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**More Continuity than Change? Re-evaluating the Contemporary  
Socio-economic and Housing Characteristics of Suburbs**

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*Abstract*

Suburbs that developed in metropolitan Canada post-World War II have historically been depicted as homogeneous landscapes of gendered domesticity, detached housing, White middle-class nuclear families, and heavy automobile use. We find that key features of this historical popular image do in fact persist across the nation's contemporary metropolitan landscape, particularly at the expanding fringes and in mid-sized cities near the largest metropolitan areas. The findings reflect suburbanization into new areas, point to enduring social exclusion, and recall the negative environmental consequences arising from suburban ways of living such as widespread automobile use and continuing sprawl. However, the analysis also points to the internal diversity that marks suburbanization today and to the growing presence of suburban ways of living

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in central areas. Our results suggest that planning policies promoting intensification and targeting social equity objectives are likely to remain ineffective if society fails to challenge directly the political, economic and socio-cultural drivers behind the kind of suburban ways of living that fit popular imaginings of post-World War II suburbs.

*Keywords:* suburbs, suburbanization, suburban ways of living, Canadian cities, metropolitan landscape, sprawl

### *Résumé*

Les lotissements suburbains bâtis dans les régions métropolitaines du Canada après la Seconde Guerre mondiale ont souvent été représentés comme des paysages homogènes caractérisés par la domesticité sexuée, les maisons isolées, les familles nucléaires de la classe moyenne blanche, et l'utilisation intensive de l'automobile. Nous constatons que les principales caractéristiques de cette image populaire historique dominant en fait le paysage contemporain des métropoles canadiennes, en particulier dans les franges en expansion et dans les villes de taille moyenne près des grandes régions métropolitaines. Les résultats reflètent la persistance de l'exclusion sociale et rappellent les conséquences négatives sur l'environnement découlant de l'utilisation généralisée de l'automobile et de l'étalement urbain. Cependant, l'analyse souligne également la diversité interne qui marque aujourd'hui les banlieues et la présence en croissance de modes de vie suburbains dans les centre-villes. Nos résultats suggèrent que les politiques d'aménagement favorisant l'intensification et les objectifs d'équité sociale sont susceptibles de rester sans effet si la société ne parvient pas à contester directement les facteurs politiques, économiques et socio-culturels derrière les modes de vie suburbains qui correspondent à l'imagination populaire de la banlieue canadienne d'après-guerre.

*Mots clés:* banlieues, rurbanisation, modes de vie suburbains, villes canadiennes, paysage métropolitain, étalement urbain

### **Introduction**

In a process that in many ways echoed the Fordist transformation of the United States' economy after 1945, the search for a peace-time spatial fix exploded the Canadian metropolis outwards through an expanding network of highways leading to new low-density residential communities (Walker 1977, Lorimer 1978, Harris 2004). The tremendous popularity of these new housing developments reflected state efforts to vastly increase access to mortgage credit, but also the widespread seductiveness of an existing image of the suburbs as idyllic retreats from the polluted and congested industrial city and its density, diversity, and perceived danger.

There has been much discussion of the dramatic transformation that Canada's

metropolitan regions underwent after the Second World War, but much less about the continuing prevalence of the postwar suburban ideal. Postwar Canadian town planners and urban scholars participated in the reproduction of this image (Sewell 2009), not least through their deployment of measurement and mapping. By relying on variables such as distance or development density, they helped cement a definition of “the suburbs” as spatially bounded and ontologically separate segments of the metropolis. Mass media representations complemented this image with skewed depictions of ethnic and class homogeneity, exclusivity, and profoundly gendered domesticity (Korinek 2000). Even recent scholarship (see Gordon and Janzen 2013), in trying to determine the extent of Canada’s suburban population, has generally relied upon mutually exclusive categorizations. Although seeing value in the prior research, this study, by building on the conceptual work of Walks (2012), seeks to chart a different and complementary course. We explore the multiple overlapping dimensions in the persistence of suburban ways of life.

There is evidence that cultural and socio-economic diversity within and between North American postwar suburbs was much more prevalent than what popular imaginings of suburbia allowed (Harris 2004, Berger 1960, Gans 1967, Nicolaides 2001). Such heterogeneity, moreover, has been increasing over the past four decades. Post-Fordist dynamics such as the decentralization of manufacturing at the metropolitan and global scales, the greater flexibility of labour, and various processes associated with increased inter-urban competition (including public investments in the cultural and consumption infrastructure of cities), have contributed to a heightened geographic mobility of urban populations and employment sources (Harvey 1990, Walks 2001). The resulting suburbanization of diversity (Orfield 2002, Singer et al. 2008, Li 2009) but also the apparent “suburbanization of the city” (Sherrell 2008) have led scholars to challenge binary conceptualizations that narrowly place “suburbs” as fixed spatial entities situated in relation to a historically defined urban centre (Bourne 1996, Ekers et al. 2012, Walks 2013).

In the Canadian context, however, such efforts have largely remained in the conceptual and theoretical domain (see Walks 2001 for a notable exception). Seeking to expand the empirical dimension of this important scholarly project, we present an analysis of Canada’s largest metropolitan areas based on Census data for 2006. To do this, we bring into sharp focus that popular image of postwar-era suburbia upon which hegemonic notions of socio-economic homogeneity and dichotomous geographic segregation once firmly rested upon.

There are three objectives of this research: (1) to operationalize the popular image of postwar-era suburbia and then map it onto the contemporary Canadian metropolis; (2) to identify the specific geographies that will result from such a multi-dimensional approach; and (3) to draw conceptual implications for defining suburbs and “the suburban” in research.

As we show in this paper, these goals are significant in that they help us document

and understand the present landscapes of metropolitan Canada, and more specifically, provide evidence of the existence of a spatiality in the contemporary metropolitan landscape that is in many ways consistent with the imagined postwar suburb. However, our analysis also shows the limits of such imaginings. On the one hand, we find that ways of living associated with the popular image of suburbs can occur in a plurality of geographical locations—including many unexpected ones. On the other hand, our analysis captures the demographic and socio-economic diversity that characterizes contemporary metropolitan expansion. By comparing an operationalized model of the popularly imagined postwar-era Canadian suburb to the actual geographies of contemporary suburbanization, our study challenges current understandings of (sub) urban space. We demonstrate the inappropriateness in some cases of relying on distance from a historical central area to understand processes of suburbanization, while putting empirically into question the dichotomous “city/suburb” conceptualization.

We begin our paper with a brief discussion of four ways of living that have become entrenched in popular consciousness as the defining traits of the Canadian suburbs that developed in the postwar era. We then explain how we make use of Statistics Canada data from the 2006 Census to operationalize these four ways of living. The analysis generates three different indicators of suburbanization, which we map to describe the contemporary geography of this ongoing but changing process. We conclude by discussing the implications of our findings for urban policy and research. In particular, we consider our findings in light of contemporary planning policy aiming to stem heavy automobile use and sprawl due to their negative environmental consequences.

