discourses on the needs of guest workers in the 1960s and 1970s focussed first on their economic identity as migrant labourer. If issues related to cultural differences played a role at all when talking about the immigrant workforce it was usually in discourses mixing stereotypical observations about differences in language, looks and skin-colour, eating habits, dress codes, culture and religion.

These three historical facts can, when taken together, explain why there were fewer opportunities for the discursive and institutional reproduction of colonial repertoires and arrangements. Counterfactually, diffusion of repertoires would have required a conceptualisation of the cultural differences and specific needs of guest workers from Turkey and Morocco in such a way that a comparison with the situation of the indigenous in the East Indies seemed plausible. Such a conceptualisation could, for example, have focussed on issues such as Islam and on the distinctions between regular Islamic practice, "fanatical Islam" and (Turkish or Moroccan) culture. In the absence of such a conceptualisation, it seemed implausible to argue that there was much to learn from Dutch colonial practice. There were also few opportunities for diffusion via the expertise of officials and bureaucrats who had been employed in the colonial administration. In France many civil servants and army veterans returning from the colonies in the 1960s were employed in specialised institutions such as the hostels for immigrant workers, special police services and the immigration services. The colonial administration in the East Indies, by contrast, had always been relatively small and most of the "repatriates" had already found

242. Guest workers from Turkey and North Africa tended to see the Ahmadiyya movement as a sect (see chapter 4). Moreover, because of differences in ethnic and social background and language there were not many opportunities or incentives for newly arrived guest workers and the mostly Indonesian and Pakistani members of the Mobarak mosque congregation to see if they had common religious needs.

243. As I have shown in chapter 5 the Paris Mosque was also not much used by Muslim guest workers in the Paris region in the 1960s and 1970s. However, this was primarily because of ideological, political and practical reasons, such as the distance immigrants had to travel to reach this mosque in the centre of Paris. In terms of language and ethnicity of the mosque congregation the Paris Mosque could very well have catered to the needs of North African immigrant workers at the time.

244. See chapter 4.

new jobs before the recruitment of guest workers took off in the 1960s. It also mattered that in the Netherlands the accommodation of guest workers was seen as primarily a responsibility of private companies and civil society organisations. In contrast to the French case then, the Dutch colonial past was largely irrelevant in the development of a guest workers regime and in developing institutional arrangements public authorities found their conceptual maps in other domains, notably in the sector of social work.[245]

6.3. Policy responses to the presence of Islam in the 1970s

In the course of the 1970s the situation of immigrant workers in the Netherlands changed in a number of respects. The immigrant population now included a greater number of families and children.[246] More immigrants had found housing in hostels or regular dwellings, mostly located in the older and more run down neighbourhoods of the bigger cities. In 1970 the Dutch government issued a Memorandum on Foreign Workers (*Nota buitenlandse werknemers*) to respond to demands for a better regulation of labour migration. The starting point for policy was to be that the Netherlands with its dense population was not, and should not become, a country of immigration. The Minister of Social Affairs, Bouke Roolvink (Orthodox Reformed Party, ARP), suggested a rotation system, which would oblige foreign workers to leave the Netherlands after two or three years in order to be replaced by new immigrants. After the first oil crisis the recruitment of foreign workers was stopped altogether. In 1974 a proposal was developed for a "premium on return" of 5,000 guilders to encourage migrant workers to return to their country of origin.

The policy guidelines that were issued in the early 1970s by the national government, and particularly by the Ministry of Social Affairs, still were by and large based on the assumption that the guest workers would *en masse* return to their countries of origin (Entzinger 1984: 87ff.). In the bigger cities, however, there were clear signs that a process of settlement of immigrants had begun. Consequently municipal governments began to reorient their policy approaches by the early 1970s, seeking to respond to al kinds of social issues that presented themselves in this new situation. These diverging assumptions underlying national and municipal approaches would lead to some tensions, notably in the domain of housing. However, quite surprisingly, in the domain of religion and culture a broad consensus emerged around the need to allow labour immigrants to "retain their culture", irrespective of whether they would eventually decide to return home or settle in the Netherlands.

In 1971 the Minister of Housing issued a directive that offered municipalities possibilities to build suitable housing for foreign workers. The dwellings for foreign workers would be

245. In a book published in 1995 the Dutch sociologist Jacques van Doorn suggested that Dutch Minorities Policy could learn from the colonial experience and from the Islam policy in the East Indies to respond to new challenges of multiculturalism as a result of immigration from predominantly Muslim countries such as Turkey and Morocco. See Van Doorn 1995: 79ff.

