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Intercultural policies and intergroup relations

Case study: Amsterdam, the Netherlands



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About CLIP

In 2006, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the city of Stuttgart and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) established a 'European network of cities for local integration policies for migrants', henceforth known as CLIP.¹ The network comprises a steering committee, a group of expert European research centres and a number of European cities. In the following two years, the cities of Vienna and Amsterdam joined the CLIP Steering Committee. The network is also supported by the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), and has formed a partnership with the European Network Against Racism (ENAR).

Through the medium of separate city reports (case studies) and workshops, the network enables local authorities to learn from each other and to deliver a more effective integration policy. The unique character of the CLIP network is that it organises a shared learning process between the participating cities and between the cities and a group of expert European research centres, as well as between policymakers at local and European level.

The CLIP network currently brings together more than 30 large and medium-sized cities from all regions of Europe: Amsterdam (NL), Antwerp (BE), Arnsberg (DE), Athens (EL), Barcelona (ES), Bologna (IT), Breda (NL), Budapest (HU), Copenhagen (DK), Dublin (IE), Frankfurt (DE), Helsinki (FI), Istanbul (TR), İzmir (TR), Kirklees (UK), Liège (BE), Lisbon (PT), Luxembourg (LU), L'Hospitalet (ES), Malmö (SE), Mataró (ES), Newport (UK), Prague (CZ), Strasbourg (FR), Stuttgart (DE), Sundsvall (SE), Tallinn (EE), Terrassa (ES), Turin (IT), Turku (FI), Valencia (ES), Vienna (AT), Wolverhampton (UK), Wrocław (PL), Zagreb (HR), Zeytinburnu (TR) and Zürich (CH).

The cities in the network are supported in their shared learning by a group of expert European research centres in:

- Bamberg, Germany (European forum for migration studies, efms);
- Vienna (Institute for Urban and Regional Research, ISR);
- Amsterdam (Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, IMES);
- Turin (International and European Forum on Migration Research, FIERI);
- Wrocław (Institute of International Studies);
- Swansea, Wales (Centre for Migration Policy Research, CMPR).

There are four research modules in total. The first module was on housing – segregation, access to, quality and affordability for migrants – which has been identified as a major issue impacting on migrants' integration into their host society. The second module examined equality and diversity policies in relation to employment within city administrations and in the provision of services. The focus of the third module is intercultural policies and intergroup relations. The final module (2009–2010) will look at ethnic entrepreneurship.

The case studies on intercultural policies were carried out in 2009.

¹ See also <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/populationandsociety/clip.htm>.

Acknowledgements

The researchers at IMES of the University of Amsterdam are responsible for this report on Amsterdam. Considerable effort has been made to find all the necessary data on Amsterdam for this study, and invaluable help was provided by the contact person from the municipality of Amsterdam, Marian Visser of the Platform Amsterdam Samen (PAS). Many officials and other parties who are involved with integration policies, statistics and support of immigrants were interviewed (see the list at the end of this report). Notably, these included officials from the Social and Welfare Department and from the city districts Westerpark and Slotervaart, as well as from projects that cooperate with the municipality. They have provided the author with reports, statistics and comments on the concept version of this report.

In addition, representatives of the Polder Mosque, the Union of Moroccan Mosques in Amsterdam (UMMAO), the group Young Muslims in Amsterdam (MJA), the Network of Key Figures and Project Connect willingly provided information. Researchers from the University of Amsterdam also provided data and useful comments. The author wishes to thank all those who cooperated in giving information, particularly Marian Visser for coordinating the search for data.

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Introduction

This module of the CLIP project focuses on intercultural and interreligious dialogue: on the one hand, this concerns the policies that the city of Amsterdam has introduced on this subject; on the other hand, it relates to the way in which the immigrants who are involved think about their needs regarding this issue. As Heckmann explains in his introduction paper for this CLIP module (Heckmann, 2008, p. 3), the topic of this module:

has to do with phenomena of urban life that are related to the multi-national, multi-ethnic and multi-religious structures of urban populations which challenge the ability of municipalities to establish or keep peaceful relations among the different segments of the population. In present day political discourse, relations between different ethnic and religious groups, immigrants and natives are predominantly discussed in terms of 'intercultural dialogue' and/or 'interreligious dialogue'. We will conceptualise these phenomena as cases of intergroup relations. This conceptualisation stands for an abstraction working with the assumption that there are similarities in the relations between quite different 'groups'.

This understanding has been established in the field of intergroup relations research in social psychology and sociology. The approach focuses on interactions and relations, and stresses that general explanations and practical recommendations can be made for the relations between different groups. As Sherif and Sherif explain:

'...intergroup relations refer to states of friendship or hostility, cooperation or competition, dominance or subordination, alliance or enmity, peace or war between two or more groups and their members' (Sherif and Sherif, 1969, p. 222). 'Intergroup behaviour refers to the actions of individuals belonging to one group when they interact, collectively or individually, with another group or its members in terms of their group membership...' (ibid, p. 223).

As Heckmann (2008, p. 4) states, from a political and practical point of view, two dimensions of intergroup relations are of particular interest for local governments: conflict between groups and policies to avoid or solve conflict between groups, that is, conditions of social cohesion in a city.

The concept of 'group' on which intergroup relations research is based is rather broad. In the CLIP project, it includes the city administration, the city council, political parties, churches, labour unions, welfare organisation foundations, local media and anti-immigrant movements, among others, in the majority society. On the part of the minorities, it includes religious groups and national minorities. Among the religious groups, Muslim communities find particular attention. Where Muslims are not the most relevant group, another faith-based community is of interest in our research. It is noteworthy that most of the religious groups are organised on an ethnic basis.

Led by this conceptualisation of intergroup relations, a questionnaire has been developed, comprising three parts: local intercultural policies in general; local policies towards Muslim communities; and intergroup relations and radicalisation. This questionnaire was sent to the contact person for Amsterdam. After the responses to the questionnaire were received, the city representative was contacted again and a city visit was arranged. Interviews took place with officials of the administration and with representatives of immigrant associations and projects. Interviews were also arranged with researchers. The full list of interviewees is shown at the end of this report. A combination of the answers in the questionnaire and information from the interviews was used to write this case study. The report is organised in a similar way for all the cities participating in the project, although a section was added to this report, entitled 'Immigrant and religious associations and the policies towards them'. Intercultural and interreligious dialogue is defined as cooperation at the organisational level, either formal or informal. The study also examines the attitudes of the population under the heading 'Relations between ethnic groups'.

In the case of Amsterdam, the central concept of the policy that is currently used – according to the director of PAS, Henk van Waveren – is *Verbinding* (connecting). This policy is not particularly directed at interethnic relations, but at all intergroup relations between citizens in Amsterdam – therefore, it also encompasses conflicts between younger and older citizens, or between religious groups like Christians, Jews, Muslims and Hindu, or people with different political views.

Verbinding is used when policy is directed at one of the following:

- neighbourhoods – this involves searching for existing connection points where people already find each other and can interact, so that social cohesion may increase;
- migrant or religious associations – while these are, by definition, connection points, they can be stimulated to become more diverse connection points;
- anti-radicalisation – this entails finding connections among individuals who are in the process of becoming radical and among less radical groups in order to make them feel part of society (this is explained further in the subsequent chapters).

Moroccans are the second largest immigrant group in Amsterdam, probably soon becoming the biggest group, and in the case of Amsterdam, Muslims are explicitly named in policy documents. This is related to the national debate on Muslims, where right-wing parties and individuals ‘problematise’ Muslims, while Amsterdam continues its efforts to combat prejudice against Muslims and its policy seeks to address Muslim and other radicalisation since the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh. The awareness of the authorities that a particular section of the young Moroccan population perceives society as being anti-Muslim and the authorities as being unfair in their treatment of Muslims has led to a conflict prevention strategy based on stimulating connections.²

² According to an analysis of the conflict potential, conducted in November 2004 by the Bestuursdienst Amsterdam, the following characteristics increase conflict: lack of trust in the neutrality of the police, perception of unequal access to political and economic sources of power, and group anger.

Background

Brief history of migration to the Netherlands

The Netherlands was a destination country for immigrants as far back as the 17th and 18th centuries, when the country was a centre of trade and shipping and tolerant to religious refugees. The percentage of immigrants, which was around 10%, diminished to a very low level in the first half of the 20th century (Lucassen and Penninx, 2002). After the Second World War, emigration was dominant, as new farmlands were discovered in the United States (US), Canada and Australia. However, as Table 1 shows, a negative trend (more emigration) in the 1950s turned into a positive trend (more immigration) in the 1960s.

Table 1: *Estimates of net number of migrants in the Netherlands, by five-year intervals, 1950–2000*

1950–1955	1955–1960	1960–1965	1965–1970	1970–1975	1975–1980	1980–1985	1985–1990	1990–1995	1995–2000
-123,000	-31,000	36,000	55,000	152,000	168,000	55,000	151,000	190,000	161,000

Source: *Migration Policy Institute (MPI), calculated from the United Nations Population Division, 'World population prospects: The 2000 revision', 2001*

The few immigrants that arrived in the period 1945–1960 came from the former Dutch colonies Suriname in South America and Indonesia. Surinamese elite sent their children to study in the Netherlands, Indonesians with one Dutch parent could remain Dutch after independence in 1949, and the Indonesian army officials from the Moluccan islands who had fought in the Dutch army in Indonesia had to be resettled in the Netherlands because they were not safe in Indonesia. About 1960, immigration began to rise. The first large influx was a result of the regulations relating to the independence of Suriname in 1975. While independence was meant to stop immigration, citizens of this former colony had the right to choose between Surinamese and Dutch nationality for a period of five years – in the end, half of the inhabitants of Suriname decided to move to the Netherlands. A second large influx of immigrants was caused by the booming economy and the need for cheap labour from the 1960s onwards. Factory and shipyard owners – first in southern Europe, later in Turkey and Morocco – recruited so-called 'guest workers'. Although initially temporary, their immigration became permanent and wives and children also arrived. During the period when the European Union (EU) was further institutionalised, neighbouring countries, particularly Germany, also added to the number of immigrants. In the 1980s, the Dutch economy experienced a downturn and the first measures were taken to stop immigration. A significant refugee population was growing in that period, at first encompassing those from the then communist countries, but in more recent decades mainly involving those from Third World War areas, namely Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Somalia and other countries. Since 2000, the number of Chinese and Polish immigrants has been increasing considerably. The number of Poles has been growing rapidly since 2007.

The percentage of people with a foreign nationality has been stable at about 4.3% since 1997. The number of naturalisations rose from 12,800 in 1990 to 82,700 in 1996, then falling to 45,300 in 2002, according to the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (*Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, CBS*).

Table 2 shows the largest ethnic groups in the Netherlands as at 1 January 2009 in three categories that are often distinguished in Dutch statistics – namely, immigrants from Western countries, from non-Western countries and from refugee countries. On 1 January 2009, the total Dutch population was 16,405,399, of whom 13,189,983 (80%) were considered as autochthonous Dutch (note that anyone with one or two parents born abroad is not considered autochthonous).

Table 2: Netherlands population, by Dutch and immigrant groups, first and second generation, as at 1 January 2009

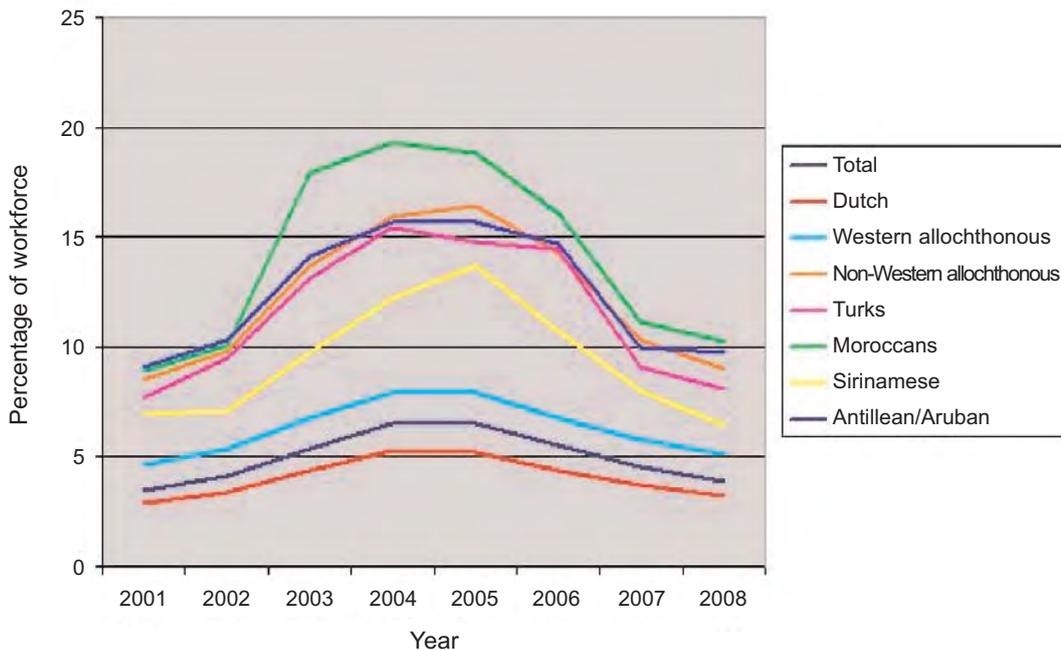
	Total 2008	Total 2009	1st generation immigrants	2nd generation immigrants
Total population	16,405,399	16,486,587	1,664,500	1,625,171
Dutch population	13,189,983	13,196,916		
European countries				
Belgium	112,333	112,529	37,017	75,512
Germany	379,610	379,518	104,383	275,135
United Kingdom	76,090	77,733	43,572	34,161
Former Yugoslavia	77,115	77,995	52,648	25,347
Poland	58,853	69,115	50,802	18,313
Former Soviet Union	49,530	52,563	39,431	13,132
Non-Western countries				
Indonesia	387,124	384,553	121,423	263,130
Turkey	372,714	378,400	195,520	182,880
Suriname	335,799	338,519	185,001	153,518
Morocco	335,127	341,640	166,877	174,763
Netherlands Antilles and Aruba	131,841	134,486	79,629	54,857
China	47,108	50,681	35,291	15,390
Refugees				
Iraq	45,459	49,234	38,693	10,541
Afghanistan	37,370	37,739	30,737	7,002
Iran	29,771	30,617	24,535	6,082
Somalia	19,549	21,753	15,224	6,629

Source: CBS, 16 April 2009

As Table 2 shows, the older immigrant groups already consist of a large second generation population. Within these groups, the male to female ratio is about 50%. The refugee populations consist to a larger degree of men – for instance, 58% of the Iraqi refugees and 53% of the Iranian refugees are men. The relatively new immigrant groups – Poles and Soviet citizens – consist of a larger percentage of women (both 60%). The distribution of immigrants by age depends on the time of arrival. Among Indonesians, an ageing population is increasingly visible. The first-arrived Turkish and Moroccan guest workers are now in their 60s and 70s. Among the new immigrant groups, such as the Iraqi, Iranian and Afghani groups, there are not many elderly persons. In general, the non-Western immigrant groups have larger families than the Dutch and Western immigrants.

The socioeconomic status of immigrants from neighbouring countries is either similar to the level of the Dutch people or better. However, the socioeconomic standard of non-Western immigrant groups is generally poorer than the Dutch level. This is particularly true for the former guest workers from Morocco and Turkey and for refugees – although it is not necessarily the case for every ethnic group. Figure 1 shows the percentage of people working and/or on welfare by ethnic group and among the Dutch population. Welfare includes social security benefit, unemployment benefit, health benefit or disability allowance.

