MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN CONTEMPORARY NETHERLANDS

Jan Jaap de Ruiter[1]
[1]Tilburg University, Tilburg, the Netherlands
jj.deruiter@tilburguniveristy.edu

ABSTRACT

This contribution aims to give an overview of the position of Muslim communities in the Netherlands. The approach is driven by the question of the processes of acculturation of the mentioned communities in the Netherlands, the concept of acculturation as understood by Sam & Berry (2010). The article is composed as follows. Section 1 draws the theoretical context of this article and formulates a main research question. Section 2 presents some statistical data on the Muslim communities in the country; section 3 presents a sketch of the communities under concern, treating divers aspects; section 4 presents a selection of studies on acculturation processes of Muslims in the Netherlands. Section 5 then wraps up the findings and observations and concludes with the presentation of an answer to the key question of this article, and a discussion.

Keywords: acculturation, populist parties, Muslims in the Netherlands

ACCULTURATION

When people of different cultures meet, all kind of processes develop. What basically happens is what can be captured under the term 'acculturation', which' most widely used definition is as follows: 'Those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups … under this definition acculturation is to be distinguished from … assimilation, which is at times a phase of acculturation' (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, as cited in Sam & Berry, 2010, p. 473). Now there can be said a lot on acculturation as it covers a large number of social, psychological, economic, political aspects, and more of them and therefore it is worthwhile to discuss the issue at stake more in detail, taking though into consideration the scope of this article that aims at giving an overview of the position of Muslims in the Netherlands. Sam & Berry (2010, p. 473) state, in the first place, that 'not every group enters into, participates in, or changes in the same way during their acculturation'. Still, they state as well that either as group or individually 'no cultural group remains unchanged following culture contact: acculturation is a two-way interaction, resulting in actions and reactions to the contact situation' (p. 473). With this quote it becomes evident as well that not only the 'incoming' group

changes, but that the receiving society changes as well. It is dynamical processes we are dealing with here. Another aspect in this context is 'cultural stress': 'when serious challenges are experienced and appraised to be problematic because one is not able to deal with them easily by simply adjusting to them by changing one's behavior, then acculturation stress results' (p. 474). It is not taken for granted that getting used to a new culture goes without effort and stress; and this applies both to the incoming group as well as the outgoing group. One has to get used to each other and some individuals are quite successful in this while other are not. Here, personality factors or socio-economic status may play major roles. Another factor that possibly contributes to the successful adaptation is mastery of the language(s) of the receiving society. 'Language skills are relevant both for the performance of daily tasks in the new cultural society and in establishing interpersonal relationships in the society' is what Sam & Berry (2010, p. 475) state, based among others on the work of Masgoret & Ward (2006). Still, mastering languages does not automatically lead to feeling completely accepted in the new society as cultural differences may continue to form obstacles between the outgroup and ingroup. It may be clear that there are numerous aspects that play a role in acculturation processes. Still, and in order to create some order in these processes, Sam & Berry (2010) formulate four acculturation strategies, based on their numerous studies (p. 476). There are four of them:

- '*Assimilation* is the strategy used when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek close interaction with other cultures (or in some cases adopt the cultural values, norms, and traditions of the new society);
- The *separation* strategy is defined by individuals who place a high value on holding onto their original culture and avoid interaction with members of the new society;
- The integration strategy is used by individuals with an interest in maintaining one's original culture while having daily interactions with other groups;
- The marginalization strategy is defined by little possibility or lack of interest in cultural maintenance (often for reasons of enforced loss) and little interest in having relations with others (often for reasons of exclusion or discrimination)'.

Then, Sam & Berry (2010, p. 476) add that 'the four strategies are neither static, nor are they end outcomes in themselves'. And it is in no way the case that in a given ingroup outgroup case only one strategy is applied. Depending on all kind of factors, of which some are mentioned above, with groups and societies different acculturation strategies can be observed.

Based on the ideas and thoughts of Sam & Berry (2010) this article aims to describe the position of Muslims in the Netherlands. In doing so it seeks to answer the question what kind of strategy or strategies the Muslim community in the Netherlands applies in its processes of acculturation. It will not be an easy task to formulate answers to the question at stake as the community is very much divers and composed of different generations. Still, in order to make things manageable, the article focus on

different aspects related to the acculturation processes of the community under concern. It focuses among others on the socio-economic aspects, the religious aspects, and the political aspects. There are other factors to be discussed as well but due to a lack of space choices had to be made and the once chosen can be considered as crucial in any description. Before doing so the article presents some demographic data on Muslims in the Netherlands in the next section.

