

# **From Altar to Mihrab:** *The Architecture of Adaptive Reuse in the Fatih Mosque in Amsterdam*

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## **Abstract**

This thesis focuses on the multiple and final conversion of the former Roman Catholic Church Holy Ignatius to the Fatih Mosque. The church was built in 1929 by the architect Hendrik Willem Valk in Amsterdam and after many failed conversions the building transformed from a private meeting space for the socialists to its final form; the Fatih Mosque.

After all these years of the building not being used after their commercial renters, the Turkish Muslim community bought it in the early eighties and transformed it into a Mosque. The transformation process was based on respecting and preserving the building's architectural heritage while adapting to its new function. This case study shows how the mosque serves as an important cultural and religious center for the community (especially the Turkish/Dutch community) and neighborhood, symbolizing successful adaptive reuse of a historical monument.

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## **Keywords:**

Fatih Mosque Amsterdam, Adaptive building, religious architecture, conversion; church to a mosque

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## Introduction

Walking through Amsterdam's Jordaan district, one may come across a modest square door made from wood, bearing the inscription "Fatih Mosque" in both Dutch and Arabic. The structure facing this square bears unmistakable features of a church—tall arched windows, a pitched roof, and brick façade—yet it now serves a different faith and community. This research takes the Fatih Mosque as a point of departure to explore how religious buildings are reused, adapted, and reimagined in contemporary Western European contexts and what changes were made to accommodate this religious change in architecture.

Contemporary mosque construction and adaptation in Western Europe has been the subject of growing academic interest. Scholars such as Gerdien Jonker have examined the cultural and architectural negotiations involved in creating Muslim sacred spaces in secular and historically Christian urban environments.<sup>1</sup> In her comparative study of mosque transformations, Şenay Özdemir offers a range of European examples, highlighting how material, political, and social factors shape these religious transitions.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Oskar Verkaaik's work builds on this foundation to argue for a more integrated understanding of mosque architecture as both spatial and discursive practice.<sup>3</sup>

While these studies provide valuable insights, many of them focus on either purpose-built mosques or iconic, large-scale transformations. There remains a gap in the literature concerning smaller-scale, local examples where reuse intersects with urban history, community identity, and architectural preservation. This thesis addresses that gap by analyzing the transformation of the former Holy Ignatius Church into the Fatih Mosque.

Before discussing the transformation, it is important to understand the significance of the original building. Designed by Hendrik Willem Valk in 1929, the church—known then as "Heilige Ignatiuskerk" or "De Zaaier"—served as a community hub for Roman Catholics in the Jordaan district. Its design reflected Valk's neo-Romanesque style, characterized by simplicity, symmetry, and community-centered planning. Understanding the church's original role provides critical context for interpreting its later adaptation.

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<sup>1</sup> Gerdien Jonker, "The Mevlana Mosque in Berlin-Kreuzberg: An Unsolved Conflict," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31 (2005), <https://websites.umich.edu/~jshie/mosquekreuzbg.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Şenay Özdemir, "Collection > IJIA Volume 3, Number 1 (2014)," *Archnet*, 2014, <https://www.archnet.org/collections/1698>.

<sup>3</sup> Oskar Verkaaik, "The Anticipated Mosque: The Political Affect of a Planned Building," *City & Society* 32, no. 1 (2020): 118–36, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ciso.12241>.

The transformation story begins not with a sudden conversion, but through a phase of neglect and changing commercial uses. As attendance declined, the parish sold the church. It briefly housed a carpenter's workshop known as the "Nederlandse Tapijt Centrale", and later a music store—both of which failed to thrive.<sup>4</sup> Eventually, the building fell into disrepair, with visible decay and structural neglect.

A turning point came in the early 1980s when the Turkish Muslim community of Amsterdam purchased the building and renamed the "Fatih Mosque" after the Ottoman sultan Mehmet II. The new religious function initiated a gradual and careful adaptation process, rather than demolish or radically rebuild, the community chose to preserve much of the original building, converting the interior into a mosque while honoring the building's spatial legacy and history.<sup>5</sup> This process represents a thoughtful act of adaptive reuse—preserving the architectural past while enabling a new religious present.

That's why this thesis aims to focus on 3 different forms of research. There will be a plan analysis where all the material will be examined with the original pictures and documentations. This information is available in the Amsterdam City Archives and in the mosque as well. The answers to the research question will also be conducted through Oral history and interviews from the public to the imam and the representative of the mosque to collect more data about the origin of the building and the impact that it had on the neighborhood's identity and urban environment.

This thesis is built upon 4 sections. The first section will focus on the beginning of the building's history. The second part will focus on all of the changes that this building went through in many different years. The third part will explain what the final adaptation of the building is and what the final building changes were. And in the end of section 4 the focus would be aimed at the neighborhood and the public impact of the building and its new function.

