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Charity as a Way of Civic Engagement for Ordinary Muslims in Europe

All major religions praise serving community but not all religious communities nor their members are equally capable of engaging with society (Ammerman, 2005). In this paper I will argue that charity, in the sense that is inclusive of giving time and effort on volunteering, is considered a way of engaging with other humans for Dutch Turkish Muslims in the Netherlands as well as a complementary element of their piety. In my analysis, I will try to show that ordinary Muslims who are part of religious movements are in a reciprocal interaction with both their religious communities and the Dutch society that they want to be active participants. According to Azak, Turkish religious movements went through a shift from a mosque oriented Islam to an Islam that spreads itself in the broader public sphere (Azak, 2009). These movements organize formal or informal charity and volunteering platforms to meet the need of their constituencies for fulfilling their piety as well as to play role of intermediation for their constituencies to reach out the society (Yukleyen, 2012). Such relations make agency of ordinary men much more visible by accommodating negotiation with established religiosities with regards to tactics and strategies in order to provide best service (Chaves, 1993). Building on previous scholarship on the religious movements and European Muslims, I will attempt to analyze the relationship between forms of pieties prescribed by these movements and how their constituencies interpret, practice and reflect on charity and volunteering in the European context.

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