‘Social mix’ and neighbourhood ‘revitalization’: a transatlantic comparison of policy discourses and local experiences

Research team presentation in Toronto to the Neighbourhood Change & Building Inclusive Communities from Within CURA and Toronto Neighbourhoods Research Network
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Our project and our team

- Full title: ‘Social mix’ and neighbourhood revitalization: linking globalized policy perspectives to locally embedded experiences – towards a transatlantic comparison

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Rationale

- Since mid-1990s, marked resurgence in attention + seeming international convergence around value of ‘social mix’/‘mixed communities’ as urban policy tool
- Why has this happened?
- Does this shared vocabulary ⇒ similar goals?
- Or does it mask differences in values, objectives between national contexts, between local actors in a given context?

Research objectives

- Explore international circulation of ideas re merits of ‘social mix’/‘mixed communities’
- Explore links between national, sub-national and local scales of policy thinking
- Decode different local actors’ narratives of social mix in inner-city neighbourhoods undergoing ‘revitalization’
  1. what does ‘mix’ mean?
  2. what is a ‘mix’ policy meant to achieve?
  3. how do ‘mixed neighbourhoods’ work out in practice?

Our analysis = work-in-progress. This afternoon: synopsis of project and preliminary findings
Social mix/mixed communities: what are the differences that matter?

Demographics: household/ family type, generation

Housing type, tenure

‘race’ / ethnicity

Social class, income

Lifestyles

In cities differently-positioned in international hierarchy:

- Paris, FR: La Goutte d’Or (18e arrondissement)
- Montréal, QC, CA: Hochelaga-Maisonneuve
- Bristol, UK: Easton

Commonalities:

- Centrally-located
  - impoverishment, criminality
- strong neighbourhood organizations
- important local commercial artery
- object of multiple targeted policy interventions
- nascent gentrification

Case studies: three neighbourhoods
Wider national context for each case

- Please see Annex for outlines of evolution of housing system, neighbourhood ‘revitalization’/’regeneration’ and history of social mix in each of the 3 national contexts (UK, FR, CAN/QC)

Case study methodology

- Analysis of documentary sources (policy documents, grey literature)
- Analysis of media coverage
- Key informant interviews (about 25 per city) – semi-structured face-to-face, recorded, transcribed:
  - officials involved in neighbourhood policy design and implementation
  - elected municipal officials
  - representatives of neighbourhood-based organizations (including residents’)
  - local retailers
  - other specialized informants
La Goutte d’Or (Paris)

Foreign nationality

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>1960</td>
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Easton (Bristol, UK)

Cracking down on youth crime

"Stapleton Road has incredible potential as a vibrant and diverse shopping area"
**Montréal: Hochelaga-Maisonneuve**

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**Hochelaga-Maisonneuve: Population**

2000s: “A social mix project, infill in a revitalizing neighbourhood”

1990s: discourses of abandonment

Some *preliminary* findings
Meanings of social mix: Paris

- Very diverse expectations:
  - to avoid ghettos
  - a moral value, against self-interest, a way to “live together”
  - Middle class taking power
  - An economic resource in poor neighborhoods

- Vague content: social diversity, sometimes ethnic

- Diversity in housing, retail business, public facilities, schools

Social mix as strategy: Paris

- Create mix of housing types/tenures
  - low-income social; intermediate; private
- Social housing attribution policies to increase proportion of middle-class
- Transformation of local retailing: less “ethnic business” and more “traditional” stores; showcase for emerging local designers; rebranding
- The in-movers (retailers and residents) organize to transform the neighbourhood
Experiences – Paris: From social mix to gentrification? cohabitation and social tensions

- Overall discourse: mix is enriching but emphasis on difficulty of cohabitation
- Social tensions in private housing, public parks
- Limits of social mix: it stops at the school gate
- The new associations contest social work and old-style community organizing

Meanings of social mix: Bristol

- Social mix = housing tenure mix
  - (implicit) avoiding concentrations of poverty in isolated neighbourhoods
- Other terms
  - ‘balanced communities’, ‘sustainable neighbourhoods’
- *It’s about having a mix of people with incomes and cultural backgrounds ... that is achieved by providing a mix of housing types and tenures*
Social mix and strategy: Bristol

