

Religious Pluralism, Politics, and Participation in the Netherlands

A Country of Immigrants

Through the Union of Utrecht (1579) the Republic of the United Netherlands (comprising seven provinces) declared its independence from Spain because of the persecution of Protestants by the Spanish king and the high level of taxation (the southern territories remained under Spanish control). The Reformed Church developed into the public church. Other churches were tolerated and had more freedom than was usual in other countries during that period. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Netherlands offered safety for waves of refugees who tried to escape the Inquisition: Sephardic Jews from Portugal, Huguenots from France, and Protestants from the southern Low Countries. People like Descartes and Locke moved to the Netherlands so that they could develop their ideas in freedom. At the end of the seventeenth century, the Catholics were also allowed to build churches—although in the northern part of the country it was stipulated that these churches could not be visible from the street.

Freedom of religion was granted during the French occupation under Napoleon and, after the Restoration period, in the Constitution of 1848. The public affairs of the country were in the control of the nobility and merchants, most of whom belonged to the public church. This historical context partly explains the Netherlands' positive reputation with respect to tolerating (im)migrants. It also helps to explain an uneasiness about the more recent and unexpected rise of nationalism and intolerance towards “foreigners” across large swathes of Dutch society (cf. Ghorashi 2006; Engbersen 2003; Meurs et al. 2000).¹

The change from tolerance and a relatively non-problematic integration of some recent new minorities to suspicion and intolerance is caused, among other things, by naive immigration and integration policies in the past. After the Second World War, three groups entered the country before the numbers of (im)migrants expanded dramatically. The first were the families of soldiers from the Royal Netherlands Indies Army, who came to the Netherlands after Indonesia gained independence (1949). They were housed in “camps” until they could return to their own independent islands, the Moluccas, and estab-

¹ Ghorashi speaks about a “paradox” in diversity management.

lished the Independent Republic of the Moluccas in exile. When it became clear that nobody would or could help them found an independent republic in the tropics, in 1975—and again in 1977—some young Moluccans seized a train and killed some of the Dutch hostages. Assuming that the Moluccans would eventually return “home,” the government policy with respect to this group was one of non-integration and social isolation. Although they have been integrated into housing alongside Dutch citizens for decades, there is still some unrest among young Moluccans today (cf. Van Doorn, 1995; Bosma, 2009; Oostindie, 2009). The Moluccan Protestant Church is the centre of their subculture.

After the Netherlands was rebuilt following World War II, new (im)migrants arrived from Italy and Spain at the beginning of the economic boom in the 1950s. The Spanish and Italian (im)migrants worked in factories, but some of them also started restaurants and ice-cream parlours (the Italians). Chinese people from Indonesia came as well and started Chinese(-Indonesian) restaurants in the cities and later in almost every village; “Chinese” food became very popular. Although some tensions arose, these new (im)migrants were not seen as problematic. As such, their integration was successful. The same can be said more or less about the other immigrants from Indonesia and Westerners who live in the Netherlands, now numbering altogether about 1.5 million—although many English-speaking people cannot speak a word of Dutch.

The recent difficulties with accepting (im)migrants began with the guest workers from Morocco and Turkey, most of whom practise Islam. Factories and the Rotterdam harbour urgently needed people for hard labour. Human resource management staff went to remote districts in Turkey and (northwest) Morocco, offering the younger men good temporary jobs that could help them save enough money to start a local shop and extend their financial resources beyond one cow, one sheep, and one goat. The staff checked to make sure the young men were in good health and capable of hard shift work. In the 1960s these workers sometimes slept sixteen to a room with four bunk beds in shifts. They played football in the parks and started prayer houses in their free time. The oldest mosques of guest workers in Amsterdam and Utrecht were founded with the help of churches who thought it appropriate that these workers should be able to live in accordance with their religion in these circumstances. Since then, hundreds of thousands (the exact number is unknown and depends on various measurement instruments, as we will show later) of Muslims have arrived in the Netherlands. They worked, saved money, sent part of it home to their families, and dreamed of a shop or a better farm in the hills of northern Morocco, in the area northeast of Ankara or in Kurdish territory in Turkey.

Postmodern Thinking and Unemployment

The guest workers were given the opportunity to bring their wives and children to the Netherlands. They could not afford the best housing, and because many of them did not speak Dutch they tried to live as close to one another as possible. When parents were invited for parent-teacher interviews, their children were present for these talks. Often, only the mother would go and the oldest child would translate. The children were bilingual: they had to learn Dutch so they could learn to add and subtract and live in the Netherlands, but they also had to learn Turkish or Moroccan so they could get by in their home country when they returned to it. As a result of post-colonialism, cultural relativism and the introduction of human rights across Europe, autochthones felt that the cultures, customs, and languages of the newcomers should be respected. Honour killings and discrimination against women were neglected. The project of giving these guest workers and their families the right to be educated in their own language and culture failed with respect to the Moroccans because most Moroccan guest workers spoke various dialects of Berber languages. The advantage of that is that now many Moroccan families speak Dutch at home, and the second generation is becoming more and more integrated culturally through the use of the Dutch language and the social media. Social integration continues to be a problem, however, because their contacts are still found mainly within their own circles (cf. Extra 2011; Extra et al. 2002). This expensive cultural and educational project was based on the following presuppositions: 1) the guest workers would return to their home countries; 2) all cultures and religions are equally valid, even when people act in ways autochthones would not applaud; 3) those who stayed would become integrated into Dutch society, just as the Spanish-Jewish, French, Flemish, German, and Polish people had done in the past over the centuries and had helped build up the country.

