Article

An Invisible School: Social-Cultural Work of the Mosque Organizations

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Abstract: There is a knowledge gap in the contribution of socio-cultural work in Islamic organisations to the participants' learning and development. This article focuses on the role of the socio-cultural work of Islamic organizations as a form of non-formal education. Education is the internal process of a person which leads to a better understanding of themselves and their situation, a critical appreciation of their situation and a conscious and targeted use of the possibilities in their social situation. Therefore, what volunteers learn when they participate in socio-cultural work in mosque organizations will be investigated. The research is based on the case study of a Turkish faith-based organization Milli Görüş Amsterdam-West (MGAW) and its volunteers. The method of the research is ethnographic field research. The research focuses on a specific group of participants, namely, the volunteers who are active at the MGAW. One of the results of the research is that the participants who follow the social-cultural activities of MGAW for a certain period develop a cohesive worldview whereby volunteering becomes a virtue.

Keywords: non-formal Islamic education; mosque education; social-cultural forming work; Milli Görüş Amsterdam; lifelong learning

1. Introduction

In the Netherlands, there are approximately 600 mosques and at least as many affiliated organizations such as women's, youth, student, sport and media organizations. Due to numerous kinds of research, we now know that mosques and related organizations organize various social activities besides their main tasks, which include religious services and guiding the 'rites of passage' (see Canatan et al. 2005; Sunier and Landman 2014; Yar 2018). These organizations have a wide range of activities which can be grouped into three fields, which are religious well-being, social well-being and education. Research into mosque education in the Netherlands focuses mainly on mosque education-classes (see Pels et al. 2006; Sözeri et al. 2021). The teaching in those classes is designed only for one part of the mosque's target group, namely, children between 5 and 15 years old. The mosque's student population does not consist only of children. Adolescents and adults also participate in the mosque's educational activities. Besides educational lessons, the mosque offers various socio-cultural activities to promote the participants' person-building education. Socio-cultural activities such as lectures, conversation circles (*sohbet*), conferences, film evenings, international film competitions and museum trips are examples of the educational activities of the mosques that occur outside of the education classes. Not only is the education in the mosque classes still in its infancy, but the educational role of the socio-cultural activities of mosques and related organizations for adolescents and young adults is also an underexposed aspect in scientific research. This article explores the contribution of the social-cultural work of the mosques and related organizations in the Netherlands to the development of its participants. The research question to be addressed in this article is: What do volunteers learn when they perform socio-cultural work in mosque organizations?

The research shows that religious community organizations tend to serve as learning schools for entry into wider society. The community organizations of religious minority

groups help ordinary participants to build social skills and encourage active civic involvement (Peucker and Ceylan 2017). Despite the slowly growing evidence base in mosque education classes, the educative role of the socio-cultural activities of the mosque and affiliated organizations has not been sufficiently researched in the Netherlands. This paper is an attempt to make an exploratory contribution to closing this research gap. It focuses on a religious community organization in a disadvantaged neighbourhood of Amsterdam where non-formal Islamic education has not been systematically studied. The significance of the socio-cultural work of the mosque organisations in building the participants' social skills was explored through a case study at one of the mosque organisations in the Netherlands, known as 'Milli Görüş Amsterdam-West' (hereinafter: MGAW).

Context

Milli Görüş Amsterdam-West is a religious community organization in which a significant proportion of the Turkish-Dutch residents of Amsterdam-West participate. Amsterdam-West is a multi-ethnic district of Amsterdam with socio-economically disadvantaged inhabitants. The MGAW is part of the Turkish Islamic movement Milli Görüş (hereinafter: MG). MG is a Turkish transnational movement that originated in the 1970s. When Western Europe accepted labour migrants into their countries, MG travelled with those migrants in a similar way to other mainstream Turkish social and cultural movements. The movement is being characterized in different ways, and it has shifted from being referred to as a fundamentalist movement to a reformist one (Ramadan 1994; Sunier and Landman 2014). Some significant developments such as the split in the political party of MG, which resulted in three different parties which include the AK-party (Turkey's current ruling party), in addition to the death of Necmettin Erbakan, the founding leader of MG, have led to a reorientation in European MG. Due to that change in orientation, the European Islamic Community Milli Görüş (IGMG) seems to be an increasingly European mosque organization with a focus on three fields: the religious well-being of the West-European Turkish diaspora, governing and serving the affiliated organizations and delivering the international development aid. The mosque organization abandoned the political ambitions of Turkey, which means that IGMG has quickly made itself independent from the MG movement that is there (IGMG 2022). Administratively, MG Netherlands falls under IGMG Europe, and it is divided into two regional administrations: the north and south of the Netherlands. These two administrations are umbrella organizations, and together they account for 39 local mosques and about 100 mosque-related youth, women, student and sport associations, as well as entrepreneurs and media organizations.