- No planned residential mix in this neighbourhood but strong desire for `balanced community'
- Institutional actors – tenure mix and range of services
- Re-branding of Stapleton Rd (main commercial street) from `the worst street in Britain’ to ethnic entrepreneurialism

Social mix in practice: cohabitation: Bristol

- Stakeholders
  - structural – time of arrival of groups
  - contextual – positive and negative accounts of street life
- Elected
  - Mixed experiences
  - Pressures of gentrification

*In the next ten years everything will change*
**Experience of social mix: cohabitation: Bristol**

- Residents Associations
  - tolerance/ enjoyment and tensions
  - hesitancy prevents fuller interaction
  - ethnic sub-areas of the neighbourhood
  - street encounters
- Institutional actors and stakeholders – social mix can weaken political representation of the neighbourhood
  - Smaller groups, competing priorities, suspicions of policy favouritism, officials from other groups distrusted or not seen as representative
  - They ... don`t think I`m representing the community
- Retailers
  - General atmosphere of tolerance
  - Specific – positive and negative events

**Meanings of social mix: Montréal**

- "The idea (…) that all households could have access to housing in Montréal and to have an equilibrium between the types of housing" (City of MtI Urb. Planning Advisor for Lavo site, CP04M)

- "Inclusion is to ensure that you have a mix of population groups that we have forgotten to have meet each other. So it is more than just housing. It is inclusion in life, day to day (...) With the arrival of sidewalk cafés on Ontario Street, people are realizing that it is good for [the local] people, [because they used to think] 'that's not accessible to people like us, I am not capable of going to have a coffee at a sidewalk café, I have never done that in my life'. But now we see that everybody has access (...). So, it has a mobilizing and also a socializing effect which you did not use to see in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve" (Municipal councillor, E01M)

- Diversity of residents (income/demographic/lifestyle) means range of customers for local shops (but also less predictable customer base?) (summary: 6 retailers, various types)
Social mix as strategy: Montréal

- "We increase the population and at the same time increase the balance between different classes of the population" (Municipal councillor, E02M)

- "If the local economic situation keeps improving, there will be more jobs for the locals and more interesting shops (...), a nicer pastry shop, bakery (...). Because one of the big problems of the neighbourhood, when everybody left [with deindustrialization and suburbanization], only renters were left behind (...). The more owners, the better (...). That way, it's like people are taking possession of their neighbourhood." (Lavo site condominium developer, PA01M)

- "[The municipal revitalization strategy of 1996 aimed to] re-establish the income mix in some of those [targeted] neighbourhoods" (senior City housing policy official, CP06M)

- "Diversity in the genetic code of populations, makes the human body stronger, so an urban milieu that is diversified is healthier" (community non-profit developer, MA02M)

Social mix in practice - cohabitation: Montréal

- "So today we are very proud because we hear a new reality in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, but it is bound up with the people who are from here (...). People do not feel threatened [by the arrival of new residents]" (Municipal councillor, E01M)

- "It is possible that H-M is on the upswing, but keeping in mind the role that has been played by community organizations, I think they will succeed in doing controlled development" (QC govt research director, hsg & n'hoods, CP07M)

- "I personally [being of the type that frequents sidewalk cafés] am in the middle of the [gentrification] paradox (...). The people who live in these new condos here, they have a different spirit. I'm going to use the term, I think they're yuppies that have no children. I live right opposite the yellow-brick condos, and there isn't a single child there. It's terrible. It's systematic. They're all the same. They dress hip (...) they probably work in communications or the arts, they need to be close to downtown, and the Plateau Mont-Royal is full up" (President, management board, Lavo site housing cooperative, AR01)
Preliminary conclusions: (1) the changing paradigm of social mix?