Figure 1: *Unemployment as a percentage of workforce, by Dutch and largest ethnic categories, 2001–2008*

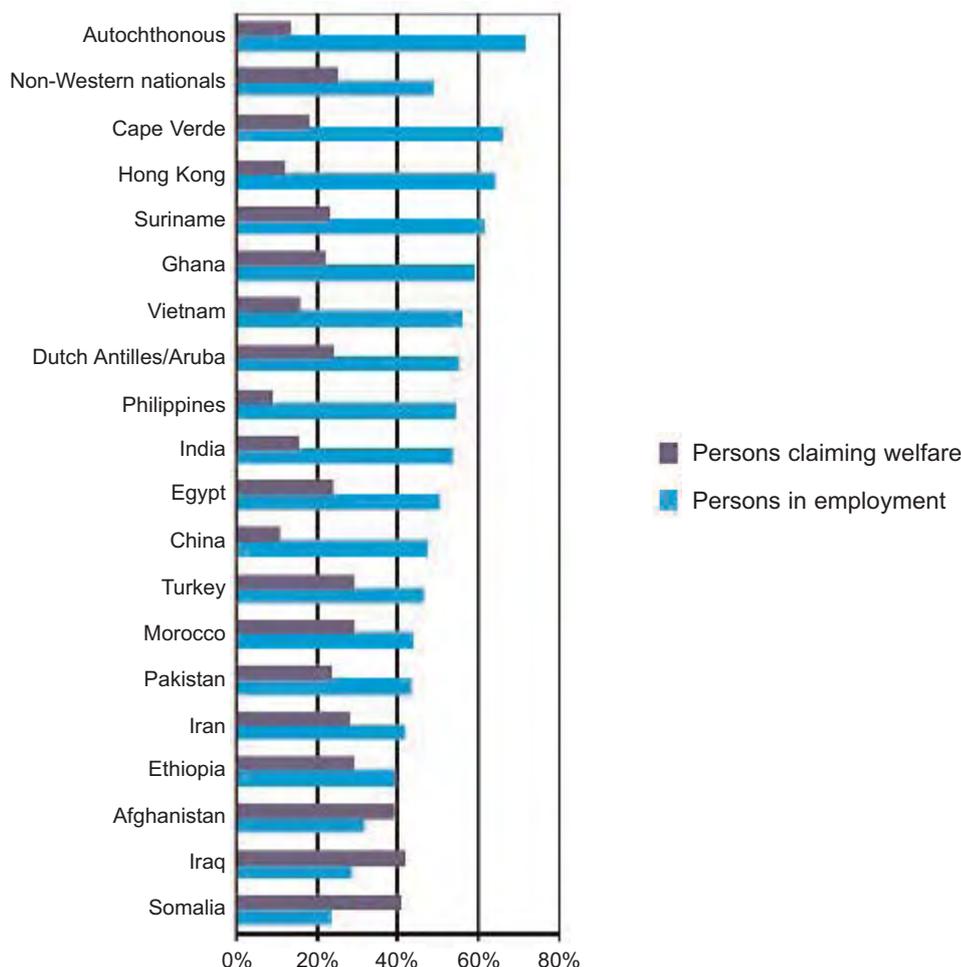


Source: CBS press bulletin (Persbericht), 'Werkloosheid niet Westerse allochtonen in 2008 licht gedaald', 17 February 2009

As Figure 1 shows, unemployment levels among the Dutch population are considerably lower than among non-Western immigrants and their children. As shown in the CLIP city report in 2008 (Van Heelsum, 2009), this situation does not improve for the second generation of immigrants.

Figure 2 differentiates between Dutch and immigrant groups on the basis of the proportion of people in employment and in receipt of welfare.

Figure 2: Percentage of persons in employment or on welfare, 2004



Notes: Data refer to the working age population aged 15 to 65 years.

Source: Research and Documentation Centre (Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum, WODC), *Integratiekaart (Integration monitor) 2006*, p. 26 (based on Social Statistical Data (Sociaal Statistisch Bestand (SSB)) of CBS)

As Figure 2 shows, the percentage of working people among all ethnic groups is larger than the proportion of people on welfare, except for Afghani, Iraqi and Somali refugees.³ The highest percentages of working people and the lowest percentages of people on welfare are found among the Dutch population and among people from Hong Kong, the Philippines and China. Although the three refugee groups from Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia are the most problematic groups, not all refugee groups have a larger proportion of people on welfare than working: this can be seen in relation to the Vietnamese (who arrived relatively earlier) and Iranian immigrants, of whom a significantly higher proportion are working than on welfare. The four largest non-Western immigrant groups – Suriname, Turks, Moroccans and Antilleans – have relatively higher shares of persons on the net very low social security benefit (a basic sum needed to survive), while the Dutch population have a greater proportion of people on the net higher unemployment benefit (calculated as a percentage of their previous income). Among the Turkish population, a higher share of people are on a disability allowance than on social security benefit.

³ Asylum seekers are not allowed to work until they receive their refugee status, which can take up to 10 years.

National policy context

Integration policies

Rijkschroeff et al (2004) divide the national policies concerning immigrants into three phases. The first phase, underway in the 1970s, was a categorical policy focusing on specific fields. Special provisions were put in place for Moluccan⁴ ex-soldiers. The Surinamese, who were not expected in such large numbers, were supported on an ad hoc basis by welfare associations, which were funded by several municipalities. In the study *Nota Buitenlandse Werknemers* (1970), guest workers were encouraged to maintain their identity and culture of origin so they would not face difficulties on their return. Due to the assumed temporary nature of their stay, no attempts were made to provide Dutch language courses or information on the society. A long-term consequence of this is that the language proficiency of these low-educated men is often limited to this day.

The second phase began with a 1979 publication issued by the country's Scientific Council for Government Policy (*Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid*, WRR), which was followed by the first policy document – *Minority policy 1983 (Minderhedennota 1983)*. The Dutch government realised that the stay of guest workers was no longer temporary and this raised concerns in relation to immigrants in the Netherlands. This minority policy was directed at stopping a trend whereby immigrants were acquiring a permanent disadvantaged social position – to this end, measures were taken in the areas of education and the labour market. Integration was considered to be a two-sided process, and the importance of respect for immigrants' culture was highlighted in this policy document. A positive attitude also emerged towards the rights of religious groups – for instance, in relation to establishing mosques and Hindu temples.

Rijkschroeff et al (2004) call the third phase 'integration policy' – this started in 1989 with the WRR document *Policy on Allochtonous (Allochtonenbeleid)*. Documents like the 1994 *Integration policy for ethnic minorities (Contourennota Integratiebeleid Etnische Minderheden 1994)*, *Investing and intergrating (Investeren en Integreeren 1994)* and *Getting opportunities, seizing opportunities (Kansen krijgen, kansen pakken 1997–1998)* show an urge to motivate and mobilise immigrants to learn the Dutch language, increase their knowledge and adjust to Dutch culture. Professional courses became obligatory for newcomers. The problems arising in relation to the children of immigrants in the educational system became clearer and are now targeted.

A fourth phase started around 2001, when a representative of the right-wing parties became Minister for Immigration and Integration Affairs – first Hilbrand Nawijn of the List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) Party and then Rita Verdonk of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (*Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie*, VVD). Both politicians were known for their anti-immigrant standpoints. Some proposals to limit the rights of foreigners to a level below the rights of Dutch people were discussed in the second chamber, but implementation was not always possible, as the proposals were in conflict with the Dutch constitution. The media debate became harsher and more hostile towards immigrants, and many of them felt uncomfortable. This period lasted until the elections of 2006. The new government since 2007 has had a friendlier approach to immigrants.

Important changes in the policies on integration/citizenship for the municipalities took place with the Law on the Citizenship of Newcomers (*Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers*), effective from 1 January 2007. Municipalities became more responsible than before in their role of supporting the integration of newcomers, as was shown in the second CLIP module (Van Heelsum, 2009).

⁴ Refers to the Moluccan Islands, an archipelago in Indonesia.

Policies on immigrant associations

Subsidies are given to immigrant associations at both national and local level. In the Netherlands, there are a large number of immigrant associations: 1,125 Turkish associations, 881 Surinamese associations, 720 Moroccan associations, 399 Moluccan associations, 244 Chinese associations and many other ethnic groups (Van Heelsum, 2004a and 2004b). About one third of these organisations, particularly the religious ones, generate their own money with the help of gifts and contributions to pay for their own building and activities. Some organisations have limited finances and work from the homes of members, such as refugee associations. A small proportion of organisations are run professionally and incorporated into the social, educational or broadcasting system. These smaller ones (estimated to be about 45%) work with limited subsidies, usually from the municipalities, and add to their income by asking for entrance fees or contributions (Van Heelsum, 2004b). If the municipalities provide subsidies or a building, they usually require that an organisation cooperates on the objectives of the integration policy.

As part of its official minorities policy, in the mid 1980s the Dutch government promoted the establishment of national bodies representing the major immigrant groups in order to have a counterpart for consultations on policy issues concerning immigrants. The structure of these institutions is regulated by an Act of Parliament and the bodies are fully financed from public funds. The National Council of Minorities (*Landelijk Overleg Minderheden*, LOM) comprises seven councils representing different nationalities – more specifically, there is a Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, Caribbean, South European, Chinese and Refugee council. The officials are employed by the ministry. The councils have associations as their members and represent all associations of the particular immigrant community as much as possible. These bodies offer an opportunity for immigrant groups to voice their opinions and discuss their interests with government ministers and high-ranking civil servants. A critical few mainly serve to legitimise the policies of the government.

Another important body created and financed at national level is the Contact Organ for Muslims and the Government (*Contactorgaan voor Moslims en Overheid*).⁵ This platform was also established as a discussion partner for the country's Minister of Integration Affairs, and as far as possible is made up of all the Islamic denominations that exist in the Netherlands. The fact that it was assembled by the government is, on the one hand, an advantage – otherwise the extremely different religious groupings would not come together as easily; on the other hand, it represents a disadvantage because traditionally powerful figures are chosen to represent the groups and young Moroccans, for instance, do not feel represented, as indicated by the interviews conducted for this report.

Policies on separation between Church and state

The relation between the Church and state is based on two articles of the country's constitution: Article 1 on non-discrimination and equal treatment and Article 6 on the freedom of religion. A more explicit law on equal treatment, the General Law on Equal Treatment (*Algemene Wet Gelijke Behandeling*) has applied in the Netherlands since 1994, and is meant to stop any form of discrimination. Maussen describes four principles in the interview that the Netherlands traditionally applies in the spirit of these laws (for further information, see Maussen, 2006).

- Equal treatment is promoted, not only of citizens, but also of religious and non-religious organisations. This means that faith-based associations such as the Salvation Army (*Leger des Heils*) may not be rated lower than a non-religious association when it establishes social work activities. In line with this principle, a decree on meat inspection as far back as 1977 made Islamic slaughter possible; Islamic burial was also made possible by a change in the law on burials in 1991.

⁵ According to its website, <http://www.cmoweb.nl>, the members are: the Turkish Diyanet-related Islamitische Stichting Nederland (ISN); Stichting Turks Islamitische Culturele Federatie (TICF); the Turkish Suleymancilar Stichting Islamitisch Centrum Nederland (SICN); the Turkish Milli Görüs Noord Nederland (MGN); the Moroccan Unie van Marokkaanse Moslim Organisaties Nederland (UMMON); a Shia body, Overkoepelende Sji'itische Vereniging (OSV); Nederlandse Islamitische Federatie (NIF); the mainly Surinamese/Pakistani World Islamic Mission (WIM); the Limburgse Islamitische Raad (LIR); and Vereniging Imams van Nederland (VIN).

- Religious freedom is not only a negative freedom – in the sense that it should not be obstructed – but also positive: the government can sometimes actively help in providing for religious needs; this is referred to as the social component of basic rights. Public space rules still apply, such as the safety of the building. However, since the constitutional revision of 1983, there is no longer any direct financing of religion.
- The public sphere is pluriform and there is no single state institution – thus, there is a preference for several types of schools rather than one state school. The Dutch school system makes it possible for public, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim and Hindu schools to apply for the same subsidies, as long as they follow the national curriculum and maintain the required quality standards. In addition, within the national broadcasting system, a Muslim and a Hindu broadcasting organisation can obtain subsidies, just like the many other broadcasting organisations.
- There is an emphasis on freedom of choice. This means that there has to be choice, both in the religious terrain, for instance in terms of protection against religious coercion, and in the social domain. Thus, in the case of social work services for young persons, there have to be at least two institutions to give people a choice.

The history of Church–state relations in the Netherlands has been strongly marked by pillarisation (*verzuiling* in Dutch) – a term used to describe the denominational segregation of Dutch and Belgian society – although this is not the active system any longer. Under this system, societies were, and still are in some areas, vertically divided into several smaller segments, or ‘pillars’ (*zuilen*), according to different religions or ideologies. These pillars all had their own social institutions – newspapers, broadcasting organisations, political parties, trade unions, banks, schools, hospitals, universities, scouting organisations and sports clubs. Some companies even only hired personnel of a specific religion or ideology. This led to a situation where many people had no personal contact with people from another ‘pillar’.

As Maussen (2009) remarks, pillarisation principles are actually becoming more modern again, since pluriformity is already important in this context and the system can easily also apply to ethnic and religious newcomers. Relations between the state and religious institutions have changed since 1983, although mosques were indirectly helped by the principle that Muslims have equal rights regarding places of worship and had arrears. A systematic policy did not really exist in relation to the housing of minority religions, but support was occasionally offered by the municipalities (Maussen, 2009, p. 53–54). Since 2000, politicians have instigated a public debate, arguing that the system has to change and that the state should have as little as possible to do with religious organisations. On the other hand, the national government has been supporting competence training for imams since 2002, which includes a course and guidebook on citizenship for ‘spiritual caretakers’ (see Maussen, 2006, p. 241). The events of 9/11 in the US and the murder of Theo van Gogh in 2004 triggered a debate, especially in Amsterdam, on the extent to which the state has to support a liberal Islam; exert some form of supervision, particularly of schools; and implement anti-radicalisation policies. In March 2009, the Association of Dutch Municipalities (*Vereniging Nederlandse Gemeenten*, VNG) published a manual for municipalities about religion in the public sphere. It deals with the legal limits of religion in the public sphere and gives advice on integration policy and religious organisations, on relations with religious associations and on some solutions from practice.

Profile of Amsterdam

Brief description of the city

Amsterdam is the largest city in the Netherlands, with 758,198 inhabitants as at 1 January 2009. Although the Hague in the west is the seat of the government, Amsterdam is the capital of the Netherlands. The city developed as a centre for trade and shipping on the banks of the River Amstel in the Middle Ages. In 1275, a dam was built in the Amstel to collect tax from passing ships laden with herring from the North Sea and beer from Germany. In about 1306, the city acquired town rights, which included the right to have walls, a market and a court. It soon became the most powerful town in the region, both politically and economically, with trade relations expanding internationally. The trade of large shipping companies with the East Indies added to its economic position. In the 17th century, the 'Golden Age', Amsterdam was known for its wealth, power, culture and tolerance. Foreign traders, writers, painters and labourers were welcome in this environment, as well as political and religious refugees, who were protected and had more rights to uphold their views than anywhere else. Churches were built, for instance by the Catholic Walloons, Scottish Anglicans and Portuguese Jews, but also by many 'conventicals' (churches in hiding) of the persecuted religious groups from other countries. Amsterdam was known for its intellectual and religious tolerance. Thus, a religious pluriform society had already developed during this period (Lucassen and Penninx, 2002).

In the 19th century, economic growth and immigration diminished, and by the first half of the 20th century, the city reached its lowest point. However, after the Second World War, Amsterdam's economy recovered, resulting in the revival of immigration and further expansion of the city. In the last half of the 20th century, Amsterdam's inhabited area nearly doubled in size.⁶ International migration contributed considerably to its growth during this period. The town can basically be divided into three types of districts. Firstly, there is the city centre, with its canals and circular street pattern, while southward there are the relatively well-to-do southern districts. Secondly, there are the less wealthy but nevertheless up-and-coming old areas around the centre (West, Oost, Westerpark). Thirdly, there are the newer areas further out from the centre (Slotervaart, Noord).

Amsterdam's migrant population

Immigration to Amsterdam is as old as the city itself. While the percentage of immigrants nationally was about 10%, the share of foreign-born persons in Amsterdam was three times higher: it was consistently about 30% in the 17th and 18th centuries (Lucassen and Penninx, 2002). At the beginning of the 20th century, immigration was at its lowest point, but it increased again from 1960 onwards. Firstly, this was related to the influx of immigrations from Suriname following its independence in 1975, many of whom ended up in Amsterdam. Of the two main ethnic groups in Suriname, the Creoles (Afro Surinamese) went in large numbers to Amsterdam, while the Hindustanis (Indian Surinamese) went to the Hague.

The wave of guest worker immigration also affected Amsterdam significantly. The first Mediterranean, Turkish and Moroccan workers lived in pensions, with many residing in one room. When their settlement became more permanent, they moved to small, cheap apartments in the old parts of town just outside the city centre. The guest workers were poor and interested in saving and sending money home. The increase in the number of Turks and Moroccans in the old areas of the city caused some of the Dutch inhabitants to move out.

