

Cities and Polarization

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What Do We Know and Where Do We Go:
Building a Social Inclusion Research Agenda

“There were others for dinner. A young man and a woman with a baby. Chladek with another bottle. Others he didn’t recognize. They all stood quietly in or just out of the ring of golden firelight. Everyone brought their own plates, produced from backpacks and hidden pockets.

The Professor looked at him curiously when Caruzo and he pulled in with their bag of starlings. He smiled at his father and nodded his head. He felt wonderful.

Dinner came together like on those magical nights when the front is packed and the back is slammed but not a thing you touch will turn out wrong. Everything leaves the frenzy of the kitchen in a warm halo of perfection. The room is stoked; the energy builds and builds.

He plucked and drew the starlings. He ran them down green wood skewers separated by slices of stale baguette brushed with olive oil and rubbed in garlic. Somebody brought potatoes. Another person had foil and onions. There were bottles of wine.

He laid the skewers across the shopping-cart grill and he felt very, very good.” (Timothy Taylor, Stanley Park, p.292)

“La cuisine n’étant pas grande, Rose-Anna reconnut que souvent elle avait contrarié l’enfant dans son plaisir, bousculant les chaises et l’envoyant jouer ailleurs.

Elle fut de nouveau tellement fatiguée qu’elle dut s’arrêter. Haletante, elle pensa à tous les malheurs qui leur étaient arrivés depuis quelques semaines. Ils passèrent devant elle en tourbillon et, lorsqu’elle ouvrit les yeux sur la clarté du ciel, elle se demanda si ce n’était pas un mauvais rêve qui l’avait surprise. Et cependant, à mesure qu’elle s’apaisait, à mesure que les battements de son cœur s’espaçaient, elle retrouvait de la force pour reconnaître et admettre ces malheurs.

Quelle folie que d’être allé aux sucres! Chercher une joie, n’était-ce pas pour eux, est-ce que ce n’avait pas toujours été un sûr moyen de s’attirer la malchance.” (Gabrielle Roy, Bonheur d’occasion, p.227).

I start this presentation with two long quotations from novels - Bonheur d’occasion and Stanley

Park - to set the stage for thinking about cities and polarization. As these quotations indicate, we want to think about how urban space creates inclusion and exclusion and how inclusion and exclusion create and condition urban spaces. Gourmet food for the homeless in Stanley Park, happiness for the poor in Montreal - how does the juxtaposition of the marginalized and the privileged create the conditions of social exclusion and inclusion. This presentation covers some of the same issues as the other workshops - immigration, ethno-cultural diversity, disability, poverty - but looks at it through the lens of space, through thinking about cities. How do cities create social exclusion and inclusion and what sort of research should we be doing to better understand this? This presentation makes the argument for two research priorities: more theorizing (and, on the basis of this, more empirical research) about the consequences of the spatial distribution of poverty, ethno-cultural diversity and immigration in Canadian cities and secondly, a lot more research on interventions, practices, programs that are going on in cities relating to social inclusion. In other words, we need to think more about how to understand the processes that create social exclusion in Canada's cities and we need to know more about the practices, and the impact of these practices, that are building social inclusion in Canada's cities. In looking at each of these questions, it should be clear that I am in no way doing a systematic literature review. Both Bunting and Filion (2000) and Andrew, Graham and Phillips (2002) have extensive bibliographies, the Metropolis website and the admirable Canadian Social Research links website have extensive listing of resources. What I want to do here is use a few examples of recent research to illustrate directions I think our research efforts should take.

Theorizing the processes of exclusion: the art of measurement

Recent work has been done on the spatial distribution of poverty in Canadian cities. (Bourne 2000, Ley and Smith 1997, Halli and Kazemipur 1997, Kazemipur 2000, Ray 1999, Germain 2003). We are beginning to understand more about the growth and persistence of poor neighbourhoods and their link to immigration. But we also need, and this seems to me a research priority, to continue to work on trying to articulate the links between spatial distribution and social exclusion. Kazemipur has described the link in terms of Tocqueville's theory of relative deprivation; "the concentration of the poor

in certain neighbourhoods means that their contacts would be confined mostly to other poor”(p.408). Living in poor neighbourhoods limits the likelihood of people realizing that change is possible because they do not see different life styles. Ray (1999) has added to this debate by looking both at the evenness of the residential distribution of social groups and also at the probability of contact between groups within city areas based on whether the groups share residential space. Comparing Montreal and Toronto is interesting; on evenness Montreal emerges as a more separated environment than Toronto but on exposure, things are different; “there is a much higher probability that immigrant groups will have contact with the British/French Canadian population in Montreal relation to Toronto” (p.80). Further complexity is added by Bourne’s analysis of increasing polarization and the visibility of certain marginalised groups - the homeless and street people, young single mothers, the frail elderly (p.31). What this adds also is the theoretical question - is it poverty or polarization that is the significant variable in turns of understanding social behaviour? And is it the creation of spaces of deprivation and alienation or is it perceptions about spaces that are the most significant? Certainly research has indicated that feelings of lack of security do influence behaviour (Whitzman 2002). Germain (2003) adds to the debate by reminding us that spatial concentrations also imply the possibilities of different regimes of managing these concentrations. She compares the old city of Montreal’s intercultural approach to Laval’s universalist republicanism and Brossard’s efforts to base integration of the variety of ethno-cultural communities on a exploration of the common values of the new and the old communities.

