

Creating Cosmopolis

the end of mainstream

by Steven R. Dang
B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1995

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"We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard..."

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Department of School of Community and Regional Planning

The University of British Columbia
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abstract

Increasing cultural globalisation and the assertion of cultural identities present an interesting opportunity for cities in the postmodern Western World. An increasingly multi-situated polity must better reflect and serve an increasingly self-aware and heterogeneous population in search of better planning, community and social justice. A great deal of research in diversity issues has been conducted in various disciplines, but there is little integration of this theory and even less instruction as to its application. This thesis attempts to address the deficiencies – providing some rationale and some guidance towards the diversification of civic culture as a model of incorporation.

Diversification requires a significant shift in our understanding of culture, identity, community and self – an end to mainstream and its hegemony. It places the onus for change on local institutions and operates on an assumption of difference, a desire for meaningful incorporation and a commitment to equality as equity. These principles translate into the pursuit of increasingly differentiated benefits, inclusive participation, varied discourse and inclusive definitions. For the transformation to be truly meaningful and systemic, it must take place in *all* agencies of civic culture: government, civil society, business, the media and family. A conceptual, prescriptive and evaluative framework for cultural diversification is thus elaborated.

Change will require deliberate purpose and action. This thesis attempts to provide some direction by applying the discussion to a level at which most urban leaders, planners and cultural producers work. A local organisation in Vancouver, Canada – a reputed leader in diversity – is selected as a case to illustrate application of the developed framework and to enrich it with an initial investigation of how practitioners work towards the diversification of their individual institutions and their larger socio-cultural environment. It is hoped that strategies learned here, and in future applications of this research, can provide guidance for other organisations and that numerous small efforts will be rewarded with the gradual transformation of the whole.

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preface

Leonie Sandercock (1998:4) writes of her vision of *Cosmopolis* as a “journey of coming to terms with difference, of connection with the cultural Other, of an emerging sense of an intertwined destiny.” This was the inspiration for the title of the thesis – an attempt to help chart the journey, and make it more deliberate and purposeful.

The project was in many ways a natural one for me to undertake. I am the product of an exceptionally multicultural upbringing, a very postmodern education, and family aspirations of a future cosmopolitan with the interests of a Renaissance intellectual and artist. A Canadian of Chinese descent, multilingual and relatively free from the impositions of particular identity, I have always been fascinated by the interactions between cultures and the formation of new cultures, identities and communities. My bias towards increased cultural choice and freedom is also the result of formative years spent between Vancouver, Québec and Ottawa, amidst Trudeau’s speeches against nationalism, Spicer Commission hearings on identity, and the failure of Charlottetown, Meech Lake and a referendum on separation. I am thus drawn to questions of culture and diversity, especially when the project is of an interdisciplinary nature involving very different ideas and approaches.

The present thesis is the culmination of my undergraduate and graduate studies in intercultural relations, citizenship and organisational change. It was undertaken in the hope of synthesizing this experience and making a sincere contribution to the emerging field of cultural diversification.

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chapter 1: a cultural revolution

creating cosmopolis in a nutshell

Cities have always been great “crucibles of culture” (Hall 1998) – not only as the birthplace of creative movements, but also as the dynamic meeting place of different ways of life: values, norms, behaviours, discourses, material objects and symbols.¹ Cultural forces concentrate, react and interact in the urban swell. And here, human diversity often finds its fullest and freest expression.

In recent decades, globalisation, the politics of recognition and intercultural conflict have underscored this diversity to the challenge of established institutions and the cultural foundations of society itself (Delanty 2000:131). Cityscapes are increasingly complex geographies of overlapping socio-cultural communities organised according to ability, age, ethnicity, gender, health, sexuality and socio-economic situation.²

Yet, mono-cultural hegemonies still reign over most societies (World Commission on Culture & Development 1996). Many urban residents still face everyday inequalities and are excluded from significant entitlements of citizenship – most notably, from the definition and production of civic culture itself. Despite a rhetoric of appreciation for diversity, selected subcultures are often promoted as “mainstream” while other resident subcultures are relegated to the status of curiosity, outlier, deviant, antiquity or foreign outpost. Non-mainstream cultural groups are seen to comprise “others” who live within our midst, by the “grace” of our tolerance. It is a narrow, mistaken and destructive view

¹ “Culture” and other related terms will be further defined in the following section.

² This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but illustrative of predominant bases for cultural identities.

of community that presumes and desires a culturally homogeneous "us" (Anderson 1991, Mathews 2000).

At the same time, the same postmodern forces that have strengthened cultural variety are feared to have weakened civic virtue and local "connectedness" – to place, neighbour and community (see Crang 1998). The resulting alienation, apathy and polarisation are lamented as a "crisis in democratic citizenship" (Bewes 1997, Dahrendorf 1994, Ignatieff 1995, Putnam 1995). Many Western leaders, political philosophers and planners (Barber 1984, Barber 1998, Bellah et al. 1985, Castles & Miller 1998) call for a "renewed citizenship": an active citizenry within a collaborative civic culture that is capable of the collective action required by increasingly complex environmental and socio-economic problems. In many such discussions, diversity is mistakenly seen as a hindrance (Gitlin 1995).

Diversification of civic culture, however, is about removing the barriers to full and active participation by all citizens. It is about *incorporation*, not disintegration (McClure 1992). In order to engage a deeper citizenship, civic culture and its component institutional cultures must be redefined as the ever-changing aggregate and composite of *all* residents, not just of the most dominant subcultures. Such a cultural transformation would involve abandoning the idea of "mainstream" – narrow, static, passive and determinable – for the reality of a more dynamic, active and pluralistic conception of culture, identity, community and self.

It must be recognised that a society can comprise tremendous diversity and thrive, without sacrificing integrity or effectiveness (Ellison 1997, Hall 1998, Mouffe 1992b, Rapoport 1984, Sandercock 1998, Soja 2000, World Commission on Culture & Development 1996). Indeed, cultural diversity can be a society's greatest asset and the key to its ultimate sustainability (Landry 2000). Complex problems require the creative synergy that diversity generates. Civic cultures need diversity to remain *living* and relevant, to survive, adapt and prosper.

Naturally rich in human diversity, postmodern cities in the democratic West present both the greatest opportunity and the greatest need for the diversification of civic culture. The challenge is to cultivate "ways of living together" that are meaningfully inclusive; that genuinely celebrate the complexity of human experience; and that capitalise on the

creative energy of this diversity towards building collaborative, effective and sustainable communities (Landry 2000, Senge et al. 1999).

There is a growing realisation that such changes will require deliberate purpose and action on the part of urban leaders, planners and cultural producers (Bourne 2000, Burstein 2000, Jacobs 1961, Lofland 2000, World Commission on Culture & Development 1996). This thesis attempts to provide some justification and direction for their efforts. It recognises that the ultimate goal of a society-wide cultural transformation is daunting in its ambition. The discussion is thus immediately applied to the more manageable scale of the individual organisation – the level at which most urban leaders and cultural planners actually work. The project is undertaken in the belief that numerous small steps will be rewarded with the eventual transformation of the whole. The developed framework for cultural diversification is thus set to work in an initial case study of a community organisation, reputed for excellence in diversification, as an illustration of its analytical application and as the beginning of its enrichment as a prescriptive framework with some specific strategies learned from actual practice.

words we live by

Culture can be considered a set of traits that an individual regards as a basis for his or her **identity** and as shared with other individuals in perceived **community**.

The approach, here, is definitely postmodern. Culture, identity and community are seen as relative constructs that are in constant negotiation with the socio-political environment. They are not inherent attributes, but matters of perception, socialisation and maintenance. They are *activities* or *processes* (Barth 1969, Delgado-Moreira 2000:65-66, Pratt 1998), and individuals rarely belong to just one culture, identity or community – but to several simultaneously and over time, exchanging one for another depending on context (Castiglione 2000, Delgado-Moreira 2000, Ellison 1997, Hall 1996, Innes & Booher 1999, Powell 1999, van Gunsteren 1994). Cultural identities and communities are constructed around whatever traits people consider pertinent to their sense of self in relation to others – be they ability, age, ethnicity, gender, health,

sexuality, socio-economic situation or combinations thereof. They are highly contested, overlapping and negotiable (Delanty 2000:131).

culture

Richard Rorty (Rorty 1998b) summarises well the postmodern approach to culture:

Culture is simply a set of shared habits of action, those that enable members of a single human community to get along with one another and with the surrounding environment... In this sense of the term, every army barracks, academic department, prison, monastery, farming village, scientific laboratory, concentration camp, street market and business corporation has a culture of its own. Many of us belong to a lot of different cultures – to that of our native town, to that of our university, to that of the cosmopolitan intellectuals, to that of the religious tradition in which we were brought up, to those organizations to which we belong or groups with which we have dealings... There is a difference in complexity and richness between the culture of a farming village and that of Buddhism,... but not a difference of kind.

As a set of “shared habits of action,” culture can be said to comprise “ways of life” and/or “ways of living together.” Both are revisions to the standard anthropological definition of culture as “the way of life of a people.” By “way of life”, we refer here to a set of values, norms, behaviours, discourses, material objects and symbols (Knox & Pinch 2000, Rapoport 1984). Its pluralisation recognises that within any given culture, there is inevitable change and internal variation (Barth 1969).

The phrase “of a people” is omitted for the fact that culture is possessed both individually *and* collectively (Delgado-Moreira 2000), and that no set of cultural traits is exclusive to one particular people, place or time (Anderson 1991, Mathews 2000, Waldron 1992). The integrity of any cultural community is thrown into doubt, its boundaries blurred, when subjected to more critical inquiry: Just when does *modern* Alsatian culture begin? How much do its practitioners really have in common with their 18th century ancestors? Where does it end, and French or German cultures begin – or for that matter, European or American pop culture? Does an 18 year old Japanese lesbian grunge musician have more in common with her 25 year old sister accountant, a 60 year old Japanese lesbian feminist or the 17 year old president of the Kurt Cobain fansite in Seattle? Cultures are

constantly evolving (Soja 2000), and any set of cultural traits identified as characteristic of a particular community will always be inadequate and inaccurate. It is perhaps only legitimate to speak of the existence of many, loosely defined “subcultures” within any given society.

The UNESCO (World Commission on Culture & Development 1996) definition of culture as “ways of living together” contributes the idea of a social purpose to culture, and a development that is mediated by social environment. A culture serves as a template for social behaviour. As such, it is subject to constant negotiation within its community and with other subcultures in a larger society. The principles and practices that govern these exchanges comprise another layer of culture – whether negotiated or imposed, peaceful or antagonistic. It is this *civic culture* that shapes how subcultural communities define themselves and interact, determining the level to which different residents participate in, care about, and enjoy the benefits of, urban life.³

identity

Identity can be defined as an “ongoing sense the self has of who it is, as conditioned through its ongoing interactions with others” (Mathews 2000:17). This, again, is a postmodern interpretation of identity as a construct – an evolving perception, true or false, of oneself. As sociologist Stuart Hall (1996:3-4) explains:

this concept of identity does not signal that stable core of the self, unfolding from beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change; the bit of the self which remains always-already ‘the same’.... [Instead,] it accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions.

In this sense, an individual holds multiple personal identities, simultaneously and over the course of one’s life, according to an ever-changing social context (Ellison 1997, Faulks 2000). Cultural identity or collective identity consists of how the self is categorised at a given moment when considered in association with others.

³ Civic culture is defined further in chapter 3 of this thesis.

Identities provide an individual with pre-fabricated sets of cultural habits: ready-made templates for social behaviour and moral reference, menus for life choices, a sense of belonging and meaning beyond the self, and extremely powerful bases for political mobilisation and action (Ellison 1997, Glazer & Moynihan 1975, see Kymlicka 1995). Political philosopher Juan Delgado-Moreira (2000:60) elaborates:

Cultural identities... provide personal identity; are ethical communities; build historical constancy; are made up by belief; tend to mark a territory; do things, have practical purposes; are thought by their members as conferring marks that differentiate them from the others; define a boundary; enable patterns of behavior, beliefs and a shared language; and have a public presence. In sum, they provide order and meaning.

In doing so, cultural identities also limit individual freedom and the availability of certain life choices (Barth 1969, Kymlicka 1995:ch. 5). And although identity is ultimately a matter of self-perception, it is not always entirely a matter of choice. Often, it is at least partly imposed upon an individual and group by more dominant members of society (Barth 1969, Mathews 2000).



figure 1
the perfect european.
J.N. Hughes-Wilson, 1998.

community

Community has been lamented as "a much-used term with little specific meaning" (Knox & Pinch 2000:396). Like culture and identity, it is a relative construct referring to "a group of people who share a perceived common interest." That "interest" might be geographic, social, cultural, economic, political, or any combination thereof.

Community comprises what people identify as a realm of social interaction, political action and concern. It usually involves a set of close social networks and some perception of shared identity. In delimiting community (like culture and identity),

boundaries are created to the exclusion of others who are perceived as non-members. No community, however, is isolated or impervious. Individuals belong to several different communities at the same time and over time. Communities cannot help but touch, and their concerns overlap (Castiglione 2000, Innes & Booher 1999). Every society is a complex of many interdependent communities.

In this thesis, "community" is most frequently used in the following two senses:

- (1) **subcultural community** – a community of interest and identity based on perceived cultural traits in common, and
- (2) **community of residence** – a community of interest and identity based on common residence in a particular place.

Although cultural traits may be a traditional and effective basis for individuals to mobilise politically (Kymlicka 1995, McClure 1992), simple residency is argued as the sole just criterion for membership in a polity and its civic culture (Faulks 2000, Soysal 1994).

some more words...

society – arena of social interactions, composed of many interdependent communities.

polity – community defined by an arena of political interactions.

subculture – culture perceived as shared by a particular community. Every culture is inevitably a subculture of another, and is itself composed of many subcultures.

civic culture – culture perceived as the basis for citizenship as it determines the enjoyment of benefits, participation, discourse & definition in a society and its institutions. Further discussion of civic culture is provided in chapter 3.

cultural hegemony – dominance by one subculture – or a few subcultures – over the definition, realisation and enjoyment of civic culture. Further discussion of cultural hegemony is provided in chapter 2.

diversification – actions that transform institutions according to principles which demonstrate an acceptance of diversity, a desire for meaningful incorporation of all residents and a commitment to equality as equity. Further discussion of diversification is the subject of chapter 3.

figure 2
some more words.

It is with these new, postmodern and self-liberating definitions of culture, identity and community that societies can make a break from cultural hegemony towards a meaningful diversification of civic culture, towards real inclusion, social justice and cultural sustainability. The end of "mainstream" is not only an ideal, but a cultural imperative for increasingly complex and culturally diverse cities.

enter the cultural planner

Why the diversification of civic culture should be of direct concern to local leaders, administrators and planners may not be immediately apparent. A legacy of the nation-state project, the tendency is to leave matters of culture and identity to national authorities. Even so, it is inevitably the task of local agents to translate national policies into actual communities of action within culturally complex neighbourhoods. Local involvement in culture, identity and community, moreover, is not limited to the implementation of federal dictates. Cultural concerns penetrate all planning and policy development activities. They are inherent to the exercise – regardless of policy field or sphere of governance.

An inclusive, postmodern approach is again taken here in the definition of planning. Planning simply refers to “the guidance of future action” (Forester 2000:1). Applied to collective projects, it becomes the guidance of processes that attempt to identify and achieve the ambitions of a given “public.” The public domain in this thesis is not restricted to the traditional concerns and activities of government. The separation between public and private is regarded as deceptive, counterproductive and oppressive (Arendt 1958a, Cohen 2000, Désert 1997, Vogel 1994). In Western democratic society, there are significant “public” implications to the actions taken by actors in all spheres of governance – including civil society, corporations, the media and even individual families. As governments continue to downsize and even greater responsibility shifts to other sectors, this becomes increasingly evident (Brown 1997, Edgington & Hutton 2002, Faulks 2000, Holston 1998, Sandercock 1998). Cultural planners therefore not only include planners, politicians, public administrators, policy analysts, architects and engineers, but community leaders and activists, corporate managers, religious and moral authorities, the media, advertisers and artists.

They are all engaged in matters of culture, identity and community – often with significant impact. The “public” dimension of their work can usually be found in one or more of the following objectives (adapted from Hudson 1979):

- **better planning** – process and product – for a certain “public”;
- **development** of a certain “public”; and/or
- **social justice** for a certain “public”.

The diversification of civic culture, and of individual institutional cultures, is of tremendous interest to planning because it serves all these fundamental planning objectives. By recognising and engaging the inherent diversity of any given public, it incorporates greater complexity and greater creativity in problem solving. It builds community and community capacity, and works towards the achievement of a lasting commitment to social justice. It is perhaps no surprise that questions of civic culture are gaining attention in discussions of urban planning, development and sustainability (Bailey et al. 2001, Bourne 2000, Burstein 2000, Early 2000, Friedmann 2002a, Friedmann 2002b, Ife 1995, Knox & Pinch 2000, Lofland 2000, Polèse & Stern 2001, Putnam 1993, Sandercock 1998, World Commission on Culture & Development 1996).

in the interest of better planning

As the management of processes that attempt to identify and achieve collective ambitions, planning is fundamentally concerned with the intimate knowledge of an identifiable client public (Forester 2000). The postmodern city is then an enigma. It is an exceedingly complex subject of tremendous fluidity and variation that is difficult to capture in generic models and serve by standard practices. A singular, “rational” approach, formulated by “expert” bureaucrats in air-conditioned towers, cannot but be an inadequate response to so many different pulses (Forester 1989, Sandercock 1998).

As Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller (1998:39) remark, an institution and its agents derive their "legitimacy from the claim of representing the aspirations of [their public]. This implies two further claims: that there is an underlying cultural consensus which allows agreement on the values or interests of [that public], and that there is a democratic process for the will of [that public] to be expressed." In the presence of an "Unknowable Public" and low levels of participation (due to both lack of opportunity and interest), conventional planning methods are not only insufficient, but lack public confidence (1994:44):

Planning of civil society is, today even less possible than it was in the past. From the point of view of those steering it, society is less and less knowable. The categories in which government seeks to represent reality (using numbers and diagrams) no longer fit the processes that they are expected to describe. There seems to be widespread awareness that we need new categories and coordinates. Yet when we have to specify what those categories should be, we are clueless and often talk at cross-purposes without reaching a new consensus. We struggle on with the old categories and coordinates and find our bearings as best we can, without conviction or commitment, with all kinds of ad hoc retouched images. Planning [as we knew it] is certainly out of the question now.

It is the postmodern fate of modernist, Enlightenment and Renaissance ideals... no one can be an expert in all things, possess all the required knowledge, understand all perspectives and predict all implications. Given increasing complexity, it would be in the best interest of planning to incorporate a greater diversity of knowledge, perspectives and expertise in its practice. More than ever, planners need the active participation of diverse communities in order to serve them (van Gunsteren 1994).

As collaboration theorists have long argued (Landry 2000), problem solving profits tremendously from the creativity and adaptability of diverse input. It is the ecological principle of biodiversity applied to cultural and intellectual assets. The involvement of a wider public also secures a larger base for collective action and successful implementation (Thomas 1995). These are fundamental premises behind integrated and cooperative approaches to environmental management, and a growing practice in business management. For many corporations, it is simply the reality of doing business in an increasingly heterogeneous environment, of capitalising on internal resources and fragmented markets (DiversityInc.com 2002, Hofstede 1991, Thomas 1999). For democratic theory, it is a call to engage a wider public as a matter of principle and to profit from more diverse debate and deliberation.

in the interest of community development

With its recognition of the opportunity that is cultural complexity and its encouragement of inclusive participation, diversification of civic culture, and its component institutional cultures, is to the benefit of planning practice. The project though is not simply an ad-hoc attempt to "muddle through" in a chaotic postmodern world, it is part of something much more ambitious. The engagement of a deeper, more diverse public requires systemic change (Forester 1989, O'Brien & Howard 1998, Young 1989): the cultivation of new civic virtues, new ways of thinking about ourselves, our cultures, identities and communities. The goal is a transformative one, and lessons learned will be of great interest to that growing number of more proactive planners concerned with other questions of sustainability and "paradigm shifts."

Planners are already employed in the "culture racket." It is an unavoidable consequence of their work. In the course of any given day, planners are actively engaged in making cultural choices for society. As planning theorist John Forester argues (2000:1), "when city planners deliberate with city residents, they shape public learning as well as public action. Sharing or withholding information, encouraging or discouraging public participation, ... planners nurture public hope or deepen citizens' resignation."

Moreover, many practitioners are active in the formation, organisation and empowerment of communities (Rocha 1997), the encouragement of participation and the shaping of interests through public education. Arts, culture and heritage planners are directly involved in the selection of which cultural symbols, expressions and ways of life receive endorsement and distribution (Dubrow 1998, Duncan & Duncan 1984). Economic planners work to develop certain new industries and to encourage entrepreneurship in selected communities (Hall 1998, Landry 2000). Community planners are actively engaged in peace-building through public education, outreach and mediation (Bollens 2000, Dunn 1994, Lofland 2000, Rothman 1997, Saunders 1999), or in community-building through the development of community organisations, public spaces and other resources (Rocha 1997). These are all direct attempts to manipulate aspects of civic culture for long-term effect.

The diversification of organisational and civic cultures is in the service of community development efforts. Its reach and engagement of a wider public, its facilitation of

intercultural interaction, results in the development of important community resources, civic virtue and social capital (Saunders 1999).

in the interest of social justice

For many, planning is about more than impartial, dispassionate service – more than simply good decision-making and the facilitation of collective action. Planners are both pawns and players in the political game of power (Forester 1989), and advocacy theorists, such as Shean McConnell (1995) and John Forester (1989), argue that the primary focus should be redistributing resources in the pursuit of social justice against the established hegemony. Planning practice should be thus governed by a Rawlsian ethic of “greatest benefit to the least advantaged” (McConnell 1995) and “justice as fairness” (Hillier 1998).

To this end, many cultural planners have been working directly to improve conditions for the most alienated urban residents: immigrants and disadvantaged ethno-cultural groups (Burayidi 2002, Lofland 2000, Sandercock 1998, Young 1989); women (Bondi 1998, Young 1989), seniors & youth (Pratt 1998), disadvantaged sexualities (Bouthillette 1997, Ingram 1997, Knopp 1998), the poor (Jacobs 1961, Sandercock 1998), and differently-abled (Gleeson 1998). All these practitioners confront on a daily basis the challenges of cultural hegemony.

The diversification of civic culture through the transformation of its component institutional cultures would go a long way in assisting these efforts. A culture of exclusion figures prominently the root causes of social inequality. A societal transformation towards greater engagement of cultural diversity is thus a primary goal of many so-called “radical” planners, who work towards a systemically more just institution out of planning (Forester 1989, Friedmann 1987, Young 1989), and of Leonie Sandercock’s (Sandercock 1998) “cosmopolitanisation” of the profession for the new postmodern millennium.

For those planners not in the conscientious service of social justice, their activities have no less cultural implication. Planners have always been engaged in attempts to

manipulate civic culture and its constituent organisational cultures. This includes, but goes well beyond, the support of the arts, curriculum development in schools, immigration policies and regulation of the media. Their harmful activities are not restricted to infamous cases of residential schools, McCarthyism, censorship and ethnic-cleansing. In their daily practice, most planners are inextricably implicated in the cultural offence of perpetuating, actively or passively, the established cultural hegemony and its systemic inequalities.

The reasons for diversifying civic culture, putting an end to "mainstream", are thus both practical *and* principled. The pursuit of better planning, community-building and social justice necessitates new inclusive ways of thinking about ourselves – our cultures, identities and communities. It requires a professional transformation towards the active engagement of diversity, creativity and complexity (Dorcey 1986, Landry 2000), a more conscientious, reflective and just planning practice in every sector that is involved in the determination of our collective civic culture.

chapter 2: **the end of mainstream**

the myths of mainstream

Diversification of civic culture and its component organisational cultures is also the most appropriate response to a growing awareness of the inherent and increasing cultural heterogeneity of large urban centres in the West. Planners no longer serve a *single* public interest. There is no mainstream. Cultural hegemony is simply no longer an appropriate basis for society and its institutions – if, indeed, it ever was.