Four circumstances made the situation more complicated: 1) the social security system; 2) modernisation and the automation of labour; 3) the easy means of travel and long holidays at “home”; and, 4) the Dutch “pillar” system. The latter will be discussed later on. First, the Netherlands had the richest social security system in Western Europe. Guest labourers who lost their jobs or could not work any longer could get a state pension, which was enough to continue to live in their neighbourhoods with food, fruit, and other products from their own shops. Health costs were covered for all citizens; whoever could not pay their rent completely on their own could apply for a subsidy; all parents received child allowance; primary and secondary education was almost free. Most women who came did not work outside the home but looked after the children, and thus many spent most of their time at home. The social security system helped them but did not stimulate them to take the initiative in improving their situation. Neo-liberal politicians criticise this broad social security system in general (and not only in relation to [im]migrants) by calling it

“the subsidy drip”: cared for but not included (Ghorashi 2006: 13-14). Second, Dutch industry became automated. Many factories with jobs for uneducated and unskilled workers closed because their products were made in China or elsewhere with cheap labour. The Rotterdam harbour became automated and thus needed engineers and controllers but not guest workers or other unskilled people. The city of Rotterdam had the highest percentage of unemployed people; for at least two decades young people had few opportunities. Poverty, bad housing, bad health, and youth crime, especially among Moroccans, are serious problems. Third, the refugees of the past and present had left home and family behind and did not fantasise about going “home.” But the guest workers bought old vans and travelled three thousand kilometres to their home countries for holidays. The parents could go to the local mosque, and the children could socialise with the extended family. Some marriages were arranged, but the Dutch children of Moroccan and Turkish descent could also compare life in Amsterdam with life “at home.” Successive governments, dominated by Christian Democrats and socio-democrats, did not see that the great majority of guest workers preferred to stay and bring more family members to the Netherlands. The expectation that they would go home proved to be false, and the hope that their integration would occur smoothly did not match the changes taking place in the world: the easy means of travel, more wealth in the West than in other parts of the world, more facilities, more personal freedom, and different cultural backgrounds. For these reasons publicists started to write about the Dutch “multicultural illusion” or “multicultural drama” cf. Scheffer 2007: 49-58; Schnabel 2002).²

The consequences of this postmodern paradigm have turned out to be serious. Young people had to live between two cultures, and cultural dissonance is one of most important causes of indifference and crime (Jennissen 2009: 89). Like their fellow young people of Dutch descent in poor areas, they do not have many opportunities to escape poverty and lack good role models. The problems in parts of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and some other cities are not as explosive as in the suburbs of Paris or London, but they are serious. Nevertheless, the overall situation is improving. The percentage of the younger generations in higher education is almost as high as the native Dutch population; the mayor of Rotterdam is a Muslim, and some city councillors are Muslims; Moroccans and Turkish people have been, all told, slightly overrepresented in parliament (2010-2012). The majority of young people nowadays find their partners in the Netherlands (Sterckx et al. 2014). Therefore, since the government began to accentuate the need for integration (since about 1994) and stopped providing courses in the (im)migrants’ “own culture” and language (2002), the gap between autochthones and allochthones has decreased (Blok 2004; Rijkschroeff

² Other scholars criticise the “multiculturalism debate.” Cf. also Gowricharn 2000 and Shadid 2009.

and Duyvendak 2009). Nevertheless, since the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the subsequent “War on Terror,” the global situation has changed as well, and the scope of the criticism at present is not directed against the Moroccan, Turkish, or any other cultural group but against Islam (Fortuin 1997; Wilders 2012). The cause of worry is not the old unemployed guest worker and his attire, but the well-educated young person who criticises Western superiority and secularism and advocates returning to “pure Islam” or “political Islam” (Wagemakers, de Koning, and Becker 2014). The Moroccan and Turkish communities have a religion with different ritual patterns and they are less secularised. On the contrary, many Muslims and particularly young people, seem to take their religion more seriously than ever, even if they do not attend mosque regularly.³

For a long time, politicians did not take cultural and religious differences seriously. Criticism of other cultures and worldviews was taboo; they were simply declared equally valid and, without any serious study to back up the claim, as sharing the same morality. One of the first to attempt to break through this cosy view that hid serious differences was the liberal Euro commissioner Frits Bolkestein. Pim Fortuyn, leader of the political party *Leefbaar Nederland* and, after leaving this party, of his own *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* party, did the same. Later, the Dutch-Somalian ex-Muslim Ayaan Hirsi Ali generalised the bad experiences of her youth in a thorough condemnation of Islam (Hirsi Ali 2011, 2008, 2006). In addition to his serious offences against Islam, the nationalist and anti-European politician Geert Wilders argues that Muslims should be allowed to stay in the country if and only if they give up their religion. The idea that all cultures have the same value has been replaced by the idea that the West is best: it has achieved prosperity, is tolerant, forbids any discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation, and gives people freedom. The question that both right and left wing politicians are asking is: What does Islam do for its own people?

It seems difficult to achieve any kind of nuance in relation to the encounter between and the mixing of cultures in our Enlightenment culture of tolerance. It is, however, not just the postmodern approach that has stimulated Muslims to live within their own circles. The specifically Dutch political system has contributed to this as well: the so-called Dutch pillar system that served as a means for dealing with worldview diversity after the Constitution of 1848 guaranteed freedom of religion and conscience.

³ A study among 900 Muslim youths in Rotterdam found that almost 100% of them labelled themselves Muslims and almost 90% attached great value to this label. Cf. Phalet, Van Lotringen, and Entzinger 2000.