We therefore need to do more work thinking about what it is that is significant about spatial concentrations of poverty, of polarization, of recent immigration in neighbourhoods. Is the persistence and deepening poverty of poor neighbourhoods a problem because the residents cannot see other life-styles and therefore cannot imagine changing the distribution of societal resources? Or is it a problem because these spatial distributions get different levels of public services and indeed different philosophies of public action? Rose (2003) reminds us that the suburbanisation of immigration, particularly in Toronto, imposes problems of access to services and of distance and travel time to jobs and services and that these constraints particularly affect women. (p.7)

In terms of research, Ray reminds us that our theoretical questions relate to issues of measurement. If contact between marginalised groups and the mainstream is the significant issue, then certain measures are more relevant than others. Rose (2003) adds to this by linking period of immigration, educational attainment and gender and underlining the fact that immigrants with university degrees arriving after 1981 are more likely than non-immigrants to be in jobs that do not fully utilize their qualifications, and that this gap is greater for women. What this supports is that the non-recognition of foreign credentials may be adding to spatial concentrations by lowering the earnings of recently arrived immigrants and therefore pushing them into poorer neighbourhoods. What combination of push and pull factors are we looking for at? And how can we look at this empirically and theoretically?

Without going into these questions in depth, there is a huge amount of exciting international literature emerging on these questions. On the bases of urban organization - going back to Kazemipur's argument that the perception of the possibility of change is necessary in order for people to want to act - Holston's (2001) work on urban citizenship and Roth's (2000) on social citizenship both provide avenues for thinking about the relationship of the organization of urban space and the organization of collective action.

Les pratiques d'intervention dans les villes: la gouvernance urbaine

Notre deuxième champ de recherche touche aux études sur les pratiques d'intervention visant l'inclusion sociale. Nous pouvons penser à toute une série des types d'intervention qui visent à construire l'inclusion sociale; les projets qui visent à accroître le sentiment de sécurité urbaine des femmes, la création d'emplois pour les populations marginalisées, l'empowerment des groupes de clients des institutions urbaines (ensembles de logement public, institutions de santé mentale, écoles et conseils scolaires, centre communautaires, etc) les projets interculturels et multiculturels. Il y a une certain nombre d'études sur ces initiatives (voir, entre autre, Church 1997a, 1997b, Fontan et al 2003, Whitzman 2002) et, aussi, une énorme, mais plus difficilement accessible, littérature "grise" sur ces projets. Les sites internet pour le projet Metropolis et the Canadian Social Research Newsletter ne

sont que deux sources possibles - d'autres sources incluent les listes de projets subventionnés par toutes sortes de programmes gouvernementaux, tels que le Conseil national sur la prévention du crime, l'Égalité pour Décider du Gouvernement du Québec, les subventions "Breaking the cycle of Violence" de la ville de Toronto. Mais, malgré l'intérêt des études existantes, nous connaissons fort peu des choses sur les structures et les procédures de ces projets et sur l'impact de ces projets - est-ce qu'ils réussissent à accroître l'inclusion sociale?

We need to know a lot more about the ways in which intervention is structured and the ways in which different projects have met the challenges of organizing to build social inclusion - we have Kathryn Church's fascinating studies of the Ontario Council of Alternative Businesses (OCAB) and the ways in which psychiatric survivors have built survivor-controlled community businesses, we have studies of the eleven existing corporations of community economic development in Montreal and their work in integrating marginalized populations (Fontan et al 2003), Evelyn Peters (2002) has looked at Aboriginal controlled urban-focussed institutions in Winnipeg and Carolyn Whitzman (2002) has analyzed the experience of women's safety audits in terms of the "diffusion / de-fusion of a feminist idea" (p.108). But even here we need to know more about the questions of governance - what are the structures of decision-making? Of accountability? Of democracy? And on a second dimension: how can we measure the impact of these projects on social inclusion? What would be the appropriate ways to evaluating the success, or lack of success, of these projects?

