

**Planning for Diversity in the Global City:
The Toronto Case**

Carol Altilia

Supervisor: Liette Gilbert

Volume 8, Number 4
FES Outstanding Graduate Student Paper Series
June 2003
ISSN 1702-3548 (online)
ISSN 1702-3521 (print)

Faculty of Environmental Studies
York University
Toronto, Ontario
M3J 1P3

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Abstract

This paper examines the contemporary treatment of difference as “diversity” and explores its articulation through planning. The utility of this approach to difference is set in the urban context to illuminate the role of diversity as a strategic asset in the local consolidation of global economic processes. The qualitative research reported here is a study of the City of Toronto’s recently developed diversity initiative as expressed in the recommendations of the Task Force on Community Access and Equity. An evaluation of the efficacy of the City’s Action Plan is provided with special focus on the main feature of the Plan, the city wide Community Advisory Committees. Their general role in facilitating inclusion and their specific impact on the planning function is considered.

Assessment of the Plan finds it consistent with the dominant treatment of difference as “diversity” reflective of the competitive, corporatized city in which it has been developed, offering minimal opportunity to open political space for marginalized groups. The advisory committee approach to community participation can not only be seen as having limited impact, but also as containing and/or fracturing resistance. However, the contribution of such state-sponsored planning for inclusion is clear when it is set against the broader constellation of action in the social justice movement. The Plan’s potential lies in the possibility of iterative developments pressed by forces inside as well as outside of the bureaucracy. The conclusions suggest that such initiatives are one aspect of multifaceted, cross-sectoral progress towards radical democracy.

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Introduction

Bell Canada Enterprises is currently running a television advertisement that seems to encapsulate an increasingly dominant social theme. People of every description, from all over the planet, play divergent styles of music on a variety of instruments. They are all brought together via the internet to create a brilliant symphony. The image is powerful, the music is catchy and it speaks to one of our deepest desires: harmony. This awe-inspiring spectacle of human cultural variation reflects the postmodern ideal. It presents utopian notions of coming together in our differences through a common passion, each of us making a contribution as equally valued voices in the creation of something larger.

But the advertisement also speaks directly to the contradictions in that vision. Although the idea is to consider the limitless possibilities, the limits are actually quite considerable for most of the world's population. The technical and therefore, financial threshold for gaining access to this "orchestra of difference" remains staggeringly high. What appears in the advertisement as a unifying force (the technology), in fact contributes to the widening chasm between those who have access and the disenfranchised. Our dreams of a united humanity have been elegantly tied to the market. This kind of image, with its double message, is employed shamelessly in selling everything from internet access, to clothing, to financial services.

How can the increasing visibility of cultural diversity pay double service to the recognition of difference on one hand, and the status quo on the other? How can the mechanisms for creating opportunities to claim identity be subverted to impose "otherness"? At a very basic level, unpacking the nature of this apparent paradox is essential to an understanding of what is genuine progress towards an inclusive society and what is only illusion.

This paper seeks to contextualize the contemporary treatment of cultural difference as "diversity" with global city formation. The implications of cultural differentiation for citizenship are considered with the view that the construction of difference as "diversity" limits the possibilities for a more inclusive, equitable political reality. The utility of this approach to cultural difference is explored as part of the constellation of processes involved in regulating the contradictions in a post-Fordist regime of accumulation. This uncloaks "diversity" as discourse complicit in maintaining the inherently unequal social relations of capitalism.

Planning is offered as an important element in this process. With emphasis on the treatment of difference in global cities influenced by corporatization, the theory and practice of planning is considered a fundamental instrument through which the "diversity" agenda is re/articulated. The assumption underwriting this approach is that in understanding the diffusion of "diversity" as discourse through these means, it becomes possible to evaluate the tensions and contradictions in such ideology and consider how, particularly through planning, to expose the neutralization of claims-making in the city. More

important, it becomes possible to identify the requisite conditions, processes and practices that provide for genuine inclusion in a pluralistic society.

The research included here features the City of Toronto, Ontario. This selection is based on its demographic character as one of the world's most diverse cities and the profile given to diversity issues. The City offers significant official support for its diverse citizenry as reflected in everything from electronic and print media to internationally acclaimed festivals. Toronto is also considered a world leader in addressing the needs and concerns of its diverse population through program and policy initiatives (Croucher, 1997).

For specific consideration is Toronto's broad strategic plan for addressing cultural diversity as expressed through the recommendations and plans for action from the Task Force for Community Access and Equity and the potential of this initiative to address social inequity in the City.¹ The scope of assessment is a combination of literature review of theoretical materials, a review of City of Toronto plans, policies, committee deputations and interviews. The logic of analysis provided is telescopic. Starting with an overview evaluation of the Task Force recommendations, focus is then narrowed to consider the efficacy of the Plan's premier offering, the creation of five City-wide Community Advisory Committees. The field is then reduced again, to bring to light the potential of the advisory committee model in instigating change in planning practice itself within the City. Events surrounding the recent release of Toronto's Official Plan are reviewed for this purpose.

The final discussion considers the possibilities for diversity initiatives to participate in the social justice project. By changing the expectations of such plans and viewing their contribution as part of the development of radical democracy, reflections are offered on how diversity planning fits into the broader complex of advancements in social justice. Some of the mechanisms by which such plans can make this contribution are drawn out of the research. This exploration of diversity planning concludes with consideration of the relationship between different approaches to planning and progressive outcomes.

Difference and Social Justice

"If difference has moved from margin to core in the reconstruction of capitalism after Fordism, theorizing the role of difference in hegemony has become more, not less important." (Kipfer, 2001, pg.18)

The postmodern experience is in part defined by ever-expanding variety in thought, belief and expression. "Difference" is not new. As Tully (1995) observes, cultural diversity is and always has been the living face of humanity. The contemporary treatment of difference, however, is changing. The modernist pressures to produce cultural homogeneity are yielding to a number of social, political and

¹ The recommendations from the Task Force on Community Access and Equity, taken together become the "Action Plan".

economic forces. The resulting multiplication of lifestyles and social differentiation raises great challenges for the boundaries and meaning of citizenship.

“Citizenship can be described as *both* a set of practices (cultural, symbolic and economic) and a bundle of rights and duties (civic, political and social) that define an individual’s membership in a polity” (Isin and Wood, 1999, pg 4). From a legal and social perspective, citizenship has been viewed as a universalizing form of belonging to a single political reality. Increasingly, the variety and range of claims made by various groups, such as women, gays, “racial” and ethnic “minorities”, and dis/abled persons reveal the marginalizing impact of such constructs. Cultural politics based in identity oriented movements, framed on recognition of difference, have forced the reconceptualization of citizenship in pluralistic terms. But thinking about citizenship in terms of group membership and rights creates logistical dilemmas. How do we ensure individual freedom while articulating belonging to a larger political community? How do we provide for that belonging without essentializing identity? What is the core of common interest and mutuality that will bind the inherent divisiveness of pluralism? At the centre of these tensions is the role of cultural politics in social justice. The larger question is whether or not the politics of recognition and the forms of citizenship which emerge from it can offer an effective alternative to injustice, inequality, domination and oppression.

The answer is far from clear. Certainly, recognition of varying cultural identities produces opportunities for broader social, political and economic inclusion but a world in which difference is close to the surface of social experience is not necessarily equitable. The recognition of difference can either lead to fragmentation and the consolidation of social inequity or lead to politicized and radical expressions of citizenship. It can either destabilize or sustain hegemony.

There are those who would argue that difference is a key element in transformative politics. Isin and Wood (1999) suggest that radical citizenship has an ethos of pluralism.² While disruptive and disjunctive impacts exist, the recognition of different identities can lead to politicization and stimulate the democratizing tendencies of postmodern culture. Recognition is the feature of postmodernity that spawns cultural renewal, new social movements, claims making and intracultural/intercultural solidarity. For bell hooks (1990), postmodern culture can be the context where ties are severed or bonds are formed. Ruptures “create gaps that make space for oppositional practices” (hooks, 1990, pg. 31).

Identity positions result in the illumination of structural inequity. Social change is possible when alliances are established between interests and new political forces emerge. The disruption of older hierarchies and universalisms in favour of pluralistic forms is a possible outcome of what might at first glance seem to be paralysing social fracturing. Mouffe (1996) for example, suggests that radical democratic citizenship is achieved when different groups struggle to address subordination and in doing

² Although the term “radical” has come to represent the politics of the left, it is also intended to reflect the idea of “taking from the root”, breaking away from the past and bringing about change.

so, recognize their common concerns leading to new political identities. The key is to abandon the notion of a static democracy in which antagonisms are eliminated. The pluralist approach acknowledges the multiplicity of subject positions and the unending shift of alliances in the creation of partial and provisional forms of agreement. Pluralism as a political reality, institutionalizes the commitment to common mechanisms, structures and practices that enable the negotiation and renegotiation of those terms (Tully, 1995).

But realizing the counterhegemonic potential of difference is far from inevitable. It is true that there is an increasing social consciousness of “difference” and this “new” regard for inclusion carries with it an implied sense of social justice: equal but different. Achieving social justice through difference, however, is obstructed substantially by the reduction of difference to little more than variety. As Kipfer (2001) observes, it is important to distinguish between “minimal”, “induced” difference and “maximal” or “produced” difference that can provide a counterpoint to hegemonic formulations. Minimal difference exists as an “unmediated form of individualist or pluralist particularity that is easily serialized, reproduced, trivialized and naturalized” (Kipfer, 2001, pg. 19). The contemporary discourse of “diversity” reflects this caricature of difference.

