

GAZIANTEP UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Journal homepage: <http://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/jss>



Araştırma Makalesi • Research Article

Mosque and Society: Cambridge Central Mosque “A British Mosque for the 21st Century”

Cami ve Toplum: Cambridge Merkez Camii: “21. Yüzyıl için Bir İngiliz Camisi”

Merve ÇETİNKAYA^{a*} Nur EFEOĞLU^b

^aDr., Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt Üniversitesi, Ankara / TÜRKİYE

ORCID: 0000-0002-6737-0781

^bDr., University of Exeter, Exeter / Birleşik Krallık

ORCID: 0000-0002-5392-0172

MAKALE BİLGİSİ

Makale Geçmişi:

Başvuru tarihi: 4 Kasım 2023

Kabul tarihi: 3 Mayıs 2024

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Camii,
Mimari,
İngilizlik,
Kültür,
Kimlik.

ÖZ

Camiler, özellikle gayrimüslim toplumlarda Müslüman yaşamının merkezinde yer alır. Göçmenlerin kültür ve milliyet çeşitliliği, Britanya'daki cami kavramını belirlemektedir. Britanya'daki camiler kültürel, ulusal ve mezhepsel kavramlar açısından farklılık göstermektedir. Camilerin çoğu ya belirli milliyetlere ya da mezheplere odaklanmaktadır. Çevre dostu camiler İslam'ın başlangıcından beri İslam mimarisinin gündeminde olmuştur. Tarihte buna örnek verilebilecek birçok camii mevcuttur. Örneğin Konya'da bulunan Eşrefoğlu Camii ekolojik malzeme kullanılarak inşa edilmiş ve 900 yıldır mevcudiyetini sürdürebilmiştir. 21. yüzyılda sanayileşmenin artması ve buna bağlı olarak pek çok çevre problemlerinin ortaya çıkması nedeniyle çevre dostu binalara olan ilgi artmıştır. Bu durum, İslam'ın ve Müslümanların hayatında her zaman temel bir kavram olan sürdürülebilirliğe yeniden odaklanmamız gerektiğini bize hatırlatmıştır. Bu konuya güzel bir perspektif sunan Cambridge Merkez Camii tüm Müslümanlar, kadınlar ve aileler için kapsayıcı bir alanı temsil etmekle beraber, modern toplumda çevre dostu, sürdürülebilir ve aynı zamanda sosyal yapıyla iç içe bir örnek teşkil etmektedir. Bu makale, 2019 yılında İngiltere'de "çevre dostu" sloganıyla ilk kez ortaya çıkan Cambridge Merkez Camii'ni örnek olay çalışması olarak kullanarak camilerin çağdaş toplumlarda İslami ve kültürel kimlikleri ifade etme açısından nasıl konumlandırıldığını araştırmaktadır. Mevcut çalışma öncelikle Cambridge Merkez Camii'nin mimari, sürdürülebilir ve sosyal yönlerini incelemeye odaklanmaktadır. Makale, caminin tasarım özelliğine değindikten sonra İngiliz Camii'nin işlevi ve çok kültürlü yapısı açısından ne anlama geldiğini sorgulamaktadır.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: November 4, 2023

Accepted: May 3, 2024

Keywords:

Mosque,
Architecture,
Britishness,
Culture,
Identity.

ABSTRACT

Mosques are at the heart of Muslim lives, especially in non-Muslim communities—the variety of cultures and nationalities of the immigrants determines the concept of mosques in Britain. The landscape of the mosques in Britain differs in regard to the cultural, national and denominational concepts. Most of the mosques are focused on either specific nationalities or denominations. The current article explores the ways in which mosques are situated in contemporary societies in relation to expressing Islamic and cultural identities, using Cambridge Central Mosque, which debuted in Britain in 2019 with the motto "eco-friendly", as a case study. The current research focuses primarily on examining the architectural, sustainable, and social aspects of the Cambridge Central Mosque. After engaging with the design feature of the Mosque, the article questions the meaning of 'British Mosque' in its functioning and multicultural structure. Eco-friendly mosques have been on the agenda since the beginning of Islam. There are many mosques in history. For example, Eşrefoğlu Mosque in Konya was built using ecological materials and has survived for 900 years. In the 21st century, the increased interest in eco-friendly buildings due to the growing rate of industrialisation and the ensuing pollution of the environment has reminded us to focus on sustainability, as it has always been a core concept in Islam and Muslim lives. Offering a good perspective on this issue, The Cambridge Central Mosque represents an overarching space for all Muslims, women, and families. It is an example of environmentally friendly, sustainable, and integrated with the social structure in the modern world.