246. In the course of the 1960s more and more Italian and Spanish guest workers sought to bring their families to the Netherlands. Italian and Spanish migrants had the right to reunite with their families after a stay of one year, and Turkish and Moroccan migrants could do so after a stay of two years (Tinnemans 1994: 75).

created in such a way that they could very easily be transformed into a regular house for a Dutch family once the guest workers would have returned (Tinnemans 1994: 111).[247] A public official in Rotterdam developed an analogous idea in 1972 and suggested in an annex to a "Memorandum concerning the problematic around housing foreign workers in Rotterdam" that foreigners should best be housed in "somewhat remote locations". As he explained, foreign workers were entitled to a humane existence, but the style of social life in the Netherlands should not "seduce [the foreign worker] into abandoning the original plans to return to his home country" (in Tinnemans 1994: 118, my translation, M.M.). However, no follow up was given to this idea. Municipal policy makers had already begun to base their policy approach upon the idea that the key challenge was to smoothen the progressive incorporation of a new immigrant population in the neighbourhoods.

Employers were only obliged to provide housing for guest workers during the first one or two years of their stay. Therefore immigrants entered the regular housing market relatively soon and in relatively large numbers. Almost in the same period many of the more well off Dutch residents in the larger cities began to move to newly built residential areas. The remaining Dutch residents in those neighbourhoods were usually either very attached to their neighbourhoods or they simply could not afford to leave. Increasingly immigrants came to live in these neighbourhoods, which often led to social tensions. In Rotterdam, for example, landlords would sometimes end the renting contracts of Dutch residents in order to transform dwellings into more profitable hostels for foreign workers. Tensions between hostel owners, immigrants and native Dutch residents came to a head in the so-called "Turk riots" (*Turkenrellen*), in Rotterdam in the summer of 1972.[248] Fights between some of the Turkish and Dutch residents and attacks on several hostels lasted a week. The riots were not only illustrative of growing tensions between native Dutch and immigrants, they also showed that an increasing number of migrants and their families was in fact already living in the older neighbourhoods.

Another important issue concerned the cultural, educational and religious needs of immigrant workers and their families. The government had in its 1970s memorandum promised to help provide for migrant workers' spiritual needs and spiritual welfare (*geestelijk welzijn*) (Rath et al. 2001: 45). In 1973 a new government of the Left finally took up again the further development of the memorandum and issued a new policy text called the Memorandum in Reply (*Memorie van Antwoord*) in 1974. The government held to the idea that the Netherlands was "definitely not an immigration country". Nevertheless, the basic needs of immigrant workers should be provided for (Schuster 1999: 190ff.). At closer look three different motivations and perspectives were underlying the idea that the cultural needs of immigrants should be provided for. First, the national government argued that support for cultural life might help in sustaining the possibilities for guest workers and their family members to successfully re-integrate upon the return to the home country. Second, there was the view, which was particularly popular in

247. This directive was at odds with the conclusions of a report on the housing needs of immigrants that had been issued in 1969. That study suggested that many immigrant families were looking for a more permanent accommodation. On the kind of policy responses in the domain of housing that are typical for guest workers regimes see also Alexander 2006.

248. At the time the total number of legal and illegal hostels in Rotterdam in 1972 was about 750. On the riots in Rotterdam see Blokland Potters 1998: 270-274; Bovenkerk et al. 1985; and Buijs 1998. Brawls between foreign workers and Dutch populations also occurred in other Dutch cities in the 1960s and 1970s.

the sector of social work, that special groups could benefit socially and psychologically from specialised attempts at "community building" (*samenlevingsopbouw*). When applied and attuned to the particular situation of immigrants this became understood as "building up a cultural milieu" (*culturele milieuopbouw*) (Van Twist 1977: 101). Third, there was a view that was more emancipatory in its orientation and argued that foreign workers were entitled to find respect, tolerance and support for their cultural needs. Since the late 1960s solidarity movements supporting the foreign workers had begun to demand a more humane treatment of foreign workers, which included more room for immigrants' cultural identity. These different perspectives could connect around the idea of developing policies and facilities allowing immigrant workers "to retain and develop their cultural identity".