The Dutch Pillar System

Background

In the twentieth century, Dutch society was organised along worldview lines, a social structure is known as the pillar system (Kennedy and Zwemer 2010). To understand the pillar system, we need some more historical data. As we have seen above, after the Union of Utrecht (1579) the Reformed Church became the public church. Other denominations were tolerated: Lutherans, Mennonites, and Remonstrants.⁴ They were allowed to have their own seminaries for their ministers. Catholics and Jews had relative freedom as well. After the Constitution of 1848 granted freedom of religion, the way was open for Catholics and free churches to expand and establish foundations. The Catholic hierarchy could be reinstated as of 1853. The new freedom for religious minorities was also used to establish institutions for education and various kinds of charity work for their own members and sometimes for the general public. Beginning in the 1840s, a Protestant Revival Movement (Reveil) revived the medieval custom of taking care of the needy by founding hospitals. The first of the Deaconess hospitals in the Netherlands was founded in Utrecht in 1844. In that same year, a Society for the Salvation of the People (*Tot Heil des Volks*) was started to provide education, clothing, food, and baths for poor young people in an Amsterdam slum. In addition to having their own educational (including universities) and social organisations, both Protestants and Catholics founded their own weekly and daily newspapers, political parties, and later on broadcasting corporations. This was characteristic of all minorities that were not part of the established upper class that managed the cities, city hospitals, public schools, and other institutions in the northern Protestant provinces, including the socialist movement that established its own party in 1894. For those layers of society that had not exercised power for centuries, this brought them enormous emancipation. The rise of the lower middle class and the poor living conditions of the majority of the population in the second half of the nineteenth century led to broad movements that opposed the liberal and individualistic elites. The separation between the state and the public church started a process in which the former minorities could develop and assume positions of power. At that time, when the organisational hierarchies were strong, the peace of society was maintained through the compromises between the leaders of the various pillars.⁵

⁴ The latter two are Dutch reform movements. Mennonites are named after Menno Simons (1496-1561), a follower of the “radical Reformation”. Remonstrants, or the Remonstrant Brotherhood, is a denomination that emerged after approximately 200 liberal Protestant ministers were expelled from the Dutch Reformed Church (1619).

⁵ The term “pillarization” (*verzuiling*) was popular among Dutch church sociologists in the 1960s. Cf. Kruyt and Goddijn 1962; Thurlings 1971. The term is now frequently used in the integration debate. See Schrover 2010.

A Muslim Pillar and a Hindu Pillar

Since the arrival of Muslim and Hindu (im)migrants, some policy makers thought that the pillar system could help their process of emancipation in a way that would stimulate integration into society at large (Rath et al. 1996). The result is ambiguous. Drawing on Robert Putnam's distinction between bonding and bridging capital, researchers found that, on the one hand, the continuation of their own style of living and the central position of religion has helped (im)migrants feel secure and included in their own group. On the other hand, this bonding capital served as a springboard to the wider society. There are indications that, in the long run, security in one's own group helps one integrate into the wider society and become assimilated into its culture (Duyvendak and Uitermark 2006; Uitermark 2003; Fennema and Tillie, 1999).⁶ The Muslim (im)migrants especially come from a different culture and religion with obligations that cannot be integrated easily into the daily life of an affluent society in which religion does not form part of the rhythm of daily work. The religio-cultural differences make Muslims feel more connected to their home country than earlier (im)migrants did. For many, the mosque is important, not just as a prayer house but also as a meeting place. As stated above, the majority of the first-generation Muslims lived in neighbourhoods with many immigrants and shops from their culture. Many of them are relatively poor. Their children cannot mingle with other children and they do not have good role models for how to live in cities in a climate with long days in summer and short days with long, cold evenings in winter.

The pillar system has been important for social inclusion within people's own communities. The larger mosques started social and cultural organisations beside them in which the participants in the prayers could meet, like they did in the teahouses in Morocco and Turkey. Many local Islamic organisations took care of social work, language training for women, and youth work. But up till now, the right to educate their children in their own language and culture and the help given to them through their own organisations have not been optimal means to promote their integration into society as a whole.

In addition to these organisations of (former) guest workers, the staff of the public welfare service helped them navigate the Dutch social security system with its bureaucracy, and youth workers have put many young people on the right track. But for two decades this did not lead to many social relationships outside their own groups. On 14 October 1994 a member of parliament whose portfolio was integration policy recounted, with some amazement, that she had visited a great many immigrant organisations in the country and heard that the

⁶ The Catholics in the Netherlands are often seen as example. Being marginalized for a long time, they became emancipated through having their own pillar.

only contact these (im)migrants had were with professionals from the public welfare system or church members. Social inclusion in broader society was lacking.⁷

Now, twenty years later, the situation has improved considerably because most second- and third-generation people are much more integrated, at least in the sense of being able to adapt to the broader society (Te Riele 2009; K. Phalet and J. ter Wal 2004; Maliepaard and Gijsberts 2012). The pillar system made it possible for Muslim and Hindu immigrants to establish schools, a broadcasting corporation, and some other organisations. In 2004, the Islamic umbrella organisations of mosques founded the Committee for Contact between the Mosque Organisations and the Government (CMO), which is responsible for the selection of potential Islamic spiritual caregivers. In 2009, the government also recognised the Hindu Council and the Buddhist Union in the Netherlands as organisations that can nominate “chaplains” in the army, prisons, and youth institutions.

Spirituality and Distinctions

Due to regular studies by Statistics Netherlands, the Netherlands Institute for Social Research, and the Scientific Council for Government Policy, the demographics and some other aspects of the religious (and worldview) composition of the Netherlands are well documented (Schmeets 2009; Donk et al. 2006; J. de Hart 2014). The Netherlands has 16.7 million inhabitants (mid 2012), and their attitudes towards religion are quite diverse. We will first describe classifications of groups with various (non-) religious orientations. Then we will deal with the religious communities separately and indicate their main social and public activities.

Kronjee and Lampert distinguish six kinds of worldviews, religious and non-religious. Based on research conducted by Motivaction, a private research company, they calculate the percentages of those groups in the population as follows: 1) not-religious, not-humanist (18%); 2) not-religious, moderately humanist (16%); 3) not-religious, humanist (12%); 4) spiritual, not-organised (26%); 5) Christians (25%); 6) other organised religious believers (3%) (Kronjee and Lampert 2006: 176ff.). In the European Values Study (2008), 60% of the Dutch say they are believers, 33% say they are non-believers, and 7% say they are atheists (De Hart 2014: 24). Earlier, De Hart had classified 2% of the Dutch as “atheists,” 14% as “agnostics,” 41% as “believers in something”

⁷ On the other hand, measuring social return on investment, various studies show the contribution of (im)migrants churches and mosques churches to social inclusion and cohesion. Cf. Van der Sar and Visser 2006; Van der Sar, Lombo-Visser, and Boender, 2008; Davelaar, Damacena Martins, and Doude van Troostwijk 2012.

