2-2016

'Highway to Heaven': The creation of a multicultural, religious landscape in suburban Richmond, British Columbia

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'Highway to Heaven': the creation of a multicultural, religious landscape in suburban Richmond, British Columbia

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ABSTRACT

We analyse the emergence of the 'Highway to Heaven', a distinctive landscape of more than 20 diverse religious buildings, in the suburban municipality of Richmond, outside Vancouver, to explore the intersections of immigration, planning, multiculturalism, religion and suburban space. In the context of wider contested planning disputes for new places of worship for immigrant communities, the creation of a designated 'Assembly District' in Richmond emerged as a creative response to multicultural planning. However, it is also a contradictory policy, co-opting religious communities to municipal requirements to safeguard agricultural land and prevent suburban sprawl, but with limited success. The unanticipated outcomes of a designated planning zone for religious buildings include production of an agglomeration of increasingly spectacular religious facilities that exceed municipal planning regulations. Such developments are accommodated through a celebratory narrative of municipal multiculturalism, but one that fails to engage with the communal narratives of the faith communities themselves and may exoticize or commodify religious identity.

'La route du paradis': création d'un paysage multiculturel religieux en banlieue de Richmond en Colombie-Britannique
RÉSUMÉ

Nous analysons l'émergence d'une « route du paradis », un paysage unique de plus de vingt bâtiments religieux différents, dans la banlieue municipale de Richmond, près de Vancouver, pour explorer les intersections de l'immigration, l'urbanisation, le multiculturalisme, la religion et l'espace urbain. Dans le contexte de polémiques plus générales d'urbanisation contestée pour de nouveaux lieux de culte destinés aux communautés d'immigrants, la création d'un « quartier d'assemblées » à Richmond est née, réponse créative à un urbanisme multiculturel. Toutefois, c'est une politique contradictoire qui récupère les communautés religieuses pour satisfaire les besoins municipaux de sauvegarder les terres agricoles et empêcher l'expansion urbaine, mais avec un succès limité. Les conséquences non prévues d'une zone d'aménagement réservée aux bâtiments religieux comprennent la production d'une agglomération de constructions de plus en plus spectaculaires qui dépassent les règles municipales d'aménagement.

Ces développements sont accueillis par un discours jubilatoire de multiculturalisme municipal, mais toutefois ils ne réussissent pas à engager le dialogue avec les discours communautaires des communautés religieuses elles-mêmes et ils risquent en fait de les rendre exotiques ou de faire de l'identité religieuse une marchandise.

'Carretera hacia el cielo': la creación de un paisaje religioso y multicultural en los barrios periféricos de Richmond, Columbia Británica

RESUMEN

Se analiza el surgimiento de la 'Carretera hacia el cielo', un paisaje distintivo de más de veinte edificios religiosos diversos en el municipio suburbano de Richmond, en las afueras de Vancouver, para explorar las intersecciones de la inmigración, la planificación, el multiculturalismo, la religión y el espacio suburbano. Dentro del contexto de amplias y conflictivas disputas de planificación para nuevos lugares de culto para las comunidades de inmigrantes, la creación de una Asamblea de Distrito designada a Richmond surgió como una respuesta creativa a la planificación multicultural. Sin embargo, también es una política contradictoria, incorporando comunidades religiosas para ajustarse a requerimientos municipales para salvaguardar las tierras agrícolas y prevenir la expansión suburbana, pero con un éxito limitado. Los resultados no previstos de una zona designada para la planificación de los edificios religiosos incluyen la producción de una aglomeración de cada vez más instalaciones religiosas espectaculares que exceden normas urbanísticas municipales. Estos complejos se acomodan a través de un relato de celebración del multiculturalismo municipal, pero que no se compromete con las narraciones comunales de las comunidades de fe en sí y pueden impregnar de exotismo o mercantilizar la identidad religiosa.

Introduction

'Highway to Heaven' is the colloquial name for a three-kilometre stretch of the Number Five highway on the eastern border of the built-up section of the City of Richmond, a suburb immediately south of Vancouver in British Columbia. This corridor is characterized by an unusual clustering of more than 20 religious buildings of diverse faiths. With the exception of the two oldest churches, founded in the 1950s, these buildings reflect Vancouver's recent immigration history and include two mosques, eight churches (six Chinese language churches), three Buddhist temples, two Hindu temples, a Sikh gurdwara and six religious schools, including both Jewish and Muslim schools (see Figure 1). This agglomeration of religious buildings is a particularly concentrated, and celebrated, example of a more widespread phenomenon in North America and Europe as ethnically diverse populations suburbanize and consolidate their presence in the built landscape. Despite some critical attention from geographers on the emergence of the 'ethnoburb' (Li, 2009) as a distinctive suburban formation, the role of religious buildings in such ethnically diverse or multicultural suburban landscapes remains largely unexamined (but see Agrawal, 2008; Agrawal & Barratt, 2014; Hoernig, 2006). We investigate the emergence of Number 5 Road (henceforth No. 5 Road) as a site of cultural and religious diversity[1] to explore the intersections of planning, multiculturalism, immigrant religion and suburban space.

Amid discussions of multiculturalism and immigrant integration in North American and European cities (Fincher & Iveson, 2008; Fincher, Iveson, Leitner, & Preston, 2014; Kilbride,
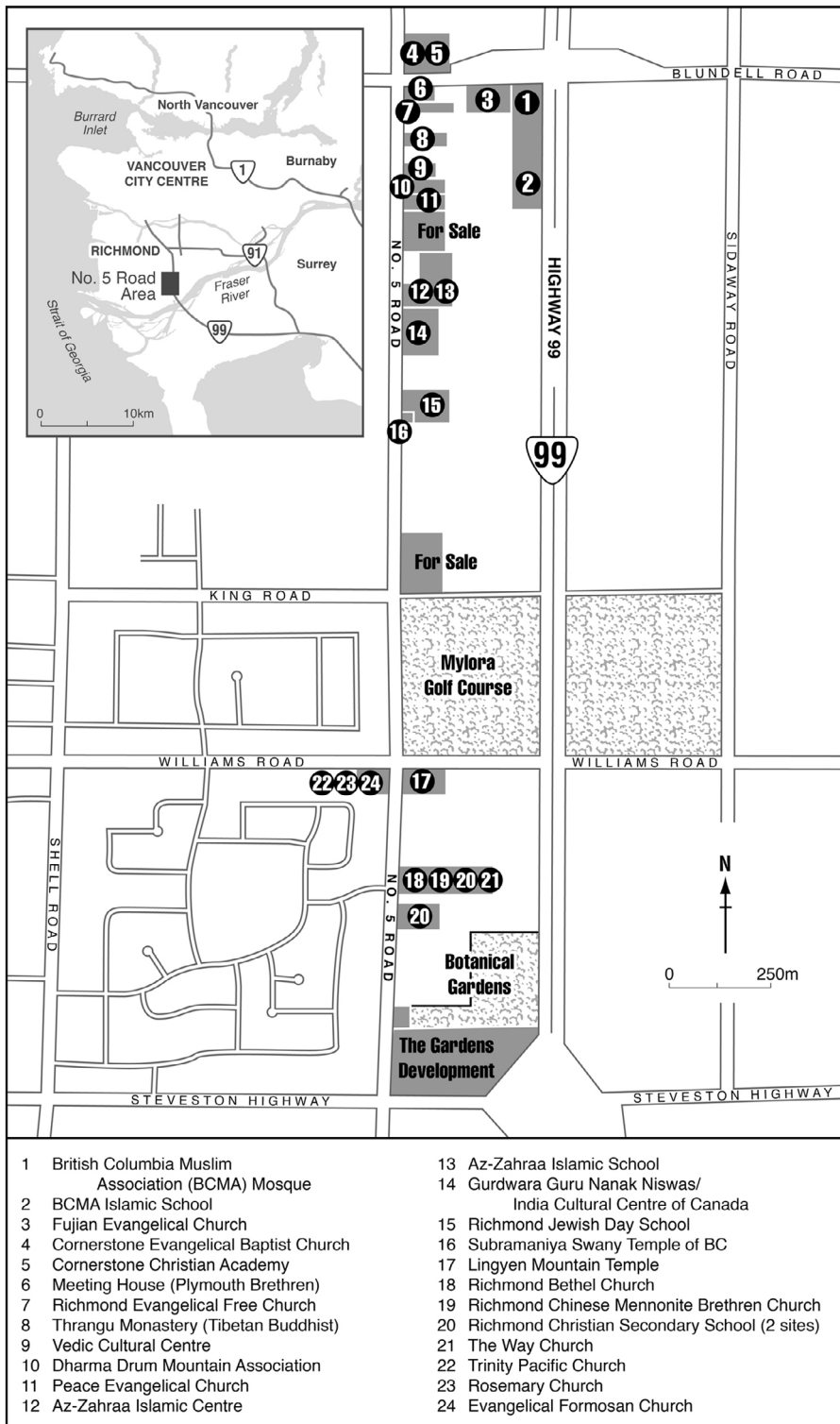
Figure 1. Map of No 5 Road, Richmond, Vancouver. Source: Reproduced by permission.
Credit: Miles Irving, Department of Geography, University College London.

