

# A TALE OF TWO AHMADIYYA MOSQUES: RELIGION, ETHNIC POLITICS, AND URBAN PLANNING IN LONDON

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**Built on the site of a disused dairy in London, the Ahmadiyya Baitul Futuh Mosque is simultaneously a regenerated postindustrial site, a signal achievement for the community that built it, an affront to local Sunni Muslims, a focus for Islamophobic protest, and a boost to local regeneration plans and tourism. Using town planning documents, media articles, and ethnographic fieldwork, this article considers the conflicting discourses available to locals, Muslim and non-Muslim, centered on the new Baitul Futuh Mosque and an older, smaller, suburban Ahmadiyya mosque located nearby. These discourses are situated in the broader transnational context of sectarian violence and creation of community where ethnicity, faith, and immigration status mark those who attend the mosques. The article considers the different historical periods in which the two mosques were built, the class composition of residents in the neighborhoods of the mosques, and the consequences these have for how the mosques are incorporated into the locality. The strategies diverse local groups use to define the space in different and conflicting terms, and their cross-cutting claims, are discussed to present a range of religious, political, and ethnic positions shaping ideals of self-realization and aspirations for the future at individual and community levels.**

**Keywords:** Urban Regeneration; Sectarian Conflict; Muslim; Ahmadiyya; Class; Ethnicity

In March 2013 a British tabloid newspaper published a color photograph of what the text referred to as a “mega mosque” (Goodhart 2013).<sup>1</sup> The image was taken from a

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<sup>1</sup> “Mega mosque” is a media term used to describe places of worship that can accommodate several thousand worshippers. It is a shorthand term reflecting negative local reactions to planning applications for such buildings. It may also signal the increased confidence of Muslim groups to raise funds to pursue such projects and may, less positively, also be a mark of competition be-

perspective designed to emphasize the building's dominance over the surrounding environment. With its marble-white dome in the center and minaret to the right, the mosque takes up two thirds of the photograph and dwarfs an iconic red London bus in the foreground. The caption read: "New landscape: Merton's mosque, which dominates the skyline of the south London suburb ... can accommodate 10,000 people." The photograph thus juxtaposes stereotypical symbols of Islam, a dome and minaret, with another easily recognizable symbol of the capital city, the red double-decker bus, to make visible the message that the former now looms over the latter, calling into question our assumptions of what London is, should be, and is becoming, and just who is in a position actively to transform the city's landscape into something we are told "is not English any more." The accompanying article further locates this image as a visual referent for what the author describes as the "polite apartheid" threatening social cohesion in the UK as a result of "over-rapid immigration in recent years" (Goodhart 2013). This image, then, is not just about Islam and the religious buildings of diasporic faith communities in the capital city. It is about migrants—elided swiftly in the article with asylum seekers—and a perceived lack of social integration in a Britain that is no longer as white as it once was, even if some of the recent arrivals are, for the record, described as "model immigrants" who work, pay their taxes, and are law abiding. The newspaper article is also about what London, a global city, has become and how those who fashion the city to meet their needs no longer do so solely on the basis of class identities but on ethnic and religious ones which, in some cases, have come to supersede the earlier class-based identities of the industrial city. For, as Jocelyne Cesari states:

While the industrial city brought an end to ethnic and cultural differentiation and gave rise to more universal categories such as the working class, salaried employees, private employees and civil servants, the global city tends to reinforce and preserve ethnic differences.... The development of ethnic business, like all forms of self-employment in the service sector, provides economic opportunities to those who newly enter the great metropolis. Within this new principle of urban organisation, the forms of socioeconomic integration can no longer be understood solely in terms of class. More and more, class tends to be combined with ethnicity. (2005:1016)

And key aspects of many ethnic identities include both a religious and a transnational component, which further serve to challenge the nostalgic vision of a supposed homogenous Christian and white society, such as the one portrayed in the newspaper article discussed above. These identities, however, "are not straightforwardly given, but worked at through language and action, and ... these identities do not just take place, but also make place, [resulting in] a need to understand the way in which inter-ethnic relations may be the emerging outcome of 'everyday' spatial influences" and interactions (Clayton 2009:483). Some of these interactions may

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tween Muslim groups to stake some claim to authority on this basis. See, for example, Hough (2012) who also connects the Muslim group in this case to radicalization and terrorism, and DeHanas and Pieri (2011) who link such developments to national identity, Islamophobia, and governance. The term is also a consequence of sensationalized media attention (Poole 2002; Neal 2003).

even take place thousands of miles away, but their effects can still be felt locally. Further, urban city spaces can be conceived of as dynamic, in process, and as the outcome of competing discourses, practices, and power relations between different ethnic and religious communities, as well as between these and the official bureaucracies that mediate disputes and adjudicate on the built environment.

Some of these processes, discourses, and interactions were made visible in the planning applications and protests against the building of the mosque in the photograph described above, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association's Baitul Futuh<sup>2</sup> Mosque. This mosque, built on the derelict site of a former industrial Express Dairy bottling plant in Merton, a borough on the outskirts of southwest London, is considered to be a postindustrial development success by the local council. It is listed on a council website as a local tourist attraction and is located in one of the less affluent parts of a borough which contains some very upmarket locations as well as several considerably more deprived wards.<sup>3</sup> The mosque provided Merton Council with a virtually cost-free urban regeneration project, as the Ahmadiyya Muslims undertook to raise the funds for the redevelopment of the site themselves, and its location, by a railway track and fronting a large main road, also served to facilitate planning permission, as minority religious buildings in the UK are increasingly denied planning permission on amenity grounds if the chosen sites are not already in built-up areas (brownfield sites) and also on main thoroughfares, served by public transport, or otherwise suitably removed from residential housing.

However, despite the clear regeneration potential at low cost to the Council, the mosque from the very first proposal for its construction has been at the center of many debates, including whether or not it can even be called a mosque. Examining what the building represents for Ahmadiyya Muslims, for other Muslim groups, and for non-Muslims, together with the transformation of the local environment that has resulted from it, allows for complex and nuanced understandings of local manifestations, and refutations, of Islamophobia in the context of wider concerns over mosque building in Europe. It also contributes to the scholarly literature on the ways in which everyday forms of racism are submerged in the language of "amenity" in town planning regulations. In addition, the mosque and the debates surrounding it also make visible how local issues arising from international migration and sectarian in-

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<sup>2</sup> Literally "House of Victories."

