The Canadian Discourse on Urban Neighbourhoods, 1900-present

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Scope:

- Discourse: speech + action
- Residents and experts
- All urban areas
- All types of neighbourhoods (esp. middle-income and poor)

Sources:

- Academic studies
- Planning documents, 1945- (thanks to Emily Hawes, Amy Shanks, Alexandre Maltais, Will Gregory)
- Newspaper coverage (Globe and Mail; New York Times)
- Google Ngram Viewer

Outline:

1. Why neighbourhoods matter more now
2. Historical trend in discourse
3. Geographical focus (within urban area)
4. Issues: social, physical, process
1. Why neighbourhoods matter more now

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e45eZz1DwYY
(Chicago Urban Forum, April, 2014)

A. Homeownership: 33% to 66%
   - Owners have a twofold stake in their neighbourhood
   - Lower rates of residential mobility
   - Owners care more – NIMBYism

B. Education: neighbourhood school
   - Increased importance of formal education
   - Neighbourhoods chosen because of school
C. Long-term cycles of immigration and income disparity

- **1900s-1920s:**
  - High disparity
  - High immigration
  - Limited state services

- **1930s-1970s:**
  - Reduced disparity (1940s)
  - Initially lower immigration
  - Standardised services

- **1970s-present:**
  - Increasing disparity
  - Sustained high immigration, visible minorities
  - Cutbacks
2. Historical trend in the discourse

- Two peaks: 1900-1920s, 1970s-present
- Difference is the role of the state
Graph these comma-separated phrases: neighborhoods

between 1900 and 2008 from the corpus English with smoothing of 5

Search lots of books
• Trend complicated by ‘neighbourhood unit’, esp. 1940s-1960s
• (a discourse largely confined to planners)
3. Geographical focus

- Always disproportionately inner city
  - 1900s-1920s – lower income need: ‘neglected neighbourhoods’ and settlement houses
    - e.g. Neighbourhood Workers’ Association, 1918
    - (but note suburban Earls Court, Peter Bryce)
  - 1970s onwards – redevelopment pressures, NIP neighbourhoods, gentrification (e.g. Toronto, Vancouver)
  - 1990s onwards – lower income need: ‘priority neighbourhoods’ (e.g. Hamilton, Winnipeg)
• Recent emergence of concern for inner suburbs (variable)
4. Issues

1900s-1920s
1. Social – settlement houses, social workers, etc
   • Living conditions: health
   • Cultural assimilation – ‘becoming Canadian’
   • Soft services: recreational facilities, libraries
2. Physical – ratepayer associations
   • Services
   • Land use restrictions (zoning/residential restrictions)

1970s onwards
1. Social – service agencies, city administrations
   • Living conditions: affordability
   • Cultural recognition
   • Jobs and soft services
2. Physical – neighbourhood associations
   • Redevelopment (NIMBYism)
   • Transit
   • ‘Complete’ neighbourhoods, with mixed land use, walkability & public services.
1970s onwards (continued)

3. Process: relation with municipal government
   • Appease (1960s-1970s)
   • Encourage participation (1970s-1980s)
   • Integrate (1990s-present): ‘City of Neighbourhoods’
     o Protect middle class neighbourhoods
     o Foster community in poor, immigrant neighbourhoods