

Jill L. Grant, Alan Walks and Howard Ramos, eds.
***Changing Neighbourhoods: Social and Spatial Polarization in Canadian Cities* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2020),**
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Cities and neighbourhoods across Canada are undergoing significant social and economic transformations. Though change is an expected part of urban development, Canadian cities are experiencing growing levels of income inequality and polarization. In *Changing Neighbourhoods: Social and Spatial Polarization in Canadian Cities*, editors Jill Grant, Alan Walks, and Howard Ramos assemble a collection of studies that provide a stark picture of the socio-economic realities of Canadian cities: low-income neighbourhoods and high-income neighbourhoods are intensifying, and “the middle is disappearing.” Differences in city characteristics, including population and geographic size, regional culture, ethno-cultural diversity, and population age, mean that neighbourhood change and inequality happen in different ways and for different reasons. This data-driven collection takes up important questions about the causes and trends of neighbourhood change.

The chapters in this book stem from the collaborative efforts of researchers engaged in the Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership (NCRP). The project seeks to understand inequality, change, and diversity at a local level across Canada. Focus on the neighbourhood level enriches our understanding of the patterning of inequality and offers much needed nuance to previous works at the city and regional levels. The book relies on multiple data sources, namely Canadian census data and tax filer data from Canada Revenue Agency, to explore neighbourhood transitions and the extent to which the Canadian urban landscape can be characterized by “divided cities.”

The coverage and scope of the book constitute its major contribution to urban studies. The book is organized into three parts. Part 1 introduces readers to the project, situates Canada within a larger global framework of economic inequality and polarization, and reviews key approaches to the study of neighbourhood inequality and change. Part 2 investigates neighbourhood change in each of the seven study cities: Toronto; Montreal; Vancouver; Hamilton; Halifax; Calgary; and Winnipeg. Part 3 reflects on these findings and proposes policy solutions to meet the challenges confronting Canadian cities. Extant studies tend to examine one city over time or multiple cities at one point in time. This book extends knowledge of the Canadian urban context by looking at multiple cities over time. The comparative focus provides new insight into the causes and consequences of inequality and polarization.

While the seven cities differ in important ways, the chapters identify commonalities. For example, the greater Toronto region is Canada’s most unequal and income-segregated region, owing to a complex set of factors including economic restructur-

ing, migration flows, and neighbourhood gentrification. While operating in distinct ways, these factors have also contributed to neighbourhood inequality in other cities, and the book carries these issues throughout its chapters. Smaller cities such as Halifax may be less polarized and have lower levels of inequality than larger urban centres like Toronto and Vancouver, but they are not immune to external and local pressures that bring about socio-economic and political change. Alongside descriptive discussions of income inequality, the chapters provide valuable discussions of urban practice and policy. Central among them are discussions of gentrification. This was a common theme in the study cities, though the pace and impact of gentrification is uneven in Canada. For example, Hamilton provides a unique case as it experiences gentrification that is tied to Toronto's housing and employment contexts. Commuting between the two cities and movement of Toronto workers to Hamilton has moved up home prices in the city and forced some Hamilton workers to look for homes in surrounding areas such as Brantford or St. Catharines.

Given the salience of ethnic and racial change in Canadian cities and its connection to socio-spatial and income polarization, the chapters would have benefited from closer attention to intersections of race, ethnicity, religion, and income. The chapters on Toronto, Halifax, and Winnipeg do attend more directly to racial and ethnic differences and Indigenous populations. The book admittedly focuses on "broad societal trends and the location-specific dimensions of those trends" (p. 5), but in doing so often presents findings that reduce important differences within immigrant and ethnic communities.

Toronto stands out in the book as being the most socially unequal and segregated Canadian city. Toronto is also home to Canada's largest Jewish community, with nearly half of Canadian Jews living in the Greater Toronto Area. For racial and ethnic minority groups, socio-spatial concentration is largely the result of external forces including racism, declining employment opportunities, and economic restructuring. The negative effects of this are particularly acute among racialized populations, namely South Asians, African Canadians, and recent immigrants, who are most likely to live in neighbourhoods marked by long-term income decline.

Historically, these external forces also caused Jews to live in segregated Jewish neighbourhoods, however, in more recent decades the Jewish population has experienced the shifting social geography in cities like Toronto quite differently than many other ethnic and racial groups. Jews are among the most residentially concentrated ethnic groups in Canada, but their socio-spatial concentration today is largely the result of choice. No longer confronted with systemic discrimination restricting where they can live, Jews have nevertheless remained highly concentrated in particular neighbourhoods in Toronto, Montreal, and Winnipeg. Alongside processes of suburbanization and gentrification discussed throughout the book, Jews have fared compara-

tively well. Still, as the book makes clear, Canada as a nation of increasingly “divided cities,” has important implications for everyone. Beyond the immediate economic, health, and social consequences of concentrated poverty, divided cities breed intolerance and present numerous other challenges to the security and well-being of the broader society.

Changing Neighbourhoods provides a timely and significant contribution to our understanding of the causes and consequences of social change at the neighbourhood level. The book will be of interest not only to researchers studying cities, but also to policy makers at all levels of government and community organizations seeking to effect positive change.

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