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<sup>4</sup> *The Fatih Mosque on the Rozengracht," Amsterdam Old Town, accessed April 24, 2025, <https://www.amsterdamoldtown.com/en/places-of-interest/fatih-mosque>.*

<sup>5</sup> *"Religious Matters | In an Entangled World," accessed April 24, 2025, <https://religiousmatters.nl/>.*

### **The history of the church and its different adaptations**

Back in year 1663 the Jesuits created a hidden church in the attic of a house called "The Sower" on the Keizersgracht, number 22. This clandestine church was moved to a new location that would be more central in the street (at the Rozengracht) in 1899 and the Jesuits bought the building which they then called "De Zaaier" from the Sociaal-Democratische-Bond (Social Democratic League/ SDB) after they had been erected from their building what was also called as "Constantia". <sup>6</sup>

The SDB's main spokesperson and leader Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis (a protestant minister of the organization) used to give speeches in the Constantia building (Figure 1) and after the socialists heard that their building was sold through a middle-man to the Jesuits they were visibly upset and plainly refused to hand over the keys to the new owners of the building. The Jesuits still found a way to get a hold of those keys and moved into their new building and converted the private conference room into a church called Sint-Ignatius.



**Figure 1:** The last meeting of the SDB in their building "Constantia", with Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis who is giving a speech. Picture credits: Amsterdam City Archives

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<sup>6</sup> "Religious Matters," accessed April 24, 2025.





**Figure 2:** "Amsterdam. St. Ignatiuskerk (de Zaaier) Aan de Rozengracht: Eerstesteenlegging (first stone placing) | Nationaal Archief". z.d. Nationaal Archief.

Constructed in 1929, with the first stone placing celebration (Figure 2) it finalizes the start of their new journey. The Sint-Ignatiuskerk is located on the Rozengracht in Amsterdam's Jordaan neighborhood. The design of the church, created by the renowned architect Hendrik Willem Valk, embodies a traditionalist approach that combines elements of Gothic and Romanesque architecture with more modern features (figure 3&4).



**Figure 3:** Interior of the church. Picture credits: Municipality of Amsterdam, NH news



**Figure 4:** Exterior of the church. Picture credits: Municipality of Amsterdam, NH news

A striking sculpture of a Sower on the church's façade, symbolizing the spreading of faith, became the source of the church's nickname, The Sower (De Zaaier).<sup>7</sup> Following the completion of its religious function in 1971, the Sint-Ignatiuskerk was closed and sold.



**Figure 5:** Interior of the warehouse after the church closed. Picture credits: Amsterdam City Archives

Mid 1970's, after the building was empty and used as a warehouse (Figure 5), the building was bought and it fell into commercial hands which turned it into a carpenter's workshop (figure 6&7), marking the first major adaptation of the building. The high ceilings and overall spacious feeling of the room that was originally designed for religious activities, was later on re-designed to accommodate woodworking equipment for the carpenter shop. This adaptation allowed the building to serve as a productive space for carpenters and the local community.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 6:** Coloured interior of the Carpenter shop. Picture credits: M. Yamali, Representative.



**Figure 7:** Exterior of the Carpenter shop Picture credits: M. Yamali, Representative.

<sup>7</sup> Daan Beekers and Pooyan Tamimi Arab, "Dreams of an Iconic Mosque: Spatial and Temporal Entanglements of a Converted Church in Amsterdam," *Material Religion* 12, no. 2 (April 2, 2016): 137-64, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17432200.2016.1172760>.

<sup>8</sup> "Converted Churches: Matters of Entanglement, Heritage and Home," *Religious Matters*, accessed April 24, 2025, <https://religiousmatters.nl/converted-churches-matters-of-entanglement-heritage-and-home/>.





**Figure 8:** Exterior of the Music shop, Picture credits: Dijkman muziek. z.d.

In the late 1970s, the Sint-Ignatiuskerk underwent yet another transformation and this time it got sold and used as a music store. The building's high ceilings and openness proved ideal for displaying a wide range of musical instruments with varying heights and equipment with different sizes, making it a popular destination for musicians and music lovers at the time. It became an integral part of Amsterdam's growing music scene, offering instruments, accessories, and music sheets for both aspiring and professional musicians and a place where they could meet with each other and talk about the passion that brought them together.<sup>9</sup>

This unfortunately didn't work out either and in no time the expenses were too big for the music store, and they also decided to sell it. After a few years a few members of a Turkish muslim community bought the building together around the eighties because they wanted a place for their community as well in the street. The Turkish community also felt the burden of keeping the heritage of the old church building alive and asked for the building to be an official Amsterdam heritage monument, so that they could also get the needed financial funds and