(somethingists)⁸ 24% as “weak theists,” and 10% as “strong theists” (De Hart 2011: 210).

The data provided by Statistics Netherlands, the Netherlands Institute for Social Research, and the Scientific Council for Government Policy on the religious landscape in the Netherlands vary, depending on how religion is defined and operationalised, what is measured and how it is measured if they ask one-stage or two-stage questions. For example, they may ask respondents to tick pre-given categories, including “no religion,” or they may ask them whether they consider themselves to be religious and, if yes, to which religion (denomination) they belong (cf. Schmeets 2014: 3; De Hart 2014).⁹

Thus, figures are complex and ambiguous. Nevertheless, one can discern some patterns. Taking into account that religion has various dimensions (Stark and Glock 1968; Smart 1989), if we look from the institutional perspective it is safe to say that almost half of the Dutch population is secularised, if secularised means de-institutionalised, de-churched. If we look from the perspective of religiosity or belief, roughly three quarters of the population say that they are “believers” or “religious” in one way or another, the majority of whom are people who “believe in something” or are “spiritual seekers.” Viewed as such, the Netherlands is an example of a country characterised by “believing without belonging.”¹⁰ The percentage of organised believers given by Kronjee and Lampert mentioned above is lower than the actual numbers of Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists, which amounts to around 8% (not 3%) of the population, as Muslims and Buddhists especially lack co-ordinated organisations for all claiming adherence to those traditions.

⁸ In Dutch they are called *ietsisten*. Somethingists believe in a higher or invisible power but not in a personal God.

⁹ De Hart compares figures given by the European Value Survey and the International Social Survey Programme, which use different measurement techniques and produce different results.

¹⁰ The phrase “believing without belonging” goes back to Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without belonging* (Davie 1994). It has become popular among sociologists to distinguish “believing without belonging” and “belonging without believing.” If one compares the statistics of the European Value Study (2008) it is interesting to note that, on the question whether they are (a little or very much) interested in the holy or supernatural, 61% of the Dutch answer yes, whereas in Germany this is only 43%. Figures for church membership give the opposite picture: 62% in Germany and 39% in The Netherlands. Cf. also comparative statistics for nine European countries in De Hart 2014: 23-26.

Now we come to the religious communities, their composition, and their role in group formation and public life.¹¹ Because Muslim, Hindu, and some Buddhist groups have arrived from foreign countries, we will also give some background information about (im)migrants and introduce a distinction that has been used for affirmative action by the government: autochthonous and allochthonous people. Autochthonous people are those whose parents were born in the Netherlands, allochthonous are those whose parents (or at least one of them) were not. For policy reasons, the government distinguished between Western and non-Western allochthonous people. Of course, after thirty years this distinction is quickly losing its usefulness because the third generation of immigrants is autochthonous by definition. Nevertheless, the distinction helps to show the dimensions of immigration in the Netherlands. Many other West European countries have nearly the same or a somewhat lower percentage of (im)migrants. Out of 16.7 million inhabitants, the Netherlands has about 3.5 million allochthonous people, of whom about 1.5 million are “Westerners” and nearly 2 million “non-Westerners.” The entire area of the country covers about 230 by 180 kilometres. The percentages of allochthonous people in the cities are much higher than average and can reach nearly 50% of the population in some districts. The category comprises (descendants of) guest workers, refugees, economic migrants, and immigrants who work in industry, services, and universities.¹²

Special categories of (im)migrants are the Surinamese citizens, people from the Dutch Antilles, and refugees. When Surinam became independent in 1975, many chose to live in the Netherlands. They now number about 345,000, and most of them are religious. After the end of slavery in 1863, the plantations needed personnel and recruited people from northern India and from Java as well. The first ship with Indian immigrants, the *Lala Rookh*, arrived in 1873. Their arrival was the origin of Islam and Hinduism in Surinam and is the background of most Hindus in the Netherlands. Many Christian Surinamese are members of the Church of the Brethren. Most Surinamese (im)migrants are well integrated and find their social homes in Hindu temples, churches, and the Surinamese community as a whole. Dutch citizens from the Antilles also came to live in the Netherlands as well. As in black Surinamese families, Antillean children are often raised by women alone, and a significant proportion of Antillean boys are involved in minor criminal incidents (Jennissen 2009).

Refugees and economic (im)migrants come from all conflict countries in the

¹¹ For a general overview of the religious landscape in The Netherlands, see Ter Borg et al. 2008.

¹² Cf. Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (2012. The same office previously the an annual report “Allochtonen in Nederland’ [Allochthones in The Netherlands].” Its present terminology and focus has shifted to “diversity and intregation.”

world. Many are connected with the Orthodox Churches (from former Yugoslavia, the Middle East, and Egypt), Anglican, and Pentecostal churches in black Africa, and Reformed churches from the Moluccas and Korea, and many are Muslims or members of Buddhist traditions. Many black churches are Evangelical or Pentecostal and often organised according to the country of origin (Jongeneel, Budiman, and Visser 1996; Castillo Guerra, Steggerda, and Wijzen 2006). Refugees differ from guest workers in that in most cases they do not intend to return home. Many of them are well educated, but for some it is difficult to find suitable jobs because Dutch is a rather difficult language to master.

