



SHIFT: EQUITY Planning Conference

HALIFAX, NS
MARCH 8 & 9, 2019

Final Report

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**The SHIFT:
Equity Conference**

is about taking action to make our communities equitable, inclusive, accessible, diverse, and safe. We seek to explore, listen, empower, amplify, and question Halifax's narrative as a just city.

 Shawn Cleary District 9
 Wayne Mason District 7
 Sam Austin District 5

HALIFAX halifax.ca 311

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SHIFT: EQUITY Planning Conference



HALIFAX, NS
MARCH 8 & 9, 2019

a FREE public conference dedicated to advancing conversations
about **(in)equity** & **accessibility** in cities, towns, & rural places.

DAY 1 - FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2019

Kenneth C. Rowe Building, Dalhousie University
6100 University Ave, Halifax NS

8:30 AM - 4:30 PM

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Catherine Hamel (9:30AM)

"Measure Twice, Once for Inclusion, Once for Exclusion"



PECHAKUCHA EVENING SOCIAL - FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2019

Ralph M. Medjuck Building, 5410 Spring Garden Rd, Halifax, NS

7:00 PM - 10:00 PM

DAY 2 - SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 2019

Halifax North Memorial Public Library
2285 Gottingen St, Halifax NS

9:00 AM - 4:45 PM

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Richard Milgrom (9:30AM)

"Active or Activist: Making Age-Friendly Communities"





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Executive Summary

On March 8 and 9, The SHIFT: Equity Conference, organized by students of the Dalhousie School of Planning, took place. It attracted 160 attendees including professionals in the field of planning as well as planning students and members of the general public. Topics discussed during the conference included housing affordability, accessibility, and gentrification in Halifax's North End. The keynote speakers were Catherine Hamel and Richard Milgrom who came from Calgary and Winnipeg, respectively. Other speakers and panelists were local to the province and the city of Halifax. For the first time, the SHIFT Conference included speakers who were not necessarily planners or designers. The theme of Equity for this year's conference was able to open up a much-needed dialogue between the planning community and the general public about equity issues. Next year's conference will continue this dialogue and seek to bring in more participants and attendees from different professional backgrounds.

Acknowledgements

The authors of this report would like to thank several people who were instrumental in making this conference a reality. Thank you to our speakers who provided their unique perspectives and insight on both local and national equity issues. Also a big thank you to our volunteers who donated their time both before and during the conference, SHIFT would not have been possible without you. As well, we'd like to thank Meghan Doucette for volunteering to be a part of the conference planning committee, we sincerely appreciate all the hard work and passion that you put into organizing this conference. We would also like to thank our classmates for being so supportive of us and of the conference. Finally, we would like to thank Ren Thomas and Mikiko Terashima for their guidance and feedback over the course of the year.



Conference Schedule

Friday March 8

Rowe Management Building

TIME	SESSION TYPE	SPEAKER	THEME
8:30-9:00	Doors Open		
9:00-9:30	Opening ceremonies (Room 1011)		
9:30-10:30	Keynote Lecture (Room 1011)	Catherine Hamel	"Measure Twice: Once for Inclusion, Once for Exclusion" (Social Justice in Public Spaces)
10:30-10:45	Coffee Break		
10:45-11:45	Panel Discussion (Room 1011)	Ren Thomas (moderator) Lisa Roberts Eric Jonsson Ben Sivak Nanci Lee	Equitable Access to Housing
11:45-1:00	Lunch		
1:00-1:30	Lecture (Room 1011)	Gerry Post	"Nova Scotia: Access By Design 2030"
1:30-2:00	Lecture (Room 3001)	Amanda Casey	Physical Activity and Disability
1:30-3:00	Presentations (Room 1011)	Lisa Berglund + Dalhousie PLAN 5500 Studio Class	Topics in Equity Planning
3:00-3:15	Break		
3:15-4:15	Panel Discussion (Room 1011)	Lindell Smith (moderator) Patty Cuttall Busby DeRico Symonds Kevin Hooper Emma Beukema	Community Development in the North End
4:15-4:30	Closing for the Day		
7:00-10:00	Networking Social (Medjuck Building, 5410 Spring Garden Rd, Room HB-4)		Pecha Kucha Presentations