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<sup>9</sup> "Van Kerk Naar Moskee: De Succesvolle Metamorfose Van De Zaaier in Amsterdam," NH Nieuws, accessed April 24, 2025, <https://www.nhnieuws.nl/nieuws/338314/van-kerk-naar-moskee-de-succesvolle-metamorfose-van-de-zaaier-in-amsterdam>.

approval for the restoration and renovation of the church from the municipality of Amsterdam.<sup>10</sup>

The Sint-Ignatiuskerk went through various different stages, from a church to a carpenter's shop, to a music store and then finally to a mosque. The different transformations of this specific building show an example of Amsterdam's approach to reusing historical buildings that are not being used and adding them to bigger projects where people can visit the site freely like the "Largest Museum Project" from the Netherlands. These adaptations reflect the city's flexibility in preserving its architectural heritage while adapting to the needs of its diverse population and changing communities.<sup>11</sup>

### **From "De Zaaier" to the "Fatih Mosque" and its changes.**

Around 1981 the church underwent its final and most significant transformation when it was converted into the Fatih Mosque. The building was acquired by the Islamitische Stichting Nederland (ISN diyanet), a Turkish Muslim foundation, which aimed to provide a place of worship for the growing Turkish-Muslim community in Amsterdam.<sup>12</sup> This transition, which took place in the early 1980's up until now, symbolizes the changing religious and cultural landscape of the city and the beginning of a new chapter for the communities.

After all the previous owners had vacated the building, the old church was left unused, and it required a lot of restoration. In 2002 a chunk of stone fell on the ground from one of the towers out of neglect. The roof was leaking, and the walls of the former church were full of mold and some parts of the towers had a huge collapsing risk because of the rotten wood. Between 1970 and 1980, plasterwork was applied—by whom remains unknown. The Muslim community later removed this plaster to restore the church's original brickwork. Islamic practices are remarkably different from Christian practices, especially in terms of how religious spaces are utilized and the symbols that are used to decorate the space. In Islam, the emphasis is on no illustrations or any prints with faces on it such as icons or visual representations).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with the Representative of the mosque, M, Yamali, 2025

<sup>11</sup> "Amsterdam's Turkish Mosque Joins 'Netherlands' Largest Museum' Project, Attracts Tourists," Anadolu Agency, accessed April 24, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/amsterdams-turkish-mosque-joins-netherlands-largest-museum-project-attracts-tourists/3325848>.

<sup>12</sup> Beekers and Tamimi Arab, "Dreams of an Iconic Mosque."

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Imam K. Gözütok, Fatih Mosque, Amsterdam, 2025.

And that's why any remaining religious icons were removed, instead, two types of Islamic decorative elements were introduced: botanical motifs (notably tulips, referencing the Ottoman tradition) and calligraphy for example used on the mihrab (*niche indicating the direction of Mecca*, Figure 9).

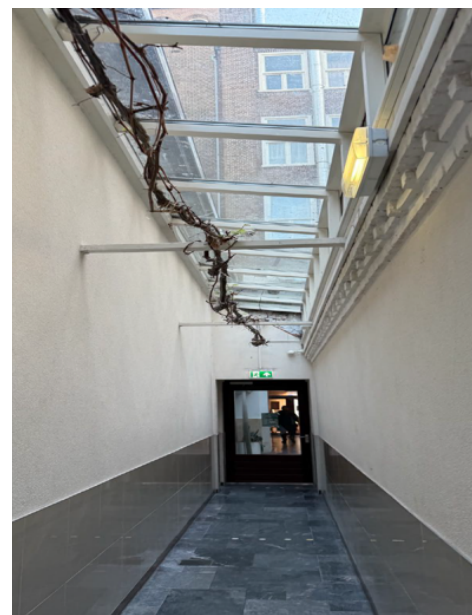


**Figure 9:** Imam K. Gözütok in front of the mihrab, where once the entrance of the church was located. (Picture credits: NH Media)

The orientation of the building posed a challenge for the new community of the building, as it had to be rotated 180 degrees to align with the new prayer direction that Muslims use towards Mecca.<sup>14</sup> That's why the old church's main entrance was repurposed as an emergency exit, and a narrow side entrance was created as a new main entrance, allowing worshippers to enter the mosque and walk through the hallway to the main prayer hall, also known as the mescid (Figure 10&11).