While cultural diversity is an inevitable condition of large postmodern cities in the West, full cultural citizenship for many who are “different” is unfortunately not. In the face of increasing cultural diversity, civic culture and its component institutional cultures are still largely practiced according to a mono-cultural ideal. Despite much rhetoric, the occasional sushi, and reggae on the radio, many citizens, civic leaders and planners continue to see cultural pluralism as a problem – rather than a positive and creative social force (Fleras & Elliott 2002:94-5, Sandercock 1998). Many of these critics argue that cultural differences lead to inequalities, conflict, and the destruction of effective and affective community. They thus support policies that validate the present cultural hegemony – policies and practices that try to assimilate differences, or that purportedly “celebrate differences,” but continue to deny full cultural citizenship to many who are “different.”

It is, however, the insistence and overemphasis on *sameness* – not diversity – that is the problem. The present paradigm, which perpetuates an ideal of common culture, leads to

systemic exclusion and/or marginalisation of significant populations. It is this alienation that is the root of social injustice, intercultural conflict and civic apathy. Cultural hegemony is, in fact, *evidenced* in the persistence of everyday inequalities, intercultural conflict, civic apathy and garrison identities.

If “hegemony” proper is actual “power or dominance that one social group holds over others, then “cultural hegemony” is the “method for gaining and maintaining [this] power” (Lull 2000:48). Media analyst, James Lull, elaborates (2000:48):

If ideology is a system of structured representations, and consciousness is a structure of mind that reflects those representations, then *[cultural] hegemony is the linking mechanism between dominant ideology and consciousness.*

A hegemonic civic or organisational culture is entirely inappropriate for postmodern cities and their institutions in Western democracies. Cultural hegemony is founded on, and continues to be defended with, an outdated set of beliefs about culture, identity and community. Now, more than ever, its values and basic assumptions are unrealistic, untenable and unjust. This is the “new” reality of postmodern cities in the West:

- there is ***no* homogeneous cultural majority** to call “mainstream”;
- **common culture is *not* necessary** for effective & affective community; and
- **cultural hegemony is *not* benign**, nor is it benevolent.

Each of these “new” realities have significant impact on planning theory and practice: (a) that there is no homogeneous cultural majority has tremendous implications for those engaged in the betterment of planning practice – in the identification of “client communities” and the “public interest,” and in the design of planning processes and programme implementation; (b) that common culture is not in fact necessary nor desired for effective & affective community brings new insight to projects in community-building; and (c) that cultural hegemony is neither benevolent nor benign helps focus the efforts of those interested in matters of social justice.

Since the roots and reach of cultural hegemony are long and pervasive, it is all the more insidious. Its assumptions and practices go undetected or unquestioned (Bausinger

1984), such that many deny its existence. Sociologist, Jodi O'Brien (1998), remarks that many of our neighbours "just don't get it." Evidence of her observation unfortunately abounds. Remembering an encounter with a "Heterosexual Pride" sticker, she laments in frustration (1998:27):

My initial urge was to roll down the window and explain to this creatively downwardly mobile, prominently heterosexual doofus that every day is heterosexual pride day in America.

Cultural hegemony has to do with the manipulation of how we view ourselves, perceive our social roles and routine activities, the unspoken social impositions and constraints we demand of each other, and the reality of who participates in society (who is welcome, who has the means and on what terms). As James Lull (2000:50) summarises, "hegemony works on a grand scale, but in a subtle way." It under lays or penetrates all our established traditions and institutions.

what majority?

Diversity seems to be a "natural condition" of cities (Jacobs 1961). Recent globalisation and other postmodern forces are intensifying the experience. Urban geographers and sociologists document an increasingly complex urban landscape in terms of ability, age, ethnicity, gender, health, sexuality and socio-economic situation (Bourne 2000, Pratt 1998), and stronger, more diverse voices are beginning to challenge established institutions (Knox & Pinch 2000, Murdie & Teixeira 2000, Ray & Rose 2000, Sandercock 1998).

This is certainly not to say, that those who are different are completely free to be who they are or want to be. The city is still contested space. Many subcultures are ghettoised, their expression constrained, their contributions excluded from the larger whole. Mono-cultural hegemonies persist despite increasing cultural pluralism (Kymlicka 1995:2).

There is simply no longer a definable cultural majority to call "mainstream" in Western postmodern cities. The perpetuation of the idea of "mainstream" then just serves to disguise a hierarchy of domination by a selected subculture over others.

urbanity

Cities have always been exceptionally diverse in human culture and experience. As urban planning theorist Jane Jacobs (1961:143-5) praised, "diversity is natural to big cities... and big cities are natural generators of diversity and prolific incubators of new enterprises and ideas of all kinds." Urban diversity is, in part, the mere consequence of so many people, so close together. Urban historian, Peter Hall (1998:611), adds to her sentiments:

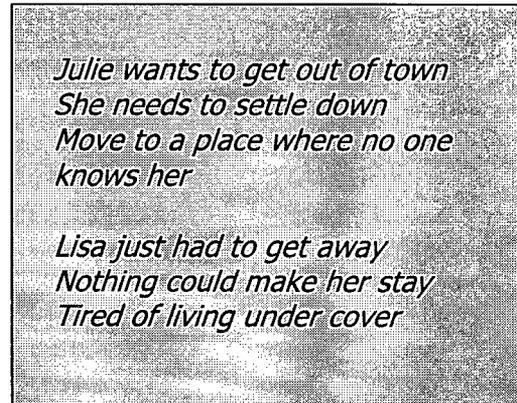


figure 3
julie wants to get out of town.
lyrics from *Be As*, by Prozzac.
(Levine & McCollum 2000).

Cities are quintessentially disordered places... [And,] it is not just that big cities have more people living in them; it is that they contain so many different kinds of people, different in birthplace and race and social class and wealth, different indeed in every respect that differentiates people at all, living in almost infinitely complex social relationships. The traditional rural and small-town moral constraints, imposed through visibility and familiarity, and reinforced by customary social relations and by long-accepted religious inhibitions, here begin to break down.

Whether due to actual pleasure in variety or just mutual indifference, city dwellers are known for a relatively high degree of tolerance (Jacobs 1961, Lofland 2000, Sennett 1994). Living in the midst of a circus, one expects to encounter difference. Of course, expectation and tolerance are not the same as acceptance, inclusion or celebration – but still, living in a city does seem to afford a certain freedom to be different. The urban swell and the anonymity of skyscrapers seem to provide fertile ground for self-expression (Crang 1998).

Urban densities make possible communities that otherwise could not be. Even the smallest minority here can be quite significant and capable of a vibrant, self-sustaining community. With greater numbers, subcultural groups can develop culturally-specific institutions, services and a political voice.

A creative synergy is put in motion, for differences are "mutually stimulating." Diversity creates more diversity. As urban historian Peter Hall (1998) recounts, the creative

energy of cultural diversity has made the city, the confluence of ideas, activities and civilisations. It is a gathering place of migrants, merchants, artists, diplomats, entrepreneurs and exiles – a prime destination for those seeking opportunity and freedom. The city is a beacon for many who are different.

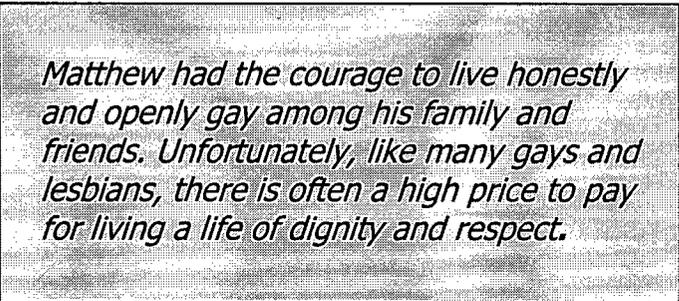
As social geographer Anne-Marie Bouthillette (1997:213) remarks:

Homosexual men and women, [like other immigrants to the city], have long known that they are more likely to find one another in high-density inner-city settings, that they are more likely to lead a peaceful existence in what is traditionally felt to be more open-minded, urbane, and even anonymous surrounding.

A “peaceful existence” is not won without cost. Social geographer Gordon Ingram (1997:27) argues with poignancy that it continues to be a long and painful fight for recognition:

For most people who... have been 'marginalized'..., we travel great distances in order to live in the ways that enhance fuller contact with one another. The spaces that we cross and in which we live - to which we adapt, create, and sometimes reconstruct - have great bearing on how we come to express ourselves. Surviving..., no matter how invisible, often requires knowing how to travel across hostile territory - whether it be physical, emotional, cultural, or theoretical.

Although urbanity can mean greater liberty for self-expression, it does not at all guarantee membership in urban society. For the most part, urban hospitality is extended reluctantly (Fleras & Elliott 2002:94) and selectively to different subcultures. Moreover, as Sarajevo and Los Angeles cruelly demonstrated, the urban crucible is



Matthew had the courage to live honestly and openly gay among his family and friends. Unfortunately, like many gays and lesbians, there is often a high price to pay for living a life of dignity and respect.

combustible. Tolerance seems to require more than mere exposure and habituation to differences, but a ongoing sense of security as well (Barth 1969, Lofland 2000, Schaller 1999). Incidents of prejudice tend to rise in times of socio-political, economic or environmental uncertainty,

figure 4
*in memory of matthew shephard,
who was brutally murdered in 1998, a victim of hate.*
WJGSA (2000).

and keeping whatever acceptance and inclusion has been achieved for those who are “different” requires constant vigilance (Friedmann 2002a).

a world in motion

Since the early 1980s, global migrations have intensified urban cultural diversity – such that Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller (1998) have declared our entry into an unprecedented “Age of Migration.” Fundamental transformations – upheavals in the former Soviet Bloc; wars and famine throughout Africa; rapid development in Asia; unstable democracies in Latin America; economic integration in Western Europe and growing inequalities between North and South – have put the world in motion. Castles and Miller describe a period of migration distinguished in its acceleration, global dimensions, socio-economic diversity, feminisation and politicisation. To this list, one should add that contemporary human migrations have been distinctly *urban*.

acceleration. In 1994, there were an estimated and unprecedented 120 million immigrants, 15 million refugees and asylum seekers, and 20 million internally displaced persons worldwide (Castles & Miller 1998:4-5). These statistics do not include illegal immigrants and internal migrants who were not forcibly displaced. The sheer number of people on the move has presented a particularly difficult and urgent challenge to local governments and other service agencies. The dramatic influx of new cultural groups in large number has visibly destroyed the “myth of cultural majority” in many urban areas.

urbanisation. Whereas earlier migrations, especially to North America, were to rural regions, more recent immigrants have settled overwhelmingly in urban centres (Fleras & Elliott 2002:33-4, Kalbach & Kalbach 1999, Mercer & England 2000). In search of social and economic opportunities, international immigrants join internal migrants in the continuing trend towards global urbanisation (see also Knox & Pinch 2000). Large cities receive a disproportionate share of migrants. In Canada, for example, sixty percent of all immigrants in the last two decades of the twentieth century chose to call Toronto or Vancouver home (Mercer & England 2000). Planning theorist John Friedmann (2002b) thus refers to transnational migration as “a pre-eminently urban phenomenon.”

globalisation. More regions of the world are presently affected by large movements of people at the same time. Migrants are travelling greater distances in greater number. Consequently, cities are becoming more diverse ethno-culturally and communities with formerly limited contact are interacting on a closer, more frequent basis within single polities (see also Isajiw 1999). Where immigrants to Canada were once overwhelmingly of European descent, they now originate in large numbers from all over the world (see also Kalbach & Kalbach 1999, Mercer 1995, Mercer & England 2000, Murdie & Teixeira 2000).

differentiation. The socio-economic circumstances of migrants, their reason for emigrating and the intended duration of their habitation are increasingly varied. Most urban centres receive migrants of very different circumstances from many different regions – from permanent immigrants and asylum seekers, to transnational professionals, “guestworkers” and illegal migrants. Many cities thus have a significant percentage of residents without official citizenship (see also Friedmann 2002b, Soysal 1994). Contemporary trends in global migration are resulting in – not only greater ethno-cultural diversity – but also greater diversity *within* ethno-cultural communities in terms of socio-economic class and political status (see also Curtis et al. 1999, Murdie & Teixeira 2000).

feminisation. Whereas previously, global migrants were predominantly male, an increasingly significant proportion of all migrants are now women. This has led to increasingly complex relationships between gender, ethnicity and socio-economic

the globalisation of immigration

10 top countries of immigrant origin to Canada*
(in decreasing order)

1951 Britain, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, France
USA, Belgium, Yugoslavia, Denmark

1968 Britain, USA, Italy, Germany, Hong Kong, France
Austria, Greece, Portugal, Yugoslavia

1984 Vietnam, Hong Kong, USA, India, Britain, Poland
Philippines, El Salvador, Jamaica, China

1996 Hong Kong, India, China, Taiwan, Philippines
Pakistan, Sri Lanka, USA, Iran, Britain

* “immigrant origin” denotes country of last permanent residence - not necessarily ethnicity.

figure 5
the globalisation of immigration.
(Kalbach & Kalbach 1999, Murdie & Teixeira 2000)

situation – further divergences in urban experience and identity (see also Bobo et al. 2001, Ray & Rose 2000).

politicisation. Global migration has become an increasingly politicised issue with significant impacts on international law and trade agreements; national immigration, security and cultural policies; and local healthcare, education and other service provision (see also Joppke 1999, Mercer 1995). Given recent economic and international security concerns, there has also been strong local backlash against migrants in many cities (Mercer 1995). In response, migrants, minority communities and their advocates have been increasingly vocal in their struggle for citizenship rights. Urban cultural diversity is becoming more prominent, and more controversial.

Urban societies are becoming more culturally diverse due to recent acceleration, urbanisation, globalisation, differentiation, feminisation and politicisation of immigration. It is now difficult to speak of a true ethno-cultural majority in most major cities (Frankel 2002) – although it is still possible to refer to a *dominant subculture*. The relationships between ethnicity, gender, socio-economic situation and other markers of identity are growing in complexity. Subcultural communities, themselves, are becoming less homogeneous. The result is even greater divergence in urban cultural experience and identity.

other changes in the air

In the West, transformations in the workplace and at home are also leading to further cultural diversity. Social geographers, Robert Murdie and Carlos Teixeira (2000), identify economic restructuring, an aging population, new approaches to family organisation and cutbacks to the welfare state as important factors contributing to increased social fragmentation and complexity in postmodern cities. Their list serves as a basis for the following cursory examination of other socio-economic causes of increased urban cultural diversity:

changes at work. Recent *de-industrialisation*, a decline in manufacturing and a dramatic growth in the globalised service and high-tech sectors, has led to dramatic social, geographic and economic transformations (Hutton 1998) – including increased *occupational differentiation* in Western postmodern cities. Increasing specialisation and

isolation of various trades are creating further socio-economic divisions, while growing numbers of women and people under twenty-five in the workforce and the demands of a diverse and globalised marketplace are diversifying the workplace (see also Beckett & Dungee-Anderson 1998, DiversityInc.com 2002, Knox & Pinch 2000). These divisions are underscored by inequalities in treatment at work based on ability, age, ethnicity, gender and sexuality (see also Bobo et al. 2001, Curtis et al. 1999, DiversityInc.com 2002, Harvard Business Review 2001, Hiebert & Ley 2001).

changes at home. A rapidly aging population in most Western societies has increased the political profile of seniors, sometimes argued as to the detriment of younger age groups. This, coupled with a dramatic increase in the purchasing power of teenagers (see also Klein 2000b), has made cultural differences between generations even more prominent

(see also Knox & Pinch 2000:117).

The composition of the family unit itself is also diversifying

tremendously with an increased incidence and/or recognition of

divorce and remarriage, single-

person and no-child households, both single-parent *and* extended families, same-sex parents and ethnically-mixed marriages. Choices in education are also proliferating with many families opting out of public systems in favour of private institutions, traditional schools or home schooling. This infringes upon the power of the state over acculturation through public education to some degree and might impact childhood levels of exposure to those who are "different". The cultural implications of all these transformations in the home are yet to be determined, but attitudes toward these changes are already split along lines of age, affluence, education, ethnicity, religion, gender and sexuality.

changes on the street. While urban renewal and economic diversification policies in the West are leading to increasingly mixed ethnic and socio-economic neighbourhoods in the inner city (see also Jacobs 1961), the cultural gaps between urban, urban fringe

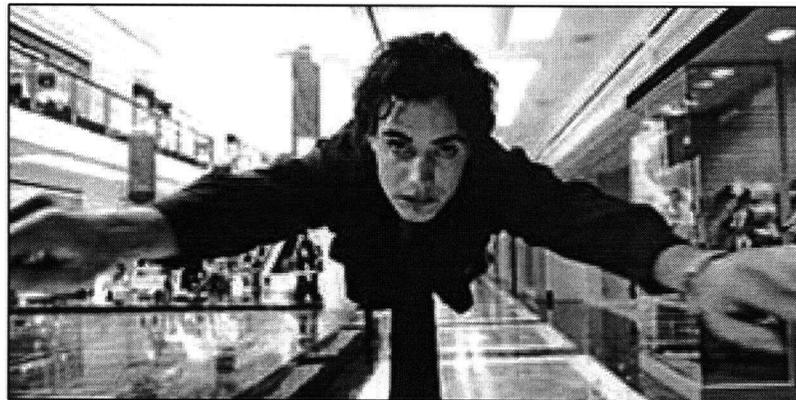


figure 6
floating man: the disconnection of urban youth.
scene from Gary Burn's (2001) film *Waydowntown*.

and rural seem to be increasing (see also Knox & Pinch 2000:117). There is also a widening gap between rich and poor and greater social distinction based on degree of welfare dependency (see also Knox & Pinch 2000:117). Many sociologists and political philosophers now refer to the establishment of a "permanent underclass" (see also Dahrendorf 1994, van Gunsteren 1994). The plight of these groups are made all the worse by increasing cutbacks to state-sponsored support networks, as so-called "minority" and poverty relief programmes seem first on the chopping block. Many subcultural communities are forced to turn inward for assistance (see also Brown 1997), leading to further socio-cultural isolation and alienation (see also Ingram 1997, Knox & Pinch 2000). This is part of a more general proliferation of actors in the activities of governance and the provision of "public" goods (see also Dorcey 1986, McClure 1992), a proliferation that translates into increasingly diverse and distinct arenas for the practice of citizenship and the realisation of culture, identity and community (see also Faulks 2000, van Gunsteren 1994).

a cultural supermarket

The globalisation of media, entertainment and information networks is increasing awareness of, and connection with, other cultures. Gordon Mathews (2000) argues that the power of states over the acculturation of their citizens has been eroded. Especially for those urbanites with social mobility and easy access to globalised communications, cultural identity is becoming more and more a matter of personal choice (see also O'Neill 2000, Pratt 1998).⁴

Urbanity, wealth and education offers entrance into the era of what Madan Sarup (1996:126) calls the "do-it-yourself" self, in which the individual selects and borrows pieces of culture in a process of endless re-creation (see also Chong 2001, Crang

4 Mathews (2000) qualifies that choice of cultural identity is still very much constrained by several factors: (1) access and ability to make use of cultural information and identities (a question of education and affluence); (2) the relative promotion and suppression of various cultural information and identities by mass media, advertisers and entertainment markets; (3) the valuation of these identities by one's resident society; (4) deep and middle level cultural influences that restrict individual selection; and (5) the ongoing necessity to negotiate with, and perform for, others in one's community (Pratt 1998). One should add an important sixth: (6) socio-cultural mobility, since identity for many is imposed by others (see also Klein 2000b).

1998:137). And for the “protean self” (Lifton 1993, Rorty 1998a), the urban environment is an incredible toyshop. As Theodore Von Laue (1987:339) argues:

In the global confluence of all cultures, religions, and historic experiences evolved over millennia, all of humanity’s cultural heritage has now come into full view.... In the great metropolitan centers... the world’s great religions vie with each other; lifestyles from different parts of the world are on display. The world has become a shopping mart crammed full with humanity’s riches...

Cultures no longer belong exclusively to a particular time or a particular place, and contemporary urban markets support many cultural trends simultaneously. As every good marketer knows, there is always a niche (Klein 2000a).

Theodore Levitt (1983:30-1) elaborates:

Everywhere there is Chinese food, pitta [*sic.*] bread, country and Western music, pizza and jazz. The global pervasiveness of ethnic forms represents the cosmopolitanisation of speciality.... Globalization does not mean the end of segments. It means, instead, their expansion to worldwide proportions.

It is an interesting extension of Benedict Anderson’s (1991) argument of “imagined communities.” Cultural communities – be they tribe or nation – are not only false in their claims of historical integrity and homogeneity, but also in their claims of exclusivity in time and place (Hobsbawn & Ranger 1992). Virtually every community now functions as part of a complex global system of cultures, and in many incidences, this is resulting in greater internal diversity, not less.

As cultural geographer, Mike Crang, writes (1998:137):

Accounts of global consumption have traditionally been bound into a series of binary pairs, where 'fashion' is contrasted to 'tradition', 'Western' to 'indigenous', and indeed mass-manufactured to handmade. However, such oppositions should not be simply accepted at face value. Traditions seem static..., but careful research often reveals that traditional forms have evolved continuously. Equally, what is now regarded as 'traditional' is just as likely to be inspired by contemporary trends... The traditional can provide a powerful nostalgic desire by appearing as stable and unchanging... These sort of appeals grow stronger as the world appears ever more fragmented... The effect of this is that various traditional forms are resold and repackaged; consuming them creates a synchronic rather than diachronic idea of cultures in the world. That is, instead of seeing one style succeeding another over time, ... different cultures' artefacts are available as contemporaneous choices.... We create as pastiche, a bric-a-brac of bits of different cultures and periods.

In another related twist, globalisation is thus giving new life to once declining or diasporic cultures (Dayan 1998, Smith & Ward 2000). Satellite programming and the internet is consolidating the Inuit North into a larger, stronger cultural community (Valaskakis 1992) and has given new lease to the Dakota language (Zimmerman et al. 2000). Developments in transportation and communication transform a local ceilidh in Cape Breton into an international Celtic event, a personal website by a 24-year old Winnipeg student in Vancouver into an important global meeting place for Bob Dylan fans, and the image of a brutally beaten young man left to die on a fence in Wyoming into a haunting icon for the gay community throughout North America.

The power of subcultural markets has not gone unnoticed by corporations and their advertisers (DiversityInc.com 2002, Lull 2000:252). The effects of segmented marketing and personalised communication – “the end of mass media” – reinforces cultural diversity (Wilson & Gutiérrez 1985). In a 500-specialty channel universe, everyone is *not* watching the same thing.