<sup>3</sup> Merton Council website (<http://www.merton.gov.uk/leisure/history-heritage/architecture/mordenmosque.htm>) has the following description of the mosque: "Baitul Futuh Mosque. London Road, Morden Surrey, SM4 5PT (to north of Morden South Station). New purpose-built mosque and the largest in Europe, with 15m diameter dome and minarets 36m and 23m high, and accommodating 1,600 worshippers in each of its two prayer halls. The building is a blend of Islamic and modern British architecture and incorporates much of the structure of an old dairy site. The building is a focal point for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. This is an international religious organisation with branches in over 176 countries and a membership of over 200,000,000 people worldwide [this statement is unlikely to be verifiable]. The foundation stone was laid by the spiritual leader, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV in 1999 and the building was inaugurated by Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the Supreme Head of the Ahmadiyya community. Facilities include halls, library, creche, studios. Voted one of top 50 buildings in the world by Spectator magazine."

ter-Muslim conflicts between Sunni Muslims and Ahmadiyya Muslims, stemming from a very particular historical political context in Pakistan, are now played out on the streets and in places of worship in southwest London. More positively, it also allows for the study of intercommunity engagements, local economic regeneration, and the participation of Ahmadiyya Muslims in local, regional, and national level community developments and politics. The latter is particularly clear in relation to the professional middle-class Ahmadis, who are now entering local and national politics and today include a Conservative Party peer in the House of Lords and a local councilor, elected in May 2014, to represent the Labour Party in Merton.<sup>4</sup> However, while some Ahmadis are highly educated and active in many professions, a large number of Ahmadis, including those more recently arrived from the subcontinent and others who have arrived from elsewhere in Europe, in particular from Germany, may well be among the less affluent members of Merton borough, and for these individuals and families search for employment, housing, and schooling for children may present challenges typical of those faced by new immigrants and members of ethnic and religious minorities across Europe. This group of more recent Ahmadi migrants, attracted by the possibility of living near to their spiritual leader and access to the flagship Baitul Futuh Mosque, has sought housing in the neighborhood of the mosque, visibly changing the make-up of the local population in some residential wards. As a community, therefore, the Ahmadis are a complex mixture: British-born Muslims and recent migrants, some of whom may be seeking refugee status; native English-speakers and those for whom German may well be a first language; middle-class professionals and an upwardly aspiring but presently less affluent and less formally well-educated majority. As Muslims in the UK, however, all constitute a minority and many are, in addition, ethnically marked as of South Asian heritage.

The postindustrial urban transformations represented by the Baitul Futuh Mosque can only be fully understood in the context of a longer history of mosque building in London dating back to the late colonial era. This history is briefly set out to contextualize the complex, and not always harmonious, local network of diasporic Muslim faith centers. I then outline the politico-religious history necessary to locate the sources of today's conflicts between the Ahmadi Muslims and Sunni Muslims in colonial India and, more particularly, after partition in Pakistan. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork<sup>5</sup> I show how individuals of South Asian heritage, resident in Lon-

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<sup>4</sup> For Lord Ahmad, a Conservative peer, see <http://www.parliament.uk/biographies/lords/lord-ahmad-of-wimbledon/4210>; and for Imran Uddin, a Labour councilor, see <http://democracy.merton.gov.uk/mgUserInfo.aspx?UID=421>.

<sup>5</sup> Anthropological fieldwork has been ongoing—and intermittent—over several years and includes not only the usual participant observation, attendance at religious events, and partaking in a variety of committee meetings, but also interviews, ethnohistorical archival research in the British Library and National Archives, the Baitul Futuh Mosque, and collections of private individuals, as well as on the official Ahmadi website (<http://www.alislam.org>), and a study of the abundant Ahmadiyya literature and film available online, as well as the anti-Ahmadiyya literature also available online and in print. The number of events attended and interviews conducted run into the hundreds and range from informal discussions to time-limited interviews with preset topics formally agreed to by the interviewee in advance of the interview.

don, have reworked attitudes and practices derived from Pakistan's recent political and religious history to continue the hostilities between Sunni and Ahmadi that have been legitimated and authorized in Pakistani law since the 1970s, albeit in ways restricted and modified by the UK context. This is the politics of faith that pits one South Asian diasporic Muslim group against another in London's suburbs and that requires knowledge of the complexities of subcontinental religious identities and even nation building to make sense of it. Ethnicity here is shared, as is, from the perspective of an outsider at least, faith. From the perspectives of those on the inside, however, faith is most certainly not shared, while histories and migration patterns are often intertwined and in many respects very similar. The article concludes with a discussion of how the conflicts between local Muslim sects have been co-opted by local non-Muslim residents in their attempts to thwart Ahmadi Muslim mosque extension plans and how the local council has been embroiled in this as the authority empowered to adjudicate on planning applications submitted to it. Needless to say, at least some of the issues that arose during the planning and building of the mosque mirror the experiences of other diaspora faith communities when dealing with the planning system, including the inevitable opposition of local residents as they seek to develop existing, or construct new, religious buildings (Nye 2000; Naylor and Ryan 2002, 2003; Gale 2004, 2005; Dunn 2005; McLoughlin 2005; Shah, Dwyer, and Gilbert 2012). Throughout the article, intersections of class, faith, and ethnicity are brought to the fore as always relevant—though in different ways at different times—to understanding the shifting and evolving processes that become significant as individuals and groups seek to find ways to inhabit the postindustrial, suburban residential, and urban landscapes in one part of a major global city.

## A TALE OF TWO MOSQUES

The Baitul Futuh Mosque, opened in 2003, boasts a gym, bookshop, library, television studio, homeopathic clinic, soundproof crèche for children (so that women are not disturbed while praying), and Merton's largest enclosed hall available for hire by community organizations. These and a number of other features certainly make the mosque exceptional among European mosques. Yet what matters most for the present discussion is not the architectural distinctiveness of the building but the historical continuum and discursive network in which its formation need to be understood. Had it not been for the refusal by Wandsworth Council to allow planning permission in the 1990s to expand the London Mosque, which also belongs to the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, in neighboring Southfields, the Merton mosque might not have been needed and the community would not have had to locate a new site on which to accommodate their increasing numbers in the area. The Merton mosque, therefore, represents the success of a town-planning application to regenerate a derelict industrial site on the edge of London as a consequence, in part at least, of the failure to be granted planning permission to extend an already existing Ahmadiyya mosque in a suburban, middle-class residential area in the neighboring inner London Borough of Wandsworth.

These two mosques, the London Mosque in Wandsworth and the Baitul Futuh Mosque in Merton, are only a few kilometers apart and are both examples of minority faith construction in the suburbs, yet their distinct histories mark the dramatic changes that have taken place in London over the last century as it has become a “world capital” by “virtue of [its] sizeable immigrant population” (Cesari 2005:1016). The first of these mosques, and the first purpose-built mosque in London, was the London Mosque, constructed on orchard land, literally therefore a greenfield site, bought by the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in 1920 and officially opened in 1926 (Naylor and Ryan 2002:45).<sup>6</sup> In the 1920s the area around the mosque was not the built-up and populated residential suburban location that it is today, and only a few residential buildings were located in the vicinity. The very existence of a mosque in the UK was so unusual at the time that it was reported in the national press and a news film of the opening was screened around the country (46). As Simon Naylor and James R. Ryan (2002) note, the London Mosque was viewed in explicitly orientalist terms by the British, as self-evidently a mosque and an example of the ornamental and exotic in the suburbs at a time when India was still part of the British Empire, when the Muslim population of Britain<sup>7</sup> was far smaller as a proportion of the population than it is today, and when most Muslims were likely to use private spaces as mosques rather than worship in visible and public religious buildings or, to paraphrase Cesari, when Muslims constituted the private and invisible rather than today’s public and unwanted (2005:1018).