After this first phase of large-scale immigration, three patterns were visible: family reunification of guest workers; ongoing immigration as a result of family formation and student immigration of Surinamese and Antilleans; and the arrival of a large variety of new immigrant groups, such as refugees and economic immigrants, including Ghanaians, Egyptians and Chinese. Family reunification led to some movement of the Turkish and Moroccan population to bigger houses in the New West area, which therefore became concentrated with Turks and Moroccans.

⁶ A dynamic map of the inhabited area from the year 1000 to 2000 can be found on the website of the Amsterdam Historical Museum at <http://www.ahm.nl/>.

The current ethnic composition of Amsterdam's population is shown in Table 3. The percentage of Dutch stood at 51% as at 1 January 2008. The other half of the population is a mixture of Western (14%) and non-Western groups (35%). Of the non-Western groups, 58% are first generation and 42% are second generation immigrants. The Surinamese are still the largest ethnic group (68,813 persons), although the Moroccans have nearly reached the same number (67,153) and their immigration is continuing – therefore, they are expected to become the largest group in the near future. It should be noted that among the persons counted as Surinamese, a much larger percentage of the second generation group has one Surinamese and one Dutch parent (40%); this percentage only amounts to 7% among the Moroccans and Turks. Therefore, the Turkish and Moroccan groups are more homogeneous; this will probably last for a few decades because of religion, as they generally tend to prefer a Muslim partner.

Table 3: *Composition of Amsterdam population, by native and largest ethnic groups, 2007–2008*

	Number of persons 2007	Number of persons 2008	% 2008	1st generation 2008	2nd generation 2008
Dutch	382,104	381,374	51%		
Surinamese	68,878	68,813	9%	40,218	28,595
Moroccans	66,256	67,153	9%	34,390	32,763
Turks	38,565	38,913	5%	21,523	17,390
Antilleans	11,290	11,440	2%	7,017	4,423
Other non-western	71,269	72,175	10%	48,470	23,705
Westerners	104,742	107,422	14%	57,963	49,459
Total	743,104	747,290	100%	209,581	156,335

Source: *Dienst Onderzoek en Statistiek (O+S) website Amsterdam, 16 April 2009*

As a news item on the website of the Department for Research and Statistics (*Dienst Onderzoek en Statistiek, O+S*) of Amsterdam⁷ shows, the highest increase in 2008 took place in relation to immigrants from Bulgaria (41%) and Romania (32%). It is also striking that the new economies China, India and Russia are in the top 10 countries accounting for the highest increase in Amsterdam. At the same time, immigrants from western Europe are also increasing in number.

It is possible to have dual citizenship in the Netherlands. Of the Surinamese population, 1,988 (2%) have a foreign passport and 3,857 (6%) have two passports; of the Moroccans, 19,447 (30%) have a foreign passport and 44,474 (68%) have dual nationality; of the Turks, 10,569 (28%) have a foreign passport and 26,570 (69%) have dual nationality (O+S, 2006).⁸

From a gender perspective, Amsterdam has 10,000 more women than men, and this surplus is also true for some immigrant groups. Conversely, the age composition of immigrant groups is different from the total Amsterdam population, and there are not as many elderly among the immigrant population. As at 1 January 2006, some 6% of the Surinamese population were older than 65 years, compared with 17% among the Dutch population. The percentage of Surinamese elderly persons is higher than among other non-Western groups – for instance, only 3% of Turks and Moroccans in Amsterdam are above 65 years of age.

⁷ O+S website can be accessed at <http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/>.

⁸ Note that the Moroccan state does not allow citizens to give up their Moroccan nationality.

On the other hand, there are relatively more children and young people aged 0 to 18 years among Amsterdam's immigrant groups. Among the Dutch, 15% of the population are aged 0 to 18 years, compared with 29% of the Surinamese, 37% of the Turks and 41% of the Moroccans.

A specific characteristic of Amsterdam is that more than half of its households (55%) consist of one person, and this proportion is still increasing. Couples without children comprise the second largest group (20%), while one out of seven households (15%) is a couple with children; one out of 10 households (10%) is a single-parent family. Among ethnic minority groups, the pattern is different. Suriname, Antillean, Ghanaian, Dominican and Columbian groups have a considerably higher percentage of single-parent families. For Surinamese, the percentage is 60% and for the other groups it ranges between 70% and 77%. It is interesting to see that the percentage of single mothers among the Surinamese is 70% in the flats of the Zuidoost city district, but only 45% in the newly built middle-class housing occupied by this group.

The socioeconomic position of the large immigrant groups is not as good as that of the Dutch. Table 4 shows that unemployment (as a percentage of the total workforce) is only 5% among the Dutch population in Amsterdam, while all immigrant groups, including Western immigrants, have at least 10% unemployment. Of the non-Western groups, Moroccans are in the worst position, with 28% of its population unemployed, while 20% of Surinamese/Antilleans and 15% of Turks are unemployed. Gross participation rates are also worst for Moroccans, followed by the Turks and the Surinamese/Antilleans, with the Dutch at the top of the list. Although the first Turkish and Moroccan immigrants arrived as uneducated guest workers, their labour market position has developed in a fundamentally different direction: Turks have an unemployment rate of 15% compared with 28% among Moroccans.

Table 4: *Amsterdam's working, unemployed and non-labour force rate, by ethnic group, as at 1 January 2006*

	Total workforce (no. of persons)	No. of persons working	No. of unemployed persons	Unemployed as a % of total workforce	Non-labour force (no. of persons)	Total population aged 15–64 years (no. of persons)	Gross participation rate (%)
Surinamese and Antilleans	40,600	32,600	8,000	20%	20,100	60,700	67%
Turks	14,500	12,200	2,200	15%	11,800	26,300	55%
Moroccans	20,000	14,400	5,600	28%	22,200	42,200	47%
Other non-Western groups	34,600	27,900	6,700	19%	16,300	50,900	68%
Western groups	64,100	57,900	6,200	10%	18,500	82,600	78%
Dutch	212,900	201,500	11,500	5%	63,600	276,500	77%
Total	386,700	346,500	40,200	10%	152,600	539,200	72%

Source: *O+S Amsterdam, 2006*

While the average income and purchasing power in Amsterdam are above the national average, there are large differences between the poorer and richer city districts. In the city centre, inhabitants' income is well above the national average; however, in city districts such as Geuzenveld-Slotermeer, Bos en Lommer and Zuidoost, nearly 25% of the households live below the social minimum. These districts show a high concentration of Surinamese, Turks and Moroccans. The incomes of non-Western immigrants are still far behind those of Western immigrants and the Dutch population. This gap widened further between 1998 and 2003. Some 46% of young Moroccans grow up in households at or below the legal minimum standard, compared with 32% of other foreigners and 13% of young Dutch persons.

City's Muslim population and its characteristics

While there are no exact figures for the number of Muslims in Amsterdam, O+S Amsterdam has two ways of estimating their number. The first method is based on the large survey called the *Burgermonitor*, which is conducted yearly in Amsterdam (Table 5). The number of Muslims totals 66,959 persons, representing 11.4% of the population. However, it should be noted that this survey concerns people over 18 years of age and that the percentage of children among immigrants is in fact higher – thus, the overall percentage would be greater if children were included.

Table 5: *Size of Muslim population in Amsterdam, 2006*

	Total number of persons (18 years and older)	Number of Muslims	% Muslims
Surinamese	52,258	4,390	8.4%
Antilleans	8,643	0	0.0%
Turks	25,769	17,343	67.3%
Moroccans	41,151	32,057	77.9%
Other non-western autochthonous	50,275	9,552	19.0%
Western autochthonous	91,643	1,283	1.4%
Dutch	333,546	2,335	0.7%
Total	603,285	66,959	11.4%

Note: The Amsterdam *Burgermonitor* is a survey conducted among persons aged 18 years and older. The survey asked the question: 'To which religion or ideological movement do you feel related?' ('Met welke religie of levensbeschouwelijke stroming voelt u zich verwant?'); note the 2008 survey did not contain this question.

Source: *O+S and Amsterdam Burgermonitor, 2006*

The second method used by O+S looks at the two largest ethnic groups with a considerable percentage of Muslims: namely, the Turks and the Moroccans. This method is used to look at labour market, educational and other characteristics. The size of Amsterdam's Turkish and Moroccan population totals 38,913 and 67,153 persons, respectively (as at 1 January 2008). Both groups have a relatively large young population: 53% of the Turkish population and 58% of the Moroccan inhabitants are younger than 25 years of age, while 87% of both groups are younger than 50 years of age. Moroccan women in particular – and to a lesser degree, Turkish women – have a relatively large number of children, although these high fertility rates are decreasing rapidly.

As mentioned, the labour market position and educational attainment of Moroccans in particular are more problematic than for other ethnic groups, with unemployment reaching 28% of the workforce for Moroccans (see Table 4). A considerable proportion of young Moroccans believe that they are discriminated against when looking for jobs and apprenticeships due to the general image of Muslims and Moroccans. For Muslim girls, wearing of the headscarf is an issue when they apply for jobs. In some sectors, there has been greater acceptance a headscarf in the last 10 years, but not everywhere. School dropout rates, however, remain a big problem among the second generation of Moroccans (Crul and Heering, 2008).

Local intercultural policies in general

This chapter will begin by looking at Amsterdam's policies towards immigrant integration, which are formulated in such a way that they are intercultural policies, including policies towards immigrant and religious associations. It will then go on to examine intercultural and interreligious dialogue by associations, both formal and informal. In the section on relationships between ethnic groups, the focus will be on attitudes in the population. Finally, the chapter will look at communication and media in this context.

Responsibility in the city and general approach to ethnic issues

Responsibility

Amsterdam is governed by a 'red-green' coalition, comprising the Dutch Labour Party (*Partij van de Arbeid*, PvdA) and the Green Left Party (*GroenLinks*) (2006–2010). The central city government determines the general strategy and controls central services. These include, for instance, health (general health services, healthcare for drug addicts, centres for homeless people), higher education (school buildings, information about the quality of educational institutes), general social services (immigrant reception, employment and income services), infrastructure and town planning, housing, public transport, the environment, the harbour and many other services. The city is now divided into 14 city districts, with their own elected councils, a chairperson and a governing council.⁹ After 1 May 2010, these will merge into seven bigger city districts. City districts usually have some five or six departments covering general affairs/governance (public services, logistics, personnel, post and communication services); finances; public space and environment; well-being (social work, nurseries, elderly and young persons, immigrants); education (primary schools) and sports; and labour and housing (markets, shops, building permits, ground).

A number of departments play a role at the central level in relation to integration policies, policies to increase social cohesion and combat radicalisation, and policies directed at immigrant associations. The first important section is called Education and Citizenship (*Educatie en Inburgering*, E&I) and is responsible for citizenship and language courses for new immigrants and immigrants who have never had the opportunity to take such courses. This service was described in the second CLIP module (Van Heelsum, 2009) and will not therefore be treated in this report. The service is part of the Department of Social Development (*Dienst Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling*, DMO).

A second unit within the same department is the Diversity Unit (*Unit Diversiteit*). The responsibilities of this unit are: implementing the policies towards immigrant associations; determining their subsidies through the Integration and Participation Subsidy (*Subsidieverordening Integratie, Participatie en Sociale Cohesie*, SIP) arrangement; and implementing the anti-discrimination and gay policy.

A third relevant unit is Platform Amsterdam Together (*Platform Amsterdam Samen*, PAS), which runs the temporary programme coined We Amsterdammers (*Wij Amsterdammers 2005–2010*). This temporary unit is not part of the administration's departmental structure and is therefore independent and more flexible in its approach. The platform works together with the Diversity Unit in operating the so-called Desk for Good Ideas (*Meldpunt Goede Ideeën*, MGI), which will be described further later on. The platform also cooperates with the body Public Order and Safety (*Openbare Orde en Veiligheid*, OVV), in which the Information House on Radicalisation (*Informatiehuishouding en Radicalisering*, IHH) programme is established.

The implementation of the policies developed by PAS takes place through cooperation between the central-level and city districts. Since this report cannot deal with all 14 city districts, it will look at two examples in the city districts – namely, intercultural policies in Westerpark (Chapter 4) and policies directed at Muslims in Slotervaart (Chapters 5 and 6).

⁹ The fifteenth one (Westpoort) is the harbour, but this does not have its own council or officials.

General approach to ethnic issues

As outlined in the introduction, a central theme in the policies of Amsterdam is *Verbinding* (Connecting). In the policy document entitled *Being part of and participating, 2003 (Erbij Horen en Meedoen 2003)*, integration was defined as mutual acceptance by both the host society and immigrants, as well as active participation by the immigrants. A more recent policy development is the PAS We Amsterdammers programme.

Important issues for PAS are social cohesion, stopping exclusion, dealing with polarisation and preventing radicalisation. The director of the PAS explains, 'By itself, social cohesion is nothing, the main issue is where to find the connections; one can, for instance, look for these connections on a square in a neighbourhood or at schools. Finding these connections works indirectly against polarisation. It is important to find the right connections.'

Maussen (2006, p. 70) describes how the policy of PAS is typically based on a dialogue model, the objectives of which include stimulating mutual understanding; stimulating debates about Islam and other relevant issues; promoting discussion among Muslims on the diversity within Islam; maintaining contact with more orthodox mosques like the El Tawheed Mosque; paying considerable attention to discrimination; and promoting a 'we feeling' among Amsterdam's inhabitants.

The theoretical basis of PAS's work covers both social cohesion and conflicts between groups. On the one hand, concepts such as social capital are used, and the common understanding is that a lack of binding and bridging social capital in immigrant communities may lead to isolation and, in extreme cases, radicalisation. The administration asked for help and contacted a Hungarian-American professor, Erwin Staub, who analysed which characteristics in a society bring about violence, but also how conflicts can be solved. At the request of the municipality of Amsterdam, Mr Staub applied his reasoning to the situation after the murder of Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam. The municipality is naturally interested in preventing conflict and stimulating a situation where destructive ideologies have no room to incubate and where ingroup-outgroup thinking will diminish. Mr Staub's terminology and theoretical concepts are used – a few of his points can be summarised as follows (Staub, 2007).

- Humanising the 'other' – media reports can portray the lives of Muslims in an understandable way, giving knowledge of groups' needs to help people understand and not fear each other. Other measures to this end include encouraging 'deep' contact, beginning in schools and among young people, as well as arranging common activities, for instance in sport, business or neighbourhoods.
- Promoting a shared vision of a hopeful future through dialogue between Dutch and Muslim leaders, in which the involvement of Muslim religious leaders is crucial. This objective also includes encouraging an inclusive and caring environment for children.
- Active involvement of members of minority groups in political debates in order to express the needs of immigrant communities; empowerment through engagement in constructive activities; promoting positive leadership; helping influential individuals to take responsibility and seeing how they can exert influence through their words and actions in order to mobilise their group.

Using these ideas, in 2006 a second version of the action plan emerged in which the emphasis shifted to the underlying reasons for radicalisation and polarisation. The main themes of the new plan are accumulation of social capital; establishing limits and demands; and offering perspective and opportunities. The actual work of PAS for the period 2005–2010 is currently divided along three important lines: stimulating social cohesion; promoting resilience within

society to counter processes of radicalisation through diminishing the breeding ground for radicalisation and dealing with polarisation; and countering radicalisation. These objectives are further elaborated on under the following three subheadings.

Uniting people with the city and each other

The main targets here are social cohesion, binding and bridging social capital, commitment to and pride of the city and (visible) opportunities in the city. The approach comprises strengthening and linking networks, investing in relations with key figures, deploying existing social capital by, among other means, connecting elite groups, and realising meetings between (groups of) people through the use of key facilities such as sport, culture, economy and education. Examples of projects realised include platform gatherings; social cohesion think tanks; a TV series called *Canon of the History of Amsterdam*; a TV series called the *West Side Soap*; city games (sport); the Good Ideas Centre (*Meldpunt Goede Ideeën*, MGI); and Project Connect (more information will follow on some of these projects).

Developing Amsterdam's 'resilience' to radicalisation

This objective seeks to improve the flexibility and coping capacity in case of crisis. Targets are the promotion of mutual respect, reducing (feelings of) discrimination, a tolerant approach to religious persuasion and less disruptive, provocative behaviour. The approach involves the participation in and influencing of public debate, broadly and narrowly defined actions against (feelings of) discrimination and bias, and involving teachers and parents in solving problems. Examples of projects include awareness-raising activities; the Complaints Bureau for Discrimination Amsterdam (*Meldpunt Discriminatie Amsterdam*); a campaign against discriminating admission policy applied by catering establishments; and a local alert network in the case of tensions.