Islam

The main groups of Muslims are Turkish (329,000), Moroccan (314,000), Surinamese (34,000), refugees and others from various countries (178,000), and converts (14,000): in sum 869,000.¹³ There are seven nationally recognised umbrella mosque organisations: the official Turkish state Islam, Diyanet (146 mosques), three smaller Turkish mosque organisations that are prohibited in Turkey (altogether 96 mosques), a small but ambitious Shi'a Organisation, a Union of Moroccan Mosques (80 mosques), and the Surinamese-Pakistani mosques (30). Thus, non-Turkish Muslims (about 540,000) are organised into three national bodies: Moroccan, Shi'a, and the Surinamese-Pakistani societies. The Moroccan Mosques' society covers about half of the Moroccan mosques. In addition to those mosques, they also have a loose leadership relationship with other free established mosques with imams from Morocco, Indonesia, and other countries. During Ramadan, preachers and scholars from overseas will come to lead the prayers and to preach. In most mosques, the preacher will also provide a Dutch summary of his sermon, if he speaks a few words of the language. The Ahmadiyya movement came to the Netherlands via Surinam; it has about eleven mosques but is not acknowledged as an Islamic movement by Muslim organisations.

The Moroccan mosque organisation acts independently of the Moroccan government but has good relations with the Conseil de la Communauté des Marocains dans 'l Étranger (Council of the Community of Moroccans Abroad]. This council furthers the establishment of programmes for training imams in Western Europe, precisely in relation to further integration and in the interest of young European Muslims. On the one hand, it stresses that those Muslims are Europeans and, on the other, tries to improve relations between Moroccan (and Islamic) leadership in Europe and Morocco.

¹³ There has been a debate on how to count the number of Muslims in the Netherlands. Some argue that the figures given are too high. See Van Herten 2009: 35-40.

Imams and Islamic Theology

The average mosque does not contribute much to social inclusion outside the Muslims' own group.¹⁴ The main office of Diyanet Vakfi in Ankara sends qualified imams for four years; they do not speak Dutch and do not understand the problems young people face in the Netherlands. Since 2010 they have been asked to provide summaries of their sermons in Dutch. For their sermons, they can use texts prepared in Ankara to which they are allowed to add a few sentences. Also Moroccan, Surinamese, and Pakistani mosques acquire their imams from their home countries. There is some commotion concerning a more or less radical imam now and then, but most of them are moderate and friendly, even though their knowledge of Dutch culture and mastery of the local language is very poor (Maliepaard and Gijsberts 2012).¹⁵

Although secularisation has changed the pillar system, the openness to religion in the law has created not only the possibility of establishing Islamic primary and secondary schools but also of situating Islamic education in universities. Because foreign imams were felt to be an obstacle to both the integration of Muslims as well as the development of an authentic Western Islam, in 2004 the Dutch parliament decided that the government should stimulate a programme for the education of imams in the Netherlands.¹⁶ In January 2005, VU University Amsterdam acquired a subsidy for a programme for the education of imams in spiritual care. Dutch prisons need educated imams, and hospitals and the army began to appoint Muslims for spiritual care as well; The official Turkish Islam (Diyanet Vakfi) prefers to educate its own imams in Turkey and does not collaborate in this.

In 2010, VU University Amsterdam was able to reach an agreement with the three national non-Turkish umbrella mosque organisations and in June 2012 it received a five-year government subsidy for an extra one-year Master's programme for the education of imams. For reasons of social and cultural integration, the Bachelor's programme and the Master's in Islamic spiritual care are interwoven with the corresponding Religious Studies programme, and the Muslim staff have been integrated into the staff of the Protestant Faculty of Theology. The Faculty's policy is to stimulate students to grow in their own

¹⁴ Van der Sar, Lombo-Visser and Boender (2008: 40-41) note a growing number of activities directed at people outside their own groups, e.g. intercultural and inter-religious activities.

¹⁵ In November 2014 the Dutch minister of Social Affairs announced that he would start an investigation of four Turkish organisations (Milli Görüş, Gülen movement, Süleymanci and Diyanet) because they are suspected of hindering the integration of Dutch citizens of Turkish descent.

¹⁶ Proposal by Mirjam Sterk MP, 26 May, 2004. Kamerstuk 29200 VI, no. 139.

tradition, to have a better understanding of “the Other,” and to be able to interpret their own tradition in their secularised and diverse context in an authentic and accountable way (Vroom 2008).

In 2006, the government also subsidised an Islamic studies programme at Leiden University focused more on liberal Muslims and InHolland College, Amsterdam, to train imams at a professional, non-academic, level. Apart from these initiatives, Muslims have also set up two private universities, the Islamic University of Rotterdam (Turkish) and the European Islamic University (Moroccan). Each educates a hundred part-time students, but only very few of these students have diplomas that qualify them for higher education.¹⁷ Together with the Islamic primary schools, they are part of an Islamic pillar with little exposure to Dutch culture.

Primary Schools

The majority of Muslim youth attend public primary schools, but a considerable number also attend Christian schools. Muslims have established about forty primary schools subsidised by the government. They have to fulfil the criteria for good education but are free with respect to their religious education. Muslim schools also appoint non-Muslim teachers (Meijer 2006). While the quality of what are termed “special schools” run by private foundations, including Christian schools, is higher on average than public schools, the results of Islamic schools are relatively low. This relates to the status of some groups of Muslim (im)migrants who struggle with problems of integration and (often hidden) poverty. Many Muslim parents want their children to be better integrated and to socialise and to be taught about religions than other Islam. This is why they send their children to public or Christian schools.

Foundations

Muslims have founded a great many societies and foundations, including SMHO (Samenwerkende Moslim Hulp Organisaties (Collaborating Muslim Aid Organisations)) and branches of UK-based Muslim Aid and Islamic Relief, which organise fund-raising activities during Ramadan.¹⁸ Research into the network structures between those foundations shows that the Union of Moroccan Mosques in the Netherlands (UMMON) and the Turkish Diyanet provide a place for the board members of these foundation to meet, for example, during the *iftars* (evening meals after sunset when Muslims end their

¹⁷ The private Islamic University of Rotterdam (IUR) was recognised as a University of Applied Sciences (in Dutch: Hogeschool).

¹⁸ Van der Sar, Lombo-Visser and Boender (2008: 150) estimate the social contribution of the approximately 475 mosques in the Netherlands to represent a value of 150 million euros; according to them, this is amount that Dutch society saves per year through the volunteer work done in and through the mosques.

daily fast during the month of Ramadan) of both umbrella organisations of mosques and other festivities (Van Heelsum and Fennema 2004).

