Fate and Faith: Claiming Urban Citizenship
In Immigrant Toronto

Engin F. Isin and Myer Siemietycki

June 1999

Working Paper No. 8

Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement – Toronto
On October 2nd 1995, several hundred Muslims "stormed out" of a meeting of East York Council which rejected a proposal to establish a mosque in a vacant factory building because the mosque was 26 parking spaces short of the required 130 spaces. "Let's get out of here," some announced. "This is a racist vote" (Gombu, 1995b: A6). Even after East York Council finally approved a scaled-down version of the mosque, the experience of securing space for prayer in East York still pained mosque president Mr. Abdur Ingar who believes that, "there are huge double standards that are preventing Muslims from having the same access to their religious freedoms as others" (Ingar, 1998).

The East York saga lurched over a year from impasse to accord and back. Searching for a permanent site to replace rented facilities serving East York's large South Asian Muslim group, the Islamic Society of Toronto (IST) had purchased an unused low-rise industrial site. Places of worship (of diverse faiths) are now commonly locating in Toronto's postwar suburban industrial strip landscape. De-industrialization is making these properties available and relatively affordable. Typically, too, these sites are well served by road and highway access; this is particularly significant for mosques which often serve widely dispersed congregants who may also be travelling to prayer services several times daily from their places of residence, work or study. Initially, the argument raised against the mosque by East York's Planning Department and some of its politicians was that mosque occupancy would cost the municipality over $90,000 in lost taxes due to the tax-exempt status of places of worship. Yet churches were commonplace in East York's business districts, and places of worship were now permitted as of right in industrial zones across Toronto (Talim-Ul-Islam, 1996). The mosque's strongest champion on council, Mayor Michael Prue, argued that the lost taxes were minimal compared to both the municipality's $60 million budget and a religious group's right to practise its faith (Gombu, 1995a: A3). Toronto Star columnist David Lewis Stein
argued that a municipality so desperate for $90,000 that it would deprive a group a place to worship has "outlived its usefulness" (Stein, 1995: A23). In July, 1995, East York council reversed an earlier planning committee decision to approve the mosque in principle by a close vote of five to four. Three months later, the mosque was stymied by a six-to-three council vote on the grounds that insufficient parking was available, despite a report to the contrary from a prominent transportation planning firm acting for the mosque. Yet, ironically, at least four churches had succeeded in gaining exemptions from parking requirements which were more stringent than those prevailing in most other Toronto municipalities (East York, 1996). Newspaper editorials and Catholic and Jewish leaders joined the Islamic Society of Toronto in condemning the council's decision. Stein suggested that, for some members of council, "quibbling about parking is just a means to keep the mosque out of there all together" (Stein, 1995: A23).

In the winter of 1996, East York Council approved the mosque after the Islamic Society of Toronto agreed to demolish part of the factory for added parking and to reduce the worship space from 417 to 368 square metres. While East York finally had a mosque, many of its worshippers suspected that their faith had singled out their proposal for undue scrutiny. The fate of cities which have been demographically transformed by global migration, will depend on their response to diversity and what Iris Marion Young defines as "the politics of difference" (Young, 1990). The rapid growth of Toronto's Islamic population has prompted this community to seek appropriate places of worship. Thus the community's first foray into civic politics, its first expression of citizenship/belonging has been framed by its faith; Toronto's response is revealing of both the fate of newcomers to the city, and the city's own fate as one of the world's most multicultural cities. How do we make sense of such land use conflicts that are simultaneously about space, identity, faith and fate and that are increasingly visible in urban politics?

**Immigration to Toronto**

Recent immigration has transformed Toronto dramatically. The Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) had 1.8 million immigrants in 1996, a 21% increase since 1991 compared with just a 5% increase for people born in Canada (Statistics Canada 1997). It had
the largest immigrant population of all of 25 Canadian census metropolitan areas in 1996, 42% of Toronto CMA's population, up from 38% in 1991. Toronto was also the preferred destination of Canada's most recent immigrants. About 441,000, or 42% of all new arrivals to Canada, settled there, nearly three times the CMA's share of the total Canadian population (15%). In comparison, 18% of recent immigrants to Canada settled in Vancouver, and 13% in Montreal. Just over a fifth (21%) of Toronto's total population were immigrants who came to Canada since 1981. Recent immigrants (those who arrived since 1991) represented one-tenth of Toronto's total population.

The sources of immigrants to Toronto have changed dramatically over time. Toronto's immigrant population who arrived before 1961 was composed almost exclusively (92%) of people born in the United Kingdom and Europe. Since the 1960s, the number of European-born immigrants in Toronto has steadily decreased, representing just 17% of those who settled in Toronto (with Poland as the most frequent European source). Toronto received an increasing number of immigrants from Asia and the Middle East as well as Central and South America, the Caribbean and Africa. Six out of ten of all recent immigrants living in Toronto in 1996 were born in Asia and the Middle East. Hong Kong, Sri Lanka and the People's Republic of China were the most frequent sources of the newcomers.

In mass print and visual media and official discourse, Toronto appears to have integrated these groups into the 'mainstream culture' quite well and harmoniously. The federal policy of multiculturalism helps frame and give legitimacy to these representations. Yet underneath these representations of harmony and commitment to multiculturalism there lurks a more problematic reality. Many immigrant groups in Toronto occupy a marginal position in the social space (Croucher, 1997). Citizenship -- defined not only as a legal status but also as participation and influence over the city's economic, social, cultural and political spheres -- has eluded many members of immigrant groups.

