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Cooperation in Turbulent Times: Strategies of Jews and Muslims in Amsterdam

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ABSTRACT
Relations between Jews and Muslims in Amsterdam grew tense after the conflicts between Gaza and Israel in 2014, the violent attacks on Jewish targets in Brussels (2014), Paris (2015) and Copenhagen (2015) and local incidents of online, verbal and sometimes physical discrimination. Nevertheless, these factors also inspired Jews and Muslims to launch cooperation projects and strengthen the bonds already existing between them. Cooperation in turbulent times is not always easy. The data collected for this research show how Jews and Muslims in cooperation projects use to strategies to solve some of the problems confronting them. The three most widely used strategies that were found are 'searching for similarities', 'decategorizing' and 'avoidance'. These strategies do not emerge in a vacuum, however, but at a certain moment in time, in specific fields. Therefore, this article, will describe the usage of the three strategies and explain the interaction between strategies and their contexts.

Introduction

In the summer of 2014, the conflict between Gaza and Israel escalated after three Israeli teenagers were killed. Although this took place at a distance of almost 5,000 kilometres from Amsterdam, it caused complex tensions. Muslims as well as Jews were afraid the conflict would be 'imported' to the city, because pro-Gaza and pro-Israel protests took place and heated debates emerged in the media. Other developments, such as the violent attacks on Jewish targets in Brussels (2014), Paris (2015) and Copenhagen (2015) and local incidents of online, verbal and sometimes physical discrimination, also left their mark on relations between Jews and Muslims in Amsterdam.

Although these factors did provoke tensions, they also inspired Jews and Muslims – both individuals and groups – either to strengthen their cooperation projects or to launch new ones. Among the new initiatives were various kinds of dialogue meetings and interreligious networking, but also art projects, including an exhibition of Jewish and Muslim art. Jewish and Muslim leaders tried to bring groups of Jews and Muslims together in order to decrease tensions and create more understanding between them.

Cooperating in times of international conflict is not easy, however. Jews and Muslims engaging in cooperation had to deal with complex problems and fear of the other. From the data collected for this research, it became clear that both Muslims and Jews have used certain strategies to deal with these struggles. In this article, these cooperation strategies are studied to give more insight into the processes of cooperation between Muslims and Jews. Three questions will be answered: What cooperative relations exist between Jews and Muslims in Amsterdam? What strategies do leaders and participants use to work together? Do these strategies help them attain their goals or do they also hinder them?

The article begins with a description of the methods used to research Jewish–Muslim relations in Amsterdam. This leads to a summary of the theoretical insights into cooperation strategies and contextual factors. The next section gives the demographic and historical context of Jews and Muslims in the Netherlands, followed by a section of results, which illustrate the fields in which Jewish–Muslim relations occur. The next section contains a discussion of the strategies Muslims and Jews have used in their cooperation projects. The article concludes with a discussion of how these strategies relate to the specific context in which they are formed.

Methodology

Between June 2014 and December 2015, the first author conducted fieldwork into Jewish–Muslim relations in Amsterdam. She conducted 73 qualitative, in-depth interviews (with 75 persons), 2 focus groups (comprising a total of 16 persons) and 50 observations. The interviews were conducted with the help of an interview guide (Bryman 2004, 113). For this study, we wanted to provide an image that captures the many aspects of relations between Jews and Muslims in Amsterdam. Therefore, a sampling technique that Robert Weiss (1994, 22–23) calls a 'sample to maximize range' was used. In practice, this means that the first author tried to select Jews and Muslims of different ages and genders, from different religious groups and ethnicities. She also interviewed academics, politicians, policy makers, youth workers and people who identified as Christians and who were engaged in Jewish–Muslim relations.[1] The respondents were selected through key informants; contacts within religious, community or activist organizations; social media and through snowball sampling (see also Bryman 2004, 100–102).

Of the 75 persons interviewed, 29 were women and 46 were men.[2] Their ages ranged from 18 to 77 years old, with an average of 43. Thirty respondents identified as Jews and 26 identified as Muslims. Of the 30 Jews, 6 identified themselves as 'cultural' Jews and of the 23 Muslims, one identified as a 'cultural' Muslim. People in the 'cultural' category do not identify as religious, but do consider themselves to be part of Jewish or Muslim groups. The remaining respondents identified themselves as Christian, member of the Sufi movement in the Netherlands or non-religious. As they were interviewed as experts on the subject and not about their personal circumstances, the religious backgrounds of five academics or policy makers were unknown.

The religious Jews belonged to the Liberal Jewish community, Ashkenazi modern Orthodox communities or the Sephardic Orthodox community. Although most of the Jewish respondents were born and raised in the Netherlands, a few had been born in Israel, the United States or the Dutch East Indies. Most of the Muslims were either first- or second-generation migrants of Moroccan or Turkish descent. All the Muslim

respondents were Sunnis, but they belonged to different groups. The Turkish community included such groups as Diyanet mosques, Milli Görüş and the Gülen Movement, while the Moroccan community was organized into networks between mosques, or into such groups as the Collaboration of Moroccans in the Netherlands (*Samenwerkingsverband Marokkanen in Nederland*).[3]

The observations were conducted by the first author during educational projects, dialogue meetings, interreligious meetings between religious leaders, (inter)religious activities, women's groups, meetings about anti-Semitism or Islamophobia, meetings between activists, a pro-Israel protest and a pro-Palestinian protest. On all these occasions, she witnessed the interaction of people from different backgrounds. The age range of the people she came across stretched from ten to some who were in their eighties. She met Muslims who frequented the mosques of the Turkish Reform movement Milli Görüş and others who attended mosques that cater to people with Moroccan or Pakistani backgrounds. The sampling technique used in the observations was the same as that used in the interviews and led to a selection of different events and activities in which Jews and Muslims engaged. The result was a diverse image of Jewish–Muslim relations.

Theory: cooperation strategies in fields

Strategic behaviour between groups is studied both in the social sciences and in the humanities (see Bekerman 2003; Bourdieu 1979; Wimmer 2008a, 2008b). One of the most influential sociologists, Pierre Bourdieu, describes how groups use strategies in order to gain power or to maintain the status quo (Lamaison and Bourdieu 1986, 116). In *Distinction* (1979), he describes, for example, how cultural elites may exchange their cultural resources in their pursuit of economic power. Dominated groups may also use strategies to achieve social mobility. One example is the 'black is beautiful' strategy, in which dominated groups demonstrate to more powerful groups that their capital is worthwhile. Another strategy Bourdieu (1979, 384–386) describes is how dominated groups imitate the goods of dominant classes in order to fit in.

Other attempts have also been made to capture the wide range of strategies that individuals or groups use in relation to each other (Baumann 1996; Wimmer 2008b). Social identity theory describes how groups try to include some but exclude others from their own in-group (Brown 2000, 746–747; Tajfel 1982, 2–3). It is based on the idea that people separate 'us' from 'them', and in doing so create different groups and create boundaries between these groups and themselves (see Barth 1969; Castells 2010; Nagel 1994). These boundaries consist of categorizations that signify who does and does not belong to the group. Examples of these categories are being Muslim or Jewish, male or female, straight or gay, and so forth. They are created by norms or structures that prescribe how individuals should act if they want to be counted as part of a certain group (see Nagel 1994; Wimmer 2008a, 975). Although structures contribute to the establishment of boundaries, this does not prevent people from using their social identities strategically to try to belong to a group, to include people from other groups, to exclude others or to switch between these identities in different situations (see also Baumann 1996).[4]

In his review article, Rupert Brown (2000, 752) argues that social identity theory is often used to explain group favouritism and so it focuses on the conflictive aspects of intergroup relations. However, he also explains that there have been some attempts to explain the role

of social identity strategies in cooperation between groups. Brown (2000) points out that John Brewer and Robert Miller, for example, developed their 'decategorization model', in which they show that people try to deconstruct an ascribed identity by highlighting aspects that are not associated with stereotypes (see also Pettigrew 1998, 74, for a similar strategy). A second strategy Brown describes is the creation of a broader identity to fit in two groups.