Conference Schedule

Saturday March 9

Halifax North Public Library



TIME	SESSION TYPE	SPEAKER	THEME
9:00-9:30	Doors Open		
9:30-10:30	Keynote Lecture	Richard Milgrom	"Active or Activist: Making Age-Friendly Communities"
10:30-12:30	Walking Tours	Patty Cuttell Busby Eric Jonsson Lindell Smith Eliza Jackson Meghan Doucette	1. "Gentrification or Progress?" 2. "Past to Present: A Historic and Contemporary Look at the North End" 3. "Active Transportation as a Tool for Promoting Equity"
12:30-1:30	Lunch		
1:30-2:00	Lecture	Leticia Smillie	Equity Initiatives in HRM
2:00-2:15	Break		
2:15-3:15	Workshop	Catherine Hamel	"Spaces of Opposition"
3:15-3:30	Break		
3:30-4:30	Panel Discussion	Moderator: Mikiko Terashima Ren Thomas Richard Milgrom Catherine Hamel Gerry Post	Planning for Equity and Moving Forward
4:30-4:45	Conference Closing		



Introduction

The SHIFT Conference is an annual planning conference organized by Master of Planning students at Dalhousie University. For over 30 years, this conference has attracted students, professionals, academics and the public to discuss planning issues around a particular theme. For the first time, the SHIFT conference stepped away from a design-oriented theme and focused on Equity. This new theme allowed the SHIFT conference to serve as a platform for conversations around equity and emphasize the importance of having a diverse group of speakers and participants.

Equity is one of the more modern topics in planning that stems from advocacy planning. Advocacy planning originated with Jane Jacob's grassroots movement and was further explored in Paul Davidoff's landmark 1965 essay "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning". Today, equity issues in planning are vast and include topics such as accessibility, gentrification, and cultural displacement. Equity is about including many different voices in the planning process and ensuring that these voices are heard and that their communities are empowered.

This report will describe each of the events that took place during the conference. These events included lectures, workshops, panel discussions and walking tours. This report will also reflect on the lessons learned from these events and use this newfound knowledge to shape the continuation of the SHIFT: Equity conference next year.



SHIFT: Equity Planning Committee L to R: Mikiko Terashima, Setara Zafar, Meagan Doucette, Katherine Deturbide and Ren Thomas

Speaker Talks - Day 1

Opening Ceremonies

Geri Musqua-LeBlanc
Mayor Mike Savage

The day began with opening ceremonies led with a blessing from Geri Musqua-LeBlanc, followed by an address by Mayor Mike Savage. Geri Musqua-LeBlanc is the coordinator for Dalhousie's Elders in Residence program and is a proud Nakawe woman from the Keeseekoose First Nation. As it was International Women's Day, she discussed the importance in acknowledging the progress that women have made so far and how empowering them has made communities better for everyone. Mayor Mike Savage also wished everyone a happy International Women's Day, expressed his enthusiasm for the conference theme and looked forward to the future of Halifax as a more equitable city.





“Victory is not some absolute that is far away; but changing of it through rigour, discipline, and thoughtfulness.”

Catherine Hamel

Keynote Address

“Measure Twice: Once for Inclusion, Once for Exclusion”

Catherine Hamel is an associate professor of architecture in the Faculty of Environmental Design at University of Calgary. Born in Beirut, Lebanon, and having lived through the civil war from 1975-1995, she brought a unique perspective on equity in the built environment. As an architect and an academic, she sees herself in an observational role that is less rigid than the roles of engineers and planners. In this role, she is able to question what is considered normal in everyday practice and explore new ways of tackling old problems.

