Résumé
La ville multiculturelle est un type de ville relativement nouveau. Quelles sont les qualités qui font d’une ville un lieu multiculturel est la question abordée dans cet article. La diversité ethnoraciale, entrainée par l’immigration, est la condition nécessaire et le régime des droits civils et culturels/religieux est la condition suffisante pour la réalisation du multiculturalisme. Quand la philosophie pluraliste est infusée dans les institutions et les structures d’une ville, elle devient un lieu multiculturel. L’article s’appuie sur les expériences de Toronto, New York et Los Angeles pour identifier les formes que le pluralisme des institutions prend avec l’infusion du multiculturalisme. Il termine avec une définition d’une ville multiculturelle. Il souligne que les espaces, les services et la culture civique d’une ville agissent comme points communs pour l’intégration des diverses cultures secondaires des communautés urbaines. La ville est un agent actif dans l’intégration des communautés et des groupes dans une société civile solidaire.

Mots clés: multiculturalisme, urbanisme, Toronto, New York, Los Angeles
Abstract
The multicultural city is a relatively new genre of cities. What qualities make a city into a multicultural place is the question addressed in this essay. It is an attempt to clarify and define multicultural city as a concept. Ethnoracial diversity, driven by immigration, is the necessary condition and the regime of civil and cultural/religious rights is the sufficient condition for the realization of multiculturalism. When pluralistic ethos is infused into the institutions and structures of a city, it becomes a multicultural place. The essay draws on the experiences of Toronto, New York and Los Angeles to identify the forms that pluralism of institutions take with the infusion of multiculturalism. It concludes with a definition of a multicultural city. It emphasizes that the space, services and civic culture of a city act as the common ground integrating diverse subcultures of urban communities. The city is an active agent in integrating communities and groups into a cohesive civic society.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, urban planning, Toronto, New York, Los Angeles

Two Sides of Multiculturalism and the City
‘Multicultural city’ is a new badge of distinction proudly worn by contemporary cities. Toronto, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, London and Sydney advertise their ethnoracial diversity as a cosmopolitan attraction for visitors and investors. Many other cities of North America, Europe, India and Southeast Asia also claim to be multicultural. The BBC radio’s World Service holds a call-in show for listeners’ to nominate the most multicultural city in the world. Toronto, in the same spirit, has an urban legend that the UN has declared it to be the world’s most multicultural city. The UN-HABITAT identifies multiculturalism as the defining characteristic of the global urban culture.¹

Despite its increasing use, the term multicultural city remains a vague concept. Often the presence of people of different races and ethnicities is taken to be the proof of a multicultural city. Yet ethnoracial diversity, though the foundation of multiculturalism, is not enough to make a city multicultural. It has to be complemented by the organized and recognized expressions of ethnocultural identities in a city’s structure. A multiethnic city is not necessarily a multicultural city, as the following discussion elaborates.

Defining and critically examining the concept of a multicultural city is the objective of this essay. It will also touch upon the planning implications of cities’ multiculturalism. These objectives will be examined in the context of Toronto, New York and Los Angeles, which are well recognized for their multiculturalism. These three are not only the largest metropolitan cities of their respective countries, but also the biggest gateways of immigrants to Canada and the US.

It must be pointed out at the outset that these three cities will be discussed to the extent of illustrating the defining characteristics of multicultural cities, as the objective is to develop a generic definition of a multicultural city. This essay does not offer a
comprehensive analysis of the evolution of multiculturalism in these cities.

What makes a multicultural city? This question arises because cities always have had people of different races, languages and religions who carved territorial turfs. Even today Jeddah, Dubai or Moscow are multiracial and multiethnic cities, but without effective minorities’ social and cultural rights, are they multicultural cities?

Leonie Sandercock sums up the spirit of multiculturalism as the political practice of two rights: the right to difference and the right to the city. How does this political practice affect institutions and structure of a city? This is the central question in identifying multicultural qualities of cities.

