Making space for religion

A spatial analysis of the construction of two religious buildings in Oslo

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Abstract

The public debate on minority religions is often political, at times hostile – and rarely reflecting experiences and perspectives of people living their everyday, religious lives in Norway. By use of a version of Lefebvre’s spatial triad on the production of space as an analytical framework, this thesis examines practiced and material religion, how religious practice and materiality are formed and limited by dominating discourses, and how religion is given meaning. The analysis builds on observations, document analysis and in-depth interviews with users of a Hindu temple and a mosque in two suburban landscapes of Oslo. Both cases are, or have recently been, in the process of constructing new, purpose-built religious buildings. The thesis seeks to contribute with an understanding of the production of religious space, mainly building on the perspectives of the users of the buildings.

The main findings are that religious buildings play an important part in the lives of Hindus and Muslims as enablers of social life, religious practice and as cultural centres, and that materiality and architecture in itself is an important factor. This is part of a religious space, that also exceeds the buildings. The buildings and lived spaces of the users are relational spaces, that are formed by laws and regulations and dominating discourses on Islam and Hinduism, and Norwegian public space. Within these meaning systems, minority religious bodies and buildings are constructed as foreign disturbances, making their existence acts of resistance to the dominating discourse of what Norway “is”. Religious spaces are created within, and formed by, the tension between these discourses and the everyday lives of religious minorities. This tension also challenges the dominating discourses of Norway as a social space, contributing to the creation of a new social space.
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1 Introduction

Religious buildings take many forms. Some are majestic, almost intimidating stone constructions that leave us humans feeling small against their high towers, impressive domes and intricate art work, statues and mosaics – probably the intention of the architects and of the leaders of often powerful and wealthy religious institutions at the time of their construction. They can be grandiose, but they can also be the opposite: Some are invisible – not the magic kind of invisible, but by the way they blend in with the city landscape, so that those who do not know it is a religious building cannot see it. They could be resembling any basement or office, maybe distinguishable by a sign on the wall, maybe only visible to the people that know them.

Some are temporal – coming to existence only once a week, as people bring in religious objects and gather to pray. This was the case in a sports hall in Mortensrud, a suburban part in the south of Oslo, up until last September. In October, however, the mayor of Oslo was present and participated in the opening of a brand-new mosque, drawn by an architect who has specialised in making religious buildings. The new mosque is one of relatively few mosque buildings in Oslo that was built with that function in mind. The majority of minority religious buildings in Oslo are located in more or less permanent premises. They are often situated in rented rooms in basements, some story of an office building – or, as the other case in this study, in a building that was once a printing workshop in a semi industrial area of another suburban area in the north of Oslo, almost hidden at the border of the woods.

Despite not claiming much attention, such religious spaces are common in the city. Most of them belong to some form of minority religion, be it mosques, temples or Pentecostal churches. As opposed to the grand churches of the Lutheran Evangelical Church of Norway, these do not have the privilege of being visible from rooftops all over the city, making their imprint on the city skyline. They are not ornamented with religious symbols, or calling for prayer, making their presence audible. But they are important spaces for many people in the city. Such buildings function as spaces for worship, social meeting points and cultural activities. People gather in them for exceptional life events, and they are part of people’s everyday practices.
1.1 Aims of the study

This is a study of the social, discursive and material processes of constructing minority religious spaces in Oslo. The most basic ontological notion is that there is nothing inherently religious about such buildings or religious spaces – they are not sacred before they are made sacred, and it is this process that is of interest. The starting point is that religious buildings are constructed, building on a tradition of social constructivism, and that getting knowledge of what processes contribute to that construction will give insight in religious lives in Oslo. The research design and analysis is based on a notion of the importance of understanding how these processes are experienced by the people that live in these spaces every day – the people that use the buildings as part of both their everyday practices and movements in the city and seek to them for exceptional life events. These are people who visit the buildings for prayer, base more or less of their social networks around these buildings. They are Hindus and Muslims in the Oslo area, whose religion and existence is often debated, while their voices are rarely herd in these debates.

The two cases, a Muslim and a Hindu community in Oslo, have in common that they are, or have recently been, gathering points for worship, socializing and cultural activities in some form of temporary building. Further they are, or have recently been, in the process of constructing a building for the purpose of being a religious building – rather than altering an existing building for religious purposes. I base the study on the theoretical conception that space is produced through practice, meaning, power relations and the material. The focus lies within a triangle between practice and the material, concrete buildings and architecture; the law, policy and regulations that form the possibilities for practice and material buildings; and the ways people negotiate practice and systems of meaning within this institutional and spatial framework.

I will analyse these cases within a theoretical framework based on Lefebvre’s theory on the production of space (1991), that forms a trialectic relationship between practice and the material, discourse and power relations and the interrelationships between practice, discourse, power, in what Lefebvre calls the lived space. This third aspect of the triad is where space is possibly changed, and where new social space can be produced.
I combine this theory with Massey’s notion of relational space, and take inspiration from a growing tradition of acknowledging the importance of everyday practices and experience in both studies of religion and architecture. My aspiration is that this theoretical framework will allow a holistic analysis of the production of space through discourse, practice, materiality and power relations, through the case of minority religious people in Norway. The combination of theories and the empirical basis could possibly contribute to the development of the ways we understand and apply theory on the production of space.

An inspiration for the research design was the impression that the public debate on religion in Norway is often a debate about, rather than with or between the people that are religious. How people practice and give meaning to their religious lives is often set aside in order to talk about a politicized understanding of religion. Coming from a geographical and social science background, rather than religious studies, I made the choice of being guided by the experiences and perspectives of the people that practice religion, and to whom religious spaces are important, as the basis for this study. This has formed the development of the research design and the analysis, making the research design a hybrid between explorative, inductive and abductive research. The theoretical framework, production of data and analysis have been developed in a non-linear form, where the three have formed and informed each other. This process has led to the following three research questions.

1.2 Research questions

Firstly, I understand religious spaces as practiced spaces. Religion is not only religious scriptures or institutions – it is lived and practiced in everyday lives and in the exceptional events of life such as marriage, migration and death. The religious lives of people consist of going to and from a religious building, eating habits, clothing practices, prayer rituals and pilgrimage. These are bodily practices that happen with material objects and buildings in space. There is a growing literature within studies of religion that recognizes the everyday, lived religion as an interesting framework for studies of religion in people’s lives, and I have drawn inspiration from this body of literature (Such as Ammerman, 2006; Kupping, 2014). In this study, my assumption is that understanding what people do, how and where they do it – and how they give meaning to these practices can increase the understanding of the function, materiality and use of religious buildings. Understanding how people practice religion within
and without religious buildings, can shed light to how they are constructed, both materially and through meaning. Following this, the first research question is:

1. *How are religious buildings constructed through practice and what is the relationships between practice and materiality?*

Social practice does not happen in a vacuum, however. It is no “coincidence” that a mosque is built facing Mecca, or how a Puja\(^1\) is performed. Practice is formed by meaning systems, or discourses, that give some practices meaning, make some inappropriate, and some seem impossible. Further, formal public institutions, law and regulations in Norway creates a framework that forms how religious buildings are constructed in Oslo. So do discourses, sometimes understood as rules, on how a temple or a mosque should look or religion be practiced. The second research question is formulated to get insight in the (competing) discourses on religion, and how these are formative for the construction of religious buildings and religious lives:

2. *How do dominant discourses form religious practice and material constructions?*

The last assumption, that has led to the third and final research question, concerns the interrelations between the practices and meaning systems. In our daily lives, we do not separate practice or materiality from meaning. Practice and interaction in space and with materiality is always understood through a lens of meaning, for example making us read some practices as symbolic for something “more” than the mere practice. However, the way we understand and give meaning to the world is not necessarily the same. I will analyse how religious people give meaning to their practices and materiality, and whether there are competing narratives that might interfere with these. According to Lefebvre’s theory the lived spaces and the ways we give meaning to the world are passively experienced, as we merely reproduce the dominating systems of meaning. However, it is also within this lived space, where there is possibility for creative tension between practiced and lived lives, that challenge or resist the dominating discourses in the conceived space. The last research question is two-fold:

3. *Are there competing meanings of what religious practices and materialities represent, and is this possibly challenging the dominating discourses on social space?*

\(^1\) Puja is worship of deities (images or figures of gods), either as a collective worship in temples of outside festivals, or in homes (Fuller, 2004).
1.3 The choice of cases

I have chosen two cases for this study. The cases are spatially and socially separate cases - two religious buildings, and the religious communities that are based in and around these buildings: a Hindu temple and a mosque in two different suburban landscapes of Oslo.

Having two cases will restrict the extent to which I am able to go into depth in either, as compared to studying only one case. Given the scope of this project, the result is of course a slightly less substantial data base of either case than I would probably have had if I had chosen just one.

The main reason I chose two separate cases, however, was to move beyond the study of a single religion, to understand religious practices more generally. To be able to do this, I considered it critical to have more than one case. Studying only one religious community, or one religious building and its users, could have led to an understanding of this being a case of that specific religion. Studying two cases that represent different religions meets this challenge to some extent, as it detaches the study from essentialising one specific religion, or adding too much emphasis to the theological or cultural practices of that specific group to the case. Studying two cases allows me as a researcher to let the cases speak to each other – to compare, and look at commonalities and differences. The context and background of the cases will be presented in chapter two.

1.4 Outline of the paper

Chapter one introduced the topic and aim of the thesis. The cases have been briefly presented, along with the research questions and the methodological and theoretical strategies. I have also given a short introduction to some central concepts and how they are understood in this paper.

Chapter two will present the cases in context. The reader will get insight in the history of the buildings and communities, a brief overview of policy on religion and religious buildings in Norway, and a very short contextualization of the cases through the history of Islam and Hinduism in Norway.

In chapter three, I will present the methodology and methods for this thesis. The chapter gives insight in methodological strategies, and methods for data collection. In this chapter I also give
an account of my ethical reflections in the research process, and how I have analysed and presented the data in the analysis.

**Chapter four** is the theoretical framework. In this chapter, I present the constructivist, ontological framework for the thesis, and continue with a review of approaches to religion in Geography, migration, transnationalism, nation and belonging. I also present geographical approaches to architecture. These theoretical areas inform the analysis with different, relevant perspectives throughout the analysis.

The central part of the chapter is a presentation of the main theoretical framework. This builds on Lefebvre’s theory on the production of space, and a discussion of how this theory is applicable to the field of religion. The chapter ends with an analytical framework, that connects the theory to the research questions, and how the theory is connected to the analysis. Chapters five, six and seven are built around this framework, each chapter presenting and analysing the data within one of Lefebvre’s “spatial spheres”. **Chapter five** presents the ways in which practice constructs space in relationship with materiality. **Chapter six** presents the ways religious lives, practices and buildings are shaped by, and relate to, law and regulations, and dominating discourses, within a relational space. **Chapter seven** explores the ways religious practice and buildings are given meaning by the users and in the public debate, through the perspectives of the users.

**Chapter eight** takes form of a discussion that moves towards a conclusion. In this chapter, I seek to answer the second part of the last research question – whether the competing meaning systems presented in the previous chapters challenge dominating discourses, and whether this leads to the construction of a religious space. I also discuss how this possibly contributes to changing the dominating discourses on the social space of Norway as nation-state.

The conclusion in **chapter nine** summarises the main findings in the study and relates it to the current political situation and theoretical contributions.
2 The two cases: Background and process

Both buildings have acquired land that was regulated for religious and cultural purposes by the municipality of Oslo in 2008 (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2013, 2014). The land was bought with some attached regulations concerning the dimensions of the buildings, infrastructure decisions on parking, traffic and road access, and of function and aesthetics. These will be further described in the analysis.

2.1 The temple

The majority of Hindus living in Norway are Tamils from Sri Lanka, the rest are mainly people of Indian descent (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2017a). There exists no statistics on religious belonging in Norway, and I have not been able to find an estimate on the number of Hindus living in Norway. However, in a report from Statistics Norway on the living conditions of immigrants in Norway, 70 percent of immigrants from Sri Lanka were “raised as Hindus” (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2017a). Other Hindus in Norway have background mainly from India. There are 15 300 people who have migrated from Sri Lanka, or are children of people who have migrated from Sri Lanka today (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2017b). Approximately 9000 persons were member of a Hindu faith community/congregation in 2016 (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2017a).

The temple in this case was the first Tamil Hindu temple to be established in Oslo. There are, as far as I could find, three Hindu temples in Oslo, one in Trondheim and one in Bergen (Jacobsen, 2010). Based on the photographs of them, none of them seem to be purpose-built, but are altered buildings originally built for other purposes, as the case in this study.

The temple is located in a suburban area in the North of Oslo, around 30 minute travel from the city centre. The majority of the users of the building are people with migration experience from Sri Lanka, and their children. The regular users of the building reside in the wider Oslo area, and consist mainly of people of Tamil descent, though some users are of Indian descent as well, according to some of the users.
According to the building committee, the community was formed in 1998, by a group of people that started to gather for prayer. At the time, they rented a gymnastic hall at a school, where they brought god figures around once a week. After a while, they started collecting money to be able to buy a locale, and bought the building they are currently using by taking up a substantial loan (16.10.16). The regulations for getting public funding in Norway necessitates systems of personal membership in order to get funding, with a minimum number of members of 500 persons (NOU, 2013). In 2016, the congregation had 2078 members, and received NOK 980 816 in public funding, an amount that is connected to the number of members (Fylkesmannen i Oslo og Akershus, 2017).

There is now employed a Brahmin (priest) in the temple, and there are regular pujas (worship) twice a day, one at noon, and one in the evening around 7 pm. In addition, there are celebrations of religious festivals, the largest being the annual chariot festival, that lasts for 12 days and includes a circumbulation ritual around the temple premises, and bathing of the temple’s main deity in a nearby, sacralised lake (interviews with users of the temple, and Jacobsen, 2009). There are normally 40-50 people present on the regular pujas, whilst the largest festival often has 2-3000 visitors from all over Norway, according to members of the building committee (16.10.16).

The building is located in a somewhat remote area, bordering the woods on one side, in a complex they share with semi industrial businesses. The building that was previously a printing workshop, has two stories, where the first floor is used as a permanent prayer room, furnished with altars, god figures, statues and ornaments. In 2008, they started the project of constructing a new temple, and set down a committee in charge of the process of acquiring land. They bought a plot not far from where the present temple is, and have since been in a process of collecting money from members and solving practical and bureaucratic hindrances to start the building process. The actual building has not yet started at this point, almost ten years later.

2.2 The mosque

The history of Islam in Norway is longer, Islam “arriving” to Norway with migrant workers in the late 1960s. From the beginning, Pakistani diaspora was the largest group, taking a leading role in the organisation of Muslim communities, who up until the 1970s gathered for Friday prayers in different rented locations (Vogt, 2008). The first Mosque in Norway was established
in 1974, but moved between buildings until a permanent location was established in the inner, eastern part of Oslo in 1990. After some years the different faith communities divided in different mosques. Today, most Muslim communities or congregations in Norway are either based on faith direction within Islam, or on national groups (Vogt, 2008).

The Muslim community is larger and more diverse when it comes to number of communities, number of Muslims and faith directions and country background. There exists no statistics on faith or religious belonging in Norway, but the number of Muslims in Norway is estimated based on the number of members in Muslim faith communities and the number of people with background from a country where Islam is the most common religion. The number is between 2.8 and 4.8 % of the population, and between 17.5 and 29.5 % of people with migration background in Norway, making it the largest religion after Christianity (in different forms) (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2017a). During the thirty years between 1980 and 2011, the number of members in Islamic faith communities had grown from 1000 (estimated to be around 10 percent of the persons with background from a Muslim country) to 110 000 persons (an estimated 60 percent of those with a country background from a Muslim country) (NOU 2013).

The Muslim congregation in this case was formally established in 2004 with the intention of establishing a permanent space for worship and other activities associated with a mosque, according to the leader of the mosque (05.01.17). In addition to a sports hall that was used for prayer on Fridays and special occasions, such as Ramadan, the community rented some premises that were used for meetings and education, including Urdu school and Quran school for children for a period.

The land for building the mosque was acquired in 2008, and the new mosque was opened in September 2016, just before I started the field work for the study. At that point, the community had raised money through donations and private loans from users, hired an architect that has specialized in constructing religious buildings, negotiated the building through a bureaucratic process that involved some alterations to the original plan to adjust to complaints from neighbouring stakeholders and the demands from the municipality. The building was financed through donations, fundraising and private loans, according to the leader of the board.

The users of the building are mainly people with Pakistani background residing in the area. There were 1601 officially registered members of the congregation in 2016, and the mosque
community received NOK 755 672 in public funding (Fylkesmannen i Oslo og Akershus, 2017). The building consists of a prayer room with a gallery for women to attend prayer, a kitchen, a meeting room and two classrooms used for different activities such as Quran classes, Urdu classes, Nasheed (singing) classes and other cultural gatherings. There is a parking basement, that is also used for large gatherings.

2.3 Regulation of, and attitudes towards religion

Protestant Christianity continues to keep a privileged position in Norway, more than 200 years since the first independent Norwegian constitution defined Evangelical Lutheran Christianity as the state church in 1814. Not until 1961 did a law state that all citizens have the right to free religious practice, and in 1969 other religious groups got the opportunity to receive financial support on equal terms as the State Church (NOU 2013).

In 1970, 94 percent of the total population were members of the State Church. By 1980, the number had fallen to 88 percent, whereas members of the Church of Norway today constitute 77 percent of the population (Den Norske Kirke, 2017; NOU, 2013). The diversity of religious communities has grown while the Church has been reduced: When the law on faith communities [Lov om trudomssamfunn og ymist anna, my translation] was adopted in 1969, the religious communities outside the state church consisted mainly of other protestant Christian communities. 40 years later, in 2011, such communities are still the largest group of religious communities comprising around 170 000 members of the faith communities receiving funding. However, a larger group of 220 000 persons are part of non-protestant churches and other religions. The Norwegian Humanist Association receives funding as a faith community as well, consisting of 88 000 members in 2016 (Human-Etisk Forbund, 2017).

In addition to opening up for religious diversity and adapting laws to this reality, there has also been a development of secularisation, the last major reform being the secession of the Church of Norway from the state in 2012. The constitution, however, still states that The Church of Norway is the “Popular Church of Norway”, but that it is to receive support from the state on

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2 My translation of the term “folkekirke”, which is used in the article referred to in the text, explaining the outcome of the separation of state and church.
the same terms as other faith communities (Regjeringen.no, 2017). Employees in the Church of Norway are now not employed by the state, but by the Church as a legal entity.

In addition to formal law and policy, the representation of religion in media and attitudes towards religion and religious people also forms the framework that the cases in this study operate within. The Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) has released reports on attitudes towards immigration, religion and media representation during the last decade that will help shed light on these issues. In a report from 2009, IMDi reviewed the representation of immigrants in Norway, including representation of religion. Some of the main findings that are of interest in this study are: Among topic defined as concerning integration or migration, Islam received most attention, with over 70 000 mentions, making it the second most important topic in Norwegian media that year – only topped by the Prime minister at the time. Persons with migration background were interviewed in two percent of media articles in the eight largest newspapers in Norway. Persons with migration background were used as sources in 62 percent of the articles that had migration or integration as main topic (IMDi, 2009, p. 36). Hijab was mentioned over 14 000 times. As a comparison, Racism or discrimination was mentioned 20 747 times (IMDi, 2009, p. 36); Religion is more often used as identity marker when talking about people with minority status. Rather than being Pakistani or Tamil, people are represented as Muslim or Hindu (IMDi, 2009, p. 48).

Against this backdrop, what role does religion have in the lives of people living in Norway, and how are their attitudes towards religion and religious people? “The integration barometer”, also published by IMDi (2014), has some answers to this based on quantitative survey studies with people from different country backgrounds and the population as a whole. Country background is defined as people who have migrated from the country themselves and children of people with migration experience, in the study. The most relevant findings for this study are: When asked the question “how important is religion in your life”, 25 percent of the total population answers that it is important. Among people with country background from Muslim countries, the answers are considerably higher: (86 percent of the persons with background from Pakistan, 69 percent from Iraq and 71 percent from Somalia.) (IMDi, 2014, p. 52); 48 percent of the total population considers the assertion “I am sceptical towards persons with Muslim faith”, to match their own view totally or quite well (IMDi, 2014, p.60). There was no question on Hinduism, but as comparison, the percentage for the same question about people with Christian faith was 18 percent, and for Jews 24 percent.
Based on these points, we can conclude that the role of religion in Norway has gone through considerable changes in the last 59 years, from being a mainly Christian country, to a more pluralistic society. Parallel to this development, the Church of Norway has lost some formal privileges such as its direct connection to the state and the role of Evangelical Lutheran Christianity in the education system. It is still, however, in an exceptional position both when it comes to attitudes towards it and in the how it is represented in media. Islam, on the other hand, is in a different kind of exceptional position: People are more sceptical towards Muslims and Islam, and this is supported by a considerable amount of mentions in media, many of which are negatively framed (IMDi, 2009). Hinduism is rarely singled out in public reports, and is not a topic of media interest in the same way as Christianity or Islam.
3 Methodology and methods

Any social science research project runs out of an interest to acquire knowledge about a social phenomenon, and to document and present this with the aim of adding to existing knowledge. A good research design is a holistic connection between research question, theoretical framework, methods and methodology. The choice of methods is innately connected to the research questions, as the research question sets out the course for the types of methods most suited for getting the information one wants. The theoretical framework builds on ontological and epistemological traditions of what one can know and produce knowledge about (Patton, 2002; Thagaard, 1998).

Based on what aspects interested me in making this study, it was obvious from an early stage that this study would have a qualitative research design. The research questions are about people’s personal experiences of places and discourses, of practices and everyday lives, and of the process of constructing religious buildings. Such research questions are best answered through qualitative methods (Dunn, 2010; Ragin & Amoroso, 2011). As the research questions were formulated, the implications for the methodology and methods was developed further. I found it relevant to study more than one case for two reasons. The first is, as mentioned in the introduction, that I wanted to study minority religious spaces, rather than only Muslim or Hindu spaces. Secondly, this allows me to compare and look at similarities between two rather different cases. This study does not have a comparative research design, however, as the research questions are not mainly comparative. I will compare the two cases in the analysis, and look at similarities and differences between the cases and contexts, as is natural when working with qualitative case studies in general (Gomm, Hammersley, & Foster, 2000).

To answer the research questions I have set out to study, and in light of the theoretical framework, it seemed relevant to have at least three sources of data: I have done semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 14 informants, two of which were community leaders in charge of the building process of the new buildings in each community. The majority of informants were users of the buildings, with different relationships to the buildings. Further, I have spent time in the buildings, observing practice and getting to know the buildings. The last source of data is documents and newspaper articles about the buildings, law and regulation on religion in Norway.
Within a positivist, quantitative tradition, reliability and validity of research and data production is often understood as the possibility of other researchers to go back to the field and do the same findings – that the results are “real”, and would thus yield the same results had the data production and analysis been done by another researcher. Within social sciences and qualitative data, this is not a possibility. There is a widespread acknowledgement that such research will always be formed by the researcher and by the context of the research, such as the relations between researcher and informants and society, including power relations and positionality (Dowling, 2010; Thagaard, 1998).

Since one cannot avoid the subjective nature of social research, there are two important strategies in order to achieve validity and reliability in social research. One is the concept of critical reflexivity – to constantly analyse and question the research and one’s position in the research, and through that shed light to the ways in which the analysis can be formed by the researcher (Dowling, 2010). The other is rigour and openness – to be rigorous in the documentation of the data production and analysis, and open, so that the reader can go back and get an understanding of what was done in order to come to the conclusions (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010; Thagaard, 1998).

In this chapter, I strive for openness, and the aim of the chapter is to give an account for the choices I have made throughout the process. I will also consistently share my reflections of my positionality as a researcher, including social and power relations and subjectivity in the research process. This is based on partly retrospective reflections as I am writing this chapter rather late in the research process, and on notes and reflections made during the process of data collection and analysis.