Opposing radicalisation

A key target here is to empower the Muslim community to counter radicalisation by increasing its religious 'resilience' and by stimulating active involvement of professionals and mosques in opposing radicalisation. The approach comprises creating support for and of Muslim organisations and mosques; supporting organisations that make the diversity in Islam visible and promoting dialogue; involving and advising professionals, particularly those working with young people; and propagating a strict anti-radicalisation policy and tolerance of religious orthodoxy. Examples of activities include the programme Information House on Radicalisation (IHH), which develops expertise relating to dealing with radicalisation; invests in networks of experts and professionals; and supports anti-radicalisation policy and experts in several city districts (see Chapter 6).

It is relevant that city districts adopt their own policies to stimulate social trust and a resilient society. The programme incorporates a broad, integrated approach, since the problems addressed in *We Amsterdammers* affect the entire city, and its residents can therefore provide a valuable contribution to finding solutions. The city districts play an important role in this process. Since 2006, the city districts have their own *We Amsterdammers* budget, which they use for (supporting) city district projects that combat polarisation and promote social cohesion. A few examples of the city district initiatives include platforms to discuss islamophobia and homophobia, protocols for incidents and Ramadan activities.

As PAS was established as a direct consequence of the escalating situation after the murder of Theo van Gogh, it also clearly focuses on Muslims as one of the groups that is part of the possible conflict. Therefore, these recent policies cannot be effective without cooperation with Muslim religious institutions, particularly mosques and the Amsterdam councils of mosques. This raises questions over the extent to which the municipality should fund activities of these religious institutions. Amsterdam's Mayor, Job Cohen, takes a clear standpoint on this issue, which according to Maussen (2006, p. 76) is more in line with a pluralistic model than with the dialogue model of the council. To find the necessary connections between Muslims and other parts of society, mosques are indispensable – however, project proposals with mosques caused serious discussion in the city council a number of times because the council thought that

the state was becoming too involved in religious issues (Maussen, 2006, p. 78). In the area of anti-radicalisation, it seems virtually impossible to work without religious leaders and organisations – even then, it has been difficult in recent years to get proposals accepted.

For this reason, the city's mayor asked for a policy paper on dealing with issues of Church and state, which was completed in 2008 (*Notitie Kerk en Staat 2008*) and accepted by the city council in 2009 as a basic way to deal with initiatives of religious groups. The aforementioned principle of equal treatment is a very important part of the policy document. The principle of inclusive neutrality – whereby the government maintains a neutral attitude towards religions and treats them equally, ensuring that no religious group gets an advantage over another – is considered the basis of Amsterdam's view on society, although occasionally the principle of 'compensation neutrality' can apply; the latter refers to instances where historical or structural inequalities between religions may exist, as a result of which the government can give extra support based on grounds of disadvantage or social cohesion.

Issues, demands and interests of immigrants

Currently, the most important issues that concern immigrant groups are firstly connected with their labour market position/income and education, and secondly with religion and culture.

As outlined in Chapter 3, more immigrants are out of work or in low-paid jobs than Dutch citizens. Up to 2008, there was a slight improvement in the employment rates of minority groups in Amsterdam. It is likely that the economic recession will strike these vulnerable groups in particular. A lot of immigrants from the guest worker period who arrived during the 1960s and 1970s are disabled due to the heavy work that they did in the past, and since they were never offered language courses, they have limited knowledge of the Dutch language. This increases the chance of unemployment and makes it difficult to participate in a broader sense. Secondly, there is a trend among the second and third generation migrants to choose work above additional education. Another problem facing young people is that internships are hard to get. Consequently, there is more poverty among Turks and Moroccans: for instance, nearly 50% of young people in Amsterdam with a Moroccan background grow up in families that 'live below the minimum'. Although the figures are not as high in the case of other migrant groups, there is a clear relation between income and ethnicity.

Their first issue of concern is education. Children from minority groups have lower participation rates and experience Dutch language problems more often. After primary school, these children are more frequently advised to follow lower levels of secondary education (VMBO) than other children. Some 25% of them start their secondary school education later and have higher drop-out rates. Measures such as preschool education and language training are introduced to try to prevent these problems. A limited number of young persons move on to higher education, although a share of Turks and Moroccans are getting through to colleges and universities.

The second type of issue that immigrants consider important relates to cultural and religious issues. Immigrants, particularly Muslims, feel stigmatised and experience negative attitudes in Dutch society towards their religion (see also Chapter 5). In the past few years, Amsterdam's Mayor Cohen has repeatedly argued for making use of the religious infrastructure of the city to meet the city's policy goals on integration and participation, polarisation and countering radicalisation among young people. This has resulted in increased cooperation between religious organisations and the city, but also a heated debate on the subject of separation between the Church and state. As already explained, this ongoing debate has delayed the implementation of city projects with regard to the policy objectives mentioned above, which is a source of frustration for immigrant associations.

Immigrant and religious associations and the policies towards them

This section will firstly look at the number and type of immigrant associations, followed by religious associations. It will also assess the funding of these organisations, as well as the issues which these associations consider relevant.

Immigrant associations

As Van Heelsum (2005) shows, in 2000 Amsterdam had 217 Surinamese associations, 189 Turkish associations and 170 Moroccan associations. At that time, the organisational density (organisations per 100 citizens of a community) was considerably higher for Turks (5.6%) compared with Moroccans (3.1%) and Surinamese (3%). Besides their higher organisational density, the Turks also had a better network between their organisations, which was largely due to the then still effective advisory board of Turkish associations.

Since then, the number of associations seems to have grown considerably. The most recent data on the number of immigrant associations per city district are gathered by Vermeulen (2009). He estimates that there are now 4,800 immigrant associations, of which 837 are Surinamese associations, 446 are Moroccan and 457 are Turkish associations.¹⁰ While the above data from Van Heelsum include organisations that are not officially registered and organisations of the second generation, Vermeulen's data are gathered through the Chamber of Commerce, where associations and foundations can register if they want to legalise, for instance so that they can open a bank account or lease a building. The figures shown in Table 6 are low estimates, since they only concern the officially registered section of the associations, while unregistered clubs also exist; they only relate to first generation immigrants; and the estimates are based on 30% of the registered associations being checked.

Table 6: *Estimated number of associations in Amsterdam, by city district and ethnic group, 2007*

City district	Total number of associations	Associations per 1,000 inhabitants	Surinamese	Moroccan	Turkish	Ghanaian	Antillean
ZuiderAmstel	1,336	28.6	32	13	9	13	9
Amsterdam-Centrum	4,156	51.4	83	25	37	12	4
Oud-Zuid	2,253	26.9	72	38	43	9	14
Westerpark	578	17.0	12	33	15	0	9
Oud-West	710	22.5	20	26	33	0	6
Oost/Watergraafsmeer	1,135	19.3	89	36	49	14	3
Zeeburg	664	14.2	44	42	24	6	9
Amsterdam-Noord	847	9.7	45	52	39	42	3
Slotervaart	591	13.5	50	74	27	0	4
Osdorp	435	9.6	31	28	59	9	0
De Baarsjes	397	11.7	25	22	30	3	6
Bos en Lommer	272	9.0	32	29	29	0	0
Geuzenveld-Slotermeer	278	6.7	21	26	63	5	0
Zuidoost	1,182	15.2	281	2	0	221	79
Total	15,095	20.3	837	446	457	334	146

Note: Areas shaded in pink denote neighbourhoods where there is a concentration of immigrants (more than 15%).

Source: *Converted by Vermeulen (2009) for the purpose of this table*

¹⁰ These are the associations registered in the Chamber of Commerce, of which 50% or more of board members are born outside the Netherlands; these represent 31.8% of the total number of registered associations (Vermeulen, 2009).

Table 6 shows firstly that the Dutch associations are always in the majority in any of the city districts. Secondly, it is evident that the immigrant associations are not as concentrated in the neighbourhoods where large numbers of immigrants live as one would logically expect. Even though a concentration of Moroccans live in the neighbourhoods shaded in pink in Table 6, there are also 38 Moroccan associations in the richer Oud-Zuid district, where fewer Moroccans reside. It is striking that there are 13 or more Moroccan associations and nine or more Turkish associations in all the city districts, except the Zuidoost district. Moreover, in the case of the Surinamese community, there are 12 or more associations in all city districts – although in this instance, there is a greater number of associations in the area where the Surinamese are concentrated, namely the Zuidoost district. The associations of the much smaller Ghanaian community are not spread across all city districts; there is a high concentration of these associations in the Zuidoost district, and in five other districts there are more than six Ghanaian associations.

An indication of the type of associations is only available at national level. Van Heelsum (2004a, p. 64) shows that within the Surinamese, Turkish and Moroccan communities, religious associations form the largest category, while among the Chinese, educational organisations are more prominent; organisations involved in development aid are more numerous among the Moluccans and Somali.

Religious associations

To give an idea of the enormous religious pluriformity of Amsterdam, two maps compiled by Marck and van der Nederveen-Meerkerk (2002) are shown below. Their most interesting study has resulted in an interactive CD showing a map of religious associations in Amsterdam in the years 1650, 1750, 1900, 1950 and 2002. The first example, shown in Figure 3, shows the city centre and western part of Amsterdam in 2002.

Figure 3: Map of religious associations in city centre and western part of Amsterdam, 2002

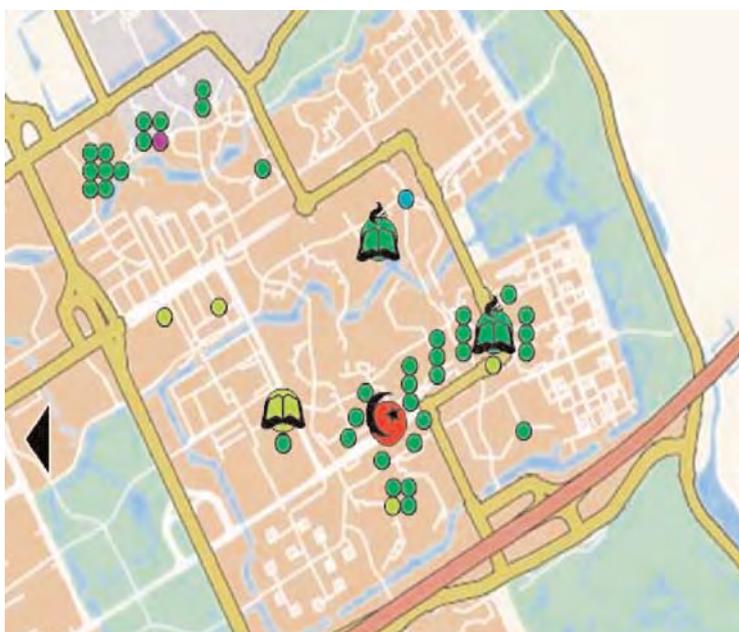


Note: Red dots = Islam, purple dots = Catholic, pink dots = Buddhist, light green dots = Protestant, dark green dots = New Christian, dark blue dots = Jewish, light blue dots = Sikh, orange dots = Orthodox.

Source: Marck and van der Nederveen-Meerkerk, 2002

As mentioned in Chapter 3, since 1650 the city of Amsterdam has hosted many religious refugees who were free to establish their churches in Amsterdam and not in the surrounding countries (Lucassen and Penninx, 2002; Lucassen, 2004). This led to the concentration of Catholic, Jewish, Orthodox and Protestant churches that is still evident in today's city centre. In the last 50 years, new religious movements have arrived in Amsterdam, establishing religious premises in the city centre – these include, for instance, the Chinese community, which established a Buddhist temple near the city's Central Station. Since the current major immigrant groups are not concentrated in the centre, more mosques can be found in the western part of the city, where greater numbers of Turks and Moroccans live; similarly, more New Christian churches can be found in the Zuidoost district, where more Surinamese and Ghanaians reside. Figure 4 shows the religious map of Amsterdam's Zuidoost district. In the middle of the map, the large red dot denotes the Taiba Mosque, around which a large number of New Christian churches have been built.

Figure 4: Map of religious associations in Zuidoost city district, 2002



Note: Dark green dots = New Christian, light green dots = Protestant, red dots = Islam, purple dots = Buddhist.
Source: Marck and van der Nederveen-Meerkerk, 2002

Vermeulen (2009) reports that the number of religious associations in Amsterdam went up between 2002 and 2007 – the highest concentration is still in the city centre and in the Zuidoost district.

Funding for ethnic and religious organisations

The national government, the central administration of Amsterdam and the city districts provide subsidies for which ethnic and to some extent religious organisations can apply. National subsidies are given to organisations that function at national level – for instance, the National Institute for Dutch Slavery and its Legacy (NiNsee). City subsidies are in principle granted to those who provide services mainly at city level – for example, the Kurdish Centre Amsterdam and the Association of Afghans in Amsterdam. City district subsidies are given to organisations that function at neighbourhood level. It is possible for associations to request funding on more than one level for different projects. Most of the regulations are directly linked to the municipal policy goals of stimulating participation, social cohesion and integration.

Three important examples are the aforementioned Integration and Participation Subsidy; the Good Ideas Centre (MGI), which is related to the We Amsterdammers programme; and an initiative of the Welfare Service (*Dienst Zorg en*

Samenleven, DZS). Besides these big funds, many youth organisations with different cultural backgrounds are supported. The representatives responsible for SIP and MGI were interviewed for this study, and these two measures will be explained in greater detail.

Since the arrival of Surinamese in the 1960s, Amsterdam has supported ethnic organisations. In the past, associations were structurally supported to rent a building or to keep an office, but in more recent years the focus has changed to supporting temporary projects related to integration and participation. The SIP funds have a maximum of €15,000 per activity, which is only given to volunteer associations that organise a typically Dutch activity, such as an information meeting at least twice a year for more than one ethnic group. For instance, an association that mainly works with Ethiopians (DIR) cooperates at least twice a year with the Somali association (SOMVAO) to organise a common information meeting on female circumcision. Activities such as an office hour on legal and social problems, a beginners' course in the Dutch language or computer lessons are also considered to be in line with the policy, since they help to support integration. SIP is part of the regular budget and therefore involves a rather lengthy bureaucratic application procedure, facilitated by a manual to judge the proposals using clear guidelines. The procedure is meticulous and transparent and therefore favoured by the accountants. In 2009, some 79 immigrant organisations were funded to organise 478 activities. The most common activities were in the field of health (77 activities) and women's emancipation (59 activities). Other activities included 16 language lesson initiatives, 16 homework support activities and eight initiatives addressing gay issues.

Compared with SIP, the MGI initiative is a much faster arrangement without the complicated bureaucracy, control of accounts or discussions with the city council. The total fund is €500,000, and the maximum funding per project is €50,000; once the fund is allocated in a given year, organisations have to wait until the following year to apply for support. The procedure is less frustrating and more quickly accessible for relevant social issues. A proposal can receive funding within three weeks, during which time a commission will decide on its eligibility; after this, the money is transferred directly. The city's mayor is directly responsible for the initiative. Although MGI also applies the policy goals described earlier for connecting people, it is rare for immigrant associations to apply for MGI funds. The responsible official gives two reasons for this: firstly, associations may not be aware of the fund; or secondly, for some of them it is difficult to write a convincing proposal, and established institutions are often better at this. Nonetheless, successful proposals are sometimes related to immigrant issues – such as the 'Pimp up your satellite dish' (*Pimp je schotel*) project, an initiative by young immigrants to improve the look of streets with satellite dishes in immigrant neighbourhoods.

Sometimes new organisations with high potential emerge. When an initiative or organisation is assessed to be potentially successful, it will be facilitated through funding and advisory support. The MGI programme is therefore often a better option, because the fund is more flexible.

Religious associations can also apply for municipal funding, although this is usually quite a complicated process. Both the regular Protestant and Catholic churches, the older Jewish associations and the newer immigrant religious associations (Islamic, Christian and others) undertake social and representative activities for religious migrants in Amsterdam (among them two Islamic umbrella organisations). In general, there are two solutions. In some cases, they register a separate social association in the same building to avoid the 'Church and state' discussion. An example of this is the Moroccan association Ibno Khaldoun, which is situated in the building of the Al Kabir Mosque and which receives a subsidy from the SIP funds. In other cases, they clearly state in their proposal that the project has a purely social purpose and that no faith-based activities will take place during the initiative. An example of this is Youth for Christ, a Christian association that applied to organise youth work in the De Baarsjes city district. The proposal was chosen as the best one by the selection commission in 2008, but the discussion that ensued in the district council became so explosive that the district mayor had to step down.