Besides the strategies Brown describes, other scholars have pinpointed different strategies (Baumann 1996; Wimmer 2008b). Andreas Wimmer (2008b), for example, distinguishes five boundary strategies minorities use in relation to a majority. These are expansion, contraction, transvaluation, blurring and positional moves. Expansion means that an individual or a group stretches the boundaries of one of his or her social identities to include more people. Contraction is the opposite and means that a boundary is made more exclusionary. Transvaluation means that people try to contest power structures by explaining why their own social identity is more valuable than those of the dominant group. Blurring is a strategy that highlights parts of the identity other than those challenged or dismissed as less valuable. Finally, positional moves are strategies that do not challenge the dominant norms. An example is trying to pass oneself off as a member of the dominant class.

From the data in this study, it became clear that both Jews and Muslims use power strategies as well as social identity strategies, such as creating bonds between Jews and Muslims and reducing stereotypes, to attain their goals. The sections below will discuss the strategies that were found and will also examine how they have contributed to, but also sometimes hindered, Jewish–Muslim cooperation.

However, Jewish–Muslim relations do not exist in a vacuum; they take place within a society, at a certain time and in certain fields. Bourdieu, who is an advocate of studying relations in context, states that a field is 'a small and relatively autonomous social world, a micro-cosmos, inside a larger social world' (cited in Thielmann 2013, 204). This implies that a field can only exist if it has its own outer boundaries and is not submerged in other fields (Bourdieu 1991, 6–8; Thielmann 2013, 204–205; Wacquant 2006, 8). Nevertheless, fields are also dependent on each other and may overlap, because capital is exchanged between them. According to Bourdieu, these exchanges can occur because fields are structured in a way that allows the exchange of resources. They are therefore both independent and dependent or, as Bourdieu calls it, relatively autonomous (Bourdieu 1991, 6–8; Wacquant 2006, 8).

Although there are power differences between dominant and dominated groups within fields, they are not defined as two opposite groups; they can be seen as a continuum from dominated to dominant groups with multiple groups in between. Hence, certain individuals or sometimes entire groups may occupy a higher position in society than others (Bourdieu 1979). These positions are defined by the amount and type of capital possessed by the group. Capital can assume all kinds of forms. It may be economic, social or cultural, but basically it consists of the resources valued by society. Fields can therefore be seen as a 'space of action', meaning that a field is the place in which capital is produced, consumed and negotiated (Rey 2007, 44). However, they can also be seen as an 'arena of struggle' between actors with different amounts of capital (Wacquant 2006, 8).

The field concept has often been criticized. Jörn Thielmann (2013, 208), for example, shows in his study on Muslim groups in southern Germany that there is in this context more than one Islamic field. Furthermore, David Krech (2008, 13–14) shows that there

can be fields within fields, which he designates regional fields. Therefore it might be concluded that the structure of the field can only be established by empirical investigation. The following sections will explore the fields in which Jewish–Muslim relations take place and show how they provide the context for the cooperation strategies that were found.

Jewish and Muslim fields in the Netherlands: a historical and demographic overview

In 1879, the Netherlands registered Muslims among its residents for the first time. In 1889 there were 49 so-called 'Mohamedanen' registered in the Netherlands (FORUM 2010).[5] After World War II when the Dutch East Indies, today called Indonesia gained its independence, groups of Moluccans came to the Netherlands, among them small groups of Muslims (see Beck 2002, 97). However, the majority of Muslims came to the Netherlands in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1960s, the Dutch economy was expanding rapidly and Dutch businesses were experiencing difficulty in finding low-skilled industrial workers. In cooperation with the Dutch government, these businesses recruited people from Mediterranean countries. Initially, these so-called 'guest workers' came from countries such as Spain, Italy and Greece, but they were eventually mainly recruited in Morocco and Turkey. At first, it was thought that these guest workers would stay in the Netherlands for a couple of years. However, in the 1970s the Dutch government allowed them to reunite with their families and apply for more permanent residence and the number of Muslims in the Netherlands increased (Beck 2002, 97–100; Essers and Benschop 2007, 51; FORUM 2010, 6). In the 1970s, after Surinam gained its independence, Surinamese migrants, among them groups of Muslims, also came to the Netherlands. In the 1990s and into the beginning of the twenty-first century, asylum seekers and refugees from Iraq, Iran, Ethiopia, Somalia, the Balkan countries and more recently Syria increased the Muslim population in the country (FORUM 2010, 6).

Approximately 950,000 Muslims currently live in the Netherlands. The majority are first- or second-generation migrants. About 70% of them were either born in Morocco or Turkey or have at least one parent who was born in those countries. The other 30% are largely people from Surinam, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia (FORUM 2012, 8). Of the (Turkish and Moroccan) Muslims, approximately 89% consider themselves to be Sunnis, and a small minority can be regarded as 'cultural Muslims' (Maliepaard and Gijsberts 2012, 71). Estimates of the number of Shi'i Muslims living in the Netherlands are scarce, but according to Van den Bos (2011, 562) approximately 7–13% of all Muslims in the Netherlands consider themselves to be Shi'i. Approximately 13% of all Muslims in the Netherlands live in Amsterdam, mostly in the north, (far) west and east of the city (Moskeewijzer 2014; O&S 2011, 2013; Schippers and Wenneker 2014, 17–18).

In the sixteenth century, Sephardic Jews fled to the Netherlands from Spain and Portugal (Van Creveld 1997, 19–20; Wallet 2007, 12). At the beginning of the seventeenth century, groups of Ashkenazi Jews from Poland and Lithuania came to the Netherlands as well (Fuks 1970, AII; Van Creveld 1997, 19–20; Van Solinge and de Vries 2001, 71). At first, Jews had few rights, but in 1796 they were granted the same rights as other religious groups. Despite this earlier history, their integration into Dutch society is often dated back to 1813, because in this year the Dutch government made active attempts to integrate Jews

into society (see Van Lunteren-Spanjaard and Wijnberg-Stroz 1998, 9; Van Solinge and de Vries 2001, 71; Wallet 2007, 12). Before World War II, there were approximately 112,000–150,000 Jews in the country, but during the war and the Holocaust'. Aftermath would suggest that the Jewish population would have decreased after the war (Berg and Wallet 2010, 8; Van Solinge and de Vries 2001, 29–30).[6]

There are currently approximately 52,000 Jews in the Netherlands. Most of them were born and raised in the Netherlands, but approximately a quarter of them were born in Israel (Berg and Wallet 2010, 12). About 57% of Dutch Jews consider themselves to be religious; the others consider themselves to be part of the Jewish community or the Jewish tradition, but do not identify themselves as religious (Van Solinge and van Praag 2009). Of the 52,000 Jews, 22% (11,400 people) belong to a religious organization. Approximately 5,000 of these religious Jews belong to an Orthodox organization, 3,000 to a Liberal organization and 800 to the Sephardic-Portuguese organization (Berg and Wallet 2010, 12). Forty-seven per cent of all Jews in the Netherlands live in Amsterdam, most of them in the inner city, the south of the city, Amstelveen, Badhoevedorp (which are small towns on the south side of Amsterdam) and sometimes in the east (see Joods Amsterdam 2014; O&S 2013: Schippers and Wenneker 2014, 17–18; Van Solinge and van Praag 2009, 32).