It is useful to make a distinction between legal (formal) and sociological (informal) spheres of citizenship. The latter includes, among other things, those practices of immigrants that claim public space as their own to foster the formation of new group identities. Records of street parades, demonstrations, media presence, park and civic square permits portray immigrant groups actively staking claims in their new urban milieu. Yet an examination of immigrant group involvement in formal and institutional arenas of citizenship suggests a more
marginal experience. Immigrant participation in municipal elections and in the debate over the amalgamation of the constituent municipalities of Metropolitan Toronto into one city reveals a more tenuous attachment of immigrants (Siemiatycki & Isin, 1998). As well, both formal and informal modes of engagement vary across particularly class.

This paper aims to examine critically the emerging literature on immigration and metropolis and explore its implications and usefulness for empirical research and urban politics in the global era. It then focuses on various conflicts arising from requests by Muslim groups to build mosques across the Toronto region and symbolic and material resistances they have had to overcome.

**What is Urban Citizenship?**

The word "citizenship" today evokes the state or, perhaps more precisely, the modern nation-state. It is associated with membership in a nation-state where certain rights and obligations are allocated to individuals under its authority. Modern citizenship that draws from the nation-state typically include civil rights (free speech and movement, rule of law), political rights (voting, seeking electoral office) and social rights (welfare, unemployment insurance and health care) (Janoski, 1998). The precise combination and depth of these rights varies from one state to another, but a modern democratic state is expected to uphold such rights. Citizenship obligations vary, too, ranging from some states in which military service is required to other states where jury duty and taxes are the only responsibilities. Eligibility for citizenship is also associated with the modern nation-state, with membership typically beginning at birth. While they are often contested and debated, many nation-states also have elaborate rules and criteria for "naturalization", meaning acceptance to membership of those who were not born in its territory.

This legal definition of citizenship describes only its formal aspects. Citizenship can also be defined as various practices through which individuals engage in making and re-making of the nation-state. In other words, citizenship is not a static experience: citizens actively struggle to change both the meaning and boundaries of citizenship itself. The ongoing debate about Canadian federalism and Quebec secession, for example, is a debate about citizenship. For Quebecois, the question is to which polity they attach their fate, a federated
Canada or a sovereign Quebec? For the rest of Canada the struggle over citizenship entails reconciling distinctive claims of First Nations, "founding" nations and subsequent immigrant communities. Being politically engaged in these debates means practicing citizenship. This illustrates how legal and sociological spheres of citizenship are intertwined.

Both legal and sociological conceptions of citizenship are necessary to understand the complex workings of this institution and its long history. As the burgeoning field of citizenship studies amply illustrates, citizenship has been an object of struggle for different groups to claim various rights for themselves (Heater, 1990; Riesenber, 1992). From the ancient Greek peasants and Roman plebeians to medieval merchants and the modern working class, it has been a fundamental vehicle through which people have sought social justice, recognition of their needs and participation in the political realm (Isin, 1997). Today, various kinds of groups, ranging from ethnic and racial to ecological and gendered, are making new demands for citizenship concerning group-specific rights. In many western nation-states, for example, women have won even the basic citizenship right to vote only in this century. Today, they are fighting to expand their citizenship rights to include such social rights as reproductive control, access to childcare, pay equity and safe cities. Similarly, gays and lesbians are struggling to claim rights that are already extended to heterosexual couples such as spousal benefits and common-law arrangements.

In respect to urban citizenship scholars often state that citizenship originated more than two thousand years ago in ancient Greek cities. Western history is full of images of the birth of democracy and citizenship in ancient Greek cities, its republican transformations in ancient Roman cities, and its revival in medieval European cities. Classic studies of the western city such as by Weber (1958), Pirenne (1925) and Mumford (1961) are often cited as vivid illustrations of such history. Until the late-eighteenth century, citizenship in both legal and sociological senses was associated essentially with the city.

It is certainly significant to recognize that only in the last two centuries (customarily designated as the modern era) has citizenship become the exclusive domain of nation-states. However, while it is true that citizenship originated in the city and that there is an important history of citizenship in western cities, we would argue that the significance of urban citizenship today does not merely derive from this history. Rather, cities are places where the very meaning, content and extent of citizenship are being made and re-made. In major cities --
particularly global cities that have built connections with other cities to form a network of flows of commodities, services, capital, labour, images, and ideas -- urban social movements have emerged which claim rights in novel ways. Many groups such as women's, lesbians and gays, ecological, ethno-racial and others argue that traditional civil, political and social rights do not adequately address their needs and so seek new rights such as gender, multicultural, ecological, sexual, and other rights (Isin & Wood, 1999). Their struggle for recognition and social justice revolve around new claims to inclusion and engagement with the polity in which they seek membership in a qualitatively different way.