The MGAW is a local Islamic community with approximately 400 members and more than 800 visitors a week. About 8000 members of the community have their ethnic roots in Turkey in a district with a total of 148,908 inhabitants that are familiar with the MGAW (Yar 2018). The MGAW consists of four sub-organizations: the Mevlana mosque, the women's association Hilal-Basak, the youth-centre MGT Amsterdam-West and the girl's division, Katre-i Hilal. Every sub-organisation of the MGAW has a board of twelve members who also volunteer. The MGT Youth Centre and the Katre-i Hilal girls division are the two youth associations of the MGAW, and only youths and young adults are their target group. Some of their activities are specifically targeted to the Turkish-Dutch community, whilst some of them are for everyone who resides in Amsterdam-West. An example of this external activity is the cooperation with the church in Bos and Lommer in the receiving of refugees. It must be argued that there are more activities in MGAW than just education(al) classes that enhance the process of education and development, in particular, the social-cultural activities. The content of this article focuses on those types of activities.

2. Non-Formal Education as a Form of Learning Outside School

Social-cultural work can be described as a process of shaping and renewing the individual, leading to meaningful and active participation in society (Cockx 2008). The research shows that participation in volunteering leads to developing social skills, and

this is no different for religious organizations which socialize their participants in terms of values and norms, which can increase their social involvement (see Van de Donk et al. 2006; Dudley 2007; Dekker and de Hart 2009; Peucker and Ceylan 2017).

According to the Dutch Education Council, education is an intentional and systematic transfer of knowledge, skills and attitudes, involving interactions between the teacher, as knowledge transmitters, and the learners, as knowledge receivers (Onderwijsraad 2011). Learning takes form in three different ways: formal, non-formal and informal education.

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning uses the following definitions of the concepts of formal, non-formal and informal learning:

Formal learning is learning which takes place in education and training institutions, which is recognised by relevant national authorities and leads to diplomas and qualifications. Formal learning is structured according to educational arrangements, such as curricula, qualifications, and teaching-learning requirements. Thus, when learning leads to recognized diplomas and qualifications related to a particular civil effect, it is referred to as formal education.

Non-formal learning is learning which has been acquired in addition to formal learning. In some cases, it is also structured according to educational and training arrangements, yet it is more flexible. It usually takes place in community-based settings, workplaces and through the activities of civil society organizations.

Informal learning is learning which occurs in daily life, family, workplace, communities and through the interests and activities of individuals (UNESCO LL-Institute 2012).

Non-formal education refers to learning contexts outside of school. Crouzé and Meurs (2021) emphasize that these learning contexts are not characterized by curricula and objectives, but they are rather based on the learner's intrinsic motivation. They see non-formal education as sites of subjectivation of the individual. The learning contexts outside of schools are even more important sites of political socialization and subjectivation for young people's engagement and development according to Crouzé and Meurs (2021). The Dutch Education Council also defines non-formal education as intentional and systematic learning, which, however, is achieved in a different way than it is achieved in school. The council emphasizes the importance of community for shaping an individual's personality. Values and ideals are practised and lived up to within communities (Onderwijsraad 2011).

Biesta's concept of subjectification refers to the shaping of the person, rather than the shaping of the personality, which should be the main theme of education (Biesta 2021).

According to Biesta and Hannam (2019), educational work consists of awakening the desire to want to exist in the world as a subject, rather than an object.

The Dutch Educational Advisory and Research Organization, CINOP, defines non-formal education as intentional and systematic learning in work-related activities as well as in activities aimed at social participation and in activities that are primarily aimed at personal development (see Houtepen 2004). Not all forms of learning are intended for a profession or the labour market. Some forms of learning are caused primarily for a need of cultural development, social, political or religious consciousness of the person or group. Dutch pedagogue Houtepen defines non-formal education as 'a process in the person whereby he achieves a better understanding of himself and his situation, a critical appreciation of it and a conscious and targeted handling of social situations' (Houtepen 2004, p. 62).