### Popular Imaginings of Canada’s Postwar Suburbs

Exercises in statistical measurement still often view suburbanization as “a process whereby people, housing, industry, commerce, and retailing spread out beyond traditional urban areas, forming dispersed landscapes that are still connected to cities by commuting” (McCann 2009, pp. 731–732, see also Turcotte 2007). However, this definition is usually recognized as being necessarily incomplete, in the sense that it is relationally constituted around notions of what is commonly believed to be “urban” in a social and economic sense (Ekers *et al.* 2012, Smith 2006). We shift the reference point away from common ideas about what is *the city* toward common ideas about what is *a suburb*. In Canada, as we see below, such common ideas are closely linked to popular imaginings of residential tracts that were built and populated in the two decades following the Second World War.

During the 1950s and 1960s, dominant narratives about the rapidly and massively unfolding process of suburbanization generally coincided in their identification of four distinctive ways of living: pervasive automobile use, residence in a socially and culturally homogeneous environment, domesticity, and socio-economic advantage derived from middle class status (see for example Mumford 1968). A few critics argued for a more diverse view of the North American suburb (Berger 1960, Gans 1967). But

socially and culturally, these ways of living came to be seen as proxies for determining categorization in the urban-suburban dichotomy: it became commonplace to evoke these four features when characterizing places that were distant from the central business district as “suburban.”

To take as a starting point the suburbs rather than the city may appear unnecessarily limiting, for it continues to reify both the “urban” and the “suburban.” But such a counter-intuitive approach in fact helps us show empirically how ways of living associated with postwar-era suburbia can potentially occur in places that may or may not be located in those “dispersed” areas typically regarded as suburban. As a result, our analysis helps us challenge empirically the view of cities and suburbs as mutually exclusive (Walks 2013). In this section of the paper, we draw a brief sketch of how the specific aspects of “suburbanisms as a way of life”—namely automobility, domesticity, socio-cultural homogeneity and middle-class status (all of which we then quantify in the second part of the paper)—came to shape the popular image of Canadian postwar-era suburbia.

### *Automobility: Driving the Suburbs*

Postwar urban reform movements drastically redefined Canadian urban regions. With minimal public input, modernist planners created projects based on the mechanical blueprints of Le Corbusier, seeking in this way to open the inner city to the new garden city communities that were radiating outwards from the urban core (Bocking 2006, Ley 1987). In tandem with a car-centric planning ethos, suburban households also became the primary consumers of private automobiles, as car ownership in Canada grew from one million in 1945 to 4.3 million in 1963 (Harris 2004). Several inner cities were sliced by new highway systems such as the Gardiner Expressway in Toronto (Bocking 2006), although citizen opposition thwarted freeway development in Vancouver and a few other places (Ley 1996, Robinson 2011).

The result was a growing contrast between the inner city and “its Other” in terms of the application of differing planning ideals: by the early 1970s, inner city neighbourhoods were increasingly approached through a post-modern planning model in which the need for sense of place and community was given much higher priority than before (Jacobs 1961, Ley 1987). But as the inner city came to benefit from the planners’ and new wealthier residents’ growing appreciation of the existing dense built environment, the suburbs became associated with the modernist master plans of Fred Gardiner in Toronto (Robinson 2011) and Sutton Brown in Vancouver (Langford 2011), merging greenfield suburban developments with a culture of automobility.

Until the 1990s, when planning began to concern itself more directly with issues associated with urban sprawl (Tomalty 1997), suburban planning continued along this postwar path, opting for drivable, not walkable communities, wider streets instead of sidewalks, and onramps instead of transit bus loops. Indeed, in Canadian metropolitan regions, the widely touted shift in planning *thought* has not resulted in a decline in the persistent empirical *lived realities* of auto-dependency for lower density areas outside

the central city (Turcotte 2008). Thus, the postwar suburban landscape emphasizes a cultural meaning inextricably tied to automobility, in stark juxtaposition to the post-modern landscapes that later emerged in the inner city under the influence of the ideals of Jane Jacobs (Quastel et al. 2012).

*Domesticity and Social Homogeneity: The Nuclear family and Gendered Suburban Space*

As North America's suburbs multiplied and expanded in the 1950s and 1960s, they reflected and reinforced traditional Western patriarchal constructions of gender roles (Hayden 2003). Design and construction principles that dominated the growth of the suburbs and the planning of transport networks were premised on the assumption that men dominated a public sphere focused on work outside the home, while women's roles were more socially and spatially confined to a private sphere of household maintenance and child-rearing. The dramatic growth of patriarchal suburbanization in North America reflected and reinforced the distinctive trajectory of Fordist-Keynesian capitalism, etching into the rhythms of daily life the entrenched separation of private home and public workplace (Jackson 1985).

The domesticized role of suburban women was originally celebrated within postwar popular culture. Writers like Benjamin Spock and Ashley Montague stressed the importance of mothers as the primary caregivers of their young children, while popular magazines such as *Chatelaine* reinforced these norms through articles that encouraged women to accept domestic duties, support their working husbands, and maintain a "biological harmony of family organization" (Strong-Boag 1991). The suburban narrative that placed women in the home eventually took on a more critical tone, as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* shed light on the subordination of women living suburban lives in a "domestic trap" where "time is spent in meaningless busywork" of endless household labour (Friedan 1963, p. 245). To be sure, this early critical perspective on patriarchal suburbia reflected the social and spatial contours of North America's economic boom: the 'prison' experience of the isolated single-family home in the auto-dependent suburb gave Friedan's warnings special resonance for White, middle-class wives of White, white-collar husbands who drove to work in downtown office jobs. These were the suburbs that grew so dramatically in the 1950s and 1960s. Yet in the older working-class suburbs built in previous generations, White wives of blue-collar workers and women of color had often worked outside the home, creating a complex socio-spatial matrix of class, domesticity, and suburban space (Hanson and Pratt 1995, Wyly 1999). Successive waves of critical feminist analyses of metropolitan space (Hayden 2003, Coontz 2011) have highlighted the complex pluralities of suburban households and identities, and yet it is undeniable that the gendered social roles of the public/private dichotomy have found clearest expression in the "spatialized domesticity" on the expanding frontiers of suburbia in the second half of the twentieth century.



*Cultural Homogeneity: De-racialized Landscapes of Conformity*

For decades, the North American suburban landscape has been portrayed as the container of a homogeneous social, economic, cultural, and political order. Early commentators like David Riesman, Lewis Mumford, and William Whyte decried a conformist atmosphere, where a sense of place and community was created and secured via a strict socio-cultural uniformity (Kenyon 2004, Relph 1981). This “myth of suburbia” was challenged early on by academics such as Bennett Berger (1960) and Herbert Gans (1967), who sought to highlight the social diversity of America’s suburbs. Nonetheless, there continued to be a focus on measurable indicators of homogeneity that seemed to distinguish suburbs from the inner city. Scholars once emphasized the role of racial and economic covenants in the formation of American suburbs, ensuring a middle-class white composition (Jackson 1985, Twine 1996), although a “new suburban history” has recently sought to highlight the ethnic and racial diversity of post-war suburban development (Kruse and Sugrue 2006, Nicolaidis and Wiese 2006).