* Sorumlu yazar/Corresponding author.

e-posta: mervecetinky@gmail.com

Introduction

Mosques are the primary environment for Muslims and Muslim societies, especially in non-Muslim countries. Mosques are where society comes together as a community, acts together, shares mutual interests, and expresses its identity (Omer, 2014). In highly diverse, multicultural, and multifaith communities, expressing cultural and religious identity is becoming necessary for individuals. While the number of Muslims from diverse backgrounds has increased in non-Muslim, European countries, Muslims are adapting to living as minorities within this society (Husain & O'Brien, 2000). The Mosque has a crucial role in this adaptation and is a way of expressing Muslim culture. These expressions may involve specific cultural, architectural, or aesthetic points.

In contemporary times, another point comes into the scene, which is environmental problems, such as climate change, pollution, environmental degradation, and resource depletion. It is important to understand and respond to these aspects by Muslim communities and the centres, mainly mosques. Although, in the history of Muslim cultures, mosques were always considered a place to gather, pray, and interact with each other. Moreover, mosques have also served as a valuable resource for exploring broader perspectives on nationality, culture, and religion, especially in places that consist of immigrants from Muslim countries such as Britain. A mosque is not just a physical place; it is also an important space for rehearsing and voicing issues of culture and identity (Villis & Hebing, 2014). This article presents a brief landscape of the mosques in Britain. It examines the Cambridge Central Mosque as a case study by analysing contemporary society's discourse on identity, culture, and ecological design.

The history of mosques in the United Kingdom is closely tied to the presence and growth of Muslim communities with various existences regarding multicultural and national aspects. William Henry Quilliam, a Liverpool solicitor and Muslim convert, was the first Muslim to buy a house on Brougham Terrace for the Liverpool Muslim Institute; it was England's first fully functioning Mosque in 1889 (Geaves, 2010). Cardiff is also mentioned as the first place where a mosque was registered in 1860 (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). The existence of the Muslim community started around the 18th and 19th centuries with Muslim immigrants from South Asia and Africa, mainly from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. With a growing Muslim population, more mosques were constructed to accommodate Muslim communities' needs in London, Birmingham, Manchester, and other major cities. For instance, the City Council of Birmingham marketed the central Mosque as a representation of the Englishness and Islam of the city's multicultural identity (Gilliat-Ray, 2010, p. 417). An overview of contemporary British Mosques will be presented in detail in the next chapter.

In the 21st century, the variety of mosques has increased depending on nationalities, religious sects, and opinions. In the big cities, the characteristics of the Muslim communities have been different due to the diverse religious backgrounds, nationalities, and modern social norms. The issues of gender equality, sustainability, and inclusivity have increased in importance among British Muslim communities, especially second and third-generation immigrant families (Shannahan, 2014). Initially, these mosques were established to accommodate religious and community perspectives in our constantly changing modern society. More concerns have been established as a need for the Muslim community. Therefore, a requirement to answer these concerns has been raised. Hegazy (2014) has examined contemporary mosques as a way of reinterpreting 'the Prophet Medine Mosque' by developing a mosque design that harmoniously meets the needs of Muslims and their society. The Medine Model can be considered a way to gather diverse Muslim communities together, provide an understanding of the needs of Muslims, and respond to these needs in contemporary Britain.

In this article, the Cambridge central mosque will be examined from architectural, sustainable, and social perspectives in this context. The research questions are:

- 1- What role does the Cambridge Central Mosque play in exemplifying sustainability within the context of contemporary mosques?
- 2- How do this mosque's characteristics affect British Muslim society?

In this article, the case study will be used to understand, analyse and examine the context of sustainability and society in the context of mosque architecture and social impacts. The case study approach allows in-depth, multi-faceted explorations of complex issues in research (Flyvbjerg, 2011). In order to answer these research questions, the Cambridge central mosque will be a case study to examine sustainable Mosques in contemporary society. This method will allow us to examine sustainability in mosque architecture in detail as the case study approach has been extensively used as an established research design in a wide variety of disciplines, particularly in the social sciences.

So far, a clear introduction and methodology have been provided with research questions. Next, a literature review on contemporary mosques in Britain will be presented, focusing on two contexts: the general statutes of mosques in contemporary Britain and sustainability and mosque architecture. After that, a brief introduction to the Cambridge central mosque will be provided, following the examination of the Mosque's design in terms of sustainable and social effects on society and individuals. Lastly, the overall discussion and conclusion will be finalised in the paper.

