

We are all citizens of the Netherlands

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I state in my recent book Dwars op de tijdgeest. Hoe ik Nederland aantrof toen ik terugkwam that we should research developments among migrants no longer in the context of “the other” but rather look at migrants as citizens of the Netherlands. Migrants, especially those who are Muslim, are probably not exactly the citizens we had in mind thirty years ago when we were dreaming about the integrated second generation, but the reality is that they have become more Dutch than we probably realize.

We need to approach and consider them as individuals, not as persons that represent “their” group. And we need to put their religiosity into the context in which they live. Religion is a social institution that is imbedded, to speak in the words of Glifford Geertz, in culture and context, which in this case, includes the *Dutch* culture and context.

I am convinced that a growing number of Muslim migrants consider themselves as Muslim *and* as Dutch. But we continue to categorize them primarily as Muslim. And this is partly the reason *why* they identify themselves mainly as Muslim when asked about what identity they identify and are the most proud of. The growing importance of the Islam that we have seen in the Netherlands since 9/11 is, in my view, not so much the result of increased piety among Muslims, but should be seen as an expression of the cultural isolation of our migrant populations.

If we agree on this point, this means that we have to look for alternative ways of how we should study developments among non-western migrants. I do not have blueprints for that and would like to discuss this issue with all of you. What are your ideas and experiences?

Your input would help me greatly with my PhD proposal that I am currently writing with Professor Dr. Han Entzinger. My proposal takes its starting point in the following situation: It is the 1960s-1970s in a village in the province Kayseri, Turkey. Two men from that village, maybe family members, maybe neighbors, maybe just friends, are making plans to leave the village. One ends up in the Netherlands, the other in Istanbul. In my research, I want to combine an academic approach with my journalistic experience and look at how the value orientations of the 25-35 year-old children of these men compare. Are they dramatically different? Are they exactly the same?