Of course, all things are *not* equal in the world of globalised cultures. The system, the market, is certainly dominated at present by American pop culture. But, no hegemony is ever complete. Intense tribalisms – ethnic nationalisms, religious fundamentalisms, etc. – have countered with tremendous resonance, strength and sometimes violence (Barber 1995). And even in their acceptance of “foreign” cultural influences, individuals are not passive converts. They pick-and-choose, and then, interpret as their own. The recipe for a BigMac may be the same in many places, but the experience of it is still very much Indian, Turkish or Japanese (Chiverton 2002, Lull 2000, Watson 1997). And just “try and convince an Italian child... that Topolino – the Italian name for Mickey Mouse – is

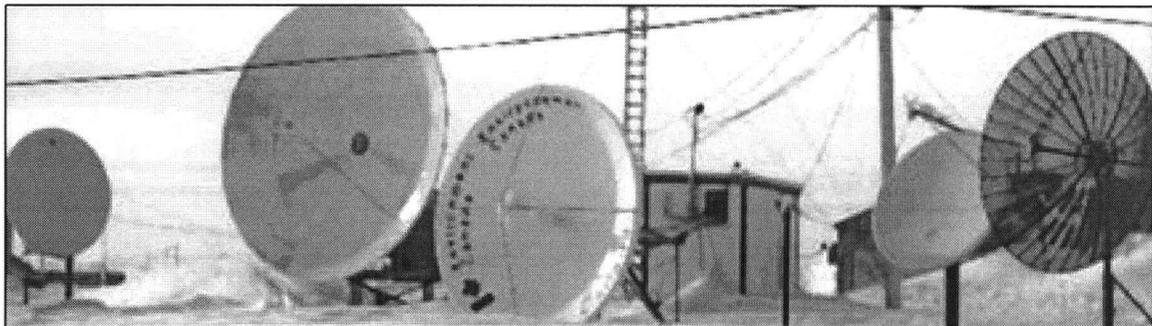


figure 7
satellite dishes in the canadian arctic.
Adapted from a photo by V.K. Chan.

American;"⁵ you will most certainly lose.

Local integration of globalised culture goes beyond the simple addition of a mutton sandwich, yoghurt drink or teriyaki burger to the menu. It is much more complex. In the face of the corporation's worldwide policy for a fast turnover of customers, young people in Hong Kong spend hours in McDonald's restaurants "studying, gossiping, picking over snacks; for them the restaurants are the equivalent of youth clubs" (Watson 1997:7). In Taiwan, the restaurants have been similarly adopted by women as among the few public spaces not dominated by men – precisely because McDonald's is *not* part of established Chinese cultural traditions (Lull 2000:250-1).

For many urbanites, the globalisation of transportation and communication has been personally liberating. The city is definitely the confluence of these cultural forces. As Mike Crang (1998:173) points out:

We can see cities as places where paths come together, cross, mutate and develop. The bringing together of different traditions results in hybrid forms. Such is not simply a bland relativism, where we say anything goes. We might think of the term as *creolisation* – from colonial societies where elaborate systems emerged to deal with inter-racial forms. Such perhaps suggests the politically charged nature of the process, as well as evoking its often unequal starting points. Instead, though, of seeing this as a loss of purity, it can be seen as a productive situation.

In many ways, the globalisation of communication and movement is leading to not less, but greater cultural diversity (Delanty 2000:99). This is not to say that there are not gross inequalities in the cultural supermarket, unheard voices and misrepresented communities. Nor is it an argument against the need for cultural content laws, cultural subsidies and other protections for local culture. It is only to give some credit to the strength, vitality, creativity and individuality of the cultural spirit.

The fate of various subcultures in the global arena is yet to be determined, but cultural communities have never been static nor passive, and the vast majority has never developed in isolation (Waldron 1992). Indeed, cultural resilience comes from an ability to change, adapt and adopt. Culture has always been a process of constant fusion, fission, experimentation and hybridisation. This process has been made all the more

⁵ The president of EuroDisneyland, as quoted in D. Morley and K. Robins (1995:111).

intense by the growing palette of cultural influences due to global migration, travel and communications. Continued urban diversity is assured.

a postmodern revolution

The postmodern end to certainty laid before us a universe of our own making. The individual became a multiple and malleable subject, constructed and reconstructed from many sources of identity – overlapping, concentric, dynamic and contextual. Our differences then were not biological, but *cultural*, and the divisions separating us were arbitrary and artificial. Postmodern analyses exposed a systemically hierarchical world maintained for, and through, the use of power.

But, the real revolutionary power of postmodernism comes not so much in its critique, but in its idea of a creative self (Rorty 1998a). However entrenched, the modernist paradigm is merely a socio-cultural construct. Just as it evolved to maintain certain conformities and inequalities, a new civic culture could be created in the service of liberating difference. The human condition is not inevitable; the social project is not predetermined. The important philosophical question is not *what is human nature*, but *what could we become* (Kingwell 2000, Rorty 1998a). A cultural revolution could be set in motion.

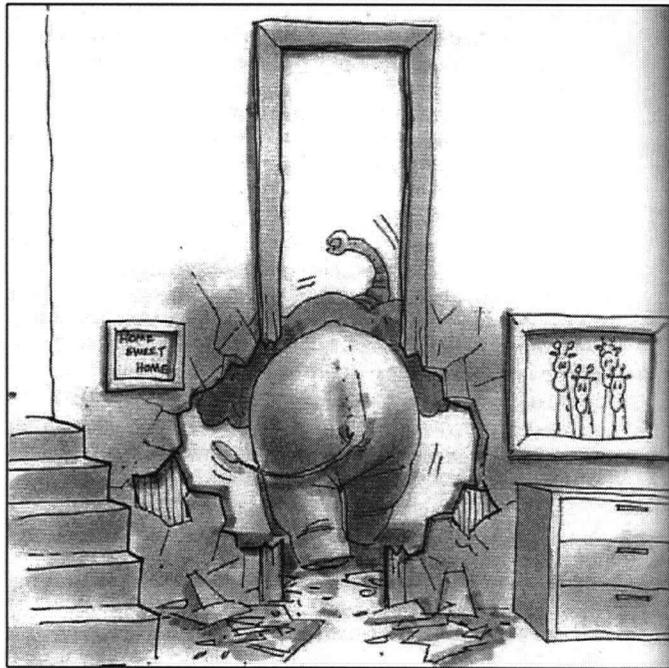


figure 8
elephants in action. R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr.
in Thomas (1999).

As Leonie Sandercock (1998) reports, strong voices from the postcolonial, feminist, queer and civil rights movements are challenging existing mono-cultural paradigms. If, as media theorist James Lull (2000:50) argues, “the effectiveness of hegemony depends on subordinated peoples accepting the dominant ideology as ‘normal reality or common

sense,' then established cultural hegemonies are beginning to show their weakness. Disenfranchised individuals are mobilising under "alternative" banners, demanding full recognition, participation, rights, access and a share of power (Glazer & Moynihan 1975). Their assertion is for simple recognition of the diversity that always existed and will always be. The slogan – "we're here, we're queer... get used to it", resonates in many alienated communities. Although the fight is far from won, being "different" carries less stigma and more power in many urban societies.

On other fronts, cosmopolitanism, globalisation and regionalisation, provincialisms, tribalisms and secessionist movements, all continue to challenge the cultural monopoly of the nation (Delanty 2000:1-6, Soysal 1994). In many states, these combined pressures are resulting in policies of multiculturalism, the establishment of democratic institutions and the inclusion of cultural issues in the discussion of sustainability (Bailly et al. 2001, Early 2000, Kazancigil 2001) and universal human rights (Kymlicka 1995, Kymlicka & Norman 2000). And as Richard Rorty (Rorty 1991a, Rorty 1991b) suggests, the globalisation of democratic values is resulting in greater diversity, not less.

welcome to the circus

Given increasing cultural diversity in Western postmodern cities, there is no longer a definable cultural majority (Frankel 2002, van Gunsteren 1994). Indeed, it can be argued that no society has ever been culturally homogeneous and that no culture has ever comprised an unified system of values and practices. Throughout history, the idea of a "mainstream" culture based on a supposed majority consensus has served a political purpose to disguise hegemony by a particular subcultural group (Anderson 1991, Hobsbawn & Ranger 1992, Isajiw 1999).

Vancouver's civic culture and the organisational culture of most of its established institutions – like that of most English-speaking cities in Canada – are founded on an Anglo-Saxon Canadian model. Here, "mainstream" culture is said to consist of white, anglophone, upper middle-class, and arguably male, middle-aged, heterosexual values and practices (Dubrow 1998, Duncan & Duncan 1984, Kenney 1998),. These are presented as a majority cultural consensus. Yet, according to the 1996 Statistics Canada report, 44% of the city's residents identify themselves as belonging to a visible minority – a number that does not include those who identify themselves culturally as

French, German and Southern or Eastern European. If one continues to factor out for other cultural variables from the remaining 56% based on language, socio-economic situation, gender, age, sexuality and so-called “fringe” cultures (while factoring in for possible acculturation), the number of residents who fit the list of subcultural traits presented as “mainstream” is a very small *minority* indeed: perhaps 10% at best.

Increasing cultural diversity and a diminishing cultural majority is a fact in postmodern cities in the West. It is a reality that has long been understood by business – undifferentiated marketing is obsolete. There is no longer a general population to which to appeal, only segmented markets. A civic culture or an institutional culture based on mono-cultural ideals is similarly inappropriate and ineffective.

common culture... who needs it?

The ideal of a unified, homogeneous culture within a single polity is only recent – born 200 years ago with the French Revolution and nationalistic Romantic movements in the West. The idea then spread, crystallising to become the dominant cultural, political model of the last half of the twentieth century (Faulks 2000). Its logic is now taken for granted: first, that common culture is necessary in order to maintain social order and prevent disintegration; and second, that common culture is required to build community and cultivate the civic virtue required for collective enterprise.

However, it is more so a *lack* of diversity in civic culture – and the perpetuation of cultural hegemony – that is at the root of much conflict and apathy in Western postmodern societies. An insistence on cultural conformity and attempts to assimilate work against community-building since they only results in alienation, resentment and exclusion.

cultural contests

Critics contend that recognition of cultural differences and attempts to diversify civic culture will lead to the disintegration of society (Gitlin 1995).⁶ Certainly, cultural diversity

⁶ A certain amount of intercultural conflict is inevitable with any social transformation. As civic culture is diversified, the loss of hegemony by dominant subcultures may be expressed as a backlash against minorities [see Castles & Miller (1998:13), Mercer (1995), and Weinfeld & Wilkinson (1999)].

means the existence in one polity of different sets of values, norms, behaviours, discourses, material objects and symbols. There will inevitably be disagreement over some issues, but cultural diversity is not unlike other forms of pluralism in this regard. As differences in political, intellectual and economic opinion are celebrated as indicators of a healthy democracy, so should debate generated by cultural diversity (Kingwell 2000:13). Negotiation of competing values and interests will always be required in any complex society (Castiglione 2000).⁷

There is more legitimate concern when conflict turns to violence or results in political paralysis. Critics look to ethnic wars in the Balkans and Africa; the high cost of accommodating special needs in classrooms and multilingual translation of government services; secessionist movements in Canada, Spain and South Asia; the backlash against immigrants in Western Europe; televised confrontations between protesters and police in the streets of Seattle and Seoul; race riots and youth riots in the United States; the minefield of identity politics in North America; and the seemingly endless list of demands from different subcultures for “additional” rights and recognition. They see a world being torn apart by diversity. They declare these events to be clashes of civilisation, gender or generation. They refer to a “special interests agenda,” and they appear to regret the long-fought battle for individual freedoms and equality, sometimes lamenting, “why everyone can’t just be the same.”

Critics of diversity blame the wrong variable in the equation. It is not diversity, but monocultural hegemony in the face of diversity, that is the problem. Intercultural conflict is

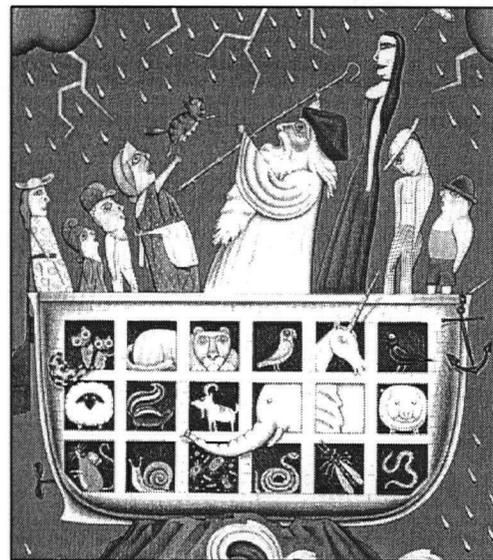


figure 9
not wanted on the voyage. Blair Drawson.
cover illustration from Findley (1984).

⁷ What might be different and need to change in light of increasing cultural diversity is *how* and *where* public debate takes place (Gram 2001). City council chambers, legislative assemblies, common law courts – conducted in English and based exclusively on the constraints of public reason and Robert’s rules of order might not be sufficient to include First Nations, youth, different socio-economic classes and ethnicities.

simply further evidence of an inappropriate and unjust hegemony – an insistence on sameness to the exclusion of certain subcultures and the persistence of everyday inequalities in the lives of many urban residents. As Wil Kymlicka and Wayne Norman (2000:3) write, the intercultural conflicts, “which came to a head at the beginning of the 1990s, made it clear that Western liberal democracies had not in fact met or overcome the challenges posed by... diversity.”

It may be true that subcultural identities provide a particularly effective means of political mobilisation, not always for noble purposes, and that we need to be vigilant of conflicts that may turn violent (Kingwell 2000:13), but we should not forget the legitimate concerns that lead many to rally their protest under cultural banners in the first place. It is the response of “dominant” society that is the primary determinant of minority formation, politicisation and potential violence (Castles & Miller 1998, Hislope 1998); the continued exclusion of subcultures is committed at great peril (Brubaker 1992, Dahrendorf 1994).

a lament for civic virtue

For other opponents of diversity, it is not so much the increased plurality of interests and opinions, but the existence of competing sources of identity that is the problem (Hammar 1989). For many, it is more than a question of allegiance. What has alarmed critics in the postmodern world is apparent political apathy in the face of urgent social and environmental crises (Castles & Miller 1998, Putnam 1995).

Many leaders, political philosophers and planners (Barber 1984, Barber 1998, Bellah et al. 1985, Ignatieff 1995, Putnam 1995) refer to a “crisis in democracy” and call for a renewed sense of citizenship and community. In these discussions, a common source of identity is considered essential for there to be an ethic of caring between neighbours, a basis for collective action. The apparent decline in civic virtue is attributed to the postmodern end to a single, fixed identity (Pocock 1995:47-8), a lost sense of local community in the global materialistic supermarket of cultural choices (Kingwell 2000),⁸ and the apparent triumph of identity politics, tribalism and individualism over

⁸ For further discussion of this feared lost sense of connectedness, see Crang (1998) and Matthews (2000:193-5).

communitarianism (Barber 1995, Beiner 1995, Bellah et al. 1985, Gitlin 1995, Goldfarb 1991, Ignatieff 1995, van Gunsteren 1994).

Certainly, the power of culture to unify has decreased significantly in the postmodern era – with “attacks from above” (universalism, cosmopolitanism, global civil society, environmentalism and regionalisms such as the European Union) and from “within” (secessionist movements, provincialisms, multiculturalism, city-states and identity politics).⁹ As Stephen Castles and Mark Miller (1998:39) remark, the traditional nation-state “derives its legitimacy from the claim of representing the aspirations of its people.... This implies two further claims: that there is an underlying cultural consensus which allows agreement on the values or interests of the people, and that there is a democratic process for the will of the citizens to be expressed.” If these claims were ever valid, they are certainly no longer tenable in the postmodern world (Faulks 2000:42). Very few states comprise a single nationality (Isajiw 1999, Kymlicka 1995) and “cultural consensus” – especially in complex urban societies – is largely unachievable. Moreover, with significant segments of the population excluded or abstained from the political arena, the ability of any state to know the will of its people is in doubt.



figure 10
the myth of single-ethnic states
(Isajiw 1999:11)

It is true that concern for others depends much upon empathy – that ability to extend one’s sense of self to include unrelated strangers (Rorty 1998a). The inability of many residents to identify with the whole of society, however, has less to do with the proliferation of cultural choices, than with the outdated model of civic culture. It is systemic exclusion through the coupling of citizenship with membership in a certain

⁹ See Castles & Miller (1998), Heater (1990), Soysal (1994) and van Steenbergen (van Steenbergen 1994b).

culture that has led to the current trends of civic apathy, alienation, separatism and polarisation.

As Richard Rorty (1991a:197) argues, "those who thus marginalize themselves [cannot] be criticised for social irresponsibility. One cannot be irresponsible toward a community of which one does not think of oneself as a member. Otherwise runaway slaves and tunnelers under the Berlin Wall would [have to be labelled as somehow] irresponsible." It remains the case that many of those who are "different" need to create alternative spaces within which they can enjoy full membership, greater security, better life chances and greater freedom of expression (Ingram 1997:27, Knox & Pinch 2000:227-38, Young 1990). A tendency towards "ghettoised" or qualified identities is a strong indicator of an exclusivist civic culture. Sociologist, Jodi O'Brien (1998:11), elaborates:

Hyphens and qualifiers, such as *African-American*, *Asian-American*, the *women's* basketball team, *black* coal miners, not only indicate a particular feature or social status, they reflect the taken-for-granted, or default assumptions about who or what people are in the absence of such qualifiers. Unless marked otherwise, references to "the college basketball team" call to mind the *men's* basketball team. This is the default assumption. The qualifier "women's team" not only deters us from the default assumption by providing additional information, it designates the persons who are the object of this classification as auxiliary to the main group, the "real" basketball players.

What is required is a model of civic culture that allows all residents to "opt-in" – a society that considers them as part of its definition. The link between full citizenship and membership in a particular subculture would be broken, such that two sole criteria would remain as the basis for citizenship: simple residency and the virtue of a deep appreciation for diversity (Faulks 2000, Soysal 1994). Only then will the disenfranchised be able to identify – and more importantly, *engage in* – society as a whole.

Civic apathy is a result of a sense of powerlessness (Goldfarb 1991). The diversification of civic culture will provide foundation for the stronger, more concerted communities required to respond to pressing social, economic and environmental challenges (Beiner 1995, Brown 1997). Citizenship will renew, and subcultural identities will cease to be competitive, when systemic marginalisation, censure and discrimination are remedied (Barth 1969, Castles & Miller 1998, Tatchell 2001).

This is not to say that subcultural identities will disappear altogether. That is neither possible, nor desired, nor even important. Politics organised according to subcultural

communities have been an important arena for civic participation and an effective means to mobilise residents in pursuit of social justice and civil rights (McClure 1992). For many residents, it has been the only avenue available. On the whole, the experience has been more empowering, more inclusive, than fractious. Occupied with a respect for the concerns of other subcultures, these “spaces of insurgence” rejuvenate the practice of citizenship and civic virtue (Holston 1998, Sandercock 1998). As sociologist Gerald Delanty (2000:3) argues, “the struggle for social justice... has led to the institutionalization of an active and deeper kind of citizenship... Class struggle... has taken a new and more plural form... [A] new range of issues has arisen, many of which go beyond questions of class, which has become only one site of struggle.” The politics of recognition is about *incorporation*.

Membership in one community does not preclude membership in another. Citizens of federal states demonstrate the ability to have multiple allegiances simultaneously and compatibly. Personal identity has always been a question of many overlapping associations, and a pluralism in cultural identity is not incompatible with the development of a responsible and effective civic culture (Castiglione 2000, Hirschman 1982, Pagé 1997). A strong civic culture is different from a strong, singular cultural identity. As Gerard Delanty (2000:131) argues, the latter



figure 11
noah's ark at sea, the mirror of human salvation.
Flemish artist, 15th century.
cover illustration from Kymlicka & Norman (2000).

can present problems in accommodating diversity... there is likely to be the danger that the collective identity will become too focused on hostility, that the self can be affirmed only by the denial of otherness. There is no evidence to indicate that societies, or large groups, actually require strong collective identities, and it might be suggested that such identities are often closely connected with xenophobia, or hatred of the other.¹⁰

As Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman (2000:6) suggest, incorporation of diverse subcultures, identities and sub-communities can be an important means of achieving deep citizenship:

The health and stability of a modern democracy depends, not only on the justice of its institutions [and] the qualities and attitudes of its citizens: e.g. their sense of identity and how they view potentially competing forms of national, regional, ethnic, or religious identities; [but also] their ability to tolerate and work together with others who are different from themselves; their desire to participate in the political process in order to promote the public good and hold political authorities accountable; their willingness to show self-restraint and exercise personal responsibility in their economic demands, and in personal choices that affect their health and the environment; and their sense of justice and commitment to a fair distribution of resources.

Ralf Dahrendorf (1994:17) argues that "the true test of the strength of citizenship rights, [which are supposed to be unconditional], is heterogeneity. Common respect for basic entitlements among people who are different in origin, culture and creed proves that combination of identity and variety which lies at the heart of civil and civilized societies."

Diversity is important for the cultivation of civic virtue, building an ability to empathise with others and a capacity for caring (Bayne & Freeman 1995). Cultural diversification is *the key* to building strong communities and renewing citizenship in Western postmodern cities.

everyday inequalities

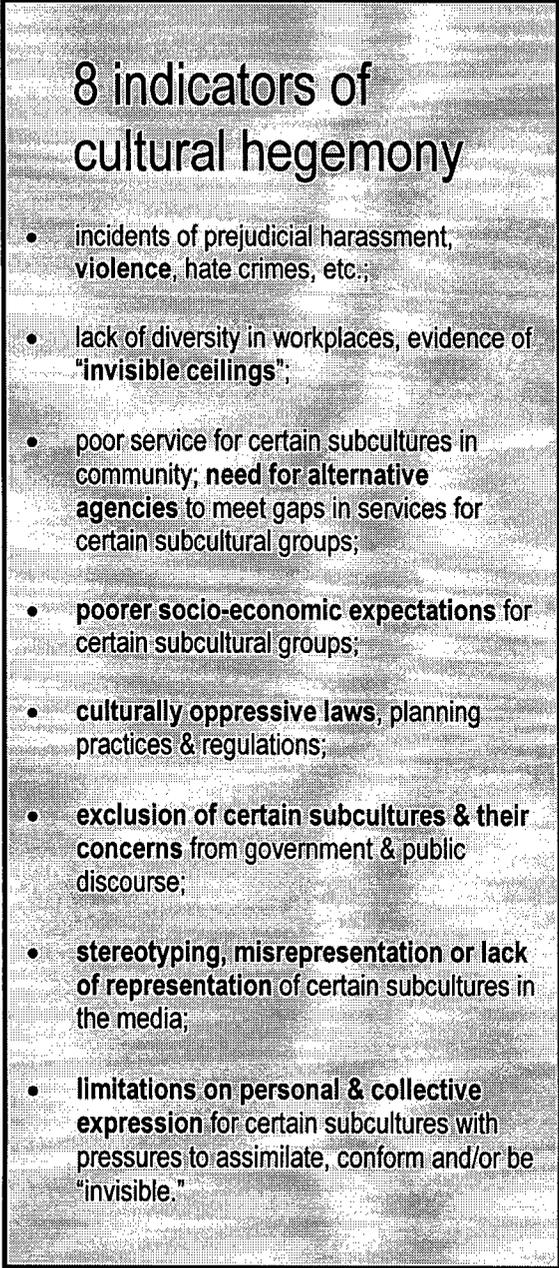
As any Dickens novel would attest, full enjoyment of the urban experience and expectations of urban life much depend on who you are. Urbanity grants a certain freedom to be different – but even in the liberal postmodern West, there is often a

¹⁰ See also Faulks (2000:167).

significant price. Not all differences are treated equally (O'Brien & Howard 1998). Cultural hegemony persists, and for many, its rule is neither benign nor benevolent.

Despite ample evidence, many urban leaders, planners and citizens still seem to have difficulty admitting the persistence of socio-cultural inequalities in liberal Western societies. Sociologist, Jodi O'Brien (1998:15), hypothesises that "in a culture that cherishes achievement over ascribed privilege and preaches the concept of separate but equal, it is difficult for many to acknowledge that much of what they take for granted as everyday entitlements are not available to others." Many critics of diversity policies either do not recognise the presence of cultural hegemony, or see it as somehow culture-neutral, harmless or even beneficial. It speaks to the power of hegemony – so penetrating that it seems to have always been, so pervasive that it seems to be the only reasonable way of doing things. The civic culture that underlays most Western societies, however noble in intent or innocent in its ignorance, is neither based on universal principles nor without negative repercussion. Cultural hegemony and inequalities exist regardless of intention or motivation. It is the effect that matters.

