13. THE INTER-RELATEDNESS OF RELIGION AND CITIZENSHIP

As we have seen in the previous chapters, there is a relationship between the religious background of Dutch citizens, their opinions on citizenship, and the role of religion in society. In the interviews it became clear that many of the religiously highly committed respondents drew inspiration from their religious conviction in their attitude towards other people and society as a whole. They did not refer to their convictions in all of their answers, but it was obvious that the inspiration of their holy book and religious tradition influenced their opinions to a large extent. This mirrored the findings in Part One, where it was shown that opinions on citizenship often coincided with particular attitudes towards religion. In this chapter, I take a closer look at two forms of inter-relatedness of religion and citizenship by taking two different approaches. In the first approach, I give an interpretation of the results of the survey regarding the correlations between thinking about religion and citizenship. In the second approach, I discuss two case studies from the interviews — one Protestant and one Muslim with a Turkish background — to show the tight connections between religion and citizenship in their reasoning.

13.1 Correlations Between Religion and Citizenship Attitudes

While the analyses of political philosophies and government policies suggested a direct relation between interpretations of citizenship and appreciation of religion in the public domain, the correlation analyses on the survey data seemed to contradict these findings. Overall, the correlations between the two were unexpectedly low (less than 0.4), indicating no strong relations between ideas on religion and citizenship at all. Were all previous results based on spurious relations? Let us first take a closer look at the correlations. The highest correlations found were those between tolerance and embracing religious diversity and between social engagement and religion as a value basis for society. This indicates that people who emphasised tolerance as an essential characteristic of a good citizen also embraced religious diversity, and that people who thought of social engagement as an essential characteristic of a good citizen tended to attribute a more important role to religion as a value basis for society.

When we split the respondents into non-religious and religious groups, we see that a greater appreciation of tolerance coincides with more emphasis on embracing religious diversity and with less negative attitudes towards religion. The groups remain consistent when it comes to the category of tolerance,
indicative of high levels of agreement and a uniform interpretation of the category.

The initial correlation analysis revealed that the category of *privatised religion* correlated positively with *shared identity*, while the category of *embracing religious diversity* correlated negatively with this citizenship dimension. These results can be related to the earlier described relation between the focus on shared identity and the appreciation of religion in government policies. Here too, it seemed that the focus on ‘Dutchness’ was accompanied by a reduced appreciation of religion, a stronger focus on a shared (non-religious) identity and a stricter restriction of religion to the private sphere. At the same time, the correlation analysis revealed that a focus on shared identity also correlated with higher scores on *religion as a value basis for society*, which was rather unexpected. When the results are split by religiosity (to compare religious and non-religious persons), this relation between *shared identity* and *religion as value basis for society* almost disappears. Only a very weak correlation ($r = .091$) remains within the group of religious people; for non-religious people, there is no correlation at all.

The other results regarding shared identity follow general expectations formed on the basis of the results of Part One. For both religious and non-religious people, the emphasis on national identity is accompanied by a reduced appreciation of religion. The only non-consistent finding in this respect is that the survey revealed that Protestants emphasised national identity more, while simultaneously appreciating religion. The interview data, however, seemed to indicate that religiously highly committed Protestants were quite ambivalent with regard to the dimension of a shared national identity. When it came to the government emphasis on progressive Dutch values and sexual morals, they did not agree to the nationalist interpretation of shared identity. The combined results thus indicate that the dimension of shared identity should be treated with sensitivity.

The most apparent differences between religious and non-religious people were found in the categories of *social engagement* and *law-abidingness*. With regard to social engagement, the direction of the correlation is different for religious compared to non-religious people in three of the four categories. This clearly indicates that there is an effect of religiosity on the relation between religion and citizenship. For religious people, the significance of social engagement is associated with less negative attitudes towards religion and with the possibility of religion to engage in the public domain and to form a value basis for society. For non-religious people, the emphasis on social engagement is associated with a greater emphasis on the restriction of religion to the private domain. Regardless of religiosity, highlighting social engagement as an essential characteristic of the good citizen coincided with higher scores on *embracing religious diversity*.

With regard to *law-abidingness*, the following results have been found. Firstly, in the group of non-religious people, a greater emphasis on law-abidingness was associated with a greater emphasis on the restriction of religion to the private domain. For religious people, higher scores on law-abidingness correlated to a greater appreciation of religion as value basis for society, as well
as a greater appreciation for religious diversity and freedom of religion, and with lower negative attitudes towards religion. These results also follow what is known from the previous chapters: both the interpretation of these two citizenship dimensions and the interpretations of these religious attitudes depend on the religiosity of the respondent.