Expressions of difference as “diversity” allows the reading of social and cultural forms of difference in terms of descriptive plurality but at the same time, the social relationships that create difference drop out of sight. This dominant discourse becomes a useful ideology to practices of power as the “diversity” concept presents the illusion of a horizontal space where all differences are equal. This simultaneously acknowledges difference while emptying it of its contents of inequity. What is gained from the discourse of diversity is “the erasure and occlusion of social relations of power and ruling” (Bannerji, 2000, pg. 555). It has become a replacement for describing difference in terms of marginalization, oppression and discrimination, neutralizing oppositional claims. As reflected in Canada’s national policy of “multiculturalism”, diversity is recognized as a demographic reality, symbolically as an ideal in coexistence, but not necessarily as lived experience of pluralism (Gilbert, 2001).

To great extent, the erasure that occurs is economic. “Diversity” as a signifier of difference does not include class distinctions or the racialized/gendered dimensions of class experience, again, supporting the idea of equivalencies. Through an economic filter, the current treatment of difference as diversity reveals its appropriation in the reconstruction of capitalism. The specific nature of this service and its institutionalization by neoliberalism reflects diversity discourse as an instrument of hegemony.

Diversity Discourse in Service

Regulation theory offers a particularly useful framework for the examination of the nature and role of “diversity” in sustaining capitalism.³ It starts from the premise that complex social systems are

³ Although Gramscian analysis is not directly provided here, it is important to recognize the relevance of Gramsci’s approaches to the exploration of difference, the emergence of radical citizenship (Kipfer, 2001;

conflictual, contradictory and crisis prone. These characteristics generate tendencies for failure of system reproduction and therefore the possibilities for system breakdown and collapse. Crisis tendencies are mitigated through “regulation”. Regulation exists as contingent ensembles of complementary economic and extra-economic mechanisms and practices that enable a regime of accumulation (system) to occur in a relatively stable way over long periods despite its fundamental contradictions (Jessop, 1997). The mechanisms of regulation vary over time but commonly include institutional forms, social relations in civil society, and cultural forms as well as those activities of the state. The effectiveness of regulation often depends on the interaction of these mechanisms (Painter, 1997). Post-Fordism, as a regime of accumulation, has several specific features that implicate the discourse of “diversity” as one such regulatory mechanism mediating the conflicts generated by capital relations.

Unpacking the policies, processes and practices of diversity reveal their enmeshment with the post-Fordist economy and complicity with neoliberalism as they span several fields and appear to have a contextual quality in the dominant treatment of difference. For example, post-Fordist developments in production and consumption feature flexible specialization, niche-targeted production, off-site manufacturing and diversification addressing globally oriented, highly diversified, segmented markets (Williams, 1999). Such modes of production and consumption demand increased flexibility in the labour market and greater polarization between a core skilled and a periphery unskilled workforce (Jessop, 1994; Painter, 1995). The treatment of difference characteristic of diversity discourse can be seen as part of the constellation of social and political “modes of regulation” directed toward addressing the implications of increasingly severe socio-economic disparity but also in maintaining that disparity as it supports the economic order of globalization.⁴ We see it deployed in several forms as a means of obscuring the divide while securing consent of the marginalized.

The Global City Context

Global cities offer a particularly important view of these dynamics. Increasingly globalization is being framed as concrete processes situated in specific space. The city is a critical site for the formation of economic and political claims grounded in “place”. With its mix of different groups and their identities, claims for urban space and resources constitute the city as an important field of struggle and implicate it in emerging forms of citizenship (Isin, 2000).

Economically, these cities are strategic sites because of their concentration of command functions and high-level producer service firms oriented to world markets. The economies in such cities

Mouffe, 1995 for example), and the parallels between structural readings of Gramsci and regulation theory, particularly as it finds expression in theories of urban governance (Lauria, 1997; Painter, 1995, 1997 for example).

⁴ Although, traditionally described as “modes of regulation” Painter and Goodwin (1997) use “processes of regulation” to denote the inherent instability, the inclusion of political struggle or agency and overall fluidity of such mechanisms.

include a high concentration of financial, legal and general management matters; innovation; development; design; administration; personnel; production technology; transport; communications; advertising services, etc. (Sassen, 2000, pg. 61).

While internationalization of the economy has occurred, internationalization of labour has followed. Global cities are destination points for large numbers of immigrants. The resulting concentration of ethnic populations extends to a range of issues from employment segregation, wages and of course, the “face” of the city (Sassen, 2000). An important result of these social and economic features is, again, enhanced polarization. While command functions and production services are staffed by professionals and semi-professionals, there is a whole infrastructure of low-wage, non-professional jobs and activities supporting the corporate economy. Stratification in income and occupation is increased, exacerbating social, political and economic marginalization (Sassen, 1996).

The City of Toronto as a Case

Toronto’s motto is “diversity is our strength”. It is widely acclaimed as the world’s most multicultural city and it has embraced this definition in such a way that has afforded it a reputation for ethnic harmony. The reality of a demographically diverse population has been appropriated in the production of the myth of the peaceable city (Croucher, 1997).⁵ In spite of the contradictions in the every day experience of its diverse residents, the idea is persistent in its popular appeal (Doucet, 2001). Diversity becomes a device for managing the public, social relations and spaces. The appropriation of the meanings and symbolic expressions of culture in an everyday sense can be linked to an effort to harness cultural aspects of living in the process of hegemonic production (Mitchell, 1996).

This is clear in the approaches to culture characteristic of the “competitive city” which is emerging as a new modality of regulating and managing the process of global city formation (Kipfer and Keil, 2002). Competitive forms of city governance result in an “urban entrepreneurialism” that demands a shift in priorities from service delivery to business development (Ruppert, 2000). The competitive city utilizes diversity as an instrument in the creation of a marketable aesthetic of difference. State involvement in the creation of a cultural infrastructure is based firmly on its potential to generate revenues in the immediate term and to attract investment as a strategic direction in urban development. The result is cultural variety as spectacle in festivals, parades, ethnic cuisine and quaint ethnic enclaves. This sanitized product of difference is itself to be consumed by the urban professional class (Jacobs, 1998; Zukin, 1995).

The utility of “diversity” as a mode of regulation is not limited to its symbolic incarnation in the creation of illusions of “lifestyle”. At the same time, it has an operational life expressed through policies,

⁵ As this paper is being prepared, the City’s police force has, yet again, been charged with racial profiling and has initiated legal action against claims presented in the Toronto Star newspaper. This is another in a long string of events revealing mounting racial tensions in the City and the implications of the revanchist approaches to policing that are characteristic of global city dynamics (Goldberg, 1993).

practices and legislation that contributes to the structural maintenance of difference and its attendant inequity. As the local implications of the global economy become increasingly clear, the “management” of a diverse citizenry is central for city politics and planning (Kipfer and Keil, 2002). This “management” reflects the double face of diversity discourse. While diversity includes the recognition of difference it ascribes identity (Bannerji, 2000). It reifies group identity and while feigning inclusion, ensures the maintenance of “otherness”.

Emerging responses to diversity in the land use planning regime are a clear example of this inclusion/exclusion paradox. The treatment of difference on a case-by-case basis, which is the practice in the Greater Toronto Area, reflects diversity as a collection of adjustments on the surface of planning (Wallace and Milroy, 2001). Addressing specific concerns, whether related to places of worship or alternative retail configurations appears inclusive while retaining the outsideness of “others” as adjunct to the unaltered “neutral” framework of the Planning Act and its expression through municipal by-laws and regulations. This works to pacify but also ensures a safe distance between social justice claims as articulated through space and the terrain of land use planning even though such planning is a vital instrument in the maintenance and reproduction of hegemony.

In corporate terms, Toronto continues to develop as a second-tier (Kipfer, 2000) global city as it plays host to an increasing number of international headquarters and the corporate infrastructure of professional firms supporting their function. In these organizations, “diversity management” programs are viewed as critical for harnessing the value of difference reflected in workforces and markets. As is true for the corporatized City, it is common for organizations to appropriate diversity as an entrepreneurial resource (Conkin, 2001) and even in organizations with the most aggressive initiatives, the symbolic rarely translates into structural changes (Liff, 1997; Young, 1997; Dickens, 1999; Krefting and Kirby, 1997; Liff and Dickens, 2000). When the nature and form of the polarized workforce characteristic of global cities is taken into account, even organizations with the most developed diversity programs are often structurally quarantined from the difference in their midst. In “Toronto the Good”, economic advantage continues to be stratified in ethnic and racial terms (Ornstein, 2000).

The parallels between corporate and urban treatment of difference are substantial, weaving together a mutually supporting framework for the “management” of claims presented by diverse groups. In the global city, difference is something to be harnessed as an economic and cultural asset. Of course, there is virtually no social justice potential here or political space for social claims. Such approaches are structurally inert and only reflect, at best, neoliberal forms of justice based primarily on individuality and distributive justice: equality in opportunity but not necessarily outcome.