No "interest" is culturally neutral. We are *all* "special interests" – even if we be white, male, heterosexual and middle class. The distinction often made between "civic nationalism" (touted as "patriotism for established



8 indicators of cultural hegemony

- incidents of prejudicial harassment, violence, hate crimes, etc.;
- lack of diversity in workplaces, evidence of "invisible ceilings";
- poor service for certain subcultures in community; need for alternative agencies to meet gaps in services for certain subcultural groups;
- poorer socio-economic expectations for certain subcultural groups;
- culturally oppressive laws, planning practices & regulations;
- exclusion of certain subcultures & their concerns from government & public discourse;
- stereotyping, misrepresentation or lack of representation of certain subcultures in the media;
- limitations on personal & collective expression for certain subcultures with pressures to assimilate, conform and/or be "invisible."

figure 12
eight indicators of cultural hegemony.

ideologies and institutions”) and “ethnic nationalism” is a false one. The former simply masks ethnic nationalism on the part of the dominant subculture (Isajiw 1999:26). As citizenship theorist Ronald Beiner (1995:9) argues:

the basic theoretical challenge here is that the philosophical universalisms that we know from the canonical tradition of the West all involve what we might call a 'hegemonic function,' which is to suppress various particularistic identities. Appeals to universal reason typically serve to silence, stigmatize and marginalize groups and identities that lie beyond the boundaries of a white, male, Eurocentric hegemon.

In the case of the United States, Jodi O'Brien (1998:12) speaks of a pervasive *Americanism*, “a philosophy that competes with individual democracy for doctrinal status... [and according to which the] land and its endowments belong to a select group of individuals who are ethnically and culturally descended from the original Anglo-European colonizers.” In Canada, Richard Gwyn (2001)¹¹ refers to a stubborn self-conceptualisation as the “true North strong and free” – rural, homogeneously European and white, inward-looking and conservative.

A civic culture founded on the idea of “mainstream” versus “non-mainstream” thus results in the exclusion of many from the full enjoyment of citizenship and the perpetuation of systemic inequalities. The list of injustices that many urban residents suffer because of their “differences” is well-documented (Curtis et al. 1999, DiversityInc.com 2002, Knox & Pinch 2000:117-24, O'Brien & Howard 1998). They include:

prejudicial harassment, violence & hate crimes against certain ethnic communities and socio-economic classes; homosexuals, transsexuals and women (Ingram 1997, O'Brien 1998, Young 1999);

lack of diversity in workforces & “invisible ceilings” based on ability, age, ethnicity, gender and sexuality (Curtis et al. 1999, Gidengil & Vengroff 1997, Harvard Business Review 2001, McNeely et al. 1998, O'Brien 1998:24, Pendakur et al. 2000);

differentially poor service in the community (adoption agencies, banks, community agencies, police, security, store clerks, etc.) of women, youth, and certain ethnicities, sexualities and socio-economic classes (O'Brien 1998). As a result, alternative community agencies rise in order to fill the gaps (Brown 1997);

¹¹ See also Samuel and Schachhuber (2000).

poorer socio-economic expectations for certain ethnicities, women, seniors and differently-abled (Bobo et al. 2001, Bouthillette 1997, Curtis et al. 1999, Donovan et al. 1999, Hiebert & Ley 2001, Winders 2000);

culturally oppressive laws, planning practices & regulations against – or lacking consideration of – certain ethnicities, sexualities and socio-economic classes; the differently-abled, women, seniors and youth (Burstein 2000, Donovan et al. 1999, Dubrow 1998, Duncan & Duncan 1984, Fincher & Jacobs 1998, Ingram 1997, Kenney 1998, Knox & Pinch 2000:186-201);

exclusion from government & public discourse of certain ethnic communities and socio-economic classes; the differently-abled, seniors, women and youth (Bellett 1999, Edgington et al. 2001, Gidengil & Vengroff 1997, Hynna 1997);

stereotyping, misrepresentation or lack of representation in the media of certain ethnicities, sexualities and socio-economic classes; the differently-abled, seniors and youth (Acland 1995, Creese & Peterson 1996, Dunn & Mahtani 2001, Gross 1998, Henningham 1992, Ley 1999, Taylor & Stern 1997);

limitations on personal & collective expression for certain ethnicities, genders and sexualities – often accompanied by pressure to assimilate, conform and/or be “invisible”: eating disorders, steroid use, disproportionate rates of suicide & self-destructive behaviours, surgery to modify physical ethnic markers, etc. (Cohen 2000, Désert 1997);

All indicate the persistence of cultural hegemony¹² – the last two being particularly blatant forms of cultural oppression. For many, the combined disadvantages amount to exclusion from the full practice of citizenship (Donovan et al. 1999, Vogel 1994) – imposing severe constraints on what certain groups of individuals can be, do, aspire, achieve and contribute in society as a whole. As urban geographer, Gordon Ingram (1997:44), argues in the case of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual communities, many subcultural groups are denied basic “access to certain forms of standing in public space and typical levels of freedom of expression, comfort, and security.” In the postmodern city, such inequalities mean the exclusion of a significant number – arguably, the majority – of residents from meaningful participation in the creation and enjoyment of civic culture.

As it has long been argued, equality in civil, legal and political rights has not translated into full equality on the streets (Friedmann 2002a, Holston 1998:51, Marshall 1964).

¹² These comprise more specific indicators of what Iris M. Young (Young 1990:39-65) calls the “five faces of oppression”: exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence.

Political and legal theorist, Ursula Vogel (1994:76), summarises the two main thoughts as to why this might be the case:

We might say that differences of colour, ethnicity and sex, although they have long been removed from the formal, legal qualifications of citizen status, still have some purchase in the informal mechanisms of our political culture. Or, we might refer to the specific disadvantages suffered by these groups as latecomers to the political arena. They often lack the resources that are necessary to make full use of the equal entitlements and opportunities postulated in the idea of democratic citizenship. Money, time, health, education, command of the dominant language, as well as organization and connections within the spheres of institutionalized power - all of these factors could be listed among the assets without which the avenues to effective citizen participation will remain closed.¹³

While it is likely that both factors operate simultaneously, this thesis concentrates on the former. It argues that the cultural and intellectual underpinnings of most Western societies have not changed a great deal. As Jodi O'Brien (O'Brien 1998:24) argues, systemic cultural conditions persist that slow progress in the acquisition of resources by "latecomers." She reports that recent studies are finally providing "empirical evidence for something that many professional women and minorities have long felt in their bones to be true; [they] have to work more than twice as hard to demonstrate [their] competency... [They carry] an additional burden of proof." Many of those who are "different" continue to confront "invisible ceilings" to their aspirations for full and meaningful participation.

Even when these inequalities are acknowledged, some turn and blame diversity itself. Some opponents contend that it is the attention to differences that leads to inequality, and that any attempt to mitigate particular disadvantages amounts to "special treatment" – a treason against the principles of equality (Qadeer 1997). They thus work to

¹³ Similar to T.H. Marshall (Marshall 1964) and borrowing from David Held, planning theorist John Friedmann (2002a:82) puts forth an argument that resembles the latter. He argues that:

life-chances, which is to say, our prospects to fully share in the 'economic, cultural, or political goods, rewards, and opportunities' available in a community, have a social origin: they are produced and distributed unequally. It is this inequality that limits and erodes the possibilities of citizen participation... the possibility of 'human flourishing'... thus appears as a function of relations that lead to the systematic disempowerment of large numbers of people on the lower and lowest rungs of the social order.

eliminate differences through assimilation or proclaim a city that is magically “colour-blind” – where cultural differences are irrelevant or non-existent. But, as argued earlier, diversity is inherent to large, complex societies, and as long as cultural hegemony persists, these differences translate into real injustices that matter a great deal to many.

Still entrenched in the “cult of mainstream,” current diversity policies in most Western cities fail to bring about full incorporation and social justice. Jodi O’Brien (1998:3-4) exposes the deception, “the slogan ‘Celebrating Difference’ despite its promise of a mosaic of equality, masks [in fact] the hierarchical scaffold upon which we mount the expression of these differences. The invitation to celebrate detracts from the difficult enterprise of uncovering the more mundane, yet insidious practices of everyday discrimination based on these differences.”

an opportune chaos

And so, there is no mainstream; it has all been a ruse. Whether a cultural majority ever existed is doubtful, but the question is irrelevant anyway. Recent developments in global migration, communications, urban economics, demographics and politics are increasing cultural heterogeneity in an already diverse urban environment. A cultural majority to call “mainstream” no longer exists in Western postmodern cities, and it is neither needed nor desired. Western societies must divest themselves of their cultural hegemonies. A civic culture based on mono-cultural ideals is contrary to the ambitions for a democratic city.

Simple residency and a meaningful appreciation for our inherent cultural diversity should be the sole foundations of civic culture. This appreciation must be much more than the shallow support revealed in recent surveys (Fleras & Elliott 2002:94) – a support that quickly dissipates when questions go beyond the token amusement of ethnic restaurants, drag shows and the Special Olympics. It must even go beyond what sociologist, Lyn Lofland (2000:146-7), refers to as *positive tolerance* – the capacity to live with “an other’s *fully recognized* differences from self even under conditions of intersection... with... appreciation for, or enjoyment of, those differences.” This, as opposed to *negative tolerance*, which amounts no more to an ethic of “live and let live,” facilitated by the relative anonymity of urban life (see also Sennett 1994) – the “capacity

to 'put up with' an other's difference from self [only] because the different other is simply not perceived and/or because self and other do not intersect."

An appreciation of diversity that will translate into *meaningful* change requires a fundamental shift in thinking about culture, identity, community and self – an end to the cult of mainstream. Local culture must be redefined as a snapshot of the values and activities of an ever-changing composite within a given place – not just of the dominant, established or "original" cultural groups. This shift would involve abandoning the idea of "mainstream" – narrow, static, hegemonic and determinable – for the reality of a more fluid and pluralistic concept of community, culture and self. It will require tremendous self-examination on the part of every citizen (Thomas 1999) and a careful deconstruction of the subtleties of cultural hegemony, unspoken constraints and indirect exclusions.

The transformation must penetrate widely and deeply to become both principle and practice of urban leaders, planners and residents alike – of society as a whole and of *all* its subcultures. Meaningful cultural freedom and inclusion in Western postmodern cities will not be achieved if any component continues to oppress. There are many levels of hegemony. Many subcultural groups, while advocating diversity in society as a whole, demand conformity within their own ranks (Dahrendorf 1994:17, Faulks 2000, Kymlicka 1995, Lister 2000, Rorty 1998b).

Many will need to confront a fear of change, of perceived "chaos" (Friedmann 2002a, Landry 2000, Sandercock 1998). They will need to develop a capacity to see order in disorder, to appreciate the "circus" as a positive and creative environment. Cities that are often described as "chaotic" or "disorderly" by outside observers do in fact have a distinct order determined by its resident subcultures. What appears to be "disorder" is simply the operation of a complex set of cultural orders, co-inhabiting the same space (Rapoport 1984).

Diversification of civic culture is the *key* to building stronger communities and to cultivating a deeper citizenship. Cultural diversity is a tremendous asset, a positive and creative force. Cultural chaos – "that entertaining stimulus of a little confusion" (Soja 2000:120) – is perhaps the city's greatest contribution to civilisation. As urban historian Peter Hall (1998:285) writes:

So... talent may be more important than the wealth. Not infrequently, it was the recent in-migrants, sometimes from the native countryside, often from far-distant parts of the empire, who provided both the audience and the artists... This last point is probably crucial. The creative cities were nearly all cosmopolitan; they drew talent from the four corners of their worlds, and from the very start those worlds were often surprisingly far-flung. Probably, no city has ever been creative without continued renewal of the creative bloodstream.

The Western postmodern city presents a unique opportunity in history for the achievement of real cultural freedom and social justice. Global cities are great crucibles of culture – places where cultural forces concentrate, react, interact and cause change. Here, human diversities meet, clash, share, synthesise and hybridise. The urban swell has tremendous power of creation. As Ali Kazancigil (2001), Director of UNESCO's Management of Social Transformation Programme, remarks, "cities [are] arenas of accelerated social transformations." They are seats of innovation and revolution, "spaces of insurgent citizenship" (Holston 1998), great laboratories of ways to live together (Landry 2000). They are a natural choice for an "experiment" in cultural diversification.

The diversification of civic culture is an experiment of the highest order. It is not, however, a utopian one. As philosopher Richard Rorty (Rorty 1991b) argues, the Rawlsian appeal to pursue "justice as fairness" does not reflect a condition inherent to human nature (i.e., an appeal to universal human rights). It is, instead, something more pragmatic. It is to say, that given our inheritance of tolerance and democracy in the West, a cultural paradigm that extols "freedom over perfection" is our best course. Social institutions, indeed society itself, are experiments on how to live together – houses under permanent renovation (Mouffe 1992a:234-5). They should not be viewed as attempts to create a universal or ahistorical order.

If the challenge is not just, as Thomas Peters (1987) puts it, figuring out how to "thrive on chaos," the goals are still rather simple – to learn how to share, play well together and enjoy the ride. As sociologist Tim May (2000:ix) argues:

In any society that claims to have democratic aspirations, ... hopes and wishes are not for [planners] to prescribe. For this to happen it would mean that the social sciences were able to predict human behaviour with certainty. One theory and one method, applicable to all times and places, would be required for this purpose... the conditions in societies which [would provide] for this outcome, were it even possible, would be intolerable. Why? Because a necessary

condition of human freedom is the ability to have acted otherwise and thus to imagine and practise different ways of organizing societies and living together.

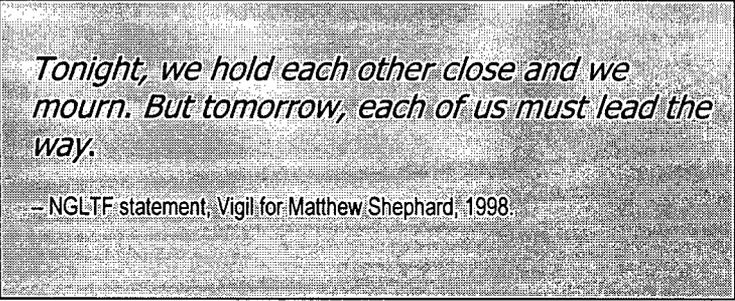
There is no ultimate vision of cosmopolis in mind, no goal in the diversification of civic culture other than to ensure that everyone has a role in the ongoing re-creation of the society in which they live.

chapter 3: developing an action plan

the project thus far

Having exposed the myths of mainstream and provided some rationale for cultural diversification as an important project for planners, discussion can now turn from questions of *why* to those of **WHAT, WHERE and HOW**.

Postmodernism has not only been valuable in its critique of absolutism and hegemony, but also in its potential to inspire. Both hope *and* power spring from the demonstrated flexibility of human nature and the social project. Indeed, there is a growing impatience



Tonight, we hold each other close and we mourn. But tomorrow, each of us must lead the way.

– NGLTF statement, Vigil for Matthew Shephard, 1998.

figure 13
tonight, we hold each other close.
quoted in WJGSA (2000).

to move beyond critique to reconstruction (Friedmann 1987, Powell 1999). John Forester (2000:9) lends a battle cry for a profession *empowered*, not beleaguered, by the postmodern revolution:

Let us stop rediscovering that power corrupts, and let's start figuring out what to do about the corruption. Let us not just presume as unshakeable truth that disciplinary power is total, that rationality self-destructs, that hegemonic culture is all pervasive, that we can do nothing to address inequality, poverty, environmental destruction, and needless human suffering. If we are to analyze power as political, and thus alterable, reality rather than as an unchangeable

metaphysical ether, let us stop rediscovering power and instead assess practically, comparatively, and prescriptively what different actors can do about it.

As John Friedmann (1987) writes, planning is the translation of knowledge into action. This is no simple task. It is much easier to identify problems and prescribe alternatives than to effect real change. Successful implementation has often eluded the planning exercise, and it remains an ongoing challenge for diversification. Unravelling centuries of cultural hegemony requires systemic change, the transformation of most social and cultural institutions. The project is, to say the very least, daunting.

Friedmann (2002b:66) recommends that theoretical frameworks be developed to navigate these uncharted waters, to instruct planners in the dynamics of successful incorporation. This chapter attempts an initial step by breaking down the diversification project into manageable parts, providing a framework for action – a “plan of attack” as it were.

The previous arguments for a strong planning interest in cultural diversification and for “the end of mainstream” resulted from a rigorous survey and integration of theories from a wide variety of disciplines engaged in the diversity debates. A similar “*quasi-grounded-theory*” approach is now employed in the construction of a framework for action. Induced from the various literatures, diversification is first simplified as a set of three guiding principles, and civic culture is deconstructed into four essential components that operate in five significant socio-political arenas. These two models are then integrated into a set of four end-objectives of incorporation through cultural diversification. A course is then planned for the discovery of specific actions to employ in the diversification of individual organisations towards the transformation of the larger socio-cultural environment.

the principles of diversification

While diversity and its implications are vigorously debated in a wide variety of disciplines, applied discussion is sadly lacking. What is meant by “cultural diversification” often goes unclear. Consensus on a few guiding principles, however, is emerging and is discussed below.

The civic culture here proposed for Western postmodern cities assumes cultural *heterogeneity*. The project is a *transformative* one. It is a model of incorporation that places responsibility for systemic change in the hands of dominant social institutions, and does not require any cultural consensus other than on the principles of acceptance, participation and equity. Membership is based on a simple criterion of residency, and the participation of all residents in the definition and enjoyment of civic culture is not only encouraged, but actively sought.

Civic culture is conceived as the ever-changing aggregate and composite of *all* residents, *all* subcultures. The "myths of mainstream" are abandoned in favour of a more dynamic, active and pluralistic understanding of culture, identity, community and self. This recognition and encouragement of individual cultural freedom demands a more sensitive, flexible and varied approach to planning practice.

what it is, what it's not

Diversification of civic culture recalls elements of other civic traditions – most notably, republicanism, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. Certainly, these models of incorporation share a great deal in common, but some differences are significant and their discussion is engaged to further elaborate on the principles of diversification.

3 principles of diversification

acceptance of diversity – there is no mainstream. Cultural diversity is inherent to all subcultures, identities and communities. Culture, identity & community are *dynamic* processes, of which individuals possess *multiple* associations. Local civic culture is likewise a dynamic and pluralistic composite. This then requires that the common cultural basis of society only be a positive & meaningful regard for diversity and individual cultural freedom, and the sole criterion of membership, common residency.

incorporation – inclusion of all subcultures in local civic culture. Efforts are focused on the systemic transformation of established institutions to accommodate differences, so that all residents are able to opt-into the larger society. Active *participation* in the definition, expression & enjoyment of civic culture by all subcultures is pursued in the name of better planning, community-building and social justice.

equity – sometimes differential treatment is required to account for cultural differences and everyday inequalities. Multiple and diverse approaches & policies are thus the norm in practice. For the most part, differentiation should occur within more general structures and programmes for the benefit of community-building.

figure 14
three principles of diversification.

With **republicanism**, diversification shares an interest in justice as fairness, membership based on local residency, and community achieved through participation. The concept of fairness implied by diversification, however, differs from conventional republican and neo-republican thought of equality as equal access and equality before the law. Diversification allows for differential treatment when necessary to account for cultural differences and offset everyday inequalities. It supports a Rawlsian understanding of equality as *equity*.

Diversification is also suspicious of republican brands of communitarianism. Whereas many republicans stress singular loyalty to the state, and particularly, the city, as the appropriate expression of citizenship, diversification acknowledges that citizenship is multiple and dynamic, and that the local state is only one site of culture, identity and community among many. As Richard Rorty (1991b:195) warns, “the danger of re-enchanting the world [in the republican sense], is that it might interfere with the development of what Rawls calls ‘a social union of social unions,’... for it is hard to be both enchanted with one version of the world and tolerant of all the others.” Both republicanism *and* diversification actively pursue incorporation of the disenfranchised into local society through participation – the creation of an inclusive community of action. Republicans, however, tend to express participation as a matter of public duty, a civic virtue to be cultivated through legal obligation and public education. Their objective then is a form of **integration** – the adaptation of *citizens* to the established ways of local power.

Diversification efforts, on the other hand, focus on the systemic transformation of *institutions* to accommodate the continually changing diversity of residents. In the diversification project, the persistence of cultural differences is valued as a creative democratic force. This process then is also distinct from “**mainstreaming**” – in which non-mainstream groups are included only according to terms set by the dominant subculture. Through “mainstreaming,” more controversial elements are “watered-down” and certain members “left behind” in order to render the subculture more “palatable” to mainstream society (Vaid 1995). Many activists thus fear incorporation by any means as an attempt to “divide and conquer.” They believe that marginalized groups are better off operating from the fringe. The goal of diversification, however, is incorporation on one’s *own* terms through one’s direct participation in the negotiation of civic culture. The

principal onus is upon local institutions to adapt to the diversity of residents. Although intercultural collaboration is encouraged in the creation of local communities of action, no greater consensus is sought other than on the acceptance of diversity, encouragement of participation and pursuit of equity.

Some critics charge that acculturation in even the few basic principles of acceptance, participation and equity is an imposition of Western values. These principles are considered neither Western nor universal, but rather, a pragmatic response to the incredibly diverse cultural landscapes of postmodern cities. Tim May (2000:xi) elaborates:

we turn to human rights, not as a reflection of a universal human nature, but something to be achieved... this is not about the cultural imposition of western ideas... but the local conditions of their realization. Sensitivity to context... comes in the recognition that there is no universal and autonomous human nature to which we can appeal, but the frailty and incompleteness of the human condition. Difference is... recognized without resort to a universal humanity, but relativism and its accompanying retreat to indifference is checked by human rights becoming something that is to be achieved, not assumed, against such a background.

Diversification of civic culture “fits” the local conditions of postmodern cities in the West. Given an increasingly heterogeneous cultural landscape, diversification is the most appropriate model here for civic culture (see also Kymlicka 1995, Rorty 1991b).

With **multiculturalism**,¹⁴ diversification shares a commitment to the recognition and encouragement of differences, and an understanding that in the face of hegemony equality must necessarily be pursued as *equity*. A common culture is not asked of residents for their membership in the polity. There is a strong belief that there can be “unity in diversity.”

¹⁴ The following is but a brief discussion of diversification in relation to current debates on multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is a highly contested issue, and even as official Canadian policy, it remains rather ambiguous – evolving as its socio-political implications continue to be explored and negotiated. This thesis chooses to distinguish itself from this tradition and not dwell on these debates, for the following reasons: (a) to extend discussion of difference beyond multiculturalism's emphasis on ethnicity; (b) to extricate itself from an already quagmired debate where what is trying to be achieved in terms of better planning, community and social justice is often lost; and (c) to initiate a new conversation that focuses on the responsibility and *action* of society at the level of local organisations.

The two traditions part in opinion on the nature of “culture” and dependence on group representation. Current practices of multiculturalism are often criticised as entrenching static and constraining definitions of subcultural groups. Marginalisation is perpetuated as “individuals are slotted into pre-existing cultural categories without much option or choice; society is seen as a panorama of culturally different tiles locked into place by mainstream grout...[such that] diversity is defined as basically whatever isn’t mainstream” (Fleras & Elliott 2002:19). Labelled as minorities, **segregation** results as people who are “different” become permanent outsiders to the real practice of power (Bissoondath 1994, Fleras & Elliott 2002, Harles 1998). Much of current multicultural and diversity practice thus concentrates on the development of alternative arenas of citizenship for those disenfranchised (Young 1990). While these efforts are certainly important in the present hegemonic environment, diversification works towards making *all* arenas of civic culture inclusive. The diversification project encourages equity *without* segregation, believing there to be



figure 15
hands. Catherine Ivison, 2001.

tremendous benefits in terms of community-building for differentiation to occur, as much as possible, *within* more general programmes and structures.