Another way of coping with the ‘Church and state’ conflict is to organise events or manifestations with the clear purpose of bringing people together – as seen, for example, with the Ramadan Festival (2007–2009) and the Pentecost Festival (2008). The Ramadan Festival in 2008 included four weeks of varied programmes of cultural activities and common *iftars* – the festival aimed to give Amsterdammers more insight into the fasting season of Muslims, and to help them perceive the Ramadan period as a common celebration for all Amsterdammers. The Pentecost Festival had the same goal: to build bridges between different religious communities, in this case with a central role for the Christian churches.

Issues, demands and interests of immigrant and religious organisations

Immigrant associations often merely request a space and some possibilities to run their own centre, as is often the case with religious associations. Since Amsterdam has 177 nationalities and 3,491 immigrant associations, it is impossible to fund all of them. Looking at the current SIP list of subsidised immigrant associations, it emerges that the city has tried to support many nationalities, and usually not more than two associations per nationality. This means that smaller communities like refugees, who usually arrived later and are relatively less well organised, currently have more chances than a new Moroccan or Surinamese association.

On the other hand, there have been many applications for grants and subsidies – for example, by the Amsterdam Union of Moroccan Mosques (UMMAO) or by separate mosques requesting support for public debates, training or other activities on issues related to the stereotyping of Muslims. An issue that keeps emerging is that these kinds of debates often fit in well with the policy that PAS is executing, yet over and over again, the subsidising of Muslim associations has caused debate in the city council. The Muslim associations that were interviewed for this study were very frustrated about this. However, as mentioned, the city’s mayor has asked for a policy paper on the separation between Church and state, which is supposed to help cope with these issues.

Forms of relation and dialogue

This section will distinguish between two forms of dialogue: intercultural dialogue and interreligious dialogue.

Intercultural dialogue

The work of PAS explicitly focuses on improving intercultural relations, and is therefore one of the clearest examples of a policy designed to stimulate good relations. Two particularly relevant examples demonstrate: how the Westerpark city district implements its policies with the help of PAS at a local level; and how a project that was noticed and supported by PAS functions in the Bos en Lommer city district.

Westerpark’s approach

According to the 2008 Amsterdam Burgermonitor (O+S, 2009), the Westerpark city district is highly appreciated by its inhabitants: the district has the highest percentage of citizens who believe that the city district functions (very) well and that it has the best functioning district council; who are aware of the neighbourhood consultation system (*Buurtbeheeroverleg*); and who are interested in city district politics. The district is relatively small and is not dominated by one particular ethnic group. This positive attitude may be related to the way in which policies are executed, which has a lot to do with bringing people together and connecting them. For the purpose of this study, a Westerpark representative in charge of activities related to the PAS goals was interviewed.

Firstly, the representative explained that knowing each other and being known is an important principle. This not only means that connections are stimulated in the streets and on the squares, but also that the district mayor and aldermen should be easy to reach and that they should attend neighbourhood centres on a monthly basis to talk to neighbourhood residents and address their concerns. Neighbourhood negotiators organise neighbourhood meetings and bring people together who disagree or have problems. Open discussion and trying to find new solutions are important goals.

Secondly, the representative explained that bottom-up initiatives are considered more important than an authoritarian top-down approach. Westerpark has always had a lot of autonomous thinking groups, like squatters, as well as a relatively large number of organisations. It is considered better to use the power of this potential rather than introduce measures that do not interest people. One of the most successful projects in recent times – Young in Westerpark (*Jong in Westerpark*) – was based on concerns first voiced in schools and then during neighbourhood meetings, which were highly supported by the city district.

A third basic idea underlying the policies is that identity and self-confidence of children and young people are one of the keys to success in developing a peaceful neighbourhood. The district had a problem with youth gangs in the past, but this problem has ceased. The Young in Westerpark initiative applies a positive approach on the basis of four simple rules: everyone is part of ‘us’; we care for each other; we care about our surroundings; and we maintain self-control. These rules are repeated everywhere: in primary and secondary schools, at the Koran lessons in the mosques, at the football club, at the Turkish council and on the squares. When any fights take place, the persons involved are immediately put around a table so that the problem is resolved and, at the same time, ties are created. The project started in 2005 and is now supported by 70 local organisations. The rules are easy to apply and everyone agrees with them.

A further example can be seen at the Marcanti College, a school for low-level vocational training, where attention is constantly necessary as the young people can easily cause annoyance; however, an initiative called Socratic Talks between neighbours and young persons has been far more effective than punishing the young population. The method encourages the young people to search for the reasons behind certain decisions – including the assumptions, reasoning and views behind actions or decisions, and ways in which the group can test their validity. Together, the participants have to search for solutions through ongoing questioning.

Overall, the Westerpark approach is a positive one, focusing on connecting people and avoiding polarisation. Therefore, problems are resolved more quickly and the breeding ground for any tensions is removed from an early stage by addressing conflict among young people and ensuring that small fights do not develop into big ones.

The Connect project in the Bos en Lommer city district

The Bos en Lommer city district neighbours Westerpark and is known for one of its neighbourhoods (Kolenkitbuurt), which heads the list of 40 problem neighbourhoods in the Netherlands (*Vogelaarwijken*). The district has a combination of high unemployment, children growing up in poverty, new immigrants, overcrowding of housing and fast removal patterns (see the CLIP housing module for more information: Van Heelsum, 2007). The Bos en Lommer city district has the highest proportion of immigrants in Amsterdam (65%), comprising 23% Moroccans and 16% Turks, along with a relatively high share of young people. One particular programme – Project Connect (*Stichting Connect*) – is a typical bottom-up initiative, which was launched by a 37-year-old Moroccan, Saïd Bensellam, who works with young Moroccan street boys who are considered ‘unreachable’ by the regular youth work programmes.¹¹ Firstly, the boys get in contact with Mr Bensellam and a plan is devised for a more positive future perspective; they are then enrolled in one of the programme’s activities. The boys may be trained at the Flying Brigade, an initiative concerned with supporting police and negotiating and stopping escalating conflicts in the Kolenkit neighbourhood; at the ‘Karam’ foundation (meaning ‘help’), gathering and repairing medical equipment for Morocco and Suriname; or at the Parking project, which arranges parking at big events. The activities not only improve the situation of the young boys, but also contribute to a safer and more positive multicultural neighbourhood. As Mr Bensellam explains, ‘Street boys are connected to society.’

¹¹ More information (in Dutch) on Project Connect can be accessed online at <http://www.connectinitiatieven.nl>.

Mr Bensellam's own past relates to the boys' experience, as his father also arrived in Amsterdam as a guest worker and Bensellam was thrown out of secondary school. He became acquainted with 'bad friends' but eventually escaped this negative spiral by going to kickboxing lessons, and at the age of 19, he became a bouncer at one of Leidse Pleins' nightclubs (Veldhuis, 2008; Bahara, 2008). Through his work, he learned to analyse conflicts, directly address problems and not avoid confrontation. As a result, he was not scared to address the street gangs who terrorised the neighbourhood, for instance at the Horizon community centre, and often interfered in fights. After some time, the police realised that Mr Bensellam was one of the few people who could negotiate with such people and therefore asked him to intervene when conflicts in the neighbourhood seemed to escalate.

One of his first organised initiatives was to gather money for his cousin in Morocco who needed a harelip operation. His efforts grew and accelerated when an earthquake hit El Hoceima on 24 February 2004, after which the foundation Karam was established. Under this initiative, large numbers of old wheelchairs and beds are gathered from Dutch institutions, after which they are checked and repaired by the young people at the Connect building, and shipping is then organised.

Mr Bensellam's initiative has gained widespread recognition, as shown by the many publications, prizes (TANS Award 2006, Amsterdamer of the Year Award 2007) and even a TV documentary on Dutch national TV (*Tegenlicht*, 20 April 2009) show. With the help of all kinds of intermediaries who could arrange the paperwork and talk to financiers and officials, he managed to get funding and two floors of an unused office building. Project Connect has since rapidly broadened its activities and now also organises a Father Project and a Mother Project. Mr Bensellam realised that without the parents, it was impossible to help the boys. Fathers were often angry and frustrated about their sons and blamed the mothers for their bad upbringing. Mr Bensellam's approach is to talk about the emotions underlying the conflict, including taboo subjects like fathers' resentment at not feeling respected for all their efforts to improve their family's lives. Mr Bensellam encourages fathers to 'make your son your friend', highlighting that 'your son needs your support to improve his life'. He explains to them how lost he felt himself when his father blamed him for being thrown out of school. When the father is proud of his son, the whole family becomes happier. Moreover, the boys are encouraged to help their younger brothers to make sure that they do not get into the same trouble, thus making them better prepared for life.

Despite the remarkable speed and success of the project, there are also difficulties. One problem is the degree of mistrust between Project Connect and the established social work institutions, as Veldhuis (2008) describes. On the one hand, the established youth workers failed to work with this target group and therefore feel threatened; on the other hand, it was realised that although Connect finds real solutions, others get a larger share of the funding. To some extent, there is also some miscommunication between Mr Bensellam and city district officials. Several intermediaries had to 'translate' and write funding proposals and financial reports and defend Mr Bensellam's approach – among them were the educational workers of a Dutch project called Capabel, which sought to improve cooperation between all the supporting agencies and institutions that work with children and teenagers aged 0–18 years in the neighbourhood.¹² A representative of Capabel believes that it is necessary to establish more of these kinds of bottom-up initiatives and that volunteers like Mr Bensellam should get the funding and trust that they deserve, but that the city district is not ready for it, with its 'office culture'. Moreover, there seems to be a lot of distance between officials and the boys on the streets. Trust in authorities is already largely absent among the population of Bos en Lommer. The fact that Mr Bensellam was first asked to solve

¹² More information on Project Capabel can be accessed online at http://www.bosenlommer.amsterdam.nl/onderwijs_en_jeugd/jeugd/capabel.

an escalating conflict around the Horizon community centre, which he did successfully, but was then replaced at Horizon by an established youth worker, has not helped to increase the boys' trust; also, trying to explain how allocated money for 2008 could not be used anymore in 2009 led them to think that the money went into somebody else's pocket, since 'that's how things work with officials'. The same tensions exist in relation to subsidies for migrant associations, as outlined: on the one hand, there is the problem of the bureaucratic and accounting culture of the existing municipal systems; on the other hand, there is the current need to approach problems directly. It is clear that the faster and more flexible approach of PAS is more suitable for initiatives like Mr Bensellam's, which is why some of the money for the project comes from PAS.

The Diversity Council

Although it is not part of the work of PAS, it is important to mention the Diversity Council (*Stedelijk Overleg Diversiteit, SOD*) in relation to the theme of intercultural dialogue. Immigrant associations meet three times a year and can influence policies. Before 2004, an advisory board was made up of representatives of immigrant associations, subdivided into a number of immigrant groups – Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese/Antilleans and refugees/Chinese/Pakistanis. This changed in 2005. Currently, the associations still meet, but the Diversity Council became a public enquiry organ (*inspraakorgaan*), which can air criticisms and make the concerns of the ethnic communities heard. This organ meets with the Advisory Board on Diversity and Integration, which comprises experts, about four times a year. Sometimes an issue of concern for the associations is taken up by the advisory board, and well-founded advice is put forward by the board and presented to the municipal council.

Consultation methods such as these also exist in the city districts: for instance, the city district Oost-Watergraafsmeer has a board of representatives of migrant associations (BOMO) that meets five to six times a year, as well as establishing work groups on issues that are important for immigrants (Van Heelsum and Penninx, 1999).

Trade union efforts towards global solidarity

Trade union efforts in relation to intercultural dialogue is not unique to Amsterdam, but coordinated at the national headquarters of the Dutch Trade Union Federation (*Federatie Nederlands Vakcentrale, FNV*), which is in fact in Amsterdam. FNV has a working group for international affairs, which deals with international solidarity. This section is called FNV Mondiaal.¹³ A lot of solidarity activities have taken place, for instance with the Ghanaian trade unions, through an international day of support for Iranian trade unions (26 June), through financial support to Zimbabwean trade unions and through card writing activities to free Chinese trade union members from prison. Fundraising takes place at markets and during festivals – for example, at the 5 May Festival (liberation day), at Museumplein in Amsterdam and at the Afrika Roots Festival in Oosterpark in Amsterdam.

Interreligious dialogue

There are several forms of interreligious dialogue, which refers to cooperation between organisations of religious groups. Mayor Cohen supports the idea of using the religious infrastructure of Amsterdam to meet the city's policy goals, and is even explicitly part of some of the initiatives. Examples of such initiatives are as follows.

- Amsterdam with Heart and Soul (*Amsterdam met Hart en Ziel*) – this measure organises initiatives such as preaching in other people's parishes;
- Religious Council (*Raad voor Levensbeschouwing en Religie*) – this council organises debates and meetings to bridge differences between various religious communities and counter negative stereotyping and perceptions along religious lines, especially when tensions are mounting between groups, as in 2008, during the release of the right-wing politician Geert Wilders' film *Fitna*, which addressed the problematic impact of Islam in the world.

¹³ See <http://www.fnv.nl/helpjezelf/mondiaal/>.

In many cases, the city is represented by a civil servant and the mayor or aldermen often represent the city in public meetings. In addition, several city districts organise dialogue meetings between people with different cultural backgrounds, or between religious and non-religious groups. Different themes are discussed, such as core values and the place of religion in society.

Jewish Moroccan Network Amsterdam

An initiative that particularly relates to the recently contentious relations between religious groups is the Jewish Moroccan Network Amsterdam (*Joods Marokkaans Netwerk Amsterdam*, JMNA).¹⁴ Jewish and Moroccan Amsterdammers met each other at different types of occasions – for instance, during the dialogue gatherings in the De Baarsjes city district, in common activities for young people, at exchanges between mosques and synagogues and at the yearly Moroccan-Jewish *Mimouna* celebration. They felt that besides these usual activities, relations needed a boost. On the one hand, anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim prejudices show a lot of similarity and therefore need one voice to counter such prejudices. On the other hand, each group had concerns about the other: the Jewish were worried about the increasing anti-Semitism among Moroccan schoolboys, which included an incident in 2003 when Moroccan boys played football with wreaths that were laid on a monument to commemorate the deaths in the Second World War; meanwhile, Muslims were concerned about the Jewish views on the Iraq War and the Palestine issue, believing that the Jews in the Netherlands all support the Israeli policy. Against this background, the JMNA network was officially established on 27 February 2006.

The network seeks to resist expressions of anti-Semitism, islamophobia and other forms of discrimination; the hardening of the Dutch social and political climate; ingroup-outgroup thinking; and the stigmatisation of groups in society. It is important that the two groups get to know each other better. To this end, meetings are organised between young Jewish and Muslim school-goers, and a couple of a Jewish girls and Moroccan boys visit schools to explain their family's experiences during the Second World War. The Moroccans who fought on the Allied side now get extra attention. Also, during times of crisis, it is important that representatives show how they talk to each other about issues in public places and on TV. In February 2009, for instance, during the conflict in Gaza, meetings were arranged in mosques to discuss how Jews and Muslims in Amsterdam look at this issue. Thus, the general idea underlying the policy of Amsterdam – connecting people, encouraging them to meet and get to know each other, and finding their common goals – is also visible here.

Relations between different ethnic groups in the city

This section will give an overview of relations between ethnic, religious and other groups in Amsterdam, including the extent to which people have friends in their own ethnic group or outside it. These recent results come from the Amsterdam Burgermonitor 2008 (O+S, 2009). This survey was conducted among 3,000 inhabitants of Amsterdam aged over 16 years by telephone, postal questionnaire or personal interview.

¹⁴ More information (in Dutch) on JMNA can be accessed online at <http://www.jmna.nl>. The website shows a list of its members – the network was established together with Mayor Cohen, although he is not on the list of members. See also http://www.art1.nl/artikel/4935-Amsterdams_netwerk_joden_en_Marokkanen_gelanceerd.