2014; Sandercock, 2003; Wood & Gilbert, 2004), the contested planning disputes for new places of worship offer an effective measure of how religious and ethnic diversity is accommodated, and how immigrant communities negotiate visibility and belonging in public space. Suburbs have recently emerged as a distinctive site for the negotiation of multicultural planning in the context of their increasing diversity (Ehrkamp & Nagel, 2012; Katz, Creighton, Amsterdam, & Chowkwanyum, 2010; Keil, 2013) and their specific geographies of land use and residence (Dwyer, Gilbert, & Shah, 2013). No. 5 Road represents a novel experiment in multicultural planning, which sought to designate a specific area on the edge of the city as an 'Assembly District' for places of worship and religious schools. No. 5 Road might be read as a 'successful' example of multicultural planning, in contrast to the notable barriers migrant groups often encounter in establishing places of worship (Hackworth & Stein, 2012; Peach & Gale, 2003). However, we tease out some of the contradictions of a policy of zoning for religious land use that has resulted in a suburban landscape of largely unintended religious diversity on a scale unanticipated by its architects. We foreground the challenges of multicultural planning through a critical examination of how religious and ethnic diversity is framed by public policy and enacted in suburban space.

These challenges of multicultural planning can be framed within two intersecting areas of scholarship relating to geographies of religion. Largely situated within a framework of understanding the multicultural politics of urban planning (Fincher et al., 2014; Gale, 2008), work has focused on the obstacles encountered by religious, and particularly immigrant religious groups, in establishing places of worship either through the conversion of existing buildings or the construction of new ones highlighting intersections of racism and exclusion within planning norms and frameworks. Recent work, particularly in the British context (Dwyer, 2015; Eade, 2011; Gale, 2004; Gale & Naylor, 2002; Shah, Dwyer, & Gilbert, 2012) highlights the necessity of expertise within faith communities in navigating planning legislation, a theme which also emerges in this case study.[2] In their analysis of conflicts in suburban Toronto, Hackworth and Stein (2012, p. 23) suggest that such expertise requires an understanding of the 'secular' politics of the city, as 'cities become battlegrounds for the larger processes of secularisation'. Intersections of the urban and the secular have been at the forefront of recent scholarship in geography, particularly in explorations of the possibilities of the 'post-secular city' (Beaumont & Baker, 2011; Cloke & Beaumont, 2013; Molendijk, Beaumont, & Jedan, 2010). While some have heralded the possibilities of new formations 'where religion, faith communities and spiritual life have returned to the centre of public life' (Beaumont & Baker 2011, p. 1), others are more circumspect tracing a wider 'coproduction of the religious and the secular in modern societies' (Olson, Hopkins, Pain, & Vincett, 2013, p. 1423, see also Wilford, 2010). This theoretical framework, although not engaged with explicitly in this paper, is an important backdrop to our discussions about how religious communities are framed within a Canadian context, offering points of comparison with other multicultural planning regimes.

Our argument is developed in three stages; first, we outline the evolution of a distinctive planning policy for No. 5 Road, which combined zoning for 'Assembly use' with the safeguarding of agricultural land and the prevention of urban sprawl. Second, we argue that the planning policy produced a set of accidental or unintended consequences as it attracted a range of diverse places of worship clustered together in a suburban setting precipitating new challenges of scale and agglomeration. Third, we consider how this accidental landscape of religious diversity has been celebrated as a 'unique site of interfaith harmony',[3] extolled as evidence of paradigmatic Canadian multiculturalism and embraced for commodificiation.

Our analysis suggests that the desires and needs of Richmond's diverse migrant faith communities are narrowly framed in a planning policy shaped by a desire to 'manage' ethnic diversity alongside pressures of suburban sprawl. The planning policy not only co-opts religious communities to the city's role of maintaining agricultural land, but also relegates them to the periphery of urban space. Alongside a managerial approach to cultural diversity, which shows limited understanding of the desires or needs of faith communities, is a municipal framing of an emergent 'spectacular' multiculturalism (Goh, 2013) whose commodification as a form of suburban boosterism betrays a superficial and essentialized view of cultural differences, akin to the ocular multiculturalism satirized by Ghassan Hage (1998) as 'ethnic caging'. Multicultural diversity thus emerges as either a problem to be managed or an asset to realize.

At the same time we examine a third rendition of multiculturalism: its mundane practice in everyday life among the faith communities that populate No. 5 Road. While offering a critique of multicultural planning, we also reveal how diverse faith communities negotiate belonging in (sub)urban space within the framework of secular planning regimes, and how they undertake co-existence within a planned zone of assembly use. A secular discourse of civic multiculturalism requires faith communities to engage as 'ethnic' rather than religious others. Thus, in the Canadian context, faith communities may downplay religious differences and may sometimes strategically mobilize markers of cultural difference in a *pragmatic* engagement with civic authorities in the realization of new religious buildings and the practice of suburban faith.

Immigration, multiculturalism and new religious geographies

The impact of immigration on the increasingly secular societies of the global north has been one of the principal factors prompting the identification of a putative post-secular city (Beaumont & Baker, 2011). In its most contentious form, this population movement has triggered anxieties about the impact of Muslim minorities in European cities, particularly in the wake of terrorist actions in Britain, Spain, the Netherlands and elsewhere (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010). In contrast, Jenkins (2007) provocatively names Europe as *God's Continent,* and emphasizes that the emergence of Islam is only one component of a broader religious renewal in a secular region, triggered largely by international migration from the countries of the global south. He notes that the numbers of evangelicals, charismatics and Pentecostals doubled in Europe since 1970, and to a significant degree this infusion of Christian spirituality has come from immigrants. Africans, for example, headed four of the ten largest churches in Britain, usually with a charismatic form of worship, while Poles have renewed declining Catholic parishes (Jenkins, 2007).

Similar patterns prevail in North America, though in the USA organized religion has prospered, providing a stronger cultural platform for new movements. The wide-ranging *Religion and the New Immigrants* project traced the transformative impact of immigrant religions in seven American gateway cities (Ebaugh & Chavetz, 2000; Foley & Hoge, 2007). While immigrants comprise the majority of adherents of non-Western religions, a survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2008) established that the major impact of immigration was on established Christian traditions, for three-quarters of immigrants to the USA affiliated with Christianity. Catholicism has been transformed by Latino immigrants, more than half of whom describe themselves as charismatic, and the rapidly growing numbers of Latino

and Southeast Asian Catholics are reshaping America's historic Protestant ascendancy. The Canadian profile is somewhat different, for in recent years immigrants with Christian affiliations have fallen to less than half of new arrivals, while adherents of non-western religions have comprised a third of new Canadians, and this proportion has been rising (Kunz, 2009). The same transition to Catholicism over Protestantism is evident, while non-Western religious adherents grew by between 80 and 130% among various faiths through the 1990s, with Muslims accounting for the fastest growth.

Moreover, religious conviction is often kindled following immigration among formerly non-religious households. Smith (1978) has described immigration as a 'theologising experience', and there is abundant evidence of conversion following immigration as new arrivals seek to make sense of an uncertain world where familiar socio-cultural meanings offer limited direction (Ley & Tse, 2013). An oft-cited statistic is that while 25% of native Koreans are Christian, 50% of Korean immigrants to the USA claim this affiliation, but following settlement the proportion rises to 75% (Min, 2002). The propensity of Chinese- and Korean-origin immigrants to conversion (Yang, 1998) is of particular significance to the religious landscape in Vancouver, where both groups have grown rapidly, and where Chinese-origin residents exceeded 400,000 people, or 18.2% of the 2006 metropolitan population.