Demographic Background

In formal statistics of the Netherlands people are not registered based on their religion. The Central Bureau of Statistics registers people living in the Netherlands, based on country of birth. Based on that criterium the CBS states the following on its website:

> 'Of the 17.6 million people residing in the Netherlands on 1 January 2022, 2.6 million were born abroad. They came to the Netherlands as migrants. The remaining 15.0 million residents were born in the Netherlands. They include 2.0 million who belong to the second generation: born in the Netherlands, but with one or both parents born abroad. Just over half (1.1 million) have one foreign-born and one Netherlands-born parent, while just under half (910 thousand) have two foreign-born parents'.

When it comes to the countries of origin the CBS remarks the following:

> 'Among the traditional countries of migration, the group born in Turkey is the largest (205 thousand), followed by inhabitants born in Suriname (178 thousand) and Morocco (173 thousand). The Netherlands is also home to a relatively large group of migrants born in Other - Asia (497 thousand)'.

These statistics are in that sense distorted as that those children of these people who are born in the Netherlands are not labeled as Turks and Moroccans and the like. Would the second and third generations be counted as well, the figures rise more than double. Would they be counted then the number is 431,000 and for Moroccans it is around 420,000. These two communities form the larger part of the Muslim community in the Netherlands. The Netherlands counted in October 2023 17,938,053 people and of them 6% regarded themselves as Muslims, which makes up to 1,076,283 people. As said, most of the Muslims in the Netherlands have a Turkish or Moroccan background. Still, there are also smaller communities of Muslims stemming from the time of the Dutch colonies in Indonesia, in particular the Moluccan community (some thousands) among them and Surinamese people, around 70.000. Mostly due to political crises in the world, refugees with a Muslim background made their way as well to the Netherlands. It concerns Afghans (53,000); Iraqis (68,000); Syrians (150,000); Somalis (4,000) and other smaller groups. Finally, there are around 35,000 Dutch converts.

The larger Turkish and Moroccan communities are the result of labor migration that took place in the sixties until the eighties of the last century. Young men were recruited in Turkey and Morocco or they came through chain migration to the Netherlands to work there. The original intention of these workers and of the Dutch authorities was that they would return to their countries of origin but that hardly took place. Family reunion took place, new children were born in the new country and today we witness the coming of a third and fourth generation. The refugees are from later dates, in particular from the first decennia of the new century. In 1983 the Dutch government, confronted with the permanent character of the Turkish and Moroccan workers implied a new 'integration policy' with the Minorities Act stipulating that the government strived after the integration of these new citizens while maintaining their own original identities (Obdeijn & de Ruiter, 1998). This policy was applied until the beginning of the nineties when voices were raised against the said policy and pleading for assimilation policies: the newcomers had to become Dutch and accept Dutch values, although there was of course an intensive debate as well on what Dutch values were (and it still goes on). At the same time it occurred that the newcomers, Turks and Moroccans, became more and more aware of their Muslim identity and that led them presenting themselves more as such instead of as Turks and Moroccans. In that context a debate on Islam developed, meaning that questions were asked if Muslims were able to really integrate in society given their religious background, a question that was asked by both sides: the 'old' one and the 'new' one. A basic question was if Islam is compatible with Western values and norms. In fact, this debate has not ended yet and is still going on (Geling & De Ruiter, 2019). The position of what was to be called more and more the Muslim community came further under pressure by the 9/11 attacks and the later establishment of Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, the terror attacks the organization committed in Europe and young Muslims, also from the Netherlands, joining Islamic State (Fadil, de Koning & Ragazzi, 2019). There is no space to discuss all the aspects of the Dutch policies vis-à-vis the Muslim community as a whole but in treating relevant aspects of the acculturation of Muslims in the Netherlands, the context of the political debate will be taken into consideration and hopefully that will lead to a comprehensive image of the position of the community under concern.

MUSLIMS IN THE NETHERLANDS: AN OVERVIEW

Diversity within the Muslim Community

In the first place, it is important to discuss here the term 'Muslim community'. It was signaled above that the community consists of people with different ethnic backgrounds and generations and histories. Another aspect is the sunni-shiite background. Around 100,000 Muslims in the Netherlands label themselves as Shiites, most of them from Iraq, Iran and to a smaller extent from Turkey (Schlatmann, 2016). The ethnic background results as well in the fact that mosques in the Netherlands are in most cases frequented by Muslims from the same ethnic background, thus there are

Turkish, Moroccan and Surinamese mosques. Mixing hardly takes place and there is also a practical reason for that and that is that in particular the Turks and Moroccans stick to their own languages in the mosques and therefore a visit of Moroccan Muslim to a Turkish mosque would not make sense as he or she would not understand what is said. That does not mean that preaches are not held in Dutch, but that is not yet mainstream at all.