The catch-phrase "integration with retention of cultural identity" came up in the 1970s and it would become increasingly popular in Dutch Minorities Policy. In the mid-1970s, however, the basic idea was to develop a "dual policy" (*tweesporenbeleid*) that would simultaneously create opportunities for a successful re-integration of immigrants who decided to return, and to equip those who decided to stay with a strong and positive sense of identity that was seen as a pre-condition for successful integration.[249] In terms of policy this resulted, for example, in additional subsidies for community centres organising cultural activities for Turkish and Moroccan immigrants. In 1974 a program for teaching of community language for Mediterranean children was established that could serve to facilitate the reintegration of children in the society of origin after the supposed return.[250]

6.3.1. Religious needs, immigrant mobilisation and policy responses

In the course of the 1970s more and more groups of Muslims sought to create prayer spaces themselves. In 1974 in Rotterdam, for example, Turkish Muslims created a prayer room in a dwelling and later that year Moroccan Muslims created a prayer house in a garage (Sunier 1996: 85-87). The committees that administered these prayer houses of worship were among the earliest forms of self help organisations of Muslims in the Netherlands. In February 1974, the Turkish Muslim Hasip Turan spoke in the Rotterdam municipal council and requested that a Roman Catholic church, which was to be demolished, be given to the "Muslim community in Rotterdam". According to Turan, the Muslims had come to the Netherlands to contribute to the Dutch economy and therefore it seemed reasonable that religious facilities should now be created for them (Buijs 1998: 12).[251] In Rotterdam Turkish Muslims organised a protest march

249. This motto was especially important for the policies developed by the Ministry of CRM in the 1970s, where it gradually developed into the concept of "integration with retention of identity" (Entzinger 1984: 88; Penninx 1979: 148).

250. These courses were given during school hours, a practice that continued until the late 1990s. In 1981 the objective of this form of language instruction was being reformulated. It was now no longer presented primarily as a way of preparing children for a return to the countries of origin, but as a way of creating a "positive self-image" that would contribute to the improvement of their social position (Vermeulen and Pennix 2000: 27).

251. Many Muslim immigrant workers from Turkey and Morocco believed it was a task of the state to provide religious facilities. This expectation was, according to Ruud Strijp, in part a result of policies in the countries of origin and also of experiences with French colonial rule (Strijp 1998: 86).

to underline the need for a mosque in the city. In Utrecht the Dutch Muslim convert and spokesman, Abdullawid van Bommel, asked rhetorically in a pamphlet issued in 1973:

> Whether it would not be a sign of high spirit if in the Netherlands the relevant bodies, as host to the guest workers (*als gastheer van de gastarbeiders*), would more seriously take up the issue of religious guidance, exemplified in a material compensation, which would allow this specific group of the population, that generally speaking is performing the most heavy and dirty work, to spiritually reach a better way of life.[252]

In Almelo, a middle-size town in the eastern part of the Netherlands, Turkish workers had come up with the idea of building a new mosque. A special Mosque Founding Committee was established in 1972 which brought together Turkish and Dutch workers, employers, a Turkish teacher, the secretary of the Regional Convent of Churches, the wife of the mayor and some other individuals (Hampsink 1992: 31). The committee managed to raise the necessary funds through contribution of Turkish guest workers, private donations and a gift of the employers. There was also a successful application made for a state-subsidy on the basis of the Church Building Subsidy Act of 1962, just before the latter was suspended. The mosque in Almelo would become the only Islamic house of worship to benefit from the Church Building Subsidy Act. The new mosque, a white building with a dome and a small minaret, was designed by a building expert of Nijverdal-Ten Cate on the basis of postcards and an encyclopaedia. The personnel manager spoke of the establishment of an Islamic house of worship in terms of what "we Dutch do when we settle somewhere in a foreign country: 'building a church'" (Slettenhaar 1977: 321.).

Picture 6.1
Mosque at Almelo 1975.
Picture shows the mosque after renovation in 1989

The statements and images surrounding the construction of the mosque in Almelo were illustrative of a growing uncertainty about the meaning of the presence of Islamic institutions. The

252. ["Zou het niet op grootheid van geest wijzen als in Nederland de desbetreffende instanties, als gastheer van de gastarbeiders, de religieuze begeleiding, uitgedrukt in een materiële tegemoetkoming, serieus ter hand namen, waardoor deze bijzondere bevolkingsgroep, die over het algemeen toch het zwaarste en vuilste werk opknapt, geestelijk in een beter klimaat zou komen"] (cited in Theunis 1979: 394).

