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Publisher: Routledge

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Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjmm20>

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Published online: 08 Jan 2014.

To cite this article: Pooyan Tamimi Arab (2013) Mosques in the Netherlands: Transforming the Meaning of Marginal Spaces, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 33:4, 477-494, DOI:

[10.1080/13602004.2013.866349](https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2013.866349)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2013.866349>

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Mosques in the Netherlands: Transforming the Meaning of Marginal Spaces

POOYAN TAMIMI ARAB

Abstract

Previous research has shown that mosques in the Netherlands and in Western Europe, in general, are frequently located in marginal spaces and face resistance when transformed into a visible, constructed, house of worship. In this essay, field-work analysis centered on the controversial Essalam Mosque in Rotterdam deepens the understanding of marginality, by explaining how mosque construction, spatial establishment, labor, and Islamic morality can be distinguished and intersect on the ground level. It is shown that mosques are not merely situated in marginal spaces, but rather resist marginality, appropriate the “right to the city”, and transform the meanings of marginal spaces for Dutch Muslims.

Introduction

It’s not a ghetto here. It is streets, but another form, not a ghetto. I don’t call it a ghetto. It’s not like you step outside your osso [home] and there is a clan [gang] waiting for you. You know, color gangs and stuff. That doesn’t happen here.¹

The multilingual slang in the above conversation between two Dutch-Antillean men living close to the Essalam Mosque in Rotterdam-South is hard to translate into English. The content is easier to convey, namely that even though one of them is moving away, they both do not consider their neighborhood in Rotterdam-South as “a ghetto”. Life is described instead as “streets”, indicating urban problems and spatial marginality. And yet, life is seen as relatively safe and pleasant.

The Netherlands, despite a trend of increasing economic liberalization, is still among the most socially balanced countries in the world. In comparison, in the South Bronx in New York there are neighborhoods where 4 out of 5 children live in poverty, where 9 out of 10 children perform below average in school and half do not even graduate from high school.² It has not come so far in Rotterdam-South, which is why the contrast between “ghetto” and “streets” can be convincing if we compare with cities that suffer from significantly greater social inequality as prevalent in New York, for example.

The construction of a controversial Islamic house of worship in the neighborhood, the Essalam Mosque, has been a thorn in the eyes of various non-Muslim groups who live in Rotterdam-South. The Antillean man in the exchange above who moved away from the neighborhood was one of them: “I step out of my house ... It’s like I’m in another country ... that mosque is just too big”. Thanks to years of media attention, the mosque attracted the attention of academics as well. Marcel Maussen has written about the construction of the mosque from a historical perspective on the Dutch governance of Islam,³ while Eric Roose and Christian Welzbacher have discussed it from the perspectives of architectural history⁴ and stylistic criticism.⁵ In this essay, the new Essalam Mosque that opened its

doors in December 2010 is viewed through an ethnographic lens. Based on fieldwork from 2010 till 2013, and also with my own experiences as a Dutch migrant citizen in the background, I want to address the issue of religious marginality and argue for a deepened understanding of what marginality is by making and connecting two main arguments.

First, that mosque construction is not identical to spatial establishment in the city but should be seen as intimately tied to each other. Second, that Islamic morality can help those who are less well off in finding jobs, and by doing so achieve greater spatial establishment or what David Harvey and other critical geographers have called “the right to the city”.⁶ Islamic houses of worship in the Netherlands like the Essalam Mosque should thus be described as “marginal” with the knowledge that they have the capability to resist not only religious but also economic peripherality, and in the process transform the meanings of “marginal” spaces for Dutch Muslims. But before we proceed further with our two main arguments we shall expound first on the marginality of mosques in recent scholarly literature, and then on the general situation in Rotterdam-South.

The Marginality of Mosques

Two recent essays on the production of marginal Islamic spaces are by Willem Schinkel⁷ and Petra Kuppinger.⁸ Kuppinger writes about Stuttgart’s mosquescape and the fact that the city does not have a representative mosque, or any mosque that was built to be a mosque. The gray atmosphere surrounding these mosques is inescapable for visitors: none of them look like religious buildings and they are located outside the city in industrial zones, invisible to the general public. Inside the mosques, however, the situation is quite different and we can often find richly decorated prayer rooms. To the outside, the area might look like a dull industrial zone, but for insiders the history of the mosques is a history of growth. Where there was once barely any activity mosques have succeeded to bring people together to form their own lively community, promoting religious, cultural and economic life. Their position remains precarious nevertheless, and Kuppinger attributes this partly to the general position of Islam in the city and in Germany. She believes that representative mosque spaces, for example, the new Cologne Mosque, are a step towards “broader public recognition” and “equal participation”.⁹ While she does not think that visible mosques are a remedy for all social difficulties, she agrees with Thomas Schmitt, who did a broader research on German mosques and argues that processes of integration cannot happen solely in an “abstract public ‘space’, but preferably on concrete, specially designed locations” in order to accommodate participation and acceptance.¹⁰ Housing mosques in factories, office suites and defunct and marginal spaces is not a satisfactory long-term solution. Schinkel also thinks that the social marginalization of Muslims is linked to territorial stigmatization when it concerns mosques in the Netherlands. He argues that globalization, the increase in cosmopolitan cultures and fading borders have not made space irrelevant, on the contrary.

The troubles that arise with an “unprecedented diversity” in religions has prompted critics of European secularisms such as Rajeev Bhargava to call for greater interreligious tolerance as against the more exclusive intra-religious concept of tolerance that prevailed in the dominantly Christian past.¹¹ Indeed, increasing religious diversity brought the Dutch issue of clandestine spaces of worship back on the table. Hidden garage mosques are often called *schuilmoskee* after the clandestine Catholic churches, *schuilkerken*, of the Dutch past. A glance at maps of mosques in Amsterdam and Rotterdam reveals that most mosques are located on less profitable land or outside the city.¹² The

Essalam Mosque can be spatially characterized as one of these mosques as it is in one of the poorer districts of Rotterdam-South. Mosques that are located in the city center are virtually never purpose built as the Essalam is, but are renovated schools, offices and sometimes old churches. Newly built mosques are invariably located on less valuable land.