3.1 Methodological strategy and theoretical implications

As mentioned in the introduction, the research design does not follow the guidelines from one particular tradition of science philosophy: The research design and the research process has been the result of a hybrid strategy, where I have partly taken inspiration from the abductive design of Grounded theory. Grounded theory is a rather rigorous strategy of producing and analysing data, using an abductive approach, where the researcher moves between data and
theory in order to understand the case, produce data, produce or modify existing theory, and analyse as one goes along (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Despite not having followed the systematic endeavour of grounded theory, this description is somewhat fitting to the way I have shaped the data collection, the theoretical framework and analysis. Further, I base this thesis on a post-structural ontology. The aim of the project is to look at the process of constructing religious space, understood as a process of constructing meaning systems and materiality. As mentioned in the introduction, an aim of this study is that of presenting views and experiences of users of the religious buildings, building on the typical qualitative aim of “giving voice” (Ragin & Amoroso, 2011). This has led to the study and analysis having some phenomenological traces as well.

The theoretical basis was identified early in the process, and partly laid the grounds for the methodological process. As I was interested in the construction of religious space, turning to Lefebvre’s influential theory on the production of social space was not far away. I did have a shallow understanding of the theory, and its trialectic analysis of space, when I started the data collection and identified the cases. During the process, however, it became clear that Lefebvre’s framework, fitted the research design well – with a central adaptation of discarding the structural standpoint in favour of a constructivist view that came from my understanding of the data and the field. The data also led me to add some central concepts to the theoretical framework, such as the relevance of relational space.

The result is a methodological approach that is designed to acquire an understanding both of discursive and material processes, and the experience of these. The methods chosen to do this are text analysis, observations and semi structured in-depth interviews.

### 3.2 Ethical reflections

The research design and methods of this project is approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), a prerequisite for doing research in Norway. Having made a methodical design and regime for data storage and formally securing the rights of the participants in the study is not enough, however. When studying persons and getting access to potentially sensitive information, a researcher should do ethical reflections and practice sensitivity in all stages of the process. Could this study reveal information that is potentially problematic for the
people involved? How is my position potentially influencing the interview situation, and if so, how do I interpret it? Am I presenting the data in a way that reflects and respects the intention of the informants?

A basic notion within science is that the research should do no harm. This means that the researcher must be aware of any potential risks related to participating in the study, both physical and social (Dowling, 2010). That involves the potential implications of sharing information, and of being sensitive to potential harm for the informants from giving me access to information about potentially sensitive topics. Social research involves people, and any social researcher should reflect on the possible implications of the research project, and that they could be negative.

In this section, I will present concrete strategies for avoiding harm to the participants or of the study, reflections on reliability of the data and reflections on critical reflexivity.

### 3.2.1 Confidentiality and consent

As mentioned above, a potential risk of participating in the project for the informants can lead to problems for the participants. While the safety and wellbeing of participants is of course the most important, such risks could also interfere with the recruitment, as the researcher could risk people not wanting to participate for safety reasons. One way of meeting this challenge is to ensure confidentiality: If there is no risk of the information leading back to the informant, it will make participating easier.

In this study, all informants have been asked whether they wanted to be anonymous prior to the interview. Some did, others did not mind. I asked the informants that did not chose confidentiality once more after the interview, so that they could make an informed decision, having in mind what information they had shared. Despite striving to make the informants anonymized, there is a risk that people knowing the cases and the informants will be able to understand who I am presenting in some instances. The recruitment strategy I used (further described in a coming section) lead to some other people in the community knowing who were participating in the study. I informed the informants about this prior to the interviews as well.
As some did want to be anonymous, I have made pseudonyms for all the informants, based on common Tamil and Pakistani names. The informants are presented in a list after the literature at the end of the paper. However, some are recognizable by their role or position, such as the leader of the mosque. I have not named the religious communities either, but as there are not many similar religious buildings or communities, complete anonymization is not possible. Most of the informants, however, including those who are recognizable by title, did not consider it important to be anonymised in the study, as they did not consider the topics to be sensitive.

This builds on the principle of informed consent – that the participation should be voluntary, and that the informants have received relevant information about their participation (Dowling, 2010). In this study, all participants were given a paper with information about the project, including contact information, prior to the interview. This is found in appendix C. I went through the content of it along with the participant in the beginning of each interview. They were informed about the scope of the project, that it would be published and available through the university, and their opportunity to withdraw their participation at any time if they wanted. All informants have signed such a paper, and I have stored these until the end of the project.

3.2.2 Power relations and meeting difference

At the same time outsider and insider - positionality

(...) if you are going to cross social gaps and go where you are ignorant, you have to recognize and deal with cultural barriers to communication. And you have to accept that how you are seen by the person being interviewed will affect what is said. (Rubin and Rubin 1995, in Patton, 2002, p. 392)

Being an insider or an outsider of a social research topic has different possibilities and challenges. Analysing and producing data as an insider is often considered to lead to more valid research, as you understand the field in a deeper level. The position of an outsider, however, might give the researcher more analytical distance to the field, and contribute to producing data and analysing aspects that might seem “natural” to the extent that it is not reflected upon (Dowling, 2010).
In this study, I consider myself to be both an outsider and an insider. All the participants in this research project live, work and spend most of their time in the same city as I do. Our lives are within the same political framework, and we probably follow the same public debate to some extent. Some of the informants and I have grown up in the same country, sharing references, basic education and language. We are part of the same society.

However, cultural differences can be present also within the same geographic area, and getting access to a group of people I would normally not interact with due to our different lives and our position, age, distance and daily practices is to cross a social and cultural gap. My position as member of the majority population with Norwegian as my first language, being a young woman, and having higher education has probably contributed to a social distance to some of my informants. For some, it might have been experienced as a power asymmetry. I have strived to be aware of this, and tried to “use” my ignorance of religion and religious practice as an opener to their sharing of experiences through taking a position that urged them to tell me about their lives and practices.

**Conveying views rather than giving voice**

One possible goal of doing qualitative research is that of “giving voice”. This is a strategy that is often associated with studies of marginalised groups in society (Ragin & Amoroso, 2011). As a researcher, one has the opportunity to give voices to groups and individuals that are not part of the majority, and thus might have other interests, views and experiences that are not often reflected in public debate.

I would not call the informants of this study marginalised in the sense that they fall outside society. Among the informants are homemakers and people with high education and well payed jobs, health care workers, leaders of religious communities and people that spend their spare time on volunteer work – few of them would probably see their own position in society as marginal. When it comes to the public debate on religion, however, their voices are marginalised, and the experience of practicing religion in Norway is often set aside in favour of politicizing religion. This goes especially for Islam, whilst Norwegian Hinduism practices are rarely even an issue of debate. As Sadiq³ reflects on the topic:

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³ As mentioned above, all names used for the informants are pseudonyms.
When talking about Islam it is often just politics, and the political situation in other parts of the world. No one really talks about Norwegian Islam, and when they do, they rather change the understanding of Islam to make it fit into an image they are comfortable with. (20.01.17)

One aim of this study is therefore to go into issues that are rarely described – how people practice religion and how they give meaning to that. Through observation and in-depth conversations with the informants, I have gotten insight in practices and perspectives that are rarely seen reflected in Norwegian public debate – that of the lived religious lives of religious minorities in Norway.

That being said, I am not myself part of these religious communities, and for me to claim to “give voice” would, in my opinion, be a misconception. The social and subjective nature of social research demands that the researcher is aware of her position, and as a non-religious, white member of the majority population, my views on religion are probably differing from those of the informants in this study. My background, both personal and academic, has probably shaped the questions I have asked, the way we interacted in the interview situation, and not the least my interpretations of the conversations with the informants and my analysis. I will therefore not claim to “give voice”, but rather to try to convey views, meanings and experiences of the informants. During the research process, I have strived to meet this challenge through some concrete strategies. I will come back to those as in the sections on methods and analysis.

3.3 Multiple case study

A case study is a good research strategy for getting in-depth knowledge about the case and context. According to John Gerring (2004), and a common understanding, a case study can be defined as “an intensive study of a singular unit for the purpose of understanding a large class of (similar) units” (Gerring, 2004, p. 342). This “singular unit” – the case - can be a spatially or temporarily delimited phenomenon, and it is studied over a limited period of time or at a single point in time (Gerring, 2004). Following this logic, the case must be a case of something, and the goal seems to be understood as the possibility to contribute to general knowledge about a phenomenon.
However, the idea of generalization and the purpose and reasoning behind case studies is debated (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Gomm et al., 2000; Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014). According to Flyvbjerg (2006), the case study methodology is valuable even where the main goal is not to generalize for two reasons. Firstly, social life cannot be generalized and made into rules – the social sphere is context-dependent. Secondly, the goal need not be the making of rules. Rather, learning through studying a case in depth is valuable in and of itself (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

My ambition is to contribute to knowledge about minority religions in Oslo and Europe through learning about these specific cases. I also hope to make a contribution to the theoretical understanding of religion and space through the analysis. There might be some elements that can be taken from this study that can be transferred to other cases and generalized. However, that is partially up to the reader, who will, in the terms of Stake (Gomm et al., 2000), make naturalistic generalizations based on their own experience, and further research on the topic.

An important aspect of this project is my choice of studying two cases. As mentioned in the introduction, the reason for choosing two cases was to avoid generalisations based on one religion or drawing conclusions on one religion. To the extent that these cases are cases of something, it is of minority religions in Oslo/Norway, and of constructing minority religious buildings and social spaces.

The process of identifying and choosing cases was done on the basis of document research of media articles and bureaucratic documents from the local government. I searched for cases of religious communities that were in the process of constructing a new religious building, and that were currently using a temporary building as place of worship. Some cases were identified, and I ended up with the current cases because they represent different religious groups that are both minority religions in Oslo, and both buildings are located in two different suburban landscapes. The two cases are in different phases of the construction process. The assumption is that the similarities and differences will contribute with different perspectives to the research question than had I only studied one case.
3.4 Methods – defining the cases and getting access to the field

Different methods produce different knowledge. A common feature of qualitative case studies is the use of different methods to get information about the case(s) from different sources (Hyett et al., 2014). The data collection for this study has been mainly through qualitative interviews, and a discussion of that method will be the main part of the following pages. However, during the process of data collection and getting to know the cases, I have also used document analysis and observations. These were part of getting to know the field and the cases, and as part of the process of selecting cases and informants. A shorter discussion of these methods will follow.

3.4.1 Selecting and recruiting informants

Selecting participants for a study requires finding out who can provide the information the research question requires to be answered. As opposed to quantitative research, the goal of selecting participants in qualitative research is not to find a representative sample of informants. Rather, the researcher uses purposive sampling in order to find the informants that will help answer the research question (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010). As in most qualitative research, I set out with an idea of recruiting a varied group of informants that could shed light to the phenomenon from different points of view, and that could help answer the research questions. This is called strategic sampling (Thagaard, 1998).

The informants were categorized in two main categories, based on what I thought would be the most strategic way to learn from them, and how and with what information they could help answer the research questions. The first group consists of the persons involved in the process of constructing the buildings. In this category, I have interviewed the board and building committee of the cases, to learn about the process, the interaction with neighbours, bureaucracy, financing and the architectural choices made during the process. The other main group is users of the buildings, who were interviewed to learn about the use of the buildings, and the experiences and understandings of using them.

The first category was recruited using what Patton would categorize as criterion sampling, as the participants were selected based on their role in the process (Patton, 2002 in Bradshaw &
Stratford, 2010, p. 75). I contacted the participants first through e-mail, and then telephone to land a meeting. In the case of the temple, the board leader functioned as a door opener to the building committee, and I ended up having the main interview with the building committee, whilst in the mosque the interview was conducted with the board leader. The second category, the users of the building, was selected on a different basis: I have strived to get a sample of informants with varying characteristics when it comes to age and gender, as I expected them to have different points of view, some having grown up in Norway, some having moved here at a later stage in life, and a presumption that women and men have different experiences and practices of religion and use of the buildings. This could be seen as typical case sampling, as they represent, not an average, but a typical range of users (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010).

**Users of the temple**

The initial contact with the leader of the board and the building committee functioned as a door opener in recruiting informants from this category as well, as they invited me to visit the building and attend Puja, which was where I recruited the informants from the temple. Some members of the building committee and board were present during most of my visits, and one of them helped me get in contact with some of my informants.

The recruitment strategy of informants from the temple could be seen as a mix of opportunistic and convenience sampling – I approached a random sample of people who were present, my only criteria being that they were at the temple, and consequently are characterized as users (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010). I had initial conversations with the informants at the temple, usually making an arrangement of an interview or getting contact information. The participants I ended up interviewing were selected on the basis of the idea of characteristics I had when approaching them, such as age and gender, and what I found out about the informants from the initial conversations. The group is varied in age, gender and how often they attend the temple.

Getting access to the field turned out to be rather unproblematic in the case of the temple. I was invited in, and felt welcomed by both the board members I had the first interview with and the other users of the temple. Every person I asked to do an interview with was willing and welcoming to the idea.
Users of the mosque

Getting in touch with informants in the mosque was a somewhat different experience, and was to some extent affected by my position as a relatively young woman. Due to the gender division during worship in the mosque, I did not see this as a good opportunity for getting in contact with potential informants. The one time I attended prayer, I was in the gallery, which is the place for women, and when prayer was finished, the men were socialising in a room I did not have access to. The board leader of the mosque became a door opener in this case as well. In my first visit, he took me to the kitchen, where a group of men were sitting having coffee. Two of the informants to this study were recruited there. I did not meet any women on my first visits to the mosque. Again, the leader of the mosque functioned as door opener, as he put me in contact with the leader of the women’s group, who is one of the informants, and further put me in contact with other members of the group, what Bradshaw and Stratford classify as snowball sampling (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010). All female users of the mosque that have participated in this study are part of the women’s group.

The difficulties I had recruiting informants in the mosque might be a limitation to the study. First of all, many of them spend more time working in and with the mosque than I would assume the average mosque user does. This is especially true for the women, as they are all engaged in the women’s group. They also probably have a different understanding of the building process, having been involved formally and informed during the whole process to a higher degree than most users that only come for prayers.

In retrospect, I see it would have strengthened the study to have some more informants from each case. Having analysed the interviews, I have gotten many different views on topics, but a greater variation in age could possibly have contributed to new other insights in the study. However, I do consider the information I have to be of meaning. As qualitative samples are not chosen with a goal of representativeness, the variation on many other attributes, such as gender, years living in Norway or Oslo, civil status and language skills constitute an interesting group of informants. During the interviews, I have gotten different insights from the informants that reflect the diversity of the users of the buildings.
3.4.2 Understanding the field

The main source of data in this project is interviews. However, an important aspect of any case study is to get a deep and comprehensive understanding of the case. To understand the cases in this research project involved more than interviews with the participants. As previously mentioned, I started off doing document analysis, getting an overview of the building process, of regulations of religious buildings in Oslo and the history of the religious communities. This has informed my understanding of the temple and the interview guides and conversations with the informants. The main documents were procedural documents from the construction processes. Further, I have read and been informed by white papers, regulation plans and media articles retrieved from a database consisting of all newspaper articles published in edited medias (A-tekst).

I have also done observations that have added depth to my understanding and informed the conversations and interviews with the participants during the fieldwork. As I am writing about lived religion and lived architecture, I considered it important to be present and spending time in the buildings. The impressions – temperature, sounds, smells and visual understanding of the temple and the mosque have been important to my understanding, and will be part of the analysis as well. Despite not having done systematic observations, I have strived to make notes about the experiences I have had. As I was attending prayer and rituals in what is understood as a sacred room, I did not feel comfortable to take photographs or write notes during these observations. I do, however, have several pages of notes that I have made after the visits. I also have photographies from other parts of the buildings, some of which will be presented in the analysis. I have attended Puja ceremonies, prayer at the mosque, visited people’s homes and done interviews there, thereby getting insight in how some of the informants pray at home. I have also visited the mosque during times of Quran school for children, and have observed a class. In addition I have gotten insight in the plans and drawings for the temple, and been guided through the buildings by the leader of the mosque and the temple. This has given me valuable insight in the buildings, their use and how they are in different occasions.

Having visited the buildings, spent time there and having informal conversations in addition to the interviews have not only contributed to my understanding and knowledge about the cases - it has also informed the analysis of the data and the data collection: I was able to ask my informants about behaviours I observed, and I think it was easier to establish rapport because
people had seen me at the temple. I got the impression from many of the informants that they were interested in helping me getting knowledge because I showed interest in their life and practices, and because I had spent time at the temple and the mosque.

3.4.3 The qualitative interview

As stated above, different methods produce different knowledge. Observation is a good method for getting to know what people do, and how they behave in certain situations or spaces. What you cannot get from observations is people’s experience of doing those things: the thoughts they have while doing it, or their rationale for doing what they do. This is a complex matter, and Dunn (2010), argues that interviewing is the best way of investigating these. The main reason and goal of interviewing is, with Patton’s (2002, p. 341) words “to enter into the other person’s perspective”. Interviews are also a way of constructing knowledge of diversity of opinion, or matters of consensus. In addition to people’s thoughts and feelings, the interview is also a good way of getting knowledge about behaviour, phenomena or processes that occurred previous to the research. The research questions in this project calls for a data collection method that allows me as researcher to get to know people’s thoughts and experiences and knowledge about previous events and of abstract concepts and opinions.

Semi structured interview and interview guide

The qualitative interview can take several forms, and it is common to differentiate between three main types of interview: The structured, the semi-structured and the open conversation interview (Dunn, 2010; Thagaard, 1998). In this project, I have used semi-structured interviews. The strengths of semi-structured interviews lie in their mix of rigour and spontaneity: Through using an interview guide I have been able to talk to all the informants about the same topics, while still having the opportunity to follow up on leads from the informants or elaborating on issues that come to the surface during the relatively free conversation. A translated, basic version of the interview guides used with the regular users of the buildings can be found in appendix A.

A good interview is dependent on an interviewer that is able to ask open-ended questions that are understandable for the participant and to the point. The interviewer must be a good listener, pay attention to what the informant says and interpret during the conversation in order to follow up on leads and information that comes from the conversation. A good interviewer is able to
make the informant feel heard and assured that their answers are valid and interesting, in order to build trust and make the informant comfortable in the situation (Thagaard, 1998).

Being flexible during the conversations has led me to not follow the interview guide rigorously in all the interviews, and none of the conversations have been the same. All of the topics have been covered in all the interviews, but there is variation in the depth of inquiry on each topic. Being aware of my position as partly an outsider, I strived to ask open-ended questions in order to let the informants somewhat shape the interview conversations. I will return to this topic in the section on analysis.

**Doing the interviews**

I did the interviews at the informants’ convenience, mainly meeting them in their work place during lunch hours, visiting them in their homes or having a phone interview with one of the informants - to fit into their schedule. This was done mainly to make it easier to participate, but also to get an understanding of their lives and the landscapes they live in, as an opener to questions about their everyday practices.

The interview guides with the users of the religious buildings had four main parts: Their personal background, talking about the use and understanding of the building, and religious practice and understandings of religion in society. Since the interview form was semi structured, I was able to follow up on topics that came up during the interview, and was flexible to continuing on for example the topic of praying as a routine if the informants brought that up in other times of the interview. Some of the questions had to be concretised through examples in order to get a good answer, and I either picked up on something that the informant had mentioned previously in the interview, or came with examples from my observations or interviews with other participants. This turned out to work well in some interviews, while in others they were probably somewhat leading. I have taken that into consideration in the work with the analysis, always reading the context of a specific quote to remember how the conversation was. I have also made notes on such reflections after the interviews were finished.

All the interviews were done in Norwegian, and I have worked with and analysed the data in Norwegian, translating only the phrases that are used directly in the paper to English.
3.5 Analysis

As opposed to the quantitative idea that one goes into field, collect data, analyse and lastly present the findings, analysis is a continuous process throughout the research in qualitative research. From the initiating research to identify cases, throughout the data production, choice of theoretical framework analysing and presenting the findings is a long, non-linear process. Through this process, I have asked new questions, discovered interesting aspects about the cases, that have led me to different sources of data and new literature and theoretical approaches.

The analysis has been, as mentioned previously, semi abductive, as I let the theory and empiric findings influence each other, and semi inductive, where the experiences of the informants and my own observations have formed the analysis. In practice, this means that I started with getting to know the cases on a shallow basis through reading newspaper articles, visiting their web pages and Facebook pages and the procedural documents. Parallel to this, I started reading up on the literature on the field within geography. As the process moved on, I made some preliminary research questions based on the literature and the theoretical framework I had started to construct, basing the framework mainly on Lefebvre’s spatial triad. Getting to the interviews, I made an interview guide that was partly informed by the research questions, but with open-ended questions in order to open for other directions from the informants. When systematising and coding the data (described in more detail below), I used the data as starting point, abstracting to codes and categories based on the content of the interviews. When presenting the data and answering the research questions, I have gone back to using the theoretical framework

**Systematising the interview data - coding**

I have done interviews with 14 informants, that have all been fully transcribed, comprising over 100 pages of interview data - an amount that requires some form of systematisation to be able to work with it. The aim of coding and categorisation is not merely practical management of data, however. Coding is analysis – a process where the researcher interprets, identifies patterns and sees the data in new ways, that can lead to development of theory (Saldaña, 2009).

In this process, I had an inductive approach, using the data as starting point. I started with two transcribed interviews, reading through them and ascribing them a more “abstract” label. A
paragraph where an informant talks about how often she goes to the temple and on what days, before moving on to talking about how this is a tradition she grew up with, was for example coded with “routines” and “generation”. From these two interviews, I gathered the codes and systematised them in categories. Having gone through some more interviews, I went back and did some adjustments, combining some codes and adding some. This ended in 34 codes, systematised in seven different categories. I did not code any data in the categories themselves. The code book can be found in Appendix B.

I used Nvivo as a software tool in the coding process. This allowed me to further get to know the data and look for connections. For example, I could use it to take out all the quotes associated with one or more codes, or to see what codes were recurring often in relation to each other.

Coding and categorisation is a process with more steps, and after the initial coding, it is often a good idea to do a second and third cycle coding (Saldaña, 2009). After the first coding, I “matched” the codes to the research questions, having an impression of what codes would be interesting to answer them. Saldaña (2009) describes coding and analysis as moving from data through codes, categories and themes to theory. Building theory is to remove the data from the context or the actual description, and seeing it in a more abstract context. An example from this data set could be the process of having a paragraph where an informant describes the feelings associated with arriving at the mosque, and describing it as an experience of sacredness. This was partly done in the rounds of coding, re-reading the codes and seeing patterns, and is expressed in the analysis chapter.

In this study, I was interested in both the content of the interviews and of the wordings and expressions used. Language has been a barrier in the analysis of wordings, however. There are two reasons for this: Some of the informants do not have Norwegian as their main language, some having learnt it as adults, making it difficult to ascribe meaning to the choice of wordings. Secondly, the interviews and transcriptions are in Norwegian, while the code book and presentation in this thesis is in English. I have therefore weighted content over wordings in this data and ask the reader to do the same.
Textual analysis

When it comes to the textual analysis of documents and newspaper articles, however, wordings were important in the analysis process. This data has been used both for getting to know the cases and the descriptive chapter above, and as data in the analysis of power relations and discourse. Analysing that data consisted of both getting an overview of the process and actors. Further, I analysed how they write about the buildings, using this as a way to interpret their understanding of it. Identifying wordings based on aesthetics, practical issues and symbolic understandings was an important part of this analysis. I did not develop a code book for this. Rather, I read through documents and noted interesting wordings and quotes based on the research question. I did this analysis after having coded the interview data, which allowed me to also identify differences and similarities in the ways the informants and other actors talk about the same topics, or the same material reality.

3.5.1 Presenting data ethically

The last part of the analysis is the presentation – the analysis chapters. Again, this has not been a linear process, and I did not have a completely ready analysis in my head that I wrote down. Writing the analysis chapters and connecting the empirical findings in the theoretical framework was also part of the analysis process, leading me to see new patterns, similarities and differences between two cases, or seeing the data in a new light.

While writing the analysis chapters, I have strived to follow the principle of “showing, rather than telling”. Rather than stating my interpretation of something an informant has said, I have strived to show what the informants actually say, in their own words. It should be noted that “their own words” have been translated by me, and that I sometimes have removed some sentences that were not relevant to the point I was conveying. I have also in some instances stated some patterns I have seen, and “illustrated” them with anecdotes.