Ruth Lister (2000:36) borrows from A. Phillip’s argument that multiculturalism and diversity practiced as “group representation is not the answer to the problems of democracy and difference for three main reasons: the difficulties of establishing which groups are most pertinent to political identity; the dangers of freezing identities and of ‘group closure’ so that change and the development of wider solidarities are blocked; and the near-impossibility of achieving accountability.”

Augie Fleras and Jean Leonard Elliott (2002) argue that current multicultural practice is a corruption of the intended theory. They reconstruct a notion of "civic multiculturalism"¹⁵ (2002:67-8,111-6) that corresponds more closely to the principles of incorporation through diversification that are proposed in this thesis:

Official multiculturalism is not just for ethnic minorities... it is also aimed at mainstream structures and values. Multiculturalism sets out to transform the mainstream by modifying public perceptions of diversity, by removing discriminatory barriers, both attitudinal and structural, and by creating a positive social climate in which equality and diversity can coexist.

The diversification project attempts to break down the separation of mainstream from non-mainstream, Wil Kymlicka's (Kymlicka 1995) preferential consideration of "national" over "immigrant," and "ethnocultural" over "social". Whereas current multicultural and diversity practice seems to ossify stereotypes (Crang 1998:116) and unfairly oblige individuals to be categorised (Faulks 2000, Lister 2000), diversification recognises culture, identity and community as contested, dynamic, overlapping and negotiable. Both collective cultural rights and individual cultural freedom are pursued equally, the goal being the inclusion of all residents in the definition of what is local, indigenous and "natural" (O'Brien & Howard 1998, Soysal 1994).

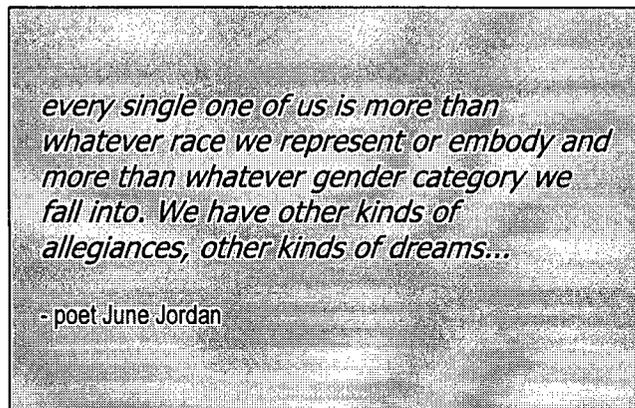


figure 16
every single one of us is more.
quoted in Lister (2000:35).

This is not to say that incorporation through diversification might not involve *some* compromise on the part of subcultures. Diversification does not mean a descent into pure **individualism**, on the one hand, or **cultural relativism**, on the other. The

¹⁵ This is also the current policy articulated by the Canadian Government (Canadian Heritage 2000). Castles and Miller (1998:xii) remark that worldwide "there is... growing realisation that multiculturalism may not just mean allowing colourful folkloric practices, but also accepting the possibility of cultural and institutional change." This has often been greeted with in trepidation.

project values the important role of collective identity in the definition, acculturation, politicisation and support of individuals. It only argues that collective rights need to be tempered by the protection of individual cultural freedom (see Kymlicka 1995). Gerard Delanty (2000:131-2) elaborates:

An integrated personal identity may provide the individual with the means of survival and coping with choice. However, a strong collective identity can present problems in accommodating diversity... there is likely to be the danger that the collective identity will become too focused on hostility, that the self can be affirmed only by the denial of otherness... In situations where personal identities are weak and collective identities are strong, there is likely to be a real danger of major cultural pathologies emerging.

Therefore, diversification does not imply blind cultural relativism – an absolute faith in the integrity and desirability of all subcultures, identities and communities. Many subcultural communities are guilty of intolerance, exclusion and internal suppression (Faulks 2000, Kymlicka 1995, Lister 2000, Rorty 1998b:189). Diversification is meant to penetrate the ranks of *all* subcultures and move beyond the old, oppressive systems of “either-or” identities (Landry 2000, Powell 1999). All communities are considered works in progress for the collective achievement of social justice *and* the liberation of individual expression (Kingwell 2000).

The disassociation of civic culture from membership in a particular subculture echoes the promises of **cosmopolitanism**. The diversification project shares with cosmopolitanism an acceptance of global cultural forces as a growing reality and creative force. In such a transnational environment, citizenship should be granted on the basis of residency, not according to birth or membership in a certain subculture (Faulks 2000:52-3, Friedmann 2002b, Soysal 1994).

*Be as white as you want to
Be as black as you want to
Be as brown as you want to
Don't let anybody stop you*

*Be as straight as you want to
Be as gay as you want to
You can wait if you want to
We all need something to hold on to*

*Be as shy as you want to
Be as loud as you want to
Be as small as you want to
Don't let anybody stop you*

figure 17
be as. (refrain).
by Prozzac (Levine & McCollum 2000)

The diversification project parts company with most cosmopolitan theorists on the question as to where incorporation should occur. Many cosmopolitans emphasize the

opportunities for citizenship in global civil society and the emergence of a sort of global civic culture. While diversification values the global arena, it considers it to be only one among many. Similar to civic cosmopolitan theorists (Delanty 2000, Sandercock 1998), the diversification project attempts to root the movement in the *local*, where most individuals still conduct the majority of their lives and encounter barriers to their inclusion.

Diversification, moreover, does not have a unique faith in civil society. Many cosmopolitan and radical theorists (Friedmann 2002a, Holston

1998, Putnam 1995, Sandercock 1998, Walzer 1992) argue that the best promise for the participation of non-mainstream groups exists *outside* formal power structures. Civil society, however, is not unlike other more established institutions of civic culture. Many grassroots organisations are guilty themselves of intolerance and the perpetuation of cultural hegemony (Faulks 2000, Kymlicka 1995). For incorporation to be meaningful, diversification must occur in *all* realms of civic culture. It is not sufficient for certain subcultures to remain on the fringes of society. The diversification project has not lost hope in the ability to transform more established institutions. Government, civil society, business, the media and families are *all* essential facilitators within a system that requires *multiple* opportunities for discursive democracy (Habermas 1996, Walzer 1992:99).

The operation of culture, identity and community on many different levels and in many different arenas is seen by diversification as an extremely positive development (Faulks

the giraffe & the elephant

The giraffe looked around. "Okay, I see the problem. The doorway is too narrow. We'll have to make you smaller. There's an aerobics studio near here. If you'd take some classes there, we could get you down to size."

"Maybe," the elephant said, looking unconvinced.. "But to tell you the truth, I'm not sure that a house designed for a giraffe will ever really work for an elephant, not unless there are some major changes."

figure 18
the giraffe & the elephant.
R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr. (1999:4).

2000). As Tim May (2000:xiii) points out, the danger of one allegiance dominating over all others is thus avoided: ¹⁶

A recognition of the need for citizenship to operate at [many] levels is a response to democracy now operating at different levels... Inclusion then also operates at different levels and reflections upon cultural traditions, as well as celebrations of their past, exist alongside each other. [This serves] as a check upon nationalism, as well as [impetus for the development of] public spaces of communication in which pluralism may flourish and communities grow. In being context bound and yet also context transcendent, the problems of liberal allusions to a false universalism and retreats into the particularity of worldviews may be avoided.

Cultural diversification involves a significant re-conceptualisation of ourselves, our cultures, identities and communities. Static, exclusive definitions are replaced by more dynamic and inclusive interpretations. The unjustified fear of "cultural chaos" is confronted. As Richard Rorty (Rorty 1998a) argues, the diversification project is in part an attempt at a "sentimental education... That sort of education gets people of different kins sufficiently well acquainted with one another that they are less tempted to think of those different from themselves as only quasi-human. The goal of this sort of manipulation of sentiment is to expand the reference of the terms 'our kind of people' and 'people like us.' "

what is civic culture

Civic culture comprises "ways of living together," the principles and codes of behaviour that govern interactions, or lack of interaction, between individuals and groups in society. It decides who has status, formal or informal, ¹⁷ to take part in the definition, expression and enjoyment of what is "local." Civic culture is the foundation of citizenship, informing its realisation, its practice, and determining its extent, content and depth. ¹⁸

¹⁶ See also Delanty (2000:131-2).

¹⁷ As James Holston (1998:50-51) argues, "formal citizenship refers to membership in a political community - in modern history, preeminently, the nation-state [or legal membership]. Substantive [or informal] citizenship concerns the array of civil, political, and social rights available to people... in many cases formal citizenship is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for substantive citizenship."

¹⁸ Keith Faulks (2000:7) clarifies what is meant by "extent", "content" and "depth" by asking these corresponding questions: (a) "Who should be regarded as a citizen and what criteria, if any, are legitimate in excluding some from the benefits of citizenship?"; (b) "What should be the *content* of citizenship in terms of rights, duties and obligations?"; and

This relationship between civic culture and citizenship is useful. For, although very little has been written directly about civic culture, countless volumes have been devoted to the discussion of citizenship.

Citizenship theory can therefore be enlisted in the development of a conceptual framework of civic culture – a better understanding of the intended target of diversification. If, as according to T.H. Marshall (1964), citizenship is “full membership in the community,” civic culture determines what constitutes membership and what makes membership meaningful and complete.

Informed by a review of this research on citizenship, civic culture can be deconstructed into four overlapping and interdependent aspects: the enjoyment of benefits, participation, discourse and definition. These components are presented as a sort of progression – an evolution in the understanding of incorporation and an increasing depth in terms of the needs and implications of diversity.



figure 19
components of civic culture.

benefits

Historically, liberal theorists have expressed citizenship as a “bundle of rights” conferred on an individual by legal status as a member of a polity (Arendt 1958b, Aristotle 2000, Kymlicka 1995, Marshall 1964). In Western democratic societies, standard citizenship rights include civil rights (legal rights, right to freedom, right to enter contracts, etc.), political rights (freedom of association, assembly, speech, etc.), social rights (welfare

(c) "How demanding or extensive should our identity as citizens be and to what extent should it take precedence over other sources of social identity and competing claims we have upon our time?"

rights: housing, health, education, employment, pensions, etc.), and cultural rights (right to cultural preservation, language, etc.).¹⁹ Civic culture determines which rights and benefits comprise a "bundle," who is entitled to them, and how they are distributed.

In postmodern cities, rights are becoming less and less tied to the formal status of citizenship. The result of pragmatic necessity and tremendous political pressure, resident non-citizens have achieved many of these formerly reserved privileges (Brubaker 1992, Soysal 1994). Citizenship rights, moreover, are no longer exercised exclusively within government structures. Civil society organisations, business, the media and families are increasingly important arena in which civil, political, social and cultural rights are actualised (Brown 1997, Dorsey 1986, Holston 1998, Walzer 1992).

The ability to exercise citizenship rights is a major determinant of life chances (Brubaker 1992:180-1). Institutions, however, grant access to benefits at their own "pleasure" (Arendt 1958b), making *de jure* or *de facto* choices to include or exclude. Meaningful citizenship is thus more readily available to certain subcultures over others, rendering constitutional equality an unfulfilled promise (DiversityInc.com 2002, O'Brien & Howard 1998, Vogel 1994).

Since local institutions of civic culture comprise the essential opportunities for actualising citizenship rights, the diversification project requires that they be increasingly open to *all* residents. In order to provide meaningful access, institutions must pursue policies of equity by developing services that are adequately differentiated, constructed to meet particular needs and circumstances (Kymlicka 1995, Young 1989). For the most part, this should occur within more general programmes and structures such that the benefits of community-building are equally pursued.

participation

Republican (Beiner 1995, Galston 1991, Rousseau 1968, van Steenberg 1994a) and radical theorists (Barber 1984, Barber 1998, Faulks 2000, Pagé 1997, Putnam 1995) alike emphasize participation as the oft-neglected, but quintessential, expression of

¹⁹ The articulation of cultural rights as a basic right is more recent. See Kymlicka (1995) and the World Commission on Culture and Development (1996).

citizenship, and thereby, community empowerment (Rocha 1997, Young 1990). Rather than a passive enjoyment of rights, citizenship is regarded as an *activity* (Arendt 1958a, Passerin d'Entrèves 2000) – along the lines of Aristotle's (2000) conception of citizens as "political beings" and Sartre's edict of "we are what we *do*." Participation is sometimes *obliged* (as in showing up for work, paying taxes or serving on a jury) and sometimes *voluntary* (as in running for political office, donating to a charity or attending a parent-teacher meeting) (Delanty 2000). Civic culture determines the level, nature and extent of individual and collective participation.

Advocates of civic participation appeal to the promise of direct democracy – inclusive participation lauded as the means to achieve diversification in all other components of civic culture: rights, membership and discourse. According to this line of argument, individual participants serve as representatives, advocates, for their subcultural communities. A greater diversity of participants would then automatically result in differentiated rights and a more varied public discourse as a greater diversity of interests are pursued at the negotiating table and as non-mainstream groups gain access to the means of public expression and communication. At the same time, a certain degree of a shared stake in the *local* and intercultural peace-building is cultivated as subcultural groups experience the more frequent practice of working together in collaboration (Rorty 1998a:176, Saunders 1999).

The impact of participation can sometimes be overstated. Although important in its own right, a more inclusive participation does not *automatically* lead to the diversification of rights, public discourse and membership in the local. Firstly, direct participation of *all* residents in *all* arenas of civic culture is impossible, and the compromise, participation through democratic representation, is not always adequate in serving the cause of diversity. An individual representative cannot be expected to understand and advocate the interests of *all* members of his or her respective subculture. Subcultural groups are inherently heterogeneous, their interests dynamic, and their boundaries unclear (Delanty 2000:45). Participation through representation, therefore, often results in the "mainstreaming" of subcultural interests as they are oversimplified (Vaid 1995).²⁰ Much depends on the skill, motivation and accountability of individual representatives in

²⁰ See previous discussion of "mainstreaming" in this chapter.

negotiating existing power structures (Angeles 2000). Many things happen at the negotiating table that interfere with a participant's ability to serve as an effective advocate for a particular subculture. Some of these processes – such as empathy, role-playing, compromise and collaboration – are not always negative (Innes & Booher 1999, Saunders 1999).

The primary objective of more inclusive participation is the actual *engagement* of residents – contributions to decision-making, society-formation and the creation of what is local. Presently, however, meaningful ways to contribute are limited. Whether offered by government, civil society organisations, business, the media or families, many opportunities to participate in decision-making amount to little more than token consultation or exercises in public relations (Arnstein 1969). The diversification project actively seeks to make participation more meaningful and more inclusive. This translates into concerted outreach to diverse communities, and the development of effective and accessible means of contribution (Forester 1989, Sandercock 1998, Young 1989).

discourse

If participation is the *act* of engaging in society, discourse is the *product* of this engagement – the stories, discussions, debate; images, symbols, representations; ambitions, concerns and collective undertakings. Discourse comprises a society's collective knowledge; its built landscape; its arts, entertainment and

media; its politics, negotiations and talk around the water cooler. These elements are engaged in constant dialogue. In this conversation, civic culture determines whose

voices are heard and at what volume. It establishes whose discourse is presented and regarded as local and collective.

Absence or exclusion from public discourse is tantamount to a denial of citizenship, rendering one socially invisible, politically powerless, a “non-person” in the eyes of



figure 20
*rick hansen raising awareness
of spinal cord injury.*
photo: Rick Hansen Foundation.

many. As Hannah Arendt (1958a:50) argues, this is why the politics of recognition are so crucial:

For us, appearance - something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves - constitutes reality. Compared with the reality which comes from being seen and heard, even the greatest forces of intimate life - the passions of the heart, the thoughts of the mind, the delights of the senses - lead an uncertain, shadowy kind of existence unless and until they are transformed, deprivatized and de-individualized, as it were, into a shape to fit them for public appearance...

Many communicative theorists (Forester 2000, Habermas 1996, Mouffe 1992a) thus consider discourse to be the essence of citizenship: ²¹ it is actual conversation that comprises culture, identity and community. Although many of these theorists are proponents of direct public participation (Arendt 1958a, Forester 1989, Habermas 1996, Passerin d'Entrèves 2000, Sandercock 1998), a diversity of actual utterances is more important than who says them. With a more aggressive advocacy approach to planning (Angeles 2000, Davidoff 1996), therefore, different voices can be brought to the table and discourse can be diversified without direct participation. The public as a whole benefits from just being privy to, and living amidst, the expanded conversation.

Diversification aims to open up the dialogue, so that local discourse reflects the diversity of *all* residents. Since there is no mainstream, no cultural consensus, a diversified discourse is essential for democratically responsive planning. Rights can be differentiated and participation made inclusive, but these achievements might still not expand the limited expression of what is local. Certain voices are simply quieter, easily stifled, confined or lost in the cacophony.

The diversification of discourse requires concerted effort on the part of planners for different voices to emerge, different stories to be appreciated, and different concerns to be addressed (Habermas 1996, Sandercock 2002, Young 1995). To be meaningful, freedom of expression must be supported by the creation of safe, accessible forums with attentive audiences (Forester 2000). If well received, the diversification of discourse becomes self-perpetuating. Diverse discourse leads to more discourse, and potentially,

²¹ See also Kingwell (2000:21-2). Most communicative planning theorists focus almost exclusively on oral and written "public" discourse (i.e., political discourse), ignoring the more popular - and extremely significant - forms of cultural discourse. The latter is more the topic of cultural and media theorists such as Acland (1995), Chomsky (1988), Frye (1997) and Crang (1998).

wider and more diverse participation. Creating a welcome environment through gender inclusive language, rainbow flags and multicultural images can in fact lead to much more than the modification of superficial trappings – they invite conversation.

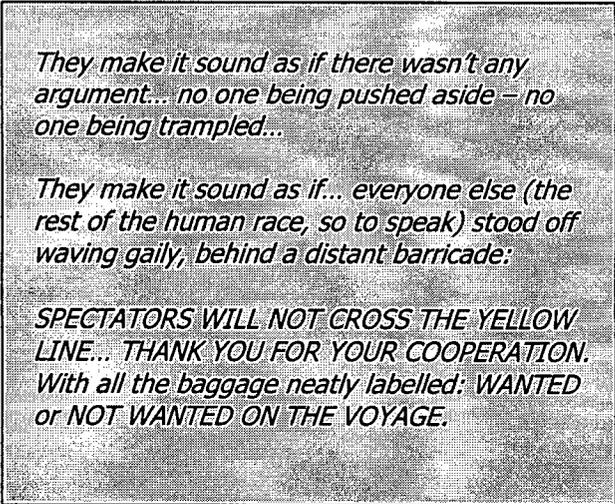
definition

Perhaps, at its most fundamental level, civic culture is about how a society sees itself and is perceived by others. This definition determines who feels a sense of belonging and ownership in local institutions, to what degree, and at what cost. Having a share in the definition of what is *local*, what constitutes “us,” would be the crowning achievement of incorporation. It is also, of course, the least tangible and the most elusive.

The cultural exclusivity of how we conceive community and its institutions is so systematic that it is often no longer perceptible. So immersed are Western democratic societies in the rhetoric of liberalism that exclusion is difficult for most to acknowledge. Cultural hegemony constructs a definition of society that assumes primary ownership by a certain “us” who comprise the “norm.” Inclusion then becomes an act of “generosity” in the accommodation of the “other.”

Diversification is different, perhaps subtly, but significantly. Diversification of civic culture involves a fundamental change in how we perceive ourselves – our cultures, identities and communities. It means the inclusion of all resident subcultures, past-present-and-future, in the actual *definition* of society and its institutions. As Keith Faulks (2000)

argues, this requires the “de-culturalisation” of citizenship – the disassociation of local identity and membership in any particular subculture (see also Soysal 1994). Reconstituted definitions must be open and flexible enough to adapt to the increasing and constantly shifting diversity of the cultural landscape. The inevitability of social



They make it sound as if there wasn't any argument... no one being pushed aside – no one being trampled...

They make it sound as if... everyone else (the rest of the human race, so to speak) stood off waving gaily, behind a distant barricade:

SPECTATORS WILL NOT CROSS THE YELLOW LINE... THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION. With all the baggage neatly labelled: WANTED or NOT WANTED ON THE VOYAGE.

figure 21
as if there wasn't any argument.
Timothy Findley (1984:3).

distinctions must be recognised without tolerance for tendencies toward social exclusion. The sole bases for the definition of "local" then becomes common residency and a meaningful respect for its inherent cultural diversity.

A share in the definition of local society and its institutions does not necessitate a republican brand of patriotism. It does not ask for the abandonment or subjugation of other sources of identity. Some identification with various local institutions is desired to provide the basis for effective communities of action – but only as it can coexist with other identities.²² The complexity of human experience with its multiple associations is not only acknowledged, but celebrated (Faulks 2000, Heater 1990). The unifying factor in the definition of "local" resides in having the common project of living in the same place and the pursuit of certain other collective enterprises – the most fundamental of which may be the achievement of social justice (Kingwell 2000).

The postmodern exercise instructs us in the possibility of re-creation (Rorty 1998a). There is nothing predetermined about the definition of our communities. As Mark Kingwell (2000:20-21) eloquently argues:

We should not fall prey to the self-contradictory argument that we can only speak of community if we already have a community we can point to. Human communities are not best imagined as exercises in picking out pre-existing essences or identifying clusters of in-groupers. Instead they are discursive achievements, processes of seeking and finding conversational partners and forging with them, painfully and by increments, the shared public institutions that will work for us. We are what we make of ourselves... [Local] citizenship is not the only way we can pursue our commonalities and needs, not the only way to entertain our longings and dreams. But it is a crucial one; and, when linked to the deep insight that we owe a duty of justice to our fellow citizens, the concept of citizenship sheds its dark origins in the project of *keeping people out* and, reversing the field, becomes a matter of *bringing people in* - not loving them or liking them or even agreeing with them, much of the time, but making room for them to be at home too.

²² This coexistence may not always be a harmonious one. The reality of multiple cultural memberships results in frequent conflict between competing interests *within* an individual (Flathman 1995). Negotiating cultural paradox and occasional internal dissonance is not new, nor unhealthy, in the conduct of a democratic, reflective and responsible existence (Castiglione 2000).

And so, the target is in view. Diversification of civic culture involves the diversification of benefits, participation, discourse and definition in society. As a model of incorporation, achievement can be measured in full and meaningful inclusion of alienated groups in each of these components of increasing cultural depth and implication.

who does civic culture

As stated previously, planners who define, shape and cultivate civic culture work across a wide range of organisations. Cultural planning is defined broadly, by necessity. The essential opportunities to actualise civic culture – the enjoyment of benefits, participation, discourse and definition, occur at increasingly multiple sites (Beiner 1995, Faulks 2000, Heater 1990, Patton 1997). The separation between public, private and non-profit has blurred significantly (Brown 1997, Faulks 2000, Knox & Pinch 2000:130-5,210-2, Passerin d'Entrèves & Vogel 2000).²³ There is growing recognition that public responsibility is shared across institutions, even those with interests once considered “private” (DiversityInc.com 2002, Gross 1998, Liebes & Curran 1998, Wilson & Gutiérrez 1985, World Commission on Culture & Development 1996).