The growth of immigrant faiths in Europe and North America has been one impulse behind a rejuvenated geography of religion (Hopkins, Kong, & Olson, 2013; Kong, 2010). But it has also established governance challenges in secular societies like Canada (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010; Bramadat, 2008; Bramadat & Koenig, 2009). In general, the management of religious diversity has fallen under the mantle of official multiculturalism, practised in Canada since 1971 and institutionalized under the 1988 Multiculturalism Act (Kobayashi, 1993; Kymlicka, 1995; Ley, 2010a). Established as a federal initiative, multiculturalism was taken up at the provincial level in policy and legislation, though unequally across the country. In Quebec, the policy has never been popular and a model of interculturalism has been preferred. The Quebec model, influenced by the French policy of *laïcité*, has been particularly controversial in its relations with immigrant religions, sensitivities that were aired during the public hearings associated with the Bouchard-Taylor Report on 'reasonable accommodation' (Commission de Consultation, 2008). The emergence of a proposed 'Charter of Quebec values' by the separatist *Parti Québecois* (PQ) in 2013 provocatively advanced the policy of *laïcité* by requiring the removal of religious dress and symbols like turbans or conspicuous crucifixes by public officials. However, it was withdrawn when the PQ lost the 2014 provincial election.

As multiculturalism has evolved it has increasingly assumed the role of buttressing equality rights before the law, government and in civil society in such areas as employment equity and anti-racism policy. For equality to exist, it must be monitored and this is one of the reasons for the broad range of questions about sociocultural origins and identities (including religious affiliation) in the Canadian Census. A principal objective is to allow performance standards to be audited for compliance required by the Multiculturalism Act and the 1995 Employment Equity Act. Beyond its institutional presence, multiculturalism has become a core value of Canadian identity, and is highly correlated with support for immigration in general. A 2010 national survey confirmed that multiculturalism has become a Canadian icon, of equal significance to the red-coated Mounties and ice hockey as an indicator of Canadian identity (Reitz, 2011). However, Canadian multiculturalism, if used as a comparative standard internationally (Kymlicka, 2007) has also been criticized for being too celebratory of cultural

diversity and unwilling to engage deeply enough with entrenched racialized inequalities (Bannerji, 2000; Kobayashi, 1993; MacKey, 2002).

Multicultural policy and practice have also been adopted by local municipalities, particularly in the urban cores of the immigrant gateway cities of Toronto and Vancouver. More gradually, as immigrants have suburbanized, so suburban municipalities have also been feeling their way toward languages, public services and policies that advance cultural inclusion. As we shall see, the Richmond City Council in suburban Vancouver has recognized religious diversity along No. 5 Road, both as a testimony to its own success in managing immigrant integration, and also as a resource to be marketed in its tourist promotion. It is against these national and local institutional settings that we can frame the development of No. 5 Road as a multicultural religious landscape.

Communal places of worship are significant for new and established immigrant groups, providing a setting for spiritual reflection and the development of social capital (Ley, 2008) while offering a symbol of public recognition and acceptance. However, the building of new places of worship by immigrant groups is sometimes contested during the planning process. While the sharp debate about the 'Ground Zero' or 'Park 51 Mosque' in Lower Manhattan attracted international attention, there are many more mundane examples of locational conflict around mosque construction in particular (Dunn, 2005; Isin & Siemiatycki, 2002). Studies suggest that planning processes sometimes directly discriminate against minority faith groups or may exclude them more indirectly by prioritizing normative ideals of vernacular architecture or Christian religious practice (Gale, 2008; Naylor & Ryan, 2002).

Such locational conflict has suburbanized (Ehrkamp & Nagel, 2012; Hackworth & Stein, 2012), reflecting the outward movement of earlier immigrants and the growing status of suburbs as 'gateways' for new migrants (Hiebert, Shuurman, & Smith, 2007). Tracing disputes about the establishment of places of worship for minority groups in suburban Ontario, Hoernig (2006) argues that development is constrained by 'suburban form, land use planning policy and land economics' (2006, p. 4). Conflicts emerge over valuable suburban real estate (Germain & Gagnon, 2003) or suburban amenities, which may pit established suburban residents against newcomers in struggles articulated through planning law.

Yet, the distinctive geographies of suburban space also offer particular opportunities for faith communities seeking to establish new places of worship (Dwyer, Gilbert, et al., 2013). For example, the model of the suburban mega church (Warf & Winsberg, 2010; Wilford, 2012) is echoed in ambitious new purpose-built places of worship on the suburban fringe such as the BAPS Shri Swaminaryan temples in Toronto and Chino Hills, California (Kim, 2010), the Ahmadiyya Mosque in Vaughan, north of Toronto (D'Addario, Kowalski, Lemoine, & Preston, 2008) or the Jain Temple in London, UK (Shah et al. 2012). Elsewhere the transitional geographies of suburban areas provide more provisional and improvised spaces of worship like the former warehouses and industrial buildings used as Hindu temples in Toronto (Hackworth & Stein, 2012) or London (Krause, 2009). Such developments may fall foul of suburban planning policy, evident in Hackworth and Stein's (2012, p. 22) depiction of a collision between 'faith and economy' for the immigrant churches whose presence in suburban industrial premises challenges their designation as 'employment districts'. As we now turn to our case study of Richmond, British Columbia, the specificities of a distinctive

planning regime and the contested geographies of the suburban fringe are both important in configuring the possibilities for new places of worship.

Richmond, BC: the emergence of an 'ethnoburb'

The 2006 Census reported that 63% of Richmond's 175,000 residents comprised a 'visible minority'[4] – the highest municipal proportion in Canada – while 57% were immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2007). Located immediately south of the city of Vancouver, separated by the Fraser River and adjacent to the international airport (see Figure 1), Richmond was primarily an agricultural municipality between the 1860s and the early 1950s. An exception was the fishing community in Steveston, developed by industrialists who established salmon canneries and hired Japanese and Chinese labour migrants from the late 1890s. Richmond grew rapidly from the 1960s, as its commercial sector expanded, and residents moved from downtown Vancouver to a more affordable and spacious residential area (Edgington, Goldberg, & Hutton, 2006; Good, 2009). Growth has diversified a previously predominantly Euro-Canadian population. While Richmond's diverse ethnic population includes Indo-Canadians and Japanese Canadians who are often third or even fourth generation, and migrants from the Philippines, Ukraine, Pakistan, Iran and South Korea, since the 1990s, the municipality has increasingly been identified as a significant centre for Chinese-Canadian settlement. In 2006, 43% of the population self-identified as of Chinese origin (Statistics Canada, 2007). Richmond was an important destination for migrants from Hong Kong prior to the handover in 1997, benefiting from a pro-active immigration policy focused on attracting capital from a 'business' and 'investor' class (Ley, 2003; Mitchell, 2004). The settlement of migrants from Hong Kong, China and Taiwan in Richmond is often direct rather than a secondary move from the central city, and is often associated with transnational circuits and lifestyles (Ley, 2010b).

The emergence of many Asian-themed shopping malls and restaurants in Richmond, including the popular Asian night market, prompts the designation of Richmond as a Chinese 'ethnoburb' (Edgington et al., 2006; Good, 2009; Li, 2009; Pottie-Sherman & Hiebert, 2015), comparable to similar regions of concentrated immigrant settlement outside Toronto, San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York. Land use conflicts associated with redevelopment and migrant integration occurred in the early 1990s in elite districts in the City of Vancouver around the restructuring of neighbourhood landscapes with new forms of private property – so-called 'monster homes' (see Ley, 1995, 2010b; Mitchell, 2004; Olds, 2001). Such conflicts were less common in Richmond (Ray, Halseth, & Johnson, 2002; Rose, 2001), although recent rapid growth has precipitated concern about containing suburban sprawl. The specific landscape of religious diversity on No. 5 Road in Richmond emerged within this nexus of pressure on the suburban fringe and the desire to protect agricultural land.

As shown on Figure 1, No. 5 Road is located on the eastern edge of Richmond's built-up area, effectively separating the western, residential portion of the city, from the primarily agricultural and non-urban region east of No 5 Road and Highway 99. In 1990, Richmond Council created a new land use category (Policy 5006), designating the eastern side of No. 5 Road, between the intersections of Blundell Road and Steveston Highway as an area zoned for 'Assembly Use', a category that specifically includes religious institutions and religious schools. Significantly this new land use category allowed 'non-farm' use of land located within British Columbia's Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). The ALR had been sheltered exclusively

for agricultural use since the 1973 Land Commission Act, to encourage local producers and to protect valuable agricultural land against urban sprawl (Garrish, 2002; Hanna, 1997). The new land use designation accommodated the ALR by specifying that religious institutions buying property along the road could only build on the front 110 m (361 feet), while the remaining two thirds of the lot (the so-called 'backlands') must be 'actively farmed'.[5] The agglomeration of religious buildings on No. 5 Road, mostly associated with transnational, immigrant communities, is thus the product of a distinctive planning policy which provides a designated zone for 'Assembly Use'. Before exploring some of the contradictions inherent in this municipal attempt to manage the needs of diverse religious groups within a context of suburban land pressures, we provide a brief overview of our sources and methodology.

