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The City Institute at York University (CITY)

Mobility in the in-between city: Getting stuck between the local and the global

Creating Cities: Culture, Space and Sustainability

München 27 February 2010

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Research funded by Infrastructure Canada



Photo by Fernando Morales

The metropolitan century



- More than 50 percent urban globally
- 70 percent of Canadians in cities
- Most Canadians live in large urban areas

The urban century is in-between

- Urbanization as the defining social process of the emerging century
- For most, this means suburbanization
- Creating cities means creating suburbs
- But suburbanization and suburbanism are changing shape
- New forms of in-betweenness are prevalent

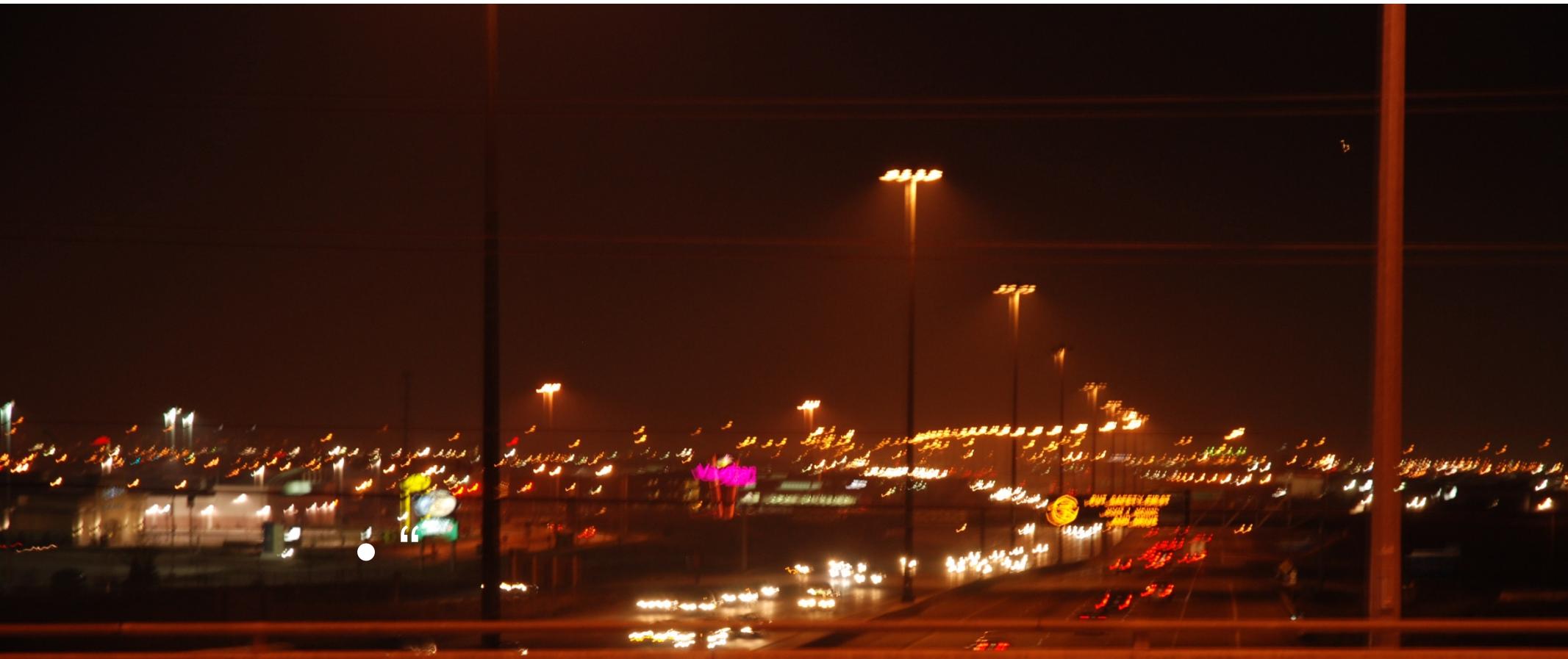
Between the glamour zones

The traditional downtown



The conventional suburb





•in-between cities”
complex urban landscapes
(Sieverts, 2003)

The topology of the in-between city

- Sieverts's *Zwischenstadt* originally based on recent spatial developments in Europe (critique of concept of the traditional, more compact, uni-centred European city). Sieverts notes that this new urban form is now pervasive and home as well as workplace to a growing percentage of Europeans. The in-between cities now appear as the most dynamic and problematic forms of suburbanization.