Religious Devotion

Not all Muslims in the Netherlands have the same level of religious practice, although studies of the SCP (Social Cultural Plan Office) show that in general they stick more to their religious duties than Dutch people do. The SCP (Social Cultural Plan Office) of Huijnk (2018) reported on the Ramadan fasting the following (p. 7):

'The vast majority of Moroccan Muslims (87%) fast every day during Ramadan, and only a small proportion (4%) indicate that they do not fast at all. Among Turkish Muslims, slightly more than half (55%) spend every day fasting during Ramadan. A quarter of them probably does not fast at all. The Turkish second generation fasts less often every day than the first generation, but there is no difference the part that does not participate at all. It is striking that in both the Turkish as Moroccan young Muslims (15-24 years), the proportion that does not participate at all is relatively is small (16% and 1% respectively). Fasting during Ramadan is, as mentioned, not alone a religious, but also a social aspect. Young people probably often do this together with their parental family.'

For mosque attendance the report drew the following image (p. 7):

'Among Turkish Muslims, mosque attendance has increased in both generations over the past ten years. There is no clear development among Moroccan Muslims. The part that goes to the mosque least weekly in 2015 among Turkish and Moroccan Muslims approximately the same size (40% and 37% respectively). Among Moroccan Muslims, the first generation (42%) more often visits a mosque every week than the second generation (28%). Men go to the mosque more often every week than women'.

Mosques in the Netherlands

Statistics show that there are at present 470 mosques in the Netherlands. The website of moskeewijzer.nl gives a clear overview of all mosques in the country. It indicates among other things which association or organization has established the mosque, the capacity of the mosque, and the language of the Friday sermon. The need to have prayer rooms was already present in the eighties and nineties of the last century with the Turkish and Moroccan workers asking for such spaces or finding them in community centers, schools or even garages (Tamimi Arab, 2013; Oskar & Tamimi Arab, 2016). An important issue was of course finding the funds to buy buildings which could be converted to mosques, or have new mosques built. The Dutch government does not subsidize the building of religious places, so other means had to

be found. Two options were in general available; the first one collecting money among the believers and the second one was taking offers from well to do religious institutions, in particular ones from the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia. The second option became more and more the object of criticism and governmental attention as the 'Gulf funding' did not go without fundamentalist influences, i.e., the financers demanded local Muslim communities to adapt to the fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, in particular the Wahhabi or Salafist one. Due to the development with Islamic extremist and terrorist movements in the first two decades of the new century, and the accusation that Gulf states and Saudi Arabia would support these organizations and associations, the Dutch government decided to install a commission to research these thorny issues. In its final report the commission recommended that this external financial support should stop but it was confronted with the question how to develop a realistic policy to reach this goal. The report, therefore remained a paper tiger. Still, quite some local Muslim communities, warned by these development, opted out of themselves more and more for the self-finance of new mosques, like the Blue Mosque in Amsterdam. The Essalaam Mosque in Rotterdam, on the contrary, was realized with foreign money, leading at the time to quite some debate (Tamimi Arab, 2013).

Organizational Character of Muslims in the Netherlands

As indicated above, if the term 'Muslim community' is used referring to Muslims in the Netherlands, it is not correct to consider it as a homogeneous entity. Many mosques are ethnically characterized, i.e. there are mosques frequented by Turkish Muslims, others by Moroccan Muslims and again others by, for example, Pakistani Muslims. There is quite some diversity here and this leads to another point and that is the organizational structure of Muslims in the Netherlands. Muslim have established numerous associations. There are hundreds of them but one of the issues that has played a role since the larger presence of Muslims in the Netherlands is the question if they should be represented by one organizational body. Such a body would be a fitting conversation partner with the Dutch authorities on virtually all aspects that relate to the position of Muslims in the country and events related to them in the positive sense, how to insert Ramadan in Dutch daily life for example, and negative ones, how to react if another terrorist attack took place in the name of Islam. It never was to be. There have been different larger Islamic organizations in the country but never one that represents all Muslims. If this it to be regretted is a question but it sure would have made communication between Muslims and government easier. Today we see the Union of Moroccan Mosque Organizations (UMMON) in the Netherlands that represents around 500,000 Muslims, most of them Moroccans, and 369 mosques. The Contact Organ Muslims and State (Contact Orgaan Moslims en Overheid) was established in 2004 and represents 380 mosques; it represents more so the Turkish Muslims in the country. The Contact Organ is a formal speaking partner of the Dutch government but not all Muslim organizations and associations recognize the Contact

Organ. It is in this context to be regretted as well that the Dutch government abolished the so-called National Consultation on Minorities at the time (Landelijk Overleg Minderheden) which was the official consultation structure in which various recognized consultation bodies of minority groups, not only Muslims, in the Netherlands discussed a variety of issues with the government. In this way, the government not only spoke about minorities, but also with them. This consultative body had been active since 1997 but was dissolved quite abruptly in 2010. The reasons for its abolishment were very much political motivated and inspired by the wish for decentralization, although the report recommending its abolishment also speaks of 'new forms of cooperation and communication' but nothing happened afterwards. However it may be, we are faced today with quite an inorganic structure when it comes to communication between 'Muslims' and 'government'.