Schinkel provides historical and economic reasons for the distribution of religious architecture in cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam. First of all, many churches already existed before mosques were an issue. When Muslims sought to build their own mosques, the city centers were already built and rapidly increasing in value. The cheaper periphery was therefore an easier attainable alternative for Muslims, but also, e.g. for industrial companies and large hardware chains. Second, there is also a logistical element involved in the choice for the periphery, namely that most mosque-visitors do not live in the city centers. A map by the Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS) shows a clear spatial segregation in Rotterdam and Amsterdam: immigrants and their descendants ordinarily live outside white city centers.¹³

But what types of other spaces can we find in the periphery besides hardware and Ikea stores? These are often prisons, mental institutions, hospitals, cemeteries, asylum centers, parking lots, highways and empty spaces: spaces that fall outside the dominant order of everyday life. These “heterotopias”, as Michel Foucault called them, are spaces where otherness is central.¹⁴ According to Schinkel, social and physical spaces are furthermore linked to the metaphorical space of national discourses. Much of the latter is about making visible the “outside of society”, making the “non-native”, *buitenlander* (literally: outside-dweller) or *allochtoon* (literally: not originally from this land), visible and identifiable, for the sake of controlling the dangers that this outside, which is de facto and paradoxically inside, presents.

The stories of mosque construction in the Netherlands connect an economic narrative about migration, from laboring guest workers to working citizens, with transnational stories of Islam in the Netherlands. If we want to understand the public presence of Islam in Rotterdam in a comprehensive way, it is not fruitful to consider either as epiphenomenal. Both relate to anthropological research on religion and globalization, for example, of Joel Robbins who argues that the religious construction of transcendence in the age of globalization can be viewed as interdependent with economic marginality, though not – I hasten to add – necessarily or as a “flat melding” of these dimensions.¹⁵ As Peter Beyer states the relation of capitalism and religion is by no means “hierarchical in any clear sense”.¹⁶ José Casanova has a similar understanding that “When it comes to religion, there is no global rule”.¹⁷

Recent Research on Social Marginality in Rotterdam-South

A brief survey of recent research on social marginality in Rotterdam-South will show that much has been achieved to improve the situation of Rotterdam-South in the past decades. The construction of the Erasmus Bridge, as well as a brand new subway and an improved tram system connects the city center to Rotterdam-South. Moving from the mosque to the city center by bike, which in Holland is a very popular means of transportation, does not take up more than 10–15 minutes and even shorter by tram.

And yet, in comparison with other Dutch cities, there is still an often expressed need to improve safety, a basic indicator of marginality, in this district. Indeed, the occasional presence of the police and camera-security at the Essalam Mosque contrasts with my experiences in other Dutch mosques where such measures are not always deemed

necessary. For example, in 2011 the football hooligans caused such a ruckus in the neighborhood that the police drew their weapons. It is not uncommon that the police arrest at least tens and sometimes hundreds of football supporters. After a recent raid near the football stadium, the mayor has gone so far to suggest that hooligan offenders are to be publicly exposed by posting their pictures on billboards and electronic screens throughout the city. On another troubling occasion, the police was filmed beating a feeble drunk man. Such events have caused national outrage, and Rotterdam-South's reputation among ordinary citizens has failed to improve.

A closer look at the district reveals however that there are around seven *wijken*, neighborhoods, that are performing poorly from the perspective of several social-economic indicators and that the general Rotterdam-South should be interpreted with the knowledge that a significant part of the district is doing relatively well. Rotterdam-South makes up one-third of the city, with 200,000 inhabitants. Around 75,000 people were living in the so-called *probleemwijken*, the problem areas, in 2011.¹⁸ Not helpful for changing popular opinion is the fact that crime-rates have failed to substantially decrease in this part of the city for the period between 2003 and 2008. Among the community of young Muslim men of Moroccan origin, i.e. parts of the community of the Essalam Mosque, crime rates are four times higher than the average among white Dutch citizen.¹⁹ Nevertheless, living conditions have improved by 2012 as the number of problem areas has been reduced to two rather than seven according to a new safety index. Bloemhof and Hillesluis, the neighborhoods of the Essalam Mosque, are still labeled as problem areas, whereas the neighboring Feijenoord is categorized as slightly safer but still a vulnerable threatened neighborhood or *bedreigde wijk*.²⁰

One of the assumed causes for the relatively problematic position of young Muslim men in Rotterdam-South is their poor socio-economic situation in comparison with youth in other districts of major cities in the Netherlands. Problems already start in primary school, with the entrance exam for high school for which these children score lower than the national average. At least one in five children eventually do not finish high school, while safety and social indices are lower than the national average.²¹ To make the situation more difficult, the district is also struggling to retain the educated class who often decide to leave the areas where they grew up. According to a medical doctor with 28 years of experience in this district, "work is the solution" because "Working people are healthier people". About Hillesluis, the neighborhood of the Essalam Mosque, he said: "Did you know that the people in this neighborhood live ten years shorter than the national average? These are shocking numbers."²²

Scheffer and Entzinger's quantitative study, however, reveals a leap in education levels among Moroccan-Dutch and Turkish-Dutch children of the second and third post-migration generations, as well as a general increase in private businesses. A significant minority of these young Muslim men however continues to suffer an unusually high unemployment rate, low level of education, and high crime rate.

Moreover, it would be a major simplification if the conflicts over mosques in the Netherlands would be represented as between a wealthy "white", Dutch population against a poor "colored" (or "black" as is often said in the Netherlands for all non-whites), e.g. Moroccan population. Strong disagreements exist among and within all groups in the highly multi- and transcultural Rotterdam-South. Not only "natives" but also migrants, e.g. of Chinese or Surinamese descent, can be critical of Muslim aspirations to the city. On a summer day, three teenage, unveiled, Turkish girls asked a Surinamese Rotterdammer living in the neighborhood what he thought about the mosque. The conversation went as follows:

Man: It doesn't belong here. Rotterdam is the harbor, cranes, the Euromast tower.

Girls: But why not? There has to be a mosque right?

Man: Everybody has a right to his own house of worship, but it didn't have to be this big.

Girls: But it isn't that big!

Man: There are many (Dutch) elders living here, and they have worked all their lives.

And they [the Muslim community] should've been more attentive towards their feelings.²³

In other words, work defines who has the "right to the city". By working all their lives, the elders have created the city and with it a right to what happens to it. A stereotype about "Rotterdamers", often reiterated by politicians as well as ordinary citizens, is that they are practical working people in a city of *doeners* or doers. This has everything to do with the city's rising from the ashes after World War II, during which 60% of the city center was destroyed, although the image already existed before the bombardment as well.²⁴ To distinguish themselves from the capital, *Rotterdamers* sometimes say that "in Rotterdam we make the money [by doing hard labor], and in Amsterdam they spend it".