The point of “showing, not telling” has two functions. The first is that it contributes to reliability – the reader can see how the informant talks about a topic and is given the possibility to interpret it herself. Further, I see it as an ethical issue. In light of the above discussion of sharing perspectives from the informants, I think it is more valuable to directly convey the words of the informants than taking them through my interpretation and describing them. That
being said, this does not remove my subjectivity from the presentation – it is still I who ascribe it to an analytical topic and puts it in context.
4 Theoretical framework

In the following theoretical framework, I will start by offering a short literature review of how religion is understood in geography. This is not a comprehensive review, but a means to position the study in the field of religious studies in geography. The next object of inquiry is space. I will draw up the theoretical framework for a spatial analysis of the cases, using Lefebvre’s spatial triad. The last topic will be buildings, or architecture. I will place this also within the theoretical framework of the spatial analysis, building on the understanding of the framework. Before this, let me introduce the ontological baseline of this study.

4.1 What we call reality

Before drawing up the theoretical framework that will be used in the analysis of the data, I should explain how I understand the world and what we can get knowledge about – the epistemological and ontological understanding. First, I make the statement that, and this is probably not radical in 2017, the world we know and can get knowledge about is socially constructed, drawing on works by thinkers such as Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. This means that there is no objective reality that we can get knowledge about that exists before discourse - everything is discursively constructed, through language, symbols, practice and performativity. Discourses are not mirrors of “reality”, reality is discourse, both as language and as practices.

The epistemological implication of this ontological view for me is not to walk around in the world deconstructing everything I see to “prove” it to be a social construct, or, on the other end “discover” a reality beyond discourse. What makes such a standpoint interesting is rather how it opens for a possibility to understand how we construct things – for example religious buildings – and what social and spatial aspects that are part of that process. As Lily Kong (2001, p. 213) states: “if sacredness is not inherent, attention must be paid to how it is sacralised” I understand this, in line with Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory as an ongoing negotiation, that will temporarily come to a halt as some meanings are given preference by many people (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). But however stable the meaning seems to be - often even appearing to be “natural” - it is always at risk of being altered and changed. What we call “reality” is an unstable thing, and it is these negotiations, that happen between the material, the body, space and social relations that are the object of interest in this study.
4.2 Religion in human geography

In the last decades, there have been several attempts to find a place for religion within Geography. Kong’s review articles at the beginning of the three last decades, and other review articles, leaves the impression of a field in Geography undergoing a struggle for finding its identity: is it a Geography of religion, a religious Geography, or a sub-division of Cultural Geography? (Holloway & Valins, 2002; Knott, 2010; Kong, 1990, 2001, 2010; Yorgason & della Dora, 2009). Rather than reviewing this debate, however, let us look at some of the ways religion is approached within geography.

In line with the ontological notion of constructivism outlined above, religion does not exist, but is a concept that exists within different discourses, assigning it different meaning. This is in line with Asad’s questioning of religion as a universal anthropological category: “There cannot be a definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself a product of historical processes” (Asad, 1993, p. 29) In the following, I will therefore not attempt to come to a definition of what religion is, but rather how it is understood within the field of geography.

Within geography, religion is often understood in terms of place and space, using terminologies such as sacred space, or sacred-making behaviour of places about religion and religious practice. However, the concept of religion is not that simply put into geographical terms, as it:

(…) blurs geographical scales and conceptual boundaries: those between the self and the world, life and death, the local and the universal, the private and the public, the introvert and the political, the fixed and the mobile (…). (Yorgason & della Dora, 2009, p. 631)

Instead of understanding religion as a concept of itself that might have ontological, theological and philosophical implications for our understanding of it (See for example Tse, 2014 and his argument for a grounded theology), Kong (2010) argues that religion is often treated as an object that can be studied empirically as a social phenomenon in the same way as for example migration. She has also argued that while race, gender, class are seen as structures or underlying phenomena that fracture and form society, religion is often understood within the field or discourse of race (Kong, 2001).
Geographical literature engages in religion in relation to secularity. The two concepts are inherently interlinked, and one cannot be understood without the other: “secularity, and religion are best perceived as engaged in productive tension” (Oosterbaan, 2014, p. 593). There has been a tendency to view “certain buildings, such as mosques, synagogues and churches as somehow sacred, whilst we think of everything else - from villages, suburbs, cities or nation states, to landscapes, work places and economies - as, almost by definition, secular spaces” (Brace, Bailey, & Harvey, 2006, p. 5).

This is a simplified understanding of religion and secularity. As we shall see throughout this paper, the idea of religion is both in constant tension with an idea of a secular, and the idea of sacred is in constant tension with the idea of profane. I will in the following present some geographical understandings of religion and space, by making a typology between the studies of space as religious as opposed to secular, and as sacred as opposed to profane. This is partly in line with a well-used separation between the politics and poetics of space (Kong, 2001) or the sacred (Chidester & Linenthal, 1995).

### 4.2.1 Religious and secular spaces

Religion is inherently political and social. It has played, and continue to play an immense role in societies: It plays an important role in “the everyday lives of a vast number of individuals” (Holloway & Valins, 2002), and it persists in what we perceive as “modern, secular” nation-states – it is even “a crucial component in the construction of these nation-states” (Gökarkksel, 2009, p. 659). Examples of this are obviously the European nation states who have historically had a strong connection between religion and the national, or even institutionalized as part of the state, as is the case for the Scandinavian state churches or other forms of Christianity in Europe (Knott, 2005; Oosterbaan, 2014). The same goes, in a more or less formalised or institutionalised form, for many other parts of the world – including Pakistan, which was constructed partly on a division between Islam and Hinduism after the liberation of India; or Sri Lanka, where the long-lasting civil war was partly fuelled by religious tensions between mainly Hindu Tamils and mainly Buddhist Singhalese.

Today it is argued that we live in a postsecular society. The term was coined by Habermas (2006), and refers to a period following what he understands as “a wave of secularization in almost all European countries since the end of World War II—going hand in hand with social
modernization” (Habermas, 2006, p. 2). Postsecularity has been influential on the studies of religion in Geography, as it describes a reality where religion’s role in society is undergoing change towards a society where the religious landscape is more pluralistic and is taking up more place in the public debate (Kong, 2010; Oosterbaan, 2014; Tse, 2014). These realities of a more complex religious landscape, include the development of a European Islam following migration from North Africa and the Middle East; the taking up of new forms of spirituality and wellness cults in Europe and USA; or even the religious presence in politics within the clash of civilization discourse especially potent after 9/11, to mention a few (Habermas, 2006; Kong, 2010; Oosterbaan, 2014). Rather than understanding the term as a description of our time/space or our society in twenty first-century Europe, however, the term is used as an analytic or heuristic tool that can be “useful in constructing a debate about shifting relations between religion, the nation-state, and citizenship” (Oosterbaan, 2014, p. 593).

Recent studies of the practiced, everyday religion has further contributed to understanding the relation between secular and religious. Religion is not only understood as the “officially sacred” (such as religious buildings, institutions or laws), but rather found in everyday lives of religious people, practices and spaces made religious places (Kong, 2001). Ammerman, in her book Everyday religion (2006) makes the argument that if we view religion as the “officially” religious, in terms of attendants to services, the power of religious institutions we would be looking at the decline of religion. However, religion is still present in people’s lives – but maybe in different forms in the social worlds of people: The sacred can be produced anywhere, and understood by religious people to be wherever. Kong (2001) writes of religious fluidity in time and space, as a space may be sacred for some or in some time, whilst it may be secular in or for others. The presence of religious bodies (Kuppinger, 2014), claiming space for religious rituals or processions in public space (Saint-Blancat & Cancellieri, 2014) or practicing religion in everyday life (Ammerman, 2006) blur the lines between the religious and the secular, making them interactive and overlapping categories in time and space. Despite being overlapping, the religious and secular are constitutive categories - the concept of religion is not present without a secular counterpart, and vice versa.
4.2.2 Sacred and profane spaces

This last point is also true for the sacred and the profane, neither of which exist without each other. But these categories are understood somewhat differently: If a space is sacred, it cannot at the same time be profane. This understanding is to a high degree influenced by Eliade’s work on the topic (1959). His was a conception of the sacred as an inherent quality. In the last decades, sacred spaces are increasingly understood as produced (Knott, 2010; Kong, 1990). Studies of sacred space have often taken the form of phenomenological studies of the subjective experience of the sacred (Knott, 2010; Kong, 1990, 2001).

Sacred space is also contested space, implying that different interests are at play in this contestation: “Against all the efforts of religious actors, sacred space is inevitably entangled with the entrepreneurial, the social, the political and other ‘profane’ forces” (Chidester & Linenthal, 1995, p. 17). One of the ways in which sacred space is produced is through exclusion of the profane, often tied to a conception of sacred as pure, and the profane as all things that are not pure. Purity is here both a literal concept of bodily purity that can be washed away, and an abstract concept of what is “out of place” (see for example Bell, 1992; Douglas, 1997). If sacred space is exclusive of the profane, Chidester and Linenthal (1995), argue that space should be viewed as a limited “resource” where there will be conflicts over its organization and control.

4.2.3 Relevant theoretical approaches to religion

The cases in this study are minority religious buildings and their users. They are directly or indirectly impacted by, and related to, concepts such as migration, nation, transnationalism, belonging, identity, and visible minorities. Theoretical literature and empirical studies within these fields have supplemented the theoretical framework and informed the analysis. Before moving on to the main theoretical framework, I will therefore introduce some of the literature that has been influential in this study.

As the users of the religious buildings in this study have migration background, studies of religion and migration and diaspora have been important. Examples are Chivallon’s (2001) study of the spatial expressions of Caribbean identity in the United Kingdom and of Ryan’s (2014) study of the creation of a Muslim identity for young practicing Muslims with migration background. These are both examples of a strain of studies on religion and identity and
integration in society, often building on post-colonial theories (such as Bhabha, 1994). Studies and theories on transnationalism and transnational connections in everyday lives have also been useful in this analysis, such as Sheringham’s (2010) article on the concepts of transnationalism, religion and everyday lives, and Baker and Beaumont’s (2011) article on creating “belonging in the postsecular city”.

As the users of the buildings are visible minorities, I have been informed by a large body of literature on claiming or negotiating space through visibility and presence. This body of literature both draws on the tradition of lived, or everyday, religion and the works of Ammerman (Ammerman, 2006), or of a notion of symbolic presence in the urban or in public space. Within the tradition of everyday religion, I have found the Kuppinger’s ethnographic study of Muslim spaces in Stuttgart useful, as well as the contributions to Ammerman’s edited book Everyday religion, such as McGuire’s chapter on embodied practices as negotiation and resistance (2007).

Within the literature on what I term “symbolic presence”, there is an ever-growing body of literature on the construction of Mosques in Europe, that has been of interest. Many of these look into the processes of constructing mosques, and most describe some form of negotiation or conflict (Cesari, 2005a, 2005b; Gale, 2005; Lillehei, 2005; Naylor & Ryan, 2002; Saint-Blancat & Schmidt di Friedberg, 2005). There is a significantly smaller body of literature on the presence of Hindus in Europe, a point I will discuss later in the paper. However, Ann David’s (2008) approach to Tamil Hindus in London as claiming space through religious performance has been useful, along with general literature on religious presence in public or urban space, such as an issue in Social and cultural Geography (vol. 15, No. 6, 2014), titled Public religion and urban space in Europe, edited by Martijn Oosterbaan (2014). Two other examples are the study of claiming space through religious processions (Saint-Blancat & Cancellieri, 2014), and an analysis of Faith and Suburbia (Dwyer, Gilbert, & Shah, 2013).

I have also built some of the analysis on theories of nation, identity and belonging in the context of migration and internationalism. In this thesis, these concepts are all viewed as constructed categories, that are produced and negotiated on different levels, from the dominating discourses of the nation to the everyday practices (Amin, 2012; Anthias, 2013; Antonsich, 2010; Brubaker, 2010; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Kaufmann, 2017)


4.3 The social production of (social) space

If everything is a social construct, so is space. Massey (1992) argues, however, that this perspective leaves geography with no other function than mapping the spatial outcomes of social practice. She suggests instead that not only is space a social construct, but the social is also a spatial construct. This conveniently makes geography relevant as a discipline for studying society and, more importantly, leaves the implication that “society is necessarily constructed spatially, and that fact – the spatial organization of society – makes a difference to how it works” (Massey, 1992, p. 70). Further, “(...) as a result of the fact that [space] is conceptualized as created out of social relations, space is by its very nature full of power and symbolism, a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and cooperation” (Massey, 1992, p. 81). Massey’s essay is called Politics and time/space, and discusses the relationship between time, space and the social. She argues that time should not be given preference over space in the understanding of the social, but rather that time/space/social are mutually constitutive, and cannot be understood without a relation to the others. This is also a central point for Soja (1996).

To say that the two are relational is not to discard the understanding of social constructionism in my understanding. Rather, it recognizes that even if everything is socially constructed and cannot be understood outside the social, it still relates to materiality, the body, space and time. These, let’s call them elements, are part of the social, and the social is always already part of them. They also constitute each other – one cannot understand space without time, power or performativity, and “social relations (...) have no real existence save in and through space” (Lefebvre, 1991).

This brings us over to the theoretical framework for analysing space that I will use in this paper – Lefebvre’s spatial triad. Lefebvre (1991) defends the dual relationship between the social and space from the Cartesian understanding of space, where space is understood as an abstract space, an empty container in which the social relationships, the material and the body are played out. Lefebvre argues that what is interesting to study “must be shifted from things in space to the actual production of space” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 37), and that is his project in The production of space. I have one important point to make before moving further, however, and that is that Lefebvre’s project is not really in line with the poststructuralist, constructivist view
that I have drawn up here. Lefebvre’s project might be postmodern rather than modernistic, but it is certainly structural: It relates to a Marxist tradition, and his choice of the word *production* is not the same as my use of the term *construction*. Rather, it relates to the *mode of production*, and with the Marxist analysis it builds on this implies a capitalist mode of production is to be understood as the dominant order. We will keep this in mind as we go through the presentation of his work, and my attempt to connect that to religion.

4.4 The spatial triad

*Space is at once result and cause, product and producer (…).*

(Lefebvre, 1991, p. 142)

The mutually constituting space and social form a triad, consisting of *spatial practice*, *representations of space* and *spaces of representation*. These are not three different forms of space, they always co-exist, partly depending on each other, sometimes constituting each other:

4.4.1 Spatial practice/perceived space

Spatial practice produces and reproduces a society’s space in a dialectical interaction; “it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 38). It is the materiality – the roads, buildings, routes – the empirically observable – the perceived space. Further it is daily routines, networks and movements that happen within and in relation to the materiality of the space. The spatial practice, or “the specific spatial competence or performance of every society member”, can only be understood empirically (ibid, p. 38). Lefebvre uses the body as a metaphor for explaining the spatial triad, and in this metaphor, spatial practice is the use of the body – the practical basis for perception of the outside world (ibid, p. 40).

4.4.2 Representations of space/conceived space

Representations of space is the conceptualized, abstract space of scientists, cartographers, technocrats and planners (ibid, p. 38-39). It is tied to the relation of production and to the ‘order’ – and hence to knowledge, signs and codes. While the representations of space are abstract, they do play a part in social and political practice: they are dominant in their planning role, and their use of verbal, intellectual signs build on knowledge, but also on ideology, thereby giving it “a substantial role and specific influence in the production of space” (ibid, p. 42). The representations of space are produced with power of ideology, and thus with immense
effect on the lived spaces. Representations are, however, not only abstract. Buildings, as materialisation of architecture, can be understood as physical and material, dominant representations. Using the body metaphor, the representations of space would be the knowledge of “anatomy and physiology, sickness and its cures, and of the body’s relations with nature and its surrounding ‘milieu’” (ibid, p. 40).

### 4.4.3 Representational spaces/spaces of representation/lived space

Representational spaces are “lived through its associated images and symbols, and it is the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’ (...) It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects” (ibid, p. 39). Representational space is more than perceived space (spatial practice). The “users” do not only apprehend space through senses such as vision or tactile experiences, but through a “lens” of what Lefebvre calls culture (“the culture intervenes here” (ibid, p. 40)). It is the social – our knowledge of the social, created by the social, of power, of representations of space, of symbols and representations that makes us, the users, interpret and add meaning to what we experience. The representational space is further not only the material signifiers, but also the lived situations – the way we make reason of social practice. To live space is to interpret, to communicate about, understand and interact with space and in space. Lefebvre calls this a “dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (ibid, p.39). Lived space is experienced passively, according to Lefebvre, because it is subject to the dominating spatial order of modernity. However, it is in the lived spaces that the dominating order of conceived space can be challenged and revived by people wishing to live in opposition to the dominant norms (Knott, 2005).

### 4.4.4 Challenging dominance in the margins

Following this, the representational spaces could be spaces of conflict, of negotiations and change. In continuance of this point, Edward Soja (1996), in his book *Thirdspace*, has developed the idea of the spatial triad further, equating spatial practices with what he calls *Firstspace* and representations of space with *Secondspace*. As for Soja’s *Thirdspace*, he adds to Lefebvre’s analysis that this is a space of social and cultural resistance, associated with marginal, critical spaces (Knott, 2005; Soja, 1996). Foucault also touches upon a conception of space that could in some ways be equated with what Soja calls a “thirdspace” in his essay *Of other spaces* (1986), describing some spaces as what he calls heterotopias and their characteristics as different from other spaces. I will discuss the notion of heterotopias further in the analysis chapter. Similar notions are also present within postcolonial and feminist
literature. Homi Bhabha (1994) also writes of a third space, a space of hybridity, and bell hooks (1989) of a radical openness in the margins. Despite being used in somewhat different forms, all these notions of thirdspace are in some way of a space in tension, a marginal space of possible resistance against an abstract secondspace, or a corporeal firstspace.

4.5 Incorporating religion in the production of space

What is an ideology without a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and links it makes use of, and whose code it embodies? What would remain of a religious ideology – the Judeo-Christian one, say – if it were not based in places and their names: church, confessional, altar, sanctuary, tabernacle? What would remain of the Church if there were no churches? The Christian ideology, carrier of a recognizable if disregarded Judaism (God the Father etc.), has created the spaces which guarantee that it endures. More generally speaking, what we call ideology only achieves consistency by intervening in social space and in its production, and by thus taking on body therein. Ideology per se might well be said to consist primarily in a discourse upon social space. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 44)

However abstract Lefebvre’s works may seem, he insists that “The triad loses all force if it is treated as an abstract ‘model’. If it cannot grasp the concrete (as distinct from the ‘immediate’), then its import is severely limited, amounting to no more than that of one ideological mediation among others” (p. 40). Picking up on that, I will continue the theory on space while connecting it to religion. How can Lefebvre’s work contribute to a study of religion, or more concretely in this case to the study of religious buildings and practices? Kim Knott has attempted to answer that question in The location of religion (2005). As a starting point for the usage of the production of space for religion, we must agree that religion is inherently social, “and must also exist and express itself in and though space, and must play its part in the constitution of spaces” (Knott, 2005, p. 21). As me, Knott does not either follow the Marxist ontology of Lefebvre. In the coming paragraphs, a “dominant order” therefore means a dominant discourse or a dominant political order – this is not necessarily capitalism itself. And the word production is not understood in terms of mode of production.

Let us then try to place religion into the spatial triad. In the following, I will mainly use Knott (2005), as hers is the most comprehensive work on the topic. There are not many others who
have directly applied the spatial triad on religion, but I have found Fraser MacDonald’s article on Scottish Presbyterianism (2002), and Christine Chivallon’s (2001) spatial analysis of Afro-Caribbean Pentecostalism in Great Britain to be useful as well.

4.5.1 Spatial practices

If we follow de Certeau’s (1984, in Knott, 2005) notion of “pedestrian speech acts” or “walking rhetoric” and Lefebvre’s idea that “the spatial practice of a society secretes that society’s space” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 38), the analysis of these spatial practices could help understand the spatial system it expresses. Following that, the study of practices associated with religion would do the same (Knott, 2005). However, there is a problem with this seemingly logical argument: What would these practices associated with religion be? Can we talk about religious spatial practices? The intuitive, logical answer is no: no practices are inherently religious (or secular for that matter). To ascribe practice with symbolic or cultural meaning would, if we are to follow Lefebvre’s triad, make it part of the lived (representational) space, rather than spatial practice.

A more pragmatic view however, is that there are spatial practices that are mainly done by people who call themselves religious. Such practices include prayer, going to and from a mosque several times a day, praying in front of a shrine at home before going to work, or wearing a turban, hijab or a red mark on the forehead. These are ritual practices ascribed with “religious meaning”, but they are not inherently religious: a non-religious person performing them would in principle be doing the same practice. They rarely do, however, and in that sense, some practices are only performed because they are associated to religion. With this understanding, spatial practices can be associated with religion, and we can investigate whether religious practice constitute the production of space as spatial practice.

Chidester and Linenthal (1995), in their book American sacred space, makes an influential argument in this context, that sacred space is ritual space, “a location for formalized, repeatable symbolic performances” (p. 9). Further, “the human body plays a crucial role in the ritual production of sacred space. Ritual action manipulates basic spatial distinctions between up and down, right and left, inside and outside, and so on, that necessarily revolve around the axis of the living body” (Chidester & Linenthal, 1995, p. 10). This view builds upon the argument in Jonathan Z. Smith’s (1992) influential book To take place, where he claims that “Ritual is not an expression of or a response to ‘the sacred’; rather, something or someone is made sacred by
ritual”. This understanding of sacred, is in line with Lefebvre’s notion of spatial practice: The body and practice are the producers and reproducers of sacred, or religious, space.

Materiality can be produced and reproduced by spatial practice: shaping paths that are often walked to get to a place of worship, altering buildings to facilitate rituals, the trade of objects that are used for worship, or even sounds such as calls or prayer can reshape materiality and spatial practice – taking a part in in the production of space: “places – and even ‘non-places’ – emerge as a result of spatial practice. They are generated by it, become the focus of journeys to and fro, and are reproduced by repeated practice” (Knott, 2005, p. 42). Spatial practice produces and reproduces spaces and places – the spatial practice of people moving to, entering through a door, doing rituals in for example a church sustains the space as it is (Knott, 2005).

To answer Lefebvre’s question from the quote above: “what would remain of the church if there were no churches?” – the spatial practice would change if there were no churches, and the churches and the Church would change if spatial practice changed: spatial practice, including the spatial practice of religious people and of religious institutions forms and is formed by social (and thus material) space. In other words “sacred space is not a stimulus for ritual; ritual, as sacred-making behaviour, brings about sacred space” (Knott, 2005, p. 43)

4.5.2 Representations of space

As the representations of space are produced through ideology, knowledge and power, a discussion of the part religion plays in conceived social space, or the conceived spaces of religion, must be grounded in an understanding of the ideology(ies) that dominates space in a society. Religion is relevant here as it is “central to the operations of knowledge and power, having been both historically and ideologically dominant” (Knott, 2005, p. 27). As MacDonald (2002) concludes – if the representations of space “are tied to the relations of production” and the order that they impose (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33), what we need to understand is the social and historical context of religion in society.

Following that, I would argue that the conceived space in the context of this study is related to some dominant discourses on religion and its position in society – in this study especially minority religions, within a social space we understand as the nation-state. The nation-state is often understood as a congruent linking of state or national territory, a notion of a national culture and of citizenry (Brubaker, 2010, p. 63). The social space of the nation-state is in this
understanding both produced by the boundaries to other states, and by the cultural production of a national culture that builds on an, in Benedict Anderson’s (2006) words, imagined community. This imagined community is produced by, and reproduces notions of what it means to “be”, for example, Norwegian, thereby including some notions of what that is, while excluding others. Religion has been a part of the construction of such imagined communities, along with language and other cultural traits (Kaufmann, 2017). In the formation of these communities as nation-states, religion has also been formalized, sometimes through the implementation of State churches and laws, the place of religion in education, symbols (such as the cross in Norway’s flag) and in the material landscapes, where religion is also inscribed through dominant church buildings (Anderson, 2006; Iversen, 2012).

In Norway, whether one agrees the law is secular or not, formal law and the application of it regulates the conceptual space of religion, in terms of sound (prohibiting of calls for prayer from Mosques, while allowing church bells), practice (the prohibition of using Hijabs in some public services) and materiality, including architecture (the regulation of new religious buildings and the usage of buildings for religious purposes). These questions influence representations of space as they formally regulate the technocrats, bureaucrats and architects that conceive space.