According to some, this is the beginning of a new type of politics, often called cultural politics (Jordan, 1995, Darnovsky, 1995). According to others, it is simply a new wave in the expansion of rights that can be traced back to the eighteenth century (Kymlicka, 1995). From our point of view, the significant aspect of the rise of new group claims is precisely their urban origins and expression. They both reflect and reconstitute the diversity of identities uniquely found in cities. We consider the city therefore as a political space where the articulation and claiming of such new rights first become possible, (sometimes subsequently inspiring similar mobilization across more sparsely populated towns, villages and rural areas). One of the most challenging issues in North America and Europe is, for example, the political status of immigrants and whether they should be extended certain citizenship rights. While the debate continues, however, as a national issue, the majority of such immigrants settle in cities and use their resources to mobilize and articulate their demands for inclusion. In Germany, it is impossible to discuss citizenship rights for Turks without reflecting on their spatial concentrations in major cities such as Berlin or Frankfurt (Barbieri, 1998). Similarly, it is impossible to understand the complexities that arise from Latino citizenship in the United States without understanding the settlement patterns and forms such groups have engendered (Rocco, 1996). Cities, particularly global cities, have therefore become political spaces where concentration of different groups and their identities are intertwined with the articulation of new claims and citizenship rights (Sassen, 1996b). It is this vast domain of groups, identities and appropriation and use of urban space to articulate claims that constitutes urban citizenship as a field of research.

This is why we conceive of citizenship broadly -- not only as a set of legal obligations and entitlements which individuals possess by virtue of their membership in a state, but also as
the practices through which individuals and groups formulate and claim new rights or struggle to expand or maintain existing rights. Analyzing citizenship, therefore, requires investigating not only formal rights conferred by states, but also the autonomous actions, claims and struggles of diverse groups within the same state. Furthermore, it also requires taking into account various polities in which such rights are exercised and enacted. The rise of the global city as a new space of politics and of re-enactment of citizenship at the end of the twentieth century constitutes perhaps one of the most significant areas of social and political research (Magnusson, 1996; Sassen, 1996).

The field of critical urban studies has not been sufficiently attentive to urban citizenship (Soja, 1997). Traditionally focusing on the political expressions of capital, and to a lesser degree labour, critical urban research has largely neglected the formation of groups along different lines than class and their use and appropriation of urban space to seek rights. Influenced by pioneering studies by Harvey (1973) and Castells (1976, 1977), critical urban studies tended to assume a binary class system and focused on conflicts between "capital" and "labour". More recently, as Edward Soja argues, "a new terrain of critical urban studies has been opened up to explore other forms of marginalization and peripheralization, subjection and domination, as well as a wider range of strategic spaces of resistance than those immediately contained in the exploitative political economies and economic alienation or urbanization under capitalism" (1997: 193). This terrain also expanded to include the relationship between citizenship rights and cities. New critical studies on immigrants, for example, reject earlier aims of mainstream urban research on immigrants as the "Other" or as subjects of integration and assimilation. Instead, critical urban research is concerned with how various groups make and re-make space to articulate and demand citizenship rights on the basis of their difference. It is in that sense that urban citizenship has become the main arena in which new rights are claimed and existing rights are maintained (Garcia, 1996; Holston & Appadurai, 1996; Isin, 1999). How immigrants reshape urban space to defined and meet their own needs is the subject we pursue through several case studies below. We explore the intersections of identity, citizenship and urban space in multicultural Toronto. Immigration and ethnoracial diversity have come to redefine the global city as cosmopolis: the city as the world (Isin, 1996; Magnusson, 1996; Sandercock, 1998). While the conceptualization of global cities initially emphasized their economic role as key nodes exercising command,
control and integration functions of the global economy (Friedmann, 1986, 1995; Friedmann & Wolff, 1982), there is now a renewed recognition of the cultural and social dimensions of global cities. Thus Saskia Sassen, whose work most forcefully advanced an economistic view of global cities, has more recently emphasized their cultural aspects (Sassen, 1996a; 1996b).

This urban diversity challenges traditional conceptions of citizenship. As Sharon Zukin observed, the task confronting ethnoculturally diverse societies is whether they can generate an inclusive political culture (Zukin, 1995: 44). Received notions of citizenship have largely been defined at the national level rather than urban. This has typically entailed an emphasis on identities of "unity and sameness over difference and diversity" (Sandercock, 1998: 183). Nations construct an identity on the basis of ostensibly shared characteristics or values, which often become prescriptions for denial of full citizenship on ethnoracial or religious grounds in some states, or pressures to assimilate in others. Conversely, the global city or cosmopolis is where we confront most directly what Iris Marion Young terms "the being together of strangers" (Young, 1990: 237, 240).

The nature of urban citizenship rights and claims may be studied along a number of terrains. Elsewhere we have examined how diverse immigrant and ethnoracial groups pursued a politics of difference in the campaign against the provincially-imposed amalgamation of Metropolitan Toronto's six federated municipalities during 1997 and in the subsequent municipal vote to elect the amalgamated city's first council (Siemiatycki & Isin, 1998). Here our focus will be on planning and zoning as arenas of conflict over symbolic and material access to space. The centrality of space to an understanding of citizenship in diverse societies has been emphasized by a number of scholars. Soja was both emphatic and suggestive when he noted that, "We must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences for us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology" (Soja, 1989: 6). Yet if municipal land use decisions embody both literally and figuratively the dominant culture's view of the space strangers occupy, as Dolores Hayden (1996) reminds us, space can also be an expression of identity and solidarity for marginalized groups. In fact, creating spaces can serve both dominating and liberating practices.

There is now a growing recognition that land use conflicts have become particularly acute flashpoints of tension for diverse immigrant and ethnoracial groups in global cities.
"Products of hyper-mobile capital and complex human migrations", Sandercock observes, "perhaps the most visible characteristics of these cities are struggles over space, which are really two kinds of struggle: one a struggle of life space against economic space, the other a struggle over belonging. Who belongs where and with what citizenship rights, in the emerging global cities?" (Sandercock, 1998: 3).