In Rotterdam, the toil of *animal laborans*, who Hannah Arendt described as being engaged with the bare, biological, necessities of life alone, is not sharply distinguished from the creativity of *homo faber*, who Arendt envisions as making lasting edifices of political ingenuity.²⁵ "Arbeid", labor, is widely seen to have slowly resulted in the creation of the city, fusing therefore with what Arendt described as "work", the human activity that transcends the individual that practiced it. Not only have the predominantly laboring Rotterdamers elevated the meaning of hard labor for themselves, but as one of the major laboring cities of the Dutch welfare state their city also resists a too sharp Arendtian separation of the social and the political in general. It should come as no surprise that children of the first generation of so-called (Muslim) guestworkers have pleaded for several statue proposals that honor their parents for their work, while other Rotterdamers are striving to realize monuments to labor in general.²⁶ Resistance to a "Monument for the Guestworker" came in the form of contrasting the guestworkers who arrived after World War II with the hardworking "native" citizens of Rotterdam who are the "real" creators of the city.²⁷ That is, to be included in the history of the city as a working being is thus connected to one's symbolic right to public spaces today, for example, by erecting statues but also by constructing mosques.

Mosque Construction and Spatial Establishment

In this section I come to explaining the first of my two main arguments, namely that mosque construction is a condition for, but not identical to, spatial establishment in the city. In the next, we will intersect this issue with that of work and the right to the city.

Shortly before the opening of the Essalam Mosque, the mosque of peace or the *vredesmoskee* in Dutch, I visited the Muslim community's original mosque in the neighborhood. The Moroccan mosque was barely visible, only a simple sign saying "Moskee Essalam" revealed that there was a mosque. The door paint was cracked. The entrance was not very welcoming to outsiders. The space for *wudhu* or ritual ablution was small, especially given the hundreds of people using the mosque. People often prayed outside in front of the mosque because of lack of space. My first impression of the prayer space was that it was cozy, but visually confusing. The building had not been constructed as a mosque, so the carpets on the floor pointing to the direction of Mecca looked skewed. The space was very dark and the ceiling low. Most men sitting inside were elderly, though

a few middle-aged men were also praying or talking with the others. For someone who thinks of religious architecture mainly through its splendors, this mosque would be a pitiful sight. For the men who were sitting there however, it was their home, somewhere they could relax, converse, and pray.

I asked about the new mosque and was met with an enthusiastic response. Ibrahim, a middle-aged Moroccan man, said: “The new mosque is really beautiful. Look!” He showed me pictures of the Essalam that he had taken with his cell phone. Not just one picture, but at least a dozen, and from different angles and at different times. The new building was just a couple of hundred meters removed from the old mosque. Ibrahim told me that the Moroccan Muslim community (though not exclusively) would walk from the old building to the new for the opening. Walking from the old building to the new, together with the mayor, the board members of the mosque, interested neighbors, with representatives from the foreign sponsor Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation in the United Arab Emirates, would symbolically effectuate a transition. The walk from the old to the new mosque building symbolized a new phase for the Muslim community, a step towards further establishing Islam as a permanent religion in Rotterdam.

The new building’s style, sometimes described as too “traditional” and at other times as a kitschy “nostalgia mosque”, for example, in newspapers and weblogs, has been criticized by politicians such as alderman Marco Pastors as exacerbating local tensions, as well as by Muslims who prefer a less “Saudi” looking mosque, and others who prefer a “Moroccan” mosque, by many of the non-Muslim locals, and by architecture critics such as Welzbacher who think that mosques should be designed to better “fit in” the Dutch or European context. The contrast with the dark, small, and invisible mosque however remains striking. It is not hard to imagine that Ibrahim was happy about the new building, regardless of architectural debates. Moreover, it was in the same neighborhood, so the separation from the old building was not so painful as when one permanently leaves a place for good. Indeed, when finally opened, the elders who felt attached to their original mosque were thanked by the mayor for making the transition from the old to the new.

The mosque finally opened on a snowy day in December 2010. The snow had delayed traffic, so I ended up taking a detour with a tram. I saw two elderly men there, from the first generation of guestworkers, who were also heading for the new mosque’s opening ceremony. One of the men said to the other that the Mayor would be there as well. He did not use the Moroccan born mayor’s name, Ahmed Aboutaleb (Labor Party, PvdA), but the Dutch title “burgemeester”, referring to an official position and the recognition this implied for them. It had been 14 years since the Moroccan community in Rotterdam-South had begun working, arguing, and fighting with the municipality, and with each other, before opening the new and controversial Essalam Mosque.

Following the march from the old building to the new, the mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb and Hamit Karakus, the alderman of Housing and Spatial Planning, opened the mosque. Everyone gathered on the ground floor and were addressed by representatives of the Dutch Muslim community, the sponsors, and of course the Mayor, after which the congregation moved to the first floor to pray in the mosque for the first time. The presence of the Mayor was symbolic given the resistance of the city towards the mosque. The tone of his speech was also quite different, more critically intimate, from his predecessor who had spoken when the first stone was laid. Maussen describes how the former mayor, Ivo Opstelten, had been mostly critical and disappointing to his audience:

When finally, in October 2003, the day of the ceremonial laying of the first stone had come, it celebrated, in the words of a representative of the Al Maktoum Foundation, “a dream come true”. However, to the painful surprise of most of the people who attended the festivities, the Mayor of Rotterdam, Ivo Opstelten (Liberal Party, VVD), chose the occasion to express his dissatisfaction with the design of the new mosque. A “less prominent building”, so he argued, would have been “more suited given the limited role of religion in Dutch society” and it would have been a “recognition of our culture”. The mosque might now become an “exotic attraction” for non-Muslims. As the Mayor put it: “We are enriched with a curiosity which is nice for the people of Rotterdam to see or to show to others. We don’t have to go each time to a museum or to the Euromast”. During the ceremony alderman Pastors ostensibly held his arms crossed so as to express his dissatisfaction. The lack of courtesy of the Mayor and the alderman at this special occasion for the Moroccan community caused a small scandal, and especially for the Mayor to be so outspokenly critical was unusual. It was all the more striking because Opstelten had warmly welcomed the Turkish Mevlana Mosque in October 2001, a building that was also fairly traditional, equally large and (at least in the eyes of alderman Pastors) equally “weird”. During the opening ceremony of the Mevlana Mosque, only a few weeks after 9/11, the Mayor had underlined that Islam in the Netherlands should not be associated with the violence of extremists abroad and that this beautiful new building gave the mosque “the status it deserved in the city” and created new possibilities for further integration of Muslims. It seemed that ideas about the significance of traditionally styled mosque buildings had changed quite a bit since that time.²⁸