Zwischenstadt in North America

- in-between cities now the most dynamic and problematic forms of suburbanization.
- In North America, they comprise the old post-WW2 suburbs in particular, but also the transitional zones between those suburbs and the exurban fringe
- a wild and often unexplainable mix of uses untypical for either the inner city or the classical suburb, they present landscapes of extreme spatial and social segregation.

The In-between city



- that part of the urban region that is perceived as not quite traditional city and not quite traditional suburb (Sieverts, 2003).
- new urban morphology where a large part of metropolitan populations live, work and play.
- Conceptually, a particular view towards urban Canada and beyond.

Socio-morphological basics

The socio-spatial landscape of the in-between city
(Sieverts, 2003)

“splintering urbanism”
(Graham and Marvin, 2001)

Urban regions as “archipelagos of enclaves” (Hajer
and Reijndorp, 2001)

In-between city as relationality

- The in-between city is less a spatial form that can be defined in static positive terms (fixed average densities, specific constitutive elements, particular minimal features, mix of uses, etc.) but a set of internal and external relationships that realign the elements of urbanity more fundamentally.

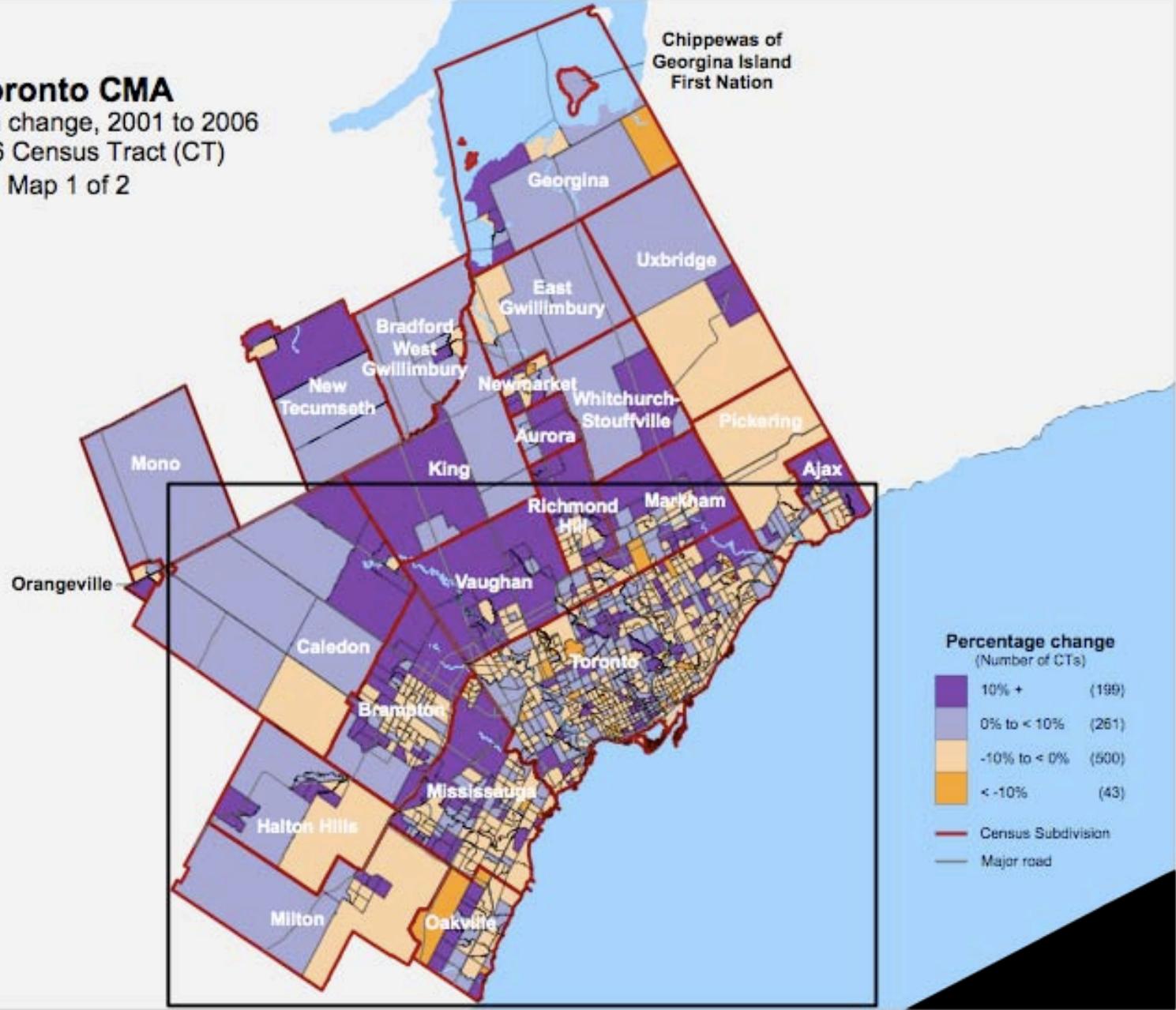
In-betweenness as relationality

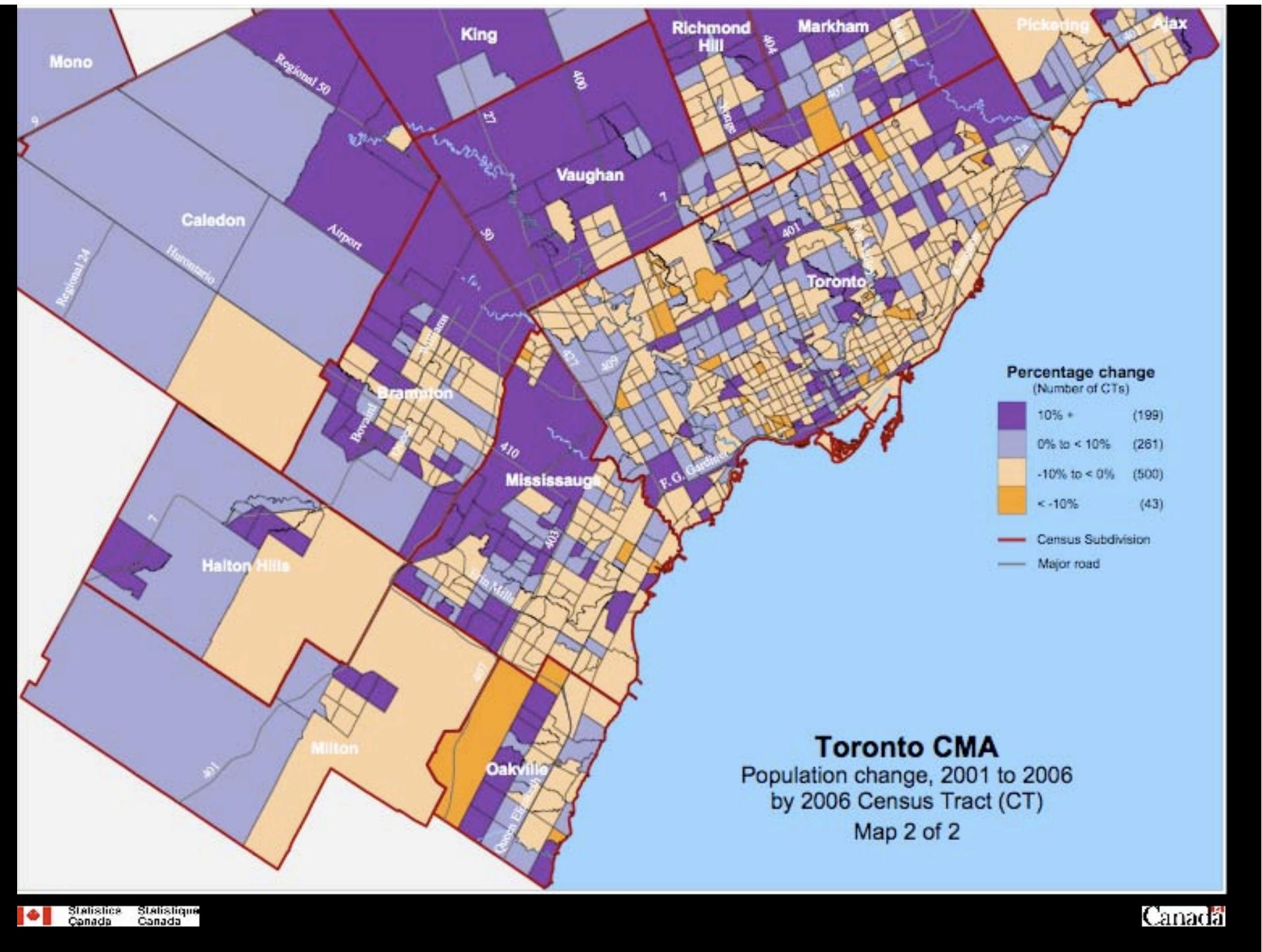
- the rescaling of socio-spatial relationships in the globalizing city region
- a reordering of socio-demographic and socio-economic relationships
- relationships of labour and life, of workplace and housing
- urban political ecology of the city region is reorganized