This paper contributes to this field of inquiry by examining the meaning of urban citizenship, the nature of diversity in Toronto, and land use conflicts that have arisen involving Muslim groups. We illustrate how immigrants symbolically appropriate space as a venue for articulating their identities and claims that derive from such identities and the resistances they struggle to overcome.

**Immigrant Struggles Over Space**

Struggles over space have been among the most recurring conflicts between immigrants and local governments in the Toronto area. To be sure, other municipal issues and services such as policing (particularly police shootings of visible minorities) and schooling (notably streaming and heritage language programs) have also periodically mobilized various immigrant groups. But the issue that has recently troubled more immigrant communities in more municipalities within the Greater Toronto Area has been land use and zoning. The centrality of urban space as a terrain of conflict for immigrant communities emerged from two questions posed in a survey we conducted in 1997 of senior administrative staff of all 35 upper and lower tier municipalities then in existence in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Asking whether there had ever been conflicts between immigrant communities and their municipal government, we determined that 17 of the 35 municipalities had experienced at least one such dispute. Reflecting the remarkable dispersal of immigrant communities across the Toronto city region, conflicts were recorded by many of its urbanized municipalities including the lower tier municipalities of Toronto, York, East York, Scarborough, North York, Etobicoke, Oakville, Mississauga, Brampton, Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Markham and Oshawa as well as the regional municipalities of Halton, Peel, York and (then existent) Metropolitan Toronto.

Most compelling was the fact that in 14 of these 17 instances the conflicts involved zoning disputes over land use. Most typical were conflicts over attempts to establish or enlarge
mosques which occurred in at least 9 municipalities; friction between Chinese groups and at least 5 municipalities arose over the character of retail malls or location of funeral homes; and at least 2 conflicts over the location of a Jamaican community centre. Interestingly too, when our survey asked respondents to name a municipal department which had been particularly responsive to immigrant communities, a Planning Department was never cited -- Parks and Recreation instead leading the way, with Public Health a close second.

Why has land use and zoning been a source of conflict for immigrants in the Toronto area? A variety of factors may contribute. To begin, land use in cities has proven inherently political and contentious. Owners of property can be counted on to object to new land uses they feel will undermine the enjoyment or value of their property. Planning law moreover entrenches neighbouring property rights in a variety of ways. Nearby residents and property owners must be notified of proposed land use changes, and invited to offer their opinions at public municipal meetings. The criteria established by provincial statute for assessing the appropriateness of intended spatial transformations are often inherently static, emphasizing conformity with existing uses, official plans, bylaws, and avoiding undue negative impacts on neighbouring properties. When it comes to urban space then, the stakes (both in lifestyle and finances) are very high and the decision-making process is very public. As Qadeer has noted, this can be a recipe for confrontation: "Ironically", he writes, "the very participatory procedures meant to give citizens a voice in planning provide the convenient means for some local groups to resist the accommodation of others" divergent needs and tastes. Public hearings on planning regulations have often turned into the tools of NIMBYism and ethno-racism' (Qadeer, 1997: 491). In this regard, as we shall see, clashes over public space sometimes embody different conceptions of citizenship: Who belongs? And on what terms?

Traditionally modern urban planning has been economically, fiscally and technocratically driven. The dominant rationality guiding land use decisions has not been identifying and meeting the diverse needs of urban residents but responding to the pressures of corporate developers and the tax assessment needs of the municipality, all the while not unduly antagonizing residential property owners who constitute the majority of municipal voters. Immigrants, along with other groups traditionally marginalized by urban planning including women, gays, lesbians, the disabled and elderly, have recently taken to "asserting
and demanding respect and space for their "difference" (Sandercock, 1998: 101). So a final reason why land use has loomed large as a tension between immigrant communities and Toronto municipalities is that newcomers have sought to claim their urban citizenship rights spatially. Significantly, the most heated conflicts have arisen over attempts by immigrant and minority groups to establish collective cultural expressions of their identity in the form of places of worship, commercial environments, recreational facilities and community centres. Urban space and planning therefore, are able to embody a group's identity and needs in ways that other municipal services typically geared to individual residents or clients do not. For all these reasons urban space has become a testing ground of citizenship rights in Toronto. An exploration of these confrontations reveals the unfinished quest of immigrants and minorities for full citizenship "rights to the city" in Toronto. Within the limited scope available in this paper, our focus will be the effort of Toronto's Muslim groups to establish places of worship.

Muslim groups have grown rapidly in the Toronto area in recent decades. Immigration from South Asia, the Middle East, Somalia, South Africa, Turkey and Bosnia has given rise to a population across the Greater Toronto Area variously estimated at between 150,000 and 250,000 (Ingar, 1998; Yussuf, 1998). The Muslim Guide To Canada, published in 1997 by the Muslim World League's Canadian Office, places the number at 200,000 -- almost half the total for all of Canada. (A precise count will be available from the census of 2001 as religious affiliation was not surveyed in the 1996 census.) Residentially Muslim groups are highly dispersed across the urbanized GTA with significant settlement in all parts of the newly amalgamated City of Toronto (spanning the former municipalities of Toronto, York, East York, North York, Scarborough and Etobicoke) as well as Mississauga, Brampton, Ajax, Oshawa, Oakville and Burlington.