These figures reveal that a Jewish field emerged in the Netherlands earlier than a Muslim field. Muslims and Jews have a different history regarding integration and have different relationships with the Dutch state. Moreover, the Muslim field is larger than the Jewish field and is also more fragmented. To a certain extent, their institutional and religious structures also have different rules. Additionally, Jews and Muslims, for the most part, live in different neighbourhoods. Therefore, we would argue that there is not one religious field in Amsterdam, but that there are Jewish and Muslim fields composed of religious, ethnic, cultural and political structures. This does not mean that there is no interaction between Jews and Muslims; it just means that they have created their own fields with their own rules of the game. The question remains, though, in what kinds of fields do Jewish–Muslim relations take place?

Overlap of fields: Jewish–Muslim relations in Amsterdam

As early as 1986, religious leaders in the Netherlands were arguing that a dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims would be desirable (Reformatorisch Dagblad 1986). In Amsterdam, we might trace cooperation between Muslims and Jews back to 1990, when a dialogue meeting between Jews and Muslims took place in 'de Rode Hoed' (the Red Hat) debating centre in the centre of Amsterdam. Between 1990 and 2000, informal networks emerged between religious leaders, a number of dialogues were organized and some formal organizations were started, such as the 'Raad voor Levensbeschouwing en Religie Amsterdam' (Council for the Philosophies of Life and Religion Amsterdam) established in 1997, and 'Stichting Maimon' (Maimonides Foundation) established in 2000 (see Reformatorisch Dagblad 1992; www.rlra.blogspot.nl; Joods.nl 2007; Stichting Maimon 2016).

Respondents mentioned that contact intensified after the attacks on 9/11 2001, when citizens of Amsterdam became increasingly worried about growing tensions in the city. Initiatives to bring the inhabitants of Amsterdam together were instigated both by the local government and by concerned citizens. An example of an initiative in which Jews

and Muslims participated was the 'West Interreligieus Netwerk' (WIN; West Interreligious Network), started by the local government, in which Jews, Muslims, Christians and non-religious locals came together to talk about problems in their neighbourhoods.

Between 2003 and 2006, some incidents took place that also inspired Jews and Muslims to try to work together. In the Netherlands on 4 May, the victims of World War II are commemorated. As a part of the ceremony, wreaths are laid at the monument in Dam Square and in several neighbourhoods. In 2003 and 2006, a few young men of Moroccan descent were seen to have played soccer with these wreathes in the West of Amsterdam. In 2006, this was, according to respondents, one of the main reasons to start the 'Joods–Marokkaans Netwerk Amsterdam' (JMNA; Jewish–Moroccan Network Amsterdam). After the foundation of the JMNA other initiatives were started, among them a project called 'Preken in Mokum' (Preaching in Amsterdam), in which religious leaders preached in each other's places of worship. After the Dutch journalist in the same period of time and documentary-maker Theo van Gogh was killed in Amsterdam in 2004, respondents again mentioned that initiatives were launched to bring the inhabitants of Amsterdam together. They were general projects such as 'Wij Amsterdammers' (We Citizens of Amsterdam), but sometimes also initiatives specifically organized by Jews and Muslims. For instance, the Liberal Jewish community organized and participated in dialogue meetings together with various Moroccan and Turkish organizations.

A few years later, in 2012, the Dutch government tried to ban ritual slaughter without the animal being previously stunned (see also Vellenga 2014). This was a reason for Jewish and Muslim organizations, such as a body of representative umbrella Muslim organizations 'Contactorgaan Moslims en Overheid' and an umbrella organization of Orthodox Jewish organizations 'Nederlands Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap', to work together. We shall return to this below.

From our data, it became clear that in 2014 and 2015 tensions arising from the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the violent attacks in Brussels (2014), Paris (2015) and Copenhagen (2015) encouraged Jews and Muslims in Amsterdam to revive or strengthen their bonds. New initiatives emerged, including an interreligious neighbourhood network in the southern parts of Amsterdam and a network of Jews and Muslims that attracted almost 3,000 people to 'like' their Facebook page.

All in all, between 1990 and 2015, 40 initiatives were created in Amsterdam, in which Jews and Muslims organized or participated (see Appendix 1 for an overview).[7] Some, such as the JMNA, became formalized into organizations, but most have been less coherent networks of people who have occasionally organized networking and dialogue meetings. Over time, some of these cooperative groups became less active; others, such as WIN, have revived their bonds when they felt it was needed because of incidents in Amsterdam, the Netherlands in general and other countries. Other groups have ceased to exist altogether, among them the JMNA. Reasons for ending their cooperation were, according to respondents, tensions about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, disagreements caused by debates about anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, disagreements about subsidies and personal conflict.

From the data, it became clear that the most common current forms of cooperation are interreligious dialogue meetings or interreligious activities, in which Jews and Muslims discuss problems such as discrimination, but also talk about religious and cultural commonalities such as fasting or their culinary traditions. From observations, the first

author estimates that the dialogue and interreligious meetings attract from 30 to several hundred people, while meetings between leaders are usually smaller. At least six educational projects also (partly) focus on Jews and Muslims. One example is an annual dialogue day between a Christian school, a Jewish school and a public school with many Muslim pupils; another is an organization called Diversion, which visits primary schools with Jewish, Muslim and gay peer-educators to talk about prejudice.[8] Other forms of cooperation are art projects, youth leadership projects, women's groups and informal contacts between individual Jews and Muslims.

As we have seen above, many of the projects were started in times of conflict. From a Bourdieuian perspective, this data can be interpreted as a signal that Jewish and Muslim communities have tried to protect their own position in society from other groups by cooperation or have begun to cooperate after they have experienced a shared problem. While in some cases this is correct, the data also suggest other reasons for cooperation. Some Jews and Muslims were curious about the other and their curiosity spurred them on to participate in cooperation projects. Others were asked to participate in a project by friends or the local government, which is also one of the main reasons why people engage in other forms of voluntary cooperation (see Van Bochove and Verhoeven 2014). Moreover, pupils usually did not have any clear motivations to be in cooperation or educational projects, because their schools incorporated such activities in their curriculum, which made it mandatory. There was also a group that just wanted to do something that they thought was good for society. Finally, over time some Jews and Muslims created lasting bonds; they stood up for each other and supported each other when they needed it. Their motivations for maintaining these bonds had less to do with protecting the own group and more to do with friendship.

A substantial group of religious or community leaders organize these projects. Such people have been called 'identity agents' (see Visser-Vogel et al. 2012, 118). They are crucial to achieving cooperation, because identity agents have attained a certain degree of authority, which may help to bring their communities together. The religious and community leaders of all of these projects are either Liberal or modern Orthodox Jews or Liberal and Orthodox Sunni Muslims, the latter usually of Turkish or Moroccan descent. Alongside the identity agents, the local government has also initiated contact between various groups in the past and present, although policy makers and local politicians are hesitant to help organize religious events, as they feel this would transgress the separation of church and state in the Netherlands.

Although the Jews and Muslims these identity agents have attracted to dialogue or interreligious meetings (hereafter 'participants') have sometimes already had experience of interreligious or intercultural dialogue, others have not. Participants in the projects came from mosques and synagogues all over the city, from all kinds of ethnicities and religious backgrounds. There were, for example, members of a mosque that caters to Muslims of Moroccan descent in the eastern parts of Amsterdam, others from a mixed mosque in the western part of Amsterdam and from Milli Görüs or Diyanet mosques in the western and southern parts of the city. In the projects that were most advertised on social media, there were also participants from other Dutch cities.