Table 7: People's perceptions of other groups in Amsterdam (%)

Thoughts about:	Negative or very negative	Neutral	Positive or very positive	Don't know
Moroccans	75	14	4	6
Muslims	62	24	8	7
Antilleans	56	26	8	10
Immigrants	44	35	13	7
Turks	34	42	18	7
Surinamese	21	44	26	8
Homosexual men and women	20	40	32	8
Jews	12	48	29	11
Christians	8	50	32	10
Dutch	5	32	54	9
Areligious people	5	51	33	12

Source: *Amsterdam Burgermonitor 2008 (O+S, 2009, p. 43)*

As Table 7 shows, the most negative perception exists in relation to Moroccans, according to those interviewed. It should be noted that 41% state they have such a negative perception themselves, but 75% think that other Amsterdammers have a negative picture. The next highest negative perceptions are in relation to Muslims (62%) and Antilleans (56%). On average, the Dutch are considered most positively (5%); similarly, only a small proportion of people think negatively about Jews (12%) and Christians (8%). Although the negative perception of Moroccans and Muslims is worrying, there is some improvement in this respect compared with 2007.

A completely different picture is shown when looking at the results of the same survey in relation to friendship (Table 8). Just 23% of Amsterdammers have friends only from their own ethnic group. Of course, the Dutch have more people to choose from in terms of friends from their own ethnic group, compared with the smaller ethnic groups that are part of the Western and non-Western immigrant population. It is therefore quite striking that just 29% of Dutch Amsterdammers currently only have Dutch friends. In fact, the large majority of Amsterdammers, either Dutch persons or those from other ethnic backgrounds, have an ethnically mixed group of friends. The results here show a tendency towards increased mixing in social circles.

Table 8: Make-up of group of friends, by ethnic group, 2008 (%)

	Only from my own ethnic group	Mostly from my own ethnic group	As many from my own as from other ethnic groups	Mostly from other ethnic groups	Only from other ethnic groups
Dutch	29	47	17	2	0
Western immigrants	24	38	25	7	1
Turks	16	31	36	6	0
Moroccans	12	29	38	9	2
Other non-Western immigrants	10	20	43	13	2
Surinamese	6	26	43	17	1
Amsterdam average	23	39	26	7	1

Source: *Amsterdam Burgermonitor 2008 (O+S, 2009, p. 43)*

Public communication

Since 1992, the local public TV station in Amsterdam has been Amstel Television 5 (AT5).¹⁵ It is the most important TV source for local news, giving local politicians access to voters, as well as providing coverage on sport, culture, human interest and discussion. AT5 gives ample attention to anything that is important in the city and is quite popular: 72% of Amsterdammers watch it at least on a weekly basis, while immigrants watch it as frequently as Dutch people. During celebrations like Ramadan or the Hindu festival, Divali, the television station provides information and shows how the celebrations take place. Each week, an interview with Mayor Cohen is broadcast. In his address, the mayor issues a few clear messages related to intercultural and interreligious dialogue, which he explains in different words over and over again. Tolerance and understanding towards ethnic and religious groups is one of the key messages.

An interesting initiative of the municipality of Amsterdam is the (co)financing of a production called *West Side Soaps* that covers the lives of four families – a Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Dutch family – who become neighbours. The series deals with many different themes: love, discrimination, education, friends and work. It is not only designed to fit in with Staub's strategy (see start of this chapter) that people should know more about each other's life and culture, but also to show how interconnected people in an arbitrary street in western Amsterdam already are. On the one hand, it reflects real people's experiences; on the other hand, it aims to fight prejudices, or even to treat situations that can easily lead to misunderstandings in a more light-hearted way.

Another public organisation is SALTO. Currently, 180 different local organisations are active on five of the city's six radio channels and on two of the three TV channels (A1, A2 and AT5). These organisations are based on neighbourhood, religious, sport, cultural or ethnic interests. They can also organise themselves according to themes such as political views, art, sexual disposition, music choice or other shared interests. All organisations that broadcast through SALTO make their own programmes. Most programmes are in Dutch, but broadcasting currently takes place in 26 languages. Amsterdam has several local ethnic media. Almost every ethnic group has their own local radio station or TV programme, which they use to communicate with and inform their local group. They often use the local SALTO and media company Migrant Television Netherland (MTNL). The main function is to provide information for those who do not speak Dutch. Many immigrant communities are allocated an hour a week, in which the main news from this community is broadcast. For instance, Ghanaians have a programme in which news from their country of origin is shown, along with some religious ceremonies of the Ghanaian Pentecostal churches in Amsterdam's Zuidoost district.

The general media have good connections with the various minority groups, although the groups themselves are not always satisfied with the way in which the general media covers their issues. Specific local media companies like MTNL target their audiences and give an alternative perspective on the news. The Gaza crisis in particular showed the power of international broadcasting networks – such as Al Jazeera and Moroccan, Turkish and Egyptian national channels – in covering the conflict more extensively and from a completely different perspective.

Summary and lessons learnt

Amsterdam is a mixed city, where just 23% of its citizens have only friends from their own ethnic group; however, it is believed that the situation in Amsterdam has become more tense in the last nine years than in other European cities, particularly after the murder of Theo van Gogh. Overall, two tendencies are clear: a large and general tendency among both autochthonous and immigrants towards mixing and integration; and a smaller tendency towards alienation, stereotyping and negative relations.

¹⁵ See website at <http://www.at5.nl>.

Amsterdam has reacted to the tensions by allocating a considerable amount of funding and by organising measures to deal with polarisation, improve relations and connect people who might otherwise withdraw from society and even radicalise. The temporary establishment of the PAS, which is outside of the usual bureaucratic structures and enables a fast and flexible way of allocating money, has proved its ability to address problems more easily and is more sensitive to bottom-up initiatives of citizens. The approach has worked well in the aforementioned examples in Amsterdam's city districts. Initiatives such as Connect by Mr Bensellam, which has made a significant difference through its work with young Moroccans, would not have easily fitted into the city's existing bureaucratic structures. PAS is also innovative, which will be further demonstrated in Chapter 6, through its work on radicalisation, together with the IHH radicalisation programme.

Traditionally, Amsterdam has always supported immigrant and religious associations. This has led to an active civic society in immigrant communities and a connected network of associations. Since a strong civic society is a safeguard against isolation of individuals and a platform for trust and social connections, the associations are further strengthened with subsidies. Even though public opinion is not always in favour of such support, Amsterdam maintains this approach to strengthen social capital among the more vulnerable groups.

Local intercultural policies towards Muslim communities

Major issues, demands and interests

As shown in Chapter 3, Amsterdam's Muslim community consists of Moroccans, Turks, Surinamese, Pakistanis and a lot of smaller groups such as Afghans, Iraqis, Iranians and Egyptians. The report has also addressed the important issue of tense relations that arose after the murder of Theo van Gogh. As shown in all the interviews, prejudices against Muslims are actually one of the greatest concerns of the interviewees, and a lot of Muslims perceive these – whether true or not – as the main reason why their position in the educational system and in the labour market is not improving. On the other hand, the stereotypical view of Muslims is that they are generally conservative, that they suppress women and that they do not actively stop their kids from criminal activities, while some even become sympathisers of fundamentalist movements. A lot of current issues relate to coping with these prejudices. As shown in Table 7, the prejudices are more directed at Moroccan Muslims than towards Turkish or Surinamese Muslims. Moroccan Muslims have become more of a scapegoat and have also reacted more fiercely to fighting prejudices.

For the second generation, the Muslim aspect of their identity is something that needs to be explored and discussed, particularly against the background of Dutch society and its prejudices.¹⁶ For example, determining how to be a good Muslim in Western society is an important question but also a difficult one, especially when it comes to gender roles and finding the 'right' form of Islam. Other related issues include questions over whether or not to wear the headscarf, and if so, whether to wear a more 'modern' one¹⁷; virginity before marriage; marrying someone from a different ethnic background; sports; free or forced partner choice; acceptance of homosexuality; whether or not an employer may refuse an applicant because of their beard or headscarf; and whether or not a civil servant can refuse to shake hands with women. The Moroccan city district mayor in Slotervaart, Ahmed Marcouch, has taken clear positions in this debate and discussions have sometimes become very heated ('the Marcouchian discussion').

Parents with poor literacy levels, and who follow traditions from their vilages in North Morocco, are not considered beneficial by the children who are used to reading and finding information in libraries and on the internet. Generally, young people struggle with their identities and search for information; having to defend themselves against the outside world makes this stage even more difficult. Some young persons even tell their parents that they are not good Muslims and go for a more conservative interpretation of Islam than their parents (De Koning, 2007; Gielen, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). The description of the Bensellam project already showed that some young Moroccans experience problems at school and that they have a higher drop-out rate from school than Dutch children. Such issues became even more relevant for Amsterdam policy when research was conducted into the reasons why some Muslim young people become radical (Slootman and Tillie, 2006; Demant et al, 2008).

¹⁶ Van Heelsum (1997, p. 114) showed that there are strong and significant relationships between perceiving prejudice and not choosing a Dutch identity among second generation young people. The outcome of the process of constructing an identity is a result of position acquisition by individuals (and groups) and the perceived position allocation (how someone perceives the way in which others see and accept this person).

¹⁷ Dutch Moroccan girls developed a fashion of wearing a tight black headscarf accompanied by a colourful headscarf.

Poldermoskee

The fact that many of the existing mosques were first generation institutions, dominated by elderly men, made it difficult for young people to put forward their questions and demands.¹⁸ In the Moroccan mosques, the imam often only speaks Arabic, while the home language of Moroccans is either Berber or Dutch, and the imams are not as aware of the problems that young persons are facing in Dutch society. For some time, ‘internet imams’ have been operating, such as the Dutch convert to Islam, Abdul Wahid van Bommel. Because of this clear gap in the needs of young people, an initiative was taken by representatives of the second generation to establish the so-called Polder Mosque, or *Poldermoskee*, which opened on 5 September 2008 (Figure 5).¹⁹ Active young people who had tried to work within existing mosques but who could not establish activities to meet their needs established this special multi ethnic mosque. The name refers to the *poldermodel*, the Dutch traditional model of discussion between denominations to reach consensus. The *Poldermoskee* is situated in the Slotervaart city district, an area where many Moroccans reside. It rents space from a housing corporation in a multi-tenant building where the refugee council used to be.

Figure 5: *The Poldermoskee in the Slotervaart city district*



The *Poldermoskee* provides a solid and safe surrounding for young Muslims, based on clear principles, so that they can exercise their religion and gather information. The mosque seeks to contribute to the development of Islamic theology in a secular environment where young Muslims of different ethnic backgrounds and denominations can recognise themselves, in turn contributing to positive identity formation. It creates a bridge between Muslims and Dutch society by encouraging meetings and dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims.

As the chairwoman of *Poldermoskee* explains, the mosque has five pillars, as follows.

- Lectures and sermons are conducted in the Dutch language, and Dutch people are allowed to visit to listen to the prayers. The five daily smaller rituals comprise the usual verses in Arabic.
- The mosque is interethnic, which means that there is a pool of imams of Turkish, Moroccan, Pakistani and Surinamese background from completely different Islamic denominations. The board consists of an Egyptian member, Moroccans and a Turkish and non-Muslim member – the latter is a Dutch girl from the neighbourhood, who makes a valuable contribution through her refreshing views on how the neighbourhood could perceive their activities.

¹⁸ This situation is more difficult for young people in the Moroccan mosques than in the Turkish mosques. Young Turkish people have fewer language problems and Turkish boys are often encouraged by their fathers to become involved in the mosques.

¹⁹ More information can be accessed online at <http://www.poldermoskee.nl>.

- The primary target group is young people, although others may visit the mosque and do so in quite large numbers.
- The mosque is kindly disposed towards women. There are no rules concerning dress code in the building, so women without headscarfs and long skirts are also welcome, although during the prayers respect is required. Women pray in the same hall behind the men, although there is a second space for women who want to pray separately.
- The mosque acts as a bridge between the Muslim and non-Muslim community. For instance, it organises weekly guided tours for visitors, it invites people from the neighbourhood for a coffee hour, and there are discussion meetings on taboo issues such as ‘honour killings’, homosexuality and domestic violence – often in cooperation with the city district authorities. Within the ongoing social debate in the Netherlands, it is considered important that Muslims also openly and critically join the discussion on such issues and do not leave this to Islam critics.

Not surprisingly, bringing together the different denominations of Islam in one institution can lead to intense discussions. The chairwoman explains that the *Poldermoskee* has a liberal image because of its standpoint on women, although the mosque tries to bring together the different views so that people can see the variety that exists among Muslims. For instance, one of the board members is more conservative and does not shake hands with women. The board believes that it is important to encourage discussion and let people choose. Guest speakers have to endorse the five pillars of the mosque and there has to be consensus within the board on the subject, although guest speakers are free to voice their opinions.

Although there is widespread support for *Poldermoskee* among the authorities at all levels and it is considered by many as exactly the type of institution that both Dutch and Muslim people have been waiting for, this has not led to considerable financial support for the initiative. The mosque is barely able to afford its rent but is aware that it would not receive money from the municipality as a religious organisation and therefore has not applied for subsidies; instead, it tries to attract money from private sources.

Although it is impossible to cover all issues, the following subsections will outline a number of other issues that have generated discussion in Amsterdam in recent years.

Mosque building

There are five completely new mosques in Amsterdam: the Taiba Mosque in the Zuidoost city district, which was built in 2003–2004; the El Oumma Mosque in Slotervaart, which was completed in 1997; the Al Mohssinine Mosque in the Noord city district (Maussen, 2006, p. 83); the Nasser Mosque in the Zeeburg city district; and the Al Islam Mosque in the Osdorp city district. The Taiba Mosque (Figure 6) is situated outside the city centre, near a metro. The building took quite some time to construct and was accompanied by the usual questions about money laundering and foreign financiers that joined to finish the project. The mosque is run by the World Islamic Movement (WIM) and is visited by Surinamese, Pakistanis and other Muslims.

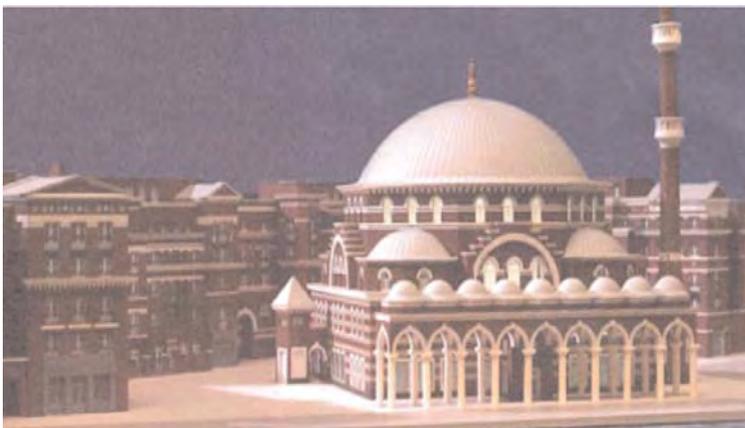
Figure 6: *The Taiba Mosque in the Zuidoost city district*



The Moroccan El Oumma Mosque in Slotervaart is situated in the middle of a neighbourhood where many Moroccans live and on a shopping square. This mosque is completely constructed using bricks and has a square minaret, in line with Moroccan mosque architecture.

However, the construction of new mosques is not always successful, as the ongoing building project of the West Mosque (*Westermoskee*) shows. In this case, the Amsterdam branch of the Turkish religious movement Milli Görüs purchased ground and presented a plan to build a large mosque, with architecture related to the Amsterdam School of Architects in the De Baarsjes city district (see Figure 7). The mosque was deliberately named after the West Tower (*Westertoren*), the symbol of the old neighbourhood Jordaan, and its name reflected its intention to become a real Amsterdam mosque for real Amsterdam Muslims.

Figure 7: *Model of the proposed Turkish Westermoskee in the De Baarsjes city district*



The modernity of the proposed mosque aimed to reflect the fact that it would be open to the entire neighbourhood and that men and women would pray in the same hall. However, the initiative faced many problems. Changes took place within the board of Milli Görüs and it was not clear to what extent the movement was influenced by the more conservative German headquarters and what had happened to the money contributed by members. Moreover, the Amsterdam Council had promised that the grounds could be used cheaply, as is usually the case with religious premises (Maussen, 2006, p. 83). However, distrust increased between the mosque organisers, builders, the housing corporation and the city district administration – all partners in the project – and doubts arose as to whether the integrative character of the new mosque could be guaranteed. Years after the discussions first arose, the problems relating to the mosque have still not been solved and the project is currently on hold.

Islamic cemetery

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Islamic burial is possible in the Netherlands after the law was adjusted in 1991. This is allowed for in several graveyards in Amsterdam, and usually a special corner is reserved; however, there is no separate Islamic cemetery. It took several years for a group of representatives from different religious and ethnic communities to agree on a mode to establish an Islamic cemetery and some issues still remain. An important issue for the representatives was that religious rules should not be violated, but the Sunnis, Shia and other ethnic groups thought differently about these rules. The building of the cemetery is planned to start in 2010.