Identifying the number of mosques in the GTA is inevitably prone to imprecision. As Qadeer notes, Islamic congregations typically progress through three stages in their places of worship, "In the beginning, someone's living room serves as the gathering place for weekly prayers, which leads to renting a hall or buying an unused church for congregational gatherings, and finally to the stage of building a new mosque" (Qadeer, 1997: 491). Prayer rooms at places of work or study are another emerging site of worship. Through interviews conducted with community leaders, estimates of the number of mosques now operating in the Toronto area ranged from 12 to over 50; the Muslim Guide identifies 29 (Ashraf, 1998;
Muslims are called to prayer five times per day, with the most significant (and widely attended) service being the Jummah (Friday) early afternoon service. Our research identified 26 full-service mosques across the GTA holding 5 prayer services per day: 5 in the former central city of Toronto, 4 in North York, 3 in Scarborough, 3 in Etobicoke, 1 in each of York and East York (for a total of 17 in the amalgamated City of Toronto), 3 in Mississauga and 1 in each of Ajax, Brampton, Burlington, Oakville, Oshawa and Vaughan. Most of these sites were established in the 1990s.

During the summer of 1998, 24 of the 26 full-service mosques responded to a survey we conducted regarding their location and experience securing zoning approvals. Eight of the twenty-four reported that they had encountered zoning or planning difficulties in establishing the facilities to meet the religious needs of their group: two in North York and one in each of Brampton, East York, Etobicoke, Mississauga, Scarborough and York. Typically opposition to the mosques from municipal officials and/or local residents has been expressed as "technical" concern over site location, size or parking; for their part, however, members of Muslim groups have been left with feelings of discrimination and ill will. Several other struggles over space in Mississauga and the new City of Toronto's former municipalities of North York and York proved particularly contentious and merit closer examination.

**Keeping Faith**

Unlike East York's case with which we began this paper, however, none of these disputes selected for study would be resolved within the confines of their municipal councils. All three that we discuss here were the subject of contentious appeals to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), a provincially-appointed quasi-judicial body empowered to review municipal land use decisions.

*Talim-Ul-Islam Mosque*

In North York the Talim-Ul-Islam Mosque also purchased an abandoned industrial site for its place of worship. Their attempt to secure zoning approval for the site from North York Council led Dr. Muhammad Ibrahim of the Canadian Islamic Congress to conclude, "There is
one set of laws for everyone else and then there's another for Muslim communities. There is no fair and equal treatment for everyone" (Ibrahim, 1998). In 1995 North York Council revised its regulations dealing with places of worship. More on-site parking was required for places of worship in all zones, limits were placed on their maximum size in industrial zones, and no more than one place of worship could locate per block, or within 500 metres of another place of worship on lots in an industrial zone which itself stood within 500 metres of a residential area. These measures were clearly intended to defend local resident interests from the intrusion of worshippers (Talim-Ul-Islam, 1996: 66,129,135).

Talim-Ul-Islam had occupied its site since 1993 when it was purchased on the assurance it could be used as a mosque. On this basis the mosque had never applied for zoning approval, but under the terms of the revised 1995 places of worship bylaw, it now required grandparenting exemption. The mosque, like other existing places of worship was in non-compliance with the new bylaw because it lacked the new standard of required parking spaces, and there were three churches and a Sikh temple within a radius of proximity no longer permitted. The mosque's application for exemption from the new bylaw was rejected by Council in 1995 pending clarification of the renovation plans for the mosque. In 1997 the mosque applied to North York's Committee of Adjustment to expand its washroom facilities and secure exemption from the 1995 bylaw provisions on the grounds their deviation was minor and inconsequential. This application was opposed by a resident and local councillor who complained of parking problems and disorderly behaviour by mosque worshippers. Given their religion's restrictions of alcohol consumption, mosque members were particularly offended by the allegations that their members were responsible for drunken behaviour, urination on lawns and littered alcohol bottles in the neighbourhood (Ibrahim, 1998). In December 1997 North York's Committee of Adjustment denied the mosque's application on the grounds its variance was not minor, not within the intent of the 1995 bylaw, and not an appropriate development of the property (Talim Ul Islam, 1996: 7). Among the three nearby churches and the Sikh temple, then, only the mosque was now labelled an illegal use of space. The mosque appealed the Committee of Adjustment verdict to the OMB where it was vindicated. OMB Adjudicator Ronald Emo ruled that the parking provision was indeed adequate, that there were no undue traffic problems in the area which the mosque had already occupied for almost 5 years, and that the mosque was prepared to undertake several design
measures to buffer it from nearby homes. Perhaps more important was a point of historical comparison Board member Emo cited in his ruling. He noted that all immigrants, dating back to Ontario's first European settlers, made a priority of establishing places of worship in their new land. However early Anglican immigrants had been privileged by the designation of Clergy Reserves -- space specifically set aside for churches. In the absence of state-provided worship space, Emo observed that recent immigrants had to be more "entrepreneurial and resourceful", and Talim Ul Islam's use of a vacant industrial building was making good use of space which might otherwise be empty and derelict (Ontario Municipal Board, 1998a: 8). For all these reasons, OMB Adjudicator Emo approved the mosque in its location, concluding that it would be unjustifiably arbitrary to reject it simply because of its proximity to other places of worship.