Aboutaleb however began his opening speech with charity, and added criticism only after having spoken warm welcoming words:

It has taken long, but the result is here and it deserves to be acknowledged. The snow of today is perhaps not for nothing. Rotterdam has a unique skyline and today a striking building has been added to it, but also a building that has a special significance for many Rotterdammers; a building to pray together; to meet each other; a building for being human. A building that is much more comfortable than mosques where the faithful up until now ordinarily had to rely on, sometimes garages or converted existing buildings.²⁹

The case of Rotterdam is quite unique because it is one of the very few Western European cities that is involved in mosque construction and has a Muslim mayor. In the UK, for example, Muslims have recently been elected mayor in Leicester and Bradford. Aboutaleb has in Holland been described as the “first Muslim mayor of Europe” (disregarding Eastern-Europe’s long established Muslim communities).³⁰ Interestingly, in Moroccan media Aboutaleb was presented not so much as a Muslim but as the first Moroccan mayor of an important European city. Fox News even cited a comparison with Obama as the first black President of the USA: “Obama on the Maas [Rotterdam’s river] ... is maybe going a bit far”, said Jan Franssen, the Dutch queen’s representative for South Holland province [and with whom Aboutaleb took his oath] ... “But the significance is great. This proves that there is no glass ceiling for immigrants in the Netherlands”.³¹ To prove the absence of a glass ceiling scientifically is not as straightforward, but in recent years, there appears to be an increase in Muslim mayors across the world described

by Charles Taylor as that of “Latin Christendom”.³² In Taylor’s Canada, for example, the current mayor of Calgary is also Muslim. In 2007, in the USA, Keith Ellison was sworn in as the first Muslim member of Congress by holding his hand on the Qur’an owned by Thomas Jefferson rather than on the Bible.

Born in Morocco himself, the mayor of Rotterdam was well aware of the skeptical sentiments with regard to Dutch society at large among immigrants. European states that took in guestworkers after World War II had expected a labor force, nothing more and nothing less, and believed that the guests would eventually return to their countries of origin. However, what they failed to realize adequately is that not merely guestworkers had come to fulfill an economic need, but that human beings, of flesh and bone, with their own languages, practices, sensibilities, and extended families had come to Europe and developed roots. The guestworker was never only *l’animal laborans* (laboring animal), but as Mayor Aboutaleb felt necessary to stress, also a “human” endowed with dignity, with feelings and emotions and bound with family and cultural ties to the home countries.

However, in the Mayor’s view the building had not solved the problems of the Muslim community with skeptical Rotterdammers who felt alienated from their environment because of the increasingly visible Muslim presence. It was no secret, he said, that many in the city and in Rotterdam-South are not happy with the mosque. Though the building was a step toward the further establishment of Islam in Rotterdam, the hearts and minds of the skeptical Rotterdammers still remained to be conquered:

The Essalam Mosque will have to conquer its place in the Rotterdam society. Realizing a building is one thing. Acceptance, trust and respect come afterwards. And in the current societal epoch, with its changing social sentiments towards Islam, that is not an easy task. There are many voices in the city against the mosque. And the future task of the board is to win those voices for the peaceful mission of this mosque. I call the mosque’s board to realize the ambition to make this mosque into a building that exists in the center of society.³³

Aboutaleb emphasized the societal impact that the mosque could have, especially when used by as many people as possible. He supported the idea that the mosque is not a place “only for prayer” but also for engaging the city as a “cultural center”. In his vision, the mosque should ultimately become integrated in the tourist attractions of Rotterdam. He ended his speech by talking about the name of the mosque, the Essalam or peace mosque. Saying that one is in favor of peace is not enough, said the mayor: the mosque should live up to its name.

Ironically, the “peace” mosque is one of the mosques in the Netherlands that have surveillance cameras on all sides. The panopticon like protection of the mosque suggested that Aboutaleb’s words had hit the mark. He praised the city and the Netherlands that despite anti-Muslim sentiments, the building had been constructed and had finally opened. The Netherlands, he said, was an example of tolerance in comparison with Muslim majority countries where religious minorities’ rights are all too often violated. By making this comment he reiterated a well-known criticism aimed at the Essalam Mosque by a skeptical Dutch audience: “Can we make a church in their country?!” This is an issue that non-Muslims living in the area felt strongly about, and while I was there, but also on television, it was frequently scathingly remarked that “we can’t build a church in Morocco or Turkey either” – even though historically both countries have accommodated churches.

An obvious challenge to this style of questioning is that from a national and European perspective, tolerance for any faith is not for outsiders but for equal citizens who should not be perpetually compared to and subjectively be placed in their countries of “origin”. On the other hand, by expressing a widely skeptical held sentiment, the mayor could subvert negative sentiments toward the mosque by presenting it as an example of cosmopolitan and transnational importance.

Aboutaleb, the son of an *imam*, ended his speech by reciting a verse from the Qur’an (9: 105) in Arabic: “Do [as you will], for Allah will see your deeds, and [so, will] His Messenger and the believers ...” Indeed, though the mayor strongly supported the construction of the mosque and establishment of Islam in Rotterdam, he appealed to the Muslims first with a moral request, that they do good works and earn the trust of fellow citizens. But in case a purely ethical request would not be sufficient, those who knew the verse would be reminded of its admonition following the call for good deeds. “... And you will be returned to the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, and He will inform you of what you used to do.”

It is remarkable that the verse chosen by Aboutaleb has a clear meaning for those who are familiar with the Qur’an. The context of the verse is that of hypocrites (*munafighin*), who may reside in the city (*Al Madinah*), and whose soul should be purified through acts of charity (9: 101). Just as Aboutaleb said, constructing a mosque is in itself not yet the actualization of charity but a potential for purification through right deeds. The verse was well chosen in his context as mayor of the city, as a leader who must be both compassionate and strict. The section of the ninth Surah is one of the relatively few that actually use the Arabic word for mosque, *masjid*, and continues as follows:

And [there are] those [hypocrites] who took for themselves a mosque for causing harm and disbelief and division among the believers and as a station for whoever had warred against Allah and His Messenger before. And they will surely swear, “We intended only the best”. And Allah testifies that indeed they are liars. Do not stand [for prayer] within it – ever. A mosque founded on righteousness from the first day is more worthy for you to stand in. Within it are men who love to purify themselves; and Allah loves those who purify themselves. Then is one who laid the foundation of his building on righteousness [with fear] from Allah and [seeking] His approval better or one who laid the foundation of his building on the edge of a bank about to collapse, so it collapsed with him into the fire of Hell? And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people. Their building which they built will not cease to be a[cause of] skepticism in their hearts until their hearts are stopped. And Allah is Knowing and Wise. (9: 107–110)

Although Aboutaleb’s quick recital did not immediately spark these thoughts in the audience, since that requires detailed knowledge and interpretation of the Qur’an, it corresponds well to his own expressed position. For Aboutaleb, it is important to keep in mind the distinction between mosque construction and the establishment of Islam, the former as a necessary condition and the latter as a moral, religious, and project.