**Figure 10:** Entrance to the hall (Picture credits: R. Han, 2025)

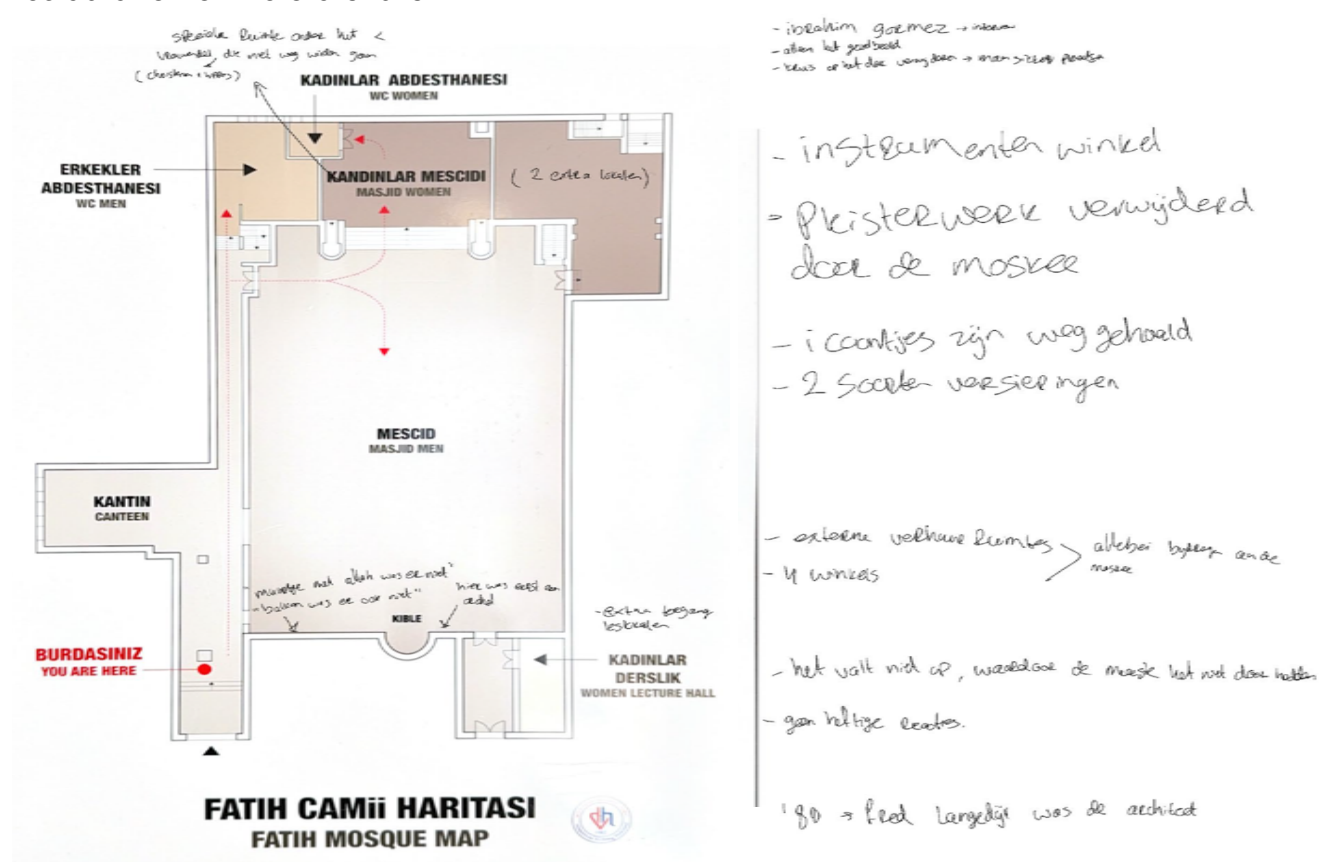


**Figure 11:** The hallway that goes straight to the prayer space. (Picture credits: R. Han, 2025)

<sup>14</sup> Interview with M. Yamali, 2025.



The main entrance, which originally featured three gates, was sealed off (now serving as the location of the mihrab) and used as extra space to rent. Above this area, there was initially an open space where the organ loft was situated; later, a wall (bearing the inscription of "Allah") and an additional balcony were constructed, and after a few years an extra floor was also added on the side of the mihrab, which also accommodates a smaller extra classroom (Figure 12). While the church's religious functions were replaced by many different users, the mosque tried to preserve as much as possible of the church's original architectural features because they found the original design of the building (as a church) too fascinating to change completely, even though they had permission of the municipality to change the interior. Only the exterior was registered as a historic monument, so the new users were free to do whatever they desired for the interior of the building.<sup>15</sup> The Sower sculpture, a symbolic feature of the original church, remained visible, linking the building's older Christian history to its new Islamic identity. The interior was modified to accommodate the requirements of Islamic worship, including the installation of prayer spaces, carpets, bookshelves etc. but the structure retained its historical character. They made a new floorplan with the new functions inside the building and the new changes that were made after the restoration of the old church.