personnel manager spoke of the mosque as "a symbol of settlement", but the Turkish guest workers were still living in a separate and impermanent resort outside the city. Employers had contributed financially hoping that the construction of a house of worship might help prevent further strikes among the guest workers. The Dutch caretakers spoke of their involvement in the construction of the mosque in light of "Christian charity", "compassion" (*medelijden*) and the will to "help the weak". The Dutch Minister of Social Affairs, the orthodox protestant Jaap Boersma, who had in 1974 suggested encouraging guest workers to leave the Netherlands by giving them a "premium on return" (*vertrekpremie*), in January 1975 proudly performed the ceremonial opening of the new and permanent mosque in Almelo. The municipal government was even more outspoken in its desire to show that the mosque should be seen as an important step in welcoming the Turkish immigrants in the city. According to the board of Mayor and aldermen this mosque "belonged in the city centre" and it should be visible, not concealed (Slettenhaar 1977: 321). Another important issue for municipal governments to deal with was to decide whether or not they should make a financial contribution to the creation of Islamic prayer houses. Whereas some municipalities, such as those of Rotterdam, Amsterdam or Tiel incidentally subsidised some of the construction costs of Islamic houses of prayer in the 1970s, others, such as the municipality of Utrecht, refused to do so.[253] These differences among local governments were an extra incentive for the Dutch government to develop a regulation for subsidies for facilities for religious practice.

6.3.2. National policy responses and subsidies for the creation of Islamic prayer spaces

In August 1975, a study on the need for spaces for worship among Muslims in the Netherlands, that had been commissioned in 1974, was published. The report demonstrated that there was a great need for religious spaces among immigrants. The researchers advised that subsidies be made available for local Muslim associations that wanted to establish small houses of worship and that local authorities should stimulate the creation of prayer rooms in hostels. The national government would then focus on the establishment of a "large" mosque in each of the four main cities. The size of the mosque of Almelo – that provided for 200 worshippers – could be taken as a guideline.[254] The researchers suggested consideration of prayer rooms as comparable to other kinds of facilities and provisions for foreign workers, such as the "meeting centres" (*ontmoetingscentra*). In this light they suggested the development of a subsidy scheme similar to the existing regulations for subventions for these meeting centres. This came down to the government financing the total costs of the construction or renovation. The researchers put forward several arguments, including:

1) The forced nature of their migration refers to the moral responsibility of the state to create adequate facilities, in this case religious ones.

253. Landman 1992: 39-55; Strijp 1998; Rath et al. 2001; and Maussen 2006.

254. See *Behoeftenonderzoek Moslims* (Samuels and Gransbergen 1975: 2).

2) For the Muslim Islam occupies an essential place in his life. In the framework of environment-construction (*milieu-opbouw*) this part of his cultural identity should be respected.[255]

They also pointed out that the Muslim were a relatively large group among the immigrant workers and that they were economically weak.

In reaction to the report the government decided to develop a regulation that refused to carry the full weight of the building costs of mosques. Instead the subsidy regulation of the Church Building Subsidy Act was taken as a model, which meant that public subsidies could cover up to 30% of the foundation costs of houses of worship. A regulation was enacted for a period of 5 years (1976-1981), the General Regulation for the Subvention of Prayer Houses (*Globale Regeling inzake Subsidiëring Gebedsruimten*).[256] The subventions were only made available for "Mediterranean Muslims", being the Muslims among the labour immigrants from Turkey, Morocco and Tunisia. The subsidies were used to cover a part of the costs of the creation of Islamic prayer houses in 25 municipalities.[257] The subsidy scheme was prolonged for two years in 1981 and finally expired in 1983.

In the literature on Islam in the Netherlands it has been repeatedly observed that the effective financial contribution of the Dutch state spent on the creation of Islamic prayer houses was modest, but it remains interesting to see the specific argumentations that were invoked to justify a subsidy scheme for the creation of mosques. An analysis of these argumentations reveals a mixture of different understandings of the meaning of mosque creation and of reasons for the government to be involved.

First, the creation of prayer spaces was put on a par with other efforts to provide for the needs of guest workers, for example by providing language courses, medical care or leisure time activities. This particular kind of governmental responsibility could be justified for those Muslims who had been recruited as guest workers, hence the introduction of the new category "Mediterranean Muslims".[258] Second, the founding of mosques could also be seen as illustrative of the emergence of a new religious community in the Netherlands. The decision to take the subsidy regulation of the Church Building Subsidy Act as a guideline for the new subsidy scheme

255. ["1. Het gedwongen karakter van hun migratie verwijst naar de morele verantwoordelijkheid van de overheid om adequate voorzieningen, in dit geval religieuze, te creëren. 2. De Islam neemt voor de Moslim een essentiële plaats in zijn leven in. In het kader van de milieuopbouw dient recht te worden gedaan aan dit gedeelte van zijn culturele identiteit."] (Samuel and Gransbergen 1975: 27).