Historically, 2 phases of advocacy for social mix:
- **phase 1 (c.1900):** utopian vision of social class reconciliation through sharing of urban space
- **phase 2 (post-WW2 welfare state):** egalitarian ideal of spatial justice

Today, a seeming international convergence toward...
- **phase 3:** a neoliberal tactic for shifting responsibility for aiding the poor onto non-state actors
  - funding affordable housing via private-sector dominated developments
  - poverty deconcentration to achieve social integration by ‘the community’ or via middle-class influence

Preliminary conclusions (2): themes for further exploration

- Implicit or emerging agenda: social mix = ethnic mix?
  - Cohabitation issues?
  - The commodification of cosmopolitanism?
- Is social mix ultimately a ‘real estate compromise’?
  - This conceptualization opens up space for exploring competing discourses
    - in particular, gap between romantic visions of social mix and the reality of negotiations ‘on the ground’
Thank you for listening!

Annex:
Overview of each national context
France: evolution of housing system

- Parmi les pays européens la France est à la croisée d’un modèle libéral soutenant l’accès à la propriété et d’un modèle social : 55% de ménages propriétaires, 17% de logements sociaux.
- Une politique nationale du logement mais mise en œuvre localement par les municipalités ou par les structures intercommunales et contractualisée par le biais de programmes locaux de l’habitat :
  - l’État distribue les aides financières pour la construction de logements sociaux et pour la réhabilitation du parc ancien par le biais de l’Agence Nationale d’Amélioration de l’Habitat
  - L’État fixe les règles d’attribution des logements sociaux
- Une politique nationale en évolution :
  - qui tend à développer l’accès à la propriété par des prêts à taux 0%
  - qui privilégie l’aide à la personne au dépend de l’aide à la pierre (depuis 1970)
  - qui ouvre le marché du logement social à des partenaires privés

France: neighbourhood revitalization

- Des politiques en direction des “quartiers difficiles” mises en place depuis 1982: une politique nationale, mise en place par les municipalités sur la base d’une contractualisation avec l’État et la Région
  - des programmes successifs: îlots sensibles, développement social urbain, pacte de relance, programme de rénovation urbaine
  - Une politique de discrimination positive sur une base géographique et une politique transversale: école, logement, emploi, jeunesse
  - Depuis 2003 un recentrage sur la rénovation urbaine s’accompagnant d’une recentralisation des financements et de leur distribution : création de l’Agence nationale de rénovation urbaine, objectif de démolition de logements sociaux
  - A Paris, cette politique existe depuis vingt ans mais a été structurée comme politique locale depuis le changement de municipalité en 2002
France: history of social mix

- Une question débattue dès le vote des premières lois en faveur du logement social et dès la construction des premiers immeubles d'habitat social: pour qui et où les construire?
- Un parc de logement sociaux destiné aux salariés, aux ouvriers et employés, aux petites couches moyennes
- Après la deuxième guerre mondiale, une politique de construction massive du logement social à vocation sociale large et accueillant pour un temps des couches moyennes
- Dans les années 1970, un départ des couches moyennes vers l'accession à la propriété, le début d'un processus de précarisation sociale des ménages ouvriers; dans les années 1980, l'arrivée de familles étrangères grâce aux mesures en faveur du regroupement familial
- A partir des années 1990, diverses lois affirment le droit au logement puis le droit à la ville: mise en place de dispositions imposant aux villes un quota de 20% de logements sociaux sous peine de verser une taxe à la diversité de l'habitat
- Mise en place de nouveaux financements de logements sociaux, Programmes locatifs à usages sociaux visant à mixer des ménages aux revenus faibles et moyens
- Politique de rénovation urbaine visant à démolir une partie du parc social et à diversifier les logements

UK: evolution of housing system

- Significant growth in home ownership since 1900 (from 10% to 70% today), and dramatic increase since 1979 via right-to-buy ‘stock transfer’
- Private rented sector decline from 90% to 10%
- Fragmentation of state involvement in social renting (increase in charitable Housing Associations)
- Deepening commodification due to emergent ‘Shared Ownership’ schemes (partnership between govt. and charities) – aimed at ‘first-time buyers’ priced out of inflated property markets. People buy a 25%, 50% or 75% share in their home, and pay rent on the share that they don't buy.
UK: neighbourhood ‘regeneration’

- The UK has a bewildering array of strategies for the ‘regeneration’ of deprived areas
- Most regeneration activity is now influenced by the central govt. Sustainable Communities Plan (2003), trying to create “places where people want to live and work, now and in the future.”
- Multi-level delivery: local councils, regional development agencies, regeneration partnerships, voluntary/community groups and the private sector
- National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (2001): “Within 10-20 years, no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live.” 88% of the most deprived areas in England receive substantial funds, to be used via ‘joined-up’ working to address ‘social exclusion’.