A mosque-space is not socially constructed in the sense that it is mediated by a mental image which exists in itself, but rather constructed by technologies of ordering physical spaces. In the jargon of “social construction”, words like “belief” and “imagination” can mislead us into downplaying the role of physical things in this process of mediation and, ultimately, into an exaggeratedly anthropocentric epistemology. Stephen Read, an architect, succinctly phrased this insight as follows: “We are creatures who go through

our lives forgetful of most of what Michel Foucault called the ‘awesome materiality’ of our human-technical worlds.”³⁴ A building is not a neutral object waiting to be imbued with meaning by people, but it facilitates values, for or against it, disclosed in and through a “world”³⁵ which exists as a spiraling intertwining of what can only artificially be distinguished as subjective and objective. Mosque construction is a necessary condition for facilitating the establishment of such a world of Dutch Islam spatially. However, mosque construction in itself cannot determine the quality of spatial establishments, which concerns ethics and the feelings of the citizens involved. The latter depends on how the building is used (or not used), i.e. on social practices.

Especially since the 1990s, Western Muslims have moved interior Islamic aesthetics increasingly to the exterior. Crossing the boundaries between private and public religion has been like crossing an ontological barrier, a step that affirms their establishment in European cities. However, as Jocelyne Cesari points out: “From being invisible, Islam goes to being unwanted” as well.³⁶ In the next section, we will see how the calls for piety, morality, and fear are intertwined with righteous deeds (*amaal salih*) or good works (*amaal al kheyr*) not only to achieve a turn in moral comportment, but to literally move young Muslim listeners to educate themselves and seek jobs, and by doing so create possibilities for the societally accepted Islam that Aboutaleb pleaded for.

Work and Morality

To raise awareness for the challenging issues of low levels of education and high rates of unemployment, the Essalam Mosque’s youth organization held their first public event on work and Islam in 2012. A unique and novel development in the Netherlands, it is one of the various events held at the mosque worth consideration to evaluate the life of the mosque since its opening. I describe it as an example of my second main claim, that Islamic morality can motivate to help those who are less well off in finding jobs, and by doing so achieve greater spatial establishment and in the process realize their right to the city.

When visitors enter the Essalam Mosque’s main hall, they see a sign that says *informatiebalie* (information desk) and there are flyers and newspapers on tables and on a wall. Here, I read that the youth organization of the Mosque has an e-mail list. I signed up and was informed by e-mail and SMS that each month, there is a night organized for and by the youth. These events often focus on informing the public about Islamic moral codes, for example, on how to avoid the “Satanic attractions of the summer”, i.e. pleasure and sex. The youth organization often states explicitly social missions. A spectacular event was a session on the social-economic status of young Muslims in Rotterdam-South and was named *De waarde van werk* (the value of work). Flyers, posters, e-mail messages, SMS, and Facebook were used to invite young Muslims. At least several hundred people, young and old, attended.

As usual, the evening proceeded semi-chaotically. People walked in and out, and kept conversing even when a speaker was addressing the audience. The contrast with the discipline and organizational austerity one can find in Dutch churches is striking. The very lively event was filmed and streamed live by *Dawah-TV*, a pious broadcasting website which is active in the Netherlands. It took a while before the maze of camera’s, computers, and wires were all connected with a large beamer, and screened online as well as in the mosque. The event was also filmed by the television crew of *Mijn Moskee is Top* (my mosque is great), a Dutch television show about mosques in the Netherlands. Also present was a famous Dutch-Moroccan comedian, Salahaddine, known for his

YouTube video's in which he makes fun of different groups in society, particularly his own Dutch-Moroccan community. Inviting a comedian to stand before an audience and speak in the mosque was seen as a step too far by the youth organization: "We will be careful to respect the fact that we are in a mosque," said the invitation e-mail that announced Salaheddine's presence. But he did get the chance to informally interview speakers and participants, make jokes, and post the video on YouTube.

Among the speakers was the director of Deltalinqs, an organization that represents the common interests of over 700 companies and associations in the port and industrial area of Rotterdam. In recent decades, the harbor has moved away from the city. By organizing events in Rotterdam, harbor companies hope to reconnect citizens with the harbor. The young Moroccan audience was called to apply for a "world class job in the Rotterdam harbor". In need of young and able men, Deltalinqs tried to recruit young Muslims but also use the occasion as affirmative action. One of the problems in the harbor companies was too homogenous populations. By coming to the mosque, the director hoped to diversify companies, to recruit, but also to contribute to the city by lowering unemployment. To overcome skepticism about working in the harbor, the audience was informed that the work would be mainly technical and with computers. By showing pictures of the working conditions, the young men were told that work at the harbor did not have to be "hard and dirty, and also pays well". To further inform the young men, they were invited to sign up for a tour in the company in the harbor. Around 80 individuals, around one-fourth of the audience, signed up. On two separate occasions afterwards, company buses came to pick them up at the mosque for a tour in the harbor. Some participated because they were looking for jobs and others signed up to be informed so that they would be able to advise their siblings.