Radicalization of Muslims

The radicalization of young Muslims in particular did not leave the Netherlands untouched as well. Around 275 Dutch Muslims joined Islamic state and quite a few of them were inspired to do so while still in the Netherlands, influenced by salafi and jihadi preachers in the country. At the time there was a small number of mosque centers where salafi preachers were active and these attracted the attention of the Dutch intelligence agencies. In their yearly reports these agencies continuously warned for radicalization and possible terrorist attacks in the years when Islamic State was powerful in the Middle East and committing attacks in Europe, like the ones in Brussels in 2016. It is only since the beginning of the twenties that right wing groups are considered more dangerous than Islamic terrorist organizations, although the diverse services still warn for Islamic inspired terrorism. These utterly negative developments have led to more pressure on the Muslim community in the Netherlands, combined with a rise of right-wing populist parties of which some aim at creating a 'Islam less Netherlands, such as the Dutch Freedom Party of Geert wilders (de Ruiter, 2023, see below). Since 9/11 there has been considerable rise of Islam hate inspired incidents like setting fire to mosques and Muslim or Islam bashing on social media and sometimes as well in respected news shows and newspapers (van der Valk, 2015). Muslims feel more and more the urge to defend themselves. In a European union survey of 2017 it turned out that 'in the Netherlands, 30 percent of Muslims have experienced discrimination because of their religious beliefs in the past five years. In no other European country are there so many Muslims who feel discriminated against' (*Second European Minorities and Discrimination Survey. Muslims Selected Findings*, 2017).

The Educational Context and Islamic Schools

All of the data and statistics presented above have not led to a deterioration of the position of Muslim pupils in secondary and higher education. Recent data show

that their educational position equals more and more that of original Dutch pupils. Taking into consideration that in the nineties and the beginning of the century there still was a major gap between both groups, we can only state that great progress is made. Dutch law foresees in the option to establish schools on a religious or ideological basis. This law as materialized in article 23 of the Dutch constitution stipulates that the Dutch government is obliged to finance such schools, on all educational levels, as long as of course these schools comply to the general rules of good education. This law stems from the year 1917 and is the result of a decennia long struggle of in particular the Protestant and Catholic communities in the country in the nineteenth century to have the right to establish such schools that were to be financially supported by the government (Bax & de Ruiter, 2006). Until today around two thirds of all schools in elementary education have a religious, i.e. Catholic or Protestant background. There is a limited number of schools on a Jewish or anthropological basis. Muslims in the Netherlands, confronted with the fact that their children were to go to elementary schools with a confessional background or a public background were soon to discover that schools on an Islamic basis could be established as well, as long as the schools meet the educational criteria. There are 6,581 elementary schools in the Netherlands. In 2022, the share of public primary schools is 31.1%, followed by Roman Catholic schools (30.3%), Protestant Christian primary schools (29.6%) and by primary schools with a denomination in the 'other special' category (8.9%). At present there are 54 Islamic schools of elementary education receiving around 2,5 % of the total of pupils in the given age. The small number has to do with the fact that it is not that easy to establish such schools; there are many issues to attend to and the Muslim community showed itself here quite divided and quite some schools ended up in conflicts in the board or the personnel (source). Still, the last years a gradual improvement set in and schools are in general judged positively by the educational authorities in their yearly inspections. The efforts to establish secondary schools did not yield good results. Quite some schools had to close doors due to internal conflicts, or not being able to meet the standards required. The Islamic Cornelius Haga college was threatened to close its doors because the Ministry of Education suspected that this school was receptive for fundamentalist influence leading to isolation of the pupils. In general schools in the Netherlands are expected to educate children as citizens open to society. A related issue is that there is also a number of orthodox Protestant schools where pupils are raised as, as they say, 'people standing in the world but not being part of the world', i.e. sticking to their principles leading often to a separated life. These Protestant schools have been under attack because they were unwilling to hire homosexual teachers, because they deemed homosexuality a sin. But that goes against article 1 of the Constitution that stipulates that all people in the Kingdom must be treated equally in equal circumstances.