We need many more analyses of these projects - we need individual case studies, comparisons between cities, comparisons between sectors, comparisons across time. There are so many exciting projects and we need more information about them. The elected empowerment Council of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the work being done by St. Christopher's House in Toronto in linking policy analysts with community members, the work of Ottawa's Lower Town Resource Center (and other community resource centres in Ottawa) with "les cuisines collectives" as a mechanism of ethnocultural integration, and hundreds of other examples.

At the same time, we need to innovate in terms of methods of research; this research should not be done “on” the community, it should be done “with” and “for” the community. The example of the federal Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) programme, Community-University Research Alliances (CURA), is one such example of an effort to expand traditional research methods. Another is le Fonds québécois de la recherche sur la société et la culture (FQRSC) new programme - appui à la recherche innovante which supports research that can be shown to be innovative, both theoretically and practically.

We also need to develop evaluation that builds on participatory research methods. Evaluation should not be an external imposition on a project or agency; it should be a practice that the project sees as useful and that involves that participants in thinking about what they do, why and with what results.

The research we need relates to governance, both at the level of the governance structures of individual projects but also at the ways in which the individual projects are linked, through a variety of networks, and how these relate to the governance of cities. To take one local Ottawa example, the individual community resource and health centres are linked through a coalition of centres. This linking takes place primarily through meetings of the executive-directors but also through meetings of the community development staff people and, more rarely, through meetings of members of the Boards of Directors. Each centre is also part of all kinds of networks within their own neighbourhood and, as well, the centres include staff from a variety of city-wide agencies. Links between the centres and the city government are strong; the city funds the centres and sees them as partners in realizing city objectives. A whole set of networks that need to be studied in order to situate the resource centres in terms of social inclusion. I should add here and this should be seen as publicity and promotion - that the up coming Canadian Social Welfare Policy Conference - co-organized by the Canadian Council on Social Development and the University of Ottawa that will be at the University of Ottawa June 15 to 17 will have a number of presentations that look at the kinds of intervention projects we have been talking about. Don't forget to mark June 15 to 17 in your calendars and come back to Ottawa for the conference.

It is important to look at these networks and these sets of relationships in terms of questions of governance, of representation, of accountability and of democracy. And we need to link these to our understanding of the ways in which municipal government works in our cities. It is interesting that both Milroy (2002) and Munter (2003) analyse local government in terms of values and that those sets of values involve citizen input in meaningful ways. Milroy argues for a governance structure that sees the city as embedded in webs (of planning, ecological webs, webs of globally-engaged cities, etc) and as combining elements of representative democracy and meaningful direct democracy. Munter echoes this in talking about tolerance, diversity, community and equality. The kind of analytical work done by Craig and Lerner (2002) on local partnership in New Zealand provides an excellent example for the kind of research we need on urban governance.

Notre priorité ici est d'abord d'accumuler les recherches sur les projets d'intervention qui ont un impact sur l'inclusion sociale. Tel qu'élaboré ici, je vois deux dimensions centrales pour ces recherches; les structures de gouvernance au niveau des pratiques d'intervention et l'évaluation de l'impact ou des résultats des projets. Sans ces deux dimensions, nous ne pouvons pas commencer à saisir les processus de construction de l'inclusion sociale. En même temps nous devrions commencer à faire la recherche sur comment ces projets et pratiques font partie de l'ensemble de la gouvernance urbaine. Si l'idée de la gouvernance fait référence à des processus de décision et de leadership dans les conditions où il y a un grand nombre d'acteurs sociaux impliqués, il est clair que nos grandes villes représentent de cas de gouvernance. Comprendre la gouvernance urbaine de nos villes, ce serait de comprendre comment les processus, les structures et les projets qui accroît l'inclusion sociale sont en rapport avec les processus, structures et projets qui augmentent l'exclusion sociale.

Conclusion:

Building a social inclusion research agenda on cities and polarization

My proposals for our research agenda are simple. We need to think more about why the spatial concentration of inequality and exclusion is important and we have to continue to develop more complex and more sophisticated ways of measuring these situations and the processes that produce them. In addition we need to know more than we do now about the structures, processes and results of the projects and practices of intervention that exist to build social inclusion. What explains the successful projects and how do we measure success? And in doing this research we have to think of new ways of doing research in terms of the relations between participants in the projects and participants in the research. Processes of social inclusion should also include rethinking relationships to knowledge and knowledge production.

I see my suggestions for a research agenda as very much reflecting trends in the research work that is being done. I am therefore not so much suggesting changing our direction but strengthening certain directions that exist. Interdisciplinary / multi disciplinary / transdisciplinary research is certainly a strong direction at the present time and so too is policy relevant research. The building of genuine research partnerships between practitioners and researchers is also a current direction. All of these trends need to be supported and encouraged if we are to build the kind of research agenda on social inclusion that we need in Canada.

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