Altogether, these correlation analyses reveal a relation between interpretations of citizenship and the appreciation of religion, although the relation is not as strong as expected. Another way of looking at the relation between religion and citizenship is to look at how religious people use their religious background and tradition in thinking about citizenship. In order to do so, larger parts of the interviews with two interviewees are discussed in detail and are closely analysed in the next two sections.

13.2 Paulien: Shared Inner Convictions as Condition for Citizenship

Paulien is a fifty-four-year-old woman, living with her husband and two of her six children in a medium-sized town in the middle of the country. I meet her at her home, on a warm summer day, where we talked in her spacious, quiet garden. She told me she was raised in a religious family. They were members of the Reformed Congregations (Gereformeerde Gemeenten), a religious community that she described as ‘orthodox Protestant’. She explained that in this community, the Bible is accepted as being 100% true and that the Bible is seen as a rule for one’s whole life and that one cannot deviate from that. Religion was very important to her family and as a child she sometimes had the idea that there were many obligations and rules about what was acceptable and

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The Reformed Congregations (Gereformeerde Gemeenten) is a church community that falls under the broader spectrum of so-called ‘bevindelijk gereformeerde’ communities, which can be regarded as highly conservative reformed communities (Amelink 2001, 18–21). According to Hoekstra and Ipenburg, the main characteristics of these communities are ‘a strong emphasis on chosen-ness, in which it is a priori established who is destined to eternal beatitude and who is not; the emphasis on the need to convert as a proof that one is chosen by God; the personal insecurity of many believers about whether one is chosen; the distinction that is made between those who have converted and those who haven’t, this distinction needs to be expressed clearly during services, the experience (bevinding), among which the strictly personal experience of the relation with God as the result of conversion; great respect for the theologians of the 17th and 18th century.’ (Hoekstra and Ipenburg 2008, 244)

The religious doctrine of the Reformed Congregations is based on the Bible as the infallible Word of God and on the Three Forms of Unity. There are 152 communities of the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands, and they are one of the few church communities in the Netherlands that has a growing number of members. In 2006, they had 103.272 members, which increased to 106.782 on 31 December 2013 (Reformatorisch Dagblad, May 14, 2014). Only men are eligible for positions within the church community. There are at least two services on Sunday and sometimes also during the week. Special attention is paid to youth and education (Hoekstra and Ipenburg, 2008, 246–248).
what was not. They were very active church members and went to the services twice on Sunday, participated in the different church clubs and societies, and took part in all kinds of church activities. Although her family was very active and religion played a large role in her youth, Paulien did not really think consciously about what her faith meant to her. This changed after secondary school, when she started teacher training college for primary school teachers. During that time, her faith became something personal and valuable, and she established a personal relation with God.

Nowadays, her religious beliefs are very important for her identity and play a large role in her daily life. Paulien and her husband have made a transition to a different church community and are now members of the Restored Reformed Church (Hersteld Hervormde Kerk). She explained that the Bible has remained the doctrine for her belief, but that she experiences less social control and more freedom to practice her belief in her own personal life within this community. She is very actively involved in her religious community. Paulien attends church twice on a Sunday, she is active in evangelisation work, teaches a course for non-religious people, is a member of the cleaning team of the church, and is member of a women’s discussion group of the church. Her children are actively involved in youth work and clubs, her husband is leader of one of the groups, and they host a Bible study group at home.

Paulien’s religious belief influences her opinions on society; belief and citizenship are strongly interwoven in her life. When asking her about the role of religion in her personal life, and specifically for her interpretation of citizenship, she connected the positive values that she sees as central to her belief to positive values for society as a whole:

80 In 2004, the Dutch Reformed Church (Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk) united with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden). This unification led to the establishment of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN, Protestantse Kerk in Nederland), nowadays the largest church body in the Netherlands. The establishment of the PKN led to a schism, in which the Restored Reformed Church separated from the PKN. Hoekstra and Ipenburg identify three main reasons for this separation. Firstly, opponents of the unification of the three communities wanted to stick to the reformed confession as mentioned in article X of the church order of the Dutch Reformed Church. Secondly, the rejection of all doctrines that oppose God’s Word; and thirdly, they did not acknowledge the pluralism in the church of Christ and they emphasised the union of man and woman as the exclusive form of cohabitation as installed by God (Hoekstra and Ipenburg 2008, 204).

It is unclear how many members the Restored Reformed Church has, because many members of the Dutch Reformed Church did not officially have themselves removed from the index of the Reformed Church after the establishment of the PKN. According to the PKN, there are between 35,000 and 50,000 members of the Restored Reformed Church, whereas the Restored Reformed Church itself claims to have over 60,000 members. In 2006, there were 126 congregations of the Restored Reformed Church in the Netherlands (Hoekstra and Ipenburg 2008, 205).
INTERVIEWER: In what way do you think your belief contributes to your citizenship?