256. See Hampsink 1992; Landman 1992; Shadid and van Koningsveld 1993; and Rath et al. 2001 for a discussion on various aspects of the regulation.

257. Landman 1992: 280.

258. As a result the relatively large group of Surinamese Muslims was not entitled to receive subsidies for the creation or refurbishment of mosques. Around the time of the independence of Surinam in 1975 the number of Surinamese immigrants to the Netherlands had increased dramatically. In 1974 and 1975 alone, more than fifty thousand Surinamese arrived in the Netherlands. Whereas in this period the government accepted some form of public responsibility to provide for the religious needs of the Moluccans (see chapter 4) and for the Mediterranean guest workers, it did not do so for the Surinamese, nor for other ethnic groups. Rath et al. (2001: 46) provide another, or additional, explanation for the exclusion of Surinamese Muslims. According to an official working at the Ministry of CRM there was a disagreement on the appropriateness of a subsidy regulation between the Section for the Welfare of Foreign Workers and the Section for the Welfare of Moluccans, Surinamese and Caravan Dwellers, both part of the Ministry of CRM. This official also declared that the regulation had been necessary to win the Muslims over for the integration policy.

for Islamic prayer houses gave further support to the idea that the government understood that it was not merely subsidising another facility for guest workers but was also making available financial support for the housing of a new religion.[259] The view of mosques as symbols of a "new religion" could also function as an anchor point for protests. In 1974, for example, during the parliamentary discussions on the proposal to finance the creation of Islamic prayer halls, Bart Verbrugh, a representative of one of the smaller Christian fundamentalist parties (*Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond*, GPV), had raised objections. He argued that the state should refrain from "organising spiritual life" and he also did not want the Dutch state making a financial contribution to the "Moorish building style – a mosque or a minaret- starting to influence the Dutch city or village scene" (cited in Landman 1992: 278, my translation, M.M.). Third, the founding of mosques could be seen as illustrative of the formation of immigrant communities seeking to set up an ethnic community infrastructure. The founding of prayer houses thus showed the ability and willingness on the part of immigrants to take their future in their own hands. From this perspective financial support by Dutch authorities could also be defended, not as a result of care for guest workers or as a result of support for religion, but as an aspect of policies to encourage the emancipation and integration of immigrants. Public financial support for the creation of Islamic houses of worship could then be understood as a part of efforts to stimulate "integration with retention of identity".

6.4. The presence of Islam and local society: mosques in Rotterdam in the 1970s

The introduction of a national Regulation for the Subvention of Prayer Houses did not end the need for municipal authorities to define their own attitude towards the creation of prayer houses. The funds that were made available by the government were far from sufficient to cover even a fraction of the actual costs of improving existing prayer spaces. Some municipalities decided to add additional funds from the municipal budget. In 1975, the public authorities of Rotterdam investigated the possibilities of creating two larger mosques in the city, one catering for 800-1000 worshippers in the centre and one for 400-600 worshippers on the south side of the city. At the end of 1976 the municipal authorities even promised to examine whether the government of Saudi Arabia might be willing to make a financial contribution to buy an old church building and convert it into a mosque (Buijs 1998: 12-13).[260] In 1977, a municipal subsidy of 36,000 guilders was made available for the establishment of a Turkish mosque, which was justified as illustrative of the municipal "duty of care" (*zorgplicht*) for the new Muslim residents (Buijs 1998: 19).

259. It would have been very difficult to defend a new regulation to subsidize the founding of prayer houses if such a regulation had been *primarily* understood as a way of the Dutch state financing religion. Following the modification of the constitution in 1972, article 185 that formed the constitutional basis for direct state support to religion, had been abolished. The Church Building Subsidy Act had been suspended in 1975. Therefore it was important to emphasise that these new regulations were primarily meant as a way of helping to address the urgent cultural, spiritual and religious needs of immigrant workers.