Islamic and Koran schools

Amsterdam has six Islamic primary schools and one Islamic secondary school.²⁰ Some of them generate constant media attention, sometimes due to financial problems, issues with the quality of education or due to concerns about the ideology that is taught in these schools. The school inspection authority carefully monitors these schools.

Besides schools providing the regular curriculum, there are also Koran schools, that is, schools that only give Koran and Arabic lessons outside the usual school hours. These schools are not checked by the school inspection authority, since they are considered voluntary initiatives. Nonetheless, with the constant attention in relation to Muslim-related activities, political discussion also arose with regard to the Koran schools. Questions were raised about the educational climate (learning through repetition, teachers using corporal punishment) and about the assumed non-integrative message. Some of the parties involved proposed giving extra religious/Koran lessons at primary schools. Although this would be legal, both politicians and school representatives were against the idea of placing more emphasis on religion at primary schools.

General approach and policies towards Muslim groups

Chapter 4 described how the Church–state debate is affecting the work of the Amsterdam authorities in relation to Muslim organisations. Generally, Amsterdam does not have any other policy towards Muslim communities than its main policy directed at immigrant groups (the diversity policy applies); nonetheless, in practice, it is impossible to address certain policy issues without paying attention to religion and cooperating with Muslim associations. Subsidising the secular activities of religious organisations and religiously inspired activities of secular organisations remains a subject of controversy. In the council, even politicians within the largest social democratic party, PvdA, have different opinions on the principle of division between Church and state. Mayor Cohen is generally in favour of using the religious infrastructure, but former alderwoman Hanna Belliot was quoted by the NRC newspaper in 2005 as saying that it is extremely contentious if the municipality gets involved in religion (Maussen, 2006, p. 78). In opinion polls, Amsterdammers tend to say that religion should not influence politics.

²⁰ More information can be obtained from the municipal website in the find a school section at <http://onderwijs.amsterdam.nl/live/index.jsp>.

It has been extremely frustrating for officials of the municipality, governors such as Marcouch and representatives of the Council of Mosques (*Raad van Moskeeen*) and the Amsterdam Union of Moroccan Mosques (UMMAO) that useful proposals that fit in well with policy have been on hold for nearly two years while pending a decision. As the representative of UMMAO explained, even if the proposal eventually gets subsidised, he is unsure if he can approach the volunteers who wrote it – some of them lost their confidence in the authorities and complain that they were not vociferous enough in standing up to the insulting remarks from the right. The Church–state discussion has blocked progress on receipt of subsidies for Muslim organisations. PAS’s decisiveness and readiness to act has also been seriously hindered by this discussion. Moreover, because some initiatives went ahead without payment, the representatives of associations felt that they were not being taken seriously. It is sometimes frustrating for volunteers that professional social workers are paid while they are not, seemingly because they are part of a religious organisation.

Another example of the tensions arising due to this debate is the controversy surrounding Marhaba – a centre for Islamic art and culture where debate was supposed to take place on Islam, in an attempt to break rigid attitudes and facilitate a more modern way of thinking on Islam. As the Jewish Historic Museum has been supported since its establishment, Amsterdam thought that there should be something similar for Muslims. However, the focus of Marhaba broadened, which was probably a direct cause of the problem, as the two goals of a museum (cultural function) and a platform for debate on religion, which involved showing modern facets of religion, constitute a somewhat difficult combination. One of the report’s interviewees remarked that the measure was too much of a top-down initiative, as Muslims felt that a more acceptable version of Islam on the government’s part was being enforced on them. The opening on Friday afternoon (during prayers), at which alcohol was served, added to the controversy. In the end, the right-wing liberal VVD voted against the measure in a council meeting of 29 November 2008 because it considered the initiative as a form of involvement in the development of religion.²¹

Examples of measures improving relations with Muslim groups

Despite the situation described above, Amsterdam has also managed to reach some of its policy goals. One of the targets is to set up networks and support activities of key figures in the Muslim community. While this is largely up to the members of the network, the members felt the same need as the municipality to do something to combat the ongoing polarisation. A group of active young Muslims from a range of existing associations came together to establish a training initiative – the so-called Network of Key Figures. Some of the current board members from the *Poldermoskee* originally met through this network and were supported through organisational training, media training and teamwork activities. One member came from a group that was established in 2001 – called the Young Muslims in Amsterdam (*Moslim Jongeren Amsterdam*, MJA) – and explained how the municipality was looking for people to talk to when tensions arose. They gathered people from all groups, including the most orthodox mosque in the city, the El Tawheed Mosque, and from the Turkish Milli Görüş movement. Because of the common interest of all those involved to improve the image of Muslims, the initiative was a success. The young participants were encouraged by the training to organise activities in their own groups and could also more easily connect with similarly active groups in other parts of town.

MJA has since organised a large number of activities – for instance, discussions in one of the theatres on Muslim girls in trouble; an initiative linking Muslims with volunteering (the Red Cross and the World Wildlife Fund), education (school officials) and the police (inviting representatives from the police); and work experience, job application and internship initiatives (with two trade unions).

²¹ See the points of Van’t Wout on the VVD website at <http://www.vvdamsterdam.nl/artikel/3236.htm>.

An important key to success is that individuals who were already active were approached, so a lot of the motivation came from within. Moreover, the issues that were addressed were very important to people, while the training delivered real practical skills and knowledge, otherwise people may have given up. For instance, the media training resulted in a more active attitude towards the media, such as in relation to writing letters to newspaper editors, the visibility of young people's views on radio and TV and the creation of a media strategy instead of constantly reacting to crises caused by others.

Public communication

In Chapter 4, reference was made to the local media and the approach that Amsterdam chooses towards them. This applies to Muslims in particular. A unique feature in the Netherlands is the existence of a national Muslim Broadcasting Association (*Nederlandse Moslim Omroep*, NMO). A chairperson of the board of the NMO, who is also one of the key figures in the network mentioned in the previous section, has considerable knowledge about Islam and is among those who preach at the *Poldermoskee* and who get involved in other mosques in theological discussion meetings on the principles of Islam.

The three central goals of the NMO are directly related to the discussion underway in this chapter.

- A key aim is making the unity and diversity within Islam in the Netherlands visible and promoting mutual recognition and tolerance among adherents of Islam. It also seeks to go beyond the borders of the confessional groups and ethnic backgrounds that are represented in the Netherlands.
- Muslims in the Netherlands often live in socially backward circumstances. The negative image of Islam makes this worse and can cause structural deficiencies and segregation among this group. The NMO wants to combat this stereotype and to ensure equal treatment of Islamic groups and the improvement of relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in Dutch society.
- The NMO seeks to support the improved social position of young Islamic persons, women and elderly people by recognising that these groups are not only vulnerable in society as a whole but also within Islamic circles, thus deserving support.

Summary and lessons learnt

As shown in this chapter, Amsterdam has managed to turn a serious crisis situation after the murder of Theo van Gogh into a lively centre of activity for young Muslims. The *Poldermoskee* in particular is an achievement that should not be underestimated. Unfortunately, the discussion on the Church–state issue has halted many useful initiatives. Moreover, according to one of the interviewees, the city's governors were concerned about the debate that could develop when right-wing politicians came to the fore to dominate issues. Whereas Amsterdam was known for its tolerance and easygoing attitude in the past, including in dealing with and supporting initiatives of religious groups, its attitude has become far more cautious. One lesson that Amsterdam has learned is that a policy paper on Church and state in which the principles of these policies are laid out is urgently required for all cities where similar debates could develop.

Furthermore, as the city representative adds, local governments should always promote equal rights and equal treatment for all individuals and organisations, religious or non-religious groups, remaining clear about the law and other regulations and communicating motives for relevant decisions. At the same time, they should improve the network of the city administration and invest in the relationship between the city authorities/administration and individual (Muslim) organisations in civil society, ensuring that they get to know each other and keep in touch.

Intergroup relations and radicalisation

Radicalisation within the majority population

Amsterdam is alert to forms of right-wing extremism or anti-immigrant movements, although it is not clearly manifest in the city. While there are people who are negative about multicultural society in general or Muslims in particular, they are not mobilised or organised. As Van Donselaar and Rodriguez (2006) show in the report *Monitor racism and extremism*, most incidents have taken place in several smaller municipalities but not in Amsterdam, although anti-Semitic incidents and arson in mosques are also reported in Amsterdam.

The level of voting at the elections for the right-wing Party for Freedom (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*, PVV) may give some indication of the extent of resentment against immigrants among Amsterdammers: 4.5% of Amsterdammers voted during the 2006 national elections for PVV, compared with the national average of 5.6%, but this has recently increased. In the European elections, the Amsterdam average was 12.8% and the national average was 17%. As Table 9 shows, there are big differences between the city districts of Amsterdam. The city districts Noord, Geuzenveld-Slotermeer, Osdorp and Slotervaart have the highest percentage of votes for the PVV. The areas with relatively more PVV voters are not systematically the areas with a lot of immigrants or a majority of Dutch inhabitants.

Table 9: *Percentage of ethnic groups per city district and percentage of votes for the PVV party in the 2006 national election and 2009 European elections*

	Surinamese	Antilleans	Turks	Moroccans	Other non-Western	Western	Dutch	Immigrants	PVV votes 2006	PVV votes 2009
Centrum	4	1	1	2	7	23	63	37	2.6	7.0
Westpoort	2	1	3	0	4	21	70	30	4.9	9.9
Westerpark	7	1	3	9	10	16	55	45	3.5	10.0
Oud-West	4	1	2	5	7	19	62	38	2.7	7.7
Zeeburg	11	1	7	13	9	12	46	54	2.7	7.3
Bos en Lommer	7	1	16	23	9	10	35	65	4.4	12.0
De Baarsjes	7	1	9	11	9	14	49	51	3.6	9.7
Noord	9	1	5	9	10	9	56	44	9.4	26.7
Geuzenveld-Slotermeer	8	1	16	23	8	9	35	65	7.6	24.2
Osdorp	9	1	10	16	7	10	48	52	8.2	25.9
Slotervaart	8	1	8	16	9	12	47	53	6.0	19.0
Slotervaart	32	6	1	2	21	8	29	71	3.6	16.2
Oost/Wgm	8	1	5	10	8	14	55	45	3.7	10.2
Oud-Zuid	4	1	2	4	7	20	63	37	2.5	7.8
Zuider-Amstel	4	1	1	2	6	20	66	34	3.7	12.6
Total	9	2	5	9	9	14	52	48	4.5	12.8

Note: Coloured areas denote high concentrations of the particular ethnic group (pink) and a high percentage of right-wing voting (red). Westpoort is an industrial terrain with a settlement of artists.

Source: *O+S, 2009*

Negative attitudes and expressions towards immigrants and Muslims in the national media have actually motivated citizens, foundations and organisations to organise activities aimed at connecting people of different backgrounds. Nonetheless, this climate probably has a negative effect on more vulnerable people among the immigrant population and leads to their withdrawal into their own community. In city districts like Bos en Lommer, the interviewees report that

Moroccans in particular perceive that Dutch police officers, school authorities and city district officials are against them. Statements claiming ‘the police only arrest Moroccans’ and ‘our kids are per definition sent to the lowest school level’ reflect the sense of discrimination felt by Moroccans.

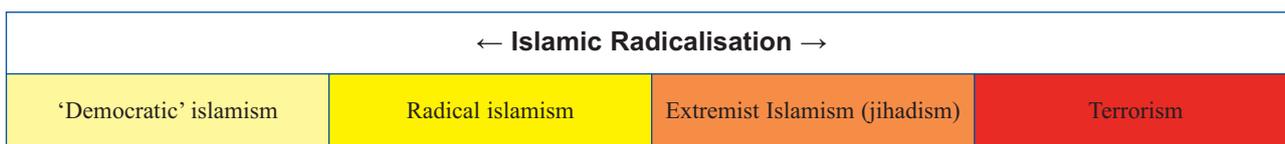
Some of the more extreme resentment against immigrants – especially Muslims – is expressed on the internet on websites such as *Polinco*, Stormfront and Holland Hardcore, according to Van Donselaar and Rodriguez (2006). These websites exist at national level and there is no particular connection to Amsterdam.

Radicalisation within the migrant and/or minority population

As outlined in Chapter 4, the We Amsterdammers programme was established after the murder of Theo Van Gogh and therefore has a strong focus on anti-radicalisation. This includes all forms of radicalisation, including right-wing extremism and animal liberation extremism, although after the analysis of conflict potential in 2004, the municipality concluded that Muslim radicalisation required more urgent consideration in Amsterdam than the other two forms.

To start with, it was necessary to develop some conceptual clarity to find out what radicalisation actually means. The work of the General Intelligence and Security Service of the Netherlands (*Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst*, AIVD) and literature has helped to clarify the concepts outlined in *Policy lines radicalisation (Beleidskader Radicalisering)* (AIVD, 2006; Amsterdam Municipality, 2006b). Radicalisation is not the same as terrorism or orthodoxy. Terrorism includes acts of violence, while a person who becomes religiously orthodox does not necessarily harm anybody in the sense that he or she will perform a violent act. Terrorism is the responsibility of the police, and orthodoxy is a religious choice and therefore not something that the state should interfere with. Radicalisation is defined as ‘the growing readiness to aim for or support far-reaching changes in society that are not in line with the democratic rule of law or where undemocratic means are used’ (Amsterdam Municipality, 2006b). Figure 8 shows a scale of Islamic radicalisation from orthodoxy (democratic Islamism) to violence (terrorism).

Figure 8: *Scale of Islamic Radicalisation*



Source: *Amsterdam Municipality, 2006b – as described in Beleidskader Radicalisering*

The hardcore jihadi groups are primarily the responsibility of the police. The city is concerned about those involved in the process of radicalisation – whereby they internalise the jihadi ideology and join these networks or groups – and wishes to prevent this. The city recognises that prevention must deal with three different levels (cited from the Common Reporting Scheme (CRS)), as follows.

- General prevention – there is a need to tackle the breeding ground for grievances that may prompt young Muslims to take on a jihadi worldview, including the grievance of islamophobia and discrimination, which seems to be growing among the majority population. Therefore, the city needs to focus, among other things, on social cohesion to tackle this breeding ground.
- Specific prevention – it must be recognised that young Muslims are at risk of encountering the jihadi ideology. The city needs to strengthen the resilience against radicalisation in Muslim communities.

- Positive interventions – some individuals are on the path to radicalisation and are beyond basic prevention, but because they are not considered dangerous enough, the police are not interested. The city tries to assist youth professionals in dealing with the radicalisation of young people through positive interventions such as coaching, mentoring, standard assistance and ideological challenge. In some cases, the police are informed but only take charge when there are indications of relevant preparatory action.

A research assignment on the situation in Amsterdam led to a report published in 2006 (Slootman and Tillie, 2006). After this, another policy paper was written, entitled *Amsterdam against radicalisation (Amsterdam tegen radicalisering)* (Amsterdam Municipality, 2007), in which the approach was described and funding was allocated. Muslim radicalisation is described as political because its aims are political. However, the political ideology of the islamists, and more specifically of the jihadists, claims Islam as a framework (rhetoric, symbolism, justification) for its ideology. Thus, religious discourse is necessary to entice radicalising young persons back.

This field is divided into three themes: diminishing the breeding ground for radicalisation; increasing the resistance of vulnerable groups and their social and professional networks; and anti-radicalisation measures for those who are in the radicalisation process. The Slotervaart city district has been at the forefront of these policies, as the murderer of Theo van Gogh came from this district and its district mayor, Mayor Marcouch, had put the theme on the agenda after he was elected in March 2006. In 2007, this initiative developed further into a testing ground for new activities and projects, and a specialised civil servant was appointed to develop and implement the approach in Slotervaart. Meanwhile, in 2009, nine out of 14 city districts established their own local anti-radicalisation policy, while six city districts decided to appoint a special civil servant to implement the policy. Although the list of activities in all these city districts, but especially in Slotervaart, is too extensive to deal with in this report, the following subsections will give some idea of the work underway.

Diminishing the breeding ground for radicalisation

Activities that help to diminish the breeding ground for radicalisation can be general, like the Ramadan Festival, which seeks to improve contacts between groups, or they can entail a project that focuses on media and image formation.