Within Lefebvre’s framework, religion is understood as an ideology. Ideology is again understood as “a discourse upon social space” (Lefebvre, 1991). In his works, religion is mainly discussed in a historical context of the European middle ages, where Roman Catholicism dominated social space and had authority (Knott, 2005; Lefebvre, 1991). The secular space of “late-modern” or neo-capitalist in twentieth century Europe on the other hand, is understood as a secular space, within a discourse of secularisation (Knott, 2005). That includes “not only the movement of lands from religious to non-religious use, but also the retreat of religion from dominant social and political space” says Knott (2005, p. 44). Further, the conceived space or spatial order – the political institutions, bureaucracy, architects, capitalists and technocrats – are understood as secular (Knott, 2005).

The historically strong position of religion is being challenged, and has changed during the last century, but religious ideologies are still part of “ethical, political and ideological struggles for space” (Knott, 2005, p. 27). Ethical and cultural values continue the strong ideological position of, in the case of European nation-states, including Norway, Christianity in different forms.
Even in the present context of more religious diversity and an increasingly complex religious landscape, the historical position of Christianity is often given preference. As Oosterbaan (2014) explains: “Some religious forms and rituals have become commonly accepted as part of national cultures, whereas others have not”. This must be assumed to hold true also for the institutions that produce the conceived space of religion – the planners, lawmakers and bureaucrats. The traditionally powerful role of Christianity as ideology in Europe should therefore not be easily discarded as a “historical” concept that was lost with “modernisation”. In a European context, the historically dominant role of Christianity has for example led to monumental Churches, and cities planned to make the churches visible and accessible, with roads leading to a main church, or surrounding it with an open plaza. Knott notes, that “ironically, the representatives of the modern order, for all their espousal of a secular worldview, often protected religious spaces through the planning process” (Knott, 2005, p. 47). Her example from Britain also holds true for Norway: the preservation of buildings of historical significance has favoured the survival of “the face of historic Christianity”. The historical preference to Christianity might limit the production of religious space for other religions. But it may also provide a space of opportunity to other religions, as the dominant understanding and discourse on religion may be utilised by new religions, that it was not intended for. This goes for example for construction of new religious buildings that is partly regulated under a common law for religion. Secondly, building traditions and trends that continue to be informed by historical tendencies, some of which carry ideology and aesthetics that draw upon building traditions previously associated with religious buildings (Knott, 2005).

Further, the increasingly heterogeneous religious landscape of Europe, with a diversity of religions and communities of faith, changes the relationship between the religious and the secular. It is not now, if it ever were, a tension between a “neutral” secularity and one religious ideology, but rather diverse meeting points of differing interests, some of them religiously based. This view is in line with the use of the term post-secular that I have presented previously in the paper, as a concept understood, not as a period in history following a secular period, but as an analytical term for the understanding of the “dialectical field of religious and secular knowledge-power relations” (Knott 2010, in Oosterbaan, 2014, p. 593).
4.5.3 The spaces of representation

Lefebvre calls the lived space a dominated, and passively experienced, space. How is the lived experience passive? This is an important point, where Lefebvre’s theory might prove difficult to relate to religion, due to his interest with our assumedly secular space of late capitalism, without some adjustment. Lefebvre’s production of space is produced in terms of a Marxist, structural analysis of the world. So, when the lived space is called a passively experienced space, it is because it does not change the dominant order of the mode of production – capitalism.

Along with the presentation given earlier, the following might seem like a straightforward argument. If lived space is our experiences seen through a lens of knowledge/culture, it would first of all be our experiences of religious space: Our interpretations of buildings and symbols, how we interact with religious spaces, such as a temple and how our knowledge of them impacts our spatial practice. Entering a religious building, for example, often requires rituals of cleansing that separates that religious, or sacred, space from other social space (a point made by Foucault (1986) in his essay on heterotopias). It is our understanding, knowledge and connotations of conceived spaces, such as monumental temples – or even a small Mosque in the basement of an apartment complex - that produce the lived spaces and our spatial practice.

As long as our behaviour and interactions with the conceived space is in accordance with the dominant ideology of the conceived space, we can follow Lefebvre’s argument that these spaces are passively experienced.

But spaces of representation have the potential to be more than passively experienced: The lived space can also be spaces of subversion, where dominant conceived spaces – and possibly the ideology they build on - are negotiated, changed or even revolutionised. This is in accordance with hooks (1989) and Soja’s (1996) notions of marginal spaces, that can be “both sites of repression and sites of resistance” (hooks, 1989, p. 21). According to Lefebvre, any revolution must produce new social space – without affecting the language, the daily practice and on space a “revolution” will only change “ideological superstructures” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 44). Further, if we take a step back from that structural understanding of the world, and instead understand dominance as discourse and potential political struggles, this might open the possibilities for analysing lived religious space with the potential of changing social space. This view is supported also by Chidester and Linenthal (1995), who argue that sacred space is
contested space, not only as space can be seen as a limited resource, as mentioned above, but also that sacred space is an arena of signs and symbols. This makes sacred space a possible “point of departure for an endless multiplication of meaning”. These meaning and symbols become available for “appropriation, exclusion, inversion and hybridization” (Chidester & Linenthal, 1995, pp. 18-19).

As we saw in the previous literature review, the changing religious landscape in Europe in the last decades is a recurring topic of interest in geography, and certainly also of public debate. This has brought about change for the migrants themselves, both in religious practice and understanding, and in their social space (Knott, 2005). These “new” lived spaces of religion in Europe have led to changes in material space and daily routines and rituals, and thereby spatial practice. They are also, as we have seen, changing conceived spaces of new religious buildings and challenging discourse on religion and the politics for controlling religion in social space. Do lived spaces of religion change the social space through subversive spaces of representation – are the changing spaces of representations challenging dominant order? Knott uses an example to illustrate this potential as well: Christine Chivallon’s study from 2001 of how participation in a church offers a space of resistance against racism and the discourses of racial difference for some Afro-Caribbeans in Britain by “opening a mental space that (…) offers the possibility of transcendence and connection with others” (Knott, 2005, p. 53). Knott argues that religion becomes a way of responding and transcending racial boundaries and racist discourse of British society.

The notion of a “British society” is an interesting one in this context. Conceptions of subversion, resistance and challenging of a dominant order are related to a notion of some social space, often a nation or a nation-state. The nation-state builds on some notion of belonging, of who and what belongs and who and what does not. Brubaker (2010, p. 64) calls this the politics of belonging, and claims that “The question 'who belongs' can be contested—and hence, in the broadest sense, politicized—at sites as diverse as cities, neighbourhoods, workplaces, clubs, associations, churches, unions, parties, tribes, and even families". Within this understanding, the discourse of a nation can be challenged through everyday practices and materiality. Within this social space, bodies, materiality and practice may be understood as Others, as they do not belong, or as challenging the dominant discourse on social space. These bodies in social space are symbolically read as subversive or provocative symbols of othering in the nation. The debate on the use of hijab is illustrative. According to Knott, in Europe,
Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Algeria and Afghanistan, the symbolic reading of the hijab varies from being a “sign of wealth, protection, oppression, modesty, exclusion community, defiance, power or rejection of westernisation” (Knott, 2005, p. 57) - or a sign of difference. In Europe, it’s most provocative trait might be the last – a symbol of rejection of western culture - within Western “social space”, or of a notion of a Christian or secular/liberal nation. In such a social space, a Hijab may be worn as, or read as, a protest against the dominant view of women, of religion, of modernity or liberalism. Such reading of a shawl changes the act of wearing it from being a mere spatial practice, to a subversive act in lived space. This is not necessarily because that is the intention of the person wearing it, but rather due to the way it is given meaning in a dominating discourse.

The last point I want to make in this paragraph is the potential for lived spaces to challenge the dominant religious order. Knott uses the example of women’s (and I would add queer) struggles to “find acceptable spaces to inhabit within religions”, as the spaces of many religions are experienced as male (and heteronormative) spaces (2005, p. 50). These negotiations have in some instances, such as the Church of Norway, altered the spaces of worship to accept women, not only as participants in worship, but as priests, and to change the marriage liturgy to wed couples with the same legal gender. Whether viewed as revolutionary or reformative - such transitions change the social space of religion. As for migrating or missionary religions, the change of social space might be followed by changes in religious dominant discourses, such as the development of a “distinct European Islam” (Oosterbaan, 2014; Ryan, 2014).

4.6 Architecture

Following Lefebvre’s triad, buildings can be analysed within the framework of the production of space in several ways. They are present, and play out different roles in the three spaces in the triad: As spatial practice, they constitute materiality and frame our spatial practices and daily routines of leaving our house, entering a train-station, leaving a different train-station, constitute the frame for work, leisure (including religious practice), shopping and consumption. As for the conceived space, buildings are the manifestation of ideology, the result of the conceived spaces where architectural drawings, renderings, plans and knowledge of materials are the only reality. Buildings (and infrastructure) might be the most direct manifestation of
conceived space, even if they are not part of the conceived space of ideology and knowledge. They can also be analysed as manifestation of the dominant order, of the political, economic and cultural ideologies of the social space. In addition to that, they constitute spaces of interaction, the materiality we interact with and within, and they are monuments and marginal spaces that we read and obey, or revolt outside or within. They constitute part of the material framework for lived space (Lefebvre, 1991).

I will argue that this analysis of buildings and architecture is reflected in the approaches to architecture within geography. This is not surprising, considering that many cultural geographers share Lefebvre’s interest in Marxist and structural approaches (Lees, 2001). It is possible to draw up two main directions of architecture, keeping in mind that this will of course be a simplification. The first consists of those trying to “understand architecture as a social product that both reflected and legitimated underlying social structure” (Lees, 2001, p. 54) building on Marxist, cultural materialist theory. David Harvey’s (1979) analysis of Sacré-Coeur in Paris as a symbol of political contestation and victory also falls into this approach to architecture. This approach has an obvious link to Lefebvre’s notion of conceived space, and the idea of a dominating order that conceives space in a depiction of dominant ideology and knowledge. The second strand is associated with a semiotic approach to buildings, reading landscape and buildings as “a text in which social relations are inscribed” (Duncan and Duncan 1988, in Lees, 2001, p. 54). This can also be understood as conceived space, but in addition it is connected to the lived spaces of interpretations of the dominant order, the way we interact with materiality and (passively) interpret and understand it in lived space.

4.6.1 A third approach to architecture

Following Lefebvre’s triad, however, there are some aspects “missing” in the approaches to architecture, namely that of spatial practices, or subversive, lived spaces. Loretta Lees puts forward a new approach to architecture in her article Towards a critical geography: the case of an ersatz colosseum (2001), that at least partly resolves this missing aspect. Lees’ main argument is that architecture is both produced and consumed, both lived, experienced and interpreted by its users. She uses a study of the public library in Vancouver to elaborate this idea: Who are the users, consumers and inhabitants of architecture and buildings? As Lees illustrates, they are outside and inside the buildings – the viewers, consumers and inhabitants. For the library in Vancouver, and, as we shall see, a Hindu temple and Mosque in Oslo, the symbolical values of the buildings are not theoretical ideas within the academic sphere that are
merely manifestations of culture, ideology and mode of production, but subject to meaning and debate – they are “constructed through interaction” (Lees, 2001, p. 75). People interact with the symbolic meanings that are socially ascribed to buildings. In the case of the Vancouver library, these were debates of imperialist culture in opposition to a multicultural society. Through vignettes from her study of the Vancouver public library, she illustrates how the library is used, and thereby produced, in different ways. It is both a place to rent books and read; to connect with an experienced home country through the news stand with international papers; to interact and discuss cultural differences; to flirt; and to use as a bathroom to wash the body for a homeless person (Lees, 2001).

The interaction with the building, the lived architecture, produces it as new spaces (such as a private bathroom), and ascribes it with new meaning. And through those practices, the building is both negotiated and produced in new ways. Such an understanding gives methodological implications to the study of architecture according to Lees (2001). Further, the users of buildings materially alter it through and for their practices. This happens not only to buildings that are altered for a new purpose – such as making a storage space a religious building, but also with purpose-built buildings. Faulconbridge (2009), has called this concept “consumption-side regulation”. We will look into these concepts in the analysis.
4.7 From theory to an analytical framework

In the theoretical framework, I have laid out several more or less overlapping approaches that will serve to analyse the cases in this study. To make clear how I intend to use them, I have made an analytical framework that draws upon the theories, and organizes them in a way that makes sense for this study. Each of the three scales – the practiced space, the conceived space and the lived will be basis for an analysis chapter, further explained after the table, as we revisit the research questions that are the basis for the study – this time with a more thorough theoretical framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Space</th>
<th>Architecture</th>
<th>Religion</th>
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| **Practicing religion** | Spaces of practice | Lived architecture | Poetics of religion/
lived religion. |
| – materiality and practice | | | Sacred-profane |
| **Constructing religion** | Conceived spaces/ spaces of representation | Architecture as manifestations of structures/discourses | Politics of religion – religion in society, power, discourse. |
| - dominating discourses | | | Religious - secular |
| **Giving meaning to religion (making religious space)** | Lived spaces | Semiotics and symbolism – reading architecture | Representations, subjective experiences |
| - negotiating practice and dominating discourse | | | |

Within the first scale, I understand firstly the approach to religion in terms of Kong’s (2001) poetics of religion, and Ammerman’s everyday religion (2006). That is the phenomenological, subjectively experienced reality of religion and the everyday practices of religion, and, more specifically, the practices that make the sacred. Chidester and Linenthal (1995) and Smith’s (1992) notion of sacred-making behaviour and the notion of sacred space as ritual space serves as a basis for this view. Within the architectural approach, this will include what Lees (2001)
has called lived architecture, the approach to architecture that considers the use and inhabitation of architectural constructs and how they are formed, reconstructed and experienced by users of the buildings. Thirdly, and mainly, it is Lefebvre’s (1991) notion of spaces of practice – the everyday movements, materiality and social interaction with the material. In the analysis, I will look at how the users of the buildings experience the buildings, the materiality of the buildings, and the everyday religious practices and routines of the informants. In this part of the analysis, I intend to answer the first research question:

How are religious buildings produced through practices and materiality?

The second scale takes in dominating discourses and power relations. Using Lefebvre’s (1991) conceived spaces as a starting point, I will look into how religious spaces are governed and managed, how religious communities respond to that, and how architecture and materiality is formed by such power relations. This is part of the “politics of religion”, viewing religious space as contested space, in constant negotiation with secular forces. I will look at how religion is understood in society, through the lenses of the users of the buildings – that is, how they relate to dominating discourses, and what they understand to be the dominating discourses of religion in society. The notion of “society” is here understood in terms of the nation-state, that is formed by narratives on what “Norway” is, and of formal laws and regulations in the state, building on Brubaker (2010). The notion of relational space is brought into this chapter, acknowledging that the religious buildings are also formed by discourses and social ties, relating them to dominating discourses on Islam and Hinduism. In this chapter, I will seek to answer the following:

How do dominant discourses form religious practice and material constructions?

The third and final scale is where we will understand how practices and materiality is given meaning. I will look at how the buildings and practices are understood, analysing what they represent to the users, and how they give meaning to their own practices. Further, I will look at how this is in possible tension with some dominating discourses by analysing if they are understood and given meaning differently by the majority. This is the domain of semiotics and symbolism within architecture, and the reading of the buildings. As for Lefebvre’s triad, this scale is the lived spaces – the ways in which spaces are understood, negotiated, created and recreated through social interaction with and within the space.
As we recall from the theoretical framework, the lived spaces is where there is possibility for change, resistance and possibly the creative production of new spaces. I will draw on literature on third space or marginal spaces (Bhabha, 1994; hooks, 1989; Soja, 1996), and on identity and everyday nation (Amin, 2012; Antonsich, 2010; Brubaker, 2010; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000) to analyse how the social space of the nation is challenged through practice, materiality, representations and construction of meaning. The last research question will be answered in two chapters, leading towards the conclusion:

*Are there competing meanings of what religious practices and materialites represent, and is this possibly challenging the dominating discourses on social space?*
5 Practicing religion

*There is a large ritual when you move the gods into the new temple. That is important.* (member of building committee of the temple, 16.10.16)

The opening ritual of bringing the gods in to the temple for the first time, is of course an important ritual to making the building that used to be an industrial building a temple – a sacred space. However, after that – what is it that makes the temple a temple, or the mosque a mosque? When there are no towers or god-figures on the outside, and when there is no dome or calls for prayer – what then is it that makes me and everyone agree to the claim that this building is a temple or a mosque? Following Lefebvre, one aspect of it is the practices, some of them rituals, that are performed in the buildings.

To enter a religious building is to walk into a different (social) space. Foucault has introduced the term heterotopia to describe this type of space: A heterotopia is a space that is real and material, possible to locate in the real world, but that at the same time is a mirror of a utopia – a presentation of society in a perfected form, but fundamentally unreal spaces (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986). Within this space one does other things than outside, and, according to informants as we shall see, experience things differently: Religious buildings are different from the world outside. For example, as many other users of the mosque and temple, Farah wears different clothes when going to the mosque than she does at work or at home. She performs wudu, and says a prayer when she enters. In both the temple and the mosque, there are practices that are required, and are repeated every time one enters the building. People know the “rules” for how to behave once inside the buildings, and act in a different way.

This is not unique for a religious building, of course. Entering a library or a restaurant also has their social codes that we follow, and if we fail to do so, our behaviour is considered out of place. This is (simplified), the point of Lefebvre’s practiced spaces: Our movements, the ways we lead our bodies, what we say and don’t say, the sounds we make or don’t make, the materiality of buildings – these are the ways lived spaces produces social space. If there is anything special about religious spaces as opposed to any other social space, it must be the ways in which meaning is given through a notion of something sacred. I have previously presented Chidester and Linenthal’s (1995) argument that sacred space is ritual space. A ritual
is understood by them as symbolic, repeatable practices, but while this definition may serve as a shallow understanding of the concept, there are many ways to understand ritual as concept (see for example Bell, 1992, 1997). In this analysis, I understand ritual as communicative, repeatable, social, corporeal and possibly both religious and secular.

Following this argument, I will start this analysis with presenting the practices I observed and talked with the informants about. What are the practices that produce these spaces as sacred, that produces and reproduces them as religious buildings – what do people do? These are ritual practices – worships and sacrifices, choreographed, collective movements of kneeling and raising arms in prayer in the mosque, or the slow, circular movement from altar to altar during Puja, led by the Brahmin. But they are also the rituals of taking off your shoes as you enter the building, washing your hands or buying coconuts or bananas to offer the gods in Puja. Some seem mundane in their simplicity, but are still producing and reproducing the notion of the sacredness of the buildings.

Further, if social space is produced through practice, it should probably also be produced through some notions of where this space starts and ends, as illustrated by Foucault’s notion of heterotopias:

\[\text{Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and make them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986, p. 7)}\]

A natural question is then: How are the buildings delimited – where are the boundaries, and how are they practiced? I will seek to answer these two questions in the following section, using an inductive approach, based on the topics that came up in conversations with the informants.

5.1 The boundaries and their practices

The first time I came to the temple, I was struck by a sense of having entered a different space. Here is an excerpt from notes I made after the visit:
Having left the subway station, I walked through a suburban landscape with single houses, past the local church and through a dark industrial area an October evening. I reach the temple. A concrete building with no ornaments, except a sign that tells me I am at a Hindu temple. I come into a warm building. It smells of incense, the temperature is much higher than houses normally are, and I regret the woollen sweater that seemed appropriate in the morning. People are wearing much less clothes than me, many of the men in traditional skirts and no clothes on their upper bodies with painting in red and beige on their upper bodies. Many women in Salwar Kameez or Sarees. The air in the prayer room upstairs is dense with incense, sounds from bells and chanting, smoke from the ghee lamps and candles that were lit, and the smell of food from the kitchen on the ground floor. It is intense, I almost get dizzy from the warm air, fumes and high sounds. It feels a bit like coming into a small pocket of South East Asia from a quiet, suburban part of Oslo. (field notes, 04.10.16)

There are of course material boundaries to the buildings: walls, ceiling, floors perforated with windows and doors, enabling us to enter. Having entered the door in both the buildings, you encounter the next boundary: The place to leave your shoes before entering the clean temple. In the first hall in the temple, one meets the first religious artefact, an altar for Ganesh in the form of an image on the wall. But there are also everyday objects that are just as normal to find everywhere: coats and jackets hanging on the walls, bags and purses on the floor, posters with practical information, a counter with a card terminal for buying Puja sacrifices or making donations. Continuing in on the ground floor are offices, a kitchen, and toilets. It is not before going up the stairs and entering the temple room one gets the feeling of being in a completely different space: In that room, people are silent, praying, or attending Puja. There are god figures, several altars and ornaments. Ghee lamps, candles, fruit and flowers – all of them objects used for religious purposes.

After having taken off your shoes in the mosque, you also come to a hallway. The building is new, and the architecture modern and functional, in the opinion of the users. On the ground floor is a kitchen, that is used for preparing food for gatherings and night- and weekend classes. It is also used as a place to be social, to talk and have coffee, while waiting for the next prayer – or just to be there and interact with others. Continuing past the kitchen one finds the bathroom, that is accommodated for performing wudu, a cleansing ritual in Islam. There is also the entrance to the prayer room. Taking the stairs or elevator up to the first floor from the entrance hall, there are two classrooms, a bathroom with the same facilities for women, a
meeting room and the gallery of the prayer room. That is where women stay when they attend prayer, and it is also used for Quran school on weekends, seminars and gatherings. The mosque also has parking facilities in the basement, a locale that is also used for social activities, such as ping pong tournaments or other gatherings.

Despite all these rooms being part of the religious buildings, they are not all subject to the same rules for purity and who can enter, as Sahar explains:

For example the room that is a prayer room, and the room upstairs, the gallery, is also a prayer room. Not women nor men can enter that room without having washed. We have to perform Wudu, wash hands, face, mouth, nose – and then we enter. The kitchen, the class rooms – that is the part for cultural activities. But for religion, it is that room. And that isn’t special for this mosque, it is the same for all mosques. (28.01.17)

According to the classic work of Mary Douglas (1997), purity is connected to constructing boundaries where the pure is separated from the impure. Purity is an important concept in both religions, and has been a recurring topic in the conversations with the users. I will therefore use the concept of purity as basis for illustrating the practices of delimiting these boundaries.

![Figure 2 - a shelf for leaving shoes as you enter the temple](image1)

![Figure 2 – facilities for performing wudu (ablution), for women at the mosque](image2)
5.1.1 Practicing purity

*Because that is what Islam is really about. Islam says that if you were to divide it in two, half would be about purity, and the other half of the rest [of the religion]”* (Hamid, 05.01.17).

To be pure, or strive for purity is partly an abstract concept, partly a concrete, bodily concept. It is understood in different ways: some are bodily (such as menstruation), while others are more abstract (the death of a family member, good behaviour or an idea of pure thoughts or mindset). This is well illustrated by Aadarshini, one of the users of the temple:

*Purity is important in our religion. You have to be vegetarian, that means you cannot eat fish, meat or egg. You know, some people say that you can eat fish and still be vegetarian, but we don’t do that. If you are vegetarian, you only eat vegetarian food, fruit, vegetables and that kind of things. That is one thing. Number one is that you have to shower before entering the temple. And women cannot be menstruating when they come to the temple. You cannot enter the temple during the first five days of menstruation. And if someone died in the family, one keeps home for a month. They don’t go to the temple. There are a few things that have changed. But everyone keeps to the first three I mentioned, showering, vegetarian and menstruation. But death – some say a month, others say three months, that’s different. It has changed.* (09.12.16).

The boundaries to religious or sacred space involves purity, as it is the entrance to the temple that is restricted for an impure body. Some impurities can be washed away. Washing the body by taking a shower and putting on clean clothes, performing wudu, or eating vegetarian foods or fasting will make an unclean body clean. Menstruation, however, cannot be cleaned away – it is a state the body is in, and it cannot be in the temple or the mosque in that state.

