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Political Geographies of Religions in Russia: Mosques, Churches, the State, and Social Movements in Moscow

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POLITICAL GEOGRAPHIES OF RELIGIONS IN RUSSIA: MOSQUES, CHURCHES, THE STATE, AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN MOSCOW

by

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A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Political geographies of religions in Russia: Mosques, churches, the state, and social movements in Moscow
written by Meagan Todd
has been approved for the Department of Geography

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John O’Loughlin

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Jennifer Fluri

Date________________________

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

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Abstract

Todd, Meagan (Ph.D. Geography)

Political geographies of religions in Russia: Mosques, churches, the state, and social movements in Moscow

Thesis directed by Professor John O’Loughlin

This dissertation explores the discourse and politics of citizenship and minority rights in Russia. In particular I am concerned with analyzing the ways in which Muslim minorities negotiate restrictions on religious practices in Moscow’s public spaces. I examine the challenges and experiences that Moscow’s Muslim communities face in forging public communities and, in particular, in constructing new places of worship. Religious construction projects in general and mosques in particular generate new forms of local activism in Moscow. I use qualitative methods to analyze how contestations over religious sites generate new configurations of publics in Moscow. 29 in-depth interviews with key informants provide insight as to how religious communities navigate their rapid growth within Russia’s managed democracy, while 95 street interviews of 10-20 minutes and participant observation portray the everyday experience of Muslim communities. Analyses of key texts, speeches, and documents from a myriad of sources, including national newspapers and the archives of community activist groups supplement these interviews by providing a look at the role that social, religious, and state institutions play in shaping Moscow’s religio-political geographies.

My analysis focuses on case studies, including the controversies surrounding the demolition and reopening of Moscow’s largest mosque, Cathedral Mosque and a comparative analysis of protests over mosque and Russian Orthodox church construction. A discussion of
other Muslim public spaces in Moscow includes neighborhood centers and women’s groups, and the diversity of Muslim communities, practices, and spaces in the city.

The public presence and diversity of Muslims in Moscow has led to tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims and within Muslim communities. These nature of these tensions and insecurities about Muslim presence and forms of public visibility touch on issues such as protests over new mosque construction and questions over Muslim rituals in Moscow’s public life. My dissertation contributes to the political geographies of religion by studying new configurations of civil society in Moscow.
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Chapter One: Introduction

This dissertation explores the discourse and politics of citizenship and minority rights in Russia. In particular I am concerned with analyzing the ways in which Muslim minorities negotiate restrictions on religious practices in Moscow’s public spaces. I examine the challenges and experiences that Moscow’s Muslim communities face in forging public communities and, in particular, in constructing new places of worship. Religious construction projects in general and mosques in particular generate new forms of local activism in Moscow. I use qualitative methods to analyze how contestations over religious sites generate new configurations of publics in Moscow. Twenty-nine in-depth interviews with key informants provide insight as to how religious communities navigate their rapid growth within a post-atheist urban geography, while 95 street interviews of 10-20 minutes and participant observation help understand the everyday experience of Muslim communities. Analyses of key texts, speeches, and documents from a myriad of sources, including national newspapers and the archives of community activist groups supplement these interviews by providing a look at the role that social, religious, and state institutions play in shaping Moscow’s religio-political geographies.

My analysis focuses on case studies, including the controversies surrounding the demolition and reopening of Moscow’s largest mosque, Cathedral Mosque and a comparative analysis of protests over mosque and Russian Orthodox church construction in Moscow neighborhoods. Mosques and Russian Orthodox church construction in Moscow raises questions over the integration of symbolic public spaces of religion into everyday life. I contend that these sites become spaces where publics define themselves against each other while negotiating their shared values.
The public presence and diversity of Muslims in Moscow has led to tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims and within Muslim communities. These nature of these tensions and insecurities about Muslim presence and forms of public visibility are explored in this dissertation, touching on issues such as protests over new mosque construction and questions over Muslim rituals in Moscow’s public life.

In this chapter, I introduce my research questions and theoretical framework. I then turn to an overview of the Moscow research context, concluding with an outline of the dissertation.

**Research questions: Russia’s Religious Revival in Moscow**

Moscow shares some commonalities and differences with other large urban centers with sizeable Muslim minority communities. Notably, Moscow fits a pattern of increased public expressions of Muslim faith in large cities in Europe and the United States (Tarlo 2010). Muslim public spaces in urban centers have raised questions over identity politics in both suburban areas in London (Naylor and Ryan 2002) as well as in symbolic sites such as the controversies over building the Park 51 Muslim community center near the World Trade Center (Ruez 2013). Even though Muslim visibilities are contested in London and New York, their aesthetic regimes are more open to Muslims than Moscow’s. Moscow’s religiously diverse population includes an estimated 2 million Muslims out of 11.5 million residents, but only four mosques serve Muslim practitioners (March 2010). In comparison to other large capital cities, London has over 400 mosques to serve an estimated 1 million believers, according to the UK’s 2011 census (Gani 2015). New York City has 285 mosques as of 2015 (Carnes 2015). Even though Muslim visibilities are contested in London and New York, the number of mosques suggests that their aesthetic regimes are more open to Muslims than Moscow’s.
Unlike London or New York, the public presence in Moscow is developing after the Soviet era of state-sponsored atheism and the repression of public expressions of religion. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and its formal state policy of atheism in 1991, religiosity in Russia has blossomed, both publicly and privately. I use the term religiosity to describe how religion becomes an element of both subjectivity and group identity formation (Gökarkıkse 2009; Brubaker 2012). Religiosity consists of multidimensional measures such as the beliefs in the tenets of religions, the practice of religious rituals, attendance at religious services, and self-identification as a member of a religious group (Cornwall et al. 1986). Increasingly, more Russians are identifying as religious (Hunter 2004; Forest, Johnson, and Stepaniants 2005). This statement is evidenced by countrywide annual data collected by the Levada Center (a leading Russian public opinion center), which shows a decline from 61% in 1991 to 22% in 2011 of Russians who do not consider themselves religious. Russian Orthodoxy and Islam are the largest religions in Russia. During this twenty-five year time period following the collapse of the Soviet Union, adherents to these religions have more than doubled: Russian Orthodoxy rose from 31% to 68%, while self-identified Muslims grew from 2% to 7% (Levada Center 2013). There are an estimated 14.5 million ethnic Muslims in Russia, and 20 million when accounting for immigrants from the traditionally Muslim areas of Central Asia (Malashenko 2014). In Russian statistics, religion and ethnicity are elided: Russian Orthodoxy is associated with Russian ethnicity, and Islam with Tatar, Chechen, and Azeri ethnicities amongst others (Hunter 2004). My goal in the dissertation is study the politics of religion beyond these historical ethnic associations to see how religiosity leads to the formation of new types of publics.

My research project studies the spatial dynamics of Russia’s increased religiosity in Moscow. I seek to understand the minority rights of Muslim communities within the context of
increased political support for public expressions of Russian Orthodoxy in Moscow’s public space. The increase in religiosity in Russia has placed new demands on city planners who inherited a lack of religious infrastructure from the atheist Soviet system. In Moscow, the lack of mosques is much more pronounced than the lack of churches. Moscow’s Russian Orthodox and Muslim practitioners are both underserved by religious infrastructures, with one church per 35,000 residents and one mosque per 3 million residents respectively. Churches and mosques play a different role for Muslim and Russian Orthodox believers—collective prayer is central to Muslim communities, and mosques are not a necessity for carrying out collective prayer. Rituals and language constitute Muslim sacred places (Metcalf 1996). Mosques are important communal spaces for Muslims, but not necessarily sacred spaces. Moscow’s mayor since October 2010 Sergey Sobyanin has endorsed a plan to construct over 200 churches while he has opposed plans to build new mosques, explicitly citing the Muslim population of Moscow as transient and illegal (Venediktov 2013). Although Moscow’s Muslim leaders and imams have sought permission to build new mosques since the collapse of the Soviet Union, plans for new mosque construction in the city have come to fruition only twice since the end of state-based atheism and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Mosque construction is one proxy for evaluating how Muslims are able to make claims to public space (McLoughlin 2005). According to data aggregated at the national level, Russia has experienced a mosque construction boom. There were 870 registered mosques in 1991, with most of them located in the two historically Muslim regions of Russia: The North Caucasus, including the republics of Dagestan, with 240 mosques, and Chechnya-Ingushetia, with 162, and

---

1 The Russian Federation consists of 85 federal states. There are six types of federal states: 46 oblasts, or provinces, 22 republics, 9 krais, or frontiers, 4 autonomous okrugs, or regions, 3 federal cities, and 1 autonomous oblast. Most of the republics are the historic
the Volga-Urals region, including the republics of Tatarstan, with 91 mosques, and Bashkortostan, with 65 (Halbach 2001). 7,500 new mosques have been built in Russia since Putin became president in 2000, most of them not officially registered with the Russian government or affiliated with state-approved Muslim organizations (Goble 2014). This mosque construction is clustered in the historically Muslim regions in the North Caucasus and Volga-Ural regions. Over 1,500 new mosques have been built in Tatarstan, while there are over 1,000 in Chechnya and an estimated 3,000 in Dagestan (Kucera 2015).

In ethnically-Russian majority regions, however, there is a pattern of opposition to new mosque construction (Fagan 2012a). For example, there have been controversies over mosque construction in administrative centers such as Astrakhan (Holland and Todd 2015), Vladimir (Interview A, August 2011), and Stavropol (Dzusati 2014). This pattern occurs not only in smaller cities, but also in Russia’s largest cities. Sochi’s Muslim community has asked for and been denied permits to build a mosque for over 15 years, despite its international prominence as host to the 2014 Winter Olympics, and Saint Petersburg has only 2 mosques to serve its population of 5 million (Fagan 2012b).

Despite the national-level data showing exponential increase of mosque construction in the Russian Federation, Moscow follows the trend of ethnically majority Russian regions that face conflict over new mosque construction. Two mosques have been built in Moscow since 1991, both in the 1990s as part of multi-confessional religious complexes housing Russian Orthodox Churches, Buddhist temples, and Jewish synagogues. Both of these mosques faced protests from Russian nationals over their construction (Smith 2002), but they were ineffective in homelands of indigenous non-Russian ethnic groups, and named after these titular nationalities. Ethnic republics are legislatively different from other Russian political units, oblasts, and have more local autonomy than oblasts. Ethnic republics have their own constitutions and official languages, but still operate under the executive orders of the Russian president (Kolsto 1996).
deterring the completion of the projects. Since then, no new mosques have been built and new mosque proposals face opposition. On one hand, the number of mosques has doubled in the city since 1991; however the increase from 2 to 4 structures does not meet the needs of its estimated Muslim population of 1.5-2 million adherents (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 Location of mosques in Moscow (Map data ©2017 Google).
The politics of religious publics serve as a lens to study how minority faith communities are embedded and subjected to networks of state and other forms of power (Kong and Woods 2016). Broadly, my project examines the relationships between the state, civil society, and religious spaces. From the neighborhood and religious politics surrounding Muslim communities and religious construction projects, my research addresses the following specific questions:

• What do the politics enveloping mosque construction in Moscow reveal about the place of Muslim citizens, migrants, and Islam more broadly in Russian political life?

• What is the nature of the various discourses that surround the proposed construction of and opposition to new mosques in Moscow? Who are the opponents and advocates, and how are they organized and mobilized?

• How are these discourses promoted and received by interest groups including congregations, neighborhood associations, human rights organizations, and local government officials, concomitant to the evolution of Moscow’s religious landscape?

• How, where and in what other forms do spaces of Muslim community life and practices arise in Moscow, especially given the restriction on mosque building?

Moscow is an iconic place and the center of Russian political culture. Political leaders have constructed their ideologies into Moscow’s built environment: In the Russian Empire, Russian Orthodox churches in the Kremlin and Saint Basil’s Cathedral in Red Square were built by tsars to display piety and celebrate military victories (Cracraft and Rowland 2003), and the city’s seemingly endless apartment blocs were designed by planners to serve as the everyday setting of a classless, undifferentiated Soviet population (Collier 2011). This Soviet bloc landscape was deliberately atheist and devoid of religious buildings. Iconic due to its reputation as a political center, Moscow is also a representative case study of other ethnically Russian majority cities where Muslims face local opposition against the right to build mosques. My project analyzes what debates about the place of Islam (aka Muslim life) in Moscow’s public space say about the politics of religion and secularity in contemporary Russian democracy.
Mosques are one type of important Muslim space for collective prayer, but they are not the only public space important for Moscow’s Muslim communities. Thus, I study the motivations of mosque advocates and how they attempt to create a normative Muscovite Muslim identity as they make group claims for mosques in public space. I do not only study mosques as public spaces of Muslims: I analyze the proliferation of Muslim spaces (and publics) in the city, including neighborhood community centers, Muslim educational centers, and the emergent capitalist halal economy. This provides insight into what types of Muslim civil societies exist within the context of Russia’s managed democracy. I use the term managed to denote the control that the Russian president has over the government, the control the government has over mass media, and the relative weakness of other civil society and state institutions in comparison with the presidency (Casula 2013; Wegren and Konitzer 2007).

Framing the Study: Religion and the Politics of Public Space

In late 19th and early 20th century social science, sociologists and philosophers regarded religion as an aspect of social life that was declining in influence. Sociologists agreed that religion served a social purpose, but that purpose would disappear over time, in what is now called the secularization thesis (Bruce 1992). For example, Weber conjectured that Calvinism and the Protestant revolution supported capitalism and the ‘work ethic’- its core belief in the individual as able to fulfill salvation through action and work. Material wealth was a sign of hard work of both the body and soul according to Protestant logic, leading the way for capitalism to emerge as an economic system. But, once religion had helped establish capitalism, its influence would disappear as scientific rationality rose as an explanatory mechanism in society, a process he described as the “disenchantment of the world” (Weber 1993). Similarly, Durkheim (Durkheim 2001) hypothesized that religion explained the origins of collective life and
consciousness. He posited that in primitive societies, religious practices helped create explanations of natural phenomenon, morality, and a sense of social stability. But, under modernity and in more “advanced” societies in Europe, religion’s social role was being replaced by science and nationalism. In *Suicide* Durkheim (2006) elaborated on this thesis, stating that the lapse of moral community caused by the devaluation of religion as a form of understanding under the advent of industrialism and rise of cities as a form of organization led to anomie, wherein an individual feels alienated from the collective community. Anomie and disenchantment were the legacies of the shrinking of the role of religion under secularism, according to Weber and Durkheim.

Like Weber and Durkheim, Marx (Marx 1977) theorized that religion played an important social role under industrialization and capitalism in Europe, more specifically in Germany. Unlike Weber and Durkheim, Marx thought that the role of religion was to legitimize capitalism and believed that therefor it needed to be targeted as an area of revolution. He wrote:

> Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness (1977, 131).

The last part of this excerpt is one of Marx’s most famous lines, displaying his claim that religion distracts from any real happiness, truth, or struggle, although people turn to it in their search emancipation. Marx believed that religion blocked the formation of class-consciousness and needed to be transformed. He advocated for atheism to replace religious belief. Atheism, to Marx, was the negation of God, meaning that there was no transcendent entity in control man or nature. By turning to atheism, Marx believed that workers would be less focused on God and more on class struggle, eventually leading to socialism and communism (Marx 1977).
Marx’s analyses on religion had a lasting legacy in the Soviet Union, as adopters of his communist manifesto believed that religion was an arena which must be addressed, changed, and policed in order to transform from the Russian Empire to communism. From Marx’s views on religion arose new religious policies under Leninism and Stalinism which tried throughout the Soviet Era (1922-1990) to force secularization onto its multiconfessional publics, resulting in the large-scale closure of religious temples, the imprisonment of religious leaders, the deportation of religious peoples viewed as enemies of the Communist Party, and the close monitoring of religious activities (Froese 2004). Nationalism or atheism, however, has not replaced religion, as evidenced by Russia’s religious revival following its oppression in the Communist era.

Although theorists of modern nation-states have placed emphasis on how the role of religion has been supplanted by nationalism due to policies separating religion and politics (Agamben 2011; Anderson 2006), this general understanding of both secularism and religion has proven to be overly simplistic (Asad 2003). Contrary to the secularization thesis that religion’s role in society is waning (Norris and Inglehart 2011), this dissertation follows Agnew’s assertion that “religion is the emerging political language of the time” (Agnew 2006). This means that the role of religion has remained significant, and not just rhetorically. Religious nationalism (Christian, Islamic, and Hindu) is affecting foreign and domestic policies of the United State, Russia, India, and Britain, amongst other countries (Agnew 2006). Religious nationalism is used to foment populist and anti-immigrant movements throughout these countries, showing that it is still foundational in social and political terms (Brubaker 2012).

Besides the anthropological critique of secularism as a contingent formation (Asad 2003), critical religious scholars have also approached religion as a historical formation tied to European hegemony (Dubuisson 2003; Masuzawa 2005). This means that as Western scholars
studied and defined distinct world religion categories ("Islam", "Buddhism" and other major world religions) that they were implicit in colonial practices of categorization wherein Western intellectuals classified and defined religion via Western lenses rather than engaging with local knowledge (Fitzgerald 2003). To be clear, to say Western academics “invented religion” as an academic category doesn’t mean that European academics fabricated religion; rather it means that they identified and studied religions relationally with Christianity. Drawing from this critical approach to religion, I seek to understand both why the Russian government defines and treats religion the way it does (particularly Islam) as well as how religious communities form in everyday life (particularly Muslim communities). In doing so, my geographic approach contributes to the growing body of literature taking a spatially and historically contingent approach to religion (Fitzgerald 2003; McCutcheon 2003).

In my dissertation, I favor Kim Knott’s localized approach, which seeks to understand how religion is related to and intertwined with politics, with culture, and society (Knott 2015). I borrow insights from feminist political geography that seek to understand politics in everyday life. Religion is political, but nations and states are not the only sites of politics (England 2003; Flint 2003). Households, public spaces, and the streets are important sites of urban politics, especially in congested Moscow. As Mahmood’s work on women’s piety movements in Cairo’s mosques shows, even though local religious social movements might not explicitly target political change they can still transform political and social spheres (Mahmood 2005). In my approach, I seek to understand what kinds of religious publics and politics constitute and are constitutive of contemporary Russian religio-political culture. This furthers research in feminist political geography on power geometries, which analyzes how globalization creates unequal
power relations (Massey 1993). I analyze how Russia’s adoption of democratic norms such as the freedom of religion affects publics differently.

Three bodies of academic literature from the fields of geography, Russian studies, and religious studies primarily influence the conceptual framework for this project: geographies of religion, critical political geography, and democracy and public spaces. I examine the literature on the geographies of Muslims to develop an understanding of the ways in which “Islam” is mobilized within the broader revival of religiosity in post-Soviet space. I use a critical understanding of religion, which treats it as a historical category (Masuzawa 2005) in order to understand its current formations in Russian contemporary politics. I turn to critical political geography to form an approach for understanding of the political role of religion in Moscow’s urban space. This approach allows an analysis of the intersection of localities and broader geopolitical issues, such as immigration, nationalism, religious freedom, and Islamophobia (Ó Tuathail 2010). It allows for me to differentiate the ways in which publics experience the social construction of time and space in Moscow. The literatures on democracy and public space provide insight on the limits and contradictions of democratic policies of secularism and religious freedom specifically as they come to bear on the problem of the construction of mosques, public signifiers and visible markers of Islam. Together, these bodies of work provide insight into how to analyze the politics of religion and its publics in contemporary Russia.

Through examining minority ethnic and religious identities in public space, my research touches on issues such as the visibility and regulation of religion/secularism in public and private spaces (Asad 2003; Habermas 2006; Calhoun, Juergensmeyer, and VanAntwerpen 2011) and the disconnection of state-based constitutional rights of freedom of religion to their interpretations in public rights to secular cities (Ehrkamp 2007; Mitchell 2012; Lefebvre 2006)). In doing so, I am
able to offer a critique of rights-based discourses and a comparison of Russian illiberalism to American and European liberalism.

Russia is characterized as an illiberal democracy by barometers such as Freedom House reports because it lacks freedom of the press, free and fair elections, and oppresses minorities (Freedom House 2017). For example, the democratic right to build mosques has been cited as an area of concern in regards to the development of freedom of religion in Russia cited by the United States Department of State, Russian human rights agencies, and international religious freedom NGOs (Fagan 2012a; Verkhovsky 2015). But, even in liberal democracies, Muslims struggle for group rights and face challenges in making claims to public space. The universal human rights of Muslim minorities to practice their religion openly are often perceived by Western secular majorities as at odds with state-based constitutional rights and international human rights norms of freedom of religion (Ehrkamp 2007b), as exemplified over controversies over the wearing of the veil in public space in France (Scott 2010) and Turkey (Secor 2002), and the construction of minarets in Switzerland (Baumann 2013). In the referendum over minarets in Switzerland, citizens voted to go against the government’s decision to allow minarets, showing that the public rights of Muslim minorities can be curtailed by the tyranny of majority in so-called liberal contexts (Antonsich 2010).

Even in liberal democracies, Muslim citizens struggle to claim group rights, showing that more rights would not inherently lead to more Muslim representation in public space. This points to the limits of human rights-based discourses: Universal human rights to freedom of religion rest on nation-state interpretations (Arendt 1968). And, in the EU and US, right-wing parties that seek to curtail Muslim rights are increasingly voted into power through free and fair elections. Muslim immigrants are choosing to stay in Europe, and their presence over time challenge
established national communities and “reveal(s) the tumultuous transition and recognition from the status of an invisible migrant to that of a visible Muslim citizenship” (Göle 2011, 388). Islamophobia and fear of terrorism exacerbate the challenges of Muslim citizenship claims in Western Europe, and is directly linked to the rise of far-right parties in Europe: The British National Party uses the slogan “No more minarets” following from the Swiss People’s Party. Far-right politicians Marie La Pen in France and Geert Wilders in the Netherlands have run for public office using Islamophobia as a political platform (Gee 2011; Göle 2011). The political purchase and success of Islamaphobic rhetoric show that the rights of Muslim to public expression are not fully folded into human rights norms, and that the normative liberal rights-bearing citizen is not imagined as Muslim.

My project analyzes of how Muslim communities operate within and shape Russia’s managed democracy. I prefer to use the term “managed” to describe the centrist nature of Russia’s democracy under Putin instead of “illiberal”, which indicates that democracy in Russia is insufficient in comparison to Western liberal models. I now turn to an overview of the Russian political and religious contexts shaping my study.

**Situating the Study: Religion in Russia’s Managed Democracy**

Polling illustrates that most Russians are now identifying as religious. According to the Levada Center’s latest 2013 countrywide poll on religious beliefs, 68% of Russians identify as Russian Orthodox, 19% identify as atheists, 7% identify as Muslim, while <1% identify as Buddhist or Jewish, the other traditional religions of Russia (Levada Center 2013). Although a majority of Russians claim to be religious, countrywide data shows that the role of religion in people’s lives is low. Although a majority of Russians claim to be religious, 43% of the Russian population says that religion is not very important in their lives. Religiosity is highest amongst
the Muslim population, with 42% of Muslims stating that religion plays an important role in their lives (Levada Center 2013).

Russians identify as religious, but religious demographics show that the role of religion in people’s lives is not as high. However, people have increased in their trust of Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) institutions since the 1990s. Russians have grown in their trust in the ROC, with a nationwide increase from 35% in 1997 to 50% in 2013 of people stating that they find the church “trustworthy”. Overall, nationwide polls by the Levada Center show that Russians are satisfied with the expanded relationship of religion and government. 45% believe that the ROC takes part in national affairs and receives the amount of state support that it should, and Patriarch Kirill has approval ratings of 67%. These religious demographics show that although individuals might not practice their religion in their personal lives, there is an overall upward trend in support of ROC religious institutions. I could not find similar survey data on trust in Russia’s Muslim institutions.

As Russia’s population grows more religious, the role of religion in Russian politics is also increasing: the 2011-2013 Russian protest movement occurred not only over questions of electoral politics and corruption following Putin’s 2011 reelection campaign, but also state politics and religion. The controversial 2012 Pussy Riot trial and its wide circulation in domestic and foreign media outlets highlights the changing nature of civil protests in Russia and the close political relationship between the Orthodox church and the federal government while clarifying the more marginal position of minority religions in Russia. Pussy Riot is a feminist performance group of protest artists based in Moscow, and one of their performance pieces was as a punk band performing in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior Church in Moscow. They record their performances for music videos, continuing the performance art on the Internet. This piece was
called “Punk Prayer - Mother of God, Chase Putin Away!” The song drew attention to the growing relationship between Putin and the Russian Orthodox Church, asking Mary, Mother of God, to banish Putin from the church. Three members of Pussy Riot were arrested for hooliganism during the live performance and tried for “hooliganism motivated by religious hatred.” Two, Mariya Alyokhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, were found guilty and sentenced to two years in Russian prison. One effect of this trial was the subsequent 2013 criminalization of acts deemed as insulting religious feelings in Russia, including the public desecration of all religious books or objects. This piece of legislation is seen as a fundamental hallmark of a new era of conservatism in Russia (Sharafutdinova 2014).

The conflict over Muslim communities and mosque construction in Moscow is a question of the management of civil society in Russia. Although Putin’s political ideology was largely based on taking a hard line on the War on Terror and fighting against radical Islam in the Caucasus, he now positions himself and Russia as anti-Western with conservative, moral values centered on issues of protecting family life, religious beliefs, and traditional values (Sharafutdinova 2014). Any group that is too “foreign” is treated with suspicion. I argue that groups that appeal to traditional, conservative rhetoric in line with the state are likely to be successful in carrying out their agendas and receive governmental support in Moscow. The next section situates my study of Muslim communities within Russia’s managed democracy and religious revival.

**Russia’s Managed Democracy**

In academic and political discourse, Moscow is occasionally referred to as the Third Rome, labeling the city as the spiritual successor of Rome and Constantinople as the center of Orthodox Christianity (Sidorov 2006). This metaphor is adopted by various geopolitical
ideologists in Russia, including Orthodox nationalists and fundamentalists advocating for Russian isolationism, Neo-Panslavists and Europeanists who seek to renew ties to Western Europe, and neo-Eurasianist expansionists. However, the Third Rome moniker does not quite capture the political agenda of Russian president Putin and his United Russia party. “Moscow” or “The Kremlin” are the more established metaphors used to refer to Russian national and foreign policy. These terms describe the “power vertical” - the unidirectional structure of Russian politics, from federal center to regional (Potapchuk 2007). Although not part of the Third Rome geopolitical metaphor, the role of religion in Putin’s policies is increasing (Sharafutdinova 2014). This subsection outlines the main tenets and role of religion in Russian politics since Putin’s presidency in 2000.

Before Putin’s presidency, the Russian state was arguably a failed state, characterized by the loss of central institutions, criminality, no shared sociocultural identity, separatism, a weak economy, and a lack of a social safety net (Goble 2004). Vertical power and directed democracy characterize Russian state politics during Putin’s first two terms from 2000-2008 (Gelman and Ryzhenkov 2011). Vertical power refers to the centralizing tendency within Russian politics to gather power within the presidency, and seamlessness within the Russian government from the local to the national level and across the executive, judicial, and legislative branches. Putin’s presidency after 2000 marks the beginning of verticality in Russian politics, and is coincident with the loss of regional autonomy. From 1991-2004, the Federation Council, the upper house of Russia’s parliament, consisted of two members from each of the 83 territories: the locally-elected governor and a member of the territorial legislature. Under Putin, this was changed in 2004 so that the Kremlin appoints the two representatives. Putin further shrank the role of regional politics in 2004 by replacing the gubernatorial electoral system with one in which the president
appoints the governors (Wegren and Konitzer 2007). The lack of autonomy of local-level politics carried over into Presidency Medvedev’s administration after 2008 and is best illustrated by the use of presidential decree to fire Moscow’s former mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, in September 2010. Moscow and the Kremlin have become stand-in terms for Russia’s vertical power and managed democracy.

Managed democracy refers to how the characteristics of a liberal democracy are used in Russian politics to gather power. Elections occur, but are neither free nor fair, and participation is limited to voting. However, not all these votes are necessarily counted in a direct democracy (Wilson 2005). Russia’s managed democracy is characterized by a lack of civic community, due to governmental corruption and lack of political activism and associations (Fish 2005; Lussier 2011). Prior to November 2011, contact with public officials was the most common form of non-voting political participation in Russia. Types of contact included petition signing and making official complaints, which in Russian culture are not considered contentious political acts but civil and informative acts (Lussier 2011). However, protests in Moscow since Putin’s 2011 bid for and reelection as Russian president resulted in mass demonstrations throughout Moscow and in regional capitals. These demonstrations, led by the middle class, about political fraud and corruption illustrate that many urban citizens are frustrated with vertical politics and managed democracy. They show that civil society in Russia is becoming more active and experienced in making rights-based demands through demonstrative protest.

During his first two terms as president from 2000-2008, Putin’s geopolitics was squarely focused on the War on Terror and combating fundamentalist Islam abroad and within Russia’s borders. This geopolitical outlook was one of an alliance with other Western countries, including the United States, against anti-Western radicalism (Bukkvoll 2003). Extremist Salafism calling
for resistance against the state was and continues to be of huge concern, as its spread into the Caucasus was accused of disrupting local traditions of Sufism and jama’ats and corrupting young men (Yemelianova 2002; Knysh 2007). This led to the Second Chechen war, which exacerbated poor economies in the North Caucasus, led to emigration and fear of radicalism spreading to other Russian territories, as well as deadly terror attacks in Moscow and Beslan (Sakwa 2005).

With time and in response to dissidence, however, the national and foreign policy agendas of United Russia and Putin changed. His third term, from 2012 onwards, has been described as neo-conservative (Engström 2014) morality politics ((Sharafutdinova 2014)). Morality politics in Russia imagines the country as a protector of conservative values in the face of Western corruption. Russian neoconservatives are similar to American neoconservatives in the sense that they seek to establish cultural hegemony to enact political change, making use of think tanks, media, and informal groups. Some examples of these institutions in Russia include the International Eurasian Movement, The Russian Project, The Institute of Dynamic Conservatism, the Russkii mir (Russian World) Foundation, as well as journals Russian Observer and Odnako. Whereas the first Cold War was defined as an ideological battle between communism and socialism versus capitalism and democracy, this new anti-Western agenda is more so based on perceived Russian conservative versus American liberal values.

Although managed democracy and vertical politics did not initially engage with Russian Orthodoxy, the new morality politics sees religious, conservative values as important for their political base. Putin refers to this base as the “overwhelming majority”, or podavliatuisheche bol’shistvo (Sharafutdinova 2014). This phrase is used by Putin to contrast his conservative base with dissidents associated with foreign influences (Chechel 2013). Key pieces of legislation have been enacted to protect this base, including the 2012 foreign agent law requiring NGOs to
register as foreign agents if they receive foreign funding, the 2013 law against the spread of gay propaganda in Russian public space, the 2013 anti-blasphemy law protecting religious feelings in the wake of the Pussy Riot trial, and the 2016 Yarovsky anti-extremism law banning proselytization and authorizing the arrest for violating “generally accepted norms of social behavior.” These laws intended to protect Russians from foreign influences are widely criticized by human rights agencies as violating international norms of freedoms of conscience and religion (Human Rights Watch 2016; Flikke 2016).

These legislative moves work to produce a managed civil society to complement Russia’s managed democracy. They make political use of Russia’s religious revival to contrast conservative values against oppositional political protestors. My analysis of the right of minority religious groups to practice their religion publicly will evaluate the extent to which they are integrated into Putin’s new morality politics. It also will provide insight into how minority groups can make claims to civic space within a managed democracy.

Russia’s Religious Revival

In this section, I review the growth of religion as part of Russian civil society and politics. I also outline key religious policies and institutions in Russia in order to understand the state’s approach to religion (Fitzgerald 2003). The transition from communism to democracy in 1991 was also one from state-based atheism to secularism. Under Gorbachev, the Soviet Union had liberalized its religious policies in 1990 to allow freedom of religion, and this liberal policy extended past the collapse of the Soviet Union under Russian president Yeltsin (Shterin and Richardson 2000). Russia’s secular policies and freedom of religion is codified in the 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations law, which declares that Russia is a
secular state, which has been influenced by the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as by the three other official religions: Islam, Buddhism and Judaism. Its preamble reads:

Confirming the right of each to freedom of conscience and freedom of creed, and also to equality before the law regardless of his attitudes to religion and his convictions;

Basing itself on the fact that the Russian Federation is a secular state;

Recognizing the special contribution of Orthodoxy to the history of Russia and to the establishment and development of Russia's spirituality and culture;

Respecting Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and other religions which constitute an inseparable part of the historical heritage of Russia's peoples;

Considering it important to promote the achievement of mutual understanding, tolerance and respect in questions of freedom of conscience and freedom of creed; Hereby adopts this federal law (Russian Federation Federal Law: ‘On Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Associations 1997).

Within Russia, the freedom of religion is guaranteed, however as the result of lobbying from representatives from the traditional religious organizations, who were concerned about the influence of outside groups, the law created a hierarchy of religions in Russia (Alexander Verkhovsky 2015). This law served to legitimize Russia’s four historical religious traditions and separate them from religious proselytizing movements entering the more liberalized Russian religious sphere, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, Hare Krishnas, and Mormons. It required these nontraditional religions to have an established legal presence of 15 years in Russia to gain legal status from the government, making it more difficult for them to gain adherents and status (Fagan 2012a). In doing so, the law was effective in curbing the spread of the new religious groups versus the growth of the traditional religious organizations (Shterin and Richardson 2000).

Also, the 1997 Law reaffirmed that the Russian Federation was a secular state. According to critical religious scholars, secularism should be understood not as the separation of state and
faith into public and private realms, but of the regulation and cultivation of faiths by the state (Asad 2003; Mahmood 2005). This means that although secular states do not declare official religions, they often enact legislation that has the effect of favoring some types of religious expressions versus others. For example, Turkey and France have secular policies known as laicism, which seek to protect the public sphere from religious symbols. In the United States, secular legislation is different than laicism, as it typically seeks to protect the rights of citizens to exercise their religious beliefs in public (Calhoun, Juergensmeyer, and VanAntwerpen 2011). These understandings of secularism have generated fierce debates about the degree to which religious groups are allowed to express themselves publicly, such as the debate on the headscarf in France (Scott 2010) and in Turkey (Secor 2002), and the use of government funds to sponsor access to birth control and abortions in the United States, which contradict Catholic doctrine (Tentler 2004). Secularism thus works to create favored status of some groups versus others, and is malleable rather than a clear separation of politics and religion.

Within Russia, although there is no official state-sponsored religion, traditional religions are favored over other groups, and the Russian Orthodox Church has a close relationship to the Russian government (Papkova 2011). Russian Orthodoxy is constitutionally separate from the government, but this separation is neither clean nor clear (Papkova 2011; Walker 2005). Putin has publicly discussed his baptism into Russian Orthodoxy as a child and his conversion as an adult from an atheist to a devout member of the Russian Orthodox Church, following a car accident in 1993 and escaping from a house fire in 1996 (Colton and McFaul 2003). His personal religious beliefs are not as important as his support for religious legislation and policies that protect the Russian Orthodox community, such as laws allowing for the teaching of religion in public schools and anti-blasphemy laws. The leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, the
Moscow Patriarch Kirill has openly supported Putin’s political policies, lending theological support to Putin’s anti-Western, conservative-based Russian exceptional politics (Myers 2015; Sharafutdinova 2014). They frequently appear publicly together for important state events, such as traveling abroad together to the eastern Orthodox holy site Mount Athos in Greece to celebrate 1,000 years of Russian Orthodox monks in 2016 (Putin 2016).

Putin has also appealed to the history of the ROC to justify geopolitical actions. For example, in his speech on the annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in March 2014, he states that Crimea is connected to Russia because it is the site of the conversion of Prince Vladimir to Russian Orthodoxy in 988:

Everything in Crimea speaks of our shared history and pride. This is the location of ancient Khersones, where Prince Vladimir was baptized. His spiritual feat of adopting Orthodoxy predetermined the overall basis of the culture, civilization and human values that unite the peoples of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The graves of Russian soldiers whose bravery brought Crimea into the Russian empire are also in Crimea (Putin 2014).

Prince Vladimir’s baptism introduced Russian Orthodoxy to the Russian Empire and its people. The reference to this event in the speech celebrating Russia’s annexation of Crimea echoes the 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations’ assertion that Russian Orthodoxy plays a special role in the history of Russia. This special role is used to justify the territorial linkage of Crimea to Russia. Such speeches showcase the central role of the ROC in Russian political culture.

The favored role of the ROC in political culture is not only rhetorical. The relationship between the Russian government and the Russian Orthodox Church has grown, with the church receiving the largest number of presidential grants given to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) according to the Center for Economic and Political Reforms, a Moscow-based anti-corruption NGO (Center for Economic and Political Reform 2015). Between 2013- 2015, the
church received grants totaling 256 million rubles, or 3.6 million dollars. In 2012, Russia passed a law requiring NGOs to register as foreign agents if they received foreign funding- since that law was passed, the Russian government has increased their grant programs to NGOs, allocating 1 billion rubles in 2012, 2.5 billion rubles in 2013 to 4.2 billion rubles ($59 million) in 2015. (Importantly non-traditional religious groups, such as Jehovah’s witnesses, are instead governed by the 1991 Law “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations”.) Many of these organizations are located in Moscow, and recipients include the Orthodox youth information organization “Vera i Dela (Faith and Deeds)” and “Knyaz’ Vladimir: tsivilizatsionnyy vybor Rossii (Prince Vladimir: Civilizational Choice of Russia),” a conference and celebration held to celebrate 1000 years since Vladimir’s decision to introduce Russian Orthodoxy to Russians, as well as to ostensibly commemorate the union of Crimea and Russia in 2014. This funding, as well as political speeches and appearances of Putin and Kirill, illustrate the preferred status of the Russian Orthodox Church amongst other religious groups and associations.

The Russian Orthodox Church has a centralized organizational structure. After the Soviet period, Moscow has re-emerged as the seat of Orthodoxy in Russia. The Patriarchate of Moscow and all Russia is the seat of power of the Orthodox religion, and the largest Orthodox Church, Cathedral of Christ the Savior, was opened in 2000 after having been demolished in 1931 by Communists. As the church where the Romanovs were canonized in 2000 as strastoterpets, or Christian sufferers, it was also the site of the Pussy Riot protests against the growing closer relationship between the Russian government and church.

The ROC patriarchate and city government are actively expanding the presence of Russian Orthodoxy not only in the city center but also in the suburbs through Program-200 (Sidorov 2015). This is the official city plan endorsed by the ROC and Moscow city government
headed by Mayor Sergei Sobyanin to build 200 Orthodox churches throughout the city, and there has been a recent plan to rename the program as it has expanded to include 380 new churches. The churches receive land from the Moscow city government, but must finance construction through donations. Donations are collected through the Moscow Church Construction Support Fund, led by Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. Donation boxes are ubiquitous, dispersed around malls, grocery stores, and food markets, usually staffed by older women. This governmental support for Russian Orthodoxy shows the power geometries of religion in Russia: the ROC has more freedom to shape public space in Moscow than other “official” Russian traditions.

**Official and Unofficial Islam**

The political role and visible presence of the ROC is growing in Russia and Moscow. Islam is growing in adherents in Russia as well, but it is not as centrally organized as the ROC. Within the Russian Federation, two types of Islam exist—“official” and “unofficial” (Matsuzato 2006). These terms are similar to the “Good Muslim, Bad Muslim” dichotomy that exists in the United States (Mamdani 2005). “Bad Muslim” is a stereotype used to refer to fanatical and violent Muslims and “Good Muslims” to modernized, secular Muslims. These terms show how Islam, instead of American foreign policy acts in the 20th century, are responsible for terrorism in the MENA states, with the expectation that Western “Good Muslims” must apologize for violent acts of “Bad Muslims.” Just as the Russian religious policy differentiates between traditional Russian religions and foreign ones, the state and media uses the dichotomy of official and unofficial Islam to differentiate between “traditional” or historical forms of Islam and newer, more radical foreign influences. These monikers, like Good and Bad Muslims, are the means through which the state and Islamic leaders shape and define Muslim publics. Official Islamic
structures maintain ties with the Russian government and are associated with the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam and Sufism, whereas unofficial Islam is associated with Wahabbism, Salafism, terrorism and isolated ja’amats in the Caucasus (Knysh 2007). In this section, I will discuss the creation of these categories and then discuss the limitations and effects of this classification.

Out of the 85 federal states of Russia, seven out of the 22 ethnic republics are traditional homelands of Muslim people. This means that they are political entities with ethnicities associated historically with Islam. These seven Muslim ethnic republics are in the Volga-Urals region (Tatarstan and Bashkortostan), and Northern Caucasus region (Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Karachay-Cherkessia). The historical forms of Islam in these regions compose “official” Russian Islam.

Islam was introduced separately into these regions: Arabs introduced Sunni Islam in the Caucasus region starting in Dagestan in the seventh century. The spread of Sufism occurred until the mid-19th century in the region. At first, Islam intermingled with local traditions but did not supplant them. The spread of Sufism in the 1800s was part of the creation of a larger resistance to Russian colonialism. Two Sufi tariqas, or brotherhoods, called for different relations with the Russian Empire: the Qadiri tariqa advocated for spiritual and not physical resistance, whereas the Naqshbandiyya tariqa led the violent resistance to the Russian Empire (Vatchgaev 2017). After the 1817-1864 Caucasian Wars, the Russian Empire conquered the Northern Caucasus. This resulted in the expulsion of many indigenous populations into Ottoman territories, most notably the Circassian ethnic group but also Ingush and Chechens, all which were Muslim (Yemelianova 2002). After defeat in 1864, the Qadiri began to resist against the Soviet Union and the Russian successor state whereas the Naqshbandiyya tariqa called for coexistence with the Russian Empire and its successors (Yemelianova 2002).
In the Volga-Urals region, in 922, the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam was declared the official religion of the Turkic Volga Bulgars (predecessors of the Tatars and Bashkirs) (Yemelianova 2002). The Bulgars were introduced to Islam via trade relationships, and then Islam spread to Siberia through Bulgar trade. Mongols invaded the Bulgars in 1237, and Mongols then established the Golden Horde in the Volga-Urals region. The Golden Horde invaded ethnic Russian territories, disrupting peaceful trade patterns that had existed between the Bulgars and ethnic Russians. Islam was the official religion of the Golden Horde, but the Mongols did not ask the Rus’ (ancient Russian people) to convert to Islam- only to pay tributes. The Golden Horde advocated for religious tolerance, and many variations of Islam as well as Russian Orthodoxy, Buddhism, and paganism were practiced in its territories due to intermingling of peoples as a result of trade relationships.

The Golden Horde split up in the 1400s into many khanates, and the Kazan khanate was the center of Islam in Eurasia. They adopted the Hanafi madhab, or school. The Hanafi school of Sunni Islam is one of the four schools of Sunni Islam, named after Imam Abu Hanifa, who founded the school in Iraq in the 8th century. It is considered a moderate school of Islam and tolerant to other religions and local customs (Hahn 2007). The Hanafi school is more flexible than other Sunni schools in part because its founder consulted with less hadiths (17), or reports on Muhammad, than other schools’ founders (The Maliki madhab is based on 300 hadiths, Shafi’i on 7,000, and Hanbali 50,000.) (Hahn 2007). The Hanafi school was adopted by the Ottoman empire, and is practiced in the present day in areas that used to be in the Ottoman empire, including Central Asia and Russia, as well as South Asia including India and Pakistan (Tuna 2015; Matsuzato and Sawae 2010). The adoption of Hanafi is a means through which Istanbul centralized and controlled the courts in the Ottoman Empire, but as Hanafi relies
on personal opinion of the jurist then it is somewhat more flexible in its local adoption (Hallaq 2009). The Kazan khanate was isolated from other Hanafi areas and adopted some local particularities due to the reliance on local legal experts to interpret Islamic law (Yemelianova 2002). The Kazan khanate had alternating periods of alliances and wars with different Rus’ leaders until their defeat and absorption into the Russian Empire in 1552 by Ivan the Terrible (Yemelianova 2002).

Crimea, annexed from Ukraine to Russia in 2014, also has a significant historical Muslim population. Crimeans converted to Islam in the fourteenth century due to the conversion of the Turkic Tatars making up Khanate Ozberg, part of the Golden Horde that had invaded Russia from the East (Crews 2006). Crimean Tatars, historically associated with Islam, make up 10.2% of the Crimean population according to the Russian-led census of the republic (Russian State Statistics Service 2015). Crimea was annexed into the Russian Empire in 1783 (Yemelianova 2002).

There are three official Muslim organizations in Russia: The Central Spiritual Board of Muslims of Russia (TsDUM), which is located in Ufa, Bashkortostan, the Council of Muftis of Russia (SMR) which is located in Moscow, and the Coordinating Council of the Muslims of the Northern Caucasus (Matsuzato 2006; Hunter 2004). The leaders of these groups meet annually with the Russian president, and in these meetings have expressed their support of Russian military efforts in the Caucasus against Islamist fighters. These groups are loosely organized, and lack the nation-wide, vertically organized structure of Russian Orthodoxy (Walker 2005). Although the government in Moscow has no immediate plans to exert state controls and create a vertical power structure for Russia’s Muslim communities, the three already-existing state-approved structures have come to define “official” Islam in Russia (Matsuzato 2006).
One crucial issue regarding state-Muslim relations in Russia includes how official Islam is operationalized by the state to contrast with the unofficial Islam of Caucasian rebels (Yemelianova 2011). Unofficial Islam is seen as the cause for terrorism and civil war in Russia. Putin’s hard stance against unofficial Islam led to his political rise in 2000. Although the first Chechen War (1994-1996) was characterized as a secular, nationalist movement fought for the independence of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, religious interests motivated the second Chechen War (1999-2009) (Knysh 2007). In 2000, under the leadership of Dokka Umarov and Movladi Udugov, the political project of the movement transformed into the establishment of a trans-Caucasian entity ruled by sharia, Islamic law-the so-called Caucasus Emirate. One goal of the secessionist movement is to unite all Muslim communities in Russia, including those in the Volga-Ural regions or in urban Moscow (Knysh 2007). But, the brutalities of the wars have worsened already-poor local economies, intensifying mass migration of North Caucasians to other areas of Russia (Ioffe and Zayonchkovskaya 2011). Out of 3.5 million registered migrants in Russia, approximately one-third come from the North Caucasus (Goble 2015), and Moscow is a key destination city. The Russian government regards migrants as security threats because they are means to bring foreign radical ideas to domestic “official” Muslim communities (Hahn 2007; March 2010).

Unofficial Islam in Russia is usually viewed as a disruption of official Islam by foreign ideologies, specifically the Salafi movement. The Russian government uses Wahhabi or Salafi to refer to radical Islam and instability (Gorenburg 2006; Knysh 2007) in order to justify extrajuridical warfare in the North Caucasus. In Chechnya, extreme Salafis call for jihad against the Russian military as they seek to establish Sharia and expand their Muslim territory. Moderate Salafis reject Sufism and its insistence on local traditions (Yemelianova 2002). The
Russian state treats the Salafi movement as monolithic and interchangeable with terrorism. This approach does not allow the Russian state to understand the variation, appeal, or form relations with Salafi groups, which have spread to other Russian regions beyond the Caucasus (Gorenburg 2006; Malashenko 2014).

Just as the Good Muslim/ Bad Muslim rhetoric in the United States renders the state as the target of crimes of the Bad Muslims (Mamdani 2004), the official and unofficial labels for Muslims in Russia allow for the Russian state to commit extrajuridical acts of violence against Salafi groups in the Caucasus while official Islamic groups must continually pledge their loyalty to the state and denounce extremism.

The politics of Muslims outside of the traditional homelands in the Volga-Urals region and North Caucasus remains understudied, as does the political geographies of Muslims in Russia beyond the official and unofficial dichotomy. This dissertation fills in these gaps in the literature by investigating the formation of different Muslim publics as they interact with one another in the Moscow context. Although Moscow is not cited as a Muslim historical homeland, Moscow has the largest urban concentration of Muslims not only in Russia but also in Europe, if Turkey is not considered (Hunter 2004). Moscow’s Muslim population is diverse because it attracts migrants from the North Caucasus and Central Asia, which have traditions of Sufism, Shia, and Sunni intermingled with local customs in addition to Moscow’s historical Tatar Hanafi community. Thus, it is a key location for understanding the diversity of Muslims within Russia and how they define themselves against each other. The next section offers a description of the Moscow research context.
Muslims in Moscow

Moscow is the spiritual center of the Russian Orthodox Church and the political center of Russia. Moscow is also a multiethnic and multiconfessional city, and is an important place to study the rights of Muslim minorities in Russia because it has a large Muslim population of 1.5-2 million Muslims. A study of the various expressions of Islam situated in Moscow is necessary because this city, although not a traditional Muslim homeland, is increasingly a destination city of migrants from those areas (Hunter 2004, Light 2010). Also, Moscow, like many other large global cities such as New York, London, and Paris, was a site of terrorist attacks performed by radical Islamic separatists. Therefore it is an important place to understand how terrorism affects its inhabitants and their behaviors towards Muslims.