**Figure 12:** Floorplan of the mosque from M. Yamali, Representative, annotated in Dutch by R. Han, 2025

<sup>15</sup> Interview with M. Yamali, 2025.

For Daan Beekers, this careful balance between preservation and adaptation is a highlight of the church's conversion into a mosque, it's maintaining respect for both its religious past and its new function.<sup>16</sup> By the time the building was converted into a mosque, the religious items from the church had already been sold from the previous tenants.<sup>17</sup> As a result, only carpeting was added to designate the prayer space. The former altar was repurposed into a separate prayer area for women. Additionally, bathrooms were installed to facilitate ritual ablution (wudu) for both men and women before prayer (*Figure 13, 14, 15*).



**Figure 13:** Interior of the prayer space. (Picture credits: R. Han, 2025)

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<sup>16</sup> Beekers and Tamimi Arab, "Dreams of an Iconic Mosque."

<sup>17</sup> Interview with M. Yamali, 2025.





**Figure 14:** Entrance to the secluded woman area with the ablution area, what used to be the Altar. (Picture credits: R. Han, 2025)



**Figure 15:** Entrance to the male ablution area, what used to be a part of the Altar. (Picture credits: R. Han, 2025)

Only the façade is designated as a heritage monument by the municipality of Amsterdam, meaning that, in principle, the interior could have been entirely altered. However, the Turkish Muslims made the decision to preserve the original architectural character of the church to maintain its interesting past and to add more character to the new functions as well. The most significant challenge was the removal of the crosses from the roofs and their replacement with crescent moons (*Figure 16&17*). According to the imam, rumors suggest that this was done secretly at night when no one was watching, so that the representation of the new faith was shown correctly.<sup>18</sup>



**Figure 16:** The crosses on the roof (Picture credits: K. Yamali)



**Figure 17:** After the replacement with crescent moons, zoomed in from Figure 18 (Picture credits: R. Han, 2025).

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Imam K. Gözütok, 2025.



At the front of the building, there are four retail spaces that the mosque rents out, serving as a source of income for the mosque itself (Figure 19&20). People like to go there for lunch break or a drink and while they are enjoying their meal, they will notice that the café or shop is linked to the mosque itself.<sup>19</sup>



**Figure 18:** Front view of the mosque (Picture credits: R. Han, 2025).



**Figure 19:** Entrance of the mosque+ retail spaces (Picture credits: R. Han, 2025).

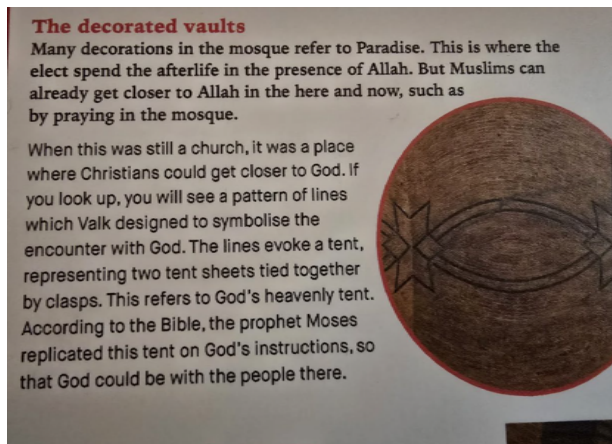


**Figure 20:** The 4 retail spaces that are being rented, zoomed in from Figure 18 (Picture credits: R. Han, 2025).

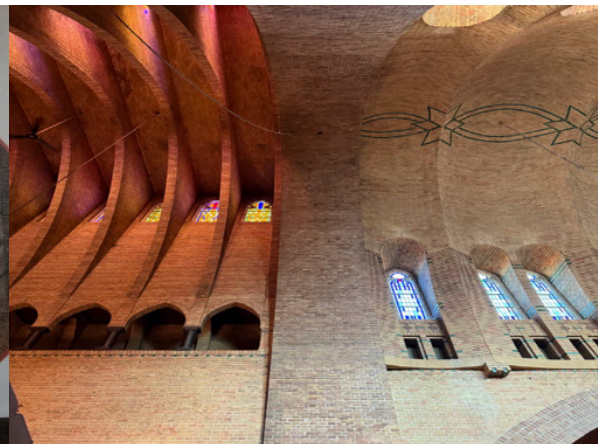
<sup>19</sup> Interview with various local residents, conducted by R. Han, 2025.