Current literature has been scarce regarding the positionality of the mosque in Muslims' lives in contemporary societies. Although some studies have examined the effects of mosques from a physical perspective, this study will be an important addition to the literature by discussing social and physical functionalities together.

Mosques in Contemporary Britain

To begin with, a brief look at the general situation, functions and funding of mosques in contemporary Britain, McLoughlin quotes Nielsen (1992, p. 43) and states, 'Britain has no generally applicable legal framework for religious communities'—the majority of mosques in Britain function within the legal framework governing charitable organisations. Compliance with the law involves securing planning permission from local authorities for any proposed mosques. Nevertheless, there are instances where efforts to establish mosques face opposition during the application process (McLoughlin, 1998).

While Muslims are not required to have a specific space for individual prayers, mosques play a dual role as locations for communal prayers and, from a historical standpoint, as spaces that foster social cohesion. Mosques function as social hubs and networks where Muslims can gather, acquire knowledge, engage in preaching and studying, share meals, and come together at the conclusion of the day. As per McLoughlin, when confronted with social exclusion in Britain, a significant number of Muslims have frequently regarded mosques as 'secure spaces,' providing alternatives to the institutional and prevalent racism in the broader society. In fact, mosques have been utilised by Muslims as focal points for organised resistance against marginalisation (McLoughlin, S., 1998).

In the 21st century, the variety of mosques has increased depending on nationalities, religious sects, and opinions. In the big cities, the characteristics of the Muslim communities have been different due to the diverse religious backgrounds, nationalities, and modern social norms. The issues of gender equality, sustainability, and inclusivity have increased in importance among British Muslim communities, especially second and third-generation immigrant families (Shannahan, 2014). Initially, these mosques were established to

accommodate religious and community perspectives in our constantly changing modern society. More concerns have been established as a need for the Muslim community. Therefore, a requirement to answer these concerns has been raised.

Examining the organisation of mosques, particularly in the context of Britain, reveals that a majority are segmented based on specific ethnicities or religious sects. In certain mosques, sermons are delivered not in English but in the language specific to the respective community. Despite constituting a minority, certain mosques lack a designated area for women to engage in prayer.

Hegazy (2014) has examined contemporary mosques as a way of reinterpreting 'the Prophet Medine Mosque' by developing a mosque design that harmoniously meets the needs of Muslims and their society. The Medine Model can be considered a way to gather diverse Muslim communities together, provide an understanding of the needs of Muslims, and respond to these needs in contemporary Britain. This approach holds significant importance, particularly in nations with a diverse Muslim population, such as Britain. The inclusion of the Cambridge Central Mosque as a case study in this paper is driven by its exemplary illustration of this approach, coupled with its sustainable architectural features.

Cambridge Central Mosque

Cambridge Central Mosque officially opened its doors to the public on 24 April 2019 and is described as the "British mosque of the 21st century" on its website (A British Mosque for the 21st Century, n.d.). Focusing on the term "British mosque" is necessary to understand this Mosque's architectural and social structure. Britishness or Englishness is inherently multicultural and based on tolerance of differences (Villis & Hebing, 2014). According to such views, the Mosque is intrinsically a positive aspect simply by being "different". The aim of the statement is that the Cambridge Central Mosque is a British mosque that emphasises multiculturalism, multinationalism, and tolerance to diversity, which is thought to be included in the expression of Britishness. This Mosque is an expression of British religious identity and a celebration of diversity on its terms. However, for some others, Islam is seen as a threat to British multiculturalism, particularly to the multiculturalism of the Mill Road area (Villis & Hebing, 2014).

The existence of Muslims in Cambridge for over a hundred years and the multinational and diverse structure of the Cambridge Muslim community seems to have been influential in the emergence of this term. The reason for this diverse Muslim community is its location within a university town and its partial growth from its roots therein (Insoll, 2001). This diverse Muslim community involves a large population of Cambridge University students and academic staff.

Today, according to census figures, the Muslim population in the Cambridge area is around six thousand. The largest ethnic group is Bangladeshi (38%). There are also a significant number of Muslims of Arab, Turkish, Nigerian, Pakistani, and Iranian origin. Ten per cent of Cambridge Muslims are of 'white' origin (Frequently Asked Questions, n.d.). The Mosque has adopted a mission to unite this diverse and rich community and is not affiliated with any denomination. It welcomes Muslims of Sunni, Shi'i, or other backgrounds. This idea was also reflected in the Mosque's design, which aimed to make Muslims from all backgrounds feel like they belonged here. For example, the 16 pillars in the main prayer hall symbolise the 12 imams in the Shia tradition and the four schools of thought in the Sunni tradition (Frequently Asked Questions, n.d.). After this brief introduction of the Mosque, its design features will be provided in detail in the next section.