UK: history of social mix

- Social mix planning first observed in the 19th century
- New Towns of the post-WWII era were supposed to be “the living tapestry of a mixed community”, but became dominated by skilled working-class families with young children (no mix!)
- Right-to-buy, 1980s: ‘tenure mix’ enters the political scene, and remains dominant today
- From 1997-2005, creating ‘balanced communities’ has become the official policy discourse to address social exclusion
- January 2005: Mixed Communities Initiative, heavily influenced by HOPE VI demolitions in the USA (aimed at remodeling deprived social housing estates by introducing a broader range of households): “Mixed-income communities can give low-income residents access to successful environments.” (role model thesis of W.J. Wilson)
Canada/Québec: Evolution of housing system

A dualistic system
- A nation of homeowners – federal role in mortgage system since WW2; today = 2/3 of Canadians (but 53% in Montréal region)
- Help for ‘core needy’ via late and modest social housing system; today: $6% are in social housing (low-rent public housing; no-equity cooperatives; other non-profit housing
- Rent allowances: very minor role in affordable housing provision

Institutional framework
- No longer a national housing policy: federal withdrawal from 1985 on
- 1960s-: Provincial housing corporations: responsibility for social housing under cost-sharing agreements with federal govt
- Varied history of municipal commitments (Vancouver, Montréal, Toronto)
- 2001-: federal-provincial agreements (B.C., Québec, others later):
  - new social/community housing by non-profit developers
  - new “affordable” housing (rental, ownership) by non-profit and for-profit developers
  - municipal or other “community” $ contribution as condition of federal funds
- Québec also has own social/community housing program – similar requirements for “partner” contributions

Canada/Québec: Neighbourhood revitalization

Lack of visible “crises”: inner-city neighbourhoods never abandoned by middle classes
- some W. Canada exceptions → recent special programs
- 1970s: Neighbourhood Improvement Program (federal)
- 1980s-: Provincial (Manitoba, Québec) programs
- 2000s: federal pilot projects with NGOs
- Various municipal programs (some with prov./fed. contributions)
  - Montréal:
    - 1960s-: rehabilitation (private rental, owner-occupied); housing code enforcement; recycling + new construction of social/community housing.
    - 1980s-: commercial & residential street revitalization/embellishment
    - 1980s-: stimulation of infill projects to retain households in Montréal (contra suburban exodus)
    - 2000s: pilot projects for ‘integrated’ revitalization
    - Funds usually concentrated on targeted n’hoods
Canada/Québec: history of social mix

- Late C19: Reconciliation of social classes in urban parks (Olmsted)
- WW2-1960s: mass-produced suburbs whose planning minimized intra-n’hood socio-economic & demographic mix (C. Perry)
- 1960s: community-based housing experimentation (new-leftist social movements) → 1970s: creation of 3rd sector tenures
  → no-equity coops (low & modest incomes), non-profit rental
  • ex. Milton-Parc (Montréal); Centretown (Ottawa)
- late 1970s-1980s: planned mixed neighbourhoods (via state land-banking of brownfields): False Creek (Vancouver); St. Lawrence Market (Toronto); Angus (Montréal)
- 1980s: Reduction of (relative) social mix in public housing ← increased targeting of most needy
- From social mix to inclusion strategies:
  • inclusionary zoning (Vancouver, 1988-); Strategy for the inclusion of affordable housing in new residential developments (Montréal, 2004)
- 2000s: Redevelopment of public housing for mixed-tenure developments (Toronto)