The Suburbanization of the “Non-Gentry”: Toronto’s Inner Suburbs

The Impoverishment & Racialization of Toronto’s Inner Suburbs

J. David Hulchanski
Centre for Urban and Community Studies
University of Toronto, April 2006

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Research Questions: #1
As gentrification continues in Toronto, where do the non-middle class, “non-gentry” live?
People who are mainly:
- low-income with low-status jobs
- non-white
- life-long renters

Short answer: Toronto’s least desirable urban landscapes
- post-war inner suburbs
- large post-war public housing estates

Research Questions: #2
Is Toronto becoming more segregated by
- income and social status,
- housing tenure (owners/renters), and
- skin colour (ethno-racial origins)?

Short answer:
based on 1971 to 2001 trends, YES
Research Questions: #3

What is the public policy response?

Short answer: Containment Strategy

- target resources better ("priority neighbourhoods")
- $$ on crime prevention, recreation, family services
- task forces, studies
- increased public and private spending on security in the rest of the city
- ignore the causal trends: the problem is localized (local gangs, "black-on-black" crime, etc.)
Answering the Questions

Method
1. detailed analysis of 30 year residential trends
   -- Census of Canada data, 1971 to 2001
   -- mapping changes in “who lives where” 1971 to 2001
   -- location of rental housing (market & non-market)
   -- gentrification trends
   -- socio-economic and ethno-racial trends

2. a review of policy and program initiatives

Research Question #1
Gentrification Trends: Where do the non-gentry live?

Summary of gentrification analysis by Alan Walks & Richard Maaranen, University of Toronto; Mapping decade by decade neighbourhood change

- from below average income to above
- rising social status (job category & education)
- change in arts and related employment of the residents

With comparisons to the Priority Neighbourhoods in the inner suburbs
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Research Question #2

Is Toronto becoming more segregated?

Mapping Change by Neighbourhood

- poverty concentrations
- income: persistent increase / decrease
- income gap: owners / renters
- rental housing stock: gain / loss
- skin colour: white folks
Economic Family Poverty Rates

1981

City of Toronto

2001

North York

Economic Family Poverty Rates

1981

North York

2001
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Rental Housing: Demand, Little Supply
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Some of Toronto’s Inner Suburbs:
The non-gentry, non-white, service class

- home of the non-middle class, non-gentry
- home for gentrification’s displaced persons
- the homeland for impoverished immigrants and refugees
- home of the largest families, in the smallest housing with the fewest community services
- home for mainly non-white people
- home of people without other residential choices

→ The opposite of gentrification

Research Question #3
What is the Policy Response?
A Tale of Two Reports: 25 years apart

Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force Membership

Co-Chairs
Eric Gans, Commissioner, Community & Neighbourhood Services, City of Toronto
Robert Hardwig, Chairman, Brascan Corporation
Frances Lankin, President and CEO, United Way of Greater Toronto

Members
Derek Ballantyne, CEO, Toronto Community Housing Corporation
Harold Braidhwaite, Senior Advisor to the President, Seneca College
John Campoy, Executive Director, Community Social Planning Council
Robbie Cardoso, CEO, The Ontario Trillium Foundation
Gordon Floyd, Executive Director & CEO, Children’s Mental Health Ontario
Scott Haldane, CEO, YMCA of Greater Toronto
Maithily Manoharan, Executive Director, Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre
Margarita Mendez, Executive Director, Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre
David Peck, Chair, Toronto City Summit Alliance
Susam Pizzi, CEO, St. Christopher House
Evan Reid, Director of Education, Toronto District School Board
Marilyn Runwick, Regional Director, Ministry of Community and Social Services
Ron Rock, Executive Director, East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club
Shahina Sayani, Executive Director, For Youth Initiative
Francesca Shaw, Senior Vice-President, CBBC, Project Office & Retail Markets
Janice Stein, Director, Munk Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto
Teish Stewart, Executive Director, Labour Community Services of Toronto
Pat Walcott, Director General, Service Delivery, Human Resources Skills Development
Kim Youssef, General Manager, World Journal

The Task Force will work to strengthen neighbourhoods and keep Toronto a healthy, vibrant place to live.

2005
The era of suburban and metropolitan innocence in Toronto is over.

Stable post-war images of urban life in Metro, with clear social distinctions between the City and the suburbs, ... no longer correspond to the social realities of what exists today or to the conditions which will have to be faced in the coming decade.”

– Social Planning Council of Metro Toronto, April 1979 (v1, p.233)

In 2005, similar observations and confirmation of trends identified in the 1979 study

“Now poverty has moved outwards, to the inner suburbs, to places once seen as havens from inner-city problems.

Our social services simply have not kept up and this means that – more than ever – people are disadvantaged by the neighbourhood where they live.”

– United Way of Greater Toronto, June 2005
“The suburbs now contain

- 50% of all inner city students in Metro's schools,
- most of Metro’s families with both parents in the labour force,
- high numbers of single parent families,
- significant groups of unemployed and alienated youth, and
- a multitude of cultures and races.”

In 1979 the trends were clear; the inner suburbs were in transition

“The absence of urgently needed help for the diverse needs of suburban families is a deep source of concern.”

- pre-school day care,
- school programs for children with special needs,
- multi-service centres to help families,
- neighbourhood agencies for outreach to isolated groups,
- counseling for immigrant families,
- community services for troubled youth,
- child-parent centres,
- after-hours and crisis support, and
- affordable recreation programs

1979 recommendations ignored

2006 same needs & issues discussed again