



Re-Imagining Mosques

The intersection of
inclusive architecture
and urban design

Ryan Wazir

Byera Hadley
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Re-Imagining Mosques: the intersection of inclusive architecture and urban design



Acknowledgment of Country

I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land in which I live and work, the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, and pay respect to elders past and present, and acknowledge their continued connection to land, water and sky. I recognise too, the several First Nations people who have embraced Islam as their religion. The 2021 census registers 1140 First Nations people who identify as Muslim across the country.

I extend this acknowledgment to all First Nations people where this research took place; in Melbourne, on the lands of the Kulin Nation; in Toronto, on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa; in Indianapolis, the traditional homelands of the Miami, Shawnee, Peoria, Potawatomi, Kickapoo, and Delaware peoples; in Los Angeles the lands of the Tongva, Tataviam, Serrano, Kizh, and Chumash Peoples; and in New York City the land of the Lenape people.

Ryan Wazir was awarded the Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship in 2017 and undertook travel in 2018-2019

Cover image: Shahporan Mosque, Hackney Rd, London.

All Photographs by Ryan Wazir.

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He was dedicated to architectural education, both as a part-time teacher in architectural drawing at the Sydney Technical College, and culminating in his appointment in 1914 as Lecturer-in-Charge at the College's Department of Architecture. Under his guidance, the College became acknowledged as one of the finest schools of architecture in the British Empire.

Byera Hadley made provision in his will for a bequest to enable graduates of architecture from a university in NSW to travel in order to broaden their experience in architecture, with a view to advancing architecture upon their return to Australia.

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About the author

Ryan Wazir

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Growing up in southwest Sydney, along a major artery that coursed with the lifeblood of a coalescence of communities, I grew to appreciate urban spaces, with a curiosity for how the built environment could help (or hinder) fostering community connectedness. I also grew to appreciate and became astutely aware, of the issues that arise for a community that is viewed as the 'Other' and the associated impacts of marginalisation.

This personal experience and curiosity in community spaces, has been a focal point in my architectural career, with an approach to architectural practice that is guided by a belief in the value of creating engaging and inclusive spaces for all.

Currently, I am in private practice, leading the design of inclusive community focused spaces internationally, including stakeholder and user group consultation. Prior to this, I have been in both private practice and the public sector, across new, adaptive re-use and conservation projects.

All view expressed within this report are my own.

Acknowledgments

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I would like to thank the NSW Architects Registration Board, and the The Trustee for The Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship, for generously awarding me this scholarship to undertake this research. This scholarship has offered the opportunity to engage with diverse of communities and viewpoints, and gain valuable insight firsthand.

This project encompasses a wide range of places, across several countries and cities, and would not have been achievable without the generosity of those who gave their to speak with me.

I would like to thank Sheridan Burke, Jocelyn Jackson and Helen Lochhead, for their support at the project's inception. I would also like thank those who welcomed me into their mosques and communities, shared their experiences, and provided rich insights into the design, and context of the mosques visited. In particular, I would like to thank the architects of these places, who generously gave their time to be interviewed, listed here.

Harkan Eevli, Director, Eevli PlusW
Newport Mosque
Glenn Murcutt
Newport Mosque
Koray Duman, Founder, Buro Koray Duman
Islamic Cultural Centre
Mustafa Abadan, Partner, SOM
Islamic Cultural Centre of New York
Michel Abboud, Founder, SOMA
Park51
C. Po Ma, Prinipal, Moriyama & Teshima Architects:
Ismaili Centre Toronto
Julia Barfield, Director, Marks Barfield
Cambridge Central Mosque
Shahed Saleem, Director, Makespace Architects
Shahporan Mosque and Alhikma Mosque
Alen Jasarevic, Director, Jasarevic Architekten
Penzburg Mosque
Anna Naumann, Lead, Kuehn Malvezzi Architects
House of One

On a personal level, I would like to thank Joanna and Art, for their continued support throughout this project, with special mention to Rushdy, a Turkish Van who remained by my side.

This research explores how the intersection of architecture and urban design offers an opportunity to not only re-imagine contemporary design approaches to mosques, but also contribute to the continuing conversation on how these disciplines can foster inclusivity.

Forward

From personal experience, visiting Camden, evokes memories of the Mosque that was never built, the name Bendigo has become synonymous with protest, and visiting Lakemba, evokes several memories of community gatherings on a cordoned off street during bi-annual Eid festival.

As a member of the diaspora community, being the child of Muslim migrants from Lebanon, and growing in Lakemba, south-west Sydney, I am attuned to the experience of diaspora populations, and the common threads that connect them across countries and oceans. Although the Muslim diaspora spans across several continents, there are commonalities in the experience.

The Muslim diaspora is not a homogeneous group, but rather a diverse group originating from several countries from Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA), sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, Turkey and Southeast Asia, speaking several languages including, Arabic, Turkish, Bengali, Farsi, Turkish, Urdu and many more. This research focuses on the diaspora Muslim population, its intersectionalities and its relationship to one of Islam's most significant symbols: mosques.

From the early Mosques in Australia, such as the simple shed in Broken Hill, New South Wales (NSW), built by cameleers, to the contemporary mosques located in major cities across the Western world, mosques are a symbol of a sacred place of worship. Yet, for many outside the religion, they remain places of mystery and the unknown.

The aim of this research is to explore how the intersection of architecture and urban design offers an opportunity to not only re-imagine approaches to mosque design, but also contribute to the continuing conversation on how these disciplines can foster inclusivity. This research is not one of contemporary versus traditional, as both approaches have a place. Instead, it is one of inquiry, outcomes and reflection, while recognising the complexities and drivers that have led to contemporary approaches to mosque design.

Several factors influence the approach taken to the design of mosques, such as specific community needs, aspirations, and budget. While it makes sense architecturally for a building to be contextual and site specific, there is something to be said about the link to tradition and symbolism. Mosques have evolved as the needs of their communities evolve, and contemporary mosques represent these changing needs. This can manifest in many ways, from a community seeking inclusion by opening up mosques to the wider public, incorporating contemporary aesthetics to attract younger generations, and creating inclusive community spaces.

The research is published at a point in time of the current, and ever evolving socio-political landscape in which these mosques exist. A total of 20 cities and 52 mosques were visited across three continents, focusing on mosques that represent a cross section of communities and experiences, in a Western context.

1

Introduction



'We do not want an ugly big white pastry in our neighbourhood, as you sometimes see when they build a new mosque. Our mosque will be completely in the style of the 'Amsterdam School'', such that it fits perfectly in the neighbourhood and becomes a real Dutch mosque.'

Dutch-Turkish Muslim community leaders who commissioned the West Mosque in Amsterdam, The Netherlands (Adwell)

'If you are Muslim and you want a mosque, go back to the Middle East. This is Australia.'
Anti-mosque protester, Bendigo (O'Brien)

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The above quotes speak to some of the many architectural, social and political tensions that the specter of a mosque and minarets rising above urban landscapes, provoke in both Muslims and some non-Muslims alike. As the quote by the Dutch-Turkish Muslim community leaders reveals (Adwell), a desire exists by some Muslims to re-imagine how a mosque is designed and integrated into the existing built and urban fabric. In contrast, the comment by the Bendigo protestor (O'Brien), speaks to a concern about a mosque existing in the first place within a country like Australia, and the notion that a mosque symbolises the unknown, the 'Other' (Said).

The aim of this research is to draw together these seemingly disparate concerns and explore how the intersection of architecture and urban design offers an opportunity to not only re-imagine contemporary design approaches to mosques, but also contribute to the continuing conversation on how these disciplines can foster inclusivity, interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Having said the above, it is important to note the complexities around statements of 'openness' in relation to mosques can imply, that for a community to be accepted, they must adapt and 'fit in', that not doing so renders them closed off or mysterious, which can be an exclusionary notion.

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The mosques visited as part of this research, have been adapted, built or proposed for regions where the largest population of the Muslim diaspora - that is, people who have been displaced from their countries of origin, call home. These regions are the United States of America (USA), Canada, Australia, and Europe including the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Italy. This research is revealing that it is these same regions where a series of protests and petitions usually follow any announcement that a mosque may be built and/or expanded.

In Australia alone, one of the better-known cases of protest is that of the Bendigo Mosque, with similar examples in places like Camden, Gosford and Padstow. Opposition to mosques increased in the years following the Gulf War and the World Trade Centre bombings of 1993 and September 11, 2001, with the built form of the mosque being the most obvious signifier of Islam in the urban landscape, and therefore an obvious target for those opposed to the presence of the religion (Barnard). In 2012, the Pew Research Centre (Pew Research) detailed 53 mosques across the U.S. that were subject to opposition and protest, while more recently, Charles Sturt University conducted a study in 2021, outlining mosques that have been subject to attack within Australia (Charles Sturt).

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As opposition to new mosques increases, leading to many being denied development approval or having a delayed or curtailed development, this study seeks to contribute to the broader understanding of how architectural and urban design principles can be used to engage in this conversation.

Examples of contemporary mosques exist in areas of the diaspora population, several from the 1970s onwards, however the majority visited have been built in the 21st Century. Locally, Glenn Murcutt, along with a Melbourne Architect, Hakan Elevli, designed a contemporary mosque, an Islamic Centre that is open to all. The mosque is designed to allow the wider community to connect and feel included within the Muslim community of Newport, and in turn allow the Muslim community to connect to the wider community. The mosque is devoid of traditional minarets and domes and seeks to represent a site specific and contextual mosque.

For the purposes of this research, a contemporary mosque is not only one that has been built since the 1970s, it is also a mosque that seeks to eschew traditional Islamic architectural elements such as the minaret and the dome, or seeks to reinterpret them. This reinterpretation of the form and traditional signifiers of an Islamic building has created a site-specific mosque that seeks to establish a dialogue

within its context. It is also a mosque that is limited in location to being within a Western context.

Regarding urban design and the place of mosques in urban landscapes, traditional mosques have historically functioned as private spaces for people of the Muslim faith to worship, contemplate and connect with community. Contemporary mosques, however, seek to disrupt the private/public divide through the integration of more public spaces. For example, the mosques visited include designated areas such as community centres, that is partly or wholly open to the public. It is such spaces that have transformed traditional notions of a mosque, from a seemingly 'closed' building to an 'open' building that sits within the fabric of a city and connects with the communities that inhabit it, facilitating and fostering an inclusive dialogue through built form.

A key to fostering a sense of openness is community consultation, the lack of which has contributed to broader community opposition to mosques. Community consultation with members of the Muslim community, but also with the broader community. For example, locally, in a conversation with Glenn Murcutt in relation to this project, the younger generation of the Muslim community members for the Newport Mosque, were in favour of a contemporary mosque that is uniquely Australian.

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In contrast, the more traditional generation required some time to come on board and were eventually welcoming of this new interpretation of what a mosque can be. In Sydney, the Punchbowl Mosque by Candalepas Architects, was advertised by the community as “a contemporary design by an award-winning Architect for the future of Muslims in Punchbowl and Sydney.”

The study seeks to compliment the existing research into mosque design, and to provide an understanding of current shifts. The study has investigated how architects have been re-imagining the design principles of mosques, and re-evaluating the relationship between the context and traditional signifiers of an Islamic building, the dome and the minaret, to foster a sense of inclusivity and openness, but also to provide mosques that are contextual and site specific. Architecture and urban design have an intersecting role to play, in both contributing to re-imagining mosques and the possibilities for community and inclusion.



2

Methodology



Image: Grand Central Mosque of Strasbourg
A

The research has been carried out through visiting mosques, interviewing Architects and community members, and undertaking desk-based research, to explore the changing architectural language of the mosque, as well as the urban design principles utilised.

Qualitative data was collected through interviews with architects and Muslim community members, both in-person and online.

Questions explored – What does it mean to lose traditional Islamic language? Is it in fact a loss or is it a change that is necessary for a community to establish a connection to a particular place? How do contemporary mosques foster an ‘openness’, a dialogue with the wider community? Is there an architectural pattern emerging? The project relied on connecting with Architects to understand the process taken in the design approach. This data was analysed for themes and used to inform the report.

Surveys were undertaken as to the key characteristics of the mosques studied, which included data such as building type, traditional elements, community facilities, public space and community consultation, among others. Quantitative survey data is set out in graphs in this report, and was used

to compare key characteristics of mosques, such as the percentage of mosques that engaged in community consultation and types of consultation at different stages of the project. This approach acknowledges that within architecture, data is increasingly important in influencing architectural and urban design outcomes.

The mosques and Islamic centres visited were selected as they date predominantly from 1970s onwards and demonstrate a contemporary design approach as defined by this project. While some may include minarets or domes, they have each sought to create a contextual mosque, whether it be through form or material choice. They each have a distinctive approach to siting, context and foster a certain openness. Several mosques in this study are repurposed buildings, which architecturally do not reflect a traditional mosque.

Some of the mosques and Islamic centres visited were in the construction phase at the time of visitation, with some having been completed, while others remain under construction. They have been included in this study as construction site visits provide insight into the siting of the buildings, context and urban design elements.

All the regions in this study feature several mosques, whether they be purpose built or housed in adapted buildings. Visits included a thorough walk through of the mosque and the neighbourhoods in which the mosques are situated to understand the context, which is expressed through photographs of the mosques, streetscape and contextual elements. Photography is a key component of this report.

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Mapping the Context



Image: Islamic Cultural Centre of NY

Mosques have historically been a feature of Islam, with the most well-known being the Masjid al Haram, enclosing the Kaaba in Mecca. As Architect Shahed Saleem articulates, the Kaaba is 'the physical and spiritual centre of the Muslim world'. Each year, millions of Muslim pilgrims visit this sacred site as part of the Hajj pilgrimage, a fundamental pillar of Islam (Saleem).

Closer to home, the second oldest mosque in Australia is located in Broken Hill, recognised with a state heritage listing, on the NSW State Heritage Register for its cultural significance. The Statement of Significance reads:

The Broken Hill Mosque is of State significance for its rarity as the first mosque built in NSW and the only surviving Ghantown mosque in Australia. Constructed in 1887, the mosque provides rare evidence of the pioneering presence of the 'Afghan' cameleers in outback NSW during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It embodies, in built form, evidence of the historic presence of Islamic culture in Australia, otherwise rarely found in NSW. The Broken Hill Mosque is of social significance at a State level for its religious associations for the Islamic community in NSW and Australia (New South Wales Government).

The mosque is a small, corrugated iron building built by the camaleers, in the late nineteenth century, which I was fortunate enough to visit in 2010. The mosque allowed for the camaleers to have space to pray, but also to address the isolation often felt by the camaleers. The mosque provided a sense of community and gathering, an important point of connection. This sense of community and placemaking is still relevant and important to mosques today.

The Broken Hill Mosque is simple in form, in keeping with the language of the buildings of the outback, now sitting on a suburban lot. Inside, a small room with a Mehrab, a Quran and prayer mat indicate the prayer space. A simple mosque, with no dome and no minaret, yet important as a place of worship in the Australian landscape. The place today, is cared for by the descendants of the camaleers. The camaleers are referred to in the history books as 'Afghan' Camaleers, however they were a more diverse group, originating from India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Egypt, as well as Afghanistan (O'Connell).

What is a mosque anyway?

A mosque is a place of worship, originating from the Arabic word 'Masjid', which means 'a place of prostration'. The first mosque built by the Prophet Mohammad, Masjid an-Nabawi, was built in Medina c622 CE, and has since undergone several adaptations. Originally, the mosque was an open air, mud-brick courtyard building, that incorporated community and administrative functions, much like the community focused contemporary mosques today (Madain Project).