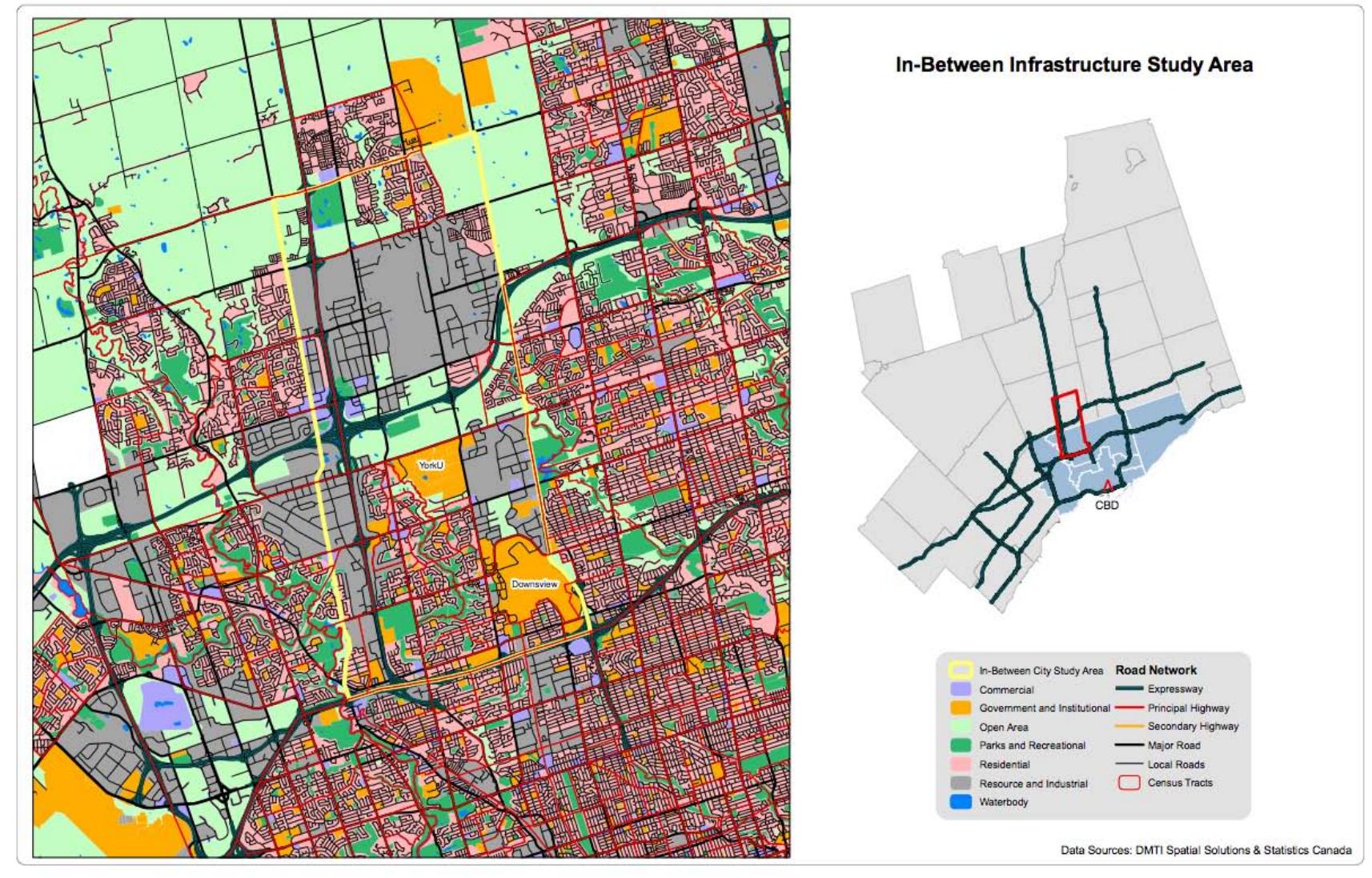
Toronto CMA

Population change, 2001 to 2006
by 2006 Census Tract (CT)