In the Canadian case, race has traditionally played a more constrained, though nevertheless important role (Anderson 1990, Blomley 2003) in delineating the social ecology of cities. Even so, the postwar-era suburbs of Canada’s largest cities have similarly been represented as being less socially, politically and ethnically diverse than the central city (see for example Strong-Boag 1991). Growing immigration and the dispersion of poverty away from the inner city over the past two decades or so (Hulchanski 2010, Murdie 2008) have dramatically altered this depiction. Yet interview data from Perrin and Grant (2014) reveal that there still remains a disconnect between residents’ views on diversity and policy-makers’ efforts to introduce “social mix” into suburban neighbourhoods, and Walks (2006) has found much uniformity with respect to political support for conservative parties in Toronto’s present-day suburban communities. But in general, the contemporary emphasis on the growing socio-economic diversity of Canada’s suburbs provides a contrast to the way “hyperplanning” of massive suburban tracts of land in the postwar years contributed to popularizing an image of “suburban conformity” and of homogeneity in the residential and social landscape of Canada’s suburbs (Relph 1981, Harris 2004).

*The Middle-Class: Fuelling the Fordist Economy*

With rapid economic growth in the postwar years, the Canadian urban landscape underwent massive change, adapting to the surge in demand created by the rise of the middle-class. Following the close of the Second World War, the economy began to expand, driven by the Fordist regime of accumulation and its increasing wages, productivity, innovation, and demand (Jessop 1994, Filion 2001). After a decade of economic depression in the 1930s and then six years of war, the previously sluggish housing market suddenly faced drastic shortages. Mass suburbanization (modeled on the success of Levittown) began to absorb this demand, providing detached housing



for young families raising the Baby-Boom generation. Supported by government funding through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, mass-planned suburban communities grew on the outskirts of every Canadian city (Harris 2004, Magnusson 1994).

These new suburban communities became home to Canada's growing numbers of nuclear families acting as the foundation of the Fordist economy and benefiting from its rising wages. The production of suburban housing and highway landscapes was instrumental in absorbing the massive capital investments that forestalled the short-term crisis of accumulation in industrial capitalism after the War's end, while the recurring consumption requirements of suburban homes and auto-dependent landscapes ensured the viability of the suburban spatial fix over the long term (Florida 2010, Harvey 2001). The cyclical nature of mass production and consumption of material goods came to define an economy marked by a culture of materialism and higher incomes, which in turn contributed to spread the image of suburbia as a middle-class landscape.

### **Quantitative Indicators of the Popular Image of Postwar Suburbia**

Our analytical starting point, then, is centered on these four key ways of living associated with popular imaginings of the postwar-era suburb: automobility, domesticity, middle-class status, and socio-cultural homogeneity. To test how these features fare as critical descriptors of contemporary Canadian suburbanization, we map a series of indicator variables in the largest 26 metropolitan areas (CMA). The indicators derive from the 2006 Statistics Canada Census data at the census tract (CT) scale. In a first step, we identify Census variables that could reasonably be conceived as measures of each of the four features of the social constructs (Table 1). The variables are calculated as proportions of CT totals. These secondary data permit us to conduct a cross-national analysis but also imply certain limits to the operationalization of suburban characteristics. In some cases, variables could be used for multiple features, but choices had to be made to create discrete measures of the popular image of postwar-era suburbia.

We use Principal Component Analysis (PCA) separately for each of these four features. PCA is most widely recognized as a simple variable reduction technique (Davies, 1984), but over the past decade and half, PCA has experienced a revival as a more comprehensive analytical tool in urban scholarship in North America (see for example Wyly 1999, Lucy and Phillips 2000, Meligrana and Skaburskis 2005, Catanzarite and Aguilera 2002, Vicino et al. 2007, Short 2007, Vicino et al. 2011). A non-inferential-test based technique of data analysis, PCA shows how multiple variables are mutually correlated by identifying those features in the data for which the most variability is registered between observations. Based on those features, the technique generates a set of new composite measures, some of which may individually provide much of the same information about statistical variability as can be derived from several variables (Townshend 2002).

It is then possible to understand the population under analysis by reference to a small number of the newly generated measures rather than the larger number of original variables. But PCA is not always a productive way of approaching research questions empirically. Results may be difficult to interpret when all the measures in the new composite set explain similar amounts of variance or load on a wide range of variables that are fairly independent of one another (King 1969). Our analysis was not affected by such problems. However, the usual caveats regarding the use of Census data must be noted, including limitations deriving from the data collection process and the nature of the information that is and is not collected in such exercises in enumeration.

For each of the four ways of living, we retained the two PCA-generated components that explained the largest amount of variation between census tracts (in all four cases, the two components explained at least 60 percent of the variation). These eight components were then included in a second PCA along with Census measures of population density, the proportion of dwelling units built between 1946 and 1970 and the proportion built between 1990 and 2006. These two dwelling age variables are treated as a measure of the incidence of suburban areas built during the postwar era and those built well into the present, respectively (dwellings built between 1971 and 1989 were left out of the PCA to avoid perfect collinearity). Population density in turn is a key aspect of how suburbs are perceived. The intent of the second PCA is to determine how the four different ways of living associated with popular imaginings of postwar-era suburbia (now summarized as PCA components) correlate with each other and with population density and the age of the housing stock. The three top-scoring components of the second PCA, discussed in greater detail in the next section, explained about two thirds (65 percent) of the variation in our data.

Finally, we mapped these three top-scoring components for each census tract in Canada's 26 largest CMAs, to gain more insight into their metropolitan geographies. For brevity, we show the maps of the component scores for only the nine largest CMAs (Figures 1-3), in sufficiently high resolution to enable readers of the digital version of this article to zoom in on different sectors of a metropolitan area. We also provide a summary of the components' scores, represented in terms of their median values, for census tracts in all 26 CMAs, grouped by distance from the central business district (Figures 4-6). This is useful for assessing whether distance from the centre is pertinent in explaining the spatial patterns of the types of suburbanisms we have identified. We should acknowledge here that Canada's metropolitan areas differ from each other in all sorts of ways, including of course population size but also labour markets and occupational profiles, levels of immigration, degrees of gentrification in the inner urban core, and so on. Caution is therefore needed when speaking of Canadian metropolitan areas as a whole: context matters.