Diversity Planning in the City of Toronto

“Of course.....”managing” is neither “doing” nor “making”. (Ralston Saul, 1995, pg.7)

The diversity agenda is articulated and rearticulated through variety of mechanisms. Certainly it is expressed through the planning function in both the corporate and municipal contexts. Planning theory offers a rich analytical framework for understanding this approach to difference and its implications but also for understanding the prerequisites for realizing the social justice potential in difference. Postmodern planning theory in particular, with its concern for inclusion, provides essential insights into how outcomes are affected by the ways that planning is executed, particularly in terms of “who” plans (Sandercock, 1998; 2000). Clearly, diverse and conflicting claims have the potential to press against planning exercises to agitate for change. Evaluating current planning approaches cannot only reveal their limits as mediating difference in hegemony but can provide insight into the possibilities for disruption. Tensions and contradictions can provide opportunities to elevate benign practices. At very least, the deconstruction of current practice can serve to disrupt the anaesthetizing impact of “diversity” planning to reveal the privilege and oppression beneath.

The Task Force on Community Access and Equity

Toronto is considered one of the world’s most diverse cities.⁶ It is also considered a leader in addressing that diversity. For example, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements has recognized Toronto’s innovative work regarding the provision of social services to ethnic, racial and aboriginal communities. The Toronto Economic Development Strategy won an international award of excellence for its broad scope and inclusiveness, and Mayor Lastman was recently invited to the G8, 2002 “Summit of the Cities” in England to speak to other mayors specifically about the Toronto approach to a diverse population. How is the City responding to its diversity and more importantly, what is the potential of the City’s efforts to effect genuine social change?

Although there are several bases on which to consider the answers to these questions, the broad strategic plans developed and implemented by the City set the climate and potential for diversity “work”. Over the last four years the focal point of Toronto’s diversity planning has been the Task Force on Community Access and Equity, its recommendations and plans for action.

The amalgamation of municipalities in the former Metropolitan Toronto in 1998 provided fresh administrative context for addressing the city’s diversity and the problems of equity and access faced by a broad spectrum of the population. The Task Force on Community Access and Equity was established in 1998 with the mandate of identifying the necessary policies, structural functions, program priorities and evaluation processes by which the city could:

⁶ See Appendix A for a brief overview of relevant demographics.

- “Strengthen civic society and in particular empower those members of the community who face barriers to full participation;
- Take a more effective role in addressing barriers faced by women, people of colour, Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, lesbians, gays, bisexual, transgendered, immigrants/refugees, difference, religious/faith communities;
- Strengthen community involvement and public participation in the decision-making processes of the municipality, particularly for equity-seeking communities;
- Continue the City’s pro-active role in linking and partnering with other institutions and agencies, as well as with the community, in engaging in initiatives in support of access and equity;
- Ensure that the contributions, interests and needs of all sectors of Toronto’s population are reflected in the City’s mission, operation, and service delivery;
- Continue the City’s leadership in the community as a model employer with a workforce that reflects the diversity of its residents and which follows fair and equitable employment practices”.

(City of Toronto, 2000b, pg. 7)

Drawing on preliminary work of the amalgamation transition team, the Task Force, comprised of citizens and councillors, held numerous community consultations, and reviewed written submissions and letters from community stakeholders. The issues on which the Task Force sought consultation included aboriginal affairs, disability issues, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered issues, immigrant/refugee issues, ethno-cultural and faith issues, racial minorities, hate activities, equity for women, literacy and communications, low-income issues, equity in the arts, culture and literature, citizen participation, municipal grants, educations and training, transportation, and organizational structures and resources (City of Toronto, 2000a). The outcome of this process was eighty-nine recommendations presented to City Council. Along with eleven amendments, Council added eight additional recommendations. The resulting Action Plan embodies the City’s direction in planning for its diverse citizenry.

Analysis of Recommendations and Action Plan

Organization of Analysis

It is useful to approach plan/policy analysis in terms of “process”, “context” and “content”, although in many ways the distinction is artificial and drawn primarily as an organizing framework (Lang, 2000). The interdependence of process, context and content of plans is endemic to planning in general and this case is not an exception. It becomes clear from the following discussion that the context in which the task of planning arises, the process by which planning is executed and the content of the resulting plan are inextricably linked. The process used by the City to compose the Task Force and the process used by the Task Force to ensure community input is only considered briefly. This is not to imply insignificance, but is more a reflection of research focus. The theoretical discussion provided above under *Difference and Social Justice* is intended to frame the broad social and political context of the City of Toronto’s diversity Action Plan. In addition, its efficacy will be set against the more immediate political and administrative context in which it will be executed. Finally, the specific content of the Plan will be assessed with special emphasis on the Community Advisory Committees.

Ineffective by Design

Overall, the Plan strongly reflects the corporatized, entrepreneurial, competitive city in which it will be deployed. Independent of its specific content, this makes the realization of social justice objectives unlikely. Several interconnecting threads of a broad neoliberal, globally oriented agenda conspire against even the most progressive aspects of the Plan. Taken together these contextual forces both flavour the content and ensure a constricted territory for its implementation.

Task Force Composition and Community Input

The Task Force is the outcome of the amalgamation transition team’s effort to engage communities in the amalgamation process. There was a great deal of territorial negotiation, competition and struggle between community groups to determine who could and would represent various interests. In the view of some social activists, the most traditional, conservative leadership was drawn from communities to participate. This provides for input from the least threatening positions, from those who are most likely to have existing ties with City Hall or from those who seek to create space for themselves in the bureaucracy. The impact of this on the content of the recommendations is obvious. The selection of the most privileged as spokespersons (for example, the white middle class feminist) excludes the most progressive (radical), most marginalized and those who are likely to best understand the experience of multiple-axes oppression. This also ensures solutions that favour working in the bureaucracy over working in the community.

The Urban Alliance for Race Relations is considered by some to be an excellent example. This self-appointed voice of racialized people does not necessarily reflect the broad and divergent interests in

the community but has inserted itself in the process as such and is represented in the “diversity” bureaucracy. This dynamic in the selection of voice frames the nature and scope of the problem, illuminating some interests while rendering others invisible. It precipitates the development of specific solutions, favouring the least progressive manoeuvres as overlays to unaltered structures and processes. The broader social, political significance of this will be reviewed in greater detail in analysis of the Community Advisory Committees, but clearly it leads to the fracturing and containment of resistance.

The Corporate City

At a general level, there is a fundamental conflict between forces related to global city formation and equity projects. One seeks inclusion and equality, while the other exacerbates segregation and polarization. In spite of repeated articulations expounding the social justice objectives of the Plan, its complicity in the global city campaign is revealed in several ways. The language of the Plan (and several supporting documents) speaks directly to the value of diversity as enriching Toronto economically by enhancing the City’s position in the global economy (City of Toronto, 2000a). Even more overt confluence can be found in Recommendation #62. This recommendation simultaneously espouses the promotion of “global city”, City-endorsed programs, such as the Olympic Bid, and The Gay Games, while advocating that these strategies be implemented in ways to benefit human rights protected groups.

But the Plan’s development and implementation takes place in a more specific atmosphere of corporatism at an organizational or bureaucratic level. While transnational corporations increasingly influence urban governance, the public sector has increasingly looked to business for ideas to reinvent themselves in a global market. This convergence of public and private management is reflected in a wide variety of municipal activities, bringing bottom line efficiency to the sector (Ruppert, 2000). The City’s approach to diversity is consistent with this trend. Overall, the language and techniques of corporate diversity initiatives are well represented in the Plan. In general, corporate approaches operate to dilute difference, favour equal access over outcomes, exercise top-down policy development and offer symbolic over structural change (Altilia, 2001). The adoption of a corporate model is evident for example in that the functional unit responsible for diversity is called the “Diversity Management” Unit as opposed to a title inferring equity concerns. This expression is drawn directly out of corporate practice as opposed to public sector traditions in equity legislation and is reflective of intent. “Managing” after all, is essentially an exercise in control. As well, much of the language of the Plan emphasizes “diversity” as variety over expressions of inequitable social relations. The demographic profile presented in the Plan as its terms of reference does not mention class, poverty or forms of social segregation.⁷

⁷ Refer to Appendix A.

The broader neoliberal agenda comes to bear on the City in additional ways entrenching the fiscalization of decision making and policy implementation. Any evaluation of the City of Toronto's diversity plan must be framed in consideration of the municipal restructuring that is the result of the Ontario Government directive to amalgamate the Metropolitan Toronto Area. The official explanation for amalgamation centred on two primary issues: enhanced competitiveness in a global economy and the elimination of costly, inefficient duplication. The resulting structural changes, coupled with massive realignment of financial responsibilities has had a profound impact on local government, "making it more concerned with establishing workable institutional arrangements rather than activist policy options for which the City of Toronto had become (in)famous" (Thomlinson, 2001, pg. 226). The City's diversity initiative is delivered into this context of fiscal austerity. Again, regardless of Plan content, there are few resources to support its implementation. For example, the staffing requirements that fall out of the recommendations call for the creation of over twenty diversity-related positions. To date, only half of those have been funded with no indication of expanded funding forthcoming and in conjunction with universal cuts to operational budgets. The implementation of many of the Plan's recommendations will be frustrated as the City battles with both the federal and provincial governments for funding of intergovernmental initiatives such as affordable housing, increased subsidized childcare spaces and transportation infrastructure projects. Many aspects of the Plan are simply not financially feasible without provincial and federal government support and face the countervailing force of funding reductions and downloading.