PAULIEN: I think that living with a Christian identity — if you can really feel it as personal experience — is only positive. That’s not because I feel it this way, but because God’s norms and values are very positive. I make mistakes too sometimes, and feel bad things, and maybe I act completely wrong. But He has good intentions, and I try to live up to those. I think, if we would live as close as possible to God and stay connected to Him, and if we are able to show something of Him, that would be only positive for society as a whole.

During the interview, there were several moments like this, in which Paulien claimed that it would be positive for society if all citizens accepted Christian values. To her, it was obvious that God’s norms and values could only be positive. People can act wrong if they do not live up to these norms and values or if they misinterpret them, but in principle, she believed in the rightness of these moral principles for society. Therefore, she thought it would be beneficial for society if all people shared these Christian values. Consequently, she related contemporary problems in society to a lack of these shared values:

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that religion can play a role when it comes to norms and values? Or that it plays a role?

PAULIEN: Yes, honestly, I think that our whole legislation is traditionally based on these Ten Commandments. However, if we don’t know where this [legislation] comes from anymore, then I start to wonder what the norm will be in the future. Is that the number of people who agree on something? If in the future, the majority thinks that stealing is okay — just as an example — does that mean you can’t be punished for it anymore? What do you base your norms on then? So I think society will profit from this. Do you know them, the Ten Commandments?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I think I would be able to name them all. Yes, I could do that.

PAULIEN: Well, I think they are only meant to let us live in peace with each other.

INTERVIEWER: I think you might be right in that a growing part of society doesn’t know them, or is unaware of the relationship between Dutch legislation and the Ten Commandments. But don’t you think that these values will always exist? That they will always seem so essential?

PAULIEN: Yes, but exactly because they are so essential, I don’t understand why people would think that God doesn’t exist. Because otherwise, where would this [legislation] come from? I even think that we all have something inside of us that gives us some kind of consciousness — something that seems to be based on these values as well. Well, I hope so. But I don’t know. Look, killing and stealing are things that we all…

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81 This is something Paulien claimed earlier during the interview.
still desire, well, I think that many people don’t consider that as disgraceful and wrong. While to me, desire is such a basic attitude, which I think is getting worse and it’s one of the things that makes us become an increasingly negative society. It’s all ‘me, me, me’. If you take God’s Commandment of loving Him above all else and your neighbour as yourself — so no desire to be superior to the other, or to earn more money no matter what, whether in an honest or dishonest way… Ultimately, this has to do with the crisis as well. So these are all things which I think, if you really… I am convinced of this, if you really know inside that God thinks it’s terrible to live like this, then it wouldn’t happen. Unfortunately, I can’t give it to other people. It is something very personal, but I am absolutely convinced that [society] would look completely different then.

These two quotes from the interview show that Paulien was convinced that society would profit if people were internally driven to live a good life according to these positive, Christian values. Furthermore, this last quote reveals that for her, it was hard to believe that someone who did not believe in God could still embrace these values to the same extent that she did. Nor did she understand how people could abide by or embrace these values, while simultaneously denying God’s existence. She based her morality on her religious conviction and thought it necessary in order to share these values.

Aside from these reflections, the quote makes clear that Paulien related morality to legislation. She was convinced that Dutch legislation is built on Christian values, thereby drawing a connection between ethics and law. Moreover, Paulien’s quote revealed that she thought the Christian values that constituted Dutch legislation were not positive values because of their intrinsic goodness, but because they formed a part of the Ten Commandments. This offers interesting material for thought, because in this line of reasoning, it is not only the value or virtue that counts, but the inner belief on which it is based as well. According to Paulien, it is important that people live by certain rules, but in the end, mere acceptance of rules and regulations is not actually enough to build a society or a moral system on. In order to establish that system, shared and lived beliefs seem to be a necessary next step.

When I asked Paulien more explicitly about her opinions on Dutch citizenship, the quotation below shows, again, that her ideas on citizenship are also influenced by her religious conviction. When it came to law-abidingness, she related the importance of this element of citizenship to her belief:

Paulien: I think that, based on the Bible, we need to accept the authority that is placed on us, unless it explicitly contradicts God’s word. To me, authority is so essential in all kinds of relations. You can see that already… it starts very small within the family. You have to teach children to accept your authority. That is something that I encounter nowadays… because I work in education I see that, well I feel that it’s becoming less. I think there has to be a natural distance between child and parent. A child needs to learn at home what it means that someone
has authority over him and that he needs to accept authority. You can have discussions with each other, but ultimately your parents still have authority over you. Then there is a next step when you go to school. There is the acceptance at school that your teachers are the boss. As parents you can question that sometimes, but principally you just need to submit to that authority. Well, then you take another step; there is the local government that is put over you. With regard to laws and rules about how to behave on the street, and the laws in the Netherlands… I think you need to accept them. If you don’t agree, you can vote for a political party that wants something different, but I think it’s very important to have some obedience to authority … in all layers of society. Even… look, if it really violates my principles, then I will probably say ‘no’, but then it needs to be very strong and very clear. And otherwise you should just accept authority.