The opening of the mosque attracted not only members of the British social and political elite but also many foreign dignitaries. The mosque was to be inaugurated by Prince Faisal of Saudi Arabia and, had this happened, it would have granted the Ahmadis a much sought-after legitimacy among Muslims. In the event, Prince Faisal did not attend the opening of the mosque and alerted the Ahmadis to this via telegram less than an hour before he was due to arrive (Basit 2012). The initial agree-

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<sup>6</sup> The London Mosque needs to be viewed also in the context of Ahmadiyya mosque building in Germany at this time. Ahmadis supported British rule in India and were British colonial subjects, but the internationalist outlook of their second Khalifa also included Germany and the United States. I was told that the London Mosque was built after plans to build a mosque in Berlin fell through. On Ahmadi mosques in Germany during this period, see also Jonker (2005:1068).

<sup>7</sup> With more than 11 million Muslims living in the major countries of the European Union, making up almost 3 percent of the population, Muslims are the largest religious minority in Western Europe (Cesari 2005:1015). According to Archer (2009:332), “The majority of British Muslims are citizens, and ‘immigrant’ is either not a relevant label for British-born Muslims (46% of Muslims in England and Wales according to the 2001 census) or of secondary importance.” A recent census shows that in St. Helier ward, Merton, where the Baitul Futuh Mosque is located, the black and minority ethnic population rose by 136 percent from 2001 to 2011 and that Pakistan was the second most frequently listed country of birth (at 4 percent of the ward population, and after 65 percent for those born in England). Islam was listed as the third largest faith at 12 percent of all residents after Christianity (54 percent) and no religion (20 percent). Only 23 percent of the population in this ward had degree-level education as compared with 62 percent for Wimbledon Village, which is in the same borough ([http://www.merton.gov.uk/ward\\_profile\\_st\\_helier.pdf](http://www.merton.gov.uk/ward_profile_st_helier.pdf) and [http://www.merton.gov.uk/ward\\_profile\\_village.pdf](http://www.merton.gov.uk/ward_profile_village.pdf)).

ment officially to mark the opening of the mosque and the last minute failure to attend are significant given the later history of the Ahmadiyya Muslims, the persecution they are subject to from Sunni Muslim groups and Muslim nation-states, and the current refusal by the Saudi authorities to permit Ahmadi Muslims to attend hajj as they are now regarded as both non-Muslim and heretic.

The official exclusion of the Ahmadis from the Muslim *ummah*<sup>8</sup> is directly relevant to the present discussion. Both these mosques, the earlier of the two billed as London's *first* purpose-built mosque and the later one as western Europe's *largest* mosque, are clearly, by virtue of their domes and (nonfunctional) minarets, examples of Muslim religious architecture for the local non-Muslim populations. However, some other Muslim groups in the locality and beyond do not consider these buildings to be Muslim places of worship at all, and this perforce connects the two Ahmadiyya mosques to other mosques belonging to different Muslim sects in the area in a sometimes tense and uneasy relationship. It also connects the mosques of southwest London to local and national politics, as well as to the transnational political situation of Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan and other Muslim nation-states. The mosques and the communities they serve may in this respect be conceived of as a network of interrelated sites. It is to some of these matters that I now turn in order to show how religious and political conflicts which began in colonial India and continued in postcolonial Pakistan, together with the global rise of Islamic fundamentalism, have shaped local perceptions and influenced the local practices of Muslim and non-Muslim groups.

## WHEN IS A MOSQUE NOT A MOSQUE?

Books on British mosques and websites listing Muslim places of worship produced by Muslims<sup>9</sup> do not include Ahmadiyya mosques in their resources, nor do any hits come up when "Ahmadiyya" is entered into searches on sites covering Muslim interests, groups, and topics in the UK. And while some British newspapers described Baitul Futuh when it officially opened in 2003 as Western Europe's largest mosque, one, quoting a prominent British Muslim, stated: "they [the Ahmadis] can call their place of worship by any name except for a mosque because that is for Muslims ... they are outside the fold of Islam" (Petre 2003). This invisibility of Ahmadiyya Muslims in some contexts, and the refusal to consider them as Muslim in others, is, to put it very simply, the outcome of hostilities that began in late nineteenth-century India when the Ahmadiyya sect of Islam was founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (Walter 1918; Lavan 1974; Jones 2008:115–119). The Ahmadis themselves described the Ahmadiyya movement in Islam in a document that made up part of their planning application to

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<sup>8</sup> The *ummah* is the global community of Muslims united beyond national, ethnic, and sectarian divides.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the website of the Muslim Council of Britain (<http://www.mcb.org.uk/tag/mosques/>) and *Salatomatic: The Most Comprehensive Guide to Mosques and Islamic Schools* (<http://www.salatomatic.com/sub/United-Kingdom/London/Merton/OwjXfyWubG>), as well as Gailani (2000).



extend the London Mosque and to build new residential accommodation on the site in the early 1990s as follows:

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908) the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement belonged to a noble Muslim family from Qadian (India). He was a pious man and on receiving divine revelations he proclaimed in 1891 that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by the Holy Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, and in the scriptures of other faiths. His claim constitutes the basis of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam. His followers believe that as the advent of Elijah was fulfilled in the person of John the Baptist, the second coming of Christ has been fulfilled, in the spiritual sense, through the advent of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Since the second coming of Christ has been awaited by the Christians and the Muslims alike, the Ahmadiyya Movement provides a common bond between the followers of the two Faiths.<sup>10</sup>

Ghulam Ahmad, born and raised in Qadian in the Punjab, India, declared himself to be a new prophet of Islam and later the promised Messiah sent by Allah to bring the faithful back to the truth of Islam. Current Ahmadi understanding is that Ghulam Ahmad's prophetic message did not bring any new laws or knowledge beyond that of the last Prophet of Islam, the prophet Muhammad. Ghulam Ahmad was a renewer of the faith, not the bearer of a new faith. Ghulam Ahmad's message was accepted by his followers in late nineteenth-century India, and so began the Ahmadi Muslim sect. For the sect's detractors, however, Ghulam Ahmad is a false prophet and a supporter of British imperial rule. Opponents of the Ahmadis use the birthplace of Ghulam Ahmad, Qadian, as a term of insult and describe his followers as Qadiani. The conflict over the status of the Ahmadiyya sect as Muslims in colonial India was a politicized issue, later taken up by national political leaders in Pakistan in the 1970s and 1980s to serve their own ends. In the 1970s the Ahmadis were declared a non-Muslim minority in Pakistan, and the constitution was amended specifically to discriminate against them. In 1984 the Pakistani legislature passed Ordinance XX, popularly known as the Blasphemy Laws, which makes it a criminal offense for Ahmadis, among other things, to claim to be Muslim. They may also be arrested if they use everyday Muslim greetings, as this is considered to insult and cause injury to "real" Muslims, and they may not call their places of worship in Pakistan mosques (Rashid 2011:21). In Pakistan itself, Ahmadi mosques have been vandalized and closed down (Rashid 2011:36; Khan 2003:218, 243n87). Since 1984 the leader of the Ahmadi Muslim community has lived in exile in the UK and is domiciled at the London Mosque in Wandsworth (Rashed 2004).