In terms of the economic capital required to undertake these projects, the leaders of educational projects are often, but not always, paid for their work. However, the rest of the leaders generally organize the cooperation voluntarily. Many experience difficulty in

finding finances to fund their projects. As stated above, local government was often reticent to finance interreligious activities because of the principle of separation between church and state in the Netherlands, which requires that the institutions of religion and state should be independent of each other (see Nickolson 2012, 23; Van Bijsterveld 2015, 125). Although the Constitution does not forbid the financing of religious organizations, the policy makers who were interviewed in this research were hesitant to do this as a matter of principle.[9] Religious or community leaders have occasionally been allowed to use money from their own communities to organize meetings, but these projects have had to compete with the needs of their own communities, which made it hard to spend funds on interreligious projects. What most of the leaders do have is a broad social network. In some cases, this has meant that they have been able to use a certain building for an interreligious meeting either for a reduced fee or for free. So, while economic capital is often scarce, social capital has in some cases made it possible for them to organize cooperation projects.

In conclusion, Jewish–Muslim relations do not take place in one cohesive field. They occur at the overlap of Jewish and Muslim fields (see Bourdieu 1991, 6–8; Wacquant 2006, 8). This is not a subfield of one or both religious fields, but involves the spaces at the edge of the fields. Furthermore, other fields are also involved because government employees, Christians and people from other religions participate in these cooperation projects and networks. Moreover, we shall see below that the political field surrounding the conflicts between Israel and the Palestinians for example influences the overlap of the Jewish and Muslim fields.

What stands out is that there seems to be a difference in how 'active' this overlap between Jewish and Muslims fields has been over time. It seems that they are more active in times of crisis. They react to the part of the fields in which conflict occurs, although individual motivations to join in cooperation projects are more varied. Furthermore, a distinguishing characteristic of the overlap of these fields is that, with a few exceptions, there are social networks but the cooperation is not institutionalized. For example, at present there is just one formal, interreligious organization. This makes the spaces in which these fields come together flexible, but also leaves them vulnerable because, if a Jewish or Muslim leader decides to stop cooperating, his or her position might be difficult to fill, especially if there is also little financial capital to help Jews and Muslims organize these projects (see Van Bochove and Verhoeven 2014 for a similar argument).

Cooperation strategies

Although fragile in terms of institutional density and economic capital, quite a substantial group of Jews and Muslims were trying to work together in the period of this study.[10] Their goals were to create friendship between Jews and Muslims, counter stereotypes, reduce tensions arising from the Palestinian–Israeli conflict and the violent attacks in Brussels (2014), Paris (2015) and Copenhagen (2015) and to resolve local conflicts that took the concrete form of threats made against synagogues or mosques in the neighbourhood. In their efforts, they had to deal with participants who, in their everyday lives, come from different fields, structured by different rules and logics.

From the data, it became clear that religious and community leaders, as well as the participants in cooperation projects, used strategies to lighten the atmosphere, create bonds and tackle some of the problems. For example, they made jokes about themselves to

ease the mood and turned to power strategies, such as the exchange of capital. The most widely used strategies, however, were social identity strategies, those used most being 'searching for similarities', 'decategorization identities' and 'avoidance'.[11]

Searching for similarities

In the cooperation projects studied, Jews and Muslims have most often used a strategy that we shall call 'searching for similarities'. It comes closest to creating a new group into which both groups can fit, as described by Brown (2000, 752). An example of creating a new group identity is that, instead of identifying as either 'Muslim' or 'Jew', people say they are part of one group of the Abrahamic religions. By creating this new category, both groups can become one group. The Jews and Muslims in this research usually did not go as far as to create a whole new group, however.[12] What they did more often was to allow each other in on a *part of* their identities.

Religious Jews and Muslims came from different institutional religious fields in the Netherlands. To bring these fields closer together, they sought and found similarities in elements of what they perceive to be their shared religious practices and traditions, including, for example ritual slaughter, male circumcision, fasting and donating to charity (*zakāt/ zedakah*). This strategy was used in three ways. First, in the activities or dialogue meetings they organized for the participants, religious leaders deliberately told those taking part, narratives about these similarities. They used these narratives as counter-narratives against stereotypes or tense debates, hoping this would help the participants see commonalities instead of differences. Marike, a Jewish organizer of an informal interreligious network, said, for example: 'We are trying to find similarities. (…) Our goal is to bring Jews and Muslims together through our cultural and religious backgrounds. (…) There are obvious similarities, like the circumcision of boys and eating halal or kosher food'.

Second, in educational projects, searching of similarities was employed by Jewish and Muslim (peer) educators to make a situation less strange for pupils. In one of the educational projects, pupils were invited to visit a synagogue. Before they entered the synagogue, one of the guides, Mathilde, mentioned that the men had to wear a kippah or other headgear. She explained this by comparing Jewish practices to Muslim practices: 'It is the same as women wearing headscarves or removing your shoes when entering a mosque. It is a sign of respect'.

Some participants in cooperation projects were genuinely surprised to learn about these similarities. For example, a Muslim man of Moroccan descent explained that, in the first dialogues he organized, he and others learned about religious similarities from each other, which surprised the participants. He thought this had contributed to the decline in prejudice among the participants. Similarly, a Muslim girl in one of the educational projects said that she learned from her visit to the Anne Frank house that Islam and Judaism were not so very different. Also, a teacher from one of the schools, who visits a synagogue every year, stated that prejudice was decreasing in his school because of this project.

Finally, religious similarities were sometimes used less consciously. Occasionally, Jews and Muslims already knew about such practices as ritual slaughter, in which case these counter-narratives functioned to emphasize binding aspects, instead of as surprising or normalizing elements.

Nevertheless, as Edward Kessler (2010, 62) argues in his work on Jewish–Muslim–Christian dialogue, religious similarities can bind, but can also easily divide. Kessler

explains that, although the figure of Abraham is often seen as an aspect that is shared in Jewish, Muslim and Christian traditions, different interpretations can cause controversies. No disputes about Abraham were found during the fieldwork for this research. However, the first author participated with a Jewish man and a Muslim woman in an interreligious walk and they spoke enthusiastically about the positive references to Jews they ascribed to the Qur'an. The Jewish man stated that negative narratives about Judaism, which he also ascribed to the Qur'an, were probably written by Jewish converts to Islam, and not by true Muslims. The Muslim woman was very interested. However, the conversation did become tense when the Jewish man mentioned that they would probably disagree about the Prophet Muhammad. The Muslim woman laughed nervously and the Jewish man understood he had made a mistake and hastened to say he did agree with what the Prophet Muhammad said about the unity of God. She accepted this, but it shows how, in newly established relationships, a conversation that begins about similarities can become tense when the differences are discussed.

Another problem that may occur when people connect on religious matters is that religious similarities are not the same for everyone. For example, when an Orthodox synagogue organized visits to several places of worship, a Jewish organizer mentioned that women and men sit separately in their synagogue. In the mosque they were visiting, the men and the women were also separated. In his eyes, this presented an example of a similarity between Islam and Judaism, but in Liberal Jewish and Muslim communities men and women may sit next to each other. Moreover, not every Jew or Muslim identifies him- or herself as religious. In the course of the interviews, two of the non-observant Jews said that they did not want to engage in activities classified as interreligious, because they were not observant.