Design

The design of the Cambridge Central Mosque stands out not only for being environmentally friendly but also for combining Islamic and English religious architectural features. There are many examples of buildings converted from churches to mosques (e.g., Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Hagia Sophia in Thessaloniki, and Church of Saint Nicholas in Chania) or from mosques to churches (e.g., Giralda Bell Tower in Seville, Mosque–Cathedral of Córdoba and Downtown Candlemas Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Pécs). These structures necessarily and naturally bear the general characteristics of both religious architectures. However, the Cambridge Central Mosque deliberately combined and emphasised these in its design from scratch, which is new and unusual.

The final design was brought together by UK-based specialists to create a synthesis combining the geometry and horticultural elements of traditional Islamic architecture with indigenous English materials, plants, and craftsmanship (A British Mosque for the 21st Century, n.d.). When looking at the British religious architectural features used in the design of the Mosque, the wooden tree-like columns that form the defining feature of the Mosque reach up to support the roof in an interlaced octagonal lattice vault structure reminiscent of the English Gothic fan vault, famously used at the King's College Chapel in Cambridge.



Figure 1: Timber pillars inside the Cambridge Central Mosque.



Figure 2: The English Gothic fan vault ceiling of the King's College Chapel in Cambridge.

In terms of Islamic religious architecture, octagonal geometry, which symbolises infinity, the cycle of inhalation and exhalation – the 'Breath of the Divine' in Islamic art, was used to illuminate the interior space of the Mosque (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

Decorating walls with Arabic calligraphy and passages from the Quran is a common traditional method in mosque architecture. As a modern continuation of this, in the Cambridge Central Mosque, the external brick tiles covering the CLT structure are of traditional Cambridge Gault in red brick colours. The bricks form an Arabic Kufic calligraphy pattern that reads, "Say he is God (the) one" (Quran, Surah Al-Ikhlâs, 112, p.1) (Figure 3). This form of application of calligraphy in the Mosque even reminds of the wall tiles frequently used in Ottoman mosques.



Figure 3: The exterior walls of the Cambridge Central Mosque covered with calligraphy.

Geometric art, which has an essential place in Islamic design and serves the religious purpose of showing "what is behind the visible world", is placed everywhere in the Mosque, from its structure to its decoration. The Mosque is located in the middle of a garden called the 'Islamic Garden'. After entering the garden, worshipers are first greeted by a covered portico and then an atrium and finally, they reach the prayer hall. The impression is created that the worshipers are offered a gradual transition from the outside world to the place of worship.

The Cambridge Central Mosque's designers noted that the combination of gardens, fountains and vaulted prayer spaces, as seen in the Alhambra, one of the finest examples, has been used to significant effect throughout Islamic history and reminds us of the interconnectedness of humans and the natural world (A British Mosque for the 21st Century, n.d.). As in the general design of the Mosque, some symbolism is also used in the garden. The octagonal geometry design is also seen in the garden fountain. Oak benches are provided for visitors to enjoy the garden, which is full of mixed seasonal plants accompanied by the sound of water (Figure 4). Specialist Islamic Garden Designer Emma Clark states that the green areas of the Mosque offer worshipers and passers-by a break from the hectic pace of the city and combine traditional Islamic and British features (A Calm Oasis within a Grove Trees, n.d.).

Examining the diverse makeup of Muslims in Cambridge and the users of this mosque, it is noticeable that specific cultural symbolisms are not included in the mosque's design. Instead, the architecture incorporates universal elements like calligraphy, geometry, courtyards, gardens, and water—features commonly found in mosques across various Muslim nations. This design choice reflects the mosque's commitment to welcoming Muslims from a global spectrum. The general structure of the British Mosque has been discussed above section; Mosque in Contemporary Britain.

Sustainability

Constructing a mosque that is both sustainable and adheres to established standards is imperative to fulfil its purpose and accommodate the essential needs of human beings. In this regard, the planning of an environmentally conscious mosque should prioritise strategies that optimise the utilisation of resources, including energy, climate considerations, and building materials. Additionally, attention should be given to indoor air quality, necessitating a design that is adaptable and accommodating. Cutting-edge mosque strategies should incorporate spatial design to promote the well-being and comfort of those within. Furthermore, sustainability must extend to economic and social dimensions, with social sustainability encompassing factors such as social equity, well-being, and overall quality of life (Sobri et al., 2021).