Table 1 – Variables used to measure popular imaginaries of suburbs

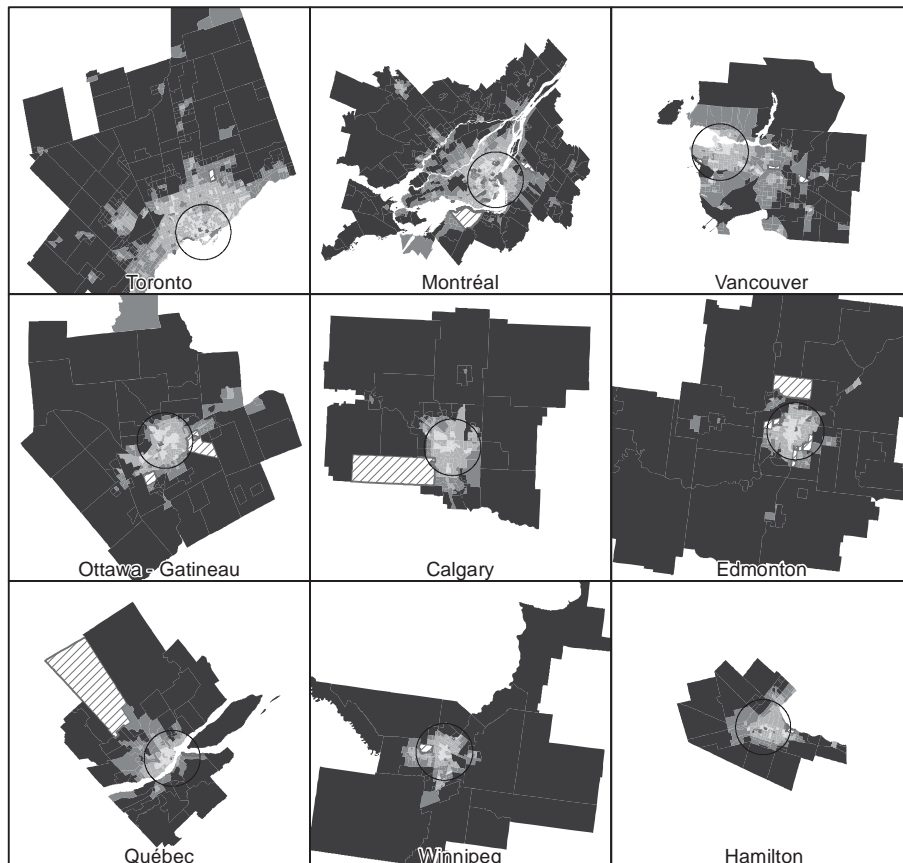
Suburban Feature	Variable (from Statistics Canada 2006 Census Cumulative Profile Tables)
Automobility	Employed persons who live and work in different Census Sub-Divisions
	Employed persons driving a car or truck to work
	Employed persons walking or cycling to work
	Employed persons using public transit
Middle-class status	Households with before tax income between \$40,000 and \$79,999 (approximates the CMAs' interquartile of \$43,718 to \$74,918)
	Owner-occupied dwellings
	Employed individuals
	Persons employed in technical and managerial occupations
	Persons employed in top skill-level occupations within each of the 10 skill-type broad occupational categories in the NOC-S
	Persons with education above trades certificate or diploma but below bachelor's degree
	Persons age 25 and older with bachelor's degree
Homogeneity	Post-1970 immigrants
	Lone parent families
	Non-family households
	Multiple family households
	Married/common law couples
	Average number of children at home per census family
	Children age 25 and older living with parents
	Average number of persons in private households
Domesticity	Persons doing at least 15 hours/week unpaid housework
	Persons doing at least 10 hours/week unpaid senior care
	Persons doing at least 10 hours/week unpaid child care
	Ratio of household to individual before-tax median income to identify households with one earner

### Mapping the Popular Imaginings of the Postwar Suburb

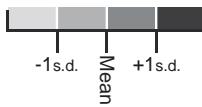
The first top-scoring component, accounting for 35 percent of the variation, is the most salient of our measures of postwar suburbia's popular image as mapped on the contemporary metropolitan landscape. We labeled this component "Classic Suburbia" in reference to its broad congruence with the popular image of Canadian postwar suburbia: it shows high loadings for automobile commuting, homeownership, unpaid domestic housework, nuclear family household composition, and middle-income


households. This component is also associated with low population densities and high proportions of dwellings built between 1990 and 2006. Visual inspection of maps for this component (Figure 1) suggests that ways of living popularly linked to postwar suburbia continue to be reproduced in more recently built areas, particularly in those traditionally described as suburbs due to their location outside the central city. Landscapes that coincide with the popular image of postwar suburbia shape vast expanses of Canadian metropolitan areas.

Figure 1



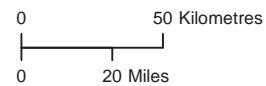
Scores for principal component "Classic Suburbia", standardized



 No Value



Circle represents a 10-km radius around the metropolitan Central Business District (CBD)



The second top-scoring component, accounting for 15 percent of the variation, stands in stark contrast with the first one: CTs where this component registers highly do not match the characteristics associated with popular imaginings of postwar suburbia. The variables showing high loadings in this component are public transit use, visible minorities, immigrants arriving post-1970s, multiple-family households, unpaid domestic work and few earners per household. The component shows high scores for CTs with a high share of the housing stock built between 1946 and 1970s; such CTs are typically associated with the inner suburbs built in the postwar years (Figure 2). While these areas were commonly associated with the middle-class in the first years after their development, they are now often (but not always) experiencing both decline and an influx of low-income immigrants and service sector workers (Hulchanski 2010, Walks 2001, 2006). We refer to this component as the “Immigrant Landscape,” as it reflects the suburbanization of immigrant settlement over the past two decades, particularly in the large Canadian cities (Burnley and Hiebert 2001).

Finally, we highlight a third top-scoring component, accounting also for 15 percent of the variation in our PCA. It is associated with workers who are not in technical, managerial or top occupational categories, and with educational attainment below trades certificates or diplomas. However, CTs where this component scores highly also are associated with university education and middle-class incomes, and so we have labelled this third component “Polarization.” While its geography is surprisingly diverse, there is a marked presence of above average scores for this component in CTs located in outer sections of metropolitan areas (Figure 3). In this sense, the CTs that developed largely over the past four decades in the outlying regions of Canada’s largest metropolitan areas differ in their socio-economic composition from the popular image of postwar-era suburbia. As our “Immigrant Landscape” component suggests, moreover, so do many of the CTs that grew through the suburbanization process of the 1950s and 1960s.

There are two other overarching trends that the mapping of these components reveals and which we explore in more detail below.

### *Decentralization*

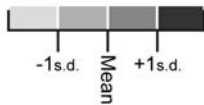
The first finding is that the geography of the popularly imagined postwar-era suburb—what we’ve called here “Classic Suburbia”—is indeed mostly a reflection of an ongoing process of metropolitan decentralization. This process appears to build on some of the state-enterprise patterns established during the postwar years (including the promotion of the private automobile and subsidized access to mortgage credit via private banks), but also by a series of neoliberal experiments in metropolitan deregulation and privatization (Peck 2011).