According to literature, non-formal Islamic education can be defined as a process whereby a person, inspired by Islam, achieves a better understanding of themself and their situation and develops a critical appreciation of that situation.

3. Results

In this research, both deductive and inductive methods are used to encode data. The following paragraphs present and discuss both types of findings.

3.1. The Learning of the Leading Volunteers' Social Awareness

Volunteers learn to develop their social awareness. One of the findings regards social awareness as one of the important factors in the altruistic behaviour of volunteers. The respondents take no pleasure in just the spiritual life that plays a role in their home, mosque and school. They want to step forward and be meaningful to society. Voluntary work at the mosque gives them satisfaction. The volunteers are highly driven, and volunteering in the mosque means the world to them. Ritual practices are necessary, but they are not sufficient in their perception. The mission can be fulfilled only on the condition that there are voluntary tasks to perform for other people. The way to the highest spiritual position according to the beliefs of the respondents is not through actions that are based on duty, but those that are based on voluntary action.

The respondents consider volunteering in the mosque organisation a virtue and a duty. The chair of the Hilal-Basak women association:

"I pray five times a day. That isn't enough . . . you have to do something for your neighbours, for your family, for other people, not only for Muslims but really for all people. That's what God says. The path to the highest spiritual position is not through acts of duty but through voluntary action".

Volunteering is a source of pleasure and fun for the respondents. Even though it demands a lot of spare time from the volunteers, as mentioned above, the respondents see serving people as a strong sign of virtue.

The chair of the women's association of the MGAW says the following:

"I am very motivated. I work with a lot of energy, and I go on; and if I continue until boredom hits, I sometimes feel empty. Thank God I can escape that feeling soon enough as the Turkish saying goes: 'of our ashes we arise' . . . Even though I am tired, I can barely eat, and I am sleepless, I am still happy. Even my unhappiness makes me happy".

3.2. Trust

Volunteers develop trust in other people. In addition to the sources of inspiration, we also read about trust in the interviews. The concept of trust is, for the interviewed young volunteers, between their supporters and the social institutions with which they collaborate, and it is a precondition for the effectiveness of their activities. They have experienced cooperation with the social environment which does not take place automatically. The organizations and the municipality first see which way the wind blows, they keep an eye on the MGAW and also the MGT Youth Centre, and they only decide to collaborate after they are convinced that MGAW is a reliable organization. All the volunteers have stressed the importance of building long-term relationships. According to the respondents, the MGAW has proven itself over the past thirty years, and it has generated confidence through numerous activities in Bos en Lommer. Serving people without expecting to be rewarded in a material sense is an idea that all volunteers cite as a determining factor of trustworthiness.

The interviews repeatedly show that buddy activities strengthen the trust of young adults.

The secretary of the Mevlana Mosque puts it this way:

"To trust, you need to show that you are serving people without compensation. When these people see that you don't expect anything from them, they say: 'even my mother and father don't do anything for me without something in return".

Presence and altruistic devotion are important to young visitors.

3.3. Hope

Another finding from the data analysis is hope. The volunteers develop hope. They have hope that their projects shall succeed, that they can achieve their goals and that they can solve the problems. Through their sub-organisations, they fully deploy their knowledge and skills in aid and services, with all their faith and power. In their perception, this is not only necessary from a social point of view for rooted identity development, but it is

also a matter of conscience and stems from a morality of honesty. The chair of the girl's department association achieves hope with hard work and honesty:

"*It is not fair to those who have had to work hard to achieve something to wait for God's help and blessing without working hard. We must first work hard and then hope*".

The secretary of the MGT Youth Centre says:

"*Muslims are a reality of this society. Even though they (natives) exclude us, we are part of this society . . . Without expecting anything in return, we have to help the other person out of his problems. . . . Look, if we can take a young person out of a problematic situation and turn it into a problem-free context, that's an elusive blessing for us. Perhaps that is one of the main factors that motivate working here*".