Research was conducted between 2010 and 2012. The research data included an extensive set of documentary and secondary sources; interviews and some participant observation at all of the religious institutions on No. 5 Road; interviews with a range of key stakeholders; participant observation at some public planning meetings and observation of some community events, such as the Temples Tour and the Heritage Fair. The documentary and secondary sources reviewed included planning documents; planning application submissions for individual buildings; minutes from planning sub-committee meetings; newspaper and online sources from local and regional newspapers; promotional and historical materials from individual religious institutions; and documentary materials from community and stakeholder groups. We conducted 30 interviews at religious institutions on No. 5 Road and made visits to 22 of them.[6] Formal interviews were conducted usually with the pastor or religious leader and/or the chair of the institution's management committee or the school's head teacher and focused on the history of the institution and their location in Richmond; the activities of the organization; and their interaction with other institutions on No. 5 Road and with the wider community. When possible we conducted further interviews with other institutional members and all but four institutions were visited on several occasions to observe religious functions and meet congregational members informally.

We conducted a further 21 interviews with key stakeholders, including Richmond City planners, cultural diversity coordinators, and heritage and museum staff; Richmond City Councillors; representatives of Richmond Tourism; architects for the new buildings at Thrangu Temple and Lingyen Temple; and representatives of NGOs including Richmond Food Security, Richmond Multicultural Concerns, SUCCESS and a representative of a local residents' group. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using Atlas-ti coding software.[7] The names of some interviewees are used with permission; however, we have also anonymized quotes when deemed appropriate.[8]

Faith and farming: the creation of the No. 5 Road 'Assembly District'

The unusual planning designation of the 'Assembly District' in Richmond has a specific institutional history, which is particularly revealing of how its architects positioned faith communities. The designation along the No. 5 Road corridor was instigated by Richmond City Councillor, Harold Steves. A City Councillor for over forty years, Steves had previously been a Richmond Member of the BC Legislature, and owns one of the oldest remaining family farms in the village of Steveston, now incorporated into Richmond and engulfed by housing. As developers bought cheap agricultural land and farming disappeared from large parts of the municipality, Steves lobbied in the early 1970s for the protection of agricultural

land via the BC Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Twenty years later, as a City Councillor in Richmond, he remained concerned about increasing development pressures and sought new measures to preserve and reinforce the ALR. Noting that two prominent new religious buildings in Richmond, the Guru Nanskar Gurdwara[9] on Westminister Highway and the Guan-Yin Buddhist Temple[10] on Steveston Highway, were already located within the ALR – they had been able to gain exemption from planning restrictions as religious institutions – he identified religious institutions as a novel solution to counter pressure on agricultural land.[11] Religious institutions could act as a 'defensive boundary' against non-agricultural development. Steves' reflections on the policy reveal implicit cultural assumptions about faith communities and their stewardship of land, largely shaped by perceptions of Christian churches in the early European settlement of the Vancouver region:

> I was involved in the United Church in Steveston, which originally was founded as a Methodist church. My great grandfather was one of the founders. But we were always, you know, giving funds to help the impoverished and the poor overseas to get – to feed them and we thought that was an activity churches do. And we thought it'd just be natural that they [i.e. future occupants on Number 5] will grow gardens, you know … And quite surprisingly, it didn't work out that way.

Thus from the outset, the creation of the 'Assembly District' on No. 5 Road was a response to the challenge of suburban land management which enlisted faith communities as a front line in municipal efforts to counter development threatening the ALR. Subsequent reviews of the No. 5 Road 'Backlands' Policy which suggest that the intended role of faith communities was to farm land which 'might have sat dormant otherwise, due to agricultural viability challenges',[12] make this unusual relationship explicit.

Interviews with the religious communities suggested that their locational decision was shaped by zoning laws facilitating religious institutions, rather than by any vision of agricultural activity or land preservation. Indeed, as we elucidate below, the viability of the land for cultivation has been a key contested issue for some of the faith communities. There is some variation in the founding dates of different institutions along No. 5 Road (see Dwyer, Tse, replace & Ley, 2013). With the exception of Richmond Bethel Church and Trinity Pacific Church, originating in the 1950s, most places of worship and schooling are associated with more recent migrant communities. The earliest establishment was the Sunni Jamea mosque and associated schools of the British Columbia Muslim Association (BCMA), whose organization bought land in 1976, but required a protracted campaign to gain a 'special permit' for the mosque which opened in 1982. Other early arrivals include the (Hindu) Vedic Cultural Centre, which bought their site in 1983 although their temple was not built until 1998, and the Sikh Gurdwara Guru Nanak Niswas, which opened in 1993, a decade after they acquired the land. BCMA is outside the jurisdiction of the ALR, but both the Vedic Cultural Centre and the Gurdwara became subject to the 1990 policy, which was imposed after they had already purchased land on No. 5 Road, causing some grievance. The majority of the other religious institutions were established after 1990, including the Chinese language churches and schools and all cited the zoning as key in their location decision. The 'Assembly District' designation also prompted the most recent and most spectacular religious institutions on No. 5 Road including the Shiite Az-Zaharra Mosque, which opened in 2002; Lingyen Mountain Temple, a Pure Land Taiwanese Buddhist foundation (1999), currently seeking expansion, and Thrangu Tibetan Monastery, an ambitious re-creation of a traditional-style monastery (completed in 2010). Most institutions were founded by a specific ethno-religious community, some relocating from elsewhere in

Figure 2. Vegetable cultivation at Dharma Drum Buddhist Monastery, No. 5 Road.
Photo credit: Authors.

Vancouver, with the realization of permanent structures taking many years of community fundraising. Alongside the larger buildings remain more provisional spaces such as the simple wooden structure of the Subramaniya Sway Hindu Temple. While most of the institutions are monocultural an interesting exception is the shared campus, opened in 1997, which houses the Richmond Bethel Church, originating in a German farming community in the 1950s, and the Richmond Chinese Mennonite Brethren Church. The initiative, and primary financial contribution, for the shared facility came from the Chinese church, which relocated to No. 5 Road in 1997.

When interviewed, representatives from the faith communities described their location on No. 5 Road as shaped by the 'Assembly District' zoning, citing the high costs of land in Greater Vancouver and the challenges of re-zoning. As one respondent explained, 'this is the only place you can build a religious institution in Richmond.' The requirement to farm was primarily a restriction to be tolerated, although some interviewees did acknowledge the social and theological merits of shared food production. Those institutions most successfully farming their 'backlands' are the Buddhist monasteries, Dharma Drum Mountain Association and Lingyen Mountain Buddhist Temple, which benefit from resident religious communities whose cultivation of fruit and vegetables is assimilated into the Buddhist practice of shared vegetarian meals (see Figure 2). Other groups were more critical of their agricultural requirements. At the Vedic Cultural Centre, one interviewee complained that the blueberry cultivation undertaken by Hindu seniors was not deemed sufficiently productive by the municipality. Others argued that their members lacked agricultural experience; an interviewee at Az-Zaharaa mosque pointed out 'we are professionals and business people,

we have no experience in farming'.[13] Interviewees also questioned the agricultural potential of the land. The president of the Sikh temple argued:

> The land in the back was really, really bad. Nobody ever farmed any more. It was all up and down. Even now, today, if you want to farm, it's too wet to start with.

The Sikh temple had unsuccessfully challenged the planning requirement to farm the land, submitting an agricultural consultant's report disputing their land's viability. However the City upheld complaints from a local environmental group, Richmond Food Security, that it was mismanagement of the land by the dumping of unsuitable topsoil that had produced drainage problems.