Sometimes, bonding did not derive from shared aspects of religious identities, but from shared aspects of cultural identities. This was common among both non-religious and religious Jews and Muslims. They talked about similarities in Jewish and Moroccan/Turkish cuisine, music and family norms (see also Bahloul 2013). However, the most common similarity arose from a narrative about Morocco that was used as a counter-narrative to oppose discourses that separate Jews and Muslims. Although this shared narrative did vary, broadly speaking they told each other that in Morocco, Jews and Muslims had lived together in peace for ages. Moreover, they reminded each other that, during World War II, the Jews in Morocco were protected by Sultan Mohammad V. This narrative was usually supported by personal reminiscences or memories handed down by the speaker's parents. During a dialogue organized on International Women's Day, for example, a Muslim woman of Moroccan origin and a Jewish woman told each other stories about King Hassan II, and in an interview a man of Moroccan origin spoke about his father's fond memories of watching soccer on television in their Jewish neighbours' house.

Using this strategy, religious and community leaders again demonstrated to others that they had something in common. For example, at a dialogue meeting, a Muslim woman of Moroccan descent who is very active in cooperation projects told her audience about her family in Morocco. She said jokingly that her Muslim family and their Jewish neighbours shared everything, except husbands. Her mother had given her a necklace, which she showed to the participants, into which 'Jewish, Muslim and Berber elements' had been worked. She added that, as she was raised with positive stories about Jews and Muslims, she valued the bonds between members of both religions.

Interestingly, many of the participants in the cooperation projects knew this Moroccan narrative and hence its function was more to emphasize common knowledge, rather than as something that came as a surprise to people. The origin of this narrative may lie in the collective memory of Morocco. Ben-Layashi and Maddy-Weitzman (2010, 90, 100), for example note that narratives about peaceful cohabitation are part of Moroccan Muslim collective memory; they draw on oral traditions and are retold frequently. The authors mention that these narratives also have been used politically by King Hassan II and his son, Mohammed VI.

Although most of the Jewish respondents do not have a Moroccan background, many of them were aware of the narratives about Sultan Mohammed V, King Hassan II and the shared history of Jews and Muslims in Morocco. This may have to do with Jews having been on holiday to Morocco, where they visited the old Jewish neighbourhoods, but it may also be an outcome of the efforts made by the Jewish community in Morocco to preserve this history (Ben-Layashi and Maddy-Weitzman 2010, 100). Additionally, a few Moroccan Jews in Amsterdam are very active in cooperation projects and a trip was organized in which a network of Jews and Muslims went to Morocco.

Remembering positive encounters between Jews and Muslims can be a powerful strategy, especially because these narratives are not just told by religious leaders, but are part of the participants' immediate environment because of accounts passed on by their parents or political leaders. Furthermore, some Jews and Muslims mentioned that, if Muslims and Jews were able to live together peacefully in Morocco, it should also be possible for them to get along in the Netherlands. A Muslim of Moroccan descent, for example, concluded from the 'Moroccan narrative' that 'we cannot be archenemies'.

However, as Ben-Layashi and Maddy-Weitzman (2010, 100) argue, this strategy becomes vulnerable as memories fade. The Jewish community in Morocco has decreased sharply and the communities abroad might not remember the stories beyond a few generations. Therefore, bonding over religious similarities may be more stable, because they are grounded in textual rather than oral traditions. Moreover, the Moroccan narrative may not work for other Muslims; it brings together Muslims with a Moroccan background and Jews, but Muslims of Turkish descent might feel left out. Although this possibility exists, it was not observed empirically.

Moreover, although the network trip to Morocco mentioned above was supposed to act as a bonding mechanism, it did not work for everyone. A Jewish participant, for example, mentioned that it did not feel right that the trip was subsidized by the local government and that some Muslims did not want to wear kippahs in the synagogue they visited. For this participant, the trip did not feel like a bonding experience. A Muslim participant also argued that there were tensions when the network began, but he mentioned, too, that the network in general had positive aspects, such as friendships and ongoing cooperation between some members of the network.

The last form of identity that Jews and Muslims used to cooperate is their minority status in Dutch society. This position was again used to emphasize or create a bond. For example, a Muslim of Moroccan descent told me that he stayed friends with a Jewish man because they shared an 'otherness' that they could express to each other. This was not possible to achieve in their contacts with 'the majority'. He did not find this problematic and was happy he could express this with his friend. Others, however,

experienced a feeling of exclusion. For example, Ashraf, a Muslim of Moroccan descent, explained what made him and his Jewish friend Gideon connect:

> Well, this might sound crazy but the lack of warmth in this society; like not feeling at home, or the feeling that society is falling apart. (…) Gideon, no longer feels he is Dutch either and he feels he does not belong in this society.

As with similarities in religious and cultural identities, minority status was also used by religious or community leaders to show pupils that Jews and Muslims have something in common and are not so very different. For example, the first author witnessed a conversation in a synagogue between a girl and a Jewish guide (Chaya): the girl asked: 'Why did Hitler hate the Jews?' Chaya answered that the reason was quite unclear, but it might have had to do with the idea that in the past the Jews were the only non-Christian minority: 'If you are a part of a minority, you are often blamed for all kinds of things, just as Muslims are now being blamed for all kinds of things as well'.

The difference between bonding on religious grounds and on cultural grounds is that participants, when bonding over minority status, sometimes felt they had to stick together because their existence as religious minorities might be threatened by what they perceived to be the secular majority population. As mentioned before, in 2012, for example, the national government tried to ban ritual slaughter without previously stunning the animal, which led to discussions in the media (see also Vellenga 2014). In the interviews for this study, respondents said that, as minorities who saw their religious freedom under threat, they had decided to counter this prohibition by working together. By doing so, they said they could benefit from each other's skills. One Muslim man, for example, said that the Jews had lived in the Netherlands for a longer period of time, so their institutions were more suited to dealing with the Dutch government. On the other hand, a Jewish man mentioned that, because they are a larger minority, Muslims could mobilize more people. In other words, although Muslims in the Netherlands were believed to own more social capital, Jews were believed to have acquired more expertise in dealing with the political system (cultural capital) (see Bourdieu 1979; Wacquant 2006). Thus, the realization that they were in the same minority position and perceived certain qualities in each other helped them to work together. As one of the Muslim respondents of Turkish descent commented about the leader of the Animal Party who introduced the bill on ritual slaughter: 'Marianne Thieme will turn us into great comrades!'

Nevertheless, the strategy might become problematic if an entire group is accused of being the wrongdoer. For instance, during a dialogue meeting between Jews, Muslims and Christians, one young man was exploring whether or not he wanted to become a Christian or wished to remain non-religious. He told the group that he had attended a dialogue meeting in the past and he felt excluded because they had said they were 'against the seculars'. As someone who identified himself to some extent as a non-religious person, he felt very unwelcome because he was seen as the wrongdoer.

In conclusion, we have seen that identity agents used these narratives as a way to show similarities to Jews and Muslims who did not normally have contact with each other, in the hope of decreasing prejudices, countering tense debates and creating lasting bonds. For people who were unacquainted with each other, similarities in religious, cultural and minority identities sometimes came as a surprise and sometimes influenced how they thought about each other. Additionally, similarities were not only deliberately used as bonding

mechanisms by religious and community leaders; they also worked to emphasize the shared knowledge of both leaders and participants. Finally, in a few cases, perceiving someone as similar influenced the ability to mobilize against a threat from the outside, a case in point being the debate on ritual slaughter.