*Wudu (ablution) is a cleansing practice in Islam, that is performed to obtain *Tahara*, a state of “ritual purity”. The practice is important in Islam, and all the informants from the mosque mentioned is as a ritual before practicing prayer and/or before entering the mosque. The practice is explained quite consistently by the informants, as cleaning the face, mouth, nose and ears, hands, feet and genitals with water (or with sand if water is not available):*

*You have to be clean – genitals, nose, ears, everything – there’s a whole system for how to do it.* (Azra, 21.02.17)
The concept of when to perform wudu, however, seems to be interpreted in different ways by the different informants, some connecting it to entering the mosque, others to the prayer room. Bushra explains:

*What is important when going to the mosque is that it is a clean zone, where you have to – it’s called Wudu. Wudu means that you must wash your hands and the whole face and both feet. And after having entered the clean zone you must wear clean clothes, washed, you must take off your shoes – you cannot wear shoes in the mosque.* (02.03.17)

Naseer, however, understands the boundary as temporal as well as spatial, and states that you *do not have to wash before entering the prayer room. I don’t, because I usually go into the prayer room to leave my coat, and then go out.* (16.01.17)

To him, it is not the room itself, nor the time for that matter, but the purpose of entering the room that requires wudu: He walks in to leave his coat, walks out and does Wudu, and then enters the room again to attend prayer or pray alone. When just entering to leave a coat, Wudu is not important, whilst for prayer it is.

For the users of the temple, there are no cleansing rituals in the same way as in the mosque. Being clean is considered a norm however, and most informants say they take a shower and put on clean clothes before going to the temple or before praying at home in the morning, a regular practice for most. As we saw in the initiating quote from the conversation with Aadarshini, purity is also connected to eating habits - fasting or vegetarianism. Most informants either eat vegetarian every day, or some days a week - Tuesdays and Fridays. That also informs when one of the informants go to the temple, as Sridharan explains below. Many fast periods as well.

*Tuesdays and Fridays are the usual days we go to the temple. It is because... we don’t make any meat on those days, we eat vegetarian at home too. And we have been taught not to go to the temple after having eaten meat, so it fits well to go to the temple on those days. It has to be vegetarian before and after a visit to the temple. It was like that when I grew up, and that is how it is done in my family at home. So we bring that with us. But we go to the temple on other days if that is more convenient. But it is always vegetarian food on Tuesdays and Fridays.* (22.04.17)
Purity is both a spatial and a temporal concept. Purity is an important spatial demarcation of the religious space, where the pure is the sacred/religious inside the buildings, whilst the impure must be left outside and is not permitted entrance. Looking more closely, however, it is not that straight forward. As the buildings are accommodating other activities than worship, they are explained as divided between a religious and a cultural part, where it is only the religious spaces that “require” cleansing.

But it is also a temporal concept, that depends on the practice. The prayer room is for example not considered a sacred space that requires cleansing rituals and silence when used for children’s Quran school. And, as showed by the informant who goes in to leave his coat, it can also be linked to the purpose of entering the space. Let us look into the practices of the buildings.

5.2 Religious practice within and without religious buildings

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the point of describing the practiced religion for the informants is to increase the understanding of how practice constructs social space. Nancy Ammerman (2006), has made the influential point that religious practice should be understood as everyday lived practice. People practice religion both within formalized institutions such as religious buildings, but also in other spaces and arenas in people’s lives. In continuance of this, and since this thesis still revolves around religious buildings, we will now turn to practice in the buildings, and what a difference a religious building makes to practice. Is it experienced differently? Is prayer a different practice in the buildings than outside? Let us start by looking at what people do in religious buildings.

Well, you come in for prayer, and then you take off your shoes and walk in. And if you haven’t done Wudu, as it Is called… It is something you have to do before you pray: you wash your hands, face and feet. And there is a room for that in the Mosque if you haven’t done it at home before coming. Then you enter the Mosque, and before we pray there is a call for prayer. The times are displayed on a screen in the hall downstairs and in the prayer room. There is a time when that prayer comes in, you know. And a different time for when we pray together. But that
is not always on time, normally we wait a few minutes, maybe even half an hour for it to be practical for everyone who lives nearby to arrive. And then, first the call for prayer, and then one prays. And maybe ten minutes later, we pray together. After that, we usually greet everyone who is there, and then we talk a bit. Because you know, it is a local Mosque, and people generally know each other, so we start talking. And then we go home. (Sadiq, 20.01.17)

Most of the informants come to the buildings to pray, and this is what the visits revolve around. Prayer, however, is not a single thing. As illustrated by the quote, it includes praying by oneself, and the act of worship led by a religious leader, that takes the form of a choreographed collective movement of bodies. Most of the informants pray by themselves in addition to praying together with other users when they visit the buildings. The “personal” prayers are often done in silence: Aadarshini usually lights a candle and prays before the Puja starts, and Sahar always says a short prayer of gratitude, a Dua, as soon as she enters the door. In both communities, the worship rituals that are done collectively are physical acts that are done with and through the body. For Muslims, it includes moving hands, kneeling, bending and chanting together. In the temple, the group moves around the temple room from altar to altar, chanting along with the Brahmin and answering his chant. Prayer can thus be a physical and a social act, as well as a contemplative, personal act. The social aspect of praying together as opposed to alone, and the sense of being in a temple, and not at home, is a different experience to many of the informants, but few of them articulate what exactly is the difference. One thing, however, is the act of praying that is different:

Every home has a shrine, a place to worship. We have one here too. But in the temple, we pray differently. Women pray in one way, men in another. We say Artanga Namaskara, Panchanga Namaskara. Panchanga means peace. Women have to go down on the floor with their head and hands. Five body parts must touch the floor when doing Artanga, and eight at Panchanga, when we pray. (Kumaraswamy and Nanthini, 12.12.16)

As the quote illustrates, there are different ways to pray alone, at home or attending the Puja in the temple or the prayer at the mosque. The same is illustrated by Sadiq:

Maybe it’s psychological, maybe it is because you are with others, but I think my prayer is better when I am in the mosque. Because you set off some time specifically for that action. But at home, it’s more like “oh, it’s time for a prayer!”, and we do it quickly before continuing
with whatever we were doing. But here, it is a break from what you always do. And maybe that is what makes it better, a deeper prayer so to say. (20.01.17)

The social aspect of praying together, or just being together is also an important function of the buildings. According to Bushra, one function of the building is to gather people:

*It is not only about Islam, it is about gathering people. I can pray at home too, but in the mosque it is a social thing. To do it with others, that we learn about Islam together.* (02.03.17)

On another note, Sadiq weighs personal faith over the social aspect of being in the mosque or being part of a social community:

*Religious to me is about personal faith. It also means that you have a community with others who have more or less the same understanding of what it means to be religious. It is about belonging to a group, but more than that it is about a personal faith. Islam is a social religion – we meet to pray together, and it is better to pray with others than praying alone. We have activities together with other Muslims. But at the same time, it is your personal relationship to God that is most important to me. To many Muslims, the social takes over, and religion becomes about belonging to a community or a group.* (20.01.17)

Worship is also understood in different ways – it does not necessarily have to involve praying. Reading the Quran is for example considered a religious practice, and being silent in the Puja room, lighting a candle might also be experienced by the users as a form of worship.

### 5.3 Does materiality matter?

Materiality is part of the spaces of practice, and a basic assumption in this paper is that there is a relationship between this materiality and the practices – they shape each other to some extent (Knott, 2005; Lefebvre, 1991). In this part, we will therefore look into the relationships between the buildings and practice.

The cases in this paper include several buildings. First of all, there are the two buildings that are in use now – the purpose-built mosque and the altered printing workshop that is the temple. Previously, however, the Muslim congregation have used a sports hall, school premises and apartments for worship and gathering. The temple has been placed in a school and is planning
on building a purpose-built temple. In addition, the temple uses the grounds outside the temple and a lake close by for religious practices (Jacobsen, 2009).

Based on the conversations with the informants and the observations I have made, the buildings that are not purpose-built seem to have been chosen from a rational argument: The best alternative among potential buildings that meet some requirements, such as spaciousness, geographic location, price for buying or renting the premises, and the accommodation of the practices associated with a temple or a mosque. All these requirements cannot be met, and the choice of building falls on the one that matches them the best. The temporary buildings are altered to accommodate the practices. In the case of the current temple, altars have been made, shelves for shoes put up, god figures brought in. Some rooms are made into offices with desks and computers, another as a kitchen, reception or Puja hall.

As for the temporary buildings that were not constant, the sports hall used for Friday prayers or the school premises used for pujas, these alterations are less permanent, but they are still material alterations. Bringing in prayer rugs, microphone and speakers, socially organising a separation between men and women, bringing god figures – the buildings are altered materially for a short time, making it as close as possible to an acceptable stage for religious practice.

What then of the purpose-built mosque? The building is drawn and built to accommodate the practices that are now happening in the building. In the case of the mosque, this was done in a collaboration between the board and the architect, according to the leader of the mosque:

_We have worked together. We couldn’t give anyone freedom to do what they wanted, and we couldn’t decide everything for ourselves. The architect knows a lot of things that you need to include. So it has been a collaboration._ (05.01.17)

The board also invited the women’s group and other users to come with ideas and comments during the process. However, despite the collaborative process, there have been some changes to the materiality of the mosque as well. This is not unique – there is a growing literature within studies of architecture that acknowledges what Faulconbridge (2009) calls _consumption-side regulations_, or what Lees (2001) calls _lived architecture_. This builds on the acknowledgement that “designed architecture is not only in the hands of the architect” (Jacobs & Merriman, 2011, p. 216), but also a product of the people that inhabit, use and practice their lives with and within
architecture. A simple story from the mosque illustrates this interaction between the architect’s ideas, the practices and the materiality:

After the new mosque was taken into use, there were some disagreements on where to take off the shoes – a practice/ritual that we have seen that is important due to notions of purity. The architect has of course thought of this, and has laid tiles in different colours to mark pure and impure zones (figure):

*Light tiles meet darker, marking the boundary for the prohibition of wearing shoes. Only one of the many things to consider when planning a mosque* (Byline to a photography in an interview with Frithjof Wiese, architect behind the Mosque (in Vårt Land, 22.11. 2016)).

People did not agree on where one should take off their shoes, however, and a lot of people went in with their shoes on according to Naseer, who reflects on this in relation to the sense of being in a mosque:

*When we had just opened [the mosque], people just bustled in, and then you sort of loose some of that religious building. Because in a mosque you must take your shoes off. And at that time, people just walked right in. But we have worked on that, and are still working on making people show the respect that a religious building is supposed to be shown. So that you feel that you are coming to a religious place.* (16.01.17)

The solution became a red tape on the floor, that Hamid and Naseer both were part of putting it up:

*Because I think it should look tidy, even if not everyone thinks like that. So I have actually worked very hard on getting people to take off their shoes, and put up that red line, and I literally stand there and tell people that they have to take off their shoes. People are probably really tired of my nagging by now! (laughing) But I think the building should look clean and tidy. Because that is what Islam is really about, half is cleanliness, the other half is all the rest. So that is where the line goes. And I am trying to do my part* (Hamid, 05.01.17)
The notion of purity is connected to the materiality of the buildings themselves. All these buildings are altered in some way by the users – but to different extents to accommodate practices.

The function of the buildings was a recurring topic in the interviews, and when asked what a temple or a mosque is, many informants connected this to function over aesthetics. The material buildings are altered or built to accommodate activities, such as a prayer room that has a gender division, facilities for ritual cleansing and an entrance where one can leave shoes, as we have seen. At the same time, the materiality of the buildings also influences the practices of the buildings. This interrelation is the topic for the coming pages.

Figure 3 – a red tape marking where to take off shoes at the mosque entrance. Sticker on the floor on the lower right of the picture symbolising prohibition of shoes.
5.3.1 Accommodating activities

In addition to accommodating worship and being important social arenas in the lives of many users, the buildings are also used for other activities. Some of these are theologically based, such as Quran school, whilst others are social or cultural, such as Urdu classes. This might not be a fruitful division, however: Social meetings, lectures, even ping pong tournaments are for example often initiated with a prayer. I have chosen to call these types of activities that are not necessarily theologically based organized activities – as opposed to informal socializing. Social life in the religious buildings and in the networks that revolve around them are important parts of the lives of many of the informants, such as Sahar:

I have lived here for seven years now, and the first three years I wasn’t very social. But when I started working in the mosque... Now I know more and more people. And it’s like we’re a family now! We visit a lot, and we are social. So it is a community, and we have gotten involved and included in society through the mosque, here in Mortensrud, and here in Norway. I used to work at home. It means a lot actually, I have gotten many friends. And not only Muslims, Norwegians and people from other countries too. So that is cool, it’s a good experience. (28.01.17)

To some users of the buildings, the social aspect is more important than for others. The quote above, from the leader of the women’s group shows the important role the building process of the mosque has had in her social life as an arena to get to know other people, that is meaningful to her. Hamid, who is currently unemployed due to an injury, is also a testament to the importance of having a place to go and meet other people:

To me, this building is important. Because I was used to being with people all the time, and I didn’t like to sit at home. But after they opened this building, I spend a lot of time here. I have gotten new friends, because you know, my old friends are at work. But now I can come here everyday to talk to people, and I really like that. (05.01.17)

The temple is also a social place, but less explicitly so, as expressed by Ratnajeevan:
I think for people in my age group, we came to this country when we were young, and then we made families and started getting older. So we have a bigger need for such a place, both socially and religiously. (20.01.16)

Social life and religious life is not two separate entities, however, as we shall see in the next section. In the mosque, there are several organized activities. Quran school for children and adults, courses and readings of the Quran, Urdu education for children and Nasheed (religious singing) classes. the women’s group organizing everything from dinners and lectures to two big festivities (Chaand Raat) the night before Ramadan twice a year. These fests have up to 1500 attendees, from all over the Oslo area, according to the Sahar, leader of the women’s group. At Chaand Raat they have food, shopping, Henna painting and make up. Men are also welcome, but they are mostly interested in the food. There are also two activity groups for youth, separated by gender. They are run by the youth themselves, in cooperation with adults.

One of the informants in the temple mention a group for learning about Hinduism in the temple, but that does not seem to be as active, and is not mentioned by any of the other informants. The temple organizes a large festival during summer, where there are thousands of visitors from all over Norway attending, according to the interview with the building committee. In addition, both communities organize school visits for different age groups where they inform about their religion and the buildings.

The generational aspect seems important for both communities, and there is a notion that social activities in connection to the buildings should be a function or “service” they should offer users. Such activities are usually thought to be important to other people than themselves, however – it is youth and elders that should have something to do in the religious buildings, as alternative to “less constructive” activities. Social and religious activities will keep both elders and youth away from hanging out at the local shopping center, in the words of Naseer:

There are so few activities for youth here in Mortensrud, and now we can arrange a fritidsklubb here in the Mosque. We have a pool table, and the church gave us a ping pong table. That was so nice of them! The sports club are arranging cricket, land hockey, football and bandy, and they recruit youth from the mosque as well. So now the youth have other things to do than hang around at the mall. They are getting a place to stay where they feel welcome, and the parents
can feel safe when they are there. They have already started assistance with homework. (16.01.17)

For youth to have a place to be, is connected to keeping them away from “unhealthy” activities, or falling outside society. Ratnajeevan expresses his wishes for the role the temple could have, that he sees as restricted by the building:

I hope that we can start not only having religious groups for youth where they learn about Hinduism, but also other activities. It can prevent crimes – we already do that, but we are not saying it explicitly. Other communities are better at that. You know, most of the youth coming here are perfectly fine without support, but some are troubled. And I think that if they have some connection to the temple, they might stay away from the streets. They can come here on Fridays, listen to the priest and avoid more extreme communities. And we have seen that with some people who have come here: they used to be outsiders, and came into a community. I think those kinds of things are important. But we need to get better at that kind of work, and to do that, we need a place. Right now we don’t have a place that works. (20.10.16)

As illustrated by the quote above, he sees the construction of a purpose-built temple as a possibility for other social activities, where he imagines more space for youth to stay.

Taking care of elders is a deed, and for the elders to have a place to gather, talk, attend prayer or Puja, or meeting people from other age groups is important to many of the informants. The daytime Puja is mostly attended by elderly people, who are no longer working, and like having a place to go to. The same goes for the Mosque, where the kitchen serves as a place for elders to sit and have coffee, talk to each other and have a good time. Ratnajeevan connects the social aspect of the temple to age or generation:

I am 52 years old now, and if I had been in Sri Lanka, this would be when I started retiring and being more social in the temple. It ties people together. (20.10.16)

There is a difference between the two communities in the amount of such organized activities that are arranged in the buildings, an aspect that seems to be related to material qualities of the buildings. The fact that the mosque is constructed to house these activities makes it possible to
have different activities in the current building than before, according to the leader of the mosque:

*A mosque is not just a religious place, it is just as much a social and cultural place. It’s a meeting place. And that is easier to do here in this building. Where we used to be before didn’t have any heat, so it is a huge difference from then. But that was only a temporary solution. We wanted to rent a place where we could gather, but there was nothing in the area, so we only used the sports hall to pray. (05.01.17)*

The difference between the two communities might be due to cultural or traditional differences between Islam and Hinduism, it might be due to the fact that the users of the mosque live close by, and it is a what some of the informants call a “local mosque”, while the temple has users from a larger area. But it also might be due to the temple being a more or less temporary building, where people are still waiting for the “real” temple to be finished, while the mosque is a permanent building, built to accommodate social life and organized activities as well.
5.4 Summary

Lefebvre’s notion of *spaces of practice* are materiality and practices and the relationship between the two. In this chapter we have seen how the social and the material interact and form each other. Religious buildings enables different practices, such as worship and social interaction, and these practices are done and experienced differently within the buildings than outside. Further, this distinction means that there are some boundaries between the religious buildings and the outside world. These boundaries are both material in the form of material building matter, but they are also practiced. The practiced boundaries can be interpreted as rituals – they are repeated and understood as a prerequisite for entering the buildings. The notion of purity is essential in these cases, as in most other religions, and the boundaries are to a large extent connected to some notion of purity: Inside the buildings are pure, and anyone who enters should avoid contaminating the pure space. This understanding is, however, not the same at all times and for all the users. Purity is both a spatial and a temporal concept, and a space can be understood as sacred/pure when used for worship, but as a part of “the cultural” section of the building when used for education or seminars.

Materiality matters – the material both restricts practice and enables it. The mosque community have more social and religious activities now that they have a building that accommodates it than they had before, whilst some informants in the temple community imagine the possibilities of getting a purpose-built temple. Despite a collaborative process between the users of the mosque and the architect in the construction of the mosque building, there are still some alterations done by the users. This underlines the interrelationship between materiality and practice – both produce and reproduce each other.
6 Constructing religion

If the lived spaces of religion described above belong in the sphere of the poetics of religion – the lived and experienced micro scale, we are now taking a leap over to the politics of religion and the representations of space. How are the spaces of buildings and religious practice conceived? In this chapter, we will look at the formal institutions that facilitates the spaces in which the informants – and I for that matter – live our everyday lives and practices. As we recall from the theoretical framework, these are the dominating discourses on religion and space, laws and regulations that decide the framework for what is materialised, and the actual physical architecture, as we recall from the theoretical framework.

6.1 Regulating religion

The second paragraph in the Norwegian constitution states that the Norwegian core values are built on a Christian and Humanistic heritage. There is an overlapping legal framework that regulates religion in Norway. These laws leave the Protestant Church in a distinct position in relation to the state, affecting people’s everyday lives and the discourses on religion on several scales. Public holidays in Norway are for example, with the exception of Labour day and the Constitution Day, related to Christian holidays. People belonging to other faith communities are allowed two days a year to celebrate religious festivals or holidays, according to law. Further, religion and religious practice is explicitly encompassed by laws that regulate marriage (who has the right to wed people); education (the role of religion in education, what is taught in public school, and religious schools); the law on children and upbringing (that regulates children’s freedom to choose religious belonging and practice); antidiscrimination; and civil and political rights within Conventions on Human Rights (NOU 2013:1).

Religious buildings are regulated through laws on funding at the state level, but the major part of administration of religious buildings happen at the local level. In Oslo, there is no overall policy on religious buildings, rather, they are regulated through individual plans for land. The building processes in both these cases have gone through a process of acquiring land that was regulated for “public use (culture house and religious practice)”. The land is also regulated in more detail concerning the dimensions of the building, infra structure such as road accessibility, water management, and parking. The language in these documents is formal and
technical, but at the same time often including vague and seemingly subjective formulations on aesthetics. It is also seemingly secular: Religious symbols are for example understood as aesthetics and function within an architectural framework, rather than as meaningful symbols or theologically based items. Faith and theology is mainly kept outside. However, there are some differences. In the documents concerning the temple, the applicant uses religious and theological arguments in some instances, whilst there are no direct references to religion in the documents concerning the Mosque.

In the cases in this study, the actors that participate in the regulation process are also seemingly secular: *Planning and building administration* does not have a religious framework, nor do the neighbours, represented by a law office. The applicant, that is the religious communities, are also represented by a secular actor – the architect.

Two anecdotes from the building process will serve as examples of management and negotiations among different actors in the building processes:

### 6.1.1 The mosque that shouldn’t look like a mosque

![Figure 4 — “Building area for public benefit (Culture house and religious practice)”. Planning map showing the regulation plan of the land where the mosque is built. Retrieved from the planning and building administration:](https://od2.pbe.oslo.kommune.no/kart/#602365,6636088,9)

When starting to plan the mosque, the community through its board first had to get land. The land was allocated by the public administration, who was the previous owner, and regulated as
“building site for public use (culture house and religious practice)” in 2008 (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2013). The regulation specifies the allowed dimensions for the building, vegetation, parking and aesthetics. The paragraph on aesthetics is as follows:

§ 6: The roofs shall be considered as part of the city's roof landscape and be treated as part of the overall architectural expression of the measure. For new buildings and rebuilding, technical installations such as lifts and ventilation systems, etc. should be integrated into the architectural design. The settlement must be displayed with a locally-adapted form and the exterior shall not be equipped with religious symbols or characteristics. (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2013)

In a short sentence, the possibilities for the architect and the community to shape the aesthetic and symbolic expression of the building is highly restricted: No religious symbols or characteristics are allowed. But what are religious characteristics? This was, perhaps not surprisingly, a disputed issue in the following rounds of document exchange. The process was long, consisting of comments, applications for changes to the original plan, complaints from neighbours and other stakeholders and replies to these from the applicant. Here is an excerpt from the complaint from a law office on behalf of neighbouring housing complexes:

It is objected against the planned tall glass tower and a large dome on the roof. This violates the intentions of the zoning plan. Rather than drawing a neutral, place-oriented building, one is approaching a traditional mosque with a dome and minaret. An illuminated glass tower and dome will differ greatly from the surroundings, and create the impression of the building as a religious symbol. These items will be a nuisance to the surrounding dwellings when they are illuminated at night. The plan for the use of the roof is not disclosed. Events on the roof will cause the adjacent houses to be shy of noise and insight. The glass tower has stairs all the way to the roof, and can possibly serve as a minaret with calls for prayer. (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2013)

The answer from the applicant (represented by the architect), on the other hand, highlights the functional reasons for the aesthetic choices in architecture, namely light conditions inside the building and accessibility, as well as architectural and aesthetic reasons for the architecture. The complaint leads to some modifications, for example the dome on the roof is covered by a
square box, resulting in what looks like a dome from the inside of the prayer room, and a square extension from the outside (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2013).

6.1.2 The planning and building administration and the cosmos

![Figure 5](http://innsyn.pbe.oslo.kommune.no/saksinnsyn/showfile.asp?jno=2015057502&fileid=5459979)

In the case of the temple, on the other hand, there are different regulations. Rather than restricting what is called “religious forms of expression”, the regulation plan for the land acquired by the Hindu community states that:

*The form of expression shall be consistent with the religious character of the building, and show high architectural quality. Materials and execution are to express a worthy and lasting quality (⋯) (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2014)*

The architectural development of the building has been a cooperation between Indian architects familiar with traditional temple architecture and a Norwegian architect office (the same as the mosque). The building has traditional traits of Indian Hindu temples, as seen in figure 5.
There have been some challenges during the process of constructing the temple. The shape of the land and the restrictions on the dimensions of the building turned out not to match the direction of the temple. The land that was acquired was therefore not appropriate for building a temple. The community, represented by the architect, had to undergo a new round of applying to change the original regulation:

The land is sold to the applicant, who wishes to raise a South Indian style temple. The regulation turned out not to be optimal for the building of such a temple. The tallest part of the building facing westwards goes against the rules for a temple in Hinduism, where the tower should be placed above the main entrance, which according to rules should face east. The regulation, underscored by the illustration, accommodates an asymmetrical building. This is not in accordance with a binding rule in Hindu temples: A temple should be symmetrical, as an illustration of the perfect universe. A Hindu temple is a comprised image of cosmos, where the centre (prayer room) contains the symbolic representation of the core of the universe. The pyramid tower at the entrance of South Indian temples marks the boundary between the sacred and the profane. This important function is symbolised by the entrance tower always being the tallest element of the temple. The tower is regulated by ancient religious rules. To obtain a temple that is in accordance with the religious rules of Hinduism (placement, symmetry and visual expression), and at the same time be in harmony with the landscape, it is necessary to exceed the height restrictions of the regulation plan on certain areas. Exemption is requested for these exceedances. (Excerpt from application for exemption from regulations from the architect firm Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2014)

The exemption was granted by The planning and building administration. The community was also able to buy the land plot next to the temple for parking, having argued that a parking basement would not be in line with religious rules, and that it was not a “worthy” solution for the building.