Moscow is the site of terrorist acts performed by radical Islamist separatists leading to and part of Russia’s Second Chechen War, fought from 1999-2000 and ongoing at a low level of insurgency. The first of these acts was the 1999 Russian apartment bombings in that occurred from September 4-16 in Moscow, Buinaksk, and Volgodonsk, and led to the loss of 293 lives. According to Dunlop (2014), the apartment bombings are Russia’s equivalent to September 11 in the USA as they mark large changes in Russian political life and the rise of a fear of terrorism in public consciousness. The Russian government blamed Chechen rebels for the attacks, thereby renewing anti-Chechen sentiment lingering from the First Chechen War from 1994-1996 against separatist nationalists in the Chechnya. At the time of the bombings, Vladimir Putin, the head of the FSB, Russia’s Federal Security Service and the successor to the KGB, had been appointed Prime Minister by then-president Yeltsin. Putin declared vengeance against the rebels for the bombings, and became popular with Russians as a result. The apartment bombings led to Putin’s rise to power and the renewal of the Second Chechen War, this time against the successors to the
separatist Chechen nationalists, the Caucasus Emirates. They also led to xenophobia and hostility against Chechens in Russia (Russell 2005).

The apartment bombings were the first but not the only terrorist act in Moscow. In October 2002, 40-50 rebels took hostage a crowd of 850 people in the Moscow theater hostage crisis. 129 people died in the attack. The rebels included shahidka (black widow) female suicide bombers trained by the Caucasus Emirates (Sabirova 2011). Shahidkas also were responsible for the 2010 suicide bombings in the Moscow metro, resulting in 40 people killed and 100 injured. The Caucasus Emirate claimed responsibility for the 2010 Domodedevo airport suicide bombing, which occurred in the arrivals hall of Moscow’s biggest international airport. The suicide bomber was a 20-year old from the North Caucasus, and the attack left 37 dead and injured 173 people (Gavrilov and Tolmach 2016). These attacks, along with smaller attacks, led to a creation of national laws banning religious extremism and terrorism, public fear, and negative representations of Islam and Muslims in the media (Sabirova 2011).

**Muslim Demographics and Migration in Moscow**

Moscow is a majority Russian city whose population consists of many ethnic minorities associated with Islam. According to the 2010 Russian census, Moscow’s population was 11.5 million people, composed 91.65% of ethnic Russians, 1.42% of ethnic Ukrainians, and 1.38% of ethnic Tatars, with .9% coming from other ethnicities associated historically with Islam (Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat) 2010). Rosstat estimated this figure to have increased to 12.3 million in 2016, which includes temporary workers but not undocumented workers (Rosstat 2016). Depending on seasonal fluctuation, there is an additional estimated one to three million undocumented workers living in Moscow (Light 2016). Most of these undocumented workers are male labor migrants from Muslim regions, including external migration from Central Asian
republics and internal migration from the Northern Caucasus during the First and Second Chechen wars (Ioffe and Zayonchkovskaya 2011). In 2009, the largest official migrant population in Moscow was from the North Caucasus at 26.4%, while the second largest was from countries in Central Asia, at 20.9% (Light 2016). In sum, Moscow’s Muslim population is composed of many different ethnic groups with varying traditions of Muslim practice, including an “indigenous” (Pre-Soviet era) Tatar population of 168,000, as well as a large proportion of registered and undocumented labor migrants (Ioffe and Zayonchkovskaya 2011). State officials and academic researchers characterize the influx of migrants from these regions in terms of the “Islamicization” of migration in Russia (Malashenko 2017). Muslim experts in Moscow estimate that due to migration from these regions, the city has 1.5-2 million Muslims (March 2010; Malashenko 2014).

Besides changing the composition of Moscow’s population, migration is changing the dynamics of some of Moscow’s neighborhoods. Migrants are located in all districts of the city, and they live in many different types of housing: the five-story Soviet Khrushchevka apartment blocks, communal apartments with shared kitchen and bathrooms, and newer residences (Deminsteva and Peshkova 2014). They tend to have roommates and settle near places closer to their place of work. A statistical analysis of migration data at the district level shows that external migrants from the Commonwealth of Independent States are concentrated in the East, Southwest, and Northwest districts of Moscow, which have higher crime rates, less infrastructure, and worse environmental conditions (Deminsteva and Peshkova 2014). External migrants from other countries are concentrated in the most prestigious areas of Moscow, the

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2 The Commonwealth of Independent States is a supranational organization consisting of 9 out of the 15 former members of the USSR. Members include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
central districts (Kashnitsky and Gunko 2016). Those numbers exclude undocumented immigrants, who tend to live in poorer conditions, such as in the basement of apartment buildings or in cars. Those involved in the construction industry, typically males from Central Asia, tend to live on the construction site (Light 2016). Overall, regions with lower income but higher ethnic diversity tend to have more tension between groups than higher-income diverse areas, such as those in the city center (Vendina 2002).

Within Moscow, ethnic discrimination occurs against migrants from Muslim homelands: Chechens are refused status as forced migrants (Roman 2002), while migrants from Central Asia and other areas of the Caucasus face frequent document checks by Moscow police at worksites and experience hostility in the residential registration process (Light 2016). This propiska system is a holdover from the Soviet Union, which is an internal system of state passports regulating residence in particular places. It continues to be used in Russia to monitor internal residence as well as migration. In order to work in Moscow, workers need permanent or temporary residence permits. To receive these permits, workers need tax documents, proof of employment, a lease, to pass a test on Russian language, history, and laws, health insurance, and to undergo testing for HIV, tuberculosis, and drug addiction, and obtain a taxpayer identification number within one month of arrival. Obtaining all of these requirements is difficult: Land-owners do not like to register workers at their property in order to evade taxes and reduce paperwork, employers face administrative delays gaining permission to hire foreign workers, and workers face administrative delays once they have all documents in obtaining the permit (Roman 2002, Light 2016). The work permit is also expensive, costing 22,000 rubles ($373 USD) initially and 4 thousand rubles ($67 USD) for monthly renewal. Therefore workers often pay bribes to expedite the administrative process, or chose to be undocumented. This results in corruption, as workers
then pay bribes to cops that check for documentation if they are in legal limbo or actively noncompliant. The amount of undocumented immigrants in Moscow is evidence that regulation is not working and corruption is an ongoing problem (Light 2016).

According to street surveys of 1,000 Moscow residents carried out by the Levada Center, Muscovites view labor migrants as a main problem facing the city. When asked to identify 5-6 problems that bother them the most, in July 2013, 55% of respondents identified migrants from the former southern republics of the USSR and North Caucasus as an issue, making it the number one problem facing the city (Levada Center 2013). Tensions between Muscovites and migrants have often expressed themselves in tension over the presence of Muslims in the city and xenophobia against minority ethnic groups, as they are perceived as responsible for increased crime rates in the city. Moscow’s chief prosecutor stated that Central Asian migrants are responsible for most of the crimes committed by foreigners in the city, and that in 2014 migrants from Uzbekistan committed 2,522 crimes, migrants from Tajikistan committed 1,745 crimes, and migrants from Kyrgyzstan committed 1,269 crimes (EurasiaNet 2016).

In turn, Moscow has Russia’s highest level of racially motivated violence. In 2016, three migrants were killed and 26 beaten or injured by neo-Nazi attacks. Neo-Nazis also participate in raids where groups seek out migrant workers and check their documents, as they believe cops are too corrupt and susceptible to bribes from migrants to carry out the law (SOVA Center 2017).

One example of ethnic conflict in a low-income, multiethnic neighborhood is the 2013 Biryulevo market riot in southeastern Moscow. Biryulevo was the site of anti-immigrant, pro-nationalist protests starting October 9, 2013 after a 25-year old Azeri immigrant murdered Russian Egor Sherbakov. Located on the outskirts of Moscow, Biryulevo was home to a large

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3 Other problems identified by respondents included high prices (35%), traffic (38%), growing utility bills (43%), and low income (29%).
fruit and vegetable market and warehouse that employed many workers from the Caucasus and Central Asia. The market was site of an immigration raid, resulting in over 1,000 migrants being detained, and was eventually shut down officially due to unsanitary conditions. The rioters did not express anti-Muslim sentiments, however migration is closely associated with Islam in Moscow (Malashenko 2014). The riot and its aftermath illustrate how tensions between Muscovites and Moscow’s migrants can lead to aggression and show why some North Caucasus migrants are drawn to anti-state groups. Large-scale migration from Muslim regions in Central Asia and the North Caucasus and a history of terrorism has led to Islamophobia and racially motivated violence in the city. Within this background, I examine how different Muslim communities form in the city and make claims to public space. I also examine how different communities react to these group claims by Muslims, arguing that mosque construction in particular generates intense political protest and active social movements in a society known for its passivity.

**Outline of the Dissertation**

This dissertation examines the formation of Muslim communities within the context of Putin’s morality politics, characterized by the enclosure of civil society in order to protect the country from dangerous foreign influences. The following chapter situates my research within the historical background of Muslims in Russia as well as the contemporary context of Moscow in order to rectify essentialized portrayals of Islam and the Russian state. Then, in Chapter Three, I detail my analytical framework, drawing from literatures on democracy and public space, political geographies and the geographies of Muslims. These bodies of literature help challenge monolithic understandings of Islam as a threat to the Russian state (Hahn 2007) and
develop a critical analysis of the politics of religion in public space. My fourth chapter provides an outline of the methodological approach developed in response to these literatures.

The next three chapters are composed from the empirical findings of the project. Chapter Five examines the political geographies of Muslims in Moscow and Russia through an analysis of the demolition and construction of Moscow Cathedral Mosque. After its controversial demolition on September 11, 2011 and five years of construction, this mosque opened to much celebration on the Muslim holiday Kurban Bayram (The Holiday of Sacrifice) in 2015. Critical geopolitics analyzes questions of how space is constructed and represented in order to justify policies and choices of political elites and ordinary citizens; this is opposed to traditional geopolitics, which explores techniques for expanding the political reach of the nation-state (Agnew 2003). The re-opening of Cathedral Mosque was a political event that elucidated the role of Islam in Putin’s politics. Whereas previous analyses of Putin’s political agenda have focused on its desire to protect Russia from foreign Western influences (Myers 2015; Sharafutdinova 2014), this analysis discusses how Putin views Tatar Muslim leadership as part of this effort to protect Russia from foreign radical Islamist influences. I also examine how the mosque is an attempt for Muslim institutions to establish a privileged role as the interlocutor of state-Muslim relations.

Chapter Six moves from prestige religious construction projects to questions of the role of religious spaces in Moscow’s suburbs, known as spalnie rayoni (sleeping regions). Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork, I examine how religious spaces become sites of dissent and participatory, active citizenship at three different sites in Moscow. I investigate how the protest over Russian Orthodox Church construction in one neighborhood, Babushkinsky, contrasts with the protests over mosque construction in two neighborhoods, Tekstilshchiki and Mitino. This
chapter provides insights into the types of civil society groups that the increased public presence of religion produces in Moscow and the access that different groups have to public space in Moscow.

I switch my focus from analyses of religious landscapes to other forms of Muslim publics in Chapter Seven. Following the liberalization of religious policy since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the intensification of migration from Central Asia and the Caucasus, Moscow’s Muslim communities are increasingly devout and diverse. I first discuss the role of the mosque as a public place from a variety of populations, including imams, women, Tatars, and migrants. This analysis provides insight into how Moscow’s Muslim communities define themselves against each other. I then examine the formation of other Muslim public spaces in Moscow. Although protests have stopped the construction of new mosques, many unofficial prayer rooms and educational centers operate in the city. This piece offers an exploration of the new formations of Muslim communities in Moscow.

In Chapter Eight, I conclude my dissertation by summarizing my findings, discussing the shortcomings and silences of the dissertation, and the contributions to the wider field of geography and religious studies scholarship. I evaluate how my findings contribute to my thesis, which is that contestations over religious sites generate new configurations of civil society in Moscow.
Chapter Two: Historical Background and Research Context of the Putin Years in Moscow

Introduction: Geographies of Muslims in Russia over time

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and its restrictive policies on religion, there has been an extensive religious revival in Russia. More people are self-identifying as religious, and religious organizations are expanding. Religious buildings are re-opening after closure in Soviet times, and there are more opportunities for religious education. In fact, the Russian government has created a law making religious education mandatory in public school. According to Blinkova and Vermeer’s (2016) study of the outcomes of this policy, which requires students to take a nonconfessional education class in the last year of elementary school, this requirement serves as a citizenship education program which links the Russian Orthodox Church with conceptions of patriotism. While more people are identifying as religious, this does not coincide with increased attendance to religious temples or participation in religious festivals.

However, there is a tendency of the Russian government to connect present-day religious policy in Russia to pre-1917 religious formations (Fagan 2014). The role of Soviet policy in affecting contemporary religious formulations is elided, and any religion or sect/branch not considered “indigenous” or “traditional” to Russia faces heavy monitoring, policing, and must undergo a rigorous registration process with the federal government (Fagan 2014). Conversely, processes of migration, persecution, internment, and globalization in the Soviet and post-Soviet period have influenced religious geographies in Russia, making the attempts to create historical continuity incongruous with contemporary practices of religion that are visible today (Verkhovsky 2002).

This chapter provides a historical and geographical context for research on religion in Russia in the recent years with a focus on Muslim communities. This shows how the Soviet
period and its official policies of atheism affected religious geographies in Russia, as well as places studies of Muslims in the Russian historical context. The latter is necessary to examine the many forms of Muslim communities which exist in Russia to counter essentialized portrayals of Muslims (Said 1981).

**Historical Background**

Four religious traditions are understood as “traditional” to Russia in the preamble to the 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations: Russian Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism. Prior to the beginning of the Soviet period in 1917, the Russian Orthodox Church was inseparable from Russian politics, as evidenced in the Tsarist slogan “Pravoslaviye, Samoderzhaviye, Narodnost’ (Autocracy, Orthodoxy, Nationality)” (Forest, Johnson, and Stepaniants 2005). Meanwhile, Russia’s Muslim congregations were loosely organized under the Orenburg Muhammedan Spiritual Assembly, created by Catherine the Great in the late 18th century to maintain governmental ties with a Muslim clerical establishment (Hunter 2004). Judaism was restricted to the Pale of Settlement in present-day Ukraine and Poland, where anti-Jewish pogroms were carried out by local militias and governments and largely ignored by Russian Imperial forces. These pogroms occurred in three waves, from the late 19th century until 1922 when the Bolsheviks emerged victorious in the Russian Civil War. Buddhism was recognized as a traditional religion in the empire, as practiced in the remote provinces of Kalmykia, Buryatia, Tuva, and Zabalkasky Krai (Kappeler 2014). Although these historical religious groups were differentially banned, persecuted, and highly monitored in the Soviet era from 1921-89, they did not disappear as an element of political or everyday life in the Soviet period as private religious practices continued (Dragadze 2003).
Religious practices were a target of several key policies in the Soviet Union, which has effects on present-day moral geographies of religion in contemporary Russia. Moral geography is deceptively simple and normalizing—the idea that there are some public spaces, landscapes, and territories where some people, places, and practices belong (Cresswell 1996). In this chapter, I overview how Soviet policies targeting religion and ethnicity instituted a moral geography of religion that is still in effect in contemporary Russia.

Much of the literature on religion in the Soviet Union examines how Soviet policy sought to transform the public sphere, creating a moral geography where religion was relegated to a private practice (Dragadze 1993). However, the promotion of Homo Sovieticus (Soviet Man) was a means through which the Communist party sought to create a new model citizen, one whose work ethic was heroic and devotion to the revolution was exemplary (Attwood 2010). Thus, the private life of the Soviet citizen was also the focus of Communist politics.

In this chapter, I examine the legacies of Soviet moral geographies that shaped public spaces of religion. This moral geography explains why Muslim public spaces such as mosques are contentious in secular Moscow: As the historical center of Russian Orthodox culture, Russian Orthodox church construction is expected. While mosque construction and renovation is expected in the Volga-Urals or Caucasus regions, where Muslims are concentrated, it challenges the cultural identity and moral geography of the capital city.

**Religion and Ethnic Territory the Soviet Union: Korenizatsiya and Razmezhevanie**

This section surveys the changing relationship of religion and territory from the 1917 and the beginning of the Soviet period to the post-1991 Russian Federation. Following Sack’s (1986), argument that territoriality is how space serves as a means through which some people seek to control others, I survey the methods used by the Soviet government to regulate religious
geographies. This consideration of the changing geographies of religion and atheism at the country/Soviet scale is necessary to understand how contemporary religious communities and the Russian state draw on historical narratives to justify current policies and projects.

Lenin and Stalin were students of Marxist socio-political thought with the chance to practice their principles. They believed in the importance of establishing socialism in a stepwise pattern, starting with a vanguard party (the Communist Party), which would enact policies to create a proletariat working class. The working class would eventually become socialist. One step of the vanguard party to start this process was elevating minority national and religious groups within the former Russian Empire. Lenin served as General Secretary of the Communist Party from the October Revolution in 1917 to his death in 1924, and Stalin was the Commissar of Nationalities. This means that he oversaw The People’s Commisariat on Nationalities, the political organ of the Soviet Union that regulated non-Russian nationalities in the Soviet Union (Hutchinson and Smith 1994). The goal of this commissariat was to show the appeal of the Soviet Union to minority groups in order to create harmony and reduce the chance of nationalism resulting in separatist movements (Blank 1994). As Commissar of Nationalities, Stalin authored the Soviet Nationalities Policy that provided the ethnic architecture to Russia’s modern religious geography. Two aspect of this Nationality Policy, elaborated in this subsection, essentially froze religion to ethnic identifications in the Soviet Union: korenizatsiya (indigenization) and razmezhevanie (national delimitation) (Blank 1994).

Razmezhevanie

Under Lenin and until Stalin’s rise to power in 1924, the Soviet Nationalities Policy was the cornerstone of Soviet domestic policy. Stalin defined a nation as “a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life,
and psychological makeup manifested in a common culture” (as cited in Smith 2013 p.11). Using these criteria, the Bolsheviks performed censuses to classify people into nationalities. Their first census occurred during the Russian Civil War in 1920, so it was incomplete. Their next census occurred only in cities in 1923, but in 1926 they carried out the First All Union Census of the Soviet Union, and identified 176 nationalities according to Soviet nationalities criteria (Hirsch 1997). Out of these 176 nationalities, a hierarchy was created according to Stalin’s criteria.

Federalism was one key aspect of the Soviet Nationalities Policy. Razmezhevanie, or the delimitation of nations, occurred in the USSR from 1917 into the 1930s (Kaiser 1994). Razmezhevanie created borders and boundaries where none existed in Central Asia and the Caucasus, and led to the borders of the 15 Soviet Socialist Republics, and their successor states now as independent countries. It also created autonomous territories within the republics, especially within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, including twenty Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (ASSRs), eight Autonomous Regions (oblasti), and ten Autonomous Areas (okruga) (Bremmer 1993).

As Slezkine (1994) elaborates, federalism seems at odds with the socialist project. These new units, the Soviet republics, were meant to be temporary territorial units that faded away as socialism spread over time and across space. Lenin posited that socialism was not universal, but must be grown locally. This means that privileged minority groups in the Russian Empire, such as Tatars and Bashkirs, was given a territorial administrative unit. Through education in local languages, local socialisms could spring forth. Then, “socialism in one country” could be achieved. This is the Lenininst belief that socialism must be established in one country before it could be exported elsewhere (Lenin and Chretien 2015). National populations would become
Soviet people, or sovietskii narod (Bremmer 1993). When the USSR was sustainably socialist itself, it could introduce revolution to other places.

This territorialization process meant to create grassroots socialism amongst nationalities, however, was a top-down project. National political boundaries were determined by party officials, but their internal recognition and symbology needed to be taught to the new Soviet citizen. The propiska passport system, which made every Soviet citizen declare an official nationality, was the main tool used to create internal recognition and legitimacy of the Soviet party in the new Soviet territory (Slezkine 1994).

The propiska was part of an internal passport assigned by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD). While the KGB monitored the Soviet population for class enemies, the MVD was in charge of regulating the everyday life of the Soviet citizen. In large part, this was carried out through administering the internal passport system, which was a document that contained information such as name, date of birth, nationality, and the propiska. Their means of territorial control was the propiska- a stamp in the internal passport that gave the Soviet citizen their right to residence. It assigned their apartment, city, and thus their status within the Soviet party. The propiska system was used to control the movement of the population. It did so by creating an internal balance amongst national groups, allocating housing, and allocating labor (Pipko and Puciarelli 1985). Soviet citizens could not simply move within its borders in search of better opportunities- they were assigned to certain towns and cities to work or study.

The 1924 delimitation of the Central Asian republics was one of the most complex processes. The Soviet Union’s administrative boundaries divided up traditional regional and clan ties, serving the purpose of preventing any political consolidation of Muslim groups (Yemelianova 2002). But, local Bolsheviks in the region were resistant to top-down Soviet
territorial reforms and preferred pan-Turkic and religious alternative structures such as the Islamic Council in Turkestan (Karasar 2002; Sabol 1995). These local Bolsheviks failed; however the idea of uniting Turkic peoples in Central Asia continued on in the Soviet East Turkestan project. Whereas West Turkestan was a term used in the 19th century Russian Empire to refer to the area making up Soviet Central Asia, East Turkestan referred to the Uighur region of northwest China. The Uighurs are an indigenous Turkic Muslim ethnic group. In the 1940s, some pan-Turkic Uighurs favored separating from China, creating the East Turkestan Republic, and uniting with other Turkic groups as part of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Turkologist A.N. Bernshtam supported this movement by writing Problems of the History of East Turkestan' (Problemy istorii Vostochnogo Turkestana) (1947), an article about the history of the Uighur people which established their national sovereignty, historical connection to Central Asian peoples, and territorial separateness from China (Bellér-Hann, Cesàro, and Finley 2016). Some Uighur nationalists favored seceding from China and forming their own country, Uighurstan, but ultimately the region was incorporated as an autonomous republic within the People’s Republic of China in 1949 (Kamalov 2007).

Within Soviet Russia, the acceptance of the nationalities policy and its state-sponsored nationalist institutions created divisions within minority groups. New cultural elites accepted the nationalities policy, while opponents were targeted as class enemies (Martin 2001). Just as Bernshtam created a nationalist history used to justify Uighur separatism from China, similar texts and research was done on other minority groups in Russia. Ethnic self-identification, a product of the Soviet Nationalities policy, was a precursor for fomenting nationalist sentiment in the late eighties and early nineties, leading to independence movements in Russian minority regions (Brubaker 1996; Gorenburg 2006). Nationalists formed parties in many Muslim
republics, including Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. Most activists came from social science institutes and universities, leading the nationalist movements as ethnic scholars (Gorenburg 2003). The nationalist demands of these movements was often incorporated into regional governments (Gorenburg 2003), but in Chechnya led to a separatist movement and the First Chechen War from 1994-1996 (Yemelianova 2002).

**Korenizatsiya and Promotion of Minorities**

Religion has been used as part of national modernization projects in Russia since the post-1825 reign of Nicholas I, whose Official Nationality policy, “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality” was meant to protect the Russian people and Russian monarchy from enlightenment thinking and democratic political ideas emanating from the West (Miller 2017). This policy, suggested by Romanov’s advisor Sergei Uvarov in 1833, was enacted position Russia as a defender of spiritual ideals and divinely ordained monarchy in the face of the growing atheism presumed to be part of the rise of democratic and secular governments in Western Europe in the wake of the French Revolution. Eventually this dynastic variety of nationalism was challenged during the 1917 October Revolution and Russian civil war, won by the Red Army. Each section of this triad became the target of Bolshevik intervention. To challenge autocracy, the Romanovs were either exiled or killed by Bolsheviks in 1917. Russian nationality and Orthodoxy became targets of policy intervention because of ideology of national socialism.

Initially, Russian nationalism was seen as an aggressive imperialist mode of belonging that had to be defeated. Thus, the Soviet Union promoted minority nationalisms to combat the “Great power chauvinism” of both Russian Orthodoxy (Forest and Johnson 2002) and nationality (Laitin 1998; Martin 2001). Decades of Russification under the Russian Empire were viewed as oppressive to minority religious and ethnic groups. During the Russian civil war, the Bolsheviks
wanted to draw minorities to their cause. They promoted themselves as protectors of minorities who had been oppressed under the Romanov dynasty. The Bolsheviks sought to connect Muslim struggles for sovereignty in the Northern Caucasus, Volga-Urals region, and Central Asia with the Red Army struggle over the Imperialists, anti-Bolshevik, and White Army (Martin 2001).

The first phase of the Soviet nationalities policy, implemented in 1923 by Lenin and Stalin, was *korenizatsiya*. From the Slavic root “core”, *korenizatsiya* refers to the development and promotion of national minorities in Russia (Slezkine 1994). Korenitzatsiya promoted the economic and cultural development of nations in the titular soviets (e.g. Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, Estonian SSR, Latvian SSR, Kyrgyz SSR, and so on), but not in the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic (RSFSR) (Martin 2001). Drawing from Stalin’s theories of nationalism, the Communist party believed that some nations were little, or more backward, and needed to catch up with greater, more advanced nationalities, such as the Russian nationality. Because of this emphasis on the development of minority language, education, and political representation Martin has called the USSR an “Affirmative Action Empire” (2001).

Under *korenizatsiya*, the Soviet Union’s affirmative action policy on the path to socialism promoted the local development of minority religions, languages, and territories. Religion was effectively subsumed under the nationality policy, and religion became a classificatory sub-feature of nationalism. Rather than serving as an alternative to Communism, religion became a step on the path to class-consciousness in the titular republics (Miner 2003).

Although atheism was the official policy of the Soviet Union, religion was reinscribed in Soviet policy as enemy or asset, depending on the religion, time, and place. Russian Orthodoxy was targeted under Lenin’s rule from 1917 throughout the Soviet era. Lenin followed Marx’s belief that religion was an institution used to bolster the bourgeois against the proletariat and that
it stood in the way of modernization. Orthodoxy was intertwined with Russian great power chauvinism, and so many rural churches were closed to combat its spread and the instillation of cultural backwardness to rural peoples within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (Sidorov 2001).

In contrast to oppression of Russian Orthodoxy, during the early decades of the Soviet Era, Bolsheviks sought to build relationships with Muslims. At the level of the USSR, Lenin saw Russian nationalities and Orthodoxy as the class enemy that needed to be destroyed. But, within the Soviets, sub-minority groups were also encouraged to develop national consciousness as a step to class-consciousness. Ideologically, soviets, or councils, were the key institutions in the political system of Leninism. They operated at local, meso-, and national levels and represented the proletariat or working class. Soviets had power over the territories of the Soviet Union. Importantly, in minority regions, minorities were appointed to positions of power within the soviets, nomenklatura, and members of the nomenklatura were the Soviet elites.

The Communist Party recognized that religion was a more prominent source of identification than nationality in many regions. Muslim communities were of particular concern as Islam could potentially motivate alternative politico-spiritual territories, such as the Idel-Ural Islamic state in the Volga-Urals region or the North Caucasus emirate. Lenin, in contrast to his successor Stalin, used minority religions to make communist appeals to minority groups (Martin 2001).

In their Proclamation to the Muslim Toilers of the East, delivered in 1917, Lenin and Stalin proclaimed that they would support the development of Muslim identity under Soviet rule, to differ themselves from Tsarist oppression:

To the Muslims in Russia, be they Tartars of Volga, the inhabitants of Crimea, the Caucasus of Siberia or Turkistan, the Turks of Kaukaz, the Charks, the dwellers of the
Caucasus mountains, to all those whose mosques and worship places and whose faith and traditions were trampled upon by the Tsars of Russia or the other tyrants; Be assured that your traditions and faith and your national and cultural institutions shall be free from this day and nobody will object to these in future. You are free to organize your national life without any interference and obstacles from outside (Quoted in Degras 1951: 16).

This policy declaration shows that early on, the Communist Party believed a close relationship with Muslims was necessary to engender a sense of nationalism for the Kazakh, Tatar, and Uzbek populations, as these peoples were nomadic tribes without a pre-communist legacy of nationalism (Estonia and Ukraine had pre-Soviet national periods and existed as their own nation-states after 1918 briefly). The Soviet Union promoted religious nationalism with the intent to culturally unify people within the Communist Party but not to politically unify them under a national identity. Lenin and Stalin thought that Islam has a ‘communist’ element of comradeship, and developing alliances with Muslim leaders would make Soviets look far more beneficent than the Russian Orthodox Imperialists. Many Muslims were placed in the nomenklatura in local soviets. For example some Jadid Muslims allied with Soviets and were promoted to positions of governmental power within the USSR (Yemelianova 2002). Jadids were modernist Muslim reformers who believed that Islamic education in the region as in decline due to its focus on memorization. Jadids challenged the doctrinal beliefs of established Islamic clergy in Central Asia and the Volga-Urals, calling for a new educational system focusing on history and theory. They believed in Islamic instruction in indigenous Turkic languages, instead of in Arabic or Russian. Thus some jadids were attracted to the Soviet national-determination reforms, such as korenizatsia (Bennigsen and Broxup 1983).

Minority Religions from Class Friend to Class Enemy

After Lenin’s death, Stalin’s rise to General Secretary in 1926 resulted in a aggressive and wary belief that minority nationalism was a threat to communism. He deported national
minority leaders in the *nomenklatura* that he thought were politicizing their supposedly apolitical nationhood, and replaced the policy of *korenizatsiya* with one of Russification and Russianization to promote national development (Martin 2001). This turnaround was largely due to national mobilization in Ukraine, which made him doubtful of Lenin’s policies of *korenizatsiya*. Stalin altered political discourse from Russia as a chauvinist nationalism to Russia as a “Great Nation” who could help other minority nationalisms develop. Thus, Russian language and culture was promoted in the minority soviets and sub-soviet schools, and Russians were given leadership positions in the Soviet and sub-Soviet governments (Gorenburg 2003).

Stalinism promoted Russian ethnic identity and atheism, and targeted religions. The 1929 Soviet anti-religious policy, “The Decree on Religious Associations” closed many religious organizations and closed or converted many religious buildings to alternative purposes (Forest and Johnson 2002; Sidorov 2001). For example, mosques in Astrakhan served as public health buildings or factories (Holland and Todd 2014). World War II had both negative and positive effects on Islam and Muslims in the Soviet Union. In order to escape from Stalin’s repressive policies half of the 1.6 million Muslim draftees defected to the Germans. In turn, Stalin accused 600,000 Muslims from territories occupied by Germans and deported them to Siberia, Kazakhstan and Central Asia (Nationalities deported include all ethnic Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, Karachais, Khamsils, Kurds, and Crimean Tatars) (Yemelianova 2002).

Stalinist repression was not targeted against all Muslim communities. Muftiates in Ufa, the North Caucasus, and the Caucasus called for a jihad against German aggression, and solidified their position as sympathetic to the Soviet cause. The Council of Affairs of Religious Cults was established in 1944 to oversee religious activities, and managed two Muslim spiritual boards in the Soviet period: the Muslim Spiritual Board of the European Part of the USSR and
Siberia, and the Muslim Spiritual Board of the North Caucasus. These were the religious institutions created to oversee Muslims in the Soviet Union, and they controlled important elements such as religious education, approving imams, and the hajj (Yemelianova 2002). As a result of these policies, Orthodox and Muslim clergy were highly monitored, and those not suspected of adhering to Communist policies were also deported in the Great Terror from 1936-38 (Ro’i 2000). The Soviet policy shift towards Muslim communities treating them as allies of communism in the early 1920s to enemies is now clear.

Religious Transformations in the Soviet Union

Territorial transformations were an essential part of the Soviet project, but so too was the transformation of the population from serfs to the Sovietskii narod, or Soviet people. I will overview how three projects of the Soviet period have a legacy that affects contemporary Russian religious geographies: educational programs, unveiling programs, and gradostroitel’stvo, or city-building. As Collier (2011) elaborates, the Soviet government faced a different challenge than liberal regimes in France or Britain because they essentially introduced urbanism and industrialization into Russia (2011). As autocracy was an essential pillar of Tsarist nationalism, these features of modernity had not been introduced into Russian feudalism. Collective life, like federalism, was a top-down project of the Bolshevik party. Through education, city planning, and women’s liberation, Bolsheviks sought to transform, improve, and modernize the inner lives of Soviet citizens as well as create a modern and atheist public sphere.

Education and the Elimination of Illiteracy

In the initial korenizatsiya phase of Soviet Nationalities Policy, education in titular languages was a key project of modernity- this program was known colloquially as lizbet, short for likvidatsiya bezgramotnosti- the elimination of illiteracy. The Soviet literacy campaign was
meant to reverse high illiteracy rates in the Russian Empire, with an estimated 12.5 percent of men and 39.7 percent of women illiterate in 1917 (Martin 2001). The goal of this program was to provide education, which could in turn introduce socialist ideals to students. Education, according to Leninism, was a corrective to religious and peasant thinking. The Communist party wanted to prevent “cultural backwardness”, so they promoted language learning in titular languages via education, and printed books in national languages (Laitin 1998; Kaiser 1994; Martin 2001).

Education was meant particularly to emancipate women from religious influence and to create an ideal Soviet woman. The Soviet woman embodied not national, but supranational traits: She was well-educated, strong, hardworking, and contributed not just to the workforce but to her household economy (Lapidus 1978). Women in Muslim communities in Central Asia were particular targets of reform, as they were thought to be the most susceptible to religious influences. The Soviets established special universities instructing women on management of households and child-rearing (Ro’i 1984). These reforms were successful in achieving 100 percent literacy rates by the 1950s (Clark 2000).

Women’s emancipation and khudzhum

Besides transforming minds via education, the elimination of religious bodily customs was a target of Soviet intervention. To transform Muslims of the ‘East’ into communist nationals, Stalin wanted to liberate women from religious oppression (Edgar 2006). According to Stalin, Muslim practices prevented women from becoming ideal Soviet citizens and members of the working class. The Bolshevik revolution challenged local traditions, such as how Central Asian Muslim women remained separated from men in public space and were responsible for the household. To divorce Muslim women from traditional customs, the Soviets created laws
banning practices like child marriage, polygamy, and allowed women to initiate divorce proceedings (Edgar 2006). Because of declining Russian birth rates and high birth rates amongst Central Asians, Muslim women were encouraged by Soviet officials to reduce their family size and find work outside of the household (Attwood 1990).

Besides promoting family planning, the Soviets targeted the veil, citing it as the most visible and gendered Muslim symbol (Attwood 1990; Tarlo 2010). Many members of Soviet leadership viewed the veil as a symbol of Muslim women’s oppression by patriarchy and local, backwards traditions, advocating for women to remove the veil in public spaces. However, Nadezhda Krupskaya, a prominent Bolshevik and Lenin’s wife, argued that the veil was not an obstacle to spreading socialism and that Soviets needed to acknowledge local traditions (Edgar 2006; Freeman 2013). This appeal to localism was ignored.

Despite dissidence within the party, unveiling became an official Soviet policy in 1926. Soviet reformers created a paradox: they saw themselves as the emancipators Central Asian women while imposing a new form of colonial repression in their lives (Kandiyoti 2002). Unveiling movements were extremely controversial and led to violence. On March 8, 1927, the Bolshevik authorities publicly conducted mass unveilings in Uzbekistan, called khudzhum, meaning siege or storm (Ashwin 2012). The khudzhum resulted in the most violent resistance to Bolshevism of all the reforms of the Central Asian ways of life, resulting in revenge murders by locals of women who chose to unveil (Edgar 2006).

The failure to unveil represents a key incompatibility of the desire to create a new Soviet man or woman with Muslim traditions. The Bolsheviks made demands in line with demands of Muslims against Russian Imperialism, including land rights for minorities, communalism, and group over individual interests. The Bolsheviks initially promised to maintain sharia courts and
returned valuable Muslim artifacts, landmarks, and mosques taken by the Russian Empire to Muslims in the Volga-Urals, Caucasus, and Central Asia (Yemelianova 2002). Although Muslim communities in Central Asia were not inherently opposed to communism, they was not amenable to all communist reforms which challenged local traditions (Ro’i 2015).

Gradostroitel’stvo

Industrialization and collective farming were key economic projects of the Soviet Union, and city-building was a key social project. Creating a daily life, or khozyaistvo, which bred values of atheism, workmanship, and collectivity was the project of Soviet city planners. Religion, through its suppression, played a huge role in city building. Not only were most existing churches and mosques shut down, they were converted into other uses. Most notably, in Moscow, the huge Cathedral of Christ the Savior was demolished to make room for a Palace of the Soviets, which eventually became a heated outdoor swimming pool (Sidorov 2000). Mosques in Russia were similarly converted to other purposes, such as suitcase factories, departments of public health, or just destroyed. Few churches and mosques operated throughout the Soviet period. Churches and mosques closed in large numbers, for example there were 26,000 mosques open in USSR at the start of Stalin’s rule, and approximately 3,000 afterwards (Hunter 2004; Pilkington and Yemelianova 2003).

The large-scale urbanization of the USSR did not make room for the construction of any new religious buildings in Bolshevik plans and religion was thus eliminated from the landscape. However, other elements of Soviet life were meticulously calculated and planned, including schools, gyms, cafeterias, and sleeping arrangements (Collier 2011). Through constructing Communist ideology into everyday spaces, the Soviet planners sought to build a scientific atheist population. However, education, the closures of places of worship and attempts to “liberate”
repressed Muslim women served not to eradicate religion from Soviet public space, but led to its relegation into the domestic sphere and the emergence of a network of unofficial or unregulated mosques and clergymen (Dragadze 1993).

**Soviet transformations of Muslim communities in Moscow**

Muslim communities in Moscow were profoundly influenced by anti-religious developments during the Soviet era. Moscow has an indigenous Tatar population dating back to the Golden Horde in 1240. As an official “tolerated minority” in the Russian Empire, they were not pressured to convert to Russian Orthodoxy but they could practice their traditional religion, the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam. The Tatar settlement (Tatar sloboda) in Moscow was located on the then-outskirts of Moscow, today situated across Moscow River from the Kremlin in central Moscow. Tatars opened two mosques in the city: Historical Mosque in 1823 and Cathedral Mosque in 1904 (Khayretdinov 2008). However, Historical Mosque was closed in 1936 and its imam was arrested and killed during Stalin’s Great Terror in 1937 (Interview B, August 2013). Meanwhile, Cathedral Mosque was kept open and served as the only operating mosque constantly open during the Soviet era in the European (West of Urals) region of Russia (March 2010). Cathedral Mosque was kept open to serve as a place of worship for ambassadors from Muslim countries that visited the Soviet Union (Gavrilov and Schevchenko 2010).

Religion might have been a target of Soviet territorial transformation, but when given the ability to choose freedom of conscience under Mikhail Gorbachev in the late 1980s, many chose to profess their religion publicly (Forest, Johnson, and Stepanians 2005). The following section discusses religion and politics in the transitional years of the 1980s and 1990s.
Glasnost’ and Perestroika

Lenin and Stalin’s Soviet Nationalities Policy was formative in linking ethnicity, religion, and territory through delimitation and korenizatsiya as well as promoting a new Soviet lifestyle via education, regulating religious dress, and also city planning. The enforcement of anti-religious campaigns continued throughout the Soviet era, with the peak of anti-religious sentiment occurring from 1958-1964 during the Khrushchev years. These years were marked by increased closures of religious places of worship and a reduction of clergy. Before the Bolshevik revolution, there were 26,000 mosques in the Russian Empire and 45,000 clerics. Following Stalin’s campaign, there were 1,312 mosques. After Khrushchev’s campaign, only about 400 mosques were left open in 1963, with 2,000-3,000 clerics (Hunter 2004). Historians have characterized Brezhnev’s rule from 1964-1982 as an era of stagnation, and this was true of religious policy as well as economic growth.

Glasnost’ and perestroika are the two policies most associated with religious revival in the Soviet Union. During the period of glasnost’, or openness, Gorbachev initiated reforms which modernized Soviet religious policies and essentially de-criminalized religious activities in public space- allowing for people to practice their religions openly, read religious texts, as religious prisoners were freed. From 1985-1986, during the first year of Gorbachev’s leadership, 6228 new religious organizations registered in Russia, with 70 percent of these or 4312 belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church. Soviet Muslim organizations increased from 392 to over 1000 registered organizations.

But, glasnost’ did not lead to an immediate liberalization of religious policy towards Muslims. The failed Soviet invasion of Afghanistan from 1979-1989 increased the political activity of Soviet Muslims, and some even defected and sided with the mujahideen
Soviet authorities actively worked to counter the influence of popular Islam during the period of glasnost. For example Soviet archaeologists excavated Muslim tombs in Samarkand in order to disprove any religious properties ascribed to these sites, and doctors held seminars to proscribe a scientific worldview to replace religious and folk customs. In an analysis of Uzbekistani media from 1986-87, Hanks showed how Islam was promoted in mass media as a hindrance to progress and as an anticomunist force that contrasted with the openness with which Russian Orthodoxy was treated in the same period (Hanks 2001).

Perestroika, or the restructuring of the economic and social institutions of the Soviet Union, led to Muslim revivals. Although the Soviet authorities cracked down on unofficial Muslim communities, they made several concessions in 1989 at the end of the invasion of Afghanistan and as a result of the social restructuring under perestroika. New mosques were opened, the Russian version of the Koran was reprinted, and the regime allowed the distribution of 1.5 million copies of the Koran donated by Saudi Arabia (Atkin 1992). In 1990, religious renaissance became even more pronounced with the new USSR Supreme Soviet law allowing freedom of conscience and religious activities. At the end of the year, over 94 mosques in Russia and 1,330 in the USSR were registered. More people were allowed to go on the hajj, and Islamic political parties formed. They were extremely varied, with the Islamic Renaissance Party based in Astrakhan being loyal to the Soviet regime while more radical parties that formed elsewhere, such as the Islamic Democratic Party of Turkestan that called for an Islamic Caliphate (Yemelianova 2002).

**Russian Political Context after 1991**

The 1990s and 2000s were dynamic years for the religious revival as the Soviet Union dissolved and formed new countries. The Russian Federation adopted secular laws that increased
the religious revival amongst their Muslim communities. The goal of these laws was to allow freedom of worship as well as curtail the growth of any Islamic separatist movements (Yemelianova 2002). While the Russian Federation maintains ties with Muslim communities through spiritual boards, Muslim communities in the Caucasus have been transformed especially by increased foreign influence. This has led to an emergence of two types of relationships between Muslims and the Russian state—official and unofficial Islam (Pilkington and Yemelianova 2003).

Historic traditions and theological debates underpin the divide between official and unofficial Islam. Amongst Tatars and Bashkirs in the Volga-Urals region, official Islam is the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam. In the Caucasus, official forms of Islam are more varied and there are more visibly Muslim public spaces and practices. Whereas official Muslim institutions are Hanafi in the northwest Caucasusian republics of Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygea, and Karachaevo-Cherkessia, Sufism is the official ideology of Muslim spiritual boards in the northeast Caucasus, including Chechnya, Dagestan, and Ingushetia.

Sufism takes on many diverse forms across these republics. Sufism is a mystical form of Islam based on tariqats, or orders. There are three tariqats in Dagestan, with 32 smaller groups, or wirds. In Chechnya and Ingushetia, there are two tariqats. Within wirds, elders teach their disciples proper prayer rituals, such as the veneration of certain saints or spiritual mentors, as well as local myths. Caucasian Sufis trace their brotherhoods back to two leaders, Imam Shamil and Sheikh Mansur. Differences of lineages of masters amongst the brotherhoods lead to the folk nature of Sufi orders in the Caucasus and the veneration of local saints. Sufis visit local saints and also incorporate them into their zikr rituals, which is a group ceremonial ritual prayer (Yemelianova 2009). In the Caucasus, Sufi authorities and tariqats play a role in the lives of
their followers that blends together political, social, civic, and family life. Local politicians seek endorsement from wirds, and wirds are involved in legal disputes, rituals such as funerals, and dictate the role of civil society groups in the region (Savva and Tishkov 2011; Yemelianova 2009). Overall, Muslim practices are much more prevalent and visible in the Caucasus than in the Volga-Urals region, with the banning of the sale of alcohol and the use of sharia courts to solve legal disputes becoming normalized (Makarov and Mukhametshin 2003).

The use of the term unofficial Islam by the Russian government, press, and leaders of traditional Muslim communities has a homogenizing effect: it treats all nonhistorical Muslim communities as extremist. Unofficial Islam in Russia usually refers to Salafism or Wahhabism (Yemelianova 2014). Although the Russian government and mass media use Salafi or Wahhabi synonymously with radicalism, this is an inadequate treatment of the movements. Wahhabism is an Arabian 18th century reform movement that calls for a return to conservative values and speaks out against other schools of Islam. Salafism is a more widespread conservative movement, and has both nonviolent and violent followers. Extreme Salafis in Russia resists both the Russian government and local Muslim leaders, while non-extreme Salafis call for different, conservative Muslim practices. In Russia, extremist Salafis contributed to separatist irredentist movements and two Russian-Chechen wars. These two wars have a legacy of radical insurgency in the North Caucasus and spreading Islamophobia in Russia (Yemelianova 2002). Moderate Salafis advocate for monotheism and denounce the worship of local saints, which are practices prevalent in Russian Hanafi and Sufi communities (Yemelianova 2009). Although not all Salafi communities are extreme, the Russian government treats them as such, arguing that Salafism leads to jihadism (Yemelianova 2014, Malashenko 2014). The Russian state treats Salafism as a
foreign ideology funded largely by Saudi Arabia and interruptive of local traditions, instead of as a developing part of Russia’s diverse Muslim communities (Malashenko 2014).

**Contemporary Research Context in Moscow**

The Russian Federation is officially a secular country with freedom of religion. The 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations is often cited as the key legal document which declares Russia’s secularism but also outlines the traditional religions of Russia: Russian Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism. Just as state atheism was enforced differentially amongst different groups in the Soviet Union, so too is the interpretation of the freedom of religion and secularism. Russia inherited from the Soviet Union a federal geography (*razmezhevanie*) that divided religious communities and associated them with nationalities (*korenizatsiya*). This moral geography created a map of religion and of religious tolerance. Although glasnost’ and perestroika led to a liberalization of religious policy and Muslim religious revivals, the effects of these revivals outside of ethnic republics remains understudied. The spread and growing visibility of Muslim communities outside of its traditional homelands, I argue, challenge these moral geographies of religion and question the extent of freedom of conscience in contemporary Russia.

Moscow’s traditional geography of religion has been challenged by migration, conversions amongst non-typical nationalities, and the growing religiosity of Muslim communities in regions where they are non-titular, minority populations. In this project, I examine how contemporary religious construction projects reproduce moral geographies inherited from Soviet times while ignoring the effects of Muslim migration and conversion. Religion is connected to political, social, and economic processes (Knott 2015). In the following section I overview the political, social, and economic context impacting the research climate.
I arrived in Moscow in February 2013 and stayed until November 2013. Politically, the local research climate was dominated by the emergence of opposition against Putin and his allies. After Putin’s victory in the 2012 Russian presidential election, huge rallies against corruption occurred throughout Russia. Because Russia previously was characterized by a lack of participatory democracy, mass protests against Putin and his conservative United Russia regime were seen as a potential trajectory for popular support against authoritarian rule in Russia (White and McAllister 2014). Bolotnaya Square, located across from the Kremlin on the Moscow River, was a key site for these rallies in Moscow. The rallies originally called for free and fair elections, but as more political dissenters were arrested also became calls for freedom of political prisoners. On the 6th of May 2012, over 20,000 protesters gathered at Bolotnaya to hear speeches by opposition leaders Alexei Navalny, Boris Nemtsov, and Sergei Udaltsov. They were arrested, as were 28 other participants for violence against the police. Out of those 27, seven received prison sentences.

Although the wave of political protests throughout Russia had largely died down by the time of my arrival in February 2013, I attended the anniversary of the Bolotnaya Square protests on May 6, 2013 in Moscow and to observe the anniversary rally which called for freedom of those arrested (Figure 2.1). Alexei Navalny gave a speech against political corruption, and an estimated 8,000 attended according to Moscow authorities. Police searched bags and escorted attendees through security gates.
This opposition expressed itself both in political rallies and in the September 2013 mayoral election. As Moscow is a federal subject within Russia, the mayor of Moscow is akin to a governor in the United States. Then-mayor Sergei Sobyanin stepped down from mayor in June 2014 because technically the mayor of Moscow is an elected position. He had been appointed in 2010 after then-Russian president Medvedev fired Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov by presidential decree for loss of trust. The firing of Luzhkov and appointment of Sobyanin is illustrative of centrist and the “power vertical” in national Russian politics, or the gathering of power to the presidency. The goals of the new election were to increase political legitimacy for Sobyanin and the United Russia party, which is aligned to Putin, while at the same time to allow some political action for the opposition. Many political parties challenged Sobyanin and United Russia in the election, most notably opposition leader Alexei Navalny (Figure 2.2).
Navalny was under house arrest for most of his campaign due to accusations of embezzling in the timber industry though he ran on an anti-corruption platform. This election was notable because Moscow, as the political center of Russia and most Westernized city, was the most likely setting for challenges to United Russia’s political clout. This is seen in Navalny’s campaign slogan “Change Russia. Start with Moscow.” Navalny revolutionized campaign politics by using newspapers and placing informational “cubes” or booths outside of metro stations in order to reach ordinary Russian voters. He accused Sobyanin of abusing his position as mayor by emailing all Muscovites about his campaign platform through mayoral instead of electoral channels. This appeal to the people on the streets without access to media channels echoes the strategy of Nemtsov’s 2009 campaign as mayor of Sochi (Orttung 2013). According to official results Sobyanin won the popular election, earning 51.37% of the vote while Navalny earned 27.24%. The turnout rate was 32%. Sobyanin is regarded by most Muscovites as having a
positive influence on the city and allowing for more democratic participation at the local level as compared to Luzhkov, who was seen as a big spender and embezzler amongst Russian media and the public (Levada Center 2013, Interview C May 2013, Interview D, October 2013).