The components developed through the PCA described above can be converted into median scores for each individual census tract. Figure 4 charts these scores for each component by distance from the central business district (CBD) in the 26 CMAs.

Figure 2



Scores for principal component "Immigrant Landscape", standardized



No Value

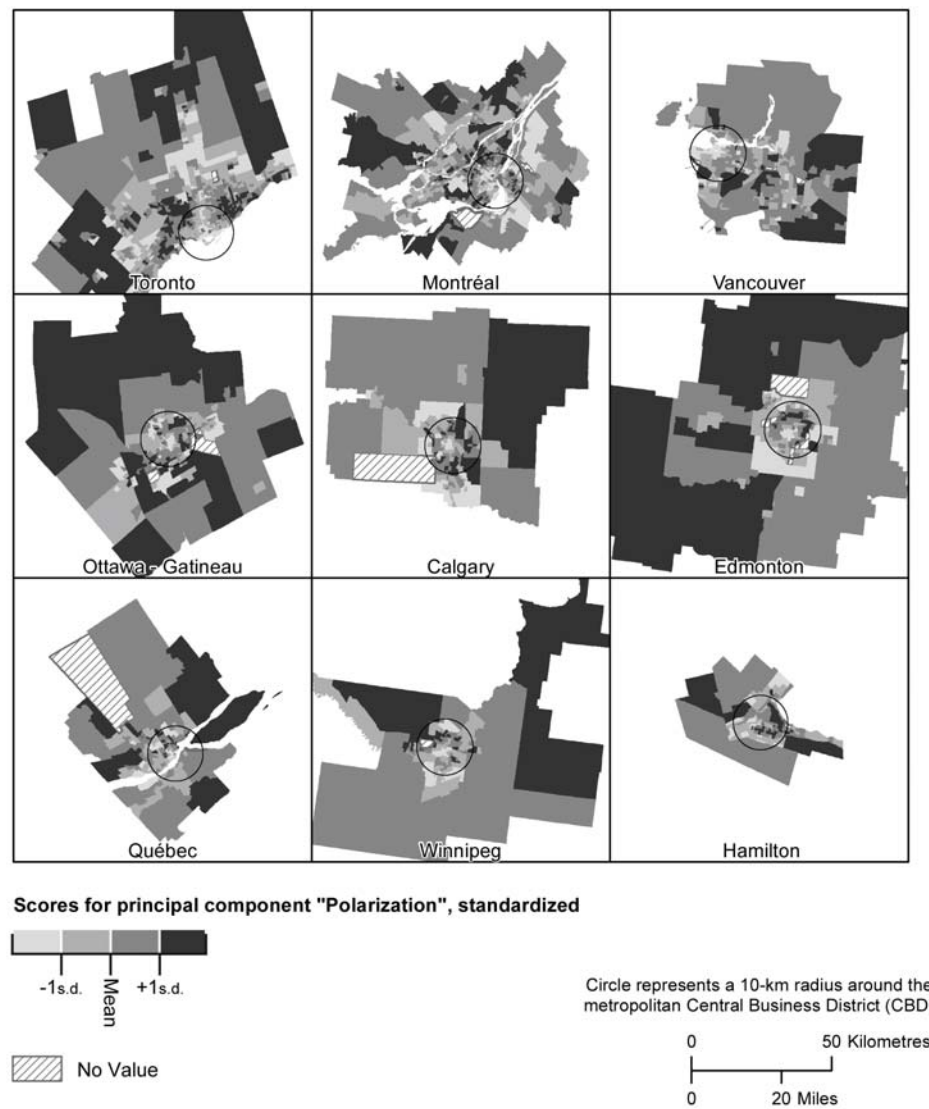
Circle represents a 10-km radius around the metropolitan Central Business District (CBD)



The graphs for "Classic Suburbia" illustrate how in the largest cities, socio-economic characteristics that match the popular imaginings of the postwar-era suburb are generally found in census tracts located at least 5 to 10 kilometers outside that core. And because this component was associated with high proportions of recently-built dwellings, Table 2 also shows that most of the growth in new housing occurred at the fringes of large metropolitan areas. This suggests that recent shifts towards less automobile use, more diverse household compositions and greater social mix have

occurred primarily in the central city, while there has been sustained replication at the periphery of the postwar image of suburban life, with its associated environmental impacts and social exclusion.

Figure 3



There also appears to be a strong connection between the location of this "Classic Suburbia" and city size. The largest cities tend to have larger and more compact central areas, a tendency that suggests low-density suburbanization takes place further from



the metropolitan centre. Interestingly, many of the smaller metropolitan areas show higher degrees of “Classic Suburbia” both away from and near the CBD, which in turn suggests that suburbanization is not always a decentralizing process in a smaller city context.

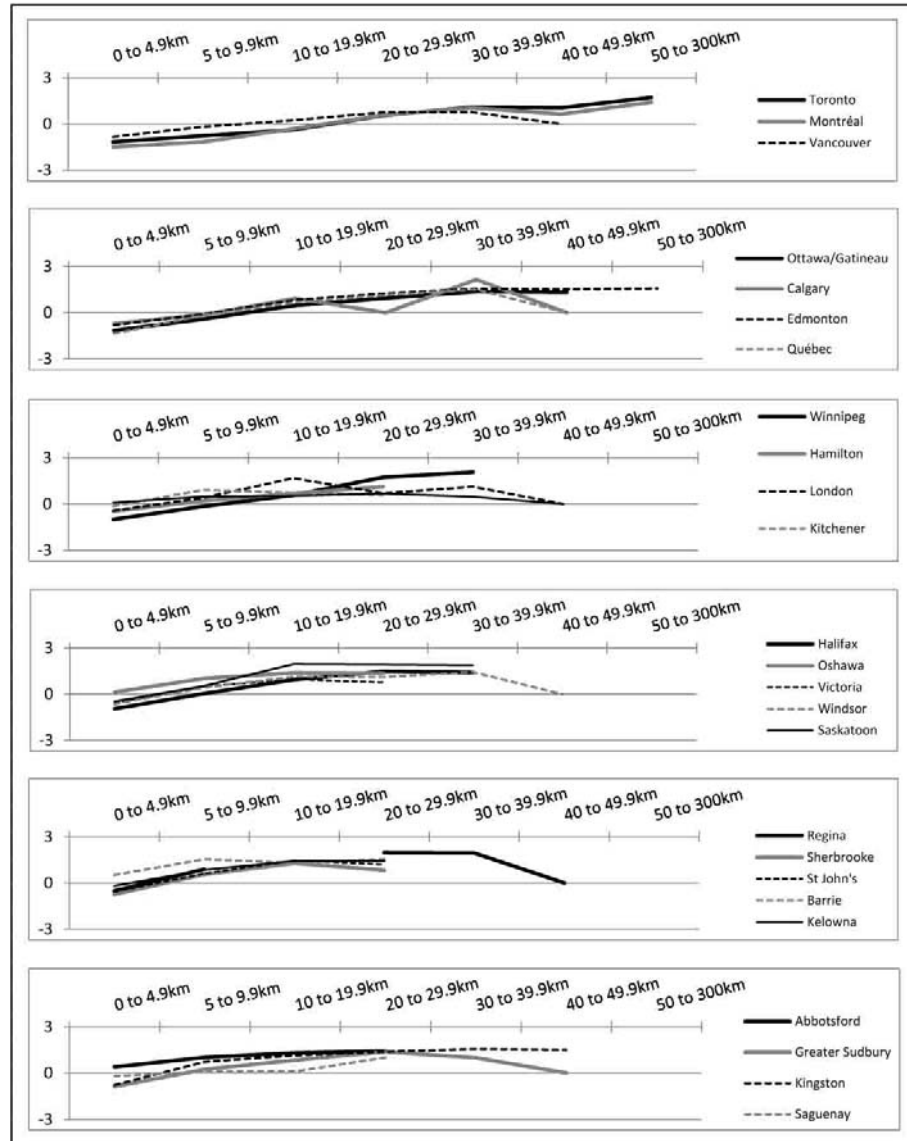
Small metropolitan area suburbanization has received much less attention in the literature than its counterpart in large metropolitan areas. The incidence of socio-economic characteristics linked to “Classic Suburbia” in smaller cities brings to mind historic planning ideals of suburbs that included notions of ‘ideal city sizes’ such as Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City (Hall 1996). In this sense, areas that today match the popular imagining of the postwar suburb mesh, to some extent at least, with notions of ‘small town ideals’ that emphasized relatively low densities. Because city size is smaller, proximity to amenities and jobs is still possible there, unlike in a large metropolitan context where residing in “Classic Suburbia” would generally require traveling much further to reach the CBD.