This met some heated complaints from neighbouring residents, who claimed the Hindu community had “deceived the bureaucrats” into regulate more land to the building. Also this complaint is building on arguments on space, view, parking and traffic, but ends quite passionately with the statement “We want to underline that this is a Religious signal building that is not wanted in the community” (Rommen vel, 2014)
These are only two examples of management of constructing new religious buildings in Oslo, and I have not given a thorough presentation of all the steps in the processes. There are still some interesting things to take from this. First of all, despite being located in the same city, getting land at the same time (both plots were regulated at the same time, in 2008), relating to the same public institution (The planning and building administration), and even using the same architect officet, the two cases are rather different in how they are framing the buildings and their religious basis. As these examples show, the temple bases its arguments on religion and religious rules. Referring to cosmos and aligning the universe is hardly regular discourse in correspondence with a public institution in Norway. As for the mosque, there is no mention of religion. Rather, it is in the complaints from other stakeholders that connections are made to religious practice - a fear of using the staircase tower as a minaret, and interpreting a dome shaped window in the ceiling as a religious symbol. The architect and the religious community on their hand, argue against such interpretations in architectural terms.

Further, despite being regulated for their purposes at the same time, the regulation plans for the land and buildings are very different when it comes to the aesthetic presentation: Where the temple’s aesthetics is to “be consistent with the religious purpose of the building”, the mosque shall “not be equipped with religious symbols or characteristics”. I cannot know based on the data in this study whether this shows an arbitrary regulation of religious buildings, based on local politics, or an intentional concealing of Islamic symbols in public space. However, as I will show in the following, it is not unlikely that the mosque is treated differently based on the discourse on Islam in Norway.

6.2 Secularisation and exceptional Islam

*Well, in my experience, when people talk about religion in Norway, it is always about Islam.*
(Sridharan, 22.04.17)

Representations of space are not only created by formal regulation and law. Religion is understood within discourses or meaning systems in the public sphere. Being part of society, we all relate to, produce and reproduce discourses on religion. We will not find one dominating power, but are rather looking for several discourses that affect the social spaces of the buildings, and the lived religious practices of their users.
As was briefly discussed in the theoretical framework, it would be a simplification to claim that our society is “secular”. Despite legal principles of religious freedom, and no longer having a state church, we are living in a tension between secularity and religion. There is a notion of a secular state, but religion is both formative for policy, the understanding of the nation as imagined community building on a historic narrative of Christianity, and of peoples lived practices (Knott, 2005). As shown in the previous paragraph, some of these are regulated through laws favouring Protestant Christianity in Norway. No matter the protestant “core values” that are described in the constitution however, a dominant interpretation of the public sector – state and municipality – is of a neutral and secular state that is built on democracy, freedom of speech, and welfare. At the same time, there seems to be “A widespread belief that liberal and secular values are under pressure from minority religions in Norway, and especially from Islam” (Bangstad, 2012, p. 62, my translation). In the same text, A Norwegian secularism?, Sindre Bangstad (2012) discusses the term secularism in Norway. In my interpretation, his arguments are in line with the understanding of the term in this paper, that secularism as a term is in tension with religion, and that Norway is becoming increasingly multi religious. He does however note that Islam especially, and conservative religions in general, to a much further extent than protestant Christianity are understood as in conflict with this modern, secular and liberal hegemony.

Islam is in a distinctive position among minority religions in Norway and Europe. Muslims are the largest religious minority in Western Europe (Cesari, 2005a), as it is in Norway if one views different forms of Christianity as one religion (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2017a). Despite the relatively high number of Muslims compared to for example Hindus, this does not explain the immense attention Islam gets in the public debate: Islam/muslims is mentioned 77 000 times in Norwegian media in 2009, a number equivalent to that of the Prime Minister at the time, according to a report made by the Directorate for Integration and Mangfold (IMDI, 2009). A quick search in Atekst, a database for all Norwegian media, confirms the continued focus on Islam: During the last three years, “Christian or Christianity” has been used 57 093 times, “Hindu or Hinduism” only 1 364 times, several of which were news articles on foreign politics. “Islam or Muslim” has been used 73 369 times. This also goes for production of academic texts. Searching for articles on Islam, Islam in Europe, Mosques in Europe, European Islam etc. gives a myriad of articles and books within academic fields of geography, but also anthropology, sociology, political science and the multidisciplinary field of migration studies.
Similar searches for Hinduism are not comparable – there are very few articles on Hinduism in Europe or European Hinduism.

A study on conflicts around construction of mosques in Italy, draws the conclusion that the status of Muslims in the national debate, affects the ways the mosques are received at the local level. The media has a significant role in this (Saint-Blancat & Schmidt di Friedberg, 2005). This is likely true for any minority group – including Hindus. While going “under the radar”, and not getting media and public attention, can be a positive thing compared to the negative representations of Islam, it can also be seen as a sign of marginalisation. Lack of recognition and representation is making Hindus in Norway invisible, limiting the possibility to shape a Norwegian Hinduism, and can possibly also contribute to the creation of Hindus living in Norway as one-dimensional “exotic Others”.

If minority religions are a threat to the discourse of a Norwegian nation, Islam is to a higher degree than Hinduism in the public debate understood as a threat to the liberal and secular Norway (Bangstad, 2012). This can be connected partly to a discourse of Islam as a threat in light of political Islamic terror attacks in other European countries, and warfare in the Middle East. The users of the religious buildings in this study live their lives and have gone through the process of building their places of worship against this backdrop. I will come back to the negotiations that happen between discourse, practiced religion and the making and claiming of spaces for religion in chapters 7 and 8.

6.3 Transnational networks

The architect that made the drawings for the temple is from India, for the building to follow traditions and rules, which is important. But we chose to build it in granite and in a single colour to make it fit into the landscape here. (Building committee of the temple, 16.10.16)

A last important point to make in this chapter is that of transnational ties and transnational power relations. Spaces of practiced Islam or Hinduism in suburban Oslo are relational spaces, and do not only relate to Norwegian discourses on secularity and religion or law and regulations. The concept of relational space is credited to Massey, who states that “Space is the product of interrelations; as constituted through the interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny” (Massey, 2005). In continuance of such a claim, it is obvious that
“we must see the local Mosque or Pentecostal church as part of multi-layered webs of connection where religious ‘goods’ are produced and exchanged around the globe” (Levitt, 2007 in Sheringham, 2010, p. 1685). There are several examples of such connections in the cases.

Firstly, the architecture is informed by traditions and discourses of how a temple and a mosque should look, at the same time as they have to be adapted to regulations for buildings and the local area plans. The results are, as we have seen, fusions between Indian traditional temple architecture, adapted to an idea of what matches the local landscape. The Mosque, on the other hand is a modern-looking building. It does not have “traditional” traits, such as a dome or a minaret tower, but is, according to the leader of the mosque “a building that we can use for a hundred years, that fits into the Norwegian landscape” (05.01.17). Bushra tells me she never heard anyone consider having a minaret with calls for prayer, because we knew that would be impossible. It would be a disturbance for children going to school (02.03.17)

That doesn’t mean the building is not relating to discourses and rules for mosques, however. As all mosques, it faces Mecca, and the tiled outside area are also aligned with the direction towards Mecca (Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2013). It is also built to accommodate the practices that are done in mosques, such as cleansing, possibility to separate women and men during prayer, reflecting dominating discourses on the practice of Islam globally.

Transnationalism is not only an abstract concept of discourses, it is lived in transnational spaces – such as the religious buildings (Sheringham, 2010). There are several ties between the local mosque and temple, who could be understood as a global imagined religious community of Islam and Hinduism. These take the form of bonds and communication with a home country – Pakistan and Sri Lanka for all the informants in this study. There are also users of the buildings that come from other places. In the temple, there is an increasing number of Indians and Nepalese users, according to the building committee (16.10.16). The mosque is mainly visited by people living in the local community, mostly people with Pakistani family background, but it is also used by “Somalis, Moroccans and Norwegians” according to Farah.
The collective worship in the temple and the mosque happen in Sanskrit and Arabic respectively, but the speech at the Friday prayer is sometimes done in Norwegian. Several informants have mentioned language as a possible barrier in the religious buildings, as the users have different skills in Urdu, Tamil and Norwegian. Norwegian is for example used in the mosque for youth and children who have grown up in Norway to understand and relate more easily, and all teachers at the Quran and Urdu schools must speak fluent Norwegian. In the temple, there is a discussion of having Pujas in Tamil (rather than Sanskrit) – a discussion that is not only happening in Oslo, according to the informants, but is an ongoing debate in Sri Lanka and India as well.

The Brahmin in the temple is educated in India, and has stayed in Oslo for a couple of years. He will probably not stay many years – at least previous Brahmins have only stayed a few years before returning to a home country. There is no education for Brahmins in Norway, and to be a Brahmin you must belong to the right caste. In the mosque, there are regular visits from religious leaders and scholars to the Mosque from other parts of the world.

Many informants visit Sri Lanka and Pakistan regularly, because they have family and other social connections. Several bring money or goods to help family or local social work when they go. In addition, some informants from the temple have gone to India and visited temples there, while pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina is a deed in Islam, and some of the informants mention this as part of their religious practice.

The Puja requires goods, such as ghee, fruits, coconuts, oils and incense that are sacrificed for the gods. These are directly imported from India or Sri Lanka by a volunteer group, and sold to the users at the temple.

Language, culture, regulations, movement of capital, people and goods – these are all present in the religious buildings, making them spaces for transnational ties and networks. Issues that relate to transnationalism, such as the examples mentioned above were not treated as exceptional by the informants during our interviews. Rather, such topics were mentioned in different contexts, reflecting the impression that these transnational ties are part of the everyday for the informants, and not exceptional events. Transnational ties came up when talking about everything from belief, experiences of the buildings, understanding of religion and life history.
Figure 6 – card terminal at the “reception desk” at the temple, used for buying sacrifices for Puja

Figure 7 – imported clay cups used for Puja rituals
6.4 Summary

Both the buildings and religious practice are formed and informed by several, partly competing, partly overlapping, discourses on city planning, religion, secularity and minorities. Some are formal law (laws regulating religious practice in Norway), others are local regulations (regulating building processes), and some are dominating discourses understood as rules (such as theological discourses on the proportions of a temple building, or the separation of genders in Muslim worship). The processes of constructing the buildings can be seen as navigating between the discourses, resulting in buildings that are local religious expressions, adapted to the space of suburbs in Oslo.

The regulations and practice should also be seen in relation to a distinct discourse on religion, secularity and politicization of Islam in Norway and Europe. I cannot claim that this is the reason for a different treatment of the use of religious symbols and traditional architecture on the two buildings. However, the position of Islam in the public sphere in Norway, along with literature on conflicts around construction of mosques in Europe could be seen as an indication for such a relationship.

The religious buildings are transnational spaces, with ties to global, European and Norwegian diaspora, and to a global understanding of the world religions of Islam and Hinduism. These transnational ties manifest in social interactions, travel, pilgrimage and trade of objects. Transnationalism is part of the everyday lives of the users of the buildings.
7 Ascribing meaning to religion

The last sphere of the spatial triad is that of *lived spaces*. Going back to the theoretical framework, this is where we will look into the ways we give meaning to practice and materiality, and see this through the lens of meaning systems that shape the ways we understand and interpret the world we live in. These meaning systems also shape the possibilities for making or giving meaning to concepts, as some meanings are fixated and understood as objective truths, whereas others are more contested.

As has been pointed out previously, there is nothing inherently religious about practices or materiality – it is understood as religious through the ways in which we interpret the world we live in. That means that there is not one correct answer to what a mosque or a temple is, for example, but rather several answers that exist parallel to one another within different meaning systems that form different narratives of what the buildings are. In this chapter, I will consider the most prominent narratives that give meaning to the buildings and practices in different ways.

7.1 Practice given meaning

In chapter 5, we looked at what practices are done in the religious buildings. But religious practice is not necessarily what is done inside or in connection to a religious building. Religion is part of people’s everyday lives, and many practices can be understood as religious. During the interviews, I asked the informants whether they think of some practices as religious, and what practices that would be.

Prayer is considered a religious practice by most informants, and so is visiting the mosque or the temple, reading the Quran or performing cleansing rituals. For many, studying religion or teaching religion is also considered religious practices, including for example Quran school and lectures. For most informants, including Bushra, religious practice can be many things:

*For example, I pray five times a day. I had just done it before you arrived. And I read the Quran, every day if I have the time, a couple of pages. And taking care of others, that is very*
important in Islam. Loving the children, taking care of elders, of your parents. That is our Islam. And for example give food and help people who are poor, that is our responsibility. And talk nicely with other people and do no harm to other’s lives. You cannot kill someone in Islam. And don’t drink alcohol. (02.03.17)

In the same way as the quote above touches upon, many informants talk about religious practice as ways to lead your life (to avoid certain things that are considered negative, such as drinking alcohol, conflict and negative emotions), and how to act towards others - to be good, do good. This is both understood as being religious - as practicing the teachings of Hinduism and Islam - but at the same time, it is also understood as being a good person in society, being part of a community. This illustrates the difficulties of defining religious practice. Aadarshini explains it like this:

I don’t think of it as practices being religious in themselves. It is more of a general way of acting, but I can’t say if it is religious. For example, if I share my food with someone, or the work I do – I don’t know if it is conscience or god or a feeling of what is right. But I do think that everything I do is seen by someone, and that I will get it back. If I do something wrong or bad, I will get it back somehow. I cannot separate religion from conscience, but I do act in a way that I think is right and good for me and others. (09.12.16)

The notion of right and wrong is associated with religion for many informants, and some of these are even understood as rules. All Muslims should pray five times a day for example, and a “good” Hindu fasts at times and eats vegetarian all the time or on all days of the week. The informants themselves are not necessarily understanding eating habits as a religious practice. Eating halal food was only mentioned in one interview, and in that interview I asked about it specifically. Rather than saying anything about the eating habits of the informants, this probably rather illustrates how many practices that are connected to religion by people who are not part of the religion is more of an everyday practice, a habit that is naturalized in their lives. Eating habits, prayer or social behaviour are private practices done while living everyday lives in homes, at work and in interaction with other people. Sridharan explains it as habitual:

I pray every day, and I have done that since childhood. I take a shower every morning, and then I go to the altar, I close my eyes and I think of the temple I used to go to growing up. That is what comes before my eyes. I think it is because I have been taught to do it, it has become a
habit – I have to stop by the altar in the morning. And if I don’t, the day feels off somehow. (22.04.17)

For many, these habits have often been part of their lives as long as they can remember – it is associated with family and upbringing, religious buildings from childhood – in Oslo or in Pakistan or Sri Lanka. But religion is of course also a spiritual and theological concept. To most informants, religious practice is a question of spirituality or wellbeing. Praying or visiting the religious buildings is for many associated with calm, good conscience that one has done something right, or with a sense of connection with the divine. For many, this is a reason for visiting the buildings, praying or using their leisure time as a teacher. As explained by Farah:

*It is a great feeling. I feel calmer, it feels good. Maybe even more because I was part of the building process, and it is nice to see people I know there. And I feel closer to Allah, you know, and if there is anything I wish for or something I want to air or get out, it helps to go there. It is only positive!* (20.02.17)

Some practices are given meaning through theology and what is understood as rules. Fasting, eating habits, how often, when and how to pray, buying sacrifices for the gods, gender differences – these are all understood as rules that are both culturally and theologically based. At the same time, they are interpreted differently by different people. In the same way as informants interpret the boundaries of purity differently, as we saw in chapter five, the informants also interpret other religious practices in different ways. Many informants talk about their own interpretations of religion and what is right or wrong. Many set their own narrative against other people who do it differently, such as placing too much emphasis on outer qualities rather than the personal relationship to a god – or, as in the case of an elderly couple at the temple, the way young people pray at the temple in a way that isn’t in accordance with how they have learned to do it. But mainly, it is a question of striving to do the right thing, according to Sadiq:

*To me, the concept of religious means personal faith. It also means to have a community with others who have more or less the same understanding of what it means to be religious, a sense of belonging, but mostly it is about my relationship to God. To many Muslims I think the social takes too much space, making religion become a question of belonging to a group, or something you do to fit in.* (20.01.17)
At the same time, there seems to be a wide acknowledgement that people practice religion in different ways, and this is not seen as a problem as religion is understood as something one partly define personally, as is also reflected in the quote above.

Turned around, practice also makes religious. All the informants in this study call themselves Muslim or Hindu, but they explain this in a way that I understood as static identity categories that they are born into, or “just are”. Whether they see themselves as religious or not is on the other hand often a question of practice – of doing right by god by praying and following religious rules, and of doing good by other people. As Naseer explains:

*You can’t really separate faith and practice. You know, we practice because of faith, so it is mainly faith. But you don’t become religious just from faith. In my past, I never prayed, never read the Quran. I was still a Muslim, but I didn’t call myself religious. But when I follow the guidelines of Islam and do the basic things, I call myself religious.* (16.01.17)

To all the informants, being religious is in essence a question of doing the right thing for yourself, in relation to others and in relation to a god.

### 7.2 Buildings given meaning

These cases include, as we have seen, several buildings –some that are no longer in use as religious buildings, some that are in use now, and some that will be built in the future. All of them have had some functions as religious buildings, such as functioning as spaces for worship, social activities and lectures and education. But are all of them mosques and temples? In the following, I will look into how the users of the buildings give meaning to the buildings.

The understanding of what a temple and a mosque is, is mainly linked to function. Aesthetics or compliance with building traditions are not as important for most. This is in line with the building tradition in Islam, where in its simplest form, a mosque only requires a sanctuary directed towards Mecca. There have been a tradition of “sacred” architecture in Islam, but there is also a long tradition of adapting locales for worship (Nasser, 2005). There are some disagreements on whether the temporary buildings actually “are” temples and mosques. All informants agree that the mosque is a mosque - the building was built as a mosque and people
do things they associate with a mosque in it: It accommodates worship, social activities, it is possible to practice boundaries between pure and impure, it facilitates separation of women and men during worship. When it comes to the temple, there are some discrepancies. In the same way as in the mosque, people do “temple things” in the temple. Through the performance of the temple as a temple, its meaning is becoming fixated as a temple, rather than a printing workshop or a storage. In the temple, on the other hand, there are aspects that challenge this view, mainly when it comes to the temporary building. Kumaraswamy and Nanthini for example, talk about the building as a temple during the whole interview, but reflect differently when asked directly whether their view of a temple matches the building in Ammerud:

*We want a real temple. What we have now is more of a venue, and that is why we have bought some land and are in the process of building a real Hindu temple in Oslo. A real temple has a main tower, an upram, that is very important. When you look at a temple you think about our gods at once. And inside are different gods and different prayers. There are eight important places in a temple. A hall where only the priest can enter. But in Ammerud, there is only one room. That is not enough, it isn’t a real temple. But it isn’t possible to make a real temple there, because it is just a building that has been altered. Nothing is right there. (12.12.16)*

The building does not match the discourse of a temple, aesthetically or functionally in their view. The same goes for the building committee, who claims that it is a temple, but at the same time underlines that it does not follow “the rules” for “being” a temple:

*There are some rules for building a temple. Traditionally, the temple represents a body and matches its proportions, where the entrance is at the feet, and the main temple room is the head. It faces the east. This building is none of those things, but we have tried to adapt it. It faces South-East. It is not supposed to be anything above the temple room, so we have the offices and the assembly hall downstairs. This is a temple, but it does not follow the rules completely. But it is what we were able to make. (16.10.16)*

These points are related to the theological function of separation of the Brahmin and the users for example, or of the building rules for a temple. Within the mosque, the building traditions are not important, and except from having to face Mecca the only “rules”, according to the leader of the mosque (05.01.17), is to accommodate the functions and the practices of the users.
7.2.1 Temporality and stability

In this context, temporality and stability becomes an important issue. But what is temporary? What difference does it make if the building is constructed for the practices that happen there? Or if it is a more or less temporary modification of a building to accommodate the same practices?

*I don’t know about temporary... we have been here for almost 20 years now* (Sridharan, 22.04.17)

In these cases, there are different “degrees” of temporality. The sports hall and the gymnastics hall that were used once a week and for special occasions in both communities were temporary in the sense that they were altered by bringing in god statues or prayer rugs that were taken out again when the activity was finished. For a few hours, these buildings became prayer rooms in practice, but they were never called temples or mosques by the informants I have talked to.

The temple that is still in use on the other hand, has “become”, or is understood as, temporal with the idea of building a permanent temple. A building does not have to be built for the function it has now to be considered permanent. Rather, it seems that in both communities, having access to a building all day every day is a more important aspect to calling it a permanent building. As the building committee comments on the previous arrangement in the gymnastics hall:

*It wasn’t a temple, we couldn’t go on like that. We didn’t have a ritual every time we moved the gods into the room, and we didn’t have a priest either. It wasn’t a permanent solution.* (16.10.16)

The same is reflected by the leader of the mosque talking about the sports hall used for Friday prayers:

*No, that wasn’t a mosque. When we rent a locale that we have access to 24 hours a day, then we can make a mosque. Or call it a mosque.* (05.01.17)

Temporality is thus not a question of the future to the informants, of how long it will last until it is moved or of whether or not the building was constructed as a religious building. Rather, it
is a question of present state – if I went to that place now, would it give me a sense of being in a sacred space?

That is not to say that the temporary buildings have not had a function. In addition to being a space to gather people for religious practice, they have had an important social function, and an important function as a stepping stone on the way towards more permanent solutions. The building committee of the temple tells me that as early as in 1998 they started gathering for prayer in a gymnastics hall at a school. Every Friday, they would bring God figures or images and gather to pray, led not by an educated Brahmin, but by someone in the community who descends from a Brahmin family. The purpose was not only religious, it was also a means to gather people to start planning for something more permanent. Without the ability to gather, the temple would probably not have been what it is today. The same goes for the Mosque, according to some of the informants. Praying in the temporary sports hall was not only to be able to pray together every Friday, but an important arena to collect money, talk about future plans and get people involved and engaged in the building process. Without the social aspect of being physically together, meeting to pray and constructing a sense of community and ownership, the informants seem to think the building process might have been different and taken more time.

### 7.3 Visible religion

The previous section discussed how the informants understand and give meaning to the buildings and their own practices. To the informants, religious practice is given meaning through an understanding of religion, upbringing and tradition and as everyday practices and habits. The buildings are mainly functional, as spaces where they can practice worship, connect with a sense of divinity or spirituality. This contrasts the discourse on religion in the public debate, as presented in the previous chapter. Within this discourse, religion, and especially Islam, is politicized to the extent that it is at times understood as an ideology rather than a religion. These discourses on religion in general, and Hinduism and Islam in particular, are part of the lives of the informants:
The representation of Islam is not right, because they always write about those extreme cases and the bad things. And the problem is that, for example here, we do collective community work twice a year. Walk around and collect garbage and things like that. But no one writes about that! No one ever wants to talk about moderate Imams, our leader here at the mosque who does a good job, or successful Muslim politicians. It makes me sad when I see negative talk of Islam of course, and frustrated. But it passes quickly and I get engaged in something else (16.01.17).

The continued negative focus on Islam is, at best, a frustration for the mosque users. Naseer in the quote above draws a clear line between the media coverage to the local context in which he lives, and through that illustrating the distance between how he experiences being Muslim, or what Islam is and the representation of Islam in media.

7.3.1 Religious bodies

During the interview with Azra, this connection between the bodies and practices and the discourse on Islam became obvious: I always wear Abaya, this long dress, and hijab. And my husband never told me to do it, it’s my own wish. And it’s the same with that little one over there, she says, and points to her six-year-old daughter: I told her earlier, because you were coming, and I didn’t want you to think you had come to the house of extremists or anything, so I told her to put on some hair pins instead of the hijab, but she protested and wanted to keep it on. She thinks it is much easier to just put that one on and be done with it. I got it for her because she is supposed to use it in Quran class... you know she is a child, so it is stitched together to make it easier to put it on. (21.02.17).