Notably for my project on minority religious rights to the city, Navalny’s progressive moment appeals mainly to Russia’s urban middle classes and not to underrepresented minorities. As Laruelle (2014) describes, this political party is best understood as \textit{natsdem}, or national democratic. Navalny rose to prominence through his website RosPil, which is now the Anti-Corruption Foundation (Laruelle 2014). This foundation is an NGO that investigates corruption amongst Russian government officials. His political ideas of transparency make him seem progressive; however he advocates for a pro-Russian nationalist government. In his manifesto \textit{Nationalism}, Navalny writes:

\begin{quote}
The principal goal of the Russian state (rossiyskiy) is to stop the processes of degradation of the Russian civilization (russkiy), and to create the conditions for the preservation and development of the Russian people (russkiy), its culture, its language, its historical territory.\text{(Manifest 2007, Quoted in Laruelle 2014 p. 281).}
\end{quote}

Multinationalism is not part of Navalny’s appeal or platform, but rather the securing of the state for the ethnic Russian people. Navalny supports Russian nationalist events such as the Russian March, which are Russian nationalist events that occur throughout Moscow on National Unity Day, November 4 (\textit{Figure 2.3}).

He also has stated that the religion of Russia is Orthodox Christianity, and advocated for the removal of corrupt officials who allow illegal immigration into Russia from the Caucasus and Central Asia. He has campaigned for the Russian government to spend less on Chechnya and the North Caucasus, as exemplified in his “Stop feeding the Caucasus” campaign, thereby reproducing nationalist sentiments in his democratic platform. Also, while the protests at Bolotnaya coalesced around anti-corruption and frustration with the policing of civil society,
there was little voice given to specific Muslim issues, such as rights of minorities, immigrants, or the right to build new mosques. Minority religious groups are not included with this natsdem movement in Russia.

Figure 2.3 Russian March on National Unity Day. Flags show the alliance between the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian nationalists. November 4, 2013. Photo by author.

Morality Politics

Besides the emergence of an anti-corruption natsdem party in Moscow, three key social issues shaping the Moscow research context at the time of my fieldwork were the emergence of laws protecting religious feelings, anti-LGBT laws, and laws governing NGOs. While Navalny is the political face of anti-Putinism in Moscow, Pussy Riot emerged as the face of anti-Putinism in the social sphere. Putinism itself tricky to define, typically referring to gathering political power to the central Russian state and role of president through a battle against powerful oligarchs (such as Mikhail Khodorkovsky) and Islamic insurgents in the Caucasus (Myers 2015). What
became evident in the Pussy Riot trial was the transition of Putin’s politics of preserving the Russian state from the Yeltsin years to establishing a Russian “morality politics” (Sharafutdinova 2014). Putin’s morality politics is best viewed as using political channels to promote traditional, conservative values in Russian society.

The Pussy Riot trial in 2012 helped clarify the growing role of Russian Orthodox values in Putin’s new moral politics. Pussy Riot is a feminist performance group of protest artists based in Moscow, and one of their performance pieces was as a punk band performing in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior Church in Moscow. They record their performances for music videos, continuing the performance art on the Internet. This piece was called “Punk Prayer - Mother of God, Chase Putin Away!” The song drew attention to the growing relationship between Putin and the Russian Orthodox Church, asking Mary, Mother of God, to banish Putin from the church. Three members of Pussy Riot were arrested for hooliganism during the live performance and tried for “hooliganism motivated by religious hatred.” Two, Mariya Alyokhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, were found guilty and sentenced to two years in Russian prison (Figure 2.4). One effect of this trial was the subsequent 2013 criminalization of insulting religious feelings in Russia, including the public desecration of all religious books or objects.

Besides the new blasphemy law, other laws have helped establish morality politics in Russia such as the LGBT propaganda law in 2013. This federal law "for the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values", makes it illegal to distribute materials depicting “non-traditional sexual relationships.” Over 90% of Russians were in favor of the law, according to the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM), the government-run polling agency, showing that Putin’s morality politics had a public backing (2013).
In my project, I examine how state morality politics is folded into the processes of creating normative publics in Moscow. The state advocates for the creation of Russian Orthodox publics in Moscow; the extent to which minority religious practices, behaviors, and publics are incorporated into morality politics is less clear. I study how Muslim communities and the Russian state use morality politics to make claims on one another.

Figure 2.4 Picket over inhumane Russian prison conditions brought to light by an editorial by Pussy Riot member Nadezhda Tolokonnikova. September 25, 2013. Photo by author.

Crackdown on NGOs

Besides the codification of traditional religious and family values into laws, in 2012 the Russian federal government also altered Russian civil society through the creation of a law requiring NGOs that received foreign funding and are involved in political activity to register as foreign agents. This law, "On Amendments to Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation regarding the Regulation of the Activities of Non-profit Organizations Performing the Functions of a Foreign Agent" has been viewed as a way of curtailing the influence of Western influences on Russian civil society (Crotty, Hall, and Ljubownikow 2014). Some of Russia’s most
prominent NGOs, such as Memorial, devoted to preserving the history of totalitarianism in the former Soviet Union, have received fines for not registering as a foreign agent. 88 agencies have registered as foreign agent NGOs, according to the director of NGOs at the Russian Ministry for Justice.

Legislature against NGOs has recently been passed allowing the Russian government to liquidate NGOs and penalize those involved that are seen as a threat to Russian national security, or “undesirable.” “The Law on Undesirable Organizations”, passed in 2015, has led to the closure of many NGOs, such as Agora, a legal advocacy association, US Russia Foundation, the Open Society Foundation, and MacArthur Foundation, while GOLOS, an electoral monitoring group, is being investigated. By curtailing the influence of foreign agents and stressing the importance of maintaining national security through monitoring civil activity in NGOs, the Russian government is using the social sphere of activity to combat Western influences on their morality politics. These actions not only alter the growth of Russian civil society, but also stake Putin’s geopolitical claims as a defender of a moral way of life in opposition to Western corrupt, amoral influences. This represents a distinct shift in Putin’s geopolitical vision from one that sought an alliance with the West in the war on terror and radical Islam to one now opposed to Western immoral influences.

This anti-Western NGO legislation raises the question of how civil society is developing in Russia’s managed democracy. Even though some NGOs are viewed as enemies of the state, this does not mean that all NGO or civil society activity in Russia is at a standstill. My research addresses how Muslim civil societies take form and operate within Russia’s atmosphere of distrust of NGOs.
Economic climate and migration

The context of my research is strongly influenced by Moscow’s economic climate, as most Muslims in Moscow are economic migrants from the Caucasus and Central Asia. I returned for a follow-up research visit in 2015 to investigate how Russia’s worsening economic climate had affected mosque attendance and my research population. Due to the falling price of Russia’s chief export, crude oil, on the world market and Western economic sanctions as a result of the annexation of Crimea, the Russian economy has shrank since 2014. The ruble, for example, has dropped by half its value- one US dollar is worth 63 rubles as of April 2016, when at the same time in 2014 one US dollar was worth 35 rubles. Since the ruble weakened, the head of the Russian Federation Department of Migration has estimated that up to 25% of migrant workers have left Moscow (Lazaridis 2016). Also affecting migration is the fact that, starting in 2015, migrants will have to take exams on Russian language, history, and culture to receive residence permits- a system that has replaced the Soviet propiska but serves the same purpose for immigrants in Moscow. Since the ruble has collapsed on the international market, I wanted to know if consequently there was a reduced presence of Muslim migrants in Moscow’s public space.

Discussion: Effects of Soviet Era on Russian religious geography

The geographies of Muslims in Russia are complex. Muslim religious revivals after the collapse of the Soviet Union did not emerge out of the ether. In fact, Soviet policies helped preserve traditional religious geographies since the Russian Empire while curbing foreign influence. Although the Communist Party used its nationalities policy and federal delimitation of borders to figuratively draw a map of religious nationalities, they saw religion as an impermanent characteristic which needed to be dissolved on the way to creating a Communist
territory and its citizens. The ideal Soviet New Man was atheist; however, under Lenin, minority religious groups were allies as the Bolsheviks sought to confront Russian imperialism.

Lenin and Stalin had differing nationalities policies as they created the USSR’s territory and both have legacies in the mobilization of ethnic and religious groups in Russia today. While Lenin promoted the growth of cultural nationalism amongst minority groups, Stalin later became wary of their political potential. As a result of Communist Party policies, religion was directly linked to nationality, and inscribed within certain territories. Muslim beliefs became part of the newly created nationalities of Central Asia and the Caucasus, and within the Volga region of the RSFSR (Martin 2001). Under Stalin, after the linkage between nationality-religion-soviet was formed, religion became isolated as an element of identity that needed to be conquered by class identity, sometimes forcibly and without consent (Edgar 2006). While some Muslims adapted to Soviet rule, many Soviet policies were met with resistance, such as the resistance to unveiling in Central Asia.

The 1990s were a relatively liberal time for religion in Russia, as freedom of religion was allowed and new religious movements sought adherents in the country. Russia’s 1997 Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations law, however, limited their influence and codified a hierarchy of religious favoritism in Russia (Papkova2011). Razmezhitvane, korenizatsie, glasnost’, perestroika, and secularism all operate under the rationality that Muslims are constrained to certain political borders. However, this is not the case in Moscow. The contemporary split between indigenous Muslim groups, called official Islam by the state and press, and Muslims influenced by foreign ideologies, called unofficial Islam by the state and press, is best understood through a nuanced historical lens. So too is the moral geography that
helps to understand why, although Russia is a secular country with many historical Muslim communities, there is a resistance to Muslim public identity and spaces in Moscow.

In Putin’s Russia, morality politics, the crackdown on NGOs, and the economic climate of boom and bust from an undifferentiated oil economy are key factors shaping the research context. So too is the close relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian government. The ideal of the unified Soviet people has over time been replaced with that of the overwhelming majority (*podavliaiushchee bol’shinstvo*) (Sharafutdinova 2014). This phrase, used by Putin to contrast his conservative base with those of political protesters in 2012-2013, is discursively used to bolster the divide and separation of Russia from Western ideas and influence (Chechel 2013). This dissertation explores what kinds of Muslim public spaces and practices are emerging in the era of the overwhelming majority and morality politics in Moscow.
Chapter Three: Literature Review: Political Geographies of Religion and Public Space

In this dissertation, I examine the formation of publics and their spaces in Moscow, specifically Muslim publics and civil society activists. Increased religious practice, the call for more religious places, and protests over religious sites produce the contemporary political geography of religion in post-atheist Russia. The conceptual framework presented in this chapter draws from three bodies of literature: critical political geography, civil society and public space, and geographies of religion. These literatures provide guidance to understand how the demands for more Russian Orthodox and Muslim spaces have changed civil society and challenged identity politics in Russia. Drawing from these literatures, I explore the geographies of religion in Putin’s era of morality politics.

This chapter consists of four parts. I first focus on critical and feminist political geographies on the politics of everyday life and places. I turn to the literatures on civil society and public space to shape an approach for analyzing the formation of publics in a managed democracy. I then examine the field of the critical geographies of religion to gain insight into analyzing Muslim communities and sacred spaces. In the conclusion, I outline how I combine insights from these literatures to study the politics of religion in Moscow’s public spaces.

Critical and Feminist Political Geography and the Politics of Everyday Life

In my project, I use insights from critical and feminist political geographies to analyze the everyday life of religions and the state in Moscow’s public spaces. Historically, political geography emphasized geopolitics, the study of nation-states as units of political power that struggle against each other for territory (Agnew 2003). Geographers played a key role in this process, shaping policies to position their countries in the modern world system. For example,
Mackinder advocated for the expansion of British land power to combat the growth of the German state (1904), whereas Ratzel argued that territorial expansion or Grossraum was necessary for the healthy growth of a nation (Agnew 2003). In the 1990s, following the influence of Derridean deconstruction and Foucauldian discourse analysis, critical political geographies emerged as a field which challenged this conception of geopolitics as a neutral science of statecraft (Ó Tuathail 1996). Critical political geography analyzes questions of how space is constructed and represented in order to justify policies and choices of political elites; this is opposed to classical geopolitical agendas, which explores techniques for expanding the political reach of the nation-state. Drawing from a critical perspective, geographers have conducted a diversity of projects critiquing the politics of spatial representations: analyzing the historical contexts of geopolitical thinkers, (such as Kearns’ analysis of Mackinder’s legacies (2009) and Bassin and Aksenov’s (2006) study of the heartland theory in Russian political culture, the use of popular media to spread geopolitical codes (such as Dittmer’s (2005) analysis of Captain America comic books or Holland’s (2012) analysis of Sacco’s graphic novels) or analyses of public opinion of foreign policies (such as O’Loughlin, Ó Tuathail, and Kolossov's (2006) survey of public opinions on foreign policies in Russia).

Within political geography, the concept of “political” is fiercely debated. Feminist and post-structural critiques have raised three debates in political geography that my research touches on: questions and challenge assumptions about what is politics, where politics occurs, and how to analyze political geographies (Marston 2003, Herb 2007). One metaphor used to discuss this conceptual split within political geography is to talk about politics with a capital P or lowercase p (Flint 2003). Big P politics refers to “high politics” which involve the nation-state, elites with political power, and the institutions through which such power is exercised. Politics with a small
p refers to what Flint calls “sub-politics”, which is a politics produced from movements and influences in the 1960s from feminism, environmentalism post-colonialism, identity politics. In particular, the feminist movement is credited with drawing the attention of geographers into the politics of everyday lives with their motto that “The personal is political (England 2003).” Rather than arguing for the split of “P”olitics and “p”olitics, the feminist approach states that state politics and everyday practices are constitutive of one another.

Feminist political geographers contend that critical political geography privileges the nation-state and realm of political elite (Staeheli 2001), and therefore needs to be extended to include studies of spaces of power beyond the nation-state, such as the household (Brickell 2013) or body (Hyndman 2007), studies of alternative geopolitical imaginations, not just those of national elites (Koopman 2011), and the daily production of politics (Secor 2001). Feminist political geographies have introduced a wide range of scholarship and topics to the field. By decentering the nation-state, feminist political geographies have examined previously understudied perspectives (Dowler and Sharp 2001), such as in Sharp's (2011) analyses of subaltern viewpoints on the War on Terror in the Tanzanian press. With the contention that academic research has reified colonial and militaristic power relationships between research and subject, feminist political geographies can be activist in nature. One example is in Koopman’s (2011) participatory analysis of accompaniment in Colombia. Arguing that geographers can actively make peace just as past geographers contributed to war and violent agendas, Koopman discusses the spatial strategies of accompaniment and how she uses white privilege and her body as a tool to protect the bodies of disenfranchised people making human rights claims. Activist research is one intervention of feminist political geography. Overall, the central assertion of feminist political geography is that global and everyday politics constitute each other.
Feminist political geography analyzes how structures of both state and other forms of
dominant power affect many types of populations, including and extending beyond women. To
illustrate, Secor (2001) applies feminist approaches to her analysis of geopolitics in Istanbul.
She writes, “My goal has been to approach Islamist politics as a question of feminist political
geography and, in doing so, to reveal a counter-geopolitics, or alternative spatialization, of lived
politics in the city (208).” To counter discourses of Islamist politics written at the global scale,
Secor examines how these discourses are produced through everyday interactions in Istanbul,
Turkey. She uses focus groups to study how urban women are political through examining
voting records and the local activities of political parties in neighborhoods. Women’s visiting
day, a weekly or monthly occurrence where women gather in a household and share tea, is
explored as an alternative space of informal political discussion. Other neighborhood meetings
amongst women in Istanbul resulted in the activity of raising money for social support for urban
poor (Secor 2001: 206). Such informal networks amongst women are sources of aid that could
subvert the impact of government aid, and also create a space for political debate amongst
women. Secor’s research shows that through de-centering the nation-state as the unit of analysis,
the complex spaces of geopolitical life appear. Her analysis demonstrates a key feature of
feminist political geographies- an emphasis on analyzing the processes rather than outcomes of
spatial politics (Staeheli 2001).

Importantly, the feminist approach does not prioritize the local or micro-scale, but rather
analyzes how global, national, or urban scales are related to each other in political relationships
of power (Hyndman 2001: 212). Harvey (1989) uses the term time-space compression to refer to
how technology and capital accumulation under globalization can make the effects of physical
distance and time feel less significant. As people socially interact quickly, place seems less
important as homogenization occurs due to time-space compressions. Expanding from this thesis, Massey (1994) discusses the power geometry of time-space compression: How globalization and its flows generate the differentiation of society. She argues that different people are affected by time-space compression, creating a politics of access and mobility. Thus, places receive their specificity and uniqueness not due to their long internal, bounded histories but through their unique articulations in networks of power and flows. Places of everyday life are not static, but dynamic power geometries. In my project, I analyze how global capital and political trends of migration and secularism create power geometry that alters the sense of places in Moscow.

Critical and feminist political geographies have extended the sites and populations of political geography, and introduced new methods to this subfield. They include public opinion surveys discourse analyses, focus groups, interviews, and participant observation. One of the most vocal calls for new methods in political geography comes from Nick Megoran (2006:623). He is critical of discourse analyses that do not analyze how elite discourses are received by their audiences, such as Sharp’s (1993) analysis of Reader’s Digest or Berg and Oras’ (2000) analysis of the Estonian-Russian boundary based on secondary data (2006: 623). Megoran posits ethnographic participation as the best method to “study the daily life of the state” (2006: 628).

Furthering the scope of critical geopolitics and feminist geopolitics, Ó Tuathail (2010) has developed a field-based approach, termed localized geopolitics (2010). Localized geopolitics evaluates local processes of geopolitics being carried from political centers (Toal 2010). Localized geopolitics focuses on the lived experience of state power and territorial disputes in everyday spaces. It is similar with feminist geopolitics in its examination of geopolitics beyond elites and traditional centers of power. As seen from the research on Bosnian migrant returns,
localized geopolitics looks at a power from a plurality of places and viewpoints. Dahlman and Ó Tuathail (2005) examine the localized geopolitics of displacement and return in two regions in Bosnia, making use of interview data, historical accounts from newspapers, and academic studies and organizational reports in order to understand the politics existing between returnees, the international community, and the local regimes of ethnic supremacy.

Ó Tuathail (2003) has also expressed the importance of fieldwork and regional knowledge for critical geopolitics. Yet, he recognizes that Megoran’s approach challenges the limits of an individual researcher and academic-language competency might be hard to achieve, and participant observation requires a lengthy time investment. Although participant observation of a community and lived experience can be a critical method, surveying, discourse analyses, interviewing, and focus groups can still provide thoughtful, ethical research (Toal 2003). All of these methods have contributed to political geographies that criticizes how state power affects people’s daily lives (Megoran 2006).

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Looking at the sense of place in everyday life does not mean that the nation-state disappears as a producer and product of political geographies, but that its role is altered. To de-center the state means that it is not treated as a monolithic actor but a prosaic entity composed of daily practices and a constellation of institutions (Painter 2006). De Certeau (2011) argues that it is the banal practices of everyday public life through which power is inscribed, reified, or contested. This sort of power includes but is not limited to state power. Drawing from insights from de Certeau’s work, I interrogate how new religious sites raise debates about normative publics and practices in everyday Moscow life.

**Civil Society and Public Spaces in Russia’s Managed Democracy**

In my project, I focus on the formations of different publics and their spaces in Moscow. I draw from Massey’s (2005) conception of space as the material and physical constitution of social relations. Civil societies, publics, and public spaces are types of social relations and material places that are characteristics of democracies, constituting the dynamic everyday spaces of the state (Habermas 1991). The creation of publics and their spaces reveal insight into the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion that are created by democracy, capitalism, and other processes (Massey 1994; Staeheli and Mitchell 2016). Moving beyond a nation-state scale allows for analyses of political geographies beyond liberal frameworks of freedoms and rights (Mawdsley 2016). Not all standpoints or practices might be liberatory or sympathetic with Western liberal values (Mahmood 2004); however they are part of the constellation of power.
shaping the politics of everyday life (Megoran 2006).

My research examines how democratic institutions and their associated public spaces, civil societies, and secularism are localized in Russia. In Western democratic theory, public spheres and civil society are considered to be the cornerstones of liberal democracies. Civil society here is understood as social life organized independently from the state (Calhoun 2011). The public sphere is treated as the means through which civil society articulates its independent, rational, claims to the state. The theory of the public sphere suggests that through an expansion of civil society and its public sphere to include more voices and outlooks, a more just democracy can be created (Habermas 1991). The public sphere is theorized as a democratic place where pluralistic voices can debate over political issues. The public sphere is generated through interactions of publics in associated spaces, the epitome of which is the 18th century coffee shops of Europe. Habermas originally argued that the hallmark of democracy is deliberation, created in a public sphere wherein people united under a rational public opinion generate political action. The public sphere is considered rational because markers of difference such as religion were relegated to the private lives and excluded from the processes of deliberation (Habermas 2006). The freedom of the public sphere hinges on secularism, the separation of publics from private affairs such as religion.

Rather than scientific rationality (Habermas 1991), Ahmed argues that inclusion into the public sphere is based in the cultural politics of emotions: as laws are created and performed to create a nurturing love for one’s community, or nation, or race, this process breeds in turn a fear for those who stand on the outside and threaten the included loved ones (Ahmed 2005). The creation of democracies and civil society is iterative, emotional, and in constant contestation (Benhabib 2004).
The proliferation of democracies in the international system does not mean that liberal democracy is globalizing and spreading universal values of human rights and the development of an independent civil society. Political geographic research suggests that literature on the globalization of democratic norms does not take into account the specificity of democracy in practice (O’Loughlin 2004). While there has been a rise of electoral democracies, which have elections and political parties, there has been both a profusion of so-called illiberal democracies as well as a larger body of work critiquing the limitations of Western liberal democracies (Arendt 1968). This literature touches on debates over rights, public spaces, and secularism. My research draws from and contributes to the literature on public spaces through examining religion and public spaces in Russia’s managed democracy.

Rights

According to the developmental logic of human rights, it is through rights-claims that individuals can achieve fulfillment and freedom (Slaughter 2007). The logic of human rights discourses evades questions over who are considered “human” and what sort of rights are worth defending while universalizing European cultural norms as natural rights (Slaughter 2007; Hunt 2008). In her work on “the right to have rights”, Arendt (1968) calls into question the contradiction of the universality of human rights when rights are carried out and codified by nation-states. She argues that because citizenship is a prerequisite for rights, those who are statelessness, such as refugees, suffer the most and are most vulnerable under the application of human rights in state-based political communities (Arendt 1968). Thus, human rights are tied up with citizenship and political relations, rather than inalienable or universal.

Critiquing the human rights regime further, Fassin (2012) points out that human rights regimes rest on an unequal logic of empathy: those carrying out rights through NGO or
frameworks are empathetic, those without rights or insufficient rights are portrayed as suffering, and minorities that need rights must be tolerated. Together, these emotions generate a cultural and moral politics of human rights that place those seeking rights in a negative and paternalistic relationship to those distributing them (Abu-Lughod 2013). It creates a social relation of strength and weakness from those giving aid or introducing rights to those receiving them (Fassin 2012). It ignores the frameworks of agency and subjectivity beyond liberal conceptions of freedom and salvation (Mahmood 2005). It also creates a moral politics that ignores the military action or capital exploitation that create a need for humanitarian responses.

These critiques of rights-based discourses are doubly important for my research on Russia and on Muslim communities. First, the convergence of anti-Muslim sentiment in the “liberal” West and in “illiberal” Russia points to the limits of human rights discourses. Only through more rights can Russian Muslims experience freedom to be themselves; however even in the most ostensibly liberal Western democracies there is a debate if Muslims can be considered worthy of being rights-bearing citizens and the degree to which Muslim practices are “tolerable” within democracies (Abu-Lughod 2013). Abu-Lughod (2013) and Mahmood (2005) argue that rights-based critiques rest on xenophobic moral judgment of Islam without offering an analysis of the forms of power that structure people’s lives. First of all, in order to judge Muslims, Islam is treated as a homogenized religion instead of as a diverse set of religious traditions. This orientalizing approach distracts from a critical analysis of the diversity of Muslims and analyses of the constellations of power in Muslim societies. Although Abu-Lughod (2013) makes these arguments to critique gendered politics between Western interventionism and Muslim societies, her work along with Mahmood’s (2005) inspires my project as they encourages me to not to rest my analysis on a moral judgment of whether or not Russia offers enough or too little rights to its
minorities, and in turn if Islam is not compatible with rights-based discourses. Rather, I seek to examine the architectures of and diversity within Russian civil society and its publics, with an emphasis on Muslim communities.

The analysis of the complicity of human rights regimes with capitalist exploitation is especially salient in Russia, as Putin is one of the most vocal critics of Western rights-based regimes, Western NGOs, and their motivations. Under Putin’s morality politics, the West has been critiqued as a meddler that uses civil society to influence Russian politics and people. In Russia, the United Russia-controlled government has implemented a series of laws that claim to increase transparency in the NGO sector but have effectively reduced the influence of international actors in civil society. In 2012, the so called “foreign agents law” was implemented which required NGOs receiving foreign funding and doing political activities to register as a “foreign agent” and create quarterly reports to the Russian government (Crotty, Hall, and Ljubownikow 2014; Gilbert 2016). The term “foreign agent” first emerged in the Cold War and is associated with espionage, and the law not only creates a negative connotation for these groups in the public eye but also creates barriers for the establishment and continuation of foreign-funded NGOs in the country (Buxton 2016; Crotty, Hall, and Ljubownikow 2014).

This distrust of foreign-funded institutions occurs at the level of federal government but also in popular opinion. In Russia, the negative public perception of foreign intervention and NGOs is tied to the socioeconomic hardships and growth of corruption in the 1990s (Hemment 2015). Western economic intervention led to corruption, so social intervention is viewed with dubiousness. These low levels of public trust mean that there is little grassroots opposition to anti-Western legislation, except from representatives from the Western-leaning NGO community (Buxton 2016).
Public Spheres and Public Spaces

Although Habermas (1991) defines the public sphere as an independent and self-organizing phenomenon of democracy, this is an ideal conception. First of all, public spheres and civil societies are not always able to function independently from the state or make demands on it. This is especially the case in Russia, where the state funds a large amount of NGO activity and creating an inhospitable atmosphere for foreign-funded NGOs. Secondly, the public sphere historically has been exclusive (Derrida 2004) and inherently limited in their ability to create a civil society that embraces difference. Fraser (1990) maintains that Habermas’s conception of the public sphere is hegemonic and encourages the adoption of bourgeois ideas by minorities, rather than allowing for an analysis of true difference in societies. Drawing from subaltern theory, she poses the concept of counterpublics, which are parallel public spheres shaped by ideas of minority groups. Counterpublics are not located on the fringes of a society but instead positioned relationally with each other in power geometries (Sziarto and Leitner 2010). Counterpublics have their own media, meetings, and spaces, and provide a place both for identity formation and to disrupt the hegemonic norms created by better-positioned dominant publics (Staeheli 2010). Counterpublics help understand how different communities create criteria for inclusion while defining themselves against other publics, and this concept is helpful for understanding the diversity of Muslim communities and public spaces in Moscow.

Publics and counterpublics do not have a definitive spatial corollary, but publics tend to use both space and time strategically in their formation (Mitchell 1995). Most literature on the political geographies of public spheres analyze the questions and strategies of how and where publics can make addresses: where publics can both make addresses to each other and interact, as
well as places where publics can make demands of power (Staeheli 2010). Public spaces include places of collective value, such as parks, streets, and sidewalks, as well as places for interaction, negotiation, and protest (Staeheli and Mitchell 2016).

De Certeau (2011) argues that it is the banal practices of everyday public life through which power is inscribed, reified, or contested. In turn, Staeheli (2011) contends that disorder in public space (such as protests in plazas, streets, and parks) is a means for fostering progressivism within democracy. By disrupting the patterns of daily life, publics can use space to gain visibility and make demands. Lefebvre (1967) states that urban public spaces are strategic sites for struggle against capitalist oppression. Harvey (2012) extends this work with his analysis of the anti-capitalist Occupy Wall Street movement in New York City and protests at Tahrir Square in Turkey, contending that urban spaces are the front line for fighting the corruption of democracy by capital and state interests.

But, urban public spaces are increasingly securitized (Koskela 2000), policed, and commodified (Mitchell 2003). Whereas Sennett argues that this closure of public space means that its relevance is waning under capitalism, Marxist geographers have contended that the enclosure of public space in democracies signifies the domination of capitalism and the state (Goheen 1998; Mitchell 1995). Thus, another key issue in the political geographies of public space is the issue of access. Although idealized as forums for political activities of the public sphere, in practice public spaces like the agora or the park have historically functioned as zones of inclusion and exclusion. This means that these “open” spaces are accessible to normative publics, but have laws restricting access for illegitimate publics, such as women in the classical agora or the homeless in People’s Park in the United States (Mitchell 2012). In turn, counterpublics often create their own public spaces, out of view from the state and hegemonic
spaces of daily life (Sziarto and Leitner 2010). Thus, a political geography of access to public space must examine not only how different publics are positioned to one another but the counterpublic geographies generated by a lack of access to normative public space.

**Secularism and Postsecularism**

Secularism is considered a key characteristic of democracies. This divide of public and private, rational and religious, is legislated differently in various democracies. Secularism is a contingent and historical formation, rather than a simple separation of secular public spheres from religious private lives (Asad 2003). Like most democracies, Russia has a state policy of secularism. Since the Russian government has enacted policies protecting religious feelings, restricting proselytizing of non-traditional religions, and banning extremist religious materials, religious expression is highly monitored by the state but also dependent on local politics. Whereas Kadyrov, the President of the Chechen Republic, has ruled that Muslim women in Chechnya must wear the headscarf when in public buildings, headscarves are outlawed in schools and universities in Stavropol and Mordovia, two non-Islamic regions. This makes Russia the only country that has laws both forbidding and requiring women to wear religious attire (Pew Research Center 2016). Thus, a place-based approach is necessary to understand how secularism operates in Russia in regards to shaping public expressions and spaces of religion.

Habermas (2008) has proposed that Europe has entered into a postsecular age. Although he believes that in the West upper and middle classes are to a large extent secularized, he believes that the increased migration of Muslims and rise of religious fundamentalism in Islam and Christianity mean that religion has reemerged in the public sphere, a phenomenon he terms postsecularism.
A second approach to postsecualism helps to clarify the political debates over religious publics in Russia. In this approach, postsecualism refers to how different religious publics and practices create public spheres. Habermas’ critics state that religion has never left the public sphere and has always served to an extent as a means of creating legitimate publics (Ehrkamp 2010; Gökarıksel and Secor 2015). Instead of creating an absence of religion in public spheres and spaces, secularism naturalized Christian faiths in public spaces in Western cultures, and the movement of practicing Muslims into these spaces challenges this normalization of Christianity (Asad 2003, Tse 2014). The literature on the geographies of religion and secularism in public space suggests that secularism has led to a preference of expression of national, traditional religions in public space (Oosterbaan 2014), which makes Muslim symbols especially visible and contentious (Göle 2011; Tarlo 2010).

In Russia, the Pussy Riot Punk prayer and ensuing court case on the protection of religious feelings has brought the conversations about Russian secularism and the role of religion in Russia’s public spaces to the forefront of Russian politics (Prozorov 2014). My dissertation pushes this analysis beyond the widely circulated Pussy Riot trial at the prestigious Christ the Savior Cathedral to examine the politics of religion in everyday public spaces in Russia.

Public spaces might be a hallmark of Western democracy, but they were also an integral aspect of Soviet urban design (Attwood 2010). Under communism, Soviet planners sought to use the urban fabric to create public spaces that would generate an egalitarian population (Attwood 2010, Collier 2011). Because the Soviet Union had an official policy of atheism, religious buildings were not part of the Soviet Union’s urban design. Most existing churches and mosques were shut down and converted into other uses, such as the transformation of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow into a swimming pool (Sidorov 2000). Through constructing
ideology into everyday spaces, the Soviet planners sought to build an atheist, Communist population.

Drawing from insights from politics of secularism and the political geographies of public spaces, I interrogate why some Muscovites view mosque and church construction as disruptive to their everyday life. The research on public space in contemporary Russia includes analyses of monuments and public memory (Forest and Johnson 2001), xenophobia against Armenian minorities in an ethnically Russian majority city (Ziemer 2011), and the commercialization of Gorky Park in Moscow (Kalyukin, Borén, and Byerley 2015). These projects show how public spaces function to create normative conceptions of publics and practices. My project furthers this work by analyzing the conflicts of the atheist legacy of Communist urban design versus the demands of Russia’s growing, diverse religious population. I study how plans to change the public spaces of everyday life in Moscow’s neighborhoods by adding religious sites raise questions of normative publics and normative practices. I also study the formation of and strategies of counterpublics as they seek to both challenge norms and create their own spaces of belonging.

**Academic Studies of Religion and the Geographies of Religion: Classical to Critical Approaches**

Religious studies scholars have voiced the need for spatial analyses of religion (Knott 2015). Tweed (2009), and Vasquez (2011) maintain that religion is spatial. They call for place-based approaches that allow for analyses of how economic, social, and political processes at multiple scales influences religious practice locally, and vice versa. Vasquez (2011) writes:

(Religion) generates distinctive and effective forms of spatiality, which while not reducible to their dynamics of place-making, are immanent to the life-world. Religion is not only locative and translocative, but also supralocative, capable of expressing transcendence, absolute space, into the midst of the spaces of everyday life (286).
Religions are caught up in power geometries and spatial processes. Spatial approaches to religious studies allow for projects on the production of sacred spaces (Knott 2015) and analyses of how religion is performative, connected to everyday experiences (Tweed 2006).

According to Tweed, religions are “confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries” (2006: 54). This approach allows for analyses of how religions are embodied, affective, and place-based. However, Vasquez (2011) rejects Tweed’s conceptualization of religion as flow, arguing that this approach does not allow for an analysis of the conflicts generated by the interaction of religions with economies, politics, and secularism. Vasquez writes that because religion is spatial, it is imbued with issues of power. Vasquez and Knott (2014) illustrate how religion can serve or challenge dominant political regimes through their comparative analysis of migrant minorities and place-making in Kajang, Johannesburg, and London. They write, “religion provides the resources through which people craft moral – and affectively charged – maps that not only reflect and buttress the logic of spatial regimes, but may also offer tools to challenge them, to introduce heterogeneity by building alternative utopias” (327). In other words, religious identities can contribute to the formation of both public and counterpublic spaces.

Geographers have studied the spatial dimensions of religions, providing insight into how religion retained its salience over time (Kong 2010). The geographies of religion first emerged as a sub-field in cultural geography in the 1960s. Just as the Earth is made of inorganic and organic material, geographers initially theorized culture as superorganic. Superorganic refers to the treatment of culture as an agentive, holistic, and transcendental force which influences people, rather than the idea of culture as a constructon of the actions of individuals (Duncan 1980; Kong
Religion was treated as one of many superorganic cultural processes shaping landscape (Kong 1997). The foundational text in the cultural geography of religion is Sopher’s *Geography of Religions* (Sopher 1967). This work outlines a research agenda for geographies of religion: investigating the religious organization of space, religion and the environment, pilgrimages, and the impact of religion on cultural landscapes. Such studies include empirical descriptive analyses of religious patterns, such as Jackson’s (Jackson 1978) research on Mormon landscapes in increasingly suburbanizing areas and Stoddard’s (1968) statistical study of the distribution of Hindu temples relative to Hindu population centers in India.

The superorganic approach to religion, however, was complicit in creating a depoliticized and Eurocentric academic analysis of religion (Masuzawa 2005). It treated religion as an isolated category distinct from economics, politics, gender, or race. Religion served as a classificatory geographical characteristic. The superorganic approach hinged on the idea that there were distinct sacred and profane spaces (Eliade 1976). Although this field initially investigated issues of distribution and description-key issues of comparative religious geographies (Eliade 1976)-along with studies of religious authenticity defined by intensity and adherence to practices (Zelinksy 1961) new studies in the geographies of religion have been informed by the poststructural, turn in anthropology and religious studies. The poststructural turn treated religion not as a transhistorical phenomenon that can be found in every culture, but rather as historical and tied to questions of power (Asad 2009). The concern with power in this approach does not mean that religion works as an exploitative force (Althusser 1995), but rather encourages scholars of religion to examine the different elements of religion to see how they give religion an authoritative status (Asad 1982).
This postmodern turn in the social sciences led to the “new” cultural geography (Cosgrove and Jackson 1987). New cultural geography argued that “cultures are politically contested” (Cosgrove and Jackson 1987), advocating for studies of the social construction of cultures and how power relations are symbolized, represented, and resisted through culture (Kong 1997). Works in the new cultural geographies of religion “read” the symbolic nature of religious landscapes (Kong 2001). To illustrate, Duncan (2004) studied how a king used religious landscapes to make his political power seem divine. This approach is helpful for this study in showing how religious landscapes are means for exercising political power and normalizing relations. But, it falls short on analyzing how publics perceive these messages written in the textual landscape. Harvey’s (1979) analysis of a religious landscape in Paris provides insight into the slippage of meaning in textual approaches. Harvey (1979) analyzed how religious spaces can have multiple meanings for different populations. His study of the Sacre-Coeur in Paris shows that while the church was intended by its builders to be a religious Catholic temple, its meaning was co-opted by Leftists as the site of social struggle, as it is where the revolutionary figure Eugene Varlin was shot by Royalists in 1871. Harvey’s work showed two important things, both relevant for this dissertation and the critical geographies of religion as a whole: religious spaces can be sacred for both religious and nonreligious publics, and although religious or political authorities might have the power to create spaces which seek to legitimize their rule, they do not have a monopoly over how the public receives them.

The poststructural turn and new cultural geography helped lead to the field of critical geographies of religion, a body of work that analyzes not the distribution of religious groups, but also the processes through which space is categorized as public or private, sacred or secular (Kong 2010). In this subfield, religion is theorized not as a superorganic, a priori descriptor, or
sub-groups of other categories such as ethnicity or race, but rather as a part of everyday life that affects believers and non-believers alike (Gökarıksel and Secor 2015; Tse 2014). In my study, I examine both the political symbolism of religious landscapes (Duncan 1994) and also how religious public spaces are made in the Moscow context. Now, I turn to a discussion of research on the politics of Muslim public spaces and symbols.

**Critical Approaches to Muslim Studies**

The new cultural geography read religious landscapes and their contested meanings, emphasizing the role of visible symbols in making meaning. While visible symbols and architecture are important for European religious traditions, for Muslims buildings themselves are not the primary component of sacred space. Rituals and practices are the primary elements composing Muslim sacredness (Metcalf 1996). Muslim spaces are composed of the rituals performed by Muslim bodies and the presence of sacred words, whether written down or spoken. Practice and collective prayer is more of an indicator of Muslim sacredness than architectural elements or mosques (Metcalf 1996). However, as an aspect of the social construction of Muslim identity, spaces such as mosques can become important historical and community spaces (Cole 2002). This is true especially for diaspora populations, border populations, and, I argue, a component of how different Muslim publics position themselves in relationship to the Russian state. (Metcalf 1996).

One area of research in the academic studies of religion and critical geographies of religion relevant for this dissertation is the growing body of work on critical approaches to the study Islam and Muslim life worlds. This literature is largely in response to the increased social and political importance of Islam at a global scale and concerns over the relationship between Islam and terrorism after 9/11 (Kong 2001). Two branches of social scientific inquiry important
for my project: analyses of the politics of representations of Muslims and the literature on Muslim geographies. In this subsection, I address these trends and how they inform my study.

Representations of Muslims

Following the September 11 terrorist attacks and the War on Terror, Islamaphobia has come to define the prejudice against Muslims, in particular its essentialized depiction as the enemy of Western ways of life. This rhetorical politics of discrimination has been explored in research on the geographies of the war on terror, where the term “unlawful combatant” is used by the US government to refer to those killed in the War on Terror. The deaths of these “unlawful combatants” considered outside of the realm of Geneva Conventions and norms of interstate war (Gregory 2004). These negative portrayals strive to make Islam synonymous with terrorism, thereby influencing popular opinion to legitimize economic and political agendas.

Monolithic understandings of Islam are not confined to politics. Both in geopolitical analyses (Secor 2002) and under academic Orientalist religious studies (Said 1978), Islam has been and continues to be studied as the “epitome of stifling rigidity, intolerance, and fanaticism” rather than as characterized by its “diversity and obvious malleability” (Masuzawa 2005: 197). Said’s (1981) analysis of Islam in US media and academia shows how its adherents are portrayed as belligerent and militant both before and after 9/11. Similar news media analyses have found bias against Muslims in the press in Britain (Poole 2002; Petley 2013), France (Hamel 2002; Laurence and Vaïsse 2007), and Denmark (Kublitz 2010).

The aforementioned analyses of Islamic representation in the media, politics, and academia take place in democratic countries with a free press, but overall research results show that the representations have a political purpose. Similar negative portrayals of Muslims occur in the Russian context. The Russian press is largely state-controlled; therefore the government
heavily influences the messages conveyed to the publics (Smaele 2007). The Huntingtonian “clash of civilizations” portrayal of Muslims is also prevalent in Russia (Shnirelman 2009). For example, Snetkov (2007) analyzed Russian media to understand the portrayals of terrorism following the Moscow Theater Hostage Crisis in 2002 and Beslan school hostage crisis in 2004⁴, finding that the media narrative changed over time. The conflict in the North Caucasus changed from being described as a national issue to an international threat to the civilized world as the guerilla movement dispersed throughout the region and successfully carried out terrorist acts. He argues that this change in narrative helped make the Russian state seem less weak as they were unable to curtail the spread of violence even as they normalized and improved relationships with the Chechen government. Similarly, Gentry and Whitworth’s ( 2011) analysis of Russian news media portrayals of Chechens show that Chechens are depicted as desperate. This desperation discourse delegitimizes the political motivations of the rebels and reduces them to religious motivations. The news media reduces the conflict an act of irrational desperation not only against Russia but against Western civilization. Just as the term unlawful combatant is used to justify extrajuridical violence by the US in the war against terror (Gregory 2004), this desperation discourse serves to justify the Russian government’s war crimes and extreme violence in the Chechen War⁵.

Besides portraying radicals as hysterical and a threat against Western civilization, Russian news media also works to racialize Chechens when they travel outside of their

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⁴ In the 2004 Beslan school hostage crisis, terrorists took over 1,000 people including school children hostage in North Ossetia in Russia’s North Caucasus. This hostage crisis started on the first day of school, considered a holiday in Russia and the standoff between terrorists and the Russian forces lasted 3 days and ended in gunfire leaving 330 hostages killed (Ó Tuathail 2009).

⁵ These human rights violation include that all Salafis are treated as terrorists, included on a watch list, and detainees have disappeared or reported being tortured. Journalists and lawyers who seek to represent or reach out to victims have received threats as well (Sagramoso 2007).
homeland. Roman’s (2002) research on non-Russians in Moscow analyzes how Soviet systems of multinationalism and affirmative action have been replaced by racialization, as Caucasian migrants are referred to as the perjorative *chyorni*, or black. She argues that bureaucracy and media depict Moscow’s population as white and Slavic, whereas people of color are outsiders that face racial profiling, more document checks, and negative portrayals in the news. By associating people of color with *chyorni*, they become associated with criminality. As Moscow’s Muslim communities consists of people of color, this means that they too become associated with danger and imagined as less civilized than white Slavs (Roman 2002).

Chechens in particular are associated with terrorism, danger, and desperation in the Russian news media and political discourse. Within Russia, the term Wahhabism has also been deployed by the news media as a stand-in for Salafis, fundamentalists, Islamic terrorists, or Islamic militants (Knysh 2007). Wahabbi has been taken up in Russian politics as a retrograde form of foreign influence in contrast to official or traditionally Russian forms of Islam: Sufism in the Caucasus and Hanafi in the Volga-Urals. Knysh argues that Russian news media, politicians, and academics use Wahabbism as a catch-all term, ignoring the complexity of Islamist politics and Salafi movements in Russia. In doing so, they make Wahabbism seem like a more stronger and coherent movement than it is in reality (Knysh 2007). Besides being associated with rebellion, Wahabbi is also a term different Muslim leaders called each other as they jockeyed for political position and favoritism from the Russian government (Yemelianova 2001).

The ‘clash of civilizations’ between the secular West and religious rest of the West posits Islam as an explanatory variable for conflict and geopolitics (Huntington 1996), but such privileging of the global scale obfuscates the political power of religion in everyday life (Secor 2001) and portrays Muslims as the ‘other’ to secularism. These representations ignore the
diversity within Islam and Muslim communities while providing support to justify geopolitical decisions, often extra-juridical that target Muslims. In my project, I will analyze what representations of Muslims are used to justify actions for and against mosque construction. I also will move beyond the register of representation in my analysis in order to explore the diversity of Muslim communities and spaces in Moscow.

_Geographies of Muslims_

The growing body of interdisciplinary social sciences literature examines religious pluralism and Muslim minority communities (Kong 2010; Mandaville 2014). It stands against understandings of Muslim life as a homogenous and Orientalist “Islamland” composed of oppressive practices, which is seen as morally bereft in comparison to majority liberal values (Abu-Lughod 2013). Rather than treating Muslim practices as separate from European values, this literature on geographies and spaces of Muslims examines Muslim minority practices and spaces as integral to Western Europe.

Russian Muslim communities are unique, but there are some comparative elements that make the Moscow community similar to those in Western Europe. In Russia and in Western European countries, Muslims are the largest religious minority group. Moscow is a destination city for Muslim migrants, like many European capita ls such as London, Paris, Berlin, and Amsterdam. 2 million Muslims live in Moscow and 20 million in Russia, whereas 11 million live in the European Union. France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece and the Netherlands each have populations that are 4-7% Muslim (Cesari 2005). Both entities are host to diverse Muslim populations- the EU Muslim population is composed of Arab, Turkish, and South Asian Muslims (Cesari 2005). Moscow’s Muslim population consists largely of migrants from Central Asia and the North Caucasus, but also an “indigenous” Tatar population whose roots date back to the 14th
century (March 2010). I examine two issues of concern: the literature on isolation versus integration of Muslims, and the research on Muslims and public space.

The increased number of Muslims as a result of migration has resulted in questions of assimilation, multiculturalism, and concern over the isolation or connection of Muslims to their host countries and cities (Joppke 2007). A particular area of concern and research interest is the debate over whether or not these migrant populations are creating enclaves (Tibi 2010). In host cities, class and social identity are interlinked as a result of migration (Samers 2003). Muslim migrants in Russia and in Western Europe tend to have low skill jobs, and in Russia many of them work illegally without permits. This has a spatial corollary in Western Europe of creating migrant enclaves in poor suburbs, such as the banlieues in Paris, France. However, as research in the social sciences literature on religion shows, these migrant enclaves are not non-integrating Muslim ghettos, or pockets of Islamland in the midst of cosmopolitan cities (Abu-Lughod 2013).

The interdisciplinary social sciences research has addressed how the increased number of Muslim migrants affects urban geographies in their host cities. The results show that the existence of ethnic enclaves does not lead to the isolation of Muslims from their host cities (Laurence 2007). Laurence’s (2007) research on Islam in France shows that while poorer Muslims are more isolated due to a lack of transportation, those in the middle and upper classes are more integrated and involved in community activities. Cesari’s (2005) research presses the issue of localism amongst the poorer classes further: her analysis of the 2005 riots in the Parisian banlieues, or suburbs, show that, although these spaces are associated with urban unrest and precarity, this is not because the population is from majority Muslim countries. The riots were depicted in French media to be a result of social and economic problems, but in the US media were depicted as motivated by Islam (Cesari 2005). In Scandinavia, a survey of Muslim
congregations yielded data showing that Muslims do not form isolated enclaves. Rather, Muslim congregations are open, interlinked to other religious congregations, and active in the nonprofit sector (Borell and Gerdner 2013). A similar study in Britain that focused on the role of women Muslim in citizenship activity activism showed that Muslim women did focus on Muslim issues, but these issues were not treated as isolated elements. These activities included both transnational issues (mobilization against Female Genital Mutilation) and local concerns (creating more gender-inclusive mosques in Bristol). The interdisciplinary literature overall challenges the myth of Muslim isolation in their host cities (Lewicki and O’Toole 2017).