Even with its broader mandate of governance, advocacy, education, and service delivery, as the City becomes more entrenched in corporate modes of operation, social justice goals will be no more a natural inclination than they are in the for-profit arena. The setting itself creates a closed loop. While it incubates content that is perfunctory and virtually ineffective, it creates a sterile field for the implementation of those measures.

Policy and Organizational Structure

The overall Plan is divided into sixteen areas of focus addressing the multiple roles of the City in governance, employment, service delivery and advocacy as they relate to creating a more accessible, equitable city. These objectives are then filtered through multiple functional departments. This decentralized structure and function as well as the divergent staff expertise in each area, demands the solid placement of the diversity function both in terms of the broad strategic policy environment and bureaucratic location.

It is not obvious how this Plan fits into the existing framework of strategic policy. Its relationship to other strategic initiatives is unclear. For example, the City's Strategic Plan contains the guiding principle to "respond to and support diverse needs and interests and work to achieve social justice" and

sets social development as a primary goal for the City (City of Toronto, 2002d). The Social Development Strategy is intended to address the social development goals expressed in the Strategic Plan – many of which are equity related (City of Toronto, 2001). The Access and Equity Action Plan seems to have a split personality. It is clearly intended to inform policy and program development of Council in a fashion parallel to the other strategic documents. For example in Recommendation #40, it seeks to inform the development of the Official Plan. But it also includes specific initiatives that can be viewed as the implementation of both Strategic Plan and Social Development Strategy directives. This renders its rank as a strategic document ambiguous and so too, its force in directing the decisions made by Council.

This ambiguity is exacerbated by the organizational placement of the Diversity Management Unit. The Diversity Management Unit is located in the Chief Administrative Officer's Office under the Strategic and Corporate Policy function, which appears to presume the importance of diversity work. But when the responsibilities of the Unit are considered, this amounts to little more than placation by location. The Diversity Management Unit is charged with the responsibility of *supporting* departments in the development of action planning for their functional area, providing specialized *advice* to the Chief Administrative Officer, Council and departments, *coordinating* support to community advisory committees, *administering* equity and access grants and providing community liaison (City of Toronto, 2000b, emphasis added).

Neither the Plan nor its incarnation in the mandate of the Diversity Management Unit carries the authority to impose recommendations, policy development, demand accountability or act as a filter for diversity concerns in decision making. The Plan carries little strategic force.

Attitudinal Climate and Electoral Politics

If there is a single aspect of corporate diversity planning that is worth adopting it is the principle of committed leadership. Organizational practitioners know that without overt commitment from the top, diversity programs die (Baytos, 1995; Loden, 1996; Wilson, 1996). The City lacks such leadership. Comments concerning the Mayor reveal the void in this regard:

“The mayor is clueless”,

“He only has a passing interest and understanding of diversity issues and sees them primarily as a promotional tool”,

“He doesn't even seem to grasp the electoral relevance of promoting the equity agenda”,

“He has been completely spoon-fed on this – he has only recently read the Ornstein report”.⁸

⁸ This comment was offered in reference to the Summit of the Cities conference to which the Mayor was invited to speak on Toronto's success in addressing diversity. He didn't feel it was a sufficiently important issue and had to be “strongly encouraged” by Federal officials to make the appearance.

Some observed in his defence, that the Major has been almost completely absorbed in battling with the federal and provincial governments on important funding issues that are critical to the equity agenda. Yet his habit of making openly racist comments suggests his orientation on the issue.⁹

At the other end of the spectrum, some are seen as not only having grasped the importance of the matter but as exploiting its utility in electoral terms. Councillor involvement in the diversity agenda is interpreted by activists as providing opportunities for self-promotion, enhancing personal profiles, and as forming an essential part of re-election platforms.

One Councillor describes the attitudes at City Hall concerning diversity issues as ranging from hostility to denial. Hostility towards the initiative has been spawned by the Provincial Government's repeal of Employment Equity legislation in 1997, which is seen as connivance in dismissing the agenda. The broader political context has provided Councillors with comfort in challenging racial concerns in particular. This is expressed for example in disproportionate debate over small grants to identity communities compared to larger expenditures of equally debatable merit.

But overall the attitudinal environment at City Hall is characterized by a lack of acceptance. There is a failure to translate the statistical realities into policy and program priorities. Councillors are not sufficiently in touch with their constituents to see the true face of the city. There is denial concerning the implications of the fact that fifty-three percent of the population is comprised of "racial minorities" (City of Toronto, 2000b). The language says it all.

Plan Content

The conditions into which this plan is delivered severely hinder its potential to effect change. In light of this, although it may be possible to comb through the content of the recommendations, word by word, the utility of such scrutiny is moot. Many of the specific measures in the Plan are laudable. There are several calls for the review of existing practice for barriers to access, and the insertion of inclusive language in policy, program and outreach materials. Efforts to address representation are also included both in terms of civic appointments, community participation and employment.¹⁰ These reflect some of what is considered "best practice" in the diversity/equity field.

In some ways, it is not so much what has been included that is problematic but what is missing. There is, for example, an inordinate emphasis on reporting. Reporting appears to be the single most common action item arising out of the recommendations. But what happens to these reports? There are absolutely no provisions in the Plan for follow up action based on reports and as mentioned, the Diversity

⁹ Of course, the most recent example of this is the now (in)famous "boiling pot" comment made in reference to Namibia.

¹⁰ The employment provisions in the Plan are minimal and are intended to operate as an extension of existing Human Resource policy that is not reflected in the Plan. Overall, however the City's record as an employer suggests that much more comprehensive and aggressive measures are in order.

Management Unit as the coordinating body has not been granted authority in this regard. The Unit is simply the repository for all of this information. As is typical in diversity plans, data collection becomes a substitute for change.

There is also an absence of overarching structure, particularly in terms of implementation. Implementation is a critical vehicle for the extension of policy politics. Diffuse delivery systems leave enormous room for bureaucratic interpretation, discretion and the dilution or mutation of plan intent (Brodkin, 1990). Taken together, the recommendations can be described as a disjointed collection of ideas with no overriding strategy to mitigate the independence of departments and their divergent expertise and focus. For example, the Plan does not provide any guidelines for how to translate recommendations into policy. There is no framework provided for a consistent approach to setting priorities, assessing outcomes, determining budget requirements, etc. Dis/ability issues will benefit from the uniform methodology that has been set out in the Ontario Disabilities Act. But it is not actually part of the Plan and of course, without the force of legislation will not necessarily take similar shape for other areas.

The evaluation provisions in the Plan speak clearly to the diluted nature of the City's efforts. Original measures for Evaluation embedded in Recommendation #76, called for a process that included representatives of the Community Advisory Committees, community organizations and external equity and human rights professionals. This was replaced by an internal audit by the City Auditor (City of Toronto, 2000a). The City has no intention of being held accountable to the community on equity measures.

Advisory Committees

The creation of community advisory committees is considered the centrepiece of the Plan. The primary objective in this provision is to provide for community involvement in the ongoing development and implementation of equity and access initiatives in the City.¹¹ The Advisory Committees are the very embodiment of diversity as hollow discourse. They play a paradoxical role by creating a form of inclusive participation that simultaneously limits social justice progress. As one City Hall insider put it, "they are structured to fail". Another commented they are the "creation of theatre".

There are five Advisory Committees: the Aboriginal Affairs Committee, Status of Women Committee, Disability Issues Committee, Race and Ethnic Relations Committee and the Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues. Their mandate is to use their knowledge and expertise to provide advice to City Council, through the standing committees of Council, and act as a liaison with external bodies on barriers to participation in public life and to the achievement of social, cultural and economic well-being of the City's residents (City of Toronto, 1999).

¹¹ See Appendix B for relevant recommendations and Advisory Committee terms of reference.

The committees have no formal connection to the decision making process. Their access to Council, through the standing committees, is nothing more than that of any other stakeholder. Their interventions, like those of others, are heard via deputations. At best they have a consultative role at the discretion of Council. There is no formal mechanism for Council decisions, or proposed policy to be filtered through the Advisory Committees for scrutiny, ensuring that relevant considerations are addressed. They're not accountable to anyone and what's worse, Council is not accountable to them.

Structurally, the potency of the Advisory Committees would have been substantially enhanced had they been situated between Standing Committees and Council as a filter through which all decision making passed. An alternative placement would have seen the Advisory Committees installed parallel to the Standing Committees with equivalent powers. Both of these models were presented to the Task Force for consideration, both were rejected.

The Advisory Committees are not simply ineffective. Their presence and function actively subverts the real work of advancing equity issues. For community activists the Advisory Committees are a method of co-opting resistance. They draw bright, energetic people out of the grassroots movement into time-wasting bureaucratic machinations. They are a structuralized deferral tactic. But more than this, they dissipate agitation by creating a buffer between community interests and Council. Council's exposure to the real issues of inequity is calibrated through advisory bodies that are comprised of the least radical voices.

To a great extent, the Advisory Committees actively divert resources from grassroots community efforts. This top-down resource drain keeps funding tied to bureaucratic solutions (which are not solutions at all) instead of sponsoring direct action at the community level, where the real work gets done. Continued engagement with the bureaucracy on these terms has the long-term impact of engendering public fatigue. Equity-seeking groups have long since lost trust over the decades of failure to produce tangible changes in quality-of-life outcomes for the City's most marginalized. On this basis alone, the efficacy of Advisory Committees is minimized as they are disconnected from the most vibrant members of the social justice movement.