INTERVIEWER: Does it ever happen, do you recall instances in which you thought: ‘this violates my principles’?

PAULIEN: Well, I have never really experienced it. But you could, for example… if it is no longer allowed to approach someone on the street about, well; ‘How do you think about God?’ and things like that, and try to convert people to believe, which is also part of our evangelisation work, once a year… Let’s suppose, I can imagine, we are in one of those stands and trying to put people in touch with the Bible… now suppose that’s no longer allowed, because it’s public space and religion is only allowed behind the front door, then I think I would protest. Yes.

It is interesting to see that, of all the possible things that could cause tensions between her obedience to authority and her religious belief — in which she thinks that obedience to authority runs contrary to God’s word — Paulien chose the example of evangelisation. If she is no longer allowed to try to put people in touch with the Bible, she would protest against that. It is quite remarkable that this is the first thing that came to her mind. One would expect (and in other interviews, it was indeed the case) that religious people would refer to examples such as the freedom of religious education and special schools, and the possible fear of a secular government denying the freedom to send one’s children to a religious school. Alternately, respondents referred to topics like gay marriage, euthanasia and abortion as possible sources of friction between their religious belief and Dutch legislation or authorities. For Paulien, however, evangelisation is apparently a crucial element of religious freedom. This might be related to the idea that for Paulien, the inner convictions of people are as important as the rules they abide by and that society as a whole would profit if more people were convinced of the truth of her religious belief concerning the rightness or wrongness of certain rules or regulations.

Lastly, when the topic of shared identity was discussed, Paulien chose to embrace a hierarchical interpretation of the notion of citizenship:
PART TWO: THE VIEWS OF DUTCH CITIZENS: AN EMPIRICAL APPROACH

INTERVIEWER: To what extent do you think it is important that all Dutch citizens — both immigrants and native Dutch people — feel Dutch or love the Netherlands?

PAULIEN: I think that is important. I think it is quite important that they feel Dutch, and I also think that the government can request something in that respect. On the other hand, they also have their own identity, and they are allowed to maintain that, if you ask me. But they need to abide by the laws here. We assume that every person who has the capacity to work, will search for a job, and won’t just do nothing. Well, I think you’re also allowed to ask that of foreigners. If I look at my own religious conviction, God asks from all of us that we make an effort to use all the talents that are given to us. And that we do not think; ‘Well, we get welfare anyway’. You are allowed to point out to someone what his responsibilities are. But look, if someone wants to maintain his own habits and customs at home, then that’s fine with me. I don’t want to force anything in that respect. Look, we have a couple of foreigners at school. Well, it happens that, when you make appointments, they don’t follow up on the appointment. Then I think, you should know that in the Netherlands, that’s really irritating. If you agree to meet at two o’clock and they show up at four, you have to be honest and tell them: ‘Guys, this is not the way things work in the Netherlands. That might happen in Africa, but it’s not the way it works here’. So you can point that out to someone else.

INTERVIEWER: And besides these kinds of unwritten rules that apply here in the Netherlands, are there, according to you, certain norms and values that are valid in the Netherlands, which are also for immigrants…

PAULIEN: Yes, but that has to do with our Ten Commandments. Honesty, for instance. You just know that in Africa ‘yes’ often means ‘no’. Let’s be very honest. It’s decent to say: ‘yes’, but they mean ‘no’. Then I think, you could say that that’s how it works in their culture, but then I think no, in our culture — and we learn that from the Bible — yes should be yes, and no is no. That’s what the Bible says. Our legislation is based on that, it is highly regarded here, whereas for foreigners it’s at the bottom of their priorities, as it were. Over there, friendliness and hospitality are number one. So one might have to accept that for us, [honesty] is a highly ranked, unwritten rule.

What we see in this quote is that Paulien began by saying that it was important that Dutch citizens felt Dutch and that the government could demand that from her citizens. However, she immediately pointed out that this did not mean that citizens were unable to maintain their own identity. This suggests that she embraced the slogan ‘integration while preserving one’s identity’; a catchphrase the government used before the 1990s. According to this ideal, migrants need to integrate and participate in Dutch society, but they do not have to give up their personal identity. Having said this, Paulien started to elaborate on what the government could expect from Dutch citizens.
First, she named law-abidingness. This can be seen as the first elementary building block of her notion of citizenship. Second, she thought that all citizens can be expected to participate in and contribute to society, in the sense that everyone should make an effort to find a job. Interestingly, here she introduced her religious conviction, which she based this second building block on. According to her belief, it is one of the responsibilities for a person to use the talents God has given. Although she based this idea on her religious belief, which is not shared by everyone, she emphasised that it should be possible to point to this responsibility as an obligation for all citizens. This second building block of her notion of citizenship matches the development in government policy of the 1990s, when the slogan ‘integration while preserving one’s identity’ was replaced by the citizenship ideal of active participation in society.