Eco-mosques are becoming increasingly common around the world. Morocco and Indonesia show the leading examples of these mosque designs. For example, the As-Sounna Mosque in Rabat, Morocco, installed energy-efficient technology to reduce its energy bill by more than 80%, saving \$7000 annually (Morocco's Green Makeover For 600 Mosques, n.d.). Although sustainable mosque design seems to be a new trend that emerged with the climate crisis, these are the principles that already exist at the core of Islam. There are numerous quotes from the Holy Quran and hadiths (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) on sustainability and wise use of natural resources. All these verses and hadiths reveal the conclusion that all species, habitats and ecosystems in the perfect universe were created by Almighty Allah. Therefore, respecting the law of nature and all its components is, by definition, an obligation of every Muslim who has "surrendered" to the Creator with his/her whole body and soul (Matali, 2012). The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "Even if the Resurrection were established upon one of you while he has in his hand a sapling, let him plant it" Musnad Ahmad (12902) (6 Lessons the Quran and Hadith Teach us About the Environment, 2021).

Over-consuming is also prohibited in Islam, and people are advised to always control their consumption habits for the sake of the Earth and its constituents. All of these reveal and reflect their Creator's infinite kindness and glory. By nature, all created beings submit to the will of their Lord and serve and exalt their Creator. The Quran says, "...But waste not by excess, for God loves not the wasters..." (Al-A'raf, p. 31). And also narrated from 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al- 'Aas that the Prophet (PBUH) passed by Sa'd when he was doing wudu', and he said, "What is this extravagance, O Sa'd?" He said: Can there be any extravagance in wudu? He said, "Yes, even if you are on the bank of a flowing river" (Imam Ahmad (6768) and Ibn Maajah (419)) (6 Lessons the Quran and Hadith Teach us About the Environment, 2021). Hence, sustainability is a religious as well as a humanitarian necessity for Islamic institutions. It is important to produce sustainable energy solutions that are more environmentally friendly and reduce carbon footprints.

We have been talking about sustainability for just 20 years (after the Brutland Report in 1987), but the previous generations were building sustainable constructions hundreds of years ago. Designing for sustainability involves considering the complete immediate and prolonged repercussions of societal influence within the design. Hence, the pivotal concern is ensuring long-lasting durability. For example, the Suleymaniye Mosque, an Ottoman Mosque built in Istanbul, Turkey (1550 - 1557). This historical structure stands out as a sustainable construction that caused minimal environmental impact. Throughout its development, there was no emission of CO₂ gas, demonstrating Architect Sinan's success in ensuring that no harm was inflicted on the environment even four centuries ago. Several sustainable solutions were incorporated into the design of this mosque. For instance, the use of light-coloured concrete walls serves to diminish the need for interior lighting, consequently reducing energy consumption within the building. Natural lighting through strategically placed windows plays a crucial role in sustainability by further minimizing energy usage (Aktuglu, Y., et al., 2007).

The interior air quality posed a challenge, not only due to human respiration but also from the soot generated by burning candles and lamps during nights and dark winter days. This brings ventilation and air purification problems. However, Architect Sinan ingeniously addressed this issue by creating a room above the entrance door designed to extract and expel polluted indoor air. The soot collected in this space is utilised for producing high-quality ink, showcasing a resourceful and sustainable approach (Kuban, 1997).

If we turn our attention back to the subject of this paper, the Cambridge Central Mosque stands out as Europe's first ecological mosque with a zero-carbon footprint. Timber was chosen as the primary material for the building due to its sustainability credentials. Its form and fabric features ensure that the building is naturally illuminated during daylight hours and naturally

ventilated throughout the year. Photovoltaic cells on the roof help generate renewable energy from sunlight. The mosque, which is very well insulated and naturally ventilated, is heated and cooled with locally generated energy, which produces much more energy than it consumes due to high-efficiency heat pumps in the basement. This type of heat pump extracts energy from the relatively constant temperature of the air or groundwater, heating the building as needed and cooling the building during times of high occupancy or excessive heat gain (Environment, n.d.). The mosque is partially powered by solar energy, which provides all of the hot water used, cooling of the building, and 13 percent of the heating. It also collects rainwater for toilet flushing and irrigation.