However, as we have seen above, there are also some problems. It is difficult to bring together groups that come from different fields, especially when the differences in the internal logics of the Jewish and Muslim fields are not addressed in a constructive manner and become more important than the common ground. Examples are the discussion between the Jewish man and Muslim woman who talked about the Prophet Muhammad, and also the more ambiguous example of the discussions within the interreligious network. Moreover, when one group, such as Moroccan Muslims, is included, others may feel excluded. Bonding over being a minority introduces the additional complication of how to deal with the (secular) majority population and other religious groups with yet other fields with different logics. Searching for similarities is therefore a strong strategy, but it is also a sensitive one in which it is important to know your audience.

Decategorizing ascribed identities

One of the main goals of educational projects is to learn about the other. Identity agents claimed that pupils had little knowledge about each other's religious or cultural practices. Observing education projects Muslim pupils did not know about the ritual practices of Judaism. Nor did Jewish pupils know much about Islam. Besides a lack of knowledge, the organizers of educational projects reported that these pupils had negative assumptions about each other, which they believed had been received from the media coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflicts and the violent attacks in Brussels (2014), Paris (2015) and Copenhagen (2015). In one of the focus groups, Jewish pupils were asked what went through their minds when they thought about the word 'Muslim'. One of the girls said she thought about 'fear'. When she thought the matter over she said she knew 'not all Muslims are like that', but she still felt fear, because Muslims are often portrayed negatively in the media.[13]

To challenge these negative assumptions and lack of knowledge, religious leaders and peer-educators use a 'decategorization model' (Brewer and Miller cited in Brown (2000)). In this strategy, aspects of identities that do not match the negative assumptions are discussed.[14] Karin, a Jewish woman who was one of the organizers in an educational project in a synagogue explained:

> When asking the pupils what they thought when they hear the word 'Jew', many pupils make an association with Anne Frank, the Second World War and Hitler, some children draw swastika's. (…) What we want to project is that we are modern Jews. We show that there are differences in Judaism. My colleague eats kosher and I do not and that is okay. We just think about this differently. If the pupils understand these differences, the project is a success.

In practice, this kind of deconstructing was also happening in the classrooms visited: 'Mathilde (one of the Jewish hosts) asks the pupils if they had expected that she and the other host (Lotte) would be Jewish. A Muslim boy of Moroccan descent (Farid) says he had, because Mathilde and Lotte are the hosts in a synagogue, so the conclusion is obvious. Mathilde laughs. She asks the pupils if they would have thought they were

Jewish if they were walking along the street. Farid and his friend of Surinamese descent say that they would not have guessed this. The latter says that Mathilde and the other host do not look Jewish. Lotte asks him what 'looking Jewish' is. He says: 'Hooked noses'. Mathilde says: 'All right, what else?' Farid says that Jews wear long, black clothes. Other pupils say 'curls' and 'moustaches'. After the laughter has died down, Mathilde explains that not all Jews have hooked noses and that the people who wear black clothes are Orthodox Jews. Liberal Jews do not wear that kind of clothing.

In another educational project, Muslim, Jewish and gay peer-educators played with a combination of appearance and conversation to decategorize stereotypes. In one of the lessons, the peer-educators wrote a number of propositions on the blackboard, such as: 'I am Jewish', 'My brother has blonde hair and blue eyes' and 'I have a Surinamese family'. At one of the primary schools that was visited in this project, the pupils all chose either the blue-eyed Jewish or the blond gay peer-educator when asked whose brother had blond hair and blue eyes. They were surprised that the Muslim peer-educator who had a darker skin and brown eyes was the one who had a brother with blue eyes. He explained to the children that his brother is actually a stepbrother and therefore they do not have the same parents. Later, the peer-educators discussed the proposition 'I have a Surinamese family'. One of the boys in the classroom said he chose the Muslim peer-educator, but then he hesitated and said: 'Maybe they are related by marriage, so it could also be the other two'. This strategy was also used outside educational projects. For example, religious leaders spoke up for each other in public, to show that Jews and Muslims were not each other's enemies, but could cooperate.

The latter examples show the successful deconstruction of parts of religious or cultural stereotypes. However, the subjects that many Muslims and Jews found most problematic to talk about, and which are therefore the most difficult to decategorize, are the armed conflicts between Israel and the Palestinians. An example of how complex these tensions can be is the pro-Gaza and pro-Israel demonstrations in Amsterdam in the summer of 2014. During these demonstrations and online discussions, some Jewish groups showed their support for Israel, while some Muslim groups supported Gaza. They had opposing views on who had initiated the conflict between Gaza and Israel, who were the wrongdoers and what the solution should be.

However, there were also other parties involved in the protests and media discussions, including left- and right-wing activists, Christian organizations, people who identified themselves as non-religious and human rights organizations. So, although Jews and Muslims were involved, they were not the only ones. Moreover, among both Jews and Muslims there were people who either did not want to take sides, did not want to get involved, were uninformed about the conflict or had different views on the issue. To make matters even more complicated, some of this last group felt they were being asked by their own communities to choose a side and others felt the media had turned the conflict between Gaza and Israel into a (religious) problem between Jews and Muslims, which they felt damaged the relations.

In the educational projects, there are Jewish and Muslim (peer) educators who try to solve these problems either by deconstructing the view that all Jews support Israel and all Muslims support the Palestinians or by trying to explain the more complex opinions in this debate. In doing so, they have had to disentangle political, ethnic and religious identities. For example, in the educational project in the synagogue, described above, one of the

Jewish educators explained to a group of pupils that the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is primarily about land. She explained there are Arab Israelis in Israel and there are also Jews living in Arab countries, so the conflict is not necessarily religious or between Jews and Muslims.

The second form of decategorizing was used in an informal interreligious network in which the Palestinian–Israeli conflict seemed to have become a problem. When misunderstandings arose about her presence, a Muslim woman who had attended a pro-Palestine protest explained her reasons for doing so in front of the group. The woman defended her presence at the protests by emphasizing the human struggles of civilians and stating that she did not agree with violence. A Jewish woman was also asked to share why she was at a pro-Israel demonstration and she answered using the same kind of terminology. The organizers expressed that they did not have to agree on every aspect of life to be friends and the interreligious network remained intact. This form of decategorization strives to explain positions by providing the other with more information so that they can understand these views.

As we have seen, decategorizing discusses assumptions about Jews and Muslims. The examples above show that identity agents, such as Jewish and Muslim (peer) educators, use this strategy often and deliberately in their programmes. However, this strategy was also found in dialogue meetings, because participants in dialogues often have to explain their positions. Decategorizing can help in attaining the goal of dismantling stereotypes, as shown in the example of the peer-educators, whose pupils applied what they had just learned to the next proposition. It can also help to explain certain positions, which may reduce tensions, as in the example of the interreligious network.

The problem with this strategy is that, particularly in discussions about Israel and the Palestinians, it may not increase trust, but rather result in distrust. In these circumstances, tensions can prove difficult to temper. In an interview, a Muslim woman explained that a heated debate had emerged in her interreligious women's group when a woman who identified as Christian had said that the Palestinians were not being listened to by the international community and she could understand that they were eventually forced to use violence in order to gain a hearing. A Jewish woman argued that this was a violation of Israel. This conversation resulted in an intense discussion between the people who identified as Christians and the Jews in this group. The Muslim woman, who preferred not to get involved, said she was caught in the middle, because both parties had phoned her to talk about each other. The Muslim woman already wanted to avoid the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, but the dispute in her women's group made her even more anxious about attempting to open a discussion about Israel and Palestine.