These findings reveal the contradictions inherent in a planning policy compromise that united faith and farming. In 2000, Richmond City Hall consolidated its policy with stronger penalties for non-compliance with farming obligations.[14] In September 2010 the Az-Zaharra Mosque was threatened with losing their tax exemption if they did not develop their land's agricultural possibilities, prompting the planting of a community orchard in partnership with Richmond Food Security.[15] Newer religious institutions, like Thrangu Tibetan Buddhist Monastery, were required to submit a detailed farming plan before final planning permission was granted. Such punitive legislative measures effectively highlight the contradictions of a land zoning policy which co-opts faith communities to the City's task of maintaining agricultural land and combating urban sprawl. Most of those we interviewed would rather develop the land they own but cannot build on, with one pastor of a Chinese church puzzling over the 'duckyi' [strange] policy that prevented his community from developing seniors' accommodation. The City's planners were also ambivalent about this novel combination of faith and farming, as one interviewee admitted:

> identifying members of the congregation that will undertake this activity, you are relying on volunteers, you are relying on the expertise and the knowledge of the group undertaking the activity. And quite often, it doesn't work.[16]

With the growing expansion of religious buildings on No. 5 Road, Richmond City Hall reviewed the Backlands Policy in 2010[17] without any conclusive recommendations. While some suggested managing the 'backlands' collectively as allotment gardens, in conjunction with a housing development under construction at the southern end of the corridor (see Figure 1), this would require new forms of agreement with the religious communities to manage land which they own. As we discuss below, in the context of increasing pressures in the 'Assembly District', the farming requirements remain contested.

As this analysis suggests the combination of faith and farming is not a policy vision shared by religious communities on No. 5 Road, although it is largely accepted as a condition of their location. Another controversial aspect of the 'Assembly District' is that the zoning effectively places faith communities on the margins of urban space. Interviewees described the peripheral location as offering specific challenges in relation to infrastructure and in the development of associational life. For example, they had to organize collectively to connect their facilities to the municipal sewage system, which did not extend to the eastern side of the road. The infrequent provision of public transport was another concern. While those groups who attract a more spatially dispersed congregation, such as the Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist temples, cited the adjacent Highway 99 as advantageous for their 'faith commuters', problems of mobility and access were acknowledged for the elderly reliant on family members for transport. The peripheral location also affects associational religious culture or

building wider communal links. The Christian churches reported difficulties in establishing the midweek prayer groups, which underpin evangelical Christian life, while the pastor of the Richmond Bethel Church attributed their failure to attract significant numbers to 'drop in' community meals to their marginal location away from the centre of Richmond. For a few respondents, their location prompted resentment that religious life had been relegated, by planning restrictions, to the margins of urban life. Municipal marginalization of new faith buildings has been noted elsewhere (Gale, 2008; Peach & Gale, 2003) as a strategy to avoid opposition to new religious facilities from established residents. However, No. 5 Road is perhaps the most extreme example of a planned zone for religious life on the edge of the city; as one interviewee remarked caustically: 'It's like a zoo, this is the only place that you can build a church in Richmond so we're forced here'.

With its implications of a captive, managed zone of religious expression, this remark emphasizes how the needs of the faith communities themselves are not central to the city's planning policies. However the interviewee also caricatures the unusual juxtaposition of diverse religious buildings. The politicians and planners who conceived the 'Assembly District' policy had not anticipated either the scale or the cultural diversity of institutions bidding to locate there.

Managing expansion: the unanticipated consequences of zoning for assembly use

Since the 'Assembly District' zoning was first enacted in 1990 the scale of re-development along the No. 5 Road corridor has unfolded as a largely unintended consequence of the policy for both local councillors and city planners. Looking back on the outcome of his original policy proposal, Councillor Steves commented:

> Well we gave quite long strips [of land] so we knew we could have a lot of churches. But we never dreamed that we'd have such a multi-ethnic, uh, row of temples. It became quite exciting.

The unpredicted diversity of religious institutions has been shaped in part by the rapid growth of Richmond as a multiethnic, and increasingly Chinese, ethnoburb. However, the 'Assembly District' policy has also precipitated location by faith communities unable to find accommodation elsewhere in Vancouver. Interviews with city planners suggested that a key unanticipated consequence of the zoning was the location of 'regional' religious centres rather than those serving primarily 'local' congregations as expected. While no fixed definition of a 'regional' religious centre was provided, the planners questioned whether facilities on No. 5 Road served residents of Richmond or attracted visitors from a wider area.[18] The designation of facilities as 'regional' religious hubs provoked traditional planning questions such as car parking provision, but also raised wider questions about the overall 'benefit' to Richmond. Such concerns were expressed by a local residents' group that opposed further development of the No. 5 Road corridor, arguing that new religious facilities were increasing in height and scale and attracting more worshippers from a greater distance, necessitating larger parking lots. These concerns were recognized in the inconclusive review of No. 5 Road planning policy in 2010:

> It's appropriate that we review the policy and what our future objectives are for this area [in the context of] appropriate land uses, massing, height and densities, traffic management, servicing implications, sustainability issues.[19]

Figure 3. Thrangu Tibetan Buddhist temple, No. 5 Road.
Photo credit: Authors.

So an initial zoning policy, intended as a compromise between the needs of local faith communities and concerns about safeguarding agricultural land from suburban sprawl, had produced a distinctive site within greater Vancouver for the location of religious buildings. Land values in the Assembly District have increased[20] preventing smaller communities from purchasing sites. The 1990 planning policy has unintentionally shaped the location of a range of new and expansive religious institutions, catering for more widely dispersed worshippers.

Among these institutions, the Thrangu Tibetan Monastery and the Lingyen Mountain Temple illustrate increasing scalar challenges and suggest that land use conflicts in suburban Richmond are connected to the circuits of transnational capital that shaped development (and conflict) in the central city of Vancouver (Ley, 2010b; Mitchell, 2004). The Thrangu Tibetan Monastery, which opened in July 2010 (Figure 3) is the most ambitious recent addition to the religious landscape. It realizes a long-term ambition by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, the spiritual leader of the Thrangu Vajra Vidhya Buddhist Association, and is celebrated as 'the first traditional style' Tibetan Monastery in North America. The building is a careful re-creation, involving considerable creative ingenuity by its Vancouver-based builders (see Dwyer, in press). It was funded by wealthy Hong Kong Chinese benefactors resident in Richmond, who are members of the Lee family, owners of Henderson Land, one of the largest property developers in Hong Kong. The Vajra Vidhya Buddhist Association worked closely with Richmond City Council to realize the project, having identified No. 5 Road as a suitable location, emphasizing in their negotiations with the municipality the benefits that the temple could bring to Richmond. An acknowledgement of this mutually beneficial relationship is clear in a promotional leaflet that explains: 'Vancouver was chosen for the first Thrangu Monastery in the West as the Canadian government promotes multiculturalism.'[21]

Figure 4. Lingyen Mountain Temple, No. 5 Road.
Photo credit: Authors.

This narrative of supportive municipal multiculturalism was also evident in congratulatory speeches from civic leaders at the temple's opening ceremony.

Mobilizing support from Richmond City Council was crucial in gaining planning permission for additions to the temple, which exceeded existing planning height limits. While previous applications (such as one from the Vedic Cultural Centre) to exceed these restrictions had been unsuccessful, the new monastery gained planning permission for a roof-line cupola, giving a maximum height of 23 and 11 m above the limit. The development variance permit was granted on the grounds that the cupola is 'an important component of the vernacular architectural vocabulary of Tibetan temples'.[22] Evidently, the City was prepared to stretch planning regulations to promote cultural and religious authenticity with a group who had laboured to convey the value that the new building would offer to Richmond's tourist aspirations (see below). Unsurprisingly, this precedent precipitated a response of competitive building from other religious communities. In 2011, a new gold dome was erected on the roof of the Guru Nanak Niswas Sikh Gurdwara, although community members played down its significance, arguing that this had always been their long-term intention for the building.

The most ambitious plans for expansion have been proposed by Lingyen Mountain Buddhist Temple (see Figure 4). An attempt in 2005 to expand by purchasing the neighbouring Richmond Bethel Church provoked some controversy within this shared facility.[23] The temple community has continued to seek planning permission for expansion, citing increasing numbers of worshippers, and has secured adjacent parcels of land. In April 2014, following two earlier attempts, an application for a temple extension was submitted by renowned Canadian architect, James Cheng.[24] The design envisaged a traditional Chinese temple with eight new buildings arranged around a central courtyard, and including a

5000 m^2 central Buddha hall, 30 m high, with accommodation for 100 resident monks. The planning application proposed a creative re-zoning exchange in which permission to build on the designated agricultural 'backlands' on their existing site would be off-set by extending farming activities on other land they owned.