Government, civil society, business, the media and individual families are

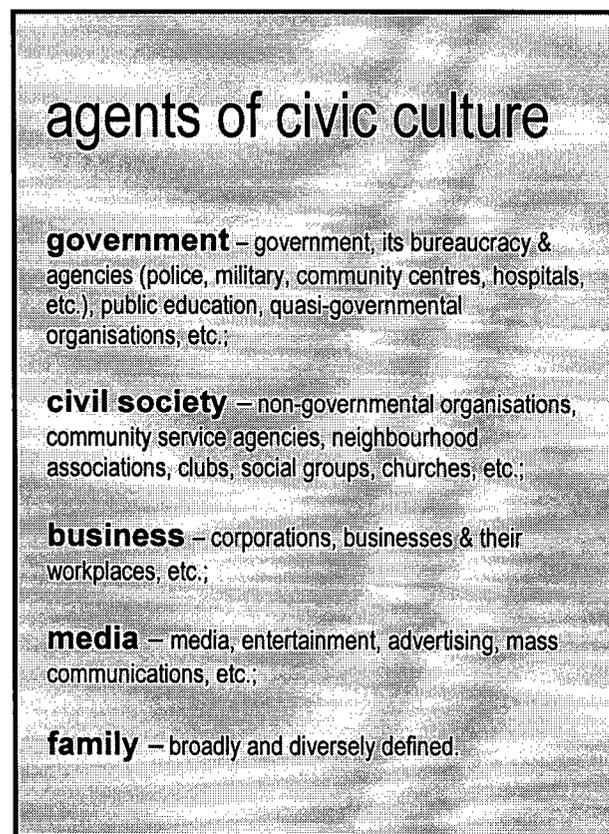


figure 22
agents of civic culture.

²³ This historic separation between “public” and “private” has served cultural hegemony in providing justification for the devaluation of women and children, for turning a blind eye to domestic abuse and violence, and for forcing homosexuals to stay in the closet (Cohen 2000, Désert 1997, Lister 2000, Vogel 1994). It has also allowed for the commitment of gross injustice by business and civil society.

all important agencies and arenas of civic culture, where citizens are shaped and reproduced (van Gunsteren 1994). In order for civic culture to be truly transformed, for cultural inclusion to be complete and meaningful, diversification must permeate widely and deeply.

As Charles Acland (Acland 1995:18) observes, “hegemonic activity takes place in a number of different locations – in law, the market, the family, the schools – and on a variety of different ideological, cultural, economic, political, and moral issues. The state should be seen as an agent (though certainly one among many) with a vested interest in this activity as well as a site at which these debates and their stakes are struggled over.” James Lull (Lull 2000:50) concurs:

Hegemony extends the systemic logic of image systems to achieve ideological saturation. The mass-mediated dominant ideology is corroborated and strengthened by an interlocking system of information-distributing agencies and taken-for-granted communication practices that permeate every corner of social and cultural reality. Messages supportive of status quo ideology emanate from schools, businesses, political organizations, trade unions, religious groups, the military, and the mass media. They all dovetail together. *This inter-articulating, mutually reinforcing process of ideological influence is the essence of hegemony.* Society's most entrenched and powerful institutions - which all depend in one way or another on the same sources of economic support - fundamentally agree with each other. Hegemony therefore depends on widespread circulation and social acceptance of the dominant ideology.

The diversification project must, therefore, engage all sectors as partners in a common project towards the achievement of better planning, community-building and social justice. What cultural diversification will mean for each institution in each sector, how it is implemented and to what extent, will require further research and experience.

As a symphony is the concert of many voices, revolution is the reform of many actions. This thesis concentrates, therefore, on the discovery of strategies that can be implemented on an agency-



figure 23
this is public property.
graffiti by squatters at Woodward's Building,
Vancouver, BC. Photo by Marwan 2002.

by-agency level to diversify their respective *institutional* cultures. The hope is that the culmination of numerous small efforts will be rewarded with the transformation of the whole.

a framework for cultural diversification

The framework for cultural diversification constructed in this thesis can be enlisted as an analytical, prescriptive *and* evaluative tool. It provides the basis for a useful conceptual model of incorporation, a programme for action and a yardstick for the measurement of progress – such things that are currently lacking in the literature on diversity planning.

Analytically, the framework is meant to provide a way of thinking about incorporation from the perspective of institutional change – incorporation through the transformation of civic culture and its component organisational cultures. The model implies that incorporation of any subcultural group advances as agents of civic culture are able to differentiate their benefits, diversify their scope and means of participation, vary their discourse and broaden their definitions to accommodate that particular group's differences.

the diversification project

Government, civil society, business, the media & individual families should continuously work towards their cultural diversification, along all axes of identity, through the pursuit of:

differentiated benefits – benefits, opportunities & services offered by the organisation should be diversified within its programmes and structures according to the principles of equity.

inclusive participation – meaningful & widespread participation in the organisation should be actively sought. This requires that the means of participation is diversified such that all can readily participate.

varied discourse – the actual expressions (images, symbols, debate, etc.) generated & presented by the organisation should be diversified to give voice to the concerns of *all* residents, to engage *all* residents in the conversation.

inclusive definition – how an organisation sees itself, and how others perceive it, should be disassociated from any particular subculture. A shared sense of ownership & belonging by *all* residents should be actively sought.

figure 24
the diversification project.

As a prescriptive framework, the diversification project requires that agencies of government, civil society, business, media and the family adopt the principles of diversity: an acceptance of difference, a desire for incorporation and a pursuit of equity. These principles should serve as a guide in shaping civic culture through the transformation of individual organisational cultures. Specifically, the end-objectives of cultural diversification are then the achievement of increasingly *differentiated* benefits, *inclusive* participation, *varied* discourse and *inclusive* definitions.

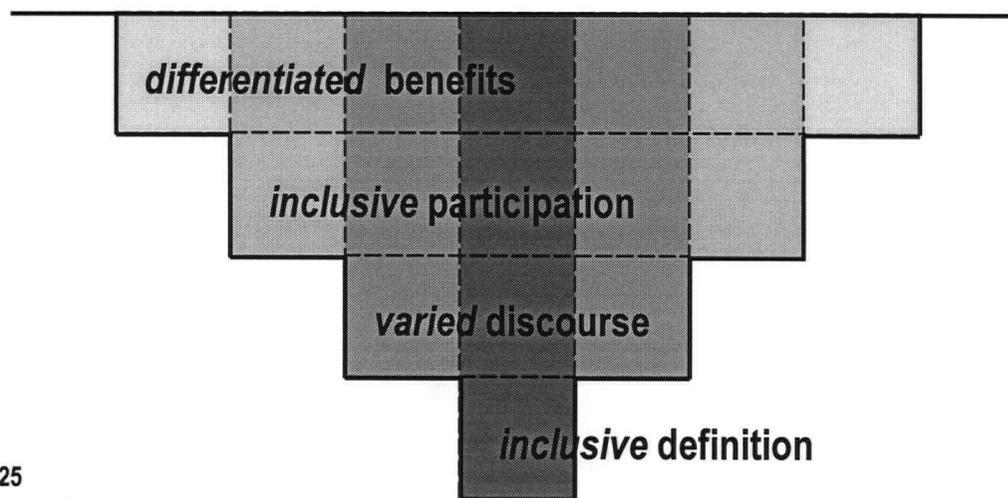


figure 25
a framework for cultural diversification.

These components are presented, in part, as a progression that increases in depth towards the very essence of civic and organisational cultures: their definition of themselves and their perception by others. That is not to say, that these transformations occur – or should be enacted – in a linear fashion, nor that they are even *distinct* arenas of action. The categories presented in the framework overlap significantly; they are inter-related and interdependent. A particular action, for example, might serve both the achievement of more inclusive participation *and* more varied discourse. Evaluatively, however, it does suggest that communities and organisations, which are more culturally diverse, will likely demonstrate a greater and more meaningful penetration into the depths of this framework in terms of a greater number of axes of cultural diversity (e.g. – ability, age, ethnicity, gender, health, sexuality and socio-economic situation).

It is hoped that this thesis, through further development and application of its framework, will generate more discussion on the neglected issue of incorporation from the perspective of organisational change and the remedy of systemic cultural sources of

exclusion. The questions generated by this dialogue can then be posed to practitioners already working towards the cultural diversification of their organisations and their larger socio-cultural environment. These investigations into present and future practice would provide further enrichment, elaboration and revision of the developed framework; test it against real world experience as an analytical, prescriptive and evaluative tool; and contribute to a growing inventory of "best practices" in diversification.

flushing out the details

In the majority of these investigations, ²⁴ a qualitative approach will be in order since the goal is a complex, holistic exploration of a phenomenon; variables are many but not easily identified; context is important and a controlled setting is not possible and/or desired; and active learning with participants is sought (Creswell 1998). As Berg (1998) and Creswell (1998) note, whereas quantitative research is suited to answer *why* and *how much*, qualitative research is simply better designed to investigate questions of *what, how, when* and *where*.

Since practice in the field of cultural diversification is really only now emerging, a case study approach with phenomenological overtones, based primarily on interviews with practitioners, will be particularly effective. Although the developed framework will provide useful direction, the exact scope, nature and richness of what can be learned from practitioners cannot be fully anticipated. Most practitioners have not had much time to reflect on their experiences and much practice remains undocumented and unstudied. Discussion is also hindered by a lack of clarity and consistency in what is meant by "culture", "identity", "community", "diversity" and "diversification."

In many cases, the interviews will constitute important "meaning-making" sessions. As a research method, interviews have tremendous potential for responsiveness and creativity (Berg 1998:59). Ambiguous terms can be immediately clarified and unforeseen lines of inquiry pursued. The researcher and the occasion itself assist in the practitioner's reconstruction and examination of his or her experiences. The framework then not only provides guidance to the researcher, but also presents the subject with an

²⁴ One notable exception would be in the enlistment of the framework for evaluative purposes. Here, a more quantitative method that measures success in diversification against selected indicators might be more effective.

occasion to reflect and perhaps some new ways of thinking. If planners should strive for a more accountable and conscientious practice (Forester 1989, Friedmann 1987, Sandercock 1998), then there is certainly mutual benefit to the interview process.

Context will also be significant. Although some general strategies and principles will be certainly discovered, it is reasonable to assume that some practices that have proven effective for one organisation might not work for another – especially of a different size and/or sector. A more quantitative approach – one based, for example, on whether and to what extent a particular set of strategies identified in the literature is practiced – would most likely fail to capture the richness of these experiences, their nuances and unanticipated offerings.

Since interviews are creative dynamic processes – malleable, dependent on effective interpersonal communication and subject to much interpretation – triangulation of research from different sources in each case and between cases is particularly important (Berg 1998, Creswell 1998). Practitioners have a natural interest in presenting their practice in a positive light. The researcher is similarly biased, and with so much latitude, must be wary of providing too much direction towards a desired outcome. Open-ended questions will mitigate this to some extent.

An explicit statement of biases and reflective conduct on the part of the researcher are essential... hence, the rather self-indulgent preface and the current discussion of methodological implications. It must also be clearly stated that the analytical framework itself is constructed upon certain presumptions that will directly shape future investigations. Indeed, that is its purpose.

in search of strategies

Prescriptively, the framework thus far is a list of *ends* in search of *means*. The model, however, can be immediately enlisted as an analytical tool to navigate in the discovery of specific strategies. Inquiry focuses on the finer details of *how*, the fundamental question being:

What specific strategies & practices are effective in the pursuit of a more culturally diversified organisation?

Elaborated by the developed framework, the questions then become:

What specific measures or actions are effective in:

- (a) diversifying the benefits & services offered by an organisation?**
- (b) making participation in an organisation more active & inclusive?**
- (c) varying the discourse engaged by an organisation?**
- (d) re-defining an organisation more inclusively?**

Some complementary lines of inquiry include: (a) What do practitioners mean by diversification? (b) Why is diversification considered important to various organisations? Why are organisations pursuing diversification? (c) What specific difficulties & challenges are encountered in the pursuit of a more culturally diversified organisation? How are these difficulties & challenges overcome? (d) Is diversification an explicit and official goal of organisations? Does this matter? What institutional support is given to these projects? and (e) What other factors are important for success in the cultural diversification of organisations?

An interview schedule emerges to guide in the discovery of “*how to.*”²⁵ These questions can be posed to practitioners, who are engaged in the ongoing cultural diversification of their organisations, in search of effective practices and the advancement of a prescriptive programme.

a first step

The thesis now embarks upon a single case study of an organisation in Vancouver, Canada – a sample application of the framework that is intended to: (1) illustrate the use of the developed model as an analytical tool, (2) provide some enrichment, possible revision and elaboration of the framework, and (3) begin to contribute to an inventory of “best practices” in diversification. In part, the study is undertaken as a test of the framework: first, as an analytical tool to solicit information, and secondly, as an organising structure for the presentation of recommendations. The study is meant to be *illustrative*, not comprehensive or authoritative.

²⁵ See Appendix.

The Greater Vancouver region on the southwest coast of Canada is an interesting environment for the exploration of emerging practice in cultural diversification. Canada is increasingly urban with over 80% of its population now living in large cities (Statistics Canada, 2001 Census). These urban centres are increasingly complex socio-cultural landscapes – Greater Vancouver exhibiting particularly intense postmodern cultural conditions (Brown 1997, Dorcey 1986, Edgington & Hutton 2002, Hutton 1998): tremendous growth in population and settlement; increasingly globalised immigration, communications and cultural influences; dramatic post-industrial social and economic change; growing assertions in the politics of recognition; and a proliferation in the number and complexity of arenas for the practice of civic culture.

As Edgington and Hutton report (2002), one third of Greater Vancouver residents are international immigrants. The region has the highest percentage of recent non-English minorities in Canada and 30% of residents speak a language other than English as their mother tongue. That number is even higher, 50%, in core municipalities such

as Vancouver proper and the City of Richmond. Vancouver has relatively large and significant subcultural populations – including prominent gay, lesbian, Chinese and South Asian communities – living in rather mixed socio-economic neighbourhoods. As in most North American societies, the proportion of seniors is steadily increasing, as is concern for alienated youth, the impoverishment of First Nations people and a growing gap between rich and poor.

Response from local organisations to the region’s inherent and increasing diversity has been surprisingly recent. A commitment to cultural diversification was only borne during the last two decades, coinciding with the experience of large-scale immigration from the Pacific Rim and self-identification as a “world city” (Edgington & Hutton 2002, Winders 2000). To date, the availability and accessibility of services vary significantly for different

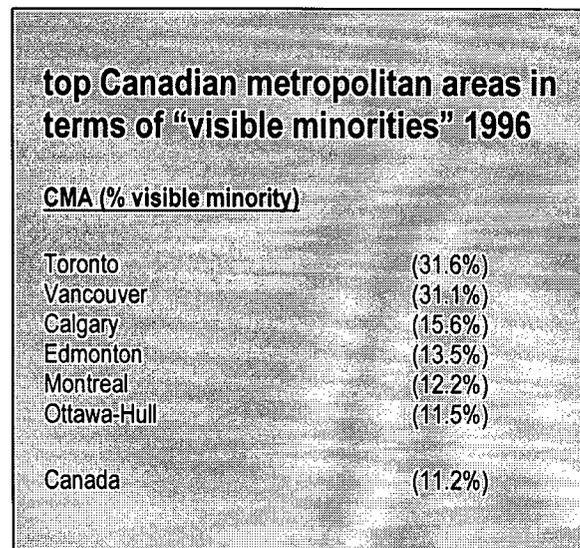


figure 26
top canadian metropolitan areas - “visible minorities”
(Mercer 2000)

groups across the region (Edgington et al. 2001, Edgington & Hutton 2002). Inequalities based on ability, age, ethnicity, gender, health, sexuality and socio-economic situation are still widely experienced within local institutions and arenas of citizenship (Bellett 1999, Bouthillette 1997, Creese & Peterson 1996, Duncan & Duncan 1984, Winders 2000). Civic culture is still largely based on a white middle class, heterosexual male idea of mainstream (Bouthillette 1997, Duncan & Duncan 1984, Hiebert & Ley 2001).²⁶

Vancouver and other Canadian cities present a unique opportunity for the diversification of civic culture. Canada is a self-recognised country of immigration with a strong tradition for collective cultural rights and a relatively low demand for singular allegiance. The country boasts a seemingly flexible cultural identity that has resulted from a long history of cultural uncertainty, debate and compromise – an ongoing experience of strong regionalisms and sensitive socio-cultural relations. A constant bombardment of American pop-culture – combined with aboriginal, Québécois and other struggles for cultural recognition and preservation – has further heightened awareness of cultural issues.

As a result, cultural planning and diversity have had a very long history of deliberate practice. Officially multicultural and bilingual (operationally *multilingual* in many instances), democratic and protective of cultural expression, however, Canada is still just beginning to understand and actualise the full implications of such aspirations.

Collingwood Neighbourhood House was selected for this first case study in consultation with experienced practitioners of cultural diversification. The non-profit community services organisation is regarded in the field as a model of innovative and successful practice. It also matched other selection criteria considered important for the purposes of this study: intent to serve a local community in Greater Vancouver, control over its own policy and practice, and an attempt to diversify along several axes of cultural diversity (ability, age, ethnicity, gender, health, sexuality and/or socio-economic situation).

Interviews structured according to the developed schedule of questions were conducted with three key people responsible for, and actively engaged in, the ongoing cultural

²⁶ The cultural ideal also assumes that one is "able" and "middle-aged."

diversification of the organisation. Each respondent has been substantially involved in the development of Collingwood Neighbourhood House over a long period of its history – one as a founding board member and the others as programme directors for over 10 and 16 years respectively. The organisation also made available policies, documents and internal research related to diversification issues for review.

chapter 4: “a place for everyone”



figure 27
cnh logo.

the collingwood experience

Collingwood Neighbourhood House is a non-profit, non-government organisation in East Vancouver that provides community programmes and services (childcare, family services, education, recreation, advocacy and community development). Its mission is “to provide leadership, programs and services in response to the social, educational, health, cultural and recreational needs of residents of Collingwood, and to promote the well being of the residents and the community as a whole.”

Collingwood (Renfrew-Collingwood) is a predominantly residential community of 41,780 people living in an area that is physically defined by Boundary Road and Nanaimo Street to the east and west and Broadway and 41st Avenue to the north and south. The community is marked by tremendous ethno-cultural diversity with only 32.0% of residents having English as their maternal language (compared to a figure of 51.8% citywide). The neighbourhood is composed predominantly of single-detached houses (54.2%) with 919 co-op housing units and 17 special needs residential buildings. The community has the largest proportion of young people under the age of 19 in the City of Vancouver at 25% and a growing seniors population, currently at 16%. ²⁷

²⁷ All statistics regarding Collingwood (City of Vancouver 2002, Collingwood Neighbourhood House 2002b).

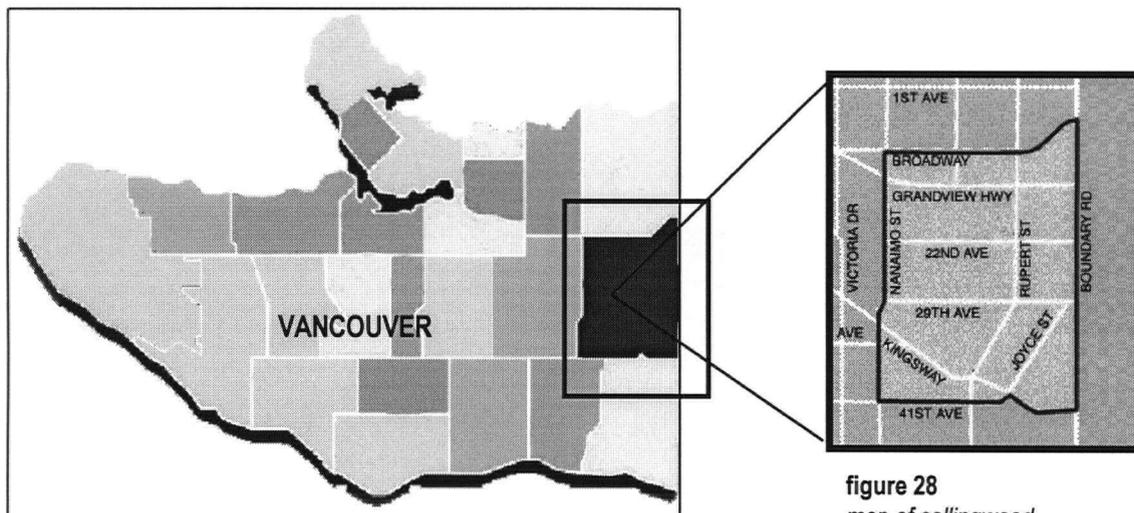


figure 28
map of collingwood.

In the early 1980s, planning and construction of an elevated rapid transit line and five stations began in Collingwood. The Provincial and Municipal Governments held consultations with residents in an attempt to mitigate impacts. The process generated significant activism on the part of residents, who grew increasingly aware of the intercultural tensions and lack of services in their neighbourhood. In 1985, a group of community volunteers established Collingwood Neighbourhood House, initially to provide much needed family and childcare services.

In the beginning, cultural diversity was not well reflected in the organisation. Founding members immediately sought to diversify in terms of language and ethnicity – motivated by the desire for better representation, compliance to funding criteria established by the City of Vancouver and the United Way, and building a sense of community. Although there were few models of meaningful cultural diversification at the time, Collingwood Neighbourhood House benefited from emerging at a time when multiculturalism and diversity were coming into vogue, and the City of Vancouver began sponsoring diversity-training programmes.²⁸ As the organisation matured, issues of access for other groups were addressed – especially in terms of ability, age and socio-economic situation.

²⁸ Very early on in the development of Collingwood Neighbourhood House, the founding President and Executive Director received extensive diversity training at the Hastings Institute, which was established by the City of Vancouver to enhance race relations and provide leadership in diversity. This important education was diffused throughout the organisation and is now part of the curriculum in the institution's own leadership training institute for community members.

Diversity has now become an integral part of the organisational culture of Collingwood Neighbourhood House, and is well reflected in the composition of its Board, staff, volunteers and participants. The Neighbourhood House was one of the first institutions in Vancouver to develop a multicultural policy. For many on its Board and staff, cultural diversification is simply part of "being accountable to the community," and diversity is seen as a strength – enriching the experience of individual and community. In its mission statement, the organisation declares its ongoing commitment to the principles of cultural diversification:

- cooperation and mutual respect among people;
- self-reliance of individuals and the empowerment of people and the Collingwood community as a whole;
- social justice and equitable treatment for all individuals;
- accountability to the community and responsive to its changing needs;
- full participation of all peoples in the social, cultural and economic life of the Collingwood community;
- valuing and recognising the work and accomplishments of staff and volunteers and providing staff and volunteers with ongoing support, feedback, and continuous learning opportunities;
- resident involvement in problem-solving and decision-making;
- integration, collaboration and co-operation among service providers and within the organisation and the Collingwood community;
- diversity and multicultural nature of the Collingwood community.

Collingwood Neighbourhood House is widely recognised for effective and innovative practice in diversification – a determination to create and maintain "a place for everyone." In 1999, the organisation received the City of Vancouver Cultural Harmony Award for having "consistently

collingwood by settlement community

main ethnic grps	1986	1991	1996
Chinese *	21.1%	28.8%	43.8%
English	51.5%	42.8%	10.2%
Filipino		1.7%	4.9%
Italian	4.4%	3.4%	4.7%
Portuguese	4.8%	1.6%	3.9%
South Asian *	3.8%	4.3%	7.5%
Canadian			7.0%
Scottish			5.9%
Irish			4.4%
German	1.5%	1.1%	3.8%
Others	12.1%	14.1%	13.0%

** these categories especially can be further distinguished into significantly distinct linguistic & subcultural groups.*

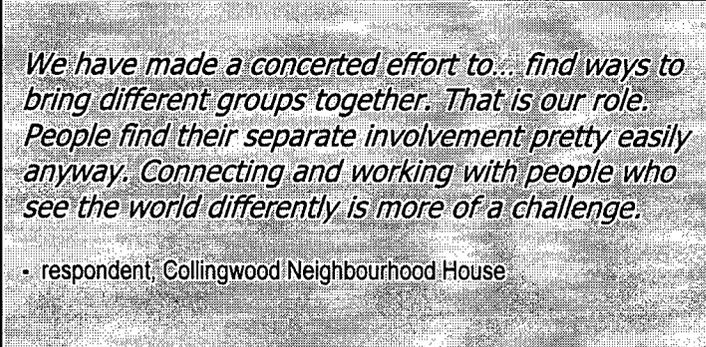
figure 29
 collingwood by settlement community.
 (Collingwood Neighbourhood House 2002)

demonstrated through its programs and actions a strong commitment to cultural diversity and community harmony,” and for developing “broad programming that brings people of different cultures and backgrounds together.” In 2001–2002, the agency’s programmes and services reached an estimated 25,000 to 35,000 residents (60-86% of the neighbourhood’s population), ²⁹ representing a wide range of abilities, ages, ethnicities, genders and socio-economic situations. Among its successes, several different religious groups – Moslem, Christian, and various Chinese traditions – share the facility as a place of study and worship. The lobby of its main facility is a constant buzz of activity – a vibrant, colourful place of different forms and faces. Collingwood Neighbourhood House is well known for its sincerity and welcome, a place of community and accommodation.

achieving differentiated benefits

building community through service

Part of the organisation’s success in creating community *through* diversification is the achievement of differentiated service *within* **broad-based programming**. Interviewees reported that in many of their needs assessments, similar stories emerge. General programmes can thus be frequently constructed around common needs – as *long as* considerable flexibility is built into the system to respond to more particular needs. One respondent referred to this as programming in an “*intercultural* kind of way,” as opposed to a culturally specific way. The challenge of this approach is sometimes considerable. It is impossible to be everything to everyone,



We have made a concerted effort to... find ways to bring different groups together. That is our role. People find their separate involvement pretty easily anyway. Connecting and working with people who see the world differently is more of a challenge.