A multicultural city is a place where different races, cultures and lifestyles flourish as of rights; their differences are recognized, accommodated and interwoven into shared citizenship, civic culture and common institutions. A multicultural city is identified by the infusion of ethnic and cultural identities of its diverse communities in its institutions and structure. Yet the recognition and expression of differences does not mean a city becomes a conglomeration of separated communities and cultural relativism reigns supreme.

The differences in norms, values and symbols, arising from diverse identities and cultures have a limited purchase. They form subcultures within larger societal culture constituted by common institutions of law, government, education and public health as well as universal values, norms and the shared space and official language(s). The civic culture of a city, expressed in its traditions, practices and public institutions, both binds diverse groups into a functioning urban society and serves as the medium for the expression of their differences. Much of the criticism of multiculturalism arises from the fact that the role of common institutions and civic culture is not fully recognized and (sometimes) upheld.

Multiculturalism is a two-sided coin, one side being the equitable expressions of ethnoracial identities and cultural differences and the other being the common ground of shared citizenship, laws, values, institutions, official language(s) and everyday behavioral norms. The space and services of a city are a significant part of the common ground. These two pulls of cohesion and differences are always in some tension and require dynamic rebalancing. The imbalance between the two pulls is often the source of public controversies.

Multiculturalism is flourishing, with or without official policy, because it is rooted in freedoms conferred by present day civil and human rights. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) explicitly guarantees freedoms of conscience and religion, belief and expression, peaceful assembly and association among others, and it promises to enhance multicultural heritage of all Canadians. The US constitution’s Fourteenth Amendment conferred equality on all citizens of the US and the Civil Rights Act (1964) prohibits discrimination based on color, race, religion, or national origins. These legislations and the case laws flowing from them have the same effect on the rights of minorities as the Canadian Charter, though the US does not have an official multicultural policy. It is not an accident that almost all litigation about cultural rights, (i.e. cases of Sikhs’ turban and Kirpan, Muslim women’s hijab, Orthodox Jews’ Sukkahs and eruv’s, language accommodations, building of mosques etc.) in both countries has
been adjudicated under civil and human rights legislation. There are no separate legal remedies for claims of multiculturalism.

The US has a lived multiculturalism, despite its ideological emphasis on assimilation and an image of a melting pot, as academic observers of urban life recognize. Canada is officially a multicultural country.

Toronto, New York and Los Angeles as Majority-minority Cities

A multicultural city is not a new town. It is a species of city that arises from the incorporation of cultural/religious diversity in a city’s existing institutions and structure. The recognition and accommodation of diverse identities leads to the pluralism of city policies, practices, activities, narratives, values and public behaviors. And that turns a city into a multicultural place. Yet the geography, history, economy and social organization of a city are long established and have continuity. They serve as the medium in which multiculturalism is infused. These mainstream institutions and structures are the fabric into which cultural diversity is woven, providing the form and substance of a multicultural city.

Toronto, New York and Los Angeles, cities as well as metropolitan areas, have a long history of immigration and ethnoracial diversity. Also as ports, commercial and financial centers of global reach and as the premier cities of their countries, they have been receptive to the diffusion of new cultural traits.

The recent wave of immigration began in the late 1960s after the reform of immigration acts in Canada and the US in 1965. Unlike the previous waves of immigration, late 19th and early 20th centuries, the present wave of immigration is unending as far as anyone can foresee. Table 1 shows the cumulative outcome of the post 1970s immigration in the three cities as reflected in the 2010 and 2011 censuses of the US and Canada respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Toronto City</th>
<th>Toronto CMA</th>
<th>New York City</th>
<th>Los Angeles County</th>
<th>Los Angeles City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White 50.9%</td>
<td>White 53.0%</td>
<td>White 44%</td>
<td>White 50.3%</td>
<td>White 49.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian 12.3%</td>
<td>South Asian 15.1%</td>
<td>Non-Hispanic White 33.3%</td>
<td>Non-Hispanic White 27.8%</td>
<td>Non-Hispanic White 28.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese 10.8%</td>
<td>Chinese 9.6%</td>
<td>Latino 28.6%</td>
<td>Latino 47.7%</td>
<td>Latino 48.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black 8.5%</td>
<td>Black 7.2%</td>
<td>Black 25.6%</td>
<td>Black 8.7%</td>
<td>Black 9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino 5.5%</td>
<td>Filipino 4.2%</td>
<td>Asian 12.7%</td>
<td>Asian 13.9%</td>
<td>Asian 11.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: The US data are compiled from censuses by David Halle and Andrew Beveridge, op.cit. Table1.1,p.5,4 The Canadian data are from Statistics Canada’s National Household Survey, 2011.