Beyond the built form, a place for prayer transcends the need for physical structures. A place for prayer does not need walls, a roof, or even water for ablutions, in cases where water is unavailable. What is needed, is a person's intention to pray and for that prayer to be orientated towards the Kaaba. This allows for flexibility, where no matter the circumstances, praying is not an obstacle, but rather is weaved into daily life and can be performed anywhere. However, there are certain symbols and architectural styles that form a mosque, in a traditional and cultural sense, such as a minaret and dome.

Building on this premise, mosques offer more than a space for prayer; they provide a sense of community and belonging. They serve as gathering

places for social interaction, spiritual enrichment, and communal activities. Whether located in majority Muslim countries or not, mosques fulfill these roles, fostering connections and belonging, and reinforcing the sense of community.

Within Islam, there are several denominations, Sunni and Shia being the predominant two, each with variations on the practice of the religion, and sometimes with dedicated mosques. This study does not differentiate between denominations, unless necessary in discussing a particular mosque.

Symbology

Traditionally, mosques feature several architectural elements that have become symbolic of mosques, including:

- A minaret: A tower used for the Adhan, the call for prayer
- The qibla: incorporates the requirement to face the Kaaba in Mecca during prayer, a mosque includes a qibla wall that faces Mecca
- A mihrab: the qibla wall includes a niche within it, in the direction of Mecca
- A minbar: a pulpit for the Imam, located to the right of the mihrab
- A dome: usually in the centre of the main prayer hall, providing light from above

These elements may or may not exist in a mosque, particularly more contemporary mosques. The minaret originated to allow the adhan (call to prayer) to be heard by the congregation, in their homes and places of work. The minaret acts as an important element in the streetscape, as a landmark to identify where a mosque is located. Given prayer occurs five times a day, being close to or identifying the location of a mosque has been important within communities.

The detailing and style of the minaret, varies from place to place, however, traditionally they are all tall towers with access for a person at the top to recite the adhan. It can be argued that minarets in their traditional form are obsolete, that they are not used for the adhan in the same way, particularity in a western context. Even so, their symbology and reference to the past is important to consider in contemporary mosque design, with endless possibilities for interpretation.

The dome, incorporated within many mosque designs, was used in buildings in the SWANA region well before Islam, yet over time, they have become symbols representing a mosque. Domes feature in many styles of architecture, including several First Nations communities across the continents, Roman and Renaissance architecture, amongst others.

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The dome also features in one of the earliest mosques, the 7th century Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, a UNESCO world heritage site (UNESCO). Built in the Byzantine style, it is significant for its place in history, and over time, the dome has come to symbolize a connection to the heavens in Islam (Museum).

In his book *The British Mosque*, Architect Shahed Saleem outlines that the 'dome emerged as one of the key symbols of the mosque, and for Muslim immigrants to Britain it served as such a primary signifier that in numerous examples of British mosques domes have been incorporated into buildings even where they serve no purpose internally' (Saleem). The same can be said elsewhere as the dome has become an integral part of mosque design in communities of the diaspora, that to remove it, or not incorporate it in a new design, requires a delicate balance of community consultation.

The Contemporary

Contemporary mosques are not a new notion. In majority Muslim countries, non-traditional mosques have been emerging for decades. However, mosques in the diaspora have often maintained traditional architectural styles for much longer, reflecting a desire to stay connected to their cultural heritage,

This research has shown there is a growing desire from within diaspora communities to move towards a contemporary approach to mosque design. There are a number of reasons for this, including a desire for purpose-built mosques that incorporate more functions, to be of the place and context, and for buildings to be more inclusive to both the wider community and future generations of Muslims within the diaspora.

The Places

The mosques visited within this research span several continents and cities with a large population of the Muslim diaspora. The research began in Australia, home to 813,000 Muslims making up 3.16% of the population, followed by:

- The USA 3.4million (1%)
 - Canada 1.7million (4.8%)
 - The UK 3.8million (5.8%)
 - Germany 4.6million (5.5%)
 - France 6.7million (10%)
 - Italy 2.9million (4.8%)
 - The Netherlands 387,000 (2.2%)
 - Denmark 313,000 (5.4%)
- (World Population Review).

A number of compelling observations can be made, that are unique to each country, when compared

to their geographical neighbours. For instance, Germany is leading the way with new contemporary mosques in Europe and makes up a large portion of contemporary mosques visited in this study. Meanwhile in France, new mosques have struggled to obtain development approval and established mosques have been protested (New York Times).

In contrast, Italy has fewer than eight purpose-built mosques across the country, despite a significant Muslim population, as the religion is not officially recognised in the country (Washington Post). Whether new mosques are being approved and built appears to reflect the socio-political landscape.

What is Inclusive?

The Cambridge Dictionary defines 'Inclusivity' as "the fact of including all types of people, things or ideas and treating them all fairly and equally" (Cambridge University Press). This extends to the built environment, places of work and of course, places of worship.

Within the Australian context, conversations around mosques has extended this notion to include the wider community within the walls of a mosque, to open up these spaces. This is noted in the descriptions attributed to Glenn Murcutt and Eleveli Plus mosque in Newport, Victoria, 'designed

to be physically and psychologically inclusive rather than exclusive, transparent rather than closed, contemporary rather than conventional, and to speak eloquently of both its current Australian context and ancient Islamic culture' (Sydney Morning Herald).

Contemporary mosques - but for whom?

Questions of inclusivity are at the heart of re-imagining mosque design, as well as who accesses these re-imagined spaces. Contemporary mosques studied in this research, allow for a certain openness in the built form, as well as through the facilitation of open days and community focused days.

While mosques inherently are inclusive of everyone who adheres to the faith, many people from underrepresented groups within Islamic communities may experience a sense of exclusion from these spaces (Toesland). This research explores how contemporary mosques can be re-imagined to be spaces of inclusion for all people, including women and people from the LGBTIQ+ communities.

An inquiry into inclusivity also involves examining who is designing mosques, and what are the lived experiences of architects informing these designs. Are female architects involved in designing mosques, and are women-led community groups participating in community consultation processes? This exploration reveals the extent to which diverse perspectives are incorporated into the architectural development of these spaces.

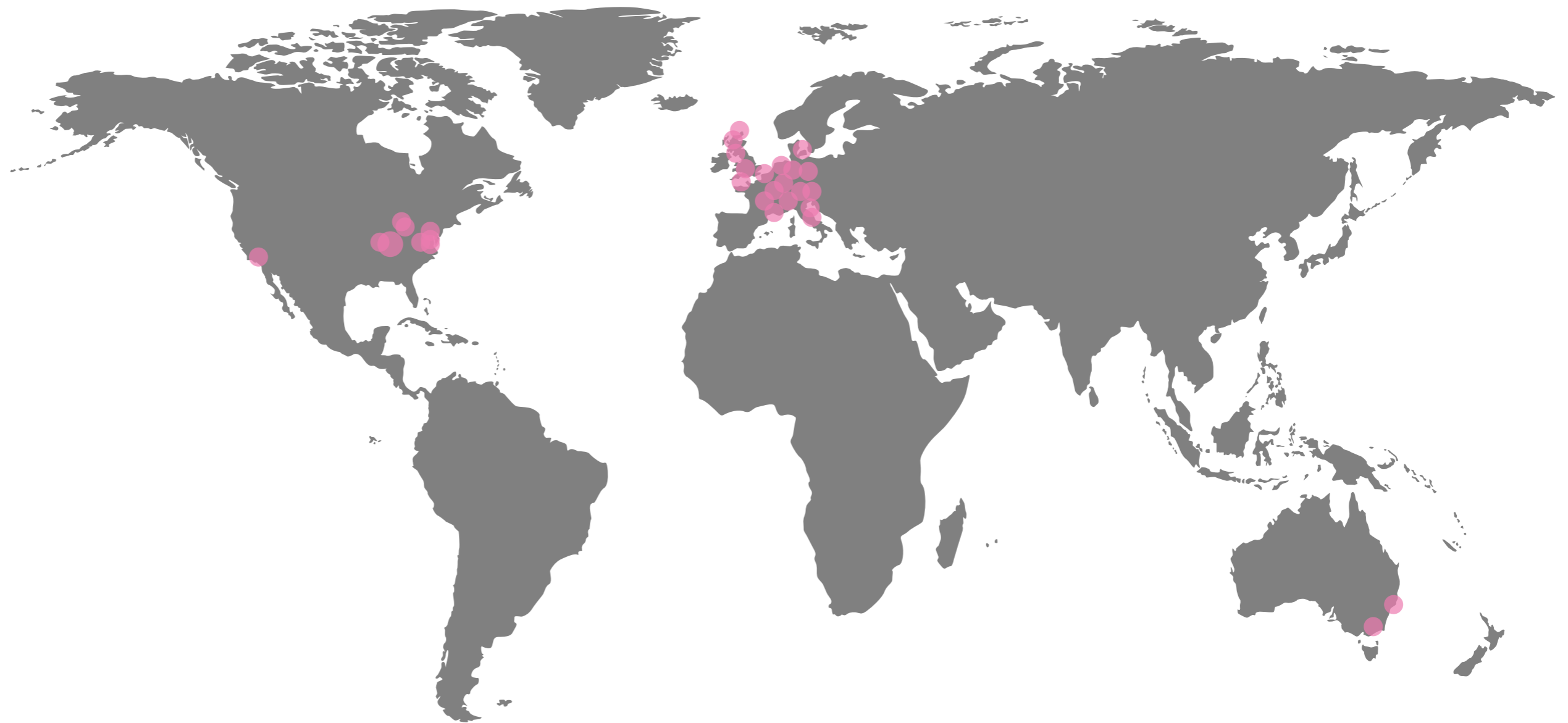


Image: Cambridge Central Mosque

Cities Visited

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21



- Sydney
- Melbourne
- Los Angles
- New York
- Indianapolis
- Toronto
- London
- Glasgow
- Edinburgh
- Aberdeen
- Rome
- Venice
- Paris
- Strasbourg
- Berlin
- Munich
- Cologne
- Hamburg
- Amsterdam
- Copenhagen

5

Identity,
Community,
Consultation



The terms 'Middle East', 'Arab World' or 'Islamic World', have undergone a recent reframing of language, and a shift to the use of the term SWANA, originating with the SWANA alliance in the USA (SWANA Alliance). This term reflects the diversity of the communities, within and outside the region. This context is important when considering mosques in the West and the communities which they serve, as well as their relationship to the wider community. Mosques are a visible and physical symbol of the religion.

Research conducted by Charles Sturt University between 2014 and 2019 across Australia (published 2021), following the Christchurch attacks, examined the magnitude of violence towards mosques and those who attended them. The research outlined that the 'threat of an attack increased in cases where there had been public attention. For example, mosques that were reported in the media (100%) or experienced online opposition to the development of the mosque (83%) experienced higher rates of victimisation' (The Conversation).

In London, a study carried out in 2022 by Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) and Muslim Census, found that 42% of mosques or Islamic institutions had experienced attacks within the preceding three years. A decade earlier, in 2012,

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the Pew Research Centre, a nonpartisan fact tank based in the USA, detailed 53 mosques across the USA that were subject to opposition and protest. The opposition cited the usual planning issues relating to traffic, parking and noise, with a number relating to 'fears around Islam, sharia law and terrorism' (PEW Research Centre).

The abovementioned studies, highlight the challenges faced with the development of new mosques, and give context to the challenges around openness and inclusivity in mosque design. These challenges encompass the perceived need to reimagine symbolic notions of a mosque. In some instances, established mosques have created regular open days to welcome the wider community, such as what was observed in Cologne, Germany.

The mosque features a reimagined dome, with transparency to the public, inviting all to enter at any time. Contemporary mosques are also evolving into multipurpose community centres, catering to a wider Muslim and non-Muslim audience. Additionally, the location influences the design of the mosque, whether it be urban constraints in densely populated areas like New York and London, or environmental and security considerations.

Community Consultation

Increasingly, community consultation has become important in planning our cities and is legislated for significant projects. The community consultation process for mosques has been led by community members, as well as architects, and from the mosques surveyed, often benefits additional community consultation.

For example, the Copenhagen Mosque, underwent extensive community consultation within the Muslim community who will be using the mosque as their place of worship. I was fortunate enough to sit in on one of the consultation sessions and listen first hand to the issues raised. The consultation led to the redesign of the mosque to better reflect the aspirations of the community, who sought a mosque that maintained more obvious traditional symbology. In contrast, the contemporary design of Newport Mosque, was driven from within the community and facilitated by the Architects, Glenn Murcutt and Hakan Elevli. In conversation with Elevli, it was highlighted that the community sought a place that caters to the younger generation of Muslims, those new to the religion, and those outside the religion.

In discussion with Architect Buro Koray, who is based in New York City (NYC) and designed an

un-built Islamic Centre, suggests that proposing a standalone, purpose-built religious building is very difficult in cities like New York. Koray suggests the key is to develop a relationship with the community, followed by an exploration of creativity into what it means to build a purpose-built mosque.

Architect, C. Po Ma of Moriyama & Teshima Architects, who designed the Ismaili Centre in Toronto, shared approaches to the consultation process and provided important insights:

- Start the engagement process early and maintain open, transparent communication. This helps address concerns and build trust.
- Involve a diverse range of community members, not just the target user group. Engage with local politicians, professionals, and the broader public to seek a range of perspectives.
- Listen to community feedback and incorporate it into the design process. Demonstrate how community input has shaped the project.
- Ensure the final design is welcoming and accessible to the public, not just the target user group. Create flexible, multipurpose spaces that can be used by everyone.
- Emphasise the project's role in fostering understanding and dialogue between different communities. Highlight how the project can bring people together.



Australian Islamic Centre

Location: Newport, Victoria, Australia
Architect: Glenn Murcutt and Elevli Plus
Year: 2019





11

More than
a Mosque,
a space for
community



Places of faith have a long history of incorporating community spaces and functions that reach beyond a space for worship. Grundvicks Church in Copenhagen, was built with an entire community of housing surrounding it, while the first mosque, built by the Prophet Mohammad, included community and administrative facilities. Mosques increasingly include community facilities when newly developed.

When we think of mosques, there is a collective image of a dome and minaret, with a space for prayer. A self-contained place, however, mosques have evolved to offer more to a community and to include more of the community. While they are spaces for contemplation and spiritual connection, they are also places of gathering and social connection.

Australia's largest mosque, constructed in the early 1970s, is located in Sydney's south-west suburb of Lakemba. The southwest region of Sydney includes a large portion of the Muslim population, making up 8.3% (Australian Bureau of Statistics).

Lakemba Mosque is a mosque I frequented with my family growing up, where every year, twice a year, the main street would close for Eid and the community gathered, extending the prayer space into the street and carpark. This still occurs today,

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with approximately 60,000 worshipers attending each year (LMA). The mosque has expanded to include several community facilities, including gym facilities. Open days are held inviting the wider community, 'essentially it's about demystifying the mosque, and provides an opportunity for non-Muslims to engage with Muslim religious leaders' (Huff Post) This is an occurrence that is happening in many diaspora communities and several of the contemporary mosques visited incorporate open days.

Punchbowl Mosque

In the neighbouring suburb of Punchbowl, a contemporary mosque has been designed and built. Prior to Punchbowl Mosque being constructed, the community advertised within local shops and sought donations, outlining that it will be 'a contemporary design by an award-winning Architect for the future of Muslims in Punchbowl and Sydney. It includes a mosque, primary school and two-level basement carpark.'

The architectural brief outlined 'the mosque is a modern interpretation of traditional elements that reflected the local Australian environment' (Candalepas). Architect Angelo Candalepas writes that appropriating traditional references is not always the appropriate approach, but rather the

process of designing 'a mosque in Australia must, therefore, be to find a path between the deeply religious aspects of the past and the relevance of the present' and to design in a way that 'takes cues from all of history'(Candalepas).