Map 1 of 2







Idiosyncratic decentralization



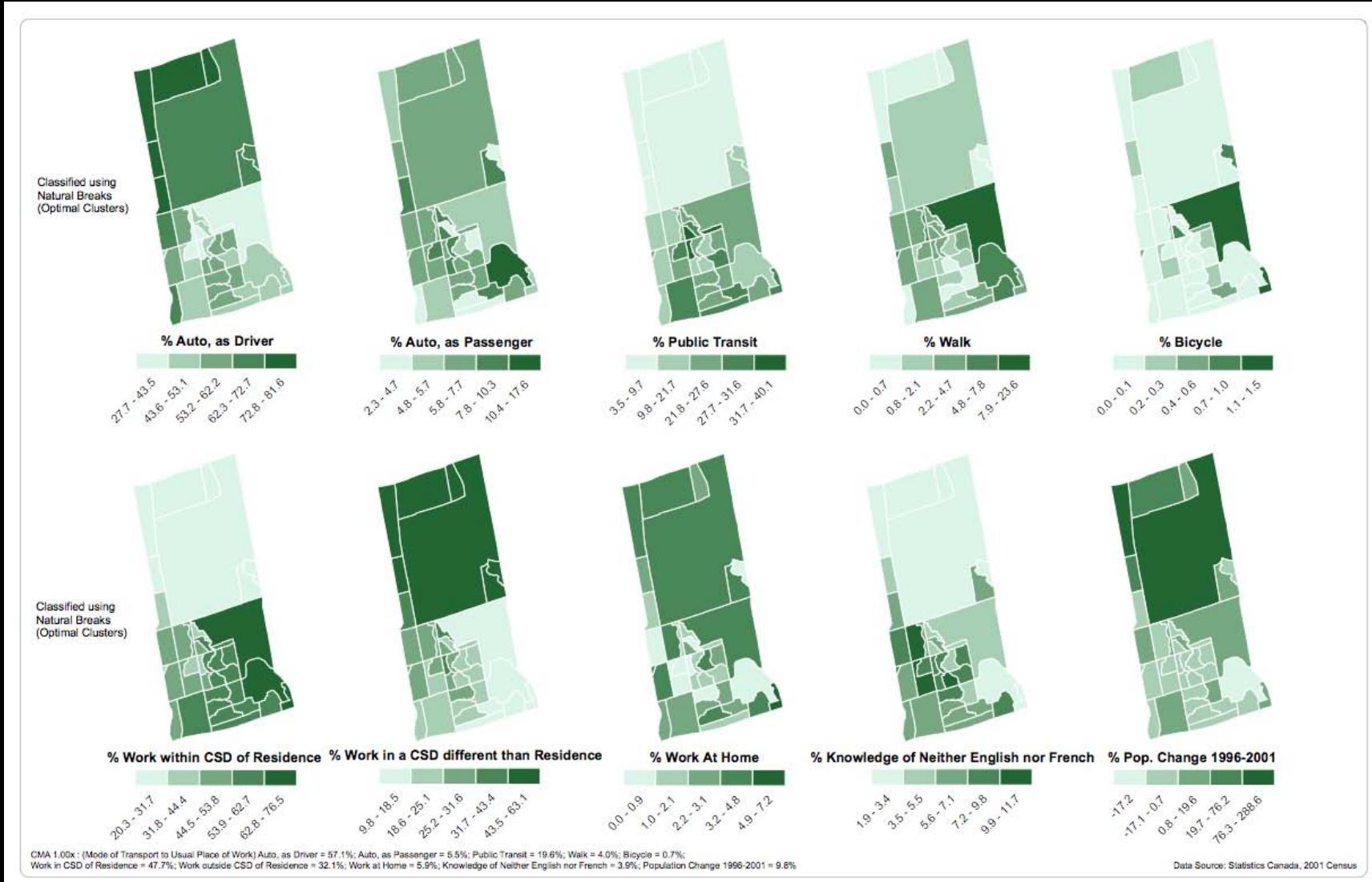
Emerging centrality



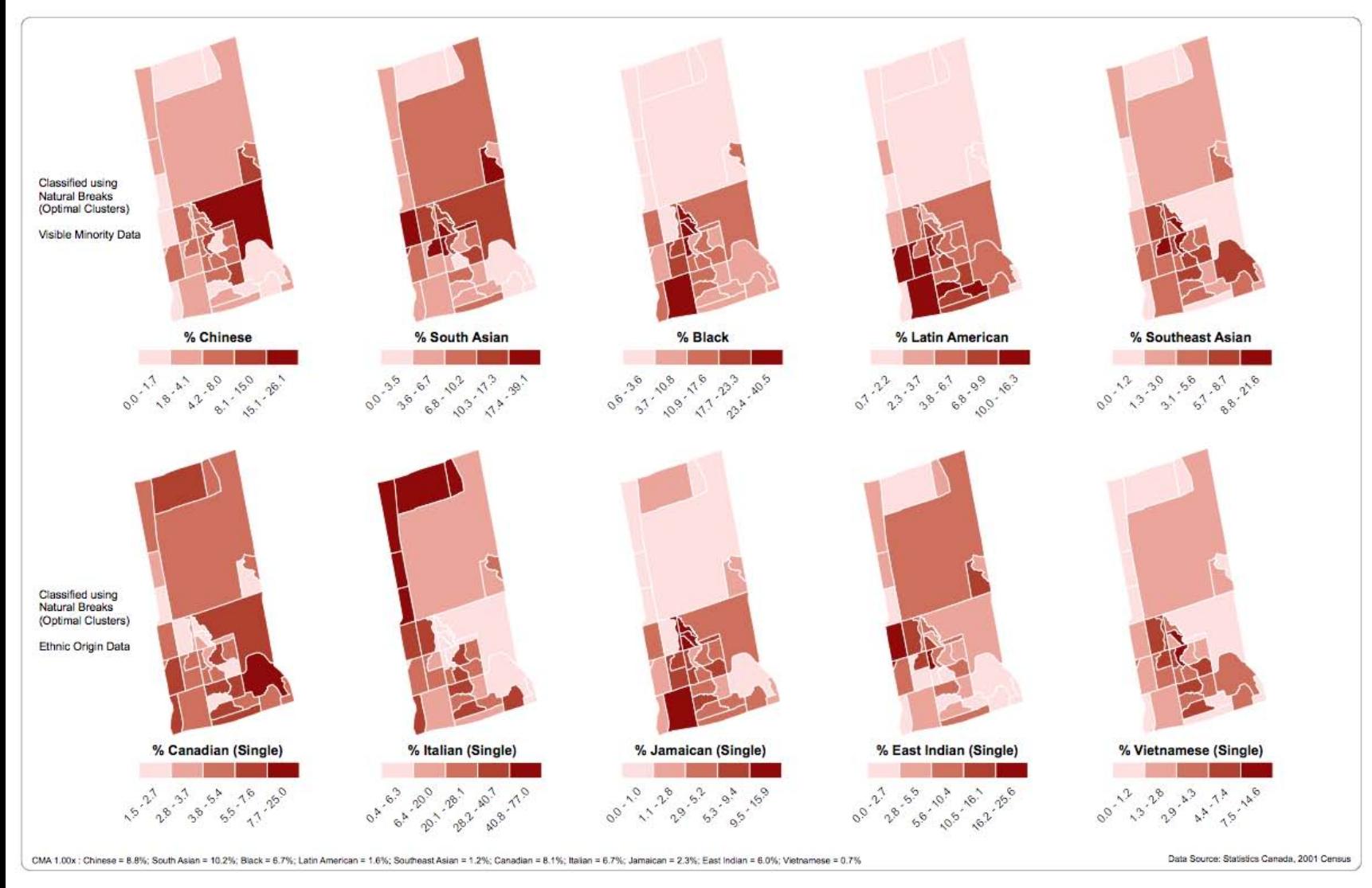
Income



Mobility



Ethnicity



In-between infrastructure

- dramatic **structural** inequalities in infrastructure provision and service delivery
- many urban residents vulnerable to unpredictable **events** – environmental, economic, social
- Understanding the infrastructure problems of the “in-between city” is a necessary precondition for creating more sustainable and socially just urban regions, and for designing a system of social and cultural infrastructure that has everything a community needs and meets global needs as well