Responsibility in Society

So far, only a few in the leadership circles of the mosque organisations have formulated ideas about their responsibility in society at large. Muslim scholars stress that classical Islamic values like equality, freedom of religion, solidarity, and the restriction of violence and war concur with Christian values and often Western values in general. Together with mainline and orthodox Christians, they feel that society should acknowledge the value of good religion and not attempt to ban religion from the public sphere. Many Muslims have found their way into (national and local) politics. With many Muslim students choosing to study economy and law, they are often professionals in these areas. A number of those of Moroccan and Turkish descent are active in the entertainment industry as popular rappers or television stars, among other things.

Recently, the percentage of Muslims entering higher education has approached the national average. The young women do especially well, possibly because they have to stay at home while the brothers are allowed to play with their friends on the street. The third-generation Moroccan children speak Dutch at home. More than Turks, young Moroccans have gained a reputation for being involved in crime. Research has shown that young Moroccan people who get into trouble with the law will start to behave more appropriately in their late twenties (Jennissen 2009: 60). Turkish culture accepts authority more, which brings the statistics of crime down but is arguably related to a higher than average percentage of attempted suicides among young women. This is also the case in the Hindu community (see below).

Hinduism

Both kinds of Hinduism that developed in Surinam are present in the Netherlands: Sanatana Dharma (the majority) and the Arya Samaj. Hindus number around 100,000 (Bernts, de Jong, and Yar 2006).¹⁹ From the 1980s onwards, Dutch people also visited gurus in India and at least 1,000 converted to Hinduism. One of the serious concerns within the Hindu community is the high percentage of suicide attempts among girls and young women. To explain this, research refers to a lower degree of autonomy in relation to marriage and choice of profession in Dutch-Surinamese Hindu culture. More authoritarian family structures can lead to low self-esteem (Van Bergen 2009). The Foundation for Hindu education has five primary schools in areas with high concentrations of Hindus. Another Hindu foundation has a primary school in The

¹⁹ Source Central Office of Statistics, 2006. Numbers given by different sources vary from 100,000 to 250,000 Hindus.

Hague as well.²⁰ According to Hindu leaders, Hindu schools have been established because Hindu youth are not as outspoken and direct in communicating as the Dutch and that it is important that they be rooted in their own religion and culture (Bangour 2002). The objection that these schools do not serve integration is not valid, in their view. In a comparison of six Hindu, public, and Islamic primary schools, Sharda Roelsma found that the pupils have a larger workload than public and Christian schools because they are taught more Hinduism and some Hindi, and do somewhat better on the centrally organised written exams. It is safe to conclude that the schools do help the social inclusion of Hindus into society and also help children acquire skills needed in Dutch society (Roelsma-Somer 2008).

In addition to Hindu schools, there is a provision for Hindus in spiritual care in the army and prisons. Hindu spiritual caregivers are trained at VU Faculty of Theology and they get their mandate from the National Hindu Council (Bernts, van der Velde, and Kregting 2012b). The Hindu pillar also includes Hindu broadcasting with weekly programmes on radio and television and the SEVA Network Foundation (Seva means business) for welfare, care for temples, and community building, and a Hindu student federation.²¹

Buddhism

The Buddhist communities began small but have grown. Many Dutch people sympathise with Buddhism, probably because it is seen to help people develop and cope better with problems. Dutch Buddhism thinks less in terms of ‘members’ than in terms of sympathisers and people who participate for some time in meditation sessions or meditate on a daily basis without being seen as official members. Therefore, the numbers given for “Buddhists” vary between 70,000 and 400,000. Often, refugees from Vietnam and members of the Chinese community are Buddhists. If the numbers are estimated at 170,000, 20% adhere to the Theravada tradition and 40% each to the Mahayana (including Zen) and Tibetan traditions; more than half of all are autochthonous (Bernts, de Jong, and Yar 2006: 134). “Believing without belonging” and “multiple religious belonging” are widespread among Buddhist sympathisers.²²

Asked how Buddhists view their contribution to society, Nico Tydeman, a Zen master in Amsterdam, once answered: “As a Zen Buddhist, I have an almost

²⁰ <http://www.hindoeraad.nl/contact.php>; <http://www.shon.nl/index1.htm>; <http://www.vahon.nl/> (accessed 13 August 2012)

²¹ http://www.hindoeraad.nl/sg_userfiles/Toespraak_Radj_Bhondoe_21juni2012.pdf.

²² According to Schmeets (2014: 5), 63.9% of Buddhists seldom or never visit a service in a Temple.

instinctive aversion to any display in the public sphere. I like to clarify that this reserve is not just a personal trait of mine but is related to my view of the lessons and practice of Zen Buddhism” (Tydeman 2002: 129).

In his paper Tydeman points out that contemplation is intended to realise the aim of life, i.e., a form of life in which we are fully conscious of our context and can respond spontaneously. The improvement of the person is a private project; it is a personal, internal civilisation, beyond individualistic self-interest. Of course, in other Buddhist traditions people do have responsibilities in society, and some Buddhists nowadays are developing Socially Engaged Buddhism. But, as understood in the Dutch context, the specific approach of Buddhism is personal growth in detachment and openness for the real needs of the moment: the public arena is filled with greed, ostentation, and self-interest, and therefore needs more people who are detached.

Buddhists have not established Buddhist schools, but they do organise retreats, and weekly programmes serving their broadcasting needs. Like the CMO, the Hindu Council, the churches, and the Humanist Federation, the Buddhist Union Netherlands (BUN) selects professionals for spiritual care and has a training program at Faculty of Theology of VU University Amsterdam (Bernts, van der Velde, Kregting 2012a).

