NCRP Funded Research UPDATES

September 2014

The detailed proposal for each of these research initiatives is available at www.NeighbourhoodChange.ca under the About tab, Research Team Documents.

1. The Emerging Vancouver Skytrain Poverty Corridor, David Ley, UBC, 2013

Our project is a further examination of the findings in “Divisions and Disparities in Lotus Land” (Ley and Lynch 2012), which shows a polarization of average incomes in Greater Vancouver from 1975 to 2005. During this time a distinctive zone of districts along the rapid transit Skytrain corridor have moved into low income status. Our research seeks to identify the factors which have led to the development of this new low-income region in formerly middle-income neighbourhoods, and raises questions regarding the security of the region’s affordable housing.

At the metropolitan scale, we have conducted a series of multivariate and logistic regressions using census tract level data from the 1996 and 2006 Canadian Censuses to identify significant variables that account for average income disparity and decline. At the sub-regional scale, 14 key informants have been interviewed. These informants include municipal and regional planning professionals, community development professionals, and immigrant services professionals all working in the Skytrain corridor. At the local scale we have conducted 2 focus groups with 13 residents of a low-income neighbourhood in the inner suburb of South Burnaby and 2 more focus groups are planned.


We conducted the interpretation of the ‘three cities’ data and released summary reports. The work has been challenging but ultimately very productive.

We hired two students to focus their research on helping us to organize and interpret the data. During summer 2013 we worked to analyze the data and to begin a report to explain the findings. The draft report was circulated in fall 2013 and the final version released in late February 2014. We continue to work on bringing the data forward for publication in scholarly and professional outlets.

We offered presentations on the work to HRM planning and housing staff, to the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre, and to the wider Halifax community. We received some press interest in the work. We intend to hold further consultations with NGOs and other groups to determine how to make our research useful for them.

This project will produce a comprehensive report that is closely aligned with the Toronto three city study document. The outcome will be comprehensive introductions to the critical thematic areas that have contributed to shaping Winnipeg’s present neighbourhood structure.

4. **The Evolution of Canadian Discourse on Urban Neighbourhoods since 1900, Richard Harris, McMaster U, 2013**

The purpose of the project is to trace the changing discourse about neighbourhoods in Canada since 1900. The first phase, which involves keyword searchers of neighbourhoods and planning in the Globe and Mail since 1900, was substantially complete by the end of March 2014. The second and more substantial phase, a survey of postwar planning documents in Toronto, Vancouver and Halifax, began at about this time. Research on Montreal will begin in May 2014.

Newspaper evidence from the Globe, and also from the New York Times, indicates two peaks in the public debates about neighbourhoods, 1910s-1920s and then rising again from the 1970s. These coincide with periods of high-income inequality and high levels of immigration. In related research based on secondary sources, I am developing the argument that neighbourhoods have become more important over the past century. This argument will be presented and discussed at the University of Chicago’s 2014 Urban Forum, April 24-25th.

5. **Neighbourhood Change and the Spatial Distribution of Violent Crime, Rosemary Gartner, UofT, 2013**

This research examines changes in the spatial distribution of violent crime in Toronto between 1998 and 2009 to determine whether violent crime has become concentrated in certain areas as the city has become more economically segregated, socially polarized, and ethnically and culturally diverse. Our data show that while calls to the Toronto Police Service for violent crimes have decreased slightly over this 12-year period – from over 80,000 calls annually in the late 1990s and early 2000s to approximately 75,000 per year in 2008 and 2009 – these calls are disproportionately concentrated in certain areas of the city.

We will soon be geo-coding the crime data to census dissemination areas and conducting time series analyses to determine whether the spatial patterning of violent crimes has shifted over time. Following this, we will link the violent crime data to characteristics of the local areas where they occur and examine whether changes in the socio-economic and demographic characteristics, and in the infrastructure of these areas are associated with changes in violent crime. We are particularly interesting in the effects of urban revitalization and gentrification processes, as well as targeted policing strategies, on the spatial distribution of violent crimes in Toronto.

