Transcript: Inclusive Spaces: Religious Infrastructure in the City

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

Inclusive Spaces, Muslim spaces, built environment

**SPEAKERS**

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**HANADI SAMHAN:** Hello, everyone, and welcome to the Inclusive Spaces Seminar Series at The Bartlett, the Faculty of the Built Environment here at UCL.

 So, I’m Hanadi Samhan, an urban practitioner and PhD candidate at the Development Planning Unit where I'm working on the sacred ontologies of the volume of Palestinian camps in Lebanon and I’m a tutor at The Bartlett School of Planning and the Faculty of Art and Sciences and I will be hosting this Inclusive Spaces session.

 Now, Inclusive Spaces is our monthly event, led by The Bartlett Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, what we call the EDI group, where we explore disability, race, gender, LGBTQI+ and many other dimensions of diversity, and discover how they intersect with the built environments around the world.

 Today you've joined the November edition of Inclusive Spaces: Religious infrastructure in the City. Before I begin just a little bit of housekeeping. The session will be recorded as Alma just wrote, and we'll be added to the YouTube Channel of The Bartlett, Faculty of the Built Environment, and The Bartlett EDI website and forwarded to the registered attendees. The format for today. I'm going first to welcome our guests to present for the first half of the session, and it will be followed by Q and A, before ending promptly at two.

 Now we encourage you to submit a question for the speakers at any point during this lecture, by clicking on the Q&A function on the bottom of the screen, and you can also submit your own questions or upvote the others.

 I will start with my, my first speaker for today. Now okay. Sincere apologies for this unfortunate event. I'm going to introduce Said. Actually, he is a colleague of mine at the DPU, at the Development Planning Unit. And he is working on religious infrastructure in London and the floors is yours Said.

**SAID MAHATHIR:** Thank you so much, thank you Hanadi. Let me share my screen.

 Right, thank you Hanadi for really good introductions, and sorry for the glitch and error during this webinar, we’re trying our best.

 Good afternoon to any one of you joining from London, and probably good morning, even Salaam-Alaikum to any audiences who are watching from all over the world. First of all, I need to thank The Bartlett Inclusive Spaces for this opportunity. It’s such a great honour for me to be able to present my work progress and how it intersects with Islamophobia issues.

To avoid positionality bias, I would like to share my positionality as a South Asian Muslim dominated by Sunni Muslim. Also, a Muslim living for about two years in London for my Phd study and I’m also a trained architect and urban planner.

So, to start with the presentation, I would like to tell you about the story of this picture. If you can't see from this picture, my research is about religious infrastructure of Muslim in London, study of production of religious space supervised by Haim Yacobi and Kamna Patel.

This mosque is called Shepherd’s Bush Mosque, because it's located in Sepherd’s Bush in the Hammersmith borough, London.

What is interesting about this image is, three days before I took this picture an Imam announced a really important notice from neighbours who complained about the noise produced from the Tara prayer and on Saturday night I took this picture, and I saw many Jama’ah or congregations coming out from the most and murmuring about the event that they witnessed. And one of my research participants approached me when I took this picture, and he said, like, this is ridiculous: “The Imam asked Jama’ah to lower their voice when reciting Amen, or Amin if you like, due to the neighbour’s complaint, but nobody does the same for the loud music that comes from that pub. I think every Jama’ah can hear the noise coming through the basement, they were bothered, but they cannot do anything.” And he closely his statement by: “We never win to argue about anything in this country.”

 So, if you see this picture, you probably already have your perception or impression. If you could help me to do a quick survey and type in in the chat box: What do you feel about it? When you see the pub and the mosque, side by side, standing in same place.

Normally, people think how it’s differentiated, how it’s different, how you would say like ‘Halal’ or ‘Haram’ or ‘develop’ and ‘develop’. Probably, religious, or not religious, secular or religious or whatever you have in mind.

But to me, I saw this as the contact of a super diverse community in London. We could recognize the similarity in here, which is to note it as a well-being space. So, the tension, the contestation over space that the temporarily of it is continuously negotiable, and it will form in the end the standard of tolerance.