Ismaili Centre, Toronto

In Toronto, the Ismaili Centre sits across from the Aga Khan Museum. Two buildings in dialogue. The mosque is only open to those of the Ismaili faith, a denomination of Shia Islam. However, regular guided tours are held for members of the public, which I was fortunate enough to join. The centre receives an increased number of visitors, given its proximity to the Aga Khan Museum, generating interest in the religion. The guided tours are informative in relation to the building elements, as well as providing insight into the religion. There are six Ismaili centres across the western world, including the Ismaili Centre in London, also visited as part of this study.

The building designed by Moriyama & Teshima Architects in association with Charles Correa Associates, features several frontages. The building plays with various volumes, dropping and elevating in height, while a large, glazed prism, highlights the location of the prayer hall, orientated towards Mecca.

Internally, artwork is used throughout based on calligraphy/typography and free of iconography as is the practice in Islam. The artwork has been produced by local Islamic artists and are placed at strategic locations throughout the building. The building includes office space and a boardroom, which open up onto a terrace overlooking the prism to the prayer hall. The building is also made up of a series of community spaces, which can be rented out to the public. As outlined earlier, a community consultation process contributed to the success of this project.

Penzburg Mosque, Germany

In Germany, the Penzburg Mosque located at the outskirts of Munich, interprets the cube form of the Kaaba, while maintaining a minaret that incorporates the adhan as calligraphy. Speaking to the Architect, Alen Jasarevic, the mosque has been designed as 'not just a mosque, but a community centre', where the mosque portion makes up 30% of the use.

The mosque incorporates community facilities, an administration wing and library, designed to allow a visitor to feel 'invited'. Design decisions have been made to facilitate this, such as deciding not to include fences or barriers, and create a sense of transparency to the façade.

Results of a survey of 300 people across the UK, found that *'75 per cent said mosques must change to become more welcoming for women, while 45 per cent said they themselves, or someone they know, have had at least one negative experience at a mosque due to being a woman'* (Javed)

Spaces for Women

The built environment influences us, it shapes us and shapes communities. Buildings enrich our experiences; our earliest memories are housed within or around buildings. My earliest memory of visiting a mosque, was attending Lakemba Mosque during Eid, which I would attend with the women in my family.

The mosque has a permanent women's prayer space in the upper level of the building, with the main entry being the men's space. A significant number of people visit the mosque at Eid, far more people than the building can hold, so during this time, the women's space is expanded into the carpark, covered with temporary shade structures, enabling women to listen to the sermon and attend the mosque.

Traditional mosques have been designed with separate spaces for women, sometimes with separate entries. In the UK, a study of mosques highlighted that 'of the 1,975 mosques in Britain, 28% do not offer facilities for women, and up to 50% of all South Asian-run mosques do not accommodate them. When mosques do offer access, it is restricted, and often does not even include a prayer space, but rather a teaching space, such as a girls' madrasa' (Aly).

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This research has revealed that the designers of contemporary mosques, as well as the communities they serve, are turning their minds to questions of inclusivity, specifically gender. Several contemporary mosques seek to express equality and inclusivity in design, through maintaining a single entry for everyone, or providing an equal space for men and women, as seen in Cambridge Central Mosque and the Islamic Centre of Southern California Mosque.

In LA, the Women's Mosque of America, aims to create 'movement to spark a women-led Islamic Renaissance — one that is led by Muslim women's voices, leadership, and scholarship' (Women's Mosque of America). Meanwhile, in the UK, the 'Open My Mosque' campaign, founded by Anita Nayyar, aims to address this issue, to enable access for women to all mosques, through raising awareness, research and advocacy.

Results of a survey of 300 people across the UK, found that *'75 per cent said mosques must change to become more welcoming for women, while 45 per cent said they themselves, or someone they know, have had at least one negative experience at a mosque due to being a woman'* (Javed).

With this campaign comes a movement to appoint women on boards of mosques, and create dedicated committees led by women, for women (Aly). In London, complaints made about the access in Brick Lane mosque, led to a change in the access route for women. The access was previously past a funeral service and through a dark corridor in the basement. It has since been moved to be adjacent to the men's entry with stairs directly leading to the prayer area.

These seemingly minor change to a building or circulation space as mentioned above, can have a significant impact on the experiences of people accessing spaces, creating a more positive experience. Brick Lane mosque has seen an increase in the number of women attending the mosque, which will lead to more positive change (Javed).

‘What’s really significant is the fact that we have triggered people’s imagination with the notion of an inclusive mosque space that’s gender-equal and queer-affirming. It’s a place that doesn’t ask you if you’re a Muslim or what kind of Muslim you are. Everybody is welcome. People are embraced in the fullness of their authenticity’ (Habib)

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Towards a Place For All

It is important to not only look at the built form’s response to a minority, but to reflect on how can the built form facilitate a welcoming environment for those who are a minority within a community.

Several mosques have been visited as part of this study, that are explicitly welcoming to the LGBTQIA+ Muslim community, as well as mosques that are led by female Imams. There is an opportunity to explore how contemporary design can facilitate a space that is truly inclusive, and how particular groups of people historically feeling excluded from a traditional space, can start to feel included.

Mosques that are LGBTQIA+ inclusive often originate from within the queer community. These spaces are examples of communities creating spaces within an existing place, often located in a building with a prior-existing function.

At the Ibn Rushd Goethe Mosque in Berlin, an LGBTQIA+ inclusive mosque, the congregation meet within a room, within a church. The church provides the space, and the space provides an inclusive environment, for all genders and sexualities.

Approaching the building from the street, it appears as a brick church. Internally, it consists of a simple

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room, with an artist design Mihreb, delineating the space. Led by female imam Seyran Ates, the space allows for all people to pray together in once space.

Visiting the mosque, I learned of the open discussions after services, where people of various faiths come together. The space itself incorporates cultural elements and a design that represents the diversity of the community, utilising a flexible space that accommodates the differing group sizes and activities. Due to the nature of the mosque, a balance is required between security for all visitors, and maintaining an open and welcoming environment.

In Copenhagen, the Mariam Mosque, is also female led and LGBTQIA+ inclusive, located within the main shopping strip. The entry door is unassuming, leading to stairs that connect to the space, which is situated amongst other community and office spaces.

The mosque consists of a single room, with flexible seating to allow for social gatherings, similar to the Ibn Rushd Goethe Mosque. It speaks to the importance of creating a space for community, a place that is safe and inclusive.

Unity Mosque in Toronto, is open to all, with the co-founder El-Farouk Khaki, outlines the significance of the place and relevance to those who attend:

‘What’s really significant is the fact that we have triggered people’s imagination with the notion of an inclusive mosque space that’s gender-equal and queer-affirming. It’s a place that doesn’t ask you if you’re a Muslim or what kind of Muslim you are. Everybody is welcome. People are embraced in the fullness of their authenticity’ (Habib).

This speaks to the importance of creating inclusive spaces, and the desire for queer inclusive mosques. Almost every capital city visited, features a of a queer inclusive mosque. Whether it has physical walls or meets sporadically or purely online, they all have a common theme, of exclusivity and space for all.

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Turkish Cultural Centre

Location: Doetinchem (Amsterdam)
Netherlands
Architect: Atelier POUUR
Year: 2013





Cologne Central Mosque

Location: Cologne, Germany
Architect: Gottfried Böhm and Paul Böhm
Year: 2017

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Penzburg Mosque

Location: Penzburg (Munich), Germany
Architect: Jasarevic Architekten
Year: 2005



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Institute of Islamic Culture

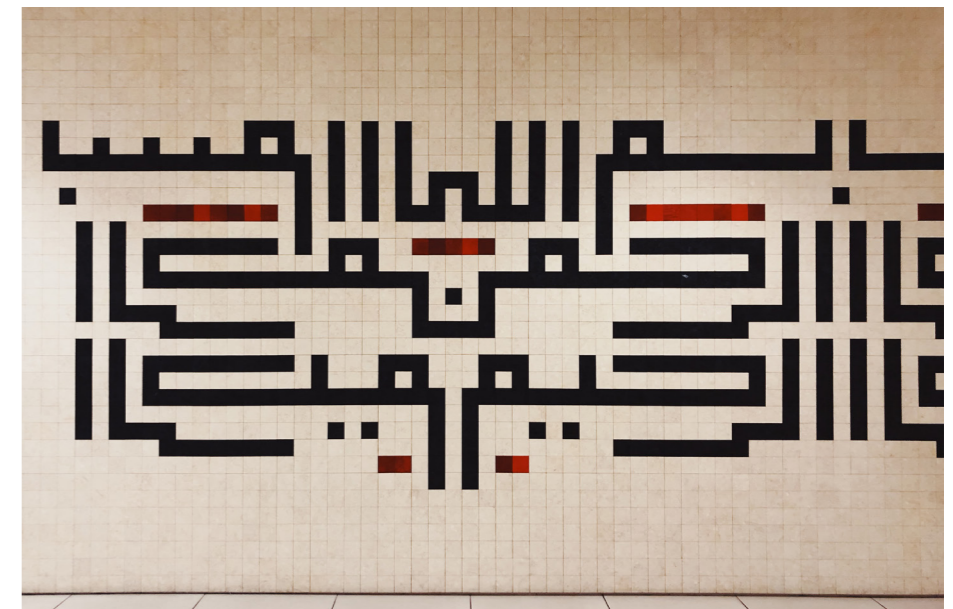
Location: Paris, France
 Architect: Ateliers Lion
 Year: 2013





Ismaili Centre

Location: Toronto, Canada
Architect: Charles Correa Associates in association with Moriyama & Teshima Architects.
Year: 2014





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Ismaili Centre

Location: London, U.K.
Architect: Casson Conder Partnership
Year: 1985



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Ibn Rushd Goethe Mosque

Location: Berlin, Germany
Architect: Unknown (adaptation)
Year: 2017 (Mosque)



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Mariam Mosque

Location: Copenhagen, Denmark
Architect: Unknown (adaptation)
Year: 2015 (Mosque)

6

Urban &
Suburban
Mosque



Image: Islamic Society of
North America, Plainfield

'Islamic architecture should be expressive and understandable to all. It should employ a form of language that invokes in immigrant Muslims a sense of belonging in their present and hope in their future. To the indigenous Muslims it should represent a linkage with Muslims from other parts of the world and should underscore the universality and unity of Islam. To the new Muslim this architecture should invoke confidence in their new belief. For non-Muslims it should take the form of clearly identifiable buildings which are inviting and open, or at least not secretive, closed, or forbidding.'

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- Gulzar Haidar

The architectural language and urban design treatment of mosques varies across cities, and is dependant on location, the community it is serving, the community's aspirations for the place, budget and funding.

The mosques visited in this study include a mix of urban and suburban – or regional – mosques, with 72% being urban, across several cities. The concept of 'suburbia' differs between the cities visited, and regional is more appropriate in some instances. This was most prominent in Germany, while the most distinctive regional mosque visited was the Plainfield Mosque in Indiana.

Islamic Cultural Centre of New York, NYC

NYC provides an important representation of the urban mosque in a Western context. The city is distinctly characterised by a lack of development of purpose-built mosques, with the majority housed in repurposed buildings. The Islamic Cultural Centre of New York, designed by SOM, is the exception.

Built in 1991, the mosque was designed within the confines of a city block, at the border of Harlem and the Upper East Side of Manhattan. In conversation with the Architect, Mustafa Abadan of SOM outlines the mosque was orientated to the Qibla, while an administration building was designed to align

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with the NYC grid to differentiate it, however this portion was never built. The building is solid and commanding. Set on a sloping site, back from the street, with a fence to the perimeter which encloses the building and the associated landscape.

The mosque is attended by Muslims from the wider NYC area and further afield. Located on a busy intersection, the building was designed with an internal focus, to avoid distraction from the busy city streets.

Islamic Society of North America, Plainfield

In stark contrast, the Islamic Society of North America's Plainfield Mosque is a suburban mosque situated on a large site with rolling hills, a long winding driveway and a solid brick building.

The mosque is slightly visible from the street in the distance, with a large sign indicating its presence. Built in 1981, the brick mass sits amongst lush, well-maintained greenery and is located 30 kilometres southwest of Indianapolis, near the capital city of Indiana.

The mosque was designed by Architect Gulzar Haidar, a member of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), which commissioned the building.

The Plainfield Mosque is yet another example of an earlier mosque that departs from the traditional. The building's geometry was derived from a cube, as appears to be a common thread in design. Haidar outlines the need for architecture to invoke a sense of belonging:

'Islamic architecture should be expressive and understandable to all. It should employ a form of language that invokes in immigrant Muslims a sense of belonging in their present and hope in their future. To the indigenous Muslims it should represent a linkage with Muslims from other parts of the world and should underscore the universality and unity of Islam. To the new Muslim this architecture should invoke confidence in their new belief. For non-Muslims it should take the form of clearly identifiable buildings which are inviting and open, or at least not secretive, closed, or forbidding.' (Khalidi)

This sentiment by Haidar, is relevant to the conversations around the design of mosques today, and their potential for positive impact on the communities they serve. This regional mosque is a critical part of the American cultural landscape.

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Masjid Tawhid

Location: Brooklyn, N.Y.
 Architect: Unknown
 Year: Unknown



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Al Abedin Islamic Centre

Location: Brooklyn, N.Y.
 Architect: Unknown
 Year: Unknown



Islamic Society of North America

Location: Plainfield, Indiana
Architect: Gulzar Haidar
Year: 1982



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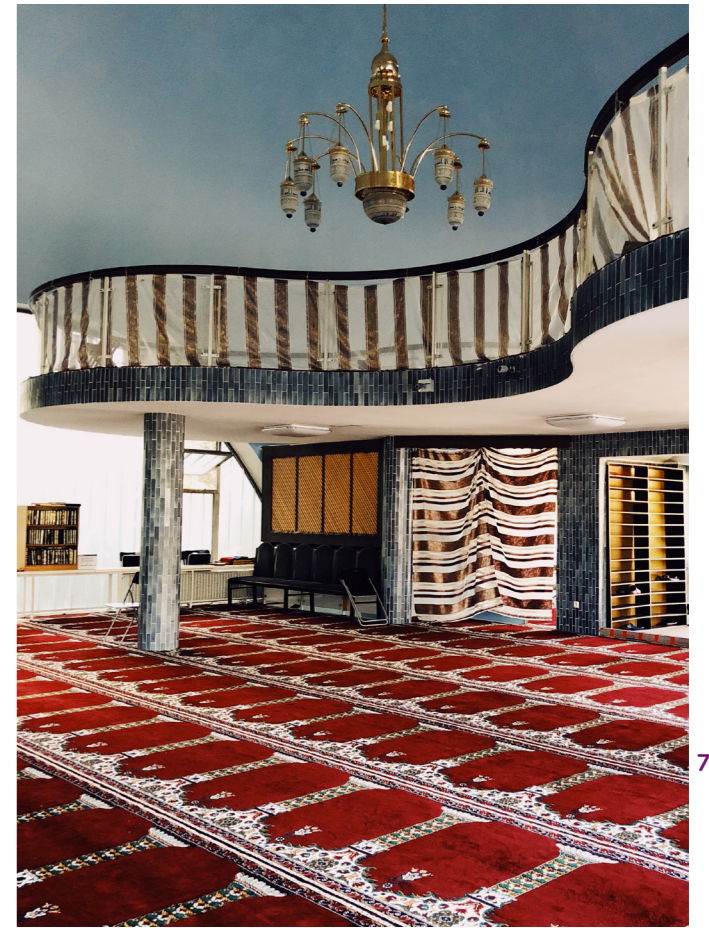