She discussed the concept of identifying “walls” in society and the importance of finding “leaks” in them. For example, in Beirut after the war was over, a ritual took place among young people where they would purposefully drive around the city simply to exercise their newfound freedom and rights. She also spoke of the ripple effect that small changes and acts of rebellion can create. She believes that several small shifts that come from a place of authenticity can be more effective than rapid, large-scale change. An attitude of persistence rather than resistance will be much more effective in the long run.

Catherine gave several examples of shifts through the built environment. For example, in Calgary, there are efforts to repurpose vacant office spaces into homeless shelters. Students are also working on an app that will educate the public about their local policies, opening up potential conversations about the effectiveness of these policies.



Housing Panel

Moderator: Ren Thomas

Lisa Roberts

Eric Jonsson

Ben Sivak

Nanci Lee



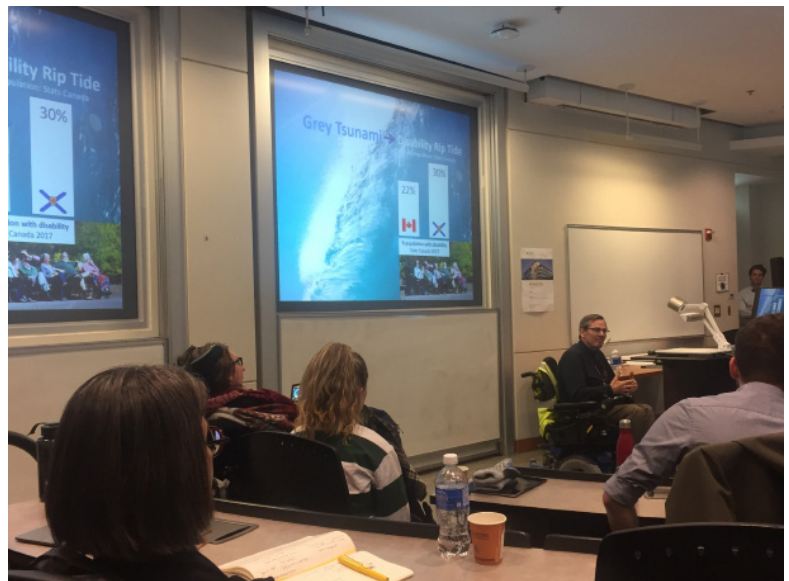
The housing panel provoked an informative discussion about current strategies people are using to improve the housing situation in Halifax. The panel consisted of four individuals all with diverse backgrounds. The panel began by identifying the main issues regarding housing in Halifax. This led to a lengthy discussion that revolved around the North End Community Land Trust. They work to ensure that the increased land value from neighbourhood improvements belongs to the community rather than the owners of the properties. This initiative is an important step in combatting gentrification in the North End, which has priced out many people in the community.



Gerry Post

"Nova Scotia: Access by Design 2030"

Gerry Post is the Executive Director of Accessibility for Nova Scotia. His talk focused on the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act adopted in 2017. Its goal is to make Nova Scotia accessible by 2030. As 1 in 3 Nova Scotians have a disability, the highest of the Canadian provinces, it will be important for planners to be aware of this Act and develop knowledge about accessibility issues in the built environment and beyond. He discussed the origins of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act and discussed the community-led efforts that went into its development. Hearing the voices of the people directly affected by the present-day barriers to an accessible environment is crucial to ensuring progress is made.





Amanda Casey

Physical Activity and Disability

Dr. Amanda Casey is an Associate Professor within the Department of Human Kinetics at St. Francis Xavier University. An advocate for inclusion, Dr. Casey has been a Board member of non-profit organizations including Nova Scotia Early Childhood Intervention, L'Arche, and Positive Action for Keppoch. She discussed the challenges that the built environment can pose to people with different accessibility needs and advocated for the universal design approach, which allows the built environment to be accessed by all people regardless of age or disability. There is opportunity in the development of the built environment To promote health equity for at-risk populations.