260. See "Saoedi-Arabië geeft 7 ton voor moskee in Rotterdam" in *Het Vrije Volk* January 19 1978.

The fact that more Islamic houses of worship were being created was seen by Muslim immigrants and native Dutch residents alike as an important sign of the settlement of immigrants in the Rotterdam neighbourhoods, but they had diametrically opposed feelings about this trend. The residents associations protested against the growing influence of "the foreigners" in the neighbourhood, exemplified by the growing number of hostels, ethnic shops, Islamic butchers, Turkish teahouses and mosques. The native residents accused municipal authorities of stimulating the creation of mosques by giving subsidies for their establishment. In a response to these publicly voiced protests the alderman of Urban Renewal, Van der Ploeg (Social Democrat Party, PvdA), acknowledged that there should be a "balance in the neighbourhood", but he also insisted that "these people who are not from Rotterdam" (literally *non-Rotterdammers*, M.M.) should not be "discriminated against" when they wanted to practice their religion (Buijs 1998: 19). The alderman explained that the municipal subsidy had been given to support "the social and cultural integration of the Turkish Rotterdammers".[261]

In 1978 the municipality issued a memorandum entitled *Migrants in Rotterdam*. Herein the city was represented as an "ensemble of citizens" consisting of "old and new Rotterdammers" who had "rights and duties" (1978: 5 and 81). Municipal authorities wanted to deal with immigrant integration in a "pragmatic and realist" way. Muslims in Rotterdam were spoken of as a "large group" for whom "the whole existence is imbued (*doordrenkt*) with religion". Islam was represented as "a conservative religion" and reference was made to the subordinate position of Turkish and Moroccan women and to organisations such as the Grey Wolves and the *Amicales* which tried to control the immigrant population by "infiltrating mosque associations".[262]

The memorandum *Migrants in Rotterdam* was an important turning point in the development of policies towards immigrants in Rotterdam. It put the emphasis on the need to encourage participation and integration of newcomers and explicitly broke with policy frames typical for a guest workers regime. Thus, various aspects of the presence of immigrants – and of Muslim immigrants in particular – came to be seen in a different light. One such aspect was the significance of transnational ties and organisations linking immigrants in Rotterdam to their societies of origin. In public and policy discourse the slightly paternalist and exoticised view of Islam as a part of the culture of immigrant workers, gave way to the image of a conservative and sexist religion that risked slowing down immigrant integration and prevent the emancipation of women. Also the responsibility of municipal authorities in facilitating Islamic practice and possibly in helping Muslims to create prayer houses was being redefined. The issue was now presented as one involving the relations between state and religion. The municipality announced that it intended to approach the newly emerging mosque associations "with goodwill but not naïvely". In general terms it was acknowledged that it was necessary that Muslims should have space for worship in Rotterdam and the municipality was willing to see it "as one of its responsibilities" to offer support. But to avoid misunderstandings and false hopes, immigrants and

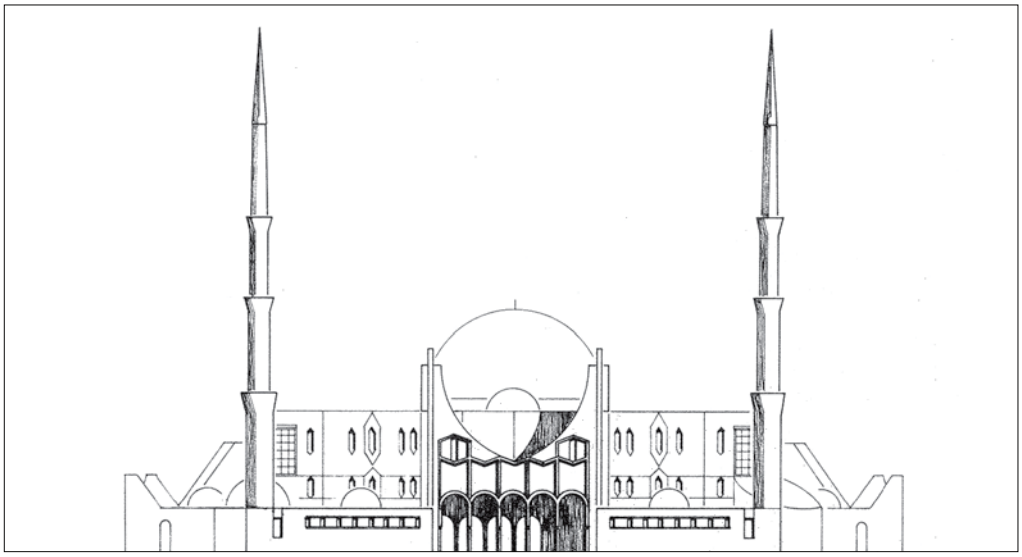
261. "Gemeente steunt aankoop moskee" in *Trouw*, September 30 1977.