Remarkable also was the presence of Marco Pastors, the former party leader of *Leefbaar Rotterdam*, the influential political party that is known for its critical stance toward Islam in the city. A friend and colleague of the late Pim Fortuyn, who changed Dutch politics by explicitly conveying and popularizing his anti-Islamic views, Pastors had protested the construction of the Essalam Mosque. In the documentary on the Essalam Mosque, *Hoger dan de Kuip*, Pastors is filmed talking with a Muslim man in the streets. He expressed criticism about Muslims in the city who did not abide by the law. His interlocutor responded by saying that he has his faith, and that "politics and religion should be separated". Pastors countered in a patronizing tone that "politics is the boss, and religion must listen". In short, he was not someone the audience or I had expected to see in the mosque (although a few days before, the news of his presence had spread informally among at least some in the community). All the more surprising was Pastor's participation in the Essalam Mosque because his name was not announced on any of the flyers, Facebook and e-mail messages. Nordin, one of the young organizers, introduced him to the packed audience humorously: "You know him don't you?" The audience laughed. "You are not coming to say that we have to give up our Moroccan passports are you mister Pastors?" The Dutch government had been seeking to ban dual citizenship. Even more controversial is that Ronald Sørensen, a colleague of Pastors and member of the Dutch Senate on behalf of the anti-Islam Freedom Party, had criticized the mayor of Rotterdam for being a dual citizen. The audience laughed again and a lot of whispering went on, but the ice broke quite easily.

Now having left his political function, Pastors told the audience about his new job as head of a national, and long-term program intended to improve the social-economic situation of Rotterdam-South, the National Programme Quality-improvement South (*Nationaal Programma Kwaliteitssprong Zuid*). Earlier local efforts had been deemed not

successful enough, resulting in the ambition to improve standards in Rotterdam-South by combining local and national government, as well as companies like Deltalinqs, but also other parties such as schools and housing corporations. Referring to an earlier report, Pastors stated that the situation in the district was “un-Dutch” (*on-Nederlands*). Although he was referring to the language used in the recent report on Rotterdam-South,³⁷ in the presence of hundreds of Muslims who are constantly reminded that they are not “really Dutch” this was an insensitive remark, though one that was actually meant to motivate. Pastor’s main worry was the high unemployment rate: 44% of Rotterdam’s unemployed citizens live in South, while around 20–25% of the youth that grows up here fails to finish high school.³⁸ Pastors pleaded that these problems had to be solved “by all of us and together”.

Though in my interpretation, after watching many interviews with Pastors, he did mean well, I experienced his tone to the audience at times as denigrating. The emphasis was on what was not going well. Rather than suggesting that young Moroccan men should pursue higher education, he stressed that lower, more practical, education would also be good. Though to a sensitive outsider this could sound like a discriminatory remark, in the Netherlands it is not intended to be. It resonates well with the famous Dutch saying *doe gewoon, dan doe je gek genoeg* (act normal and you are acting crazy enough).³⁹

By setting the goals lower, keeping as far as possible from the language of competitive ambition or of force, Pastors hoped to convince more young Muslims to seek badly needed practical and technical skills. However, by making remarks such as that “Moroccans should speak more Dutch at home”, he also alienated the audience and needlessly hurt the goal of increasing mutual understanding. Young Moroccans often already speak Dutch with each other, but Tamazight and Darija (Moroccan-Arabic) with their parents. Based on years of conversations with migrants, I think that to say that they should speak Dutch with their parents is to fundamentally misunderstand migrant experiences and feelings in the Netherlands. In conversation with friends with Iranian, Turkish, Somali, Pakistani, and Moroccan backgrounds, I asked them what they thought about Pastors’ remark. Their first reaction was almost always a sigh, followed by a condemnation of the desire to downplay the relevance of their mother tongues. The Essalam Mosque audience’s mistrust was felt during a round of questions to the company director and Pastors: “Will you hire someone if he has a beard or if she wears a veil?” “What are *you* going to about our situation, how are *you* going to help us mister Pastors?” Though reassured that men with beards would be hired, there was a general apologetic atmosphere of feeling discriminated and not being respected. Nevertheless, both men were thanked and there was even applause for Pastors.

Though all the speakers in the mosque emphasized the responsibility of young Muslim men themselves, recent quantitative research suggests that the accusations of discrimination are based on significant socio-economic inequalities.⁴⁰ On a national level, unemployment among young Dutch-Moroccans who were born in the Netherlands has increased to three times that of the “autochthonous” population in 2012. From all groups in the Netherlands, they suffer the highest unemployment rates. All ethnic groups with a recent migration history, including the Surinamese, suffer higher unemployment rates than what is average among the autochthonous, i.e. white Dutch, population. Highly educated citizens, defined as having completed at least a bachelor degree program, whose parents migrated to the Netherlands from a non-western country, have a five times higher chance of being unemployed. Feelings of resentment and mistrust are, as a consequence, prevalent. Chadia, a young Moroccan woman who works in the human

resource department of a commercial Dutch company, was not surprised when I showed her these figures:

Of course! Do you know how my Dutch colleagues look at CV's? It goes something like this: Mohammad ... no ... ; Fatimah ... no ... ; Willem ... hey, this CV looks interesting. They don't even realize that I'm sitting there or that I could be offended! And it's not as if the content of the CV is the only thing that is taken into account.

When the event on work in the Essalam Mosque had finished, Salahaddine's humor functioned as easing the pain of the past: "Did you already convert to Islam?", he asked Pastors, who in his turn laughed and reiterated the importance of work and education. Though he is somewhat insensitive or straightforward at times, the media image of Marco Pastors and likeminded Dutch citizens as "rightwing Islamophobes" is very often a caricature. Members and voters of *Leefbaar Rotterdam* have at times expressed a genuine interest in furthering social-economic standards in the city for all its citizens. The event at the Essalam Mosque showed that despite disagreements, the mosque can function as a common public space. When filmed by the television crew of *Mijn Moskee is Top*, Pastors said that the fact that he was not happy with the mosque in the past, "doesn't have to mean that one shouldn't enter the building today".

The combination of tackling social-economic problems with the assistance of religion was generally hailed as a good idea by all parties involved. One of the young men who organized the event explained as follows: "The mosque is not just a space for prayer. It has to be socially relevant as well, and we think it is high time that everybody gets to work." A reprimanding sermon by the *imam* stressed that Muslims should not blame all their problems to companies, businesses, politicians, or others but to search for the problems within themselves and with the help of their faith. The religious sermon reinforced the idea that young men must seek jobs and education, and that this was an Islamic duty. Not only was there a sermon in Arabic, which many young Muslims in Holland cannot understand properly, but there was also a speech by a Dutch convert, Alexander Abdullah, about Islam and work:

Brothers, I was shocked to find out how many of you are unemployed! ... These people have come to us, to help us find work rather than that we visit them ... We have a responsibility to add to society rather than just take from society!