Dutch authorities have been confronted as well with the question what to do with mosque schooling. Quite some mosques, if not many of them, organize weekend

schools where children are taught Arabic and Quran reading and the rules of Islam. There is no control of what happens in these schools and as tensions in society rose in the walk of the new century with the 9/11 attacks, the rise of Islamic State, the terrorist attacks in Europe, and the rising influence of salafi and jihadi preachers leading young Muslims to join Islamic State, led to unrest within the government and the pressing need to know what is going on in such schools. The problem was though that these schools were of an informal nature and that they did not strive after governmental recognition. It was private matters. So, formally the government could not do much but to urge the school and mosque boards to preach a moderate Islam. But in doing so the government violated the principle that the state should not interfere in religious affairs. Still, quite some mosque boards were sensible to the urges and demands of the government and they opened -literally- doors so that one could establish that no fanatic Islam was preached although that did not always happen. The AlFitrah mosque in Utrecht had to close its doors in the end, formally due to a financial issue but informally -also- because of the fundamentalist teaching its classes offered to young Muslims. Non-interference of the state in religious affairs basically is a laudable principle but in practice this is impossible. State and church are operating on the same societal domains, like in education, and as such they are 'condemned' to work together, as the overview of the position of Muslims in the Netherlands, shows again and again.

Leading Muslims in Public Life

This diversity of the Muslim community is also present in the media, the political domain and the arts, where one finds an increasing representation of Muslims. In the media for example, Özcan Akyol is a well know presenter of all kinds of cultural TV programs, Akyol stemming from an Alevite Turkish family; he does not present himself as Muslim but he does not deny his Islamic roots. The mayors of the cities of Rotterdam and Arnhem, Mr. Ahmed Aboutaleb and Mr. Ahmed Marcouch (both member of the Labor Party) have Moroccan backgrounds, and novelist and public intellectual Abdelkader Benali is widely known for his novels and cultural TV shows. He does not present himself as Muslim per se but he cherishes his background in his presentation to the public. When it comes to the democratic representation people with a Muslim background, once they had acquired the Dutch nationality and were this eligible to vote, would in the eighties and nineties vote on leftist parties as they belonged to the lower socio-economic layers of society although some of them would also vote for Christian parties as they cherished their religious character. More recently an Islamic party entered the government, it concerns the party DENK, of which its two founding members split from the Labor Party due to a conflict. The party has at present (2023) three seats in the 150 seat Dutch Parliament and it raises its voice regularly to defend the rights and position of Muslims in the country. There is a slight Turkish dominance in the party. Quite some MP's have Muslim backgrounds, among

them the current leader of the Green-Left party, Jesse Klaver and Liberal Party leader Dylan Yesilgöz.

The Anti-Islam Discourse in the Netherlands

Like elsewhere in Europe the Netherlands has seen a rise in populist parties in the first decades of the new century. It was in 2004 Liberal Party MP Geert Wilders who split from his party and who established two years later, in 2006, his own, which he called Party for Freedom. Wilders took part in the elections for the first time in 2006, obtaining 5,9% of the votes, or nine seats in the 150-seat parliament. In the 2010, 2012, 2017 and 2021 elections he received between 10 and 15% of the votes. The biggest election win that the PVV achieved was in 2023 when 23,49 % of voters voted for the party. This made the PVV the largest party in the Netherlands with 37 seats. At the time of writing this article the party is negotiating with three other parties to form a new government based on a majority of seats in parliament.

The Party for Freedom is in particular characterized by a sharp anti-Islam rhetoric (De Ruiter, 2021a; 2012b). Or as party leader Wilders put it in the run-up to the 2023 parliamentary elections: 'Islam will never leave our DNA'. Over the years, the party has proposed all kinds of bills to reduce the influence of Islam and Muslims in the Netherlands as much as possible. For example, the party proposed to make the possession of a Koran a punishable offense. Visiting a mosque should also become as such. In addition, the PVV wanted to levy a tax on wearing a headscarf. In the explanation of the latest measure, Wilders did not speak of 'headscarves' but of 'head rags', extremely derogatory words. None of the legislative proposals ever made it into the Dutch parliament, but the tone set by the PVV is a success, as evidenced by the results of the last election. It was the first election since the Netherlands became a democracy in which the winner had to convince the people that he would not do or undertake anything that was against the Dutch constitution. A rule that is of course tacitly respected by all politicians. Naming the rule actually had the effect of making people more concerned about the constitutionality of the new government.