So when Iqbal Sacranie, then the General Secretary of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), was quoted in 2003 in a British national broadsheet stating that Ahmadis are not really Muslim and therefore their places of worship are not really mosques, his view was one that echoed the official Pakistani government position

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<sup>10</sup> Extract from letter dated January 29, 1993, to borough planner from Tibbalds Colbourne Karski Williams Architects (File no. 92/W/0503, The London Mosque, [...], Wandsworth Borough Planning Office [microfiche]).



and added both a sectarian and a transnational perspective to the local inauguration of a diasporic faith building. As the General Secretary of the Muslim Council of Britain, an organization the British prime minister at the time, Tony Blair, was happy to do business with and consider the voice of acceptable Islam in the UK, Sacranie's views may have appeared as authoritative and mainstream. Yet, as Toby Archer (2009) shows, Sacranie's move into national-level political circles began before the formation of the MCB when he coordinated Muslim protests against Salman Rushdie's 1988 book *The Satanic Verses* and brought "sub-continental politics into Britain, particularly the politics of the Pakistani revivalist Jamaat-e-Islami party (JI), founded by Abul A'la Mawdudi in 1941." Archer further notes that "[m]any others within the group, like Sacranie, sympathized with the Pakistani Islamist tendency ... and Sacranie has made no secret of the influence of Mawdudi on him, having for instance described him as a 'renowned scholar' and an 'inspiration' to the BBC" (2009:335). The Pakistani Jamaat-e-Islami Party led campaigns against the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in Pakistan, which culminated in riots in 1953 in the Punjab, resulted in many deaths and, for a short while, brought the very survival of the country into question (Punjab [Pakistan] and Munir 1954). In 1953 Mawdudi published an anti-Ahmadi text, *The Qadiani Problem*, and later also another text targeting Ahmadi beliefs (*The Finality of Prophethood* [1978]). As Sacranie and the MCB's example shows, it is possible to play out old and distant conflicts of faith through legitimate contemporary political channels in the UK and to use access to those in government to advance one's own causes while impeding those of others. And these causes have their roots in events that began over a hundred years ago in South Asia.

While the influence of the MCB has waned considerably since its formation in 1997 and heyday in the years that followed, the current local situation with the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in southwest London is one where Sacranie continues to hold positions of local significance as trustee and former chair of the management committee of Balham Mosque and the Tooting Islamic Centre.<sup>11</sup> It was while in this position that Sacranie declared in 2007: "I have no problem with Qaderis [sic for Qadianis]. It is their religion they have the right to practice it. But it is offensive to me when they say they are Muslims. They are not Muslims."<sup>12</sup> Both Balham Mosque

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<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Woolf (2005) and *Progress*, October 21, 2009 (<http://www.progressonline.org.uk/2009/10/21/sir-iqbal-sacranie-correction-and-apology/>). The Balham Mosque charity report from March 21, 2013, available via the Charities Commission, lists Sacranie as a trustee, and a joint letter dated March 20, 2014, written in protest to *The Daily Mail* included the typed signature of Sir Iqbal Sacranie, with Balham Mosque and Tooting Islamic Centre as his official organizations. In addition, the Zoominfo online directory lists Sacranie as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Balham Mosque and Tooting Islamic Centre. The Tooting Islamic Centre (established in 1997), although not a postindustrial redevelopment, is based in the former Old Mayfair cinema building and is also evidence of the changing urban landscape as technology and local population changes impact the local environment.

<sup>12</sup> This quote is from a website advertising the event "An evening with Iqbal Sacranie," which also includes a transcript of his talk and Q&A. The meeting seems to have taken place in 2007 as the website (<http://www.shiachat.com/forum/topic/234926576-an-evening-with-sir-iqbal-sacranie/>) has a poster inviting people to attend this event on May 22, 2007, at a venue in London.

and Tooting Islamic Centre are located in southwest London and in proximity to the two Ahmadiyya mosques discussed in this article. Representatives of both the Balham Mosque Sacranie is associated with and the London Mosque run by the Ahmadis meet in the interfaith gatherings organized post 9/11 by Wandsworth Council,<sup>13</sup> and the tensions between them can on occasion flare up and become matters that local council officials have to mediate (Balzani 2014:116).

## THE POLITICS OF FAITH

Mosques are both religious and social centers for the communities that use them, encouraging worshippers to gravitate towards them and thus changing the local population and landscape as they move into the neighborhoods surrounding the mosques, set up local businesses, and begin to shape the environment in new ways. In part, the public demonstration by Sunni Muslims of anti-Ahmadi sentiment in southwest London, which I came across during fieldwork and some of which I describe below, was a consequence of the success of local Ahmadis in redeveloping the postindustrial site of a disused dairy into a large and active mosque and of the resulting inflow of Ahmadis to the area so that they now form a visible local minority. It is also, in part, the consequence of the greater visibility of Ahmadis in public life at both the local and national levels in politics, a visibility that is evidence of growing middle-class aspirations within the Ahmadi community. Had the Ahmadis not become such a significant local population centered on the Baitul Futuh Mosque and had their numbers in some electoral wards not been so great, the level of sustained hostility towards them might not have been so visible and their success in elections might not have been so readily achievable. But changes in local demographics and the presence of Ahmadis in public life were not the only causes of hostility directed against the Ahmadis.

Conflicts rooted in the politico-religious history and contemporary politics of the subcontinent have also been played out in southwest London, where the local Muslim population, both Sunni and Ahmadi, goes about their everyday lives. This happened very publicly during the 2010 national election campaign in Tooting in the Borough of Wandsworth and is illustrative of how Pakistani politics may directly impact UK Muslim communities and thus also influence British national elections.<sup>14</sup> On March 29, 2010, the Tooting Islamic Centre invited a speaker from the London branch of Khatme Nabuwaat, a term meaning “the finality of prophethood,” to give a talk. Khatme Nabuwaat is an organization that exists solely to bring about the end of Ahmadiyya Islam. It was established in Pakistan as a group with links to an earlier political party, the Majlis-e-Ahrar, which also had as one primary ratio-

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<sup>13</sup> See the description of the multifaith group on the Wandsworth Council’s website ([http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/info/200041/equality\\_and\\_diversity/60/faith\\_group](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/info/200041/equality_and_diversity/60/faith_group)).

