

EXPLORING ISLAMOPHOBIA IN LAND USE REGULATIONS: THE CASE OF THE CITY OF MISSISSAUGA

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ABSTRACT

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Building community spaces is important for immigrant communities: it helps transform the sterility of an unfamiliar new city into home. Muslims have historically sought to make cities their own by building mosques that have served spiritual, social and symbolic functions as architectural sites. This essay examines what the interplay between settlement of newcomers and new types of land use applications and what it tells readers about municipal gaps in addressing the question of “difference” in Canada using the City of Mississauga as a case study. It starts with a review of the history and context of mosque building in Canada, follows up by examining land use policies in Mississauga, and then looks at controversial mosque development issues by examining official city and provincial documents including one Human Rights Complaint. This paper wraps up by presenting recommendations for municipalities to better navigate the question of difference through policy and praxis.

Keywords: Islamophobia, land-use planning, urban planning, racism, exclusion, xenophobia, Mississauga, public policy

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This major research paper is dedicated to all the women of color in academia who strive to challenge dominant knowledge production methods and “agreed upon knowledge”.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Building Community Spaces is important for immigrant communities: it helps transform the sterility of an unfamiliar new city into home. Muslims have historically sought to make cities their own by building mosques that have served profound spiritual, social and symbolic architectural functions. In the “war on terror era” following September 11, 2001, civic debates pertaining to the Muslim presence in the West have been complicated by public uneasiness about whether Muslims belong in The West. If they do belong, what is the extent to which they should take up physical and symbolic space? In this essay, physical space refers to land, structures, and the built environment, and symbolic space refers to what the space represents through architecture, design and permitted use.

The topic of belonging is naturally a topic about land-use because even semantically, we belong “here” or “there”: mosques not only provide a “place” for communities to worship and access social services, they convey important cultural and religious meanings through architectural details, and building use as explored by Agrawal (2008), Qadeer and Chaudhary (2000) and Syed (2015). The following essay unpacks what belonging in the city of Mississauga means in three parts: first, the essay examines the history and context of mosque development in Canada, second it looks at land use policies in Mississauga, and finally case studies examining moments of tension between mosque builders and the municipality are presented in official municipal and provincial documents. Documents are then analyzed by juxtaposing them to the literature review and media articles. In the conclusion,

recommendations are presented to begin to remedy the gaps in planning policies and practices identified in the essay.

Upon examining and analyzing the literature and official municipal and provincial documents, themes that emerge are that within the current context, land-use regulations are being secularized because churches in the GTA no longer serve functional purposes. Religion in public policy is thus poorly defined and it is conflated with race, culture and ethnicity. Consequently, the ways in which religion complicates planning decisions are poorly represented in public policy and planning decisions. Even within existing multicultural policies, the lack of representation of religious minorities' results in exclusion at an institutional level. Minority places of worship are identified by Agrawal (2009) as mosques, Hindu temples, Buddhist temples and Sikh Gurdwaras. Minority places of worship can be contrasted to the now underutilized historical churches that were built in the 1700s and 1800s and onwards by European settlers in Canada referenced above. However, an important nuance to keep in mind is that while authors like Bradamat and Seljak (2008) identify the church as a key driver of Aboriginal colonialism and institutionalized European domination, authors like Smith (1996) identify that churches also served as sites of resistance, for example, Black Churches were integral to mobilize people during the Civil Rights Movement. The same nuance can be applied to mosques: the interactions that they have with communities and institutions mean that different mosques have different, often heavily politicized relationships with municipalities and communities. As such no two mosques will tell the same story.

The subject matter of the paper is complex because situating implicit bias and as the case studies will reveal, some instances outright Islamophobia identified in the case studies within land-use policies is an exercise of abstracting attitudinal issues in perceivably clear-cut policies and watertight, technical practices. It is a particularly complex exercise because Mississauga is home to quite a few mosques, illustrating that in many instances, exchanges between the city and its Muslim population have resulted in the successful completion of mosques as community hubs and spiritual centers. The essay examines land-use policies; however, city planning is a naturally interdisciplinary process, therefore while the focus is narrow, the analysis spills over into the different layers of city-building and public policy. The same can be said about the geographical scope: Mississauga is a product of ongoing settler colonialism and immigration meaning that the development of the city itself has necessarily meant the historical and ongoing erasure of its original inhabitants, the Mississaugas of the New Credit by “immigrants” or settlers from all over the world. As such, the presented analysis can be used to assess other cities that are characterized by similar historical trajectories. While the aspiration behind this essay is to justify transforming municipal land-use policies and practices in Mississauga, it can be used as a framework to justify transforming policies and practices in other professional realms.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review section of this essay attempts to contextualize the research by looking at what existing studies say about planning for “difference”, public policy and religion, the importance of religious institutions, and challenges faced by religious institutions.

A. Context: Development History of Mosques

i. The History of Muslims in the GTA and Canada

The first Muslims in the Americas were enslaved West Africans, who were forcefully displaced, carrying the first traceable practices and ideologies connected to Islam into the subcontinent between 1530 and 1850 (Yousif, 1992). It is important to note that current understandings of Muslims in Canada center the South Asian or Middle Eastern Muslim immigrant as vehicles of Islam. These understandings present a gap in historical understandings of how deeply embedded Islam is in North American history and the period within which knowledge transfer relating to the cultural traditions of Islam began. It was not until 1930, collective worship and social functions of mosques existed in the private realm. In 1930, the first formal mosque was built in Edmonton, Alberta. In 1992, the Muslim community in Canada was concentrated in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta (1992).