Note: Ethnic and racial categories in this table are overlapping and not mutually exclusive. For example, the category ‘White’ includes ‘non-Hispanic White.’ The profiles shown in each column of the table are meant to report the significant ethnoracial groups, but not all, in each city. They do not add up to 100%.
The data are for Toronto city and its Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) that includes 22 local municipalities, New York city, which is large enough to be self contained and Los Angeles city and its surrounding Los Angeles county that has 88 municipalities.

The table shows these three metropolitan cities represent a break with their past. In the three cities, European-origin whites (non-Hispanic) were either a bare majority (in Toronto city and the CMA) or more to the point are one-third and less of the population (New York, Los Angeles City and County).

Los Angeles is almost a Latino city (48%), though there is a wide range of nationalities among Latinos. New York has a greater diversity of races, nationalities and ethnicities. Here American Blacks though declining proportionately remain a sizable presence (26%), but Hispanic Dominicans and Puerto Ricans, who combined with the West Indians, make the presence of Blacks very visible. Toronto is an area where Asians from South Asia, China and Philippines constitute almost 30% of the population. Blacks in the Toronto area are largely from the Caribbean but now Africans have started to immigrate. Among whites in the Toronto area, Jews, Italians, Portuguese and Russians add to the ethnic mosaic.

Comparing these figures with data from 1990 and 2000, the declining of the historical white population and increasing proportion of Hispanic and Asians are the unmistakable trends in the three cities. Within these ethnoracial categories, the diversity of cultures, religions and nationalities is kaleidoscopic.

These are big cities: Toronto city (2.65 million) and the CMA (5.84 million), New York (8.17 million), Los Angeles City (3.8 million) and the County (9.81 million). They have turned into the majority-minority cites, where no single ethnoracial group is in majority, but a combination of minorities make the majority. This trend has swept all across North America. William Frey observes that the primary cities of the 58 top 100 metropolises in the US were majority-minority places in 2010.5

Immigration is the lifeline for the growth of population in both countries, where native fertility rates are below replacement levels. The US and Canada are dependent on immigrants to maintain population growth, fill-in for the aging labor force and sustain social security and public services. With continuing immigration, the presumption of cultural uniformity cannot be sustained. Immigrants demand civil rights and expect recognition as equal citizens. Their native-born second generations are less tolerant of racial and ethnic discrimination. They are becoming the mainstream, which is being redefined.

Apart from native-born and immigrants, North American cities also have Aboriginals. The Canadian cities in the prairies in particular have sizable Aboriginal populations. They bring another form of ethnoracial diversity that predates European settlement. Aboriginals have treaty rights and their distinction lies in their claim to be nations, whose interests and identities do not fall under the rubric of multiculturalism. Yet they are an important element of the cultural mosaic in some cities.6

Infusion of Multiculturalism in Cities’ Structures and Institutions

The infusion of cultural diversity in a city’s institutions, symbols and structure is the
process that transforms it into a multicultural place. It is an incremental process of mutual learning and enforcement of civil and human rights. Initially the cultural, linguistic or religious needs of a new group run into established practices and laws, which may not satisfy its ways of meeting public needs that are similar to those of others. Minorities demand cultural rights, religious recognition and satisfaction of their service needs in culturally sensitive ways. These demands set in motion processes of reasonable accommodation and harmonization of laws and policies. Incrementally, institutions and practices of a city recognize and incorporate ethnoracial groups’ needs and identities, and they in turn learn the functions and objectives of institutions. Thus a process of mutual learning comes to characterize multicultural cities. I do not mean to suggest that it is a smooth process without confrontations and contentious battles. Yet the enforcement of civil rights keeps it on track.