<sup>14</sup> These forms of everyday violence continue today as my recent fieldwork has discovered, with cases of primary-school-age Ahmadi children bullied by Sunni Muslim children or even thrown out of people’s homes when they are found to be Ahmadi (Oates 2010a; see also Balzani 2014:120; personal communication, Mr. G., July 18, 2014, in Merton).

nale for its existence opposition to the Ahmadis and today is linked with the persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan (Kennedy 1989:93ff). It is also listed on the Muslim Council of Britain's website as an affiliated organization.<sup>15</sup> The situation in Pakistan today is that:

According to Pakistan's Human Rights Commission, Ahmadis face the worst treatment of anyone in Pakistan. The media there are often virulently anti-Ahmadi, broadcasting phrases such as, "Ahmadis deserve to die." In particular, the Khatme Nabuwat movement carries out regular activities to oppose Ahmadi Muslims. It calls for the banning of Ahmadiyyat and for the killing of Ahmadis. It incites attacks against Ahmadis in speech and broadcast, and is credited with introducing the widely used phrase, "wajibul qatl" which means "those who deserve to be killed."<sup>16</sup>

From local and national newspaper and television reports, pro- and anti-Ahmadi websites, interviews with local council officials and members of the Ahmadi community, and debates held in the British parliament, it appears that the March 29, 2010, talk at Tooting Islamic Centre was at the root of the anti-Ahmadi leaflets (with titles such as "Deception of the Qadiani") that were soon found on shop windows and reportedly also distributed on the streets in Tooting and other local areas. The leaflets urged Muslims to boycott Ahmadi businesses and to avoid interacting with Ahmadis. The local Wandsworth press reported that the Khatme Nabuwat speaker had said:

I don't know why our sisters or mothers are talking with these Qadiani and making friendships ... I know in this road, Tooting high street, all of the shops who are selling to Qadiani.

Don't make friends with them ... they are trying to deceive you, they are trying to convert you from Islam to Qadianism. (Oates 2010d)

In 2010 some Ahmadi women told me that they had been refused service in local restaurants, and an Ahmadi butcher who was sacked by his employer for not converting to Islam went on to win a case for unfair dismissal at an industrial tribunal (Oates 2010d). Other Ahmadi shops saw their businesses decline as people stopped coming to them. The political candidates running in the national elections at the time were also caught up in the local anti-Ahmadi events. Local Muslim leaders told people not to vote for the Liberal Democrat Party candidate because he was an Ahmadi. And on April 14, 2010, a non-Ahmadi candidate campaigning for the Conservative Party was mistaken for the Ahmadi candidate and had to be locked into a room at the Tooting Islamic Centre for his own safety when an angry anti-Ahmadi crowd gathered there. That same evening the Ahmadi candidate was called and asked not to go to the election meeting he was sched-

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.mcb.org.uk/about-mcb/affiliates/>.

<sup>16</sup> 516 Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 6th series, 2010, 286WH.

uled to attend at the Tooting Islamic Centre because it was not safe for him to be there (Oates 2010c).

These events, unsurprisingly, were reported to the local police, and under the supervision of the borough commander, the most senior police officer in Wandsworth, the speech given at the Tooting Islamic Centre by the Khatme Nabuwat speaker, Abdul Rehman Bawa, was translated from Urdu to English to determine if there was sufficient evidence for a prosecution. While the speech was considered clearly unpleasant, it was eventually decided that while it had come close to inciting violence, it had not actually done so explicitly enough to guarantee a reasonable likelihood of conviction under the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006.<sup>17</sup> Therefore the police, after Crown Prosecution Service review, decided not to take the matter any further. But they did, I have been reliably informed, make clear to the Tooting Islamic Centre that they would be keeping a close eye on what happened there in future.<sup>18</sup> In the months that followed, attempts to mediate and reach some acceptable understanding, if only a local one between the Ahmadiis and Tooting Islamic Centre, failed to reach a positive outcome. The MP for Tooting and shadow Justice Secretary, Sadiq Khan, organized a meeting at Wandsworth Town Hall on Monday, December 13, 2010, to discuss the Ahmadiis' concerns: "It was attended by Mr Khan, Wandsworth police Borough Commander David Musker, Wandsworth Council Leader Edward Lister, four representatives from the TIC [Tooting Islamic Centre] and nine representatives from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association (AMA)" (Oates 2010b). According to Omar Oates reporting in a local newspaper ten days later, a "joint statement was due to be issued ... on behalf of the TIC and the AMA, but so far no statement has been agreed and no further meetings have been planned" (Oates 2010b). As far as I am aware, no statement has in fact ever been issued.

In 2010 the first Westminster Hall debate on the Ahmadi issue was held in the UK (on October 20), and it was also the year that an all-party parliamentary group for the Ahmadiyya community was established.<sup>19</sup> And it was the year in which, in Lahore Pakistan, on May 28, two mosques were attacked by members of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan during the Friday prayers and where over 90 Ahmadi men and boys were

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<sup>17</sup> For details of the Act see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-racial-and-religious-hatred-act-2006>.

<sup>18</sup> Personal communication with Wandsworth Council employees who wish to remain anonymous. See also the statement by Sadiq Khan in December 2010: "The police complete a report to send to the CPS [Crown Prosecution Service] who will decide whether or not to prosecute. There's two criteria with the CPS. One, does it satisfy the evidential burden of more than 50 per cent chance of a successful prosecution? Two, is it in the public interest to prosecute. They have said it doesn't, so they're not going to prosecute.... To be fair, the police's hands are tied. They've done the investigation, and it's for the CPS to decide. The Borough Commander has invested a considerable number of police officers to look into the allegation, including having documents translated from Urdu into English" (quoted in Oates 2010a).

<sup>19</sup> 516 Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 6th series, 2010, 284WH–304WH. This debate can be watched at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/democracylive/hi/house\\_of\\_commons/newsid\\_9115000/9115687.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/democracylive/hi/house_of_commons/newsid_9115000/9115687.stm).

killed (Nijhawan 2010).<sup>20</sup> As Michael Nijhawan (2010:430) put it: “Among recent attacks targeting other religious minorities ... this was ... the most spectacular and lethal assault in a post-Partition history of social and political mobilizations against Ahmadis in Pakistan.” It was in the aftermath of this attack that, as Jane Ellison, the Conservative MP for Battersea, noted:

The Ahmadi Muslim community in the UK has noticed ... [a] disturbing trend in the months since the Lahore massacres ... the persecution of Ahmadis has intensified in tone and frequency around our country, particularly in south-west London. There have been the incidents ... of intimidation during the general election [though this was before the Lahore killings], and posters and leaflets with aggressive and derogatory messages have appeared around the area. I have been shown images of posters put up in Scotland that denounce Ahmadis as infidels and publish their place of worship. That leaves those observing the poster to read between the lines.<sup>21</sup>

## VICTIMS OF TERRORISM? NOT IN MY BACK YARD

One unexpected consequence of the anti-Ahmadi hostilities in southwest London that became a matter of urban planning concern is that the acts of a small minority of extremist Muslims, prepared to use violence in Pakistan and to stir up hostility towards the Ahmadis in the UK, were strategically commandeered by non-Muslims in their attempts to foil planning permission for the building extension of the Ahmadi mosque in Southfields. I turn now to this connection between mosques, town planning, and the discourse of fundamentalism and terrorism as used by local non-Muslim residents. This account is prefaced by a short discussion of some of the more typical forms of anti-mosque protests played out across the UK and Europe (e.g., Allievi 2009; Göle 2011). In many places, what appear to be anti-mosque protests are more than manifestations of simple anti-Muslim prejudice; they are often complex articulations of concerns about control of public space, social justice, and changes in communal life. Such concerns may coalesce around plans by minority faith and ethnic groups to build places of worship because these buildings make public a minority's long-term goals in material form, require acceptance of a change in the urban built environment, and compel local people to generate new discourses to accommodate changed realities (Astor 2012).