Moreover, it can prove difficult for both Jews and Muslims to defend more nuanced or divergent views rather than the view dominant in other parts of their communities. Some Jews who openly criticized the policies of Israel were heavily criticized by other Jews, and a Muslim who openly argued against anti-Semitism during the Gaza protests in the summer of 2014 received a lot of negative attention from other Muslims.

Avoidance

As a consequence, many Jewish and Muslim identity agents and participants have started to refrain from talking about parts of their political identity, even when these did not

diverge significantly from the political identity of the other. The conflict was deemed 'too complicated' or 'too sensitive' and was therefore consciously avoided. Some organizations, such as the women's group, decided to talk about religion, culture or the problems faced by women in general, but not to talk about politics at all. Occasionally, Jewish and Muslim leaders also actively warned against talking about this problem, because it would 'import' the Israeli–Palestinian armed conflict to Amsterdam. They tried to avoid the topic during their meetings with participants in their projects and advised each other to do the same.

A Muslim man of Moroccan descent said:

> I was being interviewed on the radio with a rabbi when the radio DJ began to talk about Israel and Palestine. The rabbi and I decided not to talk about it. I do not know anything about Israel and Palestine. I can barely find it on a map.

His friend, a man who identified as non-religious, added:

> You are asked to talk about one subject, but then journalists try to provoke you and ask you about politics. I am aware of this, but if you do so, you are treading on thin ice, especially if you do not understand the context. I did live there for a year, but I still do not understand what is happening there. So, let's not fall into their trap by saying something stupid.

And a Jewish woman said in an interview: 'The whole dialogue process between Jews and Muslims is going very well, except when you talk about the Middle East; then it will not work'.[15]

This strategy of refraining from talking about parts of identity is not unique to Jews and Muslims. As Gerd Baumann (1996) shows in his study about London, ethnic groups highlight or downplay parts of their identity in their interaction with other people. Baumann's respondents identified as parts of several groups and could juggle these different (self) ascribed identities. He describes this as follows:

> The same person could speak and act as a member of the Muslim community in one context, in another take sides against other Muslims as a member of the Pakistani community, and in a third count himself part of the Punjabi community that excluded other Muslims but included Hindus, Sikhs, and even Christians. (5)

In this scenario, avoidance is not insincere, but something people do to escape conflict. Avoidance may indeed lead to less conflict in the short term but, as we have seen above, when differences are introduced too early, it can lead to tension.

The difference from Baumann's study is that Israel and the Palestinians are frequently discussed topics in the public debate, which leads to heated debates and confusion about concepts and symbols. Some of the cooperators joined in these debates on Facebook or Twitter by 'liking' certain pages or sharing stories on their timelines. Their friends in the cooperation projects saw this, and their political identities were questioned.

Some of the respondents were unaware of each other's views on the Israeli–Palestinian question and were shocked when they found out what their friends thought about it. One Jewish man, for example, said he thought one of his Muslim acquaintances was a nice woman who could bring people together, but was surprised she went to pro-Palestinian protests. He was also quite surprised that most of his Muslim friends 'covered their Facebook page in Palestinian flags'. In this case, it did not lead to the end of the friendship. The Jewish man thought putting up online flags could be ascribed to being young and angry.

Thinking about his own youth, he could eventually sympathize with them. Nevertheless, if they had talked about each other's standpoints earlier, there would have been less confusion.

In other cases, avoidance might lead to the opposite problem. In interviews, some Jews and Muslims expressed quite similar ideas about the Israeli–Palestinian issue, but were unaware of each other's standpoints because they were afraid to discuss it. In other words, keeping a certain political field out of cooperation may be the cause of unnecessary confusion.

Sometimes, a solution was found by combining strategies. A Muslim organizer of an interreligious network mentioned that, if the first encounter between Jews and Muslims is about conflicts and results in a heated debate, first impressions are likely to be negative. She therefore argued that it is best not to begin by discussing Israel and the Palestinians but, once trust has been established, it might be possible to raise the subject. Here, she was combining avoidance with decategorizing. Another Muslim woman who helped to organize a religious market said she thought that it depended on the situation. A religious market to show that religions can live together is not an appropriate environment in which to discuss Israel and the Palestinians, because at these moments you want to show others what unites. However, in small groups in religious institutions that have cooperated together for a long time and established trust, it might be possible to discuss this theme.

Conclusion

As we have seen above, in the designated period, Jewish and Muslim identity agents tried to unravel stereotypes, resolve local conflicts, create bonds and reduce tensions arising from the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and the violent attacks in Brussels (2014), Copenhagen (2015) and Paris (2015). In their cooperation projects, Jewish and Muslim leaders mainly use three social identity strategies to reach these goals: 'searching for similarities', 'decategorizing' and 'avoidance'. Searching for similarities is used as a way to provide participants with counter-narratives that focus on shared aspects of religious, cultural and minority identities. It is also used to emphasize similarities that are already seen as shared by participants. Decategorizing is applied in order to counter stereotypes and come up with explanations of certain political standpoints to defuse tense discussions. Finally, Jews and Muslims use avoidance to prevent relations from becoming tense.

These strategies have helped Jewish and Muslim leaders to reach some of the goals they have set themselves in the scope of these projects. Some Jews and Muslims mentioned that they had learned that there are similarities between their religions and some pupils in educational projects did begin to think more about prejudice. By achieving this, these attempts might decrease some tensions and succeed in bringing parts of religious fields together. Avoidance also ensures that the political field that deals with Palestinian–Israeli conflicts is kept outside of these projects.

However, these strategies also have their limits. As we have seen, some similarities included some groups of Jews and Muslims, but excluded others or were overshadowed by differences. Decategorizing was perceived to be too difficult to attempt in discussions about the conflicts between Israel and the Palestinians and, finally, avoidance may cause problems in the long run, if aspects of political identities are not discussed, but are 'questioned' on social media.

It is interesting to see that 'searching for similarities' has commonalities with 'creating a new group identity', but differs from the latter in its use and content (see Brown 2000). This divergence may stem from the position groups occupy in a societal field. In social identity theory, many studies focus on majority–minority relations and the pressure on minorities to assimilate into the majority group. The creation of a new group in majority–minority relations is then described as a strategy used by minorities as a way to become part of the majority population. As both Jews and Muslims are numerical minorities in the Netherlands, they feel no pressure to assimilate with each other's group. Therefore, their strategies differ in the sense that they do not try to become part of each other's group, but let each other in on a part of their own identities instead.

Decategorizing and avoidance were also applied differently from the switching described in Baumann's study and the decategorization strategy explained by Brown (see Baumann 1996; Brown 2000). For example, at the beginning of the fieldwork in 2014, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians had just begun to escalate. This political field became more prominent in the media and in the overlap of fields in which Jewish–Muslim relations take place. Hence, avoidance was a way to cope with this conflict. In less turbulent times, decategorizing might be easier because, when media attention fades, it may become easier to talk about this subject.

In conclusion, when studying Jewish–Muslim relations we have seen that strategies may introduce change in certain fields, but it is also important to see that their cooperation, conflict and strategies emerged from specific power relations at the crossroads of religious and political fields. This finding contributes to our understanding of the contextualization of the strategies Jews and Muslims use and the change their strategies might provide to religious and political fields.