Within Russia, the literature shows that Muslim isolation does exist, however these enclaves are often historical and/or rural. These isolated rural enclaves tend to be in the North Caucasus, poorer, and targets for recruitment to Salafi extremism or the Islamic State (such as the four Dagestani communities that composed the first Salafi jamaat in the 1990s). This narrative is used to justify Russian military interventions in these areas (Sagramoso 2007). Some isolated enclaves are also in the Volga Urals region, but, unlike the isolated communities in the North Caucasus, they are not considered a security threat by the Russian government. As Sagitova’s (2011) research in Srednjaja Eljuzan, an isolated Muslim village in Penza Oblast in the Volga-Urals region, shows, the village is associated with Wahabbism by Russian media but viewed as a model Muslim village in the Tatar press and popular view. There is little research on whether or not Muslims are forming enclaves or whether or not they are isolated in contemporary urban Russia. Moscow, for example, had a historical Tatar settlement in the 14th century; however the population of the area was diversified in the Soviet Union as planners tried to specifically prevent the emergence of ethnic enclaves in Soviet cities (Vendina 2002). In
Moscow, however, while migrants tend to gather in poorer areas, ghettos have not formed (Kashnitsky and Gunko 2015).

Besides questions of isolation and integration into host cities, there is also a large literature evaluating Muslim practices in public spaces, such as the rights to build mosques, wear veils, and display Muslim symbols (Statham 2016). The literature on religious landscapes provides insight into the power geometries between states, religious publics, and other interest groups. For example, Kong’s research (Kong 1993) on religious landscapes in Singapore explores how although Singapore has a secular constitution and a multiconfessional population, a hierarchy of religions is reflected in the built environment: Hindu temples are relegated to the urban periphery, whereas mosques are ubiquitous in the urban center (Kong 2001). Kong argues that this favoritism in religious landscape creates tensions between Muslim Malay and Hindu migrant populations. And, in Singapore, the city government has designated mosques as national historical monuments. This designation shows how the secular state uses historical monument designations to legislate a heritage that is associated with Islam, thereby valuing Islam and its historical presence over other religious groups. Thus, historical preservation of religious sites is one means of how state power can create a preference of religions in a secular place.

Religious landscapes and their distribution across a city can reflect a hierarchy of belonging amongst religious groups. But, as Mill’s research (2006) on national belonging in urban space shows, the state’s appreciation and preservation of minority religious landscapes does not mean that the state appreciates, values, and protects minority populations. Although the religiously diverse landscape in Kuzguncuk, Istanbul is marketed to tourists as the epitome of tolerance and multicultural belonging, the built environment obfuscates processes of racism.
While the Orthodox Greek religious landscape is celebrated, the Orthodox Greek population was forcibly removed. While temples are welcome, the people are not.

Within Russia, there has also been some research on the relationship between religion, politics, and hierarchy. Derrick’s work on symbolic religious landscapes in Kazan (2010) draws from landscape-as-text theory (Duncan 1990) to show how multicultural tolerance is valued in a region known for its history of interaction between Orthodox Russians and Muslim Tatars. By reading the symbolic landscape of the Kazan Kremlin, which situates the minarets of the Kul Sharif Mosque next to the onion dome of the Cathedral of the Annunciation, Derrick argues that Kazan is a model of harmony between formerly religiously divided frontier cities. And, furthermore, Kazan’s interethnic harmony as reflected in its religious symbolic landscape could serve as a model for peace-building in places like Sarajevo and Jerusalem. However, Derek’s approach focuses on representation in a highly symbolic landscape. In opposition to Derrick’s thesis, Yusupova (2016) argues that religious symbols create borders within Kazan that seek to privilege Tatar nationalism and Muslims in public space. She draws from Weber’s theory on role of prestige to create social hierarchy and Brubaker’s study of religion in ethnic mobilizations to understand how religion has become associated with status in Tatarstan. Her research shows that religion still functions as a hierarchical process in Tatarstan’s multiethnic society and as a means to legitimate power. By using Muslim symbols, elites try to create a sense of prestige around “Tatar Islam.” In doing so, they try to gain political status both in Tatarstan and within the wider Russian context. As Yusupova and Derrick’s conflicting findings on religious symbols show, the meanings of religious landscapes can be contested and generate conflicting conclusions about their social role. Thus, it is essential to interrogate not just religious symbols in public space but the processes through which religious public spaces are created.
The presence of Muslim migrants in Western Europe has raised debates over identity and public life (Kong 2010). Following Tarlo (2010), this dissertation examines how Muslim practices become more visible, and thus political, in Muslim minority settings. Geographers have interrogated the politics of Muslim symbols and practices in public space, such as projects on the constructions of minarets in Switzerland (Antonsich and Jones 2010; Baumann 2013), the geographies of veiling practices in Istanbul and Britain (Dwyer 2008), and the politics of Muslim communal spaces (Ehrkamp 2007). This body of work on geographies of Islam show that simplistic news media narratives about Muslims can result in uncritical public understandings of the religion, such as the affiliation of minarets with Sharia law in the minds of Swiss voters that resulted in a public referendum banning minarets (Antonsich and Jones 2010).

The role of Islam in public space raises questions of identity and urban policy, especially debates over mosque construction (Vertovec and Peach 1997). Mosques serve many purposes to their congregations: they provide places for prayer, sermons, and religious education; they are host to important life events, and they collect charitable funds to support the poor via the pillar of zakat, or alms-giving. They are different than prayer rooms, which are typically located on private property and are not necessarily host to community events. Whereas the prayer room has existed as a private space of Islam in Europe, the mosque is a public space (Cesari 2005). In minority contexts, mosques become both important places of belonging for Muslim diaspora communities as well as contentious symbols about changing group identity (Cesari 2005, Metcalf 1996). Even though Muslim sacredness is constituted by visual, mosques and minarets have become politicized Muslim public spaces in Western Europe and also in Moscow.

The body of work on mosques as public spaces in minority Muslim countries illustrates that place matters in debates over mosque construction: Whereas throughout Europe local
resistance to mosque construction is tied to concerns over traffic and noise nuisances, integration into neighborhood fabrics, and concerns over security threats and radicalism, the negotiations over these issues play out differently depending on issues of class and location (Antonsich and Jones 2010). For example, Landman and Wessel’s (2005) research on mosque construction in the Netherlands show that constructing a mosque in cosmopolitan Utrecht was easier than in smaller cities Deventer and Diebringen. Issues of class also play a role in mosque construction: the rise of Muslim middle classes in Britain and France over a generation coincides with increased mosque construction with lower levels of resistance in cities (Cesari 2004; McLoughlin 2005). Although Germany is host to generations of Turkish immigrants, their lower class status and lack of political representation correlate with resistance to mosque construction (Ehrkamp 2006). In all of these European case studies, the local resistance to mosques did not lead to a cancellation of projects but rather renegotiations of size or location. However, in my project, I examine cases where resistance did lead to a complete cancellation of mosque construction. Mosque construction provides insight into the politics of Muslim visibilities and religious spaces in secular cities, this project extends the Western European-based research on mosques in public space by examining the debates over mosques in Russia’s managed democracy.

Discussion

My project explores the formation of publics in Russia’s managed democracy, with a focus on Muslim communities. I ground my analysis in the literatures on critical and feminist political geographies, critiques of the literature on public spaces and democracies, and the body of work on the academic study of religion focusing on Muslims. From the body of work on critical and feminist political geography (Massey 2005, Megoran 2006, Secor 2001), I study the power geometries of the state, Muslim leaders, Muslim communities, and activists as they
construct public spaces. As the critical literature on democracy and public space shows (Arendt 1968, Fassin 2012, Mitchell 2005), public space can be hierarchical and exclusive. This is especially true for migrants, minorities, and Muslims, whose denial of or unequal access to rights often point to the limits of liberal values and the interpretation of universal rights in nation-states. Thus, I examine both how normative publics and separate counter-publics form in Moscow (1990).

Islam is not a coherent signifier, and Islamland is not a place composed of homogeneous practices from which Muslims need to be liberated (Abu Lughod 2013). Rather than examining Muslim life through a lens of tolerance and liberal values, which hinges on an unequal moral framework that does not acknowledge colonial relationships (Mahmood 2004), I study how Muslim communities and practices create different publics in Russia. My approach will contribute to these literatures by analyzing how Muslim publics and other groups form in Russia’s managed democracy, wherein civil society and the state are closely linked (Fröhlich 2012). Rather than treating Russian democracy and civil society as deficient in comparison to Western model, I examine how Muslim publics and their spaces form in the context of Russian morality politics. The next chapter details the methods in my qualitative study.
Chapter Four: Qualitative research methods

This project uses ethnographic methods to analyze the politics of construction at key sites in Moscow, including mosques, sites of proposed mosque construction, and Muslim cultural centers. This study has a three-part methodology 1) archival research building a data base of news articles, government documents, and relevant materials from social organizations relating to mosque construction in Moscow from 2000- present 2) participant observation at key buildings and settings and 3) interviews with congregation members, neighbors, and local officials. I conducted research from February to November 2013 as a visiting student at Russian State University for the Humanities, and returned for a follow-up three-week visit in August 2015 while based at the International University of Moscow. I first discuss issues of rigor, fieldwork, and positionality. The last section overviews the specifics of the three-part methodology and discusses their use in geographic research. I conclude with a discussion of my analysis.

Qualitative methods in political geography

I chose qualitative methods because they provide insight into how state policies of secularism are expressed in the construction of minority religious spaces in Moscow. Following contributions from critical political geography (Brenner 1999; Agnew 2005) and feminist geopolitics (Secor 2001; Gilmartin and Kofman 2004) that the state is not a monolithic actor, in this project the state is best conceived as having a prosaic nature (Painter 2006). This means that the state is a product of its effects, or operation in the daily lives of its inhabitants. A prosaic approach challenges conceptions of Russia as a sovereign democracy, wherein each scale of power, such as city or region or nation, support each other (Sharafutdinova 2014; Casula 2013). Although Putin’s managed democracy uses its vertical and centrist structure to carry out its
morality agenda (Sharafutdinova 2014), this vertical power does not emanate from the Kremlin, but is instead performed, reified, and challenged in everyday exercises of bureaucracy, city planning, and local courts.

Both quantitative (Kwan 2002) and qualitative methods (Mountz 2007) allow for examinations of the intersection of state power and everyday life; this project adopts qualitative methods because it examines how mundane state, neighborhood, and religious practices create religious geographies in Moscow.

**Reliability and ethics in qualitative fieldwork**

The strategy for achieving rigor and reliable conclusions in this research follows similar projects in geography, using multiple methods, drawing from interview quotations, and conducting lengthy fieldwork with a follow up visit (Baxter and Eyles 1997; Elwood 2010). Within qualitative research, rigor is associated with validity, inference, reliability, confirmability, and replicability. Confirmability is the process through which the researcher acknowledges their biases and motivations throughout the research, from collection to interpretation (Baxter and Eyles 1997). Whereas objectivity relies on the researcher understanding an unchanging world through an unbiased perspective, confirmability is established through the honesty and reliability of the researcher (Herbert 2000; Baxter and Eyles 1997). Research design must be flexible to account for the nature of fieldwork, but it must be transparent to allow for evaluation and replication (de Volo and Schatz 2004).

Replicability refers to the condition of being able to reproduce the research design of a project, not only to the ability to repeat the same data and results of a project (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994). Whereas in quantitative research replicability is produced through analyzing the same data, in qualitative research replicability can be more difficult to achieve. This is
because scholars cannot often locate the same interviewee or reproduce fieldwork conditions. This qualitative project aims for replicability by providing an outline of the research design, a copy of the interview prompt, and inclusion of appropriate vignettes and field notes from participant observation (Moravcsik 2010).

This research involves human subjects and received IRB approval at the University of Colorado, Boulder, in early Spring 2012 and was amended in Summer 2015. Because qualitative research involves participant-observation and spending extensive time with research communities, there is an ethical concern for the positionality of the researcher. In sociology, there are four archetypical roles an ethnographer might take on in regards to their research community: Fieldworkers may be complete participants whose intent is unknown to their research community as they try to blend in naturally; a participant-as-observer, where the role of the researcher is known and the researcher participates in activities of daily life for an extended period of time; the observer-as-participant who has a formal interaction through a one-visit interview and observation with the research community; and the complete observer who is entirely removed from social interactions but can observe interactions from afar (Gold 1958). Just as there are concerns of ethnocentricism through the detachment of researcher and lack of introspection as to what their presence or partial knowledge does to the research community (Haraway 1988) it can be an ethical concern if the researcher “goes native” and starts to identify with their research participants/informants at the expense of the emphasis on their research questions (Fuller 1999).

The protection of human research participants is a key area of concern for both the IRB and qualitative researchers (Van den Hoonoord 2003), but can lead to controversies in regards to research practices. This is best evidenced by the debates over Alice Goffman’s ethnography On
the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City (Goffman 2015) and the issue of the production and evaluation of ethnographic research (Campos 2015). The issues of “going native” and anonymization of research participants play a role in debates over the ethnography On the Run. Goffman’s work describes over 6 years of participant observation in the Sixth Street neighborhood in West Philadelphia and investigates policing in a crime-ridden neighborhood. One of the concerns her research raises is the politics of empathizing with one’s research participants. Goffman, a white woman from Princeton, gained access to a black impoverished and crime-ridden community and documented their experiences for her ethnography. Her work is characterized by rich “thick description” of first-hand accounts and extensive field experience. Reporter Lewis-Kraus (2016) posits that her work is not rigorous or skeptical enough because she is too close to her informants and trusts them at face value. However, in a response to criticism from Professor Lubet from Northwestern University, posted on the website of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Goffman (n.d.) argues back that her work gives representation to people who do not typically have a voice and that theirs should not be discredited.

There are inconsistencies however in Goffman’s account of events, such as having a deceased research participant who appears in events dated to occur after his death. Goffman defends this field note date mix-up as a standard anonymization procedure in ethnographic writing in order to protect the identity of her participant. However, Campos was able to find the identity relatively easily, showing a failure in Goffman’s anonymization process as well as an internal consistency in her ethnographic account. Goffman also destroyed her ethnographic field notes, which is sometimes a convention of ethnographers who want to protect their research participants (Lewis-Kraus 2016).

The controversy surrounding Goffman’s credibility is in line with the controversy
surrounding LaCour and Green’s falsification of quantitative data “When contact changes minds: An experiment on transmission of support for gay equality ” in Science (LaCour and Green 2014). Both authors produced work in respected academic presses (University of Chicago Press) or a key science journal and were vetted by the academic community, despite the fact that in Goffman’s case the data were inconsistent and in Green and LaCour’s case completely falsified. Goffman’s research was also awarded the 2014 American Sociological Association’s Dissertation Award.

Although my research is quite dissimilar to Goffman’s in that it is neither solely ethnographic nor occurring over a lengthy six years, it is similar in the fact that I am a white female outsider from a US university conducting fieldwork research along the “participant as observer” vein in minority communities in a foreign country with tight police control. Unlike Goffman, I have not developed such close relations with research participants as to have lived with them, and also at times was more of a distant “observer as participant” researcher that conducts formal interviews. I do not see this dissertation’s purpose as an argument to build more mosques in Moscow, nor do I take a political stance. My approach analyzes Muslim public spaces from many interest groups. To do this, I have conducted interviews and analyzed documents from many different perspectives, including those who advocated against mosque construction. My research method has reliability checks built in because it relies on multiple qualitative methods: database analysis of relevant documents, interviews, and participant observation. By incorporating many viewpoints and multiple methods, this project aims to reduce bias and increase reliability. Additionally, I have undergone research ethics training in the CU geography department.
Fieldwork and positionality

Moscow and fieldwork: 2013-2015

Within ethnographic research, the field was first conceptualized as a place where ethnographers went to in order to analyze other cultures as objects of scientific analysis (Malinowski 1922). This far-away field site was populated with natives and ethnographers were strangers with the task of recording everyday interactions and observations (Geertz 1973). Work in feminist geographic research has challenged the conception of the field as an isolated place consisting of local processes (Staeheli and Lawson 1994), arguing that geographers must also consider the role of other structuring processes at multiple scales (Katz 1994; Hyndman 2001).

Even the earliest ethnographers understood that their backgrounds influenced their work and chosen field sites. Malinowski (1922) famously acknowledged how his own savage “Slavonic” nature might make him fit in more with locals on the Trobriand Islands than his Western European contemporaries, while Levi-Strauss (Lévi-Strauss 1955) abhorred exploration and had a hard time staying in field sites for extended periods. Such admonitions and insights are part of what Haraway (1988) calls the “situated knowledge of researchers” and are essential to understanding the fieldwork context and role of researcher in affecting outcomes project formation, data collection, and analysis. In order to avoid reproducing my research sites as a “stage” devoid of political context (Katz 1994), or myself as an impartial observer, I want to highlight my motivations for choosing Moscow as a research site, important contextual factors, and my research positionality.

I chose Moscow as a research site because it is the largest home for Muslims in Russia. Moscow has many Muslim communities, so I felt if I experienced problems with one community I could try to engage with another. A colleague had encountered difficulties with the police while
conducting research in Russia’s Buddhist republics, and I hoped to avoid that by researching a more cosmopolitan setting where my project might be one of many focused on Muslims in the city. Also, I had visited the city three times during past trips and summer studies in Russia, and this led me to have confidence in my ability to navigate the cultural and political context of everyday life and Muslim communities in Moscow.

Many local, national, and international factors affected research conditions in Moscow. Economic pull factors include labor migration and oil prices. Muslim migrants from Central Asia, North Caucasus, Tatarstan, and Siberia are drawn to because Moscow because of increased economic activity; however push factors include the repression of Islam in Central Asia and declining economic and social conditions in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Falling oil prices and tensions with the West have affected the Russian economy, raising concerns about the migrant labor economy.

Socially and politically, the rise in migration from Muslim countries has led to vigilantism against migrants and ethnic tension. Navalny galvanized opposition to Putin’s presidency into a natsdem, or national democratic platform, and ran for mayor of Moscow in 2013. Meanwhile, Putin’s United Russia party has coalesced under the platform of morality politics, backing Mayor Sobyanin in the election and enacting policies protecting religious feelings while curbing the spread of foreign influence on Russian civil society.

Statement of positionality

According to Katz (1994), ethnography is a practice of displacement: a researcher has only a limited time to leave their home behind to travel elsewhere to make limited observations as an intrusive stranger. One of the benefits of being a displaced outsider of a social group is that this observer status allows one to “unearth what the group takes for granted, and thereby reveal
the knowledge and meaning structures that provide the blueprint for social action” (Herbert
2000: 551). I was not an insider in Moscow or in its Muslim communities by any means, as I am
an atheist American with no Russian ethnicity nor am I a Muslim. My positionality impacted
research, both in data collection and (Billo and Hiemstra 2013). Because I was American,
female, and not Muslim, I was differentially welcomed or excluded from many research sites. I
will detail these encounters in analytical chapters. However, I learned the Russian language,
read academic works on Islam and Muslims in Russia, and conducted an analysis of news and
media articles to better situate myself in this research context.

Because I was officially affiliated to the ethnography department at Russian State
University for the Humanities, I was autonomous as a field worker despite the fact that my
research took place in a growing authoritarian regime increasingly critical of Western influence
in civil society (Goode 2010, Koch 2013). Legacies of Soviet life still permeate the Russian
research context (Verdery and Burawoy 1999), including suspicion of Americans and the
importance of proper registration materials (Hörschelmann and Stenning 2008). Documents and
papers are still important in the professional Russian world; by having a student ID from a
Russian university I was considered a more authentic researcher when asked by participants to
show credentials. Although I am not an ethnic Russian, I speak Russian in a professional
capacity and have taken five years of language classes and spent two summers at Russian
universities in Astrakhan and Vladimir as part of language immersion programs. This familiarity
with the language and Russian culture, combined with white privilege (Kobayashi 1994),
allowed me to conduct interviews and participant observation with no interference from police.

Another legacy of Soviet life and hallmark of the contemporary Russian state is
surveillance (Gentile 2013). The ubiquity of Russian police presence in public spaces made me
feel on edge at first, but quickly became part of my everyday landscape. The only time I was ever impeded by police presence was when I forgot my ID badge in the Library of Foreign Literature and was stopped by an officer. Luckily, a merciful librarian advocated on my behalf. I felt quite fortunate as another Russianist described his encounters of being followed by a KGB agent in his early fieldwork days but I was cognizant of the myriad new ways in which my data collection could be observed via security cameras in public space (C. Norris, McCahill, and Wood 2002). It was notable that these ubiquitous cameras beside the Kremlin were down for maintenance at the time of the brutal murder of Boris Nemtsov, a leader of the political opposition to Putin’s war in Ukraine.

In ethnography, the researcher is the instrument of data collection. My objective for participant observation was to collect and participate in the everyday workings of the state and Muslims in Moscow. I observed certain interactions, such as document checks of riot police on immigrants surrounding the mosques, or observe interactions between sexes at the mosque. I saw how immigration policies are enacted through these frequent document checks, and how the Russian state enacted its perceived corrupt nature through briberies occurring in the back of police vans parked nearby. Although I could not witness what went on there directly, I learned from participant observation and analysis of news articles that this is what people thought occurred in the vans. I saw how female Muscovite Muslims experienced harassment in the form of marriage proposals or cat-calls by migrant Muslims, who in street interviews stated that they did not view such attempts to find local wives as harassment.

Gender shaped my interactions during research and the type of data I could collect (Kobayashi1994; Bolognani 2007). Some populations were open to me, and as I gained field work experience I could see that both gender and class structured my research project. I was able
to gain more insight into Muslim women’s spaces and publics, or co-ed younger middle-class
groups. Although I did not give up on interviewing other male or lower-class migrant groups, I
gained a partial view of their communities and experiences. Often times, I received access to
some parts of mosques and Muslim centers but not others. For example, when I sought
permission to observe Friday prayers at Historical mosque, I was introduced to a young Tatar
imam. He was my guide and interview contact with the mosque because he spoke English,
though we communicated in both English and Russian. On Friday thirty minutes before prayer
time, he brought me into the main hall to document the overcrowding. Because males
traditionally attend Friday prayers, this irritated many who had been waiting in the hall (Figure
4.1). A few men were not happy about having a female “journalist” as they referred to me,
invade their space, despite the permission of the imam.

Figure 4.1 Observation at Historical mosque on a typical Friday one hour before prayers. Fall
2013. Photo by author.
However, I was then taken to the private room for women. He introduced me to an older Tatar female, who brought me around to observe prayers from outside the mosque and then introduced me to the women working in the kitchens and offices of the mosque. This group was more welcoming to me as a foreign observer who did not practice Islam, even without the imam by my side. I was able to visit on several occasions and take field notes openly.

I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in the Zamoskvorechye neighborhood surrounding Historical Mosque multiple times throughout 2013 and 2015 (See Figure 1.1 for map). I frequented neighborhood businesses such as the yoga studio. The studio was in the same courtyard as the mosque, making it an ideal place to participate in neighborhood activities since I could not afford to live in the neighborhood. As I would leave the studio, I noticed many men who congregated in the courtyard. They were Muslim migrants from Central Asia who had worked at the recently closed Biryulevo market. They rented an apartment together and after the initial questioning of my marital status and conversation about wives, told me their opinions about life in Moscow, their decisions to migrate, and the mosque. I engaged them in hopes of a “go along”-group interview hybrid- however; another Tatar official showed up and scolded the men for talking to me. They escorted me to the metro station and the interview/conversation came up short.

I spent most of my time conducting participant-observation with groups divided by gender. At Historical, Yardyam, and Memorial mosques, I often spent time in the women’s halls or in the kitchens, a female-dominated space. When doing street interviews and observations, I either talked to or observed groups of males or groups of females. I interacted at times with mixed-gender groups were at the Russian Muftis Council, meetings of the Trillioner’s Club, or while visiting Tatar cafes. My research experiences reflect the fact that in Muslim interactions
beyond the mosque, Central Asian migrants tend to come from very gender-divided cultures, while Tatars and higher-class interethnic Muslim groups tend to have more interaction amongst genders. However, mosques and religious learning centers are gendered place for Tatars and migrants alike.

**Methods Overview**

**Media/ news research**

Moscow’s urban landscapes change quickly over time, and thus I found it necessary to conduct media and news research to understand the geographies of Muslims in Moscow. My fieldwork is not only ethnographic, but also based on research of news media archives (Harris 2001). To do this, I built a database or “clippings file” of news articles and government documents on topics of mosque construction and its opposition from 2000 (the beginning of Putin’s presidency) to the present. I used Lexis Nexis and home page keyword searches to find Russian language newspaper articles, and supplemented this by searching the websites of government offices and district newspapers not included in Lexis Nexis for relevant documents. I also read pertinent English language news articles from Russian and international media sources as well. This database served as a means of identification of research sites and persons to interview, such as local officials, neighborhood associations, or leaders within Muslim communities. I saved these articles in Dedoose qualitative research software and used key word tags to sort them when revisiting the archive. To create a backup, I saved more important articles that I kept returning to as hard copies and on my laptop in a Microsoft Notebook.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>National-level Newspapers</strong></th>
<th><strong>Moscow-level Newspapers and Magazines</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Izvestiya - 35 articles</td>
<td>Bolshoi Gorod- 15 articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kommersant- 12 articles</td>
<td>Moskovskie Novosti-3 articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komsomolskoye Pravda-20 articles</td>
<td>Moskva Vechernaya-20 articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novyiye Izvestiya-20 articles</td>
<td>Metro- 4 articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rossiskaya Gazeta-5 articles</td>
<td>The Moscow Times (English)- 20 articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian Knot- 10 articles</td>
<td></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Russian News Agencies</strong></th>
<th><strong>Radio and Television</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interfax-30 articles</td>
<td>Echo Moscow- 4 broadcasts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIA Novosti-70 articles</td>
<td>Channel One- 9 news stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTER-TASS-40 articles</td>
<td>Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty- 20 broadcasts</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Human Rights Organizations</strong></th>
<th><strong>Muslim Organizations</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOVA Center for Information and Analysis- 50 reports</td>
<td>Medina Educational Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum 18 News Service- 15 reports</td>
<td>Russian Council of Muftis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian Knot- 10 articles</td>
<td>Spiritual Administration for Muslims in Moscow</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spiritual Administration for Muslims in the Russian Federation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Social Media/ Newsletters</strong></th>
<th><strong>Organizational Archives/ Documents</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Johnson’s Russia List</td>
<td>Archnadzor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window on Eurasia</td>
<td><em>Moj Dvor</em>/ Mecheti.Net</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moscow Tatar Free Press</td>
<td>Regional Tatar National-Cultural Autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moscow Tatar Free Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For Torfyanka Park!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program to Build 200 Churches in Moscow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.1 Database sources.*

I also visited virtual and physical archives of activist groups and Muslim organizations to identify key documents, such as press releases, speeches, and images. Specifically, I visited the
online archives of *Moj Dvor* and Mecheti.Net, websites of groups against mosque construction in Moscow, the reading rooms and exhibits of the Mardjani Foundation, a Russian NGO devoted to humanities, arts, and culture of Eurasia, and the Moscow Tatar Cultural Center. I located these groups through reading news articles about Muslims in Moscow and mosques in Moscow. I asked for permission to use any images or file in my research “database” as they were not formal Russian archives.

Visiting these repositories allowed me to see how these groups portray themselves (Harris 2001). Schein writes:

> I understand that the archive is at once a repository of facts as it also is laden with, and implicated in historically (and I would argue geographically) constituted webs of power relations that work to make the archive central to social, political, economical, and historical reproduction (Schein 2006: 91-92).

Following Schein, I tried to understand how each of the sources gleaned from these sites were representative of an institution, and to understand and access archival settings. For example, I enjoyed an image of Putin watching over me as I scanned four years of programs and newsletters at the Moscow Tatar Cultural Center. I took screen shots or digital images of many pertinent articles, and put them into my database/ clippings file.

In creating my database, I paid attention to more than text and context (Lorimer 2010). Images, video clips, and films found in the archival and news reading process were treated as key documents, especially images that appeared in more than one news item or attempted to display similar scenes (Rose 2003). Visual images are crucial to understanding how Muslims are portrayed in Moscow’s public space. For example, images circulated in media around Muslim holidays to illustrate the large number of devout Muslims in the city. These images from newspapers or news clips are often reproduced on nationalist blogs, fomenting xenophobic sentiment. Also, graphic artistic images of Moscow with a mosque skyline became logos for
anti-mosque protests in Mitino, a site of proposed mosque construction. Rich sources of video data include the film shown on Russian public television for the grand re-opening of Cathedral Mosque, which positively retells the history of Muslims in the city and contrasts to past tensions expressed in archival data, as well as Youtube clips of protests in Tekstilshchiki and Mitino over mosque construction. In total, there are 469 items in the database.

**Participant-observation**

Another important component of my fieldwork was ethnographic participant-observation. Although participant observation was first used to study indigenous cultures, human geographers use these techniques to study how everyday practices create spaces, such as public or private space (Watson and Till 2010). Following Kong’s advice to explore religious geographies outside of officially religious places (2010), I visited three types of sites in my initial nine months of fieldwork: Official mosques, sites of proposed and failed mosque construction, and also sites of Muslim practice beyond mosques.

**Mosques**

I used participant-observation in mosques and their neighborhood contexts to gain insight into the power relations between mosque congregations, their neighbors, and local officials (Kong 1993, Megoran 2006). I focused on examining social interactions at the mosque and how community members use the mosque. I requested permission from mosque leaders and members in order to film or photograph events or attend services and classes, following ethnographic research conventions (Watson and Till 2010). Within Moscow, I visited the four official mosques to conduct ethnographic research and interviews. These mosques are official in two senses- they are registered as mosques and part of country-wide Muslim organizations that maintain positive ties with the Russian state and are part of the Hanafi madhab of Islam.
The mosque sites are depicted in Figure 1.1 and include:

**Cathedral Mosque** - Although this mosque, built in 1904, was demolished September 11, 2011 due to deterioration, the politics of its reconstruction and its proximity to the offices of Ravil Gainutdin, the head of the Council of Muftis of Russia make this construction site in central Moscow a key place of concern. The mosque was reopened in 2015, and is associated with DUMER and site of the offices of the Russian Council of Muftis.

**Historical Mosque** - This mosque, located in center of Moscow, is stone, and dates back to 1823, when it was built by Tsar Alexander I for the Tatars and Bashkirs who defended Moscow from Napoleon. This mosque was confiscated by the Communists in the Soviet era. During perestroika, elders in the Tatar and Muslim community campaigned to the city for the return of the mosque. It was turned over to them in 1991, and renovated with help from the Saudi Arabian ambassador to Russia, Dr. Abdel-Aziz. The mosque reopened in 1993 and is associated with DUMER.

**Yardyam Mosque** - This mosque was constructed in 1996 as part of a larger spiritual complex in North-East Moscow, which includes a Shiite mosque, an Orthodox church, and a synagogue. This spiritual complex also houses a madrassah (Muslim school), shops, and a halal meats kiosk. By conducting research at this site, I gained insight into the relationship between different Muslim publics.

**Memorial Mosque** - This mosque was constructed in 1995 to honor Muslims who fought in World War II, in Park Pobedy, or Victory Park. Although this mosque faced opposition from political and civil groups in its construction, the mosque was erected with the support of Moscow’s then-mayor, Yuri Luzhkov. Research at this site explored what conditions can lead to mosque construction despite opposition.

At these four sites, I veered between participant-as observer and observer-as-participant (Gold 1958). My sites for extended participant observation and more intense involvement in everyday life included Historical Mosque and its surrounding community and Cathedral Mosque and its surrounding neighborhood. I did not pray at these sites, but made regular visits. Although I observed and conducted formal interviews at Yardyam and Memorial Mosques, I did not travel to these sites on a daily basis and attended Friday prayers on occasion for observation.

At first, I visited the mosques in person to see what might be the best way to arrange interviews and ask for permission to conduct participant observation. At Historical Mosque, I felt no need to make a formal phone call as a worshipper, an older Tatar man, came up to me as I
inspected some placards on the side of the building. He introduced me to an imam who spoke English as well as several other parishioners. After arranging a more formal initial interview, I was welcome to visit the mosque for my project, received a tour, and was introduced to many women who worked there.

At other mosques, I followed up initial visits with phone calls to arrange interviews with officials and ask for permission to observe. After initial interviews, I was asked by a member of the international department at the Russian Council of Muftis, whose offices were in Cathedral Mosque, if I might be interested in conducting some English language lessons there in exchange for discussions on my research topic. I accepted this opportunity. At Memorial and Yardyam mosque, I was welcomed to observe Friday prayers and talk to women at the mosque.

At all mosques, I introduced myself to research participants as Meagan Todd, PhD student in geography at the University of Colorado. I framed my research as being on the geography of Muslims in Russia and that I was affiliated with the Russian State University of Humanities. As per IRB rules, I obtained oral consent for interviews.

**Other Muslim Public Spaces**

Besides analyzing how mosques operate as sites of social and state reproduction, I also used my news article database and fieldwork to identify other important research sites. I also examined other Muslim public spaces. Katz (1994) and Appadurai (1997) warn against fetishizing field sites as containers of cultures, and urge researchers to find information beyond expected places. For example, Ehrkamp’s (2007) research on Muslim Turkish immigrants in Germany illustrates the importance of conducting research at and beyond officially religious settings such as mosques. Her approach makes visible the diversity of Muslim practices and religious spaces in a small German town, such as in private homes or at local Muslim businesses.
To examine other Muslim public spaces outside of mosques, I attended special events, such as the Moscow International Halal Expo, the iftar tent at Memorial mosque during Ramadan (Figure 4.2), and prayers on Muslim holidays Kurban Bayram and Uraza Bayram, and exhibits hosted by museums, such as an exhibit “Soviet Propaganda Posters in the East: from 1918-1940, and “99 Faces of God” featuring Muslim artworks across Russia and Central Asia. I arranged observations at these events by contacting organizers and receiving a press pass to allow for interviews. I conducted “go along” or street interviews with people throughout Moscow, including in my home district of Belyaevoo, because halal shops and kiosks selling halal foods are ubiquitous.

Figure 4.2 Moscow International Halal Expo. June 2013. Photo by author.

Through research participants I met during fieldwork, I attended meetings of women’s organizations and Trillioner’s group, an international Muslim organization founded at Memorial Mosque which follows the teachings of popular imam Shamil Alyautdinov. At Medina, a women’s Muslim center, I was invited to record observations, attend classes and lectures, but was declined interviews even when presenting all questions ahead of time. They did not want to
participate because they thought my questions about mosque construction and preferences were too political, and felt that as representatives of a cultural center that they did not want to comment on them. The women I spoke to wanted to present their center as an important place where Muslim women could experience community and I was invited to take notes and observe different lectures and round tables on topics such as portrayals of Muslims in the Russian media.

I was also invited to a Muslim cultural center, Darul’ Arkam, which is associated with Salafi Islam. Salafism is usually practiced by Muslims from Central Asia and the Caucasus, and is a conservative type of Sunni Islam. However, I was not allowed to observe or interview when I visited the center, as the community council of the mosque had decided to liquidate the organization following a large raid by the Russian Federal Security Service (the successor to the KGB) and Migration Services in April 2013, which sought out radical extremists. The women there said, instead, they were a Tatar cultural center and laughed amongst themselves sarcastically. They instead showed me their offices, and how all signs and posters of other mosques had been removed from the walls. They wanted to show that they were officially closed for worship.

At another location, Milost’, a Muslim center in southwest Moscow, I was specifically asked by the imam not to show up to observe activities because as a female traveling alone, I would receive marriage proposals and not get much work done. Instead, I was invited to a formal interview with the imam only after daily activities had ceased for the day.

**Sites of Failed Mosque Construction and Protest**

Because my research focused on politics of Muslim public spaces, I visited two neighborhood sites of failed mosque construction proposals in Tekstilschiki District and Mitino District. I also visited the site of an active ongoing protest over the construction of a Russian
Orthodox Church in Torfyanka Park so that I could compare strategies of protest against majority and minority religious public spaces (*Figure 4.3*).

![Map of Moscow with sites labeled](image)

*Figure 4.3 Sites of protests over mosque and church construction. (Map data ©2017 Google).*

*Tekstilshiki District:* This district is located in southeast Moscow and is considered to be a sleeping district, or *spalnii raion* (*Figure 4.3*). This means it is a place where residents tend to live but not work. It was the site of a failed mosque proposal in 2010. I visited the site of failed construction to see how residents use the space and also had short interviews with locals as part of participant-observation. The site was located in an empty space, or *pustin*, between 10- and 14-floor apartment buildings. I interviewed the leader of the movement against mosque construction, *Moj Dvor*, or My Courtyard and conducted street interviews.

*Mitino District:* This district is in northwest Moscow and is also a sleeping district. It was the site of a failed mosque proposal in 2012. The site of the proposed mosque is at the urban fringe of Moscow, near an apartment building, carpark, and a fire station. In Mitino, I conducted an interview with a neighborhood official.
Torfyanka Park: I visited this park located in a sleeping region of northeast Moscow in summer of 2015 as part of a follow-up research visit. This park was site of two active protest camps. The park was the site of a proposed Russian Orthodox Church for the Plan-200 program to build 200 new Russian Orthodox Churches in the Moscow sleeping regions. One group was for the construction of the church, and composed of people not from the district, while another group was composed of locals against the church construction. I held two group interviews with both camps and observed activities.

Field diary

I kept an ethnographic diary to record observations, “go along” interviews, and field notes, and digital photography and film were used to record key events, such as speeches, demonstrations, or meetings (Bernard 2006). I handwrote in a small notebook, or sometimes to blend in I would send myself texts of observations by taking notes on my phone.

Because my research was on Muslim visibility in public space, I used photography to document key interactions as much as possible (Watson and Till 2010; Rose 2012). At first I was nervous to take field notes or photography around the mosque neighborhoods because of heavy police presence, but I learned as long as I did not zoom in on police actions such as document checks or pat-downs of suspected immigrants that the police were uninterested in my presence. Although worshippers were often asked to show passports and documents, mine were never checked even when I once asked a policeman for directions to the offices of the Muftis Council.

In 2013, I felt like I was the only observer attending these Friday services. But, in 2015, two other groups were documenting the activities. In 2015, I noticed Central Asian migrant worshippers took photographs of the crowds themselves, and many Russians who I assumed to be nationalists took videos and photos. Such images are available on blogs dedicated to Russian nationalism and against Muslim presence in the city. One example is Tretii Rim (Third Rome) (http://3rm.info), a news blog promoting Russian Orthodoxy and Russian patriotism. Another is the social network site of Sorok Sorokov (Forty times Forty) (https://vk.com/sorok_sorokov), a
social movement that combines Russian Orthodoxy and nationalism into a civil society group. Because I am unable to speak or read Central Asian languages, I am unsure what happened to their videos.

**Interviews**

In addition to participant-observation, I conducted three types of interviews that need to be differentiated: semi-structured, in-depth interviews, “go along” or street interviews, and group interviews. Interviews have different strengths, and so I used different types of interviews to gather facts from key informants (in-depth interviews), collect a diversity of experiences (go-along interviews), and to learn about the interactions amongst groups (group interviews) (Dunn 2010). A list of interviews and interview IDs are included in Appendix A.

**Semi-structured interviews**

I conducted thirty semi-structured, in-depth interviews with members of mosque communities, neighbors, and officials involved in the processes of mosque construction or opposition (Appendix A). Semi-structured interviews are appropriate methods because they create a flow of conversation between the interviewer and interviewee, and allow for spontaneity in the discourse (Al-Hindi and Kawabata 2002). These interviews took place with the leaders or representatives of mosques, cultural organizations, or neighborhood associations. The goal was to see how, through interviews with their representatives, these groups envisioned their role in shaping normative public life in Moscow.

Interviews took place at a site chosen by the interviewee, in order to maximize comfort level. Not all interviews were sit-down, many involved tours of buildings or neighborhoods. I introduced myself as a geography graduate student from the University of Colorado, Boulder, and asked for verbal consent to participate in the research project. I received a waiver of written
documentation of consent from the IRB at the University of Colorado at Boulder because my research presented minimal risk. Although my project is about the controversies over Muslims in Moscow’s public space, discourses of racism, Islamophobia, and neighborhood politics are pervasive routine parts of daily discussions and did not signal any threat to participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sample Questions</th>
<th>Relevance to Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic information of interviewees</td>
<td>What is your age? What is your ethnicity? What are your religious beliefs? How long have you lived in Moscow? Where are you from?</td>
<td>Demographic indicators provide insight into the relation between responses and background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosque/religious background (Muslim respondents)</td>
<td>When did you start going to this mosque? How often do you go to a mosque? When did your mosque open? Why is your mosque located in this neighborhood?</td>
<td>This section explores the relationship of the individual to the mosque congregation and structure. Besides asking about attendance and the nature/strength of religious beliefs, it also explores perceptions of inter-mosque and neighborhood issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics of mosque construction (Muslim respondents)</td>
<td>Do you think that there are enough mosques in Moscow? Why or why not? Should a new mosque be built? If so, where?</td>
<td>This set of questions asks the respondents to make observations about Muslim spaces in Moscow, and what entities are responsible for the growth of religious communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics of mosque construction (neighborhood members)</td>
<td>How would you describe your neighborhood? Why should a mosque not be located in your community? Where should mosques be built?</td>
<td>This set of questions, targeted to those identified via archival research as opponents to mosque construction, seeks to understand the nature of the opposition and also where instead they imagine Muslim spaces should be constructed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other spaces of worship/Muslim culture (Muslim respondents)</td>
<td>Where do you worship? What Muslim places are in Moscow? Where do you discuss religious issues?</td>
<td>Questions on where respondents feel comfortable performing and discussing religion will lead to information on Muslim spaces outside of official mosques.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 Interview Guide
A guide with key questions (Table 4.2) was employed to structure interviews in the pilot phase of the project, which occurred in the first month. After initial interviews, I edited the interview questions according to findings from the pilot phase. I used two methods to locate interviewees: identification of key figures through my news media database, and a snowball-sampling frame to locate interviewees. This is an appropriate sampling frame for this particular project because the Muslim communities in Moscow consist of many minority groups, which are typically hard to reach (Bernard 2006; Secor 2010). Having a recommendation or introduction from a colleague usually helped me gain new interviewees or access to places for participant-observation.

The main problem with snowball sampling is that this method could lead to an over-representation of one particular interest group in research. This over-representation, notably, is a critique of Goffman’s work (Campos 2015). To get around this problem, I used snowball sampling amongst several different types of peoples. In one example, I was invited to observe prayers at Memorial Mosque from the women’s floor. While there, I met three female students. Two of them were Tatar students at Moscow State University that invited me to go to visit the Medina center for Muslim women. This led to me meeting several young Tatar university students for participant observation and being invited to social outings and places important for Moscow’s Tatar Muslim community, such as Chai-Bar Kazan, a restaurant and wedding hall named after the homeland of Tatars. Rather than over-relying on this population of research participants and their narratives of experiences of public space, I used the snowball technique to see how social networks of Muslim women in Moscow were formed (Noy 2008). For example, these younger students were acquaintances with others that I had met at the Russian Muftis Council international department and helped me learn more about differences and similarities.
within their community.

While at Memorial Mosque, I met a third student. She was dressed more conservatively than the Tatar students, and was from Chechnya. She introduced herself as an Arabic language instructor at a madrassah and offered to take me there. I said yes, and together we visited her Salafi underground mosque, Darul’ Arkam. However, I was not invited to participate or observe at the mosque, as it was the object of surveillance, immigration round-ups, and had been officially shut down at the time. The snowball sampling frame is useful if one uses it to trace social networks and also if one follows different paths to research many experiences or views.

Interviews were conducted in Russian or English, and recorded and translated into English. In connection with research questions on Muslim spaces, the interviews included distinct question categories, as seen in Table 3.2.

I adjusted the interview protocols to allow for specific questions about organizations. For example, for Moj Dvor, I mentioned that in news media, they are accused of being a nationalist organization. I asked if they agreed with this assessment or not. At an interview with a creator of an app that allows for Muslims to locate Halal places and foods in Moscow, I asked what types of Muslims he envisions using his product.

“Go along” interviews

Although I used semi-structured interviews, to learn more about certain organizations or events, I used “go along” or street interviews to clarify observations from participant observation and to gain insight into opinions of ordinary people. I consider them under the rubric of participant observation, but different from taking field notes on conversations between groups of people. This street interview method is sometimes referred to as the “go-along” method because it is a hybrid of interview and participation (Kusenbach 2003). It is particularly useful for place-
based ethnography because it takes place amongst ordinary actions. Although my initial research plan included focus groups, I received a recommendation from a Moscow-based geographer to conduct shorter street interviews, as they will allow more insight into different populations’ opinions and increase research participation as most Muscovites and migrants seemed unwilling to devote the time commitment to a focus group in the face of their work and commute schedules.

I typically asked three to five questions, or used a photograph as prompt. For example, I visited the offices of businesses surrounding Historical mosque and asked these questions to inquire into neighborhood relations:

- How long has your business been here?
- What is your opinion of the neighborhood?
- How does being located near a mosque affect your business?

I asked similar questions in “go along” interviews to locals and worshippers, introducing myself as a geographer doing research on Muslims in Moscow.

“Go along” or street interviews with worshippers after services were important parts of my fieldwork collection; I asked about topics such as Muslim practices in Moscow, distance traveled to the mosque, and treatment by Muscovites with interviewees.

I conducted street interviews with each group until I reached theoretical saturation on topics related to everyday practices or opinions on Muslims in Moscow. Theoretical or data saturation refers to collecting data until no new concepts or opinions are expressed in response to interview questions (Glaser and Strauss 1967). I conducted street interviews with the following populations: 12 Muslims at Historical mosque, 10 neighbors and workers in the area surrounding Historical mosque, 5 workers at Historical mosque, 35 Muslims at Cathedral mosque, 10 neighbors and workers in the neighborhood surrounding Cathedral mosque, 4 Muslims at
Yardyam mosque, 13 workers at halal shops and kiosks, and 6 residents in Tekstilshiki neighborhood, for a total of 95 street interviews.

**Group interviews**

I conducted three group interviews for this project. These differed from focus groups because I served as a moderator, and the groups were composed of people that knew each other beforehand. Focus groups originated in the field of market research, and have been used in the social sciences to inquire into a vast array of topics, such as the politics of urban citizenship in Turkey (Secor 2002) or masculinities and young British Muslims (Hopkins 2006). Focus groups typically are composed of a moderator and a small group of participants who do not know each other but have similar characteristics, such as gender, age, ethnic group, and belief. This is said to create an atmosphere not shaped by power relations or fear of breach of confidentiality (Hopkins 2007). However, as Koch’s (2013) experience with focus groups in authoritarian Kazakhstan shows, these dynamics might also create and be shaped by hierarchies and reproduce hegemonic scripts. Based on willingness to participate and a survey of group and focus interview literature, I followed guidelines set forth by Kuhle’s (2011) study of Muslim groups in Denmark. In this study, the researcher conducted group interviews with already-formed social groups. The researcher found that familiarity with others helped participants feel more open with discussing political topics (Kühle 2011). I conducted the group interviews in settings chosen by the participants to create a familiar and comfortable atmosphere (Longhurst 2010).

Therefore, my group interviews were not typical focus group constructions, as I moderated instead of an insider, and participation was based solely on willingness to take part in the project instead of stratification by gender, age, or ethnicity. However, the group interaction did not seem to reproduce patriarchal norms or organization-approved scripts (Koch 2013),
which is a concern in a group setting (Hopkins 2007), as men and women shared divergent opinions on Muslims in Moscow and gave positive feedback about the experience.

Overall, the group interviews helped me triangulate data from my field notes, interviews, and news analyses. The focus of these interviews was to see how participants responded to topics that emerged in my participant observation and news analyses. For example, I asked opinions on neighborhood characteristics, holidays, police presence, access to comfortable places to worship and the role of mosques and churches in Moscow. In interview, the dialogue is generated between interviewer and participant. In ethnography, I both observed dialogues amongst participants as well as generated my own sets of questions. In the group interviews, I carried out the role of the moderator and did not intervene with dialogue generated amongst participants unless there was a lull in conversation. I tape recorded the interviews. These interviews lasted from one to two hours in length. They generated data about preferences and Muslim practices, such as which mosques and organizations participants preferred, as well as experiences of practicing in public space.

Participants felt free to disagree with one another, showing that the group interview method was successful in creating a comfortable atmosphere. For example one participant stated that he was frustrated by the presence of beggars from Uzbekistan on Fridays at mosques, while another stated she felt the umma, or larger Muslim community, needed to more to help them if they did not want beggars at the mosque. In another instance, focus group members fundamentally disagreed on the need for more mosques in the city, with some expressing that they already did not feel the need to attend mosque except for holidays, and another stating that the beauty of the mosque inspired her and made her feel connected to her religion.
My three group interviews were different from one another in composition and in scope. The first group consisted in workers at the Russian Muftis Council, who agreed to participate in my project in exchange for English language practice. This is an example of reciprocity in qualitative research, wherein the researcher provides information or a service to increase trustworthiness between the researcher and research participant (Harrison, MacGibbon, and Morton 2001). I asked questions about a wide range of topics, from trends in Muslim culture in Moscow, to equality and religion, to the role of their organization. The goal of these interviews were to gather information and see if people agreed or disagreed with observations I made from fieldwork and interview. The group was sized from 3-5 people, depending on the evening. The interviews took place in the library of the Russian Muftis Council.