When the Merton mosque was in the planning stages and as it was under construction from the late 1990s to its opening in 2003, the expected local response included residents writing to the Council to protest against the proposed mosque on

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<sup>20</sup> During the Westminster Hall debate, the attacks are described as follows: “The multiple suicide attacks by the Punjabi Taliban took place slowly, with terrorists methodically throwing hand-grenades among their hostages and climbing the minarets to fire at them from above. When the attackers started to run out of ammunition, they began detonating their explosive vests. Although the police came, they arrived late—even after the media arrived—and the only attackers who were caught were captured by unarmed Ahmadis” (516 Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 6th series, 2010, 286WH).

<sup>21</sup> 516 Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 6th series, 2010, 293WH.

the grounds that local amenities would be negatively impacted by the development. Some suggested that the derelict Dairy Express plant be turned not into a mosque but into a residential home for the elderly instead. Others feared violence between Muslims and non-Muslims in the area and a local rise in Muslim fundamentalism. The British National Party (BNP), a right-wing and anti-immigrant organization, went so far as to stage a protest outside the Merton mosque site on November 17, 2002.<sup>22</sup> The ultranationalists who organized it argued that all mosques in the UK should be closed down to prevent “terrorism by Islamic extremists worldwide”<sup>23</sup> and were either ignorant of, or did not care about, the fact that the Ahmadis are themselves the victims and not the perpetrators of such violence. The demonstration, however, failed to attract many people and the organizers were left to claim, somewhat unconvincingly, that although numbers at the protest itself were small, they had the support of many of the motorists driving past. Some of the residents I have spoken with recall posters opposed to the mosque on walls and lampposts and even in the windows of private houses at this time. And one person remembered thinking that a mosque on the derelict site would mean no partying, no drinking, and no late-night music, all of which made her consider that it might not be such a bad idea after all and certainly better than turning the site into a nightclub or rehabilitation center for drug addicts—also suggestions put forward at the time for the redevelopment of the disused dairy. This same interviewee, however, did say that many people thought the neighborhood would be fundamentally altered because of the mosque as the white population left and was replaced by South Asian Muslims. She considers that this has indeed happened over the last ten years and now believes some local schools cater mainly to children who are not only of South Asian Muslim heritage but, more specifically, are Ahmadi Muslims.

While some residents and right-wing political groups use acts of violence by a minority as justification for their protests and Islamophobic attitudes, assuming that all Muslims are the same, others in southwest London used the same acts of violence in a more focused and distinctly targeted fashion to argue not that Ahmadi Muslim mosques are the source of such violence and radicalization, but that they might attract such violence to the neighborhood. In short, as potential victims of violence, Ahmadi Muslims should not be permitted to expand or build, as this puts “innocent” non-Ahmadis at risk of being caught up in sectarian Muslim-on-Muslim violence in an otherwise quiet and peaceful suburb. The approach taken by local residents op-

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<sup>22</sup> The BNP website (<https://www.bnp.org.uk/policies/immigration>) cites the following rationale for BNP anti-immigrant policies: “Given current demographic trends, we, the indigenous British people, will become an ethnic minority in our own country well within sixty years—and most likely sooner.... Immigration is out of control. Britain’s population is now over 60 million and rising, solely due to immigration. Not only is Britain increasingly overcrowded, but the fact is that a country is the product of its people and if you change the people you inevitably change the nature of the country. We want Britain to remain—or return to—the way it has traditionally been.”

<sup>23</sup> From the now defunct website of the National Front (NF) ([http://www.nfse.co.uk/bermondsey\\_site/frame1.htm](http://www.nfse.co.uk/bermondsey_site/frame1.htm)). For a similar BNP protest, this time against a Dawoodi Bohra Mosque in London, see Crinson (2002:94). For a recent protest against an Ahmadi mosque, see Massey (2014).

posed to mosque extension in southwest London did not, therefore, follow the more routine and familiar local resident concerns that the Ahmadiyya mosques, simply because they are mosques, would be institutions fomenting radicalization (Langer 2010; Shah et al. 2012).

This line of thought and this strategic form of opposition to mosque development are certainly more sophisticated and clearly more informed by the knowledge of actual local and international Muslim factions and sects than many superficially similar anti-mosque protests. That such a strategy has been employed is clear from both interviews and a study of Wandsworth planning records for the London Mosque in Southfields, and it is one that has worked, but only up to a point. It is a strategy that has been organized and led by mainly white, non-Muslim, middle-aged, and often retired middle-class professionals who live in the streets that surround the mosque where a terraced family home now costs in the region of 1 million British pounds and a semidetached house in a neighboring street sold for just under 3 million pounds in February 2014.<sup>24</sup> It is clear, for example, from the many letters sent to Wandsworth Borough Planning Office over a period of years that pro forma letters have been designed and circulated for those who wish to protest but are less able to draft their own complaints. This accounts not only for the lack of explicit racist and Islamophobic statements in letters to the Council about the mosque development plans, which are more readily heard when speaking directly with local residents, but also for the persistence and organization of the protests over many years. One home I visited near the mosque had what amounted to an anti-mosque development coordination office in the front reception room of the house. Minutes of resident opposition group meetings, plans, letters, strategies, clippings from newspapers, official documents, and more were systematically organized and stored in a series of box files. And Wandsworth Council's own planning records have archived this opposition movement over the years. In the early 1990s planning applications to extend the London Mosque and build residential accommodation for the imam of the mosque were refused. Among the reasons cited for the rejection of the planning applications were "the changes which have occurred since the Imam arrived" and "the changes which appear to have occurred in the nature of the activity [at the mosque]."<sup>25</sup> Part of the mosque's problem was that from the time it was built in the 1920s to the application for expansion in the 1990s the area had become a predominantly middle-class residential area, and the borough plan recognized "the importance of protecting and enhancing the environment seeking to control the nature and scale of non-residential development in predominantly residential areas so as to minimise noise, traffic and other intrusion. Non-residential uses will only be permitted if compatible with a residential environment, of a limited scale and of benefit to the local neighbourhood."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.zoopla.co.uk/property/17-melrose-road/london/sw18-1nd/23371256>. The rental value of this four-bedroom house in 2014 is estimated at £8,427 per calendar month.

<sup>25</sup> File no. 92/W/0503, The London Mosque, [...], Wandsworth Council Planning Office (microfiche).

<sup>26</sup> File no. 92/W/0503, The London Mosque, [...], Wandsworth Council Planning Office (microfiche).