Figure 4: The Garden of the Cambridge Central Mosque

One of the striking features of the design is that it also considers green transportation. It is easily accessible by pedestrians and has ample space for bicycles. In addition, the underground car park opened up space for the mosque and gardens, allowing more congregations to pray simultaneously. In the garden design, attention was paid to sustainability, biodiversity and insect-friendly planting. The gardens aim to strike a harmonious balance between Islamic structure and relaxed English herbaceous and native vegetation (Figure 4) (Environment, n.d.).

Also, the mosque is designed to be compatible with its surroundings, which is a very responsive behaviour to build an aesthetic architecture. Care has been taken to use local materials, and the mosque complements its neighbouring structures on Mill Road.

In conclusion, the utilization of space in a religious structure is crucial, as overlooking environmental considerations can adversely affect the user experience in unfavourable circumstances. Therefore, the effective integration of green and sustainable practices in mosque design is essential for enhancing the functional quality of the building and meeting the needs of the Muslim community (Sobri et al., 2021).

The Cambridge Central Mosque is a good example of how architecture can embody religious and cultural philosophy and traditions using sustainable and contemporary materials. A contemporary "British mosque" that is both specific to its place and time and that can set an example for those after it in terms of architecture and social aspects has been created. Next, the social effects of the mosque will be discussed in the section below.

Social Aspect

The Cambridge Central Mosque has become a place that serves a harmony of needs for religious and social aspects for Muslim communities in local, national, and international aspects. In that regard, the Mosque can be examined as a sample of the 'Prophet Medina Mosque', answering the needs of Muslim societies in the 21st century. These needs have been expressed as a way of updating the understanding of the community, taking an overarching

approach to the Muslim population of different nationalities, sects, and understandings, and answering the timely issues that Muslim society has been facing. The demographic of the Muslim community in the area of Cambridge is highly diverse, and the Mosque aims to provide an umbrella to all communities. For example, the Mosque has three imams from highly educated backgrounds and different nationalities and traditions: Turkish, Bosnian and American Muslim (Our Imams, 2024).



Figure 3: Iftar preparation in the Mosque

For the local Muslim community, the Mosque serves various programs, events, and gathering places for people of diverse backgrounds by addressing cultural and religious boundaries. For daily prayer, Nikah (wedding), Janazah (funeral service), and shahadah services (converting to Islam) are highly important for Muslims who reside in non-Muslim countries. All mosques in the UK provide these services; the point of Cambridge Central Mosque is that these services are comprehensive for all nationalities, cultures, and understandings. Initiatives and community outreach, such as iftars gathering during Ramadan, volunteering, and training, contribute to a more integrated and harmonious society in Cambridge.

The Mosque provides an environment for families with kids and toddlers. It also has a soundproof room for the babies and kids, who can play loudly when the parents are praying (Figure 6). The Cambridge Central Mosque project aimed to create 'one of the UK's leading women-friendly mosques, an aspect that Marks Barfield also took into consideration when designing the space' (Carlson, 2021). Although some of the mosques in Britain do not provide space for women and kids, the Cambridge central mosque has provided soundproof rooms alongside multiple women's spaces. The Mosque also provide opportunities and spaces for events such as gatherings, art galleries, and conferences.

All in all, the Cambridge Central Mosque provides an alternative space for all Muslims in 21st-century Britain, alongside its Eco-friendly nature. In this case, it can be a leading example of future design in sanctuaries. The Mosque embraces multicultural aspects of the community and structural views.



Figure 6: Soundproof rooms for kids and families

Discussion and Conclusion

The characteristics of the city have an important effect on the Cambridge Central Mosque, as the needs of a highly intellectual and multicultural society are different. Because of the university, many immigrants, specifically university students and academic staff, have been located in Cambridge City. Due to the multicultural environment, a comprehensive approach is needed. As the aim of the foundation of the Mosque has been stated as a women-friendly, environmentally friendly, comprehensive approach to the nationalities, cultures, and understandings, the characteristics of the Mosque will be discussed around these aspects. As a comparison between other European mosques, such as Mezquita de Granada in Spain and Gran Mezquita de Paris in France, as they were built by the community, the Cambridge Central Mosque is the one and first eco Mosque in Europe. Both Mosques provide facilities for Muslims and have a space for the Muslim community to come together and practice the religion Islam in a non-Muslim environment; they are not adapted as the Cambridge Central Mosque did in Britain.