Interestingly, however, many of the smaller CMAs showing high scores for “Classic Suburbia” throughout their metropolitan structure are actually located in close proximity to Canada’s largest metropolitan areas, particularly near Toronto and Vancouver—for instance, Hamilton, Kitchener, St. Catharines-Niagara, Barrie, Oshawa and Abbotsford. It suggests that some of these cities, which are known to have commuter flows to and from the largest metropolitan areas, are reproducing twentieth-century variants of Gottman’s (1961) “megalopolis,” or what Knox’s (2008) more refined conceptualization has termed as “metroburbia.” What we are seeing here, we would argue, is the suburbanization of many existing medium- and small-cities into the larger metropolitan structure of their nearest Canadian global city. This observation fits with Ley’s (2007) explanation of population outmigration from large metropolitan areas to nearby medium-sized cities due to high housing costs, reinforced by anti-growth sentiments that commonly strengthen in established neighbourhoods. At the regional scale, then, we are seeing the next cascading wave of decentralization of “Classic Suburbia” taking place, wherein Canada’s metropolitan global city-regions are punctuated by peripheral localities of traditional Fordist-era suburbanism.

#### *Sub/urbanisms in sub/urban places*

Another valuable finding is that various characteristics that were traditionally associated with urban places are now found in suburban areas, and vice-versa. For instance, parts of the inner city also register intermittent incidence of our first, suburban, component. This is likely related to gentrification, which has resulted in some inner city neighbourhoods becoming more affluent and more internally homogenous in terms of socio-economic and ethnic composition. Similarly, CTs with low scores on our second component (thus indicating social homogeneity and non-transit users) are located not only in outlying areas but also in downtowns. This likely arises in part because gentrifier households tend to use transit less frequently than other downtown residents

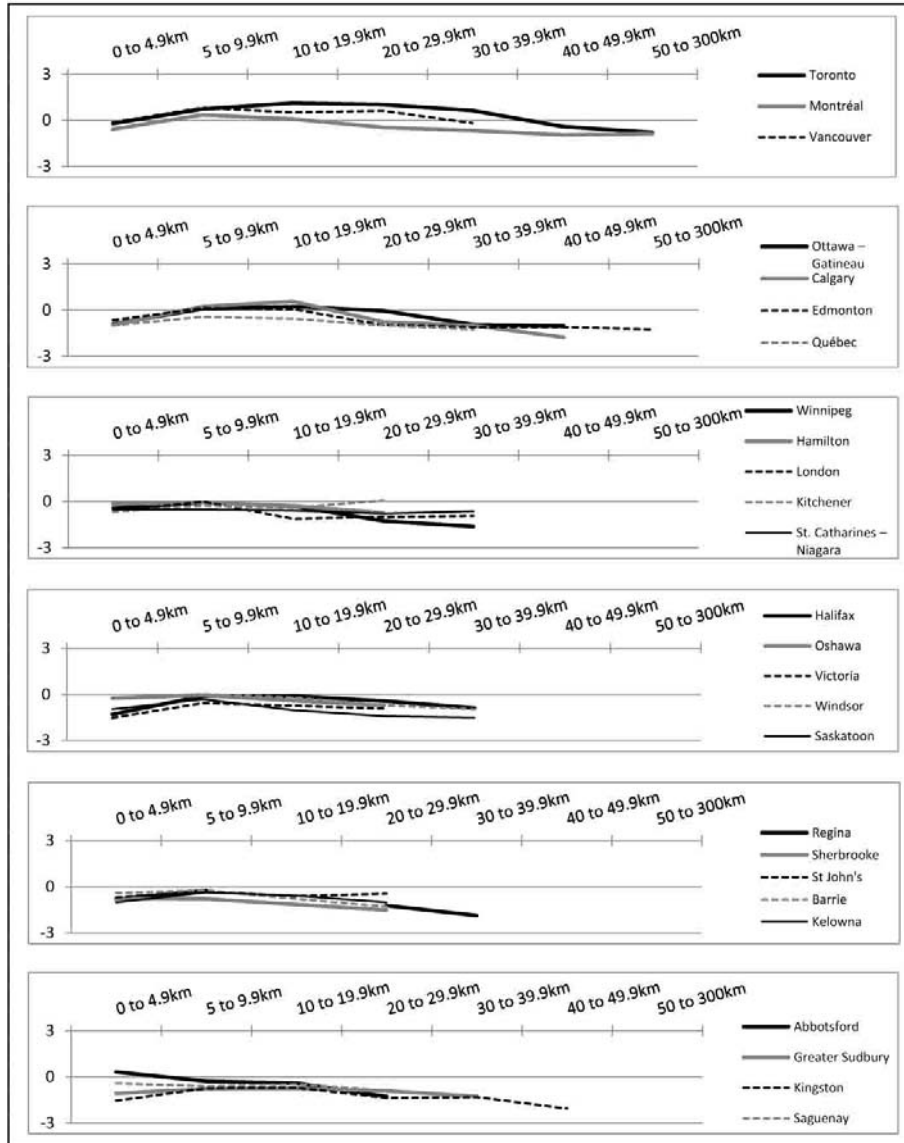
Figure 4: Median scores for component 1 ("Classic Suburbia"), by distance to nearest CBD



and less than immigrants now living in the older suburbs (Danyluk and Ley 2007).