Notes

1. When we speak of Christians in this article, we mean people who identify themselves as religious Christians.
2. More men than women were interviewed, because many of the respondents were religious or community leaders, who are more often men than women.
3. The first author did not speak to Muslims who identified as Shi'i, because she did not come across them participating in Jewish–Muslim relations, in cooperation projects or in any conflict. This might have to do with the fact that there is only one Shi'i organization present in Amsterdam (see Van den Bos 2011, 562). It might also be argued that some individual Muslims who identified as Shi'i did engage in the events the first author visited, but were not visible as Shi'i in these relations. In large events, such as protests, for example, she could not identify all of the participants as either Sunni or Shi'i.
4. It is important to note here that, although people are sometimes aware of their strategies, in other situations or cases they are not (see Barth 1969, 33; Brown 2000, 767; Douglas 1983; Lamaison and Bourdieu 1986).This means that, despite the fact that social identity strategies may be beneficial to their own group(s), people who belong to the group may not always use them deliberately.
5. It should be noted that, until Indonesian independence in 1949, the Dutch East Indies had a large Muslim population (see Kennedy and Valenta 2006, 344–345).
6. This included all Jews who were members of the Israelite Church Communities (*Israëlitische Kerkgenootschappen*). In the 1930s, there were probably more Jews in the Netherlands but some of them were no longer members of religious communities (Van Solinge and de Vries 2001, 29–30).

7. The groups of people who cooperated were counted, but not all of their different projects. Sometimes, the people in one cooperative group also participated in another group. In this case, they were counted as separate groups, unless two groups contained exactly the same people.

8. Strictly speaking, the first and third educational projects studied are not organized jointly by Jews and Muslims, but only by Jews. Therefore, they do not cooperate in organizational terms. However, during these projects Jewish hosts did try to cooperate with young Muslims and so they were counted as part of the cooperation projects.

9. Lars Nickolson (2012, 30) describes how, in Amsterdam in 2010, policy makers in different parts of the city differed in their interpretations of this principle. Although some did not finance religious organizations, policy makers in other parts of the city financed both youth work by a Christian organization and Qur'an lessons. During this research, policy makers and politicians in the central, eastern, western and southern parts of Amsterdam were interviewed and all of them were hesitant, at least on the matter of financing religious activities such as interreligious dialogue. This said, most of them were open to the idea of financing activities by religious groups if they organized intercultural dialogues and discussed societal problems.

10. The following paragraphs are based on the narratives respondents provided in interviews or on observations by the first author. The names of respondents are changed and sometimes their affiliations to organizations are made less specific to preserve anonymity.

11. It is important to note that the identity strategies described are based on similarities and differences in identities *perceived* by groups of Jews and Muslims in Amsterdam. Therefore, the differences or similarities may differ (slightly) from official religious doctrines, scriptures or official historiography. The present study does not focus on determining the accuracy of these similarities or differences from these official sources, but tries to show how perceptions of certain similarities or differences in identity are acted upon and used strategically.

12. In a few instances, people did use either 'Abrahamic religions' or 'People of the Book' to describe Jews and Muslims. However, searching for similarities occurred more frequently than the creation of a new group.

13. Prejudices and lack of knowledge were not only expressed by Jewish and Muslim pupils, but also by pupils from other backgrounds. There were also more knowledgeable and less prejudiced (Jewish, Muslim or other) youngsters. However, in the classrooms that were visited, the lack of knowledge was greater than expected.

14. In decategorizing, religion, ethnicity and culture are difficult to separate, because the stereotypes they counter also make use of various social identities. Therefore, we did not separate these categories as we did in the previous section.

15. She said the Middle East, but when she elaborated she talked about Israel.

16. This list is based on projects mentioned by respondents in the interviews or during observations and on the sources listed above.

17. The children's monument project was founded in 1982. In this project pupils are educated about World War II. Nowadays, this often involves Muslim pupils, but this may not always have been the case.

18. There were some educational projects in mosques. However, these projects were usually visited by public schools and not necessarily by Jewish schools. Because the Jewish community is quite small, there were not many Jewish pupils from public schools who visited the educational projects of mosques.

19. The organizers of this project fight hate speech against all minorities in the Netherlands and work with all kinds of people who are victims of hate speech or who are involved in hate speech themselves.

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Appendix[16]

Cooperation projects founded in: 1990–2000

1990: Dialogue in the Rode Hoed debating centre
1992: Moses & Aaron Church dialogue
1997: Raad voor Levensbeschouwing en Religies Amsterdam (Council for the Philosophies of Life and Religion, Amsterdam)
2000: Stichting Maimon (Maimonides Foundation)
Exact year unknown: Project kindermonument[17] (Children's monument project)

2001–2010

From +/− 2001 till today: Informal networks between key persons from mosques and synagogues in Amsterdam
2001: Interreligious Network in the west of Amsterdam, which organizes projects such as the 'Morrocan–Jewish' soccer tournament
2003: Project 'Gelijk = Gelijk' (Diversion: projects on discrimination and World War II)
2004: Broad interreligious network in the east of Amsterdam
+/− 2004: Informal relations between the Liberal Jewish community and individuals/groups from the Gülen movement, Milli Görüş, Argan community centre, the Al Kabir mosque and the Fatih mosque
2005: The Ramadan Festival invited the Liberal Jewish community and a synagogue in the west of Amsterdam to their iftars
2005: Classroom of Difference Project on schools in Amsterdam, and other cities in the Netherlands
2005: Raad voor Levensbeschouwing en Religies Amsterdam: vrouwengroep. (Council for the Philosophies of Life and Religion Amsterdam: women's group). This women's group was founded in 1998, but in 2005 Jewish and Muslim women joined.
2005: M-Zine, FORUM en Centrum Informatie en Documentatie over Israël (M-Zine, FORUM and Centre of Information and Documentation on Israel) organized trips to Westerbork and Auschwitz with young Muslims and Jews from Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam, The Hague and Den Bosch.
2005: Brievenproject 'Niet van Gisteren' (Sending-letters project – pupils correspond with Jewish survivors of World War II)
2006: Dialoog Diamantbuurt (Dialogue in the Diamond neighbourhood)
2006: Rap Project in youth centres in Amsterdam
2006: Joods–Marokkaans Netwerk Amsterdam (Jewish–Moroccan Network Amsterdam)
2010: Cooperation projects organized by a Muslim youth leader and a rabbi

2011–2015

2010: Artist duo who perform drama about friendship, tensions between different ethnic and religious groups and the Middle East

2011: Preken in Mokum (Preaching in Amsterdam)

2011: Leer je buren kennen[18] (Get to know your neighbours) educational project

2011: Dialoog in Actie (Dialogue in Action) dialogue panels in which Jews and Muslims sometimes participated

2011: Gerard Dousquare network between a synagogue, a church and a mosque

2012: Annual dialogue between a Christian school, a Jewish school and a school with many Muslim pupils

2012: Safety pact against discrimination, signed by several Jewish and Muslim organizations

2012: Cooperation between an umbrella organization for Orthodox Jewish organizations and a representative body of umbrella Muslim organizations, because the Dutch government tried to forbid ritual slaughter without stunning the animal beforehand

+/− 2013: Informal network of Jewish and Muslim artists

2014: Dialogue group Jews and Muslims with the mayor of Amsterdam

2014: Dialogue in the Jerusalem Church

2014: 'Het Andere Verhaal' (exhibition 'A Different Story')

2014: Salaam-Shalom network

2014: Cooperation between the Jewish and the Moroccan gay pride floats

2014: Mo & Moos youth leadership project

2014: 'I Believe I Am Gay' (exhibition 'I Believe I Am Gay')

2014: No Hate Speech the Netherlands[19]

2015: Interreligious Network in the south of Amsterdam

2015: Together United Amsterdam network

2015: Two female singers, Noam and Teema, who sing in Hebrew and Arabic

2015: Liberal Jewish community visits refugees in the Havenstraat

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