• respondent, Collingwood Neighbourhood House

figure 30
to bring different groups together.

²⁹ In 2001-2002, Collingwood Neighbourhood House generated over 69,000 instances of involvement through its programmes and services (Collingwood Neighbourhood House 2002a). The number of residents served is estimated based on an average rate of involvement in 2-3 activities per person.

and a balance must often be negotiated. Planning for a volunteer recognition event, for example, means finding entertainment that is ethno-culturally diverse and active enough to engage youth, but not too overwhelming for seniors.

Collingwood Neighbourhood House decided very early in its development that all of its programmes would be open to anyone who wanted to participate. The organisation thus does not offer English classes just for Chinese-speaking people or a childcare service reserved only for First Nation families.³⁰ Staff, however, do recognise that a segregated service might sometimes be important to members of a subcultural community for various reasons. In such cases, employees refer groups to other agencies that offer this kind of programming. If none exist, they will on occasion help facilitate the development of alternative services with other organisations.

A culture-specific approach to programme delivery simply does not suit what the Neighbourhood House sees as its role in the community. The organisation has as its primary mandate: the assessment of residents' needs, the development of services to meet those needs, *and* the building of community through those services. As one interviewee commented:

Some institutions simply see themselves as offering services. That is valuable in itself, but ours is a very different philosophy and approach... Our services, we do not see them as just as services. They may have other objectives, but one important one is that they serve as meeting places. No matter what service we have, people are connecting and meeting. That is how we have always seen our services... that by coming together, there will be a synergy in that meeting place.

This does not mean that some programmes do not attract more participants from one subcultural community over another... ballroom dance classes, for example, are overwhelmingly more popular among Chinese-Canadian seniors. Moreover, other services are *intentionally* developed to draw in under-represented communities. Some programmes, for example, were initiated to appeal in particular to Vietnamese and First Nation residents – whose need for community services was assessed as very high, but

³⁰ Notable exceptions to this rule are Collingwood's childcare services and some of its recreation programmes, which are designed for specific age groups. There are also space limitations in some programmes that restrict participation to some extent. But even with these guidelines, some flexibility is afforded on occasion.

whose benefit from existing programmes was determined to be low. These initiatives, however, were open to everyone, regardless of membership in a particular subculture.

accountability & responsiveness

Respondents stressed the importance of **constant monitoring** as to whether programmes and policies are still relevant and responsive to diverse communities. This is particularly important in Collingwood, given its rapidly growing population and the continual emergence of new subcultural communities. As one executive director remarked, “communities are [always] shifting and changing – as are opportunities.” It is thus crucial for practitioners “to get out there and get a pulse of the community” on a regular and frequent basis.

Collingwood Neighbourhood House conducts an annual review of its programmes in terms of diversity, but Board and staff are constantly questioning whether their actions are reaching broadly and deeply enough into various communities. Staff engage in ongoing assessment of community needs through participant surveys, the analysis of Census reports, consultations with other local service providers (health clinics, churches, housing co-ops, schools, community police and special needs facilities), less formal community networks and more concerted “action research.”

Much of this research can also be employed in the service of community development. Networks are often established, maintained and further developed into collaborative partnerships. **Action**

There is a group of Indo-Canadian men who gather on the benches... in the park. They go there every day, playing cards and socialising... Some people here were concerned that they were out in the cold... in the wintertime. Staff... went out to talk to them, to invite them to... use the facility [instead]...

We found out that they enjoyed the fresh air and being out in the park, but what they wanted was access to washrooms in the park. So, the staff here contacted the Parks Board to make arrangements for the washrooms to be open. So, there is a connection there. They know that the Neighbourhood House is there to go to for help or information.

It did not turn out the way that we thought it would. [We thought]: "Well, they should just come in here." – That was not what they wanted; they wanted to be out there. They just wanted washrooms.

- respondent, Collingwood Neighbourhood House

figure 31
not the way that we thought.

research" initiatives in particular offer tremendous opportunity for citizen empowerment. In these studies, aimed at determining the needs of specific subcultural groups, input is solicited very early in the decision-making process from a wide, but targeted, sampling of residents in several languages. Funding for this kind of research can often be obtained, such that an honorarium can be offered or a position created. In accordance with its local hiring policy, the Neighbourhood House can then engage residents as researchers in the investigation of their own community. The studies are *active* and *interactive*, requiring participants to go out into the community, establish contacts and build relationships. Often, these networks survive and grow beyond the research phase to involve even more residents in the decision-making process and programme implementation. Such concerted efforts are especially valuable in the attempt to reach more insulated communities, and Collingwood Neighbourhood House has used this approach successfully in its assessment of the needs of youth and seniors.³¹

Results from these assessments are often surprising – and sometimes, sobering. As one respondent remarked: "A lot of times, it is hit-or-miss. You cannot assume that a certain group is not coming in because of 'x'. You have to get out there and talk to them, try some things and see if people respond to it... It takes time to develop a programme."

Respondents expressed that Collingwood Neighbourhood House could still do more to assess and address the needs of youth & seniors, different sexual communities, the homeless & people of lower income, the physically & mentally challenged, prostitutes and those addicted to drugs & alcohol in the neighbourhood. One interviewee admitted that indeed, it is easy to feel inundated by needs. This is perhaps an inevitable downside of trying to create "a place for everyone."

personalised flexibility

When a need is identified, an organisation must be ready to act in order to maintain accountability and community trust. All interviewees stressed the importance of **flexibility** in programme delivery. At Collingwood Neighbourhood House, staff are empowered to adapt to specific needs and sometimes modify guidelines in order to

³¹ The latter programme was in fact entitled "Seniors asking Seniors," and the former involves an ongoing community youth mapping exercise.

personalise services and guarantee accessibility.³² Community suppers thus provide a take-out delivery service for “shut-in” seniors and participants are welcome to bring a friend or family member into a programme if translation is required.

Such actions will sometimes require addressing concerns over fair treatment. The Board and staff are very clear in their communication that the Neighbourhood House is in the business of building “a place for everyone,” and that this might sometimes entail exceptions. The Board and staff work hard to cultivate an understanding within the organisation that equality cannot be achieved through rigid guidelines – to develop a **shared project of inclusion**.

This flexibility is also evident in the Neighbourhood House as a workplace. Employment and volunteer opportunities can be in themselves very important services offered by local organisations to community residents. Among its many workplace initiatives, Collingwood Neighbourhood House provides childcare, subsidised transportation and flexible holidays to staff and volunteers. Directors try to respond to a culturally diverse work environment with the same personalised flexibility that it affords the public.³³

A broad-based approach to programming, therefore, translates into a concerted effort to include everyone within a framework of shared programmes. This, however, is frequently achieved in practice through very different and sometimes exceptional measures based on individual circumstances.

achieving inclusive participation

a commitment to openness

Collingwood Neighbourhood House has made it an explicit policy to do its very best to include anyone who wants to participate, in any of its activities. This openness is also

³² Examples of specific measures needed to guarantee inclusive participation are discussed in the next section.

³³ One respondent reported that recent unionisation has resulted in the loss of some of discretion on the part of management. But, as the organisation is becoming more comfortable with its collective agreement, staff are expressing a desire for continued flexibility in response to particular staff circumstances.

required of all user-group and partner programmes. Exclusive events are not endorsed by the organisation nor permitted to rent space in its facilities. It is an *expectation* that all activities that occur in the Neighbourhood House will be open to anyone who might want to be involved.³⁴

This means the conscientious **dismantling of barriers** that may be less explicit – financial costs, lack of transportation, access to childcare, language, conflicts of time, manner and place... Staff and Board members at Collingwood Neighbourhood House continue to develop strategies to mitigate the obstacles that are faced by various communities. Some of the organisation's responses thus far have included:

action research initiatives – comprehensive & inclusive studies conducted to identify barriers to participation that are faced by certain communities. Local residents are engaged themselves in the process.

special needs planning – programme development is subject to diversity review. Dedicated funding to improve accessibility for especially challenged groups is provided for in the organisation's budget. Facilities are planned with extensive community involvement. Care is taken in the design of facilities to ensure access, comfort and security for various ability communities, young children and seniors.

language accessibility – a plain speech policy to address issues of literacy

translation & interpretation – an automatic requirement that all programme materials, community service information and important meetings are available in six languages: Chinese, English, Hindi, Punjabi, Spanish & Vietnamese. These languages were decided on the basis of number (actual number of speakers in the community) and need (likelihood of speakers not to understand one of the other languages). Dedicated funding for translation is built into the budget. Participants in programmes are welcome to bring a friend or family member if they require interpretation.

ethnic media strategy – concentration on wide distribution of information in ethnic & other local media

extended hours of operation – such that the Neighbourhood House is almost always open for activities and refuge. This was initiated to address in particular the needs of youth and residents who are employed in shift work. Other guidelines, such as closure over the Christmas holiday, have been modified to accommodate religious groups who meet in the facility.

satellite locations – use of partnerships & facilities distributed throughout the neighbourhood (annexes, neighbourhood churches, housing co-ops, and local

³⁴ There is some exception to this rule when safety and security are a concern (i.e., childcare programmes).

elementary and secondary schools) to deliver some programmes even closer to where residents need them.

free rental of facilities – for neighbourhood groups to conduct programmes, events and activities.

flexible financial arrangements & subsidies – for those who cannot afford otherwise participate. A special fund was established to subsidise participation based on financial need. Arrangements are tremendously flexible, individuals determine what percentage of funding they need from the fund. Sometimes, volunteer hours are offered in lieu. The programme is well used, but demand has not depleted its funds.

childcare & transportation subsidies – available to staff, volunteers, Board & committee members on a varying basis. For others, these can also be provided on an individual case basis. Parents are welcome to bring their children into the workplace.

concerted outreach

Frequently, efforts to be inclusive need to be much more *proactive*. A “build it and they shall come” philosophy is rarely sufficient – especially when trying to reach more insulated groups such as Moslem women, the mentally challenged, and those who are ill or elderly. Practitioners engaged in diversification stress again and again how crucial it is to **build relationships**, to “get out” into the community and develop trust. Respondents from Collingwood Neighbourhood House referred to a number of strategies that they employ to reach under-represented or at-risk communities, and to generally ensure diverse representation in their organisation: personal networks of staff and volunteers, relationships with various community leaders, dedicated outreach staff, collaboration with other local service providers (religious institutions, community

We are constantly challenged with how to create trust. We try to address these challenges through consistent behaviour, really making an effort to understand and assist, being really clear about what our objectives are, listening to what theirs are as well and trying to respond, spending time together and create relationships...

Often a person who is seen chatting and chatting and chatting will be remarked as someone who is not working, but what is not realised is that person's job is to chat and build relationships.

- respondent, Collingwood Neighbourhood House

figure 32
about chatting & building relationships.

health clinics, community police, neighbourhood schools, youth groups, housing co-operatives, ethnic and immigrant service organisations, etc.), action research initiatives and community art projects.

These efforts have been significantly enhanced by the stability afforded by longer-term funding. In the early years of the organisation, funding for programmes and outreach were mostly short-term. Staff would be hired for a particular initiative. They would establish contacts in a particular community, build relationships and draw in new participants. When the funding would end after six months or a year, staff would leave and their networks would leave with them. The organisation learned that building trust in a particular community requires dedicated time and consistent staff. Incorporation is a very gradual, hesitant process. It calls for a **stable organisation** that residents can get to know and feel part of.

The ability to create such an institutional presence depended on the achievement of stable funding levels. Becoming a United Way organisation was thus very important to Collingwood Neighbourhood House in the early years. Since then, care has been taken to diversify funding sources and develop partnerships with other service providers – in an attempt to never be beholden to a single organisation. Presently, the Neighbourhood House has over one hundred collaborative partners and is the recipient of over 60 different grants from over 30 separate funding agencies.

The organisation still creates **dedicated staff** positions to outreach to particular subcultural communities, but these initiatives are longer-term with care taken to introduce new participants into the entire organisation. Recently, settlement workers were hired to establish contact with new Chinese and Spanish-speaking immigrants – to investigate their needs, identify potential barriers to their participation and develop appropriate services.

Ability to outreach to diverse communities is also a serious consideration in the more general selection of staff, volunteers, and committee and Board members. Attention to diverse representation through **targeted recruitment** is now standard in the organisation for all selection processes – including the solicitation of community grant applicants and programme participants. Participation levels on the basis of ability, age, ethnicity, gender and socio-economic circumstances are assessed; needs for added

representation are identified; and recruitment is focused. The resulting target is sometimes *very* specific. One respondent recounted an instance where it was determined that the Board needed more input from women, business and the Chinese-Canadian community. With only one Board position available, the search was thus on for candidates who were female, Chinese and owned their own business.

No official levels of representation are set in policy by the organisation for any of its programmes, staffing or recruitments – only a general commitment to diversity. The **absence of quotas** avoids dependence on false cultural categorisations and allows for the flexibility to adapt rapidly to the constantly evolving needs of the community. Such an approach, however, necessitates frequent and very critical self-assessment.

creating meaningful opportunities

It is one thing to ensure diverse representation, another to make this diversity *matter*. Opportunities for diverse communities to participate must be made *meaningful*. Collingwood Neighbourhood House declares in its mission statement a commitment to “full participation of all peoples in the social, cultural and economic life of the Collingwood community” and “resident involvement in problem-solving and decision-making.”

The organisation thus pays very close attention to **diversity at senior levels of management** – where decisions are made and policy is set. Its policy to engage *local* residents applies to both staff and volunteer recruitment. Its Board and various committees are all composed of volunteer residents and local partner service providers, and they are extremely active in determining the direction of the organisation. Residents are also directly involved in setting policy through Neighbourhood House community improvement grants, action research initiatives and other community development programmes.

The organisation demonstrates a dedication to **inclusive process** – participation in decision-making considered akin to that in any of its other programmes: open to anyone who might want to participate. The Neighbourhood House is in itself an institution borne and maintained through the efforts of local residents. Over a thousand individuals were involved in the planning, design and opening of the main facility on Joyce Street.

Respondents reported that this openness has resulted in a certain level of comfort, that members often feel comfortable coming forward to offer their ideas or initiate their own projects. Staff noted, however, that care must be taken to maintain such an open environment – other organisations have become more closed and exclusive due to co-option by single interest communities and/or dependence on single funding sources.

Securing deeper involvement in the decision-making of an organisation, in community activism, requires patience. As one staff respondent commented, there is a distinct

“pattern of engaging people first as participants, and then, from participation grows levels of comfort towards leadership. It is a long process and has to do with building relationships – not only the number of relationships, but intimacy.” Collingwood Neighbourhood House is guided by its mission statement to take a decidedly

“community-development

approach” in its activities – to support the development of leadership and decision-making capability *within* the actual communities being served. Among its initiatives in this area, the organisation has developed, in partnership with a nearby college, its own community leadership-training institute that especially targets

recruitment in under-represented and at-risk communities. Many other of its programmes also serve to facilitate wider and more diverse participation in the community as a whole – a community improvement grants programme, ESL classes, settlement services, counselling services, and workshops on resume writing and computer skills.

comment apprivoiser un renard...

Il faut être très patient, répondit le renard. Tu t'assoiras d'abord un peu loin de moi, comme ça, dans l'herbe. Je te regardai du coin de l'œil et tu ne diras rien.... Mais, chaque jour, tu pourras t'asseoir un peu plus près...

Il eût mieux valu revenir à la même heure, dit le renard. Si tu viens, par exemple, à quatre heures de l'après-midi, dès trois heures je commencerai d'être heureux... Il faut des rites.

- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.
Le Petit Prince (1987 :69-70).

figure 33
comment apprivoiser un renard.

involvement through the arts

Interviewees were all particularly impressed with the success of outreach through the arts. One respondent recounted the initiation of the agency's "Building Community through Cultural Expression" programme:

It was an idea that came from residents, who live in this community, who wanted to find ways to build a community and neighbourhood. They wanted to reach out and include particularly the ethno-cultural diversity of the community a bit more. They believed that using the arts was a good medium for doing that because it transcends language and people can come out and work together. Over three years, they developed a number of initiatives with the public, including native carvers who worked in front of the Neighbourhood House, where there is high traffic... People from Taiwan, Japan, India, etc. stopped and talked about what carving was in their community, and helped out... We had similar initiatives in painting, mosaic, textile work... People have come and used the arts for communicating.

Multicultural celebrations and community festivals can be similarly enlisted to great effect. As all the respondents remarked, intercultural exchanges through children, food and the arts seem to provide a **less intimidating initiation** into deeper, more long-term involvement in the organisation and in the community. One interviewee went on to speak of the outreach that resulted from another resident initiative – a series of projects, funded by the Neighbourhood House's community improvement grant programme, to install works of art in local parks:

A lot of people enter relationships assuming that people thinking and feeling the same way they are. Even if they have had a relationship over a long period of time, it may have not have been intimate enough to ever achieve that. My job is helping people work through that challenge... When you work in diversity, there is compromise. When things are not actually the way you might have envisioned them, you may see, after having worked with the group, that it ends up being more than you expected and other times it lands up being less. Sometimes, I have to help people feel comfortable with that.

- Collingwood Neighbourhood House respondent.

figure 34
the challenges of facilitating among diverse communities.

There was a deliberate attempt by artists who were improving conditions in Slocan Park to connect with the tai chi group [that exercises in the park every morning. The tai chi group replied.] "You are putting up a totem pole beside the path there, that is very nice... but you know what we would really like – a cover, a shelter, where we can do our tai chi even when it rains." That information came

back to us and is now in the works... [and] when we unveiled the totem pole, many of the tai chi people came to the opening... We also [had] a festival, in which we approach different groups in early summer to set up a table with information about their activities... they came.

Members of the tai-chi group are now very active in the organisation, and engaged in their own outreach efforts – conducting classes at the Neighbourhood House and involving other groups in the park. The respondent was elated: “After many years of walking in the park, seeing... Chinese people doing tai chi in the park, I saw Indo-Canadian women in their saris doing tai chi [with them]. This just happened last summer...this is what community is all about.”

In all these encounters, an important attitudinal shift is occurring – people are seeing themselves and others as *assets*, not just clients or people in need. Through these different outreach initiatives, residents from diverse communities are immediately contributing in very tangible and visible ways. One of the interviewed summarised well the experience: “There was a huge shift in attitude... The

aboriginal community, [for example], has always been seen as ‘needy’... [People] did not see the resources in that culture.

Through the carving and participation in different activities, people began to see

what they could contribute to the community. So, they became **contributors, rather than recipients** of services.”



figure 35

“It didn't matter that she was shy when she spoke. They loved the sound of her music.”

Madeleine Thien (2001), *the Chinese Violin*.
Illustration by Joe Chang.

achieving varied discourse

creating opportunities for dialogue

Respondents see their programmes, services and activities as *meeting places* for residents and their diverse communities. Especially in the early stages of its

development, Collingwood Neighbourhood House engaged in many neighbourhood conversations about diversity and what it means to live in community. The organisation continues **to initiate and facilitate dialogue** on sensitive topics in the neighbourhood such as racism, drug and alcohol addiction, prostitution and bullying in schools. In these exchanges, it sees itself as an important facilitator of community dialogue – bringing residents together... to vent, talk, listen, debate, negotiate, teach, learn and sometimes decide and/or compromise.

In order to gain the trust of participants as a convenor and moderator, the organisation needs to be perceived as having a, not necessarily neutral, but certainly more moderate opinion on issues. At times, staff appear to balance a delicate compromise between their roles as community facilitators and community advocates. In general, Collingwood Neighbourhood House pursues a policy of **advocacy through community empowerment**. One respondent elaborated on the approach: "The whole policy is based on the belief that some people need others to speak on their behalf... Our success in advocacy comes from when we support residents bringing forward issues. Everything from building social housing to support for park redevelopment, we take a secondary role in organising people, enabling them to advocate for themselves."

As a moderator of dialogue, staff constantly work **to promote mutual respect** among participants and **to ensure that quieter voices are heard**. "You have to make sure that you have everyone there, people who have some experience and knowledge, people who can talk about personal impacts." As a convenor of dialogue, Neighbourhood House staff generally wait for a certain "community readiness" to build – for residents to come forward or for an incident to occur: "Ultimately, you hope that a right time will come up to talk about [a subject]... When you get [a] chorus of complaints and concern about these issues, that is the time to bring people together." The disadvantage to this approach is that "silent" issues can remain painfully silent. The organisation and the community as a whole, for example, have been notably hesitant on issues of sexual orientation. Dialogue in the community and within the organisation has been so far absent – the topic "has simply not come up yet." One staff respondent noted, however, that communities of youth often demonstrate greater willingness to engage in more difficult conversations. Through its youth leadership programmes, the

Neighbourhood House is actively engaging students in these issues, and they, in turn, frequently engage their parents as well.

Collingwood Neighbourhood House does not waiver in its commitment to building “a place for everyone.” The organisation is *proactive* in seeking out and dismantling barriers to participation and expression. Staff regularly give voice to the concerns of quieter communities as part of their ongoing needs assessments, action research initiatives and outreach efforts.

building community through dialogue

In some cases, the “community-development” approach to advocacy has allowed Collingwood to confront some very pressing and controversial issues as an entire community. About five years ago, local agencies began to receive a flood of concerns about local prostitution and drug use. The Neighbourhood House thus convened a community Drug and Alcohol Committee and ensured that there diverse representation among participants – representatives of different ethnocultural communities, youth, sex trade workers, community police, health care providers, drug users and other concerned residents. One staff respondent reflected on this experience of building community through dialogue:

There was one [individual] on that committee... who was quite adamant... She did not care who the sex trade workers and drug addicts were, what problems they had in their lives, she just wanted them out of here... This person has not changed her attitude completely, but is now at least beginning to apologize before saying something that might be offensive to another group. She has a level of awareness that she did not have before. During that period of time, one of our committee members, who was a recovering drug addict, overdosed and died. That was very hard hitting to those on the committee. Someone who they spent many hours chatting with is all of a sudden dead. It then became a matter of “we *have* to do something about this issue.” ... The committee became more proactive. We just brought in a needle-exchange programme into the community. Five years previous to that work being done, there would have been huge protest and demonstrations in the community against that... We still have people in the community thinking negatively about other populations, but we also have examples of major shifts when people are engaging with each other.