Judaism

Sephardic Jewish refugees from Spain and later Ashkenazi Jews from Poland found refuge in the Netherlands long ago. After full freedom of religion was granted, Jewish lawyers could become members of the courts. Amsterdam has had many Jewish mayors. Until 1940, the Jewish community in the Netherlands numbered about 110,000, but after the Holocaust fell to about 10,000. Currently, about 12% of the 75,000 Jews now present are members of a synagogue. In 2000, the strictly orthodox New Israelite Church Association had about 5,100 members and Liberal synagogues about 3,200. The now retired rabbi of the Liberal synagogue in The Hague was one of the most public figures among those who tried to establish dialogue with Christians and Muslims. Jews are fully included in Dutch society. The conflicts around Israel are reflected in efforts to damage synagogues, which now take extensive security measures. Nevertheless, the dialogue committee of the Liberal synagogue of Amsterdam continues producing initiatives for bringing people from the Abrahamic religions together (see below).

Christianity

As will be clear from the above, the population in “the North” and Zeeland is traditionally Protestant, with some Catholic enclaves. The south was Catholic. The mixing of people from the two different expressions of Christianity was an

urban phenomenon. As of 1853 the Catholics could openly build churches, typified in the northern part of the country by many neo-Gothic churches.

Membership in the churches has gone down considerably.²³ In 2006, the Roman Catholic dioceses had about 4.37 million members, 1,450 parishes, 1,740 churches, and 1,864 pastors (priests and lay ministers). There are 5,901 members of religious institutes (orders, congregations, societies), 4,112 nuns, 628 brothers and 1,161 priests (source: KASKI, 31 Dec. 2012), most of whom are old and retired. Short stays in monasteries are popular—regardless of whether people are Catholic, Protestant or “nothing”—as are pilgrimages like walking or cycling to Santiago de Compostella. In early 2006, the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, which reunited the two main Reformed denominations²⁴ in the Netherlands in 2004, had about 1.94 million members, 1,832 congregations, 2,840 churches, 2,173 ministers and around 250,000 people with tasks in or representing the church. For both churches, further decline is expected; congregations have fused and churches have been closed and consigned to other uses; although some congregations build new churches. About 500,000 people belong to free churches and 150,000 to Evangelical and Pentecostal churches.

The number of allochthonous Christians is not that clear, but it is estimated to be around 800,000 people (Castillo Guerra, Steggerda, Wijzen 2006: 12). Until about 2005, the Catholic Church had special parishes for Indonesian, Central African, and other (im)migrant communities. These people are now part of the local parishes; some have services in their own language as well. With respect to Protestants, African Pentecostal churches have been formed in the larger cities. As in all greater European cities, the initiative has been taken by the (im-)migrants themselves or by mission departments of large Pentecostal churches elsewhere. If traditional Protestant services in Amsterdam have 2,500 attendees on a Sunday morning at present, there will be 25,000 in the non-Dutch language services. This is caused partly by secularisation, but it is also an effect of the fact that cities have a high percentage of relatively poor (im)migrants.²⁵ For Christian (im)migrants, churches play a role similar to that mosques play for Muslims. Members support one another in finding housing and jobs and help its members become oriented in the new environment. Most churches stimulate

²³ Although longitudinal figures are difficult to give, it is estimated that church membership was 96% in 1899 and 58% in 2008. Cf. Van der Bie 2009. According to De Hart 2014: 38), in 1958 three quarters of the Dutch population considered themselves to be church members, in 1970 this was 61%, and in 2012 this was 30%.

²⁴ The Reformed Church of the Netherlands and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

²⁵ In 2004, 27% of those attending Catholic services in Amsterdam and 44% of the converts to the Catholic Church there were allochthones. See Massaar-Remmerswaal and Steggerda 2004.

people meeting and helping one another and talking about raising children and other tasks. The churches provide a good infrastructure, according to De Hart and Dekker, to help them in medical affairs, taxes, and in other matters where they are in contact with the local administration (De Hart and Dekker 2006: 156).

Christians have traditionally felt responsible for the country (Van der Sar 2004; Castillo Guerra, Glashouwer, and Kregting 2008). In the past, board members of public institutions in care and education have been chosen mainly from the members of the public church. The free churches stimulated their members to found their own organisations, and thus a whole network of Christian schools on all levels and various care institutions have developed that still exists today, although many staff-members have only a loose relation to the church. More recently, new institutions have been erected by the Evangelical and other movements in the church, both in the media and youth care, in helping prisoners reintegrate into society, etc. National churches are active in inter-church aid, development work, and work in reconciliation and conflict prevention in violent places in the world. They have a strong network of international relations. Large faith-based organisations for development work, so far considerably subsidised by the state office for development collaboration, have been founded.²⁶ On the personal level, active church members give remarkably more to philanthropic organisations outside the church and spend more time in volunteer work than the average person does (De Hart and Dekker 2006: 152f.).

Besides four seminaries, the Catholic community has two universities that provide programmes in academic theology: Tilburg and Nijmegen. Recently the university of Nijmegen, Radboud University, started a training programme for foreign priests. Since 2012, most seminaries of the small Protestant churches have been concentrated at VU University Amsterdam. The Protestant Theological University offers theology programmes in Amsterdam and Groningen.

Encounter and Dialogue

In addition to its work in ecumenical relations, the Dutch Council of Churches has been trying for a long time to raise consciousness concerning poverty and exclusion. On this national level, churches work together to establish good relations with other religious traditions. The Roman Catholic Church and the

²⁶ The main Catholic one is CORDAID (Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid), the main Protestant one is ICCO (Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation). There are numerous smaller faith-based non-governmental organisations for development collaboration, often partly subsidised by the state.

Protestant Church in the Netherlands have various dialogue programmes, at local and national levels. Together they publish the journal *Begrip* [in English: Understanding], whose aim is to foster understanding between Muslims and Christians.