 Now look at the second picture, here. You probably you see that the family, a group of family walk on a bicycle lane in front of the crowd of the mosque. This picture was taken on Friday, and the family approaching by the people who are coming out from the mosque and waiting for the queue for the second Jumu’ah. And the only, and they are able to employ only one security to control the crowd because, of course, of financial reasons.

Also, it's not the only problem or not the first problem that happened in this mosque.

A couple of years back, some of them even prey on walkway, they just put a sign that they were praying, of a praying man, and the Hammersmith and Fulham council start to policy by putting the CCTV camera actually to avoid the Muslim praying on the same space again.

And as you can see here, we learn about, what it says by Low and Lawrence, that “the most effective ways to investigate the social construction of space is through an analysis of ‘contested spaces’”. In the sense that this space is contested between Muslim or non -Muslim, or any other religious group. And “the form of opposition, confrontation, subversion, and resistance engage actors often with differential access to power and resources.”

So, we can see that in Shepherd’s Bush, the form of tension is not only experienced by both Muslim, but not only by Muslim I mean, but also by non-Muslim communities. In this case, either Islam, Muslim or how they practice their religion can be wanted for the hate crime.

Now, let's see the Islamophobia and the patterns in London urban space. By definition, “Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expression of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness” related to the space.

Seventy-one percent of non-Muslim or the British citizen in general want close monitoring of Muslim faith schools. This probably has correlation with the Trojan Horse, the case in Birmingham if I’m not mistaken. Then the second is 43 percent concerned if a mosque was built near them. And the third, there is, some of them believe that 23 percent believe that there are ‘no-go areas’ where Muslims actually live and dominate the space.

And if we see the pattern of Islamophobia, this is what Najib found. You can focus on space, place and urban model. Three of them focus on where it happens, it happens normally in public access, public transport, in public area, or along major roads or in everyday spaces, in everyday places. And we see the geographical tension, we know that Islamophobia is not necessarily happening in Muslim population, or where Muslim resides. It's more diffused in Mosque also, in Muslim institution. And as a consequence, we see that Muslim are worried about their mobility and their daily life. And the question is so: Is there any place for Muslim in London to be, and practise in accordance to their faith? If you see this kind of action of Islamophobia.

So, we will see the answer, probably, within the community. So, by preserving the community, is also increased, or maintaining the sense of belonging. This echoes what Haque found in 2015, her research found that there are five reasons why Muslim seems like segregated: First, “the structural inequalities, institutional racism, social economic marginalisation, ingrained sociocultural reasons- staying with family and community, and hostility and discrimination against Muslims forces them to seek support from their ow n communities”. So, I highlighted the ingrained sociocultural, or probably religious, cultural, that they want to preserve the value and the knowledge of Islam, close-knit to the community.

And on the right side you will see probably Islam not the same monolithic religious, because it's not one practice, they practise differently. On the right side, yeah, the left side, you see, that would be Bohra communities from Husainy Masjid and Ahmadiyya community at Baitul Futuh Mosque and also Sunni community that is dominant most in London, East London Mosque and the Shia community.

So, before we go deeper into the details of this community and mosque demography, I would like to show you, if you want to study, if you want to study what religion, particularly in Western urban setting, probably need to understand ‘urban’ as a territorial unit.

So, this is what Daniels said: they argue that logically that various way of religious organisation impact their environment would be magnified by other religious unit. Now, if you see the diagram on the right side, you will see London as a territory which is not only Muslim, there are some Jews, Hindu, Christian, of course, and Buddhist, Sikh and any other religion, and this street itself in here I put an example, for instance, as a Muslim district

But that district itself, it's not like district of Hammersmith, or of Shepherd’s Bush, for instance, it's more like metaphor that links social distance within the space and then this district connected each other, where they help each other, and the infrastructure is work as a connector that sharing the goods, people, capacity. I did. I will explain later what this infrastructure is.

Now let's go deep to the demographic data of Muslim population. This data is recorded in 2011. There are about 2.7 millions of Muslim in England and about 4ou or 2 millions reside in London. This is dominated by Asian bridges, probably because of the he colonial era. Then the age group. They are in a really young age group. Still, half of them dominated by a young age group. And then nationality. They have like 70 percent of them which we have British nationality. And then 47.2 percent Muslim born in UK.

Let's skip at the housing. Now let's see the spread of the mosque in the central of the page. In this slide you see the distribution of 478 Muslim place for worship. This could include the actual mosque, hire hall, prayer room, musalla and et cetera.

But my argument is, this is not the only one recorded. There are some mosques that are not being recorded yet, because they don't have, probably the permissions, or it is not being registered.

Now let’s see how mosque is distributed based on capacity. If you are familiar with the Central mosque or the Islamic mosque where you can see a really obvious shape of the mosque of the dome and the minaret, that's only about 45 from all the total of 407, and the rest of it, people rely very much on the ‘everyday’ mosque.

As you can see on the right side, that's all the mosque that spreads all over the line. The fact is, if you see the number of the capacity they can, they can hold normally, the biggest mosque, they only hold Juma’ah for instance, only once. While the ‘everyday’ mosques, they sometime run twice for instance, and twice, with most the capacity of 500-700 and run twice, probably will reach for 1.400. So, this is the realistic need for Muslim, no matter where they work, or they live.

Now we also see the mosque distribution based on Islamic sects. In fact, you will see that London is still dominated by the Sunni group, which is from Barlevi school, Deobandi, Maudoodi or Salafi.

They are spread from East London to West London. But the Shia group, we can see it's a bit to the North London and spreading to the South London; and while the Sufi is also still there. Now the rest of it, they have not, identified themselves as an Islamic sect, or probably, the data has to be discovered yet.

And now we see the distribution based on the ethnicity who manage the mosque.

You see that in the centre are Bangladeshi or east, most of the mosque there are managed by the Bangladeshi. And Pakistani pretty much spread. And Arabs as you can see from the Shia group, probably in the in Edgware or North London, and also the Gujarati Sufi, which if you go back to the Islamic sects, you see a lot of Sufis there and also the mixed group and students, we are in Central of London, UCL, Westminster, and so on, and other ethnic minorities, such as Afghan or Bosnian Herzegovina, and so on and so forth.

So what is with this infrastructure, anyway? So religious “infrastructure are built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people or ideas and allow for their exchange over spaces.”

And, as a physical form, the shared nature of network that speak the directions of each movement, its temporalities, its liabilities to break down. They comprise the architecture of circulation, literally providing sustainability of modern society. They generate the ambience of environment, of every life. Larkin in 2013. De Nunzio, I like this definition that they make by “act of living” as a mode of collective existence and action, to survive simultaneously in this, and to survive religious life, amidst the conditions of marginality.

 Now what is the object material of Islam, pillars on space.

Probably you’re familiar with the mosque, which is only the second pillar, which is ‘Prayer’. That's why we go to the mosque, mushalla, or prayer room.

But of course, as religious infrastructure, we need to consider all the infrastructure related to the fact that of Islam as a material object, its appearance on space, for instance, like the ‘Profession of faith’: islamic center, education institution, marriage service, burial ground. It’s important for Muslim who live in London. And ‘Fasting during Ramadan’, Halal food shop and groceries, probably in the end of Ramadan they would celebrate the Eid Al-Fits, they’d have to use the religious equipment and apparels for them to shop. And then “Almsgiving’ or Zakat institution and Sharia bank, as well as the ‘Pilgrimage’, travel agency and slaughterhouse for Qurbani.

Now Shepherd’s Bush I chose as ethnographic setting. This is denoted as a religious corridor where you can see a lot of religion, not only Islam. You can see the Sikh, or Christians, different type of Christian, sorry different branch of Christians and then if you can see here, it’s all on this picture it’s all everyday mosque that we can see around the area pretty much as you can see, for instance the Al Mukhbateen Masjid is closed due to the Imam passed away and other financial issues. And the next, the Faizan e Imam Shafai they have hardship in sustaining £3000 of operational cost. Also, if you see the Daar us Sunnah Mosque, which is located exactly behind the Shepherd's Bush Market, where people throw rubbish, trash, it smells unpleasant, but to them the ability to perform prayer is more important than the quality of location. And the Shepherd’s Bush Mosque also struggle because the capacity keeps increasing because the Mass is closed people keep coming and every Jummah there is a lot of tension and contestation you see around this place.

So this is what these preliminary research findings that I can acknowledge at the moment.

So related to the first pillar of Islam of the ‘Profession of faith’, there is an infrastructure of religious knowledge and values in form of education school or et cetera.

But I’m putting forward this really interesting, this case where Speaker Corner, if you're familiar with Speaker Corner in Hyde Park where people can talk freely, often in Oxford street, sometimes Soho too. The nature of freedom of speech in this society makes the dialogue of religion in the space more casual and less intimidating.

You can see the same in Shepherd’s Bush tube station which is part of my religious corridor, every weekend this space temporarily, this open space temporarily is turned into a religious space where many religious institution, like Christian Coptic, Christian and Pentecostal and Muslim and many more, they spread the word they believe and what values the believe.

Sometime they also use a provocative method to bring the conversation points. For instance, if you see on the picture like “Allah King of Kings”, or if you see on the top picture, this is a Muslim and you see the gentleman with the blue coat, probably want to approach and discuss about that. That's probably one of the strategies.

And then, what I found from the one of the, one who manage this Muslim booths said: “As a Muslim who lives in a Western country among the non-Muslim, we are suggested to do Da’wah as written in Quran” and then he continued by reciting Quran Surah Ali ‘Imran: 104.

And the second finding so far is about the Zakat, the obligatory charity, which Muslim need to gift it normally every year. And then the the fact is Islamic Relief found that 50 fifty percent of Muslim in UK household live in poverty and education, compared to 18 percent of general UK population. However, the tendency of Zakat, of Fitrana in this case, from local giver distribute to the global community who are at war, in drought, or other hardships rather than to local Muslim recipients.

And the internal perception of Muslim with the decision, say that Muslim in London are wealthy. Therefore, the charity is best distributed to other native country. This is aligned when I interviewed the Shepherd’s Bush Mosque management and asked where are you going to distribute the Zakat and they said: “How do we locate the poor Muslims in London? Most Muslims here are wealthy and stable compared to those in Pakistan, Bangladesh or Syria. If they want to receive Zakat, they need to fill an application form to the Mosque” which is a hustle for most.

Some time, you see online Zakat institution they also give a lot of advertisement about giving Zakat or distributing Zakat abroad, and then to the London community, the London Muslim community as well. In this sense, we could understand that there is this connectivity between the local recipient and the Zakat institution in London.

And then last, we see the ‘Pilgrimage’, related to the Hajj, but for the people who cannot do Hajj, they cannot do the Qurbani or the slaughter of animal. I found from my ethnography fieldwork, some of my participants, one of my participants, called Habiba said: “My husband and I decidea to do Qurbani in our home country. People in this country don’t eat much meat compared to in our country. They don’t need it, many poor communities in our country need it more.”

There is internal doubt by Muslim communities regarding the proper Qurbani ritual in the UK. Some of them believe that the strict regulation hold by the FSA (Food Standard Agency) on Halal slaughterhouse, such as stunning, specific red meat temperature for transporting, offal consumption, use and waste, cast doubt over the proper Qurbani. And that the slaughterhouse and halal butchers tend to capitalise on Qurbani and making it unaffordable. The religious institution enable alternative for affordable Qurbani. From my survey I found that when Qurban comes the price of mutton or lamb that that normally costs around £100, during the Qurban it’s twice, like £200 or £270 maximum. While, if it holds by religious institution, the price is the same. There's one mosque that I found in Peckham, Peckham centre station, they hold the same price, as everyday price.

And then there are contestations of most proper ritual of Qurbani among the Halal butcher and the slaughterhouse. So if you buy the Qurbani, if you want to apply to get the Qurbani, they say, oh we are the most proper one and that’s why the price is expensive. That’s what they always advertise.

Well, so far, this is what I can present the progress of my research, thank you for the floor, and I give it back to you Hanadi.

**HANADI:**Said, we have questions for you from the attendees. I'm not sure if you can see the questions, or do you want me to state them so that we can have a discussion about them?

**SAID:** Yeah let me see the first question from Kyan: “How do religious institutions enable alternatives for affordable qurbani?”  I think. I will just answer this question first.  , it's basically because of not - religious institution is not alone to do with qurbani. Only specific people who are in the abattoir or in the slaughterhouse are allowed to do the qurani. it says, based on the FSA. Regulations about the slaughterhouse. So probably it's my assumption. The most, I say, can do qurban the same price, as the known is everyday space. They also work in the slaughterhouse, probably.

But I mean, I need to figure it. I need to dig that deep in future. Um. But optimistically, you can say that religious infrastructure works as a medium to create affordable qurban.

**HANADI:**Okay, I will read the second question for you. Okay, it's from Kyra: “Do you think cities and towns should be divided into districts according to religion to avoid conflict such as the noisy pub disrupting the mosque (as you mentioned at the start)? Would this accentuate the divide between religions and races when we have focused on being more inclusive and appreciative of each other’s culture this decade? Or would this create more harmony between religions as there would not be any clashes in daily activity?”

**SAID:** These are really interesting question. Yes, yes. When we talk about passiveness or a sense of collective life, for instance.

I probably don't have a specific answer about it, but my pessimistic nature: I believe that, don’t you think the urban is already segregated, based on like, capitalistic nature. Rich people get it in their own house or their own community.

But the thing is we all live as assemblage like musicians in an orchestra: we live to support each other. But we need to build a sense of tolerance. That's why, probably,no matter how we define it based on religion or based on money or financials that we have as an urban citizen, we still need to live with each other, particularly in multi-cultural society.  Like here in London. I don't have a precise answer.

But do we need to build a cohesiveness or a sense of living together? Because, in fact, you’re segregated already, but what we have to build now is how to understand each other, and then how we build a sense or standard of tolerance.

I hope this answers your questions. It's a really good question.

**HANADI:**It is. I mean, I'm happy to take further questions from the attendees. If anyone would like to ask a direct question, just write it down.

If not, I would like to take this question further, and discuss with you.

The way you present it, the religious practices, it's basically to present it through the way of life. Right, is that Islam is not just  a religion that is bounded, you know, it actually directs us how to navigate the city, how, where to go in terms of food, you know, or whatever we want to do. So, you know, to live in isolation and in separate districts for me, it's a bit, you know, it's a bit   delusional, because at some point we will have to interact and intersect, with each other. And this is what you said basically that we have to be more tolerant and more and more   forward in our thinking.

**SAID:**Right? Right? Yeah, I agree. I agree with you Hanadi. Yeah, that's why it says by I mean in our hearts, it seems segregated. But in fact, if you see, there are five items which is one up to five, four of them I assume it's something like external factors that Muslims can control, such as segregation, institutional in workplaces, in any you know, but what Muslims as a community can control is how to keep their son, for example, their generations still within the values of Islam. Teaching Koran. It is simple. That's why some of them still believe in living in the same community where they can find this, Islamic education near by their house. It's important to live in a secular country, for me, I think the conflict between religion in London: probably a lesser issue. Currently,it’s more between the non believer and the believer. That’s why the corridor is the religious corridor for an alternative space where all religions can find each other, without any specific ethnic   denominations.

That's probably what is the future of London, which is of a super diverse country for diverse community, and it's also doesn't mean they also there in you will avoid the idea that probably in future, there will be a building that has different religions in one of building that can interact with each other and create, you know, with different rooms, for instance, but still -

**HANADI:** Labelling is an issue, to put labels on things. Um. So now I have. I have two other questions.  I have a question from Moaz and he's asking: “Does the incoherence inside the Muslim community make it harder to explore solutions and concepts for their needs?”

**SAID:**  Well, that's, is that question for me?

**HANADI:** Yes, that's a question for you. Yeah.

**SAID:** Let me digest this. Does that incoherence in side the Muslim community make it harder to explore solution concept of what I mean I that's I think, what I would say is, if you are living in a close knit  community, probably the infrastructure is just come right to you. Maybe the proximity with you and the religious infrastructure is closest, so the solution is always there.

But the thing is, you imagine, if I leave like in South London, or or in any other place in London, except for London and Chester or Birmingham, which is difficult to find mosque or any other halal food vendor for that is going to be a lot of trouble for me. Of course that's why, even as an immigrant or Muslim will come in like, come first to London. The first thing that they find probably the closest space to gain foot or follow closely the halal.

Actually, does that answer the questions?

**HANADI:** So basically I have another question. I will state it now but I can go back to the answer about you know the difference in Muslim communities. So, Ulya is asking: “I am really curious about your positionality.” This is an interesting one. “How did you build the trust to your participants?”

**SAID:** Right? This is that they're exactly really interesting question about, positionality, because I also said earlier that i'm Sunni Muslim like most of South East Asian Muslim, normally. The thing is: the case in in in my corridor, my setting of ethnography, all of them normally Muslim, and Sunni Muslim, but also, in the Shafi'i, some Shafi'i mosques are right there. But I think, as long as, as Sunni I can go, pray, and you know, access all the building. But the thing is, let's say to the Shi’a of the Sufi: I don't know how to practice the way they do. It's a bit dfficult for me to gain access to them or to interview them, because you know the conflict between internal religious is also there.

You know that there's no question that it's really important, of course. I'm - You know I cannot access all the religious facilities at a moment in London. But to my corridor, my my ethnographic corridor. Yes, I mean as Muslim i'm internal somehow, but I'm also external or outsider, because I'm not Londoners. I don't have any London citizenship. I live here only two years, something like that, and I’m also a researcher, and also part of personality. I have intention, you know. I've purpose on it. I'm not doing that, like, not like this normal citizen of London.

It's right because they need to interact. I interact to them because of my research. Yeah, I need to note that in my writing, probably

**HANADI:**Great. Ala’a, would you like to, would you like to just, you know, come and give us, like, feedback or contribute?

**ALA’A SHEHABI:** I mean, I just want to apologize for this. I think the network in my area is not now I'm on my own Internet. But um, I didn't hear the question. I'm sorry, but I just wanted to make a comment on what Said you said about access to communities?

You know, like any other. I don't think there's anything kind of exceptional about access to Muslim spaces and other than building trust and friendships and um other space. Yes, there are different um, and you know there are different religious groups. There's a lot of rich diversity between, you know there are one point two million Muslims in London. So there's a rich ethnic and sectarian diversity within the Muslim community. Um, but access is possible, and I think, it just needs a bit of effort from the researchers need to make an effort both to kind of break down the barriers between the different religious groups, but also to build trust and to um give the different insights into the rich diversity of the cultures that exist within the different mosque spaces and different religious spaces.

There is a lot of variation. I kind of enamoured, and every time I get to new space, how they run things differently the events that they hold are differently… the kind of um, particularly of  I think, of direct interest within Muslim groups is this kind of inter-generational relationships to religious spaces so like: how do you cater for different religious needs. How do you bring the next generation on board to take over charities? Take over the governance of these mosques spaces is a particularly interesting one. I was going to touch on that in my talk, but I couldn't. Unfortunately, I really apologize about that.

**HANADI:**No worries. Thank you Ala’a. Okay, I have three questions. Okay. And you know, feel free, both, I mean, if you want to respond. So, the first one is from Fara, and she's asking: “Do any”, this is probably for Said, “Do any of your participants retain their country of origin's identity when constructing infrastructure?”

**SAID:**Yes, that's also a really good question.  Yes, I believe, many British citizens have like multiple identities. They can't distinguish between: what should I go first? I am British. I am Muslim first, or I am like, let's say, Indonesian, or in some some sese, if I have, British citizenship. In my case, my friends my participant, sorry, he's Pakistani he’s also Muslim, also British. So it's a bit difficult, but they need to hold that for their best identity. So if you want to create them, if you want to list that, they're gonna put that Muslim first and then Pakistani and British the last.

Yeah, that's based on my empirical study.

**HANADI:** Okay. There's a question here, an interesting one, and it's a comparative one. So, Saif is asking: “Many churches in the UK are not being used in the same ways as in the past. Do you think more needs to be done to accommodate interfaith dialogue with Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists?”

**SAID:**Um, I'm not quite understanding about the interfaith dialogue in that space, probably if you ask is it possible for the like, the unused mouse, or unused temple to be changed into other religious groups’ place for worship? That's happened a lot. New Peckham mosque, was built on a church, or there's a synagogue, in not London, has been built for a Sectarian group. Yeah, I think that's that's also implicitly to say that there is a dialogue. Of course, even though the that the Church is not being used by that  community anymore, but still holds, or still owned by the the Christian community, or the Jewish community, but because of that dialogue that beautifully mingles around London as it's already a tolerant country of every religion. That's why they can build the mosque inside the church. It's never happened in Indonesia, probably, or I don't know. Yeah, in case initially, it's difficult. Something happened like that.

**ALA’A:** I just wanted to add to that point. It's just unfortunate I keep wanting to share my examples, because the two designs of the mosques that I wanted to share was one. That was exactly that was the one in Harrow that's going to be open to other cultural groups, and that was one of the kind of conditionalities of the planning proposal, and it's on the High Street.  So it's about the design of these new spaces to actually offer public services. You know, restaurants, gymnasiums bringing that culture outwards, and that intercultural engagement. Um as part of the design of the mosque.

Whereas the example of The second most that I was going to show was was the idea of that. We need to kind of ensure the needs of our own home grown community.  Inter generationally from elderly care homes to facilities for child care that the State is no longer providing, and you know, using kind of membership-models of governance, and almost like a large social co-op. Some of these new models are being run in kind of new ways. To ensure these services, and what really struck me was the story. You know, my friend um got killed cycling her bike in Holborn a few months ago, and I only realized the value of kind of -  I have realized the value of being a member of the community.

It was when I saw our community take her body, wash, and you know I realized well, you know, this is the community that will look after us when we are aging when we die, and so on. And then I realize what? Why, being part of a religious group in the community is so importan. And who does that labor who does that work right? And so these mosques serve really critical social functions for people. And the more we, some people realize the more they can extend the outwards is another form of Dawa, that it's not just about us, and this is where the the the transition from the first generation of Muslims that came to this country, you know, in the sixties and seventies is now transitioning to the second generation, and that's questions are being asked, and they're being staked:

You know. Who are these mosques for? Some communities remain small. Some communities have expanded, and that reflects in the design of some of these new mosques as service providers.

**HANADI:** Oh, thank you. I have. I have two questions. So there's one for you. I'll skip one. I'll go directly to this question. So this is Sare, it’s for Ala’a: “It is unfortunate that we could not see the whole presentation, but as far as I could understand, the design and form of mosques were to be discussed. I am interested in the gender segregation and inclusivity in mosques. I am wondering if the new approaches and designs ever add something to the traditional use of space between genders, in the scope of your research. And thank you”

**ALA’A:** I mean, we, me and Hanadi discussed this because it featured in one of the most, we call it the English mosque, right, the Cambridge Mosque. And you know these, the design of these: all these new mosques have spaces for women have sometimes equal spaces, so there's a flexibility of the space. It's not like hard walls or separate rooms like there’s a balance between the intermingling that happens between sexes, but also the space and the safe space that you need for you know, for mothers with children who want to feed versus you know, kind of privacy issues.

I mean, you know, we all know that the Ground Mosque and Mecca is not segregated right? So this is more: the idea of segregation reflects the you know a a patriarchal conception of the role of women and others in which that is being challenged in the design of some of these new mosques.

**HANADI:** Okay, I have two questions, and then we need to wrap up. Okay. So one from Ayan. Ayan is asking, “Do you think more open-minded interaction between internal sects would help build trust and communication with the external environment? Would that help break down the walls between Muslims and other religious groups?”

**SAID:** Is that for me or for Ala’a?

**HANADI:** I mean, feel free to answer, if you want. I mean Ala’a…

**ALA’A:** I'll answer it just because I am a Shia Muslim and Said is Sunni. It kind of bothers me that actually, you know, mainstream Sunni Islam is the normative Islam as the dominant sect, and when you are from a minority sect, you know you have a sense of: Our spaces can be insular as a minority within the within a dominant group.  At the same time there is interfaith work happening, and they need to happen, more, I agree.  For example, in one of the Harrow mosque that I was going to show. They will host the local Sunni community for Friday prayers, because there's another Shia mosque not far away.

They can't have, so that kind of the congregations around sect, and who can use the space needs to be constantly negotiated. And so you know it's good to see, I mean. Unfortunately, it's not even between intersects that sometimes within the sex themselves. You know we have a Pakistani mosque,a mosque for Palestinians, and you know, community centers for North Africans and others.

You know there are some mixing on the margins, but predominantly, sometimes these mosques shaped around different artistic, ethnic groups, some mosques are shaped around different generational groups, and so on. So. There is a diversity there, but it's being, I think, negotiated at the moment as the elder generation, who maybe someone asked about whether some mosques reflect where people are from. You know that we're from the kind of the country of origin? And yeah, I mean, I find that you know, in Ramadan, for example, we've always had the a culture in my family where we will try and visit as many mosques as possible during Ramadan, because we celebrate Ramadan differently in this country.

Ramadan, in this country’s celebrated predominantly around the mosque in ways that it isn't necessarily.

 You know, we break our fast in the mosque in the way, you know. I'm originally from   the island of Bahrain, and we don't, you know we break the fast at home. So we make the point of visiting all the different mosques. You know Iraqis, Syrian, Afghanistan, Afghani, and Persian, and others because we get that different cultural vibes everywhere we go and we like that. But yeah, there's a kind of sense that some mosques are kind of:

People congregate around the ethnicity even within the sect. So there's lots of layers of  , you know, lots of boundaries within sects and between sects and others that exist. But yeah, it's it kind of, you know, and that's sometimes the nature of the city and the nature of geography. But other times it's not. It's a conscious decision.

**SAID:**Right? Probably I would just add a bit about the boundary. Probably they have like the tolerance between what is ritual and what is ceremonial, so some Muslims they will like: They want to push forward to the ritual part. But for the ceremonial, for instance, like when when the Shia group doing the Unsura (?) the march,  I also join in, you know, as part of wanting to learn and to talk to them, to feel: how does it feel in the crowd?

**HANADI:**  Okay, I'm gonna take the last question, and it has to be last, because I need to wrap up and to finish the session. Okay, so, the last question is from Michael, but I think it's for you Said, he's asking: “What made you decide to design/build religious infrastructure in the first place, or what was your motivation?”

**SAID:** Probably, the question is not what I'm designing, or what I'm building, because the Religious infrastructure itself is basically like a network of cable or  roads which is connecting all the peoples’ capacity around England, UK, or London in general. So I'm not building anything here. But I want to investigate that religious infrastructure which is like a pipe which is broken. We just want to fill that gap, and if you want to see which halal food or it’s qurbani which has the problem of the ritual which they are known as proper qurbani. So we can see whether or not religious  infrastructure or religious institution can help those infrastructures, fill the gap of the proper one, which a lot of people have doubt about that. Yeah that’s my feeling.

**HANADI:** Okay, I just want to wrap up and just to give some reminders. So we explored the meaning of the social practice of Islam by looking at interconnections between public spaces, personal faith between religious lived space and religious ecology, and what enables the production and inclusion of religious life and infrastructure of cities.

So thank you, everyone for joining. And I'm still so sorry Ala’a that you couldn’t share your presentation, I mean, unfortunately, and your thoughts, Said are thought provoking. So, I urge everyone to join us for the Inclusive Spaces that's gonna be back on Wednesday 14 December with Disability-inclusive Design for Climate Resilient Cities and with colleagues from UCL-led Global Disability Innovation Hub. Sign up details are in the chat. So we have to see everyone there. And, I just wanna say, have a lovely afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining.

**SAID:** Thank you. Thank you.

**ALA’A:** Bye.

**HANADI:** Thanks.