Islamic Centre of Munich

Location: Frieimann, Munich, Germany
Architect: Osman Edip Gürel
Year: 1973



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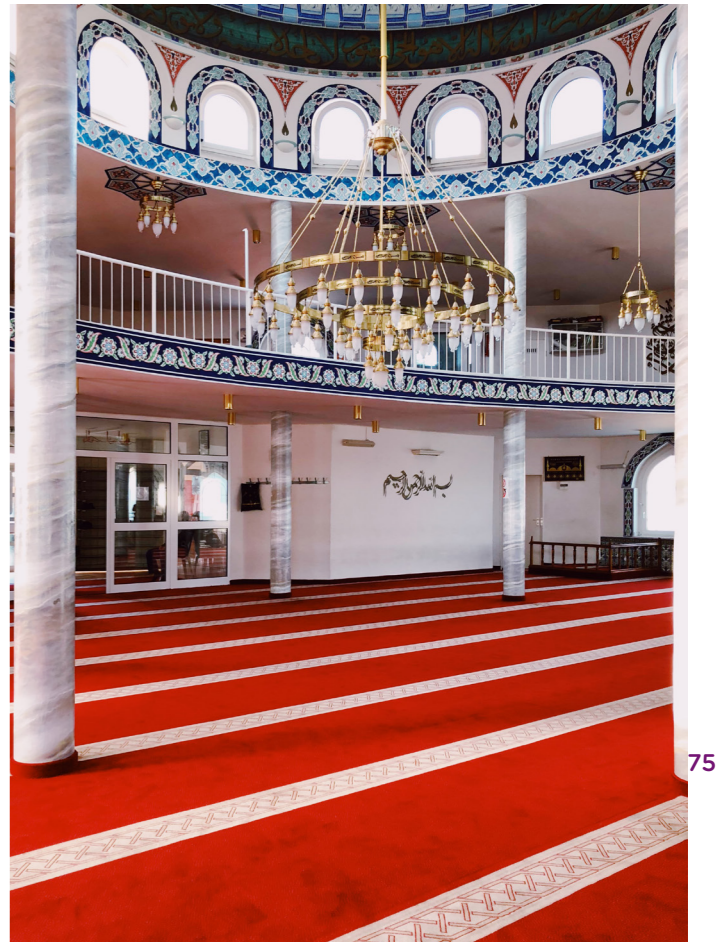


Social Complex & Mosque

Location: Gelsenkirchen, Cologne, Germany
Architect: Agirbas & Wienstroer Architects
Year: 2013



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Duisburg Cathedral Mosque

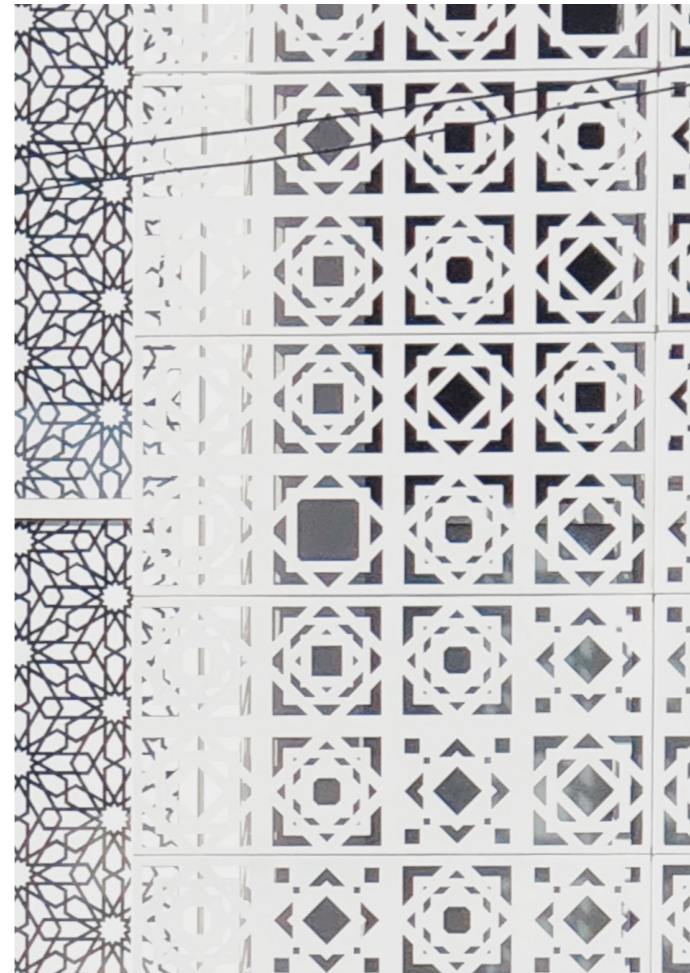
Location: Duisburg, Cologne, Germany
Architect: Cavit Sahin
Year: 2008



Bondy Mosque

Location: Seine-Saint-Denis, Paris, France
Architect: Abderrahmane Bousmaha
Year: 2001

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Alhashimi Mosque

Location: Saint-Ouen, Paris, France
Architect: Unknown
Year: 2017

7

Built for
Purpose

Built for purpose mosques in Western countries are few in comparison to mosques housed in repurposed buildings. There are usually financial and spatial constraints that limit the introduction of purpose-built buildings, as well as planning and approval constraints.

Australian cities are becoming increasingly sprawling, with migrant communities settled in the suburbs, which inherently allow space for purpose-built mosques, often at a lower purchase price. Similarly in places like Germany, purpose-built mosques are largely located at the outskirts of city centres, as was observed with the mosques visited. Cities such as London and New York are examples of densely populated places with few purpose-built mosques.

Of the mosques visited for this study, 70% were built for purpose. This concentration highlights the focus of this study on contemporary mosque design and includes cities like Munich, Amsterdam, Paris and Sydney, with a higher proportion of purpose-built mosques.

As noted earlier, NYC includes the only purpose-built mosque in the city, the Islamic Cultural Centre of New York, an important building for the Muslim community of NYC and visitors.

Grand Mosque of Paris & Institute of Islamic Culture
France is home to several mosques across the country. The Grand Mosque of Paris, which was built in the 1920s in a traditional Spanish-Moorish style, a traditional building form, and features a restaurant, hammam and shops that are open to all (Mosqpedia).

North of the city, the Institute of Islamic Culture, is a contemporary art centre dedicated to the cultures of Islam, and has incorporated a prayer room for 300 people, managed by the Grand Mosque (Institut des Cultures d'Islam). Designed by Ateliers Lion, the building sits within a typical Parisian street with a strong presence and internal terraces.

Great Mosque of Rome

In Italy, Islam is not recognised as an official religion, and while the country is home to 2.9 million Muslims, there are only eight mosques. There are blockages in relation to planning permissions and access to public funding. Instead, there are several hundred prayer spaces, including several within the outer suburbs of Venice.

The mosques in Italy are located in Tuscany, Liguria, Milan, Rome, Ravenna, Emilia-Romagna, Palermo and Sicily. The Ministry of Interior recognizes the Islamic Cultural Centre of Italy, as the sole legal

Islamic entity in Italy (United States Department of State). The Great Mosque of Rome is run by the Islamic Culture Centre of Italy, designed by the Architect Paolo Portoghesi and built in 1994. Despite the circumstances, the mosque has been given the title as 'the largest mosque outside the Islamic world, Russia and India' (Divisare).

The building's repeating columns are visible from the street, appearing as a Roman structure, and walking amongst the columns evokes a feeling of walking through a traditional Roman building.

Cambridge Central Mosque

Meanwhile in Cambridge, an environmentally sustainable mosque has been designed by Marks Barfield Architects, a mosque that sits beautifully within the streetscape.

The mosque was under construction at the time of visiting, however, has since opened to the public with great success. Speaking with the Architect, Julia Barfield, the design process of the mosque aimed to create a modern mosque that reflects the context of Cambridge, while also incorporating principles from Islamic architecture.

The Muslim population of Cambridge had outgrown their mosque and wanted a new mosque reflective

of their community, which consists of a large university related population. The mosque was designed for the community, with functions open to everyone, and an environmental and social focus. Nearby, King's College Chapel informed the design of the mosque as a local reference point, while the geometry of the building references Mecca. The columns are of structural timber, appearing like trees from the streetscape and within the building, while a dome sits over the prayer hall.

A key consideration in the design was ensuring that the prayer space for women was flexible and accommodates the needs of all women. The main prayer hall features a timber screen to delineate the women's space, which can be removed to open up the space for all when required. Barfield highlights that this flexibility is important, as it caters for women who prefer the privacy of the screen, with the option to open the space. The upper level includes a dedicated women's space for additional privacy when required.

The mosque promotes inclusiveness for people of all backgrounds by ensuring the public spaces like the garden, cafe, and teaching areas are welcoming and accessible to the Muslim community, as well as the wider community. The focus was to create an integrated, inclusive environment rather than

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overly traditional or segregated spaces, ensuring all community members feel welcome. The design process included working closely with local community groups to understand their needs and incorporate these into the design, and promoting transparency and open communication about the mosque's purpose and activities, to build trust and understanding with the broader community.

Westermoskee, Amsterdam

Further afield, the Westermoskee (or West Mosque) in Amsterdam, built in 2015 and designed by Marc and Nada Breitman, has taken a more traditional approach. Situated on the banks of the river Schinkel, the architecture is in the Ottoman style, with a minaret, a dome and arches, while referencing the context through materiality and detailing. This approach compared with the Cambridge example, highlights the many ways in which architects are designing modern mosques.



Image: Westermoskee

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Islamic Cultural Centre of New York

Location: Upper East Side, N.Y., U.S.A.
Architect: Skidmore, Owings and Merrill
Year: 1987



Cambridge Central Mosque

Location: Cambridge, U.K.
Architect: Marks Barfield
Year: 2019





Westermoskee

Location: Amsterdam, Netherlands
Architect: Marc and Nada Breitman
Year: 2015



Glasgow Central Mosque

Location: Amsterdam, Netherlands
Architect: Copeland & Associates, with
Coleman Ballantyne Partnership
Year: 1983



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London Central Mosque

Location: London, U.K.
Architect: Frederick Gibberd
Year: 1977



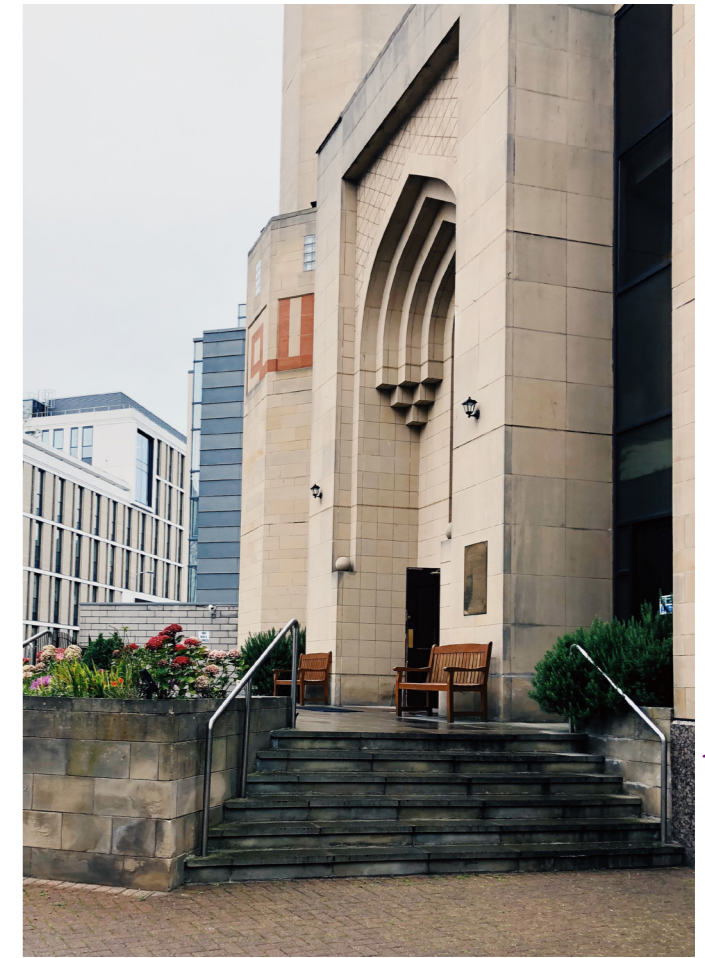
Hamburg Central Mosque

Location: Hamburg, Germany
Architect: Unknown
Year: 1977

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Edinburgh Central Mosque

Location: Edinburgh, U.K.

Architect: Basil Al Bayati

Year: 1998

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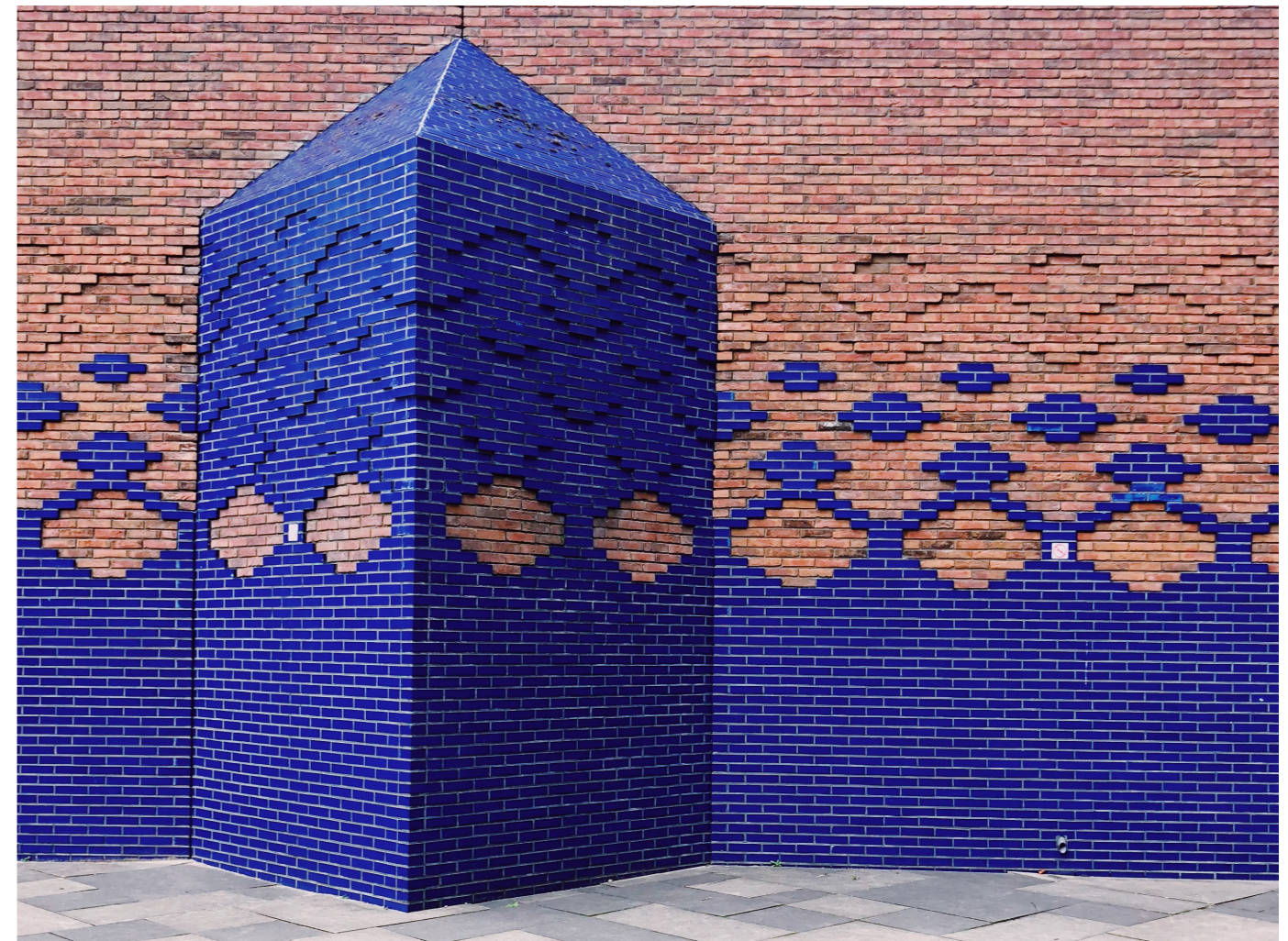
Great Mosque of Rome