3.4. Social Skills

Volunteers develop social skills. The interaction of the leading volunteers with the surrounding society in Amsterdam-West can be characterized as a conscious interaction. The activities performed in the interaction with the social environment are schoolwork, establishing and continuing an interreligious dialogue platform, visits to detainees, the sick and the elderly in institutions, and maternity visits in hospitals. Participation at the MGAW offers the opportunity to develop basic social skills such as learning to organize meetings, taking responsibility, listening to others, asking questions, constructing arguments and learning to negotiate and compromise.

In addition, the respondents see a dynamic interaction between their participation in the activities of the mosque and their reviving religious position. This religious position is also said to be related to their migration background. The chairman of MGAW was born in Turkey, and they later emigrated to the Netherlands. Migration can lead to confusion and to the fears of being lost in the new situation and to disappearing, but can also lead to the creation of new identities and new paths. For some, it is a relapse, which means holding onto what was there and being a little rigid about it, while others are moving and developing new identities precisely because of the migration and new context.

Vice-chair of the Youth Centre belongs to the latest category. According to his self-description:

"*For example, when I came to the Netherlands, my faith was an incentive to not leave my school and continue my education. If I had not been introduced to my faith then, I would most certainly have left school. Because my age reached 18 or 19 and I was still at secondary school*".

3.5. Bonding and Bridging

Volunteers learn to develop networks internally (within their community), but also externally with groups and associations in Amsterdam. There are different groups that the MGAW collaborates with. A guidance plan has been drawn up for each group. What the MGAW achieves with young adults is to empower their identity development, their self-esteem and their self-image. The MGAW guides young adults to find a new identity that can be seen as the key to a proper life. The interviewees are satisfied if their target group does not cause problems and leads a respectable life. For example, when it concerns young adults who experience mild or severe tensions regarding their identity development, staying on the straight path is the guidance goal for them. The path that is followed here is the bonding (Putnam 2000), the inclusion in the mosque community in which they participate. However, more active work is expected of those who lead a more stable life. They are expected to be socially active, help other vulnerable people and not be selfish. The path taken here is the path of bridging activities. Through bridging activities and networks, the person involved in MGAW also becomes a member of wider society (Putnam 2000; Lin et al. 2017).

3.6. Role Models

Each respondent has their own biography in which different people have played educational roles. All the interviewees were inspired by historical personalities, such as the prophets (of the Abrahamic faiths). For some interviewees, personalities from their immediate environment are inspiring role models. This includes parents who have or have had an active association with life in different communities. For others, it might be the grandfather who was involved in the establishment of mosques and would thus be regarded as a role model. Another was impressed by the movements sincere volunteers who offered their wellbeing for the good of others. One of the activities for young adults is the buddy project, which is called *abi-kardeş* ("big brother-little brother"), and this involves the mentoring of young adults by members who are a few years older. The interviewees point out the importance of role models, which they first encountered in the *abi-kardeş* approach. At the beginning of their association life, these young adults themselves were admitted to the group as newcomers, and they were subsequently supervised by the members of that group. In turn, the newcomers started guiding others after a certain amount of time. The secretary of the Youth Centre MGT emphasizes the importance of role models:

> *"One of our board members is a lawyer. I present him as a role model to the young adults and tell them: 'You see if you study you can also become someone like him . . . The motivation of young adults for their education increases when we show them a vivid example . . . This is a blessing, a very great blessing".*

3.7. Dialogue

The volunteers learn to talk with people of other faiths. The volunteers show openness in their relationship with various societal organizations in Amsterdam-West, and they participate in projects which are aimed at bridging people and groups with each other. Presence and altruistic devotion are important to young visitors.

3.8. Helpful

The volunteers learn to be helpful to others.

The inspiration in the tradition is reflected in all the activities of the (young) volunteers. For example, they help people in need, serving vulnerable people regardless of whether they are Muslim or not. The secretary of the youth centre explains this as follows:

> *"We belong to a faith that believes in the equality of people. Our prophet has clear statements: "There is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab, nor for a non-Arab over an Arab The superiority lies only in piety." "Human beings are equal to God, like the teeth of a comb"".*

The leading volunteers initially act and feel locally responsible mostly for other Muslims, but also for non-Muslims in the Netherlands. The young adults responsible for social-humanitarian development aid push the boundaries and also feel responsible for the poor in developing countries.