The first proposal for a mosque or temple in a city confronts zoning requirements based on requirements of churches, but with some heated public meetings and/or litigation, the rules are amended and policies are harmonized to include non-Christian places of worship. Similar mutual adaptations occur in introducing kosher food in hospitals, black history in school curricula or permitting parades and festivals of various ethnic groups in city streets, for example. This has happened in city after city. Toronto, New York and Los Angeles have led the way.

Initially cultural differences are manifested in the private domain of domestic and community life. The language spoken at home, gender relations, the food, the dress, music, religion, festivals, customs of birth, marriage and funeral are examples of the subcultural differences in private domain. Yet these practices do spill out into the public domain as they run into laws and practices. Incrementally the norms of dress in public, rules of preparing and displaying foods in restaurants, housing codes and funeral regulations, for example, are modified to accommodate cultural differences. Also in the provision of city services and resources, ethnoracial communities agitate for equity. Such accommodations add up to reconstruct the common ground and realign civic culture. This process can be visualized through the experiences of the three cities.

**Multicultural Urbanism of Toronto, New York and Los Angeles**

Ethnic restaurants and food carts offering fares of distant lands are a city’s most common mark of its multiculturalism. Following food multiculturalism, ethnic enclaves and ethnic economies are the most striking features of multicultural cities.

Toronto has five Chinatowns, two enclaves of South Asians and Jewish and Italian neighborhoods fanning out to suburbs from their historical bases in the city. The suburban municipalities of Markham and Brampton have turned into the territorial turfs of Chinese and South Asians. Ethnicity now also has its home in suburbs.

New York always has had immigrants’ ghettos, but now ethnoracial communities have spread out beyond the historic neighborhoods of migrants, such as Harlem, Lower East Side and Manhattan’s Chinatown. Joseph Berger lists 16 such neighborhoods, mostly in outer boroughs, including Jewish, Italian, Russian and Dominican enclaves. For example, Flushing in Queens and Sunset Park in Brooklyn rival old Chinatown and are thriving centres of Chinese culture and economies.
Los Angeles’ historic ethnoracial sectors, Latinos in East LA, Blacks in South LA and Anglos in West LA, are complemented by much bigger ethnoburbs in the LA county. Apart from the downtown Chinatown, Asian enclaves in the San Gabriel valley, Monterey Park, Walnut, have emerged both as residential communities and territorial bases of ethnic economies and cultural life. Their mega malls, TV and radio stations, tutoring and homeland language schools, ethnic banks, import/export houses, dance and music studios have woven together Taiwanese, mainland Chinese, Korean and Filipino communities. They are the evidence of the infusion of multiculturalism in urban structure.

Ethnic enclaves are not ghettos. They are not products of institutionalized social exclusion but mostly of market choices and revealed preferences for living in an area where ethnic institutions and businesses create a wholesome community life. Present day ethnic enclaves are thriving communities of mixed social classes, affluent and poor, providing homes to immigrants as well as second-generation ethnics. Yet they are grafted on the existing city structures and institutions.

Ethnic enclaves have restructured the social geography of cities. They spawn new focal points and turn a metropolitan area into a multi-nuclei urban region. They break the soulless uniformity of suburbs by imprinting landscape with ethnic motifs and forms.

Often ethnic enclaves are viewed with apprehensions of perpetuating segregation. This is a legitimate concern, yet so far enclaves are not entirely exclusive, though a particular ethnic group may dominate but there is always an internal diversity by nationality, religion and class. They are subject to the usual urban processes of social mobility resulting in ethnic/racial infiltration-displacement with the shifts in housing markets and business cycles.

A more common form of multicultural neighborhoods are where two or more ethnic groups live together. New York had 1103 such neighborhoods in 2010. Toronto’s ethnic enclaves contained only about 16 to 49 percent of different ethnic groups’ respective city populations. Majorities lived in mixed areas. Residential multiculturalism comes in both concentrated and mixed neighborhoods.

The current wave of immigrants has brought large number of non-Christian faiths, which is unprecedented. Their presence has introduced new forms of cultural and religious institutions in North American cities, such as Mosques, Mandirs, temples, marriage halls and community clubs with new iconography of minarets, domes and pagodas.

The Toronto metropolitan area has about 100 mosques and Islamic centers, many newly built. New York has 75 mosques, 30 in Brooklyn alone. Los Angeles city and county have 59 mosques. Scores of Mandirs, Gurdawaras, Buddhist temples and Chinese, Russian or Ethiopian churches also add to the architectural diversity of the three cities. The case of mosques is illustrative of the accommodations by right in these cities, because in the anti-Islamic sentiments of the post 9/11 era often there is opposition to the development of mosques.

Accommodations of immigrants’ languages to facilitate their access to city services and participation in local affairs are another feature of multiculturalism. All three cities have policies and services for translation and interpretation...
in numerous ethnic languages. For example, public meetings for planning are required to provide interpretations in languages of the local areas. City libraries are expanding their holdings and programs in ethnic languages. Schools, day care centers, seniors’ homes and hospitals in both public and private sectors increasingly offer access to interpretation services. The three cities have global cast of store signage in ethnic languages. This description is meant only to suggest the form that multicultural language accommodations take. It is not to suggest a harmonious evolution of these practices. Sometimes even ethnic communities begin to protest too much of ethnic signs.9

Art, music, literature of different cultures are thriving by community initiatives but grafted into civic culture. Electronic and print media in the three cities is pulsating with multicultural offerings. Television and radio have 24-hour channels for multicultural programs in numerous languages. It is said that Toronto has about 300 ethnic newspapers. New York has 90 Chinese newspapers and magazines, 6 Spanish and 3 Polish language newspapers among a vast body of ethnic press10. Parades, fairs and marches celebrating or demonstrating for national days and causes of distant lands are also a feature of multicultural cities. These are examples of accommodations of cultural diversity in urban institutions and the infusion of new norms and symbols in public domain.

Multicultural curriculum in schools, ethnic studies in colleges and universities, anti racism and diversity training in public and private agencies, employment equity to increase representation of various groups in employment are manifestations of accommodations of cultural and racial differences. All-around diversity is being viewed as an asset.

As the ethnic voters increase and immigrants become citizens, political parties and leaders pay attention to ethnic communities’ concerns. Political leaders of ethnic backgrounds are elected to public offices, though their number may not be commensurate with their voting populations. Yet the paths to influence and power are being pried open, slowly eroding the lingering heritage of discrimination.

The most striking infusion of multiculturalism is in the rhythms of daily life and manners of casual encounters in streets, buses, subways, parks and stores. The diversity of languages, accents, dresses and etiquettes germinates an ethics of tolerance and mutual accommodation. It does not mean that harmony always prevails but civility is expected. People may harbor ethnic stereotypes or racial feelings, but those are discouraged from public expression. There are mutual misunderstandings on account of cultural differences, but usually those remain confined to individual encounters. The exposure to others’ food, music, art and humor enhances the urban experience. It makes multiculturalism everybody’s experience.

Multicultural cities are not without social disparities. Some racial/ethnic groups do better than others economically and socially. There are instances of police profiling of non-whites, and recently Muslims; immigrants have a hard time finding suitable jobs and discrimination is not unfamiliar to dark skinned people. Zoning battles can turn into racial/ethnic confrontations. The process of multicultural infusion is not unhindered.
Yet multiculturalism offers a path to reduce these disparities by investing rights to claim fairness. It is focused on reasonable accommodation of differences. It has some success on this score. A wide-ranging practice of micro-negotiations at personal as well as group levels helps bridge multicultural differences.

The City as a Common Ground

The city is not just a vessel for multiculturalism. It cultivates mutual accommodations through living in close proximity, sharing of infrastructure and civic services as well as by webs of daily encounters and interdependencies. In cities, people are different but they are joined together by dovetailing roles, transactions and exchanges, citizenship, public spaces, laws, civic morals, symbols.

There are imperatives of city living, which affect and interlink everybody, albeit in impersonal bonds. Among those imperatives are shared space and dense living, indivisible collective goods such as clean air and water, public health, sanitation, traffic laws, water and sewerage, safety and police etc. Similarly social life in cities is organized around dovetailing roles and bonds of interdependence regulated by rules, etiquette and ethics. Together both the physical and social imperatives of urban living generate a civic culture and constitute a common ground that undergirds subcultures.

There cannot be different traffic rules in New York or Toronto for immigrants from England or India whose cultural norm is to drive on the left side of the road. The regulated behaviors for sanitation, pest control, zoning, and safety are examples of how common ground cuts across differences. The city is an active agency in this process, acting as an instrument of integration, through its history, rules, civic culture, collective goods and shared space.

The important point often overlooked in discussions of multiculturalism is that the ‘subcultures’ of ethnoracial communities and the civic culture of a city (also the societal culture of a country) are changing, particularly by mutual borrowings and adaptations. This dynamics of cultural change leads to the fusion of practices, norms, arts and symbols and evolution of new cultural forms in both ethnoracial (sub) cultures and civic culture. It spins new forms of diversity, fostering hybridity, combining and splitting communities and identity groups in finer divisions, e.g. Chinese feminists or mixed-race halfies. Multiculturalism is always a work in progress and not a finished state.

Diversity becomes a spur to creativity and is now recognized as an asset of successful cities and corporations. In this respect, the multicultural city is an exciting place to live, full of variety and surprises, but also an incubator of economic success.

Conclusion

To conclude the discussion, a multicultural city can be described to have six elements: i) ethnoracially diverse population, ii) a regime of civil/human rights enacting cultural/religious freedoms, recognition and expression of individuals’ and groups’ identities in the private domain of home and community, iii) an overarching common ground of public institutions, societal and universal values, norms, official language(s), ethics of shared space and services that underlies (ethnic) subcultures, iv) reasonable
accommodation of cultural differences in public institutions to make them pluralistic and inclusive, v) harmonization of differences and restructuring of mainstream institutions to promote shared citizenship, sense of belonging and a common civic culture, vi) evolution of the common ground and ethnoracial subcultures through mutual influences.

I have pointed out the parallel developments of multicultural institutions in the three cities, but their differences arise from their particular economy, social structure, civic culture and physical form. New York and Los Angeles, as American cities, have entrepreneurial, private and community initiated multiculturalism. Toronto’s multiculturalism is publically sanctioned and promoted. It is top down rather than bottom up. The history, geography, politics and economy of each city lay down the scope and form that cultural diversity takes.

Multiculturalism is the new conception of a nation. It supplants the idea of a nation forged in a uniform culture. The same notion filters down to multicultural cities. In the global and highly interconnected world of today, and with increasing dependence on immigrants for their demographic sustainability, there is no alternative to inclusive and multicultural cities.

In a city there are many institutions and processes that overarch diversity: economic and job markets, finances and taxes, transportation systems, land and housing markets, media and technology, environmental sustainability, planning and social policies. Multiculturalism operates within these parameters through the reasonable accommodation of cultural differences.

Urban planning in multicultural cities has two sets of challenges: 1) to incorporate ethnoracial differences through a structured process of reasonable accommodation and harmonization of polices, 2) to reconstruct common ground for forging an inclusive civic culture and shared citizenship. Multicultural planning is as much a matter of social and cultural planning as of culturally sensitive space and services planning.

Multicultural cities will be seldom without controversies. Today it is the tensions between the historical mainstream culture and the transplanted cultures of immigrants and sojourners. Tomorrow, it will be the challenges of balancing intercultural demands among majority-minority groups. A continual reconstruction of common ground should go hand in hand with the expression of cultural differences.

Notes

1 United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), Cities in a globalizing world, (London: Earthscan, 2001)
4 David Halle and Andrew Beveridge, “New York and Los Angeles: the Uncertain