To refocus the history of Muslims in Mississauga into a contemporary context, some statistics are presented to give the reader an idea of what the population looks like today: In

2011, the NHS survey identified that 3.2% of the population in Canada identified as Muslim (Statistics Canada, 011). 7.7% of the population in the GTA is Muslim (Statistics Canada, 2011).

9.4% of the population in Peel Region self-identifies as Muslim, most of whom belong to the South Asian Community at large (Statistics Canada, 2011).

According to Kazemipur (2008), a significant number of Muslim immigrants come from areas that have been particularly prone to long and violent conflicts in South Asia and the Middle East (p.73). However, Muslims have historically chosen to settle in Canada to seek educational opportunities, to escape political alienation in their ancestral lands, to access economic advantage, to join kin and friends in Canada and to enjoy freedom of faith.

According to Vezina and Houle (2017), South Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants have chosen Ontario, Quebec and Alberta particularly because these provinces have established social networks: new immigrants chose these areas because of the presence of familial ties or friendship.

To avoid homogenizing Muslims in Canada, it is important to identify that the Muslim community in Canada have emigrated from different places in the world for different reasons. Fleeing war was a key driver of Muslim immigration to Canada, for example, in the 1980s, Lebanese refugees escaping the Civil War fled to Canada. In the 1990s, Somali Muslims and Bosnian Muslims also came to Canada to escape the Civil War and the breakup of the Former Yugoslavia (Yousif, 1992). Kazemipur (2008) made similar observations, indicating that most Muslims immigrating to Canada are escaping violence in their home countries today.

Varying historical trajectories into Canada necessarily mean that some groups have more economic leverage than others, giving them more social and political leverage. An example of the impact of varying historical trajectories is explored in Murdie's study (2010) which explores how Somali immigrants and Polish immigrants experienced different "housing careers" over two decades. The Polish group had established networks in Canada and consequently could access social services more easily. However, because the Somali group was fleeing civil war, they had to start from scratch, making them less likely to end up owning homes. In another example of varying experiences within the Muslim Community, Mussa (2017) criticized the lack of representation of Black Muslim voices in a conference in Ottawa that sought to bring the Muslim community together and engage in dialogue regarding contemporary issues affecting Muslims. Mussa (2017) noted that their exclusion led to a regeneration of an exclusive and discriminatory community.

The differences in the histories of Muslims mean that they experience land use regulations in different ways: when approaching municipalities, they come to the table with varying levels of access to legal counsel, social capital and economic resources, all of which are factors that impact their interactions with municipalities.

ii. The History of Mosques in the GTA

According to Qadeer and Chaudhary (2000), it was not until 1961 that the Muslim population was sizeable enough to establish a formal place of worship for Muslims on Dundas Street into Toronto's first mosque, the Jami Mosque. By 1980, only four mosques had been

established and between 1980 and 1990, ten new mosques were established. Between 1990 and 2000, another six mosques were built.

The first mosque in the GTA was a converted warehouse on Dundas Street in Toronto (Bradburn). Over the next decade, the Muslim community in Toronto grew from 400 to 5000 people. The congregation that was serviced by that location naturally outgrew the facility, and in 1969, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia helped purchase the High Park Presbyterian Church to serve as Jami Masjid, which still served as the only mosque in Toronto during that time. Internal conflict fragmented the congregation, making families seek other facilities to worship in, and in the 70s and 80s mosque development increased exponentially in the GTA because of inward migratory patterns of Muslims fleeing violence across East Africa, South Asia and the Balkans (Bradburn).



Figure 1. “Allah hu akbar” or God is Great painted on window of Former High Park Presbyterian Church that served as the Jami Masjid for several years, Toronto, Canada, From *Architectonic Toronto & Cities* by M. Gebresselasie, 2011,

<http://architectonictoblogspot.ca/2011/01/jami-mosque.html>

The first mosque in Mississauga was built in 1987: Masjid al Farooq. The mosque is now located on the same site, but the neighborhood has grown into a residential area with a sizeable population of Muslim homeowners and renters (Masjid al Farooq, 2017).

According to an online tool called Salatomic used to find mosques and Islamic Schools in different cities across the world, there are 239 mosques in the Greater Toronto Area. 37 of these mosques are in Mississauga according to data most recently revised in 2018. This figure will serve as an estimate in this paper.

iii. The challenge: Examining difference through a colonial lens

Sandercock (2000) examines urban planning policies and practices in Australia, finding that racial “difference” is glossed over because the idea that municipalities are inherently neutral exists. He investigates where racialized people fall in relation to the status quo in planning policies and practices. Sandercock (2000) identifies that racial differences exist in Australia because of the history of the settler colonization of Aboriginal Australians, and the following inward migration of communities who were also colonized by European nations in the “Global South” today. These differences therefore became more pronounced because of the rise of civil society rooted in the 1960s and 1970s. However, a reflection in policy was lacking because municipalities considered themselves neutral. As such, the importance of representing indigenous groups, ethnic minorities and other marginalized bodies in planning policies in Australia became more pronounced.

The settler-colonial history of Australia is similar to the history of Canada, as is the migration of people to Australia from countries still navigating the Historical impetus of

European colonialism in “the Global South”.

Sandercock’s (2000) critiques of existing land use policies in Australia ring relevant to the City of Mississauga because Mississauga is also Indigenous land with a significant immigrant population.

iv. Systemic Racism and Islamophobia in Canada

To define the broader issue that rationalizes the identified challenges faced by mosque developers in Canada, systemic racism and Islamophobia are defined and contextualized.