The Cambridge Central Mosque has expressed Islamic and cultural identities, combining British and Muslim heritages. Willis and Hebing (2014) have stated that the Englishness and multiculturalism characteristics of the Cambridge Central Mosque have been combined. The British culture has been mentioned as having a multicultural approach, as the society has a wide range of immigrants and cultures. A contemporary understanding of Britishness can be understood as a cross-cultural concept. The community is highly multicultural; as expressed earlier, the Cambridge community involves Muslims who come from diverse backgrounds, British (convert) Muslims, South Asian Muslims, and many more from the Cambridge University academic community and others. Cambridge Central Mosque reflects the multicultural structure of its community in its architecture by bringing together British religious architecture, Andalusian gardens, and fundamental elements of Islamic art such as geometry and calligraphy.

The case of the Cambridge Central Mosque is a sample of a combination of cross cultures on either the design or community bases regarding Britishness and Islamic heritage. The assimilation of the Prophet Medina Mosque can be explained in one way with regard to these overarching cultural approaches at Cambridge Central Mosque. In another way, it answers the needs of society in the contemporary environment. For example, sustainability has been the fundamental concept of the entire Mosque, from its design to its functioning. This plan overlaps with the core concept of Muslim life, as also seen in the history of the Mosque from the Seljuk to the Ottoman periods. For example, the Esrefoglu Mosque in Konya (built in 1297-1299) is known as the largest flat-ceiling Mosque built on timber pillars. The Mosque is one of the oldest and most remarkable examples of sustainable mosque architecture, which has survived for seven centuries without decay despite being made of wood. This Mosque, which was built seven hundred years ago using natural materials and maintained itself with a natural and sustainable solution, is a clear indication of the importance Islam attaches to the subject. According to the research that has been done about the Mosque, the humidity created by the gradual melting of the snow that fills the 4-5 meter deep well called "karlik" in the middle of the Mosque protects the timber pillars inside the Mosque, and above the "karlik" there is an opening called the lighthouse (Koc and Mazlum; 2022). This opening provides natural lighting inside the Mosque (Figure 7).

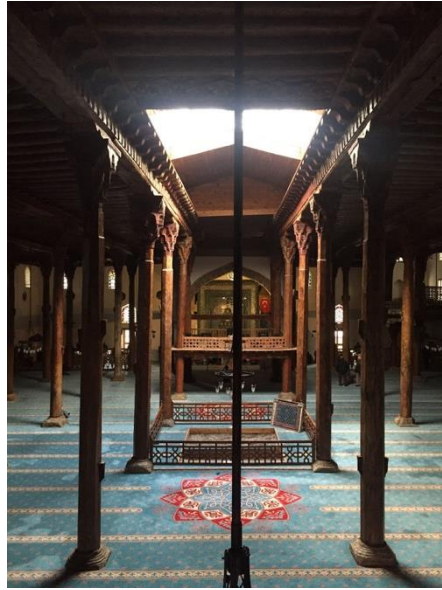


Figure 7: Interior view of Esrefoglu Mosque

As previously stated, this method was also implemented at the Cambridge Central Mosque, where the harvested rainwater serves the purpose of flushing toilets within the Mosque and watering the garden. Additionally, using natural lighting is another environmentally friendly practice implemented in the Cambridge Central Mosque.

As a result, the Cambridge Central Mosque provides a shared space and unifying language for Muslims in Britain, irrespective of their race, sect, or gender. This commitment is also underscored by an eco-friendly architectural design. The Mosque responds to the intellectual quest of Muslims and serves by offering initiatives, conferences, art galleries, meetings and newsletters. Additionally, the Mosque provides spaces for British Muslims to express their identity as Muslims in Britain, interact with the extended community and a place to serve equality to women, kids, and families.

In this study, the Cambridge Central Mosque has been analysed from a perspective of eco-friendly characteristics that may be a great example of future Mosque constructions. This study did not explore the whole picture, but what is visible in the analysis of the Mosque is that the Mosque present a great combination of sustainability and social harmony for the society and environment. Future studies may focus on these themes in detail by providing Qualitative and Quantitative data from the mosque participants and further analysis of other mosques in similar contexts.