By rhetorically contrasting the situation of Muslims in Rotterdam-South with the heydays of Islam in Al Andalusia, Abdullah tried to motivate and uplift the spirit of his youthful audience, quite different from the sober and critical approach of Pastors. He spoke about the construction of aqueducts for the city of Cordoba, and about the importance of the city as a central place of learning. Abdullah also criticized the young men for not being self-critical, blaming their problems on others, and not being sufficiently responsible:

Know my dear brothers, that soon you will be the one who is responsible for the care of your family. You will be the ones who must pay for a house, must care for your wife and support your children. You will be the ones who must carry the responsibility of being hard workers. If you do not prepare yourself now, that will surely result in disadvantages when the time has come.

In between talks, the religious dimension was emphasized through prayer and the ritualized conversion, the *shahada*, of a young woman, who could not be seen, but was in contact with the men through speakers. The main purpose of the event was to inform

the men of possible employment opportunities. Abudallah was asked afterwards what he thought about combining the call toward practicing the Muslim faith, or *da'wah*, with matters related to employment: "I think this is a great combination. Organize, and put the youngsters at work. Such events should be organized more often".

A few months later, I contacted Deltalinqs to find out more about their experiences with the mosque. Cees Alderliesten, one of the organizers of the event, stated that on balance he was very content with how things had proceeded. Of course, the effectiveness of such events has to be taken with a grain of salt as ordinarily less than 20% of applications eventually lead to a job. Organizations such as Deltalinqs have tried to help young people find a job with similar strategies in other locations as well. In one case, of a 1000 people invited to look for a job in a greenhouse, eventually only around 10 people actually found a job. The first barriers that Deltalinqs are trying to overcome are the very negative reputation of the harbor, as well as its distance from the city, which is around 50 km until the Maasvlakte at the North Sea, the actual harbor area, is reached. The event was not only meant to influence the younger audience, but also to inform the elders who can spread the word to family and friends. Moroccan fathers, who had worked as guestworkers in the harbor decades earlier, ordinarily advised their sons to find a nice, clean, desk job instead. Because of a great need for technically skilled people in the harbor however, the mosque's youth organization involved itself in changing attitudes toward the harbor.

In comparison with earlier attempts to get young people to the harbor, there was great enthusiasm. The new mosque turned out to be important for locating, and influencing, the youth. Before, it had been difficult just to find a dozen interested individuals for a bus trip to the harbor.⁴¹ In fact, Alderliesten did not expect to receive the many reactions made possible by the new contacts:

I come from a Protestant background myself, and I didn't know what was possible or not in a mosque. In the end, the combination of preaching and talking about work and being able to offer something right there, in a place where people feel at home and at ease, turned out to be very effective ... The media attention and the extra push by the imam and Alexander Abdullah turned out to increase the number of people that we could reach.

Judged as more effective than anticipated, Alderliesten mentioned that efforts are being made by Deltalinqs to organize a similar event in the nearby Kocatepe Mosque for the Turkish-Dutch community in Rotterdam-South. "What the Moroccans can do, we can as well", was the sentiment in that mosque. Although these encounters are still relatively new, it is likely that Islam, as an established minority religion that employs Muslim piety to further social ends will continue to color the lives of young Muslims in Rotterdam.

A year later, the Essalam Mosque again organized an evening for the youth on education and finding a good job. The theme was "the most beloved act", *de meest geliefde daad*. This time I watched from home, thanks to a livestream. The audience was first brought to calm with a Qur'an recitation of the *imam*, after which Alexander Abdullah spoke about "the most beloved servant of Allah, who is of most benefit for others". Abdullah emphasized the importance of the right habits in life, necessary for a strong, stable and moral character. At the end of his talk he connected the religious message to a field of work, this time engineering. Having a good job, he said, is to acquire a place in society and to flourish ethically: "Do you want to succeed as a person, and as a community, make sure that you become a stable person." The young boys were then

informed by seniors in education and business about the importance of technical skill and the degree programs that they could pursue, e.g. about the metal industry. In contrast to the previous year, a more positive approach was chosen: the evening was less centered on what was going wrong in Rotterdam-South than on possibilities for the young. The safe, homely, atmosphere ensured that criticism was tolerated in a more relaxed manner. Hugo de Jonge, Rotterdam's alderman of Education (on behalf of the Christian Democratic Appeal), was present as well. He smiled to the young audience and said that he was happy to be able to speak in a mosque, something that he had not done before. "It is very good that you are together here and are thinking about work, about how to make the right choices ... We need a lot of people with technical skills ... Know that employers will need you badly in the near future."

Conclusion

On a sunny day in spring I was reading in the prayer space on the main floor of the Essalam Mosque. I looked at the bright light, white walls, and calligraphic drawings hung on the wall and thought about how they contrasted sharply with the dark, claustrophobic, mosque that I had visited the first time. A young man walked inside and sat down listening to a sermon or *khutba*, and what sounded like music to me on his iPod.⁴² He spent an hour of his quiet Sunday afternoon there. One should take into account such calm, comfortable, moments as well when considering busy events such as the ones I described in this essay. As a comfortable space, where people sit and pray together, the mosque turned out to be an ideal place to reach out for parents and their children looking for work. The Essalam Mosque resists social marginality, while also being an emotional safe haven for the Muslim community.

The social emancipation promoted by the mosques such as the Essalam occurs at times within questionable, conservative, moral limitations. For Ali, a young intellectual who also prays at the Essalam Mosque, the religious interpretations offered in sessions organized by the youth organization are too conservative, let alone for non-believing proponents of a non-pious sexuality as guaranteed by a secular, liberal democracy. By emphasizing the capacity of Islam to empower, I have not suggested that the mosque may not simultaneously disempower and block the emancipation of Muslims. The "often limited and limiting effects of religions on people", for example, through patriarchy, exist in this case as well.⁴³ "Was the event on work also for women or only for men?", asked Ali skeptically. Given that unemployment among young Moroccan women is as high as among men, it is a pertinent question. In this essay, I have argued for a complex understanding of what empowerment out of marginality is. Adding disempowering elements of the Essalam Mosque only further complicates and deepens that understanding.

In many senses of the word, as was made clear by mentioning the problems affecting Rotterdam-South, the space surrounding the mosque can be perceived as marginal, and makes people of a migrant background visible. The mosque as peripheral and "exotic" can be seen to assist in the perpetual "migrantization" of Muslims in the Netherlands, as observed by Murat Es.⁴⁴ It would be more accurate to add to these dimensions of the marginality thesis that the mosque produces a space for Islam that is not necessarily perceived as marginal by Muslims themselves. As one young man summed up his judgment about the mosque, it is "a place for us". The Muslim community did not insist on building a mosque in the city center, but simply demanded to expand and become visible in the neighborhood that they consider their own.