After this second building block, Paulien moved on to the next block. Here she mentioned that everyone should be allowed to maintain their habits and customs at home, and that she did not want to force anyone to change those habits in private situations. This appears to be a shift away from what she said at first about the maintenance of identity. Paulien introduces a separation of private and public domain here. Furthermore, she mentioned certain Dutch customs and values that all citizens should accept, like punctuality and honesty. With reference to the Bible she argued that these Dutch values are greatly valued here in the Netherlands, but not in other cultures. She added that it was important that immigrants are told that they should accept these values and live by these customs. The move from the second to this third building block resembles the shift in government policy to the liberal nationalist approach of the past decade, emphasising shared cultural values.

Lastly, what is interesting to see in this quote is when I asked Paulien whether she thought that all Dutch citizens should feel Dutch, she narrowed her answer down to immigrants and the way in which they should integrate in society. Apparently, Paulien considered the shared identity element of citizenship to be something that applied especially to immigrants. It even seems as if she thought that this shared identity and the unwritten rules and values she attaches to this identity were self-evident for native Dutch people. Moreover, when she said that the cultural value of honesty stemmed from the Bible, she equated Dutch culture with Christianity. Although she did not elaborate on this connection, it suggests that Christian immigrants might have an easier job integrating in the Netherlands than non-Christian immigrants, because their values are based on the same system of beliefs, according to Paulien. At the same time, she explicitly mentioned the difference with African culture, which indicated that it is not merely religion, but also culture that determines these differences in values.

13.3 Murat: Religion as Basis for Boundless Citizenship

Murat is a Turkish man in his mid-forties. He was born in a city in the south-east of Turkey, close to the borders of Syria and Iraq. His father came to the Netherlands in 1971 to work as a guest worker. Murat and his mother followed
in 1974, and they lived in a large city in the east of the Netherlands. In 1985, he went to a boarding school in Syria to study Islam, after which he moved to Turkey, where he went to an Imam and Minister high school. He returned to the Netherlands in 1990, to the same city where he grew up and has lived there ever since. He is married and has three children. We met on a Friday afternoon in his mosque, where I was warmly welcomed. As it was Friday, there were many people in the mosque, so we conducted the interview in a small, separate room.

Murat told me he was raised in a traditional Muslim family, in a town where religion was handed down through an oral tradition. Their belief was an important element in their daily life and his parents emphasised this to him. The importance of praying, fasting, the way you treat other people, and all kinds of social Islamic conventions were highlighted as being important for a Muslim. His belief always remained important to him, and so it still is. He is convinced of the truth of his belief; it provides guidelines for how he thinks and acts. Murat is actively involved in the religious community as chairman of the mosque. In the mosque, there is a praying room and a gathering room, where the community members can come together in an informal way. The mosque also offers weekend schooling, where they organise Quran and Islam lessons and assist pupils with their homework. They offer lectures and information meetings, there is a student organisation, a women’s and a young women’s group, and Murat is involved in all of this as member of the board. He pointed out that the mosque does not only offer religious activities, but that all the activities are driven by their religious conviction. For example, the homework assistance they offer is based on the conviction that studying is important from a religious perspective.

In the interview with Murat, the connection between his belief and his opinions on citizenship were made very explicit. When asking him an open question about what one should do or how one should behave in order to be a good Dutch citizen, he gave an elaborate answer that revealed how his opinions on living together are based on his religious conviction:

INTERVIEWER: What does being a good citizen mean to you; what makes up citizenship in the Netherlands, in the Dutch context?

MURAT: To me it doesn’t matter that much whether you live in the Netherlands, in China, in the United States or in Turkey. My conviction is based on a religious framework. My religious framework teaches me that God created human beings for two reasons. In the Quran, two things are mentioned. [First — God says] I have created human beings to serve me. Then it doesn’t matter that much where you are. Whether you are in the Netherlands or in the United States, in China, or in Turkey, you can serve God everywhere. And second, [God says] I have created human beings for... well in Christianity they call it stewardship. These are the two reasons why I live, why I exist. And if I take my responsibility, we call that khalifa-ship, if I take my khalifa-ship — so that responsibility here on earth — with regard to people, animals, plants, and earthly life you may call it, if I take that [responsibility] honourably... And what that means exactly, God tells us in the next verse. What it absolutely doesn’t
mean, is destruction and bloodshed. That absolutely not. That is, the Quran says … Allah says in the Quran, ‘I will create a khalifa’. And the angels then say, ‘Are you going to create someone who will destroy and shed blood?’ ‘No’, He says, ‘that is not my purpose.’ But the fact that human beings actually do that, is a different story. So, as long as I, wherever I live on this world, in whatever place I live, if I take the responsibility upon myself not to destroy and not to shed blood, that means I should treat my environment well.