The member of the Youth Centre MGT continuously:

> *"The reason they come to the Youth Centre is that they find a warm atmosphere here. They especially feel that the voluntary leaders are friendly to them. The friends here do their best to pay attention to those who come and do something for their personal development . . . We try to be helpful with this kind of problem".*

3.9. Islamic Ethical Values

The bond that the young leaders currently experience within the mosque community has developed according to a certain pattern: from an inconspicuous 'ordinary' participant to an active volunteer. A leading volunteer is not an average member of MGAW, but they are someone who has social and managerial skills, who has proven to be reliable over time and who is familiar with the daily experiences of the residents in Amsterdam-West.

The leading volunteers all have a job in everyday life. They see their association life as a second home and experience satisfaction in being a part of it. Dutch society is also their society. They consider themselves to be Dutch, but they also consider themselves to stem from the same sub-community: Turkish Muslims. They identify with the Milli Görüş movement. The data analysis show that the leading volunteers move and act by seeing and hearing the problems of their target group in Amsterdam-West, especially in the Bos and Lommer neighbourhood. They are emotionally touched by this and conclude that they must do something to alleviate the suffering of their target group.

The focus of the activities of the MGAW is on formation work. As stated, educational work is not about learning school subjects such as language education, mathematics, physics or geography, although guiding and supporting pupils and students with their homework related to their school does receive serious attention. For the MGAW, the specific activities are education-oriented ones because they strive for the social participation and awareness of the participants.

Religiously motivated educational and social activities occupy a central place on the MGAW agenda.

The religious values which the respondents refer to can be described as follows:

A positive image of human beings: They begin to see the good in people and hope to find and further develop that good in others as well. Potentially, the conscience is good, and it wakes up when it is treated positively. The vice-chairman of the Youth Centre uses fire as a metaphor for that positive view of humanity:

> "Islam inspires me to do things the way I do them. Islam teaches me: 'A man's conscience does not die completely; it is only covered; the fire continues to burn. However, much you cover the embers, the fire will burn again if you throw anything over there, by God's permission. When someone has a problem, whether he is a Muslim or not, you have to help him. If one doesn't care about the other's worries and problems, then I doubt his faith. He is then an egoist".

Responsibility (Mas'uliya): The reflection of one's actions in light of the Islamic ethics of responsibility is a fundamental idea for them. In the first instance, they feel locally responsible for Muslims, but also for non-Muslims in the Netherlands.

Accountability (*Hesap*) is another value. All the interviewed volunteers are convinced that their faith provides them with an orientation point. The believer's suspicion that there is an afterlife and that everyone will have to account for what they do here on Earth has been emphasized by all the interviewees. Religion urges them to do something for others.

God's satisfactory (*Allah rızası*): 'divine consent for good' is an important source of inspiration for them to be active in society.

Rewards by God (*Sawab*): This is another value that must be earned according to the leading volunteers. It should only be expected if a man does his best to be good.

The policy adviser Hilal-Basak:

> "When I lay my head on the pillow, I think, 'What did I do today? We sometimes ask ourselves these questions, sure. For this is again advice from our religion, the muhasabe. What have you done today for humanity, for humanity's benefit, for its happiness, for the making of an even more beautiful world?"

The respondents give a specific meaning to their commitment to voluntary work. Being spiritual on your own is not satisfying enough for the respondents. Social involvement is just as important. Some of the respondents indicated that they would feel useless if they were not doing voluntary work. Giving accountability for one's actions is used as motivation as well. The God of the respondents is a God whom we, as people, have to answer to. The respondents believe that they have to give accountability for their actions in the afterlife, and therefore, it can be considered as a socially activating source of inspiration. One respondent expressed this as follows:

"I believe that there is an afterlife and that I, like everyone else there, must be held accountable for my actions on earth. For me, that is a basic motive in my existence and to be socially active".

The God of the respondents gives them the belief that they are of significance to other individuals. Ritual practices are necessary, but they are not enough in the experiences of the respondents. The divine mission can only be fulfilled if they voluntarily help other people. The journey to the highest spiritual position, in terms of the respondents' beliefs, is not accomplished by actions based on duty, but by actions based on voluntary acts.

The interviews show that the leading volunteers are motivated by witnessing the problems of the target group in Amsterdam-West, especially in the neighbourhood of Bos and Lommer. They are emotionally affected by this and conclude that they must do something to alleviate the suffering of their target group.