Systemic racism is defined as

“The policies and practices entrenched in established institutions, which result in the exclusion or promotion of designated groups. It differs from overt discrimination in that no individual intent is necessary.” (Calgary Anti Racism Education, 2017, para 5)

Garner and Selod (2014) state that Islamophobia is a form of racism *because* Muslims across the existing spectrum of racial and ethnic identities are racialized or excluded in organized overt or covert ways. Garner and Selod (2014) note that Muslims are racialized through ideology, historical power relations and discrimination at both interpersonal and structural levels. They also note that a historical lens into Islamophobia in the West would confirm Islamophobia exacerbated after 9/11.

Wilkins-Laflamme (2018) examines Islamophobia in Canada and confirms that after 911, Islamophobia spiked. She notes that the “intentional exclusion of Muslims is the product of public laws and policies”. She identifies that discriminatory media coverage and *conflicts*

surrounding places of worship are normalized as “usual suspects” of discrimination: often they are not identifiable by individuals (para 9 - 10).

Systemic racism and Islamophobia are defined here to name the key issue being examined and to avoid the risk of falling into a racially neutral discussion.

B. Public Policy and Religion

To situate the challenge of lacking policy representation in Canadian terms, Bradamat (2008) attempts to answer the question of how religion is framed by existing laws and policies in Canada. He looks into whether there is evidence to substantiate that policy-makers are interested in religious perspectives on public policy. He begins by introducing the “secularization hypothesis” which is the idea that as society becomes more modern, it rejects religious ideologies because it is becoming more “rational”. He (2008) then rejects the secularization hypothesis, drawing onto the events of 9-11 and a general context of migratory exchanges that are continually transforming Canada, and bringing in different populations who access “new ethnic religious places of worship” (p. 124). Bradamat (2008) identifies that religion *is* mentioned in high level federal legal document such as the Constitution, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in addition to the Criminal Code which apply to provincial and municipal policies.

However, regarding federal targeted projects that tackle the question of religion, Bradamat (2008) identified that only 19 of the 546 government projects regarding multiculturalism related to religion directly. Of these 19 projects, only 6 were designed to

address the effects of September 11. According to Bradamat's (2008) assessment, religion is poorly represented in public policy.

Gale (2008) identifies that religion is also a cavity in planning policy in the UK. He believes it is a limitation because poor understandings exist regarding the distinctions and relationships between race, religion and culture in public policy. He further believes that this institutionalized ignorance is problematic because faith groups mobilize religious identity to situate themselves in the city through religious institutions. Gale's (2008) findings indicate that it is important for municipalities to understand how religion binds communities and potentially impacts space outside questions of race and ethnicity, while simultaneously acknowledging that these layers of identity can exist in tandem.

Gale's findings are important because they highlight a gap in planning policy in Canada considering that much of the literature examined in this paper conflate planning for religious minorities with planning for racial minorities.

To localize Gale's (2008) findings, Kazemipur (2014) notes that migratory patterns have meant that Muslim immigrants have brought religion to Canada alongside their cultural practices. He notes that different cultural communities practice Islam differently. However, he also emphasizes that where fragmentation exists along ethnic lines, Canadian Muslims have used religion as a binding identity that individuals have used to build community.

Relating to both religion and public policy in Canada, Germain (2014) examines an important document regarding religious representation in public policy: the Bouchard Taylor Commission. The

Commission notably examine religion as a facet of identity that is not inherently partnered with culture. The Commission is a document that Quebec funded to explore policies and practices that allow communities to come up with solutions when universal standards exclude religious groups. Germain's finding was that while the Commission itself looked at various instances of conflict between faith-based communities and policies, it glossed over places of worship from a spatial perspective.

C. The Importance of Religious Institutions

To justify a critique of existing policies regarding religious institutions, a good starting point is to identify their purposes in a pluralistic society. Agrawal (2008) examined the role of places of worship in either helping or hindering "neighborliness". He did so by examining four organically evolved faith-based neighborhoods in the GTA that varied across religious affiliation, history and socioeconomic class. Agrawal (2008) found that at the bare minimum, religious institutions are unthreatening. The neighborhoods he examined were stable and that the presence of religious institutions neither localized friendship or intimacy, nor does religion polarize or isolate neighborhoods along religious or cultural lines.

Syed (2016) identifies the importance of religious architecture in providing symbolic spaces that represent belonging for new immigrants. She notes that

In periods of immigration, churches, mosques and temples have served as much more than just religious and spiritual centers. They have become points of reference for newcomers, affirming their presence as they confront otherness. These places can provide a space of belonging and a reminder of the old on new streets (p.66).

She cites Sikh and Christian leaders who identified the importance of distinctive minority religious institutions. One example she draws upon regarding a notably historically marginalized group is the example of the Methodist-Episcopal Church served as a symbol of home for African American refugees escaping slavery in the 1840s.

To complete the picture, Rajaram (2015) notes that places of worship offer social services that benefit communities. He (2015) notes that they are particularly important service hubs for lower income people as they provide free meals, homeless shelters, educational programs, daycare, senior homes and immigration services.

The literature identifies that the two major functions of places of worship are that they provide social services and the latter is that as physical structures, they fulfil a symbolic purpose by providing familiarity and belonging.

D. Challenges faced by Religious Institutions

i. Broad Institutional Challenges

The importance of examining institutional challenges in this paper is to understand high level problems that might complicate land-use planning for mosques. Hackworth and Gullickson (2013) examine the impacts of secularization on space due to a declining Christian population, and Hackworth and Stein (2012) study the tension between industrial uses and places for worship respectively. Germain and Gagnon (2003) are also referenced because they look at the impacts of secularization on municipal policies.