A professional consultancy working on behalf of the temple organized local 'Open Houses' to build support for the proposal. Nonetheless, it was strongly opposed by a local residents' organization (Committee Against Lingyen Mega Retreat, CALMR) concerned about traffic and the scale of the proposed new building. City Hall's planners advised rejection of the proposal expressing concerns that 'the scale and magnitude of the proposed expansion would result in a building character not anticipated in this area,' noting the 'looming effect' of the proposed buildings.[25] The proposal for re-zoning and agricultural compensation had been given preliminary approval by the BC Agricultural Land Commission in 2004 but was rejected as 'significant variance from Council policy' for No. 5 Road, although the efforts of Lingyen Mountain Temple to 'undertake active farming' and their 'noteworthy contributions to the community' were noted. The application was rejected although resubmission of a revised application was allowed.

Lingyen Mountain Temple's protracted and so far unsuccessful rebuilding attempts test the No. 5 Road planning policy and its unusual coupling of faith and farming. Despite some support for the proposal, the City was unwilling to approve a building of such ambitious scale in light of vociferous local opposition and its own land use regulations. The contested planning dispute also highlighted fractures in the multicultural consensus as the temple's Taiwanese Buddhist community was depicted by their opponents in implicitly racialized terms. Referring to their attempts to bypass city planning regulations by approaching BC's Agricultural Land Commission, Carol Day, chair of CALMR argued that 'Lingyen needs to understand that they're in Canada and it's important to abide by the laws of the land'[26] while City Councillor, Bill McNulty, accused the Buddhist applicants of 'not acting in a Christian way.'[27] Carol Day was also the source of a controversial newspaper quote that suggested a 'Disneyfication' of the landscape was taking place.[28] For architect James Cheng, such sentiments revealed a lack of understanding of Lingyen's Buddhist community:

> to build this temple is their gift back to the community. So it is very annoying when she says this is Disneyland. That is farthest from the truth. Disneyland has no altruistic value. It's a commercial enterprise. These guys are [a] non-profit organization. They give money and their services away. To me, that really crossed the line.[29]

While Day's comment was criticized for its objectification and racialization of the groups along No. 5 Road, its characterization of the corridor's diverse landscape hints at a 'spectacular' multiculturalism (Goh, 2013) that has also been celebrated by local politicians and other municipal actors. The unintended consequence of City policy, producing a juxtaposition of distinctive religious landscapes and prompting varying interpretations of multiculturalism, is where we now turn.

Contested narratives of multiculturalism: celebration, commodification and ambivalence

In 2006, No. 5 Road was nominated in a poll by Canadian broadcaster CBC to find the 'Seven Wonders of Canada.' The nominator, Henry Au, a Richmond teacher, asked 'Where else in the world would you be able to experience so many individuals of different faiths coexisting

in harmony with each other?'[30] Such imagined co-existence and tolerance, a paradigmatic example of successful Canadian multiculturalism, was echoed by civic leaders and politicians. Speaking at the opening of the Thrangu Monastery in July 2010, John Yap, BC Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism celebrated No. 5 Road as a 'multicultural mosaic in multicultural Vancouver … we all come from different backgrounds and different walks of life but celebrate values that all Canadians share peace, harmony, tolerance, service.'[31] His sentiments were reinforced by Richmond's Mayor Brodie who described No. 5 Road as a 'unique site of interfaith harmony'. This discourse of the corridor as an important site of multicultural harmony mobilized a recurrent theme that different faith communities worshipped 'side by side' tolerantly. The sharing of parking lots, a widespread practice along the road to accommodate extra visitors at key festivals, was a particular signifier of interreligious cooperation. As a Chief Planning Officer at Richmond Council explained:

> We are extremely fortunate. When you look around the world [where there is religious conflict] All those assemblies there, down the Highway to Heaven, they're meeting together, they get along, they're sharing their parking lots. There's harmony.[32]

Such statements require further interrogation of a discourse of 'multicultural harmony' and in this section of the paper we reflect first on specific initiatives to develop the 'Highway to Heaven' as a site of intercultural dialogue and interaction. We then critique the marketing of the road as a site of 'spectacular' multiculturalism and we consider instead the possibilities of a more 'everyday', 'mundane' and ambivalent multiculturalism (Neal, Bennett, Cochrane, & Mohan, 2013; Watson & Saha, 2013; Wise & Velayutham, 2009) enacted by the faith communities themselves.

Multiculturalism as cultural recognition

A number of municipal initiatives have promoted a form of multicultural engagement which promotes 'intercultural' experience and interaction. In 2009, the Interfaith Bridging Project, brought together different groups on No. 5 Road for interreligious conversations and visits, organized by *Richmond Multicultural Concerns Society* (a secular NGO) with funding from *Embrace BC* (a government fund for anti-racist initiatives). Organized by retired teacher Balwant Sanghera, from the India Cultural Centre (Sikh gurdwara), the project discussed shared beliefs and issues such as inter-faith marriages. Participants included the Gurdwara, Vedic Cultural centre, the two mosques and the Lingyen Mountain Temple. Monks from the Thrangu Monastery have since joined similar discussions. Sanghera argued that the main purpose of the project 'has been to broaden our horizons, you know, just learn about each other.'[33] Despite some successes, Sanghera admitted that none of the No. 5 Road churches participated, although members of churches from elsewhere in Richmond took part. Involvement is strongest from those who are longer established in Canada, fluent communicators in English, and with strong orientations towards the discourses of municipal multiculturalism. Members of the Gurdwara for example, emphasized their commitment to 'integration' as 'third generation Canadians'. Indeed, they carefully positioned themselves against some more recent Sikh migrants to Canada who, they felt, supported more inward looking versions of Sikhism (Walton-Roberts, 1998).

There are also municipal initiatives to incorporate wider publics. Richmond Heritage Museum operates an annual 'Open Doors' Festival that includes some of the religious buildings on No. 5 Road. Alongside this festival they organize a 'Temples Tour', which takes visitors

to several different religious sites, ending with a meal at the Sikh Gurdwara or Lingyen Mountain Temple. These tours enable local residents to learn more about the diverse faith communities in Richmond through intercultural encounter. The Museum coordinator explained:

> a lot of people are scared [of other faiths]. But I think that's a great service for the community when you can take these [visits]. [To see] intercultural dialogues going on.[34]

Our analysis of the museum's feedback responses collected from participants on the tours suggests that they enjoyed the opportunities for inter-faith dialogue and encounter, but also revealed some limitations and fractures. The most popular sites on the tours were the Buddhist and Hindu temples. Mosques were also seen as important sites of engagement within wider geopolitical narratives of curiosity and fear of Islam. Christian communities were not represented on the 'Temple Tours' – with organizers suggesting that they did not offer the kinds of multicultural diversity sought by visitors. Reflecting on an earlier exhibition, 'Heritage of Faith', at the Richmond Museum, the curator admitted:

> How do you give as much attention to one group as the other? One group can provide you with the gold statue that is very beautiful and very colourful and that's what their culture is about like, you know, colour. And then you might have, you know, the Christian organisation which gives you a bible and a leaflet. And you're going ok, how do I balance this?[35]

The Museum tried to retain a wider comparative perspective on the diversity of faith on No. 5 Road and in December 2012 produced another Museum exhibition *Highway to Heaven: Richmond's Multi-faith Community* which told the history of the development of the road.[36] The museum staff were, however, wary of making too many demands on the faith communities, as the Museum coordinator explained:

> You know, we don't try to invade these places because we know they're not tourist destinations. What we've found is that people are very welcoming. The public love the opportunity to learn about different cultures and their history.[37]

Consuming multiculturalism

In contrast, a campaign from *Tourism Richmond* (a business organization) in 2011–2012 sought to capitalize on No.5 Road's wider marketing possibilities. Richmond's cultural diversity was already integral to *Tourism Richmond*'s marketing programme. They promoted the celebrated Richmond Night Market (a fair with mostly Asian vendors) and had developed a municipal tourist strategy through an imaginative geography, the 'Golden Village', focusing on Chinese restaurants in central Richmond. In their *Destination Guide* for 2011/2012 they chose to promote Richmond's religious diversity for the first time under the title, 'The Highway to Heaven: exploring Richmond's Faiths'. Recognizing the marketing power of the Assembly District's colloquial name,[38] the feature was prefaced with a familiar narrative about religious co-existence:

> In a world torn with religious strife, it's refreshing to discover a place where different belief systems co-exist peacefully side by side. In Richmond, it's called the 'Highway to Heaven'.[39]

Featuring images of religious diversity (most in fact drawn from the International Buddhist Temple which is not located on No. 5 Road) the guide explained:

> Richmond's population is about 60 percent Asian and this stretch of No. 5 Road reflects multi-cultural diversity. Even those who don't follow a particular faith will be fascinated by the culture, history and architecture that mark the colourful houses of worship here.