The indicators of our "Classic Suburbia" component are also found in some parts of the inner city. However, this is not a new trend entirely—there have long been established elite neighbourhoods in the central cities of Canadian metropolitan areas, and such neighbourhoods not surprisingly display characteristics that match indicators

Figure 5: Median scores for component 2 ("Immigrant landscape"), by distance to nearest CBD

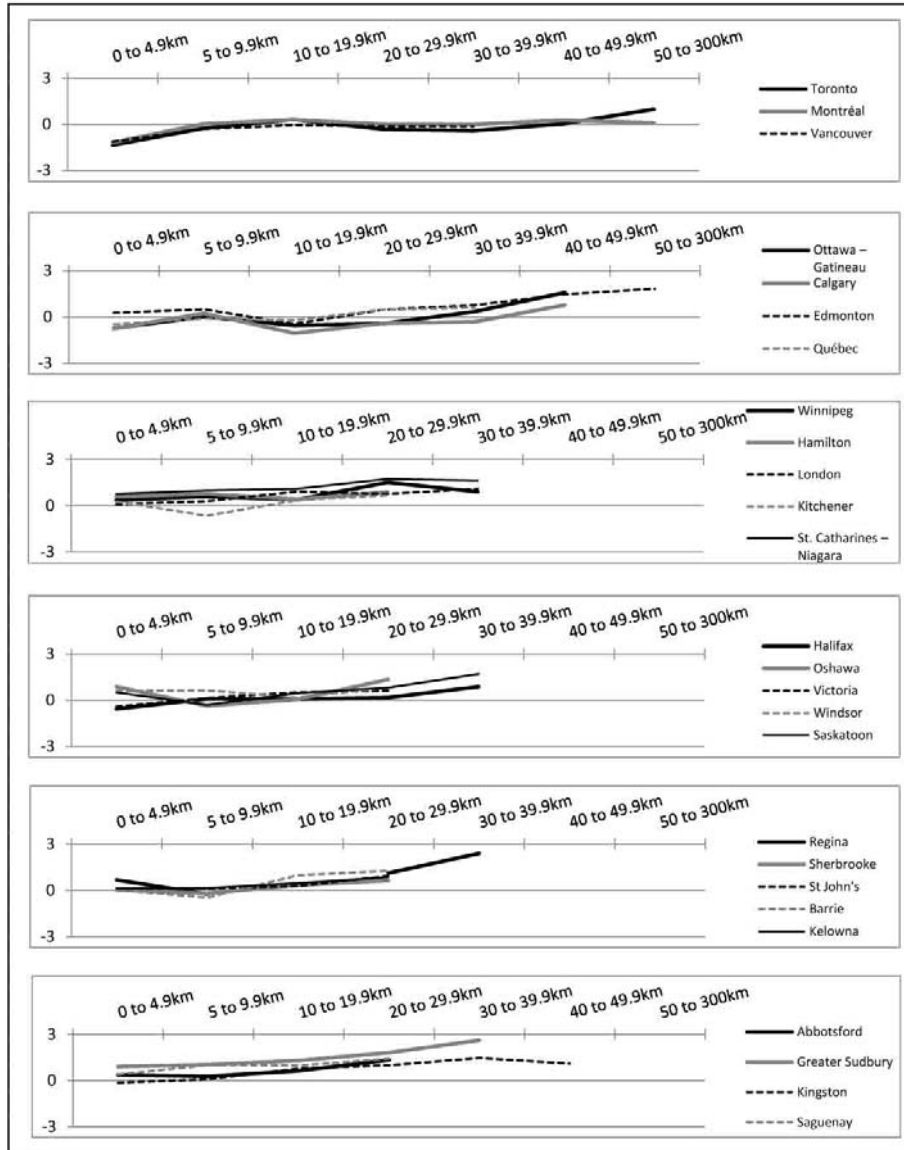


of the popular image of postwar suburbia (e.g., single-family homes, high social status, homogeneity etc.) (Ley 1993).

### Discussion

Over the past four decades, post-Fordist socio-economic restructuring—marked by

Figure 6: Median scores for component 3 ("Polarization"), by distance to nearest CBD



the onset of contemporary globalization and the internationalization of the production process—has reshaped both physically and socially the geography of Canadian cities, creating new forms of socio-spatial segregation through gentrification, immigration and occupational restructuring (Walks 2001, 2006). Postwar stability began to erode in the early 1970s, when the cumulative effects of oil crises, increasing international economic competition, and the decline of the welfare state threw the Fordist

economy and its socio-economic structures into crisis. The transition to a post-Fordist, Schumpeterian workfare state characterized a new economic regime. It brought with it the rollback of social services, falling wages, and increased wealth polarization (Bunting, Walks and Filion 2004, Sassen 2001, Walks 2001, Jessop 1993, Peck and Tickell 2002). Within the new entrepreneurial metropolis, the middle class began to dissipate spatially (Harvey 1989).

Economic restructuring has led to both continuity and change in the Canadian metropolitan landscape. In spite of increased female labour participation rates over the past three decades, today's suburbanization is still reliant on a domesticized household structure (England 1991, Johnson and Johnson 2008, Strong-Boag 1991, Wyly 1999). The built environment of the suburbs contributes to a separation between work and home, the public and the private (Hanson & Pratt 1995), though this divide is being blurred by new technologies that facilitate work in the home, allowing for housework to be done during office time and vice versa (Ford 2011). Suburbanization is still primarily geared at accommodating the nuclear family, and long commutes by private transport are required for all types of trips. In contrast to the inner city, where there is more convenient access to communalized domestic responsibilities like childcare, the suburbs continue to retain a built environment that reproduces a gendered division of labour, placing domestic roles solely on one adult of the household—usually a woman (Ford 2011). This contributes to the creation of what Kim England (1991) calls the “patriarchal nature of the spatial structure of the city.” All parts of society are gendered, and suburbs are increasingly diverse in terms of class composition, family arrangements, and daily rhythms of life; yet, on balance, it is clear that suburbia etches a more stark gender division of labour when compared to city neighborhoods. With most suburbs being underserved by public transportation, their spatial configuration creates a significant “time-squeeze” for women who attempt to balance unpaid domestic labour with demanding professional careers—even as women's increased labour force participation has been essential in sustaining the earnings of middle-class households (Crane 2007; England 1991; Jacobs and Gerson 2004).