The ceiling paintings were preserved because they depict scenes from the story of Moses. Since Muslims also believe in the prophet Moses, it was decided to keep these artworks intact and were not removed (*Figure 21&22*). After all it was not worth the trouble and extra costs to remove something that wasn't strictly prohibited in Islam.<sup>20</sup>

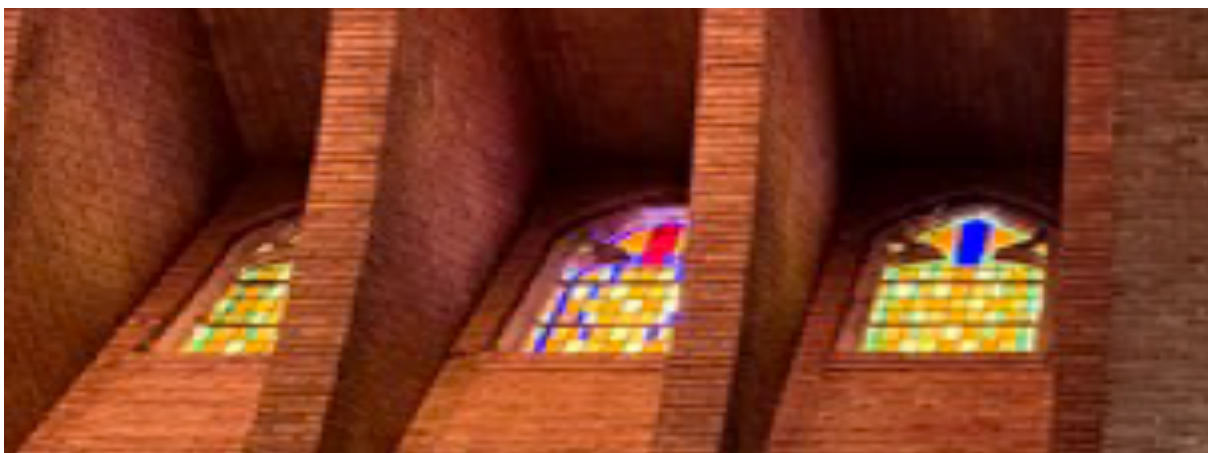


**Figure 21:** The ceiling paintings (Picture credits: K. Yamali).



**Figure 22:** The ceiling paintings (Picture credits: R. Han, 2025).

Additionally, the stained-glass windows were left untouched to maintain the authentic atmosphere of the former Roman Catholic church, even after its transformation into a mosque.



**Figure 23:** The stained-glass windows, zoomed in from Figure 22 (Picture credits: R. Han, 2025).

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Imam K. Gözütok, 2025.

### **The social critiques and concerns**

The adaptation of the church into a mosque was a major cultural shift in the Jordaan district of Amsterdam, a historically Christian neighborhood. The opinion at that time from the locals about this “unusual” change was mixed, reflecting both support and concern about the implications of such a transformation. For some, the conversion of the church into a mosque symbolized the evolution and adaptation of the city’s religious diversity and their willpower to not lose their faith in God as it was after the church closed, and other were scared of the unknown and what it would mean for their neighborhood.<sup>21</sup>

Supporters of the mosque viewed it as a major step toward religious inclusivity and recognition of the Muslim community’s growing presence in the city. It was seen as a place for interfaith dialogue with many different religions and a representation of the multicultural character which Amsterdam strived to have. A city known for its progressive values and acceptance of diversity, in every shape and form. However, not all reactions were positive as the muslim community was already expecting. Many residents who had previously been part of the church community felt loss and displacement after the church got sold. For them, the building had a deep religious and historical significance, and its final conversion to a mosque represented a change that they could not easily accept.<sup>22</sup> The church was always the central spot for community life and connection with other neighbors for the local Catholics, and for some, the mosque’s establishment felt like a disrespectful erasure of their religious and cultural history and identity, even though the church was not active and sold to other commercial projects. Daan Beekers argues that this sense of cultural and religious loss was compiled by the bigger tensions surrounding religious diversity in Amsterdam during the 1980s, the time of rapid immigration and demographic change in the urban fabric of Amsterdam.<sup>23</sup>

Further debates also arose over this conversion, with some speculating about the potential side-effects of the religious change on the neighborhood's identity and image. Critics and social analysts held varying opinions; some were concerned about the possibility of societal fragmentation, while others viewed it as a natural evolution. They were worried that the mosque's existence may worsen already-existing conflicts between Amsterdam's many religious groups and communities and therefore endanger the city’s image as a place of cultural harmony.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Imam K. Gözütok, 2025

<sup>22</sup> Interview with local residents, R. Han, 2025.

<sup>23</sup> Beekers and Tamimi Arab, “Dreams of an Iconic Mosque.”

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Imam K. Gözütok, 2025.