They give a certain definition to their Islamic beliefs so that it inspires others, and their volunteering makes sense to them. They start from a point of seeing fundamental goodness in people and hope to find that goodness in others and develop it further. Reflecting on their actions in light of the Islamic tradition of responsibility and accountability (*muhasabe*) is a fundamental belief for them, which nourishes their social commitment. Not only is accountability cited as an explanation for why they do what they do, but also values such as God's pleasure, mercy, justice and rewards for being good. For them, this is an important source of inspiration for being socially active.

It can also be concluded from the interview data that among the volunteers, there are differences in the use of religious values and what it means to them. While the younger volunteers mainly speak in terms of 'duty' and 'accountability' when it comes to standing up for the underprivileged, the older volunteers frequently use the term 'mercy'.

4. Data and Methods

This article is based on an ethnographical study, which is a qualitative research method that focuses on the narratives of the research group. The empirical data used in this article were collected in 2014–2016. In-depth interviews with seven leading volunteers members of the MGAW were conducted by the author of this article. It means for the present research that we focused on the narratives of these volunteers. The research was an ethnographical study, which was qualitative in nature. The data were gathered in interviews during in-depth conversations using a topic list. In addition to interviews, the data were obtained also through observations of four sub-organisations of the MGAW. The research group consisted of volunteers who had been active in the MGAW for some time. The starting point of the research was the perspective of volunteers who were board members in MGAW (called "leading volunteers" in this article)[1]. Following the founder of the Symbolic Interactionist school of Blumer, 'humans act towards things based on the meanings they ascribe to these things' (see Blumer 1986).

4.1. The Choice of the Cases MGAW

The case MGAW was not selected or advised by the management of the Milli Görüş Netherland, instead it was chosen by the researcher (the author of the present article). He (the author) stumbled upon the world of the participants of MGAW in his role as a researcher at IHSAN, the Islamic Institute for Social Activation. As a manager of this national institute, he initiated community development projects in Amsterdam, in the district of Bos and Lommer, together with the Protestant Deacony Amsterdam (hereinafter: PDA), in which various faith-based community organizations (FBO) were co-implementors. During that period of conducting community development projects, the author of the present article observed the world of Islamic grassroots organizations in Bos and Lommer at some distance through regular monitoring and evaluation reports from projects. Four of the five Turkish self-organizations that participated in the project were affiliated with the Turkish MG organization. IHSAN and the PDA wanted to do something about the problems that the residents experienced. They jointly formulated a question that formed

the common line of the collaborative projects between IHSAN and the Parish at the district level. That question was: what would the contribution of the religious and philosophical traditions in Bos and Lommer be to the lives of the residents in a cosmopolitan city such as Amsterdam? The MGAW seemed to be very sensitive to the search for the contribution of religious traditions to community empowerment in Bos and Lommer. Years later, in the form of a PhD field study by the author, the opportunity arose to return to Bos and Lommer and MGAW to gain more insight into MGAW's social involvement.

4.2. The Research Population

The research population consisted of board members and volunteers of the four sub-organizations of the MGAW. Two board members, the chairman and the secretary, of every sub-organization have been interviewed. Table 1 shows some characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1. Characteristics of the interviewed leading volunteers of MGAW.

Interviewed Leading Volunteers	M/F	Age	Education	Name Sub-Organization	Years of Experience at MGAW
ST Board member secretary	M	26	Bachelor IT	MGT Youth Centre Amsterdam-West	10
MO Board member	M	27	Bachelor	MGT Youth Centre Amsterdam-West	15
AK Policy adviser/ex-chair	F	49	Bachelor in Turkish literature	Hilal-Basak	25
RK Board member Chair	F	19	Vocational educational degree Education assistant	Hilal-Basak	4
IS Board member Chair	F	54	Islamic high school Vocational educational degree in Islam	Mevlana Mosque	30
HK Board member secretary		22	Bachelor student of teacher training at the University of Applied Sciences	Mevlana Mosque	9
FA Board member Chair		20	Bachelor student of architecture at the University of Applied Sciences	Katrei Hilal	7

4.3. Interviews

A total of seven interviews were held. The researcher—that is the author of the present article—used a deductive method as well as an inductive method for data coding. Based on a literature study, the concepts 'participation, trust and reciprocity' have been taken into consideration to formulate the items for the semi-structured interviews. The headings correspond to the terms resulting from the analysis of the interviews. With the description and substantiation of these concepts, the information that came entirely from the interviews was used to establish a relationship with the research question and research objective, which is: the non-formal education in the mosques. The interview protocols were analysed using a 'close reading' method (Rubin and Rubin 2004). The 'close reading' method meant to use as many authentic words of the respondents as possible. The interviews were analysed in four rounds:

1. Identification: the first round was a careful reading of the verbatim report to identify the relevant information, terms, metaphors, symbols and repetitions.