As a model for change, this approach serves to exacerbate fractured alliances between community groups. The creation of five separate committees, each responsible for a particular identity community leave little opportunity to focus on areas of common concern, conceal issues related to cross-bases oppression and mitigate the strength of collective force that comes from operating out of areas of overlap. The City's concession for the obvious limits of five separate committees is the creation of a "Diversity Advocate". This is a super-ordinate position, intended to provide the link between the various committees. There is no budget for this position and full committee meetings are infrequent nonetheless, it is seen by some as a first step in a progression towards integrating the committees and installing this integrated body at the standing committee level.

The City of Toronto's Action Plan is characteristic of the contemporary treatment of difference. "Diversity" concerns are inserted into existing policies and programs, but do not become the foundation for alternatives in process or challenges to structure. Further, such measures serve to conceal the real terms of inequity and obstruct agitation, contain and erode sites of genuine change.

But the City's initiative is relatively new. Most of the provisions in the Plan are still in very early stages of implementation. The analysis provided above is predictive. It is not based on retrospective assessment of impacts and outcomes. There is value in exploring the Plan as it takes shape in action, assessing measures for impact as they are applied or become functional. Looking at the Community Advisory Committees as they begin to operate, albeit with limited capacity, provides additional insight into the possibilities for the City's approach. The recent release of the City's draft Official Plan has offered an opportunity to assess the impact of Community Advisory Committee interventions.

The Plan's Impact on Planning

"there is no unspatialized social reality" (Soja, 1996, pg. 46)

How does the City's diversity plan affect *planning*? This will be explored by considering the impact of the advisory committee model featured in the City's Action Plan. Recent developments concerning the City's new Official Plan and an intervention from the Community Advisory Committee on Race and Ethnic Relations offers an opportunity to evaluate advisory committee efficacy. In looking at these events, it is essential once again to assess *context*, in this case the nature of urban planning with its focus on land use and built form, its agency in the maintenance of power relations and the broader contestation of identity and equity.

The Politics of Space

As Donald (1997) argues, urban planning for the past century has approached the city as territory to be bounded, mapped, occupied and exploited: a population to be managed. In everyday terms, cities are divided space. Class distinctions are considered naturally expressed through location. To have space, a home over homelessness, ownership over renting set the basics of power relations related to place. But this topography of wealth does not render a complete view of the politics of space. Spatially constructed identities are expressions of the intersection between class, and other bases of oppression such as race, gender and dis/ability.

From Forest Hill to Agincourt, a city like Toronto has identity, advantage and disadvantage carved intricately into the land. For example, the City is divided into many ethnic and racial enclaves that are only partially created through congregation (Siemiatycki, 2001). Inequity is reproduced by the cause and

effect of separation. The construction of “other” is bound to spatial segregation which makes possible the ascription of social pathologies such as crime, prostitution, and drug abuse which “appear” concentrated in ethnic communities (Goldberg, 1993; Mitchell, 1996; Heikkila, 2001).

Gender can be similarly assessed as space-bound. For example, the design and organization of urban and suburban space entrenches the separation of public and private life, the division of labour and economic dependency of women. The construction of fear in cities (which is tied together with race) operates to constrict the movement of women, and ironically rendering women more susceptible to the greater danger that comes from the domestic sphere (Fenster, 1999; Rakodi, 1996; Beall, 1996). This is true for children and the elderly as well.

Theories “of “ planning describe how planning participates in the production and reproduction of these constructed, and spatially reflected identities and social relationships. Radical critique as a model of theorizing, has linked planning to multiple critical discourses about social transformation. This critical review of traditional planning exposes the assumption of planning as a neutral instrument directed toward the homogenous public interest, unbiased with respect to gender, race, age, class, and the extent to which planning operates as an instrument of capital and the state (Harvey, 1996; Sandercock, 1998). Applied in a diverse social context, this analysis reveals the extent to which values and norms of the dominant culture are embedded in legislative frameworks of planning, by-laws, regulations and planning processes.

Founded on this critique, postmodern planning theory espouses a different form for planning to foster inclusion. Sandercock’s (1998) insurgent practice, for example, is not planner or necessarily state centred but draws in “voices from the margins” in a bottom-up exercise. New processes that include listening, collaboration and facilitation that are communicative in essence feature prominently in this practice. Planners work to “shape attention” and are to be conscious of the narrative form of their work (Forester, 1999) all to the end of developing transformative strategies for “making sense while living differently” (Healy, 1997, pg. 6).

But the prescriptive value of such theorizing remains diffuse (Allmendinger, 2001) leaving a disconnect between the theory of identity oriented planning and the practice of planning *for* diversity populations. In a review of a volume on urban planning in multicultural societies, Qadeer (2000) echoes the concerns of many practicing planners:

“I, for one, am sceptical of relying on individual sensitivity and communication to resolve substantive and emotionally charged differences among client communities. The planning theorists are putting faith in the goodness of process and in the magic of open discourse among contested communities. Is this faith justified, or is it another academic romance?” (Qadeer, 2000, pg.37)

It’s not that practicing planners fail to appreciate the spirit of academic direction in pluralistic planning. Practitioner dialogue on the challenges of planning in multicultural cities relentlessly reiterates the need for planners to replace the homogenous “public interest” with new concepts of equity,

community and multiple publics, to develop cultural sensitivities to the needs of specific groups, and to expand strategies for garnering public participation (for example, Grenier, 2000; Wallace and Milroy 2001; Qadeer, 1997). But the daily work of planners in existing systems is often more reactive than theory allows. An exploration of planning in culturally diverse contexts reveals that the current treatment of cultural claims is iterative and offers little potential for fundamental change. Current practice in planning for “diversity” clearly reflects the dominant discourse.¹²

Expressions of Diversity as Discourse in Urban Planning

Land “Uses” not “Users”

The tradition in urban planning has been to strip identity out of considerations of land use. “People zoning”, refers to the practice of making zoning decisions based on the personal characteristics of the users and has been, without question problematic in fostering discrimination in planning decisions. To combat the implications of such practice, the Ontario Government amended the Planning Act to ensure that planning is executed on the basis of land “uses” not land “users” (Smith, 2000). Although this has common sense appeal in the interest of treating everyone equally, it removes the substance of difference and reinforces support of the general language of the Act and the assumption of the generic “person/public/owner”. It is a reaction consistent with the limited terms of equality in our society that emphasize fairness as sameness. It is an approach that finds parallel expression in the identity-blind policies that have grown in popularity in employment practices as replacement for more overt and effective practices of accommodation. To the extent that unequal social relations are expressed through land use, remaining blind to “who” uses removes the possibility of addressing underlying power dynamics and contributes to the hollowing out of difference. Planning for diversity in any meaningful sense requires navigating the recognition that land use practices are made by human beings with legitimate differences.

Planning By Exception

In spite of the Provincial Government’s provision for the separation of identity from use, there are several cases in which Ontario Municipal Board decisions indicate that such a connection is appropriate and can be articulated in official plans (through section 16(1)). But these advancements in the treatment of difference in the land use regime offer little to elevate practices above the terms of the dominant discourse.

As visible illustrations of the intersection between identity and land use planning, places of worship and alternative forms of commercial development, for example “Asian Theme Malls”, are

¹² As an exploration of the current urban planning regime, in itself, is not the focus of this paper, only an overview of the issues is provided.

frequently cited as highlighting the politically laden nature of land use planning (Qadeer and Chaudhry, 2000; Preston and Lo, 2000). They have become important sites for the mediation of difference and provide evidence of constrained progress towards genuine inclusion.

Consider mosques and Islamic Centres as example. Recent waves of Muslim immigrants from the Middle East, Eastern Europe and South Asia have necessitated the building of such alternative places for worship. Twenty-seven mosques alone have been established in the Toronto area over the last twenty years and not one proposal has failed to materialize although many have had less than smooth process (Qadeer, 1997). Minor technical planning issues, such as height restrictions and parking allotment formulas, become cultural issues when ostensibly culturally “neutral” planning regulations are applied. Most existing zoning and site plan regulations for religious uses in the GTA have been based only on the requirements of churches. The number of successful challenges to these regulations is frequently cited as evidence of the successful address of multiculturalism in urban planning.¹³

The apparent success in addressing places of worship can be placed in the willingness of the City of Toronto, and other municipalities to make amendments to accommodate these variations. But this kind of adjustment remains to a large extent, reactive, case by case and realized through controversy. It is not the result of a proactive process of revision to planning frameworks (Wallace and Milroy, 2001). The planning principles that underwrite the system remain unchanged, while planners become set in a continual process of making minor amendments.

On a case by case basis, diversity is represented as a collection of adjustments on the surface of planning. This certainly creates the illusion of fairness, particularly when proposals are accepted but is indicative of the dominant discourse surrounding difference, as it has absolutely no structural impact. Again, paradoxically, addressing specific concerns seems inclusive while actually reinforcing the outsiderness of “others” as adjunct to a relatively unaltered system.