*Canadian Islamic Trust Foundation Mosque*

Enlightened judgements from the OMB were also forthcoming in our next two cases. In their ruling on the Mississauga Mosque review, OMB adjudicators noted that the Canadian Islamic Trust Foundation's (CITF) application to locate a mosque in an industrial site had been "vigorously opposed by the City of Mississauga and many residents in the area" (Ontario Municipal, Board 1998b: 1). Since its incorporation in 1974 as an amalgamation of several long-time independent towns immediately west of Toronto, Mississauga has experienced massive population growth. From 1981 to 1996 the City's population has almost doubled to 546,186 making it by far the largest GTA municipality after the City of Toronto. In keeping with the Toronto city region's recent pattern of immigrant settlement in edge cities, much of this growth has been the result of global migration (Siemiatycki & Isin, 1998). Immigrants represented 43% of the City's population in 1996, led by newcomers from India. Yet the City's political culture seems to reflect a demographic long past. While residents of British ethnic origin constituted barely 18% of the City's population in 1991 -- and this percentage has certainly declined since in the wake of increasingly high Asian migration -- the 1997 municipal election saw 7 of 10 council seats won by politicians of British origin. Mississauga is also one of the very few municipal governments in the urbanized GTA which does not have
a special committee (typically identified as a race relations or equity committee) to enhance communications, liaison and relations with immigrant communities (Siemiatycki & Isin 1998).

The Canadian Islamic Trust Foundation's effort to locate a mosque in Mississauga reflected one immigrant group's difficulties in securing space for their collective expression of identity. In October 1995 the CITF selected a site for a new mosque in a vacant industrial area just off the Queen Elizabeth Way highway which integrates Toronto with its westerly metropolitan sprawl. The site fulfilled all the CITF's criteria: it enjoyed highway access to an existing building on 7 acres which could be renovated to provide prayer space and parking to accommodate some 1100 worshippers at peak weekly use. Places of worship were permitted as of right in industrial areas yet given its cost, the site was only feasible if it could also include revenue-generating uses such as a social hall, travel agency and the Toronto area's first private Islamic high school. The CITF assumed the latter addition could be secured through rezoning since the adjacent Catholic Iona High School had recently been built within the same industrial zone.

A fundraising ad for the mosque in the *Toronto Star* in early March 1996 provided the first public notice of the CITF's plans. The nearby residential community's concerns over traffic and parking surfaced immediately (much as they had earlier over the new Catholic School in the area). Yet Muslims believed that opposition to their plans were in fact "based on considerations other than planning considerations": that they were not wanted in the area by residents of the nearby suburban enclave (Ontario Municipal Board, 1998b: 4). Veteran Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion called a meeting for late March to discuss the CITF's plans, and one City planner present recalls it as the largest turn-out ever to discuss a zoning application. The message from the Islamic group was "This is something we've dreamed of all our lives, that there would be a big, beautiful mosque in Mississauga. This is something we really want. We are peace-loving. We don't drink. We're not violent". The planner went on to note, "It was almost like they were defending themselves and yet they weren't really being accused. There were some people on the other side, on the residents' side, who were probably not too happy with the [Muslim] group but basically they did use land use reasons for not supporting it -- that is the traffic or the parking, hours of operation, that kind of thing" (Anonymous Planner, 1998).
Explicit motivations behind neighbourhood opposition to a development like this are difficult to establish. To be sure, there were longstanding traffic problems in the area already which residents feared the mosque might compound. As well, concerns of parking spilling onto neighbouring residential streets need to be addressed in all applications for places of worship. Yet at least one seasoned observer of the interplay of religion and space across the Toronto area believes that mosques come in for particular scrutiny. Rick Gosling served as Executive Director of North York's Office on Race and Equity Relations. "It's always the same," he believes, "Churches, synagogues have cars lined up and down the streets no one says a word or even thinks about it, but when a mosque comes in and you've got cars parked down the street everyone goes "what the heck are we doing here, we're bringing in all these strange people"" (Gosling, 1997).

In the Mississauga case two factors suggest the Islamic nature of the place of worship may have been a factor. First, the City's Planning Department saw fit to investigate the operation of another mosque in the City, and found worshippers there making use of an adjacent park on weekends to the dismay of local residents. As a Mississauga planner describes it, residents in that area felt "displaced because they cannot use their local neighbourhood park because people have kind of taken it over. So there was a lot of comparison between that situation and this [CITF] proposal" (Anonymous Planner, 1998). Would park use by a church group have caused as much neighbourhood discomfort? Would the City have studied the neighbouring impacts of all churches as scrupulously in assessing an application from a new church? These are questions that define the nature of struggles for citizenship rights in the cosmopolis. Second, residents who opposed the mosque at hearings before the OMB "spoke of the need to preserve the character of the residential neighbourhood" (Ontario Municipal Board, 1998b: 24). This prompted the Board Adjudicators to doubt that a mosque would impact the character of the neighbourhood any more than its existing churches or community centre (Ontario Municipal Board, 1998b). It appears unlikely, then, that issues of identity and belonging were absent from this attempt to establish a mosque in Mississauga.

At the March 27, 1996 public meeting the CITF was informed that neither the mayor nor the local councillor regarded the proposed site as appropriate, and that the mayor was prepared to assist in finding an alternate location. After the Muslim group nonetheless proceeded to close the deal on purchasing their site, a more surprising setback ensued. The
CITF now learned from the city's Planning Department, through a bylaw provision just uncovered, that contrary to everyone's assumption a place of worship could not be located on this site as it was one of three "prestige industrial" zones in Mississauga. In the end Mississauga council voted 7-2 against the CITF's rezoning bid to establish a Mosque and related community facilities on the site.