However, socio-economic changes have called into question the reliability of imagining Canada's suburbs in terms of the dominance of automobility, domesticity, and cultural and socio-economic homogeneity. Poverty has become more dispersed, and so has the metropolitan immigrant population. Gentrification has brought high-income earners, and increasingly also their cars, to central areas. By contrast, public transit has contributed to the formation of high-density nodes and corridors outside traditional downtowns (Bunting, Filion & Walker, 2010). The post-Fordist city is more uneven and socially and spatially polarized (Walks 2006), characterized not only by continued suburban expansion that accommodates the car but also by a continued expansion of homeownership and the gentrification of central cities—including not only inner-city landscapes of single-family homes, but also new high-rise condominiums that reproduce some suburban ways of life in a vertical spatial form (Kern 2010, Sherrell

2010). Popular imaginings of Canadian postwar suburbia as a middle-class landscape are therefore increasingly challenged by growing polarization between wealthier and poorer residents in suburban neighbourhoods (Hulchanski 2010). Yet amidst polarization there is also a great deal of continuity in the spatial expansion of the metropolitan landscape through what we have called “classic suburban” ways of living.

### Conclusions

Our exploratory research reveals the outcomes of a process of suburbanization that is consistent with the popular image of Canadian postwar suburbia, and suggest that this process has not abated in the contemporary Canadian metropolitan landscape. This is the case across the nation’s urban system in spite of decades of urban restructuring that saw increases in the share of immigrants in the suburbs, a return of higher income earners to the central city, and a dispersion of low-income earners away from it. In fact, some of the fastest growing areas, such as Milton west of Toronto, exemplify how the process of suburbanization has shaped today’s communities. The geographic dispersal of a population whose ways of living match the popular imagining of Canada’s postwar suburbia thus appears to be still occurring, but it is happening on a new scale and includes new kinds of populations (e.g., immigrant nuclear families). Akin to “metroburbia” (Knox 2008), the growing incidence in certain medium- and small-sized metropolitan areas of what we have labelled “Classic Suburbia” likely reflects a spatial expansion of the labour market from the nearby large, global metropolitan areas of Toronto and Vancouver.

The outcomes we see are in a sense quite reminiscent of Wylie’s (1999) depiction of “continuity and change” in the US urban landscape. Suburbanization characterized by development of single-family dwelling tracts, built with the expectation of automobile reliance on the part of the majority of residents, is still being replicated at the edges of Canadian metropolitan areas. At the same time, the incidence and geography of our two other components or indicators of suburbanism lend support to the claim that the internal social fabric of metropolitan areas are more diverse than they are often credited for, thus adding complexity to evolving understandings of contemporary processes of suburbanization. Social homogeneity and the presence of higher income earners are now apparent both in central areas and in outer suburban locations, while cultural diversity and presence of lower income earners are now quite evident in inner suburbs and suburban ethnic enclaves. The formation of ethnic enclaves is a new facet of contemporary suburbanization, and our research demonstrates that the presence of children, near (or at times above) middle-class earnings, single-family dwelling occupancy and high automobile use are all evidently compatible with the presence of social/ethnic diversity. However, our analysis also does show that high proportions of post-1970 immigrants in a given census tract reflect a different dimension of the metropolitan social geography than “Classic Suburbia.” Indeed, one benefit of PCA in this context is that it allows for a geographic area to be described simultaneously by



more than just one type of suburbanism.

There are at least three implications arising from this work. The first is the seeming permanence of the social ideals associated with postwar suburbia, as reflected by contemporary outcomes of suburbanization that we observed here. While widely embraced, these ideals are also often critiqued for contributing to the reproduction of exclusionary and patriarchal structures associated with popular imaginings of the postwar-era suburban lifestyle. This study suggests that metropolitan expansion under the current neoliberal regime has extensively imprinted such ideals onto particular built forms that appear to be enduring. Smith (2006) seems right in noting that “The ideals of space and privacy and the freedom they [the suburbs] convey, the sense of independence and personal control, are not easily forgone, certainly not by Canadians. They are core values that the suburban way of life seeks to satisfy” (p. 217), and more so, we would add, in a “post-political” climate (Swyngedow 2011) that encourages individualism and the idealized notions of self-reliance.

This may begin to explain why stated planning policy, which now largely seeks to minimize the sprawling aspects of suburban development, has not been fully realized in practice (Grant and Scott 2012). The implication here is that attempts to address negative consequences arising from sprawl will ultimately fail if the policies rely on (and thus reinforce) the very neoliberal market logics that have driven contemporary suburban expansion for more than half a century. That is, we cannot address social exclusion and negative environmental consequences arising from automobile use and sprawl simply by ignoring the attractiveness of the privacy and home-ownership aspects of the suburbs to a large segment of the population (Walker and Carter 2010). Rather, we must reconsider policies that have had the polarizing effect of promoting increasingly smaller condominium units near transit in urban areas, which, while encouraging more sustainable ways of life for this segment of the population, have forced many other households to seek out the same privacy and ownership ideals in suburban, auto-dependent areas.

A second implication relates to current discourse and research on metropolitan change, which emphasize the growing internal diversity of suburbs and inner city gentrification. By contrast, our analysis shows that in spite of the notable incidence of such processes, the popular imaginings of postwar suburbia still constitute a substantive aspect of the metropolitan landscape in Canada. This finding matters because contemporary urban debates relating to the intensification of land uses and attempts to reduce automobile use continue to face considerable opposition (Condon 2010). We can speculate that this opposition arises, at least in part, due to the lack of congruence between largely suburban constituencies and the promotion of what are still seen in some quarters as planner-driven urban lifestyles (Preville 2011, Sewell 2009). In this respect, we recall the role of white, middle-class reformers and planners in the 1960s and 1970s, whose plans for the central city were often made at the expense of the suburbs (see for example Desfor et al. 2006). If attempts at reducing



heavy automobile use and sprawl are to be successful, these issues will need to be addressed throughout the metropolitan area and not only in the inner cities, which is where most intensification efforts and transit projects in Canadian cities are currently focused. Families' needs for larger dwelling space must be accommodated through alternative housing types that compromise between large lot single-detached homes on the urban fringe and high-density central units that cannot adequately support growing families (Skaburskis 2006). Such medium-density housing options would also be able to support improved transit servicing and consequently reduce automobile use for more households.

The final implication is a conceptual one. The present-day materialization of popular imaginings of the postwar suburb is epitomized in our "Classic Suburbia" indicator. This indicator registers its highest incidences in outlying areas within the metropolitan system, increasing in significance with distance away from the central business district. In other words, there is justification for considering the suburbs as the areas located outside a spatially defined inner city. At the same time, this approach alone would of course mask many of the nuances our analysis revealed both with respect to the diversity that characterizes contemporary outcomes of suburbanization and to the spread of some attributes associated with popular imaginings of postwar suburbia to central areas. Our analysis indicates that such ways of living are actually taking place in central areas, but also that ways of living that were traditionally seen as "urban" are also found outside that urban core. Our findings therefore simultaneously lend legitimacy but question the practice of using a central reference point in analyzing contemporary processes of metropolitan change. By formulating a complementary definition of suburban based on the ways of living occurring in specific areas, our approach can facilitate future study into the factors that are promoting greater spatial variability of the suburban ideal.

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