6. **The Temporary Neighbourhoods of Homeless Youth in Shelters and Implications of Socio-spatial Polarization, Kathleen Gallagher, OISE UofT, 2013**

To formulate a youth perspective on neighbourhood inequality, our team from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, has been working with community partner:
Project: Humanity theatre conducting drama workshops in a Rexdale youth shelter (our second community partner). The workshops focus on drama activities and discussion about neighbourhoods; both the neighbourhood in which the shelter is located and neighbourhoods in which the youth have previously lived. We have interviewed fourteen youth either individually or in groups and they have been very eager to engage with our questions and have appealed to us to make known the circumstances of their lives. We are currently about half way through the collection of our data: audio/video recorded interviews as well as several hours of video data from the workshops. There are many youth who do not consent to the use of video so we have been limited in how much we have been able to tape for later analysis. We are convinced that what the youth are sharing with us and what they are creating in their workshops will provide evidence of the multiple injustices of income polarization and limited infrastructural and personal support they have experienced. These results will be highly relevant to the larger Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership.

7. Metro Vancouver’s Shifting Debtscape, David Ley, UBC, 2014
This project will examine the debtscape of Vancouver. It will add to existing work in several ways. First it will examine a comprehensive set of types of debt provided by Equifax. Second, it will consider a time series showing the changing extent of debt. Third, it will complement spatial analysis of the debtscape by interviews with at risk households. The primary sponsor of this project is SPARC BC and an important objective of the project is the creation of public expert panels and the development of a policy report for government, social agencies and financial institutions.

8. How do People Perceive Neighbourhood Change in Halifax, Howard Ramos, Dalhousie, April 2014
Our analysis of economic inequality and changes at the Census Tract (CT) level for the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) between 1970 and 2010 indicated that CTs were a poor proxy for neighbourhoods (Prouse et al. 2014; Prouse 2014). In many respects, that scale of measurement masked diversity of economic and social trends within the regional geography, making the city seem relatively homogeneous and equitable. Defining neighbourhoods is difficult, and administrative divisions rarely capture them adequately. While our work to date has characterized ‘neighbourhoods’ quantitatively and spatially, we believe it is equally important to understand how people in the city perceive economic, social, and cultural conditions and changes in their neighbourhoods. We will investigate these issues using a mixed methods research design, including statistics and surveys, fieldwork, and interviews.

In their A City-Region Growing Apart? report (2013), Rose and Twigge-Molecey showed that income inequalities between neighbourhoods have been widening in the Montréal metropolitan area over the last decades, even if they are not as substantial as in Toronto or Vancouver. The lowest-income neighbourhoods of Greater Montréal are also neighbourhoods with major
concentrations of recent immigrants (Côte-des-Neiges, Parc-Extension, Montréal-Nord, Saint-Michel, LaSalle...). To expand on these findings, we propose to study the working poor in the Greater Montréal region (and a few adjacent zones so as to fully cover the territory of our main partner, Centraide). The first objective is to identify the key characteristics of the working poor in Montreal, based on the report written by our Toronto colleagues for the Metcalf Foundation. In its latest report on the state of work in Quebec (Kilolo-Malambwe and Rabemananjar 2014), the Institut de la statistique du Québec has revealed that women still earn less than men and that nearly all new jobs that are filled by immigrants are in the service sector, two processes strongly related to low earnings. This diversity of interrelated factors encourages us to adopt an intersectional framework in order to give more depth to the results by giving accurate portraits of different types of working poor. The second objective is to determine whether the working poor live in the neighbourhoods with the lowest incomes. This socio-geographical knowledge of the working poor will enable our partner Centraide to inform local NGOs about the particular needs of this population that often experiences a threefold flexibility (i.e. wages, schedules, staff). Finally, this report is about identifying socio-spatial trends of working poverty in Greater Montreal. Our team will analyze special compilations of 2001 and 2006 census data, and will compare the results with similar studies such as that of Ulysse (2006) "When work does not protect one from falling into poverty". They will also be compared to the conclusions of the Toronto study in order to identify some common trends that may come up in various Canadian urban contexts.