262. The Moroccan consulate had set up and helped run regional and local *Amicales* organisations in the Netherlands since 1974, followed by a national *Fédération des Amicales des Marocains*, beginning in 1975. The *Amicales* tried to gain influence among the migrant population by occupying positions in mosques and in the Federations for Foreign Workers (Theunis 1979: 449-459). Dutch social workers, employees of the Foundations for Foreign Workers, journalists and politicians often associated the activities of the *Amicales* and the Turkish Grey Wolves with espionage, violence and intimidation.

potential future citizens should understand that "the state bears no responsibility for the Church, also no financial responsibility" (1978: 71).

6.4.1. A central Rotterdam mosque?

In 1978, the same year in which the municipal government issued the memorandum *Migrants in Rotterdam*, a few leading men in the Muslim community in Rotterdam, Ibrahim Spalburg, Sait Sahan and Fawzi Farouk, created a *Foundation Islamic Centre Rotterdam*.[263] The foundation aimed to integrate the Muslims community "with the Dutch society without losing the Islamic faith".[264] At the request of this foundation the Dutch Muslim architect Latief Perotti, made a design for a mosque. The design showed a building of 77 meters long, with a ground surface of nearly 4,500 square meters, with two minarets of 33 meters and a dome of 15 meters.[265]



Picture 6.2 Project Mosque Rotterdam 1979

Inside the building there would be a Koran school for children, a space for the ritual ablution, a separate praying room for women, a fountain, a mortuary and also separate rooms where different

263. The English name "Foundation Islamic Centre Rotterdam" is used in a brochure entitled "Moskee Rotterdam" (1979). The official name of the foundation was "Stichting Internationaal Comité Islamitisch Centrum Rotterdam" (See Landman 1992: 49). This account is also based on newspaper articles, notably "Moskee wordt nieuwe toeristisch attractie" in *Rotterdams Nieuwsblad* July 28 1979 and *NRC-Handelsblad* July 6 1979. Also Buijs 1998. All citations are taken from the brochure.

264. See the brochure "Moskee Rotterdam" written in English and in Dutch.

265. Perrotti had designed the plans for the Moluccan mosque in Ridderkerk a year earlier. For a discussion see Roose 2006.

national groups (Turks, Surinamese, Moroccans) could have sermons in their mother tongue. The mosque could cater to some 3000 worshippers and it was to be built in the centre of Rotterdam. The proximity of a subway station would allow Muslims from all parts of the city to reach it. The central mosque would cater to the religious needs of Muslims, it would help migrants to "maintain their own identity" and it could also function as a "meeting place" (*ontmoetingspunt*).[266] The Rotterdam Mosque would also be "a clear manifestation of the presence of tens of thousands of Muslims in this city" and it could function as a centre where information about Islam could be given to non-Muslims. According to the founding fathers there was a need to do something about the climate of distrust and prejudice regarding Islam and Muslims in the Netherlands. The headline of a newspaper article said: "Mosque will become new tourist attraction".[267] The initiators claimed that the government of Saudi Arabia was willing to contribute 300,000 dollars to construct a mosque in Rotterdam. The municipal authorities initially responded more or less positively to the idea of building this central mosque. Even a land reservation was made.

However, problems would quickly arise. There was internal strife in the foundation and it appeared that the large financial gift from Saudi Arabia was perhaps not forthcoming. It also turned out that the municipality did not intend to donate the land for free, as the originators had somewhat idealistically presumed (Buijs 1998: 30). Even though this project for a Central Rotterdam Mosque would never materialise, it is interesting because of the ways ideas about the incorporation of Islam were being linked together. Some of these ideas already figured on the local public agenda in the late 1970s, such as the need for better prayer facilities. Other ideas, however, would only reappear in the debate many years later; for example, the possibility of thinking of the building of a mosque that could function as a clear manifestation of the presence of Muslims in Rotterdam. That idea only re-emerged in the 1990s. Something similar can be said about the idea of creating an institution that could also provide information about Islam and that could thereby help to diminish distrust and prejudice. The idea that larger mosques would provide opportunities for women in terms of social contacts and spaces for recreation would also return in the debates in the late 1980s and 1990s.