When Azra feels the need to excuse her daughter wearing hijab in her own house, she is part of a discourse of Islam as a threat to security or “Norwegianness”. Within this discourse, the simple practice of wearing hijab can be a symbol of “extremism”. Most of the practices that are given meaning for the informants are done in private: Prayer, worship, eating habits and the general way of acting towards others, teaching and learning about religion. They are not visibly religious practices, but are religious to the informants. Clothes, on the other hand, are often visible. Some clothes, such as hijab and abaya are interpreted as “muslim”. At the same time, for example sarees are interpreted as “traditional Sri Lankan” rather than Hindu by the informants. The issue of clothing is much more prominent for women than for men, as the
debate on hijab and other headscarves has become a debate on women’s position in society, where the hijab is seen as a symbol of oppression in Islam, as discussed in the theoretical framework (Knott, 2005). For men, having a beard can be understood as a representation of Islam or political Islam, a topic that came up in conversations with several informants, but it is not politicized in the same way as women’s clothing in their experience.

Some everyday practices are given meaning as religious by the informants on a personal level, while others are given meaning by others. Visibility is key here. As the hijab is visible, and understood as a symbol of Islam, oppression of women and even a protest against Western culture, or Norway as nation (Knott, 2005), it is also potentially challenging the space in which they are visible. In the same way, a mosque can potentially be more conflicted than an “invisible” locale used for worship.

### 7.3.2 Religious buildings claiming space

Visibility is a recurring topic in the interviews with many users of the mosque, and their reflections on the topic are interesting in this context, because it can shed a light on how the discourses shapes their practices and religious spaces in the city. As Sadiq argues:

*Well, debates on praying in public or for example airports keep coming back. There was just a debate on having a prayer room in a high school, some youth wanted to have that. I think it is better if there are specific rooms for prayer, instead of praying in public. Because there are so many people in society, most people I think, who have their reasons to not like what they see. Maybe they aren’t religious themselves, or just think religion shouldn’t be in public space, or they are affected by what they hear in the media on the role of Islam in Norway, you know. And the big debate is affecting people on an individual level, limiting their freedom of practicing their religions. And I think that makes the need for specific spaces to pray even more important. (20.01.17)*

The question of practicing religion in the public might thus be a question of visibility, and of visible religious practice not having a place in an assumedly secular, or Christian space. One aspect of secularisation is the privatisation of religion: from being a “natural” part of media, education, public space and public affairs, religion has become a more private matter (Bangstad, 2012). Further, visible or audible religion in Norwegian public space is dominated
by evangelical Lutheran Christianity, in the form of for example visible churches, sounds of church bells, missionaries on streets or a political party (the Christian democrats) campaigning. These are however considered a “natural” part of Norwegian social space within a discourse of historic Protestantism and the idea of a historical cultural heritage. It is rarely questioned. Presence of other religions in public space can thereby challenge dominant discourses on public space and “Norwegianness”. As Sadiq argues in the quote above, having specific spaces to pray could remove such practices from the public, keeping it “hidden” in the private sphere. On the other hand, such spaces could also make the religious practice more visible: One does not see the actual act of praying, but such spaces make the practice visible – the religion is present even when not seen. As shown in a special issue of Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies concerning conflicts over mosques in Europe:

*If prayer rooms have the ability to go unnoticed in the non-Muslim environment, a mosque certainly cannot. Every project that concerns the construction of a mosque entails time-consuming processes in which leaders of the Muslim community must discuss and negotiate with local, city and regional authorities. From being invisible, Islam goes to being unwanted* (Cesari, 2005a, p. 1018).

This is also seen in the case of the temple. In addition to complaints on traffic, noise and parking, the temple was also explicitly unwanted, as a religious “signal” building. For some users of the temple, however, the visibility of the temple and its traditional, symbolic architecture, is considered a positive and seemingly unproblematic concept associated with pride more than anything else. In Mathangi’s words:

*I am happy they are building such a temple for the first time. I feel proud, it makes me happy that the Hinduism is becoming stronger in Norway.* (25.01.16)

As we saw in the previous chapter, the mosque on the other hand, was not allowed to show any religious symbols according to the land regulation. None of the informants expressed discontent with not symbolising visually that the building is a mosque. Still, other stakeholders interpreted parts of the building as a mosque, and filed their complaint, expressing fear of prayer calls – an issue that was never debated.
Constructing religious buildings is a form of claiming space, and claiming ones permanent presence in the city by making it visible in the urban landscape. This often leads to some form of conflict in the planning process that often take the form of conflicts over parking, traffic nuisance or that the building doesn’t “fit into” the urban plan of the area (Gale, 2005; Saint-Blancat & Schmidt di Friedberg, 2005). The same has been the issue in construction of purpose-built temples in Europe as well, such as in several cases of South Indian temples in Great Britain (David, 2008). These technical objections are often connected a meta-narrative of Islam as conflated with threats to international or domestic order, according to Cesari (2005a). One prominent example of this in the Norwegian debate was a debate of calls for prayers in one mosque in the inner city of Oslo in the early 2000’s that became a national debate where the notion of Islam as “foreign” in Norway became a crucial part of the debate, to an extent over shadowing the local debate on (Lilleheil, 2005). I will return to this topic in the next chapter.
7.4 Summary

The informants ascribe different meaning to their practice. To some it is merely habitual, a way of acting that they have learnt from childhood that they bring with them and repeat as a habit, sometimes not giving it much thought. These can be practices such as the daily prayers, eating vegetarian or Halal food. There are also different ways of understanding what religious practice is. It is both a way of living, to be good and do good towards others and do right in relation to a god. Some practices are more easily classified as religious, such as praying or learning about religion through studying. This difficulty in categorizing religious practice is essential to the understanding of religion as lived, as everyday practices. It is not only what happens in religious buildings or within institutions.

Religious buildings are also not one single thing. They are given meaning to the informants mainly through their function. At the same time, that is only as long as they comply in some way to the basic discourses of what a religious building is – again connected to function, such as being available all the time and having some basic facilities for prayer and worship, social activities and practicing boundaries of purity.

In the public debate and by neighbours who are not users, religious buildings and religious practice is understood differently. They are read or understood as symbols of something, often of an idea of what Islam or Hinduism is, or as foreign objects and practices. The conflicts seem to follow visibility, making way for conflict around practices that are visibly religious, and around buildings that are visibly religious.
8 Discussion – Making religious space?

Through the last three chapters, I have analysed the social spaces of religious people, or religious spaces, using Lefebvre’s framework of a trialectic understanding of space. This analysis has enabled a thorough understanding of several aspects of space, from the basic bodily practices to the political or discursive framework that enables, disables and forms the ways religious space is produced and given meaning. The framework offered by Lefebvre is useful because it works as a tool for systematising the analysis and understanding social space as a holistic concept that cannot only be understood as discourse, interpreting symbols or the everyday practices.

Despite striving to stay true to Lefebvre’s framework to analyse the cases spatially, the relations between the spheres have of course been evident in the preceding analysis. That is partly because despite being useful in a theoretically informed spatial analysis, the world we live in is not necessarily best understood as separate spheres. When it comes down to it, we live in a world that we at the same time practice, understand, ascribe with meaning and in which we relate to others. In the following discussion, I will try to look at the findings from the analysis in relation to each other, while drawing lines to other studies of similar cases.

This will partly be a discussion of the three previous chapters in relation to each other, but while answering the second part of the third research question: Are the different meanings that are ascribed to religious practice and buildings possibly challenging dominating discourses? As can be recalled from the theoretical framework, the lived space is, according to Lefebvre (1991) passively experienced, as it does not challenge dominating discourse. But it is also the space where there is possibility for challenging the dominant discourse, and even for changing space. This builds, as we recall from the theoretical framework, on the notion of third space, the marginal spaces where there is possibility for resistance and creative change (Bhabha, 1994; Chivallon, 2001; Soja, 1996)
8.1 Contesting or complying religion?

Let us go back first to the beginning of the analysis— the practices and materiality of the buildings. I have described in chapter five what people do, how the buildings and the social interact and form each other. In chapter seven, we saw how these are given and producing meaning – as religious in line with a theological meaning system, as social, as habitual, as traditional and as spiritual or sacred. We have also seen in chapter six, how the buildings are relational spaces, where the users relate to both dominating discourses of what Hinduism and Islam is, and how it should be practiced, and of a secular or protestant narrative of Norway.

The communities in this study shape the ways in which worship is done in their own ways, making it a local version of religious practice. It is a combination of a transnational discourse on Islam and Hinduism adapted to a local context. This is in line with what Dunn (2010, in Sheringham, 2010) calls embodied transnationalism, an embodied, practiced synthesis of layers of spatial and temporal connections that are manifested in practice. Let us look at what this means in practice.

8.1.1 Negotiating transnational relations

The ways in which the communities organize prayer, and practice their religion, is not necessarily the same way as it is done in Sri Lanka or Pakistan. Some obvious differences: The buildings are different than traditional temples or mosque in those countries, and materiality of buildings form the movements. In Sri Lanka, for example, it is common to wash your feet in a basin as you enter the temple, according to Nanthini, whereas in this temple, people keep their socks on and do not wash. Both the building that is altered to function as a temple and the purpose-built mosque are built in a different context. They are complying to rules and regulations of buildings used for large gatherings of people in Norway, that includes rules for everything from parking to fire exits and toilet facilities. And their architectural aesthetics are partly or wholly formed by a Norwegian or western building tradition. It is also the actual prayer séance – the use of Norwegian language in Friday prayers in the mosque for example, to make sure that young Muslims who have Norwegian as their primary language and have grown up in Oslo are able to connect with and understand the message of the Imam. Another example is the hours of volunteer work that is put into ordering and getting the right items for puja (ghee, coconuts, flowers, incense, clay cups) in the temple, items that are probably available at any corner shop in Sri Lanka.
A study of young Hindus in England by Baker and Beaumont (2011), found that many young people thought of the temple as a space for keeping and building identity as both British, Gujarati and Hindu - a way of empowering themselves in the meeting with the outside society.

_The role of this religious space is therefore more wide ranging and subtle than the simple remembering of rituals from a mother tongue within an alien culture. It would appear not to be a backward-looking space, but a dynamic and creative one, putting religious and cultural capital to not only adapt but also shape the wider, pluralized culture in which they are located_ (Baker & Beaumont, 2011, p. 39).

The younger participants of this study who have grown up in Norway express this dynamic process in different ways on the micro scale of practice. 21 year old Mathangi, for example, says that she always washes her hand and face before Puja, but hasn’t really seen anyone else doing it. She has learned religion from her mother, and strives to be a better religious person through fasting and other rituals. Many of the older informants do none of these things. Azra receives glances from both Muslim and non-Muslim neighbours when she walks the neighbour’s dog while wearing her hijab and abaya. She thinks it is because “everyone knows” dogs are considered impure in Islam, but she has found a way to reason this seemingly conflicting act to herself through a personal interpretation of religious teachings.

Both Farah, a user of the mosque, and Aadarshini, a user of the temple, wear different clothes to work and at home than they do in the mosque and temple - a way to negotiate both their own understanding of what is appropriate and respectful when visiting the religious building, and what is expected in different social spheres. The informants who have grown up in Sri Lanka or Pakistan are making adaptations to combine their professional lives with the religious rule of praying five times a day for example, finding a room at work to pray to get away from their co-workers, or skipping a prayer if it doesn’t fit the schedule of work.

The practices of the informants, worship, rituals of purity and deity, and social life all follow a meaning system of what is acceptable, possible, right and wrong. The rules for prayer are so internalised that they are not even reflected upon. None of the informants described prayer without being asked to, when we were talking about what they do in the buildings. They simply told that they prayed. Observing the rituals as an outsider, however, the movements of bodies
in the room seemed to me as complex choreographies that made no “sense” to me. I could follow what the informants did, but when offered milk or coloured powder on the forehead during Puja, it came out of nowhere, and I had no idea of what to do. For the users of the temple, on the other hand, it was an obvious “chain of events”.

This shows, primarily, that the rituals are so well-known that they are internalised – everyone who attends Puja in the temple or prayer at the mosque have done this so many times that their practices are habitual movements of their bodies that are not reflected upon, but merely done. These practices are probably close to what they could expect in Sri Lanka or Pakistan, but there are still some adaptations and differences.

How can we understand these adaptations? From the way the informants talk about and explain these bodily and material practices, it doesn’t seem they should be understood as a “failed” attempt at practicing a “rightful” version of Hinduism or Islam as is done in Pakistan or Sri Lanka. Nor should they be understood as passive compliance to a Norwegian context.

The bodily practices of moving in the city, adapting clothes and practice to context and finding time and space for worship in an everyday life that does not necessarily facilitate it. These are ways of practicing religion in their spatial and temporal context. This context is a transnational context with ties to both Oslo, Norway, a European diaspora and a global discourse on Islam and Hinduism. The material structures and practices are local and individual versions of Islam and Hinduism, adjusted to comply with regulations for buildings and dominating architectural practice.

From the views of the participants of this study, the narrative is that of adapting to a notion of “the Norwegian society”, while still being able to practice and exist as Muslims and Hindus. Staying true to the focus of spatiality, I understand this notion of a Norwegian society as an imagined community of Norway as a nation bound by the boundaries of territory. The practices become a form of embodied transnationalism that is shaped by the everyday practices of religion and dominating discourses – the conceived space.
8.2 Out of place or constructing a new narrative

Is there room for Hindus and Muslims within this space? Through the course of this paper, we have also encountered a more conflicting view of religion in Norway. Throughout the document analysis, from the general public debate in Norway, the conversations with informants and literature on conflicts over religious buildings in Europe (Such as Cesari, 2005a; Oosterbaan, 2014) there are two dominating discourses that are in possible tension with the construction of minority religious buildings and religious practice. The first is a meaning system in which Norway is understood as a secular state, based on liberal principles, including religious freedom. Within this narrative, religious minorities are to an extent welcome, as long as they comply with Norwegian law, and do not challenge liberal values (Bangstad, 2013). The other is a discourse of Norway as a nation, that is built on Christian core values from a tradition of Evangelical Lutheran Christianity, and where other religions are foreign. This is in line with a study of attitudes towards immigration in four European countries (Denmark being the closest to Norway in the study): Storm (2011) identifies a connection between the change in the public debate on immigration from focusing on crime, racism and integration to issues of culture and religion and the rise of a narrative of Christian nations, constructed in opposition to “foreign” culture. This is supported by Ash Amin, who claims that within the post 9/11 discourse in the west, there has been a sharp escalation of racial biopolitics, that are based on bodily traits and ethnic cultures. This builds, according to him, on a discourse of a conflict between a “secular liberalism of the west”, and the “world of religious society”, that are (conveniently) attached discursively to Islam, rather than Christian fundamentalism (Amin, 2012, p. 98).

This duality between a Christian nation and a liberal/secular state, is of course a simplification, and there are few actors who conform with either. The growing adherence to xenophobic political movements in Norway at the moment builds, I would argue, both on the discourse of Norway as a Christian nation and of a liberal/secular state. The two are overlapping – the idea of the Christian nation is to a degree compatible with the secular state. Religious buildings and practice of minority religions are placed in this narrative as Other, placing them in a hierarchical position under a majority that is either Christian or liberal, and where Evangelical-lutheran Christianity space is “natural”, and secularity and secular spaces are considered neutral spaces. Within these discourses, minority religious buildings, bodies and practices are either “unnatural” or foreign, or divergent, because, in bell hooks’(1989, p. 19) words, “our very presence is a disruption”.

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This is a recurring topic in studies of religion and migration in Europe, as it is common that some religious traditions (often a form of Christianity) are identified with the idea of the nation, and others become foreign or problematic within this narrative (Hatziprokopiou & Evergeti, 2014; Oosterbaan, 2014; Saint-Blancat & Cancellieri, 2014). Religious minorities, and especially those who are understood as “conservative” or “un-modern” become othered within the liberal/secular meaning system (Bangstad, 2012). Within both discourses, there is an imperative for minority religions to change, or adapt in a way that gives them a place within the discourse.

8.2.1 Negotiating meaning

In these discourses, religious practice, buildings and bodies become symbols of something else: Minority religions become a foreign ideology, rather than the routine-like, everyday practices of some citizens that is the narrative of the users themselves; a hijab is not a piece of clothing, but a symbol of oppression of women or “extremism”, of Islam as an ideology, and the ones wearing them become provocative others (Knott, 2005); and prayer is practice out of place – if it is visible to others. The following quote from Sahar is interesting in this manner:

_I portray a peaceful image of Islam. Because I am Muslim, and my head shawl says that I am a Muslim. If I am nice to you, you will not get any negative associations to the hijab or Islam. Here in this neighbourhood, everyone have accepted me and my head shawl. So I am happy with living in Norway. I think we have a lot of freedom here, more than in many other countries. It is a nice experience to be Muslim in Norway._ (28.01.17)

From Sahar’s perspective, she is an “ambassador” through her everyday life in the city of a peaceful version of Islam, making her role visible by putting on a shawl that is understood as a symbol of Islam. In her narrative, she seems to be opposing a discourse of Islam as a non-peaceful religion. The need to be an ambassador for her version of Islam must be understood as a response to a different version of Islam, and a different way of giving meaning to the symbolic value of the hijab.

By this, I do not mean to disregard Sahar’s experience of living in Norway as a good experience, which is true, and also in line with the conversations with the narratives of the other informants. Neither do I think the negative representation of Islam is experienced as a
suppressing discourse: Most informants talk of the representation of Islam as more of a
nuisance, a political discourse one disagrees with, than an oppressive discourse that limits their
everyday lives. However, the quote illustrates both how Sahar is complying to a discourse in
which she must be “accepted”, implying that this is not a given, and that she must act in a
certain way to produce, or convey a version of Islam through her way of being. To a degree,
she cannot escape her role as Other. Further, the shawl is a symbol of something, of Islam, and
she wants to fill this symbol with her own meaning – implying that there are competing views
of what Islam “is”.

In the discourse of a Christian/secular nation, buildings are also foreign disturbances in the city
landscape, and they are, as we have seen, often the source of conflict. The process of making
religious buildings can be seen as a struggle for claiming space of their own for minority social
groups:

**Despite constitutional protection of religious diversity, the urban struggles of new
religious movements are not about gaining a place in religiously neutral societies, but
about achieving presence, physically and otherwise, in cities where particular notions
prevail about the form and shape that public religion should have** (Oosterbaan, 2014,
p. 596)

These conflicts, as in the cases in this study, are often manifested through mundane nuisances
such as parking and traffic, but at the same time with some underlying, more or less explicit,
conception of a larger discourse of what is in and out of place (Cesari, 2005a). In the case of
the mosque, we saw this stated rather explicitly in one of the complaints, in the fear of the
tower “becoming a religious symbol”, which it was not supposed to be according to the plan
(Plan- og bygningsetaten, 2013). The temple was also regarded as an unwanted religious
building in the neighbourhood (Rommen vel, 2014). Some of the informants explicitly interpret
such complaints as not being wanted themselves, such as Farah, who thinks the reason for the
resistance against the mosque was based on a fear of “getting more Pakistanis” to the
community.

In response to this, the informants I have talked seem to mellow down the conflict in the
mosque, both in their representation of it in the interview situation, but also in the way the faith
community has handled it. The strategy has been to avoid escalation, and wait for things to
calm down. Naseer, for example, was frustrated by how the management at the local shopping centre were negative to the use of parking spaces during Friday prayer. He wanted to talk to them, but was advised not to by the board of the mosque. They wanted to avoid escalating the conflict (16.01.17). There have been no public dialogue meetings, but an open invitation for neighbours to visit the mosque at the opening, and establishing good relations to the youth club and the Church. The mayor of Oslo was present at the opening of the Mosque, and the mosque has a good relation with the church and the local sports club. The faith community also engages in collective community work. These practices are probably related to an understanding of a mosque and Islam’s role as a positive factor in the local community. In the context of Norway, I would argue they are also a form of negotiation that resonates with the logic of Farah in the quote above. Doing good for society, and making a positive contribution can be understood as a way of reclaiming the understanding of Islam in the way the users of the mosque understand themselves. No matter the reasoning behind these actions, they function as a response to a negative picture of Islam that is portrayed in the media, and reflected in the complaints filed by the neighbours.

This has not been an issue in the interviews with the temple users. This is probably partly due to the different traditions in Hinduism and Islam, where mosques have a stronger tradition of taking on social welfare services, such as school and providing for marginalised people in society through the mosque and the congregation (Ryan, 2014). It might, however, be different in the temple when the building process proceeds and the temple is materialised.

8.2.2 Is there room for identity?

As already mentioned, but needs to be stressed, the main pattern is that the informants in this study are content with their lives, including their experienced freedom of practicing religion. The practices are adaptations of a global discourse of the religions, and of the limiting discourses on how religion can be practiced in Oslo. This could be understood as a Norwegian or European Islam or Hinduism. The idea of a European Islam or Hinduism is both understood theologically and within a framework of identity. An important contribution to the theological framework of a European Islam comes from Tariq Ramadan’s book To be a European Muslim (2013), wherein he discusses the ways one can interpret and practice theological concepts within a European legal, cultural and social framework. I have not encountered similar
literature on being a European Hindu. There could be several reasons for this, a likely one being that Hinduism is less regulated by religious rules, a more subjectively practiced religion.

The framework of identity brings forth the ways people give meaning to their own position as practicing Hindus and Muslims, and what possibilities they have to construct such narratives. Identity is not something one can merely make up by oneself, it must also be validated by others (Ryan, 2014). Further, the identity category must be available within the existing discourses (In line with Foucault's notion of self-constitution, as discussed in Butler, 2005). Is it possible to “be” a *Norwegian Hindu*, or a *Norwegian Muslim*? The lives of the informants could be said to be testaments to this. They are both Norwegian citizens and Hindus and Muslims. Their practices are also, as we have seen, Norwegian, or local ways of practicing religion that are both rooted in the space in which they happen, but also a relational space.

Within a wider discourse of what it means to be Norwegian or Hindu, however, it could be more problematic. The room for being a Muslim in Norwegian media seems to be a choice between being a “bad Muslim”, associated at best with traditional, “anti-liberal” values, or a “good Muslim”, an ex-Muslim, a secular or liberal Muslim (Bangstad, 2013). As rather explicitly stated by Ash Amin:

> ‘Bad Muslims’ can only become ‘good Muslims’ (Mamdani, 2004), never fully of the West, as those doing the judging come to redefine the world – once again as the battleground between a peaceful, rational and tolerant West and its opposite in the Islamic East (Amin, 2012, p. 99)

The categories are within some narratives incompatible, because Islam and Hinduism are understood as foreign, and therefore not part of a narrative or meaning system of what it means to “be” Norwegian. In an article discussing the possibility of “being” Norwegian for ethnic minorities, visibility is found to be a barrier to being able to belong to a notion of “Norwegianness” (Lynnebakke & Fangen, 2011). In this study, visibility is seen as bodily markers, such as skin-color, but is probably also valid for visible symbolic bodily markers, such as clothes, and practice. I have not discussed with the informants whether they identify as Norwegian and cannot take that for granted. However, many, especially those born in Norway, seem to understand themselves as both Norwegian, Muslims, Hindus, Tamils/Sri Lankans or Pakistani. In the way they talk of themselves in a larger “we”, I sometimes interpret an
understanding of themselves as “Norwegians” in the context of the conversation, sometimes as other identity categories – such as Muslim, Hindu, Tamil or Pakistani. Whether or not they are understood as Norwegian by others is another matter. However, studies on the topic of belonging to a notion of “Norwegianness”, and the public debate on topics of “Norwegianness”, implies that this is a negotiation that does not end, but keeps returning in different contexts that allow for different identity categories (Erdal & Strømsø, 2016; Lynnebakke & Fangen, 2011).

Identity is not a main focus of this paper, however, and I will not stress this point (for some recent studies of negotiations for identity and religion in Europe, see for example Erdal, 2014; Hatziprokopiou & Evergeti, 2014; Kuppinger, 2014; Ryan, 2014). The reason I still think this is an interesting last point to make in this paragraph is that the literature and approaches to identity possibly can shed light on the possibilities and constraints for practice and constructing material spaces – and the ways one can give meaning to these. It is at the borders of what is possible there is opportunity to claim space, and it is here we find the marginal spaces where make hybrid spaces, or make spaces of resistance (Chivallon, 2001). I will continue on this point shortly.