In the first part of this quote, it becomes clear that Murat does not make a distinction between being a good citizen and being a good person. He shows that his ideas on citizenship are based on his religious conviction and not restricted by national boundaries. Murat referred to Surah 2:30, where it is explained how Allah created Adam after He created the world and the angels. The khalifa-ship mentioned in the Quran can be seen as both an individual and a collective task for humanity. Every individual Muslim has to earn the honour to become Allah’s khalifa by being loyal and faithful (Abdus Sattar 2011, 201–202).

It is quite interesting to see that Murat translated the Islamic notion of khalifa-ship in Christian terms, and thereby assumed that I was familiar with the meaning of the Christian notion of stewardship. Murat apparently expected that he was talking to a Christian to whom he did not have to explain Islamic notions if he could translate them into Christian ones. In the next quote — which is the immediate follow-up to the previous quote — it became clear that he only expected me to have some basic knowledge of Islam. Here, he explained the Islamic fundamentals behind his ideal of good citizenship, by saying that the five fundamentals he was about to explain were not the five well-known pillars of Islam:

I should consider the wellbeing of the people around me. And for that purpose, the Islam has named five main points. Not the five pillars that you probably know, about praying and fasting. Those, those are the servant parts. But besides these servant parts there are five different pillars, you might say, of Islam. And [the first] is holiness of life. So human life is sacred. As people we should do everything to maintain the life of other humans and to increase the quality of life. That means that, yes, not only my life here on earth is sacred, but also other lives of other people. That means that I have to make sure … not only that I can live, but also that the standard of my life should improve, qualitatively. So, not only maintenance but also development. Founding a hospital contributes to that quality, and so belongs to this [first pillar]. So, life, human beings, and the holiness of life.

The second one is intellect. The intellect of humans is sacred. And so we have to make sure that everyone has the safety and the opportunity to develop his intellect. So, education is important. To be able to talk and think … that safety needs to be created. So speech, freedom of speech
belongs to this aspect, just in this part. Next... so holiness of life, intellect, and then of family. Family is also sacred to us. The ability to reproduce. Anything that threatens reproduction and the family then yes, you should be able to guide that. You should thus maintain the quality of the family.

Then next, we have holiness of religion. And we do not only name Islam here... that it should have the freedom, but also all other religions should have the freedom to live. So religious freedom. And the last one is ownership, holiness of ownership. That watch is yours, I am not supposed to touch that. Yes, that is your sanctuary, as it were. And that counts for everything of course, around these five aspects. We call those the essentials of Islam. And all statements of Islam are based on these five essentials.

In this quote, Murat described the Islamic foundation of his interpretation of citizenship. The five essentials of Islam that he distinguished are elements of the Maqasid Model of Shari'ah, the set of rules and regulations about how Muslims should act and behave (Bakker et al. 2010). Literally, Shari’ah means ‘the path that leads to the source of water’. In the Western world, it is often assumed that Shari’ah is a complete and fixed law book. This is, however, not true. Shari’ah is a notion that is interpretable in different ways (Oldenhuis et al. 2007). A detailed explanation of these different interpretations and applications of Shari’ah lies beyond the boundaries of the present research. It is, however, important to mention that a Dutch study on the interpretations of Shari’ah showed that Muslims in the Netherlands differ in their interpretations of the notion; a minority views Shari’ah as a legislative system, a larger group describes it as the religious rites of Islam, while a majority interprets Shari’ah as a system of norms and values, which arguably applies to Murat as well. Furthermore, the study has shown that in general, Dutch Muslims do not actively and consciously apply Shari’ah to their daily lives (Bakker et al. 2010, 45–46).

As mentioned above, Murat focused on the Maqasid al-Shari’ah, which can be translated as ‘the Shari’ah Objectives’. The famous Muslim philosopher-theologian Al-Ghazali (1058–1111 CE) classified the maqasid into the five categories that Murat used to explain his ideas on citizenship:

The very objective of the Shari’ah is to promote the wellbeing of the people, which lies in safeguarding their faith (din), their self (nafs), their intellect (aql), their posterity (nasl) and their wealth (mal). Whatever ensures the safeguard of these fives serves public interest and is desirable, and whatever hurts them is against public interest and its removal is desirable. (Al-Ghazali as quoted in Umer Chapra 2000, 118)

This quote shows how the maqasid, or the objectives of Shari’ah, are related to the idea of the public good (maslahah). Safeguarding these objectives serves the public good, and according to several Islamic scholars, maslahah’s fundamental meaning is exactly the preservation of these five objectives (Dusuki and
Abdullah 2007). The *maslahah* can be divided into three categories, as Figure 13.1 shows.