The party's continuous hate speech has its effect in the Netherlands, a country that increasingly seems to consist of groups of people who are each in their own 'bubble' and no longer communicate with each other. According to the philosopher Bas Heijne (2017), there are no longer any common values that bind all Dutch people and this is disruptive to the homogeneity of society. Remarkable was the statement Mr. Wilders made after the great win of his party, namely that nobody had reason to fear his party and that nobody was to be kicked out of the country, mentioning that if his party was to rule the country and he would become the new prime minister no 'Christian, Muslim or unbeliever' had reason to fear.

The development of the Party for Freedom as a populist party fits in with the growth of comparable parties in the countries around the Netherlands, especially

France and Germany. The French Rassemblement National of party leader Marine le Pen won no less than 41,45% of the votes in the second round of the French presidential elections in 2022. The German Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany) party obtained 83 seats in the 736 seats German Bundestag (11,2%) in the 2021 elections; in the German state Thüringen German intelligence services classified the party in that state as 'right-wing extreme', because it showed obvious neo-nazi sympathies, making it a danger to democracy. Italy's coalition government is led by Prime Minister Georgi Meloni, who is party leader of the right-wing populist party Brothers of Italy, obtaining 119 seats in the 400-seat Italian parliament (25,98%). Hungary has been firmly in the hands of the anti-democrat and populist Victor Orbán and his Fidesz party for many years. Fortunately, there are also positive developments. Since the end of 2023, Poland is governed again by a center-left coalition that relegated the previous right-wing populist PiS government to the opposition benches.

However, it is to be expected that the populist forces will not disappear anytime soon and that Europe will have to deal with their hatred towards Muslims and migrants in general for a long time to come. This does not mean that the whole of Europe will fall into populist hands and the European democracies will die, but it is clear that the coming years will be crucial for those same European democracies and the Muslim communities that have settled there for (more than) decades.

Studies on Acculturation Processes of Muslims in the Netherlands

There have been a multitude of studies on the acculturation of Muslims in Dutch society and it is of course not possible to treat them all. Still, this section will treat some of them, some dating from some time ago and others of a more recent date. Not all studies focus necessarily on Muslims, quite a few of them take 'Turks' and 'Moroccans' living in the Netherlands as focus. Most studies share the observation that practically most Muslims in the country have adapted well to Dutch society and that as well Dutch people have got used well to Muslims in the country. But there is a variety in acceptance of each other. Often Muslims, even of the third generation, still feel not completely accepted and even often there are Dutch people who continue regarding Muslims as 'foreigners' with deviating habits. It does not surprise of course that we find a broad variety of attitudes from both ingroup and outgroup people in the country: from fully acceptance and feeling accepted to fully distancing oneself and fully feeling marginalized. The diverse studies treated here show light on the different aspects of the processes of acculturation.

Fassaert et al. (2011) conducted research into the relationship between acculturation and psychological problems among first-generation Muslim migrants from Turkey and Morocco in the Netherlands. They did this in the context of political and social developments that would indicate an increasing marginalization of Muslim migrants. The research showed that 'successful contact and participation in Dutch

society and the preservation of heritage culture and identity are moderately associated with fewer psychological problems' (p. 143). Improving proficiency in the prevailing language in host countries and allowing migrants to maintain their traditions can be effective measures to improve their mental well-being.

Verkuyten et al. (2012) examined the relationship between religious group identification and ethnic and national identity among Moroccan-Dutch Muslim adolescents (11-18 years) and their parents (n = 369). Compared to their parents, adolescents showed high national identification and lower religious and ethnic group identification. However, for adolescents and their parents, there were similar positive relationships between Muslim and ethnic identification, and both identifications were negatively related to Dutch identification. Among early adolescents, parents' religious group identification was strongly related to their religious identification and ethnic and national identifications. One of the conclusions was that research among children from Muslim families should not only focus on ethnicity, but especially on religious identity.

Azghari et al. (2017) executed a large-scale research on young Moroccan-Dutch youngsters. They state that Moroccan Dutch are one of the largest and disadvantaged non-Western groups in the Netherlands. At the same time, they have changed significantly both socially and culturally within a generation. In their study it showed that many young Moroccan-Dutch people have become more Dutch, not because they speak Dutch well, but also in their way of thinking. Yet, on average, these young people still have a significantly lower socio-economic status compared to native Dutch people. The conclusion of their study is that the complex migration background and the disadvantaged socio-economic position of quite a few Moroccan-Dutch people still pose major obstacles to the integration because these have long been negatively influenced by the varying Moroccan and Dutch integration policies, the lack of social resources and the general negative Dutch climate towards 'migrants'. Yet it is also true that many individuals work hard to improve their socio-cultural position. Improving factors reinforcing their socio-cultural position strengthens their position and helps them to better acculturate. This in its turn, leads to increased social participation, and could serve as a good example for other ethnic minorities with similar acculturation problems in the near future.