North End Panel

Moderator: Lindell Smith
Patty Cuttell Busby
DeRico Symonds
Kevin Hooper
Emma Beukema

The North End Panel consisted of several key advocates for the North End community. The panel, moderated by Councillor Lindell Smith, provoked a lively discussion about some of the most pressing issues facing the North End today, such as gentrification and poverty. Kevin Hooper from United Way expressed his passion for breaking the cycle of poverty and urged everyone to be creative in finding solutions to this problem. DeRico Symonds, a community leader in the North End, reflected on his youth when he played for the community basketball team and emphasized the importance of programs that build confidence and friendships of at-risk youth.





Student Presentations

“Planning Through an Equity Lens” First year Master of Planning Students


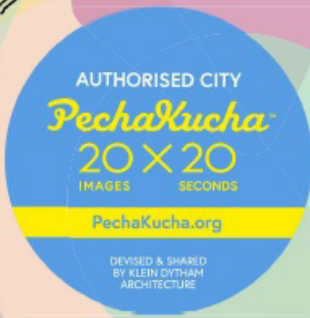
This year, the first year Master of Planning studio course, taught by Lisa Berglund, focused on equity planning. The class was divided into five groups, each focusing on a particular equity lens: environmental justice; transportation access; housing access and homelessness; physical accessibility; and cultural representation and displacement. Once assigned a topic, each group conducted background research on the subject and chose a community within the Centre Plan to study over the course of the term.

During the conference, the students made posters that reflected the work done to-date. They presented the background research they had done on their site, as well as a preliminary list of interventions that could help alleviate the equity problems facing these communities. They received valuable feedback from three panelists: Gerry Post, Patty Cutteli-Busby and Megan Dalton.

This was the first year that students have presented their work at the SHIFT conference, and the general consensus is that they were a valuable addition. Students benefitted from gaining the perspectives of local professionals and community members, and conference participants enjoyed fact that each presentation focused on a particular equity theme.






PechaKucha Night™
**SOCIAL
EQUITY**
March 8, 2019
hosted at
Ralph M. Medjuck Building,
Dalhousie University
FEATURING
Josh Creighton
Joyce Lui
Alfred Burgesson
Eliza Jackson
Daniel Broderick
Samantha Blatz
Catherine Hamel
Joseph Crawford
Jillian Banfield
Anika Riopel

19:00 – 22:00
Speakers begin at 20:00

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Pecha Kucha Night

The first day of the SHIFT Conference ended with a Pecha Kucha Networking Event. Pecha Kucha is a presentation style in which 20 slides are shown for 20 seconds each. The presentations were concise and fast paced. There were 10 presentations that all had different themes within planning and equity. The night started off with Josh Creighton's presentation on social enterprise. Josh Creighton works at the Common Good Solution and in his presentation he shown light on the importance of social enterprise how organizations in Halifax can use their resources to foster relationships local businesses and their community. Alred Burgesson and Joyce Liu from Future City Builders gave a presentation on the innovative approach to the housing issues in Halifax. They focussed on how the Future City Builders 30Lab allows young influences to come together and work to create innovative solution in Halifax. the presentation showcased the work that was done recently during a series of workshops by Future City Builders. Two of the presenters were Richard Milgrom's students from the University of Manitoba, Daniel Broderick and Samantha Blatz. Daniel presented on the current affordable housing polices and how there is a need to redefine what it means for home to be considered as affordable housing. Samantha Blatz's presentation emphasizes the importance of age friendly communities and how planners should align with our current growing population. The next presentation was created by Catherine Hamel and her student, Joseph Crawford and was presented by Catherine. Joseph Crawford is a Metis student at the University of Calgary where he is in the Master of Architecture program. The presentation was about the urban land and the covering of the history of the Indigenous culture. Jillian Banfield have a presentation on accessibility and cycling and the importance of active transportation on ones health. She advocates for cyclin infrastructure, accessibility and better public engagement. The Pecha Kucha presentations ended with David Paterson's presentation on autism and the urban space. David is an Employer Coordinator at Autism Nova Scotia. He connects autistic entrepreneurs to business development supports and development employment opportunities for autistic job seekers. His presentation emphasized how communities should be designed with people who may have both mental and physical disabilities.





