Toronto’s Growing Socio-spatial Divide

Researching the Urban Impact of Rising Income Inequality & Income Polarization

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“Divided Cities”

Divided cities are not new.
Cities have always been divided.

What is new?
Today: A new socio-spatial order with stronger (more rigid) divisions, and greater inequality

“Those changes may be summarized as an increase in the strength of divisions in the city and the inequality among them.”

– Peter Marcuse & Ronald van Kempen, 2000, p.272
Toronto is sometimes described as a “city of neighbourhoods.” It seems an odd description, since nearly all cities contain neighbourhoods, but it is intended to imply that Toronto’s neighbourhoods are especially varied and distinctive. However, neighbourhoods are not fixed entities. Although some neighbourhoods change very little in their physical, social, and demographic composition over time, others may change significantly in the course of a few years.

This report provides a new way of looking at Toronto’s neighbourhoods. It focuses on who lives where, based on the socio-economic status of the residents in each neighbourhood, and how the average status of the residents in each neighbourhood has changed over a 35-year period. It shows that Toronto’s neighbourhoods fall into one of three categories — creating three distinct Toronto.

Why is this important? Cities have always had pockets of wealth and poverty. Neighbourhoods in the great cities of the industrialized world have undergone many transitions over the course of their history. However, the City of Toronto’s neighbourhood transition has been relatively sudden and dramatic, and the changes have serious consequences for Toronto residents.

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Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership: Research Focus

1. Economic Inequality produces Socio-spatial Exclusion

We start with this observation, as a premise

2. Socio-spatial Segregation

3. Socio-spatial Disadvantage

We will research socio-spatial SEGREGATION trends and processes, and the DISADVANTAGES that result (the consequences).
Neighbourhoods Matter

Research has found “area related outcomes” such as
- school dropout rates;
- childhood achievement;
- transition rates from welfare to work;
- deviant behaviour;
- social exclusion; &
- social mobility

40 Year Trend in Toronto, 1970-2010

A *new* socio-spatial polarization (partitioning of urban space) on the basis of income & SES & ethno-cultural origin

Three increasingly distinct “cities” within Toronto
Toronto's Growing Income Gap, Census Tracts, 1970 to 2010

Change in the Census Tract Average Individual Income as a percentage of the Toronto CMA Average, 1970-2010

City #1: Increase of 20% or More
(131 Census Tracts, 25% of the City)

City #2: Increase or Decrease by Less than 20%
(177 Census Tracts, 34% of the City)

City #3: Decrease of 20% or More
(207 Census Tracts, 40% of the City)

Top of 3D map:
Income Increases
Blue = City #1;
White = City #2

Bottom of 3D map:
Income Decreases
White = City #2;
Brown = City #3

Change in average individual income
Toronto's City #1 &
City #3
1970 to 2010

City #1

City #3
Toronto 1970, Average Individual Income

Census Tract Average Individual Income compared to the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area Average of $5,755

- Very High: 140% to 396% (30 CTs, 9% of the City)
- High: 120% to 140% (23 CTs, 7% of the City)
- Middle Income: 80% to 120% (197 CTs, 56% of the City)
- Low: 60% to 80% (83 CTs, 24% of the City)
- Very Low: 52% to 60% (7 CTs, 2% of the City)

Source: (1) Statistics Canada, Census Profile Series tables 2011
(2) Statistics Canada, Census Road Network, 2011
Notes: (1) Census tract and municipality boundaries are for 1971.
(2) Average Individual Income is for persons 15 and over and excludes.

Toronto 1980, Average Individual Income

Census Tract Average Individual Income compared to the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area Average of $14,384

- Very High: 140% to 463% (38 CTs, 9% of the City)
- High: 120% to 140% (28 CTs, 7% of the City)
- Middle Income: 80% to 120% (236 CTs, 56% of the City)
- Low: 60% to 80% (116 CTs, 27% of the City)
- Very Low: 42% to 60% (5 CTs, 1% of the City)

Source: (1) Statistics Canada, Census Profile Series tables 2011
(2) Statistics Canada, Census Road Network, 2011
Notes: (1) Census tract and municipality boundaries are for 1981.
(2) Average Individual Income is for persons 15 and over and excludes.
Toronto 1990, Average Individual Income

1990

Census Tract Average Individual Income compared to the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area Average of $38,817

- Very High - 140% to 297% (53 CTs, 11% of the City)
- High - 120% to 140% (34 CTs, 7% of the City)
- Middle Income - 80% to 120% (238 CTS, 50% of the City)
- Low - 60% to 80% (141 CTS, 30% of the City)
- Very Low - 44% to 60% (9 CTS, 2% of the City)

Toronto 2000, Average Individual Income

2000

Census Tract Average Individual Income compared to the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area Average of $35,618

- Very High - 140% to 701% (72 CTS, 14% of the City)
- High - 120% to 140% (23 CTAs, 4% of the City)
- Middle Income - 80% to 120% (167 CTS, 32% of the City)
- Low - 60% to 80% (212 CTS, 41% of the City)
- Very Low - 36% to 60% (46 CTS, 9% of the City)
Toronto’s Segregated Ethno-Cultural Population, 2006

Why worry about more rigid socio-spatial divisions and greater inequality?

“Inequality promotes strategies that are more self-interested, less affiliative, often highly antisocial, more stressful, and likely to give rise to higher levels of violence, poorer community relations, and worse health.”

Divided Societies: Inequality is a Choice

“I see us entering a world divided not just between the haves and have-nots, but also between those countries that do nothing about it, and those that do.

“Some countries will be successful in creating shared prosperity — the only kind of prosperity that I believe is truly sustainable.

“Others will let inequality run amok.”

– Joseph Stiglitz, 2013
What Money Can’t Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets

from a market economy
to a market society

What about the necessities of life?


What Can be Done?

Policy Options: Income inequality & polarization; and the resulting Socio-spatial and Ethno-cultural Divides
What can be done?

Federal & Provincial Policy Action

Effective Anti-Discrimination Strategy

Affordable Housing Strategy

Income Support Strategy

ESSENTIAL
Government Policy Actions

Labour Market Strategy

2025 if nothing changes
City #1 = 30%
City #3 = 60%

1970 - 2005

1970 - 2025