2. Labelling: The second round consisted of labelling relevant information, terms, metaphors and symbols. The repetitions were reduced to include unambiguous information.
3. Merging: The third round of analysis merged two separate labelled interviews into a text. This text was ordered based on the labels that were obtained.
4. Converting: the fourth round consisted of converting the merged text into a coherent text and changing it into concepts.

The inductive reading and analysis of the interviews have yielded several concepts. The relevant concepts for this article are social awareness, characteristics, hope and social skills.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

This article started with the observation that the educational role of the socio-cultural activities of Islamic organizations is an underexposed aspect in scientific research. This article studied the educational work of an ordinary Islamic community organization in Amsterdam. This included the Turkish mosque organisation Milli Görüş Amsterdam-West. The research question was: what do volunteers learn when they perform socio-cultural work in mosque organizations?

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the social-cultural work of the mosque supports the development of its participants as follows:

Firstly, the mosque organization serves as a complementary facility for the well-being and education activities in Amsterdam-West. From the interviewees' narratives, it appears that the educational work of the mosque shares similarities with non-formal education, particularly the pursuit of a dignified place in society (Cockx 2008; Houtepen 2004) and the individual's self-esteem.

Secondly, the volunteers learn to take responsibility through being societally active both within and outside the mosque community.

Thirdly, the leading volunteers of the MGAW build a resilient existence within the social network of the MGAW through the attention and time they put into their work.

Fourthly, as shown in the international research on Muslim community organizations (Peucker and Ceylan 2017), the motivations for volunteering can be divided into religious and social motivations. The religious concepts such as *Hesap*, giving accountability in the afterlife, *Allah rızası,* the satisfaction of God, *Sawab*, the reward for good deeds and finally, *Masuliya*, taking responsibility, were quoted quite a lot by all the respondents. The volunteers allow religion to play a certain role. For example, being honest with oneself and with God is extremely important. A reward from God must first be earned in that context. It can also be concluded from the interview data that the leading volunteers see religion not only as a source of inspiration, but also as a success factor. All the volunteers are convinced that their faith provides them, and their target group that participates in their activities, a solid position and orientation point. The belief that there is an afterlife and that everyone will have to account for what they do here on Earth has been strongly formulated by all the interviewees. In their view, their religion urges them to do something for others. For the interviewees, religion consists of sources of inspiration for social activation. The problems of the target group at both the individual and social levels are the source of their social motivations.

Citizenship in The Netherlands

The integration debate in the Netherlands is gradually shifting towards the individual responsibility of the migrant, and towards participatory citizenship, which means that the migrant adopts the basic values of Dutch society. The emphasis in the dominant integration discourse will be on the question of whether the newcomers sufficiently identify with the fundamental values of Dutch society. The volunteers develop citizenship skills by performing voluntary work. In this sense, my research confirms previous research on the shaping role of volunteering, both for the volunteer and society in general (see Coleman

1988; Putnam 2000; Johnson et al. 2002; Peucker and Ceylan 2017). The socio-cultural work provided by mosque organizations acts as a training ground for individual altruistic ethics in the service of the surrounding society, as evidenced by Peucker and Ceylan (2017).

It can be concluded that the socio-cultural activities of mosque organizations contribute to creating awareness among the participants about themselves and their situation in society and, on a larger scale, about the social, religious and political mechanisms in society on the one hand and self-esteem on the other hand. The Dutch fundamental values are not different. The non-formal Islamic education is first and foremost a learning context of awakening the desire to want to exist in the world as a subject. Further research is required to examine how non-formal Islamic education shapes the socialization of its participants in citizenship on the one hand and the subjectification of its participants on the other hand.

Note

1   This article will be handling the term 'leading volunteers' -*Kaderlid*-, because this is the most common name in the Dutch language for board members and volunteers who fulfil a leading role in a community.

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