Karina Velasco González et al. (2008) conducted research into the prejudices of Dutch young people (N=1,187) towards Muslims. One in two participants appeared to have negative feelings towards Muslims. It turned out that mainly stereotypes and symbolic forms of threats, but not realistic threats, predicted prejudice against Muslims. The negatively conceived concept of multiculturalism also directly related to prejudice against Muslims.

Berger (2023) published an essay on how the acculturation processes of Muslims in the Netherlands have developed since their massive presence in Dutch

society in the sixties and seventies of the last century. He considered 2004 as a key year. It was the year that the Dutch film maker Theo van Gogh was killed by a Muslim fundamentalist in plain daylight. The year was as it were a culmination of all kinds of themes that had surfaced the years before: the debate on headscarf, shaking hands, (Islamic) schools, insults, radicalization, integration, imam training, you name it – all those topics were discussed in one way or another that year. This had everything to do with what had preceded. Until the 1990s, integration was seen in terms of social and economic participation in society. Afterwards, integration was mainly seen in terms of identity with an emphasis on culture and values. And so you saw that there were Dutch Muslims who were perfectly integrated in a social and economic sense - perfectly Dutch, good job, neat and tidy - but who were considered to be insufficiently 'Dutch' because they propagated their Islamic identity. Berger showed himself very much concerned about the relationship between Islam and security. In an interview Berger said: 'We must 'de-secure' Islam because Islam has become the subject of security thinking. In fact, this is happening to such an extent that Islam has become a kind of national security risk of itself. We all know that that is not the case, but in the book I show that this security thinking has become deeply intertwined with our government policy'.

In 2019 I myself published together with Gert Jan Geling a book with as *title What will happen with the Islam debate?*, in which Dutch leading figures in the debate on Islam expressed themselves on the question if Islam was compatible with Dutch culture and if yes why and if not why not. Even though there were contributions in the book of Muslim a public intellectual like Youssef Azghari (see above) and Muslim convert Joram van Klaveren (former MP of the Party for Freedom of Geert Wilders) the book met with severe criticism from the Muslim side as they argued that there is not something like a 'Islam debate' and that the term in itself expresses a deprecatory meaning. Furthermore the book was criticized as no women contributed to it. The critics could of course not know that we as editors did our best to attract female writers to contribute but in vain. We are dealing here with a very thorny issue. We as editors as well wished that there was no 'islam debate' but we notice that such a debate takes place nearly every day in our society.

The studies quoted here are in no way exhaustive but all of them show aspects of the acculturation processes of the ingroup and outgroup in Dutch society. In the following section the findings of this article ae wrapped up and conclusions drawn.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

In the theoretical section above four strategies of acculturation were discussed, based on the work of Sam and Berry (2010). *Assimilation*, *separation, integration* and *marginalization.* Now, discussing the question what kinds of strategies are applied in the case of Muslims in the Netherlands we are first confronted with the fact that both

the Dutch indigenous population as well as the Muslims are characterized by a great diversity concerning socio economic position, religious devotion, ethnic background to name but few factors. The general image that pops up from above description is that in general Muslims have found their place in Dutch society in the sense that they settled there, live there, have jobs, have their children go to school, practice their religion at home and in mosques, speak the Dutch language in different measure but the younger generations in general very well and that one finds people with a Muslim background in all layers of society, including politics, media and arts. Also, the image is that the Dutch population is used to the presence of the Muslim community in all its diversity and knows how to deal with it.

Another general aspect is though, and that shows from nearly all studies done on acculturation of Muslims in the Netherlands, that Many Muslims, in particular the younger ones do not feel accepted; at best they feel tolerated and at the same time many Dutch people indeed accept the presence of Muslims in the country but not their habits and religious practices in particular. The practical acculturation seems to run much better than the psychological one. It is especially the diverse studies, quoted here, that evoke this image and there are many more studies that confirm these findings.

So we could argue that from the point of view of the strategies of acculturation, the integration one seems to apply on the practical daily life processes of Muslims in the Netherlands living together with Dutch people but that when it comes to the actual acceptance of each other strategies of separation are at stake. One accepts each other formally but informally there still is a lot of distrust from both sides.

If we take a look at the future we cannot escape the fact that the xenophobic and anti-Islam Party for Freedom of Mr. Geert Wilders will play a major role. His party won the general elections of November 2023 and it will most probably form coalition government the coming years. And although party leader Geert Wilders has sworn to be there for everyone it is to be doubted if that is credible taking into consideration that he has been stressing how dangerous he regards Islam and therefore Muslims as a threat for Dutch society and democracy. This is even reinforced by the general growth of populist parties in Europe, getting closer and closer to the centers of power.