In other words, the borough planner had resorted to an argument based on the “subjective problematic of amenity” to refuse planning permission (Naylor and Ryan 2002:52). Another reason given for the refusal of the planning application was that the Khalifa, the spiritual leader of the Ahmadis, had only relocated to southwest London in 1984 when it became impossible for him to continue to live in safety in Pakistan. Local residents, but not the Council, dated the increase in numbers attending the London Mosque from this time and considered that the arrival of the Khalifa was responsible. In the early 1990s the borough planner’s take on this, as the Council’s Assessment of the Appeal Proposal (point 5.1) explaining why planning permission had not been granted makes clear, was that “the Council is concerned that the scale of the building proposed has arisen from the world leader locating at the premises. This may not be a permanent arrangement and the Council and neighbours are concerned that a permanent solution to a temporary problem is proposed.”<sup>27</sup>

However, noting resident concerns that this local religious building was no longer just for local use, the Council also stated (point 5.5):

Whilst the general level of worship and demand upon the site has increased over the years, there does not appear to have been a marked change since the world leader has made [the mosque] effectively the world headquarters of the organisation. There has been an intensification of activity. Neighbours have expressed concern about this and that the emphasis of the site has shifted with the site attracting a world-wide audience rather than a local congregation and that the on site activity has altered with greater emphasis on other activities associated with international organisational matters rather than local religious/community activity.

This change in use, if substantiated, it was further suggested, might even amount to “a material change of use” (point 5.9) with potentially significant consequences for the mosque itself, if fresh permission had to be sought for the activities now taking place on the site.

The Ahmadis themselves made the case to the borough planner that the imam had no choice but to live at the mosque for security reasons and confirmed that “[the] present Imam is also the head of the international Ahmadiyya community.”<sup>28</sup> This situation was one that local residents themselves took up in the consultation on the mosque expansion to argue that the quiet and pleasant residential setting of the mosque made the location “unsuitable as world headquarters of an international movement,” and they objected to what they considered to be the “fortress-like arrangements with sentries,” arguing, contra to the Ahmadis, that they did not consider there was “a ‘security risk’ to the leader of the community [and] therefore no

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<sup>27</sup> File no. 92/W/0503, The London Mosque, [...] Wandsworth Council Planning Office (microfiche).

<sup>28</sup> Paper 8925 Wandsworth Borough Council Planning Committee—15 February 1993 Report of the Borough Planner on a planning application in respect of development at the London Mosque, [...] Road, SW18 (East Putney), p. 2.

need for the world leader to be housed on site." Yet, one well informed local resident who wrote to oppose the expansion plan included in his 1992 letter a copy of an earlier letter he had sent in 1991 about a prior planning application in which he had written:

... In 1924 when the mosque was first erected the Ahmadiyya movement was a relatively minor sect within the Islamic faith. It has since grown very considerably in size and importance, and its development in the UK has been helped by the considerable number of immigrants following its teachings. The presence of the Head of the Community since 1984 has led to increase in importance of the site and of the number of visitors who come to see him, as acknowledged in the Authorities letter to you.

It is unfortunate that the permission was given in 1969 for the creation of the ugly office/residential/hall block which conflicts with the residential nature of the neighbourhood. It is inevitable that the growth in size of the movement has led to further approaches for additional office/residential accommodation. This is firmly opposed by the local residential community. There is no reason why the administrative/organisational side of activities should be on the same site as the mosque: it is a convenience which is obtained at the expense of the neighbours. I urge that the Council press the movement to take all organisation and administrative matters away from the mosque site which be left solely as a place of worship.

The application cites the wish to provide more appropriate living conditions for the Head of the community and his family. His presence at ... Road is a matter of considerable concern to local residents. As the position is understood, his life is under threat and he has bodyguards with him all the time. In addition there are security guards at the premises. I should like to know specifically what weapons the bodyguards and security guards carry and whether it has been agreed by the Council and the Wandsworth Police. I am sure you can appreciate the concern of surrounding residents on this issue.

Meetings held in the past have not been fruitful; they have degenerated into accusations of racial prejudice, religious feeling, etc. all untrue.<sup>29</sup>

This letter was part of the organized and systematic opposition to further extension or development of the London Mosque in Wandsworth in the early 1990s. It is particularly interesting because it demonstrates just how much knowledge of Ahmadi Muslims local residents have, and it notes the threat of violence *against* the Ahmadi Khalifa, which local residents were already aware of and used strategically, but at this point not very directly, to make their case against the Ahmadi mosque extension planning proposal. The letter also demonstrates an awareness of the anti-Muslim sentiment, racism, and interethnic tensions discussed in my interviews but to which the official planning documents contain very little explicit reference.

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<sup>29</sup> This letter was dated November 28, 1992, and included a copy of a letter sent to Wandsworth Council dated July 9, 1991. File no. 92/W/0503, The London Mosque, [...] Wandsworth Council Planning Office (microfiche).

More recently, in 2010, the Ahmadis again applied for planning permission to develop the London Mosque. While a Wandsworth Council committee recommended approval of the new application, councilors voted against it, once again on the grounds of amenity.<sup>30</sup> However, by 2013 planning approval, with some restrictions, had been granted by the Council and a modified redevelopment of the mosque site agreed. This 2013 planning agreement was not what the local residents, who by this time were also writing openly to state their fears of terrorist acts in the suburban streets of Wandsworth, wanted. The concerns of the residents were summarized by the Council in their committee minutes as: "Security measures heavy handed and obtrusive, increase in security not acceptable. Chances of terrorist attack would increase, should disclose security risks."<sup>31</sup> And in one letter, dated February 14, 2012, a local resident listed some 17 reasons for denying the Ahmadi mosque extension planning application, with point 16 reading:

Neither planning application [sic] show the intrusive use of CCTV, guard house complex fences/walls around the site which are viewed by residents as intrusive and threatening as well as out of keeping with a faith site. Given that other sites of this faith have been bombed in Lahore in 2010, any increase in size of this building will make this an even more attractive terrorist target and place residents and users at even more risk than present.<sup>32</sup>

In this case Wandsworth Council appears to have used the persistent attempts by the Ahmadis to get planning permission for their mosque site and the equally persistent opposition by the neighbors to prevent this to reach a compromise, which enabled the Council to enforce the rectification of planning contraventions that it had no other way of enforcing. Wandsworth Council had long been aware that the residential houses, numbering about ten, owned by the Ahmadis immediately surrounding the mosque had been used as offices and guest accommodation for the community rather than as private residential homes. Local residents had complained of their occasional use as large-scale hostels, with marquees straddling several back gardens set up to accommodate large numbers of guests, as well as causing disruption to amenity with noise, lighting, and cooking taking place for large numbers of visitors. As the buildings had been used as offices and guest accommodation for many years, in some cases since 1989, the Council had no means of enforcing a change of use on the Ahmadis. However, when planning permission was given to redevelop the mosque site, allowing for a new residence for the Khalifa, new office space, and a redesigned mosque space, the Council also included restrictions that require the Ah-

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<sup>30</sup> Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Refusal of Permission for Development, ref. 2010/0486, July 15, 2011 (<https://planning.wandsworth.gov.uk/WAM/doc/Decision%20Notice-2246700.pdf?extension=.pdf&id=2246700&location=VOLUME8&contentType=application/pdf&pageCount=1>).

<sup>31</sup> Planning applications committee, ref. 2011/4853, April 18, 2012 (<https://planning.wandsworth.gov.uk/WAM/doc/Committee%20Report-2347718.pdf?extension=.pdf&id=2347718&location=VOLUME8&contentType=application/pdf&pageCount=18>).