Location: Rome, Italy
Architect: Paolo Portoghesi
Year: 1994



The Blue Mosque

Location: Amsterdam, Netherlands
Architect: Unknown
Year: 2008



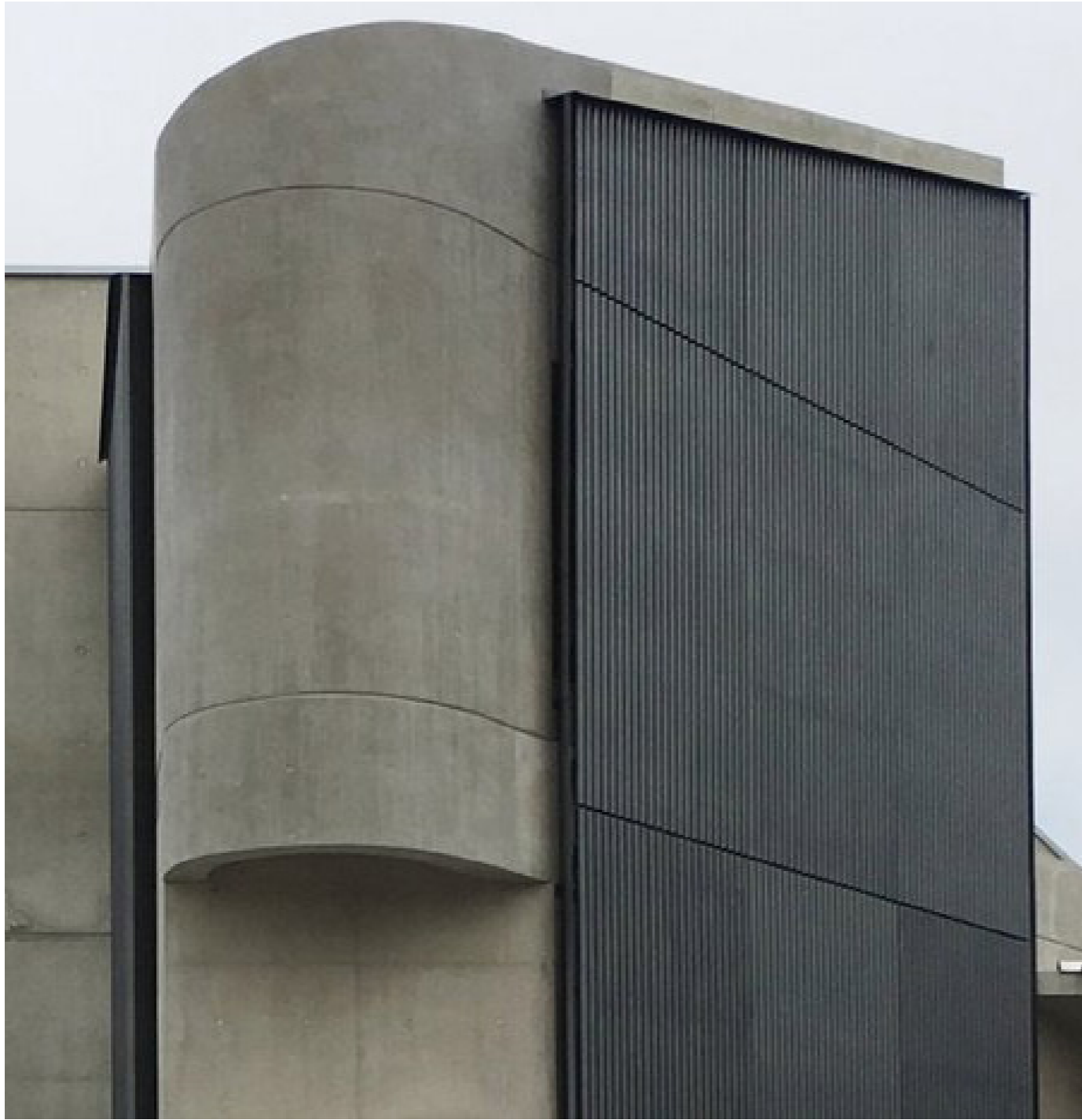


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Noor Cultural Centre

Location: Toronto, Canada
Architect: Raymond Moriyama
Year: 1963

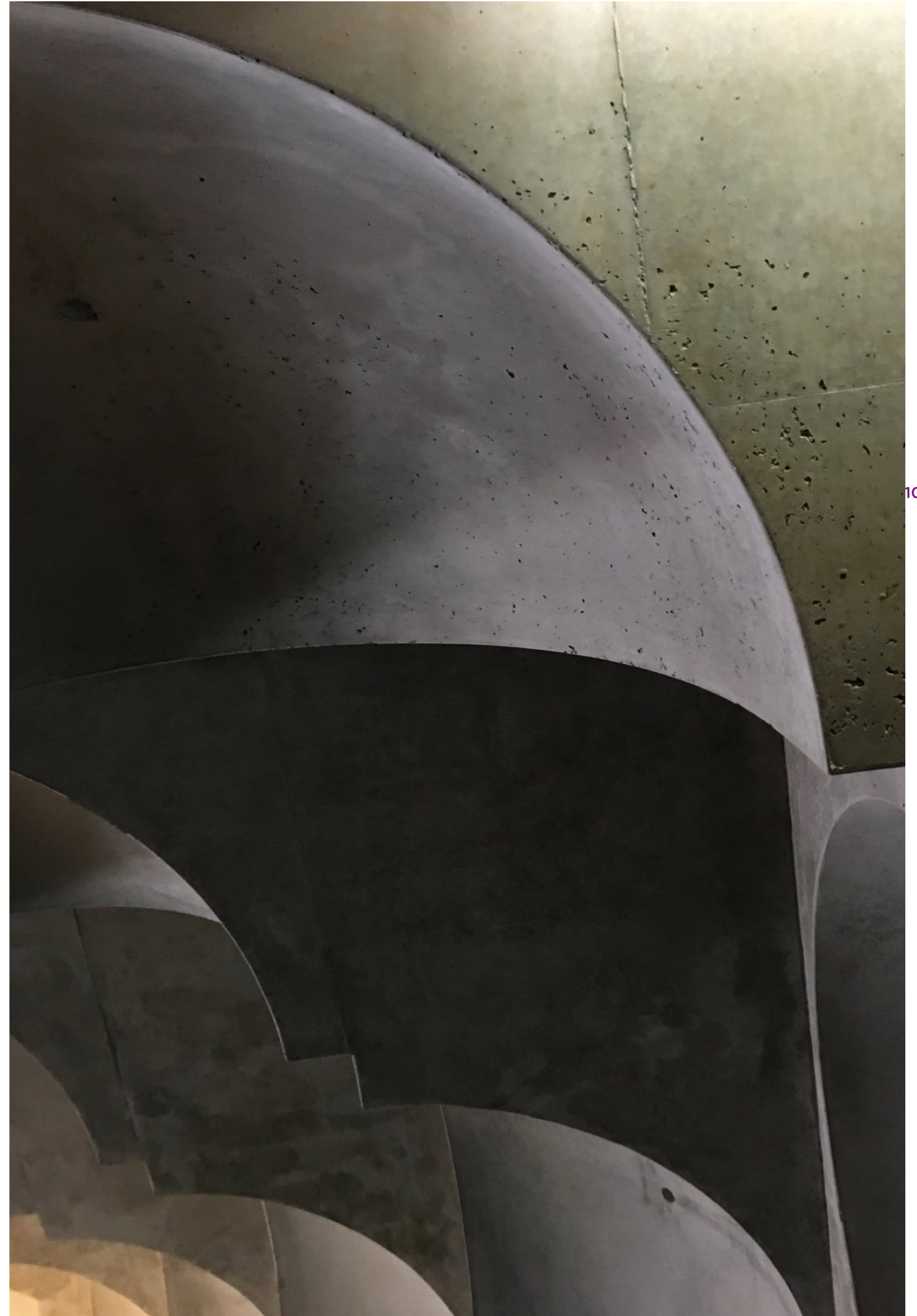




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Punchbowl Mosque

Location: Punchbowl, Sydney, Australia
Architect: Candalepas Associates
Year: 2019



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Grand Mosque of Paris

Location: Paris, France
Architect: Maurice Tranchant de Lunels
Year: 1926





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Grand Central Mosque of Strasbourg

Location: Strasbourg, France
Architect: Paolo Portoghesi
Year: 2004



8

Re-Purposed
Buildings, New
Mosques



‘This is a beautiful, enormous space in Williamsburg and we’d like to spruce it up and open it up more — for social programs, cooking classes, interfaith lectures — and show people that Muslim Americans have been living in this country for over a century.’

- Alyssa Ratkewitch

With the pressing issue of a sustainable future, there has been increasing recognition of the benefits of repurposing or renewing buildings for new uses. The benefit of renewal and reuse is significant in lowering the carbon footprint, however, environmental sustainability is not the sole purpose of reuse. Often, there are economic considerations. It is usually simpler and cheaper to adapt an existing building, than build anew, though this can depend on the complexity of the brief and how it fits in with the existing structure.

Mosques, have a long history of being housed in re-purposed buildings, particularly in former churches, and even adapted houses. Churches feature a configuration that is easily adaptable, with a large space as a prayer hall already in place. Adapting houses is often most cost-effective, being located in residential areas and in close proximity to the community in which they serve. There may be spatial constraints, as well as planning constraints to convert these buildings into mosques and associated facilities. Nonetheless, there are several hundreds of mosques internationally that are housed in this way.

The adaption of existing buildings can be understood through the lens of Françoise Bollack in *Old Buildings, New Forms*, where five categories

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are identified for adaptive reuse (Bollack). These are; Wraps, Weavings, Juxtapositions, Parasites and Insertions (Bollack), all of which are relevant to the adaptation of buildings into mosques.

This lens is the basis for understanding the several ways in which mosques make use of re-purposed buildings. They are located in either in:

- An existing building with minimal external changes and internal alterations
- An existing building with external and internal alterations
- An existing building, with a new portion above or adjacent

Several high-density cities feature mosques in re-purposed buildings, such as NYC, Los Angeles (LA), London and Sydney. Mosques in existing buildings with a smaller budget, that are usually community funded, are similar in their appearance. They modestly identify themselves as a mosque, either through simple signage or the inclusion of a crescent or interpretation of a minaret. Examples of these are the Power Street Mosque in NYC and the Brick Lane Mosque in London.

Internally, these mosques usually include prayer mats which align with the Qibla, a Mihrab, and Quran verses in Arabic calligraphy on the walls. Simple

spaces that provide the necessities for prayer . When one is in prayer, they are disconnected from the outside world and look inward, and so these re-purposed buildings achieve this goal, quite simply.

Islamic Centre of Southern California

In LA, along a typical street dotted with palm trees, food chains, offices and warehouse buildings, the Islamic Centre of Southern California (ICSC) addresses the street, taking up residence in a former insurance office building. The building is located in an area bordering the Koreantown and Wilshire Center neighbourhoods.

Repurposed to accommodate the mosque and Islamic Centre in 1976, it appears as a typical office building from the street, complete with the USA flag, and a discreet sign that alludes to the presence of an Islamic Centre. The ICSC is contemporary in its approach to leadership and the inclusion of women. In 2016, Hedab Tarifi, was the first woman to be elected as Chair of the board, and they pride themselves on their ‘growing reputation as one of the most progressive mosques in the country,’ in relation to their approach to the religion, a place that includes all (Islamic Centre of Southern California).

Power Street Mosque

Over on the east coast, NYC and its boroughs is home to over 275 mosques, the majority of which are housed in re-purposed buildings (Marcelo). These are located predominately within the boroughs of Queens and Brooklyn, but also feature in the Bronx, Staten Island and Manhattan. NYC includes the only purpose built mosque, the Islamic Cultural Centre of New York. However almost sixty years before that was built, the modest Powers Street Mosque was founded and housed in a former Methodist Church in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

The Powers Street Mosque was the first mosque in New York, serving the minority Lithuanian Tata Community, from 1931. The mosque is important in identifying the link to the beginnings of Mosques in NYC. Today, the building is often closed, with the exception of significant events, like Eid, weddings and funerals, as the community has significantly dwindled over the decades. Similar to the Broken Hill Mosque in NSW, the place is looked after by a descendant of one of the former Imams, Alyssa Ratkewitch. While the community is smaller than it originally began, there remains a community spirit and desire to utilise the building and re-engage with it as a vibrant mosque.

‘This is a beautiful, enormous space in Williamsburg and we’d like to spruce it up and open it up more — for social programs, cooking classes, interfaith lectures — and show people that Muslim Americans have been living in this country for over a century.’

The sentiment shown in Alyssa’s desire to engage with the wider community, speaks to the desire to establish a long history of presence in NYC for Muslims. As discussed in previous chapters, there has been a desire to shape the perceptions of Muslims, and celebrate the cultural history within NYC.

The mosque itself is small, two-story building with a gable roof and timber panel clad. The street frontage is simple with external stairs leading up into the main hall. Situated on a typical street in Williamsburg, the only external indication of the place being a mosque is atop the turret, a white crescent moon, discreetly symbolising the connection. This discreetness is typical of mosques housed in existing buildings.

Alhikmah Mosque, Aberdeen

Europe also includes a number of mosques in repurposed buildings, particularly in dense cities. In the north of Scotland, within the granite city of Aberdeen, Architect Shahed Saleem has

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transformed a former warehouse into a mosque, Masjid Alhikmah. Saleem explains, Aberdeen has a large university population, but also a cosmopolitan population because of the large oil industry and a mosque was required for the growing population.

The rear portion of the building, which was originally an existing warehouse, has been retained, and the front portion facing the street is new construction. The building is identifiable as a mosque through the facade, however not in a traditional sense, rather through the interpretation of traditional patterns and symbols with contemporary materials. This façade was developed in conjunction with artist Lubna Chowdhary, using glass and glazed ceramic panels. Drawing on the context, granite was used for the base of the building, with GRC panels above (Chowdhary).

The building underwent several design iterations through the planning and consultation process, to achieve the building that exists today. In conversation, Saleem outlined the project first went through a change of use process to establish that the site could be used as a mosque. Through the planning process, early design proposals that were taller, were revised and brought down in height to address any massing concerns from the neighbors. Following these design changes, the whole process

was fairly straightforward, with the main focus being on maximizing the usable floor space and integrating the new construction with the existing context.

Shahporan Masjid and Islamic Centre, London

Appearing as carved stone blocks, the Shahporan Masjid and Islamic Centre on Hackney Road, London, also designed by Shahed Saleem, is situated within a heritage conservation area and adds a new building to a Grade II listed terrace.

Saleem outlined through our discussion that the design approach aimed to retain the visual character and language of the original terrace building, while incorporating new elements, and that ‘rather than trying to speak one language, buildings should speak a number of languages’, being in a sense ‘multi-vocal’, which is evident in his work.

The mosque is an urban mosque, in keeping with the streetscape in terms of scale and form. The screen pattern is borrowed from the Shah Jahan Mosque in Woking, the first purpose-built mosque in the UK, while the main pattern of the façade draws on Anatolian tilework from 13th Century Turkey. This combination both considers the history of Muslims in the UK, and the Islamic broader history, creating a unique and well considered building.