In this essay, we also distinguished the physical construction of a mosque from the moral establishment in the city. Although the former has to a large extent been realized, the latter has not. The anti-Islamic Party for Freedom stated in its election program for 2012 that it seeks to ban the construction of new mosques. On a popular political party picking website, just before the elections on 12 September, one of the questions was whether one agreed that “the construction of new mosques must stop”. When over four million people had filled out the questions, 55% had agreed with this illiberal idea, while only 28% disagreed.⁴⁵ Of course, one may question the methodology and phrasing that was used to arrive at this figure. It can nonetheless be seen as an indicator that although mosque construction has largely been realized, mutual acceptance or a “post secular rapprochement”, i.e. establishment in a deeper sense of the word, remains contested.⁴⁶ Using mosques as facilitators for the improvement of education levels and employment rates of their communities is one of the ways for Muslims to change the tide.

Acknowledgements

Kamel Essabane and Eeva Liukku provided helpful comments and data for this chapter. Stephen Read at the Faculty of Architecture of Delft Technical University took the time to help me rethink my concepts, and Justin Beaumont reminded me of the importance of faith-based initiatives for social emancipation. I would also like to thank the editors of the *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*.

NOTES

1. My translation from the documentary *Hoger dan de Kuip*, higher than the Kuip, which refers to the minarets of the Essalam Mosque about which residents complained that they were higher than the lights of the nearby Feijenoord football stadium, the Kuip. Available on <http://www.hollanddoc.nl>.
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9. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
10. My translation, Thomas Schmitt, *Moscheen in Deutschland. Konflikte um ihre Errichtung und Nutzung [Mosques in Germany. Conflicts around Their Construction and Use]*, Deutsche Akademie für Landeskunde [German Academy for Regional Studies], Band 252, Flensburg, 2003, p. 31.
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15. Joel Robbins, “Is the Trans- in Transnational the Trans- in Transcendent? On Alterity and the Sacred in the Age of Globalization”, in *Transnational Transcendence: Essays on Religion and Globalization*, ed. Thomas Csordas, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009, p. 64.
16. Peter Beyer, *Religions in Global Society*, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 40.
17. José Casanova, “Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective”, *Hedgehog Review*, Vol. 8, Nos. 1–2, Spring-Summer, 2006, p. 17.
18. “Rotterdam-Zuid kent vele pareltjes” [Rotterdam-South has many Gems], *Volkskrant*, October 8, 2011.
19. Paul Scheffer and Han Entzinger, *De staat van integratie – Rotterdam Amsterdam* [*The State of Integration – Rotterdam Amsterdam*], Rotterdam and Amsterdam: Municipalities of Rotterdam and Amsterdam, 2012, p. 50.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Team Deetman/Mans, *Kwaliteitssprong Zuid: ontwikkeling vanuit kracht* [*Quality-jump South: development out of strength*], Werkendam: AVANT GPC, 2011.
22. “Rotterdam-Zuid: Het afvoerputje van ons land” [Rotterdam-South: The Drain of our Country], *AD Nieuws*, February 17, 2011.
23. From Hoger dan de Kuip. See note 1.
24. In a promotion movie made in the 1920s, for example, the Rotterdam of the future is portrayed as a city of mainly hard workers. The film *De stad die nooit rust*, the city that never rests, was made by an Hungarian artist, Andor von Barsy (1899–1965).
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26. See, for example, the proposals for a “Monument for the Guestworker” (<http://www.hansvanhouwelingen.nl>), the “Tribute to the Rotterdammers” (<http://www.eerbetoonaanderotterdammers.nl>), and <http://www.havengroet.nl>. The Monument for the Guestworker was Finally Realized in 2013.
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28. Marcel Maussen, *op. cit.*, p. 230.
29. “Essalam moet plek in Rotterdamse samenleving veroveren” [Essalam must conquer place in Rotterdam’s society]. Accessed December 17, 2010. <http://www.rijnmond.nl>.
30. “Pastors betreurt uitspraak over Aboutaleb” [Pastors regrets statement about Aboutaleb]. Accessed September 6, 2009. <http://www.nrc.nl>.
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32. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.
33. “Essalam moet plek in Rotterdamse samenleving veroveren” [Essalam must Conquer Place in Rotterdam’s Society] Accessed December 17, 2010. <http://www.rijnmond.nl>.
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35. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, San Francisco: HarperCollins, [1927] 1962. Also see Arendt, *op. cit.*, 1958.
36. Jocelyne Cesari, “Mosque Conflicts in European Cities: Introduction”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 6, 2005, p. 1018.
37. Team Deetman/Mans, *op. cit.*, 2011.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
39. Today, white Dutch parents often avoid forcing their child to follow a specific path in education, and believe that children should not have to be severely disciplined qua education. Montessori schools and other more liberal or “freethinking” pedagogic approaches have been popular in Holland for decades. A pedagogic romanticism is highly favored, in which parents emphasize the “natural” talents and interests of their child which must be given “space” to flourish without being too much steered from above and are fashioned in an as egalitarian as possible relation to other pupils.
40. Forum Monitor “Allochtonen op de arbeidsmarkt 1e kwartaal” [Forum Monitor Allochthons on the Labor Market 1st Quarter], 2012. <http://www.forum.nl>.
41. “Allochtone jongeren: niet in Rotterdamse haven werken” [Allochthonous Youth: don’t [want] work in Rotterdam’s Harbor]. Accessed November 9, 2011. <http://www.ad.nl>.

42. There are voices in the Essalam Mosque, as well as in other Dutch mosques, that view music as potentially corrupting the soul. Charles Hirschkind has given a description of such aural “modesty” for the case of Egypt. See Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2006. Extreme forms of Islamic aural conservatism are known to result in music bans and aural gender apartheid, for example, in Iran. In the Netherlands, Turkish, and Moroccan Muslims ordinarily believe that there is no place for music in a mosque. Extending aural “modesty” to outside the mosque plays almost no role in the Netherlands, but has caused (very minor) irritations, for example, when other Muslims celebrated the end of Ramadan by having a televised feast that mostly revolved around singers and musicians. There have also been mosques in the Netherlands, which have at times allowed music in their mosque and even in their prayer space, for example, the Turkish Fatih Mosque in Amsterdam.
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46. Paul Cloke and Justin Beaumont, “Geographies of Postsecular Rapprochement in the City”, *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2013, pp. 27–51.