In Rotterdam, the foundations Dialogue Academy and Islam and Dialogue have merged into one new organisation: Platform INS – Voor de kunst van het samenleven (For the art of co-existence; (INS means humanity in Arabic), which organises dialogues between Muslims and Christians. The Liberal Jewish congregation in Amsterdam has an active dialogue committee that successfully arranged mutual visits to a mosque belonging to the Turkish mosque organisation (Milli Görüs) and its own synagogue. In 2012, Amsterdam Muslims, Christians, and Jews had meetings in the main Moroccan mosque, a church, and synagogue, in which “the other” provided the sermon. Rotterdam organised a similar project in 2001. For a few years, religious leaders have been taking part in a yearly public walk in one of the cities with a statement and media coverage (see also Bakker 2014).

The practice of interreligious worship has been going on since the early 1990s. One of the first was organised in the northern province of Friesland—not exactly the heartland of multiculturalism (Wijsen and Nicolay 2010). This shows that interreligious activities are widespread. These are only a few of the initiatives taken to further understanding and give some counterweight to the images in the media that religions only lead to conflict.

Politics and Policies Regarding Religious Diversity

Since the introduction of Thatcherism in the United Kingdom in the 1980s, most Western European countries have seen an introduction of neo-liberal policies and the reduction of the welfare state, partly because of rationing and cost-cutting, partly because of the critique of not taking seriously the responsibility of citizens (Aquina 1993; Van Bijsterveld 2009). Since then there has been new room for non-governmental organisations, including religious and faith-based ones, to offer all kinds of social services. An example that evoked a lot of debate is that a sub-municipality of Amsterdam, after a public tender, granted a subsidy to Youth for Christ for its youth work, on the basis of a cost and benefit analysis (Davelaar and Smits van Waesberghe 2010:42). It was feared that the money would also be used for religious (i.e., missionary) purposes.

After a long history of “re-educating a-social families” and “integration with retaining the own identity,”²⁷ the Dutch government now advocates a

²⁷ Van Doorn (1995: 107) shows the continuity between the “civilising mission”

participation society in which all citizens play their part (Donner 2011).²⁸ Public-private partnership, particularly in the religious domain, raises policy issues on both sides. To what extent can national or local governments use and even finance religious or faith-based institutions (e.g., churches, mosques, temples) in guaranteeing public services without violating the separation of religion and state? To what extent can religious or faith-based institutions implement government policies without becoming a government stooge?

The previous Dutch pillar system provided a platform for discussions between representatives of the government and representatives of the churches because pillars had political parties as well. Although some advocate a revival of the pillar system because the pillars also seem to offer a springboard to the wider society, as seen above, none of the Islamic political parties has been able to attract a large electorate. Most Muslims who are politically active do so through the major political parties.

Among other things, due to secularisation and de-institutionalisation, the political debate in the Netherlands has become post-ideological and pragmatic, more a debate about concrete measures, and less a debate about the inspiration behind the choices to be made, although (religious and non-religious) worldviews still play a significant role (Noordegraaf 2008: 215, 219). Many politicians tend to leave worldview, and thus moral, questions to the private sphere so that new laws tend to protect personal freedom, leaving moral issues aside (except for human rights) and concentrate on formal issues. The liberal-secular worldview thus remains dominant, although some liberals argue that true liberalism implies freedom of religious expression.

In the Dutch context, neutrality does not signify anti-religious policy but the impartiality of the state in religious affairs; it implies the possibility of including religious minorities. Secularism, meanwhile, tends to exclude religious minorities and loses a larger picture of the process of nation-building in which all citizens, religious or not, are expected to contribute. It is interesting to see, however, that some secularists now see a place for religious groups in the public domain (Habermas 2006; Rorty 2003). For other secularists, it remains a shock that many Muslims place their religious obligations first and do not leave their religion at home (Geelhoed 2012). This results in stereotypes and a disparaging tone. Public discourses about “ignorant Islam” or the “inferiority

in “re-educating of a-social families” in The Netherlands, including Netherlands Indies, and the present multiculturalism debate.

²⁸ The Dutch State of the Union address (*Troonrede*) of 2013 was also devoted to the theme of the “participation society.” The report by the Scientific Council for Government Policy in 2000 already spoke of “Social participation as the future cornerstone of integration policy.” See Meurs 2000: 50-52.

of Islam” lead to widespread dismay about “Islam” on the one hand and the popularity of political Islam among young Muslims on the other (Shadid 2009: 8-11; Van der Valk 2012).

In relation to religion, Dutch policies seem inconsistent (Overdijk-Francis, Van den Eijnden, Martens 2009; Davelaar and Smits van Waesberghe 2010: 47). Sometimes they take the secularist route and want to prohibit the presence of any sign of religion in the public sphere; sometimes they accept religious conviction as a fact of life and use religious organisations for their own policies, such as involving liberal imams in anti-radicalisation campaigns. For example, the former mayor of Amsterdam, Job Cohen, emphasised that the first thing new (im)migrants do is look for a religious community. His policy was to help mosques, temples, and allochthonous churches develop.²⁹ His successor, Eberhard van der Laan, although a member of the same political party, immediately distanced himself from this approach, declared religion to be private, and changed integration policy. The municipality of The Hague is reluctant to involve religious people, the municipality of Rotterdam welcomes them, and these policies could change dramatically when new city councils are instituted after local elections. Government regulations regarding religious and faith-based organisations are more or less flexible, and they are implemented locally in different ways (Overdijk-Francis, Van den Eijnden, Martens 2009).

Conclusion

There has been a shift from tolerance to intolerance in Dutch immigration and integration policies. Whereas cultural relativism and accepting differences was dominant in the later part of the 20th century, since the beginning of the 21st century politicians tend to require religious minorities to assimilate. On closer inspection, however, pragmatism rules, and religious and faith-based organisations are used and even subsidised if they offer public services. There is new room for them to play their part in the participation society. But it is yet to be seen whether a new form of “pillarisation” is a useful strategy for managing religious diversity and promoting emancipation of religious minorities.

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²⁹ A well-documented example is that the municipality of Amsterdam promised to sponsor the building of a mosque in Amsterdam-West if imams would preach a liberal Islam there.

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