Some of the breeding ground for radicalisation is found to be related to experiences of discrimination and prejudice that occur in the Dutch context.²² One of the frustrations that young people cite in the interviews is their belief that due to prejudice, their chances in the educational system, in the labour market and even on the streets are much more problematic than for the Dutch. An important activity in this context is therefore combating discrimination. Complaints of discrimination can be put forward to the Anti-Discrimination Office Amsterdam (*Meldpunt Discriminatie Regio-Amsterdam*), which is considered important – this office is actively supported by an information campaign which highlights that discrimination should be reported.

Increasing resilience (empowerment)

At a second level of influencing the process of (de)radicalisation, Amsterdam tries to increase resilience within Muslim communities. The Amsterdam officials use the words ‘increasing resilience’, meaning increasing the strength to cope flexibly. Comments on the text showed that not everybody understood this terminology. Generally, one can see this as a form of empowerment.

²² Prejudice is not the only factor that influences this process. Buijs et al (2006) point to three factors: the need for acceptance (if the subject perceived negative attitudes or if he or she has problems in feeling accepted by the surrounding society); trying to give meaning; and creating a sense of justice (if the subject perceives – real or unreal – dissimilar treatment, for instance at school, in the labour market or by the police, then his or her chances of becoming radical increase).

One aspect of this approach is to support parents with children who are searching for their religious and cultural identity. Both parents and children become more resilient and can cope better with their situation. It has been noticed that support for parents is needed, although the parents do not easily approach Dutch institutions with questions because staff often give limited attention to their identity. For this reason, a pilot project was organised in the Slotervaart city district, entitled Course Support in Upbringing, which was directed at cultural aspects of upbringing (Slotervaart City District, 2008, p. 14; Gielen, 2008). The course was organised in a secondary school in the neighbourhood. The initiative found that many parents were concerned about issues such as how to cope with a daughter who has become extremely religious and who not only wants to wear a headscarf but even a larger cover; how to treat young people who start to tell their parents how to behave; or how to deal with a boy who follows neither Muslim rule nor Dutch rule. Parents do not always have enough knowledge about Islam but also about Dutch society to enter into a serious discussion, and are concerned that their children are drifting in unfavourable directions without being able to stop them. In this case, a lot of the issues were related to religion, although many other types of issues could arise, depending on the needs of parents.

The training of teachers is also an important element of the approach. Teachers learn to be open to a different cultural experience, to understand each other better and to create a better climate. They also learn to recognise which boys and girls are getting lost in their search for a positive identity, as well as finding ways to understand and support them. Often, teachers know the children well and notice if their behaviour is changing and if they need help. This not only applies to extreme cases where children are already interested in the Salafi (a Sunni Islamic movement) ideology, but also to boys and girls who are angered by the TV images of Palestinians suffering and who draw far-fetched conclusions. A teacher has to distinguish between problems that he or she can tackle – for instance, by arranging a discussion on the Palestine conflict – and problems for which he or she needs the support of someone who is, for instance, educated in Islamic theology.

Muslim associations play an important role in diminishing the breeding ground for radicalisation and in increasing resilience and empowerment among young people. They can make their members aware of the different views on Islam, provide them with information on what is orthodox and what is moderate and organise discussion on these aspects. In general, it is important to make the existing Muslim organisations stronger and to support young persons. The city cannot directly support activities with a religious content. To strengthen the Muslim community's resilience, a group of active 'high potential' young persons from all relevant Muslim denominations came together in the Network of Key Figures, as described in Chapter 5. Support for the MJA (organisation for young Muslims) – which thereby indirectly enhanced the network between the UMMAO, the Council of Mosques and *Poldermosquee* – succeeded to a certain extent. These active young persons also participate in many of the discussion meetings. The group received training, but as mentioned, several proposals are currently pending approval and have not yet been executed.

Efforts to increase resilience and empowerment at a personal level have prompted some people at risk to join in the so-called Socratic discussions (Slotervaart City District, 2008, p. 12). The pilot project took place at the El Ouma Mosque in Slotervaart, where a special imam for young persons led the discussion. The imam presented all kinds of social questions and themes and asked the young participants to give their response. The central message was to be critical of information sources and to take responsibility as an individual in society. About 50 to 60 young people joined in the five meetings that were organised before the 2008 summer holidays (Gielen, 2008). One of the discussion leaders explained that these kinds of debates are particularly useful for counteracting black and white thinking. For instance, a typical discussion between a Muslim boy and a discussion leader could go as follows:

Boy: *'We cannot trust the Dutch; they are against Muslims.'*

Discussion leader: *'How did you conclude that?'*

Boy: *'Haven't you seen what they say on TV every day?'*

Discussion leader: *'Who did you see on TV?'*

Boy: *'Well, a politician.'*

Discussion leader: *'Is a politician the same as the Dutch?'*

Boy: *'Many Dutch vote for him.'*

Discussion leader: *'How many?'*

The discussion leader viewed this as a more rewarding way of communicating than just lecturing. He explained that the discussions are most interesting as they often reveal a lot about values and, after a while, the boys learn to reason following Islamic moral values.

Another project based on a more personal approach involves empowerment training for Muslim women in a weak position. The pilot project Training Identity and Empowerment for Muslim Girls took place in the Slotervaart city district (Slotervaart City District, 2008, p. 13; Gielen, 2009a, 2009b). The first problem that the organisers encountered was trying to convince girls to join such training. In this case, they gathered a group of about 16 girls – part of a larger collective of 50 to 60 girls – who attended orthodox lectures on Islam and advice and guidance to women. The girls were insecure about their Muslim/Moroccan/Dutch identity. They attended the El Ouma Mosque, where they heard about the Socratic talks, believing that they could profit from similar discussions. Of the 16 women, six finished the training and went through the following stages:

- 'turning point' – encompassing self-reflection, building up a positive self-image, improving the ability to word one's thoughts and feelings and solving problems;
- 'moral judgement' – understanding how a moral judgement comes about, understanding how Dutch society developed with goals like freedom, prosperity and happiness, and coping with religious dilemmas;
- conflict management – as a girl, learning to deal with conflict with parents and brothers, and as a woman coping with conflict with husbands.

Although less than half the girls finished the training, the effect was hugely positive for those who completed the programme. The girls were better equipped to think critically, became active discussion partners at religious meetings and became happier with themselves, their families and their surroundings.

One of the problems underlined by this example is that it is extremely difficult to approach groups at risk of radicalisation. If this group had not asked to use the mosque, they would never have been identified. There are probably many more groups of this kind who operate from their homes. If the mosques had a broader reach towards these types of individuals and small groups, it would be easier to identify and support them.

Anti-radicalisation

One of the early activities concerning anti-radicalisation has been the establishment of the Information House on Radicalisation (IHH) initiative as a central place where professionals can report cases of individuals or groups who may be in the process of radicalising. A multidisciplinary team analyses the case and gives advice to the professional about possible interventions and contacts. Professionals from schools, youth work, the police and city districts – who are trained to recognise radicalisation – can phone the IHH to report information or look for advice. The office is part of the Department of Public Order and Safety (*Openbare Orde en Veiligheid*, OVV), which has to function carefully when it comes to the privacy of individuals.

If a case of actual radicalisation is confirmed, the notifier gets advice on asking for the cooperation of those surrounding the group or individual. The aforementioned training example showed that it is not always easy to convince someone to

join the activities. The cooperation of the imam, school teachers, youth workers, parents, family members and any other relevant persons is requested. Parents are informed of what the views of their son or daughter could imply. Firstly, social problems are addressed, such as home, income, school, health or mental issues. If possible, the person in question is invited to take part in discussions with a religious expert. During the discussions – as with the Socratic discussions – the consequences of someone’s thinking are reasoned through by asking questions which in turn stimulate a process of critical thinking. Possible questions could include the following: ‘would that mean that you would fight a war against your father?’; ‘would that mean that you would also kill your sister?’; ‘do you think you are a good Muslim when you do this?’ The IHH estimates that there are no more than eight to 10 cases a year to whom this most extreme interference applies. Moreover, the chances of finding a psychiatric problem among this extreme group is considerable.

It should be noted that only a few of the 16 projects in the Amsterdam against Radicalisation programme are mentioned here, along with a few of the 24 projects whose progress was reported on in the *Progress report on the Slotervaart action plan (Voortgangsrapportage Actieplan Slotervaart)* (Slotervaart City District, 2008). The plans have been initiated with great commitment owing to the dedication of the limited numbers of staff working on them.

Communication strategies concerning radicalisation

The communication strategies seeking to combat radicalisation encompass all the aforementioned directions. Firstly, these strategies put forward the message that We Amsterdammers are free to choose any religion, including a more orthodox religion. Secondly, they show that aggressive acts towards individuals or categories are forbidden by law and will be punished. Unfortunately, Amsterdam’s message is sometimes surpassed by other priorities of journalists. As a representative of the municipality explains, ‘Newspapers’ main strategy is to sell and TV stations want airtime. There is a strong interest in everything Muslim and controversial and the experience is that the press has a flexible attitude towards precision in reporting.’

Summary and lessons learnt

As demonstrated, the approach of Amsterdam is completely new, innovative and under development. With regard to de-radicalisation in particular, it is too early to judge to what extent the approach is effective. The positive effect of the activities to establish and support networks has already been proven in other circumstances.

However, it is possible to draw some clear lessons from the example of Amsterdam. Firstly, it is impossible to combat Muslim radicalisation without the cooperation of Muslim organisations. The policy papers on this subject are much clearer here than those observed in other cases. It is quite surprising how much has already been put into effect and with only limited staff. This was only possible because Muslims themselves felt that a real need was being addressed, supported by Muslims in key positions such as the district mayor, Mayor Marcouch. The bottom-up interests of the organisations, motivated by the increasing prejudice against Muslims and by the urge to stop children from polarising further, has led to a development in the community. It has now become normal for the El Ouma Mosque in Slotervaart to cooperate with the city district – as seen when riots nearly broke out after an individual was shot inside the neighbouring police station on *August Alebeplein* in 2007. The closer ties with the mosque have led to more trust. This is beneficial for the authorities and good for the neighbourhood.

A second lesson is that it takes time before the issue of radicalisation really gets through on all the levels that are being targeted. The report by the Slotervaart city district, where most of the projects took place, shows that not everyone within the city district administration was immediately ready to act and many departments need to get involved. Moreover, along with the officials, all the social institutions, youth workers and schools, as well as the many support agencies and foundations, also need to be convinced.

A third lesson is that a lot depends on the staff members who are employed in these programmes. The experts who are currently working in the IHH and in the Slotervaart city district are very capable, both as experts and in terms of their social capacity to explain the radicalisation issue to others. They have managed to gain the trust of immigrant associations and of other institutions. Without finding such qualified people, preferably from Muslim groups, it would probably be impossible to convince others of the approach. Because the Slotervaart city district works with only two experts and the IHH with four makes it possible to operate innovatively; on the other hand, there is also a risk of work overload or of knowledge loss if someone leaves the initiative. Increasing the number of staff in this area in five other city districts creates a more stable system.

Whether or not the breeding ground for radicalisation will disappear, not only depends on the efforts of policymakers and active groups in Amsterdam. It is also largely dependent on general social and economic developments. The two forms of polarisation that were treated in this chapter – namely, right-wing radicalisation and Muslim radicalisation – are two extreme parts of a much larger picture in which both immigrants and the Dutch are trying to cope with a changing world. There are a few signs that the situation is getting worse: one worrying trend has been the recent increase in voting for parties with anti-immigrant viewpoints; another cause for concern is the new research by the Council of the Moroccan Community Abroad (*Conseil de la communauté marocaine à l'étranger*, CCME) which shows that Moroccans in the Netherlands feel more rejected than those in other European countries and that unhappiness is growing, particularly among the young population (CCME, 2009). Thus, a general anti-polarisation policy may become increasingly relevant in the coming years.

Key challenges and lessons for CLIP

This report has examined Amsterdam's policies in relation to intercultural and interreligious dialogue, with special attention to the Moroccan Muslim associations in Amsterdam and to radicalisation. As outlined in Chapter 4, immigrant associations are traditionally supported in Amsterdam, including religious associations. This has led to a large network of immigrant associations and an active civic community. In times of crisis, the municipality can depend on (multi) cultural and religious associations; in Chapter 6 on radicalisation, it was demonstrated how Muslim associations are indispensable in this field.

Amsterdam actively pursues successful bottom-up initiatives, such as the Bensellam project for young Moroccans. The advantage of such initiatives is that volunteers are highly motivated and convinced of the need for their activities.

Subsidising religious associations is a tradition in the Netherlands and continued unnoticed for many years – for instance, nobody ever protested when the Salvation Army received its usual budget. However, in the last 10 years, Amsterdam has had to face the contentious discussion on separating the Church and state; as a result, the discussion on Muslims in general became much harder, and the issue of subsidies to Muslim associations was more readily questioned. Consequently, the need to compile a policy paper on Church and state was recognised, outlining clearly when payments to religious associations are possible and when they are not.

In Chapter 5, it was demonstrated how one particular bottom-up initiative, the *Poldermoskee*, has managed to meet the needs of many young Muslims as well as addressing some of the issues that are identified as essential in all the policy documents. Nonetheless, although there is widespread support for the *Poldermoskee*, this has not led to considerable financial support for the initiative – the mosque is barely able to afford its rent but is aware that it would not receive money from the municipality as a religious organisation and therefore has not applied for subsidies. Supporting religious organisations remains controversial, although the guidelines have become easier following the publication of a document to this end. It is hoped that the plans of Muslim associations that proposed 'social' projects – and which have been on hold to date – will probably speed up once this phase is passed.

The anti-radicalisation policy detailed in Chapter 6 is completely new and innovative. The policy has many aspects that are easy to implement in other cities, where the phenomena of radicalising young people is not yet known or may not be recognised. The preventive measures against radicalisation also have the potential to prevent many other problems – for example, by organising support for parents, information provision on the diversity of Islam or support for young second generation immigrants so that they may feel more connected in the (secular) Western world.

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List of persons interviewed

Marian Visser, Platform Amsterdam Samen (PAS), Municipality of Amsterdam, city contact person for Amsterdam

Joris Rijbroek, Platform Amsterdam Samen (PAS), Municipality of Amsterdam, official responsible for the policy note on the division of Church and state

Henk van Waveren, director of Platform Amsterdam Samen (PAS), Municipality of Amsterdam

Luc Holleman, official at the Department of Social Development (*Dienst Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling*, DMO), responsible for subsidies for ethnic organisations and for the bureau that finances ‘good ideas’ for the Municipality of Amsterdam

Saadia Ait-Taleb, official at the Information House on Radicalisation (*Informatiehuishouding en radicalisering*, IHH), Municipality of Amsterdam

Collin Mellis, official at the Information House on Radicalisation (IHH), Municipality of Amsterdam, also lectured at the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES) on theoretical background

Imogen Vermeulen, representative of Westerpark City District, responsible for policies on social cohesion and against polarisation

Saïd Bensellam, founder of Project Connect, also prizewinner of Amsterdammer of the Year 2007 and organiser of a project in Bos en Lommer supporting young Muslims

Jan-Joris Hoefnagel, worker at Project Bureau Capabel, supporting initiatives like Connect, and an intermediary between financiers, administration and active citizens

Aouatif Tawfik, official at Slotervaart City District, responsible for work on the action plan against the radicalisation of young Muslims in Slotervaart

Hassan El Maimoun, official at Slotervaart City District, responsible for work on the action plan against the radicalisation of young Muslims in Slotervaart

Zakariya Lyousofi, member of Young Muslims Amsterdam (*Moslim Jongeren Amsterdam*, MJA), as well as a participant in the training of key figures and a board member and organiser of activities in the Polder Mosque

Yassmine El Ksaihi, chairwoman of the Polder Mosque, as well as a participant in the training of key figures (previously active in the Al Kabir Mosque)

Aissa Zanzen, chairperson of the board of the Muslim Broadcasting Organisation (NMO), as well as a member of the Union of Moroccan Mosques in Amsterdam (UMMAO) and a chair of some of the Socratic discussions for young persons

Marcel Maussen, researcher on mosque building and author of *Space for Islam*, Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES), University of Amsterdam

Note – in addition to the interviews, the author visited:

- a lecture by Collin Mellis of the Information House on Radicalisation (IHH), Municipality of Amsterdam on the background to the radicalisation approach;
- a lecture by Marieke Slotman and Jean Tillie of the University of Amsterdam on processes of radicalisation and de-radicalisation.

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