It is therefore my expectation that the processes of separation will only grow in importance the coming years, the distrust between Muslims and Dutch people in general getting stronger and that even the 'practical daily life' integration strategies will come under growing stress. However, this does not mean that other processes of rapprochement between the various population groups do not continue as. The process of separation is not dominant. The coming years will provide a picture of the struggle between centrifugal forces that try to bring people together and between separating

forces that strive, in this case, to isolate the Muslim community from the rest of the population, with possibly dangerous consequences.

REFERENCES

Azghari, Y., Hooghiemstra, E., & van de Vijver, F. (2017). 'The historical and social-cultural context of acculturation of Moroccan-Dutch'. In: *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 8(1).

Bax, S. & J.J. de Ruiter (2006). 'Church and state in the Netherlands. The case of Islam'. In: H. Behr & M. Hildebrandt (eds.), *Politik und Religion in der Europäische Union. Zwischen nationalen Tradition und Europäissierung*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaft, 201-225.

Fadil, N., Koning, M.J.M. de & Ragazzi, F. (Ed.). (2019). *Radicalization in Belgium and the Netherlands: Critical Perspectives on Violence and Security.* London: Bloomsbury publishing.

Heijne, Bas (2017). *Staat van Nederland. Een pleidooi*. Prometheus.

Hujink, Willem (2018). *De religieuze beleving van moslims in Nederland. Diversiteit en* verandering *in beeld*. Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.

Fassaert, Thijs Matty A. S. De Wit, Wilco C. Tuinebreijer, Jeroen W. Knipscheer, Arnoud P. Verhoeff, Aartjan T. F. Beekman, Jack Dekker (2011). 'Acculturation and psychological distress among non-Western Muslim migrants--a population-based survey'. In: *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 57(2): 132-143.

Masgoret, A.-M., & Ward, C. (2006). The cultural learning approach to acculturation. In: D.L. Sam & J.W. Berry (Eds.), *Cambridge handbook of acculturation psychology* (pp. 58–77). Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Pooyan Tamimi Arab (2013). 'Mosques in the Netherlands: Transforming the Meaning of Marginal Spaces'. In: *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 33:4, 477-494, DOI: 10.1080/13602004.2013.866349 T.

Redfield, R., Linton, R., & Herskovits, M.J. (1936). Memorandum for the study of acculturation. In: *American Anthropologist*, 38, 149–152.

Ruiter, Jan Jaap de & Gert Jan Geling (2019). *Wordt het nog wat met het islamdebat?* Almere: Uitgeverij Parthenon.

Ruiter, Jan Jaap de (2012a). *De ideologie van de PVV. Het kwade goed en het goede kwaad*. Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers.

Ruiter, Jan Jaap de (2012b). *The speck in your brother's eye. Islam's perceived war against the* West. Amsterdam Rozenberg Publishers.

Ruiter, Jan Jaap de (2023). 'Muslim Communities in European Democracies Facing the Forces of Populism: The Case of the Netherlands'. In: Moha Ennaji (ed.): *Democracy, Culture and Social Change in North Africa*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 169-186.

Sam, David L. & John W. Berry (2010). 'Acculturation: When Individuals and Groups of Different Cultural Backgrounds Meet', in: *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 5(4), 472-481.

Second European Minorities and Discrimination Survey. Muslims Selected Findings, (2017). European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

Obdeijn, H. & J.J. de Ruiter (ed.) (1998). *Le Maroc au coeur de l'Europe. L`Enseignement de la langue et culture d'origine (ELCO) aux élèves marocains dans cinq pays européens*. Tilburg: Tilburg University Press, Syntax Datura.

Oskar Verkaaik & Pooyan Tamimi Arab (2016). 'Managing Mosques in the Netherlands Constitutional versus Culturalist Secularism', in: *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 5 (2016) 251-268.

Schlatmann, Ann-Marie (2016). *Shi'i Muslim youth in the Netherlands Negotiating Shi'i fatwas* and *rituals in the Dutch context*. PhD dissertation: Utrecht University.

Van der Valk, Ineke (2015). *Dutch Islamophobia*. LIT Verlag.

Velasco González, Karina Maykel Verkuyten, Jeroen Weesie, Edwin Poppe (2008). 'Prejudice towards Muslims in The Netherlands: testing integrated threat theory', in: *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 47(Pt 4):667-85.

Verkuyten, Maykel, Jochem Thijs & Gonneke Stevens (2012). 'Multiple Identities and Religious Transmission: A Study Among Moroccan-Dutch Muslim Adolescents and Their Parents', in: *Child Development*, 83, 5, 1577-1590.