![Figure 13.1 The three categories of maslahah. Source: http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ma/works/maqasid.pdf](http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ma/works/maqasid.pdf)

The inner circle shows the essentials or necessities that people essentially depend upon (*daruriyat*). These elements are the five essentials that Murat explained in the interview. The second and the third circle of the complementary (*hajiyat*) and the embellishments (*tahsiniyat*) supplement the essentials. They are less important than the essentials (Dusuki and Abdullah 2007: 33). The protection of the essentials is not only a personal matter, but has direct influence on society. It is seen as a responsibility for all Muslims. In Murat’s quote, it becomes clear that he was aware of his responsibility as a Muslim to preserve these five essentials. It is this idea of the common good that defined his interpretation of the notion of good citizenship. In the rest of the interview, where the other dimensions of citizenship were discussed, Murat related all of the dimensions to the five essentials of *maslahah*. This demonstrated that his conception of citizenship was completely built on his religious conviction. When talking about the notion of social engagement, Murat gave the following example:

**MURAT:** Social engagement, if I may give an example: if I see a woman who has been disowned by her husband and has to stay at home alone with her two children and doesn’t have any contact with other people. Then she falls under the [category] holiness of intellect and of family.  
**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, yes, yes.  
**MURAT:** Yes, I have to make sure that she won’t experience such psychological pressure that she’d develop psychological problems. That is my responsibility. I have to make sure that her family — either with or without her husband, that doesn’t matter that much — at least that she and her children can stay in a safe situation and that they can develop. So I have to contribute to the wellbeing of… Well, you can give numerous examples like this. Everything falls under these five categories.

This example shows that Murat saw it as his duty as a Muslim to help other people. As soon as one of the essentials of another citizen is at risk, he must act...
responsibly and contribute to the wellbeing of others. The excerpt also showed that according to *maslahah*, social engagement is a very important element of being a good citizen; Murat considered it the building block of his notion of citizenship. The inequality between men and women often attributed to Islam did not seem to apply when it came to Murat’s explanation of the essentials of *maslahah*. Whenever one of the five essentials is at risk, irrelevant of sex, Murat thought it was his responsibility as a Muslim to safeguard them. This responsibility can be seen as a religious task, but one with social consequences. By relating all of the categories of citizenship to the five essentials of Islam, Murat demonstrated exactly why he did not differentiate between being a good person and being a good citizen, nor between public and private life: the principles of *maslahah* cover all aspects of life.

Murat did not seem to make a distinction between either public and private or between citizen and person; it is therefore worthwhile to delve deeper into his opinions on shared identity. As we saw in the first quote, Murat pointed out that where you lived in the world had no bearing on good citizenship and that you have to be a good person in any situation. This suggests that being a good person meant the same in all situations and all circumstances. However, his idea does not seem to match with the way the government addresses the notion of citizenship, where currently a national component dominates. Murat said the following about this nationalist interpretation of citizenship:

**INTERVIEWER:** In integration policy over the last few years, the Dutch government has focused on the fact that everyone should feel Dutch and that everyone should embrace certain progressive, Dutch values. What do you think about that? Do you think that the government can, or is allowed to ask that? That everyone needs to feel Dutch?

**MURAT:** Yes, well look, you can’t force a feeling. That is one. And two is that we need to agree on what that exactly is, being Dutch, or Dutch identity. Do we then mean the identity of someone from Rotterdam who works in the harbour? Or do we mean the identity of the professor of the university, of the Free University in Amsterdam? Or do we mean the identity of someone from the Achterhoek? Which identity are we talking about? Do we all agree on a certain identity in the Netherlands? Well, if that is the case, then, in my perspective, there is no identity aspect whatsoever, which can be at issue with these five essentials. If everyone, all Dutch people, agree on a certain identity, then I can’t imagine that there would be something that I couldn’t agree to.

**INTERVIEWER:** No, that might be true. But the big question is whether there is something which we would all agree to. Except for very general principles that is.

**MURAT:** Yes, well yes, very general principles are covered by these five.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yes, but they’re not typically Dutch.

**MURAT:** No.

**INTERVIEWER:** I mean, the government wants to have something typically Dutch…
Murat: But what is typically Dutch? Look, if you’re talking about the language, then I speak the language. If you’re talking about having a good feeling in the place where you live, then I have that good feeling. If you’re talking about contributing to the economy, I contribute by working and paying taxes. So, what are we talking about, then?