8.3 Towards a conclusion – Producing religious space?

Space is produced through practice and materiality; meaning systems and power; and through the lived negotiations between these, including interpreting, giving meaning, and negotiating meaning. This paper has filled these categories with meaning within a framework of religion, by applying them on the two cases. Across the three spatial spheres there have come forth some processes of practice and negotiation of meaning that contribute to the production of spaces as religious, sacred, symbolic, social and political – within and without the religious buildings.

8.3.1 Perforated boundaries and overlapping spaces

The relation between identity and space is not about finding out where one is, but about “Identifying the constitutive limit, or boundary of this place, as well as how, and for whom, it affects the social aspect”, according to Chivallon (2001, p. 462). This is true not only for personal identity as is the topic of her study, but also, I would argue, for the ways we give
meaning to space as something, be it a nation or a temple. A boundary is a way of differentiation between one understanding of space from the rest of the world, distinguishing it as for example religious or sacred. The social spaces of interest in this paper are mainly the material and practiced boundaries of the religious buildings, and the boundaries of the abstract space of Norway as a state or nation.

Practiced boundaries of sacred space and of religious buildings produce the buildings as religious and sacred. Through rituals of purification, the sacred space is delimited and separated from a profane outside, making it a sacred space or possibly a heterotopia (Douglas, 1997; Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986). Between the religious and the secular, however, the boundary is not clear-cut. The buildings are understood as religious, but they are also sites for cultural practice and social life, practices that can be religious and social or cultural at the same time. Further, religious practice is not confined to some spaces, it is the everyday lives of the informants that give meaning to a range of practices as religious. This makes all space and any space potentially religious - some temporarily, and others more permanent, through the practices of people that are understood as religious. In the everyday practices and lived religion, there are no religious boundaries to a neutral secular space. Public space and the spaces of home, work and leisure spaces can potentially be temporarily made religious through practices. Such practices can be prayer, reciting the Quran, eating habits associated with religious belief (Ammerman, 2006; Gökarıksel, 2009; Kong, 2001; Kuppingger, 2014).

As we have seen, that is partly also true for more or less formal places of worship: If a sports hall can become a sacred space of worship, anywhere can. We have seen that a building does not have to be purpose-built or follow architectural “rules” to be understood as a temple or a mosque. The temple is understood and used as a temple, despite not having the attributes that a temple “requires”, according to the informants. The buildings sports- and gymnastics halls that were in use previously were not understood as mosques and temple, but still served as sacred spaces where collective worship could be performed at times. On the other hand, they are different from the permanent temples and mosques, partly because they become (or go back to being?) a sports hall or gymnastics hall when the worship séance is over.

In continuance of this, one cannot talk of religious spaces any more than one can talk about secular spaces, albeit temporary. Secularity is not defined by permanent absence of religion, and religion is not defined by the permanent absence of secularity. The boundaries are shifting
- at times existing, at times non-existing because the two concepts are relational and non-exclusive, existing in the same space at times in the same time (Bangstad, 2012; Oosterbaan, 2014; Saint-Blancat & Cancellieri, 2014).

8.3.2 Claiming space to take political and symbolic place

If there is no exclusive secularity or religiousness, there would be no concept of claiming space as religious. However, the claim that there are no secular or religious spaces is not really in line with dominating discourses we live by, as we have seen.

The presence of a mosque or a temple is often a source of conflict in Europe, as it has been in this case, because it is a provocative material symbol of a religion that is considered out of place, either as religious in a secular space, or as a representation of a “wrong” religion (Cesari, 2005a, 2005b; Gale, 2005; Naylor & Ryan, 2002; Saint-Blancat & Schmidt di Friedberg, 2005). The existence of mosques, temples and bodies that practice religion becomes “embodied enactments of difference” (Saint-Blancat & Cancellieri, 2014, p. 646). Within such a discourse, the mere existence of a visibly religious body, or a visible mosque can be seen as a provocative appropriation of space in which it “does not belong”, as we have seen. Despite being unwanted in the neighbourhood in this case, the presence of Hinduism does not have the same connotations in the public debate. For some users of the temple, the plan of building a purpose-built temple in a Tamil building tradition is seen as a way of making Hinduism visible, a symbol of pride and of presence in society. The two buildings are also treated in different manners from the planning and building administration, as we have seen.

This seemingly makes the strategies for coping with complaints and conflict different. In the temple, the conflicts with neighbours has not been a topic in the interviews, whereas internal conflicts over the building process, financing, time span and scope of the building are at the surface. I say seemingly different, because his might because the process is ongoing, whereas in the mosque it is finished. There is no way of knowing if the conflicts or strategies will change when the actual material building is being constructed. But it could also be a result to not having the same amount of outside pressure: Hindus in Norway do not have the same motivation to avoid conflicts and stand together against a negative representation of their religion.
For the users of the temple, to claim space is to claim their existence in a space where their existence is unnoticed. It is a way of showing that there exists Tamil Hinduism in Norway, as is in line with the analysis made by Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri: “The request for visibility implies a demand for social recognition which entails becoming full actors who can display their identity and specificity in public space” (2014, p. 646)

For the Muslims in this case, it seems the strategy is not to avoid being seen, but a struggle for being able to define the way they are seen, as supported by some studies on Muslims in the public debate in Norway (Midtbøen, 2016; Aarset, 2006). The informants live with a discrepancy where they understand their own practices and their religion as rightful, peaceful, and about acting good towards others and god. But in the public debate and media, the group they belong to, Muslims in Norway and Europe, are mostly portrayed in negative terms (IMDI 2009).

Where the Hindu informants aspire for visibility to be able to exist as Hindus in Norway, the Muslim informants strive for the opportunity to be able to define themselves.

8.3.3 Hybridization to create space for being in the world

The concept of claiming space can be seen as a strategy for resistance, possibly with some goal of changing space, both abstract and physical. The informants, however, are not talking in terms of resistance or change. More on the opposite, they talk about themselves within the dominating discourse: they accept their role as being part of a group that should be integrated. Some, but not all, call themselves “integrated”. Most agree to the notion that Norway should be a secular nation but with religious freedom, a concept that will also allow them the freedom to practice their religion unbothered, if not unnoticed. Most see religion as a personal matter, that should not be too present in the public, and not forced upon anyone.

At the same time, as we have seen, their practices and visible presence is considered Othered. Within this, they are negotiating their hybrid spaces through practices that are informed by discourses of Islam and Hinduism, and of a Norwegian space. One way of viewing this is as cultural differences set up against each other. Within this framework, the minority is ascribed a role as the Other, at the same time being placed in a hierarchical relation with the majority who continues to define what is in place or out of place (Bhabha, 1994). However, as we have
seen, the results of these negotiations produce new, hybrid versions of what it means to practice religion, and what makes a temple or a mosque. This could be understood in terms of Bhabha’s (1994) notion of hybridization – a way of making a version of identity or practice that is not in compliance with any dominating discourse, but rather a new, spatially constructed version of what it means to be Muslim or Hindu in Oslo. This could be seen as a strategy to enable “being” in the world.

In this way, their presence, practice and everyday lives are, without necessarily wanting to, actually creating spaces of resistance. This resistance is a practiced discourse of Norway as a different social space (Chivallon, 2001). It is not an aggressive act of subversion, nor a political strategy, but the consequence of living in a social space in which dominating discourses does not allow the existence of practices and the ways they perform their existence as Hindus and Muslims (Amin, 2012; Bangstad, 2013). To exist and live everyday lives, to claim space and build religious architecture to make ones presence visible, to try and shape the representation of the social group you belong to by the way you act are all acts of subversion. Religion and religious lives are only one part of a bigger picture, that includes transnational economic, social, cultural and religious ties, migration and other forms of globalisation processes throughout the last decades. Together, they are all contributing to changing social space, a space in which Norway can no longer be understood as a Christian or secular nation, but must be understood as some form of a hybrid social space. The practiced, everyday lives of the users of the buildings are not compatible with neither a notion of a “natural” Christian, nor a “neutral” liberal/secular Norwegian space.

To end this analysis, let me use the words of bell hooks on marginal spaces. She is writing of a notion of home, in a different social and spatial context. But, at least in my interpretation, her words resonate with the temporal, spatial, relational, cultural, political and emotive power the buildings represent, as religious spaces:

Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal, fragmentation as part of the construction of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become, an order that does not demand forgetting. ‘Our struggle is also a struggle of memory against forgetting’” (hooks, 1989, p. 19)
8.4 Summary

Religious practice is adapted to a local context. This happens both as a reaction to dominating discourses expressed directly through regulations of buildings and practice, such as where one can wear some “religious” clothes, and as adaptations to a hostile public debate. It also happens as a hybrid version of religions, such as the use of Norwegian language in Friday prayer to make Islam relevant to some (young) users who have Norwegian as their main language. This can be seen as the creation of hybrid religious practice, and hybridized ways of giving meaning to practice and buildings that exists in a transnational, relational space.

Sacred spaces are practiced and constructed through rituals, whereas boundaries to religious space are perforated by overlapping discourses and the relational spaces they embody, making these boundaries shifting and temporary. Religious spaces can be constructed, temporarily, in any space through practices that are given meaning as religious.

The dominating discourses do not necessarily “allow” the construction of any space as religious, however, as space is seen as neutral when it is given meaning as secular, and Christian, if ever given meaning as religious. When minority religions take place in such space, they are thus claiming space. The two groups in this study have different interests and different strategies when claiming space: Hindus claim space for visibility and to be allowed to exist as Hindus in Norway, whereas Muslims claim space to be able to define their own version of Islam.

These are not “political” strategies of resistance, but rather the result of living in a space in which existence, practice and visible material presence becomes acts of resistance.
9 Conclusions

This thesis was finished during the summer and early autumn of 2017, the time of a parliamentary election in Norway. In the last month, the National Broadcasting (NRK) has received the highest number of complaints on any TV program in history, over a documentary series on a young woman who is learning about the different political parties and finding which is the closest to her own values and interests. The reason for the complaints is that she wears a hijab. The first televised debate in the election campaign, between the leaders of the political parties, spent some 20 minutes debating the vague concept of “Norwegian values”. At the same time, the “Islam-critical” blog document.no became one of the most shared sources for news and political analysis in social media. In July, neo-Nazis marched openly in a Norwegian city for the first time since the second world war. The contestations for what it means to be Norwegian and who and what “belongs” is more heated than ever.

In this space, and at the same time, the informants in this study continue to visit their religious buildings, and stop by the shop to buy groceries on their way home. They pray or light a candle in front of a god figure in their Puja rooms at home before going to work, read the Quran when they come home, they watch the news, follow the political debate, and walk their dog.

This ordinary, everyday life is what matters to the informants when it comes to their experiences as Muslims and Hindus in Norway. Religion is a part of all they do, being a guide to what to do and how to be as persons. The religious buildings play an important role. To visit a religious building is a positive experience that enhances their own well-being, a place of spirituality and tranquillity. It is also a place to connect to and reproduce narratives of childhood, of a home country that was left at a different stage in life – or even generations ago, and a space for socialising with people who share some experiences.

Lefebvre’s framework has proved useful for analysing the production of space within these contrasting discourses on religion. The research questions have been answered through examining the practices and materiality of religious lives, and their interrelations, in chapter five; how they are formed by, operate in and reproduce dominating discourses on space and religion in chapter six; and how they are ascribed conflicting meaning by different actors in chapter seven. Only after having identified these aspects are we able to understand the
interrelations that produce religious spaces, contest dominating discourses and contribute to changing the dominating discourses on what Norway is, and what religion is, as was discussed in chapter eight.

This paper has contributed to an understanding of the multi-scalar production of religious space for minority religions in Oslo, that could be a useful contribution to future research on religious buildings in urban social space, as well as at the micro scale of the everyday practices and the scale of the national and transnational. Because, as we have seen, religion is not a question of any one scale, but is practiced and understood, given meaning and formed across these scales.

The religious buildings produce social spaces for the users. Not only inside their walls where they meet and get to know new people, but also as an imagined community of a congregation belonging to this specific building. The buildings are essential to this, not only as symbols of religion, or as sacred spaces, but as actual materiality: Having the building enables practices such as socializing, education and cultural activities. The buildings are made and altered through use to accommodate these. In the beginning of the building process, having a space to meet was crucial to get people involved, donating money and supporting the process and the people who have spent hundreds of hours of volunteer work to get them built. This sense of community is ultimately tied to the buildings, and a local version of Islam and Hinduism.

The buildings are also transnational spaces, part of a global imagined community of Hindus and Muslims. They relate to dominating discourses on what a mosque or a temple is, and what practices are considered right and wrong. At the same time, they relate to Norwegian discourses on what a building for gathering large groups should be, and what practices are considered possible or unattainable. Some are regulated by law, others by meaning systems that shape social space. Within these discourses some tensions arise, as some aspects are incompatible, the most obvious being the predefined regulations on the mosque as a building not allowing religious symbols.

This reflects one of the dominating discourses on religion in Norway, where the secular and liberal is seen as neutral and the religious and what is conceived traditional becomes a disturbance in this secular space. There is religious freedom in Norway, and as we have seen the laws and regulations support all religions on the same terms. However, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway still continues to be in a special position – even in the constitution.
This supports the other dominating discourse of religion, where Norway is understood as a Christian nation, and where other religions are seen as foreign. Minority religious spaces are not only in tension with secular spaces, but also with a dominating majority religion that is given discursive and legal preference. The visibility of religion in public space challenges both these discourses in different ways. Both these discourses are also supported by the media coverage that continues to frame Islam as a threat or problem. Hinduism does not receive the same amount of attention, but is more or less ignored in the public debate. Both buildings have been received with complaints from neighbours – their visible presence is not welcome. It is not seen as a natural part of the landscape, but as disturbances in a neutral, secular or Christian space.

In response to this, Muslims seek to be able to define their own representation of themselves against a version of Islam that does not match their own understanding. They are not hiding, but they claim a space to make their own. The Hindus on the other hand want to create a space where they are visible, a symbolic building that is visibly Hindu, based on traditional Tamil architecture.

The informants in this study do not see this as an act of resistance or as a strategy for claiming space. But the result of the competing discourses of their everyday practices and the dominating discourses of what public or Norwegian space can be seen as a new social space. This space is the religious spaces of the users of the mosque and temple, that are constructed through materiality, practice and the way they give meaning to their practices as religious. This religious space overlays the Norwegian space, changing it, sometimes temporarily, but also constantly by the material buildings, that are at once symbolic, social, political and religious.

Changing discourse is changing social space, and social space, with all its materiality, practice, conflict and resistance is changing discourse – “Space is at once result and cause, product and producer (…)” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 142).
Afterwords

Me: Those were all my questions. Do you have anything you want to add that you thought of during the interview?

Sadiq: No, not really. Or, just that you sort of realize how important these buildings are to us. And that there is nothing problematic with us having them. You just want a place to be, you know, there is no evil plan to take over. This stupid argument that Norwegian culture is under attack or whatever, it’s nonsense. Norwegian culture is doing just fine and would survive 100 000 Muslims (laughing). It is just about coexisting. That is where the focus should be.


Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for? American political science review, 98(02), 341-354.


List of informants

Some informants wished to be made anonymous in the paper, and I have chosen to use pseudonyms for all. The names are more or less common Tamil and Pakistani names. Following is a list of the informants with some information on their backgrounds.

Informants from the temple:

Members of the building committee of the temple. Two members present at the interview, both male in their fifties. The building committee consists of eight members in total, who have been part of the committee since 2011, and will continue throughout the process. The committee was elected by the general assembly of the temple. (16.10.16)

Mathangi, female user of the temple, 21 years old. Mathangi was born in Norway, and has lived in Oslo most of her life. The temple in this case has been the temple she grew up with visiting. She now lives and studies in a different city, but was visiting her family when I met her at the temple. Interview was done on telephone. (25.10.16)

Kumarswamy and Nanthini, male and female user of the temple. Interviewed together in their home. Both are 60 years old and works in public sector. They are married and have two adult children. Both moved to Norway 22 years ago. (12.12.16)

Ratnajeevan, male user of the temple, 52 years old. Works in a public office in Oslo, and that is where we met for the interview. Has lived in Norway since the age of 19 and is married with children. (20.10.16)

Aadarshini, female user of the temple, 44 years old. Born in Sri Lanka and moved here for marriage at the age of 25. Works in private sector, is married with three children. Interviewed in her office. (09.12.16)

Sridharan, male user of the temple, 57 years old. Has lived in Norway for almost 30 years and has been a user of the temple since its beginning. Married with two children, lives outside of Oslo. Works in public sector, and was interviewed at his workplace. (22.04.17)
**Informants from the mosque:**

*Leader of the board,* male in his forties. Board is democratically elected by members of the mosque. In addition to the board are different working groups. Interview done at the mosque. (05.01.17)

*Hamid,* male user of the mosque, 50 years old. Moved to Norway at the age of 19 and has lived in the area where the mosque is situated since. Currently unemployed due to an injury. Interview was done at the mosque. (05.01.17)

*Naseer,* male user of the mosque, 39 years old. Born in Pakistan, and has lived in Norway for 24 years, since the age of 15. Works in private sector, has three children and is married. Interviewed in a café near his home. (16.01.17)

*Sahar,* leader of the women’s group, 35 years old. Has lived in Norway for seven years, and works at home and spends a lot of her time doing volunteer work at the mosque. Married with two children. Interview at the mosque, (28.01.17)

*Sadiq,* male user of the mosque, 44 years old, and has grown up in Oslo. Interviewed at the mosque, where he volunteers as a teacher for children in the weekends. Works in public sector and is married with two children. (20.01.17)

*Azra,* female user of the mosque, 40 years old. Born in Oslo, and lives outside the city. Works at home, and is active in cultural activities and other volunteer work. Interviewed in her home. (21.02.17)

*Farah,* female user of the mosque, 29 years old. Interviewed at a café close to her home where she lives, outside the city. Grew up in Oslo, close to where the mosque is, where her family still lives. Works in private sector, and is newly married. (20.02.17)

*Bushra,* female user of the mosque, 35 years old. Has lived in Norway for 12 years, in the area close to the mosque the whole time. Married with two children. Works in public sector, and was interviewed at her house. (02.03.17)
# Appendices

## Appendix A – (simplified) interview guide for users of the building

### 1. Personal background

Who are you and what do you do?

What does the term religious mean to you?

Do you call yourself Muslim/Hindu?

Do you consider yourself religious?

Have you always been?

Do you have any position in the temple/mosque?

Any volunteer work?

### 2. Building

What do you think of when you hear the word Temple/Mosque?

How does it look if you picture it?

What do you think of the building you use now?

Is it in accordance with your idea of a temple/Mosque?

*Temple:*
There is a plan to build a new temple, what do you know about the plans?

Are you involved in any way?

What do you think of the plans?

What do you think will be different?

*Mosque:*
The mosque was recently finished. If you think back to the time before it opened, how did you experience that situation?

What about the building you used?  
How much did you know of the plans?

Were you involved in the process in any way?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you contributed economically? If not, do you/did you wish to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you visited other temples/mosques/other places of worship?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you visit others regularly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you come to the temple/mosque?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you describe a visit?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you experience being in the mosque/temple?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What about worship?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you see what you do as compared to others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have friends or family that you often meet here/mainly here?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think there are some practices that are religious?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are they? Why do you do them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During a week, what practices do you do that you in some way relate to religion?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Religion in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think it affects other aspects of your life? How?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think religious practices are more appropriate in some places than others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any places you think it is inappropriate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What about religion in general - anywhere you think it should or could be present, and anywhere it shouldn’t?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you see the public debate on religion?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you experience religion as relevant in society?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anything you want to add?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix B – Code book

## 1 Religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Understanding/definition</th>
<th>What does it mean to be religious/hindu/muslim? What is Islam/Hinduism/Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>Religious rules - separation by gender, five pillars, fasting/vegetarianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Personal faith</td>
<td>What they believe to be true - salvation, forgiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Sense of right and wrong</td>
<td>Good/bad - religious practice, actions, thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>spiritual experiences - lights, calmness, sense of security</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 2 Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boundaries</th>
<th>Boundaries - social and physical, defining things as in place or out of place in some way</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Clean/pure</td>
<td>&quot;Cleanliness&quot; - practical and symbolical - menstruation, cleansing rituals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Routines</td>
<td>Practice in everyday life - both religious and not, practice in building, rituals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Volunteerism</td>
<td>Helping out at mosque/temple, taking responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>monetary charity and donations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 3 Self

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Belonging/outsideness</th>
<th>Nationality, sense of belonging, placing oneself outside of a society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Personal role</td>
<td>Social position in relation to others, understanding oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>&quot;I am…&quot;, religion, nationality, gender, other's identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Life history</td>
<td>growing up, migration, family relations, work etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 4 Building

<p>|   | sense of place | Experience of the building/surrounding area/being in the building |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.2</th>
<th>Temporality</th>
<th>Temporary buildings, understandings of temporality, use and experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>Architecture, design, aesthetics, practicalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Aesthetics</td>
<td>Modern, traditional, own perception of aesthetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Function</td>
<td>Usage of building, idea of &quot;right&quot; use of building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Future predictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Change over time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6 &quot;Practicalities&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Public/state</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7 Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1 Openness/tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Position in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3 Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4 Other religions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5 Conflict, disagreements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8 Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1 Quotes, vignettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2 Interesting wordings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C – information to participants

Bakgrunn og formål

Studien er en masteroppgave ved universitetet i Oslo, institutt for sosiologi og samfunnseksperteri. Prosjektet er også del av et større forskningsprosjekt ved Prio, Fredsforskningsinstituttet i Oslo.

Formålet med denne studien er å se på forhandlinger om religiøse rom i byen. Studien vil ta for seg hvordan religiøse minoriteter skaper og bruker hellige rom, og samspillet mellom politikk og administrasjon og religiøse aktører, samt lokalsamfunnene der religiøse bygg ligger.

Utvalget av personer som intervjues til innsamling av data i dette prosjektet er basert på tilknytning til temaet i form av tilhørighet i religiøse forsamlinger, profesjonell eller politisk tilknytning til forvaltning og beslutningsmyndighet, samt personer som er bosatt i nærheten av byggene og dermed har interesse. Du er bedt om å delta fordi du er del av en religiøs forsamling med spesiell innsikt i byggeprocessen med et nytt religiøst bygg.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?

Informasjonen/data som innhentes til studien vil være intervjuer med relevante personer. Intervjuene vil vare i ca en time, og spørsmålene vil omhandle bruk av religiøse bygg, beslutningsprosesser og deltagelse i beslutningsprosesser samt opplevelse og praktisering av religion på mer generelt grunnlag.

Intervjuene vil tas opp med lydopptaker underveis dersom deltagerne er komfortable med det. Det skal ikke innhentes annen informasjon om deltageren i studien enn den de ønsker å dele i intervju situasjonen.

Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?

Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Det er kun jeg som vil ha tilgang til direkte personidentifiserende opplysninger, og disse vil samles i et eget kodingsdokument med navn og anonymisert navn. Det anonymiserte navnet vil brukes videre i behandling, analyse og presentasjon av dataen. All personinformasjon vil lagres på min personlige datamaskin som er låst med passord. Denne informasjonen vil slettes etter prosjektets avslutning.

Øvrig informasjon, altså opplysningene som kommer frem i intervjuet som ikke er direkte personidentifiserende, vil lagres og kan brukes i senere publikasjoner ved PRIO. Denne informasjonen vil være anonymisert.

Om deltagerne ønsker det vil jeg etterstrebe å anonymisere i publikasjonen. Ettersom studien omhandler bestemte religiøse forsamlinger i Oslo er det mulig at deltagernes posisjon, for eksempel et tiltilsverv som styreleder, gjør at det vil være mulig å identifisere dem i publikasjonen.

slettes ved masterprosjektets avslutning, og det er kun transkriberte, anonymiserte intervjuer som eventuelt vil lagres videre ved PRIO.

**Frivillig deltakelse**

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Dersom du trekker deg, vil alle opplysninger om deg bli fullstendig anonymisert.

Dersom du ønsker å delta eller har spørsmål til studien, ta kontakt med Brita Brekke, 416 36 798 eller e-post britabrekke@gmail.com, eller veileder ved UiO, Christian Abrahamsson, 22845595.

Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, NSD - Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS.