

**PLANNING HEGEMONY: DISCOURSES OF URBAN  
GOVERNANCE**

by

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## ABSTRACT

Post-Fordist shifts in urban governance have been characterized by a trend toward competitive city entrepreneurialism, signalled by an orientation away from the provision of collective social services, and to creating a hospitable business climate for foreign investment and consumer activities. Via discourse analysis of the new *Toronto Official Plan*, this thesis contrasts the image of downtown public spaces as commodified sites of spectacular consumption, as part of a wider project of downtown revitalization to solicit transnational capital, to the impoverishment of public space and infrastructure in the dilapidated former suburbs. Based on an activist project in a Toronto suburban community, I explore the challenges and opportunities for enacting an alternative vision that counters that of downtown gentrification. More broadly, I hope to move beyond resistance, in creating spaces that facilitate citizen engagement and influence in the decision-making processes of urban planning in response to local and global forces of governance.

**Keywords:** Urban Planning, Critical Discourse Analysis, Gentrification, Suburbs, Political-Economy, Activism, Community

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 General Introduction:

Like other cities in Canada, Toronto has experienced profound restructuring in urban governance in recent decades. This restructuring has been characterized by a competitive city entrepreneurialism, signalled by an orientation away from the provision of collective social services and towards the creation of a hospitable business climate for foreign investment and consumer activities. The solicitation of highly mobile transnational capital is widely documented to have induced increasing displacement through gentrification and commodification of central city neighbourhoods (Gibson, 2004; Harvey, 1990; Smith, 1996). However, there remains a paucity of research that examines the repercussions of recent downtown revitalization on adjacent suburban regions.

This thesis analyzes the implications and effects imposed on Toronto residents via the urban planning process, as represented by the *Toronto Official Plan (TOP)*, with a particular focus on the suburban region of southeast Scarborough. I seek to conceptualize the spatialization of inequality by situating the dynamics of urban planning within the central core of the city of Toronto, and its relationship to the suburbs, as key to contemporary shifts in urban governance and political economy. My overall purpose is to work toward a democratization of planning processes, one

that challenges prevailing inequalities in urban power and wealth, in favour of an approach to governance that foregrounds justice, equity and local engagement.

It is first necessary to clarify the notion of democracy and what effects this entails for the role of the public. The prevailing western ideal of liberal democracy is rooted in a rational self-interest and a private property model, which assumes that everyone is equally able to 'compete' for opportunities. Although liberalism assumes an equality of individuals, the formal system of representative democracy shifts decision-making power away from the individual and places it in the hands of governing leadership. This model of democracy often results in little public engagement in the political process. Instead, "democracy" typically unfolds through the actions of political and economic elites. An "elitist" theory of democracy suggests that not all citizens need be politically active, that, aside from voting, political decisions are best left to elected leaders (Baker, 2002; Dalton, 2002; Hackett, 2005). This view suits the concept of self-interested individuals pursuing economic ends. As McChesney wryly notes, capitalism works best when elites make most fundamental decisions and the bulk of the population is depoliticized (1999).

Bearing this argument in mind, critics such as Hackett and McChesney describe political crisis in western democracies as characterized by all time low turnout rates for formal procedures, such as elections and consultations (Hackett, 2005; McChesney, 1999). It is somewhat ironic that at a point of crisis and disillusion within western democracies that the very model of the liberal 'democratic capitalist state' is being exported throughout the world (McChesney,

1999; Zhao, 2004). In this thesis, I explore some of the ways that the goals of capitalism and of democracy are antithetical in the areas of urban development and governance. I will argue that declining public political involvement is not due entirely to citizen apathy but on the contrary to a sense of futility with an abstract political process that often appears to have little direct bearing on daily or personal life. My use of the word “democratization” in this thesis refers to the original concept of “rule by many” (McChesney, 1999). I mean to reconnect the concept of democracy to a sense of “thick” citizenship (Faulks, 2000), which promotes the opportunity for active political involvement and collaboration in the decision making process.

The empirical portion of this study draws heavily upon Lefebvre’s call for a socio-historical analysis of the production of space, to demystify space as a fetishized static category. Drawing also upon the work of Michel Foucault (1984), I examine space as a nexus of power, which plays out in struggles over the organization and redistribution of community life on a discursive terrain. Discursive practices are profoundly implicated in the (re)production of social practices, which are rooted in, and constitutive of, real material as well as cultural effects. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is the primary method employed in this thesis. I use CDA to offer a deep “reading” of various interpretations of the *Toronto Official Plan*. CDA potentially enables the demystification of the ideologically “fixed texts” of urban policy which inscribe city form and praxis. I am interested in discovering whose interests particular discourses serve, whose voice is granted legitimacy to construct and espouse ‘knowledge’ and,

consequently, what alternatives are crowded out, oppressed and/or marginalized in the urban policy-making process. Rooted in a political-economy approach this thesis seeks to critique and to challenge relations of power and domination in Toronto city planning.

To overcome limitations that may be inherent in textual analysis alone, this project is triangulated throughout three main chapter sections. First, I conduct a political-economic overview of recent shifts in urban governance. This leads to a textual analysis of the discourses surrounding the *Toronto Official Plan* and a final section linking discursive to social practice. This third aspect of the analysis draws on participant observation and action research methods used while I helped to organize a public forum with a counter-hegemonic group of alternative planning activists. Because CDA, as a discursive practice, is much wider than a linguistics issue alone (Blommaert, 2005), field methods have allowed me to fully immerse myself in the process of discursive production, reception and circulation in relation to Toronto urban planning. I make no claims to write a purely 'objective' or 'value neutral' study. On the contrary, I believe that values should be embraced and made explicit at the outset in order to make bias transparent. In 'Action research', values do not need to be hidden. On the contrary, values drive the research process through a constant dialectic between theory and practice (Adorno, 1976; Fairclough, 1995; McTaggart, 1991). I take on an activist position, in which research is understood as a form of political action that seeks to break down discursive production as an ideological process and to make power visible and unnatural in order to challenge inequalities.

## 1.2 Chapter Organization

Chapter two provides a review of the literature that serves two key purposes. Firstly, it illuminates political-economic social practices, which are constitutive of the urban governance of Toronto as a global capitalist city. Secondly, it provides an operationalization of essential concepts needed to understand and theorize the current processes shaping the dialectic between urbanization, gentrification and suburbanization in the city of Toronto. The growth of suburbs after World War Two (WW2) helped to “hollow out” the core of cities across North America, depressing the tax base and leading to the collapse of many inner city neighbourhoods. Since the 1970s, urban governments have embarked on a series of inner city redevelopment projects aiming to attract affluent consumers and capital investment back into the downtown core. As gentrification has become a global urban strategy celebrated by ‘city boosters’ as the route to revitalization of city life (Burayidi, 2001; Smith, 2005), many scholars have been quick to question the undesirable effects of gentrification (Gibson, 2004; Hannigan, 1998; Orum and Xianmeng, 2003; Parker, 2004; Short, 2005; Smith, 2005; Zukin, 1991). While there has been much criticism surrounding the displacement of lower income city dwellers as a result of gentrification, there is a surprising paucity of literature that questions where exactly the displaced people (as well as displaced problems) have relocated. I borrow from Mark Lowes’s articulation of the complex nature of gentrification to recognize the process as an interrelated “set of practices that reorganize space in terms of consumption activities, practices that become manifest on explicit ties between culture and

economy...best understood as a visible spatial component of profound social transformation in urban life in an age of 'flexible accumulation'" (2003, p.31).

This operationalization recognizes the complexity of gentrification as an uneven spatial practice, which becomes manifest not only in built form but also in the (shifting) use function of particular places (Clark, 2005). Based on this transformative nature, which is deeply embedded in the construction of space and place, it is crucial to then also consider where the gentrifiers come from, how and why spaces of gentrification are produced, and what happens to the pre-existing and surrounding communities.

The background to this project necessitates elucidation of the complex dialectic between suburbanization and gentrification. Both can readily be seen as abstract labels, which represent complex processes that involve decisive and planned adaptations to wider political-economic shifts, demanding a correlative restructuring of the built, cultural and symbolic environment. I argue that David Harvey's concept of the "spatial fix" provides an entry point through which we can examine the new *Toronto Official Plan*, as a specific form of restructuring spatial practice, in response to crises in global capitalism. Spatial fix strategies entail "the production of new spaces within which capitalist production can proceed (through infrastructural investments, for example), the growth of trade and direct investments, and the exploration of new possibilities for the exploitation of labour power" (Harvey 1990:183). The spatial fix is a form of displacement, which may attenuate the crisis of capital in the short-term; however, the long-term repercussions may be more severe. The city's solicitation of transnational

capital, I argue, is fuelling gentrification and contributing to the suburbanization of poverty and the erosion of public space. Essentially this 'strategy' can be seen as simply shifting the crisis in and through space, such that if we view gentrification as a spatial fix to inner city devaluation, the corresponding shift in urban problems outwards, not only relocates the original problem but also intensifies it (Harvey 1990; 1994). This argument is supported through empirical analysis of the ramifications of the *Toronto Official Plan* carried out in each of the following chapters.

The third chapter examines Toronto's specific attempt at a strategic 'spatial fix' through the lens of urban planning. The *Toronto Official Plan* is a policy document produced by the city council of Toronto as the result of a long-term consultation process with corporate partners and public representatives. It is a legally binding set of blueprints, which outline the goals for managing future development, growth and quality of life in the city for the next thirty years (City of Toronto, n.d.; 2002). The *Toronto Official Plan* can broadly be perceived as a response to the urban crisis of the late twentieth century through a radical new approach to urban planning. The urban restructuring of Toronto, as Canada's largest city, and a beta or second tier global city (Walks, 2001), is starkly exemplified by the changes that began to take place under the 1985 Federal Conservative government. Government policies in the 1980s were marked by an onslaught of drastic reductions and selectivity in social welfare and rights based services that were also continued under the subsequent Liberal government (Cowen, 2005).



However, it was the conservative provincial government led by the infamous Mike Harris, which took power in 1995 that manoeuvred the most profound municipal restructuring perhaps ever seen in Canada. Not only did the Harris government slash funding to education, health and social services, it also initiated the amalgamation of the seven municipal governments that comprised the metropolitan Toronto region. The (forced) amalgamation of the old city of Toronto (otherwise now considered the central core) with the post-war, inner suburban regions: York, East York, North York, Etobicoke and Scarborough, along with the regional metropolitan level of government, into one “Megacity”, was an unprecedented move on the part of the province that was hotly contested by multiple citizen groups across the city (Boudreau, 1999; Cowen, 2005). Indeed, municipal resistance to this plan culminated in the first referendum ever organized by a lower level of government to challenge actions above. The overwhelming seventy-six percent of “no” responses to amalgamation was clear; elimination of the municipalities was objectionable to the majority of metropolitan voters. However, since the referendum had no legal legitimacy, the provincial government was able to bypass the opposition and proceed as planned; amalgamation took place on January 1, 1998 (Boudreau, 1999). The logic driving government action was that amalgamation would eliminate duplication in services and would ensure greater bureaucratic efficiency and cost cutting, while encouraging investment in the megacity region as key to the aims of global competition (Bourdeau, 1999; Cowen, 2005).

Unfortunately, at the same time the provincial government also made sweeping funding reforms, downloading the costs of public transportation, affordable housing, health, education, and library services onto the municipal government without a simultaneous decentralization of power that would give the city the power to institute such programs. These reforms reared their ugly head most drastically in an approximately additional \$300 million a year burden to the city budget (Cowen, 2005). Although some efficiency gains may have occurred, a widely felt “quiet crisis” in declining social infrastructure has meant a loss of local presence in many communities across the city and intensification of spatialized inequalities in resources and investment between regions (Clutterbuck and Howarth, 2002; Cowen, 2005). The former suburbs have taken the hardest hit with fewer resources available to respond to the diverse needs of increasing numbers of recent immigrants, ethno-cultural groups, and precarious workers, while challenged with declining social and material infrastructure, selective social policy and record levels of poverty (Cowen 2005; Walks 2001). Since amalgamation in 1998, even the *Community Social Planning Council of Toronto* has been forced to close offices in the former suburbs to concentrate resources downtown, leading to reduced local presence and an impaired ability to react to localized community needs (Zizys et al. 2004). The problems of the inner city in the early 1970s have effectively relocated to some of the former suburbs.

The new *Toronto Official Plan* is the city’s first attempt to respond to the amalgamation ‘crisis’, induced and exacerbated by the broader political-

economic transformations in global capitalism, to create a “fix” which unites all of the former municipalities under one plan, eliminating the previous regional ones. Most interesting is how the city now seeks to resolve the tension between the perceived need to attract transnational capital and an obligation to local residential needs. Since the policy actions adopted by the plan shape both the discursive and material construction of the city, it also has a monumental effect on the life of city residents. It is thereby vital that the Toronto ‘public’ be aware of the plan, the issues that it represents, and how residents figure into the planning process; both within the city core and in the former suburbs.

In chapter three, I conduct a textual analysis of both official and oppositional discourses surrounding the *Toronto Official Plan* by utilizing two sets of “genre colonies” which comprise unified orders of discourse (Fairclough, 1995; Flowerdew, 2004). The first set of selected documents are considered to be *representations* of the “official”, or dominant, order (Fairclough, 1995; Foucault, 1972), consisting of the Toronto city council’s framing of the *Toronto Official Plan*. This approach is represented by the description of the plan (City of Toronto, n.d.) and the executive summary of a key report produced by the city in 2000 entitled “Toronto at a Crossroads”, both of which are available (and prominent) on the city website. The official vision outlined in each of the policy documents prioritizes competitive city entrepreneurialism where the winners are the bearers and supporters of global capital and the losers are local residents with reduced public resources (particularly in the inner suburbs) and decreased opportunities to influence urban decision-making. These “*representations of space*”, within

Lefebvre's spatial triad (1991), function as the abstract, or "conceived", global space of bureaucrats, planners and scientists, a space which supports the functioning of capital, while overlooking *lived spatial practices*, experienced by the users of space and place (Lefebvre, 1991).

In juxtaposition, throughout chapter three, I draw on alternative or 'counter discourses', which directly oppose the official "institutionalized" approach to city planning. The primary unit of analysis in this respect is a deputation in response to the *Toronto Official Plan*, produced in collaboration with local residents and multiple community groups, by a group of planning activists, *Planning Action*. Through the discourses associated with *Planning Action* I hope to articulate the process through which dominant ideologies become naturalized as common sense and hence attain and maintain social control through the negotiation of consent with the governed, or those lacking in the hierarchy of power (Gramsci, 1971). The *hegemonic* naturalization of the institutional approach to urban planning is held up to 'immanent critique', seeking to expose the degradation of citizen needs and community life through processes of gentrification and private encroachment on public space (Gramsci, 1971; Fairclough, 1995; Lefebvre, 1991). As a *representational* account, the perceptions of this community-based group, reflect *perceived* space as lived in the city, particularly the marginalized spaces and subsequently, the marginalized people who inhabit them.

However, dominance is never stable or complete. Foucault reminds us that where there is power, there is always resistance; power is never absolute (1972, 1977). This realization segues into the ethnographic foundation of

chapter four, which will constitute the culmination of the project in an attempt to unite representations of space and representational spaces through *lived spatial* and discursive praxis. This chapter discusses the process of organizing a public forum, through participant observation with *Planning Action* and local residents, focused on the lack of public space and resources in the former suburbs, perceived as a direct result of an entrepreneurial approach to urban planning, which gives priority to capital expansion over local democracy.

In the interest of reconsidering and challenging the undemocratic relations of spatial and social justice in the city, the forum was planned for the Morningside suburban region of southeast Scarborough. This is an area classified as “high-risk” by the City of Toronto, and fronting public disinvestment coupled with a high incidence of poverty, affecting more than fifty percent of the population (United Way, 2004). The Morningside community is further significant to this project, as, in direct effect of the *Toronto Official Plan*; residents are facing further erosion of public space coupled with diminution of essential services and the potential for meaningful engagement in local decision-making (*Planning Action*, 2006).

The dual goals of the forum are complementary. The first major priority is to draw attention to the needs and lived realities of a community neglected at best, and exploited at worst, by the current entrepreneurial vision for Toronto urban planning. As a corollary, the forum was intended as a first step toward building upon the emancipatory potential of discourse analysis to, not only challenge and expose, but to articulate and advance a new vision. The planning process for organizing the Scarborough forum will be evaluated in terms of its

potential to democratize planning processes based on attempted decentralization of municipal decision-making through empowerment of local communities to influence the shape, form and experience of everyday life.

Although based in a community with specific local circumstances that cannot be widely generalized, this is nonetheless an account of how the local communicates with global forces. I believe that evaluation of the specific strengths and limitations experienced here will be useful in other contexts, to help inform of challenges and potentials that confront grassroots, community attempts to mobilize alternatives to the dominance of capital in urban planning.

As a discursive practice, urban policy-making is informed by existing social conventions as well as socio-political-economic context. In the city of Toronto, the application of CDA through a holistic political-economy perspective provides the necessary tools to analyze the societal implications of policy discourse that is embedded in, and exerts hegemonic pressures on, existing social practice. Through critique and exposure of the naturalization process through which the *Toronto Official Plan* has attained legitimacy as a fixed policy text, it will become possible to articulate alternative discourses in an effort to challenge and transform inequalities of power expressed in city formations. The discursive praxis represented by the forum and related interviews is a form of action intended to reflect on, challenge and change the pre-existing asymmetrical relations of power in Toronto city planning which privileges the interests of capital at the expense of less economically lucrative community needs.

## CHAPTER 2: FROM SPATIAL FIX TO SHIFTING CRISIS

### 2.1 Introduction

The massive development of North American suburbs, after World War Two<sup>1</sup>, featured the outward migration of large numbers of middle and upper class white city-dwellers. In the United States in particular, it has been widely noted that “white flight” and the movement of capital from city to suburb led to a “hollowing out” of the city centre. Lured by the dream of a “bourgeois utopia” (Davis, 1990, p.170), homebuyers abandoned the inner city in pursuit of private single family homes, on well spaced lots free from the problems (and problem people) of urban life. Urban centres came to be seen as sites of vice, crime, danger and decay, a view that was substantiated through new shifts in living patterns and investment strategies. As the more affluent ‘consumers’ fled the inner cities, industry and businesses also moved outwards to capitalize on available land, as well as on the expanding suburban market. Devaluation of the inner city was exacerbated by the subsequent loss of manufacturing and low-skilled jobs for the remaining city residents, many of whom were recent immigrants or members of ethnically marginalized groups who were “redlined”<sup>2</sup> out of the new suburban dream. The result, as commonly depicted in scholarly

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<sup>1</sup> Although, as Clark (1966) and Harris (2004) document suburban forms began to develop far earlier than the postwar period, it was not until the late 1950s that the state took on a significant role in their promotion and regulation and also when suburbs became stereotyped in Canada (Harris, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> This is a process practiced by financial institutions that refused to lend in certain neighbourhoods or to particular races, discussed further below.

literature, was a process of segregation along racial and class lines leading to social polarization and an intensified cycle of poverty and poverty related crime in the inner city (Hanigan, 2005; Orum and Chen, 2003; Parker, 2004; Walker & Lewis 2005).

In a reverse trend, prevalent during the early 1970s, but gaining momentum from the 1980s into the present, inner cities became host to a slew of reinvestment strategies and revitalization projects. Where the urban core was depicted as “blight” and with many areas slated for demolition from the 1930s to 1970s, the new trend in urban management is toward downtown conservation and neighbourhood protection. This is a trend prevalent in Toronto, as inscribed in city planning documents, wherein downtown neighbourhoods once slated for “slum clearance”, have been recast as historical treasures and the embodiments of “chic” lifestyles. Two of many such neighbourhoods in central Toronto include Donvale, northeast of the central business district, and Parkdale, along Queen Street West (Caulfield, 1994; Ley, 2000; Rose, 1974; Slater, 2005; Tsimikalis, 1983). Isolation, urban sprawl, car dependency, homogeneity, and lack of public gathering space, have reduced the appeal of suburbia. In addition, the baby boomer demographic bulge that supported suburbanization through the 1960s and 1970s began to return to the city in the 1990s. The once seemingly utopic space, is now denounced as hazardous, and blamed for an array of social ills (Davis, 1990; Fogelson, 2005; Jacobs, 1961; Kuntsler, 1993; Parker, 2004; Putnam, 2000).



At the same time, downtown redevelopment schemes have an express purpose to reinvigorate the downtown core to attract upper market consumers and commercial investment. Strategies such as: waterfront redevelopment, downtown beautification, tax concessions to corporate investors and solicitation of prestigious events, have been documented as major causal factors of gentrification in multiple cities with global aims such as: Toronto (Caulfield, 1994; Bunce & Young, 2004), Vancouver (Lowe, 2002), London (Hamnett, 2003), New York (Comella, 2003), Seattle (Gibson, 2004) and others (Atkinson & Bridge, 2005; Shaw, 2005). Central to the goals of the euphemistic 'revitalization' is the intention to entice wealthy suburbanites back into the urban centres, often through investment in aesthetic landscapes of consumption in previously low income or 'underdeveloped' regions. The promotion of art, culture and historical architecture typically function as magnets for an upwardly mobile 'creative class' of consumers who are drawn to the hip and trendy atmosphere, ironically displacing the lower income artists which created it and in turn transforming the nature of the community (Caulfield, 1994; Gibson, 2004; Lowe, 2002; Parker, 2004; Zukin, 1991).

As urban governance increasingly comes to favour the needs of capital over citizens, or as Zukin might say, market over place (1991), the gentrification of the inner city accompanied a *crisis of liveability*, whereby social polarization intensifies in the urban core while expanding the terrain of inequality. The last two decades have witnessed a rise in the suburbanization of poverty and material degradation, which we might term as a 'hollowing out' of the suburbs,

which mirrors that of the inner city decades earlier. My postulation is that, not only is the spatial fix not a solution for either the city or the suburban regions, but in fact an aggravation of existing problems. Central to what I have termed a liveability crisis is that 'quality of city life' has come to be narrowly defined in reference to the life circuit of capital while ignoring public needs. Citizen issues related to poverty, crime, inadequate infrastructure, displacement and homelessness remain prominent in the central cities while simultaneously migrating outwards (Cowen, 2005; Gibson, 2004; Harvey, 1990; Hannigan, 2005; Parker, 2004; Sassen, 2001; Teaford, 1997; Walks, 2001).

I will begin with a brief recapitulation of political, economic and social characteristics that gave birth to the cultural environment of mass consumption and suburbanization as a 'fix' to the post war crisis. Subsequently, the aftermath of 'suburban flight' led to a crisis of accumulation in the inner city, which arguably may be seen as a premonition of the wider global crisis of Fordism which came to surface in the early 1970s. I will elucidate the ramifications that the global restructuring of the world economy has imposed on urban management, resulting in a new set of entrepreneurial governance practices, oriented towards competition in pursuit of world city status and capital investment (Gibson, 2004; Harvey, 1994; 1990). As the health of urban regions becomes ideologically attached to global capital, gentrification fuels the construction of commercialized consumer landscapes, which displace not only non-ideal consumers but also the spirit of civic and place-based participation. I will expand upon this theme further through empirical evidence in chapters three and four.

## 2.2 Suburbanization and Urban Crisis

In seeking to recognize the process of suburbanization as a 'spatial fix', it is essential to recognize the forces of decision-making that fuelled suburban development. The flight to the suburbs constitutes much more than a shift in culture and consumption desires. Although consumption preferences and personal agency are certainly part of the suburbanization trend, my purpose here is to elucidate the role of policy in both the ideological and material construction of urban form. The massive wave of suburban development, after WW2, was intimately bound to the rise of a Fordist economic regime and Keynesian state policies. By the word "Fordism", I refer to the mass production and consumption model of economic growth that characterized 'advance capitalist' countries, generally, from 1940 to 1960. Following the near collapse of the economy during the 1930s depression and the subsequent wartime boom, which itself provided a temporary 'fix', the end of the war threatened the capitalist-state with another potential crisis. In order to recover the slack in manufacturing profits at the hind-end of wartime mass production, changes in investment strategies led by both business and political leaders, would culminate in the active creation of suburban development as a 'solution' to over-accumulation (Bloom, 1991; Davis, 1990; Harvey, 1990; Hannigan, 2005; Orum & Xianmeng, 2005; Smith, 2005; Walker and Leis, 2005; Zukin, 1991).

This 'fix' took on two main forms. First, a decline in manufacturing profits indicated a need to shift investment priorities to other areas. It was during this period that real estate took off as a thriving sector, which could absorb long-term

capital investment while stimulating further economic growth. Relocation of home purchasers to the suburban fringe of the central cities was not by any means necessary or inevitable. Although, post-war baby booming families did eventually constitute the market for suburban housing<sup>3</sup> several writers have argued that mass suburbanization was not a demand driven process, but rather a supply-side strategy which served the interests of dominant political and economic players (Smith, 2005; Walker & Lewis, 2005).

Cheap land on the outskirts made what Smith terms the “ground-rent levels” for suburban property development desirable. Meanwhile, inner city investment was seen as failing to provide adequate returns (Parker, 2004; Smith, 2005; Zukin, 1991). At the same time, North American governments provided a barrage of direct subsidies to developers in the form of loans and tax incentives. One particularly insidious Canadian policy is evident through the “Capital Cost Allowance (CCA)” (Hannigan, 2005:249) which allowed developers to feign substantial losses on their tax returns for income properties despite proof of significant profits on audited statements. Furthermore, the National Housing Act (NHA) encouraged corporate development in the suburbs by funding only new housing builds where large spaces were necessary, and neglecting redevelopment and improvement of old stock housing, as found in downtown neighbourhoods (Harris, 2004). Canadian financial institutions such as banks and insurance companies, also sweetened the deal with a total of \$75 billion

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<sup>3</sup> I do not wish to dismiss the consumer desires of post-war families, of which Adams (1997) and Spigel (1992) provide excellent documentation. Both authors provide compelling accounts of the normalization of the suburban nuclear family as a major factor contributing to middle class desire for suburban lifestyles. The scope of the current project however, focuses on urban governance, which concentrates attention on political-economic influences.

poured into real estate development within a thirty year period beginning in 1948 (Hannigan, 2005). Stagnant inner city properties coupled with lubricated investment opportunities in the suburbs were a powerful influence in shaping the redirection of development priorities.

On the production end was the need to recoup manufacturing profit loss as well as to stimulate employment. Characteristic of the Fordist regime was mutual acceptance between state, capital and labour, otherwise known as the “corporatist compromise” (Harvey, 1990, p.133). A booming manufacturing sector was in the best interest of all parties since governments would reap the tax benefits of full employment, while corporations and the employed would obviously also secure income. Corporations permitted a degree of union power in exchange for increased productivity, while labourers conceded to the standardization of the work process and increased commodification of cultural life. In turn, the state would assume a Keynesian redistributive role in allocating funds for social services and infrastructural development. Governmental encouragement of industrialization took many guises, from outright subsidy to more implicit forms such as policy favouritism, all of which indicated a strong interventionist role in both the economy and social life (Harvey, 1990; Goodwin & Pointer, 2005; Zukin, 1991).

Promotion of the suburban dream of private, single family homes became physically attainable via the car as an instrument of freedom of mobility away from the crowded inner city. Expansion of credit lending and declining automobile prices combined with government investment in highway and major

road infrastructure, literally paved the way for the emergence of the suburban lifestyle. This form of urban restructuring correspondingly worked dialectically with business, state and citizens (or 'consumers' depending on ideological position) in tandem with profound political, economic as well as cultural shifts. Thus the stimulation of demand for cars, housing materials and new consumer durables associated with suburban life seemed to contain the quick fix necessary to recover profit from standardized mass production techniques which endured after the war effort. A corollary of course, was a major surge of employment, not only in factories but also in construction of roads, infrastructure and housing, leading to an upwardly mobile class of family oriented consumers with discretionary income (Davis, 1990; Hannigan, 1998; Hannigan, 2005; Kunstler, 1993; Smith; Walker & Lewis, 2005).

Mass media advertising, particularly with the rise of television, heavily promoted and naturalized a purchasable suburban lifestyle. However, the consumer patterns associated with the suburbanization trend, such as the trend to privatized leisure made possible through the rise of television and home recreation, have been discussed at length elsewhere (Bloom, 2001; Cohen, 2000; Hannigan, 1998; Spigel, 1992). I certainly do not wish to downplay the role of personal agency exercised by homebuyers, as many unmistakably aspired to the glorified utopic dreams of private suburban homes (Davis, 1990). However, it is requisite to recognize that the middle-class drive to the suburbs was class and race specific in a manner very much influenced and managed through state and business led subsidization. Davis notes how, in the United States financial

institutions provided low interest loans and mortgages with little to no down payments, an “exit-option” made available to white families while redlining (refusing to give loans or mortgages to persons from certain neighbourhoods) was practiced to exclude other races (Davis, 1990, p.169). At the same time, deed restrictions that prohibited non-Caucasians from residency, coupled with municipal zoning laws that set a minimum on housing size and lot spacing, effectively excluded low-income, and particularly, ‘raced’, residents (Davis, 1990; Hannigan, 1998; Hannigan, 2005). Although, explicit racial exclusions were rarer in Canada than in the United States (Harris, 2004), systemic exclusion, such as poor employment opportunities for recent immigrants functioned to keep visibly marginalized groups out of the suburbs. In the Toronto region, many recent suburbanites interviewed in 1951 reported leaving their city residences to get away from increasingly “international” neighbourhoods, which were becoming “occupied by immigrants” (Clark, 1968, p. 53). Indeed, the Scarborough suburb had a population that was 83 percent of British origin in 1951, compared to only 68.9 percent in the former City of Toronto (Clark, 1968, p.99).

In lieu of the intricate constellation of encouragement for suburban development it is little wonder that capital investment and homebuyers fled there from the inner cities at a growth rate in the United States that was “ten times that of the central cities” (Hannigan, 1998, p.34). In Toronto, this discrepancy was even more pronounced, where the central city population grew from 667,457 to only 672,407 from 1941 to 1961 (though declining from 1951 to 1961), while the surrounding suburban municipalities that would later become part of the Toronto

“Megacity” rose from 242,534 to 946,380. Of this growth, “82 percent of it, 577,036, occurred in the three outer municipalities of Etobicoke, North York, and Scarborough” (Clark, 1968, p.99), Scarborough itself expanding from 24,303 in 1941 to 217,286 in 1961 (Clark, 1968). Businesses were soon to follow their affluent customers, along with manufacturing firms and recreational venues such as malls, drive-ins and sport facilities (Cohen, 2000; Davis, 1990; Hannigan, 1998; Zukin, 1991). Suburban residents and their car-centred lifestyles were able to support and work in such locations that were inaccessible to less affluent inner city dwellers who relied on public transit (a system which itself had been devalued through the pumping of government funds into road construction) (Hannigan, 1998; Kunstler, 1993).

The devastation of inner cities in the wake of suburban expansion is a trend widely recognized in Canada, the US, Australia and the UK (Atkinson & Bridge, 2005; Cowen, 2005; Gibson, 2004; Hamnett, 2003; Ley, 2000; Shaw, 2005; Walks, 2001). Firstly, the loss of jobs consequent of the relocation of manufacturers and major businesses fuelled a cycle of poverty wherein lost incomes of residents further depressed the areas in which they lived. A process occurred which Parker describes as “de-gentrification (or filtering) where an increasingly dilapidated housing stock is occupied by social classes and ethnic groups who, by their very presence, are likely to depress the prices of any remaining freehold properties yet further” (2004, 95). Starved of the tax base afforded through businesses and high-income residents, municipal governments slashed inner city budgets for the civil service and public subsidies and began to



claw back social services at a critical historical point of intense need.

Devalorization of inner city properties further discouraged investment, leading to a self-fulfilling spiral of both physical and symbolic, or moral, decay. For many citizens, the life of crime that had been stigmatically attached to inner city residents became a reality out of impoverished necessity (Davis, 1990; Hannigan, 2005; Orum & Xianmeng, 2005; Parker, 2004; Smith, 2005; Zukin, 1991). All the while, the subsidization of capital, and those who could generate it, manifested itself in uneven urban development marked by polarity between the 'suburban haves' and 'inner city have-nots', an early indication that the spatial fix of suburbanization represented a short-term shift in the location of the crisis.

### **2.3 Post-Fordism: Crisis in Governance**

The retrenchment of social spending the inner cities suffered during the suburban drain foreshadowed the pending Fordist crisis, and shift to the era now widely referred to as post-Fordism (Harvey, 1990; Jessop et. Al., 2005; Walks, 2001). The limits to Fordism became manifest in the 1970s, which were characterized by economic stagnation and depression. Keynesian government initiatives seemed to do little to offset the crisis and debt levels rose across western nations. In 1973-75, the immanent crisis was exacerbated by a world oil crisis that drastically increased the energy costs involved in production, without a simultaneous rise in income. In an effort to find "new" solutions, governments in western nations tightened the money supply, raised interest rates, and sought to reduce government regulation of industry. In this shift toward free-market liberalism, Keynesian welfare state social expenditure came to be seen as

wasteful and an impediment to market expansion. Nowhere is this more evident than in the formation of supranational structures of governance such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, as well as regional and continental trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In a widespread push for regional and transnational “de-regulation”, national governments have been instrumental in negotiating the formation of new supranational regulatory bodies, while effectually giving up national control and sovereignty to these new organizations. At the same time, the global reach of corporate markets became increasingly difficult to manage and co-ordinate from centralized western bureaus. Such factors necessitated a corporate restructuring to organize production and profit on a global market. Communication and technology would be instrumental in allowing the transformation of time and spatial boundaries to facilitate capital expansion. This became increasingly more feasible with the growth of highly sophisticated communications technology that emerged out of Cold War co-ordination efforts, while the collapse of the Bretton Woods agreement led to the development of finance capital based on international floating exchange rates (Amin, 1994; Gibson, 2004; Harvey, 1990; Waisbord & Morris, 2000).

Foreign direct investment (FDI), which used to be perceived as an exploitation of the local state became increasingly coveted, as corporate ownership consolidated across borders and governments were forced to adapt to the pressures of a rapidly globalizing economy (Waisbord & Morris, 2000). The ramifications of these global shifts have become particularly visible at the local

urban level, as capital has been able to flee from one location to another in search of cheaper production processes. Combined with the effects of robotics and related production technologies, western societies saw their traditional industrial base shrink. Many manufacturing jobs “disappeared” or were shipped to ‘third’ world countries, to exploit cheap labour, rent and relaxed legal and environmental standards. There was a growing level of unemployment in western nations (in both the suburbs and inner cities) that was accompanied by new growth in the service sector and investment opportunities for an expanding white-collar managerial class (Sklair, 2000). Clearly characterizing this global process, Toronto is rapidly de-industrializing where, in the central core, old factories and warehouses become brownfield sites transformed into lofts and office buildings for ‘urban professionals’, while much manufacturing has relocated to the exurban fringe<sup>4</sup> or to ‘developing’ nations. The inner (former) suburbs have also seen a transformation from an industrial base to one catering to the post-Fordist economy that is far less lucrative than the professionalization of downtown Toronto. The suburbs have been forced to absorb an expanding service sector of low-paid, non-unionized, and precarious workers (LeBlanc, 2006; Walks, 2001). In conjunction, nations and cities alike have been forced into intense competition to secure highly mobile capital and to heighten their position in a global capitalist hierarchy. The emphasis of the new regime revolves around “flexible specialization” to address the rapid change in consumer tastes and

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<sup>4</sup> In Toronto, the exurbs are referred to as the ‘905’ region due to their telephone area code. There is now much more manufacturing industry in the 905 area than in the Toronto megacity (both the core and former suburbs) (Boudreau, 1999; Walks, 2001).

demands, commonly characterized as a shift from a 'producer to consumer' society (Amin, 1994; Gibson, 2004; Harvey, 1990; Sassen, 2001; Zukin, 1991).

Just as the pervasiveness of transnational capital appears to have taken dominance over the agenda of national governments, city leaders have grown increasingly more involved in creating similar policy adaptations to the new global regime. Individual cities undoubtedly evince unique variations due to the particular conditions of their response. Clarke and Gaile refer to this process as "glocalization" (2005; Nijman, 2005), which for the most part, amounts to a series of customized place-making strategies to sell local distinction on a global market (see chapter three for discussion of Toronto's specific approach). There is nevertheless a widely practiced trend towards entrepreneurialism in city governance. This is an approach to city management characterized by a shift away from the provision of social services, toward the promotion of business and tourism, whereby city officials take on a role of "brokerage" to attract transnational capital in hopes of attaining world city status. Lack of federal investment in municipalities necessitates that cities must front this intense global competition without the assistance of active state support. Consequently the pressures to maintain a hospitable "business climate" results in the well known "race to the bottom" where localities compete to lower tax rates, labour and environmental laws and other potential barriers to transnational investment (Barnet & Cavanaugh, 1994; Gibson, 2004; Harvey, 1994).

Embedded in the intensifying neo-liberal climate is a view that the health or 'quality of city life' exists primarily in economic growth. This has culminated in

a very narrow, class specific perception of meeting 'public' needs. Public space and institutions are increasingly privatized to channel citizen activity into consumption which is perhaps most undeniably evident through the overwhelming proliferation of "public-private partnerships" (Gibson, 2004: 91; Jessop et al.; Hannigan, 2005, p.257; Harvey, 1994, p.366). In these arrangements, public agencies essentially serve as a front to enable investors to solicit loans, subsidies and charitable donations that are otherwise only available to non-profits. Meanwhile, the 'public' end is seen to receive expertise and funding support no longer available from the regional or national state. Harvey perhaps sums it up best in depicting the partnerships as no more than "a subsidy for affluent consumers, corporations and powerful command functions to stay in town at the expense of local collective consumption for the working class and the impoverished" (1994, p.366). These organizational bodies present a radical departure from public institutions of the past as they are composed of non-elected officials who need make no pretence to public accountability or representative decision-making (Clarke & Gaile, 2005; Hannigan, 2005; Parker, 2004). The re-orientation of city governance toward the strategic solicitation and management of transnational finance capital; makes it abundantly clear that it is the private end that wins out against public aims in the power struggle over city resources.

## **2.4 Gentrification: A Quick Fix?**

The adaptations of global and city governance in response to post-Fordism have direct impact on the restructuring of the urban landscape. The

Fordist crisis involved not only a decline in manufacturing but also an increasing dissatisfaction with the suburban environment. Isolation, urban sprawl and the oil crisis, which threatened the sustainability of the motor focused lifestyle, began to draw accusations that suburbia was a horrid mistake in urban planning which carried with it a lament for the devastated central city blamed on the suburban dream (Jacobs, 1961; Kuntsler, 1993). Over-investment in the suburban landscape had more than saturated the potential for expanding markets, both in terms of housing subdivisions, which were even beginning to seem crowded in the once seemingly endless space, as well as retail markets. “After twenty years of constant expansion, suburban retailing had become oversaturated leading to consumer fatigue...’Shop ‘til you drop’ has progressed to ‘malled to death’” (Hannigan, 1998:62). Concurrently the turn to post-Fordism carried with it a growing consumer adversity to standardization, and demand for more specialized cultural products, a taste change that challenged the mass production model (Harvey, 1990). In compilation with the wider crisis of Fordism, political-economic players were left reeling for a new ‘fix’ to promote capitalist growth.

By the 1970s the devaluation of the inner city, (which began during the suburban flight), had produced a sizable “rent-gap”, opening up the potential for revalorization of degraded inner city space (Gibson, 2004, p.57; Parker, 2004; Smith, 2005, p.135). In order to generate a high return on investment the goal was to attract high paying tenants to previously low-income or “underdeveloped” areas. However in order to do so, “city boosters”, represented by a complex constellation of political and business leaders promoting downtown development,

embarked on both a political-economic as well as an ideological project that transformed both the physical and symbolic downtown landscape (Jessop et. al., 2005; Zukin, 1991). Seeking to attract the holy grail of transnational capital, cities had to prove themselves worthy of long-term investment. Potential for investment in the built environment was one end of the bargain, but for this to be perceived as profitable a steady client-customer base also had to be secured. This coincided with the proclaimed “cultural turn” to a post-modern consumption society whereby the “mobilization of spectacle” assumes dominance over manufacturing. The mass production of goods with its burdensome overhead and labour costs gave way to the production of experiences with almost instant turnover time to respond flexibly to rapid shifts in consumer tastes. Often the architectural history or artistic resistance of an urban area is depicted as adventuresome and exciting, as a tool to appeal to outsiders. Increasingly, upscale leisure and spectacular entertainment experiences began to replace the production of tangible goods to attract patrons to the new urban “Bourgeois playground”, replacing the Bourgeois utopia promised earlier in the suburbs. The ideal consumers envisioned in this form of revitalization planning are affluent suburbanites, tourists and potential investors, particularly those belonging to the rising white-collar managerial class with elite aesthetic tastes and disposable income (Gibson, 2004; Jameson, 1984; Lowes, 2003; Hannigan, 2005; Harvey, 1990).

In the wake of economic crisis, the perception of inner cities as impoverished areas of physical and moral decay, necessitated the re-imaging

(Boyer, 1995) of the city as a terrain of excitement and culture unavailable in the standardized blandness of suburbia. In seeking to assuage upper-class fears of crime and vice in the inner city, city officials sought to eliminate the potential sources of disdain, such as visible street poverty. This did not evoke efforts to alleviate poverty itself where one would expect investment in rehabilitative services, affordable housing and job integration programs; quite the contrary, such public service programs were cut throughout the 70s and 80s (Gibson, 2004; Wolch, 2005). Implementation of harsher laws and policies which function to criminalize activities necessary to survival for many impoverished individuals, such as panhandling and sleeping in public, were not designed to eliminate poverty so much as to eliminate the impoverished from city streets for the comfort of 'desirable' populations (Dodge, 1999; Gibson, 2004; Hannigan, 1998; Hannigan, 2005). Ironically, the symbolic transformation of the inner city focused on connoting the downtown as a territory safe for the enjoyment of the middle-upper classes, without disruption from the impoverished or homeless 'vagrants', while, in order to attract the new urban 'gentry', the physical process of gentrification forced many pre-existing residents into poverty and homelessness.

## **2.5 Creative Destruction**

The deployment of gentrification as a strategy of urban renewal and a fix for the relocation of capital investment unassumingly neglects to consider the negative repercussions on the original, as well as adjacent, communities. As gentrifying neighbourhoods are increasingly 'sold' as unique landscapes for creation of entertaining lifestyles, new developers and 'settlers' tend to see



themselves as forging the “urban frontier”. In a process akin to colonization the “urban pioneer...conveys the impression of a city that is not yet socially inhabited; like the Native Americans, the contemporary working class is seen as less than social, simply part of the physical environment” (Smith, 2005, p.130). Correspondingly, pre-existing residents seldom enter revitalization plans, which focus on attracting high-income tenants. On the one hand, there is re-appropriation of older buildings, renewed in order to charge higher rents, displacing lower income residents without offering up alternative affordable dwellings in the same locality. Secondly, there are “new build schemes” (Short, 2005, p.195) for commercial and condominium developments, which may distinctively challenge the nature of the community while sending rental rates and property values soaring. By the 1980s, there was a boom in downtown commercial space, replacing previously residential areas in order to develop a “critical mass” of business development downtown (Gibson, 2004; Hannigan, 1998). The redefinition of development in an upscale direction can be seen through amendments to the Canadian “National Housing Act” (Hannigan, 2005, p.248) and the United States “urban renewal” programs, which expanded “slum clearance” projects to include commercial developments. Although renewal programs were originally intended for housing projects, a perceived need to compete with suburban shopping malls redirected priorities away from housing people to housing events and entertainment (Gibson, 2004; Hannigan, 1998, p.193).

If gentrification goals do in fact succeed at drawing capital investment what exactly is the nature of that success? The assumption underlying revitalization strategies is that benefits will “trickle down” into the communities, providing jobs and generating business for local merchants. However, even if we are to assume that the original residents are not displaced or removed, it is unlikely that they will reap the same rewards as the newcomers, who are targeted as consumers of city culture and amenities. The two highly coveted attractions for civic boosters are high technology firms and retail stores, neither of which can be expected to bring significant benefit to low-income city residents. Most working class citizens do not possess the educational level necessary for high technology careers and are more likely forced into menial low-wage, low-skilled service industries. Nor do such schemes encourage social mixing, indigenous inclusion or integration. With priorities centred upon personal safety and upscale consumption, more often than not, new growth results in “urbanoid’ environments” (Hannigan, 1998, p.6, 73, 191-2), which simulate the excitement of city space but through enclosed pseudo-public spaces which can be effectively controlled to exclude ‘undesirables’ (Gibson, 2004; Parker, 2004; Sassen, 2001; Short, 2005; Manifestation of this trend in Toronto is discussed in section 3.4).

## **2.6 Crisis of Liveability**

Research has suggested that gentrification does not promote diversity or levitate inner city neighbourhoods, but rather contributes to the production of what Saskia Sassen has coined a “dual city” (2001). Despite the expansion of wealth generated through capital investment, very little makes its way into the

hands of local residents. Even (or especially) cities that have been 'successful' at attaining world status, have become increasingly more polarized, evidencing a first/third world divide between the exorbitantly wealthy 'capitalist class' (Sklair, 2000) on the one hand and extreme poverty and rapid expansion of homelessness on the other (Castells, 1999; Parker, 2004; Sassen, 2001). Toronto has the widest income gap, between rich and poor, in the country with an average discrepancy of \$251,471 compared to \$174,729 in Canada as a whole (United Way, 2004).<sup>5</sup> It may be needless to say, that gentrification or urban renewal, as a spatial fix, has not only expanded the territory for capital to proceed but, of greater concern, has simply displaced or expanded urban problems to other regions.

Throughout this process, it is easy to forget the suburbs, which have come to be seen as a "places of sacrifice" (Short, 2005, p.195). Recent decades have seen a radical change in the nature and composition of suburbia. No longer are suburbs homogenous bedroom communities but many have grown into "edge-cities" of their own with many of the same problems experienced in major cities (Cowen, 2005; Garreau, 1991; Teaford, 1997; Walks, 2001). This spatial process too, is an uneven one, resulting in a dual system of "haves' (rich suburbs) and "have nots" (poor suburbs)" (Orum & Xianmeng, 2003, p.127), corresponding to the global trend toward polarization within and across cities and nations. This trend is abundantly clear in the Toronto region where the "mature" or "postwar" suburbs are challenged with declining social and material infrastructure and record levels of poverty, while most of the newer suburban

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<sup>5</sup> Between the top and bottom ten percent of the population

developments are experiencing rising average incomes (Cowen, 2005; United Way, 2000; Walks, 2001). Gentrification works in tandem with the suburbanization of poverty, as investment and infrastructure in the “inner” suburbs has been neglected in favour of downtown revitalization. The displacement of inner-city residents through gentrification has led many to relocate to the suburbs, which are also the main sites of new immigrant settlement (Cowen, 2005). Now the rent-gap has reversed whereby suburban properties are devalued. Affluent residents are seen to flee while many suburban malls are losing some of their prime retailers. Coinciding with the loss of manufacturers, the rise of unemployment and spill-over effects from the city, suburbs are experiencing a growth of crime and decay in addition to the original suburban problems emergent from its very design, (such as sprawl and lack of communal space) (Hannigan, 1998; Kunstler, 1993; Orum & Xianmeng, 2003; Parker, 2004; Teaford, 1997).

The fall of suburbia has been, perhaps pre-emptively, celebrated as a welcome end to an era of homogenized car dependency, while discussion surrounding the poor design of the landscape rarely acknowledges the people who actually live there (Kunstler, 1993). Regenerating inner city life and drawing suburbanites back downtown simply removes people from the equation. Merely making the cities a more desirable place may induce spending and investment but does not address the true nature of the crisis as one that cataclysmic cycles of capital not only cannot fix but also intensifies (Harvey, 1990).

## **CHAPTER 3: (EN)VISIONING THE TORONTO PLAN**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter explored the wider societal pressures that have influenced the shape and form of urban governance. In this chapter, I explore Toronto's specific response and restructuring of urban governance through the lens of urban planning as a form of discourse that shapes, and is shaped by, the material formation of the city. I conduct a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the *Toronto Official Plan (TOP)*. Through this analysis, I hope to reveal the plan's ideological leanings. The analysis also holds the promise of revealing alternative discourses to challenge and transform inequalities of power expressed in city formations.

### **3.2 Critical Paradigms: Methodological Implications of Discourse Analysis**

Viewed narrowly, the concept of discourse refers to language at a level above the sentence. In CDA, however, discourse is also recognized as a social and cognitive process. Texts, as a unit of study, may refer to either spoken or written forms of language as constitutive elements of perceptions, social action and interaction (Blommaert, 2005; Fairclough, 1985; Van Dijk, 1985, 1997; Weiss & Wodak, 2003). There are a number of epistemological assumptions, which underlie the application of discourse analysis as a "critical" method (Billig, 2003). Indeed, as made evident by Lincoln and Guba, specific methodology is often a

secondary issue when compared to the overriding influence of paradigmatic perspectives held by the researcher (1998). This is perhaps most readily apparent in the complex and often contradictory historical relationship between discourse analysis and more seemingly 'scientific' techniques, such as conversation and content analyses (Davis, 1985; Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1985). Both of the above offer systematic ways of analyzing texts that *could* be methodologically compatible with discourse analysis. However, CDA researchers typically argue that so-called "objective" or "scientific" techniques are highly limited. Content analysis can count surface content as a prelude to more in-depth discursive considerations, while conversation analysis provides tools and techniques for the study of language as text. While some CDA scholars have acknowledged these methods as viable starting points, the contention here, and prevalent in the literature, is that they do not go far enough and are in fact seriously flawed in their inability to bridge the gap between what is said, and what is meant. Similarly, mainstream perspectives rarely consider the wider societal implications of the discourse (Davis, 1985; Van Dijk, 1985, 1997).

Positivist methods are critiqued for their most prized virtue, "objectivity", a concept that is regarded here as a myth. By contrast, a critical theory approach, maintains that the positivist ideal of a distanced, value-free observer is neither possible nor desirable. Particularly central to more critical qualitative approaches to research, is the recognition that assumptions about reality and our relationship to knowledge dialectically inform and shape all aspects of the research process, from motivation to topic selection and procedure. The critical perspective sees

positivist assumptions as *ahistorical* abstractions, which are perceived to obscure and hence perpetuate *unequal* relations of power, class, social and spatial exploitation. Not only are the decisions regarding design, procedure and evaluation rooted in decision-making processes of the particular researcher; more problematically, the very notion of objectivity and depoliticized research fails to question existing ideological influences on knowledge production and social practice, which subtly reproduce and substantiate asymmetrical relations of power embedded in the status quo. As represented in the work of Michel Foucault and Norman Fairclough, my use of CDA is rooted in the premise that claims to apparently self-evident facts of knowledge, are in fact not fixed and immutable but are historically contingent yet have been naturalized through discursive practice to appear as “common sense” and legitimized as “truth” (Adorno, 1976; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Fairclough, 1985; Foucault, 1972; Lincoln & Guba, 1998).

However, as essential as the recognition of the mutual constitution between discourse and society is to this project, it is even more vital to avoid the relativism projected in many post-modern accounts, which subscribe to a “nominalist” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p.4) view that reality cannot be known outside of the representative system of language. Although I embrace the concept of polysemia in linguistic meaning, which recognizes the multifunctional and contingent nature of language, I also reject the relativism that can be attributed to textual studies when removed from the processes of production. John Fiske exemplifies this latter tendency when he argues that the construction

and interpretation of meaning is actively constructed at the point of interpretation. More problematic is his assumption that the separation of cultural reception from material production “liberates them [the text user] from its constraints...people can consume as much as they wish, without the restrictions of what they are able to afford” (Fiske, 1987, p.313). This perspective neglects the power imbalance that exists in the production process as well as real material limits on consumption such as language processing skills, time, education, money, and access to communication products and services (Blommaert, 2005; Fairclough, 1995; Golding & Murdock, 2000).

My use of CDA is integrated with a political-economy approach in seeking to demystify the opacity of institutionalized discourses, or apparently “fixed texts” (Blommaert, 2005, p.196). In this sense, I see the critique of discourse as similar to the demystification of the ‘commodity fetish’ in a Marxian critique. Marx argued that the commodity under capitalism had become a taken for granted element of culture, through which the relations of domination in the production process have been obscured, and hence unquestioned (Marx, 1974). Political economy can be seen as a *holistic* approach to studying the entire social totality through *historical* analysis of the material processes, which constitute the *relations* between capital, state and publics (Golding and Murdock, 2000; Mosco, 1996). Because discursive practices are profoundly implicated in the (re)production of social practices, both approaches critique and challenge relations of power and domination in the material and symbolic construction of city space.



Ideally, CDA must focus on three dimensions: the text, discursive practices and social practices (Fairclough, 1995, p.133). In-depth systematic linguistic analysis is not an end in itself but a valuable tool which can segue into further insight as to how ideological asymmetries are (re)produced and circulated in the wider social domain. While some scholars ascertain that CDA is a discipline in its own right (Connell & Mills, 1985; Van Dijk, 1985; 1997), others point to the multidisciplinary nature of CDA, which allows researchers to draw upon a variety of conceptual tools (Blommaert, 2005; Fairclough, 1995; Weiss & Wodak, 2003). It could be argued that such multiple approaches present a flaw in CDA for not having one coherent method, which could also lead to accusations of biased research where one selectively chooses evidence based on what they wish to find (Blommaert, 2005). Although CDA relies on personal interpretive skills, which produce non-replicable research, it is this element of in-depth interpretation that leads to the rich and descriptive detail that is characteristic of CDA. Furthermore, Weiss and Wodak argue that disciplinary eclecticism is actually a methodological strength that frees CDA from the limitations of one theoretical framework, thereby aiding integration across a wide range of fields, and offering a more complex account of the phenomenon in question (2003). This is particularly relevant for the current study, as the analysis of conflicting genres of policy related discourse necessitates a diverse range of techniques.

In the current project, discourse analysis provides an effective set of tools to uncover the power relations embedded in the texts, and in the discourses referring to urban planning. Through CDA, we can see how specific discourses

inscribe spatial practice within the socio-political-economic context of Toronto as a global capitalist city. The contributions of CDA scholars who focus primarily on linguistic details within the text, such as: semantic meaning (Sacks, 1992; Tomlin et al., 1997), grammar (Cumming & Ono, 1997; Halliday, 1994), style (Sandig & Selting, 1997), rhetoric (Gill & Wheedbee, 1997), narrative (Ochs, 1997) and semiotics (Kress et al., 1997), provide analytical means through which the ideological functioning of language can be interpreted at a qualitative level beneath the text. However, Fairclough's work indicates that to focus solely on content or form produces a superficial and partial analysis, which could be better complemented through a focus on "interdiscursivity" and "intertextuality" (1985, p.33). That is, to examine the relations between texts and the relations which contribute to their production. This is essential in seeking to analyze the complex process of public policy making. The discourses and practices surrounding the *TOP* emanate from a range of public and private actors, which indicates that the single unified policy 'text' is not alone constitutive of Toronto urban policy in its entirety. In order to provide reflexivity it is vital to consult a variety of specific texts and wider processes while accounting for my own personal subject position and (biased or potentially ideologically informed) motivations for choosing and defining 'representative' cases.

### **3.3 Texts Analyzed**

The first set of documents, I consider as *representations* of the "official", or dominant, order (Fairclough, 1995; Flowerdew, 2004). They exhibit the Toronto city council's framing of the *TOP*, as represented through the *description* of the

plan (City of Toronto, n.d.) and the *executive summary* of the “Toronto at a Crossroads” report (City of Toronto, 2000), both of which are available (and prominent) on the city website. I chose these texts for analysis over the *Toronto Official Plan* (City of Toronto, 2002) itself for a number of reasons. The *TOP*, with 106 pages of policy, plus an additional 38 pages of land use schedules, is an extensive document unlikely to be read in its entirety by the majority of city residents; the chosen sets of documents provide condense encapsulations of the city’s key positions on the *TOP* more easily digested by the average internet user. The total count of thirteen paragraphs in the description and twenty-five in the executive report provides a much more suitable unit for in-depth discourse analysis, which is most effective at elaboration of latent meaning in a small sample rather than postulating broad generalizations. Although the *TOP* will not be subjected to in-depth CDA, it will however be referred to through contrast and comparison, as to how policy reflects the vision outlined in the other two documents.

In terms of content, the description of the *TOP* outlines why the city considers the plan important and serves as a promotional tool for transmitting *why Toronto residents should think* the plan is important. *Toronto at the Crossroads: Shaping Our Future* (TC) was chosen because it is identified in the description as having “set the *table for public debate* about the choices facing the city” (Plan Description (PD), para. 11, emphasis mine). This report outlines a series of campaigns proposed by council in order to achieve the desired “world

class” vision of Toronto (as inscribed in the Official Plan) and is therefore highly salient in the overall city mission in producing the new *TOP*.

For this reason, the Crossroads report summary provides the main unit of analysis in my research, though it is supplemented with additional elaboration of key themes from related city documents produced later in the planning process. Most interesting, is the fact that this report and hence the “priorities” of the plan were written prior to major community consultation. This calls into question the degree of meaningful input and influence allotted to Toronto residents, despite rhetorical invocation of public participation in the planning process. Indeed, prior to the Crossroads publication there had been a mere six public “open houses” in civic centres across the city for residents to ask questions and meet planners. The series of “Town Hall Meetings” held in the fall of 2000 were centred around the *Toronto At the Crossroads* document,<sup>6</sup> thereby structuring the bounds of debate within the framework developed by the city. This genre of discourse is explored through the concept of “voice”, and the degree of city authority assumed through level of modality to assess whose interests are favoured and what groups or classes appear to be the primary beneficiaries of the new official plan, and subsequently whose needs and interests are marginalized or inadequately addressed. It is important to *analyze the articulated vision for community development in relation, or contrast to a thematic structure that constructs a promotional narrative of the entrepreneurial city* (Deacon et al., 1999; Fairclough, 1995; Flowerdew, 2004; Lefebvre, 1991).

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<sup>6</sup> [www.toronto.ca/torontoplan/about](http://www.toronto.ca/torontoplan/about); [www.toronto.ca/torontoplan/toronto/future6.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/torontoplan/toronto/future6.htm)

Throughout the analysis, I will draw on alternative or ‘counter discourses’, which directly oppose the official “institutionalized” discourses to city planning. The main unit of analysis in this genre is an activist response to the *TOP* in the form of a deputation produced in collaboration with local residents and multiple community groups, by a group of planning activists, *Planning Action (Planning Action, 2002)*. The deputation will be supplemented with texts produced by other community groups such as the *Wellesley Institute* and the *United Way*, as well as alternative media sources. As a representational account of space as perceived in the city, this genre denaturalizes the representations of the “official” institutionalized approach to abstract planning. Through the exposure of policy favouritism towards private capital and gentrification, CDA in this capacity evinces the contradictory space of global capital, one where the asymmetries of power that marginalize and oppress local residents may be overturned (Gramsci, 1971; Fairclough, 1995; Lefebvre, 1991). My focus in this regard is on the problems unique to the post-war suburbs, with a particular focus on the southeast Scarborough region.

### **3.4 Analysis:**

#### **3.4.1 The Vision**

Critical to understanding the framework guiding the *TOP* is “quality of life” as a concept that emerges consistently throughout city planning documents. This is a multi-accentual trope (Gibson, 2004, pp.134-125) with a high degree of polysemia, which can appeal to multiple groups ranging from the political left to right due to the vague ambiguity of the term, leaving it open to different and

potentially antagonistic investments of meaning (Fairclough, 1992). Because it is a concept with a positive connotation, (few will argue that they want a poor quality of life), the city strategically engages in “semantic engineering” (Fairclough, 1992, pp.186-7), to imbue the *statement* with a preferred meaning that simultaneously constructs a very particular vision of how the city can and cannot be conceived, according to planning documents (Foucault, 1972). The importance the city attaches to this concept is explicitly delineated in the first paragraph of the “About the Toronto Plan” description: “Toronto enjoys a quality of life today that is the envy of people around the world. But what about tomorrow? How can we ensure that we maintain this enviable position? ...That *is why* the city of Toronto has created a new draft Official Plan” (PD, para. 1, emphasis mine). Not only is ‘quality of life’ stated as the reason for creating the new plan, but the repeated concern for an enviable position signals an outward global orientation rather than a primary commitment to local Toronto residents. This is corroborated by the articulation given to the concept in the Crossroads report:

Quality of life is both the key to our enjoyment of city life and our top *competitive* advantage. A better quality of life leads to improved *economic competitiveness*. Improved economic competitiveness leads to rising prosperity. Rising prosperity leads to *more investment* in the three pillars of urban living...In short, quality of life is the linchpin to a “virtuous cycle” of growth and renewal. The first half of this report shows how our quality of life can be improved through *key investments* in the pillars of our economy, liveable communities and the environment (*TC*: para. 14, emphasis mine).

This tautological argument, which reveres increased investment as its end goal, conflates quality of life with the life cycle of transnational capital through

consistent juxtaposition with 'economic competitiveness'. Rather than referring to quality of public life, social redistribution or a cooperative approach to city planning, the constant impounding of the city's preferred meaning, functions to naturalize the term 'quality of life', as a euphemism for economic boosterism. In case there is any question as to the capitalist logic penetrating this approach to city-building, or city-selling, the report confirms its promotional intent by quipping, "To a large extent our *product* is our City" (TC, para.17, emphasis mine).

As the central tenet driving the purpose of the new official plan, it is indeed alarming to consider how the competitive approach to quality of life translates into spatial practice (Lefebvre, 1991). The opening of the Crossroads executive summary provides key insights into how the planning process constructs the city as object (Foucault, 1972) and more importantly, what the Toronto city council's vision of successful urbanism entails:

*We're becoming a bigger, more vibrant and exciting city. Our economy is growing again, jobs are coming back and so is our confidence. We have a new vision and plan for transforming our waterfront from Port Union Village in the east to Long Branch in the west into one of the most exciting waterfronts in the world. We're renewing the Yonge-Dundas area into a people place. Dynamic, new mixed-use neighbourhoods are rising out of the rubble of the Old Greenwood Racetrack and Etobicoke motel strip. The railway lands are undergoing major renewal (TC, para. 1-2).*

This passage is highly significant for a number of reasons. First of all, expectedly, the economy figures prominently in boosting city confidence. Of greater significance is the change in meaning of downtown "renewal", in contrast to previous city Plans. From the 1930s through to the 1960s downtown "renewal" and later, "redevelopment" were code for slum clearance (Brushett, 2001;

Caulfield, 1994; Rose, 1974). Downtown neighbourhoods, seen as 'blighted' and decayed were slated for destruction to make way for high-rise development and freeways to the suburbs. It was during the 1970s that this discourse and image of the city began to change radically<sup>7</sup> (Caulfield, 1994; Goldrick, 1982). Further investigation of the listed projects is much more revelatory of the new vision.

The redevelopment of the Toronto waterfront is a major 'renewal' project backed with significant public resources directed towards private development. The rare cooperation of all three levels of government has led to the development of the "Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation" with an initial project funding of three hundred million dollars (City of Toronto, n.d.b). The city description of the waterfront redevelopment plan clearly emphasizes the intended solicitation of global capital, "Toronto's waterfront is our front porch to the world. With the right kind of investment, the waterfront will become a necklace of green, with pearls of activity... All this activity will create the synergies needed to draw even more jobs and investment to Toronto" (City of Toronto, n.d.c). The concern of many Toronto activists and concerned citizens, that the Waterfront Plan excludes many existing Torontonians, is substantiated by the planning document itself, which reports that creating a postcard image for the city "will be attractive to 'the legion of knowledge workers who can locate themselves and their businesses anywhere in the world'" (*City of Toronto* 2001b, also cited in Bunce & Young, 2004, p.217). The plan is further criticized for its narrow focus on attracting upscale tourists, consumers and the development of high-end entertainment venues and luxury condominiums to house them. This is marked

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<sup>7</sup> See Chapter Two for discussion of the underlying political-economic shifts in this era



by deregulation in the planning approval process from a “two-tiered minor variance and zoning amendment” to “one administrative body” (Bunce & Young, 2004, p.217), thereby streamlining private investment and development while bypassing ‘onerous’ public opposition. In terms of global restructuring, ‘deregulation’ is most clearly revealed as a very specific form of “re”-regulation, permitting the dominance of economic interests, though as McChesney states the difference “under ‘deregulation’ [is that] there is no pretence that the government should represent the public interest” (1999, p.143).

Furthermore, renewal of the waterfront, as well as that of the railway yards and the old racetrack, can be seen as policy led inducers of gentrification on previously publicly owned land (Slater, 2005; Wyly & Hammel, 2005). Once start up capital from public sources has secured a prosperous start, the government induces a public-private partnership to allow corporations to takeover and privatize public projects (Harvey, 1994). The onus on market-led development has resulted in a lack of motivation to build accessible rental housing that is most desperately needed in Toronto, and in a trend toward upscale owner-occupied residences and luxury condominiums. The Greenwoods Racetrack projects, for example, began construction in 1997 and since that time have appreciated more than 150 percent, such that homes in the area now range from \$829,000 to upwards of 1.2 million (Raymaker, 2006). The CityPlace condominiums constructed on the old railway lands, provide a similar example of expensive housing which is inaccessible to renters or non-wealthy buyers, in a city facing a rental shortage and homeless crisis (Bunce & Young, 2004; Wellesley Institute,

2006). Fears that the waterfront plans will lead to a similar scenario, despite a rhetorical “goal” towards twenty-five percent “affordable” housing<sup>8</sup>, are foreshadowed by the forceful eviction of approximately one hundred of Toronto’s homeless individuals from long-standing make shift homes in a “Tent City” on the edge of the Toronto waterfront. This evacuation took place on September 24, 2002, the same day as the unveiling of the draft *Toronto Official Plan* at City Hall, and despite the drastic level of homelessness in Toronto, precariously housed and impoverished individuals remain marginalized in the planning document itself. In fact, the only place where the homeless did make it into the vision of the Official Plan was during the unveiling. The Tent City evictees stormed City Hall, protesting the effects of entrepreneurial planning which exacerbates the unfulfilled needs of the property-less in the city in favour of developers, corporations and taxpayers (Blackwell & Goonewardena, 2004).

Of further interest, and almost laughable irony, is the claim, “We’re renewing the Yonge-Dundas area into a people place” (*TC*, para.2). The city led renewal project referred to here, is a ‘quasi-‘public’ square (Low, 2006; Mitchell & Staeheli, 2006) across from the massive Eaton’s Centre shopping plaza. Built in 2002, out of ten million dollars in public investment, the square is officially owned by the city, yet privately operated by a Board of Management that is primarily

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<sup>8</sup> “Affordable housing” is defined as being affordable to the lowest sixty percent of the population; housing costs are not supposed to exceed thirty percent of total income. Where downtown rents for one-bedroom accommodations typically run over \$1000, “affordable housing”, in actuality, only applies to those who make at least \$3000 a month (far above minimum wage) (Bunce and Young 2004).

comprised of business representatives in the area.<sup>9</sup> While the square is touted by the city for its *design* as a 'public space', the reality of the spatial practices that actually take place in the space is more contentious. A wide ranging view among city residents is that the square is the latest manifestation of privatized public space, oriented towards middle and upper class consumption of spectacle events, advertising and of course, goods from the mall across the street (Norvell, 2003; Scheuer, 2006; Smith, 2003ab). Indeed the purpose for the square as articulated by *Brown and Story*, the designers of the space, is unambiguous in this regard:

The square serves as a centre-piece for ambitious new private entertainment and shopping complexes representing more than 200 million dollars in immediate new investment...The Square will continue to act as a catalyst, generating renewed shopping, entertainment, tourism, and development interest in the area and reinforcing the image of downtown Toronto<sup>10</sup>

Dominated by more than 32,000 square feet of advertising space on all corners (Smith, 2003a), the image reinforced here is unmistakably that of consumer gluttony, a mishmash of brands and corporate messages.

Notably, activities commonly associated with the public sphere such as debate, political protests, or spontaneous gatherings, are absent from this description of the space and, as it would seem in the eyes of the private managers and advertising companies of the square, preferably absent from the physical site as well (Norvell, 2003; Scheuer, 2006; Smith,

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<sup>9</sup> Additionally, although the initial plan for the square was that it would be financially self sufficient by 2005, due to the failure of the management board to achieve this goal, the city stepped in with public funds. The city now pays the operating costs of the square, which grossed at \$1,051,600 in 2005 and \$1,072,400 in 2006 (City of Toronto Economic Development and Parks Committee, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.browncandstorey.com/projects/DundasSquare/ds-5.htm>

2003ab). Although, the square is an open space to which anyone may supposedly freely enter, there are a barrage of restrictions and stipulations involved in 'appropriate use', which are tightly monitored and controlled by private security guards. Activities such as skateboarding, inline skating, releasing a helium balloon, holding a candle, chalk drawing or standing on tree planters (and others) are all explicitly prohibited in the bylaws, while assumedly less 'threatening' activities like riding a bicycle, displaying an exhibit or demonstrating a sport or artistic performance are permissible by permit only (City of Toronto, 2001a). With a price tag of three thousand dollars per day, permit costs are prohibitive to few other than major corporations. Even if one is so lucky as to secure one of the (non-consecutive) seventy days a year available without fee to charitable agencies, the group is still responsible to pay the bill for private security and clean-up crews whether such services are desired or not (Smith, 2003ab).

Moreover, the regulation even extends beyond the boundaries of the square to the publicly owned sidewalks. This has emerged out of a city recommendation to ban vending, postering, busking and panhandling, (which is defined as a "security issue"), in the surrounding area as it may detract from the profits, atmosphere and goals of the square management (City of Toronto, 2002b). The square neatly fits the definition of "sanitized razzmatazz", offered by John Hannigan, through the creation of an urbanoid environment geared towards hosting multimedia advertising and

large-scale spectacle, in a heavily monitored, tourist safe area (1998). As to the validity of defining Yonge and Dundas as a “people place”, yes, there are people there –but perhaps a contributor to the Torontoist blog sums up the citizen-resident, as opposed to consumer or capitalist, response to recent plans for yet another ad space across from the square:

This building isn't for Torontonians, much like Dundas and Yonge isn't for us either. It's for tourists. I find the building horrendous, much like I find the square across the street disgusting and lame, but thankfully as a Torontonian I have other areas to go and avoid this monstrosity. Although I dislike the message it sends to tourists. We're New York Lite!<sup>11</sup>

Viewed in this context, the later reference in the Crossroads summary to Toronto as a “people city” which is a “cornerstone of our past” and “a hallmark of our future” (*TC*, para.5) holds less rhetorical sway towards producing a collective image of city residents. Rather, the people referred to seem to be a class specific blend of potential consumers or capital investors. However, at the same time it is useful to analyze the way voice and modality are employed in this capacity, to build consensus to the vision and statements outlined for the *TOP*.

### **3.4.2 Voice and Modality**

Looking back to paragraphs one and two cited above, in the first sentence the ‘we’re’ evokes a sense of collective voice. Here the unknown author purports to speak for the city as a whole, assuming a shared homogenous vision, whereas later, the city claims responsibility for the Waterfront and Yonge-Dundas

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<sup>11</sup> [http://www.torontoist.com/archives/2006/02/desperate\\_for\\_t.php#comment-38834](http://www.torontoist.com/archives/2006/02/desperate_for_t.php#comment-38834)

renewals. However, to counteract the turn towards a divide between city and citizen, *passivisation*<sup>12</sup> is used in the final two sentences so that the Racetrack, Etobicoke, and the railway lands, all appear to be transforming themselves without any active agent. This strategy is paralleled throughout the Crossroads text, by a rotation between an interpersonal voice seeking to produce a shared vision with the reader, and an authoritative voice, where the city defines what the vision is and should be.

The production of consent is facilitated through the adoption of a “public colloquial language” (Fairclough, 1995, p.38), which sets an informal conversational tone. In paragraph three, an inclusive voice evokes a shared responsibility for the future of the city, “Over the past 50 years, Toronto has been a real success story in North America. But are we ready to take the next step forward and blossom as one of the great cities of the world? Do we have the energy and the will, the *vision* and the *plan* to capture the spirit of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?” (emphasis mine). These rhetorical questions function to draw the reader into a collective “we” with the rest of the city, relying on the ambiguity of “blossoming as a great city”, which promotes consensus to the positive connotation of the concept before it is clearly defined. The third question subtly persuades that the answer will be in the vision and the plan to follow.

The inclusive voice is frequently juxtaposed with an authoritative one where the city assumes a high degree of modality to define the situation, “embracing the future also means doing some things differently” (TC, para.5). Again inclusiveness is used as a tactic to bring the public on-side with the city

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<sup>12</sup> Use of the passive voice (Deacon et al., 1999)

government through criticism of the seven old municipal Official Plans (for each of the pre-amalgamation municipalities), which are described as “complex and written in a language that only a lawyer could love –or understand” (*TC*, para.6). By denigrating the previous approach, the city implicitly boosts the image of the new planning process while glossing over the specifics and consequences of particular decisions without having to justify why or how decisions were made. For instance, paragraph six goes on to state that the municipal plans were focused on “regulating land use by creating designations that merely describe current activity. They are stuck on describing ‘what is’, and fail to ask ‘what do we want and how can we get there?’” (*TC*, para. 6). In a similar utility, the plan description also boasts that the new Official Plan is “typical of most plans for major cities, even in Ontario, in that it does not prescribe density numbers” (*PD*, para. 4). What neither of these documents mention, is that the new plan represents a removal of density limits and ‘deregulation’ of development controls. The new *TOP* provides height and density “incentives”, meaning that applications can be made to exceed existing zoning regulations (*TOP*, 2002, pp.87-90). As well, designation of “Community Improvement” areas means that developers of such projects can benefit from development charge exemptions, fee waivers for building/demolition permits and funding opportunities through city “loans, grants and tax assistance” (*TOP*, 2002, p.96). Furthermore, as discussed above in relation to the waterfront revitalization, the newly instituted “Specialized Development Approval Process” (*TOP*, 2002, p.97) represents a streamlining of the approval process from a tri-level “zoning, site plan control and minor variance

progression into one approval process” (*TOP*, 2002, p.97). This new “flexible” approach to (de)regulating development provides ample incentives to developers and investors to profit from government handouts, while the public unwittingly subsidizes ‘growth’ projects, and is subject to reduced avenues to participate in and influence development decisions (*Planning Action*, 2002).

Yet, the inclusive voice continues with a persuasive tone, insisting on the necessity to internalize the vision of the plan to create a city where “everyone cares about the quality of life” which will presumably make us winners in the global competition for world-class status (*PD*, para.3). This exercise of power is laid-out by the Crossroads summary which stipulates that the vision can only be realized through everyday actions which support it (*TC*, para. 5), while suggesting that non-compliance with, or lack of support for, ‘the plan’ will be met with dire consequences.

An Official Plan for the City of Toronto must be set in the context of what is happening across the greater Toronto Area (GTA). The GTA is one large social and economic region. *The fate of the city and the fate of the region are interdependent. The advantages that benefit one, benefit the other. The problems that beset one, beset the other.* Toronto’s plan must guide smart growth over the next 30 years. And it must be a cornerstone of a smart growth strategy for the entire GTA –*attracting more* people and jobs to the city. (*TC* para.8, emphasis mine).

The lexical choice and reiteration of ‘fate’ (as opposed to health or quality, etcetera) attaches a life or death connotation to the choices facing the city whereby the “smart growth strategy” assumed by the *TOP* is posited as the solution. It is interesting however, to note that the principle of growth is not questioned, the plan is not intended to ‘smartly’ manage existing and/or



inevitable growth, but rather the attraction of more growth is cast as the primary strategy for achieving “world-class” status.

Of greater concern, is the fallacious argument that assumes the advantages and benefits, or pitfalls, are shared equally across Toronto and the surrounding region. While the statement is correct in pointing out that the areas are interdependent, the *TOP* and related planning documents, fail to consider the pervasive intensification of inequality both within Toronto, as well as between Toronto and outlying regions. The competitive city approach is promoted as a win-win model without actually addressing “the context of what is happening across the (GTA)”, wherein it is obvious that in a planning process catered towards investment capital there are losers in the global competition and many of them are local residents. The escalation of regional competition within and between cities has been widely cited to have contributed to the production of “dual-cities” (see chapter two), particularly in those most “successful” at attaining world city status; global cities increasingly experience the swelling of extreme poverty growing alongside the profits of finance capital (Orum & Xianming, 2003; Parker, 2004; Sassen, 2001). As a second level global city, or “beta-city” (Walks, 2001), Toronto has, over the course of the last decade, become increasingly polarized with higher levels and concentrations of poverty, declining social infrastructure and a homeless crisis whereby the homeless population is growing six times faster than that of the city in general (Wellesley Institute, 2006). Furthermore, from 1990 to 1999, the twelve poorest neighbourhoods experienced a \$6800 loss in real income while the twelve wealthiest enjoyed a

growth of \$11,400 in real wages, further deepening the gap between rich and poor (United Way, 2000). This spatial inequality is most starkly apparent in the inner suburbs, which represent ten of the twelve Toronto neighbourhoods with the highest levels of poverty (Cowen, 2005; United Way, 2000; Walks, 2001).

However, while the homeless crisis and the ever widening income disparity represent serious pending crises that Toronto must address immediately (such as in an Official Plan?), these are issues that may not resonate with all city residents. Due in part to increased segregation and concentration of poverty, many middle and upper class residents can easily shield themselves from this form of suffering (Beauregard, 1995). A more perceptible, though still closely related, (*liveability*) crisis is evident in the decade of funding cuts to social infrastructure and public services such as: libraries, public health centres, settlement services, recreation programs, and childcare which has led to declining facilities, lack of and sporadic services, and decreased accessibility through closures and user fees (Clutterbuck & Howarth, 2002). Such programs are essential to the inhabited space of the city, to healthy communities and individual well-being yet ironically, social and community development does not seem to figure into the definition of 'quality of life' proposed by the *TOP*. Unlike the waterfront revitalization and downtown cultural institutions which benefit from millions in multi-level government funds and are expected to improve global "competitiveness", social program expenditure primarily benefits local communities and subsequently receives selective and

insecure municipal funding (due to recent downloading of provincial programs onto the city).

The decline in Toronto's social infrastructure has been described as a 'quiet crisis', invisible to the global investors and highly coveted tourists, but invariably impacting the quality of everyday residential life in the city (Clutterbuck & Howarth, 2002; Lefebvre, 1991). Targeted policies selectively favour particular communities and areas such that the neediest communities, with fewer resources to pay for private services, suffer from neglect and decline. This uneven service provision is again most dramatic in the inner suburbs, which are no longer seen as lucrative investment opportunities. Where the downtown receives funding for spectacular (pseudo) public spaces and commercial sites, suburban poverty and isolation is intensified due to degraded public transit, lack of public space, and limited services for: public health, jobs, settlement issues and recreation (Cowen, 2005; United Way, 2000).

### **3.4.3 Three (Rose Coloured) Lenses**

The severity of rising economic polarization, homelessness and disinvestment and decline in social and material infrastructure suggests that these issues should be prominent in the vision of a healthy city however the official plan focuses narrowly on three "lenses". The plan description and crossroads report discuss these lenses in terms of levels of growth and change: "stable, incremental" and "major" (TC, para.11). This particular view of the city, which again, was developed only a year into the planning process, henceforth set the terms of vision for the plan prior to the majority of the (minimal) public

consultations. It is clear from this perspective that the city is viewed purely through a development lens, as the *Planning Action* deputation astutely points out “the language of lenses is deeply misleading. They do not represent different ways of seeing, or distinct perspectives; they simply refer to three levels of development –high, medium and negligible” (2002, p.2).

In the first so-called lens, “stable districts” are areas “where major physical change is not desired” (*TC*, para.11). The question here is by whom is change not desired. While potentially appearing to counter the interests of developers, the act of redirecting development away from “stable residential neighbourhoods”(TC, para.11) strategically links the interests of middle and upper class homeowners with the general pro-growth tenet underlying city policy. This form of neighbourhood protection maintains the newly discovered historical or architectural ‘treasures’ of downtown neighbourhoods (Caulfield, 1994), but has the simultaneous effect of blocking new settlement and change to areas likely previously gentrified (Merrifield, 2002). Explicitly catering to NIMBYism (Not-in-my backyard) (*Planning Action*, 2002, p.1), this lens will protect current home and landowners as property values sky-rocket in, and around, the designated areas, thereby further feeding into the crisis of housing (in)affordability. In contrast, as *Planning Action* points out, areas designated as “apartment neighbourhoods” are slated for increased intensification in already dense and overcrowded regions (*Planning Action*, 2001, p.2). Many of these high-density apartment neighbourhoods, which typically have few community gathering spaces, are located in the inner suburbs as identified, for example, in a

supplemental plan for Scarborough Centre where “most of the existing housing...is apartment high-rise” (City of Toronto, 2001c).

The “incremental lens” calls for “gradual growth and reinvestment” along the “Avenues” (*TC*, para.12). This lens of the *TOP* describes avenues as “corridors of opportunity” (*TOP*, p.23) full of potential for “reurbanization”. The Plan targets areas characterized by “underutilized lands” (*TOP*, p.23) for prioritized development. In city efforts to convert underdeveloped sites to “best use”, (read intensive development and commodification) (Clark, 2005; Harvey, 1994), the above outlined barrage of subsidies and deregulation gives right of way to developers to make over the areas to best serve the needs of capital and consumers. In line with the rent-gap thesis (Smith, 2005; see chapter two), the incremental lens designates devalued city regions that are ripe for redevelopment and hence “primed for gentrification” (*Planning Action*, 2002, p.2).

Although the Crossroads report states that “growth and reinvestment” in incremental zones will be “guided by local visions” (*TC*, para.12), it is worthwhile to question whether this definition of locals may be narrowly focused on those who support the official ‘vision’ as outlined in the plan. This is as much a concern in the third lens where certain areas are expected to “change dramatically” through “major reinvestment and development” (*TC*, para.10). Here public subsidization of development is naturalized as necessary and desirable to “kick-start and facilitate change” through “tax increment financing, priority processing, and the focusing of civic and other governmental infrastructure funds” (*TC*, para.10) –generally creating a free zone for developers. This abstract

representation of space, despite its rhetorical claim to the contrary, fails to account for the lived spatial practice of existing users (Lefebvre, 1991; *Planning Action*, 2002, p.2). It does however consolidate the overall vision of economic promotion, which perpetuates uneven investment to more financially prosperous regions at the expense of others.

The manifestation of the above issues is readily seen upon further investigation of the listed “Reinvestment Areas: Downtown; The Central Waterfront; North York, Scarborough and Etobicoke Centres; Large Brownfields... and, Greenfields” (*TC*, para.10). Although the downtown and the “Centres” of some of the former suburbs, are all identified as priority areas for extensive development in the *TOP* itself, the downtown area occupies five pages of focus and is referred to as “The Heart of Toronto” (*TOP*, p.14-19), while the Centres receive one paragraph each, and are bunched together on one page (*TOP*, p.20). In a supplementary plan for the downtown, (oddly produced a year before the draft official plan), further onus is attached to a perceived need to attract highly mobile capital and capitalists by creating an attractive and investment friendly city core (*City of Toronto*, 2000b). Downtown Toronto employment has grown more quickly than that of the rest of the city as well as the country as a whole, particularly through high-level office growth in Finance, Insurance and Real Estate (FIRE) as well as Business Services (*City of Toronto*, 2000b, p. 10-11). The perceived need to attract such industries is driven by a fear that if they do not locate in Toronto they will likely leave Canada, hence public investment and development priorities, as evidenced by the above

discussion of Dundas Square and the Waterfront, are geared towards trapping footloose capital and luring ideal people (consumers and skilled professionals) into the core.

However, in order to make room for the coveted transnational boom, the downtown core needs to 'make space' (Lefebvre, 1991; 1996; Perry, 1995). The "Future of Downtown" supplemental report states: "In this regard the movement of lower value added functions out of the downtown to other parts of the region could strengthen the downtown by releasing space for higher value added activities in the downtown and the region" (*City of Toronto*, 2000a, p.41). On the reverse end, the low wage and precarious service sector and retail jobs, as well as many of the workers forced to take them (Cowen, 2005; United Way, 2000), are displaced to the former suburbs while traditional manufacturing industries relocate further from the core to the exurbs or outside of the country. This is indicated in the Scarborough Centre supplement which states a need to attract more businesses and jobs to the area which "could include traditional industrial jobs, along with offices, *retailing and services* that are looking for *inexpensive* space and do not need prominent locations" (*City of Toronto*, 2000b, para.3, emphasis mine). While the solicitation of capital and subsequent commodification of downtown arguably point to misdirected investment priorities, which overlook local residential needs, I would like to focus on the sharp discrepancies in the level and quality of investment between the core and the inner suburban ring, specifically Scarborough.

While the downtown report, at least, pays lip service to the diversity of downtown, (e.g. through the endeavour to protect “established” downtown neighbourhoods (*City of Toronto*, 2000ab), the Scarborough report focuses merely on the *Centre* and a need to curb urban sprawl, notably failing to mention the multiple neighbourhoods with overwhelming poverty rates and lack of public space and services. There is however an additional “Avenue study” for “Kingston Road between the Guildwood GO Station and Highland Creek” (*City of Toronto*, 2003, p.1). This section of Kingston Road runs through the Morningside community of southeast Scarborough, an area with dilapidated infrastructure and a poverty rate greater than fifty percent of the population (United Way, 2000; 2004). While the impoverishment of the area is not mentioned in the study, it is depicted as an “underdeveloped” site and (abstractly) defined as an Avenue which subjects it to “substantial intensification and new development” (*City of Toronto*, 2003:9).

True to Lefebvre’s designation of abstract space, the Avenue study takes little account of existing uses of the region as ‘place’ (1991). The report calls for “mixed-use” developments and attractive urban design to improve the “feel” of Kingston Road and make it more attractive to business and to pedestrians” (*City of Toronto*, 2003, p.13), yet through a creative destructive framework which would require the removal of “the rundown” motels, and the “unkempt” strip malls” that currently line the street. Although the elimination of such *conceived* urban design eyesores may appear beneficial in the *abstract*, the report neglects to recognize the significance of these spaces to current users. Many of the



“rundown motels” on the Kingston Road strip function as the only social housing in the city that accommodates families (Mitchell, 2002), while the supposed “unkempt strip malls” have long served as affordable locations for entrepreneurs and new immigrants to start community businesses, many with a rich local history (Lorinc, 2005). Furthermore, local residents question the designation of Kingston Road as an “Avenue”; due to its function as the main arterial thoroughfare through East Toronto, it does not fit the same criteria as a central main street (OMB, 2004). Similarly, the patchy transit routes along Kingston Road, with no direct bus downtown or route that runs the entire length of the street, contradicts the *TOP* policy to intensify growth in areas well served by public transit (such as subway stations).

### **3.5 Conclusion**

The disjuncture between abstract vision and lived space is where the spatial fix of downtown revitalization converges with the spatialization of inequality in practice. The discursive construction of Toronto in planning documents as a competitive city, necessarily informs the way that the city can be thought of and lived. While discourse analysis coupled with the *Planning Action* and community responses provoke recognition of fact that hegemony is always a site of struggle –one that is exercised locally, in this case, in Toronto’s urban terrain. It is vital to recognize the ability for active agents to work within and upon unequal structures of urban governance in order to change them (Mosco, 1996). The competitive city vision, motivated by the *TOP*, instils a logic governed by economic growth that is conflated with the well-being of the city as a whole.

The critique of this approach demands attention to the lived realities or “subjugated knowledges” (Foucault, 1972; 1977) of Toronto residents whose needs are too local to reach the concerns of global capitalism. Based on this premise, a model of alternative planning is called for, one that engages with communities in a collaborative partnership relationship, rather than mere ‘token’ consultation (Healey, 1997).

It is not simply enough to gain access to the current unequal system; fundamental changes in the un-democratic political environment which gives form to an un-democratic planning process is necessary to advance the goals of social justice that community democratization is intended to achieve. Although the current competitive approach does not foreclose a model of community planning, acceptance of both is contradictory. The next chapter will investigate an attempt to enact another vision based on activist group, *Planning Action's*, efforts to institute democratized planning practices, intended to unite the triad of representational spaces with representations of space through spatial practices of community engagement and collaboration.

## CHAPTER 4: ACTIVATING A NEW VISION

*“Demander l'impossible pour avoir tout le possible”* –Henri Lefebvre

### 4.1 Introduction

Urban planning is often driven by abstract conceptions of space that scarcely reflect the nuanced realities of inhabited place. However, when inscribed as official policy, urban planning necessarily mutually constitutes lived spatial practices and has concrete material effects on the production of city space and place (Lefebvre, 1991; 1996). This chapter will move beyond the policy as text to focus more directly on context and impacts of implementation. Discourse, as a communicative act, has the power to challenge, transform and/or consolidate existing social practices. In this chapter, I elucidate the repercussions of the official *vision* for urban, and more specifically, 'suburban' Toronto. Extending and refining my focus on the Southeast Scarborough region, through participant observation with *Planning Action*, I seek to articulate how discourse analysis can contribute towards emancipation by demystifying and confronting unequal relations of power (Fairclough, 1995; Foucault, 1972; 1977).

This chapter draws on eight months of participant observation with *Planning Action* during a period of organizing a public forum, in response to entrepreneurial planning and the current socio-political situation in the Morningside community of Scarborough. Working with this counter-hegemonic

group has allowed me to immerse myself in the processes of production, reception and circulation of discourses related to urban planning in Toronto. As I also stated in my methodological approach to chapter three (3.2), I neither purport nor desire to provide an 'objective' or value neutral account; my observations are based specifically on my role as an activist. Recognizing that there are cracks in the hegemonic power structure of the *TOP* to achieve consent (Foucault, 1977; 1980; Gramsci, 1971), the process of developing an alternative model of planning practice through *Planning Action*, and in collaboration with local residents and community groups, elaborates on dissent in reception but also moves beyond resistance to enact a new vision. I have already argued that the "official" discourse surrounding the *TOP* is dangerously flawed in its assumption that the competitive approach to planning functions as a collective 'best interest'. In this chapter, I complement this argument with an alternative approach that ascertains that a structure based on engaged, collaborative participation is possible, desirable, and necessary.

I will begin with a discussion of the principles that drive *Planning Action* and outline our alternative approach to social planning. I will then move on to recount how these ideals were (and continue to be) incorporated in community initiatives by describing a specific planning project. This event is a public forum held in East Scarborough where I will discuss the forum goal, significance of the site involved, the planning process and the event itself. Although I will provide an overview of the forum, my primary focus in this chapter is on the process of planning rather than the event itself, though the themes and concerns raised

throughout will certainly influence future practice. In this sense, I conceive of the forum as a methodological tool that can point to methods, challenges, and opportunities in building community engagement into planning practices.

## 4.2 Goals and Purpose

*“We are a group of urban planners, architects and activists who work with diverse communities of Toronto struggling against economic, cultural, and ecological injustice to open spaces for people to imagine, transform, and enjoy the city”*  
–*Planning Action* mission statement.

*Planning Action* is an activist group, founded in 2001, in response to perceived injustices and disparities imposed on residents of the city of Toronto by an entrepreneurial approach to urban planning which explicitly caters to the needs of capital over residents. In contrast to the competitive, corporatized approach to planning, their alternative vision seeks to promote grassroots participation and decentralize control over decision-making and resources to empower local residents and workers to shape their own communities (*Planning Action*, n.d.).

Although Toronto planners laud their public consultation process for the *TOP*, *Planning Action’s* deputation draws attention to the fact that the six open house events held by the city represented a mere 1 per every 500,000 people, while countless private meetings with consultants, corporate representatives and high-profile architects solidified the structure of the planning process (*Planning Action*, 2002). The public consultations may very well have been mere “tokenism” (Healey, 1997; Rahder, 1996), reflected in the fact that the vision and goals produced prior to the “open house” meetings, defined the boundaries of

debate throughout the process, and were subsequently reproduced in the final planning document<sup>13</sup>. This illusion of pseudo-participation was not intended to redistribute power, or to institute a collaborative planning process with local residents but may rather be seen as a form of placation or “therapy” (Syme, 1992), designed to appease expectations for democracy out of a semblance of involvement. Even if we are to assume (by a wide stretch of the imagination) that the city consultations broadly reflected the ideas of the attendees, such events typically exhibit a middle-class bias, where a small selection of politically informed residents rise to defend their privilege, while those in marginalized communities, who feel ineffectual in the political process, abstain (Gray, 1992; Painter, 1992; Syme, 1992). Similarly, the potentially intimidating venue of civic centres coupled with a large crowd of strangers may prohibit sustained dialogue and debate, especially from those whose first language is not English, who may feel less comfortable speaking publicly. This is not to say that the consultations were entirely ineffective, however, at best they could be a starting point, not the end of the public engagement process (the use to which they were put).

On the launch date of the *TOP*, September 24, 2002, *Planning Action* publicly presented their collectively written deputation, stating a critique of the narrow competitive vision of the plan, perceived to overwhelmingly favour developers and landholders in the city.<sup>14</sup> The main contestation of the group was not with individual policies but on the structure of the planning process itself, mutually constitutive of the unequal relations of power inherent in the

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<sup>13</sup> As represented by the Toronto Crossroads Report, see chapter three

<sup>14</sup> As discussed in chapter three. See chapter two for a wider discussion of the global political-economic trends which perpetuate this vision.

entrepreneurial model of city boosterism at the expense of social justice. Demanding that a citizen focused approach to city planning must start with what is actually happening in the city, *Planning Action* questioned why the city's own maps, which reveal stark intensification of poverty across the city, and particularly in the former suburbs, were not the starting point for improving the 'quality of life' in Toronto. Although council responded well to the deputation and *Planning Action* was even asked to provide "the policy" for insertion in the plan, the group maintained that there was no "quick fix" or single solution that could be simply added; the differences in approach were irreconcilable (Hammett, 2006). The foundation of the *TOP*, based as it was on ensuring a city attractive to developers and landowners by streamlining development and providing tax incentives, represented a perceived de-democratization of the planning process. Contrarily, *Planning Action* maintained that new practices must be enacted which begin with the diverse communities in the city struggling for basic services such as affordable housing, food, transportation, and education. In effect, planning must work towards a redistribution of decision-making power and resources across the city.

### **4.3 Forum Goal and Starting Point**

The disheartening prospect of the *TOP* becoming the *sine quo non* of city planning underlay the impetus to take the critique to the streets and to not only envision, but to also, more importantly, act out a new process. To approach this goal holistically, the *Planning Action* mandate has three key components: "community involvement, popular outreach and critical projects" (Hammett, 2006,

p.12; *Planning Action*, n.d.). The deputation of the *TOP*, (and another which critiqued the lack of affordable housing in the *Waterfront Plan*), exemplifies the *critical project* aim of researching, assessing and publicly addressing the local impacts of policies and processes taking place at all levels of government. Through *popular outreach*, *Planning Action* strives to build relationships with other social, economic and environmental justice oriented groups and residents throughout Toronto while also developing networks for sharing strategies and struggles with locals in other cities. Accordingly, popular education is vital to outreach projects, in order to increase collective awareness and shared understandings of planning processes with an aim to promote participation. *Community involvement* perhaps plays the most vital role in the development of participatory planning practices that can counter the closed entrepreneurial methods in the city at large. Many of the members of *Planning Action* have professional training in planning and urban issues coupled with activist and/or artistic experience which affords an ideal opportunity to speak both languages – that of the “Officials” and of communities. A collective, collaborative approach to the provision of planning and advocacy services to “individuals and communities chronically marginalized from traditional planning and legal systems” (*Planning Action*, n.d.) is similarly integral to community involvement efforts.

The recent forum “Public Space in the Suburbs?” organized by *Planning Action* on September 9, 2006<sup>15</sup> unites the three components, which are all interrelated and essential to the overall vision of promoting justice and equity

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<sup>15</sup> The *Planning Action* website also has a short (collectively written) description of the forum [www.planningaction.org](http://www.planningaction.org)



through the democratization of planning practices. The forum emerged out of recognition of the reality of everyday life in the city (Lefebvre, 1991): the commodification of public space, lack of affordable housing, the de-democratization of planning and the increasingly widening gaps in services, space, income, infrastructure and resources across Toronto (see United Way 2000; 2004 and chapters 2 and 3). The former suburbs stood out as a glaring example of neglect and disinvestment, communities long disregarded as no longer of value to investment capital, whose residents were of little priority to city planners (see 3.4.3).<sup>16</sup>

Accompanying these changes was a “downtownism” and “gentrification of activism” (Cowen, 2006, p.22) in the core represented by a middle class ‘hipster’ population advocating for aesthetic city spaces, car free neighbourhoods, and ad-free garbage cans. While all of those things may seem well and good, gentrified activists tend not to address class, race, gender, and xenophobic inequalities percolating on the surface of the city<sup>17</sup> (Cowen 2006; Sharzer 2006). *Planning Action* saw this as a co-option of activism, which disturbingly paralleled the official vision of the entrepreneurial city where gentrifiers and council can walk hand in hand promoting beautiful downtown spaces and lively streets. This

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<sup>16</sup> This is not to de-emphasize the fact that the Toronto core has also experienced an intense increase and concentration of poverty over the last decade, however the suburbs have seen the greatest rise while receiving little attention. Contrast for instance the 21% rise in poor families in the former city of Toronto from 1981-2001, compared to 136% in Scarborough, an 88% rise in East York, 80.5% in North York, 70% in Etobicoke, and 53.6% in York (United Way, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> For example, as discussed by Greg Sharzer (2006), the Toronto Public Space Committee advocates raising public transit fares to keep advertising out and to spend money on ‘art rather than repairs’ as well as a “de-fencing project” where they remove fences from homeowners backyard (with permission) to build ‘community’. This form of activism is only available to the middle classes who can afford transit fare to begin with, let alone a fare hike, and those property-owners lucky enough to have a backyard.

quaintness does not extend very far beyond central neighbourhoods,<sup>18</sup> certainly not into the suburbs which are in fact generally depicted as the “enemy” that the “hipsterurbanists” should “just ‘bomb’...and be done with them” (Cowen, 2006, p.23). While the characterization may not always be so violent, there is nevertheless an implicit hostility and neglect towards the suburbs, perceptible in both downtown activism and urban governance.

The process of organizing a forum to address these issues had two significant goals. We wanted to encompass both a critique of the effects of entrepreneurial planning practices, as manifest in the effects of the *TOP*, but we also felt it was crucial to contribute to an ongoing deliberation. First and primary, was to begin a long-term critical community involvement project. The forum was not to be an end in itself but an initiator of an ongoing process and the first step toward instituting participatory forms of community governance. As an effort to foster democratic planning practices, we had to work directly with those most affected by the current undemocratic system. Yet our focus had to be specific. There was no way we could geographically target all of the former suburbs and expect to resonate with people at a level of everyday lived experience, nor could we expect to be effective at making planning issues accessible if our approach was too broad. We decided to concentrate on the Morningside region of southeast Scarborough as one of Toronto’s six most impoverished

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<sup>18</sup> Exemplified by the three lenses of the *TOP* which include: stable areas for neighbourhood protection and the intensification of avenues, (argued in 3.4.2 and 3.3.3, to be representative of a gentrification project) and ‘major’ change.

neighbourhoods<sup>19</sup> and its designation as one of Toronto's thirteen "at-risk" communities (United Way, 2004). The Morningside community is further significant for this project due to directly perceivable impacts of the *TOP* on the area, as manifest in the study of Kingston Road, (which runs through the region), that was discussed in Chapter three and will be elaborated below.

Secondly, we sought to address what we perceived as the spatialization of inequality by 'respatializing' conceptions of the city. Perhaps a residue of the pre-amalgamation years and aggravated by the competitive approach to urban governance, the former distinct municipalities of metropolitan Toronto are still often conceived as separate entities with little cooperation between them. Our goal was to draw attention to the challenges facing East Scarborough but in the process we wanted to make Scarborough recognizable as part of the city to downtown residents. Much of this was our response to the 'downtownism' of activism, and a desire to fill the gap between the downtown and the suburbs, while widening the boundaries of debate in the hopes of limiting the competitive impulse between regions. Although the fact that a major community project in Scarborough was initiated by a downtown based group, may evoke criticism, we were acutely aware of the implications of this and allied early with Scarborough groups and residents so that the agenda would be locally driven<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, a large part of the project was to establish connections and cooperative praxis between the two regions, in recognition of interpenetration and co-dependence

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<sup>19</sup> One of six communities with a poverty rate greater than fifty per cent of the population (as mentioned in chapter three), the others are: two communities in the Regent Park area of the former city of Toronto (a long standing public housing project in the city core); the communities of Flemingdon Park and Glenfield-Jane Heights in the former suburb of North York and Oakridge, also located in Scarborough.

<sup>20</sup> This theme is central to the planning process and elaborated throughout.

on shared resources, hence group involvement from relational communities across the city was necessary.

#### **4.4 Site of Contestation**

Locating a site for the forum was of utmost importance. It was essential to build meaningful partnerships with local Scarborough residents and community groups to develop a guideline for organizing the forum, of which the location would play a prominent role. In an area plagued by inadequate public transportation routes, where it can take three buses and two hours to travel ten blocks (Lewington, 2005), physical accessibility was a key priority and a significant challenge. Of equal consequence was the need to find a space that was conceptually accessible that would represent a welcoming environment where locals would feel comfortable and connected. Only through team planning with those intimately connected to the community could the forum speak meaningfully to the issues at the heart of concern in the Morningside region, by ensuring a site and a focus of local resonance.

By April 2006, we had solidified a partnership with community organizers at the *East Scarborough Storefront (ESS)*. The *ESS* is a coalition of more than forty community groups and organizations providing free services, programs and referrals in: health, education, employment, settlement, parenting, legal services, community information and volunteerism while offering community gathering space and access to computers, fax and phone. In all of their operations the *ESS* is committed to a transparent, democratic structure in which all community stakeholders are invited to, "share ownership and control with service provider

partners of the consortium” (ESS, n.d.). The *ESS* serves more than 5000 local residents per month with their general services (Habib, 2006, public presentation) and functions as a vital space where people can meet, kids can do homework, and links are made between various community agencies and support structures. The position of the *ESS* as a central community resource ensured connections with vital networks of residents, service providers and activist groups working towards and/or affected by the attainment of public resources and social infrastructure in the Morningside area. The challenges affecting East Scarborough, expressed by the diverse users of this unique communal space, largely informed the direction of the forum, as the *ESS* became a key collaborator in the planning process.

Since their inception in 2001, the *ESS* has held regular “Community Speaks” rooted in a civic engagement mandate. The ‘Speaks’ are forums which bring together the full diversity of Scarborough to question, discuss, and strategize in large and small groups, on issues related to the health, safety and well-being of the community. Each of the ‘Speaks’ build on the issues, questions and actions that have evolved since the previous one, and are designed to ensure that *ESS* activities continue to reflect and support local priorities. The *ESS* approach to the Community Speaks mirrors the *Planning Action* goal to democratize planning practices through popular education, and the support of greater community involvement and control over political decision-making. The decision was made early in the forum planning process, May 2006, that the current location of the *ESS* would be the ideal site for the September event.

ESS is located in Morningside Mall,<sup>21</sup> located at the corner of Kingston Road and Lawrence Avenue, and has long served as a “hub” of de facto public space in the region. Surrounded by high-rise apartments which house many recent immigrants, youth, and fixed income seniors, as well as in close proximity to the Kingston Road public housing shelters, the Morningside Mall draws local residents to gather both formally (such as for *ESS* programs) and socially. However, despite the clear communal value that the *ESS* and the mall itself has for local residents, as conducive to the *TOP*'s articulation of redevelopment on Kingston Road (City of Toronto, 2003), the Mall is slated for demolition in early 2007 to be rebuilt into big box stores catered towards middle class consumers from other neighbourhoods. The closure of the mall strikes a drastic blow to the surrounding community, which is losing one of the only public spaces in the area. Many of the users of the Storefront space and Morningside Mall cannot drive and depend on the one-stop conglomeration of essential services and communal space that the mall offers, their replacement with box stores do not fulfil those needs. At the Community Speaks of 2004 and 2005, public residents spoke of the mall as central to the community, while local opposition intensified and spawned a public march in 2005 to protest the demolition of the mall and dislocation of the *ESS* (*ESS*, 2004, 2005). The erosion of already limited public space and displacement of social infrastructure, to the expense of the city's neediest residents, insidiously reflects the challenges facing the former suburbs and Scarborough in general.

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<sup>21</sup> As of January 2007, the *ESS* was relocated to 4040 Lawrence Avenue East.

The transformation of the Morningside region clearly devalues the current uses and users of the space as “underdeveloped” (City of Toronto, 2003, p.9), in favour of “reurbanization” that serves the abstract needs of capital. While the tax base and consumption revenue that the new box stores bring in may help pad government coffers,<sup>22</sup> the locally accessible, lived communal space (which is already so scarce in the geographically dispersed Scarborough region) will be lost. The enactment of the Official *vision* for the area obliterates the public use value of the mall in conversion to the exchange value of the shopping complex that will take its place, exemplifying an explicit orientation towards consumers who shop rather than citizens who debate and socialize (Harvey, 1989; Lefebvre, 1991; Zukin, 1991). Ironically, despite the emphasis on reducing sprawl, “smart growth”, and aesthetic planning, the box stores that will be remaking the Morningside Mall site are an icon of urban sprawl and car dependency. Clearly, the designated “redevelopment” for the site works in the interest of “best use”, (albeit debateable), for capital rather than people.

The prospect of holding the forum at Morningside Mall meant that the event could speak directly to the issues emerging from the current official planning process, as directly experienced in the daily life of people in the Morningside community. The effects of a competitive model of urban governance favouring investment in downtown spaces of spectacular consumption while overlooking the outmoded transit, social infrastructure and resources in the suburbs (see chapters two and three), materialized in the politics

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<sup>22</sup> Although the amount of tax revenue may not be significant depending on the level of incentives such as waving development fees or tax breaks that are endorsed by the *TOP*, see chapter three, section 3.4.3.

surrounding the destruction of the mall. The forum would highlight the significance of Morningside Mall as a site of contestation, in discursive and material terms, against entrepreneurial capital, a local place based struggle against the global space of planners. However, the forum was not intended to protest or lament the destruction of the mall, (that had already happened in 2005), and the demolition was proceeding as planned. Rather, the forum would focus on evaluating how critique can be mobilized to plan for a better future in the community, providing an avenue for residents to question, what next? What happens after Morningside Mall?

Indeed, the question of what happens after Morningside Mall rushed forward to meet us faster than anticipated. After months of planning to hold the forum at the Morningside site, in August 2006, the mall management deemed our event “too political”; consequently, we were prohibited from using the space. The loss of the site, so close to the quickly approaching date of the forum, presented a major setback, though paradoxically seemed to justify the need for the event despite the simultaneous challenge. On a symbolic level, losing the location of the mall represented a double displacement, of both the forum and of public space in general. More significantly, it points towards the contingency of public space when governed by private interests and the irony of the only community gathering space being a *mall* in the first place (Hannigan, 1998). The obstacles involved in securing a forum site are indicative of the limited availability of accessible (non-privatized) public space where people can actually go to discuss, challenge and influence the politics in their community.



With the assistance of our partners at the *ESS*, we managed to find a new location at the *East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club (ESBGC)*. The *ESBGC* is a youth oriented organization that provides a wide range of programming for all levels of child, family and youth development based on principles of inclusion, empowerment, collaboration and speaking out (*ESBGC*, n.d.). Situated at Kingston and Galloway Road, the *ESBGC* is about five miles away from the Morningside Mall and serves a similar population. While the new space was not experiencing the same imminent devastation as the mall, it certainly fit into the wider project. The *ESBGC* is another group committed to building community based solutions to the challenges facing the area, by activating local residents (specifically youth) and hence fits into the larger goal of developing a long-term critical project out of the forum. The director of the *ESBGC* enthusiastically supported the event and the organization became another key partner.

#### **4.5 Planning Process**

Development of a democratized planning process had to begin with *Planning Action's* own internal structure. This non-profit organization is supported entirely by volunteers and fully autonomous in its operations. A broad membership, of approximately one hundred and fifty people, stays informed via a general *Planning Action* list-serv. There is also a smaller "work-group", of about twenty-five members, who wish to be more active in planning and organizing activities, and have elected to join a second list-serv so as not to burden general

members with unwanted email traffic.<sup>23</sup> The work-group develops campaigns and critical projects while the number of people active shrinks and expands, depending on energy and time both possessed by individual members, and required by the project. Monthly meetings are open to the public and announced on the main list to encourage participation. There is no chair, leader or hierarchal positions, and a consensus model of decision-making is the hallmark of all plans and actions that emerge from the group, to avoid the win-lose dichotomy that a voting approach would entail. This does not mean that there is never any conflict, but ensures that all persons are encouraged to deliberate and weigh a wide variety of ideas, which are discussed and synthesized until a mutually acceptable course of action is reached.

Most of the planning and organizing for the Scarborough forum was the work of six main *Planning Action* organizers (myself included), although there were many people who contributed support and attended at least one of the planning meetings. Meetings, announced to the general *Planning Action* list, were held frequently from May until September, at a mutually convenient time, place and location. Although the event was to be in Scarborough, the general planning meetings took place downtown, since that was the place of residence for each of the key organizers. However, there was regular contact with our partners in Scarborough through ongoing email dialogue, as well as smaller group meetings at Scarborough sites approximately once a month leading up to

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<sup>23</sup> Although we recognize that not all potentially interested members will have home internet access, the list-servs remain the most cost effective and efficient way to share information with a widely dispersed group. Access sites, such as public libraries, can potentially facilitate higher levels of internet connectivity, while word of mouth through social networks may reach those who the emails do not.

the forum. Because the forum was a first step, to generate ideas and mobilize interest in a long-term initiative, and we did not want to overwhelm the Scarborough participants with detail work, it was appropriate for logistics to take place downtown. By decentralizing contacts and tasks across the group, we managed to distribute responsibility and equalize the amount of work delegated to any one organizer.

A significant difficulty that was central to our ongoing discussions was deciding what form and structure the forum would take and where it would lead. Originally we had intended to hold the event in the summer, but, knowing that more people are likely to be away on week-ends in the summer we pushed it later to September (also to reach out to student populations). We decided that Sunday was the most accessible day that more people would likely have off work, even if subject to jobs with overtime and long hours. We wanted the event to be youth and family friendly so we decided on an afternoon timeframe from 1:30 to 5pm. This would allow those who attend religious services in the morning to participate in the forum afterwards while also finishing early enough for participants to prepare for dinner.

It was essential to allow critical, locally based voices to speak for themselves, but there was also a need to recognize, celebrate, learn from, and build connections with people doing progressive work in Scarborough communities. We wanted to bring together groups that dealt with a wide range of issues, challenges and opportunities that affect East Scarborough, however there was also concern that we not simply present a “buffet of activism” with no

unifying thread. For this reason, we did not widely advertise a call for participants, mainly because often those who self-select, or are most easily accessed, are not necessarily those that are most representative. Although panel participants were hand chosen, we made the decisions of which issues and groups to focus on in concert with our Scarborough partners who were well informed of local concerns in the neighbourhood, as well as the groups organizing around them. To allow maximum capacity for community representatives and residents to lead the agenda and find their own voice we decided that as a group, *Planning Action* would not present on the panel, as we did not wish to drive the outcomes of the discussion.

The resources necessary to make the forum happen were also an ongoing concern. The costs of transportation (discussed further below), audio-visual equipment, (local) food and supplies, would have made the forum prohibitively expensive if we did not seek external funding. We felt that to maintain legitimacy as an activist group we had to preserve our independence from government and corporate sources, which, whether real or imagined, threatened to influence or co-opt the agenda. Rather, we sought assistance from progressive organizations with which we shared an alliance in values and critical vision. We were grateful to receive support from: the Planners Network of alternative planners; the City Institute of York University; Department of Geography and Planning at University of Toronto; Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University and Graduate Geography and Planning Students Society (GGAPSS). The dominance of support from academic institutions meant that we could use their networks to

promote the event and draw on student energy, particularly graduate students who might potentially decide to become involved as a research project. At the same time, we were cautious to avoid turning the forum into purely an academic or student event. While students, academics, and downtown residents were welcomed and encouraged to attend, our intentions largely prioritized the needs of the East Scarborough community.

Communication strategies contributed to the safe guard that prevented the forum from becoming an academic exercise of a downtown community travelling to Scarborough. The way we contextualized and promoted the event differed considerably between the Toronto core and East Scarborough. In Scarborough, word of mouth and participant networks at the *ESS* and the *ESBGC* were the most effective way to reach the local population, many of whom do not have home internet access. At the *ESS*, they suggested a simple poster listing the date, location and event title with little more contextualization; this format lent itself better to translation into other languages spoken in the surrounding community. For downtown communities, we relied more heavily on email list-servs and prepared a document that situated and explained the event by describing some of the challenges facing Scarborough communities (See Appendix A). The write-up was sent across the *Planning Action* list, the University lists and lists of a wide range of other activist and community groups whose members are spread all over the city (including the former suburbs). That being said, we did also prepare and distribute a poster downtown with the same contextualization as the list-serv, however, we felt that they likely

camouflaged into the clutter of posters and advertising that line the downtown streets. The list-servs more appropriately addressed those with an interest in the questions of social and spatial justice, who were more likely to attend the event.

The external media treatment of the event was disappointing but unsurprising. The *Scarborough Mirror* expressed interest and even sent a reporter to take the bus tour we offered from downtown (see below). However, by November no related article had appeared on the *Mirror's* website. In an attempt to overcome the neglect of suburban politics and events within the downtown region, we sent press releases to the major alternative papers which are published from downtown Toronto but proclaim to citywide coverage, the *Eye Weekly* and *Now Magazine*. Neither paper followed through with coverage other than a small event listing in *Now*, which noted that the forum would take place the following week, but this was not an article and it did not discuss any of the background or issues that drove the event. We interpreted this as an indication of the general disregard, if not hostility, felt towards the suburbs and possibly a rejection of our critical approach to downtown "hipster activism" and gentrification that these two publications embody (Cowen, 2006; Sharzer, 2006).

Transportation was also a major factor in terms of accessibility and cost, which, is also indicative of a wider discrepancy between the Toronto core and the Scarborough region. In the interest of bridging the gap of knowledge, concern and activism between the core and the suburbs, we organized a 'critical bus tour' from a downtown subway station to the Scarborough site. We were fortunate enough to obtain the knowledge and voluntary services of two university

geographers with substantial personal experience and academic expertise in the social, political and built histories of both Toronto and Scarborough. The tour took participants along a circuitous route of significant sites, while the guides articulated the stories behind them as the bus made its trip to the *ESBGC*. Overflow of those who could not fit on the bus took a public transportation tour, which took us, (I participated in the subway tour), to the end of the subway line and onto a long bus ride to the site of the forum. To break up the monotony of the commute, an entertaining and informative handout was provided, which mapped out the route and highlighted interesting facts about Scarborough's history.

The overwhelming response to both the bus tour and public transit tour were that they were both very interesting but –too long (both ninety minutes). This is highly significant for the reason that it gives downtown residents a glimpse into the daily life of Scarborough locals for whom the drudgery of the commute is a routine. Poor transportation is an everyday issue in Scarborough, where in many cases, trips downtown are far longer than ninety minutes and it is just as bad to get across the Scarborough region, requiring numerous transfers to move distances as little as ten kilometres (Lewington, 2005). Kingston Road for instance, has no direct route downtown; there are a number of intersecting bus routes but none that travel the full length of the “avenue”, nor are there any ‘bus only’ lanes (City of Toronto, 2003). Similarly, due to the widely dispersed built form of Scarborough, it would have been impossible for us to provide a bus from a (non-existent) central Scarborough point to the *ESBGC*. Participants received

reimbursement for transit fares, but the lengthy and arduous nature of the journey may have been enough to prevent local Scarborough residents from accessing the forum site.

#### **4.6 The Forum Itself**

On September 9, 2006, the event finally came together, drawing together approximately two hundred participants from a broad range of ages, ethnicities and communities of residence. The forum opened with a dance performance by *CareFirst*, a local seniors group well known in Scarborough communities, who entertained with traditional Chinese dance. The panellists who followed: informed, educated and questioned the rest of the participants on key issues and concerns facing East Scarborough, while simultaneously proposing potential positive steps and alternatives. Although themes and targets of activist focus varied, overall, the speakers drew attention to the city designation of Kingston-Galloway (or the Morningside region of Scarborough) as an “at-risk” community and the need for public space and public resources to devise solutions.

Youth were a high priority for many participants such as our speakers from *ESBGC*, the *Youth Challenge Fund*, *ESS* and the *Neighbourhood Action Group*. The panellists dovetailed on their emphasis on youth empowerment to engage with their communities at a meaningful level, through the encouragement of youth-driven solutions. Barriers of access to employment and recreation opportunities, racialized exclusion and safety concerns, that often contribute to disillusion with institutions, were highlighted as key problems facing Scarborough youth. Programming which supports youth run spaces and initiatives to promote



leadership, safe spaces and employability skills are vital to building a stronger community. The work of the above listed panellists, coupled with the community bridging goal of the *ESS*, to build linkages and community partnerships was celebrated as an essential resource to strengthening this capacity.

Other panellists spoke of the precariousness of daily life for many Scarborough residents. Although a citywide (not just Scarborough) organization, the *Workers Action Centre (WAC)* organizes for the wages of non-unionized workers. This presentation, pointed to the fact that there were more than half a billion in unpaid wages in Ontario from 1989-2003, though less than one percent is inspected by the Ministry of Labour (David, 2006, public presentation). Because many non-unionized workers are recent immigrants or manual labourers pushed into the suburbs due to the gentrification of the inner city, the efforts of *No-one is Illegal (NOII)* were closely related to *WAC* (Hassen, 2006, public presentation). *NOII* organizes for the rights of undocumented migrants who are typically forced into lower than minimum wage jobs that no-one else wants and denied the benefits of citizenship such as health, education, affordable housing and police services. When faced with precarious employment and fear of deportation, many individuals feel powerless and afraid to bring their grievances to authorities. *WAC*'s targeting of bad bosses, worker mobilization and changing access to legal structures is complementary to *NOII*'s campaigns to ensure all residents have rights to civic-based services and opportunities<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> These groups also point to the increasing racialization (as well as suburbanization) of poverty in Toronto and Canada in general. For an excellent (appalling) report see Galabuzi (2001), "Canada's creeping economic apartheid: The economic segregation and social marginalization of racialised groups".

The final panellist from the *Alternative Planning Group* (APG), brought unity to all of the previously expressed themes, stressing that community capacity building depends on street level initiatives, organizational advocacy and services, as well as seeking change in municipal-institutional structures. The APG formed in 1998 to respond to the challenges facing Toronto after amalgamation and functions as a social think tank, which critically evaluates what counts and should count as social planning.

Participants in the audience expressed appreciation of the issues raised while adding valuable insight. Further concerns expressed included the limitations inherent in project funding as opposed to program funding. Government grants often have strict criteria and typically come in one shot project bursts rather than long-term support for community services and ongoing initiatives. Perceived risks of violence in the area led to voiced expression that East Scarborough residents, particularly youth and undocumented immigrants,<sup>25</sup> feel that police and other public figures do not listen to what they need. It seems that government directs more funds into policing and 'security', to crackdown on things like immigration, rather than support for access to health, recreational, settlement and educational services. While diverse and nuanced, the viewpoints expressed around the room pointed to a need to advocate for changes in governance. It is necessary to decentralize more power to communities to build safe spaces and sustain locally based programs, which can support engagement in processes and decisions that affect daily life.

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<sup>25</sup> Immigrants that have not been granted citizenship or residency status

After the panel presentations and discussion, we broke for food and entertainment prior to rejoining into five smaller workgroups to allow closer discussion on specific themes. The work groups included a youth organization called *Buzz* that works towards giving youth a voice to express themselves publicly through creative writing and spoken word. The *81 Reasons Campaign* was also youth driven and provided 81 reasons why (\$81 million in) public funds should not go into youth prisons, which focus on punishment and isolation rather than rehabilitation and integration. *Community Mapping* was another workshop; it involved rolling out a map of East Scarborough so residents could spatialize their everyday lives to help visually acknowledge what works and does not work in the community. Unfortunately, few local residents attended this workshop, although it did lead to interesting discussion instead. Scarborough *Civic Action Network* and *Planning Action* both held strategic workshops that questioned the difficulties and the opportunities for organizing activism and community building in East Scarborough. The goal was to devise strategies for action and to inform how to approach future work in the area.

## **4.7 Reflection**

After the forum, we spent a great deal of time discussing the forum both internally within *Planning Action* as well as more broadly with participants and panellists to determine how it was successful and how it could improve. In general, the reception from the downtown communities was highly favourable. The bus tour was seen as an interesting socio-political eye-opener, and the panel discussions raised many crucial issues central to the planning processes of the

city, that were previously not considered, or reflected on, by many downtown urbanites. As a form of public education and outreach, we feel that the forum opened up a space for greater awareness and dialogue between downtown and suburban issues. Although, it was certainly not a full-scale response to downtown bias (especially not for municipal 'officials'), the forum can be seen as one small step towards bridging that divide and starting an ongoing conversation.

Where we saw our purpose for organizing the forum to have taken the greatest hit was community involvement with Morningside residents. Although many of the panellists work primarily in that area, and the event did draw some residents from Scarborough, relatively few locals from the Morningside area attended the event. This can largely be attributed to the unexpected and last minute location change from the Morningside Mall, which simultaneously also changed the nature of the forum. Initially we planned to focus directly on the politics, challenges and opportunities involved in the closure of the mall and relocation of the *ESS*; the move to the *ESBGC* meant the loss of this very tangible focus, resulting in a more abstract and even academic discussion of "public space". We expect that, had the promoted event spoken more directly to specific local concerns, it may have attracted greater participation from the Morningside region. Although definitely a setback in building connections for a longer term project in the area, the minimal participation of Morningside residents points to a need for us to start smaller and better contextualize future events to resonate with concrete local concerns.

The results of the forum clearly reveal challenges in the reality of planning such an event that strays far from the ideal utopian vision of immediately instituting a democratic process of citizen engagement. The lack of accessible public space, inadequate public transportation, limited time, awareness and interest of potential participants, and widely dispersed communities make mobilizing around issues as broad as democratized planning and public resources exceedingly hard. Although the forum did not function as a representative voice of *all* Morningside residents, this was never the intention, and it did point to some very urgent and critical concerns in the area. The groups working towards greater social justice, community empowerment and democratic structures of engagement are on the front lines with local residents, and building spaces where such voices can engage in dialogue helps to facilitate greater connections and cooperation. Some of the groups involved in the forum (such as *WAC* and *ESS*) were not previously engaged in partnerships but have since recognized shared goals and have forged working relationships.

Moreover, the limitations of the forum are also evocative of the weaknesses of the current official planning structure, which assumes that one time city-led consultations offer sufficient participatory structures for resident contribution to policy. Despite *Planning Action's* explicit attempt to promote space for community voices, we were still unable, in one event, to fully engage and collaborate with the community in question. The forum was indeed one incredibly small first step to enacting an ongoing community led practice of neighbourhood planning. As an initial event, the forum helped to mobilize

community members both downtown and in Scarborough, while securing collaborative partners interested in enacting a long-term project with local residents. As a form of spatial and discursive practice in action, the forum directed attention to *representational space*, perceptions of lived and immediate concern, both positive and negative, in East Scarborough communities, which will need much greater exploration. To actually realize a model of democratized social planning, based on principles of equity and social justice, it is essential to develop ongoing spatial practices which support locally determined representations of space rooted in inhabited places, rather than the abstract space of transnational capital (Lefebvre, 1991).

## CHAPTER 5: A NON-CONCLUSION

Throughout this work I have sought to link how wider societal forces, driven by global political-economics, intersect with the discursive, material and experiential dimensions of urban life. Urban planning, as an instrument of technique, has the potential to transform the production of space at each the conceived (abstract, material), perceived (symbolic), and lived (experiential) levels (Lefebvre, 1991). The *TOP* approach to competitive city governance, driven by the abstract space of global capital, at once obliterates local spatial practices from policy representations, while simultaneously constraining them. This implicit marginalization, via discursive or policy production of spatial inequality, is most appallingly evident in the growing gap between the resources and investments devoted to the spectacularization of Toronto's rapidly gentrifying city core, and the deprivation of the resource and infrastructural impoverishment of the inner-ring former suburbs.

Despite the apparent opposition between suburbanization and gentrification the two processes are necessarily interlinked, not only through wider political-economic shifts and tendencies in governance, which clearly affect both, but more so due to their close proximity to one another. The fluid movement of persons between the city and the suburbs whether for work, recreation, community or so on, requires that we recognize cities and their outlying regions as separate yet connected (whether amalgamated, as in the

Toronto case, or not). The exchange between the two is more than economic, yet in the prevailing neo-liberal approach to city management, the neighbouring municipalities are treated as distinct and driven toward competition for capital and spectacular events rather than co-operation (Lowes, 2003). Although possibly serving many of the same overlapping communities, there are wide variances in policies (Clarke & Gaile, 2005), taxes, and regulations (Jessop et al., 2005) available between and across urban regions, which accentuates disparity and bifurcation through inconsistent social service provision. In terms of the suburbs and the city it is pertinent to recognize that users of these spaces likely have relationships to groups or organizations that frequently cross city boundaries and depend on many of the same resources. To avoid a perpetual process of creative destruction as capital shifts from one location to another, a more cohesive and cooperative relationship to regional planning would seek an understanding of how space is actually lived and actively produced (Crang & Thrift, 2005; Lefebvre, 1991; Merrifield, 2005).

The production of space inevitably involves how people interact with the material or built environment, as well as the ways in which they symbolically conceive and perceive of place (Lefebvre, 1991, pp.33-52). By the term liveability crisis, I refer to a broader category that moves beyond homelessness (although the drastic and appalling degradation of affordable and secure housing is a large part of it). The term is representative of lived experience through spatial practice, which forces us to call into question the effects that the spatial-fix to capitalist crisis has on living conditions such as housing, public space,



diversity and community. The long-term repercussions of the spatial fix adapted as a response to crises of accumulation have involved interconnected processes of gentrification and suburban degradation.

If we reconsider the spatial fix in terms of a liveability crisis, then we need to rethink not the location, but rather, the priorities of investment. This necessitates a move away from abstract “representations of space” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.33) which conflate public good with economic growth. The discourse analysis of the *TOP* conducted in this thesis, suggests that an official plan that develops hegemonic policy for thirty years does not adequately address evolving citizen needs. Recognizing that capital alone does not translate into an improved ‘quality of life’, (for any more than an unrepresentative upper class), suggests a critical need to include community members in collaborative determination of public needs and planning priorities. A true “fix” to urban crises would seek to institute new spaces that facilitate community led engagement with political and urban issues as part of an ongoing empowerment of local decision-making. If cities really are to become “world-class”, we need to consider what it means to live in these places, not merely to consume them.

## APPENDIX

To be sent out to non-disclosed recipient lists:

### PUBLIC SPACE IN THE SUBURBS?

Is downtown Toronto the centre of the universe?

Is it even the centre of this city?

Does your Toronto include Scarborough?

Why does public money and attention focus on extravagant projects in  
The downtown when basic public facilities are missing in the post-war  
suburbs?

Why don't racialized communities in the inner suburbs seem to ever get a fair  
piece of the public pie?

As the downtown becomes ever more hip and cool, as it is transformed  
into a creative hipster utopia, gentrification pushes the city's new  
immigrants, racialized poor, and precarious workers out into the  
post-war suburbs. These communities are vital, creative, and strong,  
but they face challenges of built form and public infrastructure  
designed for social forms that have long expired. Public space and  
public infrastructure are sorely lacking, and downtown remains the  
focus of flashy public investment.

Come celebrate the efforts of groups who are working to build a  
better future. Come dance, eat, and learn about suburban struggles for space.  
Come out and demand spatial justice in the suburbs. Help us think through how  
to make this city a place of justice, welcome, and care.

Join *Planning Action*, the East Scarborough Storefront, the Workers  
Action Centre, UNITE-HERE, Jay Pitter and BUZZ, The Alternative  
Planning Group, No One is Illegal, The Neighbourhood Action Group, 81  
Reasons Campaign, Care First, Scarborough Civic Action Network,  
Baby Habits, and local residents for an afternoon of discussion, music,  
and food. Enjoy live music and dance from the local community, food,  
alternative mapping, and lively discussions.

SATURDAY - SEPTEMBER 9, 2006

FORUM: 1:30 PM at the East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club  
100 Galloway Road, Near Kingston and Lawrence

Meet us at the Boys and Girls Club in Scarborough, or join us on a bus tour from downtown led by local activists and professors. The bus will stop at important sites on the way to the forum, and will drop you at the subway afterwards.

**BUS TOUR: MEET AT 11:40AM OUTSIDE MUSEUM SUBWAY STATION (IN FRONT OF THE ROM). BUSSES LEAVE AT 12PM.** Busses will fill on a first come first Serve basis. There will be a group leaving by TTC from Museum station in case we exceed capacity.

Stay tuned for more information!

Thanks of support go to:

City Institute of York University  
Department of Geography and Planning, University of Toronto  
Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University  
Graduate Geography and Planning Students Society (GGAPSS)  
Planners Network

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