With regards to planning, the local council was relatively relaxed about the proposal. The main planning concerns were around the impact of higher windows on the back of the original structure and ensuring the new building integrated well with the existing terrace. The council wanted to maintain a separation between the two linked buildings to preserve the visual character of the original terrace, which worked well for the composition of the form addressing the street.



Shahporan Mosque & Islamic Centre

Location: Hackney, London, U.K.
Architect: Shahed Saleem
Year: 2014

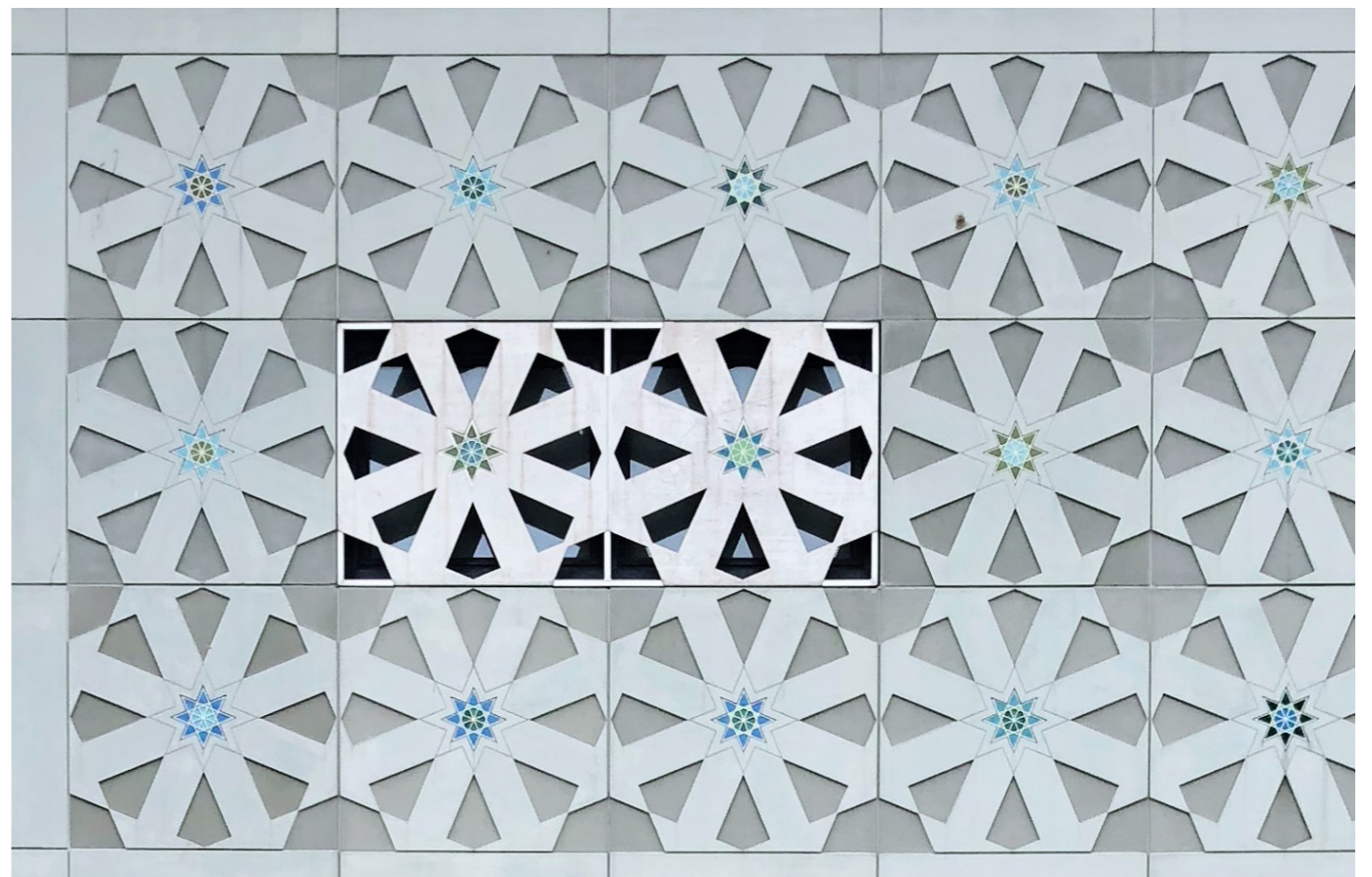




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Masjid Alhikmah and Community Centre

Location: Aberdeen, Scotland, U.K.
Architect: Shahed Saleem
Year: 2017

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126

Islamic Centre of Venice

Location: Venice, Italy
Architect: Unknown (Re-purposed building)
Year: Unknown



127

Islamic Cultural Centre

Location: Venice, Italy
Architect: Unknown (Re-purposed building)
Year: Unknown

128



129



Islamic Cultural Centre of Southern California

Location: LA, California, U.S.A.
Architect: Unknown (Adapted building)
Year: 1970s



130



131

Masjid Al Taqwa

Location: Brooklyn, N.Y., U.S.A.
Architect: Unknown (Adapted building)
Year: 1981



132



133



New York - Brooklyn 104 Pwers Road

Location: Brooklyn , N.Y., U.S.A.
Architect: Unknown (Adapted building)
Year: 1907

134



Islamic Guidance Centre, Ahul al bayt

Location: Brooklyn , N.Y., U.S.A.
Architect: Unknown (Re-purposed building)
Year: Unknown

135



Masjid Al Farooq

Location: Brooklyn , N.Y., U.S.A.
Architect: Unknown (Re-purposed building)
Year: Unknown



136

Baitush Sharaf Jame Masjid Islamic Center

Location: Brooklyn , N.Y., U.S.A.
Architect: Unknown (Re-purposed building)
Year: Unknown



137

138



139



Brick Lane Mosque

Location: London, U.K.
Architect: Nicholas Hawksmoor (building)
Year: Built 1743, Mosque 1976

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140

Assafa Islamic Centre

Location: Manhattan, N.Y, U.S.A.
Architect: Azza Aboualam (addition)
Year: 1998



141



142

Masjid Malcom Shabazz

Location: Manhattan (Harlem), N.Y, U.S.A.
Architect: Sabbath Brown (adaptation)
Year: 1956 (mosque)



143



Madina Masjid, Islamic Council of America

Location: Manhattan (East Village), N.Y, U.S.A.
Architect: Unknown (Re-purposed)
Year: 1976

9

Unbuilt,
On Hold



There are usually several reasons why a project is placed on hold or never built. For example, budget constraints, approvals being stalled or the client changing the course of a project's direction. With mosques, there is an additional amplified constraint, that is, opposition from the wider community, as highlighted by various surveys and studies (Pew, Charles Sturt).

Park51

Visiting NYC allowed for the exploration of the tensions around designing, funding and developing a mosque and how the increasing Muslim population of NYC has looked for alternate forms in which they congregate. The study afforded the opportunity to interview the Architect, Michel Abboud from SOMA, to understand the concept and subsequent reinvention of Park51, a project which was labelled "the Ground Zero Mosque" by those opposed to its construction, due to its proximity to the World Trade Centre (Padalka).

Despite the publicity, the mosque was named the Islamic Cultural Centre, incorporating 23 floors with community functions, modelled on community centres like the YMCA, common in NYC neighbourhoods. The project underwent the usual planning process which involved a public forum that drew opposition and media attention, prior to

the design images of the mosque being released. Abboud reflects that the mere mention of the word Islamic, created a collective mental image of what this building will look like within the context of NYC.

The public planning meeting galvanized those opposed with sentiments such as "This is humiliating that you would build a shrine to the very ideology that inspired the attacks of 9/11!" and that it was atrocious that anyone would even consider allowing them to build a mosque near the World Trade Center" (Ackerman).

Abboud had hoped that the release of images would alleviate the concerns of the public, and following their release, the proposal was collectively accepted, as it became clear that the design was based on a contemporary merging of cultures. There was no dome or minaret attached to the building, but rather a building that was futuristic in form. The parametric façade, merged Abrahamic religious symbols, which included the eight point star, the six point star and a cross, into a lattice like pattern, drawing on the mashrabiya that is common in traditional Islamic architecture.

As a result of the negative publicity, securing funders proved difficult, the project as it was conceived, was ultimately shelved, due to this lack

of funding. The project transformed into a much smaller building, three storeys in height, focusing on Islamic Art with a sanctuary as a prayer space, and open to all.

Over a decade following the events, the head of the Anti-Defamation League, Jonathan Greenblatt, apologised for his role in the opposition to the mosque, 'We can't change the past. But we accept responsibility for our unwise stance on Cordoba House, apologise without caveat and commit to doing our utmost going forward to use our expertise to fight anti-Muslim bias as allies.'

House of One, Berlin

In Berlin, House of One aims to be a multi faith building, with a mosque, a church and a synagogue. The building would be shared by all three Abrahamic faiths, unified under one roof. The building is designed to fit into the context of Berlin, with solid volumes, and a joined up entry space.

The building has been undergoing funding drives for a number of years, and remains unbuilt.

150



151



House of One: Mosque, Church, Synagogue

Location: Berlin, Germany
Architect: Kuehn Malvezzi Architects
Year: Unbuilt

152



Park51

Location: Manhattan, N.Y., U.S.A.
Architect: Michel Abboud
Year: 2010 (unbuilt)

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153



Masjid Bilal Mosque and Islamic Center

Location: Los Angeles., U.S.A.
Architect: Langdon Wilson Architects
Year: Under Construction



154

North Harrow Cultural Centre

Location: London, U.K.
Architect: Magera Yvars Architects
Year: Under Construction



155

Islamic Community Centre & Mosque

Location: Copenhagen, Denmark
Architect: Henning Larsen
Year: Existing building unknown, Renewal Unbuilt



156

157

Venice Biennale Installation, Temporary Mosque

Location: Berlin, Germany
Artist: Nora Akawi & Nourah Al Sayeh, Bahrain Pavilion
Year: 2018

10

Key Findings



Mosques speak to the fabric of a place through the built form, revealing the evolving nature of a community. Often, mosques are located within areas of a city or town, where a portion of the diaspora community has settled, the number of mosques growing as the community grows. Where there is a lack of mosques compared to community numbers, this can reveal the challenges that communities face in building new mosques.

The aim of this research has been to explore how the intersection of architecture and urban design offers an opportunity to not only re-imagine contemporary design approaches to mosques, but to also better understand how these disciplines can foster inclusivity,

Through visiting mosques across countries of the diaspora, and interviewing Architects, the changing architectural language of the mosque has been examined, along with the urban context that shape the mosque and surroundings.

This study revealed how architects have been re-imagining design principles when designing mosques, but also aspirations from within the Muslim community, to create engaging and inclusive spaces that better represent community needs.

In many instances, traditional signifiers of a mosque, such as the dome and the minaret, have been replaced with contemporary interpretations. In others, these elements have been kept as a way to maintain a link to the historical past - but also, familiarity.

A common thread amongst mosques purpose-built this century, is one of 'transparency'. This notion of transparency has been implemented through the physical - that is the architecture - or through immaterial ways, such as the facilitation of open days to the wider public.

This notion of transparency is usually linked to a desire to welcome the wider community into a mosque, particularly where there has the lack of which has contributed to broader community opposition to the mosque.

Prior and during the design stage, a key element to fostering a sense of openness is community consultation. Community consultation with those of the Muslim community, but also community consultation with the broader community. This was revealed to be valuable in conversation with the Architects interviewed.

The cross section of mosques visited, across several countries and continents, represent a point in time for these communities, and these spaces. There is much to be said about the resilience of communities who have experienced opposition to their presence in a place they call home.

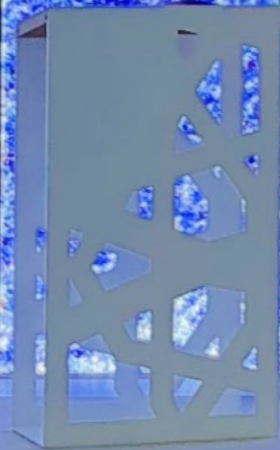
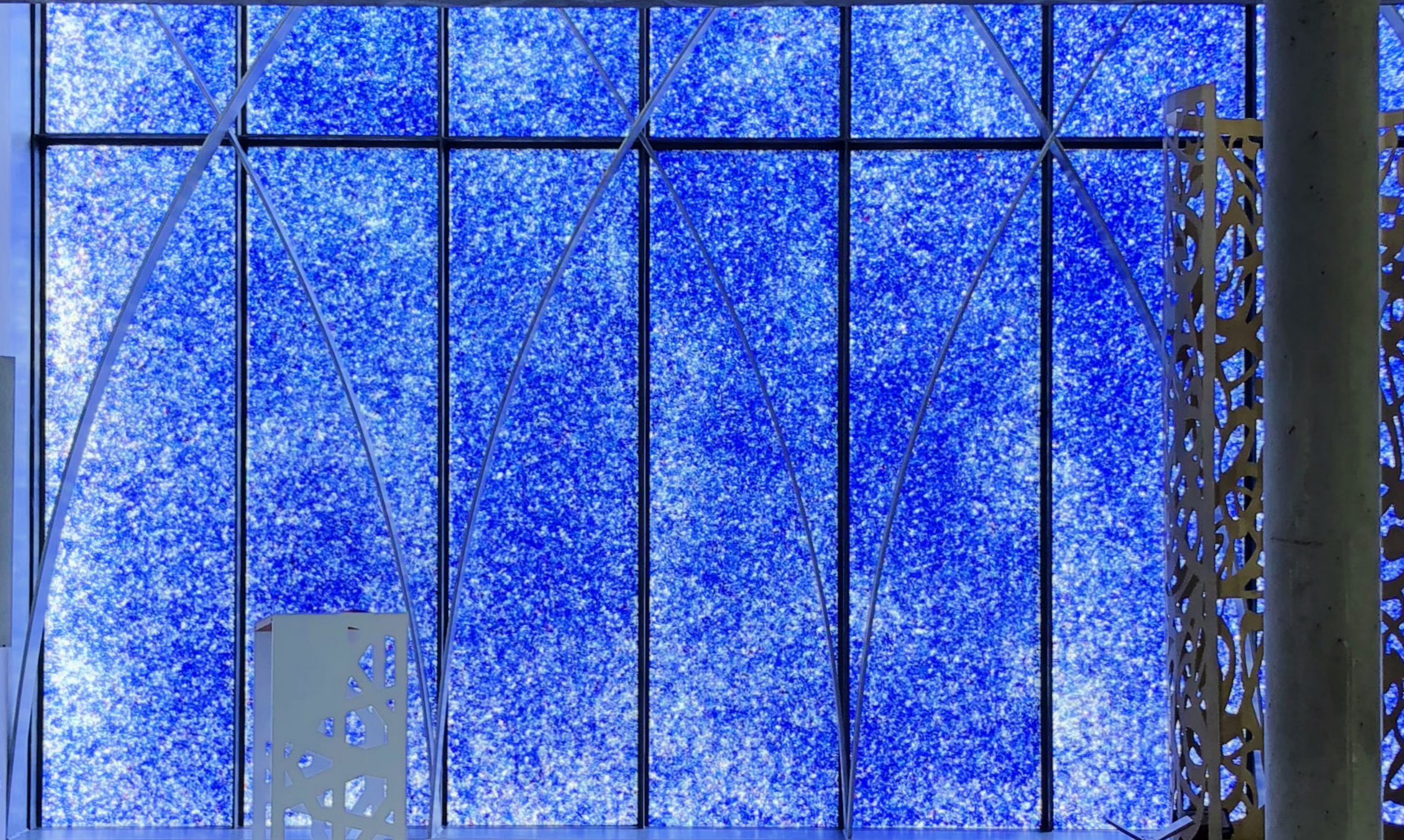
This project has not only looked at the built form's response to a minority, but also, how can the built form facilitate a welcoming environment for those who are on the fringes of a community. Several mosques visited, are explicitly welcoming to the LGBTQIA+ Muslim community, as well as mosques that are led by female Imams.