Speaker Talks - Day 2

Richard Milgrom

Keynote Address

"Active or Activist: Making Age-Friendly Communities"

Dr. Richard Milgrom is the head and associate professor with the Department of City Planning at the University of Manitoba. Dr. Milgrom has been participating in the Age-Friendly Communities – Active Aging Alliance as a researcher and as a committee member. Recently his work addresses the barriers to the production of age-friendly communities in Winnipeg. His work will move toward visualizing how the built environment may be modified to better accommodate active aging.

Dr. Milgrom was the keynote speaker on March 9th at the North End Library with his lecture on activism and planning. He began his presentation on activism by speaking about the International Network for Urban Research and Action (INURA), which involves activists and researchers from communities that wish to share experiences and participate in common urban projects or research. The projects usually involve urban renewal and community-led environmental schemes. Milgrom alluded to these types of organizations to emphasize the importance around change and networking that can start with different people rather than planning professionals. He discussed how in many cases provincial professional associations do not take a stand on issues but rather remain neutral. For this reason, he emphasizes the importance of students and academics to stand up as activists.

Milgrom's lecture shifted to discussing how Canada has a growing aging population but many communities do not accommodate the aging population and are not considered in community design. Overall Milgrom emphasizes the importance of communities to be accessible for everyone; currently, the aging population is being negatively impacted by community planning. He introduced the Winnipeg organization Age Friendly Communities, which deals with making Manitoba the "most age-friendly province in Canada." The organization deals with asking questions about the effects of the urban form on the lives of people as they age. Milgrom hones in on the importance of understanding that the urban form needs to keep up or be altered to accommodate multiple age groups.



Walking Tours

“Gentrification or Progress?”

“Past to Present: A Historic and Contemporary Look at the North End”

“Active Transportation as a Tool for Promoting Equity”



After the keynote lecture by Dr. Richard Milgrom, the second day of the SHIFT Conference moved onto a walking tours event around the North End of Halifax. The tours idea came from Jane’s Walk, which is an annual citizen-led walking tour that was inspired by Jane Jacobs. There were three tours going that were being facilitated at the same time. Having three tours with different themes allowed the attendees to have choices in the themes they were interested in. The Gentrification or Progress tour was led by Lindell Smith and Eric Jonsson. Lindell Smith is the District 8 Councillor and is a lifelong resident of law North End Halifax and Eric Jonsson is the Street Outreach Navigator for the downtown Halifax and Spring Garden Road Business commissions. Their tours consisted a talk about the changes that are happening around the North End and how we can better engage with the communities around the North End. The Past to Present: A Historic & Contemporary Look at the north End tour was led by Patricia Cuttell Busby. Patricia Cuttell is a planner, strategist and community builder. She is currently the Executive Director of the North End Business Association where she applies her sills towards fostering a vibrant and inclusive north end. The tour examined some of the social, economic and physical changes that have taken place in the neighborhood for the past 50 years. The third tour, Active Transportation as a Tool for Promoting Equity, was led by Eliza Jackson & Meghan Doucette. The tour comprised of them making stops around the north end to explore HRM’s vision for active transportation. The tour also discussed how “all ages and abilities” infrastructure can make it easier for diverse populations to get around. There is an importance in measuring who is using active transportation infrastructure and how big projects like the redevelopment of the Congswell District can impact how we move around the city.

Leticia Smillie

Equity Initiatives in HRM

Leticia Smillie is a senior planner with the Halifax Regional Municipality. She began by discussing how the municipality is looking to include equity in their municipal planning. Although they may be considered baby steps, they are nonetheless moving towards a positive goal of equity. Advocacy in planning is about helping communities to reach their potential and understand that if certain communities were to be provided with different resources, they would be able to strive towards their community goals. Smillie discusses how the African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO) was created after the negotiated settlement between the Africville Genealogy Society and the Halifax Regional Municipality. The ANSAIO is an important part to the government’s structure and an asset for making diverse business stronger. Smillie concluded her presentation on the topic of food security around the municipality and what the municipality is going to prioritize a food in the design of community. Food is a fundamental right and need and many communities around the municipality do not have easy access to food which is something that needs to be changed.