On such occasions, the organisation sees an important role in **facilitating mutual learning** within – and as – a community. The Neighbourhood House continues to engage in conversations about the definitions and implications of community, diversity and inclusion. It conducts regular anti-racism education programmes and teaches

through its consistent policies and actions that community is built through inclusion – *not* by drawing boundaries. Such efforts to “bring staff and residents along” in their thinking require patience, respect and convincing arguments for inclusion. And, as one respondent lamented, these efforts apply equally in dealings with government and funding agencies: “Constantly having to influence the political scene is a big challenge. We deal a lot with crises and re-structuring... There are also shifts – one moment, multiculturalism is promoted and the next minute, it is not. Trying to keep people grounded and reminding them what is important and what is of value is a challenge.”

Staff reported evidence that these efforts in the community are paying off: “I really think that people have developed tools through their involvement in the Neighbourhood House and in the community as a whole, to help them resolve their conflicts in a different way, in a more respectful way.... ”

achieving inclusive definitions

Respondents argued the importance of cultivating a sense of ownership and belonging in the organisation among members from diverse communities. Indeed, the very idea of a “neighbourhood house” implies a place with no particular subcultural affiliation, no shared interest other than creating a community based on common residency. The name of the organisation announces that “this place is *our* place” – and that “us” means *everyone* who happens to live and work in Collingwood.

Transforming these statements into actions, however, is sometimes more difficult. Respondents spoke of several strategies employed in creating a more inclusive sense of belonging and ownership in Collingwood Neighbourhood House.

creating ownership in a place

All agents of civic culture have some sort of public *presence* through which and within which they affect their socio-cultural environment – a building, an office, a meeting space, a storefront, a workplace, a website, a document, a logo, a radio ad. These elements define them, shape their institutional culture, and announce to staff and anyone who visits – who they are and what they stand for.

Collingwood Neighbourhood House thus pays very close attention to what one respondent referred to as the “**optics**” of the place. To avoid appearing exclusive in any way, the organisation strives to **resist association with any particular group**, sponsor or subculture. Its Board and staff work conscientiously towards the further diversification of its funding agencies, and has developed explicit policies against the prominent display of corporate logos (e.g., a vending machine in the lobby) and the names of individual donors (e.g., the naming of rooms). Advertisement of private business in general is forbidden in its facilities, as is the prominent announcement of any one particular user group at the front entrance (e.g., a sandwich board to promote the event of any one particular group).

In the early 1990s, over one thousand residents took part in the planning and construction of the Neighbourhood House’s main facility on Joyce Street. The Board and staff went to great measures to be as inclusive as possible. Representatives of various communities based on ability, age, ethnicity, gender and socio-economic circumstances all left a distinct mark on the design of the facility and the policies that govern its operation.

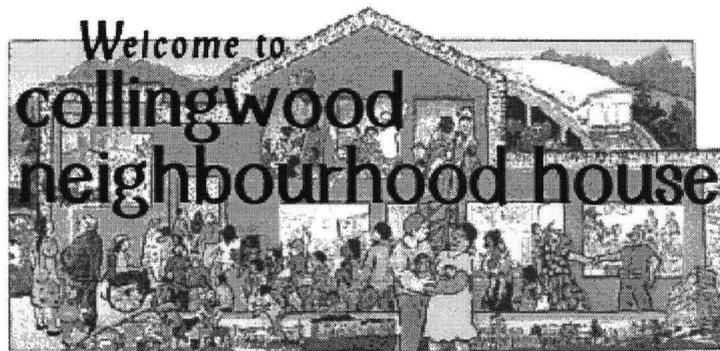


figure 36
welcome to collingwood neighbourhood house.

Collingwood Neighbourhood House continues in its effort to evolve as “a place for everyone.” Presently, the organisation is facilitating in the mapping of facilities by youth in an attempt to find ways to be more welcoming of younger residents. As one respondent commented: “The environment and the facility continue to develop because people consider this to be their home. People will come forward and say – ‘I was sitting there thinking, you know, this wall is a little blank...’ People feel comfortable bringing their ideas forward. And, if we can support them to achieve it, we will.” It is important **to be receptive and responsive** to community initiative, input and feedback.

The front entrance is an example of the attention to detail evidenced throughout the complex. The glass doors are framed by a carving created by First Nations artists in the

front courtyard as part of the organisation's "Building Community through Cultural Expression" programme. The gateway depicts a multicultural parade of animals – giraffe and armadillo alongside bear and eagle. The lobby itself is bright and spacious, made intimate by a multilingual, multicultural reception of various ages and abilities. Its counter is set back to allow visitors the choice to approach or enter without being bothered, and it is deliberately low in order not to present a "wall" to children and those in wheelchairs. The walls are adorned with the artistic expressions of diverse age groups and ethnicities. Information in several languages is prominent as are stacks of community publications – including copies of *Xtra West*, Vancouver's local newspaper for the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities.

These measures are *not* just window-dressing, *not* just token acts of political correctness – they provide **access to a sense of ownership** and belonging. An organisation presents itself in many ways to its members and to society, both in word *and* deed. Attention must be paid to both. As one respondent argued, the recognition of subcultures through inclusive language is extremely important: "Even if for the way that language is used, we might change a policy, even if the intent has not changed. The more people see themselves in the policies, the better."

weaving diversity throughout

Very early in its development, Collingwood Neighbourhood House moved to integrate diversity, and responsibility for diversification, throughout its organisational structure. Cultural diversification simply became one of the things that the organisation *does* as a matter of course. A commitment to inclusiveness was enshrined in its original mission statement and subsequently incorporated into many of its policies: guidelines on communications, funding, printed media, advocacy, the conferring of grants, selection of new Board members and establishment of collaborative partnerships. The organisation also dedicates funding in its budget for its various diversification projects – outreach, translation, action research and programmes for communities at-risk. As one interviewee commented, the organisation has made cultural **diversification as a core strategic planning objective**.

Collingwood Neighbourhood House benefited tremendously from being a young organisation borne amidst the emerging philosophies of multiculturalism and diversity.

As such, respondents admitted, certain ways of thinking and doing were not already entrenched. A certain synergy could develop that resulted in an institution, which *expects* to evolve as dynamically and complexly as its surrounding cultural environment. It is used to constant change and reflection.

The Neighbourhood House still profited, however, from having strong **internal advocates for diversity** in its early development as an organisation. The founding President of the Board and Executive Director were both dedicated to the creation of an inclusive organisation and received significant training in the practice of diversity. Respondents are confident that these philosophies have infiltrated the organisation sufficiently enough such that they would survive the departure of any particular individual. They warned, however, that the organisation must remain vigilant, responsive and flexible. Things can change rapidly in an organisation: "Many organisations have become exclusive because of the way they are structured or who comes in to run [them]."

Collingwood Neighbourhood House has thus taken extreme **care in recruiting** new Board members, staff and volunteers who have cross-cultural experience and a demonstrated appreciation of the principles of diversification. This has been especially the case in ensuring diversity, and commitment to diversity, at the Board level. New directors are elected each year by members at the annual general meeting – but there is never a complete turnover. Board members serve overlapping one, two or three year terms. This arrangement results in having only two or three positions available each year and serves to protect the Board to some extent from co-option by any particular group. One interviewee elaborated:

In some cases, ...some organisations face difficult situations because certain groups buy up memberships, come out to the AGM and end up forming the majority. They make nominations and suddenly the Board is [no longer diverse]. It is difficult to do that when the number of positions coming up every year is not very high.... If the community was dealing with incredible... controversial issues, then those kind of things could happen. One always has to keep that in the back of one's mind – the well being of the organisation...

For similar reasons, the Neighbourhood House is also dedicated to diversifying its sources of funding – to build up resistance to the dictates of agencies that might compromise its commitment to building community through diversity and inclusion.

creating ownership in an idea

Respondents argued the importance of **sharing responsibility for diversification** widely and deeply. Volunteers, staff, Board and committee members are all steeped in the principles of diversification, through their training and/or mentorship. Considerable time is also spent building relationships with members and user groups. As one interviewee remarked, "they are not just [clients or] a booking. They become *part* of this organisation;" and thus, are made to appreciate the organisation's core values.

The growing collective effort towards creating community through diversification has become a source of identity and community among members, staff and volunteers:

You walk into a room and you see everybody there.... I hear volunteers, staff or participants coming in and saying, "I feel like I'm in the world when I come into a place like this because it really reflects diversity. How much I enjoy being in that environment.... We have very gentle reminders everyday how positive diversity is... Because we created it, we all have a lot of pride in that. Our exposure is daily.

The effect of this learning through personal ownership of the project has rippled throughout the community. One respondent reflected on the experience:

[Here,] we tend to focus on positives and strengths, to see diversity as a value rather than a challenge. That kind of shift is very important. It was not there initially, but I see it developing. We had a huge meeting where we were looking at research that came out of a "Windows of Opportunity" project in which we looked at youth in transition and ways to support that development. A number of residents, principals of schools, teachers and others who were involved began to talk about diversity as their strength. In my many years of working in the community, I had never heard that before.

One of most wonderful experiences when I was in the community meetings, was when there were more Chinese-speaking people at the meeting than English. They ended up carrying out the meeting in Cantonese, and then interpreted into English. That told me, people had come a long way – that the community had that flexibility to say, "Gee, the majority of people here speak Chinese, so..."

There was not a response like "we're in Canada, we should speak English..." There was that kind and level of respect.

-Collingwood Neighbourhood House respondent

figure 37
that kind and level of respect.

The process is not without pain. The organisation frequently debates internally and within the community on the meaning of diversification, and its implications in particular instances. Sometimes, staff and volunteers are faced with a situation in which the inclusion of one community tests the comfort level of another. In these circumstances, the organisation must critically reflect on its reasons for building "a place for everyone." Principles are tested and staff must make decisions. Hopefully, the resistance is temporary and reluctant individuals can be brought along to a new way of thinking. As one respondent recounted, sharing in the vision of an inclusive community is not always easy: "It has taken a long time both internally with staff and other members, to get the point across that [youth, for example,] belong here.... There are rules that they cannot break, but if they are not doing anything, if they are just being kids, then let them be kids.... It is [all] still a work in progress."

The respondent then went on to construct another scenario that demonstrates well how the organisation resolves such conflicts of principle:

A homeless person walks into the building and asks for money.... We decide to give him food. He comes back a few more times, and a few others come as well for food. [Instead of starting] a special programme... we just give them permission to come anytime for some food. Some people [here] do not agree with that approach because how it appears, how it looks. There is a perception that parents who bring in their children for preschool will not find the "optics" comfortable, but... these are local people... this is not just some guy walking in whom we should ignore. As much as some staff may be turned off by him, or may feel that it may be the thin edge of the wedge, or that parents may not like the appearance of a very dishevelled, urine-smelling homeless guy coming in looking for something... The vast majority of staff and people think that is fine.... [but] we have to keep reminding them not to be complacent in their jobs – improving the lot for everybody.... [that] is the business that we are in.

When confronted with difficult choices, practitioners should **refer back to the fundamental objectives** of diversification: the pursuit of better planning, community development and social justice.

chapter 5: **creating cosmopolis**

some lessons learned

The purpose of this thesis was to advance the diversification of civic culture as a model of incorporation. Its means were three-fold: (a) the integration of the many disparate literatures on diversity; (b) the development of a framework for cultural diversification at the organisational level, and (c) an illustrative application of the framework, as an analytical tool and initial enrichment, through the investigation of strategies employed by practitioners in one innovative organisation towards the ongoing diversification of their institution and the larger socio-cultural environment.

lessons from collingwood

The Collingwood experience provides some important lessons in the cultural diversification of an organisation. It should be re-emphasized, however, that this study was not meant in any way to be authoritative, evaluative or comprehensive.

The Collingwood Neighbourhood House approach is to build community through service, inclusion and empowerment. In this, the organisation has received considerable direction from a clear, consistent and explicit mission to create "a place for everyone." Cultural diversification is considered fundamental to its mandate of community service and accountability.

In the early stages of development, diversification of the Neighbourhood House was facilitated tremendously by having internal champions for the cause and a receptive

socio-political environment. To ensure *ongoing* commitment, however, required that attention to diversity be integrated throughout the entire structure of an institution – in its strategic objectives and daily operations. Respondents stressed that responsibility for cultural diversification must be shared among the various people, policies and activities of an organisation. As such, an understanding of this approach and appreciation of its values must be carefully cultivated among directors, staff, volunteers, members and the community at large. Recruitment and hiring should be conducted according to these criteria.

In the development and delivery of services, the Neighbourhood House concentrates on achieving differentiation *within* broad-based programmes – an “intercultural approach” through which community is built. The approach demands considerable flexibility on the part of policy and staff to adapt to more individual needs, and continual assessment in terms of relevance and effectiveness given inevitable

complexity and change in the cultural composition of any community. Efforts to identify and remove barriers to diverse participation must be ongoing.

Respondents all stressed the importance of establishing, maintaining and strengthening personal relationships in various subcultural communities. This requires patience, deliberate outreach and a stable organisation that residents can come to know and trust. The involvement to which these communities are invited must be made *meaningful*, with

the collingwood framework

achieving differentiated benefits

build community through ensuring personalised flexibility *within* broad-based programming; constantly monitor the diverse & dynamic needs of communities; and regularly evaluate programmes against these assessments.

achieving inclusive participation

make inclusion an organisational imperative; conduct concerted outreach to ensure diverse participation in *meaningful* decision-making processes.

achieving varied discourse

initiate & facilitate opportunities for dialogue that bring people together in community and builds community leadership capacity.

achieving inclusive definitions

create a sense of ownership & belonging in the organisation among diverse communities. This means making the organisation *accessible*, and incorporating diversity into institutional structures – sharing responsibility for inclusion both widely and deeply.

figure 38
the collingwood framework.

opportunities especially at senior levels of management and decision-making. Residents thus become *contributors*, rather than mere clients, of the agency. Governed by its strong commitment to community development, the organisation sees itself often as a convenor and facilitator of community dialogue - such that quieter voices are heard, mutual learning occurs, and mutual respect is cultivated.

Many of these measures assist in creating a sense of ownership and belonging in an organisation by diverse communities. Respondents argued that many of the small decisions made everyday by its Board, staff, volunteers and user groups matter a great deal to who is made to feel at home, who has access to community and identity – the artwork on the walls, the language of a pamphlet, the faces behind a desk, the level of a water fountain... These decisions will sometimes lead to conflict. And so, practitioners of cultural diversification must often refer back their primary objectives – the achievement of better planning, community-building and social justice.

lessons for the framework

In addition to taking a first step towards the accumulation of best practices, the case study was also intended to illustrate how the model of incorporation developed in this thesis could be employed as an analytical framework. In this regard, some additional comments can be made:

creating a language

This thesis project began with the premise that there was little integration of the theory advanced by various disciplines on the topic of diversity. There is a tremendous lack of consistency in the understanding of incorporation, multiculturalism and diversity – considerable ambiguity in regards to the meaning of culture, identity and community. In these initial investigations into the practice of diversification, the developed framework was extremely useful in establishing a common language with which to discuss strategies and experience. The terms “differentiated benefits” and “varied discourse”, however, might merit some refinement.

developing questions

As an analytical tool, the framework also provided useful direction of inquiry and served as the basis of an effective interview schedule for the discovery of best practices. Complementary lines of inquiry about general policy and context also uncovered a wealth of specific diversification strategies and experience during the interviews – perhaps, in part, by simply providing the first opportunities to speak and share. Questions that were developed more directly from the framework helped respondents to later focus, refine and elaborate on their comments, as well as to fill in gaps in the information provided.

providing an organising structure

As anticipated, there was significant overlap between the categories delineated in the framework. Many of the strategies employed by practitioners serve equally to differentiate benefits, make participation inclusive, vary discourse and/or make definitions more inclusive. There were, however, some strategies that were more or less unique in the service of a single objective. In the presentation of findings, the framework has proved particularly effective in suggesting increasing depth and implication. The discussion reveals strategies towards a progressively greater involvement, empowerment and ownership by diverse communities in the organisation.

encouraging reflective practice

Practitioners appeared enthusiastic, when presented with the opportunity through the interview process, to reflect on their own practice and share what they have learned through years of experience. Initial application suggests that the developed framework has tremendous potential for the encouragement of more reflective and concerted practice in cultural planning. It serves as a useful start at clarifying what exactly is meant by cultural diversification as a model of incorporation – what such a project might entail and seek to achieve.

initiating dialogue

Through these and future applications, the framework can help initiate much-needed conversation among theorists and practitioners. By providing a common language and

conceptual model, it can help create a shared history from isolated experiences, facilitate learning between disparate disciplines and professional sectors – between organisational management and immigration research, cultural studies and political science, psychology and planning; between private and non-profit, government and civil society, individual families and global media corporations.

some future directions

This thesis has only been a tentative first step towards creating a common language, discovering lines of inquiry, providing an organising structure, encouraging reflective practice and initiating dialogue. There is much more work to be done.

integration with other models

As an analytical tool, it would be extremely useful to integrate other models of organisational change into the developed framework for cultural diversification. Lessons from the field of diversity in business management and public administration are particularly promising.³⁵ As a conceptual model of incorporation, the framework should also be tested against experience in immigration research, sociology and human resource management.

more advice from the field

Many more case studies are required in the development of the framework as a prescriptive tool. Organisations in Vancouver offer the potential discovery of a wealth of innovative strategies from many different sectors. Among some interesting cases would be the Roundhouse Community Centre and Vancouver General Hospital (in government); Big Brothers of the Lower Mainland and AIDS Vancouver (in civil society), VanCity Credit Union (in business); and CityTV CityPulse and CBC Vancouver (in media). Researchers should also turn to existing case studies elsewhere in business and public administration, where an incredible wealth of advice is being generated and

³⁵ See, for example, Cheemers et al. (1995), Cox (2001), Harvard Business Review (Harvard Business Review 2001), Hofstede (1991), Peters (1987) and Thomas (1999).

shared.³⁶ Studies into the diversification of the health care and education sectors have also been particularly active, and as planning researcher Leonie Sandercock (Sandercock 1998) has found, civil society organisations worldwide offer many examples of innovative practice.

In these investigations, care should be taken to identify significant variables and context that might impact whether a strategy might work in one case and not another. Although common principles and actions will most definitely be discovered, there will most definitely be differences depending on particular circumstances. Further inquiries should be conducted particularly in respect to: (a) each of the various sectors of civic culture – government, civil society, business, the media and family; (b) specific measures for particular subcultural communities based on ability, age, ethnicity, gender, health and socio-economic situation; and (c) organisations at various stages of development. Analysis through the shared lens of the developed framework, however, ensures that the guiding principles and broader objectives of cultural diversification are not lost in the examination of particularities.

work in evaluation

Finally, the framework requires much work as an evaluative tool. Here, specific indicators and methods for their assessment must be developed. The latter would most probably involve the surveying of client “publics,” and could be applied to the evaluation of a particular strategy, a particular organisation or a society as a whole. The key question would be: “How can the framework be used to assess the success of a particular strategy, agency or community in cultural diversification?”

creating cosmopolis

Leonie Sandercock (1998:4) writes of her vision of *Cosmopolis* as a “journey of coming to terms with difference, of connection with the cultural Other, of an emerging sense of an intertwined destiny.” It is hoped that the development of a framework for cultural diversification, in this thesis and through future research, will help chart this journey.

³⁶ See also DiversityInc.com (2002) and Multiculturalism BC (Multiculturalism BC 2000).

The globalisation of cultural forces and growing assertion of subcultural groups in the West present a tremendous opportunity for the meaningful diversification of civic culture. In times of constraint, however, programmes for diversity are often the first to be abandoned. This is due in large part to the fact that appreciation for the increasing cultural complexity of postmodern cities has not penetrated into the heart of societies and their institutions. Diversification of civic culture requires a fundamental shift in the understanding of culture, identity, community and self – an end to the hegemony of “mainstream.” Culture, identity, community and self are not distinct, consistent entities. They are inherently dynamic, contextual, overlapping and heterogeneous. Diversity is not “them”... it is “us.”

The end of mainstream will *not* lead to the end of community. Diversification is in fact the *means* to creating vibrant, effective and affective communities. Indeed, the stability and sustainability of Western urban societies depend on the full participation of diverse communities in the definition and enjoyment of civic culture.

The planning imperative now, beyond postmodernism, lies in creating a community free from the obligations of any one subculture. The challenge of change rests in our institutions – the concerted efforts and inspired leadership of government, civil society, business, media and family. What is asked of cultural planners – in their myriad of disguises: policy analyst, social worker, religious leader, educator, administrator, CEO, editor, artist and parent – is that their practice be *deliberate* and *principled*. Practitioners should pursue diversification, not only in the interest of society and its component subcultures, but also in their own professional self-interest and in the interest of their organisations. In extremely dynamic and complex cultural environments, cultural diversification is essential for the achievement of better planning, community development and social justice – the creation of “a place for everyone.”

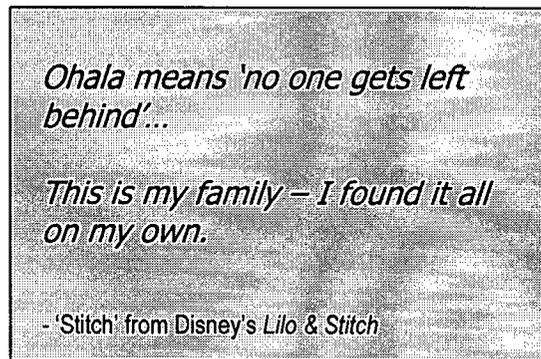


figure 39
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appendix

interview questions

general policy & context questions

1. How do you and/or your organisation define “diversity” and “diversification”?
2. Who do you consider your “community” and/or “public”? What are the demographic characteristics of this community? Is there a cultural majority? A culturally dominant group? A cultural “mainstream”?
3. Does your organisation have an official policy on diversity and/or an official programme of diversification? What are they, when were they created and why?
4. Why are you engaged in the diversification of your organisation? Why is diversity and diversification important to your organisation? What do you hope to achieve?
5. Is diversification required, encouraged and/or supported by legislation and/or policies of government, other associations and/or other levels of your organisation?
6. Who is responsible for diversification in your organisation?
7. Is diversification of your organisation seen as temporary, permanent or ongoing effort?
8. Who do you identify as “alienated” groups in your community?
9. Do you or your organisation target your efforts to these groups? If so, how do you or your organisation monitor & adapt to changing cultural demographics?

specific strategy questions

differentiated benefits & services

1. What do you or your organisation do to achieve better access to the benefits & services offered by your organisation for all residents of your community, especially for otherwise alienated groups? How do you make your benefits & services more culturally sensitive and equitable? How are these strategies working and what were (are) major challenges to their implementation and success?

active & inclusive participation

2. What do you or your organisation do to encourage greater participation in your organisation from all residents in your community, especially from otherwise alienated groups? How are these strategies working and what were (are) major challenges to their implementation and success?
3. What do you or your organisation do to create a more inclusive workplace & workforce in your organisation? How are these strategies working and what were (are) major challenges to their implementation and success?

varied discourse

4. What do you or your organisation do to create a more varied discourse (discussion, debate, conversation, cultural environment in terms of images, symbols, etc.) within your organisation and in the community, especially in engaging otherwise ignored voices, issues & discourse?

inclusive definition

5. What do you or your organisation do to make how your organisation defines itself more inclusive? What do you or your organisation do to encourage a sense of ownership & belonging in your organisation from all residents in your community, especially from otherwise alienated groups? How are these strategies working and what were (are) major challenges to their implementation and success?

reflective questions on practice

1. What do you think has been the most important factors in success of the ongoing diversification of your organisation?
2. What specific difficulties & challenges have you encountered in the pursuit of a more culturally diversified organisation? How were or are these difficulties & challenges overcome?
3. What still needs to be accomplished in terms of the cultural diversification of your organisation?

4. Despite your efforts, do you think that your organisation still represents a particular or dominant subculture in the eyes of some in the community? What groups in your community do you think still do not have a cultural share in your organisation or are especially difficult to involve?
5. What support from government and/or other organisations in the community would be helpful in your efforts?
6. How do you think the efforts to diversify your organisation impacts the cultural diversification of your community or society as a whole?

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