Part of this project, has been to reveal how contemporary design facilitates a space that is truly inclusive, and how particular groups of people, who historically feel excluded from a traditional space, can start to feel included.

Women have been leading the movement to re-imagine women's spaces within mosques. This movement is growing, and is not limited to a particular city or country, but spans across several. This highlights the importance of 'for us, by us', in creating change, the voices of those affected need to be elevated, heard and change implemented.

11

Inventory of Mosques Visited



The following pages highlight an analysis of the data collected in this study, beginning with a list of the 52 mosques visited, by country.

Australia

Australian Islamic Centre, Newport, Victoria
Punchbowl Mosque, Sydney, NSW

U.S.A

Masjid Bilal Mosque and Islamic Center, L.A.
Islamic Center of Southern California L.A.
Baitush Sharaf Jame Masjid, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Islamic Guidance Center Ahul al Bayt, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Masjid Al-Farooq, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Masjd At-Taqwa ,Brooklyn, N.Y.
Masjid Tawhid, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Al-Abedin Islamic Centre, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Power Street Mosque, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Islamic Council of America, Manhattan, N.Y.
Islamic Cultural Centre of New York, Manhattan N.Y.
Assafa Islamic Centre, Manhattan N.Y.
Park51, (unbuilt) Manhattan N.Y.
Islamic Cultural Centre, Manhattan N.Y.
Masjid Malcom Shabazz, Manhattan N.Y.
Islamic Society of North Americ, Plainfield, Indiana

Canada

Ismaili Centre, Toronto, Ontario
Noor Cultural Centre, Toronto, Ontario

U.K.

Central London Mosque, London, England
Shahporan Mosque, London, England
North Harrow Cultural Centre, London, England
Finsbury Mosque London, England
Ismaili Centre, London, England
Cambridge Central Mosque, Cambridge, England
Alhikmah Mosque, Aberdeen, Scotland
Edinburgh Central Mosque, Edinburgh, Scotland
Glasgow Central Mosque, Glasgow, Scotland

Italy

The Great Mosque of Rome, Rome Islamic
Centre of Venice Venice
Islamic Cultural Centre, Venice
Venice Biennale, (mosque installation), Venice

France

Grand Mosque of Paris, Paris
Institute of Islamic Culture, Paris
Alhashimi Mosque Saint Ouen, Paris
Bondy Mosque, Paris
Grand Centrel Mosque of Strasbourg, Strasbourg

Germany

Cologne Central Mosque, Cologne
Duisburg Cathedral0 Mosque, Duisburg
Social Complex, Gelsenkirchen
Penzberg Mosque, Penzberg
Islamic Centre of Munich Munich
House of One, Berlin
Ibn Rushd-Goethe Mosque, Berlin
Hamburg Central Mosque, Berlin

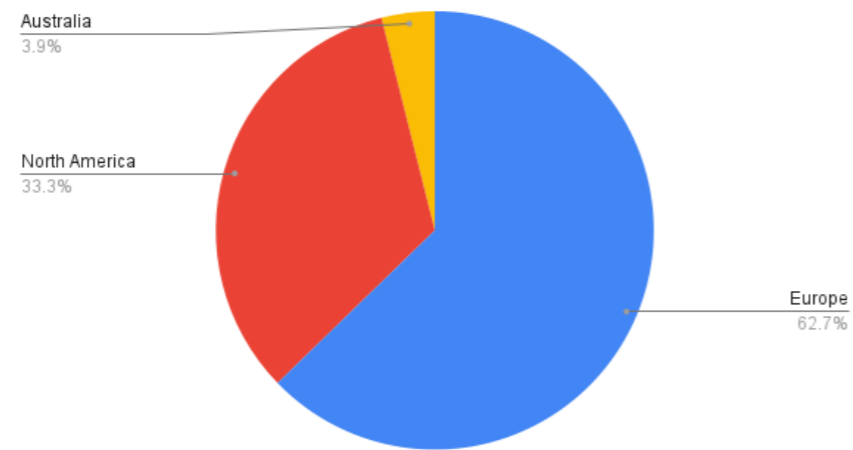
Netherlands

The West Mosque (Westermoskee), Amsterdam
Turkish Cultural Centre, Doetinchem

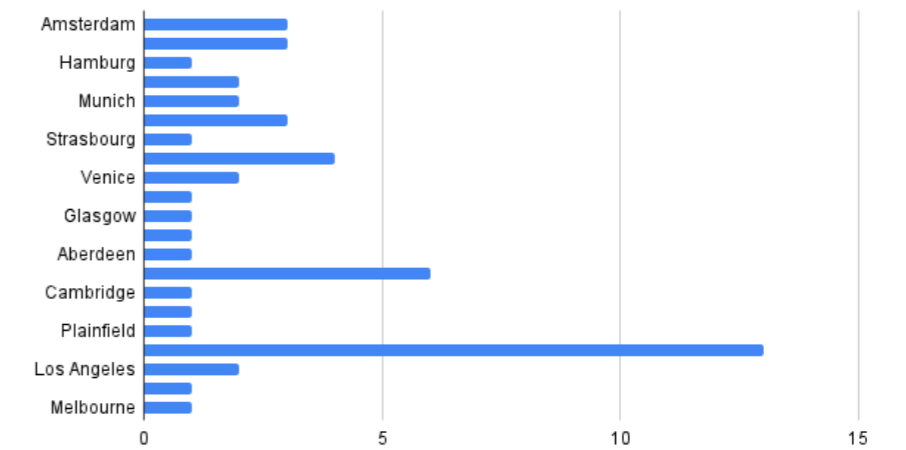
Denmark

The Blue Mosque, Copenhagen
Islamic Community Centre & Mosque, Copenhagen
Mariam mosque Copenhagen
The Imam Ali Mosque, Copenhagen

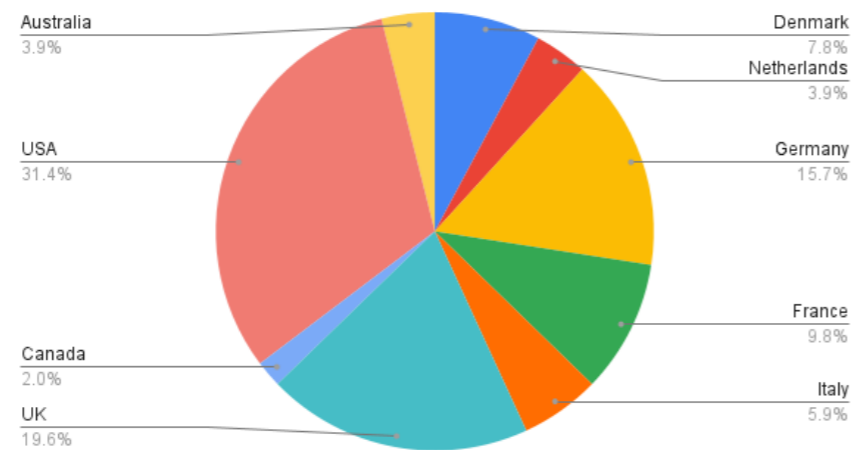
Percentage of mosques visited: By Continent



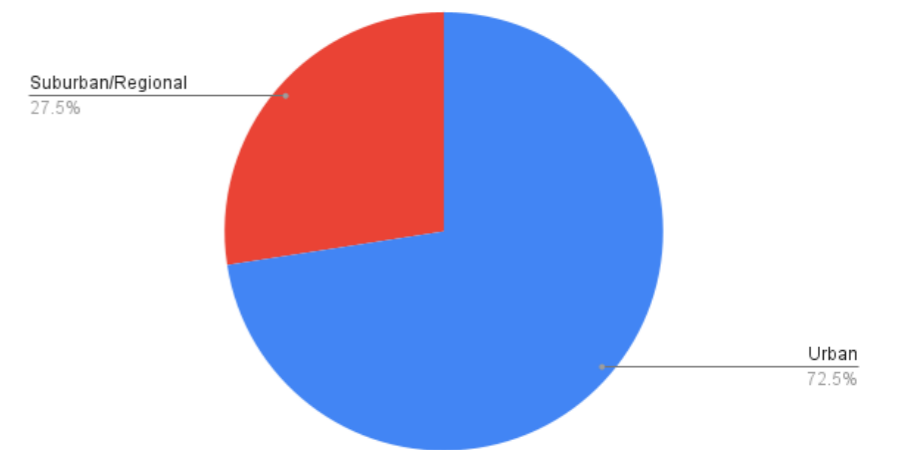
Percentage of mosques visited: By Cities



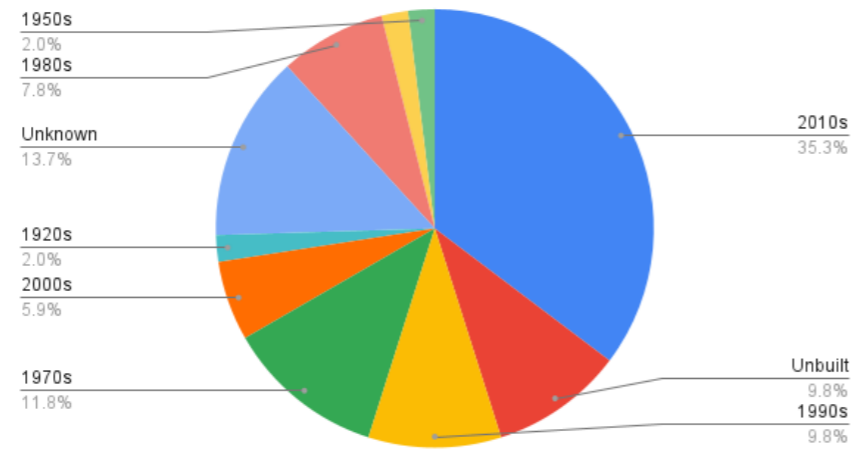
Percentage of mosques visited: By Country



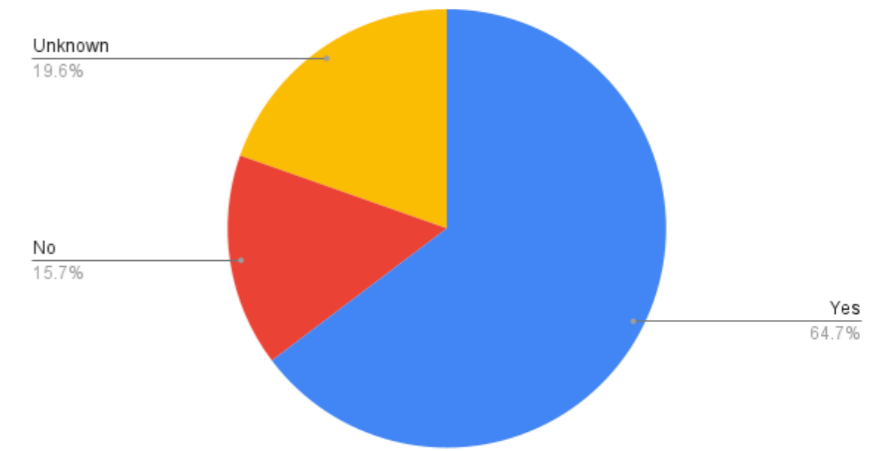
Mosques Visited: Urbanity



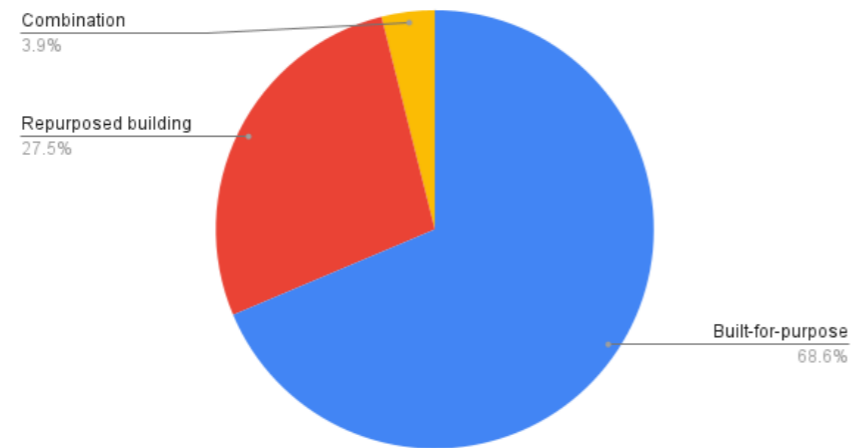
Mosques Visited:
Year Built



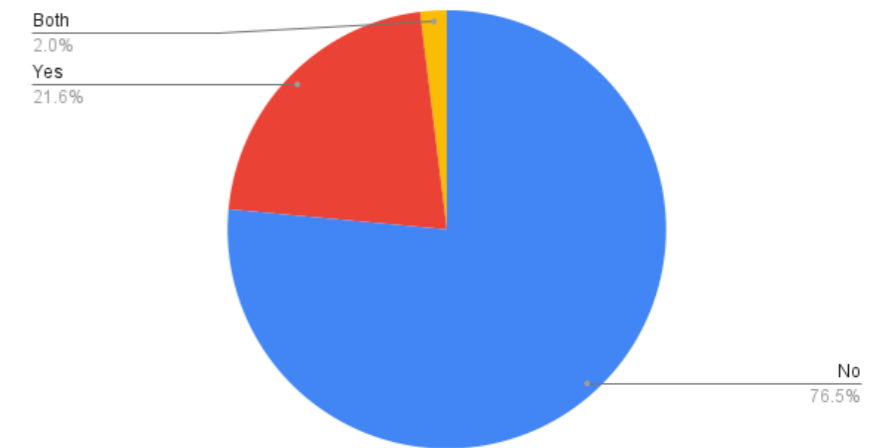
Mosques Visited:
Architect Designed



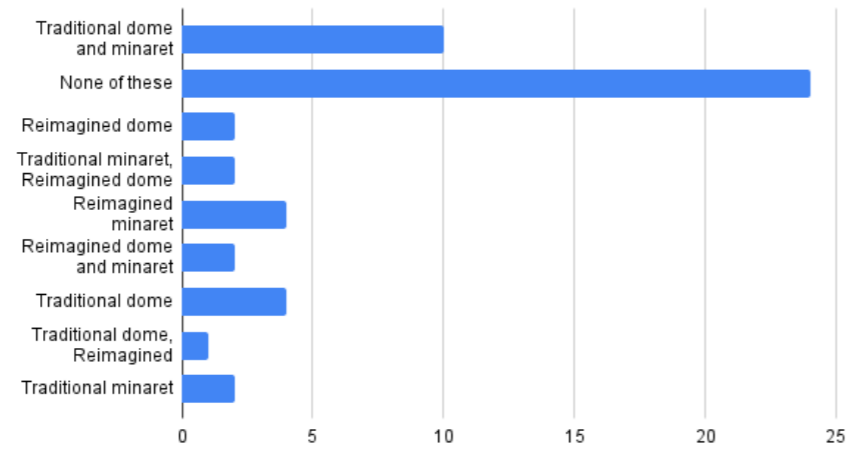
Mosques Visited:
Built-for-Purpose or
Re-purposed