Workshop

Catherine Hamel - "Spaces of Opposition"

A workshop was led by one of the keynote speakers, Catherine Hamel. Her workshop questioned how policy changes can affect different communities. She pointed out that when a policy or bylaw is being changed to have a positive impact on one factor, the change may also have a negative factor on another group of people. During the workshop the attendees were split up in 5 groups of 5. The groups were asked to think about an area of planning/ current law or practice and how either altering, putting a pause on it or completely getting rid of the law would affect different communities. One of the groups discussed heritage properties and what the effects would be with putting a pause on the redevelopments that happen on these properties. Each group began to discuss policies that may need to be completely dismissed but during the discussion many people found that some policies that may not be directly affecting one person in the group can impact another person in another group. Workshop participants learned that changes in policies and bylaws need to consider multiple people and that it is difficult to generalize what needs to be done.



Closing Panel

Moderator: Mikiko Terashima
Catherine Hamel
Richard Milgrom
Ren Thomas



The last event at the 2019 School of Planning SHIFT Conference was the closing panel. The closing panel consisted of Dr. Richard Milgrom, Catherine Hamel, Gerry Post and Dr. Ren Thomas with Dr. Mikiko Terashima as the moderator. The panel was around the topic of how to plan with equity in mind and what people and future planners be thinking about when moving forward in planning. The panel discussion began with a general question of what equity is to each of the panelist. The answers included equity being a moral obligation to plan for majorities and minorities, equity is about being in the planning process together and about being considerate in order to be fair. Each of the panelist discussed the barrier when it comes to equity in not only the professional realm but also in academia and research. It is about having to understand that in the face of a barrier one is able to go above, around or underneath to get past and that people who do not change their mind are not worth the time. Barriers are seen with all professionals and it is about understanding that people need to find multiple ways to move past that barrier. Each panelist gave examples of empowered communities today, for example with the closure of the landfill site in Sackville, communities in the area have decided that instead of selecting a site, they have decided to create a waste management strategy. They have taken the initiative to create something that can be used by future generations. Immigrant communities in the Northeast Calgary make big efforts to hear every voice in the community from youths, women, translators and such. Equity in everyday begins with communities that want to see change and having professional and representatives that empathize with that change allow communities to reach their true potential.





Discussion

During the course of the conference, a few key themes emerged during the discussions around equity. Accessibility and gentrification, particularly in the North End, stood out as major topics that were relevant to the Halifax context. It was important to have these discussions between community members, professional planners and organizations to share their different perspectives on what is currently happening in our local communities.

Many of the speakers contributed to the overall theme. For example, Catherine Hamel gave a broad overview of what equity and social change means to her. Community leaders and builders such as DeRico Symonds and Patty Cuttell-Busby brought their views of equity through the lens of the North End and guided the discussion about gentrification. Richard Milgrom highlighted the importance of activism in planning and exposed the reality of the outdated nature of current community design. Additionally, professional planners such as Leticia Smillie contributed to the discussion by outlining how HRM is working towards a more equitable approach to community engagement and planning.

As organizers of this conference, one of the most important lessons that we learned was that in order to facilitate a conversation about equity, we need be comfortable with being uncomfortable. Conversations about equity can be difficult to talk about and it is rare that people will come to a consensus on any given issue. However, these conversations are crucial and it is necessary to overcome any barriers that interfere with people's quality of life.

Conclusion

The SHIFT Conference this year was a way to open up some much-needed discussions about equity in the planning profession. We were proud to include a diverse array of speakers from both within and outside the planning realm, who each provided their unique perspectives on equity. The feedback we received following the conference was largely positive with several attendees noting that they are looking forward to next year's conference.

This conference was part 1 of SHIFT: Equity and part 2 will continue the equity conversation next year. We hope to include a more diverse group of attendees next year by reaching out to more local communities who may be interested in participating. It is our hope that next year's conference delves deeper into the lessons learned from this year's conference.