The idea to build a Rotterdam City Mosque did not stand alone in the 1970s. In Amsterdam a project was developed in the early 1970s to build a mosque for 4000 worshippers. The Amsterdam municipality already made a land reservation for the mosque to be built upon, but the initiative stagnated in 1975 because of financial problems. In 1978 the chairman of the Islamic Centre Gelderland presented a project for a new mosque following the design of the Indian Taj Mahal. This mosque, which was to be established in Arnhem, would be built in an oriental style, with six minarets and a surface of 4000 square meters. It would be combined with a swimming pool, a sports centre, a library, an amusement park for children and a ritual slaughter house.[268] As Landman (1992: 49) rightly observes, these projects were often "castles in the air". Often these projects were developed by ambitious individuals without it being clear whether there was actually any demand among ordinary Muslims for this type of mosque. The assumption that mosque projects could be financed with readily available and unlimited funds from countries in the Middle East turned out to be somewhat naïve. Moreover, the chances of

266. Ibrahim Spalburg cited in "Moskee wordt nieuwe toeristische attractie" in *Rotterdams Nieuwsblad* July 28 1979.

267. "Moskee wordt nieuwe toeristisch attractie" in *Rotterdams Nieuwsblad* July 28 1979.

268. Landman 1992: 213-124 and Theunis 1979: 390-392.

Dutch public authorities welcoming these kind of gifts from countries such as Saudi Arabia and Libya were decreasing.[269]

Crucial, however, was the overt scepticism towards plans for City Mosques among the leaders of the different ethnic mosques which already existed. In Rotterdam a municipal official had already investigated in 1978 whether there was any support among Muslims for the plans to build two large mosques in the city. He concluded that the different denominational and ethnic groups preferred to create their own house of prayer in the neighbourhoods. Differences, in particular between Turkish and Moroccan Muslims and between different groups among Turkish Muslims, were a major obstacle to the founding of a large mosque to cater to different groups of Muslims.[270] In their approach towards the Muslim population Dutch authorities also sought to take notice of differences between ethnic groups and attune their policies accordingly.

6.5. Conclusion

In the Netherlands guest worker recruitment schemes only came to be fully developed beginning in the early 1960s. Initially the government assumed that it only carried a responsibility for legal and administrative tasks. When public services and institutions became more involved in the reception of guest workers this was often under the umbrella of social work and welfare policies. Since the late 1960s, in the domain of culture and religion, there was a convergence around the idea that policy responses should allow for the "maintenance of cultural identity". Such a "dual policy" could both contribute to prepare immigrants for a return home and it could be of help for those who eventually would decide to stay.

The religious needs of Muslim guest workers became an issue on the national policy agenda in the mid 1970s. The government decided in favour of a subsidy scheme for Islamic prayer houses in 1976. The introduction of this new regulation would be seen as a way of the government helping to improve the conditions for religious practices of immigrants who had been recruited as guest workers. Nevertheless, the argumentations around this regulation showed a variety of understandings of mosques: seen as facilities for guest workers, as symbols of a new religion and as aspects of immigrants trying to create institutions to integrate with retention of cultural identity. In the 1970s, defining the significance of mosque creation was not only of concern to policy makers, it was also a process occurring in the neighbourhoods of Dutch cities. Immigrants and their families found themselves in the midst of a Dutch population. Prayer spaces that were created in the older neighbourhoods soon came to be seen as illustrative

269. See Landman 1992; and Maussen 2006: 239.

270. One of the problems of establishing a single large mosque in Dutch cities was that Turkish and Moroccan Muslims preferred to have their own places of worship. Sometimes the Turks and Moroccans would take turns for prayer or divide the prayer room by a partition. Because of differences in language, Islamic (legal) traditions and ethnicity, Muslims preferred to establish separate mosques as soon as this became feasible. See Landman 1992: 44-47; Strijp 1998: 90-91; and Samuels and Gransbergen 1975: 30. For Rotterdam see the article of reverend Reedijk (1977) "One mosque for Rotterdam or just the reverse?" [Één moskee voor Rotterdam of juist niet?] in *Kosmos en Oecumene* 11(10): pp.317-320.

of a process of settlement. Municipal authorities were now obliged to develop policy responses which would simultaneously address the lack of adequate prayer spaces and growing tensions between native Dutch residents and the immigrants. In addition, in the late 1970s Islam gradually became one of the more controversial issues in discussions on immigrant integration. In the new context the Rotterdam municipality was reluctant to become all too directly involved in improving the housing situation of Islam and declared that immigrants should understand that in the Netherlands the state bore no responsibility for religion.