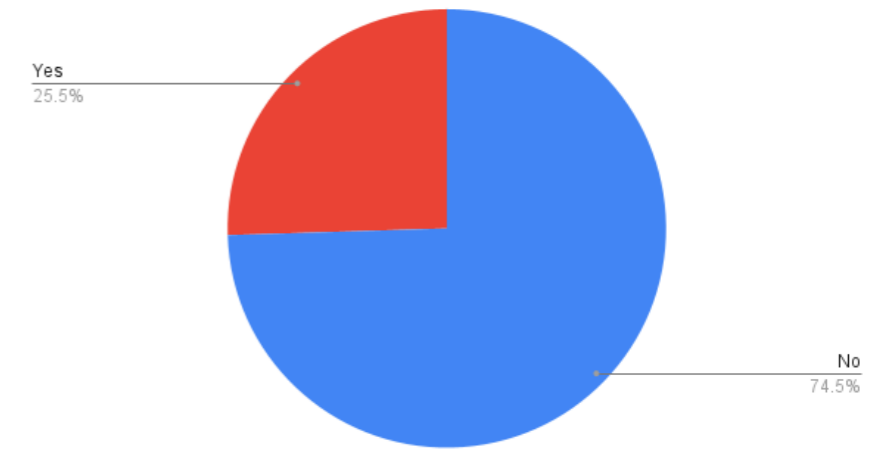
Mosques Visited:
Muslim Architect Involvement



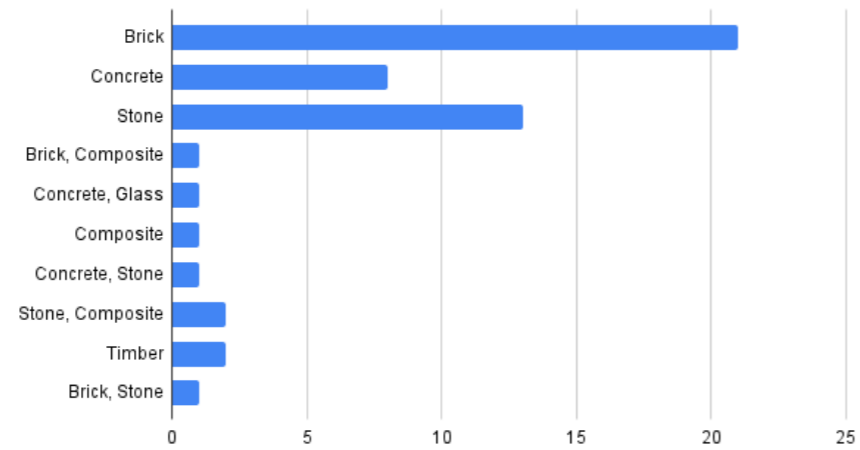
Mosques Visited:
Traditional or Re-imagined



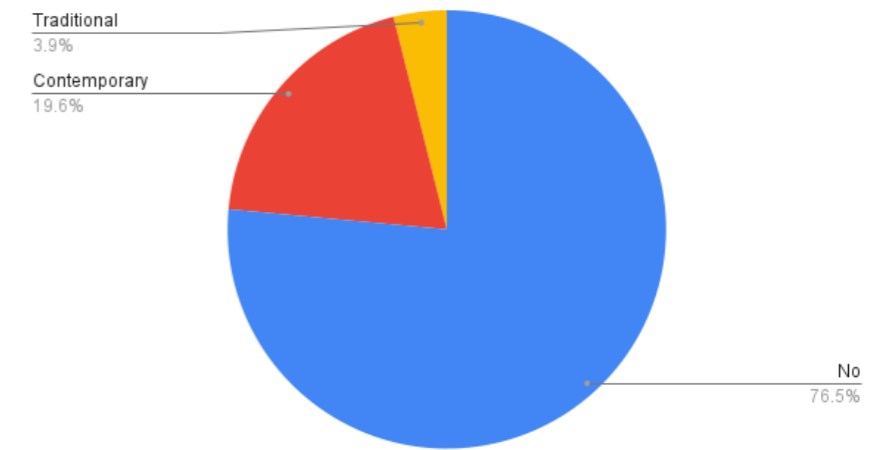
Mosques Visited:
Landscape Component



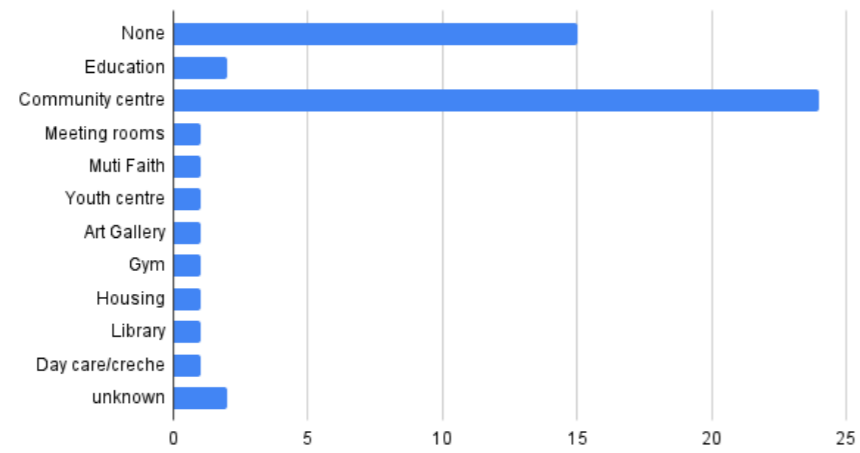
Mosques Visited:
Dominant Building Material



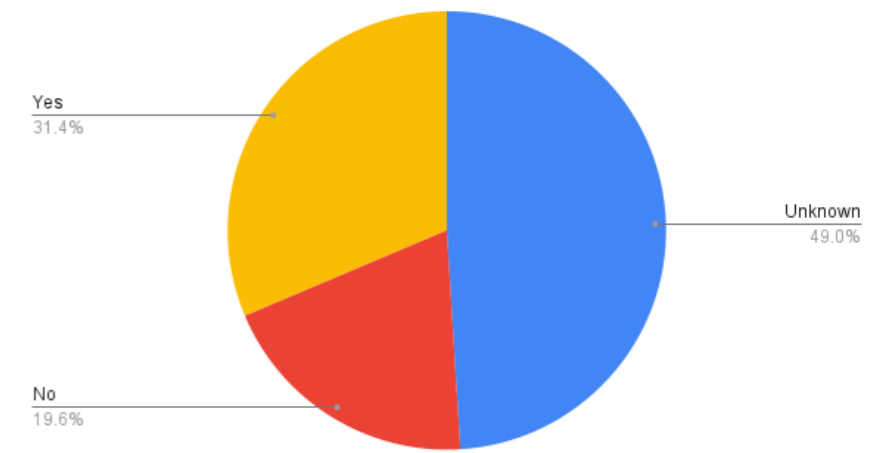
Mosques Visited:
Commissioned Artwork



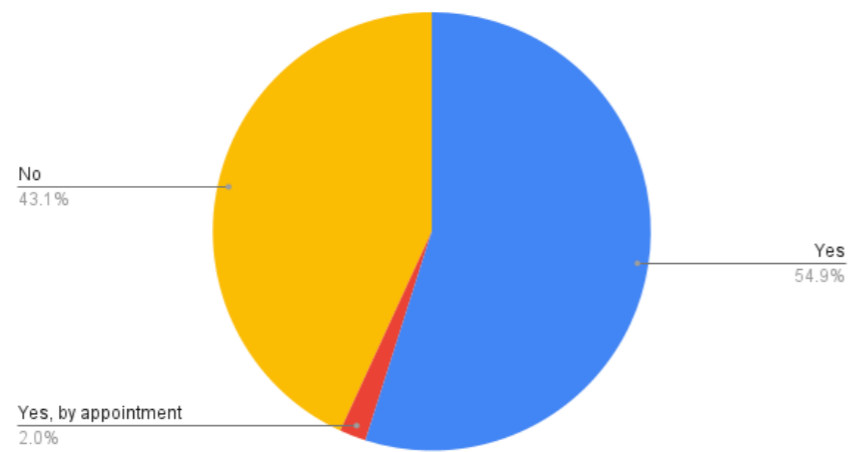
Mosques Visited:
Spaces for Community



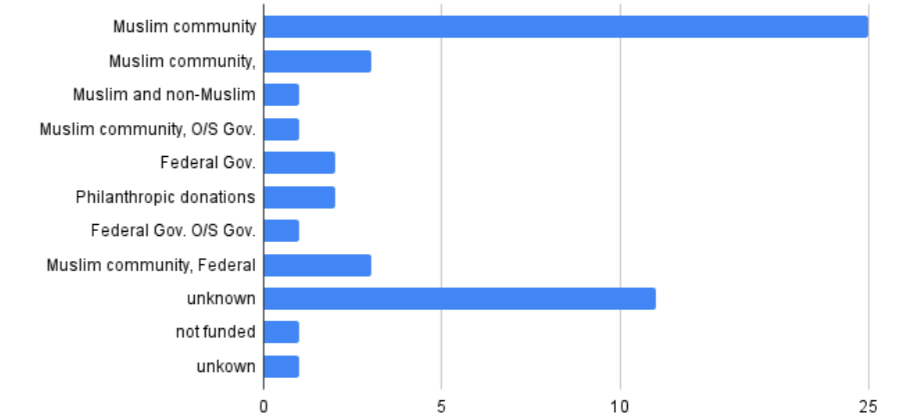
Mosques Visited:
Community Consultation



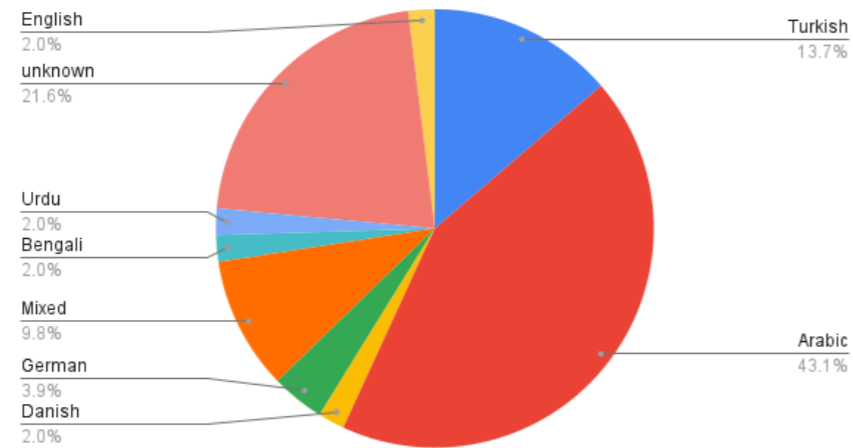
Mosques Visited:
Open days to wider public



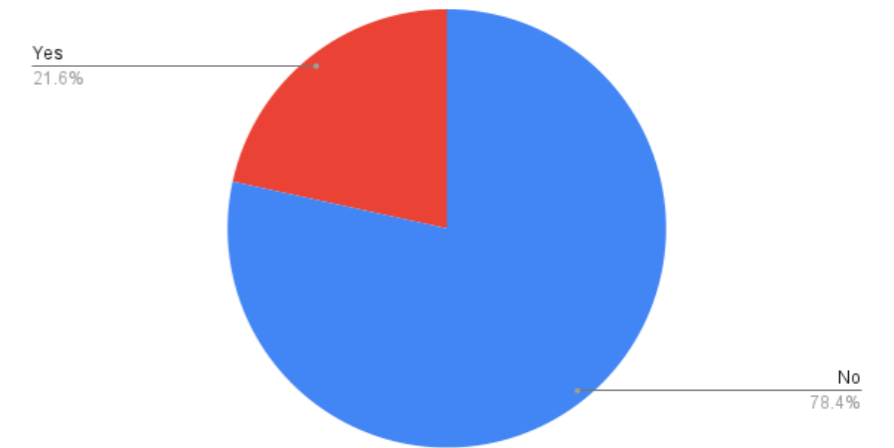
Mosques Visited:
Funding



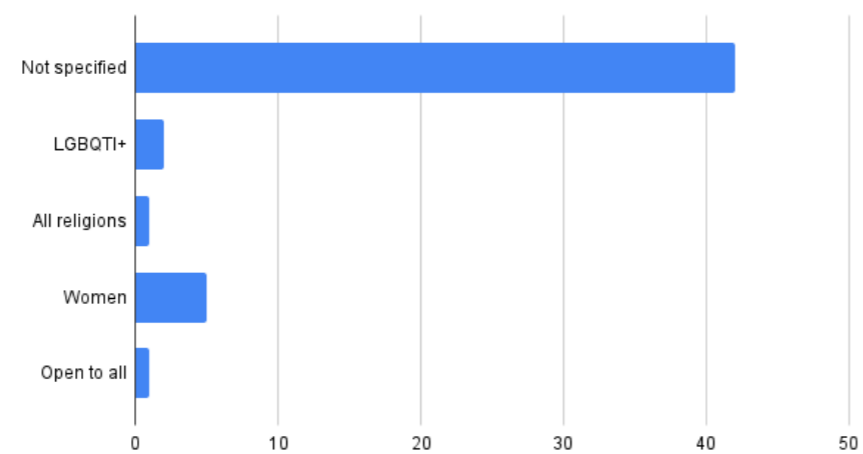
Mosques Visited:
Dominant Community
Language



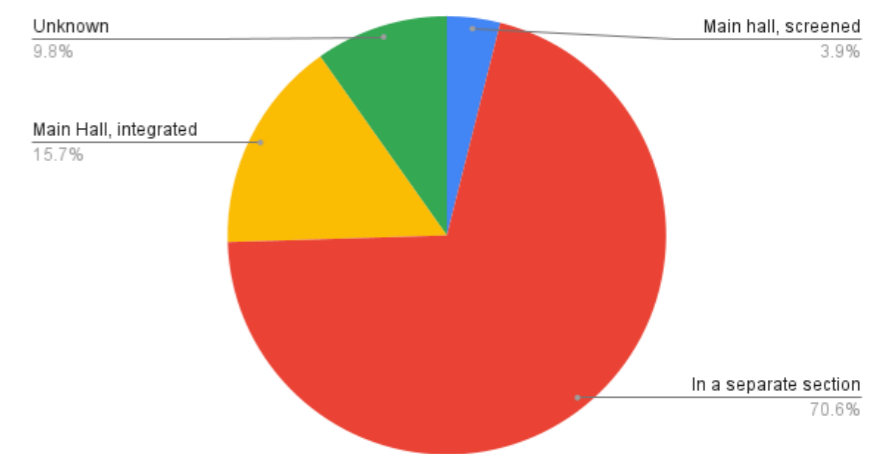
Mosques Visited:
Separate Women's Entrance



Mosques Visited:
Explicitly accessible/
promoted to:



Mosques Visited:
Separate Women's Space



18

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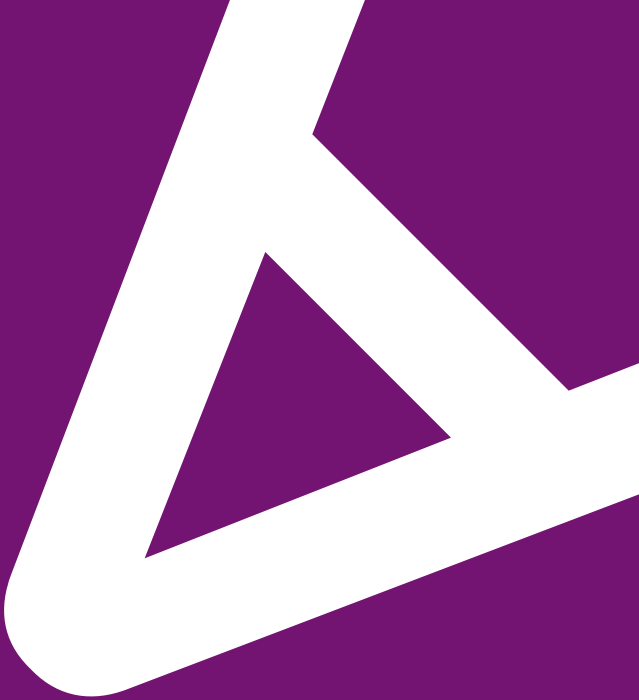


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