<sup>32</sup> Wandsworth Borough Planning Office archive.

madis to return the houses they own “to residential use ... with the integration of the office use into the site.”<sup>33</sup> By this means the Council has, in effect, given both sides in this case something they wanted, but neither side has received everything they were after. The Ahmadis get better facilities for their Khalifa and worshippers in their mosque, and the non-Ahmadi local residents get the houses owned by the Ahmadis returned to residential use, thus improving this aspect of local amenity as these houses can no longer be used as offices or to house large numbers of visitors beyond the normal capacity of a small family home. It would appear that in this instance it is the Council that has found the means to compel the Ahmadis to comply with planning regulations by permitting some of the planning applications they had submitted to go forward and, at the same time, to improve local amenity for non-Ahmadi residents by restricting how the Ahmadis can, in the future, use the houses they own close to the mosque.

## CONCLUSION

The planning applications to develop the London Mosque and resident opposition to these over decades have brought into play the professional knowledge and cultural capital of both Ahmadis and local residents in their mostly polite and middle-class interactions, with Wandsworth Council mediating the whole process. This was a situation in which locals used the fear of violence to support their case against planning approval, while the Ahmadis used this to argue their case for expansion and better security on the mosque site. In the process, the London Mosque, hidden away in a quiet residential suburb, demonstrates how all diasporic places of worship are—and have always been—what Doreen Massey (1994) calls “extroverted spaces” linked to other faith sites in complex networks whose meanings change and are changed, often by events that take place far from the sites themselves. These sites are “created and sustained through postcolonial networks and trajectories” (Shah et al. 2012:80). The meaning of these interconnections may change over time, and for the London Mosque this has meant a transformation from a unique and picturesque “orientalist” building in colonial times to just one more mosque among many associated with the risk of attracting fundamentalist violence in the minds of some locals, who can plausibly use such fears strategically to limit the development of the mosque site. These local residents do not wish to have to live with any expansion of the mosque in their own back yard, and they can now also expect such expansions to take place in other backyards—and particularly so in Morden, where the much larger Ahmadi Baitul Futuh mosque opened in 2003. This latter mosque, as a postindustrial building project dating from the early years of the new millennium and supported by Merton Council to regenerate a derelict site in a less affluent part of the borough, has itself not been entirely free from local protest. For non-Muslims such protests have focused on the place of Islam lo-

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<sup>33</sup> Planning applications committee, ref. 2011/4853, April 18, 2012 (<https://planning.wandsworth.gov.uk/WAM/doc/Committee%20Report-2347718.pdf?extension=.pdf&id=2347718&location=VOLUME8&contentType=application/pdf&pageCount=18>).

cally, and for Muslims, on the particular sect of Muslims frequenting the mosque. They have also focused on concerns over the changing ethnic make-up of the borough and over non-Christian faith buildings seen, by the majority population, as somehow foreign to the area. This particular discourse has been expressed primarily in terms of amenity issues so as to fall within town-planning regulations and avoid accusations of overt racism and Islamophobia.

The location of the large Baitul Futuh Mosque, however, fronting a main road with good local public transport and significant on-site parking space, marks the physical location as very different to that of the London Mosque, which was built in the 1920s at a time when very few people owned cars and before the development of the quiet residential suburb that has since grown up around it. This latter mosque is not so conveniently sited for public transport and is located in a now affluent part of Wandsworth where, despite the arrival of some Ahmadi home-owner residents, a larger proportion of the local residents are not Ahmadi and not Muslim.

Aware of public concern about Islam in general in a post-9/11 context and to deal with local concerns, the Ahmadi running the Baitul Futuh Mosque instituted liaison committee meetings to bring together local non-Ahmadi residents, representatives of local organizations, police officers, elected councilors, and faith leaders. These meetings have made considerable progress in planning ahead and preparing for large mosque events, alerting the mosque authorities to local concerns about the mosque, and ensuring a reasonable level of local acceptance, if not yet wholehearted support, for the mosque itself. Such initiatives demonstrate awareness of, and a desire to negotiate, the local complexities of faith, ethnicity, and class to inform and, wherever possible, accommodate others in order to ensure the continued viability of the mosque and good relations with the local community. In addition, the more affordable properties in the neighborhood of the Baitul Futuh Mosque, particularly when compared to the cost of similar housing in the vicinity of the London Mosque in Wandsworth, have meant that over the last decade there has been an influx of Ahmadi residents, including more recent German-speaking migrants to the UK, and a corresponding exodus of the primarily white lower-middle-class population.

Yet such developments in London's suburban urban environment happen not only in local space but as a consequence of events that had their origin in nineteenth-century India as well as those that have taken place closer to the present but thousands of miles away. What such developments mean may always be a matter for local exegesis, but they now inevitably involve local authorities, including council officials and the police, in learning about ethnic, religious, and political matters far from their own jurisdictions. That all sides in these local interactions strategically use their knowledge to progress their own ends is inevitable; that the authorities are aware of this and also use it to pursue their goals, mediate between contesting factions, both Muslim against Muslim and non-Muslim against Muslim, speaks to the level of grounded expertise, knowledge of each other, and skills selectively to use this knowledge that local individuals and groups now routinely possess in the global city.

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# СКАЗАНИЕ О ДВУХ МЕЧЕТЯХ АХМАДИЙЯ: РЕЛИГИЯ, ЭТНИЧЕСКАЯ ПОЛИТИКА И ГОРОДСКОЕ ПЛАНИРОВАНИЕ В ЛОНДОНЕ

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Построенная на месте заброшенной лондонской маслодельни, ахмадийская мечеть Байтуль-Футух одновременно представляет собой и возрожденный постиндустриальный объект, и значительное достижение построившего ее сообщества, и вызов местным мусульманам-суннитам. Она является также своего рода «красной тряпкой» для исламофобов и подспорьем планам по модернизации района и привлечению туристов. С опорой на документы городского планирования, сообщения средств массовой информации и данные этнографической полевой работы в представленной статье рассматриваются противоречащие друг другу дискурсы мусульманского и немусульманского местного населения по поводу новой мечети Байтуль-Футух и более старой, меньшей по размеру, пригородной ахмадийской мечети, расположенной неподалеку. Эти дискурсы представлены в контексте глобального наднационального контекста межконфессионального конфликта и создания общества, в котором посетители мечети воспринимаются как отличающиеся от прочего населения этнической и конфессиональной принадлежностью и миграционным статусом. В статье рассматриваются особенности тех исторических периодов, когда эти две мечети были построены, классовая структура населения районов, где они находятся, и ее влияние на то, как именно мечети встроились в местную жизнь. Стратегии, используемые отдельными группами местного населения для определения пространства, их точки соприкосновения и взаимные претензии обсуждаются в статье с целью представить вниманию читателя набор взглядов людей, различных в религиозном, политическом и этническом отношении, и тех представлений, которые формируют идеалы самореализации и ожидания как отдельных индивидов, так и местных общин в целом.

**Ключевые слова:** восстановление городской среды; межконфессиональный конфликт; мусульмане; Ахмадийя; класс; этническая принадлежность