The current treatment of cultural claims also expresses diversity as a horizontal space where differences are equal. As much as we see ethnoracial diversity for example increasingly expressed through the urban landscape, the failure to change the *process* ensures that challenges remain limited to occasions when groups are able to bring claims forward.¹⁴ There is little recognition that the current amendment driven system creates exacerbated differential access to the process. Although anyone can bring a proposal forward for consideration, ethnoracial communities, the dis/abled and other marginalized groups are often faced with the additional barriers of language, lack of expertise and resources. Advances realized through the planning system’s current challenge-oriented process are a reflection of

¹³ For example, in a recent issue of *Plan Canada* (2000) dedicated to planning for diversity these changes are repeatedly cited as evidence of progress. Wallace and Milroy (2001) also find that planners view such adjustments as “breaking through cultural assumptions” (pg. 21).

¹⁴ Wallace and Milroy (2001) note that ethnoracial groups are not demanding change in the planning process but are following traditional means for seeking development approvals.

class. Although this is true in a universal sense, it is likely more pronounced in the case of marginalized communities, because of the combination of economic disadvantage and the need to struggle through a process that renders their needs outside the norm. If the planning regime only acknowledges diverse claims on this basis then the majority of such will remain buried under the weight of an economic filter.

Again, the real danger in this approach is that it serves to pacify while works to maintain a safe distance from the spatial manifestation of inequity. It is clear how this reduces the possibilities for mobilizing cohesive pressure for change and hence, functions to insulate planning from its role in social justice. The interests of each identity group are addressed as distinct and as grounded in the technical aspects of challenges rather than in terms of a broader human rights framework. In this way social justice claims as articulated through space can be kept outside of the terrain of planning, even though planning is a vital instrument in the maintenance and reproduction of hegemony. As Wallace and Milroy (2001) conclude in their study of ethnoracial diversity and planning practices in the Greater Toronto Area, the principles that underpin the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms must come to bear on planning.

Community Advisory Committee Intervention and the City's Official Plan

Can the advisory committee model that is so prominently featured in the City's diversity plan facilitate the development of more rights oriented planning?

The promotion of a unified planning vision, through a vehicle such as an Official Plan aims to reconstruct consent about the goals and meanings of urban life (Kipfer and Keil, 2002). This makes it a particularly important mechanism for the consolidation of urban hegemonic formulations. A draft of the City's new Official Plan, released in May 2002, is exemplary in serving this function. From a social justice perspective, the Plan can be assessed as further codifying and intensifying the consolidation of the competitive, globally oriented city. It supports the interest of those who own land, those who develop land, while deregulating land use to facilitate the creation of flexible enterprise zones catering to the global economy. Its development was politically exclusive and its results will aggravate existing spatial and social divisions in the City. "At best this plan overlooks the needs of marginalized groups and at worst it displaces them from their homes and neighbourhoods" (Planning Action, 2002). The Official Plan's approach to diversity is nonexistent. It actually makes fewer references to diversity than its predecessor representing a major failure to recognize the character and priorities of the City's residents.

In the months that followed the release of the draft Official Plan, the Planning and Transportation Committee heard and read hundreds of deputations, including such from the Community Advisory Committee on Race and Ethnic Relations. The Committee's intervention was based on a report entitled "Ethnoracial Diversity and Planning Practices in the Greater Toronto Area" dated July 2001 and a

presentation by the authors.¹⁵ The recommendations put forward are argued on the basis that the draft Official Plan only mentions multiculturalism and diversity on one occasion and that the issue of cultural diversity should be emphasized throughout the Plan. More important, the failure to address cultural diversity is reflected in the absence of provisions for community participation in the normal course of Official Plan amendments.

The fall out from this intervention was substantial and few associated with it agreed to speak on the issue. The few comments offered were brief and cautious. Some declined interview, preferring to “wait until the smoke clears”. Others were emphatic about anonymity, as they had already received “flack” for instigating either the report itself or the deputation. It was suggested that the reluctance of planners to offer comment was symptomatic of a more general climate in the Planning Department concerning support for the Official Plan. There was a perception that dissent would be reprimanded. It is clear however that the Planning and Transportation Committee felt “sideswiped” by the deputation, as though such concerns had “come from out of the blue”. In spite of the work done by the Task Force on Community Access and Equity, the recommendation (# 40) that specifically calls for the integration of diversity concerns into the Official Plan, and the prominence of diversity in promoting the City, the Committee was “taken aback”.

With so few willing to speak freely, it is difficult to interpret the reverberations from the Race and Ethnic Relations Committee recommendations. It could be the case that the omission of provisions for community participation as they were reflected in the former Official Plan 1994 was nothing more than an oversight. The creation of an Official Plan is, after all, a complex task demanding inclusion of a huge number of considerations, reflecting broad and often competing interests. One might interpret the reaction to the Advisory Committee’s recommendations as embarrassment (Milroy, 2003).

But such an oversight also suggests support for the previous discussion. Issues related to planning for/with diverse populations have not permeated the planning function in the City at more than an operational, amendment oriented level. The research on which the deputation was based had also found that even where municipal policy statements (including official plans) acknowledge diversity and the need to address it, there is a breakdown in the translation of such vision into planning practice (Wallace and Milroy, 2001). The pluralist vision articulated in the City’s Strategic Plan, Social Development Strategy and the Task Force on Community Access and Equity is not reflected in the City’s central

¹⁵ The report is authored by Marcia Wallace PhD., a planner with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Beth M. Milroy PhD., from Ryerson in Urban Planning. The original research reflected in the report was funded by the Centre of Excellence for Research in Immigration and Settlement (CERIS) and produced in conjunction with a Steering Committee comprised of members of the City of Toronto Diversity Management Unit, The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, The Ontario Professional Planners Institute and The Urban Alliance on Race Relations. This is the same research cited earlier in this paper.

planning document. Difference and its compulsory inclusive processes are simply not a strategic conceptualization for the construction of planning frameworks.

There is another or additional possibility that directly relates to the process and content of the recommendations. On more than one occasion the notion of territoriality was offered as figuring significantly in the reluctance to address revisions from any source. The Planning Department is seen by some as operating on unique terms with the municipal structure. Compared to other functional departments, its professional base and technical orientation create a culture of privilege in navigating policy directives from Council. Interventions from the Community Advisory Committees may be seen as particularly problematic because they pose a threat to the traditional power base of the planning function. The institutionalization of community participation, not only in the Official Plan but also in the form of the Advisory Committees as created out of the Task Force on Community Access and Equity recommendations, serve to erode the traditionally exclusive discretion of planners in making planning decisions. This interpretation suggests a relatively conscious struggle for power. Although efforts to maintain control could be quite salient, they might also be less overt and reflective of more diffuse challenges to the status of “planning” as a profession. Its attributes and unique contributions have been contested both in theory and reality. Certainly, at the core of epistemological debates within planning theory is the suggestion that planners’ traditional claim to professional identity is undermined by frameworks assuming inclusion (Sandercock, 1999; Ritzdorf, 1992).

The concerns over community participation are not necessarily the manifestation of conflicting political interests. Even planners sympathetic to social justice goals, comprehend the implications of community participation for their work. Every level of inclusion creates layers of process and bureaucratic confinement. Planners understand that the task of community involvement is a difficult one, particularly for marginalized groups. These communities are often comprised of recent immigrants facing language barriers and cultural traditions that discourage public participation. Economic barriers where people are juggling several jobs and have limited access to childcare make attending public meetings a luxury. It is challenging at best to operationalize community engagement objectives. Official Plan statements and Advisory Committee inputs are meaningless without structural support affording planners real opportunities to do their work in a more inclusive fashion. The Planning Department has too, experienced years of resource reduction and corporatized standards. On a very practical level, even when they share the political posture concerning its social value, planners see community participation as an additional burden levied without the commensurate political and administrative infrastructure.

Better than Nothing?

The suggestions for revision proposed by the Advisory Committee on Race and Ethnic Relations are diluted compared to what could have been offered. Certainly, a more potent recommendation would

have included the assertion that the Diversity Advocate or the Advisory Committees be installed in some formal and enduring role in the mediation of amendments to the Official Plan. This would have provided a social justice presence in the planning function that could stimulate the transformation of planning practice in the City to include diverse concerns as a default framework rather than as an afterthought. The content of the entire report on which the deputation is based should have been forcefully proposed as required reading for the entire planning staff.¹⁶ The author's conclusions are clear in suggesting that diversity must become a basic premise for planning rather than a tangential technical enhancement (Wallace and Milroy, 2001).

But the deputation *did* force the issue of diversity and inclusion, embedding notions of community participation into the Plan, even though they are not likely to translate into radical changes for planning in the City.¹⁷ On this basis, one might conclude that although the advisory committee approach was not wildly successful, it served some function in advancing the issues. The question becomes, what is that function? This contribution can best be described as symbolic. Is there value in diversity plans that produce little more than symbolic results?

Conclusions: The Role of Diversity Plans

“An enduring truth, a wise friend once explained to me, is that important social change nearly always begins in hypocrisy. First, the powerful are persuaded to say the appropriate words, that is, to sign a commitment to higher values and decent behaviour. The social activists must spend the next ten years pounding on them, trying to make them live up to their promises...” (William Greider, cited in Barlow and Clarke, 2001, pg. 179)

“In spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres”. (L. Wittgenstein, cited in Tully, 1995, pg. 139)

If the primary criterion for evaluating the City of Toronto's Action Plan is its potential to reduce inequity then clearly it is a failure. In many ways the Plan dovetails without friction with the broader constellation of policies and practices supporting the local consolidation of global capitalism. It embodies the contemporary discourse on difference as “diversity” with its attendant obstructive characteristics.