This prompted the CITF to turn to the OMB for redress, and they were not disappointed. The two Board adjudicators acknowledged the urgent need for additional Muslim prayer facilities in Mississauga. Equally important they rejected this industrial site's 'prestige' designation since it already contained a school, small church, school, gas station and retail outlets. What remained to be established was whether in terms of scale, traffic and parking the CITF's proposal was appropriate. The Board found the area's road network capable of absorbing the additional traffic, with any congestion likely limited to no more than 30 minutes every Friday mid-afternoon. In the adjudicators' opinion this constituted "not an unacceptable impact on the residential area" (Ontario Municipal Board, 1998b: 21). However the Board did scale back the project to avert undue parking pressure on residential streets: the mosque's prayer space was reduced from a capacity of 1100 worshippers to under 900, and the social hall was not permitted with additional parking required in its place. The Board's decision then was designed to establish a mosque size which would "eliminate the possibility" of detrimental neighbouring impacts on residential streets (Ontario Municipal Board, 1998b: 24).

Predictably the ruling played to mixed reviews. Pat Mullin, councillor for the ward where the site is located, complained, "It is very disappointing that an unelected body can determine what is appropriate development in a 30-year-old "community." It appears the hearing wasn't about land use or transportation issues, but about the need for the Islamic community to have a place for worship" (Mississauga News 11 March 1998: 1). Conversely the ruling left the CITF's Muhammad Ashraf prouder than ever of his new country, "I am very grateful for the OMB. Canada is a great country where there are a series of checks and balances. The system is very fair where the public has a right to plead its case. The OMB overturned the decision by the City" (Ashraf, 1998).

Yet this redress has come at a cost. Dr. Ashraf estimates that community and municipal council opposition cost the mosque two years of delay and some $350,000 in legal and
consultant fees -- amounting to exactly 25% of the cost of purchasing the disputed property. Perhaps more damaging, twice within weeks of the OMB's decision, swastikas were painted on the building purchased by the Canadian Islamic Trust Fund. On a more hopeful note, students from the nearby Catholic school joined Muslim students to efface the offensive spray-painting, and calls of support for the mosque came in from some local residents (Ashraf, 1998).

*El-Noor Mosque*

The final case to be discussed may well have been the most contentious dispute over a mosque in the Toronto area to date. Michael Melling, the OMB adjudicator hearing the appeal related to the El-Noor mosque in Toronto's former city of York, began his ruling by observing, "What this decision will likely do is mark the end of a lengthy, fiercely-contested and emotionally charged dispute. What it will not likely do, for reasons which will become apparent, is resolve the parties' fundamental conflict" (Ontario Municipal Board, 1997: 1). The dividing lines in York had indeed been starkly drawn; yet even here -- symbolically at least -- we will see that differing perspectives and traditions could indeed be reconciled.

In 1986 the El-Noor mosque purchased a small Protestant church located in a modest residential neighbourhood of small, postwar bungalows. A decade later, with a growing congregation of several hundred regular worshippers, the mosque was ready to expand. Renovation plans called for transforming the original structure in two ways. First was enlarging the worship space by extending the ground floor and basement, and adding a second storey. Second was redesigning the new site to architecturally reflect traditional mosque appearance complete with dome and minaret. Domed construction has the pragmatic virtue of permitting a roof without interior columns, while the minaret steeple symbolically represents the call to Muslims to prayer.

Neighbourhood residents objected to both the enlargement and redesign of the mosque. Round one went to the mosque in January 1996 when the City of York's Committee of Adjustment approved the mosque's plans as an acceptable minor variation of the existing zoning bylaw, requiring only that the minaret be scaled down from a proposed height of 80 to 60 feet. Round two was fought at the OMB. Two hundred and fifty-two residents signed a
petition opposing the mosque's expansion, and eighty-five neighbours contributed to raise $16,000 to finance the appeal of the Committee of Adjustment's decision. The hearings before the OMB proved unusually heated and protracted with the Board's Michael Melling having to evict one resident for profanity, and noting in his judgement "that ten-day hearings of minor variance appeals are relatively rare" (Ontario Municipal Board, 1997: 12).

Two concerns were particularly prominent in the residents' opposition. The first was parking, with neighbours complaining that their streets were constantly filled with worshippers' cars, sometimes illegally and recklessly parked (DeLellis, 1998). While Board Adjudicator Melling accepted the legitimacy of these complaints he also noted that they were common for places of worship located in older residential areas, and that the mosque was now striving to impress on congregants the importance of observing street parking rules. Moreover, Melling also felt compelled to reject what he described as the residents' overly proprietary sense of their neighbourhood space. He rejected what he termed their "explicit suggestion that the Mosque's congregants are improperly appropriating legal parking which "belongs" to the residential neighbours. YThis is simply not so. The evidence is uncontradicted that street parking in this area of the City is public; that is, it "belongs" to no one. It may be used equally by the neighbours, the Mosque's patrons, and the customers of the stores on Eglinton" (Ontario Municipal Board, 1997: 11, original emphasis). Neighbourhood in other words could not be invoked as a claim to exclude newcomers from what is public space.

Some residents were even more direct in objecting to the mosque's proposed architectural make-over. Long-time resident Fred Lindsay was one of the mainstays who mobilized the neighbourhood, becoming particularly concerned once he learned of the plans for the dome and minaret. "There is no comparison to that kind of building here in Canada", he felt. "It was going to be a foreign, exotic building" (Lindsay, 1998). As Lindsay also told the press "We feel we don't want to see a minaret or dome in this neighbourhood. If they put up this minaret and dome, it will act like a calling card for the whole community". The result, he told the OMB hearings, would be lower property values in the neighbourhood as only Muslim congregants would be interested in moving in (Now 26 December 1996-2 January 1997: 19-25).