One predominant criticism was that the conversion may alienate Catholic locals who had a long history of being involved with the church and its community. This form of cultural layering kept growing with each new group that engaged with this building and kept on adding a new layer of identity, knowledge and memories to the space, could also be linked to Adaptive reuse and its purpose.

The conversion of churches into mosques in general sparked some debates about the role of religion in public life and the “potential” bigger effects that it could have in a city like Amsterdam, which is renowned for its liberal views on religious neutrality, freedom of expression and speech.<sup>25</sup> There were some concerns from the critics about the mosque and what it may represent in the future or how it would be used to spread a political movement, which could cause widespread friction and tension with non-Muslim and secular residents. This criticism was particularly relevant at that time period when discussions centered on Islam's place in Europe and how it related to Western morality and values.<sup>26</sup> This case illustrates the delicate balance that must be struck when transforming sacred spaces, especially in neighborhoods with deep historical and cultural ties to one religion. It serves as a reflection on the larger societal questions of identity, belonging, and community cohesion in a multicultural urban setting.

The challenge was the reaction of the wider community—both Christian and Muslim—to the transformation. In the local Catholic community, the church was a sacred space that had hosted religious services for decades. The idea of losing the church to a different religious group was a delicate issue, particularly because the church had been a cornerstone of the neighborhood's social and religious life. These tensions were further heightened by the broader context of religious diversity in Amsterdam, where buildings once central to one faith were being repurposed for others.<sup>27</sup> A group of Christians had been hiding in the lower part of the altar, where the priest once stood, and it took them a year to leave the building. Along the sides of the building, spaces were rented out as studios, attracting a large number of hippies who were reluctant to vacate the premises as well.<sup>28</sup>

At the same time, Amsterdam was experiencing a process of “ontzuiling” (the decline of religious institutional influence), and most people were unaware that there had ever been a church in that location. The building had already been

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<sup>25</sup> Wasif A. Shadid, “Public Debates over Islam and the Awareness of Muslim Identity in the Netherlands,” *European Education* 38, no. 2 (2006): 10-22, <https://doi.org/10.2753/EUE1056-4934380201>.

<sup>26</sup> Verkaaik, “The Anticipated Mosque,” 118-36.

<sup>27</sup> Jan Rath, “Ethnic Amsterdam,” accessed April 24, 2025, <https://www.janrath.com/publications/books-and-special-issues/ethnic-amsterdam/>.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with M. Yamali, 2025.

deconsecrated in 1971 and repurposed as commercial property. Because it was hidden in the urban fabric, it did not attract much attention. As a result, when the church was eventually converted into a mosque, it went unnoticed for most of the people, especially since the building had housed various other functions before being purchased by the Turkish Muslim community.<sup>29</sup>

### **Identity and integration**

The transformation of the church was not just an architectural and religious change in the neighborhood, but also a change of identity and a new way of integration in Amsterdam. As the city became increasingly diverse and developed many different beliefs, the challenge of balancing identity and integration became more important, especially in a neighborhood like the Jordaan which had strong historical and religious ties to the Christian faith.

For many Muslims, the mosque represented not only just a space for worship, but a symbol of their own place in the Dutch society. The conversion of De Zaaier into the Fatih Mosque allowed for more attention to the Turkish Muslim communities in a way that had previously been very difficult to achieve in the neighborhood.<sup>30</sup> This transformation required many forms of cultural, religious, and architectural adaptations, ensuring that the mosque remained a place of worship and reflection, where the social connection was once again a central point in this building where communities could re-connect again.<sup>31</sup>

### **Stronger community ties and social cohesion**

For some locals of the Jordaan area, the presence of a mosque in the neighborhood signified the welcoming growth of diversity of Amsterdam's cultural landscape. The mosque became a place of combined identity, where both Muslims and non-Muslims who struggled with questions of who belongs where and what it means to be part of Amsterdam's diverse community could come Together and be united in this important building who merges different groups of people and bring them closer to each other.<sup>32</sup> Despite these mixed opinions from different people the mosque still became an important cultural bridge in this neighborhood. Over time, the Fatih Mosque became a place not only for religious practices but also for community events, social services, and intercultural exchanges where their curiosity could be

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with Imam K. Gözütok, 2025.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with various local residents, R. Han, 2025.