This approach to diversity management fractures resistance. This is caused by more than the separation of identity groups into “communities” in the structure of the advisory apparatus. By its very nature, such planning initiated by the state, processed through the bureaucracy is divisive. This top-down delivery splits apart alliances through its demand for representation in participation. Only some can

¹⁶ The report might well be included as required reading in planning curriculum.

¹⁷ The final revisions to the Official Plan are not complete but the recommendations were accepted in principle.

contribute to the planning process and are expected to speak for all of their “kind”. This inevitably sets up competition and territorial posturing between community groups not simply for the right to be involved, but also subsequently for access to the bureaucracy controlled resources allocated towards community development. It also sets up another dimension of bifurcation.

Two groups essentially working towards the same ends develop distrust and discount one another’s contributions. Some working in the community express concern over the motives of those working for the state, while in turn, some of those individuals characterize community activists as naïve to the constraints and real possibilities for change. The most intriguing feature of the comments provided by activists, City Hall bureaucrats and even politicians was not their disagreement, but the substantial similarity in their assessments of the Action Plan. Their analyses, rather their critique, was virtually identical and yet, they rarely expressed a sense of common purpose.

This approach to diversity management appropriates and neutralizes. It draws people and resources away from more fruitful endeavours and fatigues public energy. It can co-opt leaders and separate them from their supporters, neutralizing community groups. It draws difference into service as a strategic asset in the global promotion of the City.

This approach to diversity management conceals. Perhaps its worst offence is its contribution to the optics of addressing disadvantage. It appears to do much without doing anything substantial. As Mayor Lastman books his speaking engagements to share the wisdom of the Toronto experience, the image of Toronto as a success story becomes part of our urban mythology while real inequity continues unabated. The lesson from employment equity legislation is that once policy is in place, further agitation is seen as unreasonable and loses credibility. There is collateral damage in the perception that the work is done.

Does it offer nothing? Can we say that the social justice movement is, in fact better off without such initiatives? Addressing these questions demands shifting the basis of evaluation or flipping the question around. The question is not so much about the Plan’s efficacy in creating a more inclusive and equitable city because to ask this presumes that we put our stock exclusively in such measures. We know how diversity planning fits into the hegemonic program. Does that preclude a role, however small, in the social justice movement? The analysis is incomplete without considering the other side of the equation. It is insufficient to contextualize such planning in terms of one set of forces without similarly setting it relative to the other.

Taking Another View

The logic of framing the inquiry in alternative terms is drawn out of “third way” approaches to the development of radical plural democracy. These perspectives take for granted that any alternative political order will unfold within and between the existing spheres of social action. The agents of social

change are seen as varied and include government, independent policy networks, social movements and traditional interests groups. Primary mechanisms for transformation emerge out of complex coalitions (Moors, 2001).¹⁸ At the core of this reasoning are beliefs about the nature of social change. Mouffe (1996) is particularly clear in advocating that radical democracy should be conceived as a deepening of the democratic ideals of liberty and equality. "The aim is not to create a completely different kind of society but to use the *symbolic* resources of the liberal democratic tradition to struggle against relations of subordination not only in the economy but also those linked to gender, race or sexual orientation" (pg. 20, emphasis added). Giddens (1994) simply calls it the "democratization of democracy" (pg. 16). The implication is that the sites of change are varied, progress is often evolutionary rather than revolutionary and building alliances is crucial.

From this perspective we can not pluck diversity initiatives out of the total and complex system of social action, evaluating only their service to one set of forces without considering the alternative interests that employ such initiatives for opposite gains. Although diversity planning may not itself produce palpable change, the development and implementation of such plans does change the overall landscape of claims making. Its value is clearer when considered part of a more extensive collection of coincident positive forces.

Enhancing Opportunities for Civil Society Action

There is a rich and vibrant layer of activity quite separate from City Hall. Civil society is purported to be the fastest growing sector of society. A growing number of nongovernmental organizations are engaged in struggles for social change (Barlow and Clarke, 2001). Community-based, grassroots or civil society action focuses on developing parallel structures, processes and incubating the advocacy tools to apply pressure. The emphasis is on multi-sectoral coalition building and the construction of concrete alternative approaches to addressing inequity. Their contact with the state exists in the form of advancing claims through political and electoral processes.

For example, social planning organizations that function outside the state's domain have exercised what the planning literature identifies as social witnessing. Through the creation and dissemination of knowledge concerning social issues, these organizations provide the awareness and substance for presenting claims in the political realm. In the tradition of radical planning, such organizations offer critique of state and economy, and apply empowerment strategies in the development of citizen agency (McGrath, 2000).

Although such grassroots initiatives are reasonable in viewing projects of the state with suspicion and see any involvement as corruptible, it is possible that the enduring presence of a diversity apparatus

¹⁸Moors' analysis of "third way" political theory is critical as well as descriptive. He sees such theorizing, while addressing the role of identity, as ignoring the role of the organized working class (pg. 319).

within City Hall can amplify external pressure. The exercise of state-directed diversity planning provides a coherent object of critique and an opportunity to coalesce resistance. In addition, the presence of an official diversity agenda can create a permissive environment both attitudinally and administratively within state structures and facilitate the advancement of entitlement arguments by providing a pressure point for politicians to live up to the promise of the Plan.

Adding Personal Agency

The incremental approach to planning presents policy-making as a process of successive approximations (Lindblom, 1973). The possibilities in the City of Toronto's Action Plan may rest in those who use it as an instrument to advance claims iteratively. From this perspective, it becomes important to identify the contribution of the people that cluster around the Plan rather than simply view it as an inert document. There are individuals at City Hall who, fully recognizing the practical and ideological limits of the Plan, are committed to pushing those limits. Some participants articulated their view of the provisions in the Plan as points of negotiation, the thin edge of the wedge so to speak. When mixed with the social justice intent of individual actors involved, useful outcomes are possible. This research offers a few examples of this potential.

The creation of the Diversity Advocate, although considered a compromise in an effort to unify the five community-based committees, is viewed as part of the progression towards integration at the standing committee level. While there are no guarantees, there is a greater possibility of this outcome with the persistent application of pressure from the Advocate's office combined with pushing from external advocacy groups.

The Advisory Committee on Race and Ethnic Relations deputation serves as additional evidence. Putting diverse community participation on the Official Plan agenda was, it seems a near subversive act with real risks attached. It required the collusion of several individuals all prepared to utilize the advisory committee structure to advance their vision. The intervention opens the possibility of future action. Its potential to deliver community participation with further agitation is genuine. If not, the reaction would have been less severe.

Also, although the Plan does not provide for specific action based on reporting the impact of reports consolidated in the Diversity Management Unit will depend on the initiatives of those processing the material. Even within the constraints their positions, there will likely be both overt and covert opportunities for staff to advance the equity potential of the Plan through follow-up activity.

The relevant point is that the Plan is not static, nor are its impacts. It is a living process that can be developed through small manoeuvres to offer greater support for change, if not present change in itself. Few working inside the bureaucracy, see it as the whole solution but as a fulcrum for leverage.

For those working towards equity in the form of civil society action, developing alliances with insiders is crucial for gaining the equivalent of “bureaucratic intelligence”. Those working inside the bureaucracy are able (and do) actively feed information to the activist community about everything from research and grant money to upcoming events and backroom discussions. Most importantly, they are able to reveal failures and compromises in implementation that render the Plan less efficacious. This allows activists to be selective in their interaction with City Hall and ultimately make those interactions more effective. It facilitates opportunities to be prepped and ready to address the gaffes, to insert their objectives into the gaps while avoiding the deleterious effects of more continuous and substantial engagement with the state’s project in “diversity management”. At the very least, individuals and groups with differing perspectives on the most effective strategies for change must not play into the existing regime by going the work of fragmenting progressive energies.¹⁹

Pluralism: Inside, Outside, Top to Bottom

If pluralism is the goal then surely it is the nature of the process. The social justice project is multifaceted, cross-sectoral and multidirectional. Social change is a complex mixture of processes, which often act in contradictory ways, producing conflicts and disjuncture. Change will germinate inside the state and outside in civil society. Coalitions will form and dissolve between obvious as well as unlikely factions.

And thus is the postmodern backdrop for planning. As Beauregard (1991) observes, “the postmodern challenge makes the modernist planning project ambiguous” (pg. 190) as the postmodern, in fact, rejects plans themselves and their claim of comprehensive understandings in addressing a knowable public interest. The pre-eminent feature of planning in this context is pastiche (Dear, 1986).

In mirroring its postmodern context, planning must avoid unitary approaches. Planning for diversity, or more accurately, planning as a progressive instrument of social change will not emulate one model. If diversity management planning reflected by the City of Toronto endeavour represents a top-down modernist exercise, as much state planning does, then grassroots initiatives reflect the insurgent bottom-up style that is the cornerstone of progressive planning and integral to the emergence of pluralistic citizenship in which difference can flourish. The ills and limits of state-directed planning have been well represented in planning theory (Pickvance, 1982; Harvey, 1985; Friedmann, 1978), but it would be dangerous to completely reject such planning. As the Toronto case demonstrates, there are transformative as well as oppressive possibilities in state planning. More important, “victories at the community level almost always need to be consolidated in some way through the state, through legislation and/or through the allocation of resources” (Sandercock, 1998, pg. 206). Although their

¹⁹Dale Spender (1982) makes this point in reference to feminism, arguing that feminists should not do patriarchy’s work, providing evidence against the cause through public debate of internal points of disagreement.

contributions may not be equal, rather than favour one form to the exclusion of the other the task is to find fruitful points of intersection, to optimize the best aspects of both and to facilitate some kind of symbiosis.