Infrastructure builds cities

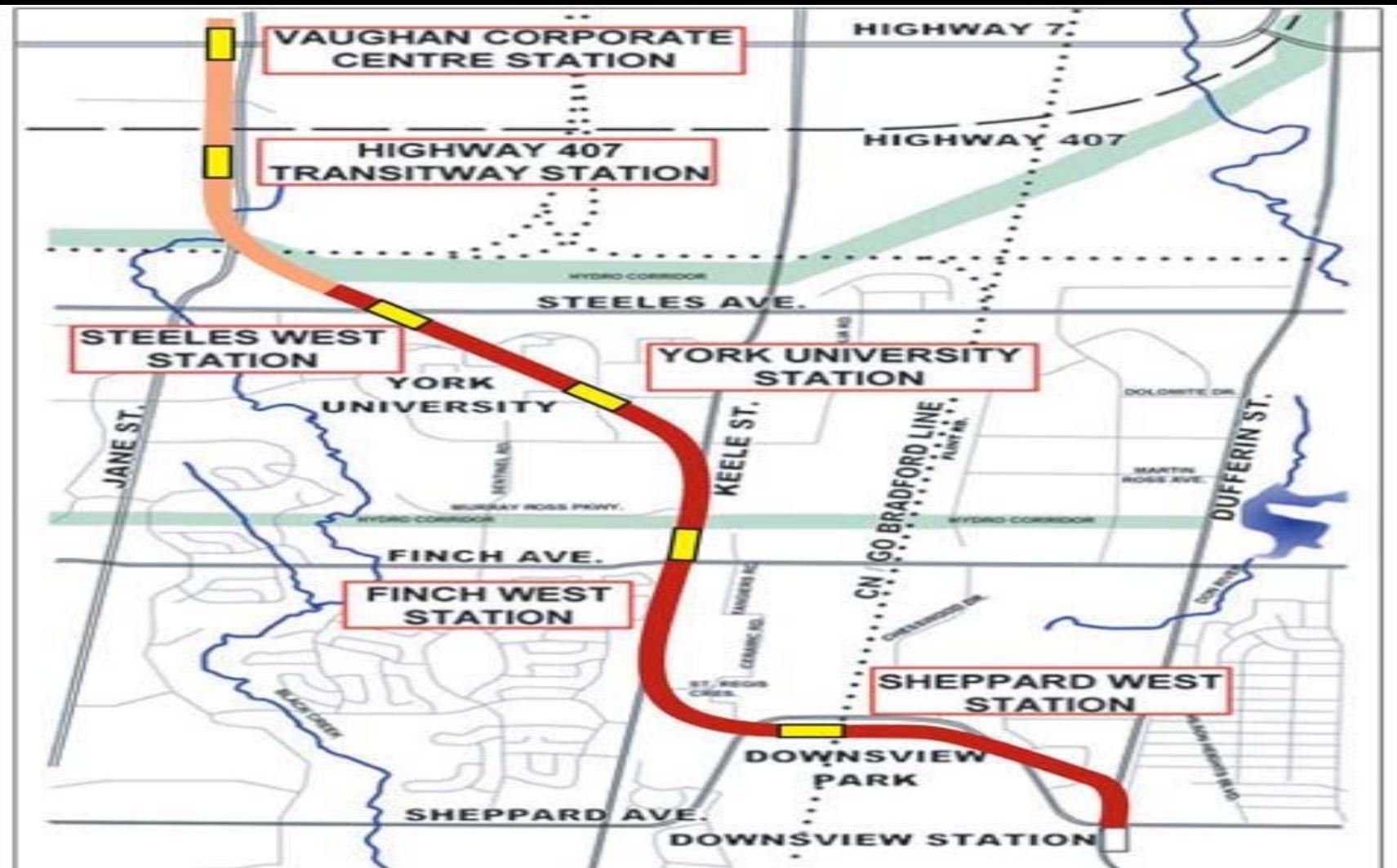
- but it also dissolves cities: as it creates centrifugal possibilities.
- A global “suburban solution” (Walker, 1981) drains the urban centres and leads to new forms of concentration where there are no traditional accumulations of infrastructure services.
- a more pervasively sprawled metropolitan landscape entirely dedicated to provide the most efficient conduit for global capital.

Infrastructure builds cities

- Even in overall “healthy” metropolitan regions the centrifugal dynamics continue.
- In Toronto, for example, the recent census figures suggest an unbroken, if not accelerated trend towards suburbanization of housing and jobs.
- This has social and spatial implications: The traditional focus on collective consumption is partially replaced with a purely exchange value oriented set of criteria for infrastructure development which makes global economic competitiveness, rather than local social cohesion the marker of success.

- infrastructure for the connection of prime network spaces (Graham and Marvin, 2001)
- little attention paid to the spaces that are traversed in the process of connecting the splintered premium locales of the metropolitan region.
- exurban voters conspire with downtown interests in creating better bypasses of the in-between city in order to move goods and people more efficiently
- The in-between city is produced to be transgressed at high speed to reach other points in the urban region.





Environmental Assessment by York Region

Environmental Assessment by TTC / City of Toronto



Waiting for the bus



Conclusions: “politics of infrastructure”

- “politics of infrastructure”: a growing awareness that “governing and experiencing the fabric of the city” (McFarlane and Rutherford 2008: 363) involves political acts that produce and reproduce the infrastructures of urban regions
- “politicization of infrastructure” (*ibid.*) involves the understanding of how infrastructure policies and planning are linked to “the co-evolution of cities and technical networks in a global context” (McFarlane and Rutherford 2008: 365).

- The politicization of infrastructures therefore includes the politicization of the people in the in-between city around issues of transportation, infrastructure, and connectivity on the basis of their own experienced needs of mobility and access.

Thanks!

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