<sup>31</sup> "Amsterdam's Turkish Mosque Joins 'Netherlands' Largest Museum' Project," Anadolu Agency.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with various local residents, R. Han, 2025.



answered from the community while interacting with different people.<sup>33</sup> It offered a huge opportunity for the Muslim community to engage a lot more with the bigger communities in Amsterdam, helping to foster a more inclusive environment for everybody. The mosque became an important icon in building social cohesion, where both Muslims and non-Muslims could participate in shared activities that emphasized common values such as community service and give each other mutual respect.<sup>34</sup>

However, now that it is definitively a mosque, it has garnered significant attention from all over the world. People are curious to see its interior, to determine whether it resembles a traditional mosque or still retains Christian elements of its former church structure.<sup>35</sup> As a result S. Aksünger mentioned that the Fatih Mosque on Rozengracht has become a notable landmark, attracting both locals and tourists to come together at this special place and has become part of Amsterdam's Larger Cultural Landscape by participating in projects that celebrate the city's diverse heritage, such as the "Netherlands' Largest Museum" initiative, which aims to highlight the richness of the city's religious diversity and heritage.<sup>36</sup>



**Figure 24:** Rosa Kartel, "Fatih Moskee Amsterdam | Museumnacht Amsterdam," Museumnacht Amsterdam, 2022,

<sup>33</sup> Beekers and Tamimi Arab, "Dreams of an Iconic Mosque."

<sup>34</sup> "As Part of 'Night of Museums' Non-Muslims Visit Amsterdam Mosque," *Daily Sabah*, November 6, 2022, <https://www.dailysabah.com/arts/events/as-part-of-night-of-museums-non-muslims-visit-amsterdam-mosque>.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with different locals in the neighborhood, R. Han, 2025

<sup>36</sup> "Amsterdam's Turkish Mosque Joins 'Netherlands' Largest Museum' Project," *Anadolu Agency*.



## **Conclusion**

The transformation of Sint-Ignatiuskerk into the Fatih Mosque presents how the history of the building—from a Catholic church to a mosque—offers a vivid reflection of the broader shifts in both Amsterdam's religious landscape and the dynamics of cultural integration in the late 20th century. The mosque's conversion was not merely a change of function; it was a symbol of the ongoing transformation of Amsterdam into a more multicultural and acceptance of a more religiously diverse society. As a former church now serving the (Turkish) Muslim community, the building has come to represent not only the intersection of Christianity and Islam but also the broader opportunities in multicultural urban spaces in the neighborhood.

In the process of adaptation, the mosque faced both cultural acceptance and resistance. The Catholic identity that had once defined the Jordaan neighborhood was disrupted by the arrival of a new religious group. This shift prompted concerns over identity loss to hopes for cultural inclusivity and interfaith understanding. The transformation of this building, despite some of the social critiques and concerns from a few locals, has created a space full of cultural exchange and dialogue. It symbolizes the resilience of the Muslim community and the possibility for coexistence in a society where religious diversity is both celebrated and contested. Over time, the mosque has facilitated greater interactions between Amsterdam's different cultural and religious groups, fostering a sense of shared identity in the city.

The power of architecture is in shaping not just religious practices, but also the evolving identities of urban communities. It is a testament to the ever changing needs and wants of cultural and religious groups, where the past is reinterpreted and adapted to meet the needs of the always-changing present. It challenges us to reconsider how we think about heritage, community identity, and religious practice in the context of global migration and cultural exchange. It offers an example of how sacred spaces can transcend their original purpose and become sites of cultural negotiation and social integration, contributing to the (architectural) building of more inclusive and diverse communities.

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**Figure 1:** *The last meeting of the SDB in their building 'Constantia', with Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis giving a speech.*

**Figure 2:** *First stone placing celebration at the Sint-Ignatiuskerk.*

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**Figure 3:** Interior of the church.

**Figure 4:** Exterior of the church.

**Figure 9:** Imam K. Gözütok in front of the mihrab.

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**Figure 5:** Interior of the warehouse after church closure.

5. Yamali, M. Representative of the mosque (photos shared in interview).

**Figure 6:** Colored interior of the carpenter's shop.

**Figure 7:** Exterior of the carpenter's shop.

**Figure 12:** Floorplan of the mosque, annotated in Dutch by R. Han.

**Figure 21:** Ceiling paintings (photographed by K. Yamali).

**Figure 16:** Crosses on the roof (photographed by K. Yamali).

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**Figure 8:** Exterior of the music shop.

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**Figure 10:** Entrance to the hall.

**Figure 11:** Hallway to the prayer space.

**Figure 13:** Interior of the prayer space.

**Figure 14:** Entrance to the women's ablution area.

**Figure 15:** Entrance to the men's ablution area.

**Figure 17:** Crescent moon on the roof.

**Figure 18:** Front view of the mosque.

**Figure 19:** Entrance of the mosque with retail spaces.

**Figure 20:** Zoomed-in view of retail spaces.

**Figure 22:** Ceiling paintings.

**Figure 23:** Stained glass window (zoomed in).

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**Figure 24:** *Promotional image of the Fatih Mosque from Museumnacht Amsterdam.*