The guide offered a visual representation of the corridor that emphasized a primarily Buddhist spirituality and a generalized exotic milieu. Places of worship were depicted as aesthetically attractive and 'authentic.' An interviewee at *Tourism Richmond* suggested that even the reluctance from some faith communities to accommodate tourists could be incorporated into their marketing strategy:

> 'Of course some of the temples say, you know, we don't really want to open our doors to those types of visitors, we want to open it up to students to come here and stay in our temple and study. I completely understand that, but that is not something we can market. In my opinion it adds to the authenticity of the 'Highway to Heaven'. Some of them have open doors, some of them don't. But that builds the mystique because if then a tourist says 'I can actually go inside a temple. The fact that I can go in there, that's really unique.' So you could make a really special excitement about it. Being honest. No, you can't go in everywhere … some of them are very secluded – but that's the realness. What you are going to experience is something real. It's not a tourist trap.[40]

However, she explained that in her view No. 5 Road could not be defined as 'a true tourism product yet' because of insufficient information and retail facilities for visitors:

> You need tour guides or someone who can speak to them and answer questions. You can go in but you don't really know what the rules are. Because it's very cultural, you need to know what the rules are. So even signage, and how friendly they are with cameras. Being able to provide printed material to take away or the ability to buy incense. It makes the experience for the visitor so much richer.

We can see in these accounts a particular version of multicultural diversity as tourist encounter (Anderson, 1991; Aytar & Rath, 2012; Dwyer & Crang, 2002) in which religious practices are presented as 'colourful' or 'authentic.' Through this narrative the Buddhist temples and Hindu temples on the road are prioritized as representing spectacular and exotic religious diversity. It is here that Ghassan Hage's (1998) sardonic allusions to multiculturalism as 'ethnic caging' in a variegated zoo curated by the state have most resonance. For the tourist project, the exhibitionary potential of multicultural difference is celebrated for its aesthetic and sensuous appeal, an appeal that is eminently marketable.

Everyday multiculturalism

Significantly, few of the religious communities were engaged with the promotion of their facilities as tourist attractions; a number were active dissidents. Only the Thrangu Monastery had signed up with *Tourism Richmond* as a member, perhaps to advance its attempts to secure its expansion permit. While most of the religious groups along the road were welcoming – an open door and invitation to share food being central to their religious practices – accommodating tourists was not a significant motivation. Their priority was supporting their own faithful and offering spiritual guidance for genuine seekers. Given their limited capacity and reliance on volunteer tour guides, many chose to prioritize educational visits from school groups. Their own discourses were invariably religious – encounters with curious visitors, including the authors, to their places of worship were usually seen as opportunities to enlighten or provide spiritual guidance, although overt proselytization was not particularly evident. What the failures of this attempt to harness the 'spectacular' multiculturalism

of No. 5 Road suggest is the gap between secular civic discourses of multiculturalism and the communal and spiritual discourses of the faithful.

Alongside renditions of multiculturalism that self-consciously encourage interfaith dialogue or market the variegated landscape of No. 5 Road as a site of (exotic) encounter are the more 'everyday' experiences of the faith communities themselves. Recent geographical work on urban multicultures has contrasted the policies and rhetoric of politicians about the success or failure of multiculturalism with the more 'mundane' (Watson & Saha, 2013) or 'everyday' (Wise & Velayutham, 2009) multicultural spaces of contemporary cities in which 'encounters with difference' (Amin, 2012; Valentine, 2009) are commonplace.

The most sustained example of mundane multiculturalism on No. 5 Road was work undertaken by the schools, through partnerships and visits. We observed how a mosque visit by pupils at the Cornerstone Christian Academy dissolved some misapprehensions about Islam. A particularly successful partnership has developed between the Az-Zaharaa School and the Jewish Day School, with pupils learning about each other's faith practices and participating in shared sporting activities. Citing the 'unique opportunity' of their proximity, the head teacher at Az-Zaharaa school described how her students 'go up and down the road and visit the other temples not only as visitors but as neighbours, trying to be good neighbours to each other'.[41] Such interfaith learning was contrasted by the Jewish head teacher to her experience of the more segregated school spaces of Los Angeles. So there are examples of effective, organized attempts to harness the multicultural possibilities of the road to foster learning and community building (Dwyer, Tse, et al., 2013).

More typically, the relationship between many of the different faith communities might be characterized as a pragmatic co-existence. We noted earlier the collective initiative of a group of religious communities to pay for a shared sewage connection. When we asked respondents about relations with their neighbours they cited the sharing of car parking facilities. Sometimes this was temporary when there was a religious festival – many respondents joked that the religious diversity of the road meant that festivals and worship were often on different days. However, for some communities, the sharing of parking occurred on a daily basis. The principal of the Jewish Day School, neighbour to the Subramaniya Swamy Temple, explained:

> Our parents use their parking lot for drop off and pickup and they use our parking lot whenever they have religious gatherings. They have a key to our gate. You know, there really is a level of trust between the two organizations.[42]

Car park sharing was thus an important, everyday symbol of successful co-existence on the road. While it might be seen as a relatively superficial measure of co-operation, its significance can be measured by an example of when it did become a more contentious issue. The decision by a pastor at one of the Chinese churches to allow Buddhist worshippers to use their adjacent car park was criticized by members of his congregation. The invitation was withdrawn and the pastor subsequently dismissed.

Indeed one measure of the evidence of successful co-existence, often stated to us by respondents, was the *absence* of conflict. As is typical in other cases of everyday multiculturalism, relationships with neighbours were usually superficial, the location on the edge of the city meaning that as one interviewee reflected: 'we just drive in and drive out'. One head teacher admitted because all the children were carpooled to school, it was 'difficult to build up any kind of relationship with your neighbourhood'. An edge-city landscape of 'faith commuters' precluded much casual interaction along No. 5 Road. One city official reflected

that the religious communities 'politely ignored' each other. This decision to ignore or disengage was evident especially when theological gaps between communities were regarded as difficult to bridge. Members of the Plymouth Brethren told us they preferred to shut their windows from the noisy worship of the neighbouring evangelical Chinese Christian churches because they worship in silence. For some Christian communities, visits to their Buddhist, Hindu or Muslim neighbours represented the crossing of a theological divide. Other barriers were more communal – the two Hindu temples attracted very different sets of worshippers, following traditions from North and South India respectively, and shared little interaction. This 'polite ignoring' of each other could be read as the failure of multiculturalism, but it is perhaps an accurate representation of how many urban spaces are experienced by the diverse communities that inhabit them suggesting that cultural difference 'is competently lived in everyday settings and routine ways' (Neal et al., 2013, p. 320).

Conclusion

In this paper, we have used the case study of the planned 'Assembly District' in Richmond, BC, to explore the intersections of planning, multiculturalism, religion and suburban space. The designation of No. 5 Road as a site for religious buildings, particularly for diverse immigrant religious communities, might be read as a successful example of multicultural planning in contrast to the notable barriers migrant groups often encounter in establishing places of worship. However, our analysis highlights the contradictions of a planning policy which not only locates religious buildings on the edge of the city but also co-opts faith communities into the municipal government's objectives to farm marginal land and block urban sprawl – betraying a limited understanding of the dynamics and needs of religious groups themselves. As we have illustrated, for some the 'Highway to Heaven' is extolled as a persuasively material achievement of paradigmatic Canadian multiculturalism. Others argue that such celebratory narratives are misplaced and that the faith communities on No. 5 Road are not well integrated into the life of the city and that communal places of worship may reinforce cultural separation (Todd, 2013). Inclinations to commodify the unusually diverse spectacle of religious diversity on No. 5 Road identify some of the contradictions inherent in multicultural policies that celebrate essentialized cultural diversity. With uneasy echoes of Hage's 'ethnic caging', No. 5 Road works within such tropes to present a version of multiculturalism that prioritizes some forms of ethno-religious difference as 'exotic' and 'colourful' but avoids, for fear of conflict, deeper engagement with questions of difference in religious belief or practice. Our analysis suggests that external attempts to capitalize on the multicultural tourist possibilities of No. 5 Road have failed to date because they do not engage the primarily spiritual or communal interests of the faith communities themselves. Instead a secular discourse of civic multiculturalism requires faith communities to engage as 'ethnic' rather than religious others.