It is important to distinguish that Bradamat (2008) rejects the idea that society is secularizing but Germain and Gagnon (2013) illustrate that policy attempts to secularize space. Read together, Hackworth and Gullickson (2013) simply identify that policies do not necessarily represent the population because Bradamat (2008) notes that Canadian society is not secularizing due to the immigration of religious minorities.

It is also important to identify that secularization entails the de-sanctification of churches as a precedent to the lack of representation of minority places of worship: secularization is not a process that deliberately excludes minority religions because public policy is inherently insidious. It does so subvertly because of an existing tension: Churches are no longer being built or being used at the same frequency, therefore policies and practices have transformed to reflect the same. At the same time, however, immigration has brought populations to Canada who have presented a demand for mosques, Hindu and Buddhist temples and Sikh Gurdwaras. This is why representation in policy is key.

To substantiate their hypothesis that land-use regulations are secularizing, Hackworth and Gullickson (2013) examine 33 cases of church redevelopment into residential and mixeduse facilities. They find that out of the 33 cases, 5 churches were demolished entirely for redevelopment. In 17 cases, the façades of the churches were maintained but the use of the buildings were changed to residential: and the remaining 16 had mixed functions and forms that did not relate to church use.

What does church redevelopment have to do with new mosque developments?
Hackworth and Gullicksons (2013) provide evidence that land use regulations are beginning to

be characterized by a trend of secularization, a trend that naturally complicates the question of mosque development given that mosques are not secular spaces.

In their (2013) essay, secularization is found to be a consequence churches in Toronto no longer serving functional purposes. A policy tool that complicates the referent secularization is heritage regulations. The friction between heritage regulations and the development of churches represents a perceived friction between developing for the future and holding onto architecture that represents the past.

Within a city-building context, the secularization hypothesis might suggest that as the city modernizes, religious architecture does not serve a function. Within the context of the Churches examined, Hackworth and Gullickson (2013) identify that Christian, European religious architecture is underutilized. Contrarily, Qadeer and Chaudhary (2000) and Agrawal (2009) emphasize that demand for minority places of worship is a concurrent theme in the GTA.

The question of whether cities are secularizing because established European communities no longer need places of worship at the expense of new immigrant populations is raised.

Hackworth and Stein (2012) look at another type of economic development in relation to places of worship: industrial development. Their analysis draws a connection between secularization and economic development. They (2012) identify that places of worship are not included in industrial development plans. They identify that the Muslim community has faced resistance developing mosques in residential areas. Because of this resistance, they attempt to

locate places of worship in employment areas. What exacerbates the tension between industrial areas and religious groups is that a consistent zoning designation does not exist across the GTA for places of worship. Therefore, the question of whether industrial growth and secularization work in tandem comes up: are emerging religious institutions antithetical to economic development? Do current communities hold an underlying belief that emerging religious institutions are antithetical to economic development? If so, is there room for planning policy to address the challenge?

Hackworth and Stein (2012) note that places of worship are exempt from property taxes. Agrawal (2008) notes that within a political context of government cutbacks, the social services that places of worship provide should be recognized. Qadeer and Chaudhary (2000) argue that religious institutions are exempt from property taxes *because* they fulfil a social need. This argument complicates the underlying tension between places of worship and religious institutions, raising the question of how the economic value social services rendered by places of worship are measured in relation to industrial or residential development, particularly within a context of secularization.

Harvey (2008) critiques city-building in general, noting that “from their very inception, cities have arisen through the geographical and social concentrations of a surplus product [and that] Urbanization has always been...a class phenomenon of some sort” (p.38).

To tie this section together, two broad contextual themes that complicate mosque building in Canada are the secularization of land-use policy and existing tensions between planning for profit and planning for people.

ii. Challenges at the Municipal Level

At the municipal level, Germain and Gagnon (2003) examine the discussion around Eruvs in Quebec. Eruvs are metal wires hung on electric poles that serve as symbolic “doorways” that expand the private realm during Passover. Eruvs serve this purpose because during passover, Hasidic Jews are prohibited to leave their homes during passover. While these wires are barely visible and non-hazardous to humans and animals, because Quebec is “secularizing”, a public discussion at the municipal level came up regarding the religious encroachment of public space.

Again, the question of whose human rights and land use needs are prioritized in public discussions is raised. Furthermore, the implications of such discussions are in land use policy and practices are raised.

To narrow into challenges at the neighborhood scale, Germain and Gagnon (2003) identify hurdles faced by minority religious groups who have tried to build places of worship in communities with notable opposition among locals. They (2003) examine cases where local dynamic hindered the growth of Hasidic Synagogues in Montreal. Secularization comes up again because of Montreal’s attempts to secularize their land-use policies. In a case study they looked at in Outremont, the Hasidic community attempted to rezone an industrial building to use it as a synagogue. They (2003) note that the French-majority Community’s response at the very beginning of the conversation was to set a volatile, tense tone that prevented the community from making any progress on that site, forcing them to move their facility.

Agrawal (2009) cites case studies where tensions between municipalities and religious institutions in some instances even resulted in cases in the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). One

example is the case of the Nanaskar Satang Sabha Gurdwara where hostile opponents complained that congregators loitered in the adjacent park (p.2). Arguably, the purpose of a park is “loitering”.

Challenges identified in this section are more institutional in nature as they are rooted in decisions at the local government level: Issues identified include exclusive policies, cultural insensitivity and incompatibilities rooted in procedural decision making in addition to the more political challenge of abstracting exclusive land use practices from technical problems. Both these issues are premised on overt or covert exclusion at different scales. Case studies examined serve as precedents for case studies examined below, illustrating that municipal policy exclusion and difficulty abstracting exclusive land use practices from practical decision making does not exist in a vacuum across the GTA, and as identified above, these challenges exist across Canada and the West-at-large.

3. METHOD

The next part of the essay looks at context regarding mosque development by drawing onto a Mississauga-specific policy scan is laid out. Then, case studies are examined that illustrate that while multicultural policies exist, their functionality in addressing existing xenophobia at the municipal level and beyond can be expanded. The analysis raises questions about their effectiveness in navigating a unique challenge: an opportunity exists to transform the planning landscape and culture. Recommendations are made at the end of the paper to explore this opportunity.

Sources referenced used are municipal land use policies, City of Mississauga Meeting Minutes, an Ontario human rights complaint and news articles.

The City of Mississauga was picked specifically because according to 2016 Census Data, more than half of the population (53%) is immigrant and close to 60% of the population are considered visible minorities (Statistics Canada, 2016).

4. MISSISSAUGA: POLICY REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

Inclusive policies are integral to support programming that facilitates inclusive cities and to formally address existing challenges. A scan of policies in Mississauga indicates that

while gaps exist policies when it comes to religious accommodations, these gaps can be remedied to improve the representation of religious groups in land-use regulations. The following Policy Review outlines existing policies and identifies some of the gaps:

A. Overarching Principles

i. Official Plan

In the Introduction (2015) of its Official Plan, the City of Mississauga envisions a city “where people chose to be”, that is, a city that generally adheres to principles of connectivity, pluralism and safety. The O.P aspires for Mississauga to inspire the world as a dynamic and beautiful global city that facilitates creativity and innovation and provides safe and connected communities. Additionally, the Introduction of the Official Plan notes that the planning process aspires to provide space for *culture and diversity* (p. 3).

The Introduction of the Official Plan also references “incorporating places of worship” in its strategic goals (p.3). In terms of overarching goals, the Official Plan has not only provided space in policy for the development of places of worship, it has represented support for this community imperative in writing.

ii. Peel Regional Official Plan

Mississauga is a lower-tier municipality. It is subject to the Peel Region Official Plan (2016). In terms of making space for matters of religious pluralism, the plan identifies that its purposes are to “provide a holistic approach to planning through an overarching sustainable

development framework” (p.17). Such a framework would integrate targeted goals that are environmental, social, economic and cultural.

The framework is to “recognize the importance of *protecting* and enriching the natural and cultural heritage of Peel Region” (p. 17). In terms of developing mosques as part of a more inclusive regional initiative, the scope of the Peel Region Plan is definitely broader and subjective to the interpretation of the cities within Peel’s jurisdiction.

The Peel Region Official Plan does not refer to places of worship but identifies enriching the natural and cultural heritage of Peel raising a question of whether religious development can fall under furthering the cultural heritage of Peel. From the Great Mosque of Touba in Senegal to the Emperor’s Mosque in Bosnia, Islamic architecture has enriched the landscape and brought incredible social value value to cities across the globe Agrawal (2008) and Maghfoor and Chaudhary (2000) have identified that minority places of worship serve an important purpose in Canada.

In the Promoting Collaboration Section (2015) of the Official Plan, the City further notes within the Official Plan that it envisions itself as a champion of complete communities, meeting the day-to-day needs of people throughout all stages of their life through, housing choices, employment opportunities, commercial opportunities, *social and institutional* venues (City of Mississauga, 2015, 2).

The city believes that community Infrastructure is a vital part of complete communities

(p2). Two needs that community infrastructure can meet are the spiritual and social needs. Places of worship provide resources to meet these needs. Representing the social value of places of worship as service providers is necessary.

iii. Mississauga Cultural Master Plan

Interestingly, Mississauga has a Culture Master Plan (2009), which is noteworthy because Buyaridi (2003) identifies Culture Master Plans as an opportunity for diverse groups to raise awareness and find spaces for their fears, concerns interests and values. Mississauga's Culture Plan does not make any references to religion, perhaps because it embodies secular values and focuses on culture as an economic generator and approaches the question of culture from an arts and innovation perspective.

Here, Gale (2008) and Sandercock's (2000) observation about the conflation of culture and religion becomes evident. At a high level, it is evident that diversity and culture are represented. However, other than one mention in the Introduction of the Official Plan, there is no further mention of religion, which is limiting given the cultural value that religious institutions bring to the city. It is therefore possible to read religious inclusion into existing policies, or to read them out of existing policies, depending on the practitioner's priorities.

B. Community Engagement

i. Official Plan

In the Policy Context (2015), the Official Plan draws upon the Planning Act in identifying that the city envisions itself as a harbinger of "planning processes that are fair by making them

open, accessible, timely and efficient” (p.2). Culture, diversity and religion are referenced in the introduction therefore openness, fairness and accessibility for religious subgroups is presumably a given. However, presumptions do not hold the same weight as written regulations, therefore there is room to elaborate on what these principles mean in consultations.

In the Promoting Collaboration (2015) section of the Official Plan, the Official Plan extensively incorporates an approach that encourages co-operations and team building between individuals and groups who are interested in planning the city, the public, particularly people with disabilities, and other stakeholders.

In terms of promoting community engagement, in this section, a policy rationale exists for discussions to tackle issues of exclusion moving forward. This section of the Official Plan further envisions developing a public participation program as part of any Official Plan Review to:

- increase awareness regarding the planning process
- encourage public involvement in the planning process
- facilitate consultation and joint planning where appropriate

Regarding Community Planning, the City will engage the public and stakeholders in local area review processes including local area reviews and policy formation and revision.

The city has also noted that it will consider Local Advisory Panels to provide input to local area reviews where appropriate. Again, a general accommodation has been established to start conversation: this section provides further site-specific accommodation.

ii. The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

The Official Plan also draws upon the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The purpose of the Growth Plan is self-explanatory: it is to manage growth through different approaches. The document notes that when managing growth, planners should recognize the diversity of communities and promote collaboration among all sectors including government, private and non-profit sectors and residents (p. 1-2).

A scan of this section provides representation within cross-regional policies to approach questions of developing mosques, potentially in innovative and creative ways that “recognize the diversity of communities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe” (p. 1-2). Again, interpreting “diversity” is a subjective exercise that the Planner will embark on, so whether religious accommodation is considered remains dependent on the Planner’s priorities when reading the policies.

In summary, the policy stance on engagement does not incorporate targeted engagement of religious subgroups or minority groups with the notable exception of people with disabilities. It is broad and subject to the interpretation of planners which is limiting because minority groups experience land use regulations in different ways.

C. Built Form

In the Build a Desirable Urban Form (2015) section, The Official Plan also speaks to the importance of building an Urban Form that “respect[s] the experience, identity and character of the surrounding context” which might limit the outward appearance of up-and-coming mosques (p2). This requirement limits the potential to build distinct mosques.

An opportunity exists here to bring interest and better represent the diversity of communities in Mississauga through built form guidelines. Islamic architecture has brought touristic value and visual interest to cities across the world in addition to serving as a sanctuary to immigrants and refugees seeking familiarity.

D. Summary on Policy Findings:

Overall, while there is little regarding religion directly with the exception of one mention in the Introduction of the Official Plan, the policy framework is flexible enough to allow for the integration of religious institutions within the fabric of the city at the discretion of practitioners.

A major shortcoming of the policy context is that in terms of process, when it comes to consultation and engagement, there is little direction regarding how to manage moments of tensions or conflicts.

5. CASE STUDIES: IDENTIFYING WHERE POLICY FALLS SHORT

Analyzing the policy has provided insight on opportunities to improve in addition to a theoretical understanding of where they fall short. However, what are the impacts of a lacking policy? Case studies are assessed below to examine incidents that have illustrated that a lack of policy can in fact exacerbate existing tensions.

Syed (2016) notes that “The GTA takes great pride in its multiculturalism...but under the feel-good rhetoric about diversity lies a complicated, and oftentimes racist, conflict over space between established residents and newcomers” (p. 66-67).

In a study by the Joint Centre for Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement in Toronto, researchers found that seventeen of thirty-five GTA municipalities had experienced at least one fight between immigrant communities and the municipal government over proposals for mosques or temples” (Joint Centre For Excellence for Research and Immigration and Settlement in Toronto). She notes that out of the seventeen instances, fourteen of them had to do with land-use regulations (Joint Centre For Excellence for Research and Immigration and Settlement in Toronto).

a. **The Opportunity: examining the Aga Khan Museum as a successful example of a Religious Institution**

The Aga Khan Museum is an excellent example of the cultural value that religious institutions can bring. The Museum is a product of a supportive land-use process whereby policies were interpreted to support its approval. This facility is noteworthy because of its architectural significance: the museum is “inspired by a contemporary take on the Islamic courtyard- the Chahar bagh” (The Plan, 2018, para 1). “Chahar bagh” refers to the four rivers in Paradise referenced in the Quran. The facility is noteworthy because it is a high-profile institution that is reputed for presenting a contemporary take on Islamic architecture to visitors, whether they be Muslim or otherwise. The building use has cultural significance and is:

Dedicated to presenting an overview of the artistic, intellectual and scientific contributions that Islamic civilizations have made to world heritage, the Museum is home to galleries, exhibition spaces, classrooms, a reference library, auditorium and restaurant (Para 1).

It draws hundreds of visitors monthly to learn about Islamic History and Civilization, displaying artefacts from a range of places across the world: In the *About Me* section of their website, they cite the Aga Khan, the leader of the Ismaili Community in stating that

The aim of the Aga Khan Museum will be to offer unique insights and new perspectives into Islamic civilizations and the cultural threads that weave through history binding us all together. My hope is that the Museum will also be a centre of education and of learning, and that it will act as a catalyst for mutual understanding and tolerance”

The purpose of presenting the Aga Khan Museum as an example of a successful Islamic architecture and cultural resource is to illustrate what supportive policy and practice can achieve. The Aga Khan Museum is a private facility owned by a relatively wealthy, integrated Muslim community in Canada, therefore, there are premises to critique its development. However, the point of introducing the facility here is to illuminate an opportunity in the realm of possibility.

B. Case Studies: challenges faced by Mosque Builders in Mississauga

Tactical aspects of planning for Mosques in Mississauga appear to be flexible enough to be able to address diversity and inclusion based on existing Policies. Opportunities for

improvement have been identified, but what does a comparison of media pieces with Official City of Mississauga Minutes illustrate regarding the relationship the City has with mosque builders?

The following case studies illustrate the implications of the lack of representation identified in the literature review broadly: The case studies all fall within the past five years and they are explored to unpack Islamophobia in planning practices when complemented by a lack of policy representation identified in the section prior to this one.

i. The Case of the Meadowvale Islamic Centre

In September 2015, the Mississauga Planning Committee convened to discuss the potential development of the Meadowvale Islamic Centre, a 12000 square foot mosque that would be located across from the Meadowvale Town Centre, a medium sized mall and community landmark. The events leading to the application were controversial and exposed issues that reflected the challenge of planning-for-minorities when hostile opposition member.