References

- 6 lessons the Quran and hadith teach us about the environment. (2021). Retrieved November 2023, from Islam Channel: <https://www.islamchannel.tv/blog-posts/6-lessons-the-quran-and-hadith-teach-us-about-the-environment>
- A British mosque for the 21st century. (n.d.). Retrieved November 2023, from Cambridge Central Mosque: <https://cambridgecentralmosque.org/design/>
- A calm oasis within a grove of trees. (n.d.). Retrieved November 2023, from Cambridge Central Mosque: <https://cambridgecentralmosque.org/garden/>
- Aktuglu, Y. K., Altun, M., Kiray, M. T., Karaman, Y., Secer, Ö., Bozdog, Ö., Kahraman, I. (2007). *Sustainability of Constructions. Suleyman's Mosque, Istanbul*. International Conference on Sustainable Construction, Materials and Practices (pp.1110-1111). Lisbon, Portugal.
- Avcioglu, N. (2007). Identity-as-form: The mosque in the West. *Cultural Analysis*, 6, 91-112.

- Bayram, A. (2013). *Sunni Muslim religiosity in the UK Muslim diaspora: mosques in Leeds compared*. University of Leeds.
- Bhimji, F. (2009). Identities and agency in religious spheres: a study of British Muslim women's experience. *Gender, Place and Culture*, 16(4), 365-380.
- Environment. (n.d.). Retrieved November 2023, from Cambridge Central Mosque: <https://cambridgecentralmosque.org/environment/>
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2011). Case study. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 4, 301-316.
- Frequently Asked Questions. (n.d.). Retrieved November 2023, from Cambridge Central Mosque: <https://cambridgecentralmosque.org/faq/>
- Geaves, R. (2010). *Islam in Victorian Britain: The life and times of Abdullah Quilliam*. Kube Publishing Ltd.
- Gilliat-Ray, S. (2010). 'The first registered mosque in the UK, Cardiff, 1860': The evolution of a myth. *Contemporary Islam*, 4, 179-193.
- Hegazy, O. (2014). Towards a contemporary mosque: Rethinking the Prophet-Mosque in Medina via applying socio-semiotics. *International Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Society*, 4(1).
- Husain, F., O'Brien, M. (2000). Muslim communities in Europe: Reconstruction and transformation. *Current Sociology*, 48(4), 1-13.
- Insoll, T. (2001). The Cambridge Mosque and Muslim Community. *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, XC 1tp, 127-132.
- Koç, S., Mazlum, D. (2022). Beyşehir Eşrefoğlu Camii'nde gerçekleştirilen onarımların ICOMOS IWC 2017 prensipleri açısından değerlendirilmesi. *Vakanüvis-Uluslararası Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 7(2), 866-903.
- Kuban, D. (1997) *Sinan'ın sanatı ve Selimiye*. Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, İstanbul.
- Marks Barfield submits Cambridge "eco-mosque" plans. (2011). *The Architects' Journal*.
- Matali, Z. H. (2012). Sustainability in Islam. *Faith Values and Education for Sustainable Development*, 35-38.
- McLoughlin, S. (1998). The mosque-centre, community-mosque: multi-functions, funding and the reconstruction of Islam in Bradford. *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies*, 19, 211-228.
- Morocco's Green Makeover For 600 Mosques. (n.d.). Retrieved November 2023, from The Eco Muslim: <https://www.theecomuslim.co.uk/2017/11/morocco-green-mosques.html>
- Omer, S. (2014). The Mosque as a community center (A Concept and Evolution). Retrieved June, 9, 2019.
- Rasdi, M. T. H. M. (1998). *The mosque as a community development centre: Programme and architectural design guidelines for contemporary Muslim societies*. Penerbit UTM.
- Shannahan, D. S. (2014). Gender, inclusivity and UK mosque experiences. *Contemporary Islam*, 8, 1-16.
- Sobri, M. I. M., Ismail, S., Sabil, A., Yusof, H. Asif, N., Setiyowati, E. (2021). Systematic review of sustainable design approach for mosque. *Journal of Islamic Architecture*. 6(4), 369-375.
- Villis, T., Hebing, M. (2014). Islam and Englishness: Issues of culture and identity in the debates over mosque building in Cambridge. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 20(4), 415-437.

Figure Reference List

Figure 1: <https://cambridgecentralmosque.org/>

Figure 2:

<https://www.pictorem.com/9564/Ceiling%20Of%20King%27s%20College%20Chapel.html>

Figure 3: <https://www.dezeen.com/2021/01/20/cambridge-central-mosque-marks-barfield-architects/>

Figure 4: <https://www.gardensillustrated.com/gardens/town-and-city/cambridge-central-mosque-garden>

Figure 5: <https://cambridgecentralmosque.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ccm-newsletter-issue-n5-2019.pdf>

Figure 6: <https://cambridgecentralmosque.org/>

Figure 7: The picture taken by Nur Efeoglu