Interviewer: Well, that is a good question. One of the things that might be problematic for different groups in society is that several political parties emphasise progressive Dutch, so-called achievements, like gay marriage, euthanasia, abortion. That is seen as something that we have achieved together in the Netherlands. While, obviously, for certain groups, certainly for religious people, but even for some non-religious people, this is quite problematic.

Murat: Yes absolutely, of course. Look, I can never, and — it’s not just me — nobody can, no one will agree with all these accords, either in or outside politics. And I belong to this group of people. And whatever law you take, it doesn’t matter. Well, if you say: ‘Gay marriage, are you in favour of that?’, I say: ‘No, I am not’. But, if I were guaranteed these five principles in the country where I live, and a rule for somebody else that I do not agree with is created, and it doesn’t force me [to act in any way], then that’s no problem to me. So, that gay marriage is legal in the Netherlands; it’s not for me, but for gays. [laughs] And it doesn’t change a single thing in my life. It doesn’t change my mentality and in my thinking nothing changes. The fact that they are allowed to get married doesn’t mean that I become gay. No, it doesn’t change anything in my life. And it doesn’t change anything in my thinking, in the sense that I would suddenly think that it’s correct — no.

Several interesting things happened in this excerpt. First of all, Murat was very decisive in pointing out that there is diversity in society. By asking what kind of Dutch identity the government envisages when they are talking about ‘Dutch identity’, he pointed to one of the problematic aspects in the idea of a national identity. The question of what binds different people in the Netherlands is not answered by pointing to a vague construct as Dutch identity. Murat showed that if this construct of national identity focuses only on things that we all agree on, it probably does not contradict his five fundamental principles of Islam. Broad principles which we all agree with are, according to Murat, universal principles. They are very important to him, but they are in no way locally determined.

Murat then named the language, a positive feeling, and contributing to the national economy as important formal requirements for citizens. He said that he meets these requirements, so that in that respect, he is a good Dutch citizen. However, this still did not immediately amount to something akin to a Dutch identity. When I asked him in a straightforward manner about progressive values, and the possibility of accepting and embracing these values as a component of a shared Dutch identity, something interesting happened. Firstly, Murat assumed that no one agrees with all Dutch legislation and regulations.
This presupposition enabled him to disagree with some of these progressive values, without the problem of losing his shared Dutch identity. By saying that it was normal to disagree on certain points, without distinguishing between norms, values or laws, it was perfectly possible to disagree with such Dutch ‘achievements’ as gay marriage, euthanasia and abortion.

Murat went further and explained that he was not affected by these progressive values and achievements. He maintained that he was not in favour of gay marriage and that the right to marry for homosexuals had no impact on him. Murat provided two explanations for his reasoning. He firstly mentioned his freedom to live according to the five principles of Islam. It matters little to him what kinds of rules and regulations are created for other people, as long as his five principles are guaranteed. Arguably, his freedom of religion is the basis on which other aspects of the Dutch situation are evaluated. As long as his religious freedom was guaranteed, he remained very tolerant. The second explanation — also related to the first — is the statement that these values or achievements do not alter Murat’s opinions. As long as he was not personally affected, forced or forbidden to do certain things, and allowed to practice his religion, Murat remained quite indifferent to these Dutch ‘achievements’. This quote has made clear that Murat embraces the pluralistic context in which he lives. He accepts different interpretations and pluralism in values and he does not problematise those. According to him, consensus in values is not a condition for citizenship.

When we compare these two case studies, we can conclude that both Paulien and Murat built their notion of citizenship (almost) completely on their religious framework. In this regard, there is a very clear and direct connection between religious conviction and the notion of citizenship. There were also many similarities in their strategies of relating belief to the notion of citizenship. When we come to the interpretation of the importance of the different dimensions and the emphasis that Paulien and Murat placed on social engagement, the similarities clearly outweigh the differences between them. However, different evaluations of the pluralistic character of Dutch society and the acceptance of diversity in values draws them apart. Murat took this plurality as his starting point and formulated his interpretation of citizenship in this context. However, Paulien saw this emerging diversity as a problematic development. Throughout the entire interview, she focused on the Christian context and Christian traditions as essential for Dutch citizenship. Consensus about certain values and over the origins of these values was essential to her interpretation of the good citizen. Murat, on the other hand, described actual differences in values in Dutch society without interpreting them as being problematic. According to him, consensus over certain values was not a necessary condition for citizenship. To me it seemed that the acceptance of moral diversity rather than religious content or the level of orthodoxy defined the differences between the interpretations of citizenship of these two respondents.
SYNTHESIS