Returning to wider debates about the opportunities for faith communities in navigating the legislative and policy landscape to establish new places of worship, this paper echoes the findings of Gale (2008) and others (Hoernig, 2006; Peach & Gale, 2003; Shah et al. 2012) that success depends upon strategic and pragmatic engagements with civic authorities. In Canada, such negotiations are articulated through dominant discourses of state multiculturalism, where religious formations are largely subsumed to 'ethnic' or 'cultural' identities. The faith communities on No. 5 Road recognize such discourses and had

developed expertise in the discourse and practice of municipal multiculturalism. In other places, the valorization of religious cultures identified in the framing of the 'post-secular' city described by Beaumont and Baker (2011, see also Bretherton, 2011) may frame negotiations for religious space differently. In Germany or the Netherlands, for example, it is primarily through narratives of religious, and sometimes ethno-religious, difference that space for worship for Muslims has been secured (Cesari, 2005; Ehrkamp, 2005; Kuppinger, 2014) Such differences suggest that the possibilities of the 'post-secular' must be carefully contextualized as understandings of 'the religious' and 'the secular' are co-produced in particular national and urban contexts.

The extraordinary juxtaposition of different religious structures along No. 5 Road provokes inevitable questions about the theory and practice of multiculturalism (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010; Fincher et al. 2014; Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010). Notwithstanding our critique of the touristic possibilities of No. 5 Road, the 'Highway to Heaven' is a site where the unusual proximity of exaggerated religious diversity has provided opportunities for limited intercultural and interreligious encounters and dialogue leading to respectful everyday co-existence even if, as a consequence of the geographies of the 'edge city', there is often little casual interaction between neighbours. Nonetheless passive co-existence and tolerance among members of a 'land of strangers' (Amin, 2012) is an achievement of sorts, not least because it normalizes cultural and religious diversity as the bedrock of new metropolitan societies, producing new landscapes of 'everyday' multicultures.

Finally, we want to suggest that while debates about multiculturalism and planning in diverse cities have rightly highlighted the marginalization of immigrant communities (Dunn, 2005; Ehrkamp, 2005), our analysis of No. 5 Road also reconnects suburban change with wider transnational aspirations and capital flows accompanying immigration (Lowry & McCann, 2011; Mitchell, 2004). While faith communities are not straightforwardly accommodated in critiques of neoliberal suburbanism (Peck, 2011), the investment of wealthy Hong Kong Chinese transnationals in suburban temples and the employment of the architect responsible for Vancouver's iconic redevelopment to build a Buddhist monastery in the suburbs suggests that analysis of new suburban formations (Keil, 2013) might incorporate religious transnational circuits. At the same time opponents to the changing landscape of No. 5 Road, whose disquiet may be expressed in registers of anti-Asian or anti-Buddhist xenophobia or racism, also voice more widespread concerns about intensive development in the suburbs. The 'Highway to Heaven' thus represents an intriguing intersection of conflicting narratives that must be prised apart in interpretation and negotiated with care in policy development in multicultural cities.

Notes

1. The research project 'Highway to Heaven?' New suburban religious landscapes and immigrant integration' was funded by Metropolis Canada (Grant Reference 12R47822) and conducted by the authors between 2010 and 2012.
2. See the activities of the Faith and Place Network http://faithandplacenetwork.org/ which works at the interface of planning, place and planning to connect faith communities with academics and planners.
3. Richmond Mayor Malcom Brodie, speaking at the opening of the Thrangu Monastery on No.5 Road, 26 July 2010 (authors' field notes, see also *The Richmond News* 26 July 2010).
4. Members of visible minorities are defined by the Canadian Employment Equity Act as 'persons, other than Aboriginal people, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour' (Statistics Canada, 2014).

5. City of Richmond (1990) 'Non-Farm use along the No. 5 Road Corridor' (Policy 5006).
6. We were unable to make contact with Rosemary Church and the Evangelical Formosan Church who rent the premises of the Trinity Church for their services.
7. For further details of the research design and interview focus (see Dwyer, Tse, & Ley, 2013).
8. The project was approved by the Ethics Board at the University of British Columbia and we have followed appropriate ethical codes concerning the identification of research subjects.
9. The Guru Nanaksar Gursikh Gurdwara is a Sikh Temple built in traditional punjabi style with elaborate painted façade which opened in 1994.
10. The International Buddhist Temple or Guan-Yin Buddhist Temple opened in 1983 and is a large Chinese temple said to be modelled on the Forbidden City in Beijing.
11. Interview with the authors, 2 April 2011.
12. 'Richmond to Review Number 5 Road Backlands Policy', City of Richmond, 16 December 2010.
13. In common with some of the other faith communities, this respondent marks an implicit class, and often also caste-based, distinction between his community and those from a lower class who might undertake the manual labour associated with agriculture. This was a distinction which was not often understood by policy makers.
14. Amended No. 5 Road Backlands Policy. Endorsed by Planning Committee on March 21, 2000. City of Richmond, Vancouver.
15. 'Shia Mosque given one less chance for tax break' *The Richmond News*, 25 September 2010.
16. Interview with authors, 12 November 2009.
17. 'Richmond to Review Number 5 Road Backlands Policy', Statement, City of Richmond, 16 December 2010 http://www.richmond.ca/news/city/no5rdbacklandspolicyreview.htm (accessed 3 August 2012).
18. Meeting with the Council Planners to tell them about our research, we were urged to gain data about numbers and residence of visitors to the places of worship. These data were hard for the city planners to obtain and often disputed. While we asked these questions in all our interviews we did not collect systematic data about congregation size or the home residence of members of different faith communities.
19. 'Richmond to Review Number 5 Road Backlands Policy', City of Richmond, 16 December 2010.
20. Confirmed in interview with real estate agent Harold Shury, 27 April 2010.
21. *A miniature Tibet you should visit in Richmond, British Columbia* (Vajra Vidhya Buddhist Association, Vancouver, no date, obtained from Lama Pema, Vajra Vidhya Buddhist Association, March 2010).
22. Development Permit Panel Report, City of Richmond Planning and Development Department, 16 July 2007.
23. The English-speaking congregation were more favourably disposed to the idea of selling up, whilst the newer Chinese congregation were opposed. For many, as one of our interviewees acknowledged, there remained a cultural stumbling block towards their Buddhist neighbours given frequent familial conflicts over Christian conversion.
24. James Cheng is best known for his green glass condominium towers in West Vancouver, which helped to create the architectural style know as 'Vancouverism'. Fong, Petti, 'Vancouver icon takes on Toronto' *Toronto Star* 16 June 2007.
25. Wayne Craig, Director of Development, City of Richmond, Report to Planning Committee, 8 April 2014.
26. Cited in *Richmond News*, 22 April 2014. Carol Day was also interviewed by the authors on 4 April 2011.
27. Cited in *Richmond News*, 24 April 2014.
28. 'Say No to Buddha Disneyland' Letter from Carol Day to the Editor, *Richmond News* 29 September 2010. Day admitted in her interview with the authors that this comment was 'a mistake' (Interview with authors, 4 April 2011). Day's characterization may have been an implicit reference to Fantasty Gardens, an amusement park built by a former premier of British Columbia, Bill Vander Zalm, at the southern end of No. 5 Road in the 1980s, now the site of the new housing development, The Gardens, see Figure 1. The park included representations of European cities and a Biblical scene, and was used as backdrop in a number of film, television and video productions. It was demolished in 2010.

29. Interview with authors, 23 September 2011.
30. Mayor Brodie recalled this citation at the Opening of the Thrangu Monastery, 26 July 2010.
31. Notes from fieldwork, 26 July 2010.
32. Interview with authors, 1 April 2011.
33. Interview with authors, 29 March 2011.
34. Interview with authors, 15 September 2010.
35. Interview with authors 29 July 2010.
36. See http://www.richmond.ca/shared/assets/Mouth_of_the_Fraser_-_Fall_201234046.pdf
37. Interview with authors, 15 September 2010.
38. Our field work did not reveal a definitive answer to the origins of the colloquial name 'Highway to Heaven', since more than one respondent claimed to have invented it. Even *Tourism Richmond* sought to lay claim to the name!
39. *Tourism Richmond*, Destination Guide, 2011/2012.
40. Interview with authors, 6 April 2011.
41. Interview with authors, 5 April 2011.
42. Interview with authors, 22 April 2010.

Acknowledgements

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

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