My second group interview consisted of seven young Muslims and took place in a popular Tatar restaurant, Chai-bar Kazan. This group consisted of men and women aged 18-30, and of many different ethnicities. I asked opinions on the role of the mosque, which mosques they preferred, and where they felt most comfortable practicing religion.

My third group interview took place in Torfyanka Park, at a site of a contested Russian Orthodox Church construction. I conducted fact-finding interviews with two groups: one of people camped out at the site in defense of the construction of the church, and the other a group of people from the neighborhood who were against the church construction. I learned about the motivations and goals of the two different groups. This third group interview was more of a “go-along” interview than an official group interview.

To sum up, the group interview actions allowed for an analysis of dialogue about issues central to the dissertation: the role of the mosque, experiences at mosques, and questions of neighborhood and group identity. Whereas street interview and semi-structured interviews
offered data on personal accounts and experiences, these dialogues helped me see where accord and disagreement existed within social groups on the issues of public space and religion.

**Analysis of research data**

My data analysis was ongoing throughout the project, as consistent with grounded theory approaches of reflexivity and theory-building from inductive collection methods (Herbert 2010). Before I arrived in Moscow, I finished a majority of news and media analyses to identify interviewees and participant observation sites. I used my fieldnotes and news analyses to guide interview scripts, and interviewees to find new sites for observation.

Once data from semi-structured interviews and group interviews were recorded, they were given to two ethnic Russian female undergraduate students from the Moscow State Pedagogical University Department of Geography to transcribe (Dunn 2010). I offered approximately 300 rubles an hour, or $10 USD an hour for the transcription. As native speakers, the Russian students required less time to transcribe the interviews from Russian into English. Prior to the start of the research, I trained the assistants in how to transcribe interview data and how to handle the data securely (Poland 1995). Because the students were interested in gaining research skills, they each accompanied me on one field interview each to further enhance understanding of the project. They also checked all interview scripts for errors prior to interviews.

I then analyzed the transcribed and translated interviews for recurring themes. I followed the conventions of latent content analysis, which examines themes amongst the transcripts (Cope 2010). The data was analyzed for the following themes: references to mosque construction, opposition, and location, references to places of prayer and Muslim communities, relations with state and local political authorities and police, and additional emergent themes.
I coded the data collected from participant observations and interviews using the qualitative analysis software Dedoose. Dedoose is a qualitative software that allowed me to track emergent themes across interview transcripts, field notes, and media sources. Within Dedoose, I performed narrative analyses of the interviews, tracking key themes across the interview texts and examining interview texts related to or challenged broader discourses found in the field notes from each site (Cope 2010; Secor 2010).

My positionality as a researcher informs my analysis. Unlike my research participants, I am not a direct stakeholder in this research (Myers 2010). As a guest of the capital (a phrase Muscovites use to refer to outsiders), I do not advocate for or against the presence or absence of mosques in neighborhoods. However, the academic project of analyzing Moscow’s religious spaces is inherently political because it discusses the unequal power relationships amongst different stakeholders (Duncan and Duncan 2010).

**Discussion**

This research project draws from and contributes to qualitative research in political geography. I employed archival research, participant observation, and interviews to analyze how the Russian state policies of secularism and freedom of religion are experienced in everyday lives of Moscow’s inhabitants – both Muscovites and guests of the capital. I used these methods to gather information from both key informants and individuals about their diverse experiences, and used these data to explore the contemporary geography of religion in Moscow.

My goal with my qualitative approach was to understand the prosaic nature of the application of Russia’s laws on religious freedom in regards to the rights of Muslims to practice their religion in public spaces (Painter 2006). My data collection captures the Russian power vertical in action: My database has many trial proceedings, summaries, and reports from local
courts and letters from local politicians. It also contains interviews with some neighborhood
government officials on the issue of mosques. My field notes and street interviews from
participant observation provided me with insight into neighborhood dynamics of both areas of
proposed mosque construction and mosques and their neighborhood environs. My gender and
language abilities however mean that my semi-structured interview and street interviews
overwhelmingly occurred with Hanafi Tatars, middle-class Muslim migrants, and ethnic
Russians in Moscow. I do incorporate some lower-class Central Asian Muslim immigrant voices
in my analyses of Moscow’s Muslim communities using street interview data, but focus on
Moscow’s middle-class Muslim populations.
Chapter Five: Morality Politics and Muslim Public Space in Moscow: The Re-opening of Cathedral Mosque

In chapter three, I outlined the literatures on political geographies, public space, and critical approaches to Islam that influence my research. In chapter four, I detailed my qualitative data collection methods. In this chapter, I turn to my first research question, as presented in the introduction: what do the politics enveloping mosque construction in Moscow reveal about the place of Muslim citizens and Islam more broadly in Russian political life? This chapter examines the politics of Islam in Moscow and Russia through an analysis of the demolition and construction of Moscow Cathedral Mosque. After its controversial demolition on September 11, 2011 and five years of construction, this mosque opened to much celebration on Eid al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice) in 2015. These processes of demolition and reconstruction transformed the Moscow Cathedral Mosque from a building of local importance to Moscow’s Tatar Muslim community to a monument signifying the national importance of Islam in Russia. My analysis in this chapter examines a monumental mosque construction project as part of Russian morality politics and contrasts its symbolic meaning with its use as a Muslim public space. In chapter one, I outlined the contours of morality politics. Following Sharafutdinova (2014), I use morality politics to describe Putin’s domestic and foreign policy agenda that poses Russia as a conservative country whose traditions and values are threatened by foreign influence. I draw from news media analysis, participation observation, and interviews to explore this question through an analysis of the demolition and reconstruction of the Cathedral Mosque.

First, I turn to an examination of the political use of religious landscapes in Russia through a comparison of Russian Orthodox Church versus mosque construction. I then survey the controversies surrounding the demolition of Cathedral Mosque and the celebrations surrounding its reopening. Although geographers have studied the politics of construction of
Orthodox churches in Russia (Forest and Johnson 2002; Sidorov 2001), mosque construction and its local politics has not been analyzed in the context of the complex relationships between Muslim communities, their neighbors, and local governments (Holland and Todd 2015). The politics of religious structure construction involve a myriad of interest groups, and serve as a lens to study how minority communities of faith are embedded in networks of state and other forms of power.

**Religious Landscapes and Power in Moscow**

My second chapter addressed how Soviet nationalities policies created religious and ethnic borders that continue to influence the geographies of Russia’s religious revival. Under the auspices of secularism, these borders have played a crucial role in creating Russia’s complex religious geography, one that makes Russia at once a country of mosque construction boom and bust, and a country where veiling is both banned and required in different regions. In this chapter, I analyze how Putin’s morality politics agenda interact with Tatar nationalism in rebuilding of Moscow’s Cathedral Mosque. I examine how the reconstruction creates a new representation of Islam and Russian state relationships in Moscow’s symbolic religious landscape. I also examine how this symbolic relationship is challenged through local debates over the controversies over the mosque’s demolition for the Moscow Tatar and historic preservation communities, and subverted by the regulation of Muslim worship practices at the mosque by Hanafi imams.

This chapter analyzes the politics of Cathedral Mosque as a local and national public space and religious symbolic landscape. Geographers have treated landscapes as “our unwitting autobiography” (Lewis 1979). This means that the built environment is a means through which identity is created in society. Although Lewis states the landscape is unwitting, meaning that the
messages conveyed in the landscape are created as a reflection of a society’s values, this approach stems on the belief that landscapes are created democratically and not a means of operating power through hegemonic influence.

Landscapes need to be examined in order to understand how they are deployed in the social production of space and history, rather than accepted as a permanent marker of control over space, history, and public memory (Till 2005). Said writes that, “the art of memory in the modern world is both for historians as well as ordinary citizens and institutions very much something to be used, misused, and exploited, rather than something that sits inertly there for each person to collect and contain” (Said 2002: 245). He proposes the idea that collective memory is an exercise of political power that endows certain events of the past with meaning. Other geographers influenced by new cultural geography such as Sidorov (2000) and Forest and Johnson (2001) have argued that landscape does not work with an epistemology of reflection but one of production, meaning through landscape structural making the state attempts to wield and express their power. For example, Sidorov’s research on the construction of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow shows that the national monumentalization of religious landscapes is political. This finding is still relevant in contemporary Russia, as protests are ongoing in Saint Petersburg over the transfer of St. Isaac’s cathedral to the Russian Orthodox Church. Protesters argue this transfer will turn it from a public museum open to all to a closed religious space (Nechepurenko 2017). Forest and Johnson (2001) confirm Sidorov’s findings that in Russia, elites use symbolic landscapes to make political claims and gather power and public approval.

By examining the contestation over the production of religious landscapes, I seek to analyze the relationship between religion, politics, and publics. My project extends Sidorov (2000) and Forest and Johnson’s (2001) research on religiously symbolic landscapes in Moscow
through analyzing how both political elites and competing Muslim groups use symbolic religious spaces to make political claims.

**Historical Symbolic Role of Church and Mosque Construction**

Russian leaders have a long tradition of using the construction of religious structures and demolition projects as ways to claim political power. In this section, I examine this tradition to better position the re-opening of Moscow’s Cathedral Mosque as a geopolitical event. Historically, Russia’s political leaders have sponsored Russian Orthodox Church projects to set forth a certain imaginary of the world which still holds sway today, that of Moscow as the gathering place of power in Russia, and that of the Kremlin as the stronghold of Russian politics (Adams 2008; Sidorov 2000). This history of monumental church architecture is in contrast to the historical tradition of mosque construction, which is traditionally blended into cityscapes.

Russian Orthodox church construction was an important function in creating landscapes of power during and after the Tatar invasions (Rowland 2003). Ivan III (1440-1505) sought to establish his political legitimacy as ruler of Russia amongst boyars through construction projects in the Moscow Kremlin. As he worked to create a stage for the actions of his state to take place, he turned Moscow and specifically the Kremlin, or fortress, into what anthropologist Clifford Geertz calls a “glowing center” of culture via Russian Orthodox Church construction (1977). The events that occur in the glowing center permeate and radiate political power outwards whilst affirming the sovereign status of those inside.

While church construction was symbolic of political power, the history of mosque construction in Moscow and throughout Russia is related more so to the history of trade and mercantile culture starting in the 14th century (Khayretdinov 2008a). After Ivan the Terrible’s defeat of the Golden Horde in the 16th century, Tatars and Bashkirs drew upon their established
trade routes to continue a mercantile economic relationship within the Russian Empire. They were not allowed within city limits, and were even evicted from cities in their historical homelands, like Kazan in Tatarstan. Typically, Tatars would build slobodi, or settlements, on the outskirts of cities (Zenkovsky 1953).

The role of early Tatar settlers in the city’s then-outskirts in the present-day Zamoskvorechie district in the Central Administrative Okrug of Moscow is unrecorded until 1619. Then, there is evidence in the city census of a Tatar quarter demarcated by trade, architecture, and ambassadorial residences (Khayretdinov 2008a). This area still bears markers of its Turkic-Muslim heritage: Historical Mosque, the first known mosque to operate in Moscow, is in this district, and key road names include Bolshaya Ordinka and Malaya Ordynka (Big Order and Little Order Road), as well as the Balchug (Tatar for wet dirt), best known recently as the site of protests against the reelection of Putin in December 2012. On the highway leading away from this district are many other places with Tatar heritage names, such as Bolshaya and Malaya Tatarskaya streets, Tolmachi, and Biryulevo. Slobodi such as Biryulevo and Tolmachi were referred to as chyorni or “black” because they were populated by impermanent settlers, and as they were on the outskirts of town the roads were unpaved and the area was dusty and sooty (Khayretdinov 2008b).

In 1649, Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich Romanov ordered non-Christians to leave Moscow and for their religious buildings to be burned. However, Peter the Great came to power in 1689 and with him came Westernization and more liberal ideas about the separation of church and state. Thus, the ban on minority religious infrastructure was lifted. Liberalization of policies toward religion continued under Catherine the Great- the Russian Orthodox Church issued a decree in 1773 calling for the tolerance of all religions. As part of this decree, mosque
construction in the Russian Empire was legalized and standardized. As part of this process of standardization, her architects developed “A Model Project of a Mosque for Siberia.” This was meant to be the blueprint for all mosques in Russia. The mosque was neoclassical in design, keeping with her trend of Westernization (Malaia 2015).

In 1862, Russia’s Muslim communities received permission to independently design their mosque plans and facades (Kinossian 2008). The facades of the two permanent historical mosques in Moscow, Historical Mosque, and Cathedral mosque, were built to blend in with their city context (Interview E, August 2013). This meant that there could be no visible or distinctive signs that the buildings were mosques, and minarets were expressly forbidden. This is in opposition to Russian Orthodox Churches, which were built within fortress walls or on the tallest point in cities so that they could stand out (Rowland 2003). Although the founding date for the first mosque is unknown in Moscow, the oldest existing mosque in the city is Historical Mosque (Figure 5.1), located at the heart of the historic Tatar area. This mosque was constructed in 1823 is a memorial to the Tatar troops who fought in the Napoleonic wars. Notably, Tsar Alexander I decreed that the mosque was not allowed to look like a mosque with any architectural features, and could not be referred to as a mosque. Muslim Tatar merchants funded the land and construction of the mosque (Interview E, May 2013).
In the second half of the 19th century, the amount of Tatar merchants grew in the city, expanding outside of the Tatarskaya sloboda. With this expanse of trade came a larger presence of Muslim communities (Khayretdinov 2008a). Private Muslim prayer rooms could operate in Moscow as long as they were not public; one such example was located in the Izamailova estate in the Myasnitskaya District, a wealthier district where many Tatar merchant businesses were located. In 1881, the community gained permission to construct a minaret on Historical Mosque. This was dismantled in the Soviet period during the crackdown on religion and the mosque was turned into a place to enlist troops, a printing house, and workshop (Khayretdinov 2008b). The mosque was turned over in 1991 to the Muslim community and reopened in 1993.
This brief examination of the historic development of mosques in Moscow illustrates how although workers and traders were allowed into the city to perform an economic function, they were not wholly accepted and had to adjust to a religious landscape that excluded Muslim public symbols. As seen by the labeling of some Tatar villages by the pejorative chyorni or the refusal to allow mosques to have distinct features or minarets the public presence of Muslims in Moscow and Russia has a long, divisive history.

**Historical Background of Cathedral Mosque:**

Since 1894, Tatar merchants and clergymen requested permission to build a second mosque in Moscow, eventually receiving it in 1903. Moscow’s Cathedral mosque was built in 1904 in Meshchanskaya sloboda, on the fringes of the city (Khayretdinov 2008b). Meshchanskaya refers to the Russian social class of meshchane, or townspeople. The mosque was constructed by Tatar merchants, including Salekh Yusupovich Erzin, a Tatar who married into a merchant family and dealt in the Central Asian trade of furs, cotton, silk, and leather. Born in Ryazan, he moved to the Tatar sloboda within Moscow, and invested his wealth in mosque construction, both making improvements to Historical Mosque, the first mosque built in the city, as well as constructing a new second mosque, Cathedral Mosque. The land was surrounded by Russian owners, and was not in a distinctly Tatar area like Historical Mosque. Built at a time when the Russian Empire no longer dictated mosque architecture, the mosque was designed in Byzantine architectural style by Nikolai Zhukov. It had space for 800 worshippers. As a shadow of overcrowding to come, the mosque was overcrowded with 1,000 worshippers on holidays. This mosque was owned by the Mohammedan Religious Assembly, governed by the Muslim Spiritual Board based in Orenburg, and overseen by the Department of Spiritual Affairs for foreign confessions Ministry of Home Affairs, created by Tsar Alexander I (Khayretdinov
This mosque was the only one in Central Russia open for worship continuously during the Soviet era. However, the mosque leadership did not escape Stalin’s Great Terror and purge of religious leaders, as imams Abdulvadud Fattahiddin and Abdulla Suleiman were tried for being enemies of the Communist party. The new imam, Halil Nasriddinovv, however, sustained more congenial ties with the Communist party. As leader of the mosque from 1936-1956, Nasriddinov supported war efforts against Germany through collecting donations and organizing Muslim soldiers (Spiritual Board of the Muslims of the Russian Federation, 2015). The Muslim community was very active in the fight against fascism, and even received the following note of thanks from Stalin: “Thank you for your supporting Red Army armored forces. Accept my greetings and the gratitude from the Red Army. I.Stalin” (Spiritual Board of the Muslims of the Russian Federation 2015). Although the mosque faced the threat of demolition in 1980 because it was located next to the site chosen for Moscow’s Olympic Stadium, leaders in the Moscow and Arabic religious community saved the mosque.

Many prominent religious and political figures have visited the mosque, making it a prominent landmark for Russia’s Muslim community. President Nasser of Egypt, and Libyan leader Qaddafi visited after World War II, and after perestroika the President of Palestine Abbas and then-president of Turkey Abdullah Gul visited, as well as the General Secretaries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Muslim World League (Yemelianova 2002). Besides hosting international leaders, the mosque was also a central of site Russia’s post-Soviet religious revival. In 1987, at the beginning of perestroika, Ravil Gainutdin as appointed imam-khatib (the chief mufti) of the mosque. Two Muslim organizations were established at Cathedral Mosque-the Russia Muftis Council, lead by Gainutdin, and the Religious Board of Muslims of the
Russian Federation. In 1994, the Moscow Islamic Institute also was established, replacing the Moscow High Religious Islamic College as a central place of education for Russia’s umma, or wider Muslim community (March 2010). Moscow’s Cathedral Mosque is a place of important events and home to key spiritual institutions and leaders.

Demolition Controversy

Although Cathedral Mosque was placed on Moscow’s cultural heritage list in 2008, the Russian Council of Muftis requested it to be removed from this list so that it could be demolished and rebuilt. Muslim leadership in Russia did not uniformly support this move. While Ravil Gainutdin, the leader of Council of Muftis, advocated for the demolition, Talgat Tadzhutdin, the leader of the Central Spiritual Board of Muslims (DUMER) asked for the demolition to be prevented. Tadzhutdin believed that the mosque’s architecture should be preserved as a testament to the historical importance to Tatars (Iskandyrov 2011).

This disagreement is reflective of the discord that exists amongst Russia’s Muslim leaders and organizations. Within the Russian Federation, the state treats Muslim communities as belonging to one of two categories—“official” and “unofficial” (Matsuzato 2007). Official Muslim structures maintain ties with the Russian government and are associated with the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam or Sufism, whereas unofficial Islam is associated with local communities, or jama’ats, in the Caucasus (Kurbanov 2011) and separatist Salafi guerilla fighters that marked the first and second Chechen War (Hahn 2007). There are three official Muslim structures in Russia: The Central Spiritual Board of Muslims of Russia (TsDUM), which is located in Ufa, Bashkortostan, the Council of Muftis of Russia (SMR) which is located in Moscow, and the Coordinating Council of the Muslims of the Northern Caucasus (Matsuzato 2007; Hunter 2004). The leaders of these groups meet annually with the Russian president, and infighting occurs
amongst them as they compete for political prominence and favor (Yemelianova 2002). The debate over the demolition of Cathedral Mosque is one example of these arguments. These groups are loosely organized, and lack the nation-wide, vertically organized structure of Russian Orthodoxy (Walker 2005). Although the government in Moscow has no immediate plans to exert state controls and create a vertical power structure for Russian Muslims, the three already-existing state-approved structures have come to define “official” Islam in Russia (Matsuzato 2007).

Figure 5.2 Cathedral Mosque under renovation in Fall 2013. Photo by author.

The mosque was demolished on September 11, 2011, and was considered a power-move by Gainutdin and the Russian Council of Muftis (Error! Reference source not found.).
According to the Russian Council of Muftis, the mosque had been built in three months without a proper foundation and with plywood and was in poor condition (Interview F, July 2013). Following a rainstorm that knocked down one of the walls and killed a construction worker, the Council of Muftis quickly went ahead with the demolition. In addition to this secular rationale of poor design, the mosque’s demolition was theologically justified because it is not properly oriented towards Mecca and the Kaaba, Islam’s most sacred holy site.

The rationales for the mosque demolition lie in both the secular and theological spheres. Meanwhile, Archnadzor, a Moscow-based social movement and historical preservation non-profit organization, the Central Spiritual Board of Russian Muslims (DUMER), the All-Russia Muftiyat, also known as the Association of Islamic Consent, the United Islamic Center of Russian Muslim organizations, and Russian Islamic Heritage all opposed the demolition. Drawing on interviews and news media analysis, I overview of these rationales for demolition to provide insight into the discourses shaping the politics of Muslim communities in Moscow.

The first rational for demolition was that the mosque was not sufficiently historical and therefore did not need protection as a cultural site (Interview G, May 2013). In 2008, the mosque received a historical designation as an important object of cultural heritage from experts in the Moscow Heritage Committee due to its value to not only the Tatars and Moscow Muslim community but also to all Muscovites. Besides being the oldest continuously operating mosque in Moscow, and the role of its members in funding the Red Army, the building was an example of Tatar architecture. The last time a church or religious building was demolished in Moscow was 1978; Cathedral Mosque notably survived attempts to demolish it under Brezhnev’s push to establish an Olympic Stadium on its grounds in 1980 (Iskandyrov 2011). Although this heritage designation legally protected the building from demolition, it was revoked in 2009 by the
recommendation of the Moscow’s Historical and Cultural Expert Council (IKES) at the request of the Council of Muftis. Scholars, architects, and geologists spoke at the meeting to declare or denounce the historicity of the mosque as well as the issues of its orientation towards Mecca and structural soundness. Notably, the vote was split amongst IKES members after this meeting, and the deciding vote went to their chairman (Archnadzor 2011).

The second reason stated for demolition is that the building was structurally unsound. According to Gulnur Gaziev, the press secretary of the Council of Muftis, the walls of the building were cracked as of August 30, 2011 and the western wall fell after a rainstorm. However, according to lawyer Hasavov, who represented an architect who believes he was illegally fired from the project, this rationale is a fabrication on part of the Russian Council of Muftis. He believes that the building was already fenced and prepared for demolition as of September 8th, and that the muftiate wanted to skip the procedures necessary to gain legal approval. He states, “This, here, is it in the usual style of doing - this is a lie aimed at misleading the Muslims and other public in Moscow” (Echo Moscow 2011).

The third reason for demolition is that the mosque was not properly orienteered towards Mecca by eight degrees. Due to this, some imams at the mosque question whether the prayers offered at the mosque are properly received by Allah (Interview G, May 2013). Although many mosques throughout Russia are also incorrectly oriented towards Kaaba, this reasoning raises theological questions within the Muslim community about authenticity and intentionality of prayers offered to Allah. However, Hasavov also dismisses this rationale, citing the fact that believers have prayed this way for twenty years and the find that the mosque was off by eight degrees was a very recent discovery and the drive for demolition predates this rationale.

The fourth reason offered by the Moscow Public Chamber member Farid Asadullin is
that updating religious temples is a normal process rather than a controversial one both within Islamic culture and within Russia (“Why Demolish Cathedral Mosque?” 2011). For example, in Mecca the mosque was rebuilt and in Moscow the Cathedral of Christ the Savior was rebuilt.

The counterargument is that the demolition of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior was a Bolshevik project and not a spiritual one (Sidorov 2000), while the rebuilding of churches in Moscow continues under the supervision of the Heritage Commissions (Archnadzor 2011). Therefore, Russia does value its historical churches and should also value historical mosques.

The demolition of the mosque is either a political achievement, according to historical preservationists, or a necessity, according to the Council of Muftis. Multiple reasons for demolition, including lack of historical significance, safety concerns and theological orientation, are evidenced in a newspaper interview with mufti Ravil Gainutdun. He stated to a news agency:

> According to the Moscow Heritage Committee, our mosque does not represent the historical value of current building of the mosque has no foundation, and the ceilings are made out of plywood shingles. Plastered and painted, they are like powder can instantly ignite… there has been a serious deviation direction on qibla (Kabba) that results in a deviation from the prescribed direction of Muslim prayers. In the name of provisions of the Creator and in the name of security of worshipers we are obliged to reconstruct and complete reconstruction of the old mosque and build our cathedral mosque - a mosque worthy of the capital of the Russian state and the Muslims of the country (Interfax Religion 2011).

This statement shows that the demolition of this ahistorical mosque is viewed by the Council of Muftis leader as a pathway to create a flagship architectural project that restates the role of Muslims in Moscow and in Russia. As it stood, the mosque threatened both the physical security of its worshippers as well as the sanctity of their prayers.

According to Archnadzor, however, the removal of the mosque from the heritage list and its subsequent demolition is a tragedy. On their public statement protesting the demolition, entitled “9/11: Moscow Version, they write, “In the center of Moscow (The Council of Muftis)
carried out an act of unheard-of barbarism, multiplied by administrative arbitrariness” (2011). In an interview (Interview G, May 2013), a member of Archnadzor stated that the barbarism was derived from three points. First, that Tatar history was part of Russia’s history, and that to declare this mosque ahistorical was an attempt to ignore the local influence of Tatars. Secondly, the destruction showed that the public process of civil disagreement in Moscow was limited and very hard to navigate. Thirdly, the arbitrary decision to demolish the mosque has occurred in Moscow over many historical sites, and is not unique to this building. Rather, because land in Moscow is so expensive, historical buildings are often demolished to make way for political and economic developments- the two are often intertwined.

Although the Council of Muftis and Moscow city government decided that the mosque was not historical, this decision was opposed by prominent national and Moscow-based organizations, including Talgat Tajuddin and leaders from the Central Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Russia (or TsDUM, the national Muslim spiritual board based out of Bashkortostan), the Coordination Center for Muslims of the North Caucasus, the Central Organization of the Russian Association of Islamic Consent (All-Russian Muftiyat), the Center for Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Republic of Tatarstan, the Islamic Joint Center of Muslim Organizations of Russia, and the All-Russian Public Movement "Russian Islamic Heritage” (Islam News 2011). The chairman of the Foundation for the Development of Muslim People, an ethnic Tatar Moscow-based group, organized a collective letter to Moscow Mayor Sobyanin asking for an investigation into the illegal demolition of the mosque as a historical site. He gathered 148 signatures, and wrote:

The unprecedented demolition of the mosque in Moscow made a painful impression on Russian society. The destruction of religious buildings and the history of our heritage creates a negative image of the Russian Muslims as barbarians- forgetting our relationship as if we do not have deep roots here.
Many people believe the act is an insult to religious and civic memory. Thousands of the faithful who made donations for the reconstruction were cheated and insulted, while the leaders of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the European part of Russia (DUMER), who constantly promised to keep the old mosque secretly took a different decision. And those who knew and protested against the demolition, including indigenous Tatars, Muscovites have been humiliated - both the Moscow authorities, and those whom they regarded as spiritual guides have ignored their legitimate demands (“Appeal against the Demolition of the Mosque of Moscow.” 2010).

This letter shows tension and distrust between Tatar Muscovite citizens and Muslim organizations in the city, and frustration at the significance of the demolition for the reputations of Tatars in Russian history. Frustrations at the misuse of funds collected from locals and people throughout Russia also led to this distrust. For example, the granddaughter of the original financer of the mosque stated that she had donated 8,000 rubles for the reconstruction and repair of the mosque, not for its demolition. The Tatars asked for the demolition to be investigated and for the rebuilding to be reassessed as a religious and cultural object. They also asked, once the investigation occurred, to hold an assembly of Muscovite Muslims to elect a new spiritual leadership to direct the rebuilding of Cathedral Mosque (Iskandyrov 2011).

This group obtained several documents to back up their claims of the illegal nature of the demolition and held meetings in opposition: For example, they received a statement from the Administrative-Technical Department of Inspections of the city of Moscow, stating that no warrant or permission was obtained for the demolition of the mosque. In addition, they organized a press conference to raise awareness and voice concern over what the demolition meant for the role of citizen involvement in choices made about mosque construction. However, the conference lost their meeting room and had to quickly make plans for an alternative venue. They met at the Yabloko headquarters in Moscow. Yabloko is the Russian Social Democratic Party based on anti-Putinism and on civil liberty principles, lying to the left of most Russian political
ideologies. Because of the quick organization, the Council of Muftis did not send a representative to the meeting; it became a meeting protesting the demolition (Iskandyrov 2011).

In this meeting, the opposition to demolition decided that the claims that the mosque was not truly historical were absurd and contrary to arguments made by historians and political scientists rooted in academic research. In addition, they said that the theological argument that the mosque was not properly oriented toward the Kaaba was not enough to justify demolition, as the minbar, or pulpit, and mihrab, arrow pointing in the direction of Mecca, could be rebuilt and rectify the situation. They were wary of the claims that the building was structurally unsound—they argued that the building had been repaired thanks to donations from Tatarstan for its 100th anniversary in 2004, and that the mosque had been in fine shape for Eid al Fitr on August 30th, just nine days before the wall collapsed. They felt it was possible that the destruction was intentionally caused, because the Council of Muftis did not wait for any official permission for continued demolition and had heavy moving equipment working the next day of the project, and even had the area fenced off the night of the rain on September 9th.

However, religious officials did not attend the meeting; nor did the Moscow Department of Relations with Religious Organizations, who stated that they received the invitation too late and opened it after the meeting had occurred. The Meshchanskiye District office of Administrative-Technical Department of Inspections also refused to investigate the illegality of the demolition, stating no obvious crime had been committed.

The Tatar community was not universally against mosque demolition. According to RTNKA, the Regional Tatar National Cultural Autonomy organization that runs the Tatar Cultural Center in Moscow, the mosque demolition was a necessity to rectify the shortage of mosques in the city. They advocate for more mosque construction throughout the city, and also
support the expanded prayer space while mourning the loss of the historical significance. In their statement on the demolition, which was addressed to residents in Moscow and all of Russia, they state that it is better for the mosque to be expanded to serve more Muslims rather than for it to be preserved at its current size:

Many of us have seen with our own eyes how the worshipers in the courtyard of the mosque got wet in the rain and in the winter pained from the grip in the cold. Seeing the human suffering, we cannot get hung up on just one, the historical or architectural, the value of our mosque. No matter how we, representatives of the Tatar people, are sorry for the old and memorable for us to building the mosque, we are aware that the main purpose of the mosque – for service, rather than the role of historical and architectural monument (RTNKA 2011).

On the local level, the politics of demolition involved the issues over the history of Tatars versus pragmatic claims of safety in addition to theological issues over the role of mosques for Muslims. What the controversy over the demolition showed are tensions within Russia’s Muslim community, especially amongst different Muslim communities, as well as questions over the cultural value of Tatar history in Moscow’s religious landscape. While a civilian organization, Archnadzor, and a governmental heritage board felt the building was historically significant for all Muscovites, the historical nature was not enough to counteract claims for the need for a more structurally sound and larger mosque.

According to opponents of the mosque demolition, the demolition process was shrouded in secrecy and a continuation of politics as usual. They felt it showed that the local and federal state are not interested in maintaining the law, as the Muslim authorities who carried out the demolition without proper documents went unpunished. Appeals to the Moscow mayor, the Heritage Committee, and then-president Medvedev were met with frustrating replies to continue the open dialogue that exists amongst the Russian government and Muslim organizations. However, the opponents felt that the dialogue was already foreclosed by the illegal nature of the
demolition. To them, the silencing of the voice of the opposition was evidence of their erasure from political decisions by both Council of Muftis and the government about religious public space in Moscow. The vertical politics of Russian government is evident in the refusal to open a court case to discuss the demolition of the mosque under dubious circumstances; also clear is the cementing of the sociopolitical relationship between the Russian Council of Muftis and the Russian state.

**Re-opening of Cathedral Mosque: From Local to National Prominence**

The demolition of Cathedral Mosque was my lens to view the politics that exists between local government, Tatar groups, Muslim leadership, and citizens. Although the demolition posed the question of for whom the mosque was historically significant, the re-opening of the mosque repositioned the mosque’s significance in Russia’s Muslim communities and also probed the role of Russia within the wider Muslim world.

The press-release inviting visitors to the grand opening celebrates the history of the mosque, stating:

Today’s imposing view of the Moscow Cathedral Mosque meets Moscow status as the capital of the biggest state in the world with huge historic heritage and emphasizes that Muslim population have played an important role and contributed much in the state building at its different stages including today.

New prayers for peace, prevention of wars and bloodshed, godsent prosperity, well-being of our multinational and religiously diverse country, salvation will be offered in The Moscow Cathedral Mosque for many centuries. May the prayers of gratitude of both the millions of the living and our descendants, for whom the Moscow Cathedral Mosque was originally built, be heard and bestow the grace and mercy of Allah upon all those who are making their voluntary efforts to build a house of God (Press service of Russian Council of Muftis August 3, 2015).

This speech does not acknowledge the controversy over mosque demolition and the questions it raised over the role of Tatars in Moscow’s history. Moscow’s local identity associated with
Russian Orthodoxy is replaced with one of Russia as a multiconfessional state. This discursive move places the Cathedral Mosque within a national framework rather than one embedded in its local context. Thus, the Council of Muftis is able to turn the Cathedral Mosque landscape into one of national importance and a symbol of harmony.

The new mosque is the second largest in Russia, with space for over 10,000 people. It is twenty times larger than its previous iteration, growing from 964 square meters to 18,900 square meters. It features elevators and air conditioning, as well as a heated courtyard for overcrowding in the winter. The new dome is 46 meters high with a diameter of 27 meters. The new mosque cost approximately $170 million dollars to build, and was financed by donation. The biggest donor is Dagestani Federation Council representative and businessman Suleyman Kerimov, who donated $100 million in memory of his father. Mahmoud Abbas, leader of Palestine, donated $26,000 in honor of Palestinian children. President Erdoğan of Turkey donated carpets and mosaics to the mosque (Press service of Russian Council of Muftis 2015). The grand size and elaborate pageantry surrounding its open makes this mosque a flagship architectural project for Muslim-state relations in Russia, and a territorial marker that Gainutdin leads the Muslim communities and shapes their relationships with the state.

At the opening ceremony, Putin delivered a speech to the Muslim worshippers and leaders of Muslim countries that praised Russian Muslims for their role in fighting terrorism in Russia in the war against Islamic radicalism in the Caucasus as well as abroad in Syria. After acknowledging the historical legacies of Tatars in Moscow, including street names, he stressed government support of traditional Islam. In the following speech excerpt, it is made clear how he views the role of Muslims in Russian social and political development:

Today, traditional Islam is an integral part of the spiritual life of our country. Its humanistic values, as well as the value of our other traditional religions teach people
about charity, justice, caring for loved ones. All these values we very much appreciate.

Over the past 20 years, the number of Islamic cultural and religious institutions in Russia has grown significantly. The beauty of the mosques appearing in Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Chechnya, and in other regions of the Russian Federation is simply amazing. Since 2003, our country has been a permanent observer in the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Thousands of pilgrims from Russia perform Hajj, and many more madrassas and schools are affiliated with mosques.

It is important that Muslim youth are brought up on traditional Islamic values, to prevent attempts to impose alien to us worldviews that have nothing to do with genuine Islam. I stress that the government will continue to assist the reconstruction of the national Muslim theological school through religious education (Putin 2015).

Putin then went on to praise Russian Muslim leaders for using their leadership and guidance to discourage young people from religious extremism. As Russia is a recruiting ground for the Islamic State, this sentiment shows the divide within Russia’s Muslim communities. While the government of the Russian Federation maintains ties with Muslim communities through spiritual boards, Muslim communities in the Caucasus especially have been transformed by increased foreign influence. This has led to an emergence of two types of relationships between Muslims and the Russian state - official and unofficial Islam (Makarov and Mukhametshin 2003).

Theological debates within Islam led to the split between official and unofficial Islam. Amongst Tatars and Bashkirs, official Islam adheres to the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam and appeals to taqlid, or Islamic traditionalism, in contrast to foreign influence. The influence of Saudi Arabia is of particular concern for their ability to use oil wealth to spread fundamentalist Salafi ideology (Wahhabism). Salafism defines unofficial Islam in Russia and calls for spiritual and political activism. Salafism contributed to separatist irredentist movements and two Russian-Chechen wars. These two wars have left a legacy of radical insurgency in the North Caucasus and Islamophobia in Russia (Yemelianova 2002).

Putin’s speech showcases the importance of “official” Tatar Muslim practice in Russia in curbing the spread of foreign ideology. This is in line with Putin’s national and international
geopolitical agenda- morality politics. Putin’s morality politics is defined by the use of political channels to promote traditional, conservative values in Russian society in the face of corrupt foreign influences (Sharafutdinova 2014). Thus, traditional Islam is folded into his geopolitical agenda. Through its ties with Tatar clerical boards, the Russian state hopes to grow, strengthen, and influence the growth of a certain type of Islam in Russia and use this relationship to eliminate foreign radical influences. This morality agenda dictates actions both domestically against Salafism in the Caucasus as well as abroad in Syria.

Figure 5.3 Cathedral Mosque and its symbolic architecture. The towers symbolize the relationship between Russia and its Muslim heritage. Photo from the Spiritual Board of the European Part of Russia. http://www.mihrab.ru/gallery.

The national importance of Cathedral Mosque is reflected in its symbolic architecture (Error! Reference source not found.). Its new golden dome evokes the golden onion domes of Russian Orthodox Church architecture. This architectural element makes the mosque look like it
is part of Moscow’s religious landscape. Also, the mosque has two minarets. One of the minarets is modeled after Spasskaya (Savior) Tower, which is the tower of the Kremlin adjacent to Red Square. A representative from the Russian Council of Muftis, stated, “This minaret is meant to honor the Russian government for their support of Islam in Russia” (Interview F, July 2013). The second minaret is modeled after the Syuyumbike Tower in the Kazan Kremlin. Kazan is the capital of Tatarstan, one of the eight Muslim republics within Russia’s federal geography. This minaret is adorned with the crescent moon saved from the first Cathedral Mosque. Together, these minarets represent the historical union of ethnic Tatar and Russian history in Moscow (Interview F, July 2013).

**Local Politics of Cathedral Mosque**

The Cathedral Mosque has been rebuilt, but questions remain about its effects on Muslim communities in Moscow. Here, I will address issues of neighborhood relations and relations amongst different Muslim groups in Moscow, focusing on overcrowding, calls to prayer, and worship practices.

First, although the mosque has room for 10,000 worshippers, more than that usually congregates for Friday ju’mah prayers (Interview H, August 2015). Therefore, although the issue of worshippers in the street has been eased by the expanded size, it has not disappeared. Muslim leaders in Moscow still ask for more space for new mosques in the city. Although Moscow has an estimated 2 million Muslims out of 11.5 million residents, it still only has four mosques. Moscow citizens fiercely protested against plans for new construction, resulting in their cancellation. Even though Cathedral Mosque’s architecture is symbolic of Russian-Islamic relations nationally, there is still a need for more worship space locally in Moscow.

Secondly, the mosque makes calls for morning and night prayers only within its walls so
that they do not disturb neighboring businesses or those in nearby apartments. They have thirteen loudspeakers to make calls for prayers beyond its walls for special times—Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha. However, the Friday sermons are broadcast outside the mosque because not all worshippers fit inside the building (Interview J, August 2015). Calls for prayers that extend beyond the mosque are routine in Muslim homelands in Russia, but are not allowed in Moscow’s public space.

Different communities of believers have different interpretations on how to conduct religious practices locally in Moscow. Due to the concern about animal sacrifices for the Muslim celebration of Eid al-Adha, Cathedral Mosque does not allow slaughter on its premises. This is a ritual meant to symbolize Abraham’s sacrifice of his son. Instead, they sell meat carefully prepared according to sacrificial rites. The mosque leadership encourages worshippers not to make sacrifices within the city limits or in shared courtyards near apartment buildings (Interview I, October 2013). Instead, there are farms and places for sacrifice in the Moscow region, outside of the city limits. The mosque leaders stress that although indigenous Muslims (Tatars) that are accustomed to Moscow life and therefore do not sacrifice lambs in the city, those new to the area might still want to perform the sacrifice themselves. Animal sacrifices in Moscow’s shared courtyards has been a point of contention between Moscow residents and Muslims, as many Muscovites are unfamiliar with the rite and have been surprised to find sacrificial remains or view the sacrifice on Eid al-Adha (Interview K, March 2013). Because of local conflict over the issue of the sacrifice, the Moscow city government also has set aside 38 sites for animal sacrifice in Moscow Oblast (the area outside of Moscow’s city limits that surrounds the capital). Moscow’s Muslims can also purchase sacrificial meat over the phone or online, thereby fulfilling the ritual but minimizing its visibility in public space (Reznik 2013).
Besides the holiday sacrifice, there is some debate over what other Muslim rituals are appropriate at Cathedral Mosque. One of these is the issue of the Shia ritual of Shaksi-Vakhsi, or self-flagellation, on the holiday of the mourning of Muharram. This ritual observes the death of Muhammed’s grandson, Hussein ibn Ali, following the battle of Karbala where he fought against the Umayyad Caliphate. The mosque leadership received complaints that this practice was disturbing other worshippers and so they have asked Shia not to perform it at the mosque. In an official statement over the ban on self-flagellation, President of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Moscow and representative of the Council of Muftis Mufti Ildar Alyautdinov stated that mosque leadership has good communication with the Shia community in Moscow and that the mosque was a common space for all Muslims (Alyautdinov 2016). But, the banning of Azeri Shia rituals shows that what Muslim rituals are appropriate to this common space is decided by Tatar officials and not through the community of believers.

This difference in the practice of animal sacrifice and other rituals such as self-flagellation between indigenous and newly arrived Muslims reflects a hierarchy amongst Muslim communities within Moscow. The demolition of the Cathedral Mosque called into question the privileging of role of Tatar history in Moscow. But, the debate over what Muslim practices are appropriate in Moscow show how, through their historical roots, Tatars establish norm of Islamic practices and behaviors. Tatars shape the Muslim culture within the city, but only make up about 168,000 out of 2 million Muslims in the city. They may define the norm, but they do not make up a majority. Tatars experience a privileged minority status because Soviet nationalities and delimitation policies created borders that essentially froze religious and ethnic identities to territories. This Soviet notion that Islam is not a mobile or changing religion (Light 2012) gives Tatar Islamic traditions a normative cultural status that their population numbers would not afford
them.

Discussion

This chapter explored what the rebuilding of Cathedral Mosque signifies about the role of Islam in Putin’s new era of morality politics. The re-opening of Cathedral Mosque was a geopolitical event that clarified the role of Islam in Putin’s morality politics: The Hanafi School of Islam is the traditional school of Islam, and its leadership is part of Putin’s effort to protect Russia from corrupt foreign influences. Whereas previous analyses of Putin’s political agenda have focused on its desire to protect Russia from corrupt Western influences (Casula 2013, Chechel 2013, Myers 2015; Sharafutdinova 2014), this analysis shows how foreign Muslim influences are folded into this protectionist agenda. Hanafism is not always opposed to Wahhabi or Salafi influences (In Pakistan, the Deobandi revivalist movement follow the Hanafi legal school) but in Russia they become political enemies.

At the international scale, the mosque opening was a celebration of Russia’s status as a growing Islamic nation and as a key player in Middle East politics. Russia has become an observer member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the reopening of the Cathedral Mosque attracted an international audience, including Turkish President Erdoğan and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. The mosque re-opening literally placed Putin within the pantheon of secular leaders of Muslim states and as a key player in the fight against terrorism abroad.

At the national level, this mosque reopening marks an endorsement of Moscow as a center of Islam in the Russian Federation. The ability to control processes of demolition and design in regards to religious buildings is an expression of power. Thus, the renovations were means for the Moscow-based Council of Muftis and its leader Gainutdin to make their claim as the preeminent Muslim organization in Russia. In 2002, Yemelianova posited that one of
Gainutdin’s goals was to promote Moscow as an Islamic center. March (2010) argues that he was effective at achieving this goal, as he was a better politician than his chief rival Talgat Tajuddin and secured more state funding for his organizations, the Council of Mufties and DUMER. My analysis shows how Gainutdin was successfully able to reinforce his political relationship with the Russian state through the reconstruction of Cathedral Mosque- a reconstruction project that Tajuddin stood firmly against.

Muslims have historically been marginalized in Moscow, as seen in the banning of mosques and minarets and the use of the term *chyorni* to describe Tatars and their settlements; however the re-opening of the mosque presented a revisionist history of cooperation and peaceful relations between the state and Moscow’s Tatar Muslim community. This revisionist history places Moscow at the center rather than at the fringes of Muslim culture in Russia.

Locally, the demolition of Cathedral Mosque caused conflict amongst historical preservationists, mosque leaders, and some members of the Tatar community. Although members of Archnadzor and the Moscow-based Foundation for the Development of Muslim People felt that they were marginalized and excluded from local politics, the leadership of Cathedral Mosque leverages the same history that those groups felt was ignored to strengthen their ties with the Russian state. Tatar “traditional” Islam has come to define the norms of Muslims in Moscow, even though it was once marginalized and even had to hide itself from public view. Whereas the first mosques in Moscow had to blend into the cityscape in contrast to Russian Orthodox Church domes that rose above it, the new iteration of Cathedral Mosque has towers that are built to celebrate the historical ties between Islam and the Russian state.

These conclusions show how the new Cathedral Mosque and the pageantry surrounding its opening are symbolic of a peaceful relationship between traditional, Hanafi Islam, the Russian
Council of Muftis, and the Russian federal government. Unlike in the American or western European context, Putin uses his speech at the grand opening to delink traditional Islam from radicalism. In creating this separation, he purposefully allies traditional Hanafi Islam with his morality politics of curbing foreign influence from Russia. This speech’s rhetorical representation is also materially reflected in the architectural elements of the mosque’s domes. But, as research in the new cultural geography has attested, it is important to move analysis of Muslim public spaces beyond the level of representation.

My place-based political geographic approach shows that although the mosque symbolizes a traditional harmony between Muslim communities and the Russian state, in practice, some members of the Tatar community and historical preservation community felt that the demolition was a political maneuver on the part of Muslim leaders against the wishes of local Muscovites. Thus, the mosque was also a public space in which histories and normative behaviors are decided. This does not mean that the mosque was an open public space- locals fought against Muslim leaders over the right to influence the landscape of Muslims in the city and lost. In fact, they felt there never was a truly democratic and open discussion over the mosque, and the reconstruction was a continuation of corrupt politics in Moscow resulting in betrayed feelings as evidenced in the appeal letter and press conference organized by the Foundation for the Development of Muslim People to Moscow Mayor Sobyanin, or expressed in Archnadzor’s statement against the demolition. Although Moscow’s Muslim communities are growing and needs more space, Archnadzor and many national- and Moscow-based Muslims felt that the renovation of this historical property was not a rational answer to this problem.

Cathedral Mosque is a symbolic religious landscape of state-Muslim relations, and it also a normative public space for Muslim communities. Through the rebuilding of Cathedral Mosque,
Gainutdin and the Council of Muftis attempt to consolidate their role as the representative of Muslim society to the Russian state. They seek to manage Muslim society within the context of morality politics/ Russia’s managed democracy. The mosque is not a public space where all types of Islam practiced by Moscow’s diverse Muslim communities are welcomed, and instead is a place that tries to acculturate Muslim migrants to Muscovite Tatar customs. For example, some migrants are excluded from practicing their Shia rituals in the mosque. Thus, as in the Western European context, new flows of migration still challenge Moscow’s Muslim normative public space. I use this study of the political contestation over the rebuilding of Cathedral Mosque to contrast with the debates over mosque construction in Moscow’s neighborhoods, a topic that I turn to in the next chapter.
Chapter Six: The Politics of Religious Sites in Moscow’s Neighborhoods

Moscow’s religious spaces are overcrowded, and both Muslim and Russian Orthodox leaders advocate for new churches, mosques, and other religious centers for their growing communities. Attendance at the main religious services for the two largest religions in the city exemplifies the growing role of religion amongst the population: There are approximately 300 Russian Orthodox churches and monasteries in the city, with 186,000 attending Easter services in the city. In comparison, a reported 170,000 attend Eid al-Fitr in Moscow at the end of Ramadan. This is greater than the 105,000 who attended Eid al-Fitr in all of 1,124 mosques in the Tatarstan republic (Fagan 2012b). These attendance figures on holiday services show that Moscow’s Muslim communities display greater religiosity than the whole population of one of Russia’s nine ethnically Muslim republics, and almost as much as the Russian Orthodox population by numbers though not by percent.

Chapter Five focused on the processes of reconstructing Moscow’s Cathedral Mosque, the largest mosque in the city. The mosque’s architecture is symbolic of Muslim relationships to the Russian government; but its expanded size does not necessarily correlate to an increased tolerance of Muslims and their practices throughout Moscow. This chapter examines new religious spaces as disputed sites of citizenship and belonging. It asks what sorts of religious spaces are welcome by inhabitants in Moscow neighborhoods. In this chapter I move from exploring the localized politics of symbolic construction to analyzing the localized politics of constructing mosques and churches in Moscow’s neighborhoods. I address these research questions introduced in chapter one:

What is the nature of the various discourses that surround the proposed construction of and opposition to new mosques in Moscow? Who are the opponents and advocates, and how are they organized and mobilized?
How are these discourses promoted and received by interest groups including congregations, neighborhood associations, human rights organizations, and local government officials, concomitant to the evolution of Moscow’s religious landscape?

Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork and my database of key documents, I examine how religious spaces become sites of dissent and citizenship at three different sites in Moscow. First, I overview protests over mosque construction in Tekstilshchiki and Mitino, two of Moscow’s *spalnie rayoni*, or sleeping regions. I then introduce Plan 200, the project to build 200 Russian Orthodox churches in suburban Moscow. I investigate how the protest over church construction in one neighborhood, Babushkinsky, contrasts with the protests over mosque construction in two neighborhoods, Tekstilshchiki and Mitino. I chose these three cases because they are the most prominent cases that occurred in my database of Russian media sources prior to fieldwork in 2013 and 2015. This analysis will provide insight into the types of conflicts that the public presence of religion engenders in Moscow.

This chapter contributes to larger questions on civil society, public religious practice, and democracy in Moscow’s public spaces. The immediate and long-term outcomes of protest movements show how normative publics and hegemonic norms are formed in democracies. Geographers have argued that public spaces are sites of contestation: they are spaces where publics can make claims against the state and hegemonic normative public practices (Staeheli and Mitchell 2007). They have also argued that public spaces work under a logic of inclusion and exclusion, as only normative publics can make demands in public spaces (Mitchell 2003). Rather than serving as a space for protest, they also can reify dominant narratives and cultural hegemonic about social order (Lefebvre 2006). As Attwood (2010) has attested, Russia’s Soviet public spaces were meant to create and energize the working classes of the Communist Party. This chapter studies how Muscovites respond to the introduction of religious infrastructure into
these deliberately atheist urban fabrics. Or, how “Not in my backyard” NIMBYism affects religious construction in Moscow apartment blocs. I examine how the response of Russia’s managed democracy to social movements for and against mosque and church shows how Moscow’s everyday spaces encompass Russian Orthodox churches but deny access to mosques.

**Protests and the Exclusion of Mosques from Moscow’s Suburbs**

November 4th is a public holiday in Russia since 2006- The Day of National Unity. The holiday is a holdover from Soviet times that celebrates multiculturalism. The date is the anniversary of the 1612 liberation of Moscow from Polish forces by heroes Kuzma Minin and Dmitry Pozharsky, whose images are memorialized on a prominent statue on Red Square in Moscow. For the Russian Orthodox Church, it is a feast day in honor of Our Lady of Kazan, one of the holiest icons brought to Russia from Constantinople.

On the Day of National Unity, the Moscow city government sponsors cultural programs and large demonstrations on Red Square, celebrating the different nationalities and religious confessions in Russia. But, a smaller event occurs in the *[spalnie rayoni]*, or sleeping regions, of Moscow. *Spalnie rayoni*, or sleeping regions, were designed by city planners to provide for the activities of daily living of Soviet people. They were built starting in the 1950s to address the housing crisis caused by increased urbanization in the Soviet Union and consisted of prefabricated apartment buildings, *dvori*, or courtyards for play and exercise, and schools (S. E. Harris 2013). They were often named after the outlying villages surrounding Moscow that they were erected on, such as Yasnevo or Belyayevo (Snopek 2013). These blocs were a main component of the Soviet biopolitical calculus, which sought to manage the collective life of the Communist workforce (Collier 2011).
Annually, Russian nationalists organize a march in the *spalnie rayoni*. These marches have occurred since 2008, and attract between 5,000-10,000 participants displaying values of ethnic superiority and Russian Orthodox nationalism. In 2013, on the fifth anniversary of the march, an estimated 8,000 people participated in the march in southeast Moscow’s sleeping regions. The day was gray and rainy. Participants carried banners with Orthodox symbols, as well as signs declaring slogans such as “Today mosque- tomorrow jihad” and “Russia for Russians.” Another sign read, “Cancel the labor visa regime to Central Asia and the Caucasus.” These marches in the outlying regions of Moscow illustrate some of the issues facing those in the densely populated sleeping regions. While celebrations in central Moscow focus on national unity at the countrywide scale, this march used the holiday to vocalize a Russian nationalist agenda- one in direct opposition to the presence of migrants.

While the nationalists are an extremely vocal minority, they raised issues of how the everyday life of Moscow’s inhabitants are changing in the face of increased Muslim religiosity: the expression of religious identity in public space amidst compact living quarters, access to civil space for minorities, and the challenges of migration from Central Asia and the Caucasus. These issues have resulted in the rise of nationalism and the backlash against Muslims in the United States and other European cases (Cesari 2005). Mosque construction serves as a touchstone for these debates, as seen in the following two case studies.

**Tekstilshchiki**

Two of my research sites include neighborhoods of proposed and failed mosque projects. Both sites evidenced increased neighborhood activism against mosque-building projects. The first site is Tekstilshchiki, a sleeping region in southeast Moscow (Figure 4.4). In September 2009, the Prefect of Moscow’s Southeastern Administrative District met with the head mufti of
the Russian Council of Muftis, Ravil Gaynutdin, and the Rector of Moscow Islamic University, Marat Murtazin to discuss the construction of a mosque on Volga Boulevard in Tekstilshchiki (Sedakov and Djemal’ 2010). However, the project would not be completed. In 2010, this neighborhood was the site of a failed mosque project that faced opposition from nationalists, an anti-immigration group, and an environmentalist group, *Moj Dvor* (My Courtyard).

Tekstilshchiki is a neighborhood and municipality in the Southeast Administrative District of Moscow. Its name refers to its historical textile industries. In the mid-19th century, the area was home a wool factory of a wealthy merchant. More textile industries developed in the area throughout the 1920s and 1930s, including a factory for fabric printing and dyeing, a calico factory, and a wool-processing mill. In the 1960s, the region was converted into a mass housing development and incorporated into Moscow. It is densely populated, with 102,935 residents (Rosstat 2013). The rents in the area are lower than in more prestigious neighborhoods such as Mitino, the other neighborhood in my study. There is less green space than in other Moscow neighborhoods. The neighborhood is historically working class and a classic example of a Soviet bloc, but lack of transport access, older buildings, lack of green spaces and wholesale food markets make it an attractive place for migrants and a potential ethnic ghetto, (Akhmetzyanova 2015).

The site of the proposed construction, Volga Boulevard 8, at the corner of Volga Boulevard and Saratov Street, was selected by Moscow city planning (Figure 6.1). The land was owned by the city and had been zoned by the Moscow Department of Land Resources for religious buildings in April 2010 (*Interfax Religion* 2010). The Russian Council of Muftis received permission to build a mosque from the mayor’s office on July 2010. Notably, an application for mosque construction from another national Muslim organization, the Central
Spiritual Board of Muslims of Russia, had been rejected in past years for mishandled paperwork. According to their representative, they had applied for over eight years to build a mosque in the same location (Portal-Credo.ru 2010). This shows the local importance of Council of Muftis over other Russian muftiates and the close political relationship of Gainutdin leader of the Council of Muftis, to the Moscow city government.

The site is a little over one mile from the nearest metro station. To get there, one would have to walk or take additional transportation, such as a bus, trolleybus, or privately operated minibus, called a marshrutka. The selected site is what Muscovites call pustin. This term refers to empty space, such as deserts, forests, or, in cities, vacant lots. Volga Boulevard has a lack of development, and contains grass, trees, and old construction materials and concrete slabs.
indicating past projects gone unfinished. Makeshift sidewalks and small concrete bridges go over pipelines that transect in the space. Large apartment buildings surround Volga Boulevard, older 1960s twelve-story buildings to one side and post-Soviet prefab twenty three-story buildings to the other.

*Campaign Against the Mosque*

Mosque debates in Europe occur in host cities to large migrant populations. Debates about mosque construction center on two issues of democracy: Muslim group representation in public space and the ability of locals to participate and influence urban planning and municipal decisions (Stoop 2012). In Europe, mosque construction debates are often co-opted by nationalists who argue that mosque construction will bring the “clash of civilizations” to neighborhood settings, as seen in Stoop’s analysis of mosque construction in the German cities of Cologne and Duisburg (2012) and Astor’s analysis of mosque construction in Catalonia (2012). The political contestation over Muslim symbols in public in democratic contexts shows that the application of rights to different groups is dependent on how these publics form in relation to each other and with the state, or in other words, their power geometries (Massey 2005). This is true for so-called liberal and illiberal democracies. The literature on mosque construction in Europe shows that outcomes of the interplay of these democratic issues of neighborhood rights, Muslim freedom of religion, and populist nationalism are dependent on locality (Cesari 2005; Stoop 2012; Gale 2004). As in the European case studies, discourses of NIMBY- based environmental activism and anti-Muslim nationalism frame the discussion against mosque construction in Tekstilshchiki.

Although the proposed site was an undeveloped lot, citizen action blocked the proposed construction of a mosque. An environmental social movement called *Moj Dvor* organized most
activism against the proposal. A dvor, or courtyard, is the shared outdoor space for those living in Russia’s apartment buildings. They are sites for social interaction and community building. They often have picnic tables, benches, exercise equipment, and playgrounds. The Russian All-National Union and the Movement Against Illegal Immigration also joined the campaign against the mosque construction and asked the local neighborhood authorities for political support (Sibera and Verkhovsky 2011).

*Moj Dvor* relied on discourses of concerns for environment couched in concerns for public health and Moscow’s green space to combat mosque construction. They stated that the chosen site was one of the few green spaces in the neighborhood, and hence a poor location for a mosque. According to the group’s leader, *Moj Dvor* was in principle not against a mosque, but rather pro-park (Interview C, May 2013). The chosen site was already host to traffic congestion, and some residents claimed that they had been promised that more urgent infrastructure would be built in the area, including a hospital and sports complex. However, this claim of promised construction seems to be invalid and an exaggeration of *Moj Dvor*, as the previous applications for construction in the area shows that local officials thought that there were too many communications and gas pipelines to allow construction at the site as of March 2006. However, the Moscow Department of Land Resources rezoned the plot on April 1, 2010 and issued the cadastral passport to build the mosque on July 3, 2010 (Sedakov and Djemal’ 2010).

One of *Moj Dvor*’s protest actions against mosque construction involved gathering locals to plant trees in the pustin, claiming it as a future park space. They planted 23 maples, ash, and lindens, as well as posted a sign stating, “There will be a park.”(Lebedeva 2010).

Notably, human rights agencies such as Forum 18, a Christian human rights organization based out of Norway that advocates for religious freedom in the former Soviet Union and
Turkey, the Russian SOVA center, a nonprofit organization that conducts research on social issues in Russia, and more liberal newspapers, such as *Novaya Gazeta*, classified *Moj Dvor* as a xenophobic front led by ultra-right former neo-Nazis. In response, the leader of the movement denied that his movement was motivated by xenophobia, stating, “So people just tried to label us that were xenophobes. ‘Phobos’ means fear, we don’t have fear, we have common sense and we are trying to show it to other people. And our opponents can scream whatever they want. I don’t think we are xenophobes” (Interview C, May 2013). The appeal to common sense shows how anti-Muslim rhetoric is normalized- a mosque could only be incompatible with daily activities of communities rather than enhance them.

The group claimed to not be Islamophobic; however they followed the anti-nationalist playbook from German case studies in their propaganda (Stoops 2012). On their web page and in social media they circulated mass media stories highlighting issues of overcrowding at the four other mosques in Moscow, violence and police arrests of Muslims, and articles on the intention of Saudi Arabia to sponsor more mosques in the city. The text on the website reminded the reader that most Saudis adhere to Wahhabism, which is considered a foreign and violent form of Islam in Russia, associated with terrorism (mecheti.net). According to Forum 18 and the Russian Council of Muftis, such news articles are evidence of the intent of the state to use government-controlled mass media to stir up Islamophobia in civil society (Fagan 2014, Interview F, July 2013)). *Moj Dvor* merged local’s environmental concerns with negative representations of Muslims to further their agenda. By associating the potential mosque as with representations of Wahabbism, they sought to prevent the emergence of new Muslim spaces in Moscow’s sleeping regions by raising the threat of foreign influence and a clash of civilizations emerging in the sleeping regions.
According to Moscow’s muftis, the controversy caused by the mosque construction was not rooted in these NIMBY secular concerns over green space but rather motivated by an identity crisis and latent Islamophobia. In a sermon at Cathedral Mosque, the head of the Council of Muftis Ravil Gaynutdin stated, “In the subconscious of the modern citizen of the titular nation, in Russia, there is fear - fear one morning wake up in a Muslim country, where after the word "Muslim" stands for the lack of knowledge about Islam as a monotheistic religion” (Shishlin 2011). He believes that the media carried out a smear campaign against the mosque, exacerbating local fears of Islamophobia.

Although the leader of Moj Dvor is associated with neo-Nazism, the movement appealed to a wide range of locals (Fagan 2010). This shows how Islamophobic movements such as Moj Dvor co-opt NIMBY discourses to create a platform with a wider appeal to mobilize locals against mosque construction, an approach which also exists in Germany (Stoop 2012) The strength of the protests show that these tactics are especially effective in Moscow, whose civil society is characterized by a low level of activism (Shomina, Kolossov, and Shukhat 2002) An interview with a local resident and human rights activist for the cause of Muslims in prison stated the complicated nature of the subject, “I care and respect other people’s rights. But, this spot was poorly chosen. We have been trying to get a hospital and school built in the neighborhood for years. We need this space for other things to benefit more people, not for a mosque which will only benefit some” (Interview L, March 2013). Moj Dvor received support for their cause from many locals. 9,616 people signed a petition addressed to Russia’s then-president Dmitry Medvedev protesting against the mosque construction. Moj Dvor activists stated that this list was composed of almost every second or every third resident living in the surrounding apartment
buildings. They stressed the multiethnic nature of the signees, stating even Tatars, ethnic Muslims, signed the petition, stating the site was not a good location.

According to an interviewee, a changed sense of ownership and property explains why more Muscovites are likely to participate in local movements. The proposed construction site is surrounded by newer, 23-floor apartment buildings, which an interviewee indicated is a key reason why the protest movements against a mosque were successful. He stated:

People from the old buildings got their apartments in the 1960-70s, then they died and passed on their apartments. It means that people who live there right now made no effort to get their flats. Those people who live in the new buildings worked, displayed initiative to be able to buy an apartment. And those people were the most active. Therefore a person who works and earns money is more responsible for his future including city planning. (Interview C, May 2013).

Because the new apartments were purchased with money in the post-Soviet capitalist economy, those owners are more likely to participate in citizen activism. Moj Dvor argues that the developers of the 23-floor buildings adjacent to the green space of Volga Boulevard promised residents an integrated community and used their district plans as a selling point. As there were no plans for an Muslim center included in the design, the purchasers of the apartments were deceived and a mosque would hurt property values (Our Manifest 2010). This is different from the traditional passivity characteristic of those living in flats built in the Soviet period, as they inherited their apartments from family members.

In support of the mosque, a Tatar leader Gayz Yambayev organized a picket with activists from the Tatar Cultural National Autonomy (RTNKA) from the southeastern district of Moscow (Jalilov 2010). Supporters of the mosques counter this new sense of ownership as a rationale for the success of the activism, countering that a mosque would enhance property values and the sense of community in the neighborhood. Representatives from the RTNKA stated that Moj Dvor mislead their supporters against the mosque, arguing that the chosen site
was not green space and that the group wanted to block the constitutional rights of Muslims to build mosques. They argue that protests against construction projects are nothing new, and many planning projects have been carried out despite protests, including those for shopping centers and in churches (Interview M, July 2013, Interview N, October 2013). Instead, proponents of the mosque argue that the success of Moj Dvor was due to widespread xenophobic feelings and lack of support from the Moscow government (Interview N, October 2013).

After a successful campaign against the mosque project, the plan for the project was cancelled on the 23rd of November 2010. Vladimir Zotov, a representative of the Southeastern Administrative District, stated that although the Moscow’s Muslim communities were promised a mosque, the assigned place of construction in Tekstilshchiki was a mistake on the part of the Moscow Department of Architecture. In a press release he stated, “A new mosque will be built, but not in this place” (Shishlin 2011). Instead, the vacant site would become either a park or something else the community needed, such as a kindergarten. (Shishlin 2011).

After the city decided to cancel the plans to build a new mosque in Tekstilshchiki, Moj Dvor supporters held an auto rally in support of their cause. About fifty cars participated, displaying bumper stickers printed with their slogan “Park-Da (Park Yes)” with their website, “mecheti.net” (Mosque.No) underneath. They rode from the proposed site of construction to the busy Moscow Garden Ring Road that encircles the city to draw attention to the cause and celebrate victory.

*The proposed site in 2013 and 2015*

Following the citizen activism in Tekstilshchiki, I visited Volga Boulevard in 2013. I wanted to see what had developed in the site of proposed construction. I noticed that nothing had yet been built on the site, and that the area was still pustin. However, just because it was not
undeveloped did not mean it went unappreciated: The crumbling paths were busy with people walking their dogs and with children. There were a few shady trees along the boulevard, under which I saw many picnics as well as men drinking alone or in groups. This site was a social space, well used by locals.

While visiting the site one evening in spring 2013, I noticed a sign about a protest against further proposed construction in the area posted by a citizen’s group. Curious about their work, I asked them about their organization, neighborhood character, and the past issues of mosque construction. This group, The People’s Council of Tekstilshchiki District, was initiated to protect local citizens and their interests.

On the issue of challenges to community identity, The People’s Council believes that Tekstilshchiki district faces problems typical of every spalnii rayon in Moscow. One of these issues is government corruption and the misuse of political positions to generate profits. Their movement was one of many throughout Moscow that has as its goal protecting the rights and everyday lives of ordinary people against corrupt officials.

The People’s Council views the increase in illegal immigration as a symptom of government greed: Migrants work for low wages and help build contract projects, thus making leaders get rich quicker. They compared them to strikebreakers as they reduce the qualifications and salaries for jobs significantly.

They explained that the protest in Tekstilshchiki against mosque construction would be the same in any district in Moscow:

The situation with construction of Christian temples and mosques is also the same all over Moscow. People don’t want remaining green spots of wildlife to be places for the construction of houses of worship, bringing to the population nothing but higher spending on utilities while destroying nature. As for Islam, we are not specialists in this matter and we are not competent enough to answer. The only thing that we clearly observe is that Islam is a very aggressive branch of the Abrahamic religions. The most brutal terrorists
are from Islamists in particular. And dissemination of terrorist ideology around the world comes from mosques, as you know too. So, indigenous population dislike for Islamists and their houses of worship is quite reasonable and understandable (Personal Communication with representative of Tekstilshchiki People’s Council November 6, 2013).

The People’s Council naturalizes dislike for Muslim public space as a shared quality of Muscovites, associating the mosque as a space from which terrorism emanates. However, concern for green space is their primary concern.

Organizations such as the People’s Council are symptomatic of the rise of place-based civil society organizations and NIMBYism in Moscow. NIMBY groups such as the People’s Council are key outlets for participation in Russia’s democracy, as political parties are associated with corruption and elections with fraud (Argenbright 2016). Such organizations serve as watchdog groups, waiting to mobilize the community into activism if need be (Saxonberg 2016). For example, the People’s Council sees their mission as defending their neighborhood status quo in the face of flux from immigration and unwanted economic development (Argenbright 2016). This is evidenced in their statement against illegal immigration, “Real Muscovites do not accept this and will assert their right of normal life. Without corrupt officials and endless reruns of paving tile and curbs in the streets and in the parks of the capital” (Personal Communication with representative of Tekstilshchiki People’s Council November 6, 2013). The first half of this sentiment creates a divide between real Muscovites and illegal migrants, the guests of the capital that serve corrupt officials and through their actions alter normal life. The latter half of this sentiment refers to the types of labor that migrants engage in, especially construction. Construction is widely viewed as one of the most corrupt industries in the city and controlled by mafias (Varese 2001). Lucrative construction contracts and endless public work improvement projects were ongoing despite economic depression in 2015 (Argenbright 2016).
Labor migration and mosque construction were seen as two separate problems, and not inherently related. This is different than the protest at the nationalist Russian march, whose participants related illegal immigration with the threatened Islamicization of the Moscow public sphere. However, according to the People’s Council, both illegal immigration and the construction of religious spaces were the effect of government corruption working to lower the quality of resident’s lives.

Figure 6.2 A dog park constructed in Tekstilshchiki in 2013 at the site of the proposed mosque. November 2013. Photo by author.

In summer 2013, over 200 residents attended a protest organized by The People’s Council on Volga Boulevard, hoping to block further construction plans and maintain the area as a green site and future park. This attendance number was notable as most Russians spend the summer months tending to garden plots outside the city, called dachas. Dachas are the key source of food production for Russians and therefore it is hard to organize city events in the summer (Interview L, March 2013). Members of Yabloko, a leftist social democratic party,
attended the protest, encouraging attendees to vote against incumbent Sobynanin in the 2013 Moscow mayoral election to end his profit-oriented politics. The site once devoted to mosque construction became a dog park in fall 2013 (Figure 6.2). Upon a return visit in summer 2015, playground equipment had been installed in the space, marking its transition from pustin to park.

**Mitino**

Another case study of failed mosque construction in Moscow is located in Mitino. On September 6, 2012, the Moscow Urban Planning commission announced plans to construct a mosque and Muslim cultural center in Mitino. A smaller Muslim organization, the United Islamic Congress of Russia, headed by Shavkat Avyasov, proposed to build the project. Mitino is in northwest Moscow and is a suburban district located outside of the Third Ring Road that encircles Moscow, on the fringes of the city. It is one of the most prestigious high-density districts in the city (O. I. Vendina 1997; Nozdrina 2006; Akhmetzyanova 2015).

Mitino District is composed of 13 neighborhoods; most of which were incorporated into Moscow in 1984, and surrounding areas were added again in 1992 to give it its present-day boundaries. The apartments in Mitino are typical of the 1990s-era buildings, with 16 stories being typical. In 2013, the population was 180,354, and in 2016 this number was 188,342 (Rosstat 2013; Rosstat 2015). The region is mainly residential, with no industrial development or mega shopping centers which tend to line the ring road. The residents tend to be wealthier than those in Tekstilshchiki, and have higher incomes (Nozdrina 2006). A large forest surrounds the district. The site for proposed mosque construction within Mitino was Baryshiha Street near apartment building 57, and plans were approved for a building up to 35 meters high (or about 10 stories or 100 feet). This site was located across from a 17-story apartment building in an undeveloped, wooded area (Figure 6.3).
Once the mosque construction plan was publicized in September 2012, opponents organized an unauthorized rally. They distributed leaflets throughout the neighborhoods in Mitino to draw attention to the proposed mosque, stating “Have residents been asked about the Construction of a Mosque in Mitino?” 1,000-2,000 people attended the rally on September 19, 2012. Four people were arrested at the rally, all of which shouted nationalist slogans and only one of which was a resident of the area (Vinogradov 2012). The allocated height of 35 meters alarmed protestors, as they were concerned that the mosque and cultural center would be massive and out of line with neighborhood characteristics. The Moscow Urban Planning commission canceled the plans in response to the protests, so protestors did not have to go to local meetings of the district government or collect signatures to support their case, as in the Tekstilshchiki case study (Malashenko 2014).
According to a participant, the social movement in Tekstilshchiki inspired the protest in Mitino. He stated:

The events in Tekstilshchiki showed to citizens that they could resist, struggle and win and they also showed to the authority that citizens didn’t want to live with guest workers and to share their land with them. After Tekstilshiki the same situation happened in Mitino when it was announced about a construction of a new mosque in their neighborhood. And a great meeting of 2-3 thousand people showed they didn’t want any mosque to be there (Interview C, May 2013).

Opponents of the mosque construction voiced concerns over traffic jams, neighborhood identity, and fear of attracting terrorists and infidels, according to my analysis of 25 Moscow news reports and radio programs covering the event. Attendees directly linked the issue of mosque construction with the concern over drawing illegal immigrants in the district that would create ghettos, live in overcrowded conditions, and lower property values. Residents expressed frustration at the decision to construct a mosque instead of other infrastructure projects, such as skating rinks, swimming pools, or a woman’s health clinic. No locals displayed support for the mosque in the news report analysis.

Environmental concerns were not employed by the protesters to mobilize citizen action, as in Tekstilshchiki. However, other secular concerns such as logical city design were used to stop the plan for construction. A city official states that the main reasons the project was shelved is because it would obstruct the nearby fire station and that the chosen lot was ill-suited, from a logical perspective, for a mosque (Interview O, November 2013). He explained that mosques were overcrowded, and that if there was an emergency, the crowds could impede firemen. Thus, the mosque is portrayed as a safety threat instead of as an enhancement to neighborhood infrastructure.

As in Tekstilshchiki, proponents of mosque construction included Muslim organizations, such as the Russian Council of Muftis and human rights organizations, such as the SOVA Center
for Information and Analysis. These groups used discourses of the freedom of religion to
advocate for their mosque, but were not successful. In the case of Mitino, Muslim leaders argue
that concerns of increased Muslim activity in the neighborhood were unjustly linked with global
discourses of terror and that the mayor should intervene on behalf of the minority (Fagan 2012).

According to Alexei Malashenko, the crowd of 1,000 that gathered to protest the mosque
was much larger than crowds that the Russian Communist Party organized in the neighborhood,
which attracted 100-200 attendees (2014). Popular dissent was unprecedented, and according to
human rights organizations, fabricated by nationalists. Human rights agencies in favor of the
mosque construction in Mitino argued that the protest attendees were paid to protest and bused in
from other districts by xenophobic nationalist groups, and protestors used xenophobic slurs to
agitate the crowd (Interview P, July 2013). The rally was effective, as the day after on
September 20, 2012, the Moscow Urban Planning and Land Commission canceled the project.

In November 2013, I visited the site of proposed construction: it had remained vacant.
While walking around the courtyards in the neighborhoods in Mitino, I noticed signs displayed
next to every apartment entrance on community message boards, with the heading, “How to
Recognize Terrorism.” The signs were distributed by the Antiterrorism Committee of the
Russian Federation and included questions and answers on combatting terrorism in the Russian
Federation and the personal security of citizens. They contained warnings on the importance of
reporting suspicious behaviors and those dressed in unseasonable clothing, such as long jackets
or dresses, because they could conceal bombs. They also warned against taking presents from
unfamiliar people and leaving things unguarded, and that according to specialists, people about
to perform terrorist acts, “usually look extremely focused, with their lips tightly pressed, or
moving slowly as if they are reading a prayer”. The signs discussed the importance of citizens
standing up for themselves, as they could be the first victims if they do not take action. They do not overtly warn about being suspicious of Muslim migrants, but stress residents of their vulnerability to the unfamiliar. In Mitino, concerns about terrorism persist. These warnings about terrorist threats in the everyday spaces in Moscow show how the urban environment has become a preemptive zone of suspicion and insecurity (Simon 2016). The domestication of Islamophobia and the War on Terror in Mitino occurred, even without the presence of a mosque.

*Potential for new mosques in Moscow*

The increased presence of Muslim migrants in Moscow has not led to the increase of mosques in the city. Despite statements by Moscow city representatives that new plots of land would be found, no new construction plans have been announced since the cancellation of the plan in Mitino in 2012. However, imams at all four mosques and officials from the Moscow Islamic University still express a need for new mosques, citing a lack of mosques as a key issue for Moscow’s Muslim population in interview data. The problem is exemplified through this quotation from an imam at Moscow’s Memorial Mosque:

The main problem we face in Moscow is a lack of mosques. The main mosques are on Poklannaya Gora, Historical Mosques, in Otradnoe and in Prospect Mira. And there are about 2-2.5-3 million Muslims in Moscow. So the lack of mosques is evident they don’t have any place to pray and they have to do it in the street especially when it’s Uraza Bayram or Kurban Bayram which are the main holidays. Sometimes it’s cold, it can be raining or snowing and praying people also cause traffic jams. Just imagine, this very mosque (Poklannaya Gora) can accommodate just 3 thousand people, for example, another mosque can accommodate 2 or 5 thousand, the third one maybe central can accommodate 5 thousand – so just 15-20-30 thousand people of 2.5 million people can pray at mosques, the rest of them will pray in the street. So summing everything up the main problem is the lack of mosques. At the same time there are more than one thousand churches in Moscow (Interview Q, September 2013).

According to city officials, the lack of mosque construction in Moscow is not due to opposition on the part of city authorities. Moscow authorities have suggested eight different plots of land for the construction of new mosques, and state that efforts to build on them have not
come to fruition due to a lack of means and the role of the Council of Muftis blocking potential projects (Shishlin 2011). Therefore, they believe disunity amongst Moscow’s Muslim leaders impedes the opening of a new mosque in a different location, rather than citizen protest in Tekstilshchiki and Mitino (Interview R, October 2013).

Since the cancellation of the mosque plan in Mitino, Moscow’s mayor Sobyanin has spoken strongly against the construction of new mosques in several public forums. He states that his stance against mosque construction is based on popular demand:

The Muslim religious holidays are mostly attended by worshipers who arrive from the Moscow Region and other regions of the country. From 60 to 70 percent of them are outsiders. We cannot provide for all those who need something. Muscovites are becoming irritated by people who speak a different language, have different customs, and display aggressive behavior. This is not a purely ethnic issue, but it is connected with some ethnic characteristics (Venediktov 2013).

Sobyanin paints opposition to new mosques as democratic, as the will of Muscovites to protect its limited territory from outsiders who do not belong. It is also expressed as a problem of shortage- as there is not enough available land nor enough appropriate use value to be extracted from mosques, they are not wanted. Muscovite Tatars are purported to have enough space to accommodate their needs, even though they too experience overcrowding and voice a desire for new mosque and easier access (Group interview, Fall 2013). Instead of new buildings, the Central Mosque was demolished and expanded. Meanwhile, on Muslim holidays, temporary gathering spaces are created in parks for prayers and sermons. According to the logic of Sobyanin, as the Muslim population is not permanent, neither is the spatial solution.

Because so many of Moscow’s Muslims were considered to be transient economic migrants, city officials cited no need for new mosques. In August 2015, I observed Friday services at two of the mosques in Moscow and interviewed an imam and three representatives of the Russian Muftis Council to understand if the Russian financial crisis had led to a reduced
amount of worshippers on Friday. I discovered that one mosque, Cathedral Mosque, experienced no reduction or increased amount of worshippers on typical Fridays, but less worshippers on holidays such as Kurban Bayram (Eid al-Adha). They had no technical way of measuring; this was a guess by leaders.

![A typical Friday scene of Muslim worshippers and riot police on Bolshaya Tatarskaya Street in Moscow. About ten officers were in the vehicle on the left of the photo. August 2015. Photo by author.](image)

The imam of Historical Mosque, however, stated that they had increased attendance at the mosque. This increased attendance was observed one Friday at the 1pm prayer. In 2013, outdoors prayer space for those who could not fit inside the mosque was confined to the courtyard surrounding the building—however in 2015, a large portion of neighboring Bolshaya Tatarskaya Ulitsa was cordoned off and additional security measures were in place (Figure 6.4). There was an additional presence of riot police, some who checked immigration papers, as well as security gates with metal detectors. These measures were much more intense than in the past.
Both mosques had implemented Russian language courses for migrants to allow for integration, but reported low attendance. Even though the Russian economy is in crisis, Moscow still has a sizeable Muslim migrant population. By providing language lessons, mosques not only to provide a space for worship but means to help migrants connect with the city.

**Program 200: Russian Orthodox churches in the Moscow Suburbs**

On November 4\(^{th}\), 2013, a long line snaked outside of the Manezh exhibit hall next to Red Square in Moscow, Russia for the opening of the free new exhibit: *The Romanovs: My History*, organized by the Russian Orthodox Church and City of Moscow government. The exhibit honored the 400\(^{th}\) anniversary of the canonized Romanov family, rehabilitating them into Russian history as victims of communist terrorism. The exhibit was well attended with over 13,000 visitors a day during its two-month run and has traveled around to many Russian regional capitals since. Many Orthodox believers came to the exhibit to kiss the miracle-working icon of Fyodorov, the saintly protector of the Romanov house.

The Romanov exhibition was not only interactive, a timely commemoration and representative of the growth of Russian Orthodoxy in Russian contemporary public culture, but also a revisionist history and a mission statement about the role of Orthodoxy today in Russian society and government. Besides depicting the ties between Russian colonial history and Orthodoxy, the exhibit was adorned with quotations of famous Russians and their statements on Orthodoxy’s vital role in their creative or political lives. The exhibit featured banners with Putin stating, “Every group, even the smallest, needs to not only preserve one’s inner independence and cultural identity, but also their cultural space.” These banners were hanging next to a screen with a short film depicting the history of Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union, showing catastrophic events such as scenes of the Chechen war and Moscow apartment bombings. The
film ends on a hopeful note, as two blond hair and blue-eyed children envision a green and beautiful future. The Romanov exhibit was well attended and a state-church politico-historical project. Lines for the exhibit were always long, and the exhibit run was extended from one week to three weeks due to popular demand, and daily hours extended to midnight. This exhibit publicly portrayed a continuity of Russian Orthodoxy, imperial past and today’s political regime quite literally.

One key feature of the exhibit was a display promoting progress and plans for Program-200. This is the official city plan to build 200 Orthodox churches throughout the city, and there has been a recent plan to rename the program as it has expanded to include 380 new churches (“Construction News,” n.d.). The program intends to construct churches in the spalnie rayoni, so that, according to a priest at the exhibit, “Grandmothers can take their grandchildren to church every day, without having to ride the metro” (Interview S, November 2013). Although churches are overcrowded on Easter, the program is not so much due to demand as it is to aspirations to increase spirituality of ordinary Muscovites (Interview T, August 2015).

The suburbanization and expansion of Program-200 is Moscow’s governmental spatial strategy to incorporate Russian Orthodoxy into the everyday lives of its’ inhabitants (Dmitrii Sidorov 2015). Because the Soviet Union had a religious policy of atheism, religious buildings were not part of the Soviet Union’s urban design. Post-Soviet Moscow therefore inherited a religious infrastructure where churches were clustered in the city center and sparse in the outlying spalnii rayon, where most people live (Sidorov 2015).

The first church of the project was symbolic, as it was located in front of the Dubrovka theater- the site of the 2002 siege of hostages by radical terrorists from the Caucasas (Sidorov 2015). Most of the projects, however, are not symbolic and meant to integrate into the everyday
landscape of Moscow. Often, these are temporary wooden structures located on empty parcels in the spalnii rayon. 18 churches have been built, while 18 are ongoing, 74 temporary structures have been erected, and 24 sites have been allocated for new projects (“Construction News”, n.d.). While some structures consist of a small building to provide room for service, others include small lavka, or shops selling icons, candles, and religious books. Many of the churches have Sunday schools for children and charitable projects, such as donation drives to provide clothes for people in the Donetsk region of Ukraine who have been displaced by war and insurgency (Field notes, Interview T, August 2015). In some cases, the wooden structures are being replaced or complemented by larger, more permanent structures, as seen in Figure 6.5. The church, located in Moscow’s southwest district Novye Cheryomushki on the left is being complemented with a larger stone structure, on the right.

Figure 6.5 A concrete church is being erected next to a wooden temple built as part of Plan 200 in southwest Moscow.
**Torfyanka Park and Russian Orthodox Church protest**

In an address to the supervisory board and working group of the Foundation to Support Church Construction in Moscow, Mayor Sergei Sobyanin explained the challenges of finding proper locations for church construction:

> Your Holiness, colleagues, the city has been implementing the church construction programme for 3.5 years — and, frankly, the achievements during this period surpass our expectations because, to find 200 sites in Moscow, a city whose construction density exceeds that of all other similar European cities, is not a trivial task, to put it mildly.

> It is twice as hard to find a location for constructing Orthodox churches that would not be criticized by city residents. Yet, together with you and municipal deputies, vast work has been done and most sites were selected. As regards a large number of sites, as you have mentioned, alternative options were proposed and they were accepted by residents. We chose the locations that neighborhood residents agreed upon, with churches blending into the local urban landscapes and complementing the city both in architectural and beautification terms (Press service of the Patriarch of Moscow and all of Russia 2014).

This introduction of Russian Orthodox Churches into Moscow’s *spalnie rayoni* has mostly been uncontroversial. In 70 NIMBY-like cases against the churches, locals have been able to request the relocation of construction sites in 35 cases (Sidorov 2015). The churches are intended to be quotidian aspects of the urban fabric, complementing existing neighborhood aesthetics.

One case, however, resulted in overt citizen resistance, interrupting Sobyanin’s overarching narrative of harmony between municipal authorities and local communities. The proposed construction of a Russian Orthodox Church devoted to Our Lady of Kazan in Moscow’s northern Babushkinsky District elicited protest movements and citizen action. The planned location in Torfyanka Park was met with resistance, as locals felt uninformed and unhappy with the site selection.

On April 30, 2013, Mayor Sobyanin signed a decree to build the church complex in Torfyanka Park as part of Plan 200. The project design published on the webpage of Plan 200 depicted the proposed church as having space for 500 worshippers. The local residents appealed
to the district, stating that the public hearing for the project had not been held legally, as it was not published in print media and was a violation of their rights to be heard. Their appeal to the Babushkinskiy District court over the results of the public hearing was denied in February 2015, and in April 2015, the Moscow City Court sent the case back to the local court. On June 18, 2015, residents halted construction efforts.

To oppose the construction, residents set up camp in the proposed construction site to block action (Figure 6.6). This camp was set up for over four months starting in June 2015. One local described, “One day we noticed construction trucks in the area and grew concerned. We banded together and locked our arms together, forming a human chain” (Interview U, August 2015). This human chain consisted of grandmothers, pensioners, and stay at home mothers, because the construction action occurred on a weekday morning. Locals received political support from two political parties- the Communist Party and Yabloko, the social liberal democratic party.

“We surprised ourselves. Who knew that we could stop them?” stated an elderly female resident as she recollected the events of that day (Interview V). “We have set up a camp and collected signatures to protest the construction. There is always someone at the camp now…it has been a good place to get to know our neighbors.” The camp was makeshift, consisting of umbrellas and tables gathered by residents. They displayed banners with the name of the social movement “For Torfyanka Park.” When asked why this site was not a good place for a church, I received one answer from fourteen local interviewees in street interviews: The park was a place for everyone, and building a church would hinder their enjoyment of the park. For example, locals liked to run, ride bikes, and sunbathe during the summer months. These are considered inappropriate activities for churches, so the proposed construction would inhibit them.
In addition, locals noted that the Russian Orthodox churches tended to work with an expansionary logic. While a small wooden church would be the initial building, based on evidence in the city such as the church in Noviye Cheryomushki, outbuildings, shops, other meeting rooms, and perhaps a larger church building would eventually surround the chapel. The locals felt that the proposed plans for the church were only a loose suggestion and would not be adhered.

One interviewee explained to me, “We are not against churches, but we are against churches in this park. It is a form of NIMBYism, is that the term? We do not need a church here. It can go elsewhere” (Interview U). She showed me around their camp and invited me to have a cup of tea. I learned about the neighborhood identity, as locals described to me how their families had lived there for two generations. Babushkinsky consists of smaller apartment buildings with between 5-9 floors instead of the mega-high rises that are a hallmark of late and
post-Soviet construction projects. Because of this, locals consider the neighborhood cozier than others in the growing megacity.

As in Tekstilshchiki and Mitino, the protest in Torfyanka Park was an example of NIMBYism in Moscow’s apartment blocs. Like the opposition to the mosque in Mitino, the citizens involved in the protest against the church felt that local authorities did not take their voices into account in planning out the construction project. Thus, they felt excluded from the democratic process. Unlike in Mitino and Tekstilshchiki, the participants in the protests were locals and did not engage in anti-Russian Orthodox discourses. Also, the site selected for construction was a park, rather than undeveloped land. In Mitino, the site selected for a mosque was undeveloped land across the road from businesses and apartments, located at the edge of the neighborhood and Moscow. In Tekstilshchiki, the pustin zoned for religious construction on Volga Boulevard was unofficially designated public space in practice. The site in Torfyanka Park was already public space, all the better to integrate the Russian Orthodox Church into their everyday lives.

The protest camp sat next to an area cordoned off with fencing, with signs displaying the official city plan to construct a new church. Within this fence stood another protest camp. These were from the Orthodox movement “Sorok Sorokov.” This name is significant because it refers to the Russian Orthodox word for parish, and it originates from a Russian idiom: “There are sorok sorokov (a multitude) of churches in Moscow” (Gumerov 2009). This idiom refers to the idea of Moscow as an extremely religious, Russian Orthodox city. The movement Sorok Sorokov is composed of Orthodox activists who support and sponsor the construction of Russian Orthodox churches in Moscow, many of whom are also nationalists (Interview W, August 2015).
This protest group also camps out at the proposed construction site, but within the cordoned-off area devoted to the church (Figure 6.7).

Figure 6.7 Camp devoted to constructing the church in Torfyanka Park. August 2015. Photo by author.

This group was not composed of locals. I met with five of them, including a pensioner and her son, two non-local Muscovites, and a Cossack. Cossacks are a Russian Orthodox, ethnocultural group that historically served the tsar. Persecuted under the Soviet regime, their population has been depleted from about 2 million before 1917 to about 200,000 in 2016. Modern Cossacks function as a group of militant patriotic morality police (Markowitz and Peshkova 2016). They defend conservative Russian Orthodox values and target enemies of the current regime such as Navalny and Pussy Riot. The Russian government often funds their
services. This Cossack was paid to protect the protest camp, and expressed his loyalty to the Russian Orthodox Church. He explained that his duty was to protect the church, even though he was not from the Moscow area. Swastikas decorated his shoes, which he said were an ancient Hindu symbol for the sun. He stated that he was paid daily to stay at the site, but did not indicate who paid him.

Sorok Sorokov and the proponents of the church felt that they were providing a service to the locals. The pensioner stated, “Moscow is a Christian city and needs more temples. This is horrible. A church will be built here.” I asked if another location would be more suitable. Another protester stated, “Yes, another location would be suitable. One church can be built here, and another in the new location as well. Even better.” (Group interview/field notes August 2015). According to locals, the protestors at this camp are disruptive, often provoking them and calling names at passers-by. One resident also reported being attacked by an Orthodox protestor, resulting in a concussion (Interview W, August 2015).

The results of the protests and encampment at Torfyanka Park are significant for this study because locals in the end were able to block the proposed construction, and the church plan was eventually relocated to a different space. Sorok Sorokov issued a statement asking for a smaller temple devoted to Saint Macarius to be erected in Torfyanka Park while another location was found for the larger church devoted to Our Lady of Kazan so that spirituality could be introduced to locals in the interim, but this was denied. In 2015, the Babushkinsky municipal court appealed the decision to build a church in the park, and held an online vote to choose the new location, which is near a train station and much more accessible by public transportation.

Life for the activists against construction, however, has not continued on as normal. In November 2016, the Moscow police raided some of the activists’ apartments, in response to tips
that they were radicals and had violated criminal laws against insulting religious feelings. These laws were passed as part of Putin’s morality politics (Gorbunova and Ovsyannikova 2016). The activists were not charged with the crimes, but their homes were raided and computers and phones searched. The treatment of these activists show that the consequences of protesting the Russian Orthodox Church can lead to a criminal investigation, even if the protest occurred through legal channels and was just as peaceable as the protests against mosque construction. The outcomes of organizers in religious construction protests in Moscow illustrate the consequences of protesting against governments in Russia’s authoritarian democracy: Although the protesters at Torfyanka Park were successful at moving the church location, many organizers are still harassed by authorities. But, Butrimov, the leader of Moj Dvor, now serves as a municipal deputy in Eastern Moscow’s Veshyaki neighborhood.

Discussion

Despite the need for more religious spaces in Moscow, protests against church and mosque construction were active and effective. These protests were in some respects a democratic achievement as they evidenced the growth of civil society in Moscow. This civil society does not seem to view religious infrastructure as an issue of concern even though the state government and religious leaders view it as a key issue. According to the analysis of the discourses against mosque construction, opponents view mosques as disturbances to their everyday ways of life, rather than having the capacity to improve them or integrate into the ordinary landscapes of Moscow. This contrasts to official statements on the construction of Russian Orthodox Churches in the Moscow sleeping regions, which state that the churches can become part of the quotidian life of the Muscovite.

Although political support for Plan 200 has been strong, there has been a lack of support for new mosque construction projects in the city— in fact, the activism that these mosque
construction projects generates challenges research which state that Russia has low levels of participatory democracy (Lussier 2011). My case studies instead supports research showing that although NGO activity in Moscow is weak, neighborhood associations are growing forms of local activism (Shomina, Kolossov, and Shukhat 2002). Even though Russian laws curtail the activities of foreign-sponsored NGOs, drawing criticism in international freedom reports, these laws have not stopped the growth of local forms of participation in Russia’s authoritarian democracy (Crotty, Hall, and Ljubownikow 2014). My study takes place in the growing literature showing the spread of place-based activism and NIMBYism over local public space in Moscow (Argenbright 2016), including issues of infill development in neighborhoods (Ivanou 2016), or the demolition of public parks to make room for private businesses (Saxonberg 2016).

For activists against mosque construction, new mosques frustrate notions of Muscovite identity and the right of locals to public spaces, while acknowledging permanence of predominantly migrant Muslim laborers into the city. These groups have been largely successful in obstructing new projects and drumming up support for their causes through rallies, petitions, and local politics- illustrating that NIMBYism is a powerful form of activism in Russia’s authoritarian context.

For mosque leaders and imams, new mosques represents a site of transformation: mosques are places to train laborers to learn Russian languages and instruct migrants in the Hanafi school, considered to be the traditional or historical form of Islam in Russia (Interview B, August 2013). By blocking new mosque construction, they argue that unofficial and unregulated Muslim spaces flourish throughout the city, exacerbating concerns of the spread of radicalism (Interview N, October 2013). They feel any positive contributions Islam and Muslims make to society were overridden by negative portrayals of the religion in media and in the opposition
discourse. The characterization of mosques as sites of disorder and interruption is based both on the experiences of overcrowding at Moscow’s four working mosques, but also is rooted in Islamophobia and related to negative portrayals in Russian media of mosques as potential meeting grounds for outsiders to the city. Negative representations of mosques dominated the discourses against their construction.

Russia is a managed democracy, meaning that although elections occur, civil society is controlled by the authoritarian state. In Moscow, this is evidenced and characterized by the selective support of local or national authorities for civil rights claims. Aidukaite and Fröhlich (2015) argue that post-Soviet grassroot movement experiences are divergent: Whereas local movements are institutionalized and have more defined channels and support from local authorities in Vilnius, Lithuania, these movements tend to be in opposition to local authorities in Moscow. My research confirms these findings through illustrating that local anti-mosque and anti-church movements feel betrayed by local authorities and are often surprised by plans for religious construction projects. Even though NIMBY movements against mosques and churches were effective at challenging local authorities, the outcomes for participants illustrate preference for Russian Orthodoxy in Moscow’s public spaces.

Moscow’s NIMBY groups such as Moj Dvor and the Torfyanka Park encampment are informal, focused on single issues, and lack substantive funds (Crotty 2009; Saxonberg 2016). Although Crotty (2009) argues that these characteristics prevent them from achieving their democratic goals, Saxonberg (2016) states that as local issues are often passion projects dependent on volunteerism, Moscow, social movements can be successful. I argue that although volunteer work and passion are important, the success of social movements depends on if their goals are in line with hegemonic culture and state goals.
These case studies of church and mosque construction in Moscow’s neighborhoods underpin the power geometries of religion in Russia’s democracy. Even though Muslim community leaders advocated for the mosque, attended protests to address concerns, and called for intercultural awareness programs, their requests were ignored (Interview N, October 2013). The protestors were successful in blocking the building, and in the case of Mitino, almost overnight. This contrasts to the experience of the protest movement in Torfyanka Park, where citizens protested against church construction for over a month before the municipal government met their demands. These case studies show that protests over mosques were acknowledged and legitimized much earlier than that against church construction. A new site was offered for the church project, whereas no new mosque was built, again showing that churches are considered as more legitimate religious spaces in the Moscow spalnie rayoni. This also shows that the Russian Orthodox Church is more organized, larger, supported by the state’s moral politics, and united than Moscow’s diverse Muslim communities, which could be explain why they were more able to negotiate alternative locations.

Protesters in Tekstilshchiki, Mitino, and Babushkinsky had NIMBY reactions to the construction of religious spaces in their neighborhoods, feeling that they had no say in decisions made by courts and were denied public hearings. They all felt these religious spaces would lower or challenge the quality of lives. These place-based discourses were successful, showing the ability of local citizen movements to sway city authorities in Moscow. But, in the case of mosque construction, the protest movements are considered to be inauthentic by human rights advocates. The cooption of concerns for environmental justice with nationalist interests challenges the democratic nature of the Tekstilshchiki protest, as they worked together to
preserve an already-exclusive status quo. The suburbanization of Russian Orthodox churches continues, while mosques are excluded from this banal landscape.

Urban planning involves mediation between different groups making claims for public space (Gale 2004). In democratic contexts in England (Gale 2004), the Netherlands (Landman and Wessels 2005), conflicts over mosque construction resulted in compromise over location and structure. However, urban planning outcomes in Moscow shows the power geometry of different groups to make claims to public space: First of all, the Russian Council of Muftis are more effective at making claims to public space than other Muslim organizations in Moscow. However, in effect while the Council of Muftis received permission from the Moscow city government to expand Cathedral Mosque, they have had no success in constructing new mosques (although they have made it farther in the planning process than other Muslim groups). In Mitino and Tekstilshchiki, no compromise over mosque construction occurred and instead mosque plans were completely canceled. Although Muslims can individually practice their religion, Muslim group rights to mosques in public space are not enforced. The Russian Orthodox Church however was able to make compromises in the Torfyanka Park case and find a new location. The leaders of the opposition are accused of violating laws about insulting religious feelings, showing that while the Russian Orthodox Church public space is valorized, protesting against them has negative individual consequences. This uneven outcome for locals, protestors, and religious communities shows how norms are created in Moscow’s public space: churches are normalized, while those against them are treated as if they are criminals. Mosques are meanwhile highly politicized and excluded from the everyday public spaces of Moscow’s neighborhoods. My next chapter turns to a discussion of the diversity of Muslim spaces and publics in Moscow despite these restrictions on mosque construction.
Chapter Seven: Geographies of Muslim publics and spaces in Moscow

Following the liberalization of religious policy since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the increased migration from Central Asia and the Caucasus, Moscow’s Muslim communities are increasingly devout and diverse. Moscow’s large migrant population has led to an increase of media reports of the inevitable formation of Muslim ghettos and an influx of radical Islam in the city (March 2010). These increased number of Muslims in Moscow have generated tabloid headlines such as: “In Moscow, a Muslim Neighborhood” (Kots 2007) or “Is there an Islamic Quarter in Moscow?” (Kulyabko 2015). Others pit religions against each other, such as the tabloid Komsomolskaya Pravda headline, “In Moscow, will a mosque appear on the site of a church?” (Lebedeva 2010). The headlines are accompanied by images of overcrowded mosques and Central Asian migrants and articles stating that although Muslim neighborhoods have not yet formed, they might. These occur in Russia’s state-run news media. This chapter seeks to move past this xenophobic portrayal of the inevitable Islamicization of Moscow’s public sphere and examines the spatialization of Muslim diversity within and outside of Moscow’s four mosques.

In this chapter, I explore both the diversity within Moscow’s Muslim communities and the fourth research question posed in my introduction: How, where and in what other forms do spaces of Muslim community life and Islamic practices arise in Moscow, especially given the restriction on mosque building?

Chapter Five explored how the reconstruction of Moscow’s Cathedral Mosque symbolized close ties between the Russian government and Moscow’s Muslim communities. Chapter Six turned to the democratic politics of religious construction projects in Moscow’s sleeping regions. Local NIMBY movements were successful forms of civic activism in Moscow’s managed democracy. However, the success of local NIMBY groups in advocating for
transparency at the local level came at the expense of Muslim rights to build mosques. Mosques are important historic and communal places for Muslim rituals; however they are not sacred spaces (Metcalf 1996). Rather, Muslim sacred space is fluid, and constituted by rituals, practice, and language. As research in the new cultural geography shows, religious geographies extend beyond official religious places (Ehrkamp 2007a; Kong 2010; Silvey 2007). Mosques raise debates over migration and identity in Moscow. To move past the debates over Islam as a migrant phenomenon taking over Moscow, and examine it as a lived religion, I look at Muslim publics and counter-publics in Moscow.

Mosques are public spaces of religion and community wherein Moscow’s diverse Muslim communities identify themselves against one another. Exclusion from participation in dominant publics leads to the creation of counter-publics; in this chapter I examine both the publics forming at mosques and Muslim counter-publics. These counter-publics include community centers and Muslim educational societies. Unlike mosques, which are located in historical Tatar areas or as part of multiconfessional religious complexes in Moscow, these centers and organizations are located in neighborhoods. These organizations are counter-publics in two ways: they are Muslim spaces in Moscow’s neighborhoods, and they interact with and comply, but do not rely, on Muslim spiritual boards or state power structures. These Muslim counter-publics are independently organized Muslim civil society groups in Russia’s managed democracy.

In this chapter, I adopt a post-Islamism analytical approach to examine dimensions of Muslim religious life in public space in Moscow. Islamism in general refers to political Islam and the desire implement Islamic principles to politics (Bayat 2013; Yilmaz 2011). Post-Islamism in turn examines how Muslim religious practices are promoted in the public spheres of
nonreligious states (Gökarıksel and Secor 2016). Although mosques are not accepted as a normative public space in Moscow neighborhoods, Moscow’s Muslims are developing vibrant Muslim civil societies in Moscow.

**Post-Islamism in Russia**

This chapter follows Mandaville’s (2001) call to understand Islam as a lived religion. To do so, this chapter addresses post-Islamism in Moscow. Just as Islamism can express itself in many forms, from the Saudi approach to funding mosques and spreading Salafism or separatism of the Caucasian Emirate in the Russia’s North Caucasus, post-Islamism also has many forms (Bayat 2013). Post-Islamism was initially described by Bayat (2013) as the transformation of a political Islamist movement from fundamentalism to one committed to Muslim civil rights and a desire to work within democratic political channels. Post-Islamic political parties include Iran’s Green Movement, Turkey’s Truth and Justice Party, or Indonesia’s Prosperous Justice Party (Bayat 2008). Drawing from a feminist perspective, Gökarıksel and Secor (2016) have expanded this approach to post-Islamism, writing:

> an examination of contemporary political and social configurations of Islamist politics requires not only the ongoing assessment of political projects such as that of the AKP, but also attention to the discourses and practices of ordinary people caught up in the currents of and actively shaping these changing ‘secular’ and ‘religious’ formations (p. 4). They pose that post-Islamism is dynamic, and not only the realm of political parties and Muslim rights but the politics of everyday Muslim public practices. They examine how the debates over religious education in public school and laws regarding the sale of alcohol question the secularness of the state and freedom of Muslim civil societies in the Istanbul context. Turkey is a Muslim-majority country, but there are multiple forms of Islam and perspectives of how much Muslim religious practices can influence civil society, schools, and laws. Post-Islamism therefore
provides a way to analyze the politics of the everyday life of Muslims in democracies. Following this insight, I explore Muslim civil society and spaces in Russia’s managed democracy.

In parallel to post-Islamism, religious studies scholars such as Asad (2003) and Taylor (2007) have called for post-secular examinations of religion and secularism beyond the state. There are two main approaches for understanding postsecularism: one examines post-secularism as a historical condition wherein religion is reemerging as a key actor in the public sphere after a period of absence (Habermas 2008). This approach is exemplified by research in both Western and post-Soviet contexts. Cloke (2015) examines the growing role of faith-based organizations in providing social welfare in the UK in the absence of state provisions. McGlinchey (2009) similarly shows how Islamic revival in Kyrgyzstan is related to issues of welfare. He uses survey results to show that Kyrgyz Islamic revivalism is a product of state failure: Muslim institutions and networks provide social safety nets and charity where the government cannot. Dzutsati, Siroky, and Dzutsev’s (2016) survey in the North Caucasus also illustrates how sharia is viewed by more liberal locals as a plausible liberating political and economic platform due to the failures of the Russian state in providing stability in the North Caucasus. Cloke, McGlinchey, and Dzutsati, Siroky, and Dzutsev’s studies show that religion emerges as an institutional actor when the role of the secular state is reduced or weakened.

The second approach to postsecularism studies the roles of religion and secularism in daily lives (Gökarıksel and Secor 2015). Geographers have contributed to these debates on postsecularism through studies of how religious diversity is produced in the public sphere. Rather than theorizing religious identity as a private practice, Gökarıksel and Secor (2015) and Tse (2014) argue that it is in public where religious beliefs are formed or challenged. The public sphere has been means through which laws and norms are used to include legitimate religious
expression and limits others, rather than defined by an absence of religious practice (Ehrkamp 2010). Thus, postsecularism is not a historical condition but rather an analytical approach to explore how religious moral orders are produced in the public sphere. One of the products of a post-secular analysis is to examine the heterodox religious publics produced in their public interactions; another is to challenge monolithic narratives of Muslim communities.

Both post-Islamism and postsecularism are important for understanding the diversity of Muslim practices that has emerged in Russia. The divide between official, state-approved and unofficial “foreign” Islam has come to dominate understandings of Islam in Russia; this divide hinges on the relationship of Muslim communities to the state. As Putin’s speech at the re-opening of Cathedral Mosque indicates, Russian official Islam is defined by its traditions and its loyalty to the state. “Political” Islam in Russia is banned, including national and international groups: Supreme Military Majlis ul Shura of the United Mujahideen Forces of Caucasus, People’s Congress of Ichkeria and Dagestan, the Base (al-Qaeda), Osbat al-Ansar, al-Jihad (al-Masri), Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya, the Muslim Brotherhood, Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Taliban, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (or Islamic Party of Turkestan), Jamiat al-Islah al-Idzhtimai, Jamiat Ihya at-Turath al-Islami, and al-Haramain (Malashenko 2014). The banning of political Islam does not mean that Islam does not affect Russian politics or social life, but creates ongoing insurgency in the Caucasus, the conditions for extrajuridical violence against members of fundamentalist groups and their families, and an incompatibility between the state and the growing rise of Salafism in and beyond the Caucasus. The banning of political Islam shows the curtailing of democratic channels for Muslims in Russia and the weakness of Russian state sovereignty in the Caucasus.
This chapter extends research on the geographies of Muslims in Moscow following the second school of thought on postsecularism, which takes religious pluralism as its analytic. The divide of Russian Muslims into official and unofficial raises the research questions of how members of the communities view or interact with each other, as well as diversity that exists amongst the communities. Mosques are important public spaces of interaction of Moscow’s diverse Muslim communities. They are places where Muslim publics define themselves in relation to one another. The first two empirical studies in this dissertation examined Muslim communities in relationship to state geopolitics and Moscow neighborhoods; this chapter explores Muslim publics and their spaces. In the first part of this chapter, I explore the heterogeneity of Muslim publics and practices in Moscow. Due to the increase of the Muslim population and mosque overcrowding, Islam in Moscow is developing beyond official versus unofficial dichotomies. In the second part of this chapter, I examine post-Islam and Muslim civil society in Moscow.

**Tensions at the Mosque**

As before the Soviet period of atheism, imams are Tatar and followers of the Sunni Hanafi school. Historical Mosque’s congregation, however, has changed since its Soviet-era closure. An ethnically and spiritually diverse crowd patronizes the mosque, creating overcrowding during Friday prayers. Women who work at the mosque are wary of the attendees, as seen in the following conversation:

“What do you think about the cops?” I asked a group of six women as we sat in the dining room of the Historical mosque complex in Moscow, Russia. We were eating a small lunch before the start of the Friday prayer in August 2013. One of these women was the wife of an imam, while two worked in the offices and three worked in the adjacent halal café. They were all
Tatar. Five groups of two cops could be found patrolling the grounds of the mosque on Fridays during prayers, and more cops stood at the metro entrances leading to the mosques. Their uniforms label them as members of both Moscow’s city policy force and the Otryad Mobilny Osobogo Naznacheniya, Special Purpose Mobile Unit (OMON), also known as the Russian riot police. These men carry weapons and have armored cars parked around the mosque and nearby metro stations. The mosque attracts an average 5,000 worshippers on Fridays- far more than the 1,500 capacity inside the mosque. These worshippers are not all Tatar- they consist mainly of a large number of migrants- legal and illegal- from Central Asian republics and the Caucasus. Worshippers pray in the courtyard surrounding the mosque, sometimes blocking traffic along surrounding roads. Although I had been in Moscow for six months, I still had not grown accustomed to the large police presence in public space and wandered if locals felt the same.

“The cops do good work,” said an older Tatar woman as she put lunch on the table. “Really?” I intoned. “You like the cops!” I was surprised, because these women experienced a level of trust with the police, rather than one of intimidation that had characterized the perceptions of citizens of Russian police in scholarly research (Semukhina and Reynolds 2014). “Yes, they keep us safe,” stated another kitchen worker. “They protect us from the gastarbeitters. They are not like us.” Gastarbeiter, the German term for guest worker, is a pejorative term used in Russia to describe economic migrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus who travel to Russia looking for work. The women began to discuss how the attendees were messy, left behind a lot of trash, and could have “dark thoughts” that were not “real” Islam (From field notes, September 2013). I had heard these sentiments about the crowds of Muslims at mosques addressed in conversations with ethnic Russians who lived in the apartments around the mosque and with those who worked in the businesses surrounding the neighborhood- hearing them from
women who worked or spent a lot of time at the mosque’s offices and café show divides in Moscow’s diverse Muslim community.

These Tatar women’s frustrati ons with behaviors and crowds of migrants are illustrative of Moscow’s Muslim geography, dictating expectations of what kinds of people belong in which religious spaces. Because Tatars have a historical presence in Moscow, they are considered as a traditional Muslim minority within the city. The behaviors of migrants are seen as a negative influence on Tatar historical tradition and spaces, creating a hierarchy of belonging amongst Moscow’s Muslim communities. This tension occurs not just at Historical Mosque, but is witnessed at all four mosques in the city.

This ethnographic vignette illustrates how the increase of Muslims in the city is not uniformly accepted as a positive development for all members of Moscow’s Tatar community. The interethnic tensions witnessed at Historical Mosque are not unique but ubiquitous. At Yardyam Mosque in northern Moscow, a Tatar imam described the majority of attendants of the mosques negatively. We conducted the interview at his desk, adjacent to the prayer hall. He stated, “Our mosques are full on Friday, but you see the types of people here.” He gestured to the men who had showed up for the evening prayer that Sunday, a small group of thirteen men and one married couple. “Chyorni. You Americans also have a word for this. Less and less Tatars come Friday but they are here all the time” (Interview X).

In a group interview of five educated Moscow Muslims of mixed ethnicity and gender, the participants also expressed unease with the migrant populations that attended mosques. The group was composed of three women and two men, ages from 19-32. The group interview was located at Kazan Chai Bar, a Tatar restaurant located in northwest Moscow. The restaurant often
hosts Muslim weddings, parties, and events, such as Islamic IQ club trivia nights and lectures from imams and scholars. I asked the group what mosque they preferred attending, and why:

Alina (F): I prefer Poklonnaya Gora (Memorial Mosque) by far. I go there with my family for holidays. It is more Tatar, and has less people from the Caucasus. It is peaceful. I do not go to the mosque on Prospect Mira on Friday.
Alfiya (F): Yes, you see there is simply very little space there.
Alina (F): No, no, Poklonnaya also has a large crowd. I refuse to go there, the people are uncultured. It is uncomfortable.
Farid (M): Yes, better for a girl to sit at home. There are many Uzbeks there.
Alina (F): Yes, and after jummah (Friday prayer) the streets are littered. They need volunteers to quickly clean it up.
Alfiya (F): I have not been there, so I do not know the situation.
Farid (M): Well, there is not enough space for everyone to clean before prayer. But what else can they do?
Alfiya (F): I want to say, I would like to go to the mosque on Poklonnaya Gora more often. But, I drive a car, and the traffic is just awful. Moscow has a huge territory. It would take me two hours there, and two hours back. I just cannot devote this much time to trying to get to the mosque.

The conversation then turned to questions over the authenticity of religious experience at mosques versus other settings. This exchange highlights three important themes regarding the interactions of different Muslims at the mosque. First, different mosques attract certain attendees. Specifically, the elite educated crowd that this group represented viewed Memorial Mosque more favorably than other mosques in the city. Second, is that, as the imam of Yardyam mosque suggested, ethnic tensions and xenophobia are deterring some Tatars from attending prayers. These first two themes address the class and ethnic divides amongst Moscow’s Muslim Tatar and Central Asian communities, and support Deminsteva and Peshkova's (2014) findings that although Central Asian migrants are dispersed amongst Moscow’s neighborhoods, there is a pattern of which places they visit. Deminsteva and Peshkova’s (2014) study of Central Asian migrant’s everyday lives in Moscow show that migrants frequent favored markets, cafes, and parks; the pattern of mosque attendance also shows that mosques are important places of belonging for Caucasian and Central Asian migrants. Third, logistical issues such as traffic and
mosque overcrowding mean that some Muslims are opting out of attending mosque. All three of these themes are shaping the new geographies of Muslims in Moscow.

**Muslim Publics at Mosques**

The first notable theme highlighted by this group interaction is that different types of Muslims are attracted to different mosques in the city. My group members, comprised of educated Muslims, had a definite preference for Memorial Mosque on Poklonnaya Gora. Poklonnaya Gora, meaning “Worshipful Submission Hill” is home to Victory Park, Moscow’s Great Patriotic War museum and is the site of religious temples for all four of Russia’s traditional religions, as outlined in the 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations: Russian Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism. Memorial Mosque was constructed in 1995 to honor the Muslims who fought for Russia against Nazism in the great Patriotic War. The mosque is led by one of the most popular imams not only in Moscow, but all of Russia, Shamil Alyautdinov. His popularity and use of social media and new forms of communication is reminiscent of Christian evangelists in the United States (Hoover and Clark 2002) and Muslim evangelists in Egypt (Moll 2010).

Alyautdinov is one of the leaders of the growing modernist Muslim reform movement in Russia. Educated abroad in Cairo, he has introduced modernization into the Tatar Hanafi school. Whereas Hanafi Islam is associated with Tatar national identity, Alyautdinov’s approach to Islam is favored by Moscow’s international Muslim middle-class and best understood as Muslim lifestyle advice (Bustanov and Kemper 2012). He has written a popular series of books in the form of Quaranic exegesis, or *tafsir*. In his books, he uses a question and answer format to address issues of Muslim practices in everyday life, using extensive footnotes to ground his responses in the Quaran (Bustanov and Kemper 2012).
Alyautdinov offers seminars and sermons in Moscow and regional capitals in Russia’s Muslim ethnic republics, as well as online on his home page, umma.ru. Through these sermons, books, and seminars, he outlines his central thesis that the ideal Muslim is a “Trillionare.” According to Alyautdinov, the Trillionare is spiritually, intellectually, physically, and materially wealthy. His best-selling book, *Trillionare Thinks*, is self-described as, “a synthesis of the latest scientific data on human thinking, Western ideas, techniques and methods to achieve success, effective time management - with the outlook of a believer, seeking to follow the precepts of the Holy Scriptures and the last legacy of the Prophet Muhammad (Alyautdinov 2012)”.

He teaches that through an adherence to Muslim values, an individual can maximize their potential in their careers, relationships, and life.

Other Muslim leaders in Russia view Alyautdinov favorably. He is positioned in the echelons of DUMER, serving as the Deputy of Religious Affairs for Mufti Gainutdin. He also has stated that Putin is the best leader for growing the presence of Muslims in Russia, and has condemned the 2012 anti-Putin protests (Moshkin 2012). He has organized a series of workshops, clubs, and books answering questions on Muslim life in contemporary Russia. He has a wide audience, selling over half a million books that have been translated from Russian into Tatar, Chechen, and English. His sources include Arabic-language scholars, and he does not often quote from Tatar *ulema*, or body of Muslim scholarship. Thus, he tries to go beyond the Hanafi school and widen his appeal, while grounding it theologically in Arabic scholarship. His teaching, he argues, is ensconced within the pluralism allowed by the Hanafi school; however, Roman Silyantev, a notorious Russian Orthodox sociologist of Islam, considers Alyautdinov to be a radical and out of line with Russian traditional Muslim values (Interview R, October 2013).
Alyautdinov’s followers have formed Trillionare’s clubs, discussion groups centered on his teachings. Many of these meetings occur at the location of the above focus group, the Kazan Chai Bar (Kazan Tea Bar). I attended several of these meetings, including a lecture series on neuroscience and prayer (Figure 7.1). They were composed of mixed ethnic groups, and predominantly men and women between the ages of 16-40. The participants as a whole did not attend Memorial Mosque regularly, but all read Alyautdinov’s books.

Figure 7.1 A meeting of Trillionaire’s Club in Moscow. Fall 2013. Photo by author.

As Alina noted in the group interview, Memorial Mosque also experiences overcrowding on Fridays. This group, however, is considered in her eyes to be the right kind of crowd. When I attended Memorial Mosque, I noticed several things separating it from Moscow’s other mosques: The mosque’s shop was mainly composed of Alyautdinov’s books, showcasing his celebrity imam status, the mosque was frequented by schoolchildren on field trips and tourist groups, showing that this mosque is a preferred place for non-Muslim Muscovites to visit and learn about Muslims, and more women by far attended the mosque on Friday for prayers- I counted over
200, whereas only a dozen or less regularly attended Historical or Cathedral Mosques. Although Friday prayers are not obligatory for Muslim women in the same way they are for men, Alyautdinov attracts a larger female audience with his self-improvement approach.

My group interview participants preferred Memorial Mosque to Cathedral and Historical Mosques, although all three are overcrowded. The exception was one Azeri participant, who indicated that, he sometimes attended the Shia mosque located at Yardyam mosque in northern Moscow. A majority of Azeris traditionally practice Shia. However, he preferred studying at private locations and prayed at work. As the conversations about mosque preferences evolved in my group interview, this exchange occurred:

Alina (F): I very rarely go to Historical Mosque. I am scared to go there because many radicals are there, Chechens.
Guzel (F): I would never go there alone. And my brother told me that they do zikr there.
Timur (M): Zikr, it is a type of prayer, involving singing and dancing.
Farid (M): Yes, it is a Caucasian type of Islam.
Timur (M): (Interrupting) Yes, and it is not controlled by the authorities there. Shouldn’t they have control? It is a shame, to allow this practice. It should be forbidden.

Zikr is a type of prayer which occurs in Sufism, a type of mystical Islam practiced in the North Caucasus. Within Chechnya and the North Caucasus, Sufism is considered traditional in contrast to the foreign Salafi school (Yemelianova 2002). The Putin-backed President Kadyrov supports Sufi traditions. Zikr is a song and dance form of prayer, where men form rings and dance in circles while singing prayers. Although zikr is practiced in Historical Mosque, sometimes Chechens perform zikr outside of the mosque. For example, in 2010, twenty Chechen men were detained for performing zikr on Komsomolskaya Square while firing “traumatic weapons”. Traumatic weapons are the largest form of handgun sold in Russia, and are considered to be non-lethal as they use rubber bullets. Komsomolskaya Square is one of the busiest public spaces in Moscow surrounded by Moscow’s three largest train stations (Interfax 2010).
Although Sufism is considered a traditional religion in the Caucasus and is increasingly practiced publicly there, these Sufi Chechen rituals are controversial amongst Moscow’s Muslim communities. Thus, Alina elides the Sufi ritual with extremism, whereas the Russian state tends to view religious extremism as connected with Salafist influence in the Caucasus (Malashenko 2013).

Alina is hesitant to attend Historical Mosque alone because of concerns about radicalism at the mosque. In an interview with Historical Mosque’s imam, he explained that although the mosque imams adhere to Hanafi principles, the types of Muslims attending the mosque have changed over time:

At first there were Tatars here, but unfortunately, as you know, there was a war in the Caucasus. A war is very bad thing, we condemn any war. Russians say “a bad peace is better than a good war”, that’s why many people emigrated from the Caucasus, they abandoned their places and their motherland. Now many Muslims from the Caucasus live in Moscow – the Chechens, the Ingush, the Dagestani. The atmosphere was and still is really tense there. If you read news, it always says that something was blown up, someone was killed. But now the situation is better…

The birth rate was terribly low in Russia, there was a transitional period in the 90s and a crisis. Gangsterism flourished, the situation was really unsteady. If it had continued the consequences would have been awful. And as far as we are are short-handed, Federal Migration Service creates some policies and says that Russia needs several million of working hands. And Muslims from Middle Asia (the Uzbeks, the Tajiks and the Kyrgyzs) fill in these niches. They come to Russia to work here. This is reflected the number of parishioners of our mosque. The majority of them are from the Caucasus and Middle Asia. Sure, there are the Tatars and other nations but at the same time there are a lot of immigrants (Interview B, August 2013).

As he explained, economic hardships in Central Asia and low birth rates in Russia have resulted in the rise of Muslim migration into Moscow. Many people from all over Russia migrate to Moscow because of the job opportunities in all sectors of the economy, but the rise of migrants from central Asia and the Caucasus is the most visible. Most of these migrants are
males in their 20s, and they tend to work in lower-skilled jobs such as construction or as food vendors (Light 2016).

In street interviews with migrants from Central Asia, I learned their rationales for mosque attendance were not rooted in adherence to a particular imam’s teachings, but were instead driven by theological and practical reasoning. The attendees at Cathedral Mosque valued collegiality, or the spiritual importance of having the maximum concentration of believers assembled in an area. Following Friday namaz, or prayers, at Cathedral Mosque, a migrant worker explained to me, “I am from Kazakstan. In my city, we go to the biggest mosque on Friday. This allows us to create the largest brotherhood and gives glory to Allah. In Moscow, I do the same.” Over thirty other interviewees echoed this sentiment, that attending the biggest mosque in the city was a social and spiritual decision.

At the time of my interviews in 2013, Cathedral Mosque was under construction. A green, semi-permanent tent with room for 500 instead served as the temporary prayer hall. I inquired how this mosque attracted the largest crowds, even when under construction. Adnan, a Syrian migrant who worked at a halal food kiosk in southwest Moscow, explained to me in May 2013, “I like to go to the biggest mosque, to see my brothers. The mosque on Prospekt Mira (Cathedral Mosque) is the easiest mosque to go to. I can go to namaz (prayer) then come to work afterwards. It is convenient and most of my brothers from Syria are there.” A group of about ten other workers at other kiosks near his agreed with Adnan, stating that Cathedral Mosque had the best location. The Prospect Mira metro station serves the mosque, and is located off the busy Moscow Ring Line that circles the city and the Orange Line that transverses northeast and southwest Moscow. Adnan and his coworkers work in kiosks located next to the
Belyaevskaya metro station entrance, also located off the Orange Line. This group, composed of Syrian and Azeri migrants, did not know the locations or names of the other mosques in the city.

According to interviews with imams from all of Moscow’s mosques, Moscow’s Muslim migrants tend to go to mosque more than Tatars, attending the mosque for prayers more frequently and in greater numbers at Friday prayers (Interview B, October 2013; Interview Q, September 2013; Interview X, October 2013; Interview Y, September 2013). Central Asian attendees are mostly male (Interview Q; Interview Y), and based on my field notes and observation data over 90% of Central Asian attendees at each mosque are male. These Muslims are bringing with them new forms and a greater frequency of religious practice. Zikr is one of the examples of how the Muslim migration has changed ritual practices at mosques. Sufism and Hanafi are both traditionally practiced in Russia; however Hanafi is considered to be traditional to Moscow’s historically Tatar community. The increasing plurality of practices at the mosques has led to a spatialization of Muslims in Moscow. All imams are adherents to Hanafi school, but Memorial Mosque tends to attract a more higher-educated audience and is Alyautdinov’s platform for spreading his self-improvement approach. Cathedral and Historical Mosque’s convenient location attracts more of Moscow’s labor migrant Muslims, with Historical Mosque being more open to allowing Sufi practices (March 2010).

**Forming of Normative Behaviors at the Mosque: Cleanliness, Begging, Gender**

The ethnographic vignette at Historical Mosque and the group interview at Kazan Chai Bar illustrated a common theme that has resulted in the attendance patterns at Moscow’s mosques- The sentiment that Muslims from Central Asia and the Caucasus are more dangerous and less clean than those from Moscow. This xenophobic sentiment is rooted in different beliefs of acceptable behaviors while at the mosque. In this section I overview three issues that create
tensions between different religious publics as they interact at the mosques: cleanliness, begging, and gender norms.

**Cleanliness**

Alina’s and the workers’ at Historical Mosque concerns over the cleanliness of “cultureless” labor migrants came up two other interviews during my fieldwork. The Tatar imam of Yardyam Mosque also voiced this complaint over the behavior of newcomer Muslim migrants to Moscow, stating:

I am Tatar, and this is my country. We have been here for 1,000 years. But, these people are our guests. They have been here for fifteen years. Some migrants are good, educated people. But, some are also aggressive. The good people do not come to the mosque, that is why so many people unite against building mosques. These people that come are not good, they are without culture. Dirtiness, garbage, that is the problem here (Interview X, October 2013).

The imam felt that it was the behavioral aspect of migrants that alienated a more desirable congregation from attending mosques, more so than differences of spiritual practice.

![A discarded box asking for alms lying outside of the Prospekt Mira metro station after Friday prayers. The box reads, “Peace be unto you. Help me, for the sake of Allah.” October 2013. Photo by author.](image)

Figure 7.2
This discourse of cleanliness also impacted the interaction of Muslim and nonreligious publics in the neighborhood surrounding Historical Mosque. I visited workers at a healthcare clinic located by Historical Mosque for a short interview on the topic of their organizations’ relationship with the mosque. One woman stated, “We are used to the crowds. We do not allow them here, they tried to use our bathrooms to clean themselves. But they leave mud everywhere.” Her coworker agreed stating, “And now look, when they leave after prayer, you will see so much trash everywhere.” I had observed men performing their necessary abdes, or cleansing ablutions before prayers on the streets, using plastic water bottles to clean their hands and face before discarding them to the side. As a non-Muscovite, I never considered this behavior as particularly unusual. In fact, I thought it was normal for Muslims to clean themselves before prayer. But, as Alina, the mosque workers, and the hospital workers wanted me to see, these acts of cleaning might be expected, but the discarding of the water bottle was problematic. Muscovites and non-migrant Muslims view cleanliness as a shared value in their crowded city, and littering was antithetical to this core trait (Figure 7.2) They did not want me, as an outsider, to observe the littering and think it representative of Moscow Muslims.

**Begging**

Notably, in my group interview, Farid singled out Uzbeks as an ethnic group of particular concern. I followed up with him after our group interview, to ask why he mentioned Uzbeks in particular. He clarified that although he does not associate Uzbeks in particular with negative behaviors, the beggars surrounding mosques are mainly Uzbeks and that beggars might need help but also can be untrustworthy. Thus, if they are at a mosque it is better for women to steer

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6 Abdes refers to the Islamic ritual of minor cleansing before salat, or prayer. Abdes, also called wudu in Arabic, is both a physical act, such as washing hands, nose, and mouth (Keskin 2012).
clear. In my participant observations at mosques, I noted that the beggar population was larger at Historical Mosque and Cathedral Mosque, the two mosques that my group interview mentioned unfavorably. I noted groups of Uzbek beggars holding signs, like the one in Figure 7.3, asking for charity. Men and women would ask for money, and often sell papers to use as rugs for namaz. Women would often supervise while children sold the mats, and ask for donations to feed the children.

Although most Muslim migrants in Moscow are male, these Uzbek women are some of the female Muslim migrants in the city. I conducted street interviews with three women from these groups- three who spoke Russian. The women all stated that they came to these mosques to ask for alms because services attracted the biggest crowds. One of the women who spoke Russian interviewed with me. I asked her why she came to Moscow, and she replied, “We are from Samarkand. But there is nothing there for us. So we came here. We find some help here, at the mosque, but where else can we go? There is not much for us here, but more than at home” (Street interview, October 2013).

According to Russia’s Federal Migration Service, in 2016, there was an average 1.6 million Uzbek guest workers in Russia, down from 2.3 million in 2013 due to Russia’s economic crisis. Uzbek guest workers abroad send $6 billion in remittances from Russia back home, which is 12 percent of Uzbekistan’s GDP (Stronksi 2015). The country’s population has doubled since the 1990s, while their economy has not improved as fast. Uzbekistan’s then-president, Islam Karimov, was highly critical of Uzbekistan’s migrant workers, labeling them as unpatriotic for leaving the country. In 2013, he publicly stated on state-run television, “There are very few lazy people in Uzbekistan now… I describe as lazy those who go to Moscow and sweep its streets and squares. One feels disgusted with Uzbeks going there for a slice of bread”
In April 2016, Karimov launched a program to get guest workers to return to Uzbekistan. This involved police going around villages and obtaining phone numbers from migrants’ families, calling and asking them to return home. However, the job market has not improved in Uzbekistan, and remittances continue to be a large part of the country’s GDP.

The beggars were usually the same women and men, and they alternated between attending Cathedral and Historical Mosque on different Fridays (Figure 7.3). These mosques are both located off the same metro line in Moscow, making it easy to navigate between them and perhaps leading to this interconnected presence. In an interview with a Tatar imam at Historical Mosque, I inquired into how he viewed the presence of these beggars, asking, “Are the immigrants who come to the mosque mainly men? I see many women with children near the mosque. They said that they were from Samarkand, Uzbekistan.” The imam addressed their presence, stating:

They are beggars. They stay there with children and ask for help. It’s a sort of their job. Getting “easy money” is an illness. It’s a contingent of people who are used to lead this way of life. When you entered the mosque you see a woman. She is healthy, everything is fine with her. She has got arms and legs, she can go. She could to go to wash up, to clean the courtyards to earn some money. So you see the contingent is quite strange. And they don’t let their rivals do the same; they can even start quarrelling and fighting.

He viewed the beggars negatively, believing their hardships did not limit their ability to work for money. He also believed that the beggars were organized, citing infighting that kept their rival beggars away from the mosque.
Figure 7.3 Group of beggars outside of Moscow Cathedral Mosque. Fall 2013. Photo by author.

Farid’s negative associations with Uzbek beggars also came up in another group interview I conducted for my project, this time composed of four members of the Russian Muslim Council at their library, located in the Cathedral Mosque complex. This group was composed of three women and one man, aged from 20-35. They were all co-workers at the Russian Muftis Council and interested in participating in my project in exchange for English conversation practice. When asked about the role of Muslims in society they responded:

Makka (F): My cousin has medical problems. Her bills are very high. For help, she had to go to a Russian Orthodox charity. They helped her, but it was difficult. She needed help, and it was not available through a Muslim place. So I think the umma should do much more.
Darya (F): I agree, there is more that could be done. There are many poor people in our umma, they come to the mosque and ask for help. They are out every day, asking for money with cups in front of them.
Radik (M): But, I do not know if they are really sick, or homeless.
Darya (F): It is our job to help strengthen the umma. We work for Russian Muslims.
Radik (M): We put on events, we organize many exhibitions…
Darya (F): (Interrupting) Yes, but these people are sick and maybe it is the first thing we should take care of. I think helping others should be the main concern, why should Makka have family that turns to the church? What if they said no?
Radik (M): We are a spiritual organization; we build relationships with other Muslims and imams.
This exchange was notable as Darya and Makka work under Radik within the Russian Council of Muftis. They have a different idea of what the goals of their organization should be than Radik does, valuing providing assistance over creating networks within Muslim society. They also view the beggars as part of their umma rather than as foreigners, as seen in the group interview at Kazan Chai Bar. The presence of the beggars prompt issues of how charity, one of the pillars of Islam, should be practiced in Moscow as well as question the role and ability of Muslim institutions to provide for them.

In 2015, during a follow up visit to Moscow, I noticed that many of the same Uzbek beggars begged at the mosque on Fridays, and conducted a follow-up interview with them. The same Russian-speaking Uzbek woman was still there. She stated, “We do not have papers, how can we find work. We look for it, there is less than before even.” However unseemly, the begging at the mosque is lucrative enough to continue despite the 2014 collapse of the Russian ruble and pressure from the Uzbek government to get migrants to return home.

Gender

In the conversation about mosque attendance, in my group interview at Kazan Chair Bar, Alina expressed discomfort with attending Historical Mosque alone. She was concerned about interacting with radical believers or migrants, and avoided the place. I similarly was warned about attending the mosque alone while conducting interviews. I was interviewing three Muslim men from Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan who rented an apartment near the mosque courtyard. It was evening, around 6pm. The men were explaining to me about the type of work they did in Moscow (one was a construction worker, the other worked cleaning courtyards, while the third ran a dried fruit business that had recently been shut down in Biryulevo following the October 2013 riots). They then turned to a discussion of how many wives they had, teasing the Kyrgyz
construction worker for having no wife. Polygamy is increasing as a practice in Central Asian countries, where junior wives are considered a status symbol (Lazreg 2000). They asked me if I was married, or interested in marriage. I said no, I was not interested. The topic then turned back to whether or not they were interested in remaining in Moscow for work, when a well-dressed man in a business suit left the mosque. He came up to my group, and told me that although the men I was talking to were harmless, that there were dangerous men who went to the mosque and that a woman should not be there alone in the evening. I typically visited the building during daylight hours, and knew that the women who frequented the mosque were either married to Muslim clergy, worked there in the offices and kitchen, or were older Muslim women. The interviewees then walked me to the nearby metro station and would not answer any more questions.

In another interview, at Milost’, a Muslim center in southwest Moscow, I was similarly advised not to attend the center during popular prayer times. While touring the center, I asked the imam if I could attend to observe prayers or any classes, and he decided against it. He stated, “First of all, it will be crowded and uncomfortable. Second, the men will not say anything of note, they will propose.” (Interview Y, September 2013). He went on to explain to me that the only reason women went to mosques in Central Asia were to find husbands, so if migrants notice a woman at the mosque, they think that she is looking for a husband and will propose if interested. Although this seems like an overstatement, it also was true in my experience and in the experience of two other research participants. While attending Memorial Mosque, the mosque that attracts by far the most women to Friday prayers, Lilia, a young 19-year-old Tatar research participant who studies Arabic at Moscow State University, exchanged a greeting with two men leaving a prayer hall. One of them asked her if she was looking for a husband. Lilia
replied. “No, no. I am a young student and I am not ready for a husband.” The man stated, “Such a spiritual woman will make a lovely wife.” She proceeded to very politely refuse his proposals two more times. As we walked away from the men, she explained that she was often proposed to at the mosque, but that she was used to it.

Lilia was unmarried, and often received proposals at the mosque. Another research participant, Natasha, a Russian who converted to Islam following her marriage to a Tatar man and who worked with the Russian Muftis Council, related her experiences as a married woman attending the mosque alone. She had participated in my group interview in the library at Cathedral Mosque, but waited until after the group interview to relay her experience. “You asked us about what we thought were the problems facing Moscow’s Muslim communities,” she told me. “I thought about the responses of the others- media and lack of mosques. But to me, the problem is the aggressive nature of our Muslim brothers. For instance, I went to the mosque (Cathedral Mosque). I was going to meet my husband at the café, and I wanted to pray beforehand. The men at the mosque bothered me- they told me that I needed to wait for my husband before I could go to the mosque. I was very insulted. Why should I need my husband to be there when I say prayers? You see, there are some very aggressive brothers. They make it difficult for the other sisters and brothers.”

Natasha, Alina, and Lilia’s experiences show how they different Muslim publics interact with one another at Moscow’s mosques in regards to issues of gender. While many of Moscow’s male migrants view unmarried women at the mosque as seeking husbands, these women do not attend mosque for that reason. Lilia in particular is exceptionally devout, unusual in her daily attendance at Memorial Mosque for prayers. Natasha worked at the offices building in the Cathedral Mosque complex, but experienced hostility in attending prayer without her husband.
Alina was nervous of attending Historical Mosque alone; elderly Muslim women constituted the main population of women who prayed at that location. For the Muslim women who wanted to attend mosque, Memorial Mosque was by far the most popular mosque.

Mosques are public spaces of religion wherein Moscow’s diverse Muslim communities identify themselves against one another. Mosques offer religious lessons, language lessons, charities, and are places where state officials visit to address Muslim communities. Hanafi Tatar imams and the Council of Muftis use the mosque as a base to produce Russian Muslim cultural and spiritual norms through the classes they offer and sermons. They are spaces for reproducing the narrative of authentic Tatar Islam in Russia, one that is supportive and supported by the Russian state in line with morality politics. Still, the diversity of Muslims makes Moscow’s four mosques places where different Muslim publics and communities are formed, rather than a place that creates a homogeneous Muslim community. Ehrkamp’s (2007) research shows how despite national-level German narratives conflating Turkish migrants with Islam, locally in Marxloh, an industrial city, there a variety of Muslim practices—some people are more involved with their mosque, while others congregate with other Alevis. In Moscow, Muslims and migration from the Caucasus and Central Asia are similarly conflated in media (Malashenko 2014). These media narratives do not address the diversity of Muslims or their communal public spaces. By sticking to the dynamic of official Tatar versus unofficial migrant Islam, other dynamics of Muslim life in Moscow disappear. Moscow’s Muslim geographies are complex, and the following trends have emerged from group interviews, street interviews, and participant observation: Differing attitudes on cleanliness, begging, and gender illustrate some of the tensions between Muslim publics at Moscow’s mosques. These tensions have resulted in different Muslim publics at Moscow’s mosques. Cathedral Mosque attracts the largest crowd due to its size and convenient
location, however Alyautdinov’s influential Muslim lifestyle approach has led to him attracting the largest crowd of women. Historical Mosque has a reputation for being the most democratic of Moscow’s mosques (March 2010), as seen in the permitting of zikr prayers twice a week. These trends show how interactions in mosques create religious pluralism and difference amongst Moscow’s Muslim communities. The next section explores how Muslims seek to create new places for communal rituals and other Muslim public spaces in Moscow.

**Overcrowding and Attempted Solutions for Muslim Sacred Spaces in Moscow**

In the group interview exchange at Kazan Chai Bar, Alfiya mentioned that she found it prohibitively time-consuming to get to Moscow’s mosques on Fridays. Moscow’s traffic problems are well documented in the geography literature, as the consumer economy has created a new automobile-owning public and put stress on the socialist-era infrastructure (Argenbright 2008). Alfiya’s values are not shared with regular mosque attendees, who viewed the amount of time spent traveling to the mosque as a devotional act. At an interview at Cathedral Mosque, a frequent Kazakh parishioner stated, “I am a business owner, I sell nuts and dried fruits. I do not work on Fridays, and I come to the mosque. It takes me one and a half hours to get here.” His friend, also from Kazakhstan, joined the conversation. “Yes, he travels far. This is good, the more we do here, the better for our souls and the greater our rewards will be in heaven.”

This difference in willingness to spend time traveling to mosque illustrates a range in religious values within Moscow’s Muslim communities—whereas some attend mosques more regularly, others primarily celebrate at the mosque rarely or only for the main Muslim holidays. Muslim practices do not stop at mosques, and mosques are not the only forms of Muslim spaces in Moscow. In this section, I analyze post-Islamism in Moscow, or how Moscow’s Muslims transform civil society and the public sphere within the parameters of Russia’s managed context.
To do this, I examine two lines of inquiry that the issue of traffic and overcrowding at mosques opens up: Spatial solutions and alternative communal spaces to alleviate overcrowding at the mosque, and other Muslim public spaces.

**Spatial Solutions**

Moscow’s bad traffic deters Muslims like Alfiya from attending, as well as creates tensions between mosques and their neighbors. In street interviews with neighbors who lived in the apartment blocks surrounding Historical Mosque, six neighbors stated that they did not find the mosque to be a disturbing presence. One woman stated, “I have lived here for many years. It is not a problem, they need their temples too.” But, one neighbor stated that she has lots of issues with the crowds, and used to call the police about noise. She stated, “I called, but they did nothing. So I am always uncomfortable here.” The imam of Historical Mosque stated that the mosque had good relations with thousands of neighbors, but that there were 2-3 people who frequently complained about the mosque (Interview B, October 2013).

Mosques are sites of interaction between nonreligious and religious publics, as well as places where different Muslim communities interact. Due to the intensification of traffic congestion caused by the crowds of Muslims attending Friday prayers, and the bad traffic that prohibits some Muslims from leaving work to attend the mosque on Fridays, multiple spatial solutions have been proposed to ease the problems. In this sub-section, I will overview three of the suggestions: Urban Cover, Mobile Mosque, and temporary prayer spaces for holidays. Plans to build new mosques have failed in Tekstilshchiki and Mitino as described earlier; these three suggestions offer alternatives to new mosque construction.
In summer of 2013, as part of the Higher School of Economics Summer School on Urbanism, one student developed an idea to address the issue of overcrowding at Moscow’s four mosques on Fridays, especially during Ramadan. The summer school encouraged innovation amongst young professionals in addressing urban problems. An Armenian Christian architect living in Moscow for two years, the project designer believed this was a serious issue, stating that while New York City has a population of 8 million and over 100 mosques, that Moscow has 12 million people and four mosques to serve 2 million Muslims. Stressing the nonpolitical nature of his project, he felt that the solution of overcrowding was not constructing more mosques, but dispersing worshippers from these four mosques and throughout the city (Interview Z, October 2013).

His project, Urban Carpet, was designed so that Muscovite Muslims and Muslim migrants could have a temporary and mobile prayer space. The title refers to the prayer mats used by worshippers during their prayers. His idea consisted of mobile prayer sites that could be assembled for prayers and then disassembled. These sites would be located throughout the city in parks, and would include television screens that would broadcast prayers and sermons from Cathedral Mosque, the largest mosque in the city. Taking into account the number of Muslims in the city, the author of the project suggested about 100 sites for 100-150 worshippers. Temporary sacred spaces could alleviate urban issues caused by overcrowding at mosques, such as disrupting traffic and neighborhood activities. Also, because the mosques would be less crowded, there would be less need for large police forces to address security concerns (Interview Z, October 2013).
The Urban Carpet project raised theological and secular questions. Some human rights specialists and researchers supported the project. Andrei Korotaev, researcher on Islamic studies stated that the Urban Carpet was the ideal solution for Moscow’s shortage of Muslim prayer space because he believed the only true issue with mosque overcrowding was for the two major Muslim holidays, Eid Al-Fitr which celebrates the conclusion of Ramadan and Eid- Al Adha, which celebrates Abraham’s sacrifice (Interview Z, October 2013, also Maltseva 2013). Because overcrowding did not constantly occur, he believed that there was no need to build mosques throughout the city. Yuri Tabak, a member of the Moscow Bureau of Human Rights was in agreement with Korotaev on the efficacy of the spatial solution as an alternative to the controversial construction of new mosques (Mal’tseva 2013).

However, spiritual and municipal authorities did not support the concept. Municipal authorities resisted the idea of using parks as religious spaces, as they are meant as places for citizens to relax and play. According to municipal authorities, the plan would need to be sanctioned by Moscow’s Muslim leadership. The project was officially presented to representative from DUMER, the Spiritual Board of the Muslims of the European Part of Russia. DUMER declined to implement the project stating that it was not theologically sound and in accordance to the Hanafi school. The first deputy chairman of DUMER Damir-Hazrat Mukhetdinov, acknowledged that while the project has merit about solving secular concerns with traffic and overcrowding, that overcrowding in itself is not a problem from a theological standpoint. Having hundreds of prayer sites around the city is not in line with the principle of collegiality, which is the maximum concentration of believers assembled in an area.

Urban Carpet did not elicit serious debate between stakeholders in the local government, Muslim leaders, Muslims, and Moscow residents, as the planner had wanted; however he hoped
to introduce the concept to other cities. Although the architect was surprised by the attention his project attracted in news media, he was disappointed by its dismissal by city authorities and DUMER. He stated that as the prayer mat was a sacred space, then his plan was spiritually sound. His frustration shows the contrast of the realities of the urban setting of Moscow with Hanafi traditions. A controversial design, Urban Cover joined the ranks of untested ideas about how to balance the demands for religious infrastructure in congested urban spaces.

**Mobile Mosque**

A second project aimed at addressing the needs for prayer space in Moscow’s urban environment was the Mobile Mosque. This concept started as a crowd-funded initiative, wherein donors could donate online at Boomstarter.ru to support the project. The Mobile Mosque was a mosque the size of a small bus that could travel around the city and provide a comfortable space for worship for Moscow’s Muslims. The design included prayer space for up to seven Muslims and a space for ablutions. Ordering the mosque would be free, and a vending machine in the bus would help generate profits to keep the mosque in service. The Mobile Mosque would consist of a fleet of several vehicles to serve the needs of Moscow’s Muslims, and then expand with use.

I interviewed one of the project designers, a young Tatar entrepreneur, about the concept. He explained that the idea for the Mobile Mosque emerged from necessity:

Many Muslims cannot get off of work on Fridays, and cannot access the mosque 5 times a day for prayers. Instead, they often perform prayer rituals in their office buildings. We only have access to one stairway in my large company and it is uncomfortable to pray there- uncomfortable for me and for my coworkers (Interview AA, August 2015).

He envisioned that the mosque could be a resource for all of Moscow’s Muslim communities, but would primarily be a benefit for those unable to leave their jobs on Fridays. The Mobile Mosque would provide a way for devout Muslims, who struggle with balancing concerns with work and traffic, to perform their prayers in peace.
The Mobile Mosque is similar to the Mitzvah Tank, mobile synagogues serving Jewish communities. These tanks originated in 1974 following the Yom Kippur War and operate in urban areas, including New York City and Moscow, providing information about Judaism to neighborhoods without synagogues (Nathans 2015). Like the Mitzvah Tank, the Mobile Mosque would provide worship space for those without access to religious temples. Unlike the Mitzvah Tank, which campaigns primarily to non-practicing Jewish populations, the Mobile Mosque’s project designer did not envision the Mobile Mosque as a way to increase religious feelings or convert non-believers. He stated that he did not view it so much as a project to increase religious practice amongst Tatars, but more so for working Muslims who already wanted more prayer spaces (Interview AA, August 2015).

The Mobile Mosque project met its fundraising goal of 850,000 rubles ($13,770 dollars) within two months, from February –April 2015, showing that Moscow’s Muslims were supportive enough about the idea to get it off the ground (Interview AA, August 2015). A prototype Mobile Mosque was built, but it never was tested on the road. The Mobile Mosque project did not receive permission from Moscow city authorities to operate and in August 2015 the project was stalled (Mikhailovina 2015). The prototype was moved to Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan, where it is parked at the company headquarters of Halal Guide, an online service that provides maps to the locations of mosques, prayer rooms, organizations, shops, and cafes in most Russian cities. Just as the Urban Carpet project designer hoped that his innovation will be used in other cities, so to does the design team of the Mobile Mosque.

Like Urban Carpet, the Mobile Mosque was an innovative approach to provide a temporary space for Muslims that would be amenable to city life. An outsider to Moscow’s Muslim communities designed Urban Carpet, while a team of young Tatars in Moscow and
Kazan designed Mobile Mosque. Both projects had designers that are young and well educated. These two designs are serious interventions that young people outside of Muslim clergy to help improve prayer conditions for Muslims. Both projects faced obstacles in trying to get these alternative prayer spaces past institutional structures. These projects were not carried out to experimentation beyond the design phase. Whereas the Urban Carpet did not receive any approval from the Muslim leadership at DUMER, the crowd-sourced Mobile Mosque did not receive approval from Moscow city authorities. Muslim and non-Muslim civilians are searching for solutions that meet the demands of urban Muslims in an atmosphere inhospitable to the construction of new mosques; despite innovative solutions and crowdsourcing, they lack the institutional support or social capital necessary to implement these changes and alter Islamic public spaces in Moscow.

Moscow city government and the leaders in the Council of Muftis in Moscow have implemented a third spatial solution, showing that the two entities are not entirely inflexible to the demands of Moscow’s growing Muslim population. Starting in 2012, the city set aside temporary worship sites for Muslims on these holidays in the spalnie rayoni, or sleeping regions. This solution is similar to Urban Carpet, but only occurs on two important Muslim holidays, Eid al-Fitr, which celebrates the end of Ramadan, and Eid al-Adha, which honors Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son for God. In addition to these prayer sites, Moscow also annually sets aside sites for animal sacrifice in Moscow Oblast, (the area outside of Moscow’s city limits that surrounds the capital); for 2015, 38 sites were designated for animal sacrifice, the main ritual of the holiday. The sacrifice is not allowed in the city limits and was outlawed in 2011, after complaints by non-Muslim Muscovites to city authorities over animal sacrifice in the city (Reznik 2013). Moscow’s Muslims can also purchase sacrificial meat over the phone or online,
thereby fulfilling the ritual but minimizing its visibility in public space. The city government also warned that they would check passports and registration documents for attendees to the temporary worship spaces, in an attempt to mitigate the number of undocumented workers attending the holidays.

In 2013, I observed Eid al-Adha at Historical Mosque and Cathedral Mosque. The streets in the neighborhoods surrounding the mosque were cordoned off from traffic, and lined with policemen, tanks, and metal detectors. 4,000 police officers were assigned to monitor the mosques and temporary worship spaces for the holiday (Interfax 2013). Only Muslim men and those working in the nearby office buildings were allowed through the detectors. After the prayers at Historical Mosque, I met several men taking part in both options for performing the sacrifice: “We are going to go to the countryside now, because it is time for the sacrifice. The sacrifice is necessary. It is an honor to be the one to perform the ritual,” stated one young Kazakh male. “I need to go study now. I have several exams. But my roommate here, he is just a good cook as my mother! We will have a good feast,” stated another young Kazakh male student at Moscow’s People’s Friendship University. His roommate agreed, and said that he bought the sacrificial meat for their meal at a kiosk located near the university.

By allocating specific sites for sacrifice outside of Moscow, the city government attempted to mitigate tensions between Muslim and non-Muslim publics. Through allowing temporary worship sites within the city, the city government tried to address the issues of overcrowding at mosques on the two days most important to Muslims. Temporary prayer spaces are not permanent solutions, but as Sobyanin has stated, he does not view the city’s Muslim population as permanent (Venediktov 2013). The temporary prayer spaces provided by the city government for the holidays do not provide a spatial solution for the everyday needs of
Moscow’s Muslim populations, which the Urban Carpet or Mobile Mosque would have provided. Ordinary citizens have been unable to get both the government and Muslim leadership support necessary to bring flexible prayer spaces to the city’s Muslims. In Russia’s managed democracy, the local state and Muslim leaders are key arbiters of what sort of practices are permissible in Moscow’s public spaces. However, there are other opportunities for following a Muslim way of life in the city.

**Muslim Counter-Publics in Moscow**

Moscow’s insufficient number of mosques is not indicative of the other ways that exist in the city for Muslims to practice and learn about their religion in their daily lives. As a post-Islamist approach allows (Bayat 2007), Muslim counter-publics in Moscow city life are more complex and varied than suggested by Russia’s national-level discourses of official or unofficial Islam.

Post-Islamism in Moscow, as in other research contexts such as Turkey or Iran (Bayat 2013) is both historical condition and analytical approach. Under Gorbachev in the immediate post-Soviet 1990s, there were a few national-level Islamist political parties in Russia, including the Islamic Renaissance Party and the Union of Muslims of Russia, and regional Islamist parties in the Islamic-majority regions in the Volga-Urals and Caucasus (Yemelianova 2002). However, in 2001 following the renewal of the second Chechen war the Russian government banned political parties based on religion or ethnicity (Hunter 2004). As a historical condition, Islamist (and religious) electoral politics in Russia is at an end (Roy 1994). Unlike in Turkey, Iran, or Indonesia, post-Islamism in Moscow does not take the form of political parties that use democratic channels to create a Muslim society. Whereas Tatar political leaders in Tatarstan use
Muslim symbols to claim status and legitimacy, this is the extent of political religious nationalism amongst Hanafi Tatars in Russia (Yusupova 2016).

As an analytical approach, post-Islamism explores Muslim claims to civil society and everyday life (Gökarıksel and Secor 2016). Thus, it is possible to speak of post-Islamism in Moscow without the existence of political parties. I have already explored the limits of Muslim visibilities in regards to constructing mosques in public spaces, but I have not explored other means through which the increased Muslim presence in Moscow transforms public life. In Moscow, many Muslim cultural organizations are forming to suit different populations, and halal establishments are opening to serve Muslim consumers. Halal refers to permissible by Islam, typically referring to the adherence of Islamic ritual in the preparation of meat. Whereas the first part of the chapter focused on the interactions of different publics at mosque spaces, this section examines the emergence of two types of post-Islamism and Muslim counter-publics in Moscow—halal economy and Muslim civil society organizations in the city.

**Halal economy in Moscow**

Moscow’s Muslim revival is connected to capitalism and market forces in Russia. Russian capitalism has a growing halal component. During the Soviet era, halal horsemeat, an ethnic Tatar food, was only sold at Pyatnitsky Farm Market in the historically Tatar neighborhood surrounding Historical Mosque (Safarov, n.d.). In the 1990s, small Tatar family businesses initially formed the halal economy in Moscow, selling horsemeat, canned meat, and sausages at tents near the city’s mosques (Safarov, n.d.). The halal market in Moscow has grown since the Soviet era, expanding beyond the Tatar family-run model to include other products, from financial to cosmetics (Interview BB, July 2013). For example, Alyautdinov’s Trillionaire brand extends from his religious teachings to a line of halal products including Trillionaire water.
Trillionaire water is bottled in the Alaniya National Park in the North Caucasus while the Koran is read. The intersection of the growth of Islam and the growth of capitalism occurs not only in Moscow, but worldwide. The mediation of market and Muslim identities is localized in its effects, as consumers navigate the demand for consumption of capitalism with the issues of Muslim morality and moderation (Gökarıksel and Secor 2009).

In Russia, the Council of Muftis have used the growth of the international and national halal economy as opportunity to gain influence over and expand Muslim practices in Russia. In the 2000s, the Russian Council of Muftis developed a certification program as the retail economy and presence of supermarkets grew in the city. This certification both promotes a halal brand and lifestyle, but also ensures the authenticity of products. According to a representative from the Council of Muftis, “Halal is associated with food. But, we want to make halal a brand and a paragon of business success and quality…We want to help develop halal product chains all over Russia, so that consumers can be sure that they are getting authentic halal goods”(Interview BB, July 2013). Thus, one of the ways in which the Council of Muftis sees its role in shaping Muslim practices in Russia is through encouraging the growth and reputation of halal products.

But, interpretations of halal vary amongst Moscow’s Muslims: Halal horsemeat was a historical ethnic Tatar product, but in the Caucasus, horsemeat is haram, or forbidden by Muslim law (Safarov, n.d.). Halal horsemeat can be certified, showing the Tatar hegemonic influence on Islam in Russia. This certification project is another way in which the Russian Council of Muftis extends its influence on the development of Muslim society in Moscow.

The halal market in Moscow is internationalizing under the patronage of the Russian Council of Muftis and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation. These organizations work together to sponsor an international Halal Expo annually to attract foreign
and domestic Muslim businesses to Moscow (Interview BB, July 2013). The expo grows every year, and includes business representatives from other Muslim nations such as Turkey, Pakistan, and Malaysia, as well as from Russian regions, such as the Caucasian Risalat Holding group. This business provides many services to Muslims, including an Internet store selling books and clothes, a travel agency, taxi services, shipping, housing services, and has headquarters in Moscow and Makhachkala, Dagestan. The goal of the business is to provide halal services for all aspects of Muslim lives, and the business supports Muslim initiatives and events, such as iftar tents at Memorial Mosque during Ramadan (Interview CC, June 2013). Other examples of exhibitors include tour companies that organize hajj trips, Muslim radio stations and Muslim publishing houses. The expo hosts a fashion show and discussion forums led by a panel of experts on key issues for Russian Muslims, such as the role of youth or Muslims in the Media. The expo grows every year, and attracts retailers and producers of halal products as well as Moscow Muslims (Interview BB, July 2013).

The growth of the halal economy is endorsed by the Russian state. According to a representative from the Halal Expo, “We are supported by the Russian government, Russian authorities, and many embassies. We are thankful that they support us. It is great that we have something in common and receive their support” (Interview BB, July 2013). This support consists of creating legislation that encourages the growth of the halal economy and the creation of international business partnerships. The construction of mosques in public space does not receive support, but the growth of the halal marketplace does. Russian secularism separates Muslim economic practices from the request for communal spaces. Whereas in Moscow mosques are portrayed as dangerous Muslim spaces from which radicalism emanates in the
discourses of the global War on Terror, Islamic capitalism, consumption, and halal economic spaces thrive under neoliberal reforms.

Besides the expo, which serves as a business incubator for the development of the halal economy, Moscow’s Muslims have a variety of halal products and services to consume (Figure 7.4). This new capitalist halal economy reshapes Muslim communities, making class a key consideration of access to halal spaces and consumption of halal products and lifestyle (Gökariksel and McLarney 2010). Moscow’s halal economy has grown from the horse meat at Pyatnitsky to include a variety of services, including hair-dressers, women’s health clinics, dating services, and kindergartens serving halal foods to children (Interview BB, Vashchenko 2016). According to the Halal Guide, a directory of Muslim businesses in Moscow, as of 2016 are 101 shops selling Halal products, 15 halal restaurants, 90 halal cafes, 33 Muslim clothes

Figure 7.4 A Halal butcher shop located in southwest Moscow. November 2013. Photo by author.
shops, and a Muslim radio station in the city. Muslim businesses tend to cluster around mosques and in south and southeast Moscow, where rents are cheaper, but halal shops are located in every district (Vashchenko 2016). The historical Tatar neighborhood and mosques were the starting points for the growth of the halal economy in Moscow, but halal shops and products are available in neighborhoods throughout the city. Muslim restaurants often have prayer rooms and host birthday parties, weddings, or ethnic holiday celebrations as well as Muslim variants of secular events such as trivia nights. As participants in the Islamic lifestyle industry, Moscow’s Muslims can engage in consumption patterns associated with capitalism, but morally grounded in Muslim morality. At these halal places, middle- and upper-class Muslims interact and forge group identities, furthering connections while becoming a more defined counter-public.

In my ethnographic research, eight group interview participants and 20 street interview participants reported that it was easy to find and shop for halal goods in Moscow, even though it was hard to find places to pray. According to one research participant:

I can speak freely about faith, but have problems with performing religious practice. It is very difficult to find suitable places for prayer- we have to pray in the streets, under the stairs, etc. There is a problem with places for prayer in Moscow. But, halal products have recently become easier to find, halal products have appeared in many major stores (Interview DD, November 2013.)

The large amount of options and ubiquity of halal shops makes it easier for Moscow’s Muslims to purchase halal goods, even if the demand for prayer space has not been met in the city. This shows how Muslim publics and practices are forming in Moscow: Muslims have the individual right to buy products, but not group rights to a mosque. Another interviewee echoed the sentiment that the halal economy in Moscow was very consumer-friendly. She stated:

Halal products can be found quite easily. Networks of large hypermarkets sell halal, there are many cafes and restaurants with halal meat on the menu, and there are places for reading namaz (prayers). And they are not just words, the halal items have a certificate of authenticity issued by the spiritual administration. I might add that there is also a mobile
program that can help one find and purchase halal, from restaurants or a Muslim clothing store. It is very easy life (Interview EE, November 2013).

She cited her use of Halal Guide, a Muslim directory available as a phone app. This app helps Muslim consumers to find and support halal businesses, and as of August 2015 had 32,000 iOS users and 14,000 Android users (Interview AA, August 2015). The app provides delivery services, frequent user discounts, and a map to nearby Muslim businesses. The HalalGuide app shows that although innovative ritual spaces are not part of the Muslim public sphere in Moscow, innovation, growth, and entrepreneurism have altered the in the Muslim economic sphere.

The official halal economy in Moscow is growing; however it is harder to estimate halal consumption patterns. Safarov (n.d.) and Deminsteva and Peshkova's (2014) research on migrants in Moscow and halal economies indicates that there is no emergence of unofficial or ethnic halal economies to serve those populations: Instead, Central Asian migrants often frequent cheaper hypermarkets which do not sell halal products at all. They become excluded from Islamic capitalist spaces; but have counter-public spaces of their own. Muslim migrants have networks to find jobs, housing, and services (Interview B, Interview H). For Muslims with cash, Moscow’s halal lifestyle is affordable and accessible. Thus, class and status become linked with Muslim identity and group formation as halal capitalism grows in Moscow.

Under the auspices of the Russian Muftis Council, the halal economy and its growth, even internationalization, receive state support. The halal economy is one way in which the Russian Muftis Council seeks to elevate the prestige of Muslim lifestyles and its association of quality, as well as grow the presence of Muslims and the ability to consume halal products from urban centers to small towns. Through its certification program, the Russian Muftis Council also positions itself as the interpreter and authority on the meaning of halal. Although this program seeks to associate halal with quality, many halal products are inaccessible to poorer Muslim
migrant consumers. Class and capitalism associated with the emergent Islamic lifestyle industry are growing ways in which Muslim publics and identities are formed in Moscow.

**Muslim Civil Society Organizations**

Outside of the four mosques in Moscow, Muslim cultural centers offer opportunities for Muslims to socialize and study their religion. Mosques are visibly Muslim spaces; these centers blend into the urban fabric and are located within apartment buildings or in industrial zones. I will outline two types of organizations shaping Muslim civil society in Moscow—cultural centers and charities. These organizations show the conditions under which minority religions form in Russia.

**Cultural Centers**

Moscow has two types of Muslim cultural centers, women’s educational centers and local organizations, called *mestniye religiozniye organizatsii musulma* (local religious organizations of Muslims) (MROMs). Both types of centers fill in a lacuna caused by the lack of mosques in the city. Each mosque has a space for women who want to attend sermons or prayers, and religious courses for women. However, overcrowding and a clash in gender norms between Muscovite professional women, Tatar women, and more conservative migrants make some women feel uncomfortable about mosques. Women’s cultural centers provide opportunities for religious education, language lessons, and interaction. Moscow has two women’s organizations, International Women’s Club Aisha, formed in 2011, and Medina Educational Center, formed in 2013 (Figure 7.5).
Aisha and Medina provide religious educational lessons and host seminars on Muslim issues such as raising a Muslim family, Muslim art, and Islam in the media (Interview FF, August 2015). Medina has more of a focus on religious education and Arabic language lessons, whereas Aisha organizes social activities. One example is Hijab Day at Gorky Park, Moscow’s largest public park. Aisha encouraged and organized Muslim women wear hijabs in Moscow’s largest public space, therefor celebrating Muslim life in Moscow. These women’s organizations are means through which Moscow’s Muslim women can explore and learn about religion while meeting other Muslim women (Interview FF, August 2015). Both centers state that they are international portray themselves as contemporary. Based on my visits, the centers attract international attendees, including Russian, Tatar, Caucasian, and Central Asian women. Lecturers included Muslim art historians and religious leaders, such as Dr. Magomedbasir Gasanov, the dean of Islamic theology at Moscow Islamic University, as the leader of a Moscow-based Muslim organization associated with Salafi Islam. There was a mix of
homemakers, professional women, and students. Like mosques, these Muslim women’s clubs are international spaces; unlike mosques this internationality is an aspect of their appeal to women.

In addition to these two women’s centers, Moscow has ten MROMs. MROMs are affiliated with DUMER, and registered with the Moscow City government. They may lease or own property and host charities, schools, educational and spiritual activities (Medina 2013). MROMs provide spaces for Moscow’s Muslim communities to gather; the Moscow media and anti-Muslim sociological figures like Roman Silyantev uses their establishment to indicate the threat of Muslim ghettos in their neighborhoods (Goble 2007; March 2010). These organizations, though less visibly marked as a Muslim space than mosques, are a contentious part of Moscow’s geography of religious public spaces. In this section I compare and contrast two of these MROMs and the controversies engendered by their presence: Darul’ Arkam, a closed MROM, and Milost’, an operating MROM in southern Moscow.

Darul’ Arkam was officially registered in 2005 and located near the embankment of the Moscow River in an industrial area adjacent to residential apartments. The origins of Darul’ Arkam date back to the Soviet period. The founder, Sheikh Muhammed Karachay, from Karachay-Cherkessia in Russia’s North Caucasus region, moved to Moscow to study Islam at Cathedral Mosque. In 1987, he rented an apartment in the city and taught Islam to a mix of Tatar locals and Caucasian students during the period of official state atheism. In 1990, at the start of religious liberalization and the collapse of the Soviet Union, he had 50 students. Darul’ Arkam registered as a MROM with the Moscow Ministry of Justice in 2002, gaining official registered status in 2005. MROM Darul’ Arkam moved locations four times, settling into a 300-square foot location on Danilovskaya Naberezhnaya in southern Moscow. Besides providing sermons and Arabic language lessons, Darul’ Arkam also had a kindergarten. The sheikh resigned from
leading Darul’ Arkam in 2012, and assigned Dr. Magomedbasir Gasanov, the dean of Islamic theology at Moscow Islamic University, as the leader of the organization (Mamii 2012).

Karachay and Gasanov stated that the cultural center taught a moderate form of Islam; however in Moscow’s mass media Darul’ Arkam was portrayed as a pathway for radicalization due to its association with non-traditional Salafi Islam (Aitamurto 2016). This negative portrayal of the community as an underground prayer room is one way in which the association of Salafists with radicalism is forged in Russia, even though not all Salafist imams and communities in Russia seek to challenge state authority. The Salafist movement in Russia has extreme components (such as in Dagestan in the 1990s) but is predominantly moderate, affecting religious communities but not Russian politics (Malashenko 2014). Like Moscow’s mosques, Darul’ Arkam was overcrowded on Friday prayers and frequented by migrant communities. On April 26, 2013, the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Interior Ministry, and the Federal Migration Service, raided Darul’ Arkam under suspicion of religious radicalism, checking the migration and residence documents of thousands of attendees. The FSB detained 140 attendees under suspicion of radicalism, but none were arrested and all were released the same day (Romanova 2013). Channel One News, a state-run news channel, was also there, filming the events of the raid for national broadcast. Darul’ Arkam’s community council chose to liquidate the organization in November 2013 due to conflicts over the direction of the organization under Gasanov. (Tuaev 2013).

I visited the former Darul’ Arkam building in November 2013, as a young Chechen woman offered to introduce me to people there. On our ride to the center, she criticized my choice to wear loose pants instead of a long skirt, showing an adherence to more conservative Muslim values. Wearing pants was normal for the women in Muslim communities I typically
met, so I did not anticipate a problem. When we arrived to Darul’ Arkam, her colleagues did not want to be interviewed. One woman told me, “We are a Tatar Cultural Center.” This was a joke, as official Islam in Moscow is affiliated with the Tatar community. She showed me how all the signs and images adorning the walls had been taken down, and how all the books were in boxes, as if trying to prove that they were closed. I then waited as the group went to say their Asr, or afternoon prayer, and then was escorted away.

Darul’ Arkam originated as an underground prayer room in the Soviet era, but was officially a MROM at the time of its closure in 2013. The closure of Darul’ Arkam was not the result of the mosque’s radical teaching, or caused by disputes over the rental agreement (Tuaev 2013). The MROM was continuously targeted by xenophobic commentary in mass media for producing radicalism (Shuster 2013), which helped lead to the decision to close the organization despite the large number of attendees. However, as Goble (2013) points out, it is the closure and not the presence of these official MROMs such as Darul’ Arkam that can lead to more radical unofficial Muslim spaces in Moscow.

Muslim “experts” such as Roman Silyantev and Rais Suleymanov, often report to state-run news media that Moscow has up to 5,000 supporters of radical Islam in the city (RIA Novosti 2015). Suleymanov and Silyantev are so called “Islamic experts- Suleymanov works as analyst for a think tank supported by the Russian government, the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, and Silyantev works at the World’s People Council, an organization sponsored by the Russian Orthodox Church. Both men warn of the existence of radical Muslim spaces under people’s noses, in halal cafes or apartment building basements. My interview data showed that most unofficial prayer rooms are actually smaller organizations in the Moscow region that are administered by Hanafi clergymen on Fridays, and not associated with radicalism. One
interviewee reported that he led a small MROM prayer room in a small building in an apartment bloc outside of the city limits, and it was frequently vandalized with swastikas. My news article database showed that most arrests over the distribution of radical literature or recruitment to join radical groups occurred at official mosques in Moscow and the Moscow region outside of the city limits. There was not data about unofficial Muslim spaces outside of Darul’ Arkam, whose history extended to the Soviet period.

Milost’ is a MROM located in Southern Butovo on the southern outskirts of Moscow, and was established in 2005 (Figure 7.6). It is typical of the other MROMs in Moscow. Like Darul’ Arkam, Milost’ has a kindergarten, religious school, and holds Friday sermon and fundraisers for charities and orphanages. Unlike Darul’ Arkam, which was in a separate building, it is located in the first floor of a large apartment building. Like Darul’ Arkam, the leader of Milost’ reported that his building is under constant surveillance from the police and neighbors. When I visited Milost’, the leader asked me if I had noticed the police car parked out front. He stated, “They come so often, many times a week, and sometimes multiple times a day. The neighbors are always complaining” (Interview Y, September 2013). Although the Tatar leader of Milost’ stated the MROM is based on the traditional Hanafi school, neighbors are concerned about radicalism because its attendees are primarily from the Caucasus and Central Asia.
Butovo has received mass media attention for its large migrant population of 60,000 out of 180,000 residents and the establishment of Milost’ as indicative of the potential formation of a Muslim ghetto in Moscow (March 2010). However, as the imam of Milost indicated, these fears are xenophobic and not rooted in reality. Although Milost’ organizes a temporary prayer space in Butovo that serves thousands of attendees for Muslim holidays (Interview Y), an average of 100 people come to the center on a regular basis (March 2010, Interview Y, September 2013). Butovo might attract a large number of migrants, but that does not mean that migrants are religious. Due to xenophobic feelings and the failure of mosque construction projects in Tekstilshchiki and Mitino, it is unlikely that plans for mosque construction in Butovo will come to fruition (Interview Y, September 2013).

MROMs fulfill a crucial gap in Moscow’s Muslim geography, as they are places for religious Muslims to come together for rituals outside of overcrowded mosques. They operate
under the auspices of the Spiritual Administartion of the Muslims of the European Part of Russia (DUMER) (also headed by Ravil Gainutdin) and the Moscow city government. However, both MROMs Darul’ Arkam and Milost’ faced heavy scrutiny and surveillance from police and their neighbors. The leaders often publicly declared the moderate nature of the Islam practiced at the centers in order to dispel fears of radicalism. As the raids at Darul’ Arkam and the fear over Muslim ghettoization in Butovo show, MROMs are controversial and face animosity in Moscow. Mosque construction in Moscow is difficult; as the closure of Darul’ Arkam suggests, so too is the establishment and operation of neighborhood Muslim centers.

Muslim charities

In my group interviews, the role of charity in Muslim social life was raised. Zakat, or alms-giving to provide welfare for other Muslims who need assistance, is a tenet of Islam. Russia has an under-funded and weak state social safety net, thus other forms of welfare are important forms of assistance (Kuznetsova and Round 2014). In the Caucasus, the failure of the Russian government to provide welfare has resulted in politically liberal Muslims to see sharia as an alternative to state politics (Dzutsati, Siroky, and Dzutsev 2016). There is little research on Muslim charities in Russia, but the one study done on Muslim welfare in Kazan shows that efforts are localized at the level of mosques, and that people tend not to trust or participate in larger groups (Kuznetsova and Round 2014). This pattern of localized charitable efforts is also in Moscow. Most of the mosques and MROMs have charities that provide small amounts of resources to help Muslims or support the maintenance of their buildings.

Zakat, headquartered at the Moscow Cathedral Mosque complex, is the largest Muslim charitable organization in Moscow. The charity’s programs include providing sacrificial meats for pensioners, disabled people, and families needing assistance for Eid al-Fitr, organizing
charity iftar tents during Ramadan, providing financial assistance to students and funding programs at religious schools, providing aid to veterans and orphans, supporting mosques, and helping prisoners. Zakat is different than other Muslims charities in Russia because it has recently implemented a program providing humanitarian aid to Muslims in Syria. In February 2017, Zakat made its first international delivery of medicine, food, and clothing. They have plans to provide aid to Palestine, showing Zakat’s focus extends beyond local issues (Press service of the Russian Council of Mufties 2017).

Muslim charity work is not separated from geopolitics in Russia. Gainutdin has released a statement because Zakat’s charity to Syria is significant and without precedent, but has received little recognition in the Russian media. He stated that in Russian media, there is only a weekly 13-minute program called “Muslims” on the Russian Channel-One, and the lack of representation of the positive charitable acts done by Muslims creates discord about Muslims in Russian society (Press service of the Russian Council of Mufties 2017).

There are also some Moscow-based Muslim-led charitable organizations not associated with mosques. One of my interviewees invited me to attend a fundraiser for the Muslim charity Vmeste (Together). Tatar businessmen founded this charity in 2011. Although it is not specifically Muslim, most organizers are Muslims. Vmeste organizes an annual charity fundraiser each year, where volunteers sell handmade goods and foods. This charity fundraiser includes entertainment, music, and activities like face painting or clowns for children (Figure 7.7). The proceeds go to humanitarian causes, including treatment and medicine for ill children, supplies for orphanages, and warm clothing for veterans of the Great Patriotic War (World War II in the US). This organization is motivated by Muslim values and the principle of zakat (Interview GG, October 2013).
Moscow’s Muslim charities are examples of post-Islamism in Moscow’s civil society. They do important humanitarian work locally, echoing the research on Muslim charities in Tatarstan (Kuznetsova and Round 2014). Zakat extends this reach, providing aid to Syria. This social work is not divorced from Muslim politics—Gainutdin questions why this social work does not change the political representation of Islam in the Russian media. Importantly, post-Islamism in Moscow is not only composed of Islamic actors doing charitable work. As the example of Vmeste shows, individuals motivated by Muslim traditions also change and invigorate Moscow civic society.

**Discussion: Muslim Publics and Counter-Publics in Moscow**

This chapter goes beyond this state-centered dichotomy of official and unofficial Islam to examine different aspects of Muslim civil society in Moscow. Religious difference is created by the interaction of different groups in public space (Gökarıksel and Secor 2015). Just as migration and xenophobia create fears around mosque in regards to construction, these issues
structure mosque attendance patterns and the formation of Muslim publics in the city. Moscow’s four official mosques are diverse, exemplified by the popularity of Imam Alyautdinov’s lifestyle advice approach to the Hanafi School and the zikr practice at Historical mosque.

This chapter also follows calls in the new geographies of religion to examine the development of religion outside of officially recognized religious spaces (Kong 2010, Ehrkamp 2007). To do this, I adopt a post-Islamism approach (Bayat 2013). Post-Islamism is composed of everyday Muslim practices that transform civil society (Gökarıksel and Secor 2016). The Russian state narrative of post-Islamism associates Muslim practices outside of mosques with “unofficial Islam”. Muslim leaders from the Muftis Council and academic experts (Malashenko 2014) postulate that the lack of mosques in Moscow raises the potential for radical cells to form in Moscow. As Gaunutdin (Press service of the Russian Council of Mufties 2017) argues, the lack of state-sponsored media coverage of Muslim charities ignores how Muslim practices positively contribute to Russian civil society while providing provisions that the state cannot.

My research examines two dimensions of post-Islamism in Russian civil society, not reducing post-Islamism to “unofficial” Islam- Muslim capitalism in Moscow and the establishment of counter-public Muslim organizations in Moscow’s neighborhoods. Since new mosques or other flexible approaches to provide communal ritual spaces (such as the Urban Carpet or Mobile Mosque) are excluded from normative Moscow public space, the halal economy and Muslim organizations are crucial elements underpinning the religious revival of Muslims in Moscow.
Chapter Eight: Conclusion

In this dissertation, I analyze the controversies over religious construction projects in Moscow and how they generate new configurations of civil society. These groups are positioned differently in Moscow’s power geometry of public space, but also form their own counter-public spaces. Russia has a complex religious geography that it inherited from Soviet-era policies but that in turn was conditioned by pre-Soviet patterns of settlement and traditions. The comparison of the construction of prestigious and neighborhood mosques in Moscow show the dynamics of Russia’s religious revival in a managed democracy: The expansion of mosques outside of historical Muslim spaces is protested and prevented. Although mosques are prohibited forms of normative public space, Muslims are creating their own vibrant civil society and separate spaces of belonging (or counter-publics).

Moral geographies instituted by Soviet policies underpin the dynamics of religious power geometries and public spaces in Moscow. Soviet policies targeted religion, seeing it first as a means of organization against ethnic Russians but then as an obstacle to creating class consciousness (Martin 2001). Nationalities policies and korenizatsiya, (literally indigenization) or the promotion of ethnic minority identities in their titular republics, created a moral geography where religious identity was linked to ethnic territories and identities (Dragadze 1993, Yemelianova 2002). Soviet public and private life were heavily managed by the state. This resulted in two outcomes relevant for this dissertation: Civil society is closely tied to the Russian state in its managed democracy, and religious beliefs were treated as an ethnic characteristic tied to certain territories rather than as a dynamic mobility. Both the Soviet state and post-Soviet capitalist forces have resulted in the migration and intermingling of different Muslim communities. As a city with historical Muslim minorities and the largest migrant destination city
in the former Soviet Union, Moscow is an important place to study the diversity of Muslim communities and public life in Russia.

Moscow’s increased number of Muslim inhabitants is altering public life in the city. The controversies generated by mosque construction and increasingly visible Muslim practices in Moscow led me to pose the following research questions:

- What do the politics enveloping mosque construction in Moscow reveal about the place of Muslim citizens and Islam more broadly in Russian political life?
- What is the nature of the various discourses that surround the proposed construction of and opposition to new mosques in Moscow? Who are the opponents and advocates, and how are they organized and mobilized?
- How are these discourses promoted and received by interest groups including congregations, neighborhood associations, human rights organizations, and local government officials, concomitant to the evolution of Moscow’s religious landscape?
- How, where and in what other forms do spaces of Muslim community life and practices arise in Moscow, especially given the restriction on mosque building?

My overall thesis is that religious sites generate new configurations of publics in Moscow. This concluding chapter has three sections. First, I overview my main findings in regards to my research questions. Then, I address the shortcomings and silences in my dissertation, evaluating how my positionality and the transactional nature of fieldwork both defined and interrupted my research sites. In the third section, I outline how my dissertation contributes to the wider field of the geographies of religion and research on managed democracy, civil society, and public space in Russia.

**Key Findings**

In Chapter Three, I overviewed the literature on critical and feminist political geography, public spheres and spaces, and geographies of religion that inform my project. Religious and
Muslim sites are caught up in local, national, and international discourses, including Moscow’s neighborhoods as sleeping regions, Moscow’s reputation as a Russian Orthodox center, Russia’s morality politics and global trends of Islamaphobia and Islamist capitalism. In Chapter Four, I detailed my qualitative methods, consisting of analysis of an original database of news articles, documents from relevant social movements and institutions, and policy reports and speeches, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, street interviews, and group interviews. My localized approach is designed to analyze the politics of religious and Muslim spaces in Putin’s era of morality politics (Chechel 2013; Sharafutdinova 2014). I examine three different categories of sites in my critical political geographies of religion framework: mosques, sites of failed mosque and church construction, and other Muslim community and economic spaces.

My first research question asked what Moscow’s mosque landscape says about the place of Muslim citizens and migrants in Russian political life. My research findings illustrate two key points in regards to this query. In Chapter Five, I examined the reconstruction of Moscow’s Cathedral Mosque. This mosque was expanded and re-stylized with a symbolic architecture. Its minarets evoke both Russian Orthodox Church onion domes and the Kremlin’s Spasskaya Tower, an emblem of the Russian government. This architecture and size shows a close relationship between the Russian national government and the Russian Council of Muftis, who led the efforts to rebuild the mosque. The Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian government have a close political relationship, showing how religious civil society is an aspect of Russia’s managed democracy. As Russia claims a geopolitical role of anti-Western conservatism, its character is in part shaped by Russian Orthodox principles. These include the condemnation of gay marriage, advocacy for churches in everyday space, and the protection of religious feelings including critiques of the close ties of state and church. The new symbolics of
Cathedral Mosque and the pageantry surrounding its opening show how the Council of Muftis and Russian state envision themselves as interlocutors and authorities on normative Muslim practices. Tatar Hanafi Muslims become positioned as the “good” or “official” Islam that must constantly condemn and oppose non-traditional “bad” foreign “unofficial” Islam. (Hanafi and Salafi practices are not necessarily oppositional outside of the Russian context.)

Moscow’s mosque landscape also shows how Moscow’s Muslim leaders are redefining Moscow as a center of Muslim life in Russia. This interpretation ignores the history of the marginal position of Tatars in Moscow (Khayretdinov 2008a), and stands in contrast to the present-day difficulties of trying to construct new mosques in Moscow’s neighborhoods, as outlined in Chapter Six. Moscow’s mosque landscape and Cathedral Mosque’s demolition and renovation shows that the Russian Council of Muftis is the Muslim organization with the most ability to make claims of and speak on behalf of Muslims to the state. Still, in the power geometries of public space in Moscow, they do not have the clout to build new mosques. This presents a paradox: The Council of Muftis wants to influence the behaviors of Muslims and use mosques as a normative public space, but as they are unsuccessful in building new mosques, other forms of Muslim counter-publics proliferate in the city.

The findings of my second and third research questions are linked. The former asks who is for and against new mosques, and what discourses they use to make their claims. The latter evaluates the reception of these discourses, evaluating their authenticity and success. Overall, Muslim groups as a whole have not been able to expand the number of mosques in the city despite overcrowding. The Russian Muftis Council and Ravil Gainutdin are the most successful Muslim entities in advocating for new mosques in Moscow. They were effective in planning the demolition and reconstruction of the Moscow Cathedral Mosque, relying on discourses of
theological concerns, deterioration, overcrowding to rebuild and restyle the mosque. Mosques are communal spaces for the performance of rituals—they might not be sacred spaces but sometimes they are of important historical value. Thus, controversially in the eyes of some Tatars and historical preservation societies, the Council of Muftis invoked its lack of historical value, actively working to get the mosque off the list of historical places in Moscow. They did not seek to preserve its former style but rebuild it in a style symbolic of the peaceful relationship between Muslim communities and the Russian government.

The Council of Muftis was also central in proposing new mosque construction in Moscow’s neighborhoods. They along with the Moscow Islamic University planned the mosque construction project in Tekstilshchiki, receiving permission from the local government and city-planning department. After the pushback from local activists, they proposed to educate locals on Islam and its civilizational role in Russian history. However, the Council of Muftis and Moscow Islamic University did not get the chance before the plans were cancelled by the city and the local district withdrew its support from the project. Still, they were more successful in advancing plans for mosques than other Muslim groups, such as in the case of the failed former plan on the Tekstilshchiki site or the mosque in Mitino sponsored by the United Islamic Congress of Russia.

Russia’s Muslim communities are fragmented; the Russian Council of Muftis is the most powerful Muslim organization in Moscow. In Moscow, the Russian Council of Muftis have made demands for more mosques, seeing mosques as a normative public space and means of assimilation for migrants. They are still limited in their ability to actualize these demands.

The opponents and discourses against mosque construction varied across the case studies at Cathedral Mosque, Tekstilshchiki, and Mitino. In the case of Cathedral Mosque, Talgat Tadzhutdin and TsDUM, some Tatar groups, and Archnadzor, a historical preservation group,
stood against the demolition. These groups coalesced around the discourse that the demolition of
the mosque was an affront to the historical role of Tatars in Moscow.

The decision to build mosques in Moscow’s sleeping regions, rather than in historically
Tatar areas, drew different opposition groups. In Europe, mosque construction raises NIMBY
concerns and the attention of populist nationalists (Gale 2004). NIMBYism discourses were
expressed through discourses of environmentalism, Islamaphobia, and nationalist agendas to
block mosque projects in the Moscow context. NIMBYism and local activism is a new
phenomenon in Russia (Argenbright 2016): most families were assigned apartments in the Soviet
era, but the mosques were planned near newer developments with owners who had purchased
property. These forms of local activism are temporal social movements, and notably successful
forms of opposition within the contexts of Russia’s managed civil society. Whereas larger
protests make anti-regime demands against corruption, they have not been successful at altering
policies and elicited reprisals from the state (with the caveat that giving public representation to
oppositional viewpoints is an achievement in its own right.) These local activist movements have
been smaller in scale than the 2012 or 2017 anticorruption protests, but they have been effective
in fulfilling their agendas.

In all three cases of mosque construction and in Torfyanka Park, corruption of authorities
and a lack of access to local democratic channels was a concern by the opposition. In the case of
Cathedral Mosque, the opponents to demolition felt that Ravil Gainutdin and the Council of
Muftis had also overreached their authority by asking for the mosque to lose its historical status
and legalize the demolition. In the cases of Tekstilshchiki and Mitino, the decision to allow
mosque construction by the city government was perceived by protestors as a sign of corruption
and a continuation of politics as usual which excludes the voice of locals. These protests all called for more transparent processes in regards to religious public spaces in Moscow.

My third research question asks how involved groups perceived each other’s discourses, and their overall effects. This question explores the power geometries of how different publics presented themselves against each other over in the politics of religious sites. All protests against new construction projects invoked NIMBY discourses and a lack of transparency. But, there are two caveats: First, although Moj Dvor’s leader contended that they wanted a park to be built in Tekstilshchiki, instead of a mosque, the Islamophobic rhetoric on their website and leader’s association with nationalist groups led international human rights organization Forum 18 and the Russian non-profit SOVA center to declare the group a nationalist front. These human rights initiatives argue that nationalists from outside of Tekstilshchiki co-opted environmental discourses to galvanize local dissent in Tekstilshchiki and create a NIMBY movement. Similarly, Forum 18 and the SOVA center believe that nationalists fomented protests in Mitino against mosque construction, and that they bussed protesters into the neighborhood to make the opposition look like a unified NIMBY front. In the case of Torfyanka Park, most of the protesters against the church were locals. Sometimes, political parties stopped by to voice their support, however locals participated in the makeshift camp for months in 2015 and formed the human chain in order to protect their park. Thus, in regards to mosque construction, the agitation of the local opposition came from pressure from nationalist groups. In Torfyanka, the movement against church construction began with and was galvanized by locals.

Secondly, the response of the state reveals the power geometries of public religious spaces in Moscow: In the case of Torfyanka Park, Russian Orthodox supporters were assisted by the city in finding a new and mutually accepted site for their church whereas Muslim groups were
unsuccessful. Even further, local activists in Torfyanka Park had their homes raided by police and accused of extremism due to their involvement in the protest. Challenging Russia’s power vertical at the local level has had negative consequences for those protesting the construction of the new church. These reprisals from the state against anti-church oppositional neighborhood protesters show that the Russian government valorizes Russian Orthodox spaces.

Mosque construction produced debates over neighborhood identity, normative religious public space, and religious politics in Moscow. My fourth research question asks about Muslim publics and their spaces in Moscow. As places for communal prayer and religious rituals, mosques are where Muslim publics define themselves against one another. Within Moscow’s mosques, the increased presence of migrants has led to some Tatars not wanting to go to Cathedral or Historical Mosque. Historical and Cathedral Mosque are host to diverse Muslim communities and practices, such as Sufi zikr prayer circles or Azeri Shia Shaksi-Vakhshi rituals. Meanwhile, the popularity of Memorial Mosque’s Shamil Alyautdinov attracts young Tatars and the largest group of women to his Friday sermons. Overall, while imams are primarily Tatar, the attendees are overwhelmingly migrant males.

Even though Muslims have not been successful at building new mosques, individuals have designed flexible prayer solutions to create temporal urban ritual spaces, such as Urban Carpet or Mobile Mosque. However, they lack the connections to the state or Muslim leaders to implement their solutions. Temporary sites are offered by the city for Muslim holidays; these sites do not meet the everyday needs for Muslims who face difficulty attending mosque or finding comfortable spaces for prayer in their offices.

Outside of mosques, Moscow has a growing number of Muslim public spaces to suit different Muslim counter-publics. These include neighborhood centers, women’s centers, and
halal economic spaces associated with the growth of Islamic lifestyle capitalism. Women’s centers provide a place for Muslim women to interact while deepening their Muslim identities, and tend to have an international appeal. Muslim restaurants and businesses provide a way for Moscow’s Muslims to engage in pious interpretations of capitalist consumption. Meanwhile, Muslim organizations and charities are a growing civil society presence in Russia’s managed democracy. Even though mosque construction is controversial in Moscow, other Muslim spaces are proliferating in the city.

Limitations of the Project

My dissertation project has many findings, but also limitations. First, my qualitative fieldwork approach is informed by my positionality, which both helped define and interrupt research sites. My educational background, gender, nationality, and religious beliefs were both a benefit and a liability in fieldwork. My positionality defined my access to certain spaces and how people responded to me. As knowledge is situated, partial, and contingent (Harraway 1998), the power relations between researcher and participant that shape fieldwork are components of the production of knowledge (Katz 1994).

My gender and nationality might have minimalized my ability to interact with lower-class Muslim migrants beyond street interviews, but I gained partial insight into their experiences of mosques as Muslim public spaces. I did not learn much about their spaces of belonging or activity outside of mosques. However, my positionality maximized my ability to communicate with Muslim women and Muslim middle-class men in the city. I was able to conduct many interviews within these groups, invited to hard-to-find women’s centers, and attend events held by these communities that I could not have learned about on my own. For some research participants, our relationship was transactional: In exchange for participating in my project,
participants wanted to practice English with me. I willingly obliged with this trade, especially as most interview participants declined payment as a benefit for participating in my project.

Because of how my positionality shaped fieldwork and the production of knowledge, my project has some silences and limitations. My fourth research question, “How, where and in what other forms do spaces of Muslim community life and practices arise in Moscow?” is explored in depth in regards to middle class and Tatar Muslims, but not in regards to Muslim labor migrants from the Caucasus and Central Asia. I conducted street interviews to see what role mosques played in their lives and I found some news articles on the subject and incorporated them into my database; however I felt that this data was insufficient in regards to evaluating the everyday lives and spaces of these groups. I see this as a good direction for future research, but in order to accomplish it, it might be best to hire male research assistants familiar with Central Asian languages. I initially searched for diverse research assistants to help the project, but I was unsuccessful. After two months of searching, I hired two Russian female geography undergraduates and kept searching. In order to improve research connections for future projects, I have attended international conferences, such as the International Geographer’s Union.

Unfortunately, the controversies over mosque construction led to some key people unwilling to participate in my research. I received contact information for three Muslims directly involved in planning mosque construction in Tekstilshchiki in 2010 and Mitino in 2012, but they declined my requests for interviews. They stated that they had already left the topic behind. Thus, I leaned more heavily on my database than I would have liked in order to learn about the failed mosque projects. One interviewee (Interview N) stated that the mosque projects created hostility and resulted in such negative representations of Muslims in mass media that they would be surprised if any serious efforts to rebuild a mosque would occur within the next ten years.
My dissertation project focused on religion and public space in contemporary Moscow. This serves as a starting point for future projects. I also would like to continue examining Muslim civil society and public spaces in Moscow as they change over time. I would like to do comparative analyses of Muslim civil society and publics in other majority-Russian areas. I would expand this project to include Saint Petersburg, Russia’s second capital and “Window to the West”, and Ekaterinburg, Russia’s fourth-largest city and home to a large migrant population. Also, my research focused on Muslim public space. I would like to conduct a public opinion survey of Muscovites on wider issues of civil society, religion, and public space could provide insight into if and how religious practices or publics shape civil society in Russia’s managed democracy.

**Contributions to Political Geographies of Religion and Public Space**

This dissertation focuses on religious sites and the formation of publics in Moscow. Broadly, I contribute to the political geographies of religion by exploring the power geometries of access to public space in Russia’s managed democracy. Russia’s managed democracy is often critiqued in the media and academic literature for its oppression of civil society and close ties with the Russian Orthodox Church. My local qualitative approach allows for a specific understanding of how publics and civil societies take form within Russia’s morality politics. It allows for an understanding of the geographies of minority Muslim religious revivals, even as these groups do not have access to normative public space.

My research points to how global discourses and processes of Islamophobia and capitalism underpin the geographies of religious sites in post-Soviet Moscow. Russia’s religious geography is shaped by an appeal to traditionalism wherein nationality and religious practices and spaces are linked, resulting in the dichotomization of Russian Muslim life into official and
unofficial Islam. Moscow has been a host city to Muslim migrants since before the Soviet era, and has a contentious history with the public expression of Muslim identities (Khayretdinov 2008). But, Western and capitalist processes shape new formations of publics in Moscow. Just as capitalism creates the need for increased Muslim migration to Moscow, so too does its’ associated discourse of NIMBYism provide rationale for the exclusion of normative Muslim mosque spaces from Russian public life. The reprisals from the state against the protestors of Russian Orthodox Churches show the limits of NIMBYism as a local oppositional strategy and the valorization of the Russian Orthodox Church as part of public space. Even though the Russian interpretation of global discourses of Islamophobia contribute to negative of mosques as dangerous Muslim spaces, the rise of Muslim cultural capitalism and has contributed to the formation and proliferation of class-based Muslim publics and spaces in Moscow.
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## Appendix A: List of Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview ID</th>
<th>Interview Participant</th>
<th>Position/ Organization</th>
<th>Interview Month/Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Male, Tatar</td>
<td>Imam, Vladimir</td>
<td>August 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Male, Tatar</td>
<td>Imam, Moscow Historical Mosque</td>
<td>August 2013 (Follow up October 2013, August 2015)</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Male, Russian</td>
<td>Founder, Moj Dvor</td>
<td>May 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Male, Russian</td>
<td>Mitino Resident</td>
<td>October 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Male, Tatar</td>
<td>Historian</td>
<td>May 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Male, Tatar</td>
<td>Employee, Russian Muftis Council</td>
<td>July 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Male, Russian</td>
<td>Archnadzor member</td>
<td>May 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Male, Tatar</td>
<td>Employee, Russian Muftis Council</td>
<td>August 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Male, Tatar</td>
<td>Employee, Russian Council of Muftis</td>
<td>October 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Male, Kazakh</td>
<td>Muezzin, Cathedral Mosque</td>
<td>August 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Female, Russian</td>
<td>Resident, Southeast Moscow</td>
<td>March 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Occupation, Location</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>Resident, Tekstilshchiki District</td>
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<td>Tatar</td>
<td>Resident, Tekstilshchiki District</td>
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<td>Tatar</td>
<td>Imam, Moscow Islamic University</td>
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<td>Russian</td>
<td>Employee, Mitino District Planning Department</td>
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<td>P</td>
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<td>Russian</td>
<td>Apartment Owner (Leases apartment to family), Mitino District</td>
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<td>Q</td>
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<td>Tatar</td>
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<td>R</td>
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<td>S</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>Z</td>
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<td>AA</td>
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<td>Employee, Russia Muftis Council</td>
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