The need to forfeit the notion that progress will be gained from a single “best” means is part of the larger task of creating a vision of the outcome. We need to continue to theorize about the nature of pluralistic citizenship as well as be open to varied means of securing it. In many ways this represents the greatest challenge for the social justice movement, to think beyond the intellectual traditions of the past, in some cases even its most radical elements. If we continue to view pluralism with the eyes of universalists, sophisticatedly trained in rational thought, we are easily overwhelmed and can not make sense of what is required to live together in difference. Pluralism as a political reality must be supported by philosophical constructions that liberate us from reductionism, essentialism and classificatory tendencies that motivate us to find order where there is none, that cause us to dream of a final reconciliation when there can not be one (Baghranian and Ingram, 2000). It is a paradigm shift not unlike the leap in scientific thought from Newtonian to quantum physics. This shift can begin with the exercise of looking within.

Identity in postmodernity is complex and blended. Globalization creates the cosmopolitan self, or in Waldron’s (1995) terms “mongrelization”. Cultural identities are not distinct. This “interculturalism” reflects the interaction and entanglement of cultures (Tully, 1995). The postmodern citizen has ensemble membership in various spheres and therefore varied needs and interests. More important, this membership is unstable, ever shifting as we move through our increasingly polyphonic world. The construction of radical pluralism in citizenship will reflect this fluidity, as will the relations of subordination and the coalitions that will forge advancements. There is no unitary subject, no “us and them”. Without question, the ingredients for a new political order will emerge from someplace within each of us.

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APPENDIX A: City of Toronto Diversity Profile

Description of Toronto's diverse population as expressed in *Diversity Our Strength, Access and Equity Our Goal: Council Approved Recommendations of the Task Force on Community Access and Equity* (City of Toronto, 2000)

“Toronto: A city of many communities, cultures, languages and needs.

- 2.4: in millions, the population of Toronto.
- 4th: Toronto has the 4th-largest government in Canada.
- 45: in thousands, the number of people who work for the City of Toronto.
- 65-100: in thousands, estimated current Aboriginal population in Toronto.
- 70-80: in thousands, the number of immigrants and refugees who annually settle in Toronto, making the city one of Canada's largest settlement areas.
- 101,350: the number of single-parent families led by females, in 1996.
- 15,995: the number of single-parent families led by males, in 1996.
- 3: percentage of Toronto's total population that was from a racial minority, in 1961.
- 30: percentage of Toronto's total population that was from a racial minority, in 1991.
- 53: expected percentage of Toronto's total population that will be from a racial minorities, in 2001.
- 48: percentage of the total population of Toronto who were not born in Canada, in 1996.
- 12: percentage of Canadians who listed either Atheism, Agnosticism or "no religion" in the 1991 census.
- 15: percentage increase, from 1981 to 1991, of people in Canada reporting non-Christian affiliations.
- 170: the number of languages spoken in Toronto.
- 6.1: percentage of Toronto's population that does not speak any English.
- 10 top home languages (other than English or French): Chinese, Polish, Italian, Punjabi, Portuguese, Tagalog, Greek, Tamil, Vietnamese, Spanish
- 17: percentage of the city's population that has some form of disability.
- 10: approximate percentage of the Toronto population that is lesbian or gay.
- 38: percentage of children in Toronto under the age of 10 who live in poverty.
- 40: percentage of people born in Canada, aged 16-65, who have reading problems.
- 80: percentage of Canadians over 65 who have low literacy skills.

- 22: percentage increase, from 1997 to 1998, in reported hate crime offences, a hate crime being a criminal offence motivated by hate against a racial, religious, national, ethnic, sexual orientation, gender or disability group”.

APPENDIX B: Community Advisory Committees

Relevant Recommendations and Amendments

Community Advisory Committees

- 1) That City Council establish seven City-wide access, equity and human rights community advisory committees to address the priorities faced by the human rights protected groups:

Aboriginal Affairs Committee
Disability Issues Committee
Status of Women Committee
Racial Minorities Committee
Ethnocultural and Faith Issues Committee
Immigrant and Refugee Issues Committee
Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Issues.

*Amended by Toronto City Council. See below.

- 2) That Community Councils establish working groups on access, equity and human rights issues, as needs currently exist or rise, and permit membership on these working groups to include individuals who work or reside in the city.
- 3) That the community advisory committees advise City Council, its agencies, boards and commissions, and advocate to external bodies on removing barriers that restrict human rights protected groups from participating in public life and achieving social, cultural, economic and political well-being.
- 4) That the community advisory committees include: individuals; individuals who work in community agencies serving the human rights protected groups; individuals with technical expertise; and, that the membership represent all regions of the city, and reflect the diversity of the city's population.
- 5) That the community advisory committees on access, equity and human rights report to City Council through the appropriate Standing Committees on issues within the mandate of the Standing Committees, and to the Policy and Finance Committee for issues which are strategic in nature.
- 6) That a publicly-advertised process with a nominating committee be used to select the members of the community advisory committees and working groups on access, equity and human rights.
- 7) That at least 2 Members of Council to serve on each of the above named community advisory committees on access, equity and human rights
*Amended by Toronto City Council.
- 8) That City Council appoint a Member of Council as a special advocate on disability issues.
- 9) That the City provide sensitivity and awareness training and materials on access, equity and human rights issues to all persons involved with the municipal structure, including elected officials, emergency services personnel, staff, contractors and persons appointed to City committees.

Relevant Amendments

1 Replaced by:

- a) In addition to an Aboriginal Affairs Committee, Council establish four city-wide access, equity and human rights community advisory committees as follows:

- Disability Issues Committee
 - Status of Women Committee
 - Race and Ethnic Relations Committee; and
 - Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Issues; and

- b) The community advisory committees on access, equity and human rights consider rotating the location of their meetings across the City.

6 Replaced by:

- a) The members of the city-wide access, equity and human rights community advisory committees be recommended for appointment by the Nominating Committee using the existing Council Policy for Citizen Appointments and, for the initial appointments, the Nominating Committee conduct the interview process Using community persons nominated by the Task Force on Community Access and Equity;

- b) the guidelines developed by the Task Force for appointments to these advisory committees be considered in making these appointments; and

- c) the term for the initial appointments to these advisory committees continue until the end of the next term of Council.

7 Amended: to provide for "at least one Member of Council" to serve on each of the five city-wide access, equity and human rights community advisory committees.

Terms of reference for the city-wide Community Advisory Committees on Access, Equity and Human Rights

Council Reference :

Strategic Policies and Priorities Committee, Report No. 10, 2, June 1999 and Policy and Finance Committee, Report No. 11, Clause 1, December 1999.

Names

Aboriginal Affairs Committee	Status of Women Committee
Disability Issues Committee	Race and Ethnic Relations Committee
Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues	

Mandate:

The community advisory committees shall use their knowledge and expertise to provide advice to City Council, through the standing committees of Council, and act as a liaison with external bodies on barriers to participation in public life and to the achievement of social, and economic well-being of the city's residents.

Each community advisory committee shall also address the specific issues facing particular communities, develop options for Council's consideration and make recommendations for positive changes that shall improve the quality of the lives of the members of the city's diverse communities.

Membership:

18 members, at least 1 member of Council

Two thirds (2/3) of the membership should reflect the committees' respective communities.

There shall be two co-chairs to be selected by the members at the first meeting.

Meetings:

Meetings of the city-wide community advisory committees will be held three to four times a year. The community advisory committees will meet jointly for an annual community consultation on access, equity and human rights to provide input to planning, policy and program development. Meetings will follow the guidelines outlined in the Nominating Committee's procedures and rules.

Term of Office:

The term for the initial appointments to the community advisory committees will continue until the end of the term of the next Council - November 2003. Members will be appointed for a 3-year term (to coincide with the term of Council) and/or until a successor is appointed, or City Council terminates an appointment. Members are eligible for membership for a maximum of two consecutive three-year terms, if recommended by the Nominating Committee. Vacancies shall be filled only if there are at least 6 months remaining of the appointment term or if necessary to maintain a quorum. When filling vacancies, the existing reserve list will be used or the vacancy will be advertised. A person appointed to a vacancy left as a result of a resignation will serve the remainder of the term and is eligible to reapply. A vacancy may be declared at such time that: a member submits a letter of resignation or is otherwise unable to complete his/her term; or, a member is asked to resign due to excessive absenteeism.

Appointment process:

The selection process for members follows the City's Nominating Committee process. The guidelines developed

by the task force for appointments to community advisory committees will be considered in the selection process.

The selection process will be co-ordinated by the Access and Equity Unit with support from the City Clerk.

Quorum:

A quorum shall be fifty percent of community members on the advisory committee.

Reporting:

The community advisory committees shall report to Council through the appropriate standing committees on issues within the mandates of the respective standing committees.

Secretariat support:

City Clerk

Program Support:

Diversity Management and Community Engagement, Strategic and Corporate Policy/Healthy City Office, Chief Administrator's Office.