In a CBC article (2015), a moment of such tension is highlighted. The mayor “accus[es] one man of “hate-mongering” prior to the Planning and Development Committee approving the development of the Meadowvale Islamic Centre on Winston Churchill Boulevard, across from Meadowvale Town Centre” (CBC, para. 1). The man the mayor was reprimanding was Kevin Johnston, author of a website called stopthemosque.ca and former mayoral candidate.

While the confrontation between the mayor and the individual were not reflected in the minutes, issues of noise and traffic were highlighted in the City of Mississauga Minutes

(2015). In addition to issues of lights, concerns regarding the function of the Minaret and Dome, sanitation issues, maintenance of garbage and other “gray areas” that potentially mask underlying issues of racism and xenophobia were raised.

What the minutes did not reflect was an exchange between the mayor and opponents of the development, where the mayor confronted opponents for producing hate-speech on a website called stopthemosque.ca, where “[T]hey warn of increases in sexual assault, vandalism, kidnappings, and a loss of freedom of speech should the project be approved” (CBC News, para 8). Johnston *presented* issues of noise, traffic and policing, but when the website was brought up, supporting audience members cheered (para 6). A flyer that was distributed in the neighborhood is pictured below:



Figure 2. Stop the Mosque Flyer, Mississauga, Canada. From: Is Mississauga Islamophobic? by Ashley Newport, 2015, <https://www.insauga.com/is-mississauga-islamophobic>

The lack of clarity in the minutes is one way that Islamophobia has been institutionally ignored and left to the wayside. The other issue that becomes evident is that it is unclear whether public officials are professionally equipped to grapple with the issue of hostile opponents attending public meetings in large numbers. This case study resonates with case studies examined by Germain and Gagnon (2003) where local communities in Quebec weaponized their collective White Nationalist identity against minority religious groups.

ii. The Case of ISNA's Friday Prayer Parking Exemption Hours

In the Human Rights Legal Support Centre (2017) Annual Report for 2014-2015, another instance where land use regulations and policies fell pitifully short regarding the question of religious accommodation took place in 2014. In April 2014, two men asked the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario to back a claim that a parking restriction in the City of Mississauga was discriminatory (Human Rights Legal Support Centre, 5).

According to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario brief, the applicants, Muhammad Khalid and Salman Khalid received a parking ticket when parked on smaller street called Finfar Street close to ISNA mosque on a Friday between 12 PM and 3 PM. The applicants did not dispute that parking was prohibited on Finfar Court. They asserted that because the prohibition falls at the specific time that weekly Friday prayers fall, the City was producing discrimination because at all other times during the week, vehicle owners could park on the street. For this reason, Khalid and Khalid sought legal counsel because they experienced the discriminatory nature of the prohibition (Khalid v. the Corporation of the City of Mississauga, 2014).

The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) was approached, and after being briefed on the situation at hand, they requested to intervene, identifying that the prohibition is discriminatory. They formally submitted to the Ontario Human Rights Commission that “parking restrictions can create barriers for participation in religious activities at mosques” (Khalid v. the Corporation of the City of Mississauga, 2014).

The NCCM was granted its request to intervene but was only permitted to provide an oral or written statement *after* the proceedings. To date, the case is still pending (Khalid v. the Corporation of the City of Mississauga, 2014).

While no definitive decision was made regarding whether the City was breaking the Ontario Human Rights Code, the trial itself was a product of the two applicants’ engagements with the City (Hudes, 2014). When the City was approached, it cited safety concerns in its refusal to continue pursuing the case, illustrating that from a legal perspective, a compelling enough case could be made regarding discrimination.

Hudes (2014) noted that the lawyer representing the City described the issue as “touchy”, illustrating the fear of the City to engage with issues relating to religion and space (para 18).

This case illustrates the polarizing and often jarring nature of the question of religious accommodation: The City’s actions indicated that they did not want to engage with the topic, while the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal gave the National Council of Canadian Muslims very limited opportunity to engage in discussion. To date, a decision has not been made.

iii. The Case of Masjid Al Farooq

The Case of the expansion of Masjid Al Farooq is interesting for two reasons: the first is that in the Planning and Development Committee (2014) Meeting minutes, City representatives suggested that the expansion be moved to a more industrial area because issues of noise and parking were cited (p.7). The second factor that is noteworthy about this case was the public anxiety surrounding the minaret and dome size, conjuring memories of the 2009 minaret ban referendum in Sweden.

The Meeting Minutes document that the mayor “expressed concern that the question of discrimination comes up when there is any opposition to mosques” when concerns identified “applied to all places of worship” (City of Mississauga, p. 6). This excerpt is noteworthy because it illustrates the supposed racially neutral approach to planning that Sandercock (2000) identifies in Australia, and Lung et al (2015) identify in Canada, which is arguably regressive because it keeps communities from engaging in dialogue with municipalities to better frame their exchanges with religious minorities.

A significant discussion also took place regarding the appropriateness of having a dome and minaret, echoing anxieties first covered in the media regarding a controversial minaret ban in Switzerland.

Dodd (2015) identifies in her analysis that the ban was a consequence of mass paranoia which came with an influx of Muslim immigration. Dodd (2015) also identifies the significance of minarets, echoing Syed’s (2016) findings that minarets serve as signifiers of place. Syed notes

that:

As a religious structure, the minaret serves primarily as a symbol: pointing heavenward as a reminder of the presence and oneness of Allah. Given its high-visibility, the minaret also served as a symbol to demarcate a religious haven for travelers, because often, the mosque was the premier destination to obtain room and board. (Syed, 67)

In both the cases of the Meadowvale Islamic Centre and Masjid al Farooq, the community was asked to scale down the dome and minaret features to better “fit the character of the neighbourhood” (City of Mississauga, p. 6).



Figure 3: Masjid al Farooq, Mississauga, Canada. From: Insauga. By: Alan Kan, 2017.

<https://www.insauga.com/mississauga-city-council-approves-mosque-expansion-near-streetsville>

The cases examined above are brought to light to problematize the municipality’s anxiety around changing the character of the neighborhood to better reflect its users and

break out of a tradition of sticking to relatively homogenous, arguably boring streetscapes that reflect Western building subjectivities in a city that prides itself on pluralism and multiculturalism. The question that Hackworth and Stein (2012) raise remains relevant, therefore: is nuance and pluralism only encouraged if it necessarily promises economic gains beyond the functionalities of providing a social service?

6. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Upon analyzing the literature, policy and case studies, it becomes evident that the secularization of land-use policies identified by Hackworth and Gullickson (2016) are both present in the policy scan and the case studies. One way that the secularization of land-use policies festers is that the representation of religious interests in policy and practice is not present because municipalities have different priorities: a reading of Hackworth and Gullickson (2016) alongside Harvey (2008) might suggest that these priorities are more profit-oriented.

Upon reflection, some implications that can be further explored by cities to better serve minorities are as follows:

1. The importance of representing Muslims and historically marginalized people in land-use policies such as Cultural Master Plans and Built Form Guidelines.

While Mayor Bonnie Crombie responded to hate appropriately to the incident at the Planning and Development meeting referenced in the Meadowvale Islamic Centre case study, what comes to light is that city officials are not always prepared for xenophobic outbursts in city planning meetings. The unfolding of events illustrated a missed opportunity for education and

relationship building to set the tone for the conversation at the beginning of the meeting. The comments made by the mosque opponents were harmful for the Muslim community and following the events, little initiative was taken by the city to promote healing and understanding within the community.

Furthermore, what is telling about the Masjid al Farooq case study is that without representation, development opponents are supported by policies when their apprehensions around architectures representing racial, cultural or religious difference are not challenged by existing built form guidelines.

Representation of not only Muslims and other historically marginalized people are paramount to mediate moments where tensions premised in racism and xenophobia become present, but representation also helps keep such moments at bay. To keep the process accountable, it is also important to approach planning policy as a process and to review it often so as to identify where it falls short.

2. The importance of employing a greater number of minorities to avoid tokenistic

decisionmaking and encourage nuanced debate to frame policies and practices

Another important consideration in organizing public meetings and making high-level decisions pertaining to matters that primarily affect minority groups is to have them present in the room: in instances where xenophobic or racial tension becomes present, it is important for public officials to be prepared.

One approach to preparedness is to have people who have experienced exclusion in the room and can appreciate the viewpoints presented by minority groups. In the Masjid al Farooq case, a prevalent theme was the apprehension of public officials in providing

statements. This apprehension likely had to do with a lacking in professional capacity in addressing xenophobia. It is beneficial for public officials to have minority colleagues because they bridge the gap between public officials and minorities. It is further beneficial for minorities to have access to public officials who represent them because their perspectives will be better because the people on the receiving end of their apprehensions will be able to better relate with them, and for public officials to work across municipal silos and leverage the expertise of professionals in equity and neighborhood development divisions *because* these divisions address matters of urban equity and discrimination.

3. The importance of training city officials to practice planning in a manner that best reflects an understanding that historical differentials necessarily entail power differentials. It is important to consider historical differentials when thinking about development from the consultation period to the approval/disapproval period. Acknowledging that city officials have different levels of knowledge on historical differences is also an acknowledgement that city officials have different levels of knowledge regarding the complexities of city dwellers' identities and experiences with planning. The history of Muslims in Canada outlined at the beginning of this essay illustrates the complex, multifaceted nature of migration, and the necessary power differentials that come from fleeing your home country as a refugee and choosing to settle in Mississauga because you can afford to do so. These power differentials nuance communities' experiences with city planning because regardless of a demand for religious institutions, aspects like language competency and access to economic assets allow, disallow and complicate the experiences of communities when attempting to

build. City Staff should be trained to be able to recognize these intersections and differentials. They should also be trained to be able to come up with strategies to navigate challenges that are consequences of these power differentials. Furthermore, drawing onto Lung et al (2015), it is important for curricula in planning schools to incorporate meaningful and proactive conversations about historical marginalization to prepare planners for related challenges before they begin to practice at a professional level.

4. The importance of structuring consultations around holding space for minorities within minority groups

Such an approach will incorporate identifying which members of minority groups are consistently excluded in community engagements and will follow up by providing targeted engagement methods that allow them to participate. Such engagement methods will nurture creativity on the planner's end because they require thinking beyond the classic open house discussion and might involve engaging with community members through technology and phoning them to receive their input if they cannot come for public engagements, in addition to other, creative, less orthodox, less jarring approaches to engagement.

Final Thoughts:

Ultimately, this paper is not suggesting that the city, as a homogenous entity, is outright unfriendly to the development of minority places of worship. It is arguing that given the historical and political context, policies and processes need to better reflect the existence, needs and nuances of historically marginalized people that complicate land-use planning. To reiterate the objective of the essay, such an approach applies to minorities beyond religious

minorities: the paper simply focuses on Muslims because they are being increasingly racialized through existing policies and practices.

In the introduction of this essay, planning is introduced as an interdisciplinary field, therefore a natural assumption in undoing legacies of exclusion in planning would also be to engage with other fields. Some that immediately come to mind within the context of religious exclusion are the fields of Anthropology, Politics, Education and Social Work because of the historical, political, social and cultural implications of planning for racial difference.

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