In his ruling, Board adjudicator Michael Melling approved the mosque's renovation while imposing several minor modifications aimed at minimizing its impacts on the
neighbourhood. The original manse (cleric's home) on the site would be demolished and replaced by parking, the library was not to be used as a prayer site, and the minaret reduced from 60 feet to 55 in height. Again the issue of awarding costs arose, with the mosque calling on Melling to assign their costs to the residents. This Melling declined, stating that while the residents "certainly mounted a comprehensive and occasionally hostile attack on the [mosque's] plans", their conduct did not meet the test required for awarding costs for being frivolous, vexatious or clearly unreasonable (Ontario Municipal Board, 1997: 35). Transforming a Presbyterian church into a mosque had indeed unleashed strong antipathies. Mosque supporters believed the residents simply did not want them in the neighbourhood; and some residents felt their neighbourhood rights were sacrificed to the Muslim need for a place of worship (Sheik, 1998; Lindsay, 1998). Symbolically at least, we will suggest below, the mosque's design may afford some reconciliation, even integration, of the distinct traditions and identities at play here.

Conclusion

Toronto's recent experience with immigrant influx and the rise of cultural politics have spatial implications. While we focused on a few cases concerning Muslim groups, we could have discussed several other cases. Recent Chinese immigrants to the Toronto area have found themselves embroiled in battles with municipal governments over the design of "Asian-style malls", the use of Chinese language in mall signage, and the location of funeral homes which some community members have customarily avoided as a harbinger of ill-fortune in residential areas. Similarly, through a protracted, ultimately successful attempt to establish a community centre in a North York industrial zone, Toronto's Jamaican groups were left feeling "They just don't want us up there" (Share 15 May 1997: 1). These struggles over space are simultaneously spatial, political, economic and cultural struggles for recognition and belonging.

An explicit recognition of cultural difference can provide tangible, visible evidence of cosmopolis in the making; of large cities inhabited by people from many different countries and cultures, "where citizens wrest from space new possibilities, and immerse themselves in their cultures while respecting those of their neighbours, and collectively forging new hybrid
cultures and spaces" (Sandercock, 1998: 219). The re-design of the El-Noor mosque in York may well represent one advance towards cosmopolis in Toronto. Ironically, perhaps, the best tribute to the new design came from a retired planner living in the neighbourhood who appeared before the OMB opposing the re-development. Contending that the site was simply in the wrong place, he nonetheless acknowledged the design by award-winning architect Zak Ghanim to be "a beautiful structure" which would transform a "plain" church into "a different cultural idiom". More evocatively he noted that the re-design represented 'completely crossing cultural lines from the historic, simple Protestant idiom to the exotic, romantic, eastern design' (Ontario Municipal Board, 1997). Such is the process by which cities open themselves to the world -- often one building at a time (See Figures 1 and 2). Nor is this symbolism of adaptiveness and acceptance lost on immigrants. As one keen observer of the York mosque saga noted, there was a message of citizenship embedded in this use of space. Bilal Abdullah wrote to the Toronto news weekly Now, "The erection of the dome and minaret would signal that the city of York [then still in existence] is a tolerant, multicultural place, a place where all are welcome to live and contribute to the cultural and economic life of the region" (Now 1996).

Toronto's cosmopolitan fate, its ultimate success in embracing diversity, is ultimately bound up with citizenship claims such as the struggles of Muslim groups to establish mosques. To put it differently, there is a temporal as well as a spatial dimension to citizenship: to be sure, citizenship is about belonging to a place, about identifying with markers, boundaries and identities of a place. But also it is about expressing a belief in the fate of that place. Being a citizen or practicing citizenship can mean having a stake in the fate of a polity to which one wants to belong and imprint an identity, beginning B for many newcomers B with their faith.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Stacy Clark, Mark Fitzgerald, and Shaheen Ramputh for their superb assistance in conducting various aspects of this research. We are also grateful to Evelyn Ruppert, Patricia Wood, Jon Caulfield, Ali Bolbol and Kenise Kilbride who read and commented on earlier drafts of this paper.
Figure 1 Original church site of the El-Noor Mosque
Figure 2 New Design for the El-Noor Mosque
References Cited


Ashraf, Muhammad. 1998. Interview conducted by Shaheen Ramputh, 14 July.


DeLellis, Rocco. 1998. Interview conducted by Shaheen Ramputh, 11 August.


Gombu, Phinjo. 1995b. 'This is a racist vote, our members were shocked, Muslims charge, East York kills mosque', The Toronto Star, 3 October 1995.


Ibrahim, Muhammad. 1998. Interview conducted by Shaheen Ramputh, 3 July.

Ingars, Abdur. 1998. Interview conducted by Shaheen Ramputh, 18 June.

Isin, Engin F. 1996. 'Metropolis unbound: Legislators and interpreters of urban form.' In Jon Caulfield and Linda Peake (eds), City lives and city forms: Critical urban research and Canadian urbanism. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.


Lindsay, Fred. 1998. Interview conducted by Shaheen Ramputh, 11 August.


Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) 1998a. 5 August.

Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) 1998b. 4 March.

Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) 1997. 8 August.


Yussuf, Hassan. 1